World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews

eISSN: 2581-9615 CODEN (USA): WJARAI

Cross Ref DOI: 10.30574/wjarr

Journal homepage: https://wjarr.com/

(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

The role of policy and legislation in advancing e-waste recycling technologies: comparative analysis of electronic waste management practices – U.S. vs. Global perspective

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World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025, 25(02), 1025-1028

Publication history: Received on 31 December 2024; revised on 07 February 2025; accepted on 10 February 2025

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.25.2.0449

Abstract

The fast increase of electronic waste (e-waste) causes serious environmental and health challenges worldwide. This study analyzes the influence of policy and regulation in advancing e-waste recycling technology through a comparative analysis of e-waste management practices in the United States and abroad. By examining emerging recycling technologies, such as hydrometallurgical and biotechnological processes, and reviewing the performance of existing approaches, this research finds gaps in regulatory frameworks and recommends innovations to develop a sustainable e-waste management system. Data acquired through experimental research, case studies, and policy evaluations indicate that comprehensive laws, along with cutting-edge technologies, can dramatically reduce landfill trash, save natural resources, and minimize environmental contamination.

Keywords: Electronic waste; Waste management; Recycling; Sustainability

1. Introduction

E-waste, which includes abandoned electronic equipment such as smartphones, laptops, and televisions, is one of the fastest-growing waste streams globally. According to the Global E-Waste Monitor 2023, the globe created over 55 million metric tons of e-waste, of which only 20% was formerly recycled. This article investigates how policy and regulation might encourage developments in recycling technologies, comparing practices in the U.S. with global standards. The study stresses novel technologies, including hydrometallurgical and microbiological processes, to promote sustainability in e-waste management.

2. Research Methodology

This research takes a mixed-methods approach, merging qualitative and quantitative analyses to analyze the influence of policy and legislation in promoting recycling technologies. Key parts of the technique include:

- Comparative analysis of e-waste management policies in the U.S. and other regions (e.g., European Union and Asia).
- Experimental evaluation of novel recycling technologies.
- Case studies of successful e-waste management schemes globally.

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2.1. Data Collection Data were collected using the following methods

- **Experimental Research**: Laboratory studies on hydrometallurgical and biotechnological processes to determine efficiency in metal recovery and waste minimization.
- **Policy Analysis**: Review of e-waste legislation, including the U.S. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the EU Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive.
- **Case Studies**: Analysis of successful recycling projects in nations like Japan, Germany, and South Korea.
- **Surveys and Interviews**: Input from lawmakers, recycling business specialists, and environmental scientists.

2.2. Data Analysis Data analysis focused on

- Comparing recycling rates and landfill diversion between regions.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of hydrometallurgical and biotechnological procedures in resource recovery.
- Identifying inadequacies in U.S. legislation compared to global best practices.

Data Validity To ensure validity, data were cross-verified by triangulation, combining experimental results, policy reviews, and case study findings. Peer-reviewed literature and official reports were examined to corroborate findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Policy and Legislative Gaps

- U.S.: Limited federal-level e-waste legislation leads to inconsistencies across states. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs are not routinely embraced.
- Global: The EU's WEEE Directive displays improved recycling rates due to required targets and rigorous enforcement procedures.

3.2. Innovative Recycling Technologies

- **Hydrometallurgical Processes**: Effective in recovering precious metals (e.g., gold and palladium) with lower environmental impact compared to traditional smelting.
- **Biotechnological Processes**: Utilization of microorganisms to extract metals from e-waste shows promise for low-energy, sustainable recycling.

Table 1 Innovative Recycling Technologies

Technology	Recovery Rate (%)	Environmental Impact	Cost Effectiveness
Hydrometallurgy	85	Low	Moderate
Biotechnological	70	Very Low	High

3.3. Comparative Analysis of Practices

- **Recycling Rates**: The EU achieves over 40% e-waste recycling, while the U.S. lags at 15-20%.
- **Infrastructure**: Asian countries (e.g., Japan) excel in integrating new technologies with policy frameworks, achieving higher recycling efficiency.

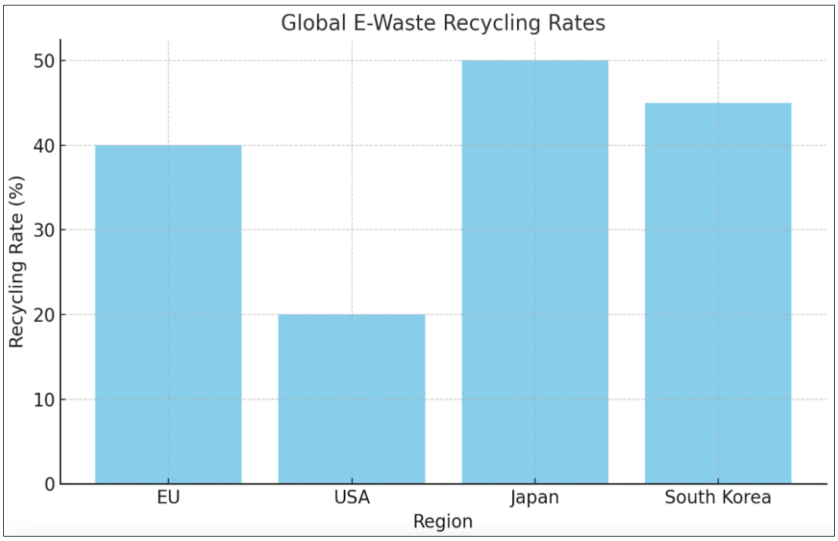

Figure 1 Global E-Waste Recycling Rates

3.4. Potential Benefits

- Landfill Waste Reduction: Advanced technologies can minimize e-waste disposal by 30%.
- Conservation of Resources: Recovery of rare earth elements decreases dependency on virgin mining.
- Environmental Impact: Biotechnological techniques minimize greenhouse gas emissions.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

- The U.S. should enact comprehensive federal legislation, modeled after the EU's WEEE Directive, to standardize e-waste handling.
- Strengthen EPR initiatives to keep manufacturers accountable for end-of-life recycling.

Technological Advancements

- Invest in scaling hydrometallurgical and biotechnological processes to commercial levels.
- Promote research and development through public-private collaborations.

Global Collaboration

- Establish worldwide agreements to combat transboundary migration of e-waste.
- Share technical ideas and best practices to support global sustainability.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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