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Investigation of Band Alignment for Hybrid 2D-MoS₂/3D-β-Ga₂O₃ Heterojunctions with Nitridation

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Abstract

Hybrid heterojunctions based on two-dimensional (2D) and conventional three-dimensional (3D) materials provide a promising way toward nanoelectronic devices with engineered features. In this work, we investigated the band alignment of a mixed-dimensional heterojunction composed of transferred MoS₂ on β-Ga₂O₃(2–01) with and without nitridation. The conduction and valence band offsets for unnitrided 2D-MoS₂/3D-β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction were determined to be respectively 0.43 ± 0.1 and 2.87 ± 0.1 eV. For the nitrided heterojunction, the conduction and valence band offsets were deduced to 0.68 ± 0.1 and 2.62 ± 0.1 eV, respectively. The modified band alignment could result from the dipole formed by charge transfer across the heterojunction interface. The effect of nitridation on the band alignments between group III oxides and transition metal dichalcogenides will supply feasible technical routes for designing their heterojunction-based electronic and optoelectronic devices.

Keywords: Nitridation treatment, Band alignment, Few-layer MoS₂, β-Ga₂O₃

Background

Beta-gallium oxide (β-Ga₂O₃) has attracted considerable interests due to its superior material properties [1, 2]. With ultra-wide bandgap (4.6–4.9 eV), the theoretical breakdown electric field (E_C) is estimated to be around 8 MV/cm [3, 4]. Combined with its high relative dielectric constant (ϵ) and electron mobility (μ), the Baliga's figure of merit ($\epsilon\mu E_C^3$) is triple that of GaN or SiC, reducing the conduction loss significantly [1]. In addition, the availability of large bulk single crystals synthesized via melt-growth and epitaxial techniques delivers significant advantages for industrial applications [5, 6]. By far, β-Ga₂O₃ has been well demonstrated in a wide range of electronic applications, including light-emitting diodes, gas sensors, photodetectors, as well as field-effect transistors [7–10]. Very recently, hybrid heterojunctions, i.e., the integration of two-dimensional (2D) materials with three-dimensional (3D) materials, are of particular

interest due to the complementary properties of their material systems [11].

To date, diverse 2D layered materials have been stacked on wide bandgap semiconductors to construct hybrid heterojunctions for novel applications with varying functionalities, such as MoS₂/GaN, WSe₂/GaN, MoS₂/SiC, and so on [12–15]. Structurally, the MoS₂ crystal is composed of a Mo atomic layer sandwiched between two sulfur layers, forming a two-dimensional hexagonal trilayer which is bonded to its neighboring layers by weak van der Waals forces [16, 17]. Unlike graphene with a zero bandgap, the thickness-dependent modulation of bandgaps motivated the exploration of MoS₂ in optical and electrical devices [18, 19]. Based on the physics of MoS₂, the density of states of few-layer MoS₂ is three orders of magnitude higher than that of single-layer (SL) MoS₂, leading to high drive currents in the ballistic limit. In this context, few-layer MoS₂ may deliver significant advantages for transistor applications than SL MoS₂ [18]. Thus, the integration of MoS₂ with β-Ga₂O₃ is of great interest for combining respective merits of both the established 2D and 3D materials. And the optical and electrical properties for hybrid heterojunctions are

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inherently dominated by the interfacial energy band alignment. Consequently, it is quite desirable to have tunable band alignments for improving the performance of hetero-junction based devices. In this work, we investigated the band alignment of 2D-MoS₂/3D-β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions with and without nitridation treatment via X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) characterizations and first principles calculations.

Methods

The SiO₂/Si substrate was ultrasonicated with acetone and visopropanol for each 10 min, respectively, followed by rinsing in deionized water and drying with N₂. Few-layer MoS₂ films were grown on the SiO₂/Si substrate by chemical vapor deposition (CVD) using precursors of MoO₃ (0.08 mg, 99%, Alfa Aesar) and S powder (1 g,

99%) [20, 21]. The MoO₃ and S powder were placed into two separate crucibles with a SiO₂/Si substrate in the quartz tube, as shown in Fig. 1a. During the growth process, the quartz tube was held at 800 °C for MoS₂ film growth within 5 min. Figure 1b displays the optical microscopic image of uniform MoS₂ film on SiO₂/Si substrate. After the growth of MoS₂ film, it would be transferred to β-Ga₂O₃ (Tamura Corporation, Japan) substrate via PMMA-assisted method, [22] as sketched in Fig. 1c. During the transfer process, PMMA was first spin-coated on as-grown MoS₂ film as a supporting layer, and then the samples were immersed in KOH solution for etching away the SiO₂ layer. Subsequently, the PMMA layer with MoS₂ film would float on the solution, after which the sample would be rinsed in deionized water for 1 min to remove the residual K⁺ and

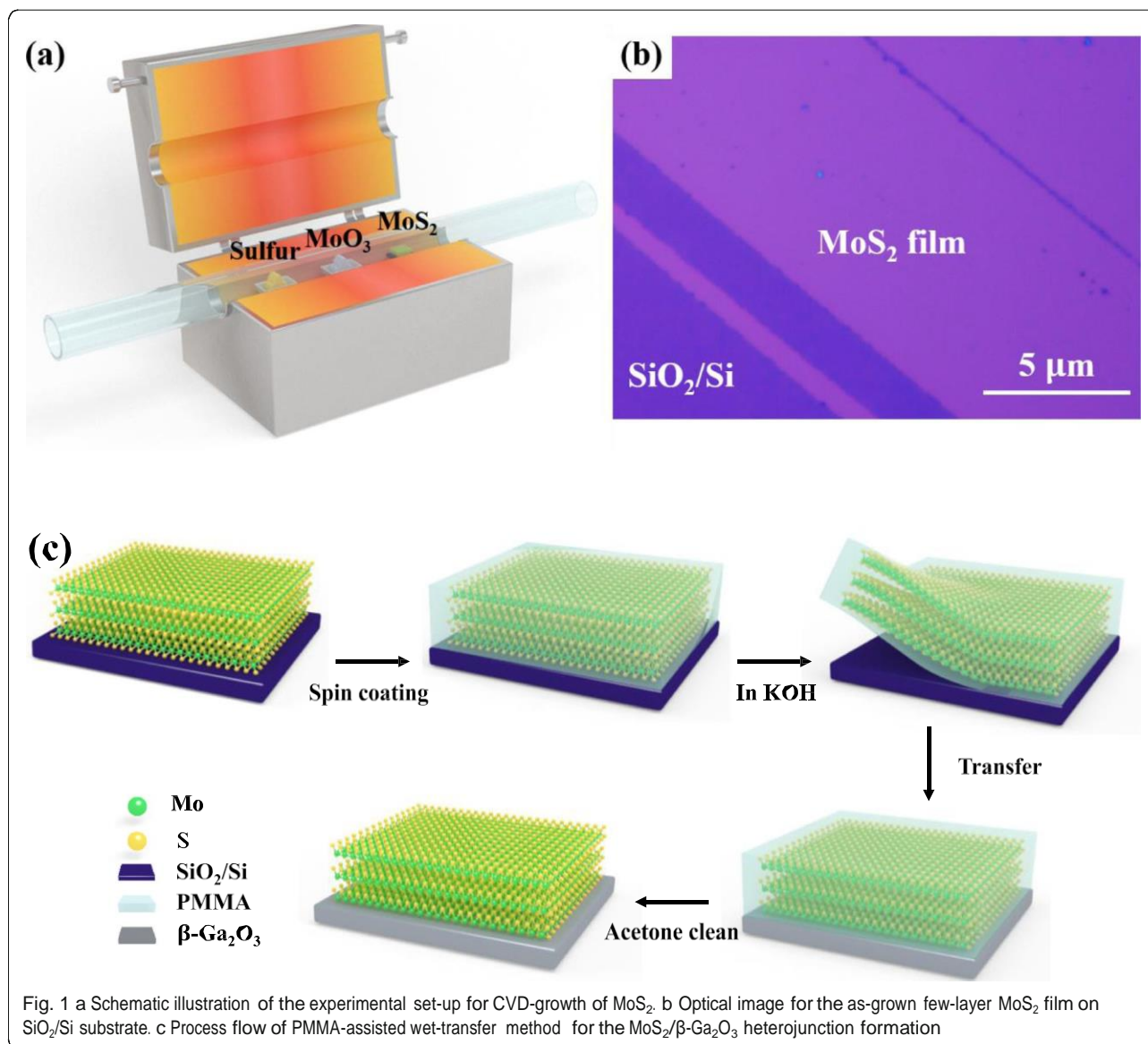


Fig. 1 a Schematic illustration of the experimental set-up for CVD-growth of MoS₂, b Optical image for the as-grown few-layer MoS₂ film on SiO₂/Si substrate. c Process flow of PMMA-assisted wet-transfer method for the MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction formation

further transferred onto β -Ga₂O₃ substrate. Lastly, the top PMMA layer would be removed away with acetone. For the nitrated MoS₂/ β -Ga₂O₃ heterojunction, the nitridation has been implemented on the β -Ga₂O₃ surface with 50s N₂ plasma treatment at a pressure of 3 Pa prior to the MoS₂ transfer. The RF power and N₂ flow rate were 100 W and 80 sccm, respectively. As a result, four samples were prepared for XPS measurements: (1) uncoated β -Ga₂O₃ substrate (bulk β -Ga₂O₃), (2) few-layer MoS₂ film on SiO₂/Si substrate (few-layer MoS₂), (3) transferred MoS₂ film on β -Ga₂O₃ substrate, (4) transferred MoS₂ film on nitrated β -Ga₂O₃ substrate.

Results and Discussions

Raman spectroscopy was employed to investigate the quality of few-layer MoS₂ film as well as to check relevant layer numbers. The Raman spectra of MoS₂ film before and after transfer are presented in Fig. 2, which was characterized by RENISHAW inVia Raman spectroscopy. Two characteristic Raman modes could be observed around 381.91 cm⁻¹ and 405.84 cm⁻¹, corresponding to the in-plane (E_{2g}¹) mode and out-of-plane (A_{1g}) mode, respectively [23, 24]. Compared with as-grown MoS₂ film, there is almost no Raman shift in E_{2g}¹ and A_{1g} modes after transfer process, indicative of undamaged MoS₂ after transfer process. The peak at 412.99 cm⁻¹ after transfer process stems from the β -Ga₂O₃ substrate, in consistent with previous reports [25]. The frequency difference between E_{2g}¹ and A_{1g} mode was deduced to be about 23.93 cm⁻¹, designating

four layers of few-layer MoS₂ film [26]. Further, as shown in the inset of Fig. 2, the thickness of MoS₂ film was verified to be 3 nm approximately (around four layers) by high-resolution transmission electron microscope (HRTEM), which is in good agreement with our Raman spectra. It can be seen from Fig. 3a that a high intensity peak of N 1s was detected from the nitride β -Ga₂O₃ substrate, suggesting the presence of nitrogen. Figure 3b shows the SIMS profiles of MoS₂/ β -Ga₂O₃ heterojunction with nitridation, where the signals of main components represented by Mo, N, and Ga are plotted against depth. It is observed that the N peak is located at the MoS₂/ β -Ga₂O₃ interface, and the N spreading into β -Ga₂O₃ substrate could be contributed by the N injection into the underlying layer during plasma treatment or primary beam bombardments. The higher Ga profile in the MoS₂ layer than β -Ga₂O₃ substrate probably stems from the different ion yield in the different material matrix [27]. Moreover, the tail of Mo in β -Ga₂O₃ could be ascribed to the diffusion or depth resolution problem, which is caused by primary beam bombardment [28].

To obtain the band alignments of MoS₂/ β -Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions, XPS measurements with a step of 0.05 eV were carried out on VG ESCALAB 220i-XL system with a monochromatic Al K α X-ray source (h ν = 1486.6 eV). The constant pass energy was set at 20 eV. Additionally, the standard C 1s (284.8 eV) was used for binding energy (BE) calibration [29]. To evaluate the valence band offset (VBO) at the MoS₂/ β -Ga₂O₃ interface, Mo 3d and Ga 3d core levels

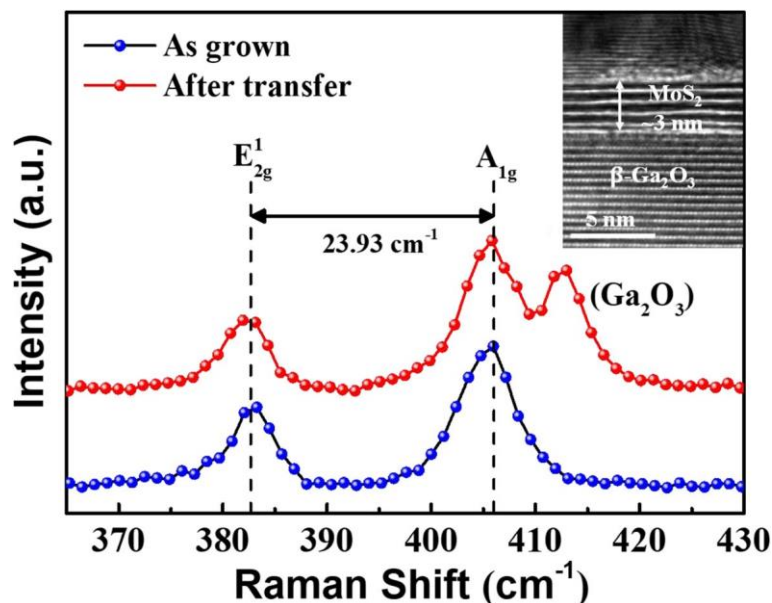
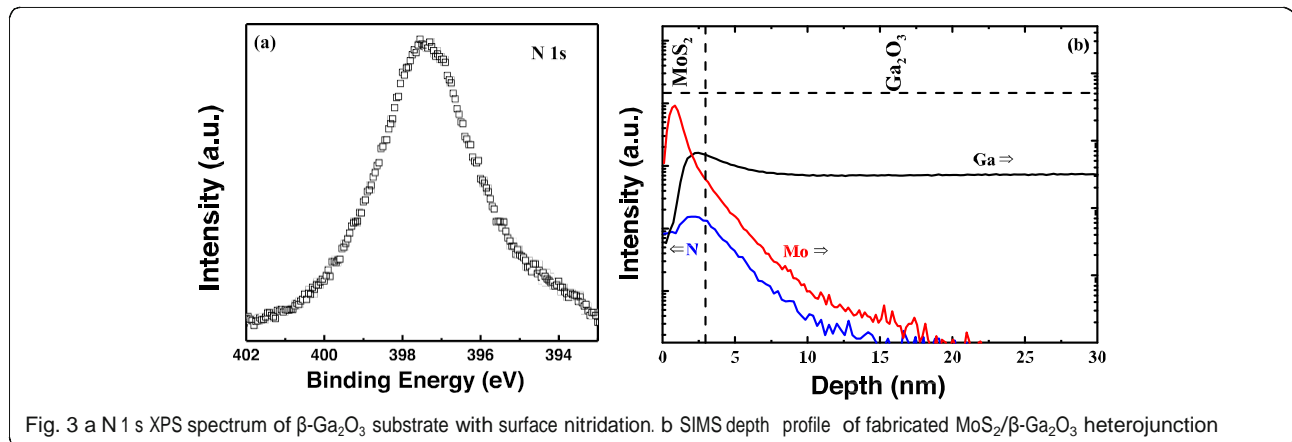


Fig. 2 Raman spectra of as-grown MoS₂ on SiO₂/Si substrate and transferred MoS₂ on β -Ga₂O₃ substrate, respectively. The inset shows cross-section transmission electron microscopy (TEM) image of fabricated MoS₂/ β -Ga₂O₃ heterojunction



(CLs) were used for few-layer MoS₂ and β-Ga₂O₃ samples, respectively. Figure 4a shows the XPS narrow scan of Mo 3d and valence band spectra from few-layer MoS₂ [30]. The binding energy difference (BED) between CLs of Mo 3d_{5/2} and valence band maximum (VBM) for MoS₂ was calculated to be 228.59 ± 0.1 eV. As shown in Fig. 4b, the BE of Ga 3d CL and VBM from few-layer β-Ga₂O₃ were deduced to be 20.25 ± 0.05 and 3.23 ± 0.05 eV, respectively. The corresponding BED was determined to 17.02 ± 0.1 eV, which is well consistent with that reported by Sun et al. [31]. Figure 4c depicts the measured XPS spectra of Mo 3d and Ga 3d CLs for MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions with/without nitridation. It is noted that the Mo 3d_{5/2} CL shifted from 228.95 ± 0.05 eV for the unnitrided heterojunction toward 229.60 ± 0.05 eV for the nitrided heterojunction while Ga 3d CL shifted from 20.25 ± 0.05 to 20.65 ± 0.05 eV. Based on Kraut' method,[32] the valence band offset (VBO, ΔE_V) of few-layer MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions was calculated according to the following equation,

$$\Delta E_V \approx \frac{1}{4} (E_{Mo\ 3d_{5/2}}^{MoS_2} - E_{VBM}^{MoS_2}) - (E_{Ga\ 3d}^{Ga_2O_3} - E_{VBM}^{Ga_2O_3}) - \Delta E_{CL} \tag{1}$$

where $E_{Mo\ 3d_{5/2}}^{MoS_2}$ and $E_{VBM}^{MoS_2}$ are binding energies of Mo 3d_{5/2} CL and VBM from MoS₂, $E_{Ga\ 3d}^{Ga_2O_3}$, and $E_{VBM}^{Ga_2O_3}$ are binding energies of Ga 3d CL and VBM from β-Ga₂O₃, ΔE_{CL} ≈ 1/4 (E_{Mo 3d_{5/2}}^{MoS₂} - E_{Ga 3d}^{Ga₂O₃}) is the binding energy difference between Mo 3d_{5/2} and Ga 3d CLs for MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions. Hence, the ΔE_V of MoS₂ on β-Ga₂O₃ substrate with and without N₂ plasma treatment was calculated to be 2.62±0.1 and 2.87 ± 0.1 eV, respectively.

Figure 4d shows the O 1s CL energy loss spectra of β-Ga₂O₃ substrates with and without nitridation. It is

noted that the bandgap keeps unchanged after nitridation treatment with a value of 4.70 ± 0.1 eV. Thus, the conduction band offset can be extracted as follows,

$$\Delta E_C \approx E_g^{Ga_2O_3} - E_g^{MoS_2} - \Delta E_V \tag{2}$$

where $E_{Ga_2O_3}^{Ga_2O_3}$ and $E_{MoS_2}^{MoS_2}$ are the bandgaps of β-Ga₂O₃ and few-layer MoS₂, respectively. The bandgap of 1.4 ± 0.1 eV for few-layer MoS₂ was used in this work.³⁴ According to Eq. (2), the ΔE_C between MoS₂ and β-Ga₂O₃ with and without nitridation were deduced to be 0.68 ± 0.1 and 0.43 ± 0.1 eV, respectively. The calculated band diagrams for heterojunctions without/with nitridation are shown in Fig. 5(a) and 5(b), respectively.

Next, the electronic structures of nitrided and unnitrided heterojunctions were further examined through the Vienna ab initio simulation package (VASP) based on density functional theory (DFT) [33–35]. The generalized gradient approximation (GGA) of Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) parameterization was adopted for exchange-correlation function [36, 37]. We used the DFT-D3 dispersion corrections approach to describe the long-distance van der Waals (vdW) interactions [38–40]. The projector augmented wave (PAW) pseudopotential method was used to describe the core-valence interaction with a kinetic energy cutoff of 650 eV for plane wave expansion. We employ a 4 × 4 × 1 G-centered k-mesh for structural relaxation of the unit cell, with the smallest spacing between k-points of 0.04 Å⁻¹, which is precise enough by the convergence test with respect to the number of k points. The convergence thresholds are set to 10⁻⁴ eV for energy differences of the system and 10⁻² eV Å⁻¹ for Hellman-Feynman force. In order to eliminate artificial interactions between two adjacent atomic layers, the thickness of the vacuum layer is set to

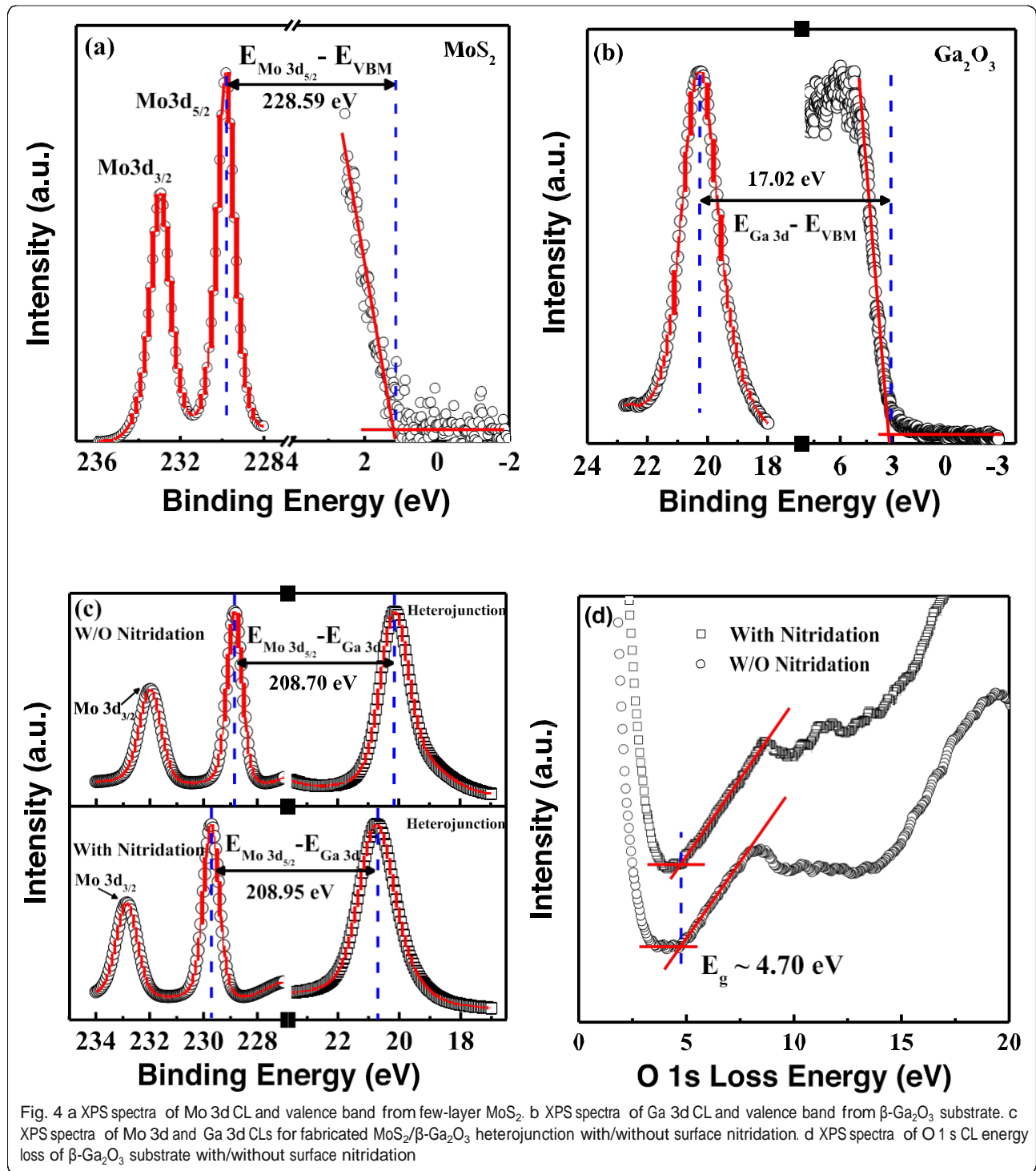


Fig. 4 a XPS spectra of Mo 3d CL and valence band from few-layer MoS₂. b XPS spectra of Ga 3d CL and valence band from β-Ga₂O₃ substrate. c XPS spectra of Mo 3d and Ga 3d CLs for fabricated MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction with/without surface nitridation. d XPS spectra of O 1s CL energy loss of β-Ga₂O₃ substrate with/without surface nitridation

~ 15 Å. The eigenvalues of the heterojunctions are further verified by the Heyd-Scuseria-Ernzerhof (HSE06) hybrid functional calculations, which improve the precision of eigenvalues via reducing the localization and delocalization errors of PBE and Hartree-Fock (HF)

functionals [41]. The mixing ratio is 25% for the short-range HF exchange. The screening parameter is 0.2 Å⁻¹. The MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions were constructed as shown in Fig. 6a. The universal binding energy relation (UBER) method, which provides a

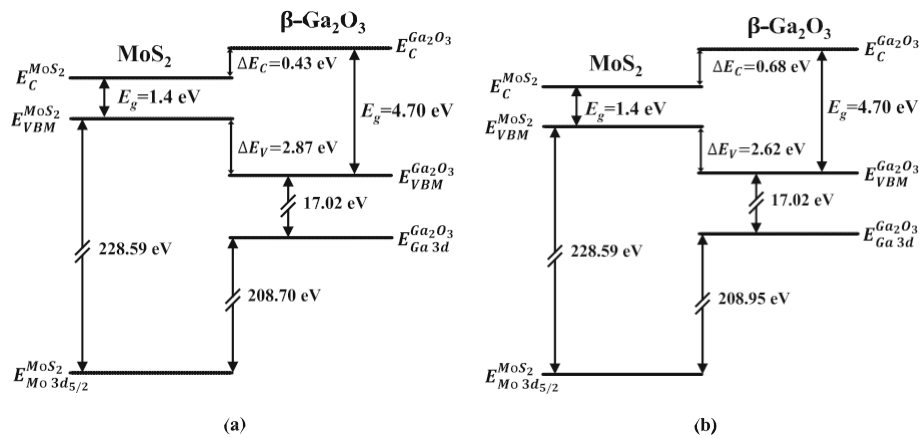


Fig. 5 Band diagrams of MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction a without and b with surface nitridation

simple universal form for the relationship between binding energy and atomic separation, [42] was applied to determine the energetically stable structure before electronic structure calculation. Various interlayer distances were considered and the surface adhesion energy W_{ad} for the heterojunctions are shown below,

$$W_{ad} = \frac{1}{4} \frac{E_{Ga_2O_3} + 3E_{MoS_2} - E_{Ga_2O_3=MoS_2}}{A}$$

where A is the interface area, $E_{Ga_2O_3}$, E_{MoS_2} , and $E_{Ga_2O_3=MoS_2}$ are the total energies of β-Ga₂O₃, mono-

layer MoS₂ and the MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction, respectively. Once the W_{ad} reaches a maximum, the optimal interlayer distance will be obtained. After structure optimizations, a nitrogen atom is substitutionally doped in the original MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction, as shown in Fig. 6b. The concentration of nitrogen in DFT calculation is around 4.17%, which is close to that (3.61%) in experiments. The electronic structures for both nitrated and unnitrated MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterojunctions were calculated as illustrated in Fig. 6c and d. It was seen that mid-gap states were introduced, which may enhance the charge transfer across the MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ interface, and the resulting interface dipole contributed to the measured binding

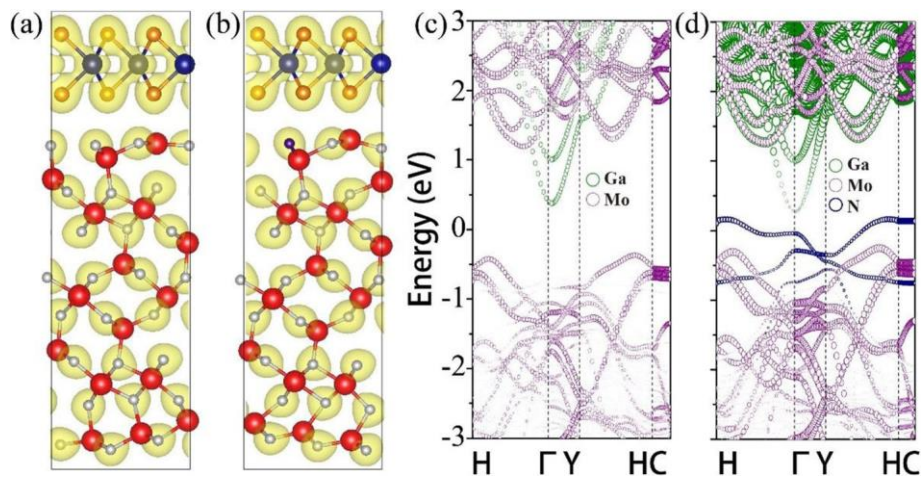


Fig. 6 Atomic structure and charge-density distributions of β-Ga₂O₃-MoS₂ stacked heterostructures a without and b with nitrogen dopants in a 4 × 4 × 1 supercell from a side view. Ga (O) atoms are in red (gray) and Mo (S) atoms in blue (orange). Band structures of MoS₂/β-Ga₂O₃ heterostructures c without and d with nitrogen dopants

energy shift. Furthermore, the calculated conduction band offsets ΔE_C ($\Delta E_C \approx \frac{1}{4} E_{CB}^{MoS_2} - E_{CB}^{Ga_2O_3}$) for undoped- and doped- β - Ga_2O_3/MoS_2 heterojunctions are 0.82 and 1.0 eV respectively, showing the same trend with the experimental results. We have also calculated the eigenvalues of $E_{CB}^{MoS_2}$ and $E_{CB}^{Ga_2O_3}$ using the HSE06 method to further confirm the above conclusion, and find that the corrected ΔE_C are 0.87 and 1.08 eV for undoped- and doped- β - Ga_2O_3/MoS_2 heterojunctions respectively.

Conclusions

In conclusion, respective MoS_2 film has been transferred onto unnitrided and nitride β - Ga_2O_3 for constructing MoS_2/β - Ga_2O_3 heterojunctions. Raman spectroscopy was used to investigate the quality of transferred MoS_2 film, and SIMS study was performed to probe the elemental depth profiles of the MoS_2/β - Ga_2O_3 heterojunction with nitridation. The VBOs were determined to be 2.62 ± 0.1 eV for nitrated MoS_2/β - Ga_2O_3 heterojunction and 2.87 ± 0.1 eV for unnitrided heterojunction by XPS, respectively. The resultant CBOs were deduced to be 0.68 ± 0.1 and 0.43 ± 0.1 eV, which was in the same trends with the DFT calculations. These findings demonstrated that the band offsets can be modified via surface nitridation process. This study offers glorious perspectives on the implementation of designed electronic devices based on 2D/3D vertical heterojunctions.

Abbreviations

β - Ga_2O_3 : Beta-gallium oxide; SL: Single-layer; MoS_2 : Molybdenum disulfide; XPS: X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy; CBO: Conduction band offset; VBO: Valence band offset; CVD: Chemical vapor deposition; PMMA: Poly(methyl methacrylate); HRTEM: High-resolution transmission electron microscope; SIMS: Secondary ion mass spectrometry; BE: Binding energy; BED: Binding energy difference; CL: Core level; VBM: Valence band maximum; VASP: Vienna ab initio simulation package; DFT: Density functional theory; GGA: Generalized gradient approximation; PBE: Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof; PAW: Projector augmented wave; UBER: Universal binding energy relation

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Authors' Contributions

WHY performed the experiments. KX performed the theoretical calculations. WHY and KX contributed equally to this work. WJL and HZ modified the manuscript. DAG, CTX, HYY, XHW, QQS, and SJD helped review and discuss the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets supporting the conclusions of this manuscript are included within the manuscript.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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