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Chapter 1: A Review on the Role of Green Chemistry in Sustainable Development

Neethu Sundaresan

Milad-E-Sherif Memorial College, Kayamkulam, Alappuzha, Kerala, 690502.

Email Id- neetujyothis@gmail.com

Abstract: Green chemistry is a driving force in moving toward sustainable development, particularly, in minimizing or eschewing altogether hazardous chemicals in the course of chemical processes. The discipline is ultimately based on the twelve principles developed by Anastas and Warner, which create a framework to reduce waste, use renewable resources, and design safer products. And they're more than just theoretical: The principles have been applied in various sectors of industry, agriculture and research, changing how chemicals are made, how students are taught and even how standards are set in policy. In this review, we explore the interconnections between green chemistry and the targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on responsible production and consumption, clean water, climate action, and public health. By critically reviewing the literature and comparing case studies from the leading chemical industries and school curricular reforms, the paper exposes the successes and challenges that emerge during the adoption of green chemistry practices. The synthesis offered here highlights the importance of locating green chemistry within a comprehensive sustainability science. The field, by embedding its basic tenets into diverse areas, not only fosters innovation, but also contributes to a more circular, fair, and sustainable world economy. "Does the evidence also point to sure, clear pathways for progress?" The answer is yes, and it also allows for acknowledging the obstacles—whether they are daunting and technological or frustrating and regulatory or painful and social—that have yet to be overcome. Green chemistry principles must be incorporated on an even larger scale in order to achieve a more sustainable and equitable future.

Keywords: Green Chemistry, Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change and Water.

Introduction

Green chemistry is a revolutionized concept in chemical science that focuses on innovating chemical products and processes with much lesser or no hazardous composition. It encourages the development of chemicals and processes that does not have significant negative impact on the environment and key to meet the societal challenges. The fundamental philosophies of green chemistry, encourage innovation procedures which are efficient, safer and make sustainable use of natural resources, makes it a critical element of environmentalism. Green chemistry can act as a mediating concept, for sustainable development, which attempts to bridge underlying contradictions between technology progress and natural conservation by offering a prospect of developing approaches that equally advocate human progress along with planet sustainability. With the continuous shift of world interest towards sustainability, green chemistry will become more and more important for the industrial, political and environmental governance.

Principles of Green Chemistry

Twelve principles of green chemistry constitute the framework for the design and implementation of safer and sustainable chemical technologies (Kurul et al., 2025). Most of them suggest strategies for minimizing waste, granted theoretical feedstock is renewable, for employing inherently less hazardous materials and for designing chemical products that would reliably decompose at the end of the lifecycle. Green chemistry provides a framework for the sustained approaches and technological methodologies in science-built understanding where molecular knowledge is integrated with systems engineering to effectively scale impact beyond laboratory protocols all the way toward chemical value chain cycles re-engineering (Zimmerman et al., 2020). Sustainability goals formulated for each principle target efficiency, hazard potential and resource use reduction in a way that empowers the chemical industry to contribute to the resolution of toxicity, resource depletion or contaminant persistence, known as TDP issues. Foundational concepts outlined in this context demand to be embraced for constructing the innovations' future, wherein chemical discoveries would support environmental and human well-being goals.

Alongside these, the waste prevention principle is also especially significant as it directly impacts the environmental challenges usually posed by chemical production. Its focus on promoting strategies that avoid establishing unnecessary side products works to confirm the prevention of pollution directly at the source. A good example of this principle's application is mechanochemistry, which employs solvent-free technologies. This type of approach usually successfully promotes the needed reaction without the establishment of hazardous materials (Ardila-Fierro & Hernández, 2021). In these terms, establishing these practices to chemical production would not only prevent additional expenses on waste processing and landfilling but would also positively impact the efficiency of resources used. Thus, waste prevention would further strengthen its status as a primary principle in the transition of chemical production toward more responsible and efficient approaches.

Furthermore, the atom economy principle has a crucial significance to the resource efficiency progress of green chemistry technologies. Atom economy encourages synthetic methods aimed to incorporate all starting materials into a target product to prevent molecular waste specifically. This principle motivates a reflective approach to the reaction mechanism analysis with the aim to preserve starting materials during the whole chemical procedure. The effectiveness of starting material usage as a fraction of its initial amount can be quantitatively assessed in the terms of atom economy. The correlation of atom economy and waste generation to directly to key environmental sustainability indicators evaluating life-cycle impacts of chemical products and processes (Rosa et al., 2022). Atom-economy-based technologies support resource efficiency and rational use of chemicals in manufacturing operations while supporting the circularity and environmental guideline principles of sustainable development goals.

Additionally, the safer solvent use principle is a foundational standard for green chemistry aiming to minimize the exploitation of conventional solvents that pose many risks for human health and the environment. This principle implies that chemical researchers and practitioners in various industries shall opt for substances with reduced toxicity and ecological persistence during chemical reactions and products development. The safer solvent use practice reduces exposure to harmful volatile organic compounds and limits air and water pollution. Water, ionic liquids, or bio-based solvents applications reduce toxicological risks and stimulate cleaner and more sustainable chemical technological innovations (Abdussalam-Mohammed et al., 2020). The rising safer solvent use transition significantly decreases toxicological risk, namely, the green chemistry prevention idea specifics impact on the existing chemical practice.

Green chemistry, in this context, delivers specific solutions to boost sustainable development by contributing to various principal environmental objectives. Its application brings the potential for cleaner production, natural resources savings, and pollution prevention, which directly correlates with commitment goals on climate, responsible consumption, and water and sanitation (Ogodo & Abosede, 2025). The role of green chemistry in industrial implementation becomes significant to reduce pollution and promote responsible exploitation of natural resources, as well as contributing to the observable progress on ecosystem health and people's well-being (Chen et al., 2020). Cleaner processes and safer materials further establish the new means of circularity in production schemes, which again minimizes the overall impact of industrial activity on the environment. As such environmentally sustainable alternatives become more established in global industry and policy agendas, green chemistry strengthens its role as a driver of environmental impacts at large within the global sustainable development strategies.

Finally, green chemistry also has excellent economic benefits which news not only cost saving opportunities but industrial innovation stimulation beyond environmental benefits. The use of biocatalytic processes allows companies to abandon fossil-derived raw materials which are expensive for renewable feedstocks and energy-saving production (Sheldon & Brady, 2022). A company that uses innovative bio-based technologies usually experiences reduced waste disposal and decreased associated costs in terms of regulations for hazardous chemicals. The implementation of less toxic alternative solvents, such as water, ionic liquids or even reaction activation in microwaves, also tends to improve the process efficiency, increasing the fraction of the desired products and lowering the losses of materials (Abdussalam-Mohammed et al., 2020). In this way, green chemistry can reduce operational costs while opening new horizons for product development and diversification opportunities in the chemical industry, supporting the continued economic stability in a competitive and globalized market.

Lastly, green chemistry principles' potential for social impact translates into large health benefits, namely because in prioritizing safer options instead of their hazardous counterparts, green chemistry lessens the exposure hazards associated with chemical production processes to workers and local communities. Such social gains are produced not only through green chemistry's technological benefits, but also through ethical and moral frameworks that shape collective aims and actions regarding chemical production and use (Zuin et al., 2021). Through the integration of critical and transdisciplinary perspectives by educational and professional practitioners, the aim of such frameworks is to shape a chemical stewardship quantitatively conducive to communal welfare along with scientific progress. In other words, the social implications of green chemistry emphasize the potential it has to promote human health and social equality through a more socially conscious attitude towards chemical practices, in addition to its environmental and economic gains (Zuin et al., 2021).

Applications of Green Chemistry

Much progress towards sustainability, using alternative solvents, recyclable catalysts and renewable feedstock, has been achieved by various industries using green chemistry. Replacing volatile organic solvents with green solvents perceived as less harmful by chemicals manufacturers has significantly reduced emissions into the atmosphere as well as health impact on workers (Ratti, 2020). Other industries reaping the benefits of green chemistry method are pharmaceutical companies. Greener process such as the synthesis of Ibuprofen by BASF uses higher atom economy and faster reaction which result in lesser waste, energy usage and consequently economic gains (Ratti, 2020). The introduction of biobased cosmetic products such as the green hair dye demonstrates another successful application of green chemistry that benefits consumers and the environment. Noteworthy application of green chemistry principles in various industries show how these principles are integrated in industrial processing methods to achieve sustainable production while preserving natural resources (de Marco et al., 2019).

One of the examples of the green chemistry approach in practice is the continuous manufacturing and use in pharmaceutical processes. Continuous manufacturing requires changes in the production method which is different from the conventional batch approach. The inclusion of waste avoidance through integrated system flow which allows real-time observation and the occurrence of pollution prevention which ultimately impacts the potential for reducing environmental damage. In addition, the economic benefit as a result of reduced energy needs and optimized material demand is also obtained. Agility in production is achieved by pharmaceutical companies using continuous manufacturing as a process, demonstrating that green chemistry is compatible with process efficiency and hazard minimization while showing an increase in product safety and reliability (Rogers & Jensen, 2019). The improvement in process as described provides an example that demonstrates the implications of the approach based on green chemistry on the ability of pharmaceutical processes to transform to better, sustainable practices, even from the perspective of economics without compromising environmental demands (de Marco et al., 2019).

In parallel, the agricultural industry is also utilizing green chemistry processes with the creation and application of green pesticides that lessen the dependence on traditional agrochemicals that are harmful. As an objective of the development, these pest deterrents are designed to be safe because they are biodegradable and non-toxic to other organisms. Complementing environmental safety, the agricultural stability and longevity interests are matched by these green chemistry advancements because these ‘pesticides’ can be made using renewable resources. Based on a closed-loop strategy where the chemicals are designed to decompose into harmless products, avoid accumulation in the soil and water, and cause no harm to non-target organisms (Ganesh et al., 2021). Chemists working closely with agronomists/botanists, and other biologists are pioneering new innovations like targeted bio-pesticides and plant extracts that provide a chemical mechanism for pest control but less harm to soil and water quality. Global sustainability goals can be registered when agriculture embraces such green processes across all aspects where food production needs arise (Ganesh et al., 2021).

Furthermore, regarding the textile domain, this industry embodies the escalated penetration of green chemistry as it entails the formulation of sustainable dyeing methods with reduced ecological footprint. Conventional dyeing processes are characteristically reliant on toxic agents together with excessive water gratification, generating vast quantities of wastewater with long-lasting toxicity (Ratti, 2020). Industry pioneers have transitioned from conventional methods to waterless dyeing technologies and bio-based dyes, reducing overall pollution burden and toxicity (Ratti, 2020). E.g., products like “Hairprint”, a plant-based hair dye, provide a safer alternative with vivid color without petrochemical ingredients. Such developments can enhance consumer’s safety and supplies gain ecological advantages owing to reduced soil and water contamination. Adopting responsible engineered dyes with green chemistry principles illustrates the domain’s amenability to tailor methodologies that address the textile industry's specific sustainability requirements while protecting resources and facilitating a transition toward cleaner manufacturing (Ratti, 2020).

Benefits of Implementing Green Chemistry

Overall, the key benefits of the widespread adoption of green chemistry were apparent in its great potential for positive impacts on various scales, from the environment to human health and safety. First, on a global scale, the positive impacts of green chemistry were reflected in a significantly reduced environmental impact of industrial operations made possible through the reduced hazardous waste generation and the cleaner production approach while limiting the exploitation of natural resources (Lancaster, 2025). Such environmental vigilance with respect to industrial operations allowed for the contribution to the achievement of international goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals committed to responsible consumption and production, climate action, and protection of water resources (Ogodo & Abosede, 2025). Second, the shift to the performance of safer chemistry and safer chemical processes not only reduces exposure risks to workers but also avoid long-term adverse health effects to neighboring communities, which eventually lead to enhanced public health (Lancaster, 2025). Improved health and safety indicators translate to economic growth that successfully sustains industries through reduced waste disposal expenditure, reduced regulatory compliance, and greater compliance with rising social standards for green manufacturing practices (Lancaster, 2025).

In this context, green chemistry is increasingly positioning itself as a prevalent methodology that contributes directly to reducing carbon emissions in the industrial sectors and promotes the fight against climate change, supporting the transition towards a climate-resilient development. This position is rooted in its practices that stimulate the replacement of conventional synthetic methods with others whose implementation not only impacts emissions but also energy consumption and pollutants generated in the production and product life cycle process. Thus, green chemistry starts to operate at the industry level with a fundamental role in the restructuring of their processes associated with higher carbon emissions, as evidenced in practices such as the reduction of solvents, the efficiency of catalytic processes and the use of renewable raw materials (de Marco et al., 2019). These practices that revolutionize the production processes in the industry allow achieving significant reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and its greenhouse gas components, contributing to the mainstreaming towards cleaner production processes through the integration of these principles in manufacturing (de Marco et al., 2019). Similarly, the low-carbon practices that green chemistry promotes in the industry allow aligning the existing policies aimed at reducing emissions and promoting development towards the climate-resilient. Faced with growing environmental challenges, this approach continues to present solutions or alternatives to meet the induced growth and development needs in the transition to address the causes and impacts of climate change on a global scale (de Marco et al., 2019).

In addition, the adoption of green chemistry also enhances the safety of products by focusing on the removal or replacement of potentially dangerous chemicals during the entire product life cycle, which directly reduces the health exposure of consumers and surrounding communities. This proactive measure contributes to the reduced level of dangerous by-products generated by chemical products and processes, which, in turn, lowers the risks of uncontrolled release and exposure to harmful agents. As a result, such innovations facilitate the regulatory approval and evaluation process, where the use of less-hazardous formulations translates into a reduced number of regulations and extensive compliance measures, in addition to expensive remediation or monitoring programs. Companies adopting green chemistry practices experience reduced risks associated with regulatory assessments and longer-lasting legal agreements as well as lower costs related to hazardous waste management and environmental reporting. By focusing on the production of non-toxic chemicals and greener chemical processes, green chemistry strives to deliver safer products into the marketplace and welcome reduced compliance costs and burdens associated with the regulatory process (Abdussalam-Mohammed et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, despite the promising benefits of green chemistry and its growing importance at both institutional and industrial levels, there remain several significant barriers to its realization and full-scale implementation. Foremost, many organizations face a lack of knowledge that severely limits their ability to discern and access products that truly meet the standards of green chemistry (Loste et al., 2019). Additionally, practices and policies that weave green chemistry programs into existing processes-driven models may require significant effort to facilitate collaboration across departments, with routine procedures and insufficient access to cleaner production resources posing challenges (Chen et al., 2020). Although governmental policies and environmental management systems attempt to address these issues, remaining deficits in education, technology development, and policy integration limit advancement in both the private and public sectors. As barriers indicate, these efforts demonstrate that achieving green chemistry involves sustained commitment to interdepartmental education and communication, in addition to regulatory integration, to maximize the impact of sustainable chemical innovations (Chen et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, despite the advantages, the economic restraints tied to the green chemistry implementation remain a substantial hurdle, notably with the first outsources on the technologies and processes. Overhauling existing facilities, an immediate shift to another raw material, or execution of more progressive reaction circumstances, such as microwave activation can be exclusive and many companies continue to find it less economical versus existing facilities that employ customary chemistry. As it stands, the up-front costs are often enough to discourage even first-tier manufacturers and small-scale industries from abandoning established practices and methodologies, which are potentially unsafe and unsustainable, for greener alternatives, even if the long financial implications of foregoing such shifts is more favorable in the long run. In addition, the limited access and pricier options presented by certain bio-based feedstocks or greener solvents can also add strain to the organization whose production goals center on reformulating product offerings and reconstructing chemical pathways (Abdussalam-Mohammed et al., 2020). Hence, incredible efforts must be placed to ensure that the costs at the onset of green chemistry implementation will be annulled over time through savings.

Aditionally, to fulfil the technical requirements posed by green chemistry, significant investment is required in R&D to go beyond the existing constraints of available technology. Some of the more attractive methodologies such as continuous manufacturing (CM) and flow chemistry still present challenges that need further development, from process design to analytical capabilities and scalability to address the varying specifications across the chemical industry. All too often, these encompass the implementation of real-time analysis and pollution prevention technologies to increase overall efficiencies in production and pro-environmental metrics. As such, even the most advanced systems in this area still encounter difficulties in regulatory acceptance and transferral to established facilities and asset bases (Rogers & Jensen, 2019). An example is continuous manufacturing that demonstrates the need of an interdisciplinary approach to optimise solvent use reduction and waste generation as well as the integration of effective separation procedures. Therefore, the scientific research and technology development continue to be necessary to enable translating green chemistry tenets into trustworthy scalable solutions that entice widespread uptake within the industry and guarantee further tangible headway towards sustainability goals.

Additionally, regulatory and policy challenges are an integral part of the problem due to the capability of emerging frameworks to outpace corresponding developments in science and technology. Some existing policies at governmental and institutional levels are based on traditional chemical management systems and related approaches to substitutive research. Therefore, incentives for green chemistry implementation may be insufficient, as regulatory authorities lack the capacity to fully address the needs of innovators and practitioners in promoting more sustainable analyses. Existing regulations may not target green chemistry principles in compliance requirements or fail to create a comprehensive implementation framework. As a result, green chemistry is primarily promoted in the form of local initiatives with no established uniform application strategy across jurisdictions (Chen et al., 2020). Policy integration remains insufficient due to the required level of cross-departmental collaboration and demand for reconfiguration of regulations to eliminate known barriers for industry and practitioners.

Consequently, changes in existing regulatory demands will require concerted efforts to promote green chemistry in practice at the level of policymakers through revisions of policy instruments and implementation of supportive frameworks at state and regional levels (Chen et al., 2020).

Case Studies of Successful Green Chemistry Initiatives

With regard to case studies that show how new technologies are a step ahead to a more sustainable practice, green chemistry has brought forth success stories. In particular, a noteworthy case focuses on recent developments in green analytical chemistry in the pharmaceutical industry. Experts manage to implement alternatives to analytical procedures that drastically reduce waste and toxic solvents. The results reflect a deeper awareness of the environmental implications of industrial manufacture while preserving applicable quality guidelines (de Marco et al., 2019). At the same time, by adopting greener analyses into their practices, the pharmaceutical companies strive to lead and contribute to a social trend in green manufacturing procedures. This mirrors the way in which green chemistry has evolved, keeping in mind that historically, this theory has been molded by decisions and values from different stakeholders making it influence the industry (Zuin et al., 2021). The integration of case studies into educational and professional settings is part of a broader agenda that seeks to inform the industry and stakeholders of best practices and raise critical thinking around the decision to adopt sustainable chemistry principles. Ultimately, the introduction of such a successful approach shows not only how new technologies can fulfill sustainability goals, but it also conveys the essence of the green chemistry vision around the industry's shift in practices and educational priorities with respect to sustainability (Zuin et al., 2021).

To illustrate, one of the top chemical companies adopted green chemistry principles by integrating biocatalysis in its bulk chemical manufacturing processes. The strategic employment of innovative enzymes and customized bioreactors allowed the firm to sustainably utilize varied biological feedstocks for producing plastics and other basic products under mild operational conditions. Consequently, the company ensured significant energy efficiency gains and a drop in toxic residuals, thus contributing to economic viability and environmental performance. The knowledge acquired from the case study implies the potential of combining biotechnology with electrochemistry to apply low-carbon renewable electricity and attain high productivity (Sheldon & Brady, 2022). Furthermore, the worked example proves the feasibility of employing innovations in feedstock choice and process design to promote the circular economy's principles and ensure measurable achievements toward industry-related sustainability objectives (Sheldon & Brady, 2022).

Conclusion

When synthesizing the main themes analyzed throughout the document, it is possible to conclude that the main topic, which is green chemistry, is an impetus for the sustainable development of the world, as it suggests new methodologies of traditional chemical practices that aim to downscale their significant threat to global sustainable development. While the principles of green chemistry include issues such as waste prevention, atom economy, and the intelligent use of safer solvents, this area of research and practice proves to be a comprehensive and applicable discipline for a wide array of fields, including, but not limited to, the pharmaceutical industry, agriculture, and energy. Moreover, the analysis of the provided examples of successful cross-sector implementation of the green chemistry principles shows that they are highly effective in contributing to improved efficiency, safety, and resource management practices, which is a cornerstone for the perception of the feasibility and relevance of the discussed strategies. At the same time, the challenges rooted in the economic, technical, and policy barriers to the integration of the previously described green chemistry practices prove that the application of collaborative innovation and educational measures is essential to establishing the green chemistry principles as an integral part of the world's industrial routine. Finally, in light of the previously described green chemistry principles and examples, it is crucial to highlight the importance of continuous focus on the innovations and practices of green chemistry for sustainable development to achieve the highlighted possibilities and benefits of bridging this area and sustainable development in the 21st century.

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