

RESEARCH PAPER

Enhancing AsH₃ Gas Adsorption Potentials of Graphitic Carbon Nitride by Codoping Cr/P, Mo/P, and W/P Atoms: A DFT Investigation

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ABSTRACT

The adsorption mode of arsine (AsH₃) molecules on the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, and also Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped graphitic carbon nitride (g-C₃N₄) compounds were investigated upon density functional theory (DFT) computations. The calculated adsorption energy of AsH₃ gas on the aforementioned systems were -0.508, -2.413, -2.642, -3.094, -2.432, -2.702, and -3.105 eV, respectively. These results displayed that the sensitivity of g-C₃N₄ system for the adsorption of AsH₃ gas can be significantly improved by introducing an appropriate transition metal (TM) dopant. Therefore, the TM/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems were found more suitable for adsorption and detection of AsH₃ gas than the pure g-C₃N₄ system. Furthermore, the band structure results illustrated that with codoping of Cr/P, Mo/P, and W/P atoms on the g-C₃N₄ and then adsorption of AsH₃ molecules, the electrical conductivity of systems remarkably reduces due to the created new impurity energy levels close to the Fermi level. The results of the relaxed structures revealed that with adsorption of AsH₃ on the g-C₃N₄ and the modified g-C₃N₄ with TM/P atoms, the initial structure of g-C₃N₄ system automatically changes from planar to wrinkles structure. In addition, the results of charge transfer analysis showed that the electron density accumulation region is located on the orbitals of AsH₃ molecules, resulting from the electron transfer from TM-modified g-C₃N₄ systems to AsH₃ gas. Overall, it can be inferred that the W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ with the highest adsorption energy of -3.105 eV is more suitable than those of Cr/P- and Mo/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems for detecting and removing of AsH₃ molecules from the environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Arsine (AsH₃) is a dangerous material with high concern about skin, lung, and bladder owing to its extreme volatility and toxicity [1-3]. AsH₃ is slightly soluble in water, colorless, and with mild garlic-like odor in the gas form [4, 5]. It can trigger serious health problems even if a low amount of arsine

gas was ingested into the human body causing long-term chronic diseases such as arsenicosis and acute fatal intoxication [6-8]. Removal of AsH₃ from a gas phase is an important matter, especially in industry. Hence, finding an efficient adsorbent for removing arsine gas from the atmosphere is essential. In this regard, several compounds

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have been recognized for AsH₃ gas detection and removal. Among various compounds, graphitic carbon nitride (g-C₃N₄) has the highest selectivity for AsH₃ molecules amongst the other adsorbents due to its excellent characteristics such as suitable band gap energy ($E_g=2.7$ eV), low cost, and excellent physicochemical stability [9-11]. These novel features make g-C₃N₄ a promising candidate for different fields, such as H₂ production from H₂O splitting, gas storage, reduction of CO₂, and toxic gas sensors [12-14]. Additionally, a vast number of attempts have been made in recent years by several strategies such as embedding, decorating, and doping different elements to improve the AsH₃ gas sensing and removing via g-C₃N₄-based compounds [15-18].

The effect of B and P atoms codoping on optical and electronic characteristics of g-C₃N₄ were demonstrated by Moshfegh and co-workers [19] using *ab-initio* simulations. They found that the incorporation of both P and B into the structure of g-C₃N₄ decreases the E_g for pristine g-C₃N₄ from 3.1 eV to 1.9 eV. Vovusha *et al.* [20] reported the adsorption behavior of CO₂ on the Cr-, Co-, Ni-, Mn-, Sc-, Fe- Zn-, and Cu-doped g-C₃N₄ systems using VASP code. The results illustrated that these modified g-C₃N₄ compounds could be used for carbon dioxide gas storage. In another work, the adsorption manner of SO₂ molecules over the Ir/P-, Rh/P-, and Co/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ compounds were studied by DFT calculations [21]. The results indicated that the Ir/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ with the highest adsorption energy (E_{ads}) of -3.52 eV can be successfully utilized for the detecting and removing of sulfur dioxide from the atmosphere. In another report, Basharnavaz and co-workers [22] reported the adsorption manner of NO over the pristine g-C₃N₄, Fe-, Os-, and Ru-embedded g-C₃N₄ using DFT computations. They found that among these transition metal (TM)-modified g-C₃N₄ systems, the Os-embedded with E_{ads} of -3.14 eV has a promising candidate for detecting and removing of NO gas. Furthermore, the adsorption of CO gas on the g-C₃N₄, Pd-, Pt-, and Ni-embedded g-C₃N₄ were reported using *ab-initio* computations [23]. The results revealed that the g-C₃N₄, Pd-, and Ni-embedded g-C₃N₄ are non-magnetic, while Pt-embedded g-C₃N₄ system induces a magnetic moment of 1.35 μ_B . In addition, they found that Pt-embedded g-C₃N₄ with the highest E_{ads} of -2.77 eV is an excellent candidate for detecting and removing

carbon monoxide gas from the environment. Furthermore, the adsorption behavior of NO₂ over the g-C₃N₄ and Rh-, Ir-, and Co-embedded g-C₃N₄ were investigated in order to explore the removing abilities of TM-modified g-C₃N₄ as NO₂ sensor [24]. The results displayed that the interaction between NO₂ gas and Ir-embedded system (with the highest $E_{ads}=-4.47$ eV) is higher than those of the other TM-modified g-C₃N₄ compounds. In another work, the adsorption behavior of several toxic gases such as H₂S, NO, and SO₂ on the pure and Mo-decorated g-C₃N₄ systems were reported using *ab-initio* computations [25]. The results demonstrated that the interaction energy between these toxic gas and Mo-decorated g-C₃N₄ is stronger than that of the pure system. Herein, a summary about the adsorption of arsine gas on the various adsorbents along with E_{ads} are summarized in Table 1 [26-32]. From this Table, it can be found that the adsorption energy of AsH₃ gas molecules on the Fe-doped single-walled carbon nanotube with the highest adsorption energy of -2.48 eV is higher than those of the other adsorbents [29].

In this research, we investigated the adsorption manner of AsH₃ gas on the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, and also Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems using DFT computations in order to introduce suitable systems for application in sensing and removing of AsH₃ gas. To the best of the authors' knowledge there is no report on these TM/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems as AsH₃ sensor, though numerous literature reports have focused on the adsorption of AsH₃ gas on several adsorbents.

COMPUTATIONAL METHODS

In this study, all of the relaxed computations were performed with the Quantum Espresso (QE) package based on DFT computations. The generalized gradient approximation (GGA) with the Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) exchange-correlation was utilized to explain the correlation and exchange effects. It should be noted that the used DFT exchange-correlation functional tends to underestimate adsorption energy, therefore the DFT computations coupled with a van der Waals (vdW)-inclusive corrections of Grimme (DFT-D) are carried out to improve the computations. A Monkhorst-Pack (MP) grid of 1×1×8 was carried out to perform Brillouin-zone (BZ) integrations. The kinetic energy cut-off equal to 90 Ry was chosen and a vacuum space of 18 Å was inserted

Table 1. Comparison between previous studies and this work about AsH₃ adsorption onto different adsorbents.

Adsorbent	E_{ads} (eV)	Software	Phase	Year	Reference
P-doped g-C ₃ N ₄ ¹	-0.50	Quantum Espresso	Solid state	2019	This work
Cr-embedded g-C ₃ N ₄	-2.41				
Cr/P-co doped g-C ₃ N ₄	-2.43				
Mo-embedded g-C ₃ N ₄	-2.64				
Mo/P-co doped g-C ₃ N ₄	-2.70				
W-embedded g-C ₃ N ₄	-3.09				
W/P-co doped g-C ₃ N ₄	-3.10				
Pristine graphene	-0.04	Dmol ³	Solid state	2019	[26]
Ti-doped graphene	-0.95				
Mn-doped graphene	-1.20				
Fe-doped graphene	-1.51				
Co-doped graphene	-1.27				
Ni-doped graphene	-1.72				
Cu-doped graphene	-1.38				
Ag-doped graphene	-1.77				
V ₂ O ₅ (001)	-0.069	VASP	Solid state	2019	[27]
S-vacancy MoS ₂ monolayer	-0.417	ATK	Solid state	2019	[28]
Mo-vacancy MoS ₂ monolayer	-0.563				
Pristine CNT ²	-0.011	Gaussian g09	Gas phase	2018	[29]
Fe-doped CNT	-2.48				
Pd-doped CNT	-0.779	Dmol ³	Solid state	2018	[30]
Pd-doped graphene	-1.00	Dmol ³	Solid state	2016	[31]
Pristine CNT	-0.014				
Sc-doped CNT	-0.490	DFT	Gas phase	2016	[32]
Ti-doped CNT	-0.627				
V-doped CNT	-0.898				
Cr-doped CNT	-0.835				

¹ Graphitic carbon nitride

² Carbon nanotube

along the z-direction of g-C₃N₄ surface to avoid the interaction between the periodic layers.

The E_{ads} of AsH₃ gas over the P-doped and TM/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems can be calculated by expression as given below [33]:

$$E_{ads} = E_{g-C_3N_4-AsH_3} - E_{AsH_3} - E_{g-C_3N_4} \quad (1)$$

where $E_{g-C_3N_4-AsH_3}$, E_{AsH_3} , and $E_{g-C_3N_4}$ are the total energy of AsH₃ adsorbed over the g-C₃N₄ systems, free AsH₃ gas, and g-C₃N₄, respectively. A more negative value of E_{ads} suggests that the adsorption behavior of AsH₃ gas molecule over the g-C₃N₄ surface is energetically more favorable.

Additionally, one of an important parameter for the adsorption process of a toxic gas sensing device is the recovery time (τ), thus the τ of AsH₃ gas from P-doped and Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems can be predicted from the following equation [34]:

$$\tau = \vartheta_0^{-1} \exp\left(\frac{-E_{ads}}{kT}\right) \quad (2)$$

where ϑ_0 , k , E_{ads} , and T indicates attempted frequency ($\vartheta_0=10^{12} \text{ s}^{-1}$), Boltzmann's constant ($k = 8.62 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV K}^{-1}$), adsorption energy and temperature, respectively. The computed recovery time for the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems are seen to be 3.90×10^{-4} , 6.42×10^{28} , 4.79×10^{32} , 2.11×10^{40} , 1.34×10^{29} , 4.96×10^{33} and 3.24×10^{40} s, respectively. According to this equation, the more negative value for the adsorption energy leads to the extended recovery time due to prolonged desorption of gas molecules from the surface of adsorbent. Thus, it is inferred that the strong interaction energy between AsH₃ gas and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ system with the highest $E_{ads}=-3.105$ eV revealed that the g-C₃N₄-based materials, gradually recover to its a stable initial state [35].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this article, a systematic theoretical investigation of AsH₃ gas adsorption by P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, and W-embedded, and also Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ compounds were

explored using DFT computations. The optimized structures for adsorption of AsH_3 molecules over the P-doped and TM/P-codoped $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ systems are shown in Fig. 1. The results of the literature review displayed that the adsorption energy of AsH_3 gas on different TM-modified adsorbents from As atom is stronger than that of H atom [29, 32]. Comparing optimized structures of P-doped and Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ systems in Fig. 1, it is clearly seen that there is a remarkable change in relaxed structures of these $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ before and after the adsorption of AsH_3 gas. On the other hand, with adsorption of AsH_3 gas

molecules on the $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ system and also codoping of $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ with TM and P elements, the primary flat structures of pure $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ automatically changed to buckle structure [36, 37].

To further explore the effect of AsH_3 gas adsorbing on the electronic characteristics of $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ systems, the band structures plots for P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, and also Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ systems are demonstrated in Fig. 2 and also the corresponding data are listed in Table 2. It is worth noting that the Fermi energy level was set to zero energy scale (red dotted line). The results of band structures revealed that the E_g for

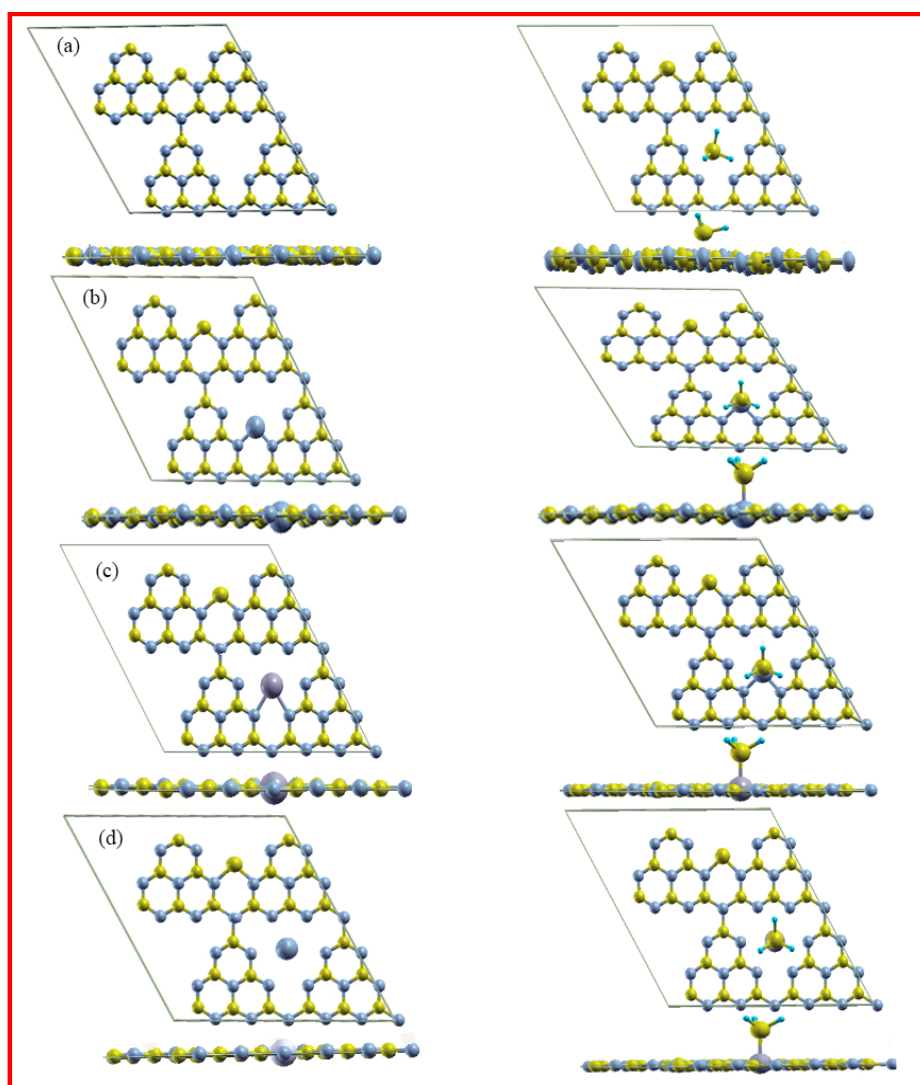


Fig. 1. The optimized structures for the P-doped and TM/P-codoped $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ systems before and after adsorption of AsH_3 gas: (a) P-doped, (b) Cr/P-, (c) Mo/P-, and (d) W/P-codoped $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$. The carbon and nitrogen elements are displayed by yellow and blue spheres, respectively.

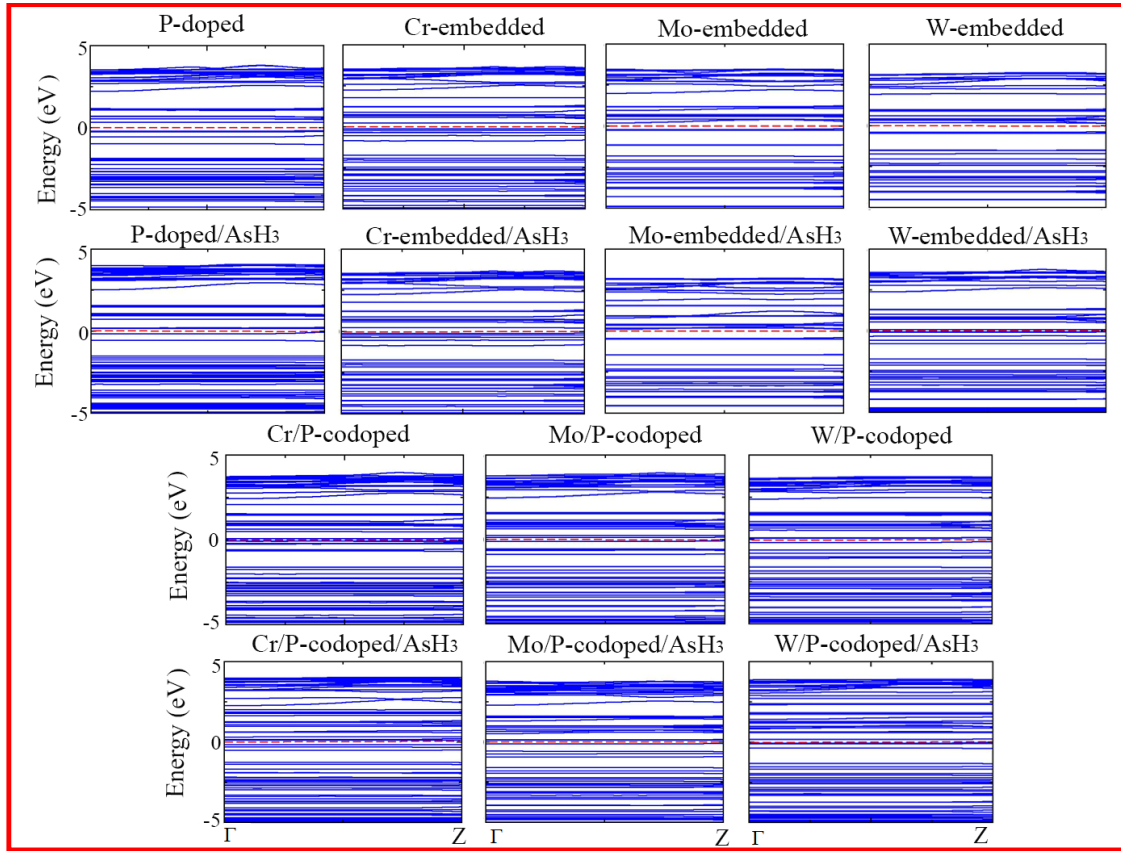


Fig. 2. Electronic band structures for the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, and also Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems before and after adsorption of AsH₃ gas. The band structures are demonstrated along the ΓZ direction. The E_f levels are at zero eV and are represented by dotted lines.

Table 2. The structural parameters, adsorption energy (E_{ads}), band gap energy (E_g), total induced magnetic moment per unit cell (M_{tot}), Fermi energy level (E_f), and Lowdin charges for adsorption of AsH₃ gas molecules on the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, and also Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems.

Property	P-doped	Cr-embedded	Mo-embedded	W-embedded	Cr/P-codoped	Mo/P-codoped	W/P-codoped	P-doped/AsH ₃	Cr-embedded/AsH ₃	Mo-embedded/AsH ₃	W-embedded/AsH ₃	Cr/P-codoped/AsH ₃	Mo/P-codoped/AsH ₃	W/P-codoped/AsH ₃
E_g (eV)	0.45	0.30	0.29	0.28	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.40	0.28	0.26	0.15	0.10	0.08	0.06
E_f (eV)	-0.36	-0.33	-0.23	-0.16	-0.16	-0.15	-0.14	-0.19	-0.22	-0.18	-0.15	-0.20	-0.14	-0.13
E_{ads} (eV)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.508	-2.413	-2.642	-3.094	-2.432	-2.702	-3.105
M_{tot} (μ_B)	0.00	0.25	0.31	0.44	0.20	0.29	0.39	0.00	0.21	0.14	0.00	0.18	0.10	0.00
Bond Length (Å)	d(As-H) embedded	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.525	1.530	1.537	1.538	1.535	1.539	1.541
	d-As	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.390	2.430	2.386	2.387	2.423	2.382
	Cr-N _{edge}	-	1.896	-	-	1.891	-	-	1.917	-	-	1.912	-	-
	Mo-N _{edge}	-	-	2.242	-	-	2.226	-	-	2.406	-	-	2.355	-
	W-N _{edge}	-	-	-	2.413	-	-	2.354	-	-	2.440	-	-	2.434
Lowdin	H (AsH ₃)	0.042	-	-	-	-	-	0.041	0.040	0.038	0.036	0.040	0.039	0.034
	As (AsH ₃)	-0.034	-	-	-	-	-	-0.096	-0.714	-0.881	-0.987	-0.797	-1.011	-1.091
	N _{edge} (g-C ₃ N ₄)	-0.339	-	-	-	-	-	-0.327	-0.269	-0.252	-0.240	-0.247	-0.237	-0.220

a pure g-C₃N₄ at the DFT calculation is smaller than the experimental value ($E_g=2.70$ eV), because the GGA functional underestimate the fundamental gap energy. It should be noted that the underestimation of E_g in the present investigation will not affect the ultimate conclusion because we aim to make the comparison for the adsorption performance and electrical characteristics of pure and TM/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems with and without AsH₃ molecules. As shown in Fig. 2, with adsorption of AsH₃ molecules on the g-C₃N₄ and also codoping of Cr, Mo, W, and P atoms, the E_g of system ($E_g=2.7$ eV) is considerably decreased. Furthermore, it was found that the E_F of g-C₃N₄ system upshifts into the conduction band edge after the adsorption of AsH₃ molecules and also codoping of P and TM atoms, indicating the improvement of the conductivity of these modified g-C₃N₄ systems. Additionally, these results indicated that the AsH₃-adsorbed and TM/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems have semi-metallic properties because valence band and conduction band energy levels have not crossed each other at near the Fermi energy. Thus, it is inferred that the electrical conductivity of g-C₃N₄ systems are considerably modulated by adsorption of AsH₃ and also codoping with Cr, Mo, W, and P atoms (see Table 2).

The total induced magnetic moment (M_{tot}) and geometrical parameters of AsH₃ gas adsorbed over the P-doped and Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems such as As-H bond length (d_{As-H}), TM-N_{edge} bond length, and distance between As atoms of arsine molecules and these TM elements are listed in Table 2. As seen, the magnetic moment for W/P-codoped ($M_{tot}=0.39 \mu_B$) is higher than those of the Cr/P- and Mo/P-modified g-C₃N₄ systems, because the weak interaction between N_{edge} and W atoms causes induced magnetic features in this system. Furthermore, it can be realized that with adsorption of AsH₃ molecules on the W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄, the M_{tot} reduces from 0.39 to 0.00 μ_B . This phenomenon attributed to strong overlapping between orbitals of W and As atoms. In addition, the bond lengths of As-H are 1.525 Å (P-doped), 1.535 Å (Cr/P-codoped), 1.539 Å (Mo/P-codoped), and 1.541 Å (W/P-codoped) having a considerable variation in comparison with the bond length of free AsH₃ gas (1.520 Å). From Table 2, it can be observed that the bond lengths of TM-N_{edge} significantly change after adsorption of AsH₃ molecules over the TM/P-modified g-C₃N₄ compounds. It should be noted that the elongation

of d_{As-H} in AsH₃-adsorbed W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ is higher than those of the other TM/P-codoped systems. This phenomenon is mostly ascribed to the large electron transfer from the W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ to AsH₃ gas. The maximum value of E_{ads} for AsH₃ adsorbed on the W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ with the smaller distance between W and AsH₃ molecules indicating strong chemisorption for AsH₃ on this system (see Table 2).

The Lowdin charges analysis before and after adsorption of AsH₃ molecules on the P-doped, TM-embedded, and TM/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ compounds are displayed in Table 2. The negative value of the electron transfer shows that the electron is transferred from TM-modified g-C₃N₄ to AsH₃ molecules. On the other hand, the AsH₃ acts as an electronic charge acceptor and these TM-modified g-C₃N₄ compounds behave as electronic charge donor [27, 28]. In addition, it was found that the charge transfer between orbitals of g-C₃N₄ and AsH₃ gas in W/P-codoped system is more than those of the other g-C₃N₄ systems. The results of Lowdin charge displayed that the interaction energy between W/P-codoped and AsH₃ molecules is higher than those of the other reported systems.

In order to further explain the electronic characteristics of the g-C₃N₄ systems, the partial density of states (PDOS) for the N_{edge} orbitals of the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ compounds before and after adsorption of AsH₃ molecules are demonstrated in Fig. 3. From this figure, we can see that with codoping of Cr, Mo, W, and P elements and also adsorption of AsH₃ molecules on the g-C₃N₄, electron density close to the Fermi energy state for N_{edge} elements in these g-C₃N₄ systems remarkably increase, which is caused owing to the strong overlapping between orbitals of the different elements in the g-C₃N₄ systems and AsH₃ gas. This shows that there is a considerable charge transfer between AsH₃ gas and modified g-C₃N₄. In addition, it can be inferred that the sharp peak close to E_F for the N_{edge} element in AsH₃-adsorbed W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ is more than those of the Cr/P-, Mo/P- codoped compounds, which reveals a strong interaction energy between W element and AsH₃ gas. Based on these results, it can be stated that the strong orbital hybridization between Cr, Mo, and especially W atoms and AsH₃ gas enhances the gas adsorption ability of the g-C₃N₄ compounds to this toxic gas.

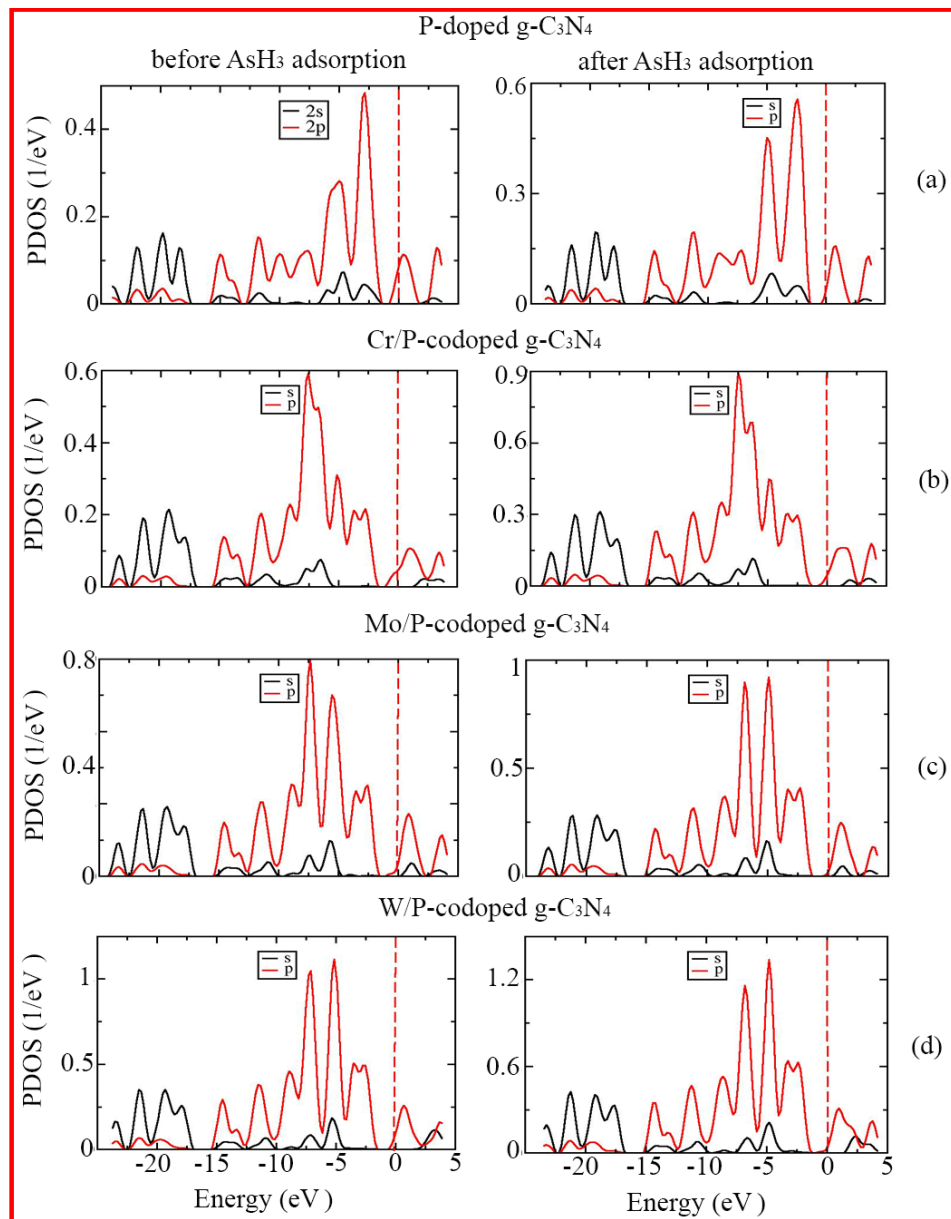


Fig. 3. PDOS for Nedge atoms in the P-doped and TM/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems: (a) P-doped, (b) Cr/P-, (c) Mo/P-, and (d) W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄. The E_f level was set at zero eV and are demonstrated by dotted lines

CONCLUSIONS

In this research, the adsorption manner of AsH₃ gas over the P-doped, Cr-, Mo-, W-embedded, Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ compounds were investigated by first-principles study. The results of adsorption energy displayed that the sensitivity of g-C₃N₄ system for the adsorption of AsH₃ gas can be considerably improved by introducing an appropriate transition metal (TM) dopant. Therefore, Cr/P-, Mo/P-, and

W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ are more appropriate for detection and adsorption of AsH₃ gas than that of the pristine g-C₃N₄. The results of electronic band structures revealed that with adsorption of AsH₃ molecules over the g-C₃N₄ systems and also codoping of TM and P atoms, the electrical conductivity of g-C₃N₄ remarkably reduces due to the induced new impurity energy levels close to Fermi energy level. Additionally, the results of relaxed structures indicated that with

adsorption of AsH₃ over the g-C₃N₄ systems and also modifying with these TM atoms, the initial structure of g-C₃N₄ system automatically changes from planar to wrinkles structure. Furthermore, the results of electron transfer indicated that the electron density accumulation region is located on the orbitals of AsH₃ gas molecules, resulting from the electron transfer from TM/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems to AsH₃ gas. Based on these results, it can be stated that the W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ with the highest adsorption energy of -3.105 eV is more suitable than those of the Cr/P- and Mo/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ systems for detecting and removing of AsH₃ from the atmosphere. On the other hand, the W/P-codoped g-C₃N₄ can be a good candidate for toxic gas sensors, providing an avenue to facilitate the design of highly active g-C₃N₄-based gas sensors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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