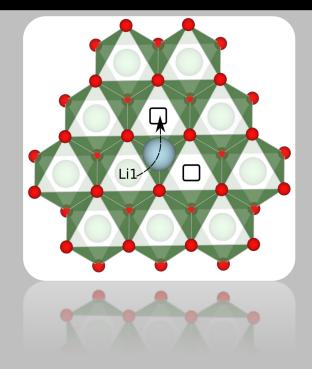
## Elucidation and prediction of ion transport in battery materials: A first-principles and machine learning study



Ph. D. Thesis Defence

Presenter

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5<sup>th</sup> Year Ph.D. student

Under the Guidance of **Dr. Sai Gautam Gopalakrishnan**Associate Professor

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Date: 17th November 2025

Email: reshmadevi@iisc.ac.in





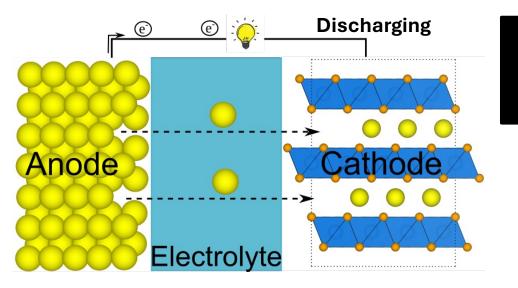




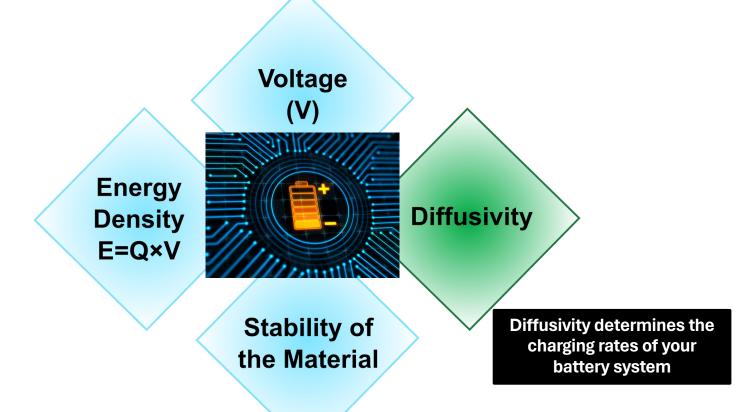


#### Migration Barriers: A bottleneck in Battery Design

Rechargeable Alkali-ion batteries: Essential energy storage solution

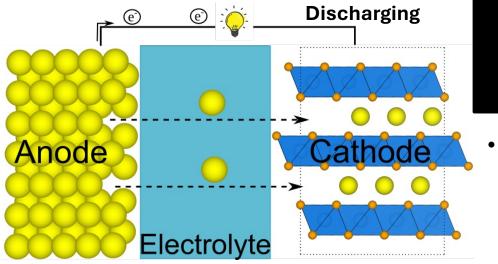


### Usage of better Materials ==> Better Performance



#### Migration Barriers: A bottleneck in Battery Design

- Rechargeable Alkali-ion batteries: Essential energy storage solution
- Next generation electric devices benefit from high energy density materials with better charging/discharge rates



#### Estimating ionic diffusivity is highly important for novel material discovery

In intercalation electrodes and electrolytes ionic diffusivity within the bulk influence the rate performance

$$D = D_0 exp \left( \frac{-E_m}{K_B T} \right)$$

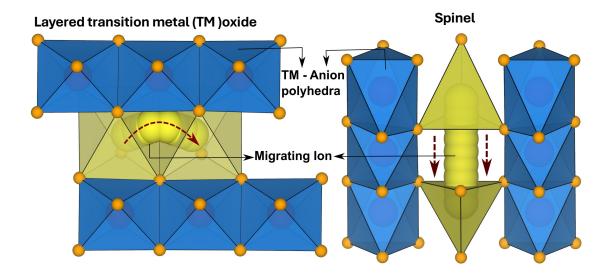
$$E_m: Migration barrier$$

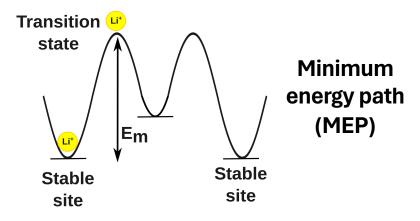
$$E_m: Rollzmann constant$$

D: Ionic diffusivity

K<sub>B</sub>: Boltzmann constant

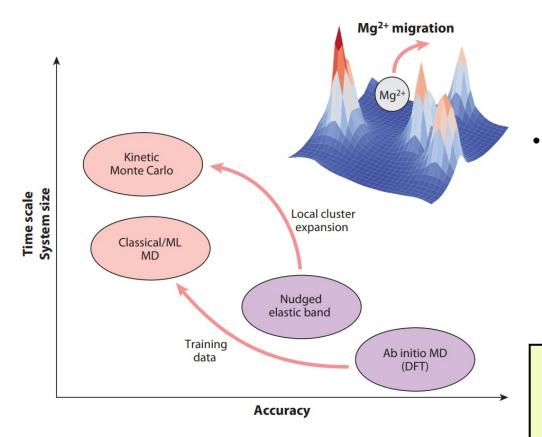
T: Temperature

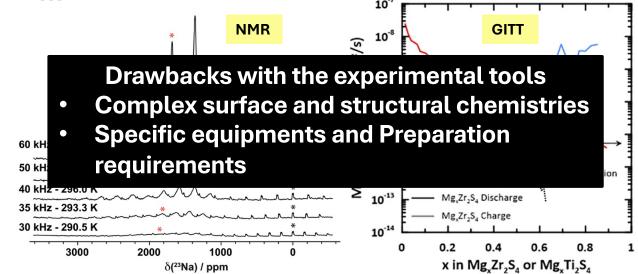




**Estimation of E<sub>m</sub> is highly tricky** 

 Experimentally E<sub>m</sub> is estimated using techniques like Galvanostatic intermittent titration technique (GITT)<sup>1</sup>, electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS), and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR)<sup>2</sup>





Computationally  $E_m$  is estimated using ab initio molecular dynamics (MD) and **nudged elastic band (NEB)** techniques

#### Drawbacks with the computational tools

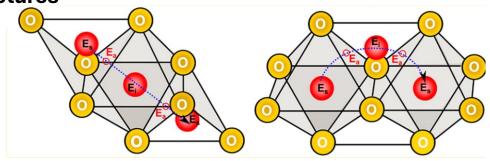
- Small simulation cell size
- Shorter time and length scales
- Significant computational time

## How can we estimate E<sub>m</sub> faster with reliable accuracy?

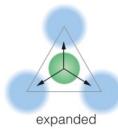
#### Insights so far from the literature - Design principles and Models

Materials design rules for multivalent ion mobility in intercalation structures 1

- Avoid preferred coordination environment
- Reduce changes in the coordination numbers during migration

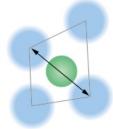


#### Searching ternary oxides and chalcogenides as positive electrodes for calcium batteries <sup>2</sup>





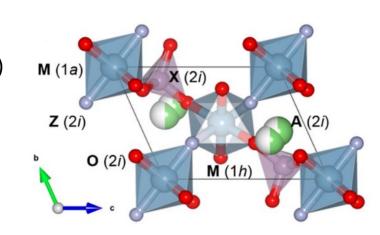




- Select structures with optimal diagonal/area/volume fraction of migrating cation
- Reduce changes in the volume fraction during migration

#### Models to estimate $E_m$ directly

- Jalem et al., utilized descriptor-based machine learning (ML) or Neural Network(NN) models to predict  $E_m$  in 72 Olivines(AMXO<sub>4</sub>)<sup>3</sup> and 317 Tavorites (AMXO<sub>4</sub>Z)<sup>4</sup>
  - A: Li/Na; M: Main group element; X: Group 14,15,16; Z: F/Cl/Br/I
  - Reported R<sup>2</sup> score: 0.978 and root mean squared error (RMSE):0.0619

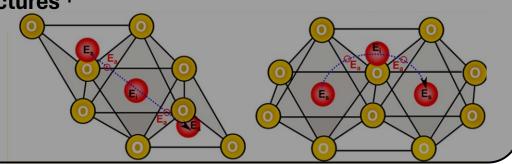


<sup>1.</sup> Rong et al., Chem. Mater. 27, 6016-6021 (2015) 2.Lu et al., Chem. Mater. 33, 5809-5821 (2021)

#### Insights so far from the literature - Design principles and Models

Materials design rules for multivalent ion mobility in intercalation structures 1

- Avoid preferred coordination environment
- Reduce changes in the coordination numbers during migration



# Searching ternary oxides

#### **Significant Limitations**

- Poor generalizability across different chemistries or structures
- Trained on specific chemistries or structures
- Less Predictive accuracy outside the scope of training dataset

al/area/volume

migration

#### Models to estimate $E_m$ directly

• Jalem et al., utilized descriptor-based machine learning (ML) or Neural Network(NN) models to predict E<sub>m</sub> in 72 Olivines(AMXO<sub>4</sub>)<sup>3</sup> and 317 Tavorites (AMXO<sub>4</sub>Z)<sup>4</sup>

A: Li/Na; M: Main group element; X: Group 14,15,16; Z: F/Cl/Br/I

• Reported R<sup>2</sup> score: 0.978 and root mean squared error (RMSE):0.0619

M (1a)

Z (2i)

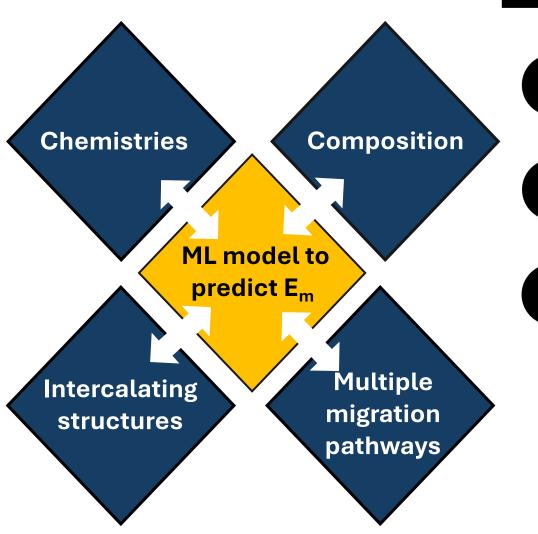
M (1h)

A (2i)

1. Rong et al., Chem. Mater. 27, 6016-6021 (2015) 2.Lu et al., Chem. Mater. 33, 5809-5821 (2021)

#### Faster and accurate estimation of E<sub>m</sub> is important





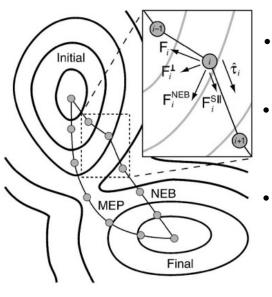
How accurately can the current state of the art techniques estimate  $E_m$ ?

Do we have a reliable database with different chemistries, composition and structures to construct an ML model to predict  $E_m$ ?

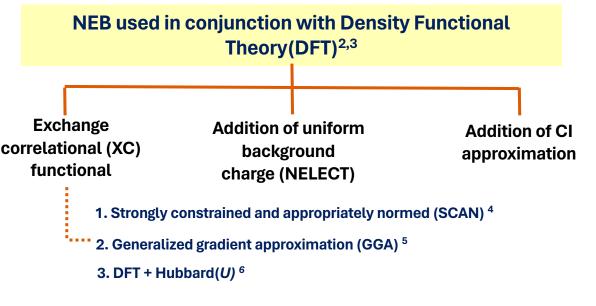
Constructing a generalizable ML model

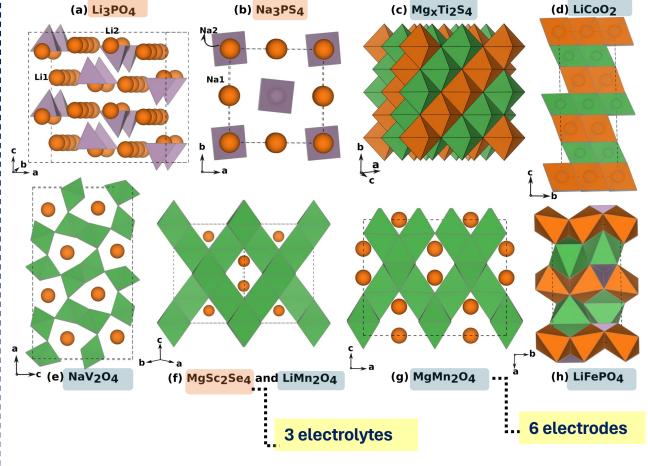
- A. How do we solve the data-inadequacy issue?
- B. How do we construct a generalizable model with all the insights gained so far?

#### 3 handles and 9 distinct systems considered



- $NEB^1$  calculations directly evaluate  $E_m$
- Estimates the saddle point by optimising the perpendicular component of the force
- In climbing image (CI), spring forces on the image with highest energy is removed



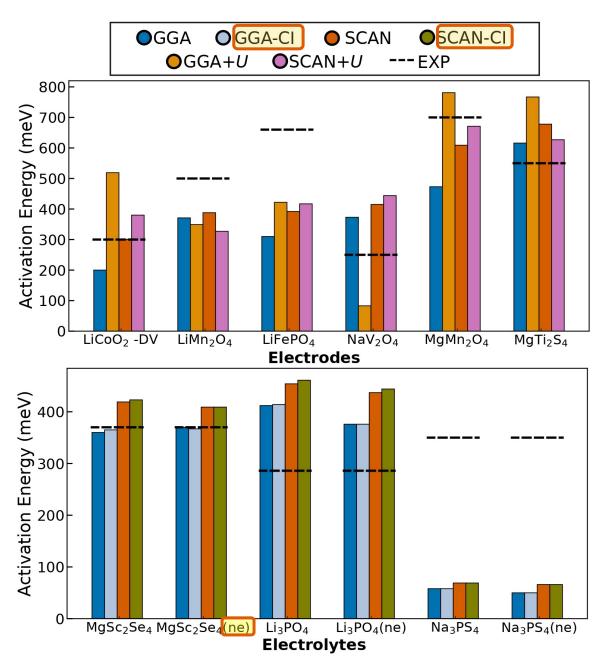


#### Why these systems?

- Heterogeneity of intercalation ion
- Diversity of structural frameworks
- Availability of experimental data

- 1. Sheppard et al., Chem. Phys. 128, 134106 (2008)
- 2. Kohn & Sham, Phys. Rev. 140, A1133 (1965)
- 3. Hohenberg et al., Phys. Rev. 136, B864 (1964)
- 4. Sun et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 115, 036402 (2015)
- 5. Perdew et al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 77, 3865 (1996)
- 6. Anisimov et al., Phys. Rev. B 44, 943 (1991)

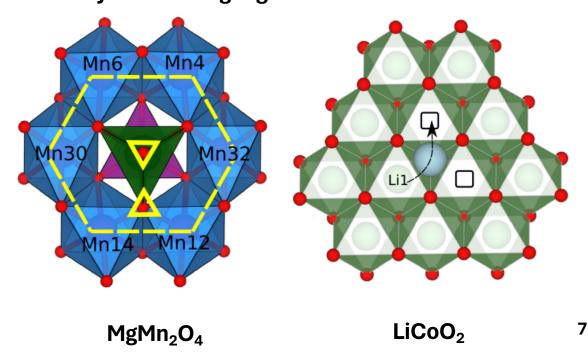
#### SCAN exhibits better numerical accuracy on average



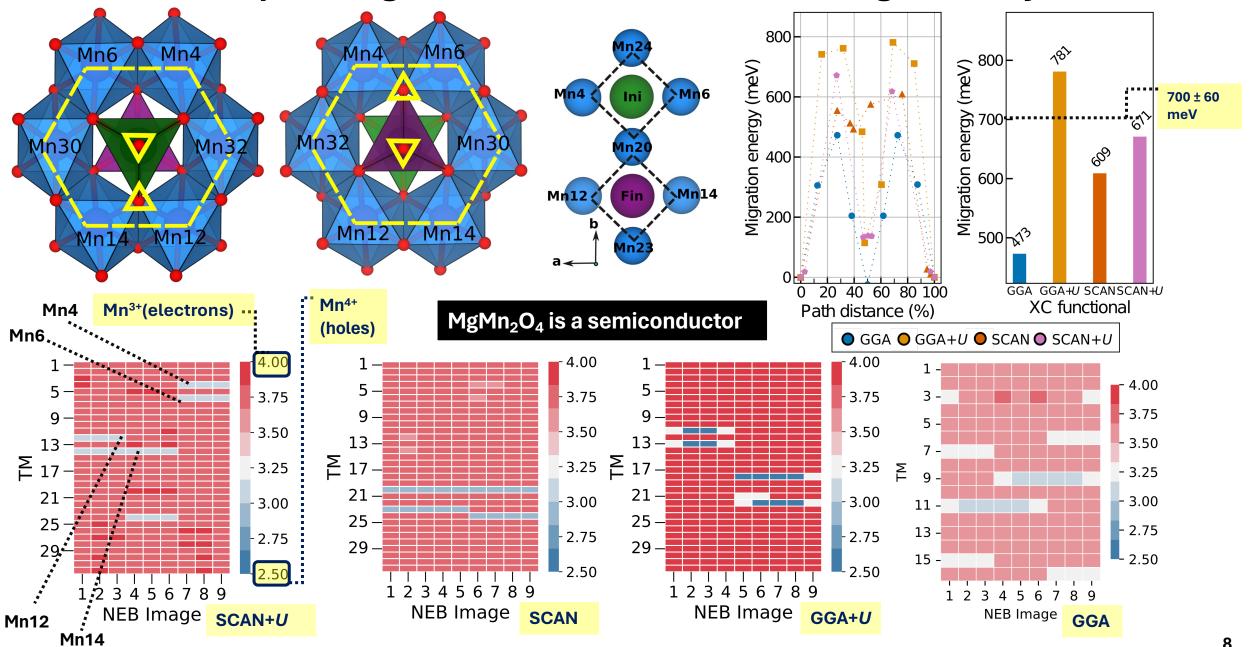
- Addition of NELECT or CI does not affect E<sub>m</sub>
- $E_m$  from SCAN >  $E_m$  from GGA
- $E_m$  from SCAN+U < GGA+U

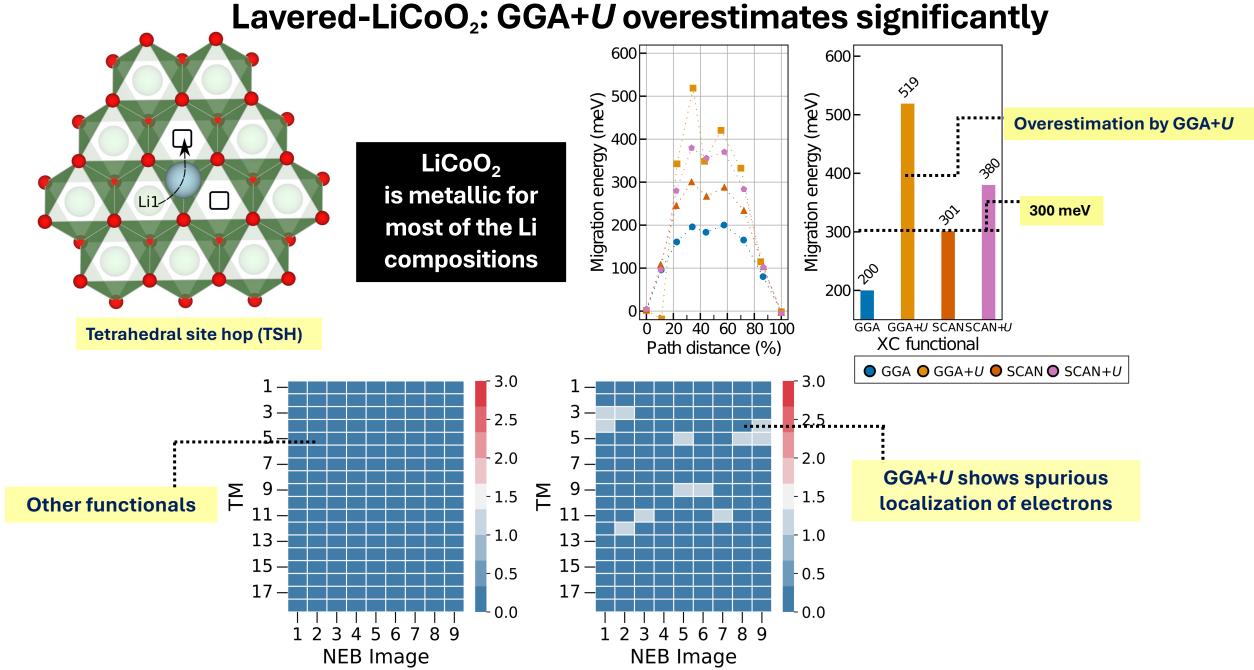
SCAN has lower mean absolute error (MAE = 140 meV) compared to other functionals (>145 meV)

#### Two Systems to highlight the trends and anomalies



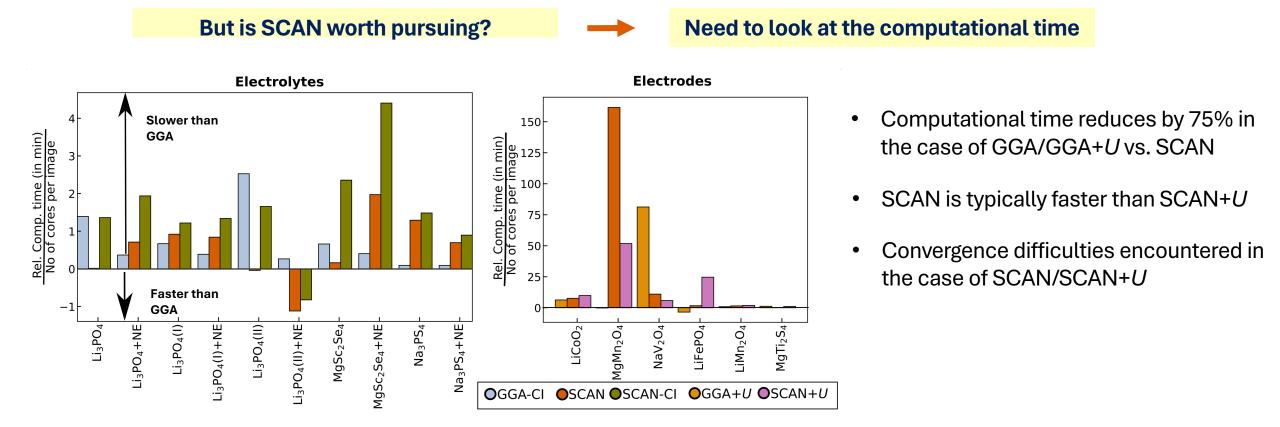
#### Spinel-MgMn<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>: GGA underestimates significantly





#### Computational cost: Is SCAN-NEB worth it?

- SCAN has better numerical accuracy on average when compared to other XC functionals
- SCAN (and SCAN+*U*) captures the underlying electronic structure well



**GGA** for "quick" estimation

**SCAN for "better" accuracy** 

# Q2: Can we obtain a reliable dataset of $E_m$ to construct an ML model?

Title: A literature-derived dataset of migration barriers for quantifying ionic transport in battery materials

Authors: Reshma Devi, Avaneesh Balasubramanian, Keith T. Butler & Gopalakrishnan Sai Gautam

Journal: To be submitted to Scientific Data



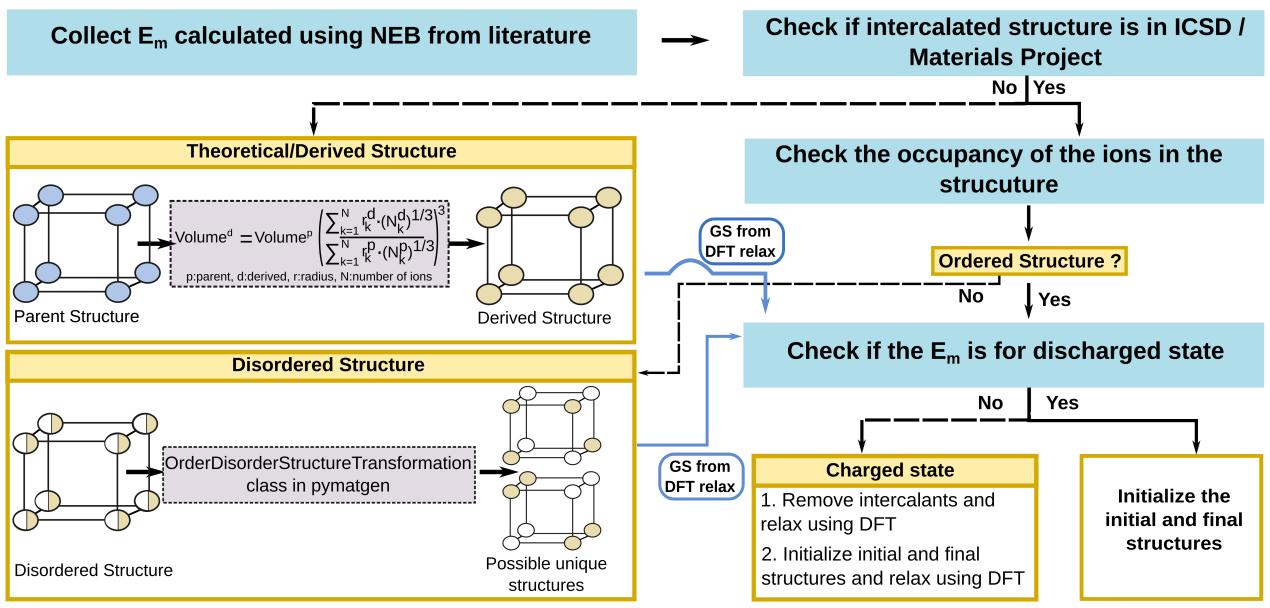


Keith T. Butler

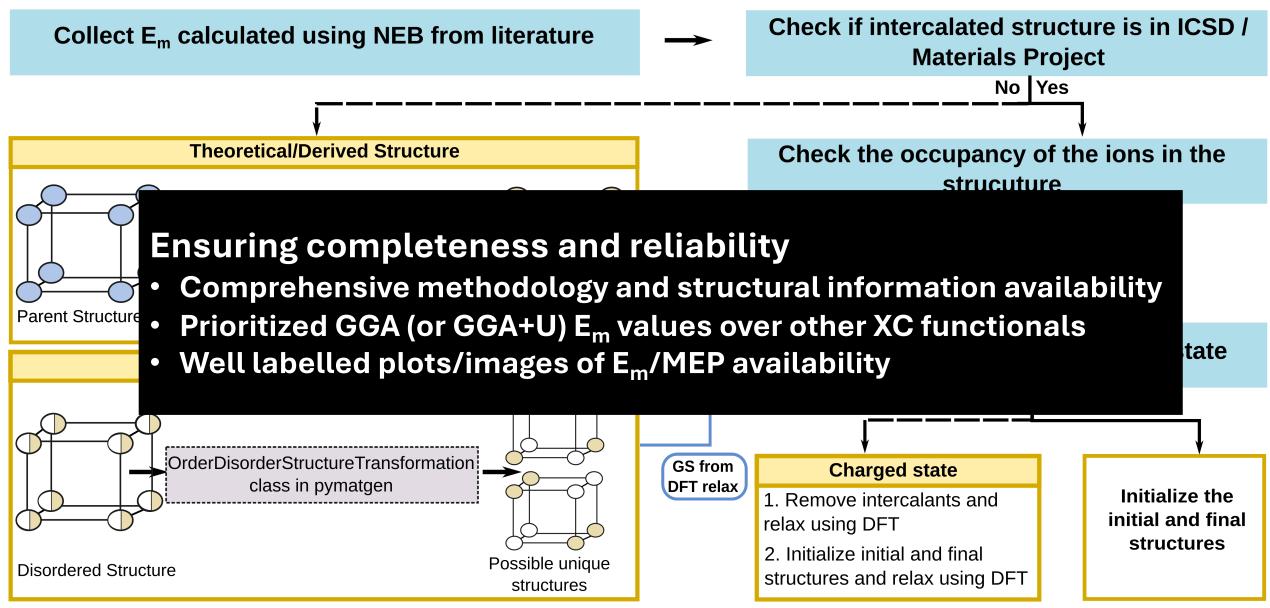


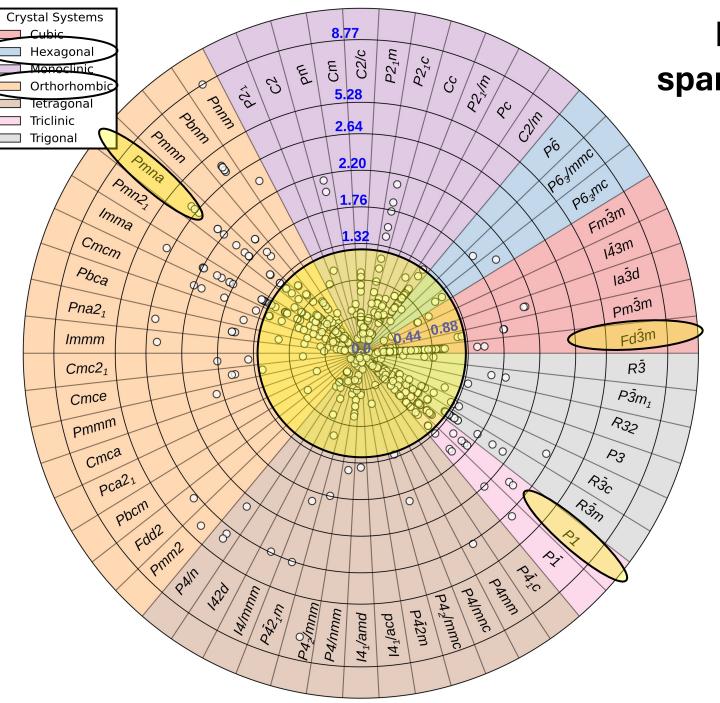
Avaneesh Balasubramanian

#### Structural data generation for each datapoint in the curated database



#### Structural data generation for each datapoint in the curated database

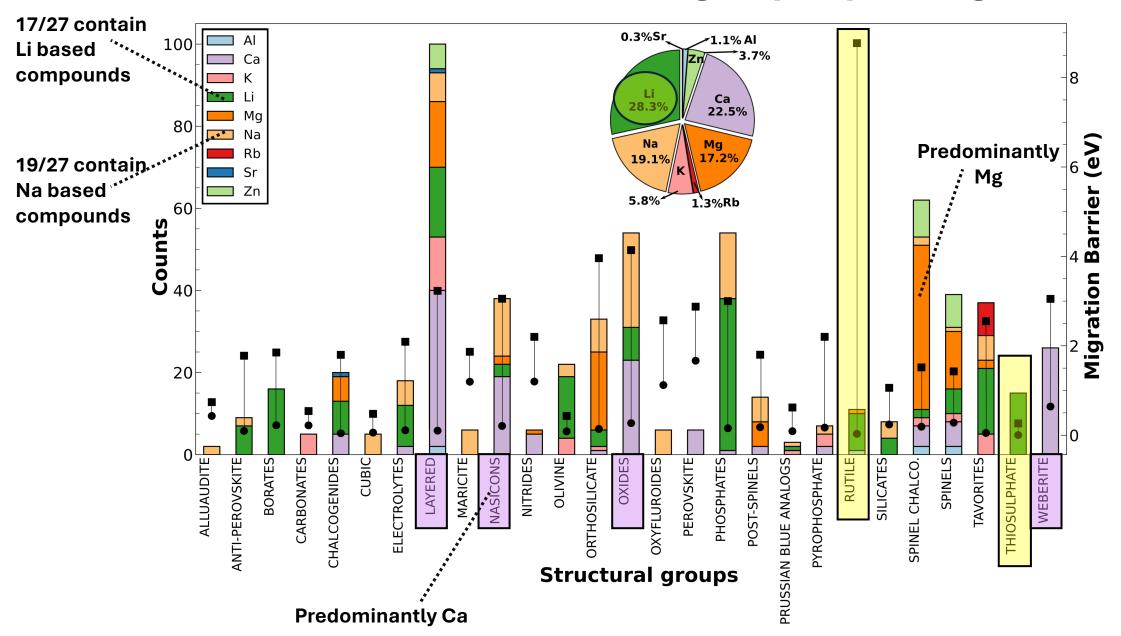




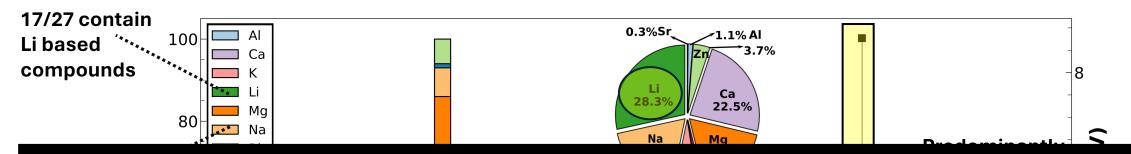
Database of 619 datapoints spanning 58 different space groups across 7 crystal systems

- E<sub>m</sub> values range between 0.03 to 8.77 eV
- 528: Electrodes; 91: Electrolytes
- Fd3m (Cubic spinels) contribute 94 data entries followed by Pnma and P1 from orthorhombic and triclinic crystal systems respectively
- Highest: Orthorhombic (206); Lowest: Hexagonal (6)
- Skewed distribution
  - $\circ$  73.4% of E<sub>m</sub> < 1eV
  - 19.4% of E<sub>m</sub> between 1-2 eV
  - 7.2% Exceed 2eV

#### Data distribution across 27 structural groups spanning 9 intercalants

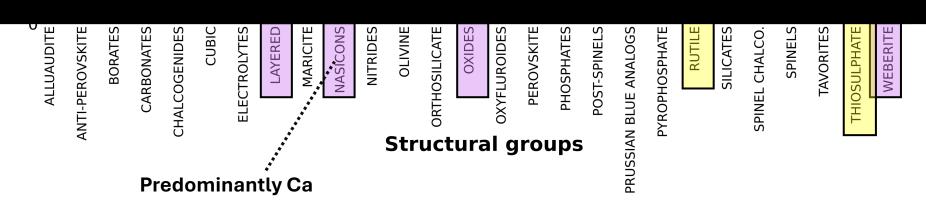


#### Data distribution across 27 structural groups spanning 9 intercalants



### Comprehensive database with diverse intercalants, structures and compositions

- 528 Electrodes, 91 electrolytes (Total of 619)
- 443 distinct compositions
- 99 systems with multiple migration pathways (275)
- 106 distinct charged-discharged pairs



# Q3 A: How do we solve the data inadequacy issue in materials science?

Title: Optimal pre-train/fine-tune strategies for accurate material property predictions

Authors: Reshma Devi, Keith T. Butler & Gopalakrishnan Sai Gautam

Journal: npj Computational Materials





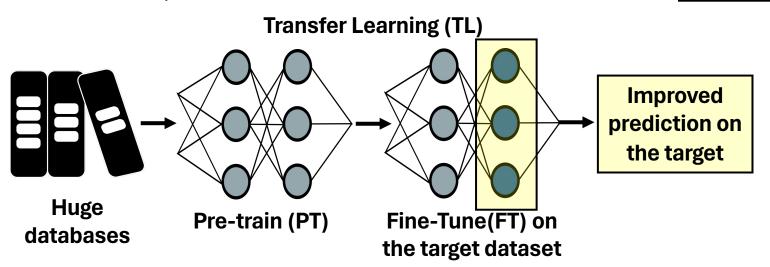


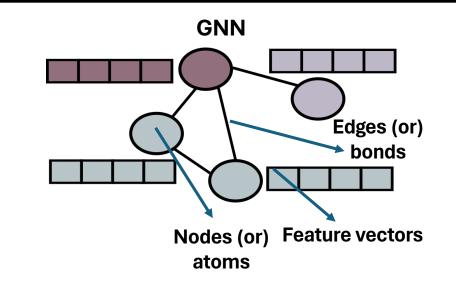


#### How to handle data inadequacy in materials science?

- The accuracy of a Machine Learning (ML) model depends on
  - Quality of dataQuantity of data
  - Model framework
  - ☐ Training algorithm
- Complex models like Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) perform better at datapoints > 10<sup>4</sup>

Construct new models that have less variance when trained on small datasets





- **Objectives**
- What is the best way to do pair-wise TL?

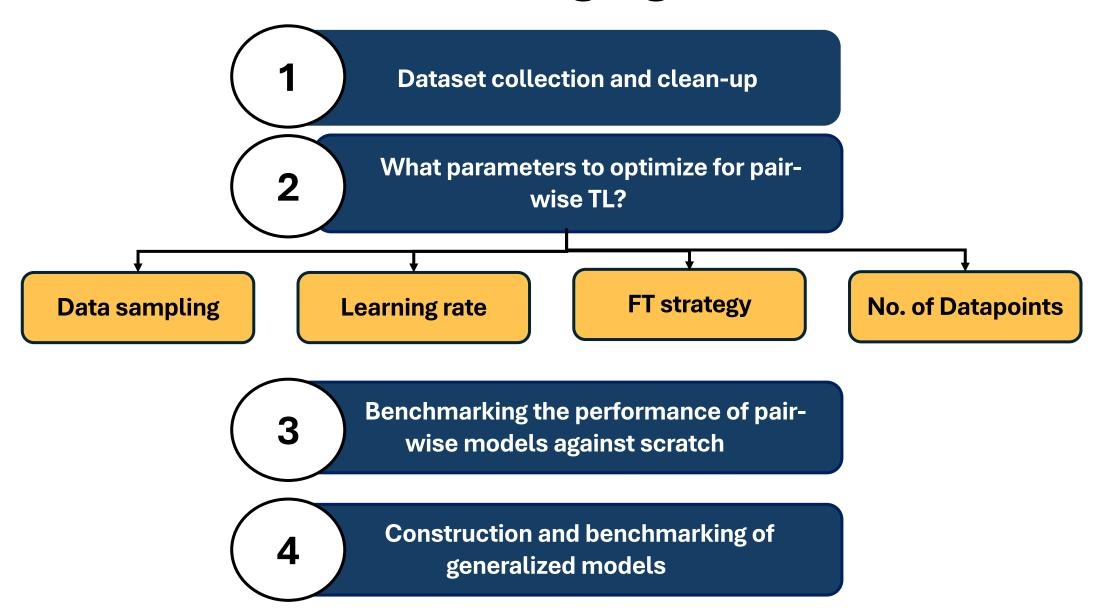
Challenging aspect to meet for

specific material properties

• Is there a strategy to create generalized models that can learn on multiple properties simultaneously?

1. Kumar et al. 2024. 2D Mater.

#### Workflow in obtaining a generalized model



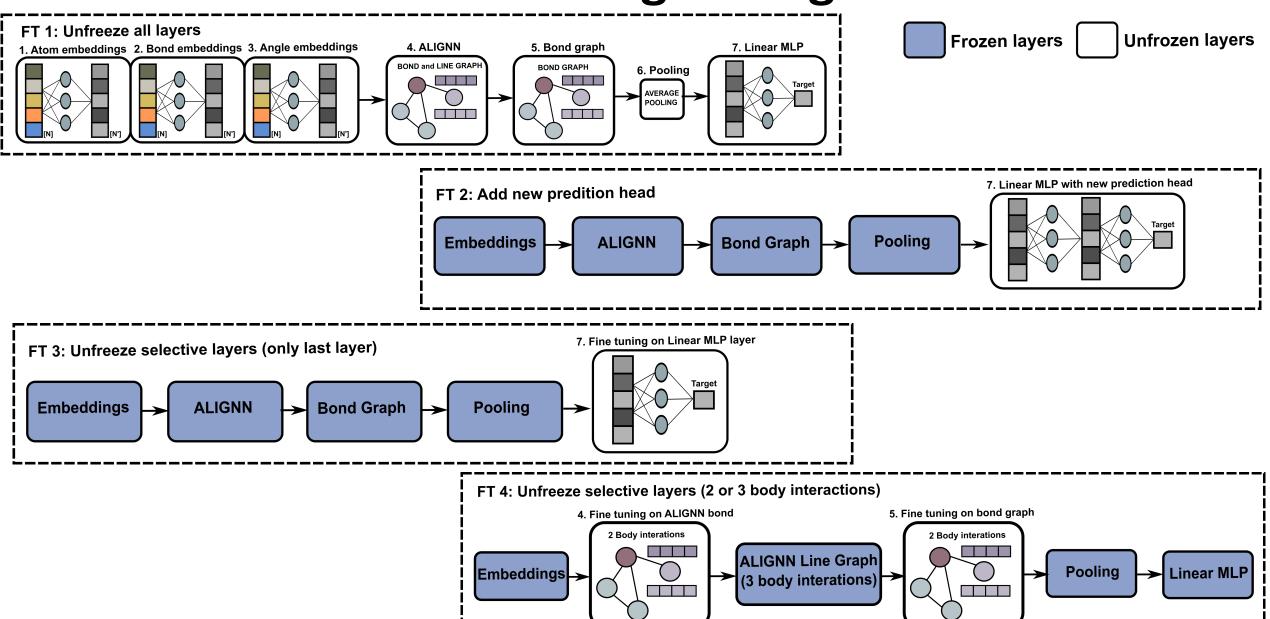
#### 7 datasets spanning different distribution

Data distribution for the 7 properties

		Data distribution for the 7 properties
Datasets from Matminer <sup>1</sup>	# of Datapoints	
Piezoelectric modulus (PZ)	941	0.0 -0.5 -0.5 -0.5 -0.5 -0.5 -0.5 -0.5 -
Dielectric constant (DC)	1056	
Phonons (PH)	1265	
Experimental Band gap (EBG)	2481	
GVRH (GV)	10987	
Band gap (BG)	106113	tanda da d
Formation energy (FE)	132752	
		GV PH FE BG PZ DC EBG
Dataset 10% : Test	malize(N) statistics	
90% : Train		Bi-modal Log-normal
S&I	N Train S&	N Test distribution distribution

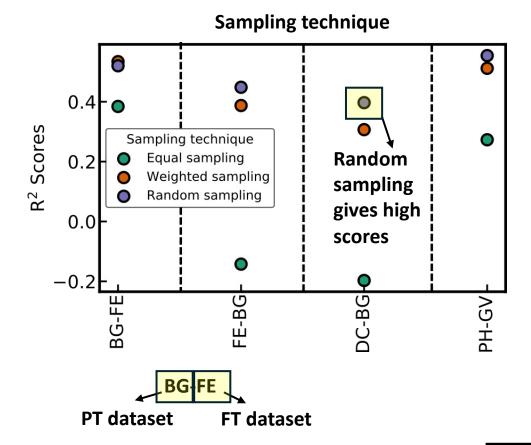
- The test dataset was never used in any of the PT or FT stages
- We report only the test scores in all our results

#### 4 Fine-tuning strategies

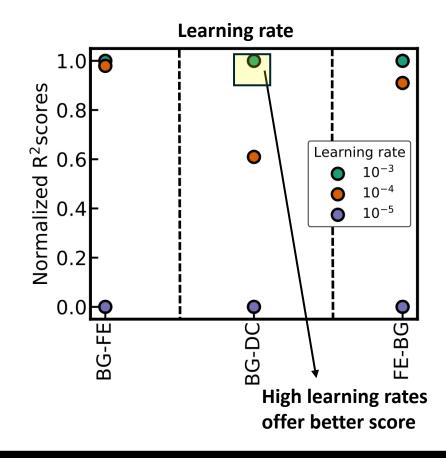


**ALIGNN (Atomistic Line Graph Neural Network)** 

#### High learning rates and Random sampling for better R<sup>2</sup> scores



Datapoints: 500 Epochs: 500 Batch size: 16 Learning rate: 10<sup>-4</sup> (for sampling technique)



Selective PT-FT pairs were used considering the enormity of the calculation

**EBG:** Experimental Band gap **GV:** GVRH

PZ: Piezoelectric modulus

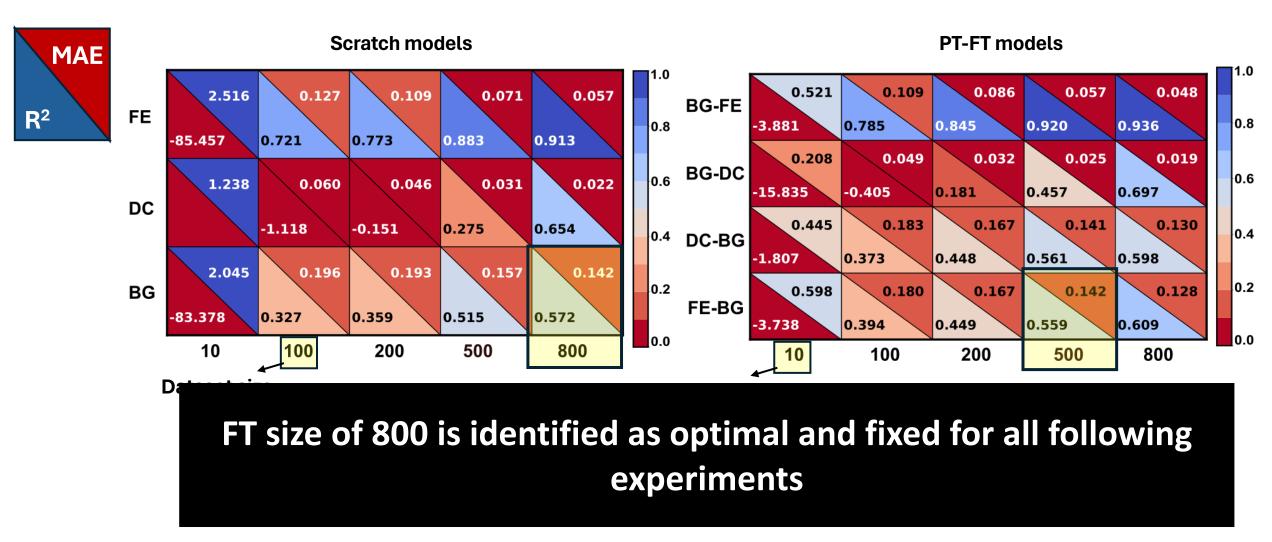
**DC:** Dielectric constant

**BG:** Band gap **PH:** Phonons

**FE:** Formation energy

Random sampling, high learning rates, and high number of datapoints improvise the performance

#### Influence of FT size: R<sup>2</sup> scores increase as FT size increases

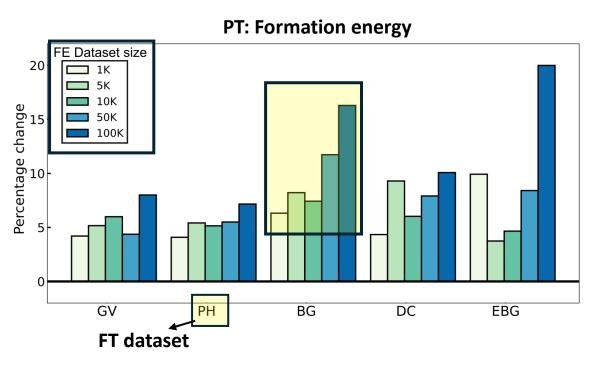


PT size: 941 (smallest dataset size considered)

FT strategy: Unfreeze all layers

Experiments repeated for 5 different random trials and the mean results are plotted

#### Influence of PT size: R<sup>2</sup> scores increase as PT size increases





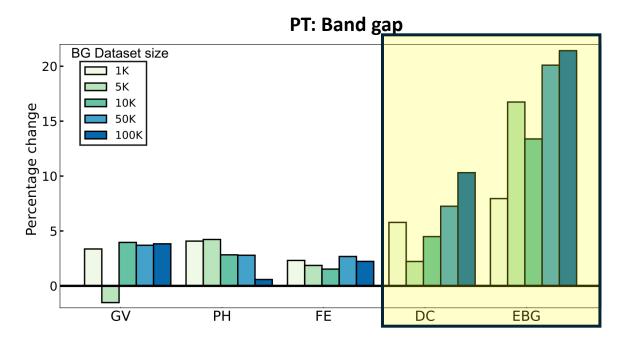
Non-monotonic trend at smaller PT sizes

PT size: Largest 2 of the 7 datasets considered – FE and BG

FT strategy: Unfreeze all layers

**FT size**: 800

Experiments repeated for 5 different random trials and the mean results are plotted



- PT with BG(50K) offers the best performance across all FT datasets
- Non-monotonic trend at smaller PT sizes
- BG(100K) Performs specifically better for DC and EBG

**EBG:** Experimental Band gap

**GV:** GVRH

PZ: Piezoelectric modulus

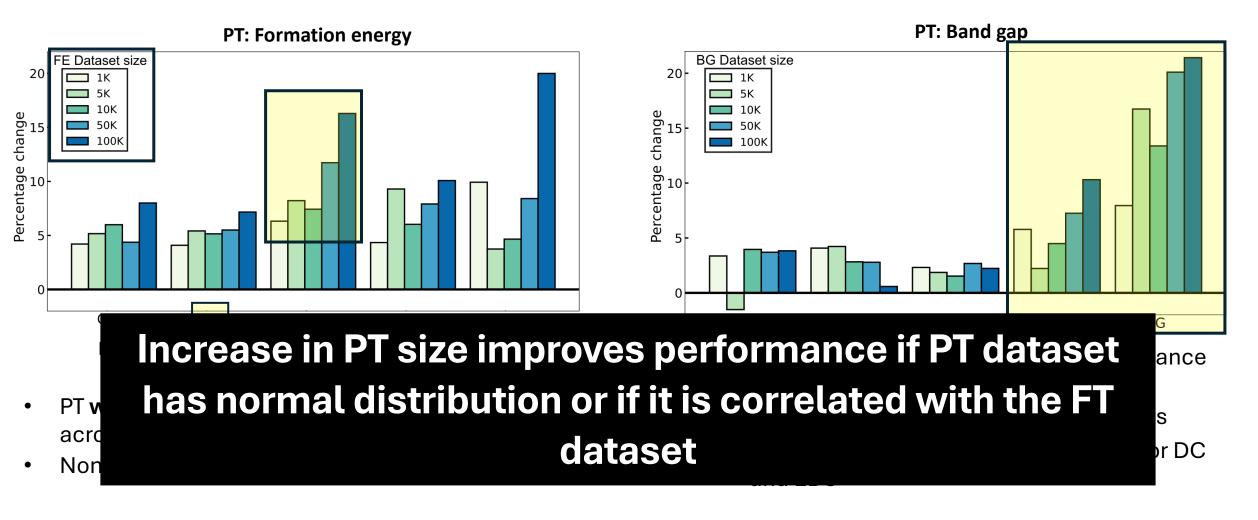
DC: Dielectric constant

**BG:** Band gap

PH: Phonons

**FE:** Formation energy

#### Influence of PT size: R<sup>2</sup> scores increase as PT size increases



PT size: Largest 2 of the 7 datasets considered – FE and BG

FT strategy: Unfreeze all layers

**FT size**: 800

Experiments repeated for 5 different random trials and the mean results are plotted

**EBG:** Experimental Band gap

**GV:** GVRH

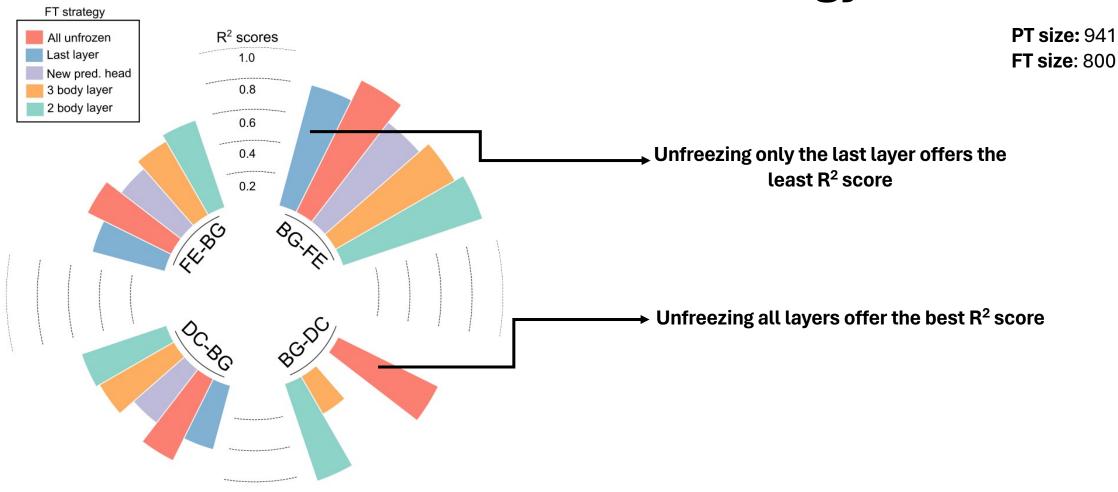
**PZ:** Piezoelectric modulus **DC:** Dielectric constant

**BG:** Band gap

PH: Phonons

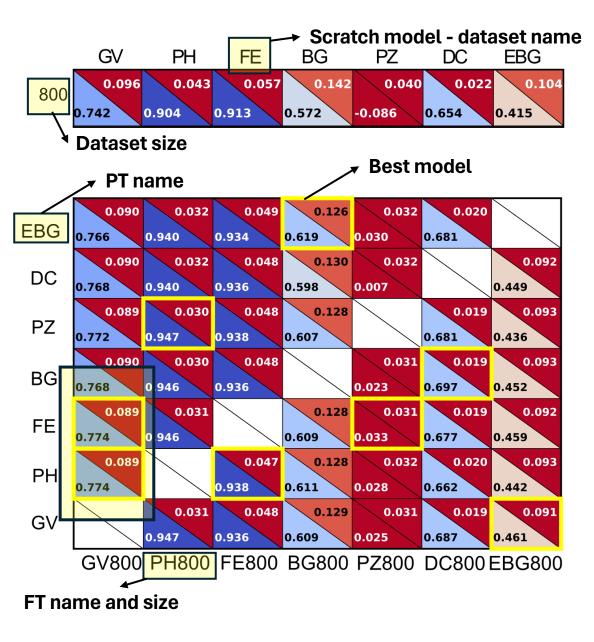
**FE:** Formation energy

#### What is the best FT strategy?



Best strategy: Unfreezing all the layers
Indicates that the PT model requires more re-training to
generalize on the FT property

#### Pair-wise TL on all 7×6 combinations: Better performance at lower datapoints



- All PT-FT models perform better than scratch
- Average increase in R<sup>2</sup> score and MAE is 28.4 % and 17.1% respectively
- The specific PT property has little influence on FT when the PT size is capped

**PT size:** 941

FT strategy: Unfreeze all layers

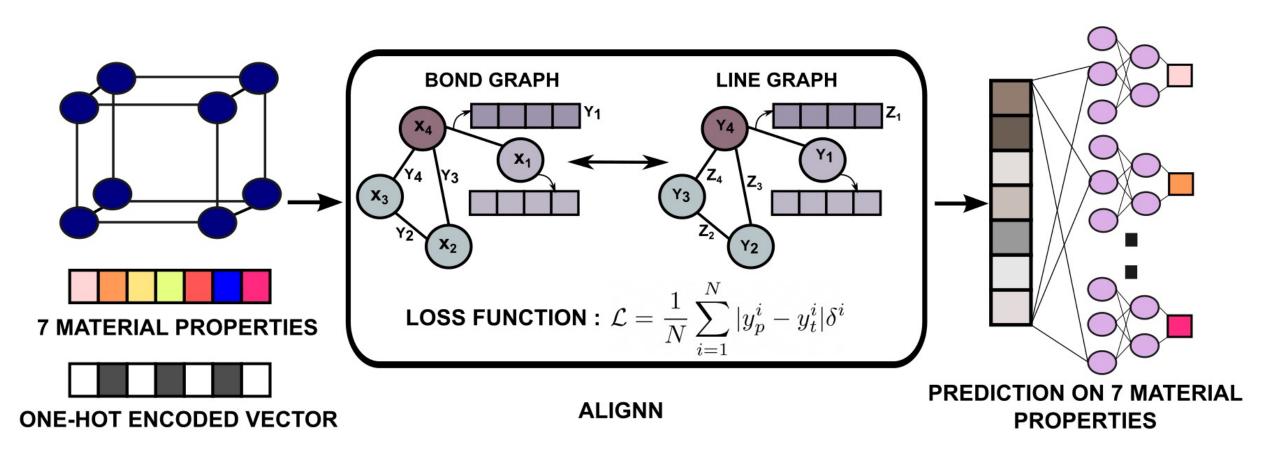
**FT size**: 800

Experiments repeated for 5 different random trials and the mean results are plotted  $_{24}$ 

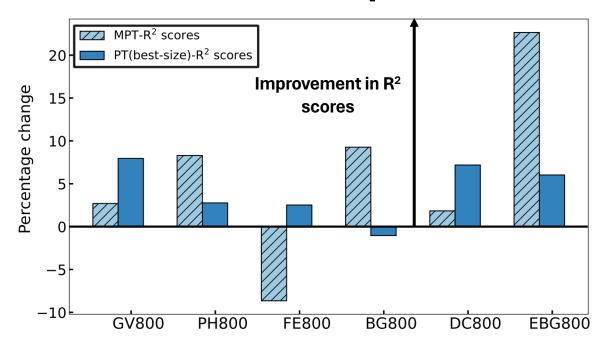


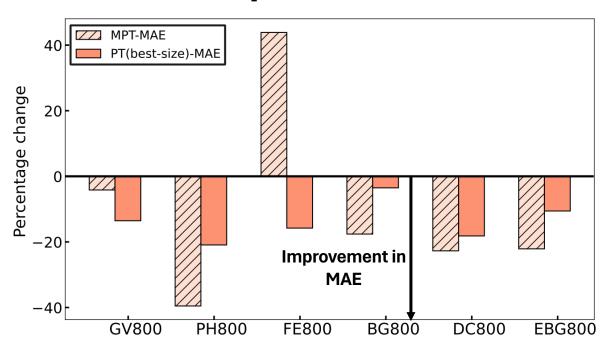
#### A step towards generalized models: MPT model

Multi-property pre-trained (MPT) model: Trained with modified loss function on all the seven bulk properties simultaneously



#### MPT models: Improved R<sup>2</sup>scores versus best pair-wise model





MPT offers best performance in 3/6 and 4/6 cases in terms of R<sup>2</sup>scores and MAEs respectively, excluding FE

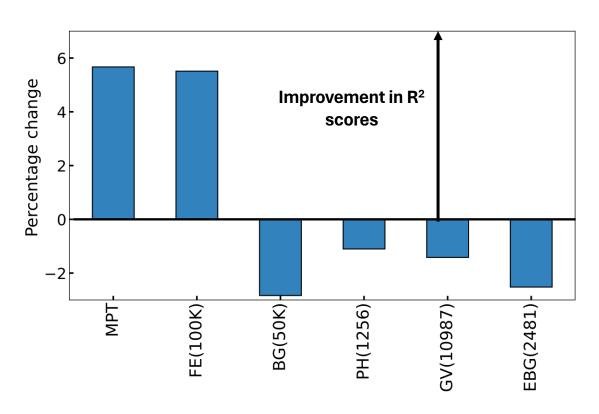
**MPT-PT size:** 132,270

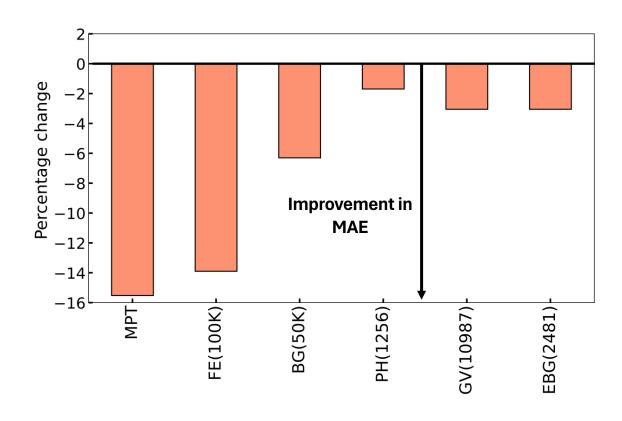
Pair-wise PT size: Maxed-out best PT dataset

**FT size**: 800

#### MPT models: Improved R<sup>2</sup>scores versus best pair-wise model

#### Performance on a completely unrelated dataset: JARVIS 2D band gap





**MPT-PT size:** 132,270

Pair-wise PT size: Maxed-out best PT dataset

**FT size**: 800

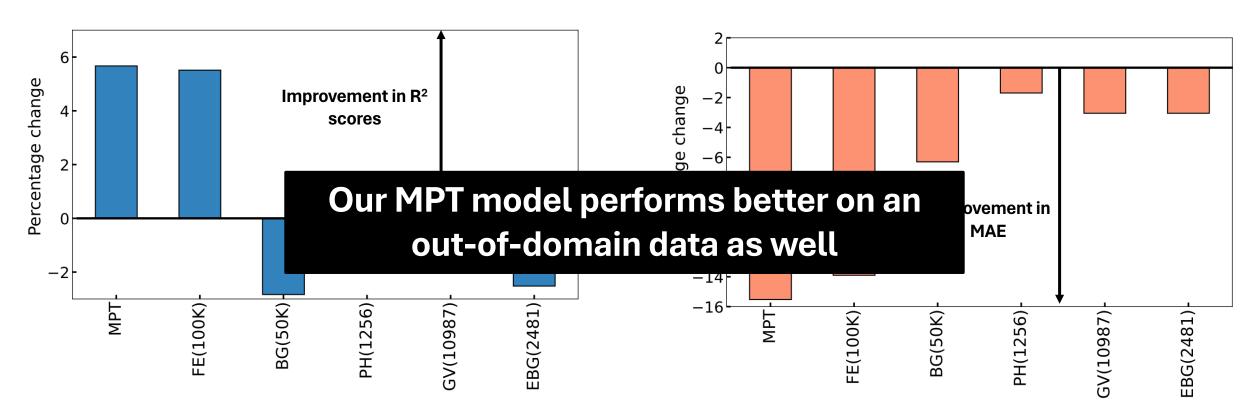
Dataset size: 1103

PT: MPT model PT on all 7 properties

Pair-wise PT size: : Maxed-out best PT dataset

#### MPT models: Improved R<sup>2</sup>scores versus best pair-wise model

Performance on a completely unrelated dataset: JARVIS 2D band gap



**MPT-PT size:** 132,270

Pair-wise PT size: Maxed-out best PT dataset

**FT size**: 800

Dataset size: 1103

PT: MPT model PT on all 7 properties

Pair-wise PT size: : Maxed-out best PT dataset

# Q3 B: How do we construct a generalized model to predict E<sub>m</sub> with all the insights gained so far?

Title: Leveraging transfer learning for accurate estimation of ionic migration barriers in battery materials

Authors: Reshma Devi, Keith T. Butler & Gopalakrishnan Sai Gautam

Journal: To be submitted

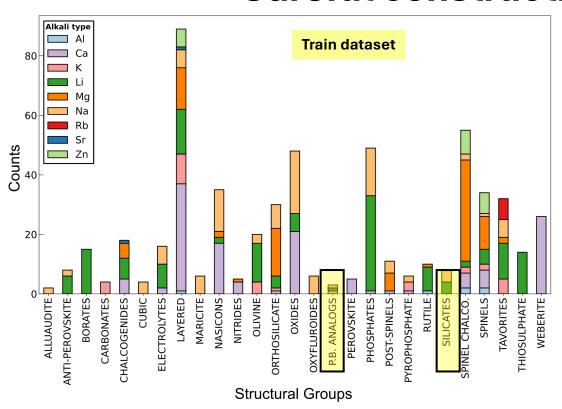


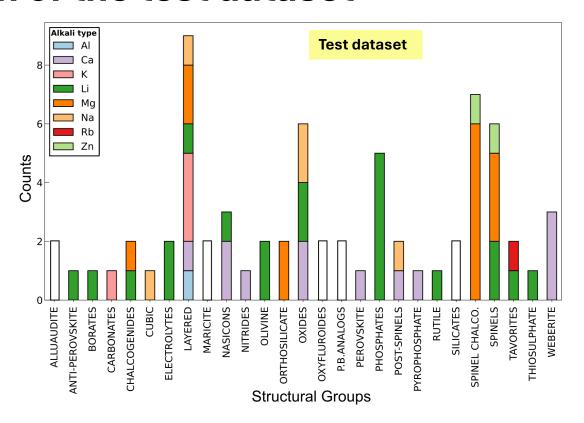


Keith T. Butler



#### Careful construction of the test dataset





#### Train-Test ratio was 559:60

Test data construction (60 datapoints)

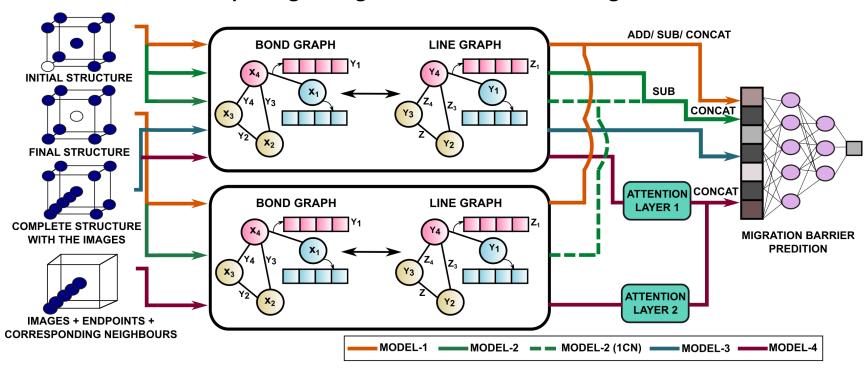
- Similar distribution as that of the train set
- Overcoming unfair penalization: Single datapoint in test set if the crystal groups constituted 1-2% of total distribution (less than 1% excluded)
- Random sampling within each group

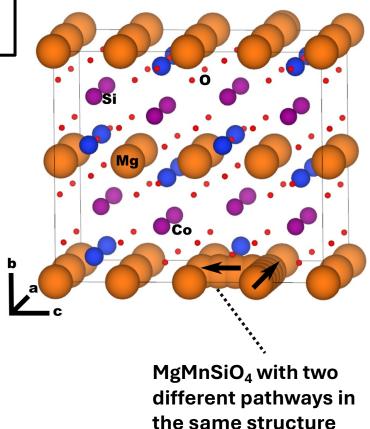
New FT architecture to capture multiple migration pathways

PT: MPT FT: E<sub>m</sub>

How do we make the FT-MPT model distinguish between different migration pathways?

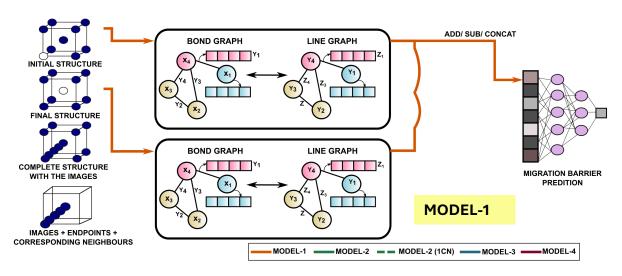
- Initial and final configurations as input?
- Initial guess to the migration pathway in the form of interpolated images?
- Add attention based pooling strategies to learn about the local geometries



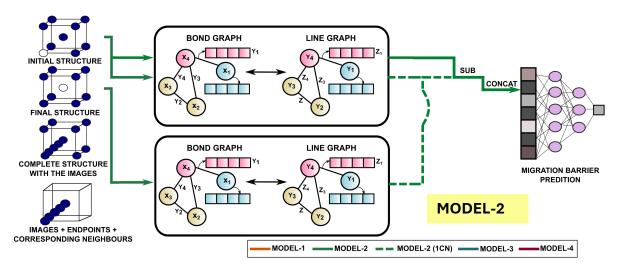


#### Four different FT architectures

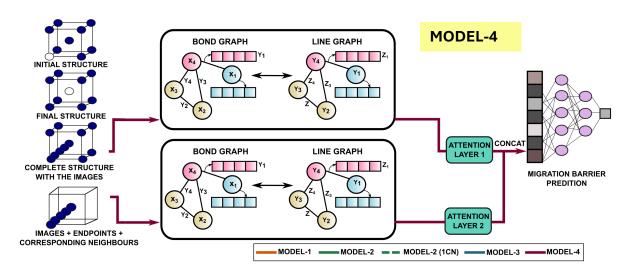
Initial and final configurations as input: Direction of the pathway



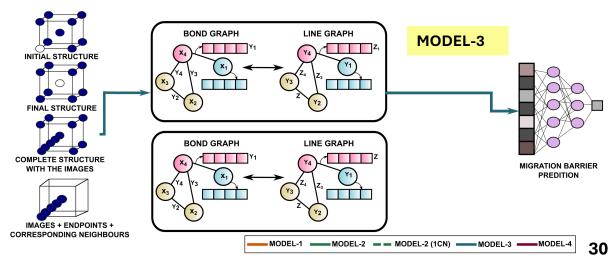
Combination of initial/final configuration + Delta



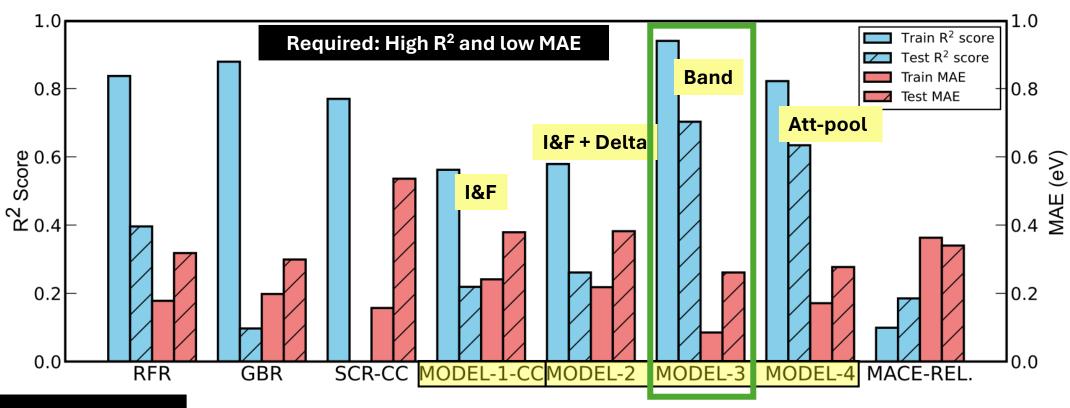
Attention based pooling on the band



Band: Transition state and complete pathway geometry



## MODEL-3 outperforms with better R<sup>2</sup> score and MAE



#### **MODEL-3 Performance**

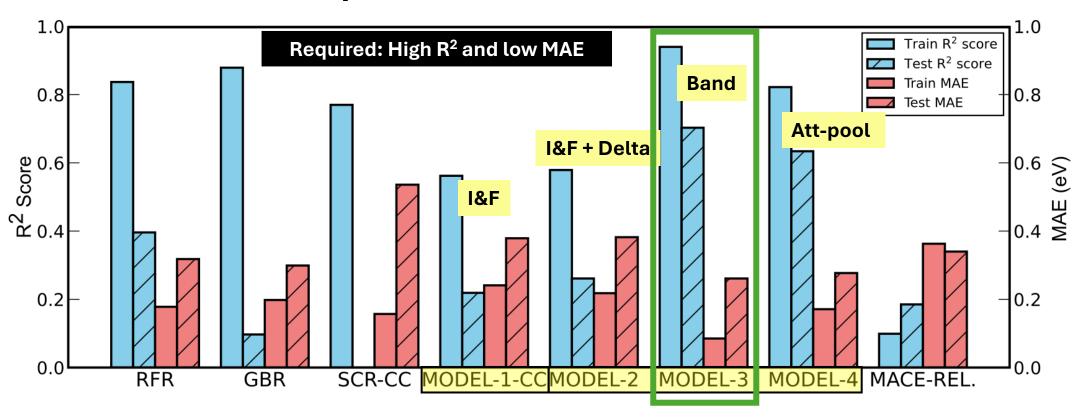
- Better than traditional ML and scratch model
- R<sup>2</sup> score: 0.703 and MAE: 0.261 eV
- MODEL-4: Comparable performance with respect to MODEL-3
- MACE-RELAX (Relaxed the endpoints before NEB calculation): Comparable MAE but poor R<sup>2</sup> score

RFR: Random forest regressor GBR: Gradient boost regressor

SCR-CC: Scratch with concatenated embedding MACE-REL.: MACE-MP-0 with relaxed endpoints

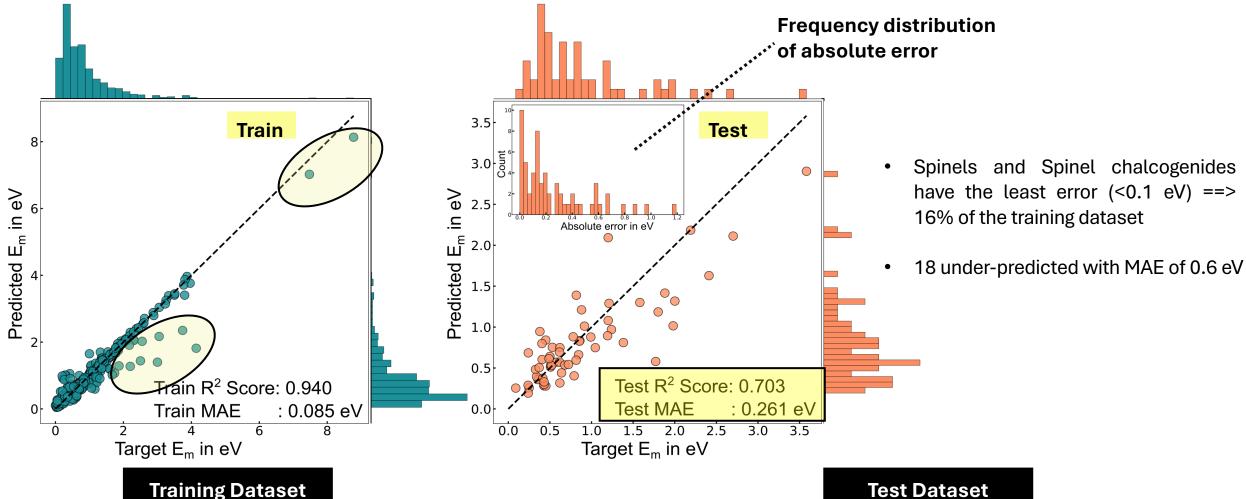
I&F: Initial and final configuration Att-pool: Attention based pooling

## MODEL-3 outperforms with better R<sup>2</sup> score and MAE



- MODEL-3: 77.5% increase in R<sup>2</sup> score and 18% decrease in MAE with respect to RFR
- Good accuracy in identifying multiple migration pathways in the same structure

## 70% of the test dataset have prediction errors less than 0.3 eV

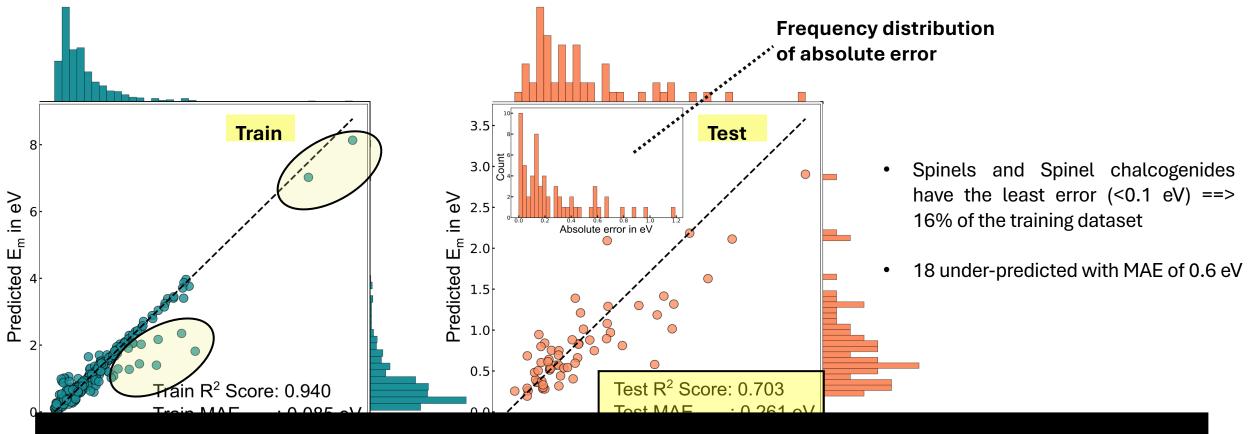


- Frequency of under and over predictions in comparable
- 12/19 datapoints: Under-prediction error greater than 0.5 eV
- 11/12: Target  $E_m$  exceeding 1.5 eV, e.g.,  $CaCu_2O_3$  1.82 eV vs 4.14 eV (target)

#### **Test Dataset**

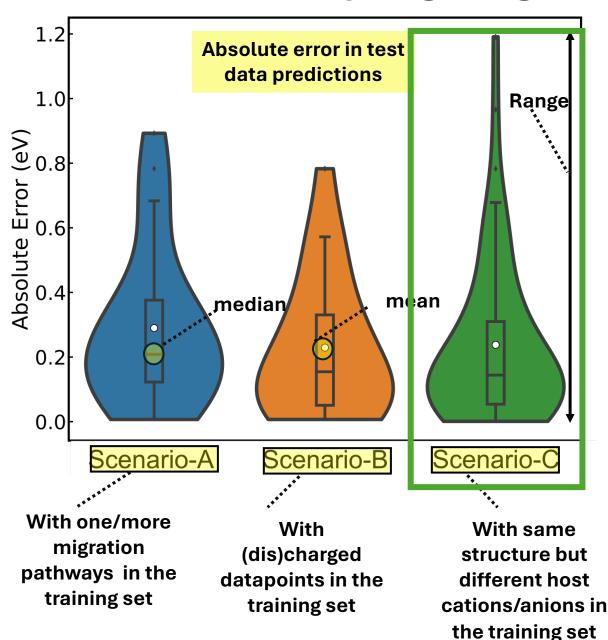
- 32%: Absolute error <= 0.1eV (high accuracy)
- 38%: 0.1 < Absoluter error <= 0.3 eV (moderate accuracy)
- 30%: Absolute error > 0.3 eV (low accuracy)

#### 70% of the test dataset have prediction errors less than 0.3 eV



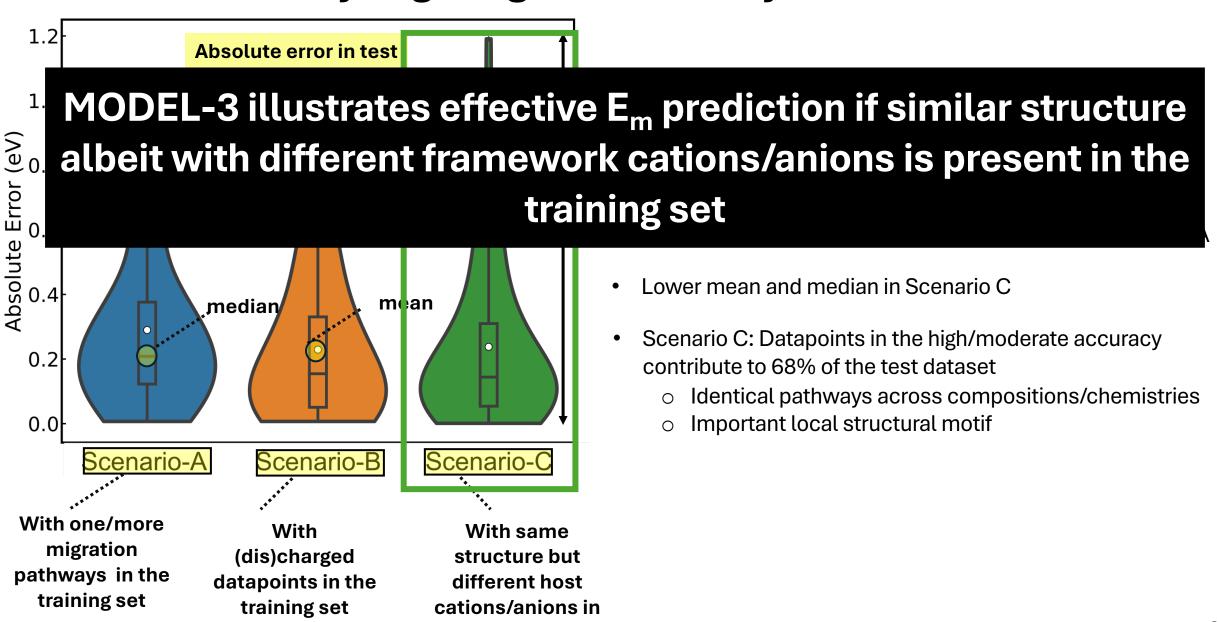
- 70% of the test data predictions have their absoluter errors in high or moderate accuracy range
- Better representation in the training dataset improvises the prediction accuracy

## **Analysing the generalizability of MODEL-3**



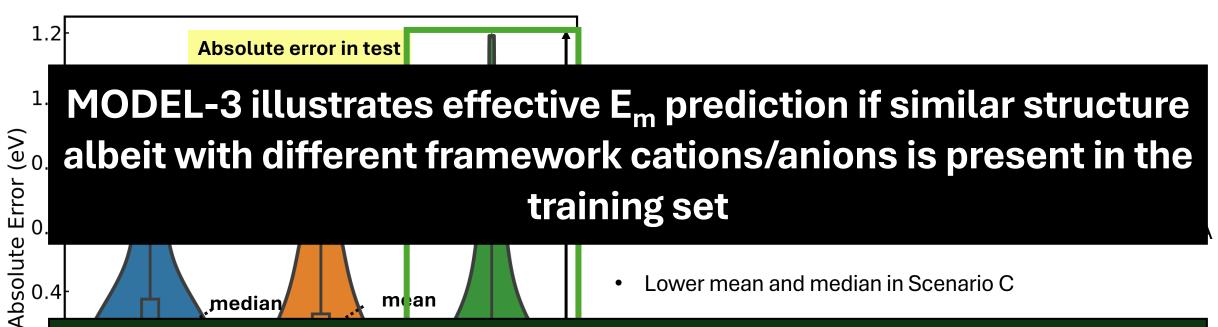
- Scenario A: Generalization across migration pathways
- Scenario B: Generalization across composition
- Scenario C: Generalization across Chemistry
- B & C have lower absolute error mean when compared to A
- Lower mean and median in Scenario C
- Scenario C: Datapoints in the high/moderate accuracy contribute to 68% of the test dataset
  - Identical pathways across compositions/chemistries
  - o Important local structural motif

## **Analysing the generalizability of MODEL-3**



the training set

## **Analysing the generalizability of MODEL-3**



- MODEL-3 can be used as a potential screening tool for Em estimation
- Expanding the training dataset: Boosted accuracy with possible potential applications in other relevant fields

pathways in the training set

0.

Wi

datapoints in the training set

median

mean

different host cations/anions in the training set

# So, have we answered all the three questions?



619 datapoints with diverse chemistries, compositions and structures

**Efficient TL** paradigm for knowledge transfer

Pair-wise TL

models

outperforms

scratch models

migration

**MODEL-3** prediction accuracy outperform MACE-NEB E<sub>m</sub>

**MODEL-3** has

better

generalization

ability across

different

chemistries

**SCAN** has better numerical

accuracy

**NELECT/CI** doesn't affect accuracy

**SCAN** is computationally expensive

> **GGA** can provide good qualitative trends

**MODEL-3 offers** superior R<sup>2</sup> score and MAE

**MODEL-3 can** identify multiple pathways within same structure

**MPT** performs better in out of domain dataset Q1. How accurately can the current state-of-the-art techniques estimate  $E_m$ ?

Q2: Can we obtain a reliable dataset of E<sub>m</sub> to construct an ML model?

Q3 A: How do we solve the data inadequacy issue in materials science?

Q3 B: How do we construct a generalized model with all the insights gained so far?

## **Publications**

- 1. Devi, R. et al., Effect of exchange-correlation functionals on the estimation of migration barriers in battery materials, npj Computational Materials 8, 160 (2022).
- 2. Devi, R. et al., Optimal pre-train/fine-tune strategies for accurate material property predictions. npj Computational Materials 10, 300 (2024).
- 3. Devi, R. et al., A literature-derived dataset of migration barriers for the investigation of transport properties in battery materials. (Accepted in Scientific Data)
- 4. Devi, R. et al., Leveraging transfer learning for accurate estimation of ionic migration barriers in battery materials. (Under revision in npj Computational Materials)
- 5. Lawrence, E. A. et al., Reversible Electrochemical Lithium Cycling in a Vanadium (IV)-and Niobium (V)-Based Wadsley–Roth Phase. Chemistry of Materials 35, 3470–3483 (2023).
- 6. Verneker, D. et al., Influence of Metastable Disorder in Titania Oxyhydroxides on High-Rate Sodium ion Storage Manuscript under preparation. (Accepted in Chemistry of Materials)
- 7. Swathilakshmi, S., **Performance of the r<sup>2</sup>scan functional in transition metal oxides**. <u>Journal of chemical theory and computation</u> 19, 4202–4215 (2023).
- 8. Devi, R. et al., **Predicting CO adsorption with transfer-learned graph neural networks to accelerate catalyst discovery** (To be submitted)

# **Accomplishments – Conferences and Workshops**

Transfer learning for materials science (Hands-on)

AI/ML for Materials Science Workshop at Department of Materials Engineering, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, India

Tutorial, 8th January 2025

The effect of the exchange-correlation functionals on migration barrier estimation in battery materials (Best oral)

18th Asian Conference on Solid State Ionics at Meenakshi College for Women, Chennai, India

Talk, 19th Feb 2024

Enhancing material property predictions by leveraging transfer learning techniques

24<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Solid State Ionics at QEII Centre, London, UK

Talk, 18th July 2024

The effect of the exchange-correlation functionals on migration barrier estimation in battery materials

11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Materials for Advanced Technologies at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, Singapore

Talk, 29th June 2023

Applications of machine learning to materials science (Hands-on)

Namma Psi-k Workshop at Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

Tutorial, 25th July 2023

The effect of the exchange-correlation functionals on migration barrier estimation in battery materials

American Physical Society March Satellite Meeting at International Centre for Theoretical Sciences, Bengaluru, India

Talk, 15th March 2022

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- Param Utkarsh at CDAC Knowledge Park
- ARCHER2 UK National Supercomputing Service
- National Supercomputing Center, Singapore,
- Param Pravega and Supercomputer Education and Research Center (SERC), IISc.











