A phonon fluctuation state in the stuffed tridymite-type oxides Ba$_{1-x}$Sr$_x$Al$_2$O$_4$

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The M-point mode condenses at $T_C$=450 K, giving rise to the low-temperature ferroelectric phase ($P6_3$), whereas the K-point mode is electrostatically unfavorable and just disappears below $T_C$. In this study, we investigated the thermal diffuse scatterings in the electron diffraction and the dielectric properties of Ba$_{1-x}$Sr$_x$Al$_2$O$_4$ ($x=0$–0.5). We present that Ba$_{1-x}$Sr$_x$Al$_2$O$_4$ system exhibits a "fluctuating" state, in which the M-point soft mode does not condense but survives and fluctuates down to low temperature, below $T^*\sim 200$ K. Although the K-point soft mode disappears below $T^*$, the $P6_322$ crystal structure is retained at temperatures down to 15 K. The wave vector of the M-point diffuse scatterings is temperature dependent below $T^*$ and loses commensurateness as the temperature decreases. This result indicates that the fluctuation in the wave vector of the M-point mode increases at low temperatures.

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