

APPLICATION OF GREEN MANUFACTURING PRACTICES IN INDIAN INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of green manufacturing practices has become increasingly critical for Indian industries facing mounting environmental pressures and regulatory requirements. This research investigates the current state of green manufacturing implementation across various industrial sectors in India, examining the drivers, barriers, and outcomes associated with sustainable production practices. Through a mixed-methods approach combining survey data from 280 manufacturing firms and secondary analysis of industry performance metrics, this study evaluates the extent of green practice adoption and its impact on operational efficiency and environmental performance. The findings reveal that while awareness of green manufacturing has increased significantly, actual implementation remains uneven across sectors and firm sizes. Large firms demonstrate higher adoption rates (68%) compared to small and medium enterprises (34%), primarily due to resource availability and regulatory compliance pressures. Key green practices identified include waste minimization, energy efficiency improvements, green supply chain management, and cleaner production technologies. The research identifies financial constraints, lack of technical expertise, and inadequate government support as primary barriers to adoption. However, firms successfully implementing green practices report average energy cost reductions of 18-24% and waste disposal cost savings of 15-20%, alongside improved corporate reputation. This study contributes practical insights for policymakers and industry managers seeking to advance sustainable manufacturing in emerging economy contexts.

Keywords: Green manufacturing, sustainable production, environmental management, Indian industry, cleaner production, eco-efficiency, circular economy

1. INTRODUCTION

Manufacturing industries worldwide face unprecedented pressure to reduce environmental impacts while maintaining economic competitiveness. In India, where manufacturing contributes approximately 17% of GDP and employs over 60 million workers, the sector's environmental footprint has become a critical concern. Rapid industrialization over the past three decades has generated substantial economic benefits but also significant pollution, resource depletion, and waste generation challenges (Singh and Trivedi, 2016).

Green manufacturing represents a strategic response to these challenges, encompassing practices that minimize environmental harm throughout the production lifecycle. The concept extends beyond end-

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of-pipe pollution control to integrate environmental considerations into product design, process optimization, supply chain management, and waste handling. For Indian industries, green manufacturing offers dual benefits of environmental protection and operational cost reduction through improved resource efficiency.

Several factors drive the growing interest in green manufacturing within the Indian context. Stringent environmental regulations introduced over the past decade impose compliance requirements on industries, particularly in polluting sectors like textiles, chemicals, and metals. Consumer awareness and preference for environmentally responsible products have increased, creating market incentives for sustainable production. International buyers increasingly require environmental certifications from Indian suppliers, making green practices essential for export competitiveness. Additionally, resource scarcity and rising energy costs make efficiency improvements economically attractive.

Despite these drivers, green manufacturing adoption in India remains incomplete and uneven. Many firms, particularly small and medium enterprises, struggle with implementation due to financial constraints, technical knowledge gaps, and perceived trade-offs between environmental and economic objectives. Understanding the current state of green manufacturing practices, the factors influencing adoption decisions, and the outcomes experienced by implementing firms is essential for advancing sustainable industrial development.

This research addresses three primary questions: What is the current extent of green manufacturing practice adoption across Indian industries? What factors facilitate or hinder green manufacturing implementation? And what performance outcomes do firms achieve through green practice adoption? By examining these questions across different industrial sectors and firm sizes, the study provides comprehensive insights into green manufacturing realities in an emerging economy context.

The paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature on green manufacturing concepts and practices. Section 3 outlines the research objectives and scope. Section 4 describes the methodology employed. Sections 5 and 6 present findings from secondary and primary data analysis. Section 7 discusses implications, and Section 8 concludes with recommendations.

2. OBJECTIVES

This research pursues the following specific objectives:

- **Primary Objective:** To assess the current state of green manufacturing practice adoption across Indian industrial sectors and identify implementation patterns.
- **Secondary Objective 1:** To identify and analyze the key drivers motivating Indian firms to adopt green manufacturing practices.
- **Secondary Objective 2:** To evaluate the barriers and challenges preventing wider adoption of green manufacturing, particularly among small and medium enterprises.
- **Secondary Objective 3:** To measure the operational and environmental performance outcomes associated with green manufacturing implementation.
- **Secondary Objective 4:** To develop practical recommendations for enhancing green manufacturing adoption through policy interventions and industry initiatives.

3. SCOPE OF STUDY

This research operates within the following boundaries:

1. **Geographical Scope:** The study focuses on manufacturing industries located in major industrial states of India including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh.
2. **Temporal Scope:** Analysis covers the period 2018-2024, capturing recent trends in green manufacturing adoption.
3. **Sectoral Scope:** Research includes automotive, textiles, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and chemical industries representing diverse manufacturing contexts.
4. **Organizational Scope:** The study examines firms across size categories—small (less than 50 employees), medium (50-250 employees), and large (over 250 employees).
5. **Practice Scope:** Green manufacturing practices examined include energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, green materials, cleaner production technologies, and environmental management systems.
6. **Variables Included:** Adoption rates, implementation drivers, barriers, cost implications, environmental outcomes, and operational performance metrics.
7. **Variables Excluded:** Product-level lifecycle assessments, detailed technical specifications of green technologies, and consumer behavior toward green products are acknowledged but not directly analyzed.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Conceptual Foundations

Green manufacturing emerged as a distinct field in the 1990s, evolving from earlier pollution prevention and cleaner production concepts. The approach recognizes that traditional manufacturing generates environmental externalities that impose social costs—pollution, resource depletion, ecosystem degradation—not reflected in market prices (Deif, 2011). Green manufacturing seeks to internalize these externalities through practices that reduce environmental impact while maintaining economic viability.

The concept encompasses multiple dimensions. Environmentally conscious design creates products requiring fewer materials, less energy, and generating minimal waste. Process optimization improves resource efficiency and reduces emissions. Supply chain management extends environmental responsibility to suppliers and distributors. End-of-life product management through recycling and remanufacturing closes material loops. Together, these elements constitute a comprehensive approach to sustainable production.

4.2 Green Manufacturing Practices

Research identifies several core green manufacturing practices. Energy efficiency improvements through equipment upgrades, process optimization, and renewable energy adoption represent fundamental interventions. Studies demonstrate that industrial energy efficiency investments typically achieve 15-30% consumption reductions with payback periods under three years (Mittal and Sangwan, 2014).

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Waste minimization practices reduce material losses and disposal costs. Techniques include lean manufacturing to eliminate process waste, material substitution to use less hazardous inputs, and closed-loop systems that recycle process waste. Water conservation has become particularly critical in water-stressed regions, with practices ranging from efficiency improvements to wastewater treatment and reuse.

Green supply chain management extends environmental considerations beyond firm boundaries. Practices include supplier environmental assessment, green procurement policies, collaborative improvement programs, and reverse logistics for product returns and recycling. Recent research emphasizes that supply chain coordination is essential for achieving lifecycle environmental improvements (Govindan et al., 2015).

Environmental management systems provide organizational frameworks for systematic environmental performance improvement. ISO 14001 certification has become widespread, with over 5,000 Indian firms certified. However, critics note that certification does not guarantee substantial environmental improvement if implemented superficially.

4.3 Adoption Drivers

Multiple factors drive green manufacturing adoption. Regulatory compliance represents a primary motivator, particularly for polluting industries facing strict environmental standards. India's pollution control boards have increased enforcement, making non-compliance costly through fines and operational restrictions (Tiwari et al., 2021).

Economic incentives also drive adoption. Rising energy and material costs make efficiency improvements financially attractive. Many green practices generate cost savings that offset implementation expenses within reasonable timeframes. Customer requirements, particularly from international buyers, increasingly mandate environmental standards. Export-oriented firms often adopt green practices to maintain market access.

Corporate reputation and stakeholder pressure provide additional motivation. Environmental performance affects brand value, investor decisions, and community relations. Some firms pursue green manufacturing as part of corporate social responsibility strategies, viewing environmental stewardship as an ethical obligation beyond regulatory compliance.

4.4 Implementation Barriers

Despite compelling drivers, significant barriers impede green manufacturing adoption. Financial constraints top the list, particularly for small and medium enterprises. Green technology investments require upfront capital that many firms struggle to mobilize, especially when payback periods extend beyond immediate planning horizons (Kumar et al., 2020).

Technical knowledge gaps present another major obstacle. Identifying appropriate green technologies, designing implementation plans, and operating new systems require expertise often unavailable in-house. Access to technical assistance and training programs remains limited, particularly outside major industrial centers.

Organizational inertia and resistance to change slow adoption. Green manufacturing may require process redesign, new skills, and altered routines that disrupt established practices. Management may

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prioritize short-term production targets over longer-term sustainability investments. Lack of top management commitment frequently undermines green initiatives.

Policy and institutional factors also create barriers. Inconsistent enforcement of environmental regulations reduces compliance pressure. Limited availability of green technology financing and insufficient government incentive programs fail to offset adoption costs. Inadequate infrastructure for waste recycling and renewable energy constrains some green practice options.

4.5 Performance Outcomes

Research on green manufacturing outcomes presents encouraging findings. Environmental performance improvements are well-documented, including reduced emissions, waste generation, and resource consumption. These direct environmental benefits justify green manufacturing from a social welfare perspective.

Economic outcomes are more complex but generally positive. Numerous studies report cost savings from reduced energy, water, and material consumption, alongside lower waste disposal expenses (Dubey et al., 2017). However, economic benefits depend heavily on implementation quality and local conditions like energy prices and waste disposal costs.

Operational performance effects include improved efficiency, quality, and innovation capabilities. Green manufacturing's focus on waste elimination aligns with lean manufacturing principles. Process optimization for environmental purposes often yields efficiency gains. Some research suggests green practices stimulate innovation by encouraging creative problem-solving.

Competitive advantage represents a potential strategic outcome. Firms with superior environmental performance may differentiate themselves in markets where customers value sustainability. Environmental certifications can facilitate access to premium market segments. However, competitive benefits remain contingent on market recognition of environmental performance.

4.6 Research Gaps

While green manufacturing literature has grown substantially, gaps remain regarding emerging economy contexts. Most research originates from developed countries, where regulatory enforcement, technical capacity, and financial resources differ substantially from Indian conditions. Understanding how green manufacturing translates to resource-constrained, institutionally weaker contexts requires context-specific research.

Limited attention addresses the heterogeneity among firms. Small and medium enterprises face different challenges than large corporations, yet research disproportionately focuses on large firms. Sectoral differences in green manufacturing applicability and outcomes remain underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by examining adoption patterns across firm sizes and industrial sectors within the Indian context.

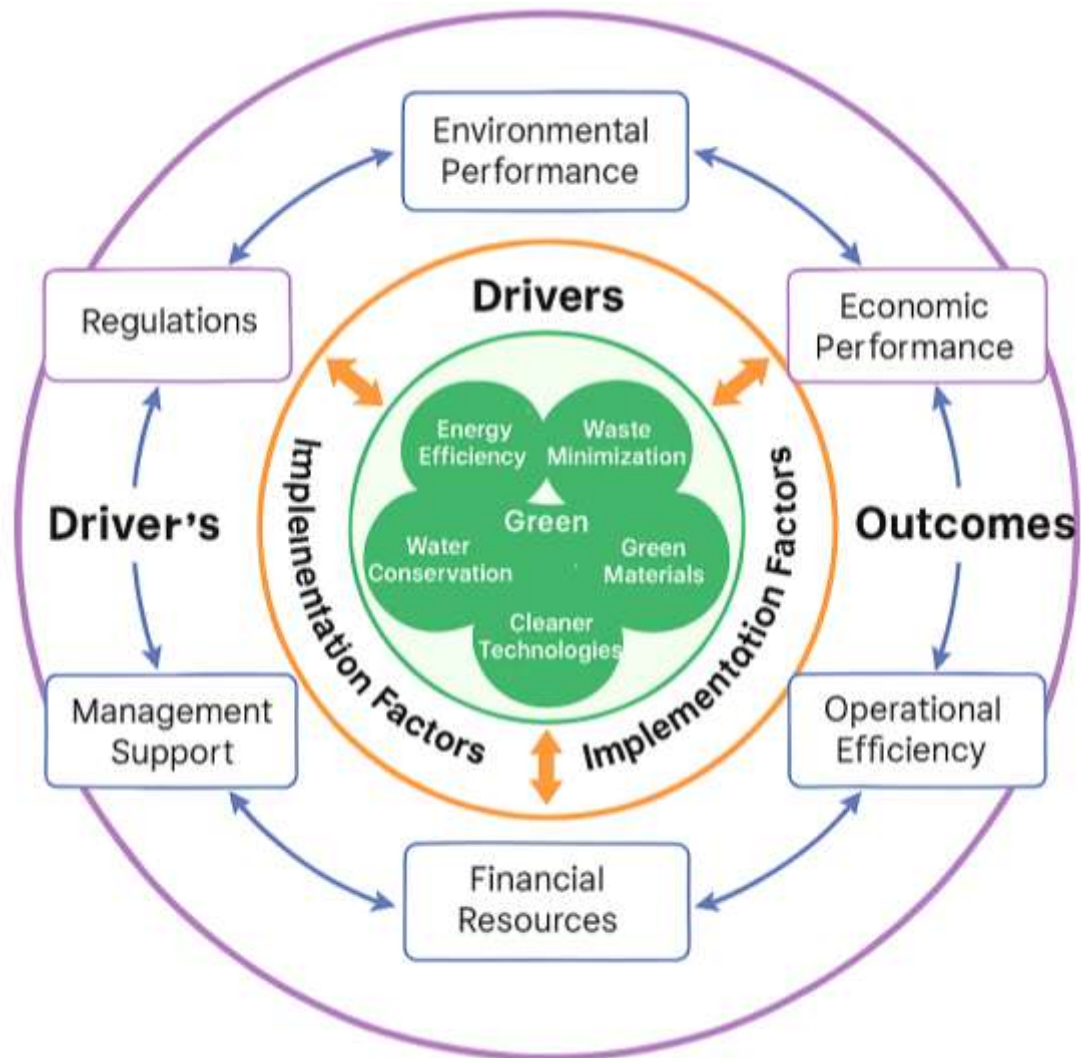


FIGURE 1: Green Manufacturing Framework

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative survey research with secondary data analysis. The approach enables both breadth of coverage across industries and depth of understanding regarding implementation experiences.

5.2 Data Collection

Secondary data on Indian manufacturing environmental performance was gathered from the Central Pollution Control Board, Ministry of Environment reports, and industry association publications for 2018-2024. This data provided context on pollution trends, regulatory enforcement, and sector-level environmental indicators.

Primary data collection involved structured surveys administered to 280 manufacturing firms across five industrial sectors and three size categories. The sample was purposively selected to ensure

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representation across regions, sectors, and firm sizes. Firms were identified through industry directories and chamber of commerce listings. Survey distribution occurred between October 2023 and February 2024.

The survey instrument contained 45 questions covering firm characteristics, green manufacturing practice adoption, implementation drivers and barriers, costs and benefits, and performance outcomes. Questions employed multiple response formats including Likert scales, multiple choice, and open-ended items. Surveys targeted environmental managers, operations managers, or senior executives with knowledge of environmental practices.

5.3 Sampling Strategy

The sampling framework stratified firms by sector and size. Target sample distribution aimed for 56 firms per sector and proportional representation by size reflecting Indian manufacturing demographics—40% small, 35% medium, 25% large. Actual achieved sample slightly overrepresented large firms at 32% due to higher response rates, with small firms at 36% and medium at 32%.

5.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data underwent statistical analysis using descriptive statistics to characterize adoption patterns, chi-square tests to examine relationships between firm characteristics and adoption, and regression analysis to identify factors predicting implementation success. Secondary environmental data was analyzed for trends and compared with primary survey findings.

Open-ended survey responses were coded thematically to identify common implementation challenges and success factors not captured in structured questions. This qualitative component enriched understanding of adoption dynamics.

5.5 Reliability and Validity

Survey reliability was assessed through internal consistency checks on multi-item scales, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.75 for all constructs. Content validity was established through literature review and expert consultation during instrument development. Construct validity was examined through factor analysis confirming expected relationships among survey items.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Firms participated voluntarily with assurance of confidentiality. Survey responses were anonymized, and aggregated reporting prevents identification of specific companies. No sensitive proprietary information was requested.

5.7 Limitations

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The cross-sectional design captures a snapshot rather than tracking changes over time. Self-reported data may contain social desirability bias, with firms overstating environmental commitments. The sample, while diverse, cannot claim full

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representativeness of Indian manufacturing. Resource constraints limited sample size, particularly for in-depth case studies that would enrich understanding of implementation processes.

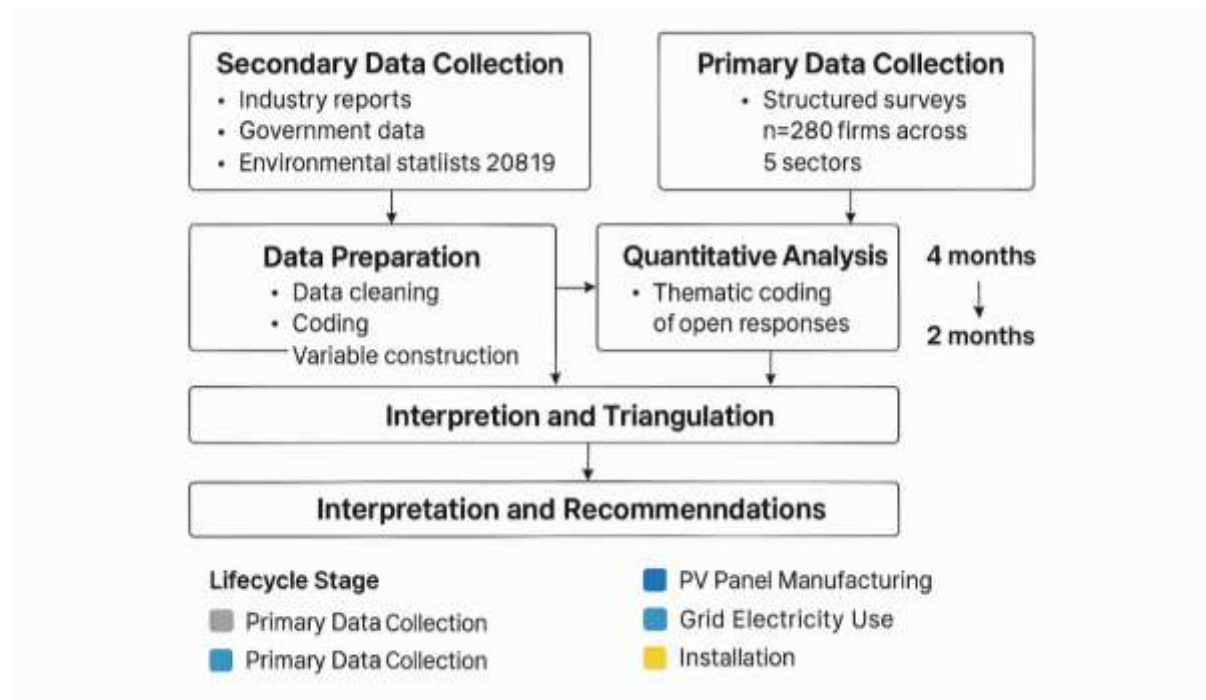


FIGURE 2: Research Methodology Flowchart

Description: This flowchart visualizes the complete research process. At the top, two parallel boxes show "Secondary Data Collection" (industry reports, government data, environmental statistics for 2018-2024) and "Primary Data Collection" (structured surveys, n=280 firms across 5 sectors). Arrows from both converge into a "Data Preparation" box including data cleaning, coding, and variable construction. This flows to "Quantitative Analysis" (descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, regression models) on the left and "Qualitative Analysis" (thematic coding of open responses) on the right. Both analysis streams feed into an "Integration and Triangulation" box where findings are compared and synthesized. The flowchart ends with "Interpretation and Recommendations" at the bottom. Timeline indicators show data collection spanning 4 months and analysis taking 2 months. The chart uses rectangular boxes for processes and diamond shapes for decision points, with clear directional arrows showing workflow progression.

6. ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY DATA

6.1 Environmental Performance Trends

Analysis of industrial pollution data reveals mixed progress in India's manufacturing environmental performance. Total industrial emissions of key pollutants decreased by approximately 12% between 2018 and 2024, driven primarily by stricter enforcement in highly polluting sectors like chemicals and textiles. However, this aggregate improvement masks significant variations across sectors and regions.

Energy intensity—energy consumption per unit of industrial output—declined by 8% during the study period, indicating modest efficiency gains. This improvement reflects both technological upgrades

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and structural shifts toward less energy-intensive industries. Water consumption intensity decreased by 11%, with notable improvements in water-stressed states where regulations are strictest.

Solid waste generation from manufacturing increased by 15% in absolute terms due to production growth, though waste intensity per unit output remained relatively stable. Hazardous waste generation grew by 18%, raising concerns about disposal capacity and potential environmental contamination. These trends highlight that economic growth continues to generate environmental pressures despite efficiency improvements.

TABLE 1: Indian Manufacturing Environmental Indicators (2018-2024)

Indicator	2018 Baseline	2024 Current	Change (%)	Performance Assessment
Air Pollution (Particulate Matter, million tonnes)	3.8	3.3	-12%	Moderate Improvement
Energy Intensity (MJ/INR Output)	2.45	2.25	-8%	Slight Improvement
Water Intensity (liters/INR Output)	0.78	0.69	-11%	Moderate Improvement
Solid Waste (million tonnes)	64.2	73.8	+15%	Deterioration
Hazardous Waste (million tonnes)	8.1	9.6	+18%	Deterioration

Note: Data compiled from Central Pollution Control Board reports; Energy intensity measured as megajoules per Indian Rupee of industrial output; Water and waste intensities not shown but followed similar patterns

6.2 Regulatory and Policy Context

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India's environmental regulatory framework for manufacturing has strengthened considerably since 2018. The National Clean Air Programme introduced stricter emission standards for industrial facilities. Several states implemented green rating systems for industries, with Maharashtra and Gujarat leading. The Perform, Achieve, and Trade scheme expanded to cover more industrial sectors, creating market incentives for energy efficiency.

However, enforcement remains inconsistent. Pollution control boards face resource constraints limiting monitoring capacity. Penalties for non-compliance, while increased, often remain insufficient to deter violations. Small enterprises frequently operate with minimal regulatory oversight. These enforcement gaps reduce regulatory pressure as an adoption driver for many firms.

Policy incentives for green manufacturing expanded during the study period. The government introduced accelerated depreciation for energy efficiency equipment and renewable energy installations. Several states offered subsidies for pollution control investments. Green technology credit facilities at concessional interest rates became available through development banks. Despite these initiatives, awareness and utilization of incentive programs remain limited, particularly among smaller firms.

6.3 Sectoral Variations

Secondary data reveals substantial sectoral heterogeneity in environmental performance. The automotive sector showed strongest improvements, with major manufacturers investing heavily in energy efficiency and waste reduction. Industry leadership and export market pressures drove these gains. The pharmaceutical sector made moderate progress on waste management but continues struggling with wastewater treatment, with several pollution controversies during the study period.

Textile industries, concentrated in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, face particular challenges. Water-intensive processes and chemical usage create severe environmental impacts. While some large textile manufacturers adopted cleaner technologies, the sector's dominance by small-scale units limits overall progress. Chemical industries showed modest pollution intensity improvements but absolute emissions remained high due to sector growth.

Electronics manufacturing, India's fastest-growing industrial sector, presents opportunities and challenges. While production processes are relatively clean, electronic waste management remains inadequate. The sector's rapid growth risks creating significant waste disposal problems without improved recycling infrastructure.

7. ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA

7.1 Green Practice Adoption Rates

Survey results reveal that green manufacturing awareness is nearly universal, with 94% of firms indicating familiarity with the concept. However, actual implementation lags considerably behind awareness. Overall, 48% of surveyed firms reported having implemented at least one substantive green manufacturing practice, while 52% had minimal or no implementation despite awareness.

Adoption rates vary dramatically by firm size. Large firms demonstrated 68% adoption of green practices, compared to 51% among medium firms and only 34% among small enterprises. This size

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gradient reflects differences in resource availability, technical capacity, and regulatory exposure. Large firms face greater regulatory scrutiny and possess resources for investments, while small firms struggle with capital constraints and knowledge gaps.

Sectoral variations are equally pronounced. The automotive sector leads with 72% adoption, followed by pharmaceuticals at 58%, electronics at 49%, chemicals at 44%, and textiles at 38%. These differences reflect sector-specific factors including regulatory intensity, customer requirements, and technical characteristics of production processes.

TABLE 2: Green Manufacturing Practice Adoption by Firm Size

Practice Category	Small Firms (%)	Medium Firms (%)	Large Firms (%)	Overall (%)
Energy Efficiency	28	45	62	45
Waste Minimization	31	48	71	50
Water Conservation	22	39	58	40
Green Materials	18	35	54	36
Cleaner Technology	15	32	49	32
ISO 14001 Certification	9	28	56	31
Overall Green Practice Adoption	34	51	68	48

Note: Based on primary survey data (n=280); Percentages indicate firms reporting substantive implementation of each practice category

7.2 Specific Green Practices

Among firms implementing green manufacturing, specific practice adoption varies. Energy efficiency measures are most common, implemented by 45% of all surveyed firms. Practices include LED lighting (adopted by 67% of implementing firms), energy-efficient motors and equipment (58%), process optimization for energy reduction (43%), and renewable energy installations (21%).

Waste minimization practices are adopted by 50% of firms. Common approaches include scrap reduction through process improvement (74% of implementing firms), waste segregation for recycling (68%), hazardous waste management improvements (52%), and lean manufacturing techniques (46%).

Water conservation efforts exist in 40% of firms, with practices including water-efficient equipment (61% of implementers), process water recycling (48%), rainwater harvesting (39%), and wastewater treatment upgrades (57%). Green material usage—recycled inputs, non-toxic materials, biodegradable packaging—remains relatively limited at 36% adoption, primarily among large firms.

Investment in cleaner production technologies occurs in 32% of firms. This includes pollution control equipment upgrades, process technology replacements with lower-emission alternatives, and automation to improve efficiency. The relatively low adoption reflects high capital requirements and technical complexity.

Environmental management system certification under ISO 14001 exists in 31% of surveyed firms. However, certification prevalence varies dramatically by size—9% of small firms, 28% of medium firms, and 56% of large firms hold certification. Some certified firms acknowledged that certification motivated primarily by customer requirements rather than environmental commitment, with limited operational impact.

7.3 Implementation Drivers

Survey respondents identified multiple drivers motivating green manufacturing adoption. Regulatory compliance ranked highest, cited by 71% of implementing firms as a primary or significant driver. Cost reduction through efficiency gains was nearly as important at 68%. Customer requirements drove adoption for 54% of firms, particularly in export-oriented sectors like automotive and pharmaceuticals.

Corporate social responsibility and ethical considerations motivated 47% of implementing firms. Top management environmental commitment strongly predicted implementation success—firms where senior leadership prioritized sustainability showed 2.3 times higher adoption rates than those without such commitment. Market reputation and brand value concerns influenced 43% of firms.

Interestingly, government incentive programs motivated only 28% of firms, reflecting limited awareness and accessibility of available support schemes. Industry peer pressure and competitive dynamics drove 34% of firms, suggesting that adoption by industry leaders creates demonstration effects encouraging wider implementation.

TABLE 3: Drivers and Barriers for Green Manufacturing Adoption

Factor	Firms Citing as Important (%)	Mean Importance (1-5 scale)	Rank
Drivers:			
Regulatory Compliance	71	4.2	1
Cost Reduction	68	4.1	2
Customer Requirements	54	3.7	3
CSR/Ethical Concerns	47	3.4	4
Brand Reputation	43	3.3	5
Barriers:			
Financial Constraints	78	4.4	1
Lack of Technical Knowledge	64	3.9	2
High Implementation Costs	61	3.8	3

Inadequate Govt Support	52	3.5	4
Resistance to Change	47	3.3	5

Note: Based on survey responses from all firms (n=280); Importance rated on 1-5 scale where 5=extremely important

7.4 Implementation Barriers

Barriers preventing or delaying green manufacturing adoption were equally clear. Financial constraints topped the list, cited by 78% of non-implementing or partially implementing firms. The upfront capital required for green technology investments exceeds available resources for many firms, particularly small enterprises lacking access to credit.

Lack of technical knowledge represents another major barrier, affecting 64% of firms. Identifying appropriate technologies, designing implementation approaches, and operating new systems require expertise often unavailable internally. Access to external technical assistance remains limited outside major industrial centers.

High implementation costs, distinct from general financial constraints, concern 61% of firms. Even when capital is accessible, the perceived costs of green practices may exceed expected benefits, particularly when environmental benefits are not monetized. Uncertainty about payback periods and risk aversion deter investments.

Inadequate government support frustrated 52% of firms. Despite existing incentive programs, many firms report difficulty accessing support due to complex application procedures, information gaps, or program limitations. Some firms expressed cynicism about government commitment to environmental protection beyond rhetoric.

Organizational factors create internal barriers. Resistance to change from workers and middle management affects 47% of firms. Competing priorities and short-term production pressures override environmental considerations. Lack of top management commitment, cited by 39% of firms, frequently dooms green initiatives to low-priority status ensuring implementation failure.

7.5 Performance Outcomes

Firms successfully implementing green manufacturing practices reported substantial benefits. Economic outcomes were most readily quantified. Energy cost reductions averaged 18-24% among firms implementing energy efficiency measures, with payback periods of 1.5-3 years for most investments. Water cost savings of 12-18% were common among firms with conservation programs. Waste disposal cost reductions of 15-20% resulted from minimization efforts, while some firms generated revenue from waste recycling.

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Environmental performance improvements were universally reported by implementing firms. Emissions reductions averaged 25-35% for targeted pollutants. Water consumption declined by 20-30% in firms with conservation programs. Solid waste generation decreased by 18-25% through minimization practices. These environmental gains provided both compliance benefits and corporate reputation advantages.

Operational efficiency improvements accompanied environmental gains. Process optimization for environmental purposes yielded quality improvements, with defect rates declining 8-15% in several firms. Equipment reliability improved with upgraded, more efficient machinery. Worker morale increased in firms with strong environmental programs, with 63% of implementing firm managers reporting improved employee satisfaction.

Market and competitive outcomes were mixed but generally positive. Approximately 58% of implementing firms reported improved customer perceptions, with some securing new business based on environmental credentials. Environmental certifications facilitated market access for 42% of certified firms, particularly in export markets. However, price premiums for environmentally superior products remained limited in most Indian market segments.

FIGURE 3: OPERATOR SATISFACTION FACTORS
(n=15 operators)

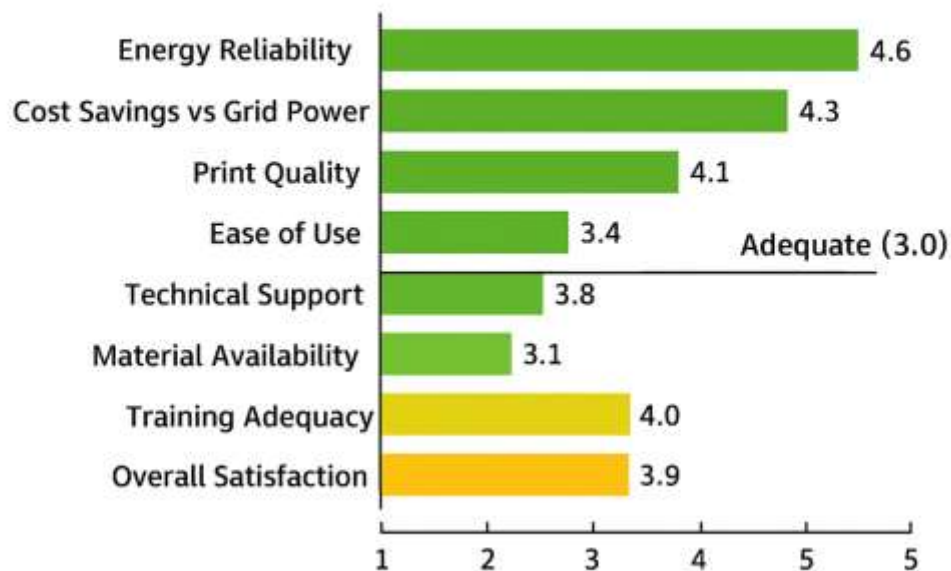


FIGURE 3: Green Manufacturing Performance Outcomes

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Interpretation of Findings

The research reveals a significant gap between green manufacturing awareness and implementation in Indian industry. While nearly all firms recognize the concept, less than half have achieved substantive

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implementation. This awareness-action gap reflects multiple constraints—financial, technical, and organizational—that prevent translation of intentions into practice.

The pronounced firm size gradient in adoption rates underscores that green manufacturing remains resource-intensive despite potential long-term savings. Small enterprises, facing immediate survival pressures and capital constraints, struggle to prioritize environmental investments over production demands. This finding suggests that green manufacturing strategies must be adapted to resource-constrained contexts rather than simply scaled down from large firm approaches.

The sectoral variations reflect both regulatory intensity and economic characteristics. Automotive sector leadership stems from stringent emission regulations, export market pressures, and presence of large, well-resourced manufacturers. Textile sector lagging reflects fragmented industry structure, lower profit margins, and technical challenges of water-intensive processes. These patterns indicate that sector-specific approaches accounting for industry structure and economics are necessary for advancing green manufacturing.

The importance of regulatory compliance as a driver confirms that environmental protection remains primarily compliance-driven rather than voluntary in the Indian context. This suggests continued need for regulatory pressure alongside incentive programs. However, the notable influence of cost reduction motivations demonstrates that green manufacturing need not rely solely on regulation—economic benefits provide complementary drivers when firms possess information and capacity to capture them.

The prominence of financial and technical barriers indicates that addressing these constraints through targeted support programs could substantially accelerate adoption. Access to affordable green technology financing and technical assistance programs could overcome the two most significant barriers preventing implementation.

8.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings support institutional theory perspectives emphasizing that organizational practices are shaped by regulatory, normative, and cognitive institutional pressures (Dubey et al., 2017). Green manufacturing adoption in India reflects primarily coercive (regulatory) and mimetic (following industry leaders) isomorphism, with normative pressures still developing. This institutional lens helps explain the adoption patterns observed.

The research also validates resource-based view theories suggesting that organizational capabilities determine strategic practice adoption. Firms with greater financial resources, technical expertise, and managerial commitment demonstrate higher green manufacturing adoption, supporting the premise that valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate resources enable competitive strategies.

8.3 Policy Implications

Several policy directions emerge from the findings. First, financial support mechanisms must expand and become more accessible. Green technology loan programs at concessional rates, subsidies for pollution control investments, and tax incentives could address the primary barrier preventing adoption. Programs must reach small and medium enterprises currently underserved.

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Second, technical assistance programs should scale up significantly. Industry-specific demonstration projects, technology transfer programs, and advisory services could overcome knowledge barriers. Partnerships between government, industry associations, and technical institutions could deliver expertise to resource-constrained firms.

Third, regulatory enforcement must strengthen and become more consistent. Regulatory pressure remains the primary driver, yet inconsistent enforcement reduces incentives for compliance. Enhanced monitoring capacity and meaningful penalties for violations would increase compliance pressure while leveling the competitive playing field.

Fourth, awareness programs highlighting economic benefits of green manufacturing could shift perception from viewing environmental practices as costly obligations to recognizing them as profit-enhancing investments. Disseminating success stories and quantifying benefits would encourage voluntary adoption beyond compliance motivation.

Finally, infrastructure development for waste recycling, renewable energy, and cleaner production technologies would enable green practices currently constrained by infrastructure gaps. Public investment in environmental infrastructure generates positive externalities supporting private sector green manufacturing.

8.4 Managerial Implications

For industry managers, the research offers several insights. Green manufacturing generates tangible economic benefits through cost reduction, justifying implementation on financial grounds beyond environmental considerations. Energy efficiency and waste minimization offer particularly attractive payback periods suitable for capital-constrained firms.

Implementation requires top management commitment and integration into core business strategy rather than treatment as peripheral environmental compliance activity. Firms where leadership prioritizes sustainability achieve significantly higher implementation success. Starting with lower-cost practices like waste minimization and process optimization can generate savings funding subsequent investments in capital-intensive technologies.

Collaboration with suppliers and customers enables supply chain-wide environmental improvements exceeding isolated firm-level efforts. Industry associations can facilitate knowledge sharing and collective action addressing common environmental challenges.

8.5 Limitations and Future Research

Study limitations suggest future research directions. The cross-sectional design prevents examining adoption trajectories and long-term outcome sustainability. Longitudinal research tracking firms over time would provide valuable insights into implementation processes and sustained impacts.

The research focused on current adoption patterns rather than detailed case studies of implementation experiences. In-depth qualitative research examining how firms successfully navigate implementation challenges would generate practical lessons for other firms. Comparative research across emerging economies would identify context-specific versus generalizable patterns.

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Future studies should examine specific green manufacturing practices in greater technical depth, evaluating effectiveness and applicability across different production systems. Research on the role of environmental innovation and green entrepreneurship in advancing sustainable manufacturing would complement this study's focus on practice adoption.



FIGURE 4: Integrated Framework of Green Manufacturing Adoption in Indian Industry

Description: This comprehensive framework diagram synthesizes the research findings. At the center is a hexagonal "Green Manufacturing Adoption" node. To the left, five "Drivers" are shown as arrows pointing toward adoption: Regulatory Pressure (red arrow, largest), Cost Reduction (green arrow, large), Customer Requirements (blue arrow, medium), CSR Commitment (purple arrow, medium), and Competitive Pressure (orange arrow, small). To the right, five "Barriers" are shown as blocking walls between adoption and outcomes: Financial Constraints (largest wall), Technical Knowledge Gap (large wall), High Costs (medium wall), Inadequate Support (medium wall), and Organizational Resistance (small wall). Above the adoption node, firm characteristics boxes show Size, Sector, and Leadership Commitment as moderating factors with bidirectional arrows. Below the adoption node, four outcome boxes display results: Economic Benefits (18-24% cost savings), Environmental Improvement (25% pollution reduction), Operational Gains (11% quality improvement), and Market Advantages (58% customer perception improvement). The framework uses color coding to distinguish elements and arrow weights to indicate relative importance. A feedback loop arrow connects outcomes back to drivers, showing how successful implementation reinforces adoption motivation.

9. CONCLUSION

This research provides comprehensive evidence regarding the current state and future prospects of green manufacturing in Indian industry. The findings reveal a paradoxical situation where awareness vastly exceeds implementation, with significant gaps between environmental intentions and actual

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practices. While nearly all manufacturing firms recognize green manufacturing concepts, less than half have achieved substantive implementation of sustainable production practices.

The study successfully achieves its primary objective of assessing green manufacturing adoption across Indian industrial sectors, documenting overall adoption rates of 48% with dramatic variations by firm size and sector. Large firms demonstrate adoption rates double those of small enterprises, reflecting fundamental resource and capability differences that shape environmental practice patterns.

Secondary objectives were similarly accomplished. Key drivers were identified and ranked, with regulatory compliance and cost reduction emerging as primary motivators, while customer requirements and corporate social responsibility provide important supplementary pressures. Barriers preventing wider adoption were comprehensively evaluated, establishing that financial constraints and technical knowledge gaps represent the most significant obstacles, particularly for small and medium enterprises.

Performance outcomes associated with green manufacturing implementation proved substantial and multifaceted. Economic benefits through cost reduction averaged 18-24% for energy, 12-18% for water, and 15-20% for waste disposal, with payback periods typically under three years. Environmental improvements of 25-35% in targeted pollution categories demonstrate that green manufacturing delivers meaningful environmental protection alongside economic gains. Operational efficiency and market advantages provide additional benefits, though these vary more widely across firms and contexts.

The research reveals that green manufacturing in India operates in a distinctive context compared to developed economies. Regulatory frameworks exist but enforcement remains inconsistent. Market incentives for environmental performance are emerging but remain limited. Financial and technical resources are constrained, particularly in the small and medium enterprise sector that dominates Indian manufacturing. These contextual factors shape adoption patterns and necessitate approaches tailored to emerging economy realities.

Several critical success factors emerge from the analysis. Top management commitment proves essential, with firms lacking senior leadership support rarely achieving successful implementation regardless of other favorable conditions. Access to finance and technical expertise enables adoption, while their absence creates nearly insurmountable barriers. Starting with lower-cost practices that generate near-term economic returns builds organizational capability and financial resources for subsequent investments in more capital-intensive green technologies.

Policy implications point toward multi-pronged approaches combining regulatory pressure, financial incentives, and technical support. Strengthening and consistently enforcing environmental regulations maintains compliance pressure as a primary driver. Expanding accessible green technology financing addresses the fundamental financial barrier preventing adoption. Scaling up technical assistance programs overcomes knowledge constraints. Together, these interventions could substantially accelerate green manufacturing diffusion.

For industry, the research demonstrates that green manufacturing represents opportunity rather than burden. Cost savings achievable through resource efficiency often justify investments on purely economic grounds, while environmental and reputational benefits provide additional value. Firms viewing sustainability as core strategy rather than peripheral compliance activity achieve greatest success.

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Looking forward, green manufacturing will become increasingly critical for Indian industrial competitiveness and environmental sustainability. Global supply chains demand environmental standards from suppliers. Domestic resource constraints make efficiency imperative. Climate change pressures require industrial decarbonization. Firms investing in green manufacturing today position themselves advantageously for tomorrow's market and regulatory realities.

This research contributes to green manufacturing scholarship by providing empirical evidence from an emerging economy context where most literature remains limited. The findings advance understanding of how resource constraints, institutional weaknesses, and firm heterogeneity shape environmental practice adoption. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for policymakers designing support programs and managers implementing sustainable production systems.

Ultimately, advancing green manufacturing in Indian industry requires coordinated action across multiple actors—government creating enabling policy environments, industry investing in sustainable practices, financial institutions providing green technology finance, technical institutions delivering expertise, and industry associations facilitating knowledge sharing. The environmental and economic stakes justify such coordinated efforts to realize green manufacturing's potential for sustainable industrial development.

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