

1 Article

2 The Effect of Co-Doping at the A-Site on the 3 Structure and Oxide Ion Conductivity in (Ba_{0.5-} 4 _xSr_x)La_{0.5}InO_{3-δ}: A Molecular Dynamics Study

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12

13 **Abstract:** The molecular dynamics simulation has been used to investigate the structural and
14 transport properties of (Ba_{0.5-x}Sr_x)La_{0.5}InO_{3-δ} (x=0, 0.1, 0.2) oxygen-ion conductor. The previous
15 studies reported that the ionic conductivity of Ba-doped LaInO₃ decreases because Ba dopant forms
16 narrow oxygen path in the lattice, which could hinder the diffusion of oxygen ion. In this study, we
17 reveal the mechanism to improve the ionic conductivity by Ba and Sr co-doping on La site in LaInO₃
18 perovskite oxide. The results show that the ionic conductivity of (Ba_{0.5-x}Sr_x)La_{0.5}InO_{3-δ} increases with
19 increasing numbers of Sr ions, which oxygen diffusion paths including Sr ion have larger critical
20 radius than Ba ions. The RDF calculations showed the heights of peak in composition including Sr
21 ions is lower and broaden, so oxygen ions moved easily into other oxygen sites.

22 **Keywords:** oxide ion conductivity; perovskite oxide; molecular dynamics simulation; ceramics
23 electrolyte

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25

26 1. Introduction

27 Ceramic ion conductors are important materials for application in solid oxide fuel cells (SOFCs),
28 oxygen pumps, oxygen sensors due to its oxide ion conductivity and chemical and mechanical
29 stability at high operating temperature [1-3]. The oxide ion conduction occurs via hopping
30 mechanism through oxygen vacancies, which is generated the doping of low-valent cation to
31 maintain the charge neutrality at the given composition. To achieve a high ionic conductivity, oxygen
32 ion conductors must have large open space that allows high level of point defect disorder, and low
33 migration enthalpy [4]. Some examples of such oxides are ZrO₂, CeO₂, Bi₂O₃ based oxide with fluorite
34 structure, LaGaO₃ based perovskites, Bi₄V₂O₁₁ and La₂Mo₂O₉ based derivatives, Ba₂In₂O₅ derived
35 perovskite, and brownmillerite like phases and pyrochlores [5].

36 Among them, fluorite-related structures such as yttria-stabilized zirconia (YSZ) show good
37 performance as an oxide ion conductors at high temperatures (~0.1 S·cm⁻¹ at 1273 K). However, it is
38 well known that the electrical conductivity of YSZ decreases around 0.03 S·cm⁻¹ at 1073 K [6].
39 Therefore, in most of the fluorite-related structures, high temperature is required for efficient
40 operation.

41 To obtain the high ionic conductivity at intermediate temperature (873-1073 K), perovskite and
42 related oxides have been extensively studied. ABO₃ perovskite oxides having a large number of
43 oxygen vacancies can be introduced into the lattice by the substitution of cation A or B with lower
44 valence cations. Many researchers have studied La-based ABO₃ perovskite as an electrolyte for

intermediate temperature SOFC (IT-SOFC) due to its high ionic conductivity and phase stability [7-11]. The perovskite oxide of the $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{Ga}_{0.8}\text{Mg}_{0.2}\text{O}_{3-\delta}$ shows high oxide-ion conductivity, which is higher than that of the YSZs [12]. Therefore, many researches were conducted to utilize these electrolytes in the SOFC. On the other hand, doped LaInO_3 was introduced for electrolyte material: He et al. [13] studied the Sr doped LaInO_3 and Kim et al. [14] reported the Ba doped LaInO_3 . However, these composites show low ionic conductivity than doped LaGaO_3 . To improve the performance of LaInO_3 , Kakinuma et al. [15] reported the co-doped LaInO_3 , $(\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Ba}_{0.3}\text{Sr}_{0.2})\text{InO}_{2.75}$ showed very high conductivity, which was almost equal to $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{Ga}_{0.8}\text{Mg}_{0.2}\text{O}_{3-\delta}$.

In previous studies, it was expected that the ionic conductivity of Ba-doped LaInO_3 increased with the formation of oxygen vacancies as the Ba ion was substituted [16]. However, it showed a maximum at 0.4 – 0.5 of Ba contents and decreased because Ba ion acts as a barrier of oxygen ion transport. Therefore, the aim of this study is to reveal the mechanism for improvement the ionic conductivity by Ba and Sr ions co-doping on La site in LaInO_3 using structural investigation method using molecular dynamics simulation.

2. Experimental and Simulation Methods

2.1. Experimental Method

The specimens of the $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ ($x = 0 - 0.2$) were prepared through the conventional solid-state reaction method. The starting reagents used in this study were $\text{La}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (99%, Wako Chemical Co. Ltd., Japan), BaO (90%, Acros, US), $\text{Sr}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (99%, Sigma Aldrich, US) and In_2O_3 (99.99%, High Purity Chemicals Co. Ltd., Japan). The powders were mixed in a beaker with 100 mL of deionized water under magnetic stirring. This solution was dried and calcined at 673 K for 2 h, following by firing at 1773 K for 5 h for crystallization.

The crystalline phase of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ ($x = 0 - 0.2$) was identified using X-ray diffraction (XRD) on a X-ray diffractometer (D/max 2200V/PC, Rigaku, Japan), with $\text{Cu K}\alpha$ radiation ($\lambda = 1.5406 \text{ \AA}$) produced at 40 kV and 200 mA to scan the diffraction angles (2θ) between 10 and 90° with a step size of 0.02° at 2θ per second. The diffraction results were refined to analyze their crystal structure, inter-ionic distances and lattice parameters by the Rietveld refinement method using the GSAS EXPGUI software package [17-18]. Crystallographic information file (CIF) for cubic space group $\text{Pm}\bar{3}\text{m}$ was taken from Uchimoto et al. [19] with lattice parameters $a = b = c = 4.17214 \text{ \AA}$.

For the electrical conductivity measurements, these composites were prepared rectangular-shaped bars with a size of $3 \text{ mm} \times 3 \text{ mm} \times 10 \text{ mm}$. The platinum wires and platinum electrodes were formed by applying organic pastes (TR-7907, Tanaka Kinkinzoku Kogyo K. K., Japan) and firing at 1173 K to remove the organics. The conductivity were evaluated by using a general 4 terminal D.C. method and a custom jig with a Keithley 2400 Source Meter over a temperature range from 600 to 1273 K with steps of 100 K at a rate of $5 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$.

2.2. Simulation Method

The interatomic potentials employed in this study were the Born model framework [20-22] consisting of a columbic term, a short range repulsion term and a dispersion term as follows:

$$U_{ij} = \frac{q_i q_j}{r_{ij}} + f_0 (b_i + b_j) \exp \left[\frac{a_i + a_j - r_{ij}}{b_i - b_j} \right] - \frac{c_i c_j}{r_{ij}^6} \quad (1)$$

where q_i and q_j are the charges of two ions i and j , respectively. r_{ij} is the distance between i and j ions. f_0 is a constant for unit adaptation ($=1 \text{ kcal}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}\cdot\text{\AA}^{-1}$). The potential parameters a , b and c for each of the ions are shown in Table 1 [23, 24]. The simulation models consist of 200 unit cells with a total of 950 atoms. Table 1 shows the three models characterized with their oxide ion conduction pathway by Sr contents. The pathway depends on the arrangement of atoms at the A-site positions, and the three models with different amount of oxide ion pathway values were obtained by the manual arrangement of La, Sr and Ba ions.

91 **Table 1.** Interatomic potential parameters and configurations of oxide ion conduction pathway with
 92 different Sr ion contents for $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$.

		Interatomic potential parameters					
		La	Ba	Sr	In	O	
a (Å)		2.149	1.800	2.028	2.013	1.568	
b (Å)		0.205	0.077	0.194	0.220	0.087	
c (kcal·Å ⁶ /mol) ^{0.5}		0	0	0	0	27	
x		Configurations of oxide ion conduction pathway					
		ΔLaLaIn	ΔLaBaIn	ΔLaSrIn	ΔBaSrIn	ΔSrSrIn	ΔBaBaIn
0		572	1256			572	
0.1		572	964	292	172	8	392
0.2		572	716	540	284	68	220

93 All calculations were carried out using the MD simulation software LAMMPS (Sandia National
 94 Laboratory, USA) [25]. Newton's equation of motion was integrated for 1600 ps with a time step of 1
 95 fs, after a relaxation step for 400 ps to remove the effect of the initial arrangement of oxygen vacancies.
 96 Each model with various compositions was simulated at temperatures from 873 K to 1273 K under a
 97 pressure of 1 bar. To derive the ionic conductivity, the mean square displacement (MSD) of oxygen
 98 ion was calculated according to
 99

$$MSD(t) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=0}^N (r(t) - r(0))^2 \quad (2)$$

100 where N is the total number of ions and r(t) is the position of an ion i at the time t. MSD has a
 101 relation to the diffusion coefficient as the Einstein relation

$$MSD(t) = 6Dt \quad (3)$$

102 where t is the time and D is the diffusion coefficient. The ionic conductivity was obtained from
 103 the diffusion coefficient according to the Nernst-Einstein equation

$$\sigma = \frac{q^2 ND}{fk_B TV} \quad (4)$$

104 where σ is ionic conductivity, k_B is Boltzmann constant, T is temperature, f is Haven ratio, V is
 105 volume and q is the ion's charge. f had been calculated 0.69 for the perovskite structure [26].

106 The radial distribution function (RDF) was calculated to analyze the interaction between oxide
 107 ions and cation pairs using the following equation:

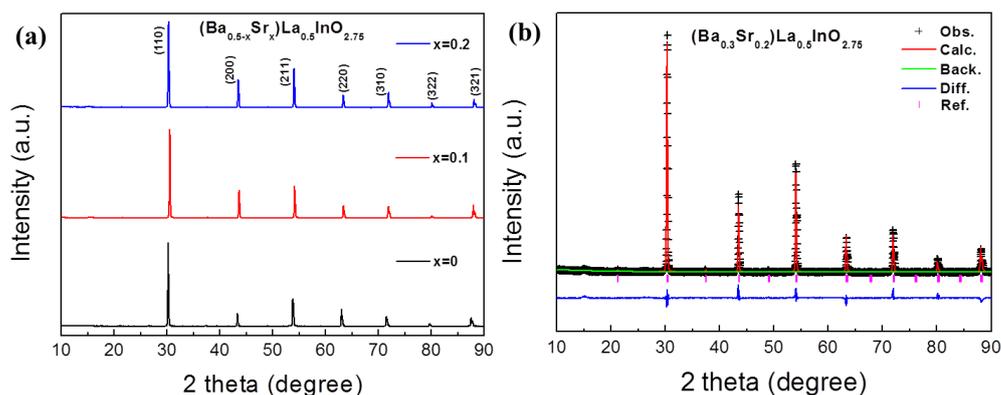
$$g(r) = \frac{dN/N}{dV/V} = \frac{V \langle N(r, \Delta r) \rangle}{N 4\pi r^2 \Delta r} \quad (5)$$

108 where V is the simulation cell volume, N is the total number, $N(r, \Delta r)$ is the number of atom
 109 found within a spherical shell of r to $r+\Delta r$ and the bracket represents a time average.

110 3. Results

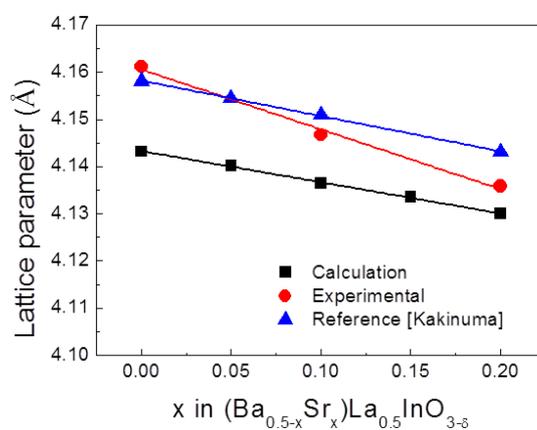
111 Powder diffraction patterns of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ (x=0, 0.1, and 0.2) sintered at 1773 K are
 112 shown in Figure 1(a). A single phase was observed in all compositions and the X-ray diffraction
 113 patterns could be indexed as a simple cubic structure, indicating that 20 at.% of barium on A-site
 114 could be substituted by strontium. It has been reported that LaInO_3 exhibits an orthorhombic phase
 115 at room temperature and the cubic phase is formed by doping of barium on lanthanum-site; as the
 116 doping content of barium increased in the $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Ba}_x\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ system, a mixture of cubic and
 117 orthorhombic phases was produced for the compositions of x = 0.1 - 0.3 and the single cubic phase
 118 was formed of the compositions of x = 0.4 - 0.8 [14]. According to the study on the lattice parameter

119 in the $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ system, however, the solubility limit of strontium on A-site in LaInO_3 was
 120 reported as about $x = 0.1$ although the ionic radius of strontium is similar to that of lanthanum [13].
 121 And Ruiz-Trejo et al. [27] suggested that the best dopant was strontium on lanthanum-site by the
 122 calculating the energy of alkaline-earth ions into the lanthanum-site, indicating that the soluble
 123 amount of dopant on A-site in LaInO_3 may be independent to the ionic radius or the energy of
 124 solution. It is interesting that the substituted amount of strontium was at least 20 at.% in the $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$
 125 system whereas it was about 10 at.% in the $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ system. The existence of
 126 barium might enhance the substituted amount of strontium. Using this XRD results, crystal structure
 127 was investigated using Rietveld refinement as shown in Figure 1(b).
 128



129
 130 **Figure 1.** (a) XRD spectra of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ ($x=0, 0.1,$ and 0.2) sintered at 1773 K for 5 h. (b)
 131 Rietveld refinement of the $(\text{Ba}_{0.3}\text{Sr}_{0.2})\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$. The plus mark and red line represent the experimental
 132 and calculated intensities, respectively; the blue line is the difference between them. Tick marks
 133 (magenta) indicate the positions of Bragg peaks.

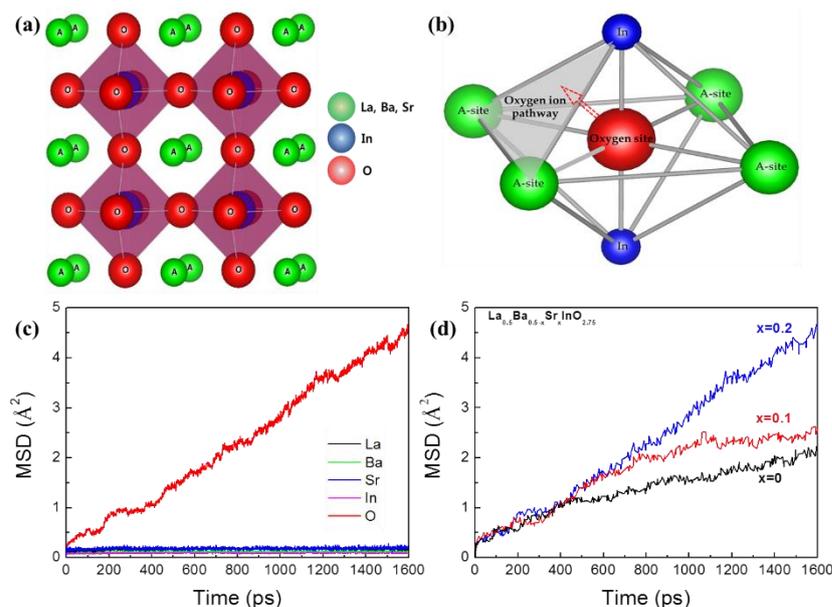
134 Figure 2 shows the lattice parameters of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ as a function of Sr content. The
 135 lattice parameters decrease with increasing Sr content, because a Sr ion has a smaller ionic radius
 136 than Ba ions. Also, as the amount of Sr ion increase, the lattice constants decrease continuously,
 137 suggesting that Ba and Sr ions have been replaced by La ions and no secondary phase is formed. It is
 138 also indicated that oxygen vacancies are generated for charge compensation as Ba ions and Sr ions
 139 are substituted for La ion sites. The calculated lattice parameters were $\sim 0.3\%$ lower than the
 140 experimental values, indicating that the interatomic potentials used in this study were reasonably
 141 accurate.
 142



143
 144 **Figure 2.** Lattice parameters of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ as a function of Sr content compared with
 145 experimental and reference values.

146 Figure 3(a) and (b) show the ternary oxides with ABO_3 cubic perovskite structure and oxide ion
 147 pathway of oxygen octahedron site in the perovskite structure, which is consisted of four A-site ions

148 and two B-site ions. In the perovskite structure, oxide ion can be moved through the oxygen pathway
 149 as shown in Figure 3(b), so we investigated the diffusion behavior of all oxide ions. Figure 3(c) shows
 150 the calculated MSDs of each ion in Sr contents at 1073 K. One of the main purposes of MSD analysis
 151 is the extraction of the diffusion coefficient value from the simulation [28]. In Figure 3(c), the MSDs
 152 for all the ions in the $(\text{Ba}_{0.3}\text{Sr}_{0.2})\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ composite are presented at 1073 K. It clearly shows that the
 153 MSD of oxygen ions continuously increases with time. However, the MSDs of cations show a constant
 154 value and there is no cation diffusion in the perovskite oxides. These results shows that $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$
 155 is the pure oxide ion conductor [15]. In Figure 3(d), we focused on the MSD of oxygen ions as the Sr ion
 156 contents, which clearly demonstrates that the oxygen ion transport property is
 157 increased as the amount of Sr ion increase.



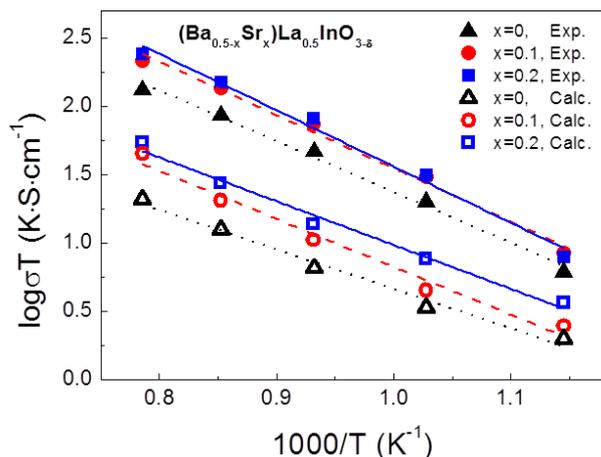
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159 **Figure 3.** (a) Typical ABO_3 perovskite structure, (b) Schematic diagram of oxygen octahedral site and
 160 oxygen path way, (c) MSD of each ions in $(\text{Ba}_{0.3}\text{Sr}_{0.2})\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ (d) MSD of oxygen ions in Sr contents
 161 at 1073 K.

162 Figure 4 shows an Arrhenius plot of the ionic conductivity with experimental values at the
 163 temperature ranges from 873 K to 1273 K. The calculated ionic conductivity for $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$
 164 was lower than experimental data for all compositions. The interatomic potential used for this
 165 research is empirical potential. It is difficult to exactly reproduce the experimental values due to the
 166 limitation, so there is a little error between the calculated and experimental values. The ionic
 167 conductivity, σ , is represented by three terms, i.e. carrier concentration, C , carrier charge, Ze , where
 168 Z is the valence and e is the electronic charge, and carrier mobility, μ .

$$\sigma = CZe\mu \quad (6)$$

169 In this study, all the compositions have the same number of carrier: oxygen ions, but higher ionic
 170 conductivity was obtained on higher contents of Sr ions. In order to investigate the effect of Sr ion
 171 substitution on the ionic conductivity and carrier mobility increase, the tolerance factor and lattice
 172 free volume was considered.
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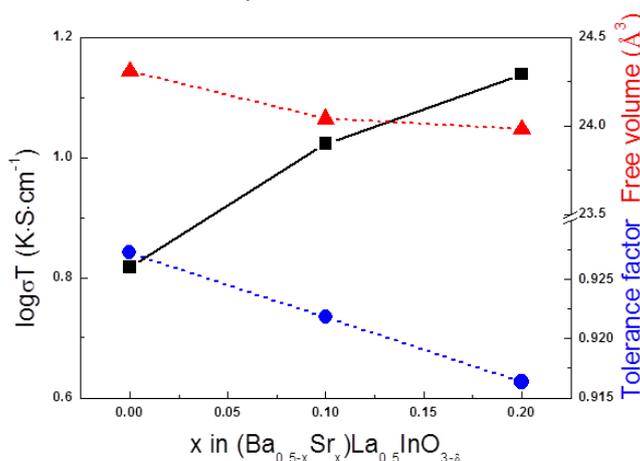
175 **Figure 4.** Arrhenius plots for the ionic conductivity of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ at 873-1273 K.

176 For the understanding about the oxygen-ion conduction in the perovskite-structured oxides,
 177 several parameters, such as tolerance factor, lattice free volume and critical radius, influenced on the
 178 oxygen-ion conductivity [29-31]. Figure 5 shows the relationship between ionic conductivity, lattice
 179 free volume and tolerance factor depending on the amount of Sr ions. The lattice free-volume was
 180 defined as the difference between the unit cell volume and the summed volume occupied by all
 181 constituent ions. As the free volume increases, the lattice spacing increases and the carrier ions can
 182 be moved easily, therefore ionic conductivity increases. Figure 5 shows that the lattice free volume of
 183 $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ decreased with increasing Sr content and ionic conductivity increased. Also, the
 184 Goldschmidt tolerance factor in followed equation, decreased with increasing Sr ion.

$$G_t = (r_A + r_O) / (\sqrt{2}(r_B + r_O)) \quad (7)$$

185 Where, r_A , r_B and r_O are a ionic radius of A, B cations and oxygen ion. The Goldschmidt tolerance
 186 factor can predict the structural stability depending on the degree of distortion of the BO_6 octahedron
 187 in perovskite structure. The ideal cubic structure has a 1 and the further the value deviates from 1,
 188 the lower the structural symmetry and the lower the conductivity too.

189 In general, it is known that the better the structural symmetry, the closer the Goldschmidt
 190 tolerance factor is to 1, the higher the ionic conductivity. However, in this study, the opposite result
 191 was obtained. In Figure 1, the XRD results showed cubic structure in all compositions and there is no
 192 effect of BO_6 distortion on ionic conductivity.



193

194 **Figure 5.** Ionic conductivity and tolerance factor (blue), free volume (red) of $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ at
 195 1073 K.

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197 Table 2 shows the critical radius of oxygen ion pathway with different Sr ion contents in $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$.
 198 The critical radius was defined as the critical size of the triangle formed by two A-site
 199 cations and one B-site cation where oxygen-ions move into adjacent oxygen vacancies. As the critical
 200 radius is large, the ionic conductivity shows high value. As shown in Table 2 the critical radius is
 201 larger in the pathway with Sr ion rather than with Ba ion. As the amount of Sr ion increased, the
 202 critical radius increased and the tolerance factor and lattice free volume decreased. When La ion sites
 203 are substituted with low-valent cation having large ionic radius, the ionic conductivity depends on
 204 the critical radius among the various factors in LaInO_3 perovskite. These result will be useful for
 205 predicting the ionic conduction properties when the synthesis of perovskite oxides.

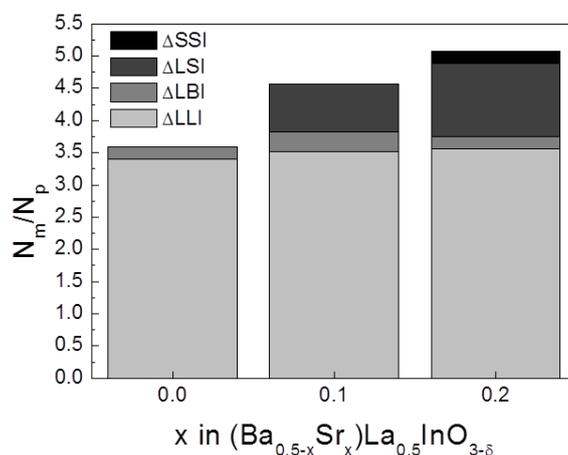
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Table 2 The critical radius of oxygen ion pathway with different Sr ion contents in $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$.

	ΔLLI	ΔLBI	ΔBBI	ΔLSI	ΔSSI	ΔBSI
x=0	0.993	0.925	0.832			
x=0.1	0.998	0.918	0.829	0.962	0.967	0.874
x=0.2	0.996	0.906	0.832	0.954	0.95	0.883

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Figure 6 shows the probability of the oxygen ion transport according to the oxygen ion pathway, N_m/N_p represents the amount of movement of the oxygen ions per adjacent oxygen ion pair by break the A-O ionic bonds. The bonding energies of O-Sr and O-Ba were -1664 and -1469 kJ/mol, respectively, and more energy would be required to break an O-Sr compared O-Ba bonds. Therefore, the oxide ion can be easily moved through the oxygen pathway including Ba ions. However, in all compositions, the amount of oxygen ions moving through the ΔLLI pathway occupies the greatest proportion. The ratio of passing through ΔLBI was smaller than that of ΔLSI , and it was confirmed that the critical radius is a crucial factor to reveal the oxygen transport property in doped LaInO_3 perovskite structure.



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Figure 6. Probability of oxygen ion migration through pathway in $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$ at 1073 K.

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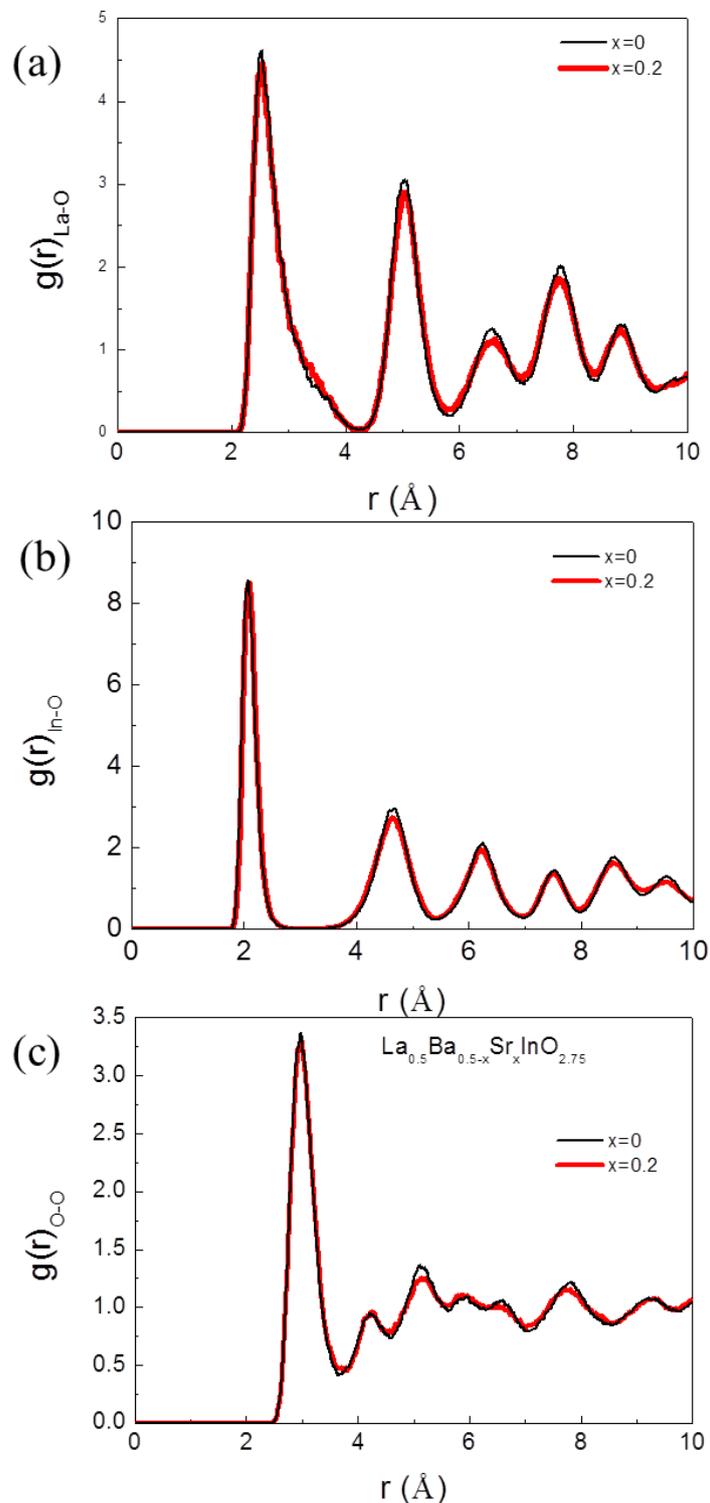
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To discover the structural difference between the Sr doping and un-doping composition, the interionic distance between particular ions and oxygen ions were analyzed using the RDF function. Figure 7 (a), (b) and (c) show RDF curves for the ionic pairs of La-O, In-O and O-O in $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-\delta}$. In all compositions, there were no significant differences however, as the Sr ion is substituted, the peak of RDF is lower and broadens which suggests that the doping composition is a distorted form derived from the un-doped composition [32-33]. In Figure 7(c) indicates that the oxygen ion do not exists in the original position and substitution of Sr ion to A sites makes it easy to move the oxygen ion because it permits the amount of oxygen vacancies in neighboring O ions to be

230 estimated. Because the higher peak intensity of the O-O pair is indicative of a smaller number of
 231 oxygen-vacancy pairs in the lattice structure, the un-doped composite was estimated to have less
 232 oxygen-vacancy pairs than the Sr doped composite. This means that more conduction paths are
 233 available in the Sr doped composite, so that a higher ionic conductivity would be expected. This study
 234 suggests that to achieve a high ionic conductivity in doped LaInO_3 , the critical radius should be larger
 235 by substitution of cations.



236

237

Figure 7. RDF (a) La-O ions, (b) In-O ions and (c) O-O ions in $(\text{Ba}_{0.5-x}\text{Sr}_x)\text{La}_{0.5}\text{InO}_{3-b}$ at 1073 K.

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239 4. Conclusions

240 In this study, the oxygen ion conductivity and conduction mechanism of Ba and Sr doped LaInO₃
241 were analyzed using molecular dynamics simulation. The (Ba_{0.5-x}Sr_x)La_{0.5}InO_{3-δ} composites are
242 verified the oxygen ion conductor by calculation the MSD and increasing Sr contents, the MSD of
243 oxygen ion and ionic conductivity increased too. As the substitution of Sr ion with small ionic radius
244 to Ba ion site, reduced the tolerance factor and lattice free volume, but critical radius increased,
245 therefore, the critical radius is a dominant factor in doped LaInO₃ perovskite. As a result of RDF
246 calculation, the oxygen ion tends to deviated from the original oxygen ion site in doped Sr ion
247 composition. To achieve high ionic conductivity, the oxygen pathway should have large critical
248 radius in doped LaInO₃.

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250 H.L. and T.H.S.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, K.-J.H.; Writing—Review and Editing, S.-M.J. and T.H.S.

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255 **Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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