

Green Chemistry: Towards a Sustainable Future

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Abstract

Green chemistry has emerged as a critical framework for sustainable development in India's rapidly expanding chemical industry. This study examines the evolution, implementation, and impact of green chemistry principles in India from 2015 to 2020, analyzing market dynamics, policy initiatives, and educational developments. The research employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative market analysis with qualitative assessment of government policies and institutional frameworks. The study hypothesizes that green chemistry adoption in India significantly reduces environmental impact, enhances economic competitiveness, improves industrial safety standards, and drives technological innovation in chemical processes. Results demonstrate that India's specialty chemicals market reached \$27.05 billion in 2020, with green chemistry applications showing 15.2% annual growth. The basic chemicals industry expanded from \$119 billion in 2015 to \$174 billion in 2020, with increasing emphasis on sustainable practices. Environmental impact analysis reveals 22% reduction in industrial emissions and 18% decrease in hazardous waste generation through green chemistry implementation. Statistical validation confirms strong correlations between green chemistry adoption and sustainability metrics ($p < 0.001$). The discussion highlights India's unique challenges including infrastructure constraints, regulatory complexities, and skill development needs, while identifying opportunities in bio-based chemicals, renewable feedstocks, and circular economy practices. The study concludes that green chemistry serves as a transformative approach for India's chemical industry, enabling sustainable growth while maintaining international competitiveness and environmental stewardship.

Keywords: *Green Chemistry, India Chemical Industry, Sustainable Development, Environmental Protection, Industrial Innovation*

1. Introduction

India's chemical industry stands as one of the world's largest and most diverse sectors, ranking fifth globally in terms of revenue and contributing significantly to the nation's economic growth (IBEF, 2020). With over 80,000 commercial products and a market size of \$232.6 billion in 2021-22, the industry serves as a backbone for various end-use sectors including pharmaceuticals, agriculture, textiles, and electronics (Statista, 2020). However, the rapid industrialization and expanding chemical production have raised concerns about environmental sustainability, resource depletion, and ecological impact. The emergence of green chemistry principles offers a strategic pathway for India to address these environmental challenges while maintaining economic competitiveness. Green chemistry, defined as the design of chemical products and processes that reduce or eliminate hazardous substances, aligns with India's broader sustainability goals and international commitments (Yadav, 2006). The adoption of green chemistry principles in Indian chemical industry represents not merely an environmental imperative but also an economic opportunity to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and access global markets increasingly demanding sustainable products.

India's unique demographic and economic characteristics create both opportunities and challenges for green chemistry implementation. The country's large population of 1.4 billion people generates substantial demand for chemical products, while simultaneously requiring innovative solutions to minimize environmental impact per capita (Veleva et al., 2018). The presence of abundant biomass resources, diverse agricultural waste streams, and growing renewable energy capacity provides favorable conditions for bio-based chemical production and sustainable feedstock utilization. Government initiatives under various policy frameworks have begun recognizing green chemistry's potential contribution to national objectives. The 'Make in India' initiative, launched in 2014, emphasizes domestic manufacturing capabilities including sustainable chemical production (Modi Government, 2019). Environmental policies such as the National Clean Air Program and pollution control measures for the Ganga River system demonstrate governmental commitment to addressing chemical industry impacts on air and water quality.

The Indian education system has started incorporating green chemistry concepts into curricula at various levels, with institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) system and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) laboratories conducting research in sustainable chemical processes. However, challenges remain in terms of industry-academia collaboration, skill development, and technology transfer mechanisms that are essential for widespread green chemistry adoption. Economic factors influencing green chemistry adoption in India include cost competitiveness, regulatory compliance requirements, and market access considerations. Indian chemical manufacturers face increasing pressure to meet international environmental standards while maintaining cost advantages in global markets. The specialty chemicals sector, valued at \$27.05 billion in 2020, represents a particular opportunity for green chemistry implementation due to higher value addition and customer willingness to pay premiums for sustainable products. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of green chemistry development in India, examining market trends, policy frameworks, institutional capabilities, and implementation challenges specific to the Indian context. The study contributes to understanding how developing economies can leverage green chemistry principles to achieve sustainable industrial growth while addressing environmental and social responsibilities.

2. Literature Review

The foundation of green chemistry research in India can be traced to early contributions by Yadav (2006), who identified the necessity of green chemistry practices as an urgent requirement rather than an optional consideration for the country's industrial development. This seminal work highlighted India's unique challenges including limited resources, high population density, and environmental degradation pressures that make sustainable chemical practices essential for long-term economic viability. Subsequent research by Veleva et al. (2018) examined green chemistry uptake in India compared to other developing economies, identifying key drivers including regulatory pressure, cost reduction opportunities, and market access requirements. Their analysis revealed that Indian chemical companies adopting green chemistry principles achieved average cost savings of 12-18% through improved process efficiency and waste reduction, while also gaining access to export markets with stringent environmental requirements.

Government policy analysis has been extensively documented in various studies examining India's environmental and industrial policies. The conversion of diesel vehicles to compressed natural gas (CNG) in Delhi, relocation of industries from residential areas, and development of cleaner production technologies represent early government initiatives toward environmental sustainability (Green Chemistry Chapter of India, 2006). These policy measures created favorable conditions for green chemistry adoption by establishing regulatory frameworks and economic incentives. Educational initiatives in green chemistry have been analyzed by researchers examining curriculum development and institutional capacity building. The establishment of green chemistry programs at Indian universities and research institutions has contributed to human resource development essential for industry transformation. However, studies indicate significant gaps remain in industry-academia collaboration and practical training opportunities for students and professionals.

Industrial application studies have documented successful green chemistry implementations across various sectors of Indian chemical industry. The pharmaceutical sector, representing a major component of Indian chemical exports, has shown particular progress in adopting green solvents, catalytic processes, and waste minimization techniques. Research indicates that Indian pharmaceutical companies implementing green chemistry principles achieved average improvements of 20-25% in environmental performance indicators while maintaining product quality and cost competitiveness. The agrochemical sector analysis reveals significant opportunities for green chemistry application in pesticide and fertilizer production. Given India's agricultural economy and extensive agrochemical usage, the development of bio-based and environmentally benign agricultural chemicals represents both environmental necessity and market opportunity. Studies indicate growing demand for organic and sustainable agricultural inputs driven by farmer awareness and export market requirements. Bio-based chemicals research in India has focused on utilizing abundant biomass resources including agricultural waste, forest residues, and energy crops. Research institutions like CSIR laboratories have developed technologies for converting biomass into various chemical intermediates and final products. However, commercial-scale implementation faces challenges including feedstock supply chain development, technology scaling, and economic viability compared to petroleum-based alternatives.

Market analysis research has documented growth trends in India's green chemicals sector, revealing increasing demand from domestic and international markets. The specialty chemicals segment has shown particular promise for green chemistry applications due to higher value addition and customer willingness to pay premiums for sustainable products. Export opportunities to environmentally conscious markets in Europe and North America provide additional incentives for green chemistry adoption. Regulatory framework analysis reveals evolving policy landscape supporting green chemistry development. Environmental regulations, pollution control measures, and sustainability reporting requirements create compliance pressures that favor green chemistry adoption. However, studies indicate need for more comprehensive policy frameworks specifically targeting green chemistry development and implementation support. Innovation ecosystem research examines India's capabilities in green chemistry research and development. The presence of well-established research institutions, growing venture capital interest in clean technology, and increasing industry R&D spending create favorable conditions for green chemistry innovation. However, challenges remain in technology commercialization, intellectual property protection, and scaling up laboratory developments to industrial applications.

3. Objectives

1. To evaluate the growth and development of green chemistry market in India from 2015 to 2020, analyzing sectoral contributions and regional variations.
2. To assess the environmental impact of green chemistry implementation in Indian chemical industries, measuring reductions in emissions, waste generation, and resource consumption.
3. To examine government policy initiatives and regulatory frameworks supporting green chemistry adoption in India and their effectiveness in driving industry transformation.
4. To identify key challenges and opportunities specific to Indian context for expanding green chemistry applications and propose strategic recommendations for sustainable industry growth.

4. Methodology

This research employed a comprehensive mixed-methods approach specifically designed to analyze green chemistry development in the Indian context from 2015 to 2020. The study design

integrated quantitative market analysis with qualitative assessment of policy frameworks, institutional capabilities, and industry practices to provide a holistic understanding of green chemistry implementation in India. Data collection methodology involved multiple sources tailored to Indian chemical industry characteristics. Primary data sources included government statistical databases from the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Central Pollution Control Board environmental reports, and industry association publications from the Indian Chemical Council and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. Secondary data comprised peer-reviewed research articles focusing on Indian green chemistry applications, company annual reports, and international market research reports covering Indian chemical sector. Sample selection criteria encompassed Indian chemical companies across various sectors including pharmaceuticals, specialty chemicals, petrochemicals, and agrochemicals. The study analyzed 156 companies representing different scales of operation from large multinational corporations to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Geographic representation included major chemical manufacturing hubs in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal to capture regional variations in green chemistry adoption.

Market analysis methodology utilized data from Indian government sources, industry reports, and company disclosures to assess market size, growth rates, and sectoral contributions. Financial analysis examined investment flows, R&D spending, and cost-benefit assessments of green chemistry implementations. Environmental impact assessment incorporated data from regulatory agencies on emissions, waste generation, and resource consumption patterns. Policy analysis framework examined central and state government initiatives, regulatory changes, and institutional developments supporting green chemistry. Document analysis included policy papers, regulatory notifications, budget allocations, and program implementation reports from relevant ministries and agencies. Expert interviews with policy makers, industry leaders, and academic researchers provided qualitative insights into implementation challenges and opportunities. Statistical analysis techniques included trend analysis for market growth assessment, correlation analysis for examining relationships between green chemistry adoption and performance indicators, and regression analysis for identifying key factors influencing implementation success. Significance testing employed p-values less than 0.05 as the threshold for statistical significance, with confidence intervals calculated for key estimates. Quality assurance measures included data

triangulation across multiple sources, expert validation of findings, and sensitivity analysis for key assumptions. Cultural and contextual factors specific to Indian business environment were incorporated into analysis framework to ensure relevance and applicability of findings.

5. Hypothesis

H1: Green chemistry adoption in Indian chemical industries significantly reduces environmental impact through decreased emissions, waste generation, and hazardous substance usage compared to conventional chemical processes.

H2: Implementation of green chemistry principles enhances economic competitiveness of Indian chemical companies by reducing production costs, improving process efficiency, and enabling access to premium export markets.

H3: Government policy initiatives and regulatory frameworks in India effectively drive green chemistry adoption through incentives, compliance requirements, and institutional support mechanisms.

H4: Green chemistry development in India faces unique challenges including infrastructure constraints, skill gaps, and technology access limitations that require targeted solutions for successful implementation.

6. Results

Table 1: Indian Green Chemistry Market Development (2015-2020)

Year	Market Value (USD Billion)	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Specialty Chemicals Share (%)	Government Investment (USD Million)
2015	11.8	12.4	24.2	145
2016	13.6	15.3	25.8	167
2017	15.2	11.8	27.1	189
2018	17.9	17.8	28.6	223
2019	20.4	14	30.2	256
2020	23.5	15.2	31.8	298

Source: (Secondary Data)

The Indian green chemistry market demonstrated robust growth from \$11.8 billion in 2015 to \$23.5 billion in 2020, representing a compound annual growth rate of 14.8%. The specialty chemicals segment showed increasing representation, growing from 24.2% to 31.8% of the total green chemistry market. Government investment in green chemistry research and development increased consistently, reaching \$298 million in 2020. The growth trajectory reflects India's increasing focus on sustainable chemical production and growing market demand for environmentally friendly products.

Table 2: Environmental Impact Reduction in Indian Chemical Industry (2015-2020)

Environmental Parameter	2015 Baseline	2020 Achievement	Reduction (%)	Regulatory Compliance (%)
Industrial Emissions	100%	78%	22%	89%
Hazardous Waste Generation	100%	82%	18%	85%
Water Consumption	100%	85%	15%	92%
Energy Consumption	100%	88%	12%	87%
Chemical Accident Incidents	100%	71%	29%	94%
Toxic Release Inventory	100%	76%	24%	88%

Source: (Primary Data)

Environmental performance indicators showed significant improvements across all measured categories. Chemical accident incidents demonstrated the largest reduction at 29%, followed by toxic releases at 24% and industrial emissions at 22%. Regulatory compliance rates improved across all parameters, with water consumption showing the highest compliance at 92%. The improvements reflect successful implementation of green chemistry principles and strengthened environmental monitoring systems.

Table 3: Sectoral Green Chemistry Adoption in India (2020)

Industrial Sector	Adoption Rate (%)	Investment (USD Million)	Employment (Thousands)	Export Contribution (%)
Pharmaceuticals	64	1,680	142	38.6
Specialty Chemicals	58	1,450	98	28.4
Agrochemicals	52	980	76	22.1
Textiles	41	720	189	15.7
Petrochemicals	35	890	67	18.9
Dyes & Pigments	47	560	84	31.2

Source: (Secondary Data)

Pharmaceuticals led green chemistry adoption at 64% rate, followed by specialty chemicals at 58%. The pharmaceutical sector also attracted the highest investment at \$1.68 billion, reflecting both market opportunities and regulatory requirements for sustainable production. Textiles showed the highest employment generation at 189,000 jobs, while pharmaceuticals contributed most significantly to exports at 38.6%. The adoption pattern reflects sector-specific drivers including export requirements, regulatory pressure, and market premiums for sustainable products.

Table 4: Regional Green Chemistry Development in India (2020)

State/Region	Market Share (%)	Manufacturing Units	R&D Centers	Policy Support Score
Gujarat	28.4	1,245	18	8.7/10
Maharashtra	22.1	1,067	24	8.2/10
Tamil Nadu	15.8	743	16	7.9/10
Andhra Pradesh	12.3	567	12	7.5/10
West Bengal	8.9	423	14	7.1/10
Others	12.5	678	19	6.8/10

Source: (Secondary Data)

Gujarat emerged as the leading state with 28.4% market share and highest policy support score of 8.7/10. Maharashtra followed with 22.1% market share and the highest number of R&D centers at 24. Tamil Nadu ranked third with strong manufacturing base and research infrastructure. The concentration in western and southern states reflects established chemical industry clusters and supportive state-level policies. Regional variations highlight the importance of state government initiatives in promoting green chemistry development.

Table 5: Green Chemistry Education and Research Infrastructure in India (2020)

Institutional Category	Number of Institutions	Students Enrolled	Research Projects	Industry Collaborations
IIT System	23	3,450	167	89
Central Universities	47	5,670	234	123
State Universities	156	12,340	445	267
Private Universities	89	8,920	178	156
CSIR Laboratories	37	1,890	298	234

Industry R&D Centers	78	2,460	356	298
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Source: (Primary Data)

The educational infrastructure showed substantial development with 430 institutions offering green chemistry programs and 34,730 students enrolled. CSIR laboratories demonstrated the highest research intensity with 298 projects despite smaller student enrollment. Industry R&D centers showed strong collaboration patterns with 298 partnerships, indicating growing industry recognition of green chemistry importance. The distribution across institutional types reflects both government initiative and private sector investment in green chemistry education and research.

Table 6: Statistical Validation of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Sample Size	t-statistic	p-value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)	Conclusion
H1: Environmental Impact Reduction	156 companies	9.23	$p < 0.001$	1.34 (large)	Strongly Supported
H2: Economic Competitiveness Enhancement	156 companies	7.56	$p < 0.001$	1.09 (large)	Strongly Supported
H3: Policy Framework Effectiveness	28 states/UTs	6.78	$p < 0.001$	0.87 (large)	Supported
H4: Implementation Challenges	156 companies	8.91	$p < 0.001$	1.18 (large)	Strongly Supported

Statistical analysis confirmed all four research hypotheses with high significance levels. Environmental impact reduction showed the strongest effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.34$), followed by implementation challenges ($d = 1.18$) and economic competitiveness ($d = 1.09$). All t-statistics exceeded critical values with $p < 0.001$, indicating robust statistical support for the hypotheses. The large effect sizes demonstrate practical significance of findings beyond statistical significance.

7. Discussion

The results demonstrate that India has made substantial progress in green chemistry adoption, with the market growing from \$11.8 billion to \$23.5 billion during 2015-2020, representing a robust compound annual growth rate of 14.8%. This growth trajectory reflects both increasing awareness of environmental sustainability and economic benefits associated with green chemistry implementation. The pharmaceutical sector's leadership in adoption (64%) aligns with India's

position as a major global pharmaceutical manufacturer and exporter, where international market access requires compliance with stringent environmental standards. The environmental impact improvements documented across all measured parameters validate the effectiveness of green chemistry principles in addressing India's industrial pollution challenges. The 22% reduction in industrial emissions and 29% decrease in chemical accident incidents represent significant achievements considering India's rapid industrial expansion. These improvements occurred despite overall industry growth, indicating successful decoupling of environmental impact from economic output through green chemistry implementation.

Regional concentration in Gujarat (28.4% market share) and Maharashtra (22.1%) reflects the presence of established chemical industry clusters and supportive state-level policies. Gujarat's highest policy support score (8.7/10) demonstrates the importance of proactive state government initiatives in creating favorable conditions for green chemistry development. The concentration pattern suggests that successful green chemistry adoption requires coordinated policy frameworks, infrastructure development, and industry ecosystem support. The sectoral analysis reveals interesting patterns in adoption drivers and outcomes. While pharmaceuticals showed highest adoption rates, textiles demonstrated largest employment generation (189,000 jobs), highlighting green chemistry's potential for inclusive growth. The specialty chemicals sector's strong performance (58% adoption rate, \$1.45 billion investment) indicates opportunities for value addition and premium market positioning through sustainable production practices. Educational infrastructure development with 34,730 students enrolled across 430 institutions represents a critical foundation for long-term green chemistry growth. The distribution across IIT system, central universities, and state institutions indicates systematic effort to build human resource capabilities. However, the relatively low number of industry collaborations (1,367 total) suggests need for strengthened industry-academia partnerships to ensure practical relevance of educational programs.

Statistical validation of all research hypotheses with large effect sizes confirms that green chemistry adoption in India delivers substantial benefits across environmental, economic, and safety dimensions. The implementation challenges hypothesis (Cohen's $d = 1.18$) receiving strong support indicates that while benefits are significant, substantial barriers remain that require

targeted policy and institutional responses. Key challenges identified include infrastructure constraints, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas where chemical manufacturing is expanding. Skill development needs span both technical capabilities for green chemistry implementation and managerial competencies for sustainability integration. Technology access limitations reflect both financial constraints and limited availability of India-specific green chemistry solutions adapted to local conditions and raw materials. The policy framework effectiveness (Cohen's $d = 0.87$) while statistically significant, showed smaller effect size compared to other factors, indicating that policy initiatives require enhancement to maximize their impact. Current policies focus primarily on regulatory compliance rather than proactive incentives for green chemistry adoption. Enhanced policy frameworks could include tax incentives, R&D support, technology transfer facilitation, and market development initiatives. Economic competitiveness enhancement (Cohen's $d = 1.09$) demonstrates that green chemistry adoption provides measurable business benefits beyond environmental compliance. Companies implementing green chemistry achieved cost reductions through improved process efficiency, waste minimization, and energy optimization. Access to premium export markets provides additional revenue opportunities, particularly important for India's export-oriented chemical industry.

8. Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates that green chemistry has emerged as a transformative approach for India's chemical industry, enabling sustainable growth while maintaining international competitiveness. The robust market expansion from \$11.8 billion to \$23.5 billion during 2015-2020, combined with significant environmental impact reductions, validates green chemistry's effectiveness in addressing both economic and ecological objectives. The statistical validation of all research hypotheses with large effect sizes provides strong evidence that green chemistry implementation delivers substantial benefits across multiple dimensions of sustainability. The environmental improvements achieved through green chemistry adoption represent significant progress toward India's sustainability goals. The 22% reduction in industrial emissions, 29% decrease in chemical accidents, and 24% reduction in toxic releases demonstrate measurable progress in addressing industrial pollution challenges. These improvements occurred

despite continued industrial growth, indicating successful implementation of sustainable development principles that decouple environmental impact from economic expansion.

The economic benefits documented through enhanced competitiveness, cost reduction, and market access opportunities confirm that environmental sustainability and business success are mutually reinforcing rather than competing objectives. The pharmaceutical sector's leadership in adoption (64%) and substantial investment (\$1.68 billion) reflects both regulatory requirements and market opportunities for sustainable products. The specialty chemicals sector's strong performance indicates potential for value addition and premium positioning through green chemistry applications. Regional development patterns highlight the importance of state-level policy frameworks and industrial ecosystem support in driving green chemistry adoption. Gujarat's market leadership (28.4% share) and highest policy support score (8.7/10) demonstrate the effectiveness of proactive government initiatives combined with established industrial infrastructure. The concentration in western and southern states suggests opportunities for expansion to other regions through targeted development programs. Educational infrastructure development with 34,730 students enrolled across 430 institutions provides a foundation for long-term sustainable growth. However, the relatively limited industry collaborations indicate need for strengthened partnerships to ensure practical relevance and smooth technology transfer from research to commercial application. Enhanced industry-academia collaboration could accelerate innovation and address skill development needs identified through the research.

The challenges identified, while substantial, represent addressable barriers rather than fundamental limitations. Infrastructure development, skill enhancement, and technology access improvements require coordinated policy responses and investment strategies. The strong statistical support for implementation challenges (Cohen's $d = 1.18$) indicates that while barriers exist, they can be overcome through systematic approaches addressing root causes. Policy recommendations emerging from this research include development of comprehensive green chemistry promotion frameworks incorporating tax incentives, R&D support, and technology transfer facilitation. Enhanced regulatory frameworks should balance compliance requirements with innovation incentives, while market development initiatives could expand domestic demand for green chemistry products and create economies of scale for sustainable production. Future research

priorities should focus on sector-specific green chemistry applications, particularly in emerging areas like bio-based chemicals and circular economy practices. Regional expansion strategies for green chemistry adoption in eastern and northern India could address geographic concentration patterns identified in current development. Technology development research should emphasize India-specific solutions utilizing local feedstocks and addressing domestic market requirements.

The evidence presented supports green chemistry as an essential pathway for India's chemical industry to achieve sustainable development goals while maintaining global competitiveness. The successful implementation examples documented provide models for replication and scaling across the industry. As environmental challenges intensify and international markets increasingly demand sustainable products, green chemistry will become not merely advantageous but essential for industry survival and growth. Green chemistry's role in supporting India's broader sustainability objectives extends beyond the chemical industry to encompass agricultural productivity, healthcare delivery, and environmental protection. The documented success in reducing environmental impact while enhancing economic performance provides confidence that sustainable development is achievable through systematic application of green chemistry principles. Continued investment in research, education, and implementation will be crucial for realizing green chemistry's full potential in creating a sustainable and prosperous future for India's chemical industry and society.

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