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Computational study of Ba-doped TiO₃ perovskites for solar energy applications

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ABSTRACT

The remarkable electrical and optical properties of barium doped TiO₃ perovskite make it an appealing material for optoelectronic applications. This study comprehensively investigates the structural, electrical, and optical characteristics of BaTiO₃ using density functional theory. The electrical characteristics, such as the energy band structure and density of states, were carefully examined. A band gap of 1.92 eV was discovered by the TB-mBJ functional, which is in good agreement with earlier experimental and theoretical findings. The partial density of states analysis reveals that the Ba-p, Ti-d, and O-p states have a significant impact on the material's electronic structure. By evaluating critical variables, the optical properties of BaTiO₃ were investigated. The TB-mBJ approximation indicates that the optical spectrum reveals BaTiO₃ has remarkable properties in the 4–5 eV energy range, making it suitable for solar energy harvesting. Its potential for integration into perovskite solar cells and other optoelectronic devices requiring high optical sensitivity is further corroborated by its low reflectance in this spectrum.

KEYWORDS

perovskite material • TB-mBJ • WIEN2K • GGA • density functional theory

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Introduction

The chemical formula ABX₃, where A and B denote cations and X signifies an anion, characterizes perovskite materials. The materials in question demonstrate remarkable suitability for solar energy applications, attributed to their outstanding optoelectronic characteristics. These include a long carrier diffusion length, low trap state density, high

absorption coefficient, excellent intrinsic carrier mobility, and an appropriate band gap [1–3]. This development may result in solar cells that are more effective, greatly increasing energy conversion rates. In the near future, researchers hope that these developments will open the door to sustainable energy solutions. Increase their potential for photovoltaic applications by producing photovoltages higher than their band gap. ABO₃ perovskites' optical and electronic characteristics can be tuned through cationic substitution at either the A or B site, providing a great deal of design flexibility for functional materials [4–7]. Among these, barium titanate (BaTiO₃), which crystallizes in the ABO₃ perovskite structure and experiences a tetragonal phase transition at about 120 °C, is a classic ferroelectric material [8–10]. BaTiO₃ is a topic of theoretical and experimental interest due to its exceptional ferroelectricity, piezoelectricity, pyroelectricity, high dielectric constant, wide bandgap, and low electrical loss [11,12]. Moreover, it has exceptional chemical and mechanical stability over an extensive temperature range. This stability makes it an ideal candidate for various industrial applications, including aerospace and automotive sectors, where materials are often exposed to harsh conditions. Additionally, its resistance to corrosion further enhances its suitability for long-term use in demanding environments. Owing to these properties, BaTiO₃ finds applications in sensors, actuators, waveguides, high-performance computing, laser frequency doubling, nanoelectronics, and aerospace technologies [13]. The phase transitions of BaTiO₃ exhibit significant temperature dependence. At 120 °C, the material changes from a cubic phase (*Pm3m*) to a tetragonal phase (*P4mm*). At 5 °C finally, at around -90 °C, it changes to a rhombohedral phase (*R3m*) [14,15]. These phase transitions are crucial for understanding the material's properties and potential applications, particularly in the fields of electronics and materials science. The ability to manipulate the phases by varying temperature allows for tailored performance in different environments. Structural modifications make BaTiO₃ highly suitable for various applications, for semiconductor applications in solar energy [16–20]. Enabling adjustments to its lattice structure [20]. Empirical studies have demonstrated that BaTiO₃ possesses a substantial bandgap of approximately 3.00 eV, which deviates from theoretical predictions [21,22]. To mitigate energy losses in photovoltaic applications, this structure ensures robust charge carrier mobility and an extended diffusion length. The lattice constants of cubic and tetragonal BaTiO₃ are estimated to be roughly 3.958 and 3.954 Å, respectively, based on theoretical simulations using the PBE-GGA. These values are crucial to understanding the material's phase transitions and structural features. This provides a platform for future research on the ferroelectric and piezoelectric properties of BaTiO₃ under various circumstances. The values are marginally lower than the experimental results, which span from 3.996 to 4.006 Å [11].

This study systematically investigates the electrical and optical properties of BaTiO₃ for prospective application in perovskite solar cells, employing density functional theory (DFT). The study seeks to evaluate its technological viability by examining critical aspects such as lattice constants (Å), electronic bandgaps (eV), and state density prior to structural optimisation. The The TB-mBJ potential is utilized to improve the precision of band structure calculations.

Materials and Methods

A first-principles analysis of BaTiO₃ was carried out [23,24]. The electronic structure of BaTiO₃ was better understood thanks to these computations, which also helped to clarify its phase transitions. The accuracy and dependability of the results were also confirmed by comparing them to experimental data. To improve computational accuracy, we used the TB-mBJ method to incorporate the exchange-correlation effects. mBJ potential, which is known for its exceptional accuracy and produces an approximate deviation of only 2 % in band structure estimations of perovskites and semiconductors [25,26]. High-resolution Brillouin zone sampling was used for structural and electronic characterization using a carefully optimized $7 \times 7 \times 7$ k-point mesh, which was then further refined to a denser $10 \times 10 \times 10$ k-grid for increased precision. The VESTA software was used for structural visualization and crystallographic analysis, allowing for a thorough depiction of the polyhedral framework inherent in perovskite lattice configurations [27–30].

Results and Discussion

Structure properties

The P4mm space group is used to describe the tetragonal perovskite structure in which the BaTiO₃ compound crystallizes. In this context, six oxygen anions (O²⁻) coordinate the barium cation (Ba²⁺) octahedrally, while the titanium cation (Ti⁴⁺) coordinates twelve times. The basic skeletal network is formed by corner-sharing between the TiO₆ octahedra, as shown in Fig. 1. Furthermore, the titanium cation occupies a central position inside the octahedral units.

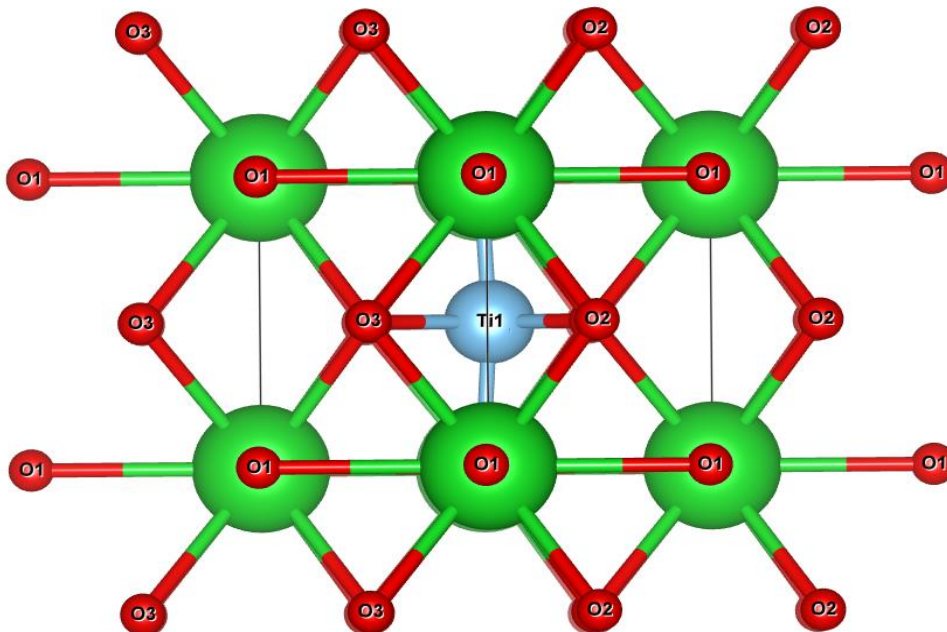


Fig. 1. Crystal structural of BaTiO₃ compound using VESTA simulation software

First-principles computing was used to improve the crystal structure and figure out the ground-state energy lattice parameters. The results showed that there was a strong

link between the lattice parameters and the physical properties of the material that were measured. The analysis also showed possible ways to improve the material's performance in a number of uses. The computed equilibrium lattice parameters, equilibrium volume and energy, bulk modulus, and first derivative for tetragonal BaTiO₃ are displayed in Table 1 and Fig. 2. These values are compared with existing experimental and theoretical datasets in a systematic way. The theoretical predictions match up very well with the reported experimental and computational results.

Table 1. Structural and electronic properties of BaTiO₃ compound using TB-mBJ approximation

Properties	BaTiO ₃	Experimental
Lattice constant, Å	$a_0=b_0=4.068$	3.9988 [13]
	$c_0= 4.183$	4.0222 [13]
Space group	<i>P4mm</i> (99)	
Wyckoff position	Ba (0,0,0) Ti (0.5, 0.5, 0.5) O (0.5, 0.0, 0.48), (0.0, 0.5, 0.48) and (0.5, 0.5, 0.96)	
Minimum volume V_0 , a.u. ³	445.7012	
Minimum energy E_0 , Ry	-18438.63743	
Bulk modulus B_0 , GPa	159.3559	
First derivative of bulk modulus B_0' , GPa	4.0942	
Band gap E_g , eV	1.92	1.56 [31,32]

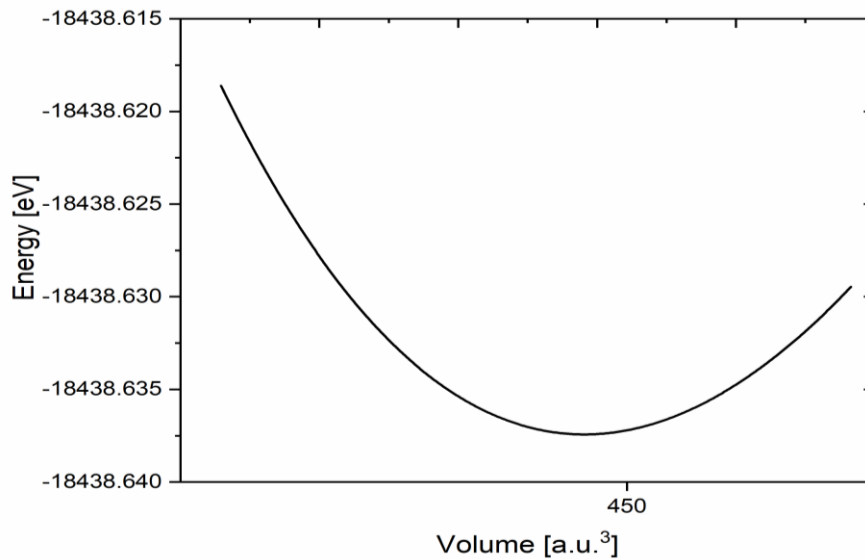


Fig. 2. Equilibrium volume V_0 , equilibrium energy curve of BaTiO₃ using Birch–Murnaghan equation of state (EOS) equation

Electronic properties

The electronic BS and DOS of BaTiO₃ have been investigated with help of TB-mBJ exchange potential [33–37]. The wave vector passes through high-symmetry points in the Brillouin zone along a particular k-point path. An estimate of the BaTiO₃ band structure is presented in Fig. 3. The Fermi energy located at origin. With the VBM point at the top and the CBM point at the bottom, the TB-mBJ approximation demonstrates that BaTiO₃ has an indirect

band gap. This method gives a band gap of 1.92 eV. This value matches what has been seen in experiments and BaTiO₃'s electronic properties, which are very important for using it in piezoelectric devices and ferroelectric materials. However, DFT calculations tend to underestimate the band gap because of the inherent problems with DFT-based methods, such as the fact that the energy derivative changes when the number of electrons changes. This underestimation happens because self-energy corrections and excited-state interactions are not handled well enough. The method used is correct. Figure 4 shows some important information that the study gives us.

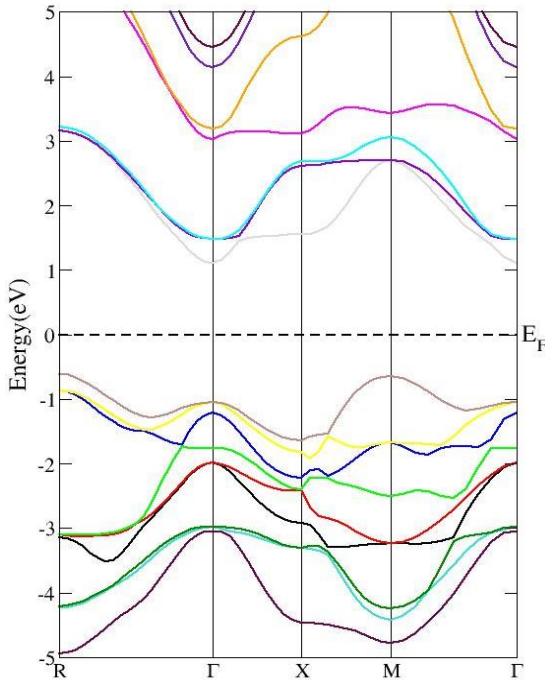


Fig. 3. Band structure of BaTiO₃

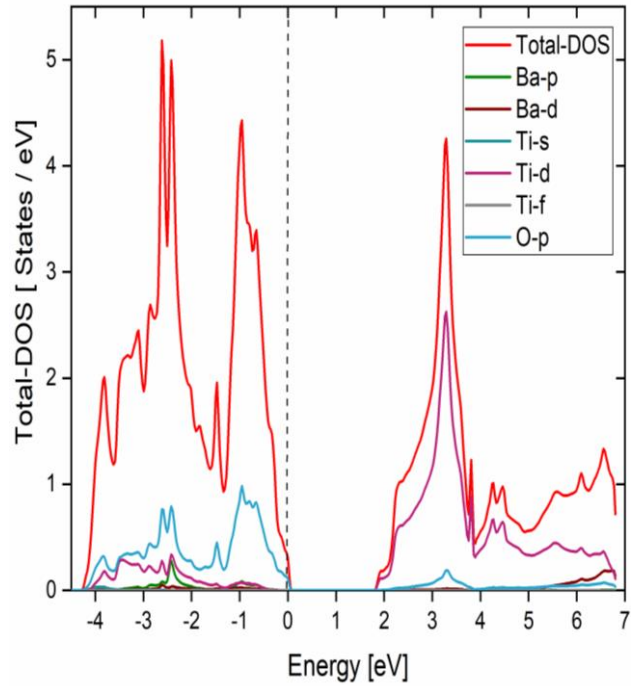


Fig. 4. Density of state of BaTiO₃

The impact of individual atomic orbitals on the DOS is displayed by the projected density of states (PDOS). According to the analysis, the titanium and oxygen orbitals make substantial contributions, especially in the valence band region. This realization aids in comprehending BaTiO₃ electrical characteristics and possible uses in piezoelectric devices. The unoccupied electronic states in this work have been analyzed using the PDOS, which takes into account contributions from the Ba-p, Ba-d, Ti-d, Ti-f, and O-p orbitals. 1.92 eV is found to be the calculated valence bandwidth for TB-mBJ in the tetragonal phase.

Optical properties

Figures 5(a–d) show the calculated optical properties of BaTiO₃. These elements include the optical conductivity $\sigma(\omega)$ shown in Fig. 5(b), the dielectric function $\epsilon(\omega)$ shown in Fig. 5(a), the refractive index $n(\omega)$ shown in Fig. 5(c), and the reflectivity $R(\omega)$ shown in Fig. 5(d). Figure 5(a) shows the real and imaginary components of the dielectric functions with respect to the photon energy. The findings show that the optical responses of BaTiO₃ exhibit distinct behaviors across a range of energies. It is important to note

that the dielectric function's real part exhibits significant change that impacts both reflectivity and refractive index, whereas the peaks in the imaginary part are closely associated with absorption. For accurate optical property calculations to guarantee convergence, a dense and uniformly distributed k-point mesh is essential [38,39]. The dielectric function has two components: $\epsilon_1(\omega)$, which represents the electronic polarization and structural features of the material's bands, and $\epsilon_2(\omega)$, which accounts for all possible electronic transitions from the occupied state to the vacant state. These elements are essential for comprehending the interactions between materials and electromagnetic fields, especially in fields like photonics and optoelectronics.

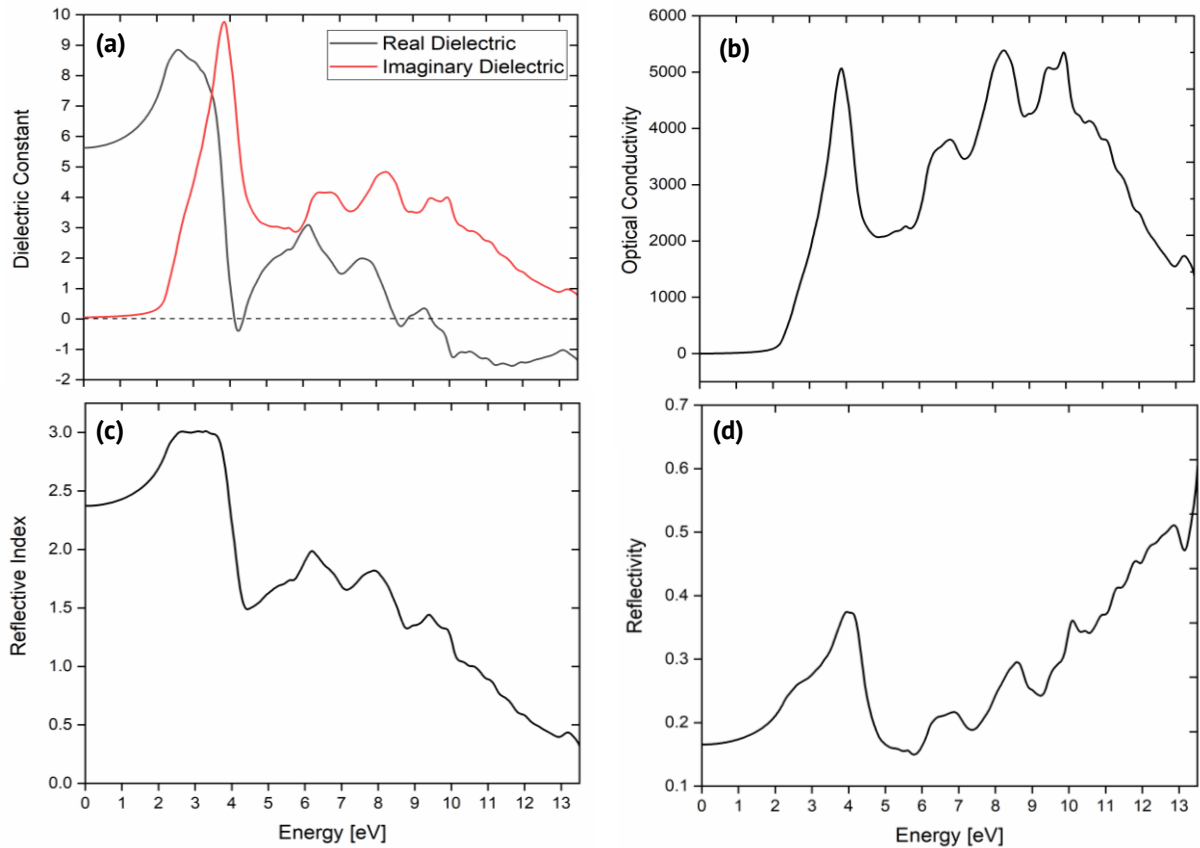


Fig. 5. Optical properties of (a) dielectric function $\epsilon(\omega)$, (b) optical conductivity $\sigma(\omega)$, (c) refractive index $n(\omega)$, (d) reflectivity $R(\omega)$ for BaTiO₃

By examining the dielectric function, researchers can discover more about the optical characteristics and dynamics of various materials. This enables them to create increasingly sophisticated gadgets. $\epsilon_1(0)$, in the TB-mBJ approximation is found to be 5.70. Moreover, $\epsilon_1(\omega)$ shows negative values in the energy intervals of 4.0 and 9.50 to 13.5 eV, as shown in Fig. 5(a), suggesting the appearance of metallic properties in the UV spectrum. The relationship between energy dissipation from electronic transitions from the valence to the conduction band and the absorption spectrum is depicted in Fig. 5(a). Determine which orbitals are responsible for these changes by comparing the peaks in the $\epsilon_2(\omega)$ curve with those in the DOS diagram in Fig. 4. It is possible to identify the electronic states that substantially influence the material's optical characteristics by examining these correlations. This knowledge is essential for customizing materials for

particular optoelectronic and photonic applications. The energy level at which BaTiO₃ exhibits optimal optical absorption and reduced polarization response is 3.90 eV, where $\epsilon_2(\omega)$ reaches its maximum value based on the TB-mBJ approximation. Strong electronic transitions within the material are indicated by the distinct peaks in the optical conductivity $\sigma(\omega)$ of BaTiO₃. At photon energy of 8.5 eV, the optical conductivity reaches a maximum value of roughly 5500 $\Omega^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$, as illustrated in Fig. 5(b). Significant charge carrier excitation and energy dissipation mechanisms within this energy regime are suggested by the presence of such peaks. The optical transparency of BaTiO₃ is determined by its refractive index $n(\omega)$, which is directly related to its actual dielectric function, $\epsilon_1(\omega)$, as shown in Fig. 5(c). The refractive index peaks at 2.4 at photon energies of 0 eV. BaTiO₃'s refractive index spectrum $n(\omega)$ exhibits two notable features.

The first is a noticeable peak that shows a strong optical response at about 3.0 eV. According to the Tb-mBJ approximation, the second is a region where the refractive index is less than unity and covers the photon energy range of 10.5 to 13.5 eV. Because of interactions with the electronic structure of the material, incident photons lose velocity when the refractive index rises above unity. This effect is further enhanced by a higher refractive index, which causes more. The first characteristic is a noticeable increase in the refractive index as the photon energy approaches the band gap. This indicates a stronger interaction between the material and light. The second characteristic is a distinct decrease in $n(\omega)$ with increasing energy level. This implies that as the material approaches the ultraviolet spectrum, its optical characteristics alter.

Generally speaking, any process that raises a material's electron density also raises its refractive index. The frequency-dependent optical reflectivity $R(\omega)$ of BaTiO₃, which is impacted by its complex dielectric functions, is displayed in Fig. 5(d). The amount of light that a substance reflects is known as its reflectivity. This property is essential for comprehending how the material behaves in a variety of applications, including electro-optic devices and capacitors. The changes in $R(\omega)$ disclose how various light frequencies interact with BaTiO₃'s dielectric characteristics, offering information about its possible applications in cutting-edge photonic technologies. It provides a comprehensive view of its light-responsiveness. Interestingly, under the Tb-mBJ approximation, BaTiO₃ shows noticeably increased reflectance.







The optical characteristics of BaTiO₃ demonstrate significant interaction with electromagnetic radiation, particularly within the UV-visible spectrum. The $\epsilon_2(\omega)$ peak at 3.90 eV signifies pronounced interband transitions, corresponding to density of states contributions from O-2p to Ti-3d states. The refractive index $n(\omega)$ peaks at 2.4, showing strong light-matter interaction near the band edge, and decreases in the UV region. An abrupt increase in $\sigma(\omega)$ at around 8.5 eV indicates elevated optical conductivity resulting from excited carriers. The reflectivity $R(\omega)$ increases at elevated energies, indicating metallic characteristics. These findings illustrate the promise of BaTiO₃ in optoelectronic and photonic applications, particularly when using the TB-mBJ functional.

Conclusions

The structural, electronic, and optical characteristics of tetragonal BaTiO₃ are thoroughly examined in this first-principles investigation. The perovskite framework's stability is

confirmed by the optimized structural parameters, which also emphasize how important TiO_6 octahedral connectivity is to be preserving the crystal's integrity. These results support the potential of BaTiO_3 for use in ferroelectric and electronic devices. The indirect band gap of BaTiO_3 is 1.92 eV, according to electronic structure calculations performed with the TB-mBJ functional. Its use in sophisticated electronic and ferroelectric technologies is supported by the band structure and density of states (DOS) analyses, which provide important insights into its semiconducting behavior. To comprehend how the material interacted with electromagnetic radiation, the optical characteristics – such as the dielectric function, absorption coefficient, reflectivity, and refractive index – were assessed. In the ultraviolet region (4.0 and 9.5 – 13.5 eV), the real part of the dielectric function, $\epsilon_1(\omega)$, exhibits negative values, signifying a shift toward metallic-like behavior. Strong optical absorption and electronic transitions are indicated by the imaginary part, $\epsilon_2(\omega)$, peaking at 3.90 eV. A noticeable peak in the optical conductivity spectrum at 8.5 eV indicates strong interband transitions. With a notable peak at 3.0 eV, the refractive index exhibits a strong optical response, reaching a maximum value of 2.4 at 0 eV. It's interesting to note that the refractive index exhibits unusual dispersion behavior in the 10.5–13.5 eV range, falling below unity. The energy range where $\epsilon_1(\omega)$ turns negative is represented by a clear peak in the reflectivity spectrum at 4.0 eV and a gradual increase beyond 5.0 eV. These findings confirm BaTiO_3 suitability for optoelectronic and photonic applications by highlighting the strong coupling between electronic transitions and optical responses.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Anuj Kumar  : writing – review & editing; **Ragini Srivastava**: supervision; **Amit Kumar**  : data curation; **Rajiv Kumar**: data curation; **Sarvendra Kumar**: conceptualization; **Ramesh Chand**: supervision; **Deepti Saxena**: supervision; **Aman Kumar**  : writing – original draft.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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