
First Principles Investigation of Structural, Electronic and Mechanical Properties of NaVF_3

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Abstract

In this research, first principles calculations of NaVF_3 perovskite are performed using the Quantum ESPRESSO software package. The structural, electronic, magnetic, and mechanical properties of NaVF_3 are computed. The electronic structure reveals that it exhibits half-metallic ferromagnetism, with conducting nature in the spin-up channel and non-conducting in the spin-down channel. The half-metallicity and ferromagnetism in NaVF_3 are further confirmed by the integral magnetic moment of $3 \mu_B$. The mechanical properties analysis reveals that NaVF_3 is mechanically stable, ductile, and displays significant elastic anisotropy.

Keywords: Quantum ESPRESSO, perovskite, half metallicity, ferromagnetism, anisotropy

Introduction

Fluoro perovskites belong to the family of perovskite structures, which are known for their unique properties. These structures have the formula ABX_3 , where A and B are cations and X is an anion (Brittman et al., 2015). Fluoro perovskites are well known for their wide range of functional properties, including optoelectronics, thermoelectric, optical lithography, photovoltaics, and semiconductive applications (Erum & Iqbal, 2017; Khattak et al., 2023; Rahman et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2023). Normally, fluoro perovskites have wide or ultrawide band gaps (Meziani et al., 2011; Neupane & Thapa, 2017; Pilania & Sharma, 2013; Sandeep et al., 2017; Shahzad et al., 2024; Rehman et al., 2021), making them suitable for lenses, ferroelectric, antiferromagnetic systems and optical technologies such as transparent and optical coatings (Gillani et al., 2021). In addition to the wide band gap, many fluoro perovskites also seem to exhibit half metallic ferromagnetism (Abdullah, Khan et al., 2022; Abdullah, Sajjad et al., 2022; Hashmi et al., 2016; Mubarak & Al-Omari, 2015). They show 100% spin-polarization at the fermi level. Such half metallic perovskites are considered to be suitable for spintronic applications and various fields of modern technology (Algahtani et al., 2023; Hamlat et al., 2020).

Inspired by its broader applications, Chenine et al. (2017) performed an investigation of the structural, electronic, magnetic, mechanical, and thermoelectric

properties of fluoroperovskite NaVF_3 within the framework of WIEN2k. They used PBE and TB-mBJ functionals in their calculations and found that NaVF_3 is half-metallic and ferromagnetic in nature. Similarly, Rashid (2019) performed the first principles calculation of the structural, electronic, magnetic, optical, and thermoelectric properties of NaVF_3 . He used PBEsol-GGA and mBJ functionals and found that NaVF_3 exhibits a semiconducting nature.

Driven by discrepancies in the two previous studies of NaVF_3 , we intended to investigate the actual behaviors of NaVF_3 and for that purpose, we performed the calculations of the structural, electronic, magnetic and mechanical properties of NaVF_3 with a different approach and presented the results in this paper.

Computational Details

The computations in this work were performed on the foundation of density functional theory (DFT) (Hohenberg & Kohn, 1964; Kohn & Sham, 1965). The Materials Project database was used as the source of crystal structure information and basic data for calculations (Jain et al., 2013). The Quantum ESPRESSO software package (Giannozzi, Baroni et al., 2009; Giannozzi, Andreussi et al., 2017) was used for DFT calculations. The PBE and PBEsol variations of the Generalized Gradient Approximation (GGA) (Perdew, Burke et al., 1996; Perdew, Chevary et al., 1992; Perdew, Ruzsinszky et al., 2008) were used as exchange-correlation functionals to investigate structural, electronic, magnetic, and mechanical properties. The sampling of the Brillouin zone was done through a Monkhorst-Pack (Monkhorst & Pack, 1976), $11 \times 11 \times 11$ k-points mesh, and the cut-off energy was set to 100 Rydbergs. An extension to the quantum ESPRESSO, thermo_pw (Motornyi et al., 2018), was implemented for the approximation of mechanical properties.

Results and Discussion

Structural properties

NaVF_3 has a cubic unit cell and lies in the Pm-3m space group. The crystal structure of a unit cell of NaVF_3 is presented in Figure 1. The position of Na in NaVF_3 is at (0.0, 0.0, 0.0); similarly, V is located at (0.5, 0.5, 0.5); and three F atoms are at positions (0.0, 0.5, 0.5), (0.5, 0.0, 0.5), and (0.5, 0.5, 0.0), respectively. The cubic NaVF_3 structure was optimized using PBE and PBEsol in its ferromagnetic and non-magnetic states and the energy difference, $\Delta E = E_{FM} - E_{NM}$, was found to be negative, indicating higher stability of the ferromagnetic state. Taking it into account, further calculations of NaVF_3 in this paper were performed solely for the ferromagnetic state. The optimized lattice parameters were obtained as 4.12 \AA and 4.05 \AA for PBE and PBEsol, respectively, which are in good agreement with the experimental value of 3.94 \AA achieved by Shafer (1969). The formation and cohesive energy were calculated to show the chemical stability of

the compound. The formation and cohesive energy of NaVF₃ can be expressed as (Ray et al., 2024).

$$E_{for} = E_{NaVF_3}^{total} - (E_{Na}^{bulk} + E_V^{bulk} + 3E_F^{bulk})$$

$$E_{coh} = E_{NaVF_3}^{total} - (E_{Na}^{iso} + E_V^{iso} + 3E_F^{iso})$$

Here, E_{for} and E_{coh} represent formation and cohesive energies for NaVF₃ while E^{bulk} and E^{iso} represent respective total energy per atom of Na, V and F atoms in bulk form and single isolated atom. The formation energy of NaVF₃ as calculated by using PBE functional was found to be -3.3407 eV/atom and the cohesive energy was found to be 4.6381 eV/atom. The negative value of formation energy points out that this compound is thermodynamically stable. Similarly, the equilibrium energies for different values of the lattice parameters were calculated, and the results were fitted to Birch-Murnaghan's equation of state (Murnaghan, 1944). From the Birch-Murnaghan fit, the bulk modulus, its first derivative, and the equilibrium lattice parameter of NaVF₃ are summarized in Table 1.

Figure 1 Crystal Structure of NaVF₃

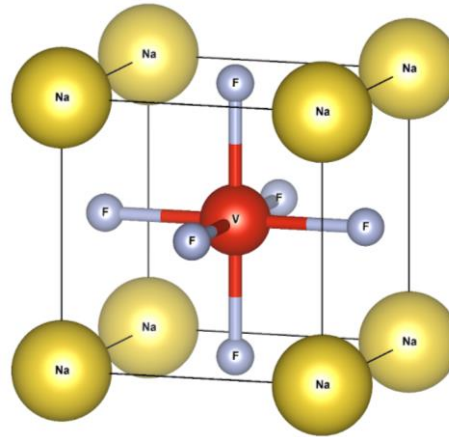


Table 1 The Calculated Bulk Modulus (B), First Derivative of the Bulk Modulus (B'), Equilibrium Lattice Parameter (a_0), Formation Energy (E_{for}), and Cohesive Energy (E_{coh}) of NaVF₃

Mode of calculation	B (GPa)	B'	a_0 (Å)	E_{for} (eV/atom)	E_{coh} (eV/atom)
PBE	69.8	4.55	4.12	-3.3407	4.6381
PBEsol	78.1	4.65	4.05		
Other calculations	94.61 ^b , 98.03 ^c	4.92 ^b	4.04 ^b , 4.07 ^c , 3.94 ^a		

^aExperimental (shafer, 1969); ^bTheoretical (Chenine et al., 2017); ^cTheoretical (Rashid, 2019)

Electronic Properties

Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the band diagrams of NaVF₃ computed along the high symmetry points. The band diagrams indicate a half metallic nature of NaVF₃ with a conducting spin up channel and a non-conducting spin down channel with a clear band gap. Thus, the values of band gaps presented in this paper refer to the band gap from the spin down channel. The measured band gaps from PBE and PBEsol are 5.7436 eV and 5.9325 eV, respectively. Our findings revealed that NaVF₃ exhibits half-metallic behavior with a wide band gap in the spin-down channel, thereby supporting the conclusions drawn by Chenine et al. (2017). The previous study by Rashid (2019) illustrated it as a semiconductor. The discrepancies in the electronic structures are due to the use of different exchange-correlation functionals and the inherent limitations of computational methods. This highlights the importance of accurate approaches to obtain a more consistent and reliable interpretation of the material's electronic structure. The calculated values of the band gap lie in the ultraviolet range, which favours the substance for optoelectronic applications (Babu et al., 2020).

Further, to understand the atomic contributions to the electronic structure, we calculated the total and partial densities of states using both PBE and PBEsol functionals, as shown in Figures 4 and 5, respectively. The figures reveal that the total density of states intersects the Fermi level in the spin-up channel, thus indicating metallic behavior. However, the analysis displays a band gap in the spin-down channel for both approximations. Thus, the material shows 100% spin-polarized behavior at the Fermi level, which confirms its half-metallic ferromagnetic nature. According to the partial density of states, the d-orbital of V atom provide the most significant contribution to both valence and conduction bands, while Na and F atoms show a very small contribution.

Total and individual atomic magnetic moments also have been computed through calculations to analyze the magnetic characteristics of the system, as shown in Table 2. The magnetic properties of any compound require an integer magnetic moment value to exhibit half-metallic behavior, according to Attema et al. (2005). The obtained total integral magnetic moment of 3.00 μ_B proves that NaVF₃ material demonstrates half-metallic characteristics. The primary contribution to the total magnetic moment comes from the V atom, with minimal contributions from the Na along with F atoms.

Table 2 Band gaps, Total and Individual Magnetic Moments of NaVF₃

Mode of calculation	Band gap (eV)	Total magnetization (μ_B)	Na (μ_B)	V (μ_B)	F (μ_B)
PBE	5.7436	3.0000	0.0224	2.1536	0.0281
PBEsol	5.9325	3.0000	0.0316	2.0890	0.0252
Other calculations	5.1 ^a , 3.72 ^b				

^aTheoretical (TB-mBJ) (Chenine et al., 2017); ^bTheoretical (PBE) (Chenine et al., 2017)

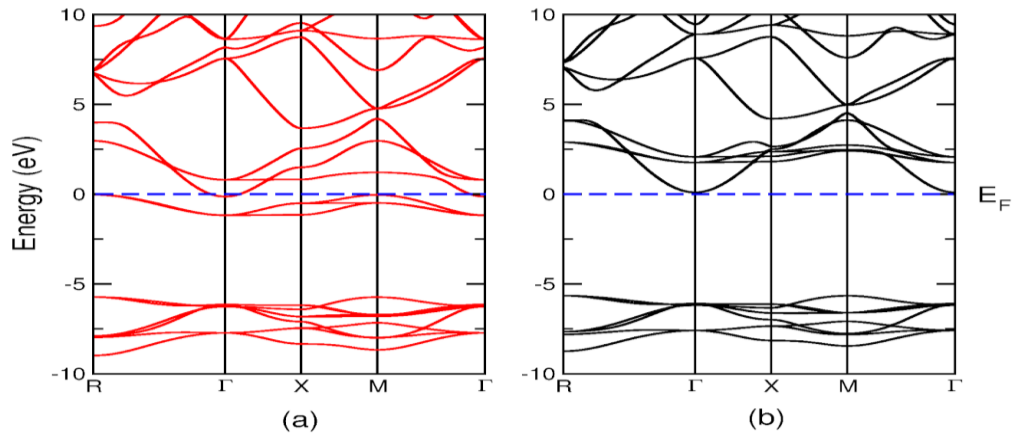
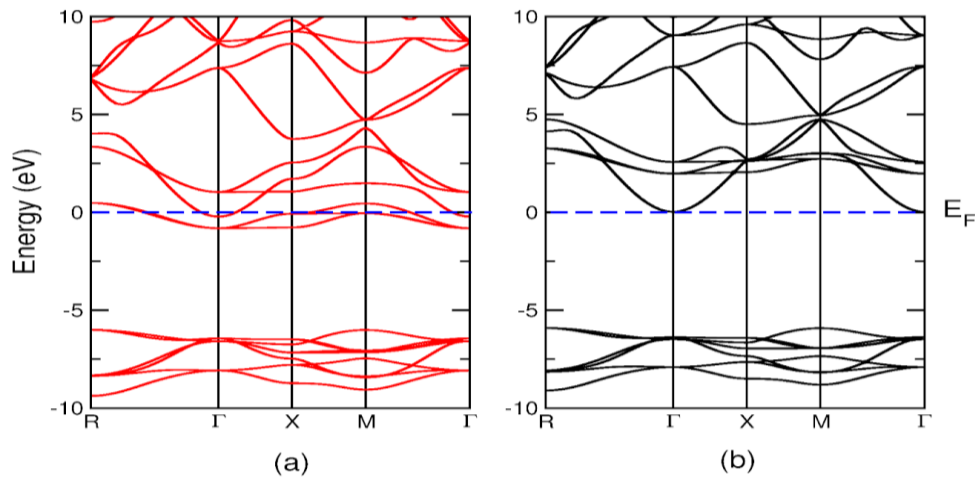
Figure 2 Band Diagram of (a) Spin up and (b) Spin down State for PBE**Figure 3** Band Diagram of (a) Spin up and (b) Spin down State for PBEsol

Figure 4 Density of States of NaVF3 for PBE

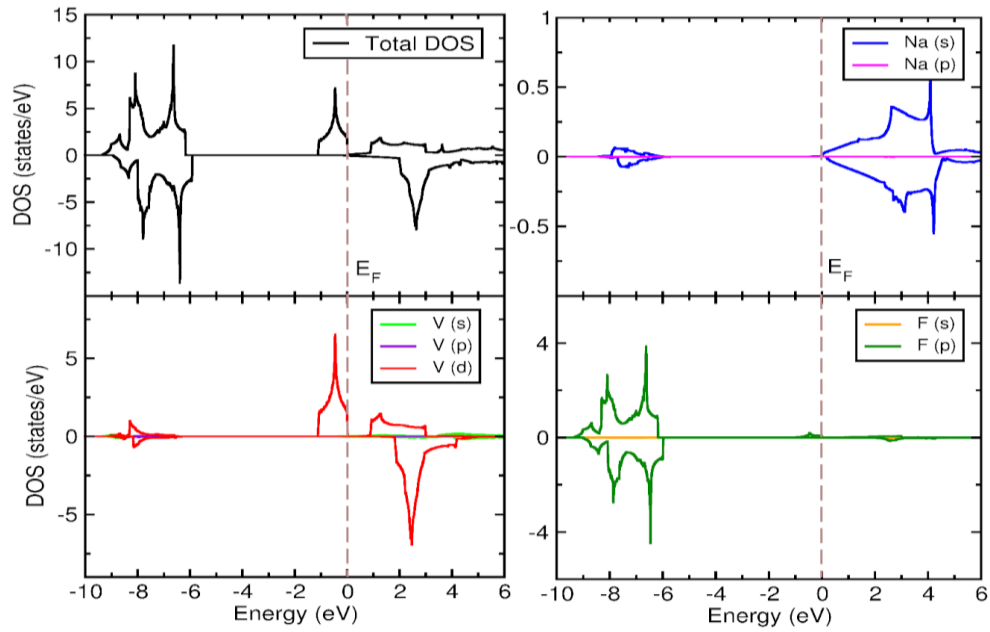
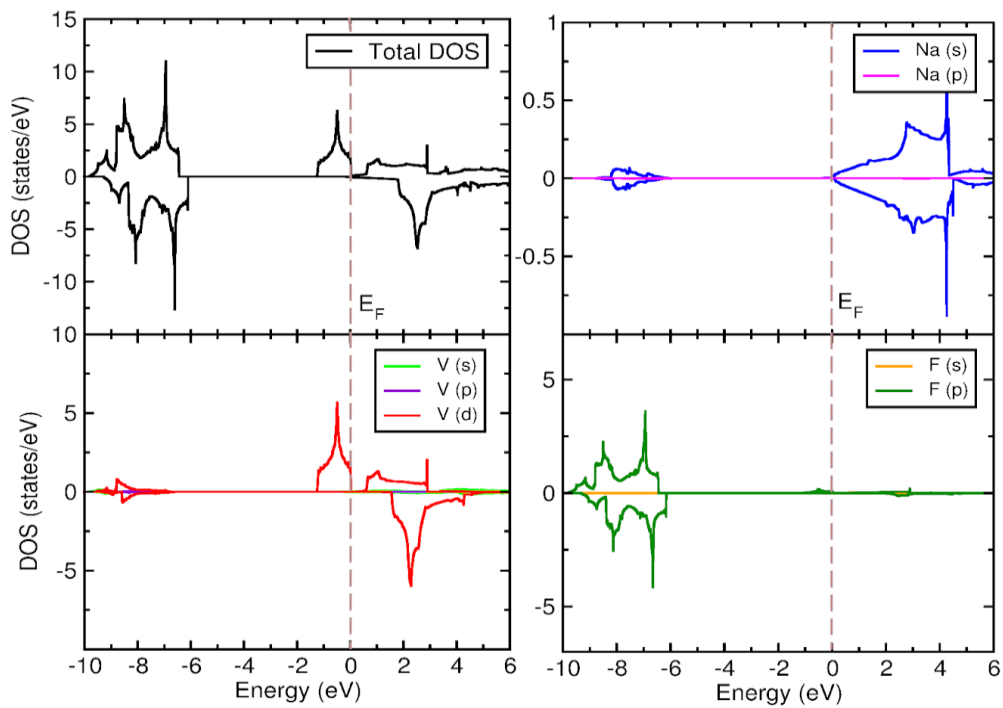


Figure 5 Density of States of NaVF3 for PBEsol



Mechanical Properties

To assure mechanical stability, the three independent elastic constants C_{11} , C_{12} , and C_{44} should satisfy the criteria proposed by Born (Born & Huang, 1956): $C_{11} - C_{12} > 0$; $C_{11} + 2C_{12} > 0$; $C_{44} > 0$. The calculated elastic constants are presented in Table 3, and it is evident that these elastic constants satisfy the criteria for mechanical stability. The elastic constants C_{11} and C_{12} indicate the response of the solid to uniaxial strain, while C_{44} describes the resistance to shape deformation. The significantly higher values of C_{11} and C_{12} compared to C_{44} suggest that the compound is less resistant to shear deformation than to uniaxial deformation. From the calculated elastic constants, various elastic properties including bulk modulus, shear modulus, Young's modulus and Poisson's ratio can be estimated using Voigt, Reuss and Hill estimations (Voigt, 1966; Hill, 1952; Reuss, 1929). The Voigt bulk modulus and Reuss bulk modulus of elasticity are equal in the cubic system (Dewit, 2008).

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

$$G = \frac{G_v + G_R}{2}$$

$$\text{Where, } G_v = \frac{1}{5}(C_{11} - C_{12} + 3C_{44}) \text{ and } G_R = \frac{5C_{44}(C_{11} - C_{12})}{4C_{44} + 3(C_{11} - C_{12})}$$

$$E = \frac{9BG}{3B+G}$$

$$\nu = \frac{3B-2G}{2(3B+G)}$$

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

Table 3 The calculated elastic constants (C_{11} , C_{12} and C_{44}), bulk modulus (B), Young's modulus (E), shear modulus (G), Poisson's ratio (ν), and Pugh's ratio (B/G)

Mode of calculation	C_{11} (GPa)	C_{12} (GPa)	C_{44} (GPa)	B (GPa)	E (GPa)	G (GPa)	ν	B/G
PBE	151.61	29.65	8.77	70.30	57.80	21.49	0.31	3.27
PBEsol	170.48	32.26	7.01	78.33	57.76	21.40	0.27	3.66
Other calculations	215.35 ^a	36.90 ^a	9.33 ^a	96.38 ^a	76.39 ^a	27.92 ^a	0.37 ^a	3.45 ^a

^aTheoretical (Chenine, 2017)

According to Pugh's formula (Pugh, 1954), the Pugh ratio (B/G) is crucial in determining the brittleness of a material. B/G higher than 1.75 indicates ductility,

while lower than 1.75 suggests brittleness. For NaVF_3 , the values of B/G were obtained as 3.27 and 3.66 with PBE and PBEsol, respectively. Thus, the ductile nature of NaVF_3 can be confirmed. Poisson's ratio (ν) can also be used to estimate the ductile or brittle nature of materials. Generally, if the value of Poisson's ratio (ν) is less than 0.26, the material is considered brittle, whereas a value greater than 0.26 indicates ductility (Frantsevich, 1982). According to our calculations, the Poisson's ratio of NaVF_3 is 0.34 using the PBE functional and 0.35 using the PBEsol functionals. Therefore, it can be concluded that NaVF_3 is ductile in nature. Elastic anisotropy refers to the property of a material that leads to different elastic behavior along different crystallographic directions. It influences a range of physical phenomena, including phase transformations, anomalous phonon modes, anisotropic plastic deformation, precipitation processes, dislocation dynamics, mechanical yield strength, elastic instability, crack propagation, and internal friction (Nasir et al., 2017). A perfectly uniform material, called isotropic, would have the same value of modulus of elasticity in all directions. A perfectly isotropic material has anisotropy value of 1, while any value greater or less than 1 represents the degree of anisotropy (Zener, 1948). For NaVF_3 , the anisotropy factors were found to be 0.14 and 0.10 for PBE and PBEsol respectively, indicating the anisotropic character of the studied material.

Furthermore, elastic constants allow the calculation of longitudinal and transverse sound velocities in a material using Navier's equations, which can then be used to estimate the average sound velocity (Anderson, 1963).

$$v_l = \left(\frac{3B+4G}{3\rho} \right)^{1/2}, \quad v_t = \left(\frac{G}{\rho} \right)^{1/2}$$

$$v_m = \left[\frac{1}{3} \left(\frac{2}{v_t^3} + \frac{1}{v_l^3} \right) \right]^{-1/3}$$

Moreover, the Debye temperature (θ_D) can be estimated by using the average sound velocity as follows:

$$\theta_D = \frac{h}{k_B} \left[\frac{3n}{4\pi} \left(\frac{N_A \rho}{M} \right) \right]^{1/3} v_m$$

Table 4 summarizes all the calculated values of longitudinal, transverse, and average sound velocities and Debye temperature. It can be seen from the table that the material exhibits a high Debye temperature, which suggests that it may possess significant thermal conductivity. The calculated Debye temperature is in close agreement with the previously reported result (Chenine, 2017).

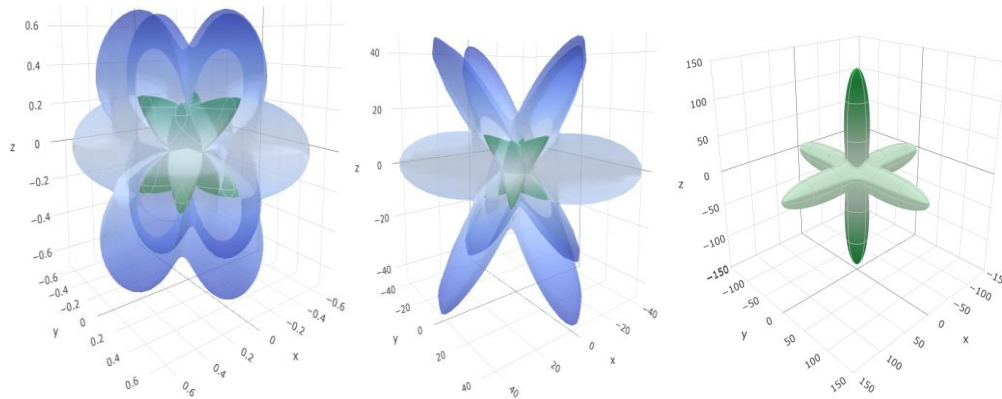
To further analyze the anisotropic characteristics of the material, 3D plots of Young's modulus, shear modulus, and Poisson's ratio were generated using the ELATE program (Gaillac et al., 2016), as illustrated in Figure 6. The non-spherical

shapes of all three plots clearly confirm the anisotropic nature of the material, consistent with the anisotropy factor reported in Table 4.

Table 4 Calculated longitudinal velocity of sound (v_l), transverse velocity of sound (v_t), average velocity (v_m), Debye temperature (θ_D), and anisotropy factor (A)

Mode of calculation	v_l (m/s)	v_t (m/s)	v_m (m/s)	θ_D (K)	A
PBE	5648.21	2632.24	2963.98	328.25	0.14
PBEsol	5730.51	2564.19	2892.70	308.92	0.10

Figure 6 3D visualizations of Young's modulus, shear modulus, and Poisson's ratio for NaVF₃



Conclusion

The structural, electronic, magnetic, and elastic properties of cubic NaVF₃ were computed using density functional theory. The study shows that NaVF₃ is mechanically stable, satisfying the Born criteria. The lattice parameters predicted by PBE and PBEsol functionals are in good agreement with the previously reported theoretical and experimental results. Band structures predict the half-metallic ferromagnetism with a wide band gap in the minority spin channel. The obtained values of band gaps are 5.74 eV and 5.93 eV for PBE and PBEsol, respectively. The integral value of the total magnetic moment further confirms the half-metallic nature of NaVF₃. The elastic constants, including bulk modulus, Young's modulus, shear modulus, Poisson's ratio, velocity of sound, and Debye temperature, are also reported in this work. The elastic calculations show that NaVF₃ is anisotropic and ductile.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors Contribution

K K: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, and writing original draft.

U C: data validation, data visualization, and Writing—review and editing.

E T: software handling, formal analysis, and writing original draft

G C K: resources, supervision, data validation, data visualization, and writing—review and editing

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