

Smart Materials for a Sustainable Environment

Rabindranath Jana*

Abstract

The accelerating pace of industrialization, urbanization, and population growth has exerted unprecedented stress on the natural environment. Consequently, worldwide issues including climate change, resource depletion, environmental contamination, and energy scarcity have intensified significantly. In response to these concerns, sustainable development has emerged as a fundamental framework, seeking to balance present-day requirements with the long-term needs of future generations. Within this framework, smart materials have gained considerable attention for their ability to adapt to environmental conditions and enhance resource efficiency. Also referred to as intelligent or responsive materials, smart materials possess the capability to sense changes in their surroundings and respond in a controlled and functional manner. They can alter properties, such as shape, color, stiffness, or electrical conductivity, when exposed to external stimuli including temperature, pressure, light, moisture, and electric or magnetic fields. By improving system performance while minimizing waste, energy consumption, and environmental impact, smart materials contribute significantly to sustainable solutions. This review presents an overview of smart materials, highlighting their types, characteristics, applications, and their vital role in promoting environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Climate change, environmental sustainability, responsive materials, smart materials, sustainable environment

INTRODUCTION

Smart materials are engineered substances capable of sensing external stimuli, interpreting signals, and actively responding to environmental changes [1]. Unlike conventional passive materials, they display adaptive and self-regulating behavior. This dynamic responsiveness allows smart materials to enhance performance, improve durability, and minimize energy and material usage [2]. The three key components of smart materials are (i) Sensor function – detecting environmental changes [3, 4], (ii) Processor function – interpreting the signal [5, 6] and (iii) Actuator function – responding appropriately [7, 8]. These functions may exist within the same material or in a system combining multiple components. The ability to self-adjust makes smart materials particularly valuable in sustainable technologies.

NEED FOR SMART MATERIALS IN SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability demands efficient resource utilization, lower emissions, minimal waste generation, and enhanced resilience to environmental stresses [9]. Conventional materials often fall short of these objectives because of their

static properties and limited-service life. In contrast, smart materials overcome these limitations by offering adaptive, responsive, and multifunctional capabilities that improve performance, durability, and environmental efficiency. Sustainability has emerged as a worldwide concern due to escalating environmental damage, depletion of natural resources, and the growing impacts of climate change. In this scenario, smart materials are vital for promoting sustainable development, as they provide adaptive, efficient, and environmentally friendly solutions. Smart materials can detect variations in their surroundings – such as changes in temperature, pressure, light, humidity, or electric fields – and responding in a

*Author for Correspondence

Rabindranath Jana
E-mail: rabindrajana@gmail.com

Associate Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, Haldia Institute of Technology, Haldia – 721657, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal, India.

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controlled and functional way [10]. Their adaptive nature makes them highly valuable for lowering energy consumption and reducing environmental harm.

A key application of smart materials in sustainability is improving energy efficiency. Materials, like shape memory alloys, piezoelectric substances, and thermochromic compounds, contribute to optimized energy usage in buildings, transportation systems, and industrial processes. For instance, smart windows can automatically adjust heat and light transmission, minimizing the reliance on artificial heating, cooling, and lighting systems, which leads to significant energy savings.

Smart materials also contribute to conserving resources and minimizing waste. Self-healing materials can automatically repair cracks and structural damage, thereby extending the service life of infrastructure and products. This reduces the demand for frequent maintenance, raw material usage, and waste production. Furthermore, biodegradable and bio-derived smart polymers help address plastic pollution and decrease dependence on fossil-based resources.

In environmental applications, smart materials are widely used for water treatment, air purification, and pollution detection. Responsive membranes and advanced sensors can efficiently identify and eliminate contaminants, ensuring cleaner air and water supplies. Moreover, in renewable energy technologies, smart materials improve the efficiency and durability of solar panels, wind turbines, and energy storage systems.

Furthermore, smart materials contribute to sustainable infrastructure and smart cities by enabling real-time monitoring, improved safety, and reduced maintenance costs. Their integration leads to resilient systems that adapt to changing environmental conditions. The advantages of the smart materials are: (i) high energy efficient, (ii) reduced maintenance and longer service life, (iii) lower material usage, (iv) enhanced recycling and reusability, and (v) adaptation to environmental conditions. By integrating smart materials into infrastructure, transportation, energy systems, and environmental management, it is possible to achieve sustainable development more effectively.

TYPES OF SMART MATERIALS

There are several types of smart materials based on their materials of constructions and working principles (Figure 1). Some of them are discussed with their environmental benefits.

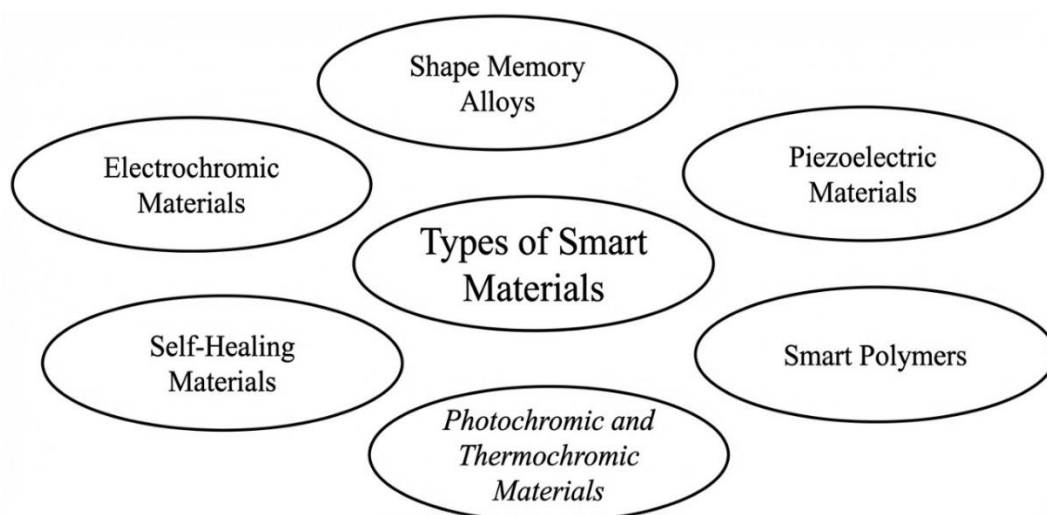


Figure 1. Types of smart materials.

Shape Memory Alloys (SMAs)

Shape Memory Alloys (SMAs) are metallic materials that can return to their initial shape after deformation when exposed to a particular change in temperature [11]. A well-known example of such

materials is Nickel–Titanium (Nitinol) alloys. The Environmental benefits are: (i) reduce mechanical complexity and energy usage, (ii) improve durability of structures, (iii) enable passive temperature control, (iv) applications in sustainability, (v) Smart building ventilation systems, (vi) energy-efficient actuators, and (vii) seismic protection in structures.

Piezoelectric Materials

Piezoelectric materials convert mechanical stress into electrical charge and, in reverse, undergo mechanical deformation when subjected to an electric field [12]. This behavior is observed in materials such as quartz and specific ceramic compounds. The Environmental benefits are: (i) energy harvesting from vibrations and movements, (ii) reduced reliance on conventional power sources. There are widely used in: (i) power generation from traffic and footpaths, (ii) structural health monitoring, (iii) renewable energy systems, and (iv) piezoelectric technology enables the conversion of wasted mechanical energy into usable electrical energy, supporting sustainable energy solutions.

Smart Polymers

Smart polymers are materials that adapt their properties in response to stimuli such as temperature, pH, moisture, or light [13]. They are lightweight, highly versatile, and frequently biodegradable. The environmental benefits are: (i) reduced environmental footprint, (ii) enhanced recyclability, (iii) lower energy requirements in processing. They are used in: (i) water purification membranes, (ii) self-healing materials, (iii) controlled release systems, and (iv) smart polymers contribute significantly to sustainable environmental management and pollution control.

Photochromic and Thermochromic Materials

These materials change color in response to light (photochromic) or temperature (thermochromic) [14]. The environmental benefits are: (i) reduce energy consumption and (ii) improve thermal comfort. The applications of the materials are in: (i) smart windows that regulate solar heat, (ii) energy-efficient building designs, (iii) UV-protective coatings, and (iv) by controlling light and heat transmission, these materials help reduce the demand for artificial lighting and air conditioning.

Self-Healing Materials

Self-healing materials can automatically repair damage, such as cracks or fractures, without external intervention [15]. The environmental benefits are: (i) extended material lifespan, (ii) reduced material waste, (iii) lower maintenance requirements. The applications are in: (i) concrete and construction materials, (ii) protective coatings, (iii) infrastructure systems, and (iv) self-healing materials reduce the need for frequent replacements, conserving natural resources.

Electrochromic Materials

Electrochromic materials change their optical properties when an electric voltage is applied [16]. The environmental benefits are: (i) improved energy efficiency and (ii) reduced carbon emissions. They are used in: (i) smart glass for buildings, (ii) energy-saving displays, (iii) adaptive solar control systems, and (iv) electrochromic windows can significantly lower energy consumption in buildings.

APPLICATIONS OF SMART MATERIALS FOR A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Smart materials support a sustainable environment through applications in energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy systems, pollution control, and waste reduction. Self-healing materials extend product life, smart sensors optimize resource use, and biodegradable smart polymers reduce environmental impact, promoting sustainability across industrial, urban, and environmental sectors. There are several important applications of the smart materials are shown in Figure 2.

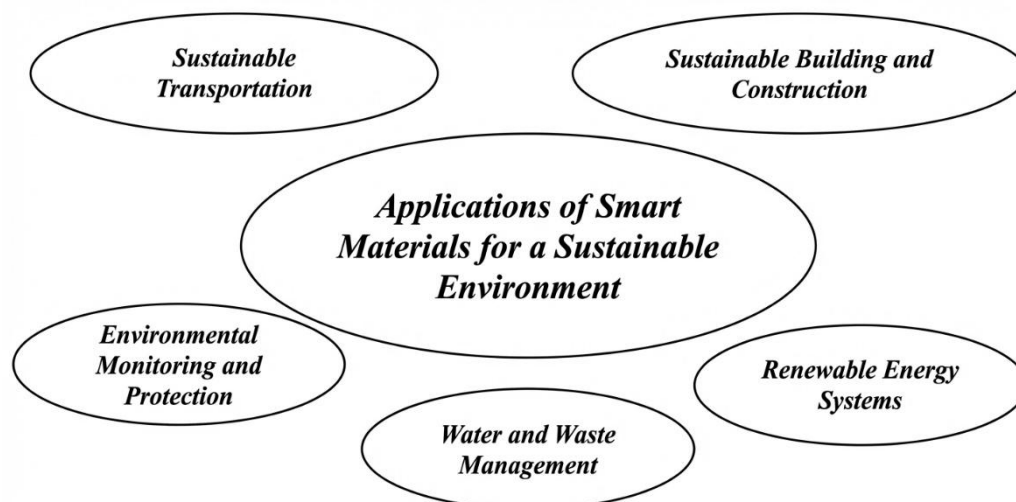


Figure 2. Applications of smart materials for a sustainable environment.

Sustainable Building and Construction

Smart materials are revolutionizing the construction sector by supporting the development of energy-efficient, long-lasting, and responsive structures. Smart glass minimizes heat absorption and thermal loss [17], shape memory alloys enhance seismic resilience [18], and self-healing concrete increases structural durability. Together, these advancements reduce energy consumption, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage sustainable urban growth.

Renewable Energy Systems

Smart materials enhance the efficiency and reliability of renewable energy technologies. The piezoelectric materials harvest energy from wind and vibrations, the smart coatings improve solar panel efficiency, and the shape memory materials optimize turbine performance. By improving renewable energy systems, smart materials support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Water and Waste Management

Smart materials play a crucial role in addressing water scarcity and pollution. The smart membranes for desalination and filtration, the pH-sensitive polymers for wastewater treatment, the self-cleaning surfaces reduce chemical usage [19]. These applications ensure efficient water use and environmental protection.

Environmental Monitoring and Protection

The smart materials enable real-time monitoring of environmental conditions. The sensors detect pollution levels, the smart coatings prevent corrosion, the responsive materials adapt to climatic changes [20]. The accurate monitoring helps in early detection of environmental hazards and better decision-making.

Sustainable Transportation

Smart materials contribute to lightweight, energy-efficient, and safe transportation systems.

The shape memory alloys in automotive components, the piezoelectric sensors for vehicle monitoring, the smart composites reduce fuel consumption [21]. These innovations lower emissions and improve transportation sustainability.

The smart materials have advantages in sustainability, e.g., higher energy efficiency as by reduced energy consumption, resource conservation by less material usage and waste, adaptability by responsive to environmental changes, longevity by extended lifespan of structures and reduced environmental impact by lower emissions and pollution.

Although smart materials offer significant advantages, they also encounter several limitations, such as: (i) high upfront costs, (ii) intricate fabrication and processing methods, (iii) restricted adoption at an industrial scale, and (iv) recycling challenges associated with certain types of smart materials. Overcoming these issues through continuous research and technological innovation is crucial to ensure their broader application. The prospects for smart materials remain highly encouraging, with ongoing investigations concentrating on: (i) bio-based and biodegradable smart materials, (ii) integration with artificial intelligence and IoT, (iii) cost-effective manufacturing techniques, and (iv) enhanced recyclability. Thus, the smart materials are expected to play a vital role in achieving global sustainability goals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Common smart materials include shape memory alloys (SMAs), like Nitinol, which return to their original shape when heated and are widely used in energy-efficient actuators and adaptive structures. Piezoelectric materials, such as lead zirconate titanate (PZT) and eco-friendly alternatives, like barium titanate, generate electrical energy from mechanical stress and are applied in vibration control and renewable energy harvesting.

Electrochromic materials (e.g., tungsten oxide) change color in response to electrical signals and are used in smart windows to regulate heat and light, reducing building energy consumption. Phase change materials (PCMs) absorb and discharge thermal energy during their phase transformation, making them highly suitable for thermal energy regulation in sustainable buildings. Self-healing polymers and composites, inspired by biological systems, automatically repair cracks, extending material lifespan and reducing waste.

The development of smart materials involves material synthesis and modification, including nano-engineering, polymer blending, and surface functionalization to enhance responsiveness and durability. Fabrication techniques, such as sol-gel processing, additive manufacturing (3D printing), thin-film deposition, and electrospinning, are commonly employed to achieve precise material properties with minimal waste.

Characterization methods include thermal analysis, mechanical testing, electrical response measurement, and environmental aging studies to assess sustainability performance. Life cycle assessment (LCA) is increasingly used to evaluate environmental impact from material extraction to disposal. Integration methods focus on embedding smart materials into structures, sensors, and control systems for real-time monitoring and adaptive response.

By enabling energy efficiency, reducing maintenance needs, and promoting longer service life, smart materials significantly support sustainable development. Their intelligent behavior aligns with green technology goals, making them essential components of future environmentally responsible systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the study of smart materials demonstrate their significant potential in promoting environmental sustainability across multiple sectors, including energy, construction, healthcare, water management, and environmental monitoring. Smart materials, by virtue of their ability to sense, respond, and adapt to environmental stimuli, offer performance advantages over conventional materials while simultaneously reducing resource consumption and environmental impact. The different ways to achieve environmental sustainability are shown in Figure 3.

Performance Enhancement and Resource Efficiency

One of the most notable results observed is the improvement in material performance under variable environmental conditions [22]. In terms of performance enhancement, smart materials improve functionality and operational effectiveness. For instance, shape memory alloys can regain their initial form after being deformed, which makes them highly suitable for use in actuators, aerospace structures,

and medical devices. Piezoelectric materials can transform mechanical energy into electrical energy and vice versa, thereby improving precision control, vibration reduction, and energy harvesting in sensors and industrial equipment. In a similar way, magnetorheological and electrorheological fluids can rapidly alter their viscosity when exposed to external fields, allowing quicker response times and enhanced control in braking and suspension applications [23].



Figure 3. Ways to achieve sustainable environment.

Smart materials also contribute significantly to resource efficiency by optimizing the use of energy and raw materials. Self-healing materials automatically repair cracks and damage, extending the service life of structures, coatings, and components. This reduces the need for frequent maintenance, replacement, and excessive material consumption. Thermochromic and electrochromic materials used in smart windows regulate heat and light transmission, minimizing energy loss and reducing dependence on heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems.

Additionally, smart polymers and bio-based smart materials support efficient resource use by being lightweight, recyclable, or biodegradable, thereby lowering environmental impact. In the fields of manufacturing and infrastructure, integrated smart sensors facilitate continuous real-time monitoring and predictive maintenance, helping to avert system breakdowns and minimize material waste. Materials, such as shape memory alloys (SMAs), piezoelectric substances, and phase change materials (PCMs), demonstrate responsive characteristics that enhance overall system efficiency [24]. For example, when PCMs are incorporated into building envelopes, they effectively regulate indoor temperatures by storing and releasing thermal energy during phase transitions. This thermal buffering reduces dependence on conventional heating and cooling systems, thereby decreasing energy usage and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

Similarly, piezoelectric materials demonstrated effective energy harvesting capabilities when subjected to mechanical stress or vibrations. Experimental results indicated that these materials could convert ambient mechanical energy – such as foot traffic, wind-induced vibrations, or machine motion – into usable electrical energy. Although the energy output per unit is relatively small, large-scale deployment can cumulatively contribute to sustainable energy generation, particularly in urban infrastructure.

Durability and Lifecycle Sustainability

Durability and lifecycle sustainability are critical factors in the adoption of smart materials for sustainable development. Smart materials are engineered to respond intelligently to external stimuli such as stress, temperature, light, or chemical changes [25]. Their long-term performance and environmental impact across the entire lifecycle – from raw material extraction to disposal – determine their true sustainability value.

Durability is a key advantage of smart materials. Materials, such as shape memory alloys, self-healing polymers, and adaptive composites, can withstand repeated mechanical, thermal, and environmental stresses without significant degradation. Self-healing smart materials, in particular, can automatically repair micro-cracks and damage, prevent structural failure and extending service life. Enhanced durability reduces the frequency of replacements and repairs, leading to lower material consumption, reduced waste generation, and decreased maintenance costs.

Lifecycle sustainability of smart materials focuses on minimizing environmental impact at every stage of their existence. During the design and manufacturing phase, smart materials can be tailored to use fewer raw resources and less energy while maintaining high performance. Many smart polymers and composites are increasingly being developed using biodegradable, recyclable, or bio-based components, which reduces dependence on non-renewable resources.

During the operational phase, smart materials contribute to sustainability by improving efficiency. For example, adaptive building materials regulate heat and light, reducing energy demand, while smart sensors enable real-time monitoring to prevent failures and optimize performance. At the end of their lifecycle, recyclable smart materials and modular designs support circular economy principles by allowing reuse and material recovery. Smart materials also showed enhanced durability and extended service life compared to traditional materials. Self-healing polymers and concrete exhibited the ability to repair micro-cracks autonomously when exposed to specific stimuli such as heat, moisture, or chemical agents. Test results revealed a substantial reduction in crack propagation and structural degradation, which directly translates to lower maintenance requirements and reduced material replacement frequency.

From a sustainability perspective, this increased durability reduces the demand for raw materials, minimizes construction waste, and lowers the overall environmental footprint across the material lifecycle. These findings support the argument that smart materials contribute not only to operational sustainability but also to long-term environmental conservation.

Energy Efficiency and Emission Reduction

Energy efficiency and the reduction of emissions are essential goals for sustainable development, particularly as global energy demand continues to grow, and climate change intensifies. Smart materials contribute significantly to these goals because they can detect environmental stimuli, respond accordingly, and adapt their properties in real time. By dynamically modifying their behavior, these materials enhance energy optimization and help minimize greenhouse gas emissions across multiple industries.

A major application of smart materials in improving energy efficiency is found in the building and construction sector. For example, thermochromic and electrochromic materials are incorporated into smart window systems that automatically control heat and light transmission depending on surrounding conditions. This adaptive regulation decreases reliance on artificial heating, cooling, and lighting systems, leading to reduced energy usage and lower carbon emissions. Phase change materials (PCMs) are also used in walls and roofs to store and release thermal energy, maintaining indoor comfort with minimal energy use [26].

In transportation and industrial applications, shape memory alloys and lightweight smart composites help reduce fuel consumption by lowering vehicle weight and improving structural efficiency. Piezoelectric materials convert mechanical vibrations into electrical energy, enabling energy harvesting and reducing reliance on external power sources. This leads to lower fossil fuel use and reduced emissions.

Smart materials also enhance the performance of renewable energy systems. Adaptive materials improve the efficiency of solar panels by optimizing light absorption, while smart coatings reduce

energy losses in wind turbines and power equipment. In energy storage systems, smart materials improve battery performance and lifespan, reducing resource consumption and emissions associated with frequent replacements.

Furthermore, smart sensors made from intelligent materials enable real-time monitoring of energy use and emissions in industrial processes. This allows early detection of inefficiencies, leakage, or excessive emissions, leading to timely corrective actions. The integration of smart materials into renewable energy systems produced encouraging results. Thermochromic and photochromic materials applied in smart windows demonstrated dynamic control of solar heat gain and light transmission. Experimental observations showed that these windows could automatically adjust transparency based on temperature or light intensity, thereby reducing cooling loads in summer and improving thermal comfort.

In addition, smart coatings with reflective or emissive properties helped mitigate urban heat island effects. Results indicated a measurable reduction in surface temperatures of buildings and pavements, which contributes to lower ambient temperatures and decreased energy demand for air conditioning. This highlights the role of smart materials in addressing climate change challenges at both building and city scales.

Environmental Monitoring and Pollution Control

Environmental pollution poses a serious threat to ecosystems, human health, and sustainable development. To effectively monitor and control pollution, advanced and responsive technologies are required. Smart materials play a vital role in this area due to their ability to sense, respond, and adapt to environmental changes such as the presence of pollutants, temperature variations, or chemical signals.

Smart materials are widely used in environmental monitoring through sensors and detection systems. Materials, such as piezoelectric ceramics, conductive polymers, and nanomaterials, can detect pollutants in air, water, and soil with high sensitivity and accuracy [27]. Smart sensors embedded with these materials can continuously monitor levels of toxic gases, heavy metals, pH changes, and biological contaminants. Real-time data obtained from these systems enables early detection of pollution and helps authorities take timely preventive measures.

In pollution control, smart materials offer innovative solutions for removing and neutralizing contaminants. Responsive membranes and smart filtration systems are used in water treatment plants to selectively separate pollutants such as dyes, oils, salts, and microorganisms. These materials can adjust pore size or surface properties in response to environmental conditions, improving filtration efficiency and reducing energy consumption. Similarly, photocatalytic materials, like titanium dioxide, help degrade harmful organic pollutants in air and water when exposed to light.

Smart materials also contribute to air pollution control through self-cleaning coatings and catalytic surfaces that break down harmful gases such as nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. In addition, smart adsorbent materials can capture carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, supporting climate change mitigation efforts.

Furthermore, smart materials enable sustainable environmental management by reducing maintenance costs and resource use. Their durability, adaptability, and multifunctional nature make pollution control systems more efficient and environmentally friendly. Smart materials also performed effectively in environmental sensing and pollution control applications. Sensors based on conductive polymers and nanocomposites showed high sensitivity and rapid response to pollutants such as toxic gases, heavy metals, and chemical contaminants in water and air. These materials enable real-time monitoring, early detection of environmental hazards, and prompt intervention, which are critical for sustainable environmental management.

In water treatment applications, smart membranes demonstrated selective permeability and fouling resistance. Results indicated improved filtration efficiency, reduced energy requirements, and longer operational life compared to conventional membranes. This makes smart materials particularly valuable in addressing global water scarcity and improving access to clean water.

Healthcare and Environmental Sustainability

Smart materials have emerged as transformative solutions in both healthcare and environmental sustainability due to their ability to sense, respond, and adapt to external stimuli such as temperature, pH, stress, light, or electric fields. Their multifunctional nature enables efficient, precise, and sustainable applications across critical sectors.

In healthcare, smart materials significantly improve diagnosis, treatment, and patient care. Shape memory alloys are widely used in minimally invasive medical devices, such as stents and orthodontic wires, allowing precise deployment and reduced recovery time [28]. Smart polymers and hydrogels respond to biological conditions, like pH or temperature, enabling targeted drug delivery systems that release medication at controlled rates. This minimizes drug wastage and side effects, leading to more effective treatments. Wearable sensors made from piezoelectric and flexible smart materials allow real-time monitoring of vital signs, promoting preventive healthcare and early detection of diseases. Additionally, biodegradable smart materials reduce medical waste and environmental burden from disposable healthcare products.

From an environmental sustainability perspective, smart materials contribute to efficient resource management and pollution control. Responsive membranes are used in water purification systems to selectively remove contaminants, ensuring access to clean water with lower energy consumption. Smart sensors help monitor air and water quality in real time, enabling timely intervention and better environmental management. Thermochromic and photochromic materials enhance energy efficiency in buildings by regulating heat and light absorption, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Smart materials also support renewable energy technologies by improving the performance and durability of solar cells, wind turbines, and energy storage systems. Self-healing materials extend the lifespan of infrastructure and equipment, reducing raw material usage and waste generation. Although healthcare applications may appear indirectly related to environmental sustainability, the results indicate a strong connection. Smart biomaterials used in medical devices and drug delivery systems reduce waste generation and resource use. For example, responsive drug delivery materials release medication only when required, minimizing dosage and reducing pharmaceutical residues entering the environment.

Furthermore, biodegradable smart polymers showed promising results in reducing medical waste accumulation. Their ability to degrade safely after use contributes to a circular material economy and aligns with sustainable development goals.

Economic and Practical Considerations

Smart materials offer significant technological advantages due to their ability to respond to environmental stimuli such as temperature, stress, light, or electric fields. However, their large-scale adoption depends not only on performance but also on economic feasibility and practical implementation. Understanding these considerations is essential for integrating smart materials into real-world applications.

From an economic perspective, the initial cost of smart materials is often higher than that of conventional materials. Advanced manufacturing processes, specialized raw materials, and complex fabrication techniques contribute to increased production costs [29]. Additionally, research and development expenses, testing, and certification further raise the overall investment. These factors can limit widespread adoption, particularly in cost-sensitive sectors such as construction and consumer goods.

Despite high upfront costs, smart materials can provide long-term economic benefits. Their adaptive and self-regulating properties lead to reduced energy consumption, lower maintenance costs, and extended service life of products and structures. For example, self-healing materials reduce repair expenses, while smart coatings minimize corrosion-related losses. Over time, these savings can offset the initial investment, making smart materials economically viable.

From a practical standpoint, challenges include material durability, reliability, and scalability. Smart materials must perform consistently under varying environmental conditions over long periods. Integrating them into existing systems may require redesigning components or adopting new control mechanisms, which can complicate implementation. Limited technical expertise and lack of standardized guidelines also pose practical barriers.

Manufacturing scalability is another key issue. Producing smart materials in large quantities while maintaining quality and performance remains a challenge. Furthermore, recycling and end-of-life management must be considered to ensure environmental and economic sustainability. Despite their advantages, the results also highlight certain challenges associated with smart materials. High initial costs, complex fabrication processes, and scalability issues remain significant barriers to widespread adoption. While laboratory-scale results are promising, translating these outcomes into large-scale industrial applications requires further optimization and cost reduction.

However, a lifecycle cost analysis revealed that, despite higher upfront investment, smart materials often provide long-term economic benefits through energy savings, reduced maintenance, and extended service life. This suggests that smart materials are economically viable when evaluated from a sustainability-oriented, long-term perspective rather than short-term cost considerations.

The different results confirm that smart materials play a transformative role in achieving environmental sustainability. Their adaptive and multifunctional properties enable systems to operate intelligently, responding to environmental changes in real time. This adaptability is crucial in addressing modern environmental challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and pollution. Moreover, smart materials support the principles of sustainable development by improving efficiency, reducing waste, and promoting renewable energy utilization. Their integration into green buildings, smart cities, and sustainable infrastructure aligns with global environmental policies and sustainability frameworks [30]. The results also suggest strong potential for future advancements. Ongoing research into nanotechnology, bio-inspired materials, and artificial intelligence integration is expected to further enhance the capabilities of smart materials. Developing eco-friendly smart materials using renewable or recycled resources will further strengthen their contribution to sustainability. Future studies should focus on improving scalability, reducing costs, and establishing standardized performance evaluation methods [31]. Collaborative efforts between researchers, industries, and policymakers will be essential to accelerate the adoption of smart materials for sustainable environmental solutions.

CONCLUSION

Smart materials represent a transformative approach to addressing the pressing environmental challenges of the modern world. As global concerns over climate change, resource depletion, pollution, and energy scarcity continue to intensify, the integration of smart materials into sustainable practices has become not only beneficial but essential. These materials, with their ability to sense, respond, and adapt to environmental stimuli, offer innovative solutions that go beyond the limitations of conventional materials. One of the most significant contributions of smart materials to a sustainable environment is their role in enhancing energy efficiency. By dynamically responding to changes in temperature, pressure, light, or electrical signals, smart materials help reduce energy losses in buildings, transportation systems, and industrial processes. Applications, such as smart windows, adaptive insulation, and energy-harvesting materials, contribute to lower energy consumption and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, directly supporting global sustainability goals. Smart materials also play a vital role in conserving natural resources and minimizing waste. Self-healing materials extend the lifespan of structures and products by repairing

damage automatically, thereby reducing the need for frequent replacements and excessive raw material use. Biodegradable and bio-based smart polymers help address the growing problem of plastic waste and promote a circular economy by enabling materials to return safely to the environment after use. In environmental protection, smart materials enable advanced monitoring and remediation techniques. Smart sensors, responsive membranes, and nanomaterials enhance water purification, air quality control, and pollution detection. These technologies allow for early identification of environmental hazards and efficient removal of contaminants, ensuring healthier ecosystems and improved public health. The smart materials support the development of sustainable infrastructure and smart cities. Their integration into bridges, roads, buildings, and public utilities enables real-time structural health monitoring, improved safety, and reduced maintenance costs. Such intelligent systems enhance resilience against environmental stresses and natural disasters.

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