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1 **Evaluation and development of models for estimating the sorption behaviour of**  
2 **pharmaceuticals in soils**

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28 **Abstract**

29

30 Sorption is one of the key process that affects the fate and mobility of pharmaceuticals in the  
31 soil environment. Several models have been developed for estimating the sorption of organic  
32 chemicals, including ionisable compounds, in soil. However, the applicability of these models  
33 to pharmaceuticals has not been extensively tested. In this study, we generated a high-quality  
34 dataset on the sorption of twenty-one pharmaceuticals in different soil types and used these  
35 data to evaluate existing models and to develop new improved models. Sorption coefficients  
36 (Kd) of the pharmaceuticals ranged from 0.2 to 1249.2 L/kg. Existing models were unable to  
37 adequately estimate the measured sorption data. Using the data, new models were developed,  
38 incorporating molecular and soil descriptors, that outperformed the published models when  
39 evaluated against external data sets. While there is a need for further evaluation of these new  
40 models against broader sorption datasets obtained at environmentally relevant concentrations,  
41 in the future they could be highly useful in supporting environmental risk assessment and  
42 prioritization efforts for pharmaceutical ingredients.

43

44 **Keywords:**

45 Ionisable compounds

46 Quantitative structure-property relationships

47 Soil properties

48 Environmental fate

49 Environmental risk assessment

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## 1. Introduction

Pharmaceuticals are administered to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases and hence protect the health of human beings and other animals [1,2]. Following use, a large fraction of these compounds is excreted in urine and feces, which are then mostly discharged into domestic wastewater and can subsequently reach agricultural soils through irrigation using reclaimed wastewater effluent or via the application of processed or unprocessed sewage sludge to land [3,4]. A range of pharmaceuticals has been detected in agricultural soil with concentrations of antibiotics, antiepileptics, anti-inflammatory drugs, antimicrobial agents and anticoagulants being reported up to  $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$  levels [5,6].

Several studies have revealed that, following application to soil, pharmaceuticals can be taken up by soil-dwelling organisms [7-9]. The presence of pharmaceuticals in soil has been shown to reduce plant biomass and significantly affect the survival and reproduction of invertebrates [4,8]. Pharmaceutical accumulation in plants could result in humans be exposed to these compounds when they consume fruit and vegetables [3]. Furthermore, highly mobile and persistent pharmaceuticals may be transported to surface water through field runoff or leach to groundwater and subsequently affect aquatic organisms or enter human drinking water supplies [6,10,11]. Long-term exposure to pharmaceutical residues could pose a risk to ecological systems and exert adverse effects on top predators via food chain transfer [3,12].

Sorption is a key factor in determining the ultimate fate of pharmaceuticals applied to the soil environment as it influences many important processes such as the rate of leaching or the fraction of chemical that is bioavailable to organisms [13-15]. It is estimated that around 1912 pharmaceuticals are on the British market and the number is steadily increasing [16]. However, around 40 studies have been published exploring the sorption behaviour of pharmaceuticals in soil with data only being available for around 6% of the total number of pharmaceuticals and for 100 soil types. Results show that sorption coefficients for

87 pharmaceuticals in soil can vary by many orders of magnitude (e.g. 0.09 (sulfameter) <math>K\_d</math> <  
88 1277873 (ciprofloxacin) L/kg) [17,18] and sorption coefficients for a single pharmaceutical can  
89 vary by up to three orders of magnitude across different soil types (e.g.  $K_d$  values for  
90 ciprofloxacin range from 726.8 to 1277873 L/kg) [17]. It is therefore clear that both chemical  
91 properties and soil characteristics are important in controlling the sorption behaviour of these  
92 compounds in soil [10,19-21].

93

94 Given the large number of pharmaceuticals in use and the fact that sorption data are only  
95 available for a small proportion of these, to adequately understand risks of these compounds,  
96 there is a need to enhance understanding of sorption behavior. It would be cost prohibitive and  
97 time-consuming to experimentally determine sorption coefficients of all pharmaceuticals in the  
98 many soil types that exist in the natural environment. Modelling approaches have therefore  
99 been proposed for estimating the sorption affinity of pharmaceuticals in soils. These include  
100 poly-parameter Linear Free Energy Relationships and Artificial Neural Networks using  
101 chemical properties alone [22,23] and models that use both chemical properties and soil  
102 parameters [24-28].

103

104 Examples of models that use both chemical and soil properties include the models by Franco  
105 et al. [26] and Franco and Trapp [27] who used nonlinear regression analysis to explore the  
106 relationship between pharmaceutical properties and sorption behaviour in different soil  
107 systems. Linear regression approaches were also proposed in the study of Kah and Brown  
108 [25] and European Union technical guidance document [24] to estimate the sorption behaviour  
109 of acidic organic compounds based on soil organic carbon content and pH corrected  
110 lipophilicity (Log D) or hydrophobicity (Log  $K_{ow}$ ). Droge and Goss [28] developed a model that  
111 estimates the sorption of bases in soil by quantifying the impact of soil organic matter, clay  
112 minerals and pharmaceutical molecular structures on the contribution to sorption by both  
113 hydrophobic and electrostatic interactions. Unfortunately, most of these models have been  
114 developed using data published in the literature. The quality of these datasets may be

115 questionable and the spread of pharmaceuticals used to train the models may not be reflective  
116 of the property distribution of all pharmaceuticals in use. There is therefore a need to evaluate  
117 these models against high quality datasets on sorption behaviour of pharmaceuticals  
118 representing the range of properties of pharmaceuticals in use more generally.

119

120 The aim of this study was therefore to evaluate the performance of existing models, that  
121 consider the effects of both chemical and soil properties, using a high-quality dataset on  
122 sorption of pharmaceuticals and, where the models are found to fail, develop improved models  
123 for estimating pharmaceutical sorption. The specific objectives were to: 1) generate sorption  
124 data for a wide range of pharmaceuticals and soil types covering the property space of  
125 pharmaceuticals more generally and soil characteristics of European agricultural systems; 2)  
126 evaluate existing models against the data; and 3) use principal components analysis and multi-  
127 regression methods to develop new models for pharmaceutical sorption and to evaluate these  
128 against published data.

129

## 130 **2. Materials and methods**

### 131 *2.1. Study pharmaceuticals and reagents*

132

133 Twenty-one study pharmaceuticals covering thirteen therapeutic classes were purchased from  
134 Sigma-Aldrich (Gillingham, UK) (purity  $\geq 98\%$ ). Pharmaceuticals were chosen to represent a  
135 broad range of both hydrophobicity characteristics ( $-0.08 < \text{Log Kow} < 4.79$ ) and ionisation  
136 states at environmentally relevant pH values ( $-1.6 < pK_a < 14.3$ ). Study compounds were also  
137 selected whose half-lives in soil indicated that degradation would not occur over the duration  
138 of the sorption studies. Information on the physico-chemical properties, half-lives and CAS  
139 number of each compound is provided in Table SI 1. HPLC grade methanol (99.9%),  
140 acetonitrile (99.9%), acetone ( $\geq 99.5\%$ ) and water as well as calcium chloride dihydrate, and  
141 potassium dihydrogen orthophosphate were obtained from Fisher Scientific (Loughborough,  
142 UK). Analytical grade phosphoric acid solution ( $\geq 85\%$ ) and formic acid ( $\geq 95\%$ ) were purchased

143 from Sigma-Aldrich (Gillingham, UK).

144

## 145 *2.2. Test soils*

146

147 Five soils, covering a broad range of soil characteristics, were obtained from LandLook  
148 (Midlands, UK). On receipt, the soils were air-dried and sieved through a 2-mm mesh and  
149 stored in sterile sampling bags at 4 °C before use in the experiments. The test soils were heated  
150 at 105 °C for 3 hours to minimize biological activity prior to use. The major properties of the five  
151 soils were analyzed by Forest Research Company (Surrey, UK). Detailed information on the  
152 characteristics and measurement procedures of each soil is shown in Table SI 2.

153

## 154 *2.3. Sorption study*

155

156 Sorption studies were carried out based on OECD guideline 106 for the testing of sorption of  
157 chemicals following a batch equilibrium method [29]. Preliminary sorption experiments for each  
158 study compound in the test soils were conducted to identify experimental conditions for use in  
159 the definitive study including the optimal soil to solution ratio, the time to reach sorption  
160 equilibrium, the experimental concentration range, the appropriate test vessel, and the filtration  
161 device. The optimal soil to solution ratio as well as specific concentration range of each  
162 compound for each soil type were selected depending on the aqueous concentrations at  
163 equilibrium and analytical method detection limits (Table SI 6). Details of the preliminary  
164 sorption experiment procedures are provided in the SI Section 2.

165

166 In the definitive sorption experiments, depending on the soil and test chemical in question,  
167 either 1, 2.5 or 5 g of soil (dry weight) was mixed with a specific volume of 0.01 M CaCl<sub>2</sub>  
168 solution (ranging from 10 to 1200 ml ) to create the optimum soil to solution ratio (ranging from  
169 1/1 to 1/1200, Table SI 4) in plastic or glass test vessels (selected based on stability tests for  
170 two vessel types, see Table SI 4). The mixtures were shaken over 12 h in the dark to pre-

171 equilibrate. The soil solution mixtures were then spiked with stock solutions of the study  
172 compounds in either methanol, acetonitrile or HPLC water to give an initial concentration that  
173 ranged between 0.5 to 60 mg/L and a carrier solvent concentration of <0.1 - 0.67%. The  
174 concentration ranges of study analytes to create sorption isotherms generally differed by a  
175 factor from three to five (Table SI 4). Triplicate samples were prepared for each concentration.  
176 Control samples (containing analyte solution in 0.01 M CaCl<sub>2</sub> without soil), and one blank  
177 sample (containing CaCl<sub>2</sub> solution without study compound and soil) were prepared for each  
178 soil. All the samples were then agitated at 220 rpm in the dark at 4 °C for 24h or 48 h to reach  
179 sorption equilibrium (see Table SI 4). After this time, soil suspensions were centrifuged at 2500  
180 rpm for 10 min and the resulting supernatant filtered, using 0.45 µm syringe filters, into amber  
181 glass vials for analysis.

182

#### 183 *2.4. Analytical method*

184

185 Filtered samples were analysed by high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) with a  
186 diode array detection (DAD) using either a Perkin Elmer Flexar HPLC or an Agilent 1260  
187 Infinity II HPLC instrument (The Agilent HPLC cannot be used with phosphate buffer).  
188 Separation was performed using an Agilent Zorbax Eclipse XDB C-18 column (4.6 mm × 250  
189 mm, 5 µm pore size) at 30 °C. The mobile phase comprised a solvent phase of either methanol  
190 or acetonitrile matched with an aqueous phase of either 0.1 % formic acid (pH= 2.7), 30 mM  
191 potassium dihydrogen orthophosphate (KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, pH=3.3), 25 mM potassium dihydrogen  
192 orthophosphate (KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, pH=3), 50 mM potassium dihydrogen orthophosphate (KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>,  
193 pH= 4.5) or HPLC grade water adjusted to pH 2.7 with 85% phosphoric acid. The flow rate of  
194 mobile phase ranged from 0.6 to 1.4 ml min<sup>-1</sup>. The injection volume and detection wavelength  
195 for study compounds ranged from 10 to 40 µl and 200 to 260 nm, respectively. The retention  
196 times fell within the range 2 to 4 min. Concentrations in samples were calculated based on  
197 peak area using calibration curves developed using known standards of each pharmaceutical.

198



199 The analytical methods were evaluated in terms of linearity, intra- and inter-day repeatability,  
200 matrix recovery, limit of detection (LOD) and quantitation (LOQ). The Intra-/inter-day  
201 repeatability was measured at two concentrations (2 and 20 mg/L) over 3 days. The matrix  
202 recovery was determined in supernatant samples (centrifuged from the mixture of soil and 0.01  
203 mol/L CaCl<sub>2</sub> (1/5 and 1/200 (w/v) soil/ solution ratio)) which was then fortified with the stock  
204 solution of target pharmaceuticals at the spiking level of 5 mg/L. The limit of detection (LODs)  
205 and limits of quantification (LOQs) were calculated as three and ten times the signal-to-noise  
206 ratio, respectively [30]. Satisfactory limits of detection (0.04-0.64 mg/L) and intra-/inter-day  
207 precisions (the relative standard deviation within the range of 0-20%) were obtained for all  
208 twenty-one pharmaceuticals. With the exception of captopril, no apparent matrix interference  
209 was found for the majority of the pharmaceuticals with the average matrix recoveries of target  
210 compounds ranging from 91.25 to 103.79%. The details of the developed analytical methods  
211 and method validation results are summarised in Table SI 5 and Table SI 6.

212

### 213 *2.5. Derivation of sorption coefficients*

214

215 Linear, Freundlich and Langmuir isotherms were fitted to the data using GraphPad Prism  
216 (version 7.00). The determination of Linear, Freundlich and Langmuir isotherm constants ( $K_d$ ,  
217  $K_f$  and  $K_L$ ) as well as organic carbon normalized sorption coefficient ( $K_{oc}$ ) are described in the  
218 SI section 2.

219

### 220 *2.6. Evaluation of existing predictive models*

221

222 Several models, which have been proposed to predict the sorption behaviour of different  
223 classes of acidic, basic and neutral organic compounds in soil (Table 2), were evaluated using  
224 the measured sorption coefficients. The applicability and accuracy of these models were  
225 assessed according to mathematical evidence by calculating root-mean squared deviation

226 (RMSE) and Nash–Sutcliffe Efficiency (NSE) using the following equations (Eqs 1, 2):

$$227 \quad RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i^{Obs} - Y_i^{Pred})^2}{n}} \quad (1)$$

228

$$229 \quad NSE = 1 - \left[ \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i^{Obs} - Y_i^{Pred})^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (Y_i^{Obs} - Y^{Mean})^2} \right] \quad (2)$$

230

231 where  $Y_i^{Obs}$  and  $Y_i^{Pred}$  are the  $i$ th observed and predicted value, respectively.  $Y^{Mean}$  is the  
232 average of observed data and  $n$  is the number of observations. RMSE value of 0 indicates a  
233 perfect fit and less than half of the standard deviations of the observed represents a good  
234 prediction performance [31]. NSE values which can range between  $-\infty$  and 1 were used to  
235 evaluate how well the predicted values and the observed values fitted a 1:1 line. The closer  
236 that the NSE value is to 1, the better the model performance [32].

237

### 238 *2.7. Development of new models and validation based on literature data*

239

240 Principal components analysis (PCA) was performed in SPSS (version 25.0) to explore which  
241 physico-chemical properties of chemicals and soil characteristics appear to drive the sorption  
242 of each class of pharmaceuticals and to identify pharmaceutical and soil properties for use in  
243 the development of new models. The first three principal component axes were chosen to  
244 reduce the dimensionality of data according to the broken stick eigenvalue test [33].

245

246 New sorption models were then developed using 1) all soil and pharmaceutical properties  
247 identified from the PCA; and 2) using pharmaceutical properties and soil properties, identified  
248 by the PCA, that are commonly reported in literature studies that have measured sorption of  
249 pharmaceuticals. Taking into account the degree of dissociation, multiple-linear regression  
250 analysis in the Minitab software (version 18) was used to develop new models for estimating  
251 sorption of non-ionised (neutrals,  $\text{Log } K_{ow} > 0.85$ ) and fully ionised (bases,  $pK_a > 8.6$ )  
252 pharmaceuticals based on their molecular descriptors and soil properties. The sorption of weak  
253 electrolytes is largely dependent on the degree of dissociation as the partitioning behaviours

254 of dissociated and undissociated species involve different sorption mechanisms comprising  
255 different contributions to the overall sorption potential of the chemicals [26,27]. Nonlinear  
256 models were then proposed for partially ionised pharmaceuticals (weak bases,  $8 > pKa > 4.8$   
257 and acids,  $3.2 < pKa < 6.8$ ) by conducting the nonlinear least squares function in the R software  
258 (R version 3.4.1). The optimum model framework applied in R software is shown in Eqn.3:

259

$$260 \quad \text{Log } Kd = \text{Log}(\Phi_n \cdot 10^{(c_0 + c_1 \cdot X_1 + c_2 \cdot X_2 + \dots c_i \cdot X_i)} + \Phi_{ion} \cdot 10^{(c_0 + c_1 \cdot X_1 + c_2 \cdot X_2 +$$
  
$$261 \quad \dots c_i \cdot X_i)) \quad (3)$$

262

263 Where  $c_i$  and  $X_i$  represent the regression coefficients and soil and chemical parameters,  
264 respectively.  $\Phi_n$ ,  $\Phi_{ion}$  are the neutral and ionic fractions and were derived from the  
265 Henderson-Hasselbalch equation [34].

266

267 Intercorrelated descriptors (e.g., the strong intercorrelation among hydrophobicity descriptors  
268 or the correlation between CEC and each exchangeable cation) were run separately in the  
269 regression analysis, as use of these could lead to double counting of the impact of cross-  
270 correlated parameters on the sorption.

271

272 The best performing model for each class was then identified based on 1) the number of  
273 observations used in the analysis (n), the standard error of the estimate (S), the square of the  
274 correlation coefficient ( $R^2$ ), the adjusted determination coefficient ( $R^2_{adj}$ ), the predicted  $R^2$   
275 ( $R^2_{pred}$  calculated using the leave one out approach) as well as RMSD and NSE indices; and  
276 2) the results of an evaluation of a models predictive capability using an external evaluation  
277 data set (including 152 Kd values covering 36 pharmaceuticals) resampled from the literature  
278 (details in Table SI 10). The external evaluation dataset was also used to explore how the best  
279 performing models compared to the existing sorption models.

280

### 281 **3. Results and discussion**

282

### 283 3.1. Overview of sorption results

284

285 In the definitive sorption experiments, interfering peaks were observed for captopril in the UV  
286 chromatograms of the soil samples (a matrix recovery of 79.62 % was obtained at the soil/  
287 solution ratio of 1/5), which might be attributed to the organic and inorganic components  
288 existing in the soil matrix, leading to the apparent signal suppression of the analyte response  
289 [35]. The obtained sorption coefficients of captopril were therefore not used in the evaluation  
290 of existing models and further model development. In the future, additional steps such as the  
291 use of isotopically-labeled internal standards, sample dilution, or preparation of matrix-  
292 matched calibration curves are recommended to reduce the matrix effect prior to the analysis  
293 of captopril in solid samples [36].

294

295 Results of the linear, Freundlich and Langmuir isotherms fitting are presented in Table SI 7.  
296 Freundlich and linear ( $R^2$  of 0.89 to 1.00) isotherm models better described the sorption of the  
297 pharmaceuticals, across the concentration ranges tested, than the Langmuir model ( $R^2$  of  
298 0.0006 to 1.00).

299

300 Sorption coefficients varied greatly within each group. Acidic pharmaceuticals exhibited lower  
301 affinity to test soils as expected, with the sorption coefficients ( $K_d$ ) ranging from 0.29 L/kg  
302 (ibuprofen) to 80.45 L/kg (naproxen). For the neutral compounds,  $K_d$  values ranged from 0.20  
303 L/kg (antipyrine) to 117.40 L/kg (disulfiram). For the bases,  $K_d$  values ranged from 0.77 L/kg  
304 (metoprolol) to 393.10 L/kg (amitriptyline). For the weak bases, values ranged from 3.24 L/kg  
305 (lamotrigine) to 1249.00 L/kg (perphenazine) (Table SI 7). The sorption behaviour of  
306 pharmaceuticals also displayed large variability within each study soil. In soil 1,  $K_d$  values  
307 ranged from 0.57 L/kg (ibuprofen) to 1181.00 L/kg (perphenazine). In soil 2,  $K_d$  values ranged

308 from 1.91 L/kg (captopril) to 1249.00 L/kg (perphenazine). In soil 3, K<sub>d</sub> values ranged from  
309 0.40 L/kg (antipyrine) to 501.00 L/kg (bisacodyl). In soil 4, K<sub>d</sub> values ranged from 0.29 L/kg  
310 (ibuprofen) to 861.30 L/kg (bisacodyl). Finally, in soil 5, K<sub>d</sub> values ranged from 0.20 L/kg  
311 (antipyrine) to 267.40 L/kg (perphenazine) (Table SI 7). Sorption affinities of pharmaceuticals  
312 in soil 1 and 2 were generally higher than in the other three soils, probably due to the higher  
313 organic carbon content of these soils (Figure 1). Highest variability (covering two orders of  
314 magnitudes) was observed for acids among the five soils, which revealed that the soil  
315 properties (such as pH and organic matter) play an important role in determining sorption  
316 behavior of acidic pharmaceuticals [37].

317

318 Comparison of our findings with previous findings [10,13,18,19,23,38-43] showed that the  
319 measured linear sorption coefficients of pharmaceuticals in present study for atenolol,  
320 metoprolol, propranolol, amitriptyline, trimethoprim, furosemide, naproxen and carbamazepine  
321 were in a similar range to sorption coefficients previously reported in the literature (Table 1).  
322 For fluoxetine, our K<sub>d</sub> values were towards the lower end of the ranges previously reported  
323 and for lamotrigine, ketoprofen, ibuprofen, our K<sub>d</sub> values were at the higher end of those  
324 previously reported (Table 1). In these previous studies, a wider range of experimental  
325 concentrations was typically used ranging from 0.01 µg/L to 10 mg/L which includes more  
326 environmentally relevant treatments.

327

### 328 *3.2. Evaluation of literature models against experimental sorption data*

329

330 Ten existing models for estimating sorption of organic compounds were evaluated and  
331 prediction statistics are summarized in Table 2. The best performing model overall was the  
332 model developed by Franco and Trapp [27] for neutral pharmaceuticals which estimates  
333 sorption from the Log K<sub>ow</sub>, and which gave a RMSD of 0.409 and NSE of 0.800. Models for

334 acids and bases performed poorly with RMSD values being greater than the standard deviation  
335 of measured sorption coefficients and negative NSEs being obtained. Moderate performance  
336 was observed for models proposed for estimating sorption of weak bases with RMSDs below  
337 standard deviation of the observations and positive NSEs being obtained. The poorer  
338 performance of models proposed for ionisable compounds is likely explained by the fact that,  
339 with the exception of the Droge and Goss model, these models consider hydrophobicity and  
340 the degree of dissociation and soil organic content and, generally, do not account for other  
341 sorption processes known to be important for ionisable compounds such as hydrogen bonding  
342 as well as electrostatic interactions (ionic exchange, charge transfer, cation bridging, ligand  
343 exchange) [10,44,45]. Therefore, in the next section, we describe work to identify key soil and  
344 pharmaceutical properties driving sorption and then move on to develop improved sorption  
345 models.

346

### 347 *3.3. Potential factors influencing the sorption of four classes of pharmaceuticals in soil*

348

349 The main factors including chemical and soil properties associated with the degree of sorption  
350 of pharmaceuticals in each class were explored by using principal components analysis (PCA)  
351 and were then used for further model development. (Details are provided in Figure 2 and Table  
352 SI 8).

353

#### 354 *3.3.1. Basic pharmaceuticals (bases, $pK_a > 4.8$ and weak bases, $8 > pK_a > 4.8$ )*

355

356 For basic pharmaceuticals, the PCA indicated that hydrophobicity descriptors (Log Kow, Vx,  
357 Log Dow) and soil TOC had a strong positive effect on sorption and that the degree of  
358 ionisation of the pharmaceutical ( $F_{ion}$ ) and soil CEC, clay and cations (Na, K, Ca) content had  
359 a weak positive effect on sorption (Table SI 8). These results suggest that bonding  
360 mechanisms such as hydrophobic effects, van der Waals interactions as well as hydrogen  
361 bonding interactions with organic matter, dominate the overall sorption of basic

362 pharmaceuticals in soil. Similar observations have been made in previous studies [25,46,47].  
363 Moreover, most basic pharmaceuticals are predominantly in the protonated form at soil pH, so  
364 some additional influence through electrostatic attraction to electronegative charged soil  
365 surfaces (clay or organic matter) is likely [48]. Indeed, a weak positive association of CEC and  
366 clay on sorption was observed across the basic and weak basic groups that supports the  
367 existence of cation exchange processes for cationic species of bases on negatively charged  
368 surfaces (clay or organic matter) occupied by metal cations [10,44,49].

369

### 370 *3.3.2. Acidic pharmaceuticals ( $3.2 < pK_a < 4.5$ )*

371

372 For acidic pharmaceuticals, the degree of dissociation ( $F_n$ ) of the molecule, soil TOC and  $Al^{3+}$   
373 and  $Fe^{3+}$  had a positive effect on sorption while pH and clay content had a negative effect on  
374 sorption (Table SI 8). These findings are consistent with observations from previous studies  
375 where the sorption behaviour of acidic compounds was found to be strongly dependent on the  
376 soil acidity [50-52]. The non-ionised species of acidic pharmaceuticals is prevalent at low pH  
377 (e.g. soil 2) where the hydrophobic partitioning of neutral counterparts with organic matter via  
378 van der Waals and hydrogen bonding interactions dominate the extent of sorption of acids  
379 [17,45,48,51]. In addition, the strong dependence of  $K_d$  on trivalent cations suggest that cation  
380 bridging between anionic form of acids and negatively charged sites and surface complexation  
381 of carboxyl group to exchangeable trivalent cations on soil metal oxides and aluminosilicate  
382 edge sites may be important processes for these molecules [44,46,53]. However, an  
383 electrostatic repulsion interaction between the anionic form of acidic pharmaceuticals and  
384 negatively charged soil surface (clay) could substantially attenuate the sorption of acids at  
385 neutral and alkaline pH [10,54].

386

### 387 *3.3.3. Neutral pharmaceuticals ( $Log K_{ow} > 0.85$ )*

388

389 For the neutral molecules, the PCA analysis indicated a strong positive effect of hydrophobicity

390 and soil organic carbon on sorption (Table SI 8). This supports the hypothesis that sorption of  
391 neutral molecules is due to hydrophobic partitioning into organic matter via van der Waals and  
392 electron donor-acceptor interactions [48, 55].

393

#### 394 *3.4. Regression model development and validation*

395

396 A linear regression model containing two explanatory variables (Log Kow and TOC) was  
397 generated with a good predictive capability ( $R^2_{\text{pred}}$  of 0.872) for estimating sorption coefficients  
398 for neutral pharmaceuticals (Table 3). For bases, a two-parameter model (Log Dow combined  
399 with TOC) explained 75.2% of the variation in the experimental Log Kd values. Incorporation  
400 of an additional soil property (exchangeable  $\text{Na}^+$ ) into the model for bases resulted in an  
401 increase in the  $R^2_{\text{pred}}$  from 0.703 to 0.782 (Table 3). These results suggest that both  
402 hydrophobic interactions and cation exchange processes for cationic species on negatively  
403 charged surfaces occupied by metal cations drive the sorption of the basic pharmaceuticals.

404

405 Two non-linear regression models were developed for weak bases, which provided  
406 satisfactory predictive performance with the explained variance higher than 91.7% (Table 3).  
407 Molecular weight (MW) was applied to describe hydrophobic partitioning of undissociated  
408 species of weak bases, while hydrophilic factor (HF is a hydrophilicity descriptor which is  
409 calculated based on the number of carbon atoms and the number of hydrophilic groups in a  
410 molecule) was superior to other hydrophobicity descriptors in predicting the sorption of the  
411 ionic molecule species. Besides, charged surface area (simplified by the number of hydrogens  
412 bound by the charged nitrogen,  $\text{N}_{\text{ai}}$ ) and TOC were selected in explaining the sorption of ionic  
413 species, which revealed that electrostatic sorption of weak bases might be influenced by the  
414 charged surface area of the different amine types and soil organic carbon content. Furthermore,  
415 inclusion of the  $\text{Ex Na}^+$  as model input (Model 5) yielded an improvement in the predictions of  
416 Log Kd for weak bases, the  $R^2_{\text{pred}}$  increased from 0.856 to 0.892 (Table 3). The hydrophilic  
417 factor (HF) combined with TOC that were found to be able to capture the variance in sorption



418 of non-ionic molecules of acids (Model 6). Molecular weight (MW) combined with soil  
419 properties (CEC and soil organic carbon content) could explain the contributions of ionic  
420 species to the overall sorption of acids.

421

422 The predictive performance of developed models and existing predictive models were  
423 evaluated against the literature data, which are summarised in Table 3 and Table 4. Briefly,  
424 four developed models from each group all yielded good predictions ( $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  range from  
425 0.416 to 0.577,  $\text{NSE} > 0$ ). The variability in predicted sorption coefficients by Model 1 agreed  
426 satisfactorily with 65 Log  $K_d$  values in the external data sets for neutral pharmaceuticals across  
427 the various soil types ( $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  of 0.448). By comparison, the model for neutral organics  
428 proposed by Franco and Trapp [27] performed poorer and showed an underestimation of Log  
429  $K_d$  values for hydrophobic neutrals ( $\text{Log } K_{ow} > 3.36$ ) over one order of magnitude ( $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$   
430 of 0.601) (see Table 4 and Figure 3). For the basic group, both the proposed regression (Model  
431 3) relying on Log  $D_{ow}$  and TOC and the published model by Franco and Trapp [27] derived  
432 from Log  $K_{ow}$  generated the reasonable predictions and gave an accuracy of a factor of 10 ( $N$   
433 =23, Figure 3). The Model 4 proposed for weak bases displayed an accurate prediction  
434 ( $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  of 0.483), which outperformed the models described by Franco and Trapp [27]  
435 ( $\text{RMSD}$  of 0.903 and 0.811, respectively). This revealed that amine types ( $N_{ai}$ ) combined with  
436 HF provided a better estimation of the sorption of weak bases compared to the single  
437 hydrophobicity descriptor (Log  $K_{ow}$ ). A satisfactory prediction of sorption was feasible with  
438 Model 6 for acidic pharmaceuticals ( $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  of 0.577) which yielded a performance  
439 significantly superior to the two existing models proposed by Kah and Brown [25] and the  
440 European Union [24] ( $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  of 0.870 and 0.611, respectively), which suggested that  
441 sorbate speciation is an important factor in predicting the sorption of acidic pharmaceuticals in  
442 soil. Similar predictions were also observed with the models developed by Franco et al. [26]  
443 and Franco and Trapp [27], with the average errors of 0.558 and 0.573, respectively.

444

445 Overall, the model evaluation results based on the independent data set demonstrates that

446 the sorption affinity of the partially ionised pharmaceuticals could be estimated accurately by  
447 weighting the contributions of neutral and ionic molecule species separately. The multiple-  
448 linear regression models to estimate the sorption coefficient of the nonionised and fully ionised  
449 pharmaceuticals yielded appropriate predictions by incorporating molecular and soil properties  
450 (all predicted Log K<sub>d</sub> values within a factor of 10). However, the better Models 2 and 5 for basic  
451 and weak basic pharmaceuticals and sorption model developed by Droge and Goss [28]  
452 containing the soil descriptors (exchangeable Na<sup>+</sup> and CEC) could not be evaluated due to the  
453 incomplete record of soil property in the literature. The predictive performance of these models  
454 is worthy of further validation through the generation of additional experimental data on a wider  
455 range of pharmaceuticals and soil types and employing more environmentally-relevant  
456 concentrations.

457

#### 458 **4. Conclusion**

459 In this study, the sorption behaviour of twenty-one pharmaceuticals across thirteen therapeutic  
460 classes was investigated in five test soils with different properties. Use of the data to evaluate  
461 existing sorption models, relying solely on Log K<sub>ow</sub>, for estimating sorption of neutral  
462 pharmaceuticals indicated that these models worked well. However, comparison of the  
463 sorption coefficients, obtained in the experiments, with predictions from existing models for  
464 estimating sorption of ionisable compounds showed that the models performed poorly for  
465 pharmaceuticals. Work was therefore done to develop new modelling approaches. An initial  
466 PCA analysis indicated that the sorption of the study pharmaceuticals was driven by  
467 hydrophobic forces as well as electrostatic interactions and a range of soil parameters. Using  
468 this knowledge, new models were developed for estimating sorption coefficients for  
469 pharmaceuticals. Evaluation of these new models against an independent dataset obtained  
470 from the literature showed that the models were on par with (model for bases and acids) or  
471 superior to (model for neutrals and weak bases) existing models.

472

473 While our study was more extensive than previous investigations of this type in terms of the

474 range of pharmaceuticals and soil investigated, it still only focused on a subset of the  
475 pharmaceuticals in a small number of soils. The study also employed concentrations greater  
476 than concentrations typically observed in the environment. In the future, we recommend that  
477 further work is done at lower environmentally relevant concentrations and covering a wider  
478 concentration range to further evaluate the models and, if appropriate, further refine the  
479 relationships. These models would allow to predict sorption behavior of pharmaceuticals under  
480 realistic environmental conditions and could be invaluable for not only characterizing the  
481 environmental risks of pharmaceuticals in soil environments but also in sediment-water  
482 systems.

483

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488

#### 489 **Supporting information description**

490 Detailed information on study pharmaceuticals and soils, the preliminary experiment  
491 procedures and analytical methods, sorption isotherms for study pharmaceuticals, results of  
492 principle component analysis, goodness of fit of developed models and existing predictive  
493 models against the external data sets as well as details of external evaluation data sets.

494

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502

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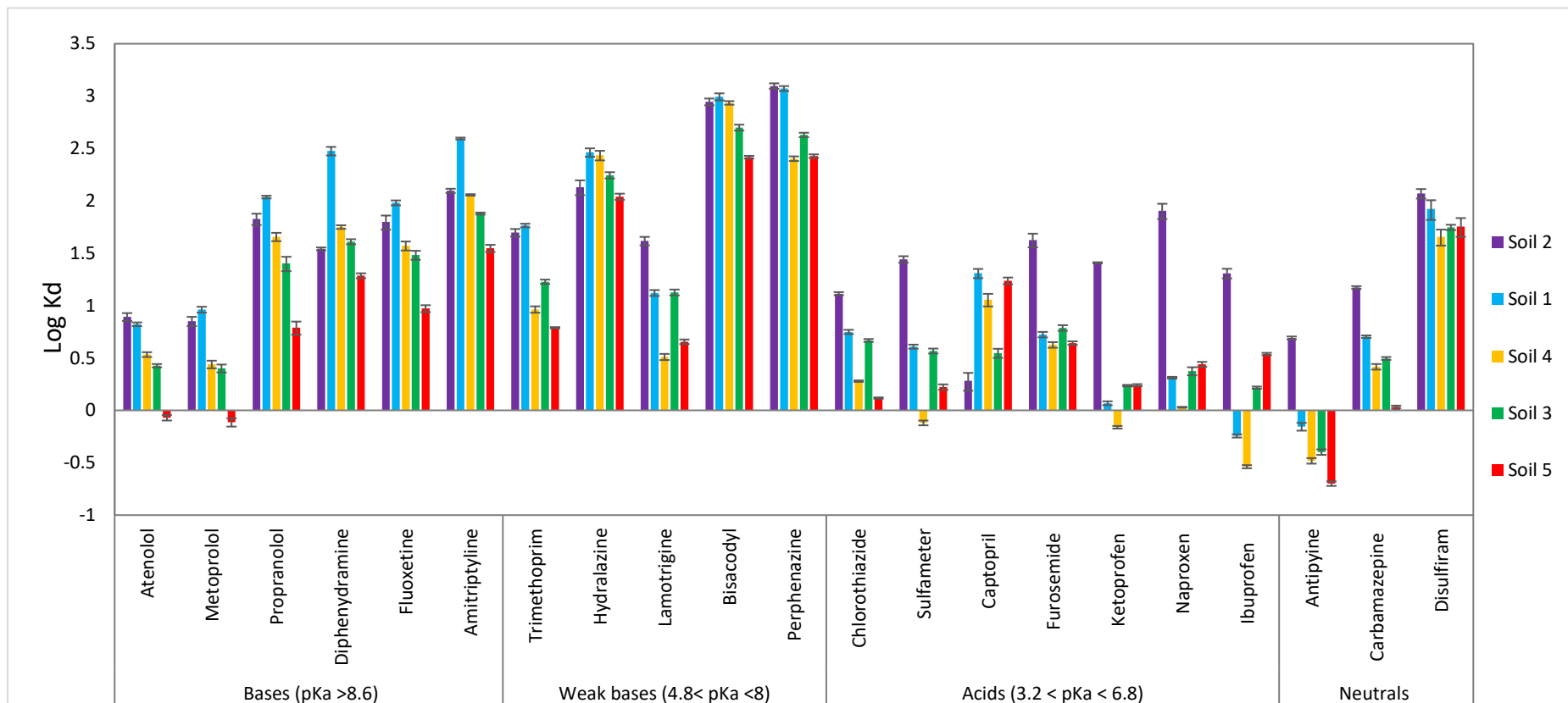


Figure 1. Logarithm of the linear sorption coefficient (Log Kd values) ( $\pm$ SE) for all the investigated pharmaceuticals in the five study soils. Compounds within a group ordered from low to high Log Kow. Soil organic carbon content increased in the order of soil 2 > soil 1 > soil 4 > soil 3 > soil 5.

Table 1. Comparison of the sorption coefficient (Kd) measured in present study and reported Kd values of pharmaceuticals in soil environments.

Compound	Measured	Literature
	Kd (L/kg)	Kd (L/kg) (Reference)
Atenolol	0.85-7.81	1.61-7.08 (19); 15 (23); 1.88-4.8 (10)
Metoprolol	0.77-9.16	25.4-75 (19); 20 (23); 1.36-3.83 (10)
Propranolol	6.16-108.7	58 (23); 16.3-199 (13)
Diphenhydramine	19.3-299.2	n.d.
Fluoxetine	9.38-95.78	146-234.8 (38)
Amitriptyline	35.29-393.1	138 (23)
Trimethoprim	6.15-58.16	4.67-109(19); 26 (23); 1.16 (10); 7.06-9.21 (18); 7.42 (43)
Hydralazine	109.70-290.36	n.d.
Lamotrigine	3.24-41.45	0.73-2.64 (41)
Bisacodyl	261.1-986.2	n.d.
Perphenazine	252.9-1249	n.d.
Chlorothiazide	1.31-13	n.d.
Sulfameter	0.76-27.65	0.09-0.17 (18)
Captopril	1.91-20.34	n.d.
Furosemide	4.22-42.3	27 (23)
Ketoprofen	0.69-25.59	0.09-9.59 (19); 9 (23); 1.26-8.24 (39)
Naproxen	1.07-80.45	0.23-17.5 (19); 11(23); 10.1-252.9 (38); 1.24-16.49 (40); 2.39-4.41 (12)
Ibuprofen	0.29-20.32	0.15-3.01(19); 21 (23); 0.56-3.71(40); 1.18(42); 1.08-1.14 (43)
Antipyrine	0.20-4.92	n.d.
Carbamazepine	1.08-14.88	0.53-16.7(19); 13 (23); 0.43 (10); 0.49-37 (13); 4.7-32.8 (38); 0.53-1.25 (41)
Disulfiram	45.28-117.4	n.d.

n.d.: no data.

Table 2. Evaluation of existing regression models for estimating the sorption behaviour of neutral, basic and acidic organic compounds in soil (The predicted organic carbon-normalised sorption coefficients (Log Koc) were converted to Log Kd to allow comparison to experimental data).

Class	Regression model		N	R <sup>2</sup>	SD	RMSD	NSE
Neutrals	Franco and Trapp (2008)	$Log Koc = 0.5 * Log P + 1.13$	N=15	0.907	0.947	0.409	0.800
Bases	Droge and Goss (2013)	$Kd = K_{CEC,clays}(CEC_{Soil} - 3.4f_{oc}) + f_{oc} * D_{oc,IE}$	N=25	0.091	0.745	1.311	-2.230
	Franco and Trapp (2008) base model A	$Log Koc = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.21 * Log P + 2.24} + \phi ion * 10^{0.42 * Log P + 2.19})$	N=30	0.709	0.710	0.780	-0.247
	Franco and Trapp (2008) base model B	$Log Koc = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.37 * Log P + 1.7} + \phi ion * 10^{pKa^{0.65} * f^{0.14}})$	N=30	0.529	0.710	1.077	-1.376
Weak Bases	Franco and Trapp (2008) base model A	$Log Koc = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.21 * Log P + 2.24} + \phi ion * 10^{0.42 * Log P + 2.19})$	N=25	0.473	0.816	0.691	0.253
	Franco and Trapp. (2008) base model B	$Log Koc = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.37 * Log P + 1.7} + \phi ion * 10^{pKa^{0.65} * f^{0.14}})$	N=25	0.309	0.816	0.686	0.263
Acids	Franco and Trapp (2008)	$Log Koc = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.54 * Log P + 1.11} + \phi ion * 10^{0.11 * Log P + 1.54})$	N=30	0.166	0.576	0.640	-0.276
	Franco et al. (2009)	$Koc = \frac{10^{0.54 * Log P + 1.11}}{1 + 10^{(pH - 0.6 - pKa)}} + \frac{10^{0.11 * Log P + 1.54}}{1 + 10^{(pKa - pH + 0.6)}}$	N=30	0.115	0.576	0.694	-0.503
	Kah and Brown (2007)	$Log Kd = 0.13 * Log D + 1.02 Log OC - 1.51$	N=30	0.282	0.576	0.655	-3.359
	European Union (2003)	$Log Koc = 0.6 * Log P + 0.32$	N=30	0.001	0.576	1.127	-2.961

$f_{oc}$ : fraction organic carbon in soil;

Log P: the octanol–water partition coefficient;

$pKa$ : acid-dissociation coefficient;

$\phi n$ ,  $\phi ion$ : fraction of neutral and ionic species;

$f$ : fraction of compound in the lipophilic phase,  $f = Kow/(Kow+1)$ ;

Log D: lipophilicity corrected to soil pH;

$K_{CEC,Clay}$  and  $D_{OC,IE}$  are CEC-normalized and soil organic matter-normalized sorption coefficients, respectively.  $\text{Log } K_{CEC,Clay} = 1.22 Vx - 0.22Nai + 1.09$ ;  $\text{Log } D_{OC,IE} = 1.53Vx + 0.32Nai - 0.27$ ;

Vx: molecular volume was determined following the approach described in Abraham and McGowan's, (1987);

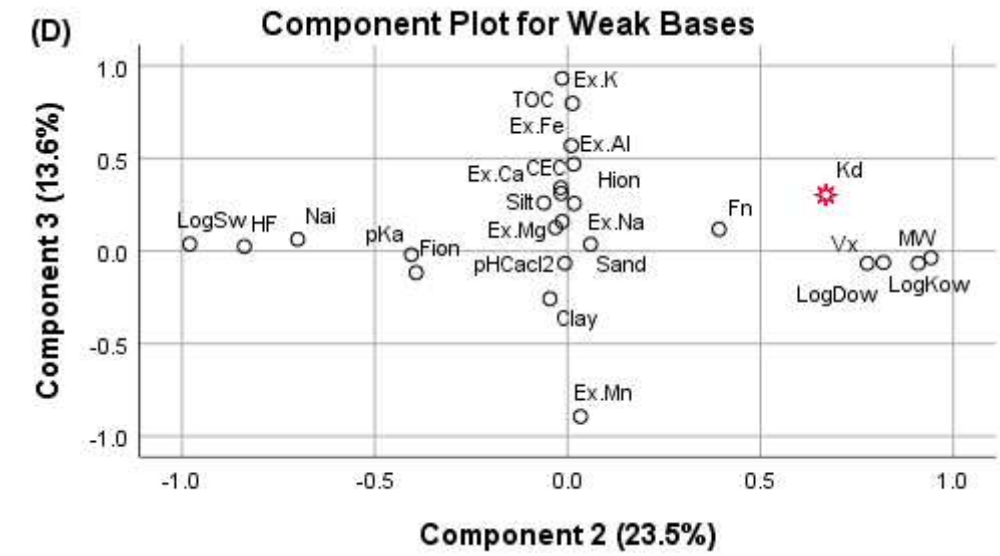
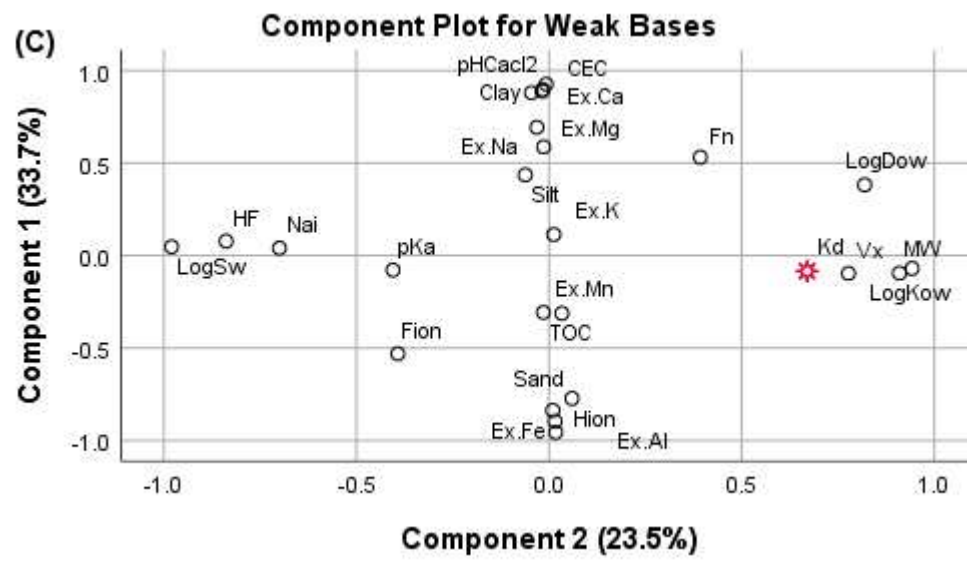
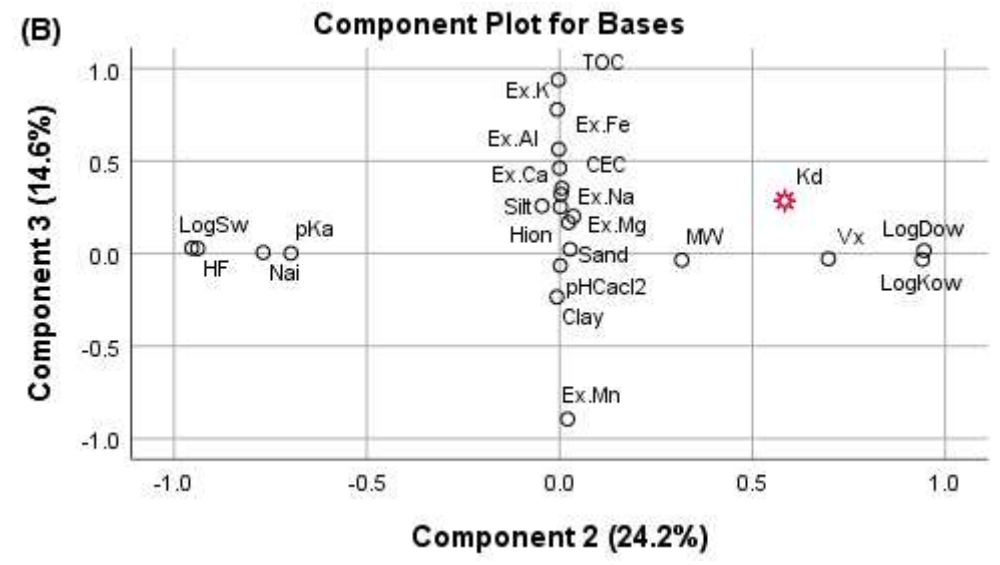
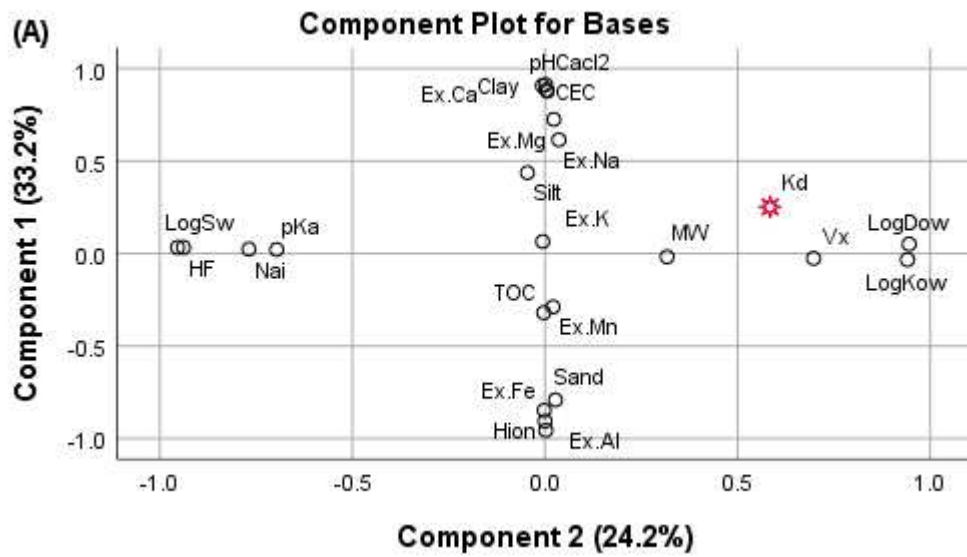
Nai: number of hydrogens bound by the charged nitrogen;

N: Number of observations;

SD: Standard deviation of the observation;

RMSD: Root mean square deviation;

NSE: Nash-Sutcliffe Efficiency.



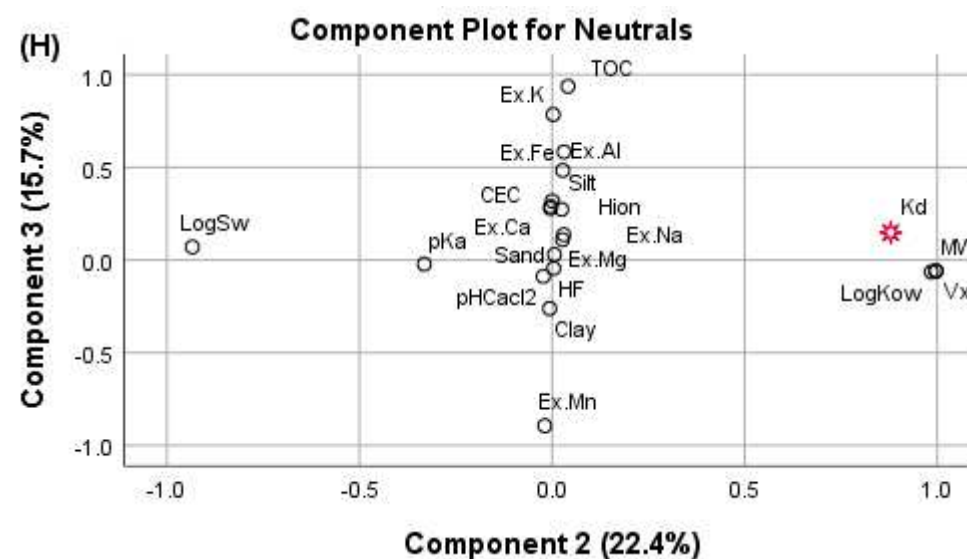
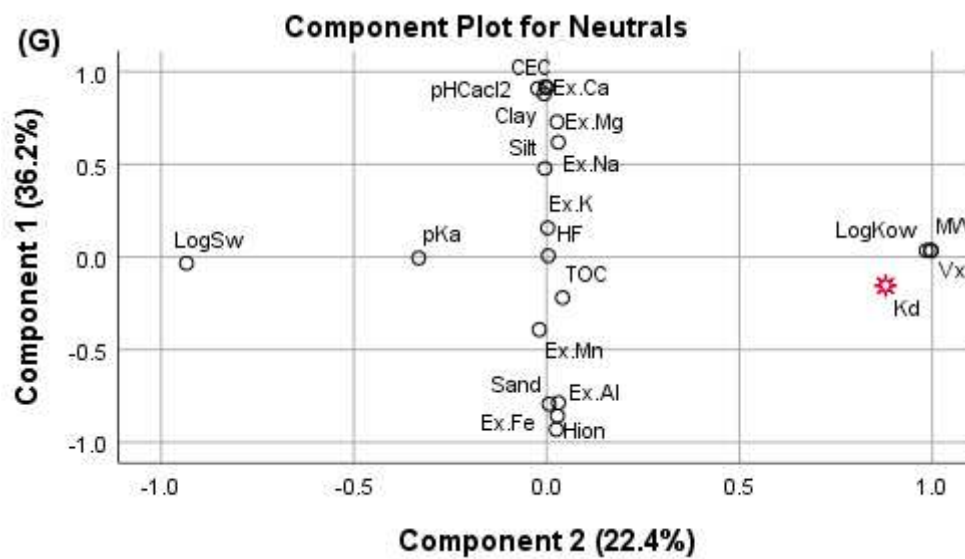
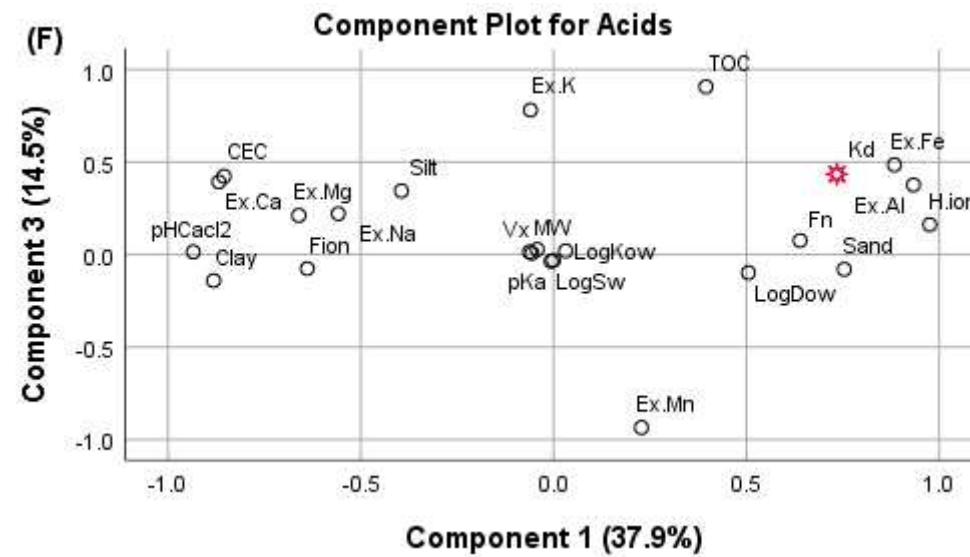
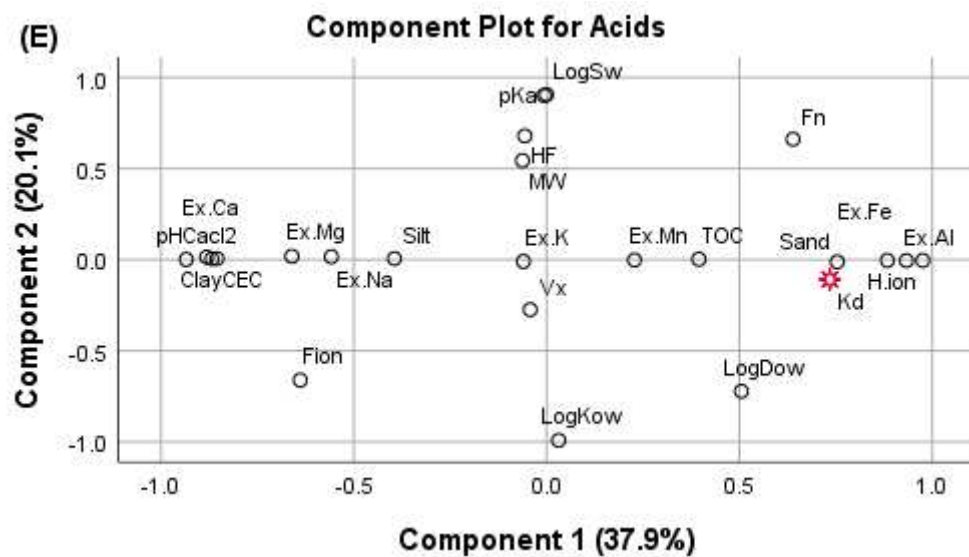


Figure 2. Principal component analysis loading plots for Kd, soil and pharmaceutical properties for basic compounds (A,B); weak basic compounds (C,D); acidic compounds (E,F); and for neutral compounds (G,H).

Table 3. Multiple linear and non-linear regression equations for predicting sorption coefficients of pharmaceuticals in soils

Class	Model	Equation	Training						Test				
			N	SE	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>pred</sub>	RMSD <sub>train</sub>	N	SD	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>test</sub>	RMSD <sub>test</sub>	NSE
Neutrals (Log Kow > 0.85)	1	$Log Kd = 0.779 * Log Kow + 0.211 * TOC - 1.729$	15	0.265	0.933	0.921	0.872	0.237	65	0.637	0.543	0.448	0.497
Bases (pKa > 8)	2	$Log Kd = 0.312 * Log Dow + 0.171 * TOC + 4.164 * ExNa + 0.336$	30	0.306	0.834	0.815	0.782	0.284	n.d.				
	3	$Log Kd = 0.315 * Log Dow + 0.188 * TOC + 0.585$	30	0.367	0.752	0.733	0.703	0.348	23	0.447	0.721	0.416	0.094
Weak bases (pKa < 8)	4	$Log Kd = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.021 * MW - 4.7} + \phi ion * 10^{-0.535 * HF + 0.345 * Nai + 0.145 * TOC + 1.559})$	25	0.264	0.917	0.895	0.856	0.230	20	1.082	0.816	0.483	0.790
	5	$Log Kd = Log (\phi n * 10^{0.021 * MW - 4.979} + \phi ion * 10^{-0.54 * HF + 0.331 * Nai + 3.208 * Ex Na + 0.139 * TOC + 1.389})$	25	0.228	0.942	0.922	0.892	0.193	n.d.				
Acids (6.8 > pKa > 3.2)	6	$Log Kd = Log (\phi n * 10^{-0.313 * HF + 0.191 * TOC + 0.417} + \phi ion * 10^{0.0083 * MW - 0.038 * CEC + 0.301 * TOC - 2.36})$	30	0.198	0.906	0.886	0.842	0.174	44	0.733	0.456	0.577	0.366

All the regression descriptors were statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Log Kow, pKa, MW, Log Dow are the partition coefficient of the neutral molecule, dissociation constant, molecular weight, pH-dependent octanol-water distribution coefficient, respectively, which were calculated by the software ACD/Labs (<http://ilab.cds.rsc.org/>). HF (hydrophilic factor) was obtained from alvaDesc (v1.0.8).

$\phi n$ ,  $\phi ion$  are the fraction of neutral and ionic species, respectively.

Nai: number of hydrogens bound by the charged nitrogen;

Ex Na<sup>+</sup> and CEC are exchangeable sodium and cation exchange capacity (cmol+/kg), respectively. Clay and TOC are clay content and total organic carbon content (%) in soil, respectively.



$N_{\text{train}}$ ,  $N_{\text{test}}$  are the number of the experimental sorption coefficients and published sorption coefficients, respectively.

SE,  $SD_{\text{test}}$  are the standard error of the fitted model and standard deviation of published sorption coefficients.

$R^2_{\text{adj}}$ ,  $R^2_{\text{pred}}$  is the adjusted  $R^2$ , predicted  $R^2$  of developed models.

$\text{RMSD}_{\text{train}}$ ,  $\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  are root mean square deviation of experimental data against predicted data and test data against predicted data, respectively.

NSE is the Nash–Sutcliffe Efficiency value.

n.d.: no data.

Table 4. Predictive performance of existing models against literature data.

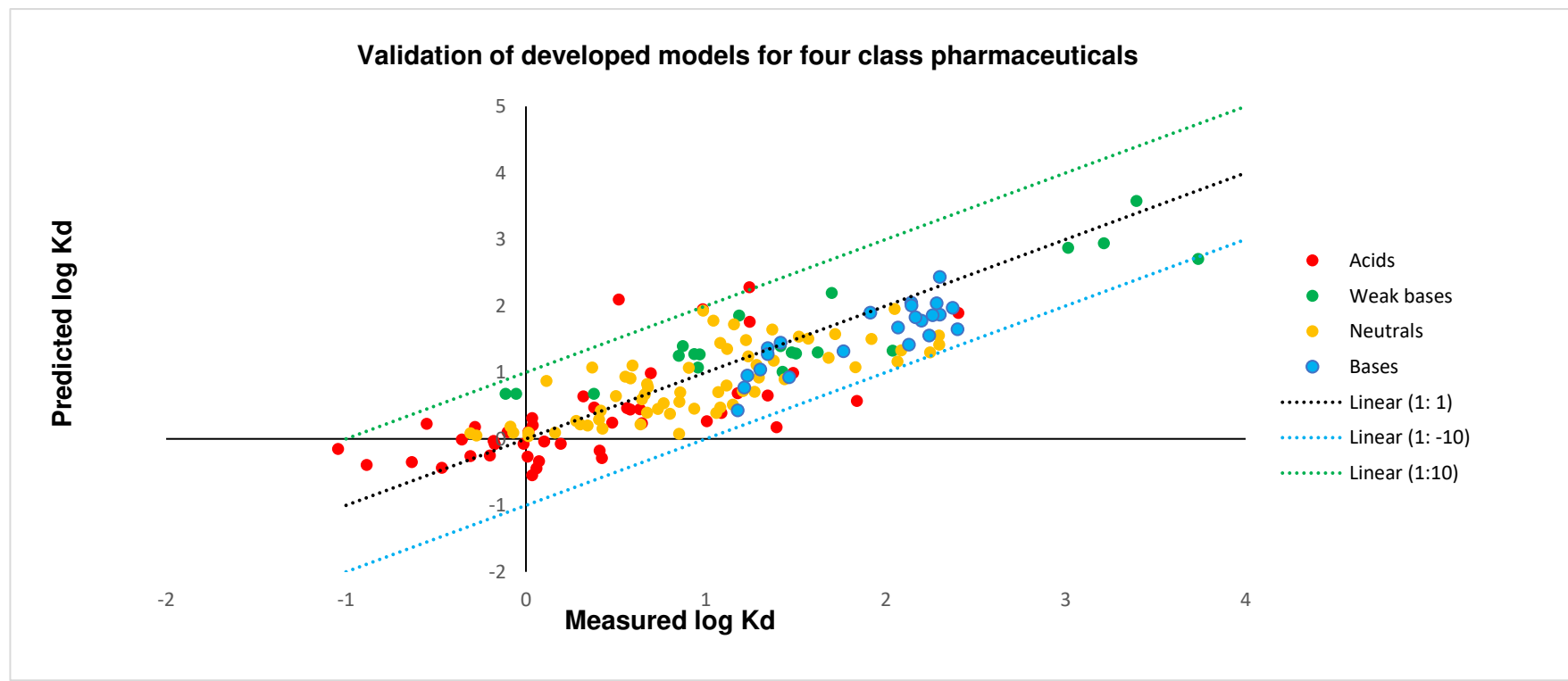
Evaluation data set	N	SD	Existing model	$R^2_{\text{test}}$	$\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$	NSE
Neutral	65	0.637	Franco and Trapp (2008)	0.521	0.601	0.096
Bases	23	0.447	Franco and Trapp (2008) base model A	0.789	0.417	0.088
			Franco and Trapp (2008) base model B	0.628	0.647	-1.194
Weak bases	20	1.082	Franco and Trapp (2008) base model A	0.512	0.903	0.267
			Franco and Trapp (2008) base model B	0.504	0.811	0.409
Acids	44	0.733	Franco and Trapp (2008)	0.547	0.573	0.375
			Franco et al. (2009)	0.513	0.558	0.406
			Kah and Brown (2007)	0.499	0.870	-0.441
			European Union (2003).	0.348	0.611	0.288

N is the number of the observations.

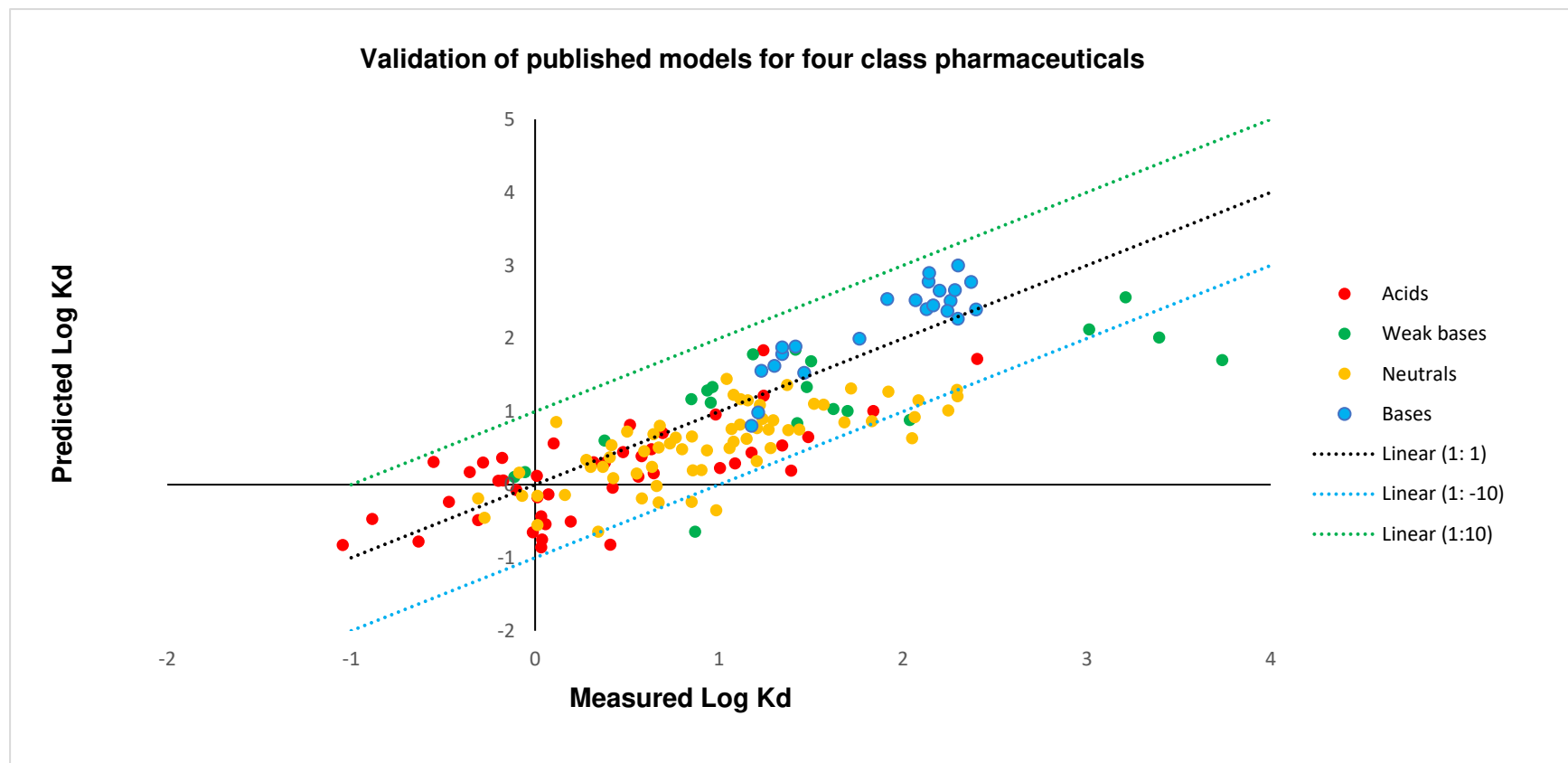
SD is the standard deviation of the observations.

$\text{RMSD}_{\text{test}}$  is the root mean square deviation.

NSE is the Nash–Sutcliffe Efficiency value.



(A)



**(B)**

Figure 3. Comparison of predictive performance between the developed models in the current study and existing models in the literature. The selected models for the comparison were the model showing the best performance in each class (The model performance results are presented in Table 3 and 4). A) Validation of models 1, 3, 4, 6 developed in present study for neutrals ( $\text{Log Kow} > 0.85$ ), bases ( $pK_a > 8$ ), weak bases ( $8 > pK_a > 4.8$ ), acids ( $6.8 > pK_a > 3.2$ ), respectively; B) Validation of the existing models for bases, weak bases and neutrals proposed by Franco and Trapp [27] and the model for acids proposed by Franco et al. [26]. The black dashed line represents perfect model fit (1:1 line) and the green and blue dashed lines represent a difference of 1 order of magnitude.