

## Photocatalysis and Its Applications in Environmental and Energy Technologies

Ji-Hoon Park\*

Department of Materials Chemistry, Seoul National University, Spain,

\*Corresponding author: Ji-Hoon Park, Department of Materials Chemistry, Seoul National University, Spain,

E-mail: jhpark.photocat@researchmail.kr

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### Abstract

Photocatalysis is a process in which light energy activates a material to accelerate chemical reactions without the catalyst being consumed. Photocatalytic materials have attracted significant attention for applications in water purification, air treatment, hydrogen production, and self-cleaning surfaces. The efficiency of photocatalysis depends on factors such as band gap, surface area, and charge carrier dynamics. This article discusses the principles, materials, and applications of photocatalysis in modern materials science.

*Keywords: Photocatalysis, Semiconductor catalysts, Titanium dioxide, Light absorption, Environmental remediation, Hydrogen production, Surface reactions*

### Introduction

Photocatalysis is based on the ability of certain materials, usually semiconductors, to absorb light and generate electron–hole pairs that drive chemical reactions at their surfaces. When photons with sufficient energy strike a photocatalyst, electrons are excited from the valence band to the conduction band, leaving behind positively charged holes. These charge carriers can participate in oxidation and reduction reactions, enabling the breakdown of organic pollutants or the splitting of water molecules. Titanium dioxide is one of the most widely studied photocatalytic materials due to its chemical stability, non-toxicity, and strong oxidizing capability under ultraviolet light. When activated, titanium dioxide can generate reactive oxygen species capable of decomposing organic contaminants, bacteria, and airborne pollutants. This property has led to its use in self-cleaning coatings, antimicrobial surfaces, and environmental purification systems [1]. The efficiency of photocatalysis depends strongly on the separation and lifetime of charge carriers. If electrons and holes recombine before reaching the surface, the absorbed energy is lost as heat or light, reducing catalytic performance. Researchers have developed strategies such as doping, heterostructure formation, and nanostructuring to improve charge separation and extend the active lifetime of carriers [2].

Surface area also plays a critical role in photocatalytic activity. Nanostructured materials provide a larger

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active surface for reactions, increasing efficiency. Techniques such as sol–gel synthesis, hydrothermal processing, and templating methods are commonly used to produce photocatalysts with high surface area and controlled morphology [3]. Photocatalysis has promising applications in energy production, particularly in hydrogen generation through water splitting. In this process, photocatalysts use sunlight to separate water into hydrogen and oxygen, producing a clean fuel. Although current efficiencies are still limited, advances in semiconductor materials and co-catalysts are steadily improving performance and bringing this technology closer to practical use [4]. Environmental remediation remains one of the most important uses of photocatalysis. Photocatalytic reactors are being developed to remove dyes, pesticides, and pharmaceutical residues from wastewater. Air purification systems using photocatalytic filters can also degrade volatile organic compounds and reduce harmful emissions in indoor and industrial environments [5].

## **Conclusion**

Photocatalysis represents a powerful approach to harnessing light energy for chemical transformations that benefit both energy production and environmental protection. Continued research in nanostructured catalysts, visible-light-responsive materials, and improved reactor designs is expected to enhance efficiency and expand practical applications. In a way, photocatalysis allows materials to borrow a small fraction of the Sun's energy and put it to work directly, turning light into a chemical tool capable of cleaning, transforming, and fueling the world around us.

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