



Research article

Hydrostatic pressure-induced transformations and multifunctional properties of Francium-based halide perovskite FrCaCl_3 : Insights from first-principles calculations

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ABSTRACT

Under varying hydrostatic pressures ranging from 0 to 150 GPa, first-principles calculations were conducted to investigate the structural, electronic, bonding, optical, elastic, and mechanical characteristics of the Lead (Pb)-free halide perovskite FrCaCl_3 using both the GGA and hybrid HSE06 parameterized density functional theory (DFT). Since the FrCaCl_3 cubic perovskite has not yet been synthesized experimentally, its structural and thermodynamic stabilities are confirmed by the Goldschmidt tolerance factor, the octahedral factor, and the formation energy. The induction of pressure has caused a simultaneous decrease in both the lattice parameters and the electronic band gap. Applying the hybrid HSE06 potential refines the accuracy of the band gap, with values decreasing from 5.705 to 2.618 eV from 0 to 150 GPa pressure, suggesting improved optoelectronic attributes. Employing pressure facilitates the formation of stronger chemical bonds characterized by reduced bond lengths. The investigation of optical functions demonstrates that with increased pressure ranging to 150 GPa, the optical conductivity along with the absorption coefficient is oriented towards the low-energy region. The FrCaCl_3 perovskite has the prospect to be used in X-ray imaging and other fields of nuclear medicine and diagnostics as it contains the radioactive element Francium (Fr). Additionally, it is found via the study of mechanical characteristics that FrCaCl_3 is mechanically stable under various applied pressure, and adding pressure makes it more ductile as well as more anisotropic.

1. Introduction

Global industrialization has resulted in unprecedented increases in energy consumption, which mainly originates from non-renewable sources. The utilization of traditional fossil fuels along with hydrocarbons is linked to major environmental difficulties due to CO_2 emissions. Solar energy, on the other hand, is the most ubiquitous and environmentally beneficial energy source. Researchers and scientists are striving to create affordable, efficient, and eco-friendly photovoltaic cells to make the best utilization of natural resources. In this respect, owing to its versatile optical properties, perovskite materials have recently substantiated significant

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potential in optoelectronic applications [1–6]. The cubic perovskites' general formula is ABX_3 , where X is considered the anion (Oxygen or Halogens), on the other hand, A and B are the cations [7,8]. Despite their significant potential for photoluminescence applications, compounds containing Lead (Pb) are poisonous and hazardous [9,10]. Non-conventional Lead-free halide perovskites have the potential to capture the interest of scientific communities [11–16]. Therefore, a wide range of physical characteristics, such as structural, electronic, photonic, optical, and mechanical properties, is being thoroughly explored to better understand the challenges surrounding material utilization.

The physical attribute of material is typically examined using both computational and experimental methods to predict its applications [17–28]. A material's physical qualities are perhaps influenced by its structure. Perovskite is considered one of the significant materials among several kinds of crystalline structures [29–31] since it is typically composed of conductors, insulators, semiconductors, and superconductors [32–36]. Physical characteristics of the perovskite-type family include photocatalysis, ferroelectricity, pyroelectricity, piezoelectricity, magnetism, superconductivity, and ionic conductance [37–42]. Engaging in experimental investigations demands substantial time and financial resources, necessitating access to well-equipped laboratory facilities. In contrast, computational studies employing computer simulation methods offer a more cost-effective and relatively simpler approach. Computational research not only serves as a practical substitute but also lays a foundation for subsequent experimental investigations. Among the array of simulation methods available, Density Functional Theory (DFT) stands out as an exceptional tool for probing a diverse range of physical properties in materials. DFT-based first-principles computations have been carried out to examine several physical characteristics of cubic perovskite compounds [43–51].

The physical properties of a material can be altered through the application of hydrostatic pressure, atomic substitution [52,53], metal doping [53–58], chemical [47], and the application of an electric field [59,60] operations. The use of external hydrostatic pressure is one of the existing techniques that are quick and effective for changing the energy gap of perovskites [61–67], which alters the materials' optical and electronic properties. Perovskite materials could be acceptable for use in solar and optoelectronic applications by altering their properties [44,51,64]. Additionally, it has been found that harnessing hydrostatic pressure to change the energy gap from the indirect band to the direct band is advantageous in several cubic perovskites [45,52,66,68–71]. The materials in the indirect band gap might produce phonons that would have the effect of heating the optoelectronic devices and reducing their efficiency [49,72–74]. The energy band gap of the non-toxic halide cubic perovskite $CsBX_3$ (B=Sn, Ge; X = Cl, Br) was brought down to 0 eV by applying hydrostatic pressure, changing the materials' nature from semiconductor to conductor [50]. The non-toxic cubic halide perovskites $ACaX_3$ (A = Cs, Rb, K, Na; X = I, Br, Cl, F) have undergone first-principles calculation and shown reliable results [74–78]. These Ca-based cubic non-toxic halide perovskites have a large band gap and could be used in the production of transparent optical coatings and lens materials [79,80]. Some of the Ca-based cubic non-toxic perovskites, including $KCaX_3$ (X = F, Cl) [30,31], and $ACaF_3$ (A = Rb, Cs), have previously been subjected to hydrostatic pressure. By increasing hydrostatic pressure of up to 14 GPa for $KCaF_3$ and $RbCaF_3$, respectively, the energy band gap of each material was converted from an indirect band to a direct band [75,81,82]. Additionally, under elevated hydrostatic pressure, $ACaF_3$ (A = K, Rb, Cs) showed better mechanical qualities [75,82,83]. The theoretical examination of $CsCaCl_3$, $RbCaCl_3$, and $KCaCl_3$ among the aforementioned Ca and Cl-based non-toxic halide perovskites have been carried out at room temperature, and it discloses an indirect energy band gap [27,75,77]. On the other hand, Fr-based compounds, such as $FrSnCl_3$, and $FrGeCl_3$ showed direct nature in the band gap [84].

Strontium (Sr^{2+}) and Calcium (Ca^{2+})-based inorganic perovskites have emerged as promising alternatives to Lead (Pb^{2+}) perovskites due to their enhanced optical conductivity and absorption properties. Francium (Fr)-based halide perovskites also exhibit high conductivity and absorptivity in the lower energy range, presenting theoretical advantages over toxic Pb-based counterparts. Francium, being the heaviest and most electropositive alkali metal, introduces unique electronic and structural characteristics that could lead to novel optoelectronic behaviors and offer new insights into perovskite compounds. Investigating Fr-based perovskites expands the frontier of material science, enhancing our understanding of heavy element incorporation in perovskite structures. Consequently, this study focuses on the perovskite compound $FrCaCl_3$.

Nazmul Hasan et al. have explored the structural, electronic, optical, and mechanical properties of Pb-free Fr-based cubic perovskite materials $FrBX_3$ (B=Ge, Sn; X = Cl, Br, I) [84]. However, the behavior of the $FrCaCl_3$ halide perovskite under both pressurized and non-pressurized conditions remains unexamined. There is a gap in research concerning how $FrCaCl_3$ halide perovskite behaves when subjected to pressure, as well as its characteristics in non-pressurized conditions. In this regard, this DFT-based computational study evaluates the structural, electronic, bonding, anisotropic elastic, mechanical, and optical attributes of the $FrCaCl_3$ compound both with and without hydrostatic pressure.

2. Computational and geometry optimization details

The first-principles calculations are performed using the Cambridge Serial Total Energy Package (CASTEP) [85] code in Materials Studio version 8.0, an application of the plane-wave pseudo-potential total energy technique established on density functional theory (DFT). The exchange-correlation effect was handled using the generalized gradient approximation (GGA) proposed by Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) [86]. The interaction of valence electrons with ion cores is simulated using the Vanderbilt-type ultrasoft pseudopotentials [87]. To calculate all the physical parameters, the plane-wave basis set cut-off is fixed to 900 eV. The Monkhorst-Pack [88] approach with a $12 \times 12 \times 12$ special k-point mesh is implemented to add unique positions sampling throughout the Brillouin zone. To quickly find the structure with the minimum energy, the Broyden-Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno (BFGS) minimizing approach [89] is also used in geometry optimization. The convergence factors are defined to be an overall energy difference with less than 5×10^{-6} eV/atom, a maximum ionic Hellmann-Feynman force of less than 0.01 eV, a maximum displacement that is less than 5×10^{-4} Å, and maximum stress compared with fewer than 0.02 GPa. The geometrically relaxed structure is used to determine all the

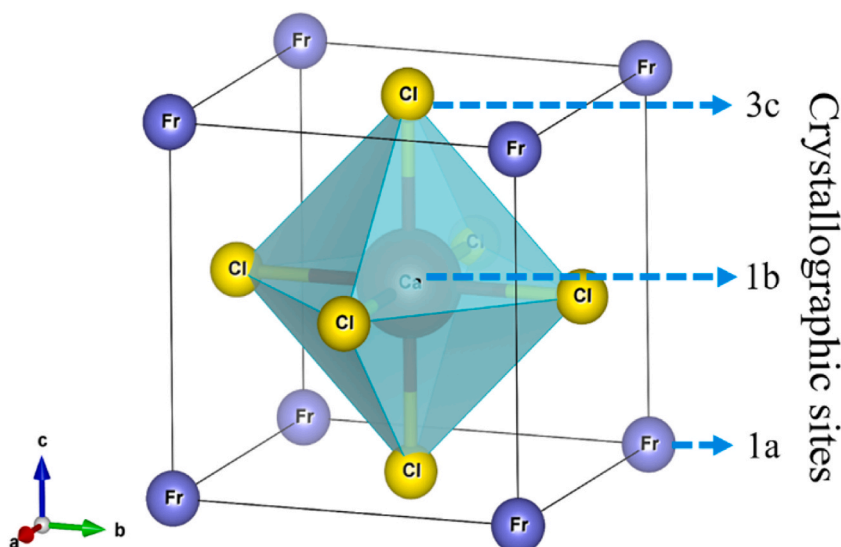


Fig. 1. Crystal structure of FrCaCl₃.

necessary physical characteristics. A pressure gradient up to 150 GPa with intervals of 30 GPa is used in this investigation. The three-dimensional (3D) optimized crystalline structure is depicted using the VESTA software [90]. The ELATE tool is used to generate anisotropic curves of Young's modulus, shear modulus, and Poisson's ratio in two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) directions [91,92]. The elastic stiffness constants of inorganic cubic FrCaCl₃ halide perovskite were calculated using the finite stress-strain method [1,22,69].

Electronic structure calculations were conducted using the GGA-PBE model with density mixing. Additionally, to improve the accuracy of these calculations, the hybrid HSE06 functional was employed, employing an All bands/EDFT electronic minimizer approach. The hybrid HSE06 electronic exchange correlation functional offers notable advantages in electronic band structure calculations. Unlike traditional density functionals, HSE06 incorporates a fraction of exact exchange, providing a more accurate description of electronic interactions, particularly for systems with substantial electron correlation. This leads to improved predictions of band gaps and electronic properties, addressing the well-known issue of underestimation common in standard functionals. The inclusion of non-local exchange terms enhances the treatment of long-range interactions, making HSE06 particularly valuable for accurately modeling materials with diverse bonding characteristics.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Structural properties and phase stability

The Fr-based non-toxic halide perovskite FrCaCl₃ belongs to a cubic crystal system and is a member of the $Pm\bar{3}m$ (#221) space group [84]. In Fig. 1, the optimized crystalline structure of FrCaCl₃ is illustrated with crystallographic positions. The unit cell structure of the FrCaCl₃ compound comprises five atoms and one formula unit. The radioactive Fr atom inhabits the corner at 1a Wyckoff site (0, 0, 0), the Ca atom takes place in the body-centered position at 1b Wyckoff site (0.5, 0.5, 0.5), and the Cl atom fills the face-centered site at 3c Wyckoff site (0, 0.5, 0.5).

Before embarking on the computational analysis of other characteristics, it is imperative to assess the stability of FrCaCl₃, as experimental synthesis remains unrealized. Insights into cubic stability are derived through calculations involving the Goldschmidt tolerance factor (t) and octahedral factor (m). The determination of these stability measures employs the formulas [57,64,70,80,84]:

$$t = \frac{(R_{Fr} + R_{Cl})}{\sqrt{2}(R_{Ca} + R_{Cl})}, \text{ and}$$

$$m = \frac{R_{Ca}}{R_{Cl}}.$$

where, R_{Fr} , R_{Ca} , and R_{Cl} are ionic radius of Fr⁺ (1.80 Å), Ca²⁺ (0.99 Å) and Cl⁻ (1.81 Å), respectively. The calculated Goldschmidt tolerance factor and octahedral factor for FrCaCl₃ are 0.912 and 0.547, respectively. For cubic stability, a compound should exhibit a tolerance factor within the range of 0.81–1.00 [70] and an octahedral factor between 0.37 and 0.859.

Abeeha Batool et al. calculated the Goldschmidt tolerance factor (t) by the following relation [66]:

Table 1
Bond lengths (L), and Goldschmidt tolerance factor (t) of FrCaCl₃ under various hydrostatic pressure.

Pressure (GPa)	Bond length, L (Å)		Tolerance factor, t
	L _{Fr-Cl}	L _{Ca-Cl}	
0	3.617	2.558	0.999
30	3.266	2.310	0.999
60	3.113	2.201	0.999
90	3.013	2.131	0.999
120	2.938	2.077	1.000
150	2.878	2.035	0.999

Table 2
The simulated theoretical values of lattice parameters and formation energy under hydrostatic pressure.

Compound	Pressure (GPa)	Lattice constant, a (Å)		Volume, V (Å ³)		Formation energy, E _f (eV/atom)	Remarks
		GGA	HSE06	GGA	HSE06		
FrCaCl ₃	0	5.487	5.116	165.17	133.88	-5.816	This work
KCaCl ₃	0	5.397	-	157.20	-	-	[27]
FrGeCl ₃	0	5.37	-	-	-	-	[84]
FrSnCl ₃	0	5.64	-	-	-	-	[84]
CsCaCl ₃	0	5.47	-	-	-	-	[77]
FrCaCl ₃	30	4.740	4.619	106.53	98.56	-4.897	This work
FrCaCl ₃	60	4.478	4.402	89.80	85.32	-3.959	This work
FrCaCl ₃	90	4.320	4.261	80.59	77.38	-3.088	This work
FrCaCl ₃	120	4.203	4.155	74.27	71.76	-2.242	This work
KCaCl ₃	120	4.101	-	69.00	-	-	[27]
FrCaCl ₃	150	4.111	4.070	69.49	67.44	-1.411	This work

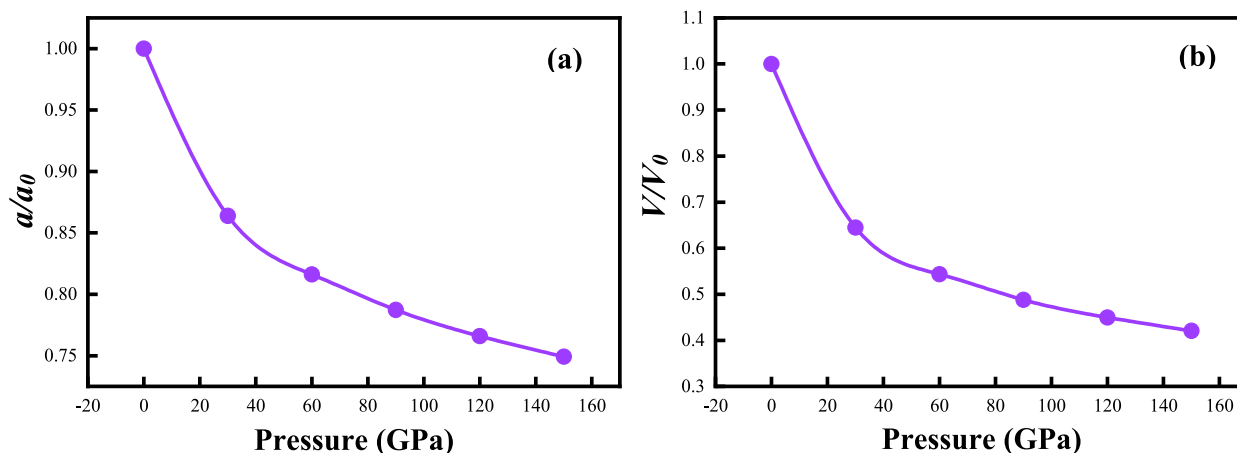


Fig. 2. (a) Lattice constant vs. pressure, and (b) lattice volume vs. pressure.

$$t = \frac{0.707(L_{\text{Fr-Cl}})}{L_{\text{Ca-Cl}}}$$

The equation provided defines $L_{\text{Fr-Cl}}$ as the bond length between Fr and Cl, and $L_{\text{Ca-Cl}}$ as the bond length between Ca and Cl. Table 1 showcases the computed bond lengths $L_{\text{Fr-Cl}}$ and $L_{\text{Ca-Cl}}$, along with the Goldschmidt tolerance factor (t), under various pressure conditions. In Tables 1, it is evident that the Fr–Cl bond surpasses the length of the Ca–Cl bond, a result of the notable electronegativity difference between the respective elements. This finding correlates with the estimations of ionic and covalent interactions in Fr–Cl and Ca–Cl, respectively, as confirmed by the charge density mapping of FrCaCl₃ (Fig. 7). As pressure intensifies, the bond lengths for both substances consistently decrease as the atoms in the compound are forced closer together, reaching their minimal lengths at 150 GPa. This implies that heightened pressure facilitates the formation of stronger bonds characterized by reduced bond lengths. As per Batool et al., in the context of an ideal cubic structure, the tolerance factor should fall within the range of 0.93–1.02 [66]. A scrutiny of Table 1 reveals that FrCaCl₃ aligns with these criteria, suggesting its adherence to cubic stability.

Table 2 contains the computed data of the pressure-dependent lattice parameter and unit cell volume for the FrCaCl₃ cubic perovskite using both the GGA and hybrid HSE06 approximation functional. The findings suggest that employing the HSE06 functional

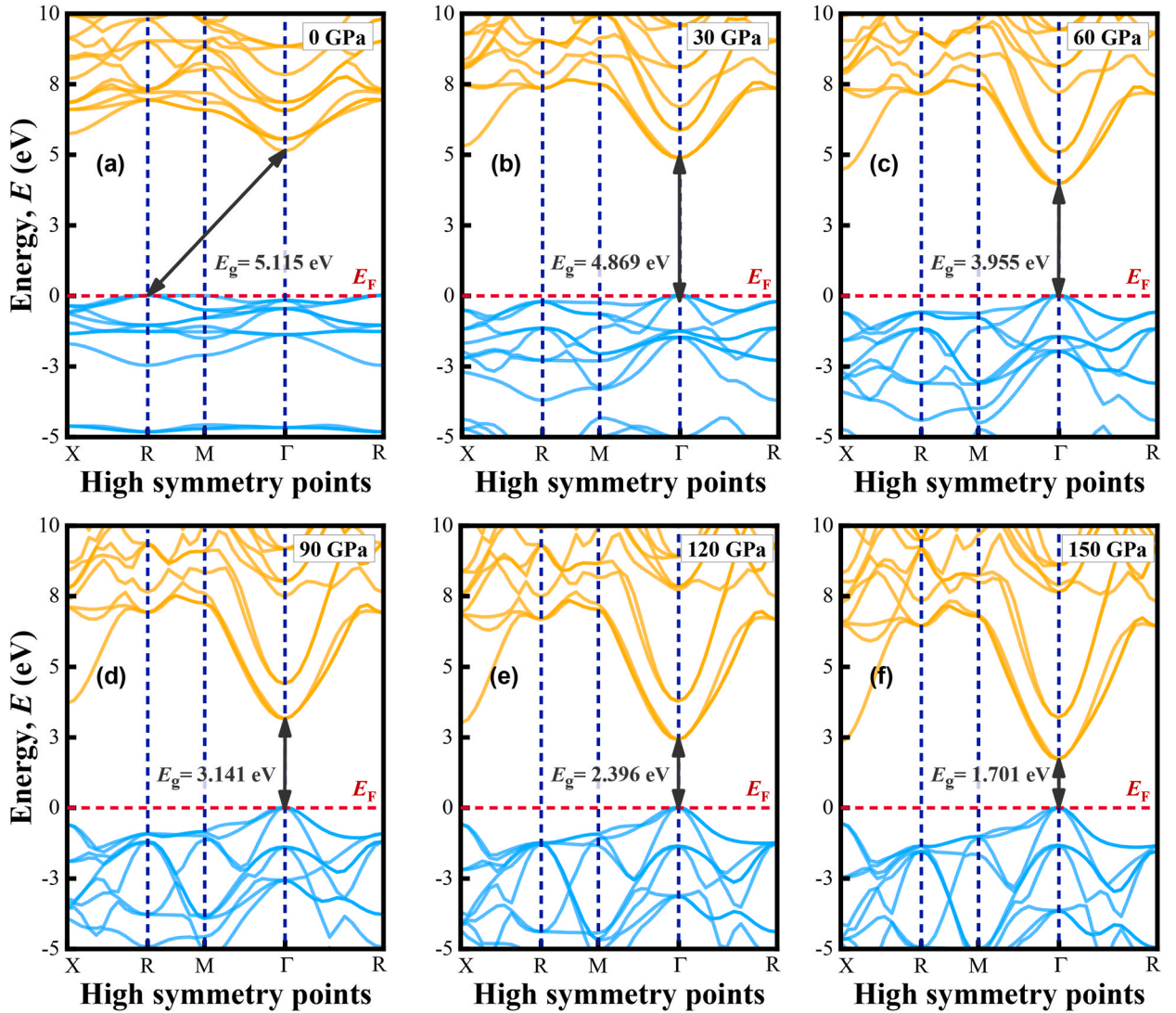


Fig. 3. The effect of applied pressure at (a) 0 GPa, (b) 30 GPa, (c) 60 GPa, (d) 90 GPa, (e) 120 GPa, and (f) 150 GPa on the band structures of FrCaCl₃.

results in slightly diminished lattice parameters in comparison to the GGA functional, both under pressure and in the absence of it. The subtle discrepancies observed in the calculations stem from the reliability inherent in the hybrid HSE06 exchange correlation potential. Nevertheless, the lattice parameters determined through the HSE06 method demonstrate a consistent trend akin to those obtained from the GGA-PBE scheme, irrespective of the presence or absence of hydrostatic pressure. When subjected to hydrostatic pressure, the lattice parameters undergo a reduction. This phenomenon can be attributed to the external pressure compelling the atoms beyond their repulsive forces, causing them to occupy a more confined space.

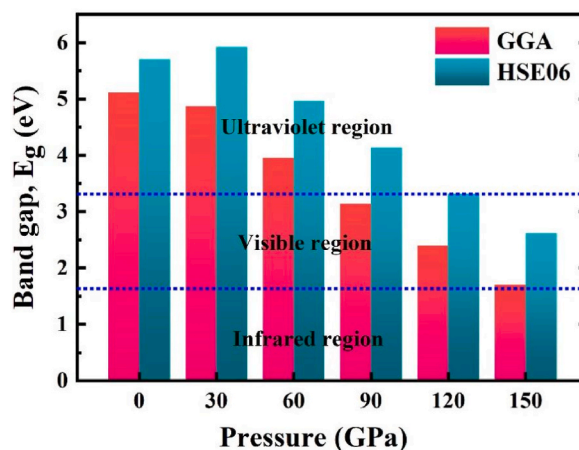
In this study, the optimized lattice constant value of the non-toxic FrCaCl₃ compound exhibits a similar trend when compared to KCaCl₃ (5.397 Å) [27], CsCaCl₃ (5.47 Å) [77], FrGeCl₃ (5.37 Å), and FrSnCl₃ (5.64 Å) [84] compounds. Fr and Cs atoms belong to the same periodic group, and both compounds have CaCl₃ in their structure, that is why both FrCaCl₃ (5.487 Å) and CsCaCl₃ compounds have closer values of lattice constant. Both the lattice constant and the unit cell volume responses to applied hydrostatic pressure (0–150 GPa) are illustrated in Fig. 2(a) (lattice constant vs. pressure) and Fig. 2(b) (lattice volume vs. pressure), respectively. As the pressure rises, it is observed that the lattice constant, along with the cell volume, is decreasing. At a pressure of 120 GPa, the lattice constants of FrCaCl₃ and KCaCl₃ exhibit closely aligned values [27].

Furthermore, structural stability was assessed through the calculation of the formation energy (E_f). The determination of this parameter relies on the equation outlined in previous works [57,64,66]:

$$E_f(\text{FrCaCl}_3) = \frac{[E_{\text{total}}(\text{FrCaCl}_3) - E_s(\text{Fr}) - E_s(\text{Ca}) - 3E_s(\text{Cl})]}{N}$$

Table 3The calculated values of energy band gap (E_g) of cubic FrCaCl_3 under applied pressure.

Pressure (GPa)	Band gap, E_g (eV)		Nature
	GGA	HSE06	
0	5.115	5.705	Indirect
30	4.869	5.923	Direct
60	3.955	4.964	Direct
90	3.141	4.134	Direct
120	2.396	3.322	Direct
150	1.701	2.618	Direct

**Fig. 4.** The decreasing tendency of band gap of FrCaCl_3 perovskite under pressure.

In the context of the FrCaCl_3 unit cell structure, the energies of Fr, Ca, and Cl atoms are denoted as $E_s(\text{Fr})$, $E_s(\text{Ca})$, and $E_s(\text{Cl})$, respectively. The overall energy of the unit cell, represented as $E_{\text{total}}(\text{FrCaCl}_3)$, considers the total number of atoms (N) within the unit cell. The formation energy values calculated through the HSE06 approximation functional for FrCaCl_3 under varying pressure conditions are tabulated in Table 2. The consistent negativity of the formation energy (E_f) across all pressure conditions establishes the thermodynamic stability of this inorganic halide perovskite system.

3.2. Electronic properties

The investigation of the electronic properties of a material, especially the band structure and density of states (DOS), may be crucial in acquiring complete knowledge of its optical characteristics. Fig. 3 represents the band structure of the FrCaCl_3 compound under varying hydrostatic pressure determined by using GGA-PBE functional. Furthermore, for enhanced accuracy in determining electronic structures, the hybrid HSE06 electronic exchange correlation (XC) functional is utilized. Table 3 provides the electronic energy band gap values obtained through both the GGA and hybrid HSE06 methods. Notably, the application of the HSE06 method results in enhanced band gap values for the FrCaCl_3 perovskite.

The band structure is diversified from -5 to $+10$ eV where the red horizontal dashed line at 0 eV stipulates the Fermi level (E_F) and there also the colored lines below and above the E_F represent the valence band (VB) and conduction band (CB), respectively. The perceived band gap (E_g) at zero pressure is 5.115 eV having the nature of an indirect band gap since the valence band maxima (VBM) are situated at the R point and the conduction band minima (CBM) are placed at the Γ point. Previous work based on cubic FrBX_3 ($B=\text{Ge, Sn}$; $X=\text{Cl, Br, I}$) perovskite compounds have been done by Nazmul and associates have found most of the Fr-based halide structures exhibit semiconducting behavior as well as direct nature in the band gap [84]. Additionally, Nayak and associates discovered that the implemented functional had little impact on the band structure's general behavior or the fluctuation of E_g under pressure; as a result, the PBE approach can deliver outcomes that are largely accurate [62,93]. This means that the GGA-PBE functional ought to be employed for pressure experiments on materials. At zero applied pressure, both FrCaCl_3 and CsCaCl_3 compounds exhibit an indirect band gap nature, along with similarities in the band gap values: FrCaCl_3 (5.115 eV) and CsCaCl_3 (5.35 eV) [77], respectively.

By employing the hybrid HSE06 XC functional, the indirect band gap is estimated as 5.705 eV at zero GPa. It can be observed from Table 3 that, with increasing hydrostatic pressure, the band gap between the valence band (VB) and conduction band (CB) is decreasing for both the GGA and hybrid HSE06 methods. The decrease in the band gap of FrCaCl_3 under extreme hydrostatic pressure can be attributed to the compression of its crystal lattice. As pressure increases, the atoms in the perovskite structure are forced closer together, reducing the interatomic distances. This compression alters the electronic band structure of the material, potentially shifting

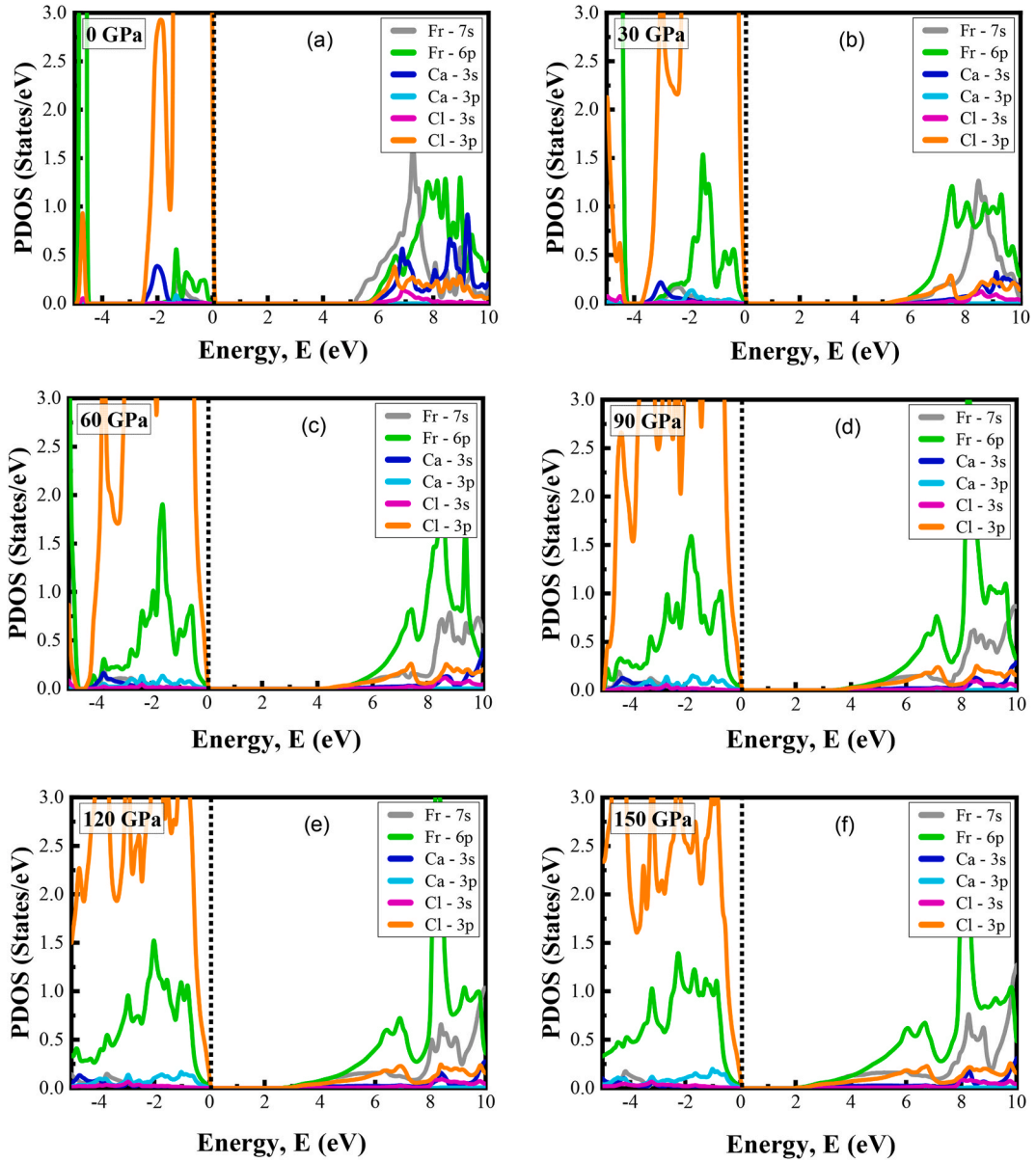


Fig. 5. The partial density of states (PDOS) of FrCaCl_3 perovskite at (a) 0 GPa, (b) 30 GPa, (c) 60 GPa, (d) 90 GPa, (e) 120 GPa, and (f) 150 GPa pressure.

the positions of the valence and conduction bands and affecting the band gap energy.

At zero pressure, an indirect band gap was observed between R and Γ points. However, with increasing pressure the valence band maxima (VBM) moved from R point to Γ point, making it a direct band gap nature evident at 30 GPa (Fig. 3). The externally applied pressure lengthens the valence band, causing it to extend linearly to higher energies in the region. Such energy shifts cause specific state rearrangement and tend to result in an indirect band gap to a direct band gap transformation [28].

Under increasing pressure, the indirect to direct shifting of the band gap was also discerned for cubic halide perovskites such as KCaCl_3 (4.76 eV), and RbCaCl_3 (6.39 eV) [70,76,82]. This transition may lower the energy required for electrons to shift from VB to CB, thereby enhancing the performance of solar devices [73,94]. The indirect to direct band gap transition is also observed in the case of Cl-based perovskite compounds which is evident in KSrCl_3 (4.45eV) [95]. Fr-based perovskite has semiconducting nature noticeable in the work of Nazmul and associates [84]. Eventually, the band gap is adjustable as a consequence of pressure, shifting from the ultraviolet area to the visible light range, as indicated in Table 3 and Fig. 4.

The investigation of the partial density of states (PDOS) is crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of the electronic band structure. The PDOS of FrCaCl_3 perovskite at different hydrostatic pressures is shown in Fig. 5, where the black perpendicular dashed line at 0 eV is the E_F . The VB of non-pressurized states is dominated by Fr-6p, Cl-3p, and Ca-3s, with Ca-3p states contributing very

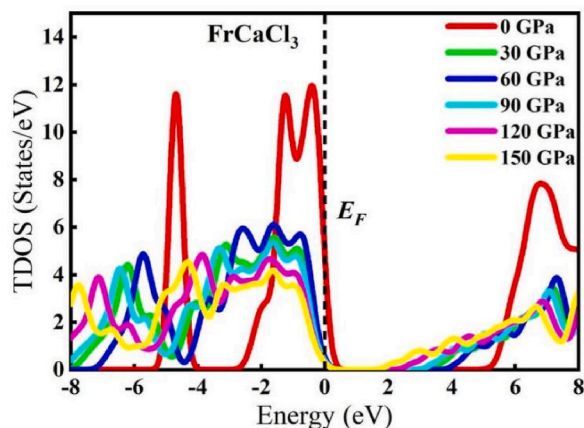


Fig. 6. The total density of states (TDOS) of FrCaCl₃ perovskite under various pressure.

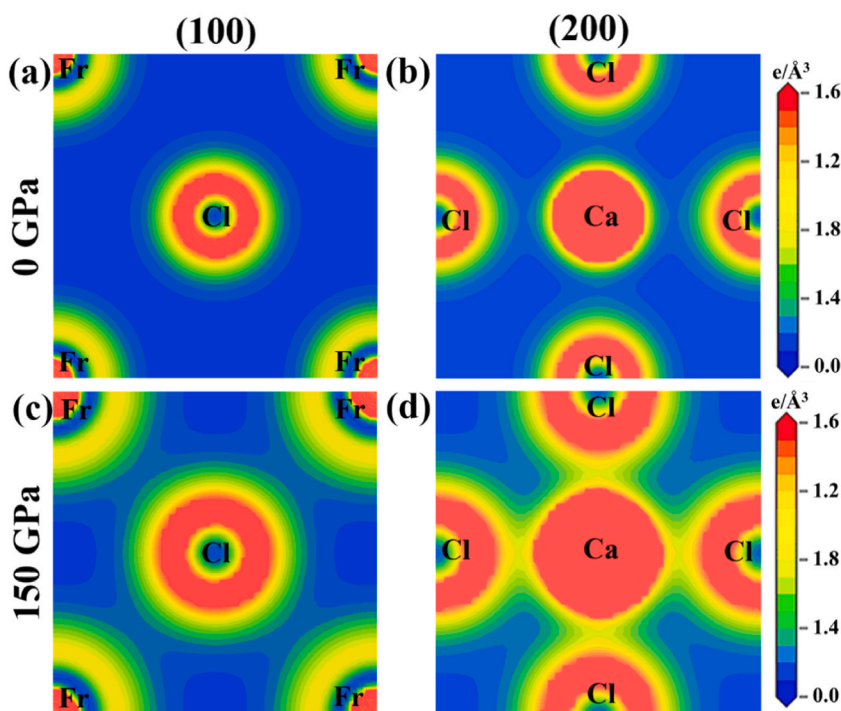


Fig. 7. The charge density map of cubic perovskite FrCaCl₃ along the (100) and (200) crystallographic plane at (a, b) 0 GPa pressure, and (c, d) 150 GPa pressure.

little. However, increasing the applied pressure reduces the contribution of Fr-6p and Ca-3s states while increasing the contribution of Cl-3p and Ca-3p states. Apart from that, the CB mainly originated from the contribution of Fr-7s, Fr-6p, Ca-3s, Cl-3p, and Cl-3s states at zero pressure. The contribution of Ca-3s and Cl-3s states reduces with increasing pressure. Additionally, the band gap is narrowed in case of high pressure due to the involvement of Fr-6p, Fr-7s, and Cl-3p states. Fig. 6 illustrates the total density of states (TDOS) for FrCaCl₃ perovskite under various hydrostatic pressures. The TDOS curves clearly demonstrate the narrowing of the band gap as pressure increases.

To comprehend the behavior of bonding between cation and anion atoms in FrCaCl₃, the electron charge density map is examined. Red hues indicate the maximum charge level, while blue colors indicate the lowest charge presence. In FrCaCl₃, the bonding between Fr and Cl is represented by the (100) plane. Fr–Cl has a weak ionic bond at zero GPa pressure (Fig. 7(a)), however, it grows stronger when maximum pressure (150 GPa) is applied (Fig. 7(c)). The lattice plane (200) exhibits an ionic bonding of Ca–Cl at zero pressure (Fig. 7(b)) which strengthened with an increase in pressure and began to exhibit overlapping covalent character as shown in Fig. 7(d). The smaller atomic distances caused by the external pressure may be the key factor for the greater electron density between the FrCaCl₃

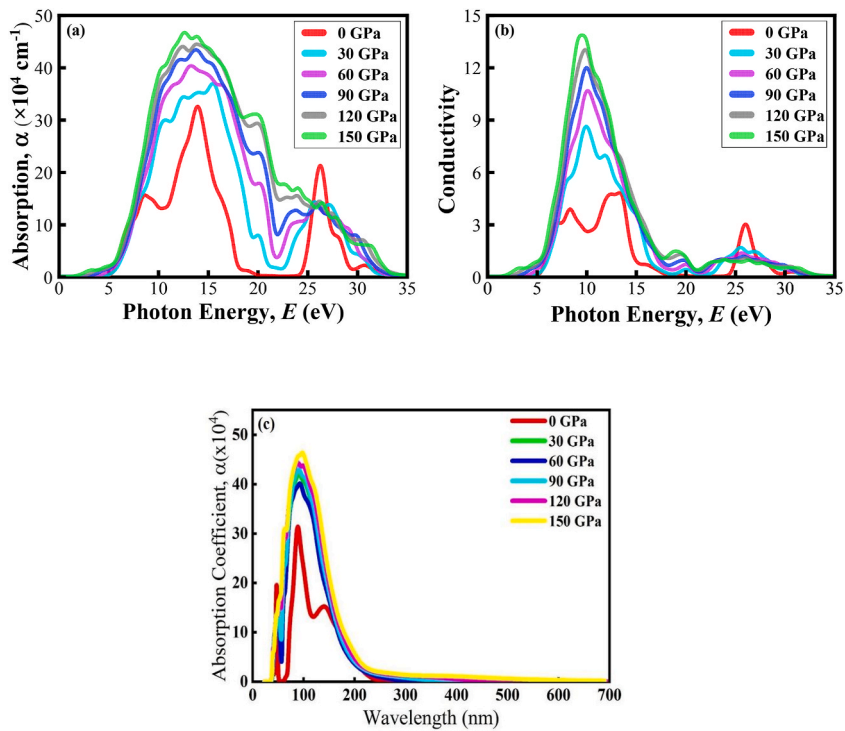


Fig. 8. The pressure-induced (a) absorption, and (b) conductivity with respect to photon energy, and (c) absorption with respect to photon wavelength of FrCaCl₃.

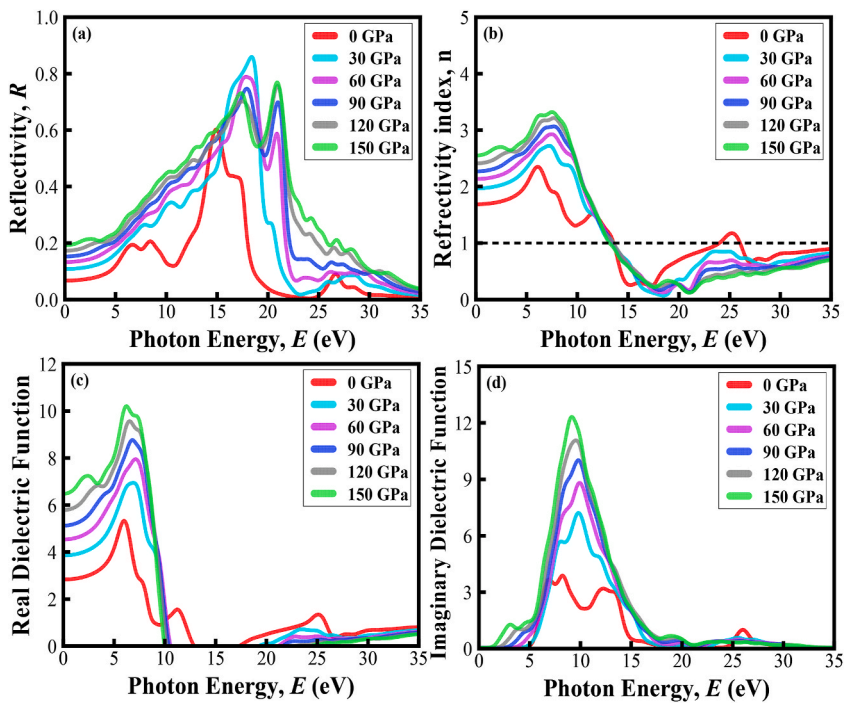


Fig. 9. The pressure-induced (a) Reflectivity, (b) Refractive index, (c) Real part of dielectric function, and (d) Imaginary part of dielectric function of FrCaCl₃.

atoms.

3.3. Optical properties

Understanding optical properties are crucial for forecasting material performance in applications involving optoelectronic devices [96–98]. Materials' optical properties lead to their viability and usefulness from a commercial standpoint, particularly in photonic devices. Under various hydrostatic pressures starting from zero GPa to 150 GPa, the optical absorption, conductivity, reflectivity, refractive index, and dielectric function of FrCaCl_3 are evaluated. Because of its wide-ranging band gap (5.705 eV) in the ultra-violet (UV) region, the cubic halide perovskite FrCaCl_3 is unsuitable for solar cell applications. As a result, further research is needed to ameliorate the efficiency of photovoltaic cells and optoelectronic applications. Using pressure to lower the band gap of Fr-based halide perovskite can be an effective strategy [73,82,94,99–102].

The shrinkage in the band gap of the electronic band structure under extreme hydrostatic pressure (Fig. 3) is discernible from the ultraviolet (UV) to the visible light range. This observed phenomenon suggests the potential utility of the compound in the realm of photocatalytic materials and optoelectronic devices operating within the visible spectrum. This material is better suited for usage in optoelectronic applications as the band gap character changes from indirect to direct at a hydrostatic pressure of 30 GPa.

The absorption coefficient is one of the optical properties used to measure the efficiency of solar cells [74]. The ability of a material to soak up light energy offers critical knowledge about the effectiveness of solar energy conversion when exposed to visible light [1]. Fig. 8(a-b) and Fig. 9(a-d) depicts an insightful analysis of several optical properties for the non-toxic FrCaCl_3 cubic halide perovskite determined for energy ranges up to 35 eV at various pressures of (0, 30, 60, 90, 120, and 150) GPa. It is evident that as pressure increases, so does the amount of absorptions in the ultraviolet energy range showing a similar trend in every pressure condition. Despite being physically anisotropic, FrCaCl_3 exhibits optically isotropic behavior in the lower energy region at zero pressure, which is the major criterion for scintillator applications [103,104,96]. As the pressure increases, the highest peaks of absorption (α) in different pressure lean towards higher energy regions. At 150 GPa pressure, the greatest optical absorption coefficient peak is evident at ~ 14 eV light energy similar to FrGeCl_3 and FrSnCl_3 compounds [105]. Fig. 8(a) also shows the widest absorption peak is in the ultraviolet region, which suggests that FrCaCl_3 can be an effective material for photocatalytic activity. Additionally, to highlight the lower energy range, Fig. 8(c) displays the optical absorption plot based on the photon wavelength range of 0–700 nm.

Another key metric that identifies a material's electrostatic response is optical conductivity (σ). Fig. 8(b) illustrates the visual depiction of optical conductivity as a consequence of photonic energy. Photoconductivity is the measurement of how many photons travel throughout the material and can be calculated using optical conductivity [106]. It is also evident that as pressure increases, optical conductivity in the ultraviolet energy range also increases, showing a similar trend in every pressure condition. At zero GPa pressure, the highest amount of conductivity for FrCaCl_3 is evident at 13.9 eV. On the other hand, at 150 GPa pressure, the greatest optical conductivity peak is seen at ~ 9.5 eV light energy. As materials absorb photon energy and release free carriers, conductivity, as well as absorption spectra follow a similar trend. However, neither α nor σ begins at 0 eV for the material under hydrostatic pressure ranging from 0 to 150 GPa, validating the semiconducting nature of the FrCaCl_3 compound. This increased conductivity indicates that FrCaCl_3 will be an efficient material under pressure, resulting in more efficient optoelectronic devices.

A material's optical reflectivity (R) can be utilized to determine the characteristics of its surface, and it specifies how much light the surface of a material can reflect [107]. Fig. 9(a) displays the reflectivity vs. photon energy of the FrCaCl_3 compound under pressure. When pressure is applied, the number of R escalates, which can lower the performance of the photovoltaic system. At zero GPa, the overall reflectivity value at zero frequency, $R(0)$ is 6.2 % of the total radiation, computed for FrCaCl_3 . As the amount of reflectivity is much lower than 10 %, FrCaCl_3 can be considered a highly transparent material in the case of the infrared radiation (IR) region as well as the visible region. For that reason, it has the potential to serve as transparent coatings and excellent lens material. When the pressure is increased to 150 GPa, the reflectivity is observed at zero frequency, constituting 18.9 % of the overall radiation. It is also evident that the material reflects more than 85 % of light at approximately 18.5 eV. Therefore, more research is needed to find ways to lower reflectivity in low-energy areas, which could enhance absorption and solar cell performance. It's important to note that the increased value of R under hydrostatic pressure in UV regions indicates that the material could be a potential candidate for reducing solar heat.

An elemental characteristic that describes how a material affects the speed of light passing through it is the refractive index (n) [108]. It also provides information of material to estimate its usefulness for practical device applications [109]. The n has a declining trend and reaches its peak in the UV energy range, where it is relatively constant at zero GPa, as shown in Fig. 9(b). At zero pressure the static value of the refractive index is $n(0) = 1.68$, which increases with increase in hydrostatic pressure. FrCaCl_3 is highly suitable for usage in solar cells, QLED, OLED [110] and waveguides as the $n(0)$ starts to increase with an increase in hydrostatic pressure.

The dielectric function is the key factor that influences a material's charge-carrier recombination rate [111]. It is expressed as $\epsilon(\omega) = \epsilon_1(\omega) + i\epsilon_2(\omega)$, where the real and imaginary portions of the dielectric function are denoted by $\epsilon_1(\omega)$ and $\epsilon_2(\omega)$, respectively. The real component indicates polarization inside the material, whereas the imaginary part reflects energy dissipation. Photovoltaic cells with higher static dielectric constants experience lower recombination rates [112]. As a result, the amount of the dielectric function in relation to the incident photon energy determines a material's suitability for use in optoelectronic devices in a very significant way [113,114]. Fig. 9(c) and (d) depict the changes in the real and imaginary components of the dielectric constant with and without hydrostatic pressure. According to Fig. 9(c), applying pressure results in a greater static dielectric function $\epsilon_1(\omega)$ than in a non-pressurized system, which could improve the device's efficiency. The lower energy gap of the crystal system under hydrostatic pressure shows the increasing values of $\epsilon_1(\omega)$ which further produces higher $\epsilon_1(\omega)$ for the compound FrCaCl_3 in the visible spectrum. The value of ϵ_1 drops below zero showing negativity around 13 eV for every pressure condition, and only zero pressure curve shows a glimpse of positive value around 24 eV after the drop. The imaginary part of the dielectric function is significantly appertained to the

Table 4The calculated elastic constants C_{ij} (GPa) values of FrCaCl_3 at numerous hydrostatic pressures.

Compound	Pressure (GPa)	C_{11}	C_{12}	C_{44}	Remarks
FrCaCl_3	0	49.78	11.31	10.84	This work
KCaCl_3	0	54.06	9.26	7.80	[27]
CsCaCl_3	0	56.91	9.69	10.23	[77]
FrGeCl_3	0	52.41	13.69	12.17	[84]
FrSnCl_3	0	48.41	9.82	6.54	[84]
FrCaCl_3	30	276.43	66.68	25.39	This work
FrCaCl_3	60	467.25	117.35	36.89	This work
FrCaCl_3	90	642.23	166.32	47.13	This work
FrCaCl_3	120	805.54	214.15	56.45	This work
KCaCl_3	120	818.07	170.96	6.82	[27]
FrCaCl_3	150	985.39	261.13	65.03	This work

Table 5The computed elastic anisotropy (A), Poisson's ratio (ν), Pugh's ratio (B/G), shear modulus (G) in GPa, Young's modulus (E) in GPa, and bulk modulus (B) in GPa of FrCaCl_3 at different applied pressures.

Compound	Pressure (GPa)	B	G	E	ν	B/G	A	Remarks
FrCaCl_3	0	24.13	13.67	34.49	0.262	1.77	0.564	This work
KCaCl_3	0	24.20	12.10	31.11	0.285	2.00	0.35	[27]
CsCaCl_3	0	25.430	14.406	36.35	0.363	1.765	0.433	[77]
FrGeCl_3	0	26.60	14.67	37.18	0.27	1.81	–	[84]
FrSnCl_3	0	22.68	10.27	26.77	0.30	2.21	–	[84]
FrCaCl_3	30	136.60	46.81	126.02	0.346	2.92	0.242	This work
FrCaCl_3	60	233.99	73.01	198.39	0.359	3.20	0.211	This work
FrCaCl_3	90	324.96	96.42	263.22	0.365	3.37	0.198	This work
FrCaCl_3	120	411.28	117.80	322.61	0.369	3.49	0.191	This work
KCaCl_3	120	386.66	72.36	204.33	0.411	5.34	0.02	[27]
FrCaCl_3	150	493.54	137.43	377.28	0.372	3.59	0.180	This work

material band structure, density of states, and absorption coefficient [115]. The absorption spectra shown in Fig. 8(a) is ultimately justified by the fact that the peak of $\epsilon_2(\omega)$ rises as pressure rises (Fig. 9(d)). With an increase in photon energy, the $\epsilon_2(\omega)$ falls from a peak value and eventually reaches zero. The possible use of FrCaCl_3 in integrated circuits and microelectronics is demonstrated by the increased $\epsilon_2(\omega)$ in the low-frequency band.

3.4. Mechanical properties

Elastic constants (C_{ij}) are the most essential variables to consider when examining the mechanical characteristics of solid materials [116,117]. They are crucial in defining a variety of material characteristics, such as brittleness, ductility, stiffness, anisotropy, and so on [1,73,74,118]. It is also possible to infer a material's mechanical stability from C_{ij} [3,64]. The mechanical properties are determined using the 'finite strain' theory [119]. It is essential to acknowledge how pressure affects the C_{ij} because the lattice constant of FrCaCl_3 reduces with applied pressure as shown in Fig. 2. Three distinct elastic constants, C_{11} , C_{12} , and C_{44} , representing the elastic modulus tensor, are observed in the FrCaCl_3 cubic perovskite. Table 4 shows the computed C_{ij} at numerous applied pressures with the available reported theoretical results. It is observed that the values of C_{ij} are simultaneously increased under applied pressure. The calculated C_{ij} at zero pressure is well suited to the results of the earlier study of Ca and Cl-based perovskite compounds [1,120].

The renowned Born stability criteria are what determine the cubic crystals' mechanical stability [121]:

$$C_{11} > 0, C_{44} > 0, (C_{11}-C_{12}) > 0, \text{ and } (C_{11}+2C_{12}) > 0$$

From Table 4 it is noticeable that the derived elastic constants successfully meet the Born stability requirements. It is clear that FrCaCl_3 is mechanically stable both with and without external pressure.

The Voigt-Reuss-Hill (VRH) method is commonly employed for estimating the bulk modulus (B), shear modulus (G), and Young's modulus (Y). Utilizing the following specific formulas, these moduli can be calculated as part of the analysis process [97,98,122,123].

$$\text{Bulk modulus, } B = \frac{1}{3}(C_{11} + 2C_{12})$$

$$\text{Shear modulus, } G = \frac{1}{5}(3C_{44} + C_{11} - C_{12})$$

$$\text{Young's modulus, } E = \frac{9BG}{3B + G}$$

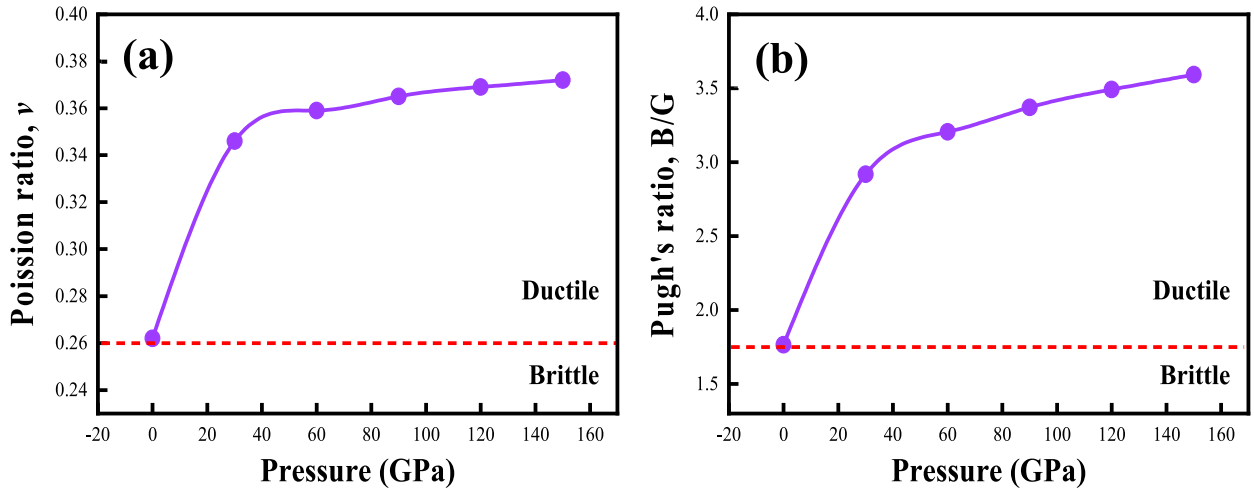


Fig. 10. Variations in (a) Poisson's ratio, and (b) Pugh's ratio of FrCaCl_3 under pressure.

Table 5 shows the computed elastic moduli and parameters at various applied pressures with the available published data. At zero pressure, FrCaCl_3 , KCaCl_3 , CsCaCl_3 , FrGeCl_3 , and FrSnCl_3 demonstrate closely aligned values for elastic moduli and parameters. The observed increase in mechanical characteristics, such as Young's modulus (E), bulk modulus (B), and shear modulus (G) values with increasing applied pressure indicate that hardness is incorporated into FrCaCl_3 by the applied hydrostatic pressure. Poisson's ratio (ν), as well as Pugh's ratio (B/G), are critical parameters that reveal a material's ductile or brittle characteristics [124,125]. Using the values of B and G , the following elastic parameters can be computed.

$$\text{Pugh's ratio} = \frac{B}{G}$$

$$\text{Poisson's ratio, } \nu = \frac{3B - 2G}{2(3B + G)}$$

For determining the brittle/ductile nature, the marginal values of ν and B/G are 0.26 and 1.75, correspondingly [50,57,73,74]. A material is regarded as ductile if B/G and ν exceed the marginal value; or else, it is brittle. FrCaCl_3 is found ductile material at zero pressure condition, as indicated by the predicted values of ν and B/G (Table 5). The variations in Pugh's ratio and Poisson's ratio of FrCaCl_3 under pressure is seen in Fig. 10. It is evident from Fig. 10 that FrCaCl_3 becomes more ductile when subjected to pressure. In order to validate the existence of a central force within the crystal, the value of ν must also fall between the ranges of 0.25 and 0.5 [126]. As shown in Table 5, there is a central force within FrCaCl_3 since the value of ν falls around 0.25 and 0.5 across the whole pressure range.

Elastic anisotropy (A) offers crucial information on the functionality of materials in various real-world applications [127,128]. It is determined using the Zener equation [129] given below and is displayed in Table 5. A material is considered isotropic if the amount of 'A' equals unity. However, the departure from unity or any value above it indicates the level of anisotropy [130].

$$A = \frac{2C_{44}}{C_{11} - C_{12}}$$

From Tables 5, it is obvious that FrCaCl_3 shows anisotropy at zero pressure. Under hydrostatic pressure, it is evidently seen that the value of A rapidly deviates from unity, which suggests that FrCaCl_3 is more anisotropic. The direction dependency of Young's modulus (E), shear modulus (G), and Poisson's ratio (ν) at both zero and 150 GPa pressure are shown in both 2D and 3D graphics in Fig. 11. These figures are illustrated using the ELATE tool [91,92,122,123] to visualize the anisotropic character of FrCaCl_3 . The XY plane is used for projections whereas the XY, YZ, and ZX planes are used to construct the 2D contour plots. The 2D and 3D contour plots of the examined FrCaCl_3 make it abundantly evident that it exhibits anisotropy in every possible direction. However, circular 2D and spherical 3D deviations are more severe at 150 GPa pressure than under zero GPa pressure, suggesting that hydrostatic pressure causes higher anisotropy in FrCaCl_3 .

Direct band gap non-toxic semiconducting halide perovskite materials are highly promising for a range of optoelectronic applications due to several inherent advantages [131,132]. The ability to customize perovskite materials through their versatile and tunable band gap further solidifies their crucial role in advancing optoelectronics [133,134]. This adaptability allows for the tailoring of these materials to meet the needs of specific applications [135,136]. A key benefit lies in their efficient absorption of light, leveraging direct band gaps to enhance the conversion of photons into electron-hole pairs. Fr-based perovskites, distinct from their Pb-based counterparts, offer unique theoretical advantages. Francium, being the heaviest and most electropositive alkali metal, introduces intriguing electronic and structural properties that could potentially lead to novel behaviors in optoelectronics and provide deeper insights into perovskite chemistry. While Pb-based halide perovskites demonstrate high efficiency and favorable optoelectronic characteristics

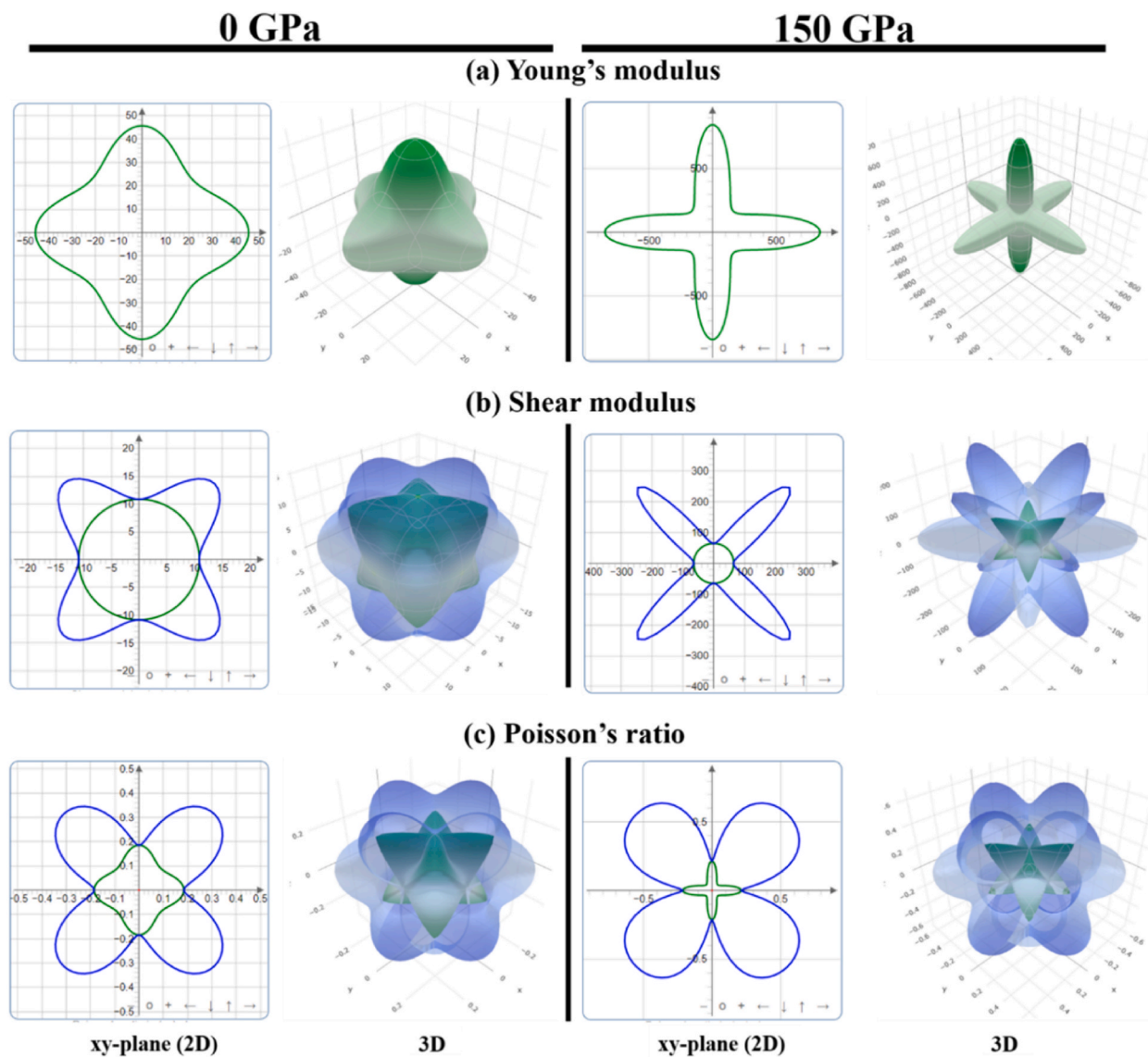


Fig. 11. The anisotropic 3D representation of (a) Young's modulus (b) Shear modulus, and (c) Poisson's ratio of FrCaCl_3 at zero GPa, and 150 GPa pressure.

[132], their practical use is hindered by significant drawbacks. Foremost among these is their toxicity, which poses environmental and health risks throughout their lifecycle—from production through to disposal. Moreover, these materials are prone to rapid degradation upon exposure to moisture, oxygen, and heat, limiting their reliability and long-term viability in applications such as solar cells and LEDs.

Despite its radioactivity, Francium halide perovskites have been selected for research due to their unique properties and potential contributions to understanding heavy alkali metals within perovskite frameworks. Additionally, perovskite compositions incorporating radioactive Fr, like FrCaCl_3 , hold promise for applications in fields such as nuclear medicine, diagnostics, and advanced X-ray imaging technologies [137].

This study emphasizes not only theoretical investigation but also the critical need for experimental confirmation, which forms the bedrock for potential real-world applications. Its impact extends far beyond academia, offering exciting prospects for progress in materials science and technology.

4. Conclusion

The geometry optimization and physical characterization of the FrCaCl_3 cubic perovskite are performed using the DFT-based first-principles computational approach. The calculation of the Goldschmidt tolerance factor, octahedral factor, and formation energy

confirms that cubic FrCaCl_3 is structurally stable. It is found that induced pressure causes a reduction in the computed lattice constant, unit cell volume, band gap, and chemical bond lengths. Under hydrostatic pressure, the lattice constant of the relaxed structure of cubic FrCaCl_3 decreases from 5.487 (5.116) to 4.111 (4.070) Å when employing the GGA-PBE (hybrid HSE06) potential. The utilization of the hybrid HSE06 potential enhances the precision of the band gap, demonstrating a reduction in values from 5.705 to 2.618 eV across pressure ranges of 0–150 GPa. At a pressure of 30 GPa, the indirect band gap transforms into a direct band gap. The band gap narrowing under increased pressure was verified by depicting the density of states (DOS) and the specific projection of electronic contributions from atomic orbitals. This narrowing of the band gap from the UV to the visible area increases the possibility of using FrCaCl_3 in optoelectronic devices. According to the structural and optical analyses, this material is predicted to be used in photoconductor-based QLEDs, OLEDs, X-ray detectors, scintillator applications, microelectronics, integrated circuits, waveguides, solar cells, and other optoelectronic devices. Despite being radioactive, Fr is proven to be mechanically stable in nature, and the researched materials may readily be formed into thin films because of their low bulk modulus at zero pressure. The Poisson's ratio (ν) increases from 0.262 to 0.372, and Pugh's ratio (B/G) increases from 1.77 to 3.59, under pressure. Thus, the application of external pressure further induces notable alterations in the mechanical properties, enhancing both ductility and anisotropy in the compound. The intended study would give the research community a thorough scientific grasp and in-depth knowledge of the selected system.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Md Istiaque Ahmed: Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation. **Arpon Biswas:** Formal analysis, Data curation. **Tariqul Islam Asif:** Formal analysis, Data curation. **Md Saiduzzaman:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Minhajul Islam:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Formal analysis, Data curation.

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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