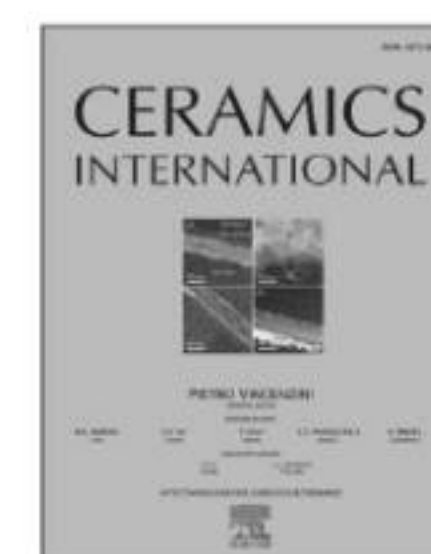




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Ceramics International

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ceramint

Phase evolution and piezoelectric properties of SnO₂ doped KNN based piezoceramics

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ARTICLE INFO

Handling Editor: Dr P. Vincenzini

Keywords:

Sintering

Grain size

Piezoelectric properties

Perovskites

ABSTRACT

The present research focuses on the electrical properties of lead-free piezoceramics (0.985-*x*)(K_{0.485}Na_{0.485}Li_{0.03})(Nb_{0.96}Sb_{0.04})O₃-0.015(Bi_{0.5}Na_{0.5})ZrO₃-*x*SnO₂ (KNNLS-BNZ-*x*SnO₂, *x* = 0.003, 0.006, 0.009, 0.012, and 0.015). This study examines the influence of varying SnO₂ doping levels on the microstructure and piezoelectric properties of the ceramics. All the ceramics prepared demonstrate pure perovskite structure without any secondary phases. The Rietveld refinement analysis of XRD data reveals the existence of multiphase evolution around room temperature. The tetragonality (*c/a*) and cell volume of the ceramics tend to rise with an increase in Sn⁴⁺ content, potentially leading to improved ferroelectric characteristics. The optimum values obtained were Curie temperature (*T*_c) = 395 °C, remnant polarization (*P*_r) = 21.07 μC/cm², piezoelectric coefficient (*d*₃₃) = 357 pC/N, piezoelectric voltage constant (*g*₃₃) = 24 × 10⁻³ Vm/N, and figure of merit (FOM_{off}) = 10.34 pm²/N, corresponding to the ceramic doped with *x* = 0.012 SnO₂. The findings indicate that an optimal amount of Sn⁴⁺ in the host composition KNNLS-BNZ improves piezoelectric properties by constructing an R-O-T phase boundary near room temperature. This study suggests that the ceramic with *x* = 0.012 SnO₂ exhibits a favorably high *T*_c coupled with an exceptional energy harvesting capability, making it a suitable candidate for energy harvesting applications.

1. Introduction

Piezoelectric materials comprise a significant category of smart materials that plays a crucial role in electromechanical devices, including piezoelectric actuators, sensors, ultrasonic medical imaging devices, structural health monitoring systems, and piezoelectric energy harvesting units. These materials possess the ability to convert mechanical energy into electrical energy or vice versa [1–3]. Piezoelectric energy harvesting devices are gaining importance due to the rise in the demand for nonconventional power sources in the past two decades [4]. The harvesting of energy from surrounding sources with a view to negate the necessity for batteries or increase their lifespan has emerged as a prominent area of interest among researchers [5]. Piezoelectric harvesting systems offer a sustainable power supply that requires very little maintenance and replacement [6].

Commercially utilized piezoelectric ceramics are primarily Pb(Zr_{1-x}Ti_x)O₃ (PZT)-based materials, which offer outstanding piezoelectric performance, and their preparation method is well established [7–10]. However, several countries have implemented restrictive laws and regulations against the use of these materials as they contain significant amount of toxic element ‘lead’ which causes severe harm to human health and environment. The EU enacted the “WEEE” and “ROHS” Acts 2006, with the aim of limiting the production and consumption of lead-containing piezoelectric materials and devices [11,12]. As a result, lead-free piezoelectric ceramics have gained importance in the field of electromechanical technology [11–13]. Among the lead-free alternatives, KNN-based piezoelectric ceramics have attracted enormous attention owing to their lower sintering temperature, relatively high electrical characteristics and significantly high Curie temperature (*T*_c). Ever since their development, KNN-based ceramics have been finding

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ceramint.2024.08.263>

Received 22 May 2024; Received in revised form 12 August 2024; Accepted 15 August 2024

Available online 16 August 2024

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