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Moderating Profitability and Environmental Sustainability: A Study of Nigerian Export Promotion Council Policies

[1]**Vivien E. Wogwu, &** [2]**Eloke, P. D.**
[1&2]*Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences*
University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The focus of this investigation is on the Nigerian Export Promotion Council's (NEPC) role in balancing profitability and environmental sustainability. It underpins the Stakeholder Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory; it evaluates NEPC policies' usefulness in the sustainable developmental organizational standards, although addressing the difficulties of exporters. A combined approach was adopted, quantitative data from 150 stakeholders and qualitative insights from interviews, focus groups, and secondary sources were collected. Results therefore reveal that NEPC policies reasonably support sustainable principles (mean = 3.03); however, when confronted with difficulties, also known as great operation budgets, controlling complications, and economic limitations (mean = 2.95). Though sustainability creativities boost marketplace approach and competitiveness, their effectiveness influence remains indeterminate (mean = 2.99). The research focuses on gaps in the environmental features of NEPC policies, highlighting the essential tactical developments. Policy recommendations contain improved economic motivations, tax breaks, improved mindfulness plans, global partnerships, and intermittent strategy evaluations. Establishment domination apparatuses and investor appointments will help align Nigeria's export sector with widespread sustainability values, nurturing stable monetary advancement and a competitive edge.

Keywords: *Profitability, Environmental, Sustainability, Moderating, Competitiveness, Economic Growth, Community engagement*

Corresponding Author: **Vivien E. Wogwu** – ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6887-0610

Background to the Study

The critical intersection of profitability and environmental sustainability, focusing on the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC). Understanding how policies can effectively moderate these goals is essential for fostering sustainable economic growth in Nigeria while addressing environmental challenges. Nigeria's economic reliance on non-oil exports has grown significantly, necessitating sustainable business practices. In line with the above, Srivastava, (2024) asserts that profitability remains a primary objective, stakeholders increasingly scrutinize corporate behaviors related to environmental stewardship, human rights, and community engagement. Sustainable management strategies seek to align these dual objectives by fostering long-term value creation while mitigating risks associated with environmental degradation, social unrest, and regulatory non-compliance. Hernandez, and Gonzalez (2024) maintains that long-term feasibility, that is integrating environmental responsibility into business practices ensures the sustainability of operations over the long term. By minimizing negative environmental impacts and conserving resources, companies can mitigate risks associated with resource depletion, regulatory changes, and reputational damage. Embracing sustainability can differentiate businesses in the marketplace, attracting environmentally conscious consumers, investors, and partners. The NEPC plays a pivotal role in driving export growth through policies that enhance competitiveness. However, achieving profitability while maintaining environmental sustainability remains a pressing challenge for exporters. Existing frameworks often lack the necessary balance between economic and environmental priorities, creating a need for actionable insights (Mamidu, 2021). While the NEPC has implemented various policies to boost exports, their impact on balancing profitability and environmental sustainability remains unclear. Many businesses struggle to adopt practices that align with both objectives, leading to unsustainable resource exploitation and limited long-term gains. The absence of a cohesive strategy addressing this dual mandate underscores the need for targeted research. Previous studies on NEPC policies have predominantly focused on their economic outcomes, with limited emphasis on environmental sustainability. Furthermore, existing literature often neglects the interplay between profitability and sustainability, leaving a critical gap in understanding how NEPC policies can address both objectives simultaneously.

Preliminary data indicates that some NEPC initiatives, such as export incentives and capacity-building programs, have spurred economic growth. However, there is scant evidence on their environmental impact. Case studies from other developing economies demonstrate the feasibility of balancing these objectives through well-designed policies, highlighting the need for similar research in Nigeria. Nigeria's unique economic and environmental landscape underscores the relevance of this study. With increasing international pressure to adopt sustainable practices, Nigerian exporters must align with global standards to remain competitive. The NEPC's role as a policy driver places it at the center of this transformation, making it an ideal case for analysis.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of NEPC policies in moderating profitability and environmental sustainability.

2. To identify key challenges faced by exporters in adopting sustainable practices.
3. To provide a framework for other developing economies aiming to moderate profitability and sustainability in export promotion strategies.
4. To propose actionable recommendations for improving NEPC policies to achieve sustainable economic growth.

Research Questions

From the provided study objectives, research questions were derived

1. How effective are NEPC policies in balancing profitability and environmental sustainability?
2. What are the key challenges faced by exporters in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC policies?
3. How does the interplay between profitability and sustainability impact export growth in Nigeria?
4. What policy recommendations can enhance the NEPC's ability to moderate profitability and environmental sustainability?

Theoretical Framework

The study will anchor on two key theoretical frameworks: **Stakeholder Theory** and **Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory**. These theories align with the study's objectives and provide a robust conceptual foundation for understanding the interplay between profitability, environmental sustainability, and policy interventions.

Stakeholder Theory

This theory, proposed by Freeman (1984), asserts that organizations have a responsibility not only to shareholders but also to a wide range of stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, suppliers, and the environment. The theory highlights the need for businesses to balance the diverse and sometimes conflicting interests of these groups to achieve long-term success and sustainability.

The NEPC's role in promoting export-driven economic growth and environmental sustainability aligns with stakeholder theory because it underscores the need to address the expectations of multiple stakeholders (e.g., exporters, regulators, environmental groups, and international consumers). The NEPC's policies aim to foster economic growth while mitigating environmental risks, a dual mandate that reflects the balancing act central to stakeholder theory. The study's focus on understanding the challenges exporters face in adopting sustainable practices resonates with the theory's emphasis on stakeholder engagement and inclusion in decision-making. Stakeholder theory, introduced by Freeman (1984), is extremely appropriate for this research since it offers a basis for exploring how the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) steers the balance between profitability and environmental sustainability through its policies. The NEPC functions within an energetic environment where different investors consist of exporters, supervisory organizations, conservation businesses, and global clients who grip various and occasionally conflicting welfares. This theory supports that corporations should handle the anxieties of all pertinent investors instead of concentrating exclusively on exploiting shareholder incomes. The NEPC case involves employing strategies that not only drive global competitive monetary development but also maintain conservational sustainability values. This is done through inspiring maintainable corporate performance; also, NEPC corresponds with the fundamental principles of responsible investing, emphasizing the importance of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors. By integrating these principles into their decision-making processes, NEPC aims to foster a more equitable and sustainable business landscape that benefits all stakeholders involved. Entails the principle of stakeholder theory, which emphasizes the importance of balancing the needs and interests of all parties involved. By fostering dialogue and collaboration among these diverse groups, NEPC aims to create a more inclusive economic framework that values environmental stewardship alongside profitability. This approach not only enhances corporate responsibility but also encourages innovation in sustainable practices. Ultimately, NEPC seeks to redefine success in the business landscape by integrating ecological and social considerations into the core of its financial strategies. of stakeholder theory, which emphasizes balancing economic, social, and environmental responsibilities.

The theory highlights the meaning of collaboration and problem-solving; both are vital for expressing policies that are effective and generally contained. The NEPC's explanation of dialogue among exporters, lawmakers, and environmental assemblies demonstrates this stakeholder-oriented approach. In essence, stakeholder theory serves as a robust theoretical lens for assessing how the NEPC controls the connection between profitability and environmental sustainability. It underlines the importance of considering the benefits of all major stakeholders to guarantee maintainable financial growth while addressing environmental concerns.

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

RBV theory, introduced by Barney (1991), focuses on an organization's internal resources as sources of competitive advantage. The theory emphasizes the importance of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources for achieving sustainable performance. By leveraging these unique resources, organizations can create a distinct market position that is difficult for competitors to replicate, thus ensuring long-term success and profitability performance. Exporters leveraging sustainable practices (e.g., green technologies, eco-friendly processes, or certifications) can create unique resources that differentiate them in the global market. NEPC initiatives, such as capacity-building programs, align with RBV by enabling exporters to develop and deploy resources that enhance both profitability and environmental sustainability. RBV theory supports the idea that integrating environmental responsibility into business practices ensures the sustainability of operations by conserving critical resources and minimizing risks. This theory is greatly pertinent to this work as it offers a structure for understanding how exporters can achieve competitiveness by leveraging internal resources. The theory highlights those businesses. The theory highlights that the effective utilization of unique capabilities and resources can lead to a significant competitive advantage. By prioritizing resource management and innovation, exporters can not only meet regulatory requirements but also respond proactively to market demands for sustainable practices, ultimately fostering long-term growth and resilience in an ever-changing global landscape. Those businesses that embrace this approach are more likely to adapt successfully to challenges and seize emerging opportunities. In doing so, they create a robust framework that not only enhances their operational efficiency but also builds a reputation as responsible and forward-thinking market players. Businesses that prioritize resource optimization and innovation are more likely to adapt to changing market demands and environmental regulations. By focusing on their unique strengths and capabilities, exporters can create a distinct market position that not only drives financial success but also promotes long-term ecological stewardship. It discusses specific capacity-building programs that have successfully integrated environmental practices for exporters. It explores how exporters can measure the impact of environmental responsibility on their profitability. It identifies common risks associated with neglecting environmental sustainability and how they can be mitigated. 4. Analyze the competitive advantages gained by exporters who prioritize resource conservation in their operations. 5. Provide case studies of exporters who have effectively balanced profitability with environmental sustainability initiatives. Supportable presentation by evolving and exploiting dear, infrequent, exclusive, and non-substitutable (VRIN) capital.

In this regard, RBV theory highlights the status of inward competencies, including the implementation of sustainable technologies, eco-friendly manufacturing procedures, and green certifications. International traders who incorporate certain supportable procedures generate exclusive modest properties that distinguish them in the global marketplace. NEPC principles, predominantly on training and development projects, synchronize with RBV by preparing exporters with the essential services, information, and equipment to advance this tactical capital. Additionally, RBV assists the concept that inserting ecological accountability within corporate processes provides strategic durability. As a result, its development, the effective use of critical capitals and minimizing ecological risks, can boost both profitability and obedience with global economic viability values. The NEPC's function in endorsing these practices reinforces the RBV standpoint by guaranteeing that exporters grow internal competencies that determine both financial and environmental monotony. RBV theory offers a robust conceptual underpinning for investigating how NEPC policies rationalize the association between profitability and environmental sustainability.

History of Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC)

The National Export Promotion Council (NEPC) compiles and manages data on non-oil export commodities based on PIAs returns. In 2016, 141 main non-oil products under 13 categories were exported, generating a total revenue of US$1.203 billion from exports to 14 countries. The top three non-oil exports were cocoa beans (US$242.223 million), cigarettes (US$118.484 million), and sesame seeds (US$107.676 million) (NEPC, 2016). The NEPC plays a crucial role in promoting non-oil exports, which have significantly grown over the years, as reflected in the increase of non-oil export earnings from 0.34 billion naira in 1981 to 1,434.17 billion naira in 2018 (Adah, et al 2022).

The Concept of Profitability and Sustainability

Balancing profitability with environmental sustainability is a critical challenge for Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) in today's business landscape. While profitability is fundamental to environmental sustainability operations and growth, the imperative to fulfill social responsibilities has become increasingly significant. This section examines how NEPC navigate the tension between maximizing financial returns and meeting ethical, social, and environmental obligations. It explores strategies employed by NEPC to integrate environmental sustainability into their core business models while maintaining competitiveness and profitability in global markets.

On the other hand, sustainability idea has evolved significantly within Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), shifting from a peripheral concern to a central component of corporate strategy. It was initially driven by regulatory compliance and corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability has expanded to encompass broader economic, environmental, and social dimensions. This section traces the concept of sustainability in NEPC, highlighting key milestones such as the adoption of profitability, stakeholder, engagement initiatives, and the integration of sustainable environment goals into business practices. It explores how NEPC have increasingly recognized sustainability as a source of competitive advantage, driving innovation, enhancing reputation, and fostering long-term value creation (Srivastava, 2024). Environmental sustainability has been widely studied, with recent research highlighting the complex interplay between economic development, institutional quality, and resource management. Several studies emphasize the negative impact of natural resource extraction on environmental sustainability, particularly in Africa, where governance structures play a crucial role (Manu et al., 2024; Nathaniel and Adedoyin, 2022). The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis continues to be relevant, showing that pollution initially rises with economic growth before eventually declining (Byaro et al., 2022; Ozturk & Ullah, 2022). Institutional quality and governance mechanisms such as voice and accountability have been recognized as critical factors in mitigating environmental degradation. Research suggests that strong economic institutions enhance environmental sustainability by promoting responsible resource management and reducing carbon emissions (Cheah et al., 2023; Jahanger et al., 2022). Studies further highlight that sustainable resource extraction methods can contribute to environmental preservation, particularly in emerging economies (Altinoz & Dogan, 2021; Wen et al., 2022).

In the African context, voice and accountability have been identified as key governance factors influencing environmental sustainability. Transparent governance structures and citizen participation are essential for ensuring responsible resource use and long-term ecological balance (Liu, et al., 2022; Liu, Xiao, et al., 2022). The emphasis on institutional reforms and regulatory policies remains central to achieving environmental sustainability while balancing economic growth and resource utilization (Dasgupta, 2024).

The Connection between Profitability and Environmental Sustainability

This has been a critical topic of inquiry, especially in developing economies like Nigeria. The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) has implemented policies aimed at promoting export-driven economic growth while addressing environmental challenges. This review will evaluate the extant literature, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and identifying gaps for future research. Several studies provide detailed analyses of NEPC policies, including export incentives, capacity-building programs, financial support schemes, integration of leadership styles effectively supports the achievement of the triple bottom line profit, planet, and people by resolving tensions between short-term profitability and long-term sustainability (Qaiser & Batoo, 2024). These works effectively outline how these policies aim to balance economic gains with environmental considerations. A significant number of studies utilize robust empirical methodologies, such as econometric modeling and case studies, to analyze the impact of NEPC policies on export performance and sustainability metrics. For instance, some works highlight the positive correlation between green certification programs and increased market access for Nigerian exporters. The literature often adopts a sectoral approach, examining industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and solid minerals. This granularity provides a nuanced understanding of how NEPC policies affect different sectors. Some studies contextualize Nigerian policies within global best practices, offering insights into how international benchmarks can inform local policy design. On the other hand, most research adopts a cross-sectional design, providing snapshots rather than long-term trends. This limits the understanding of how NEPC policies evolve and their sustained impact on profitability and environmental sustainability. While profitability is well-documented, environmental sustainability often lacks comprehensive metrics. Many studies fail to account for key indicators such as carbon footprint reduction, waste management efficiency, and biodiversity conservation. The literature often focuses on the intended outcomes of NEPC policies rather than their actual implementation and effectiveness. There is limited scrutiny of governance issues, such as policy execution gaps and corruption. Few studies incorporate the views of critical stakeholders, including exporters, regulators, and environmental advocacy groups. This omission results in an incomplete understanding of the practical challenges and opportunities associated with NEPC policies.

Future research should integrate environmental, social, and economic dimensions to develop a more comprehensive evaluation of NEPC policies. There is a need for studies that track the long-term effects of NEPC policies on both profitability and environmental sustainability. This would provide deeper insights into policy efficacy over time. Comparative studies between Nigeria and other developing economies could uncover lessons and strategies for improving policy outcomes. Incorporating stakeholder perspectives through qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, can provide practical insights into the implementation challenges and benefits of NEPC policies. Future studies should explore the role of technology and innovation in bridging the gap between profitability and environmental sustainability, particularly in export-oriented sectors. Research should investigate governance mechanisms, including transparency, accountability, and institutional capacity, to address implementation gaps in NEPC policies.

Empirical Review

Leadership plays a crucial role in balancing profitability growth with sustainability. The study highlights that transformative, paradoxical, and inclusive leadership foster innovation, collaboration, and ethical accountability. Research suggests that integrating these styles helps resolve tensions between short-term profits and long-term sustainability. A case study in Punjab, Pakistan, confirms that such leadership approaches enhance organizational effectiveness in achieving the triple bottom line profit, planet, and people. The study emphasizes that adaptive leadership strategies are vital for sustainability in resource-intensive industries, reinforcing the need for a balanced approach to business success and environmental responsibility (Qaiser & Batool 2024). Sustainable management strategies are essential for multinational corporations (MNCs) seeking to balance long-term profitability with social and environmental responsibilities. The study examines how MNCs integrate economic, social, and environmental considerations into corporate strategies through theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. The research highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainability initiatives, emphasizing the role of leadership, stakeholder engagement, and transparent reporting in achieving competitive advantage. The study suggests that successful organizations align their business goals with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by implementing ethical practices and engaging stakeholders across global operations. Case studies and comparative analyses illustrate best practices adopted by MNCs to mitigate environmental impacts, promote social equity, and enhance corporate reputation. It underscores that leadership commitment and responsible corporate citizenship are critical factors in driving sustainable business practices (Srivastava 2024). The studies emphasize the link between sustainability initiatives and financial performance, particularly in the renewable energy sector. A study on Renew Power Limited reveals that environmental responsibility positively impacts financial growth by reducing costs, diversifying revenue, and enhancing brand reputation. Research further highlights that integrating sustainability into financial strategies improves access to capital and lowers operational costs. Despite initial investment challenges and regulatory complexities, companies adopting sustainable practices achieve long-term financial resilience and growth. Firms that balance profitability with environmental responsibility are better positioned to mitigate risks, seize emerging opportunities, and create sustainable value for stakeholders in the evolving energy sector (Shireesha, et al., 2024).

Tiwari and Thakur (2020) investigated the adoption of sustainability innovation practices in hotels and resorts across Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, key tourist destinations in northern India. Using Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory, the study examined data from 120 hotels to assess the extent of adoption and influencing factors. The findings highlight that environmental opinion leadership is the strongest predictor of sustainability innovation adoption. While perceived relative advantage and trialability were influential, their impact was only partially significant, suggesting other factors at play. Additionally, the study introduced a new instrument for measuring sustainability innovations in the Indian hospitality sector. The study examined the impact of natural resource extraction on environmental sustainability in 30 African countries (2004–2021). The study found that while extraction can have short-term benefits, it negatively affects sustainability in the long run, particularly in resource-poor nations. However, strong economic institutions, especially voice and accountability, help mitigate environmental harm by promoting responsible resource management. The findings highlight that governance strength is more crucial than resource availability in ensuring sustainability. Policymakers should prioritize institutional reforms and develop balanced resource management policies to protect the environment while supporting economic growth Manu et al. (2024). This study highlight governance as crucial to environmental sustainability in Nigeria, yet challenges such as weak regulatory enforcement, poor institutional coordination, and low public participation persist. The finding reveals that outdated and unenforceable laws and fragmented policies hinder effective governance. Also, the need for greater stakeholder involvement, identification of corruption and political interference as major obstacles. However, inadequacy of existing governance structures and recommends comprehensive, enforceable environmental policies. Overall, improving institutional coordination, legal frameworks, and public engagement is essential for sustainable environmental governance in Nigeria (Ogunkan, 2024).

Akpa et al. (2022) examined the impact of non-oil exports on Nigeria's GDP from 1990 to 2021 using an ex-post facto design and OLS regression analysis. Drawing from data provided by CBN, NBS, and NEPC, the study found a significant positive relationship between non-oil exports and GDP, with a 29% contribution to economic growth. The authors recommended adopting innovative and sustainable agricultural practices to boost productivity. The study underscores the importance of economic diversification through non-oil exports and highlights the role of NEPC and policymakers in driving sustainable economic growth.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach were adopted to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of NEPC policies in moderating profitability and environmental sustainability. This design combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights, providing a robust framework for understanding both economic and environmental outcomes.

Data Collection

Primary data: Are structured interviews which were conducted with stakeholders, like NEPC officials, environmental advocacy groups, policymakers and of quantitative data from exporters on profitability and sustainability metrics also known as survey as well as interviews and focus groups, where qualitative insights from stakeholders about NEPC policies' implementation challenges and opportunities.

Secondary data: Utilize export performance reports, sustainability indices, and environmental audits from NEPC and related agencies in addition to access to global datasets (like World Bank, UN Comtrade) for benchmarking and comparative analysis.

Sample Size and Selection Criteria/ Techniques and Procedures

A sample of 150 stakeholders were selected, including 80 exporters, 30 NEPC officials, and 40 representatives from environmental and trade organizations. Purposive sampling will be used to ensure representation from key export sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and solid minerals. On quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics will be use to assess the relationships between NEPC policies and key indicators like export growth, profitability, and environmental sustainability.

Statistical Analyses

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Gender	Male	83	55.3	55.3	55.3
	Female	67	44.7	44.7	100.0
Age	18-30 years	49	32.7	32.7	32.7
	31-40 years	42	28.0	28.0	60.7
	41-50 years	40	26.7	26.7	87.3
	51+ years	19	12.7	12.7	100.0
Educational Qualification	Diploma	28	18.7	18.7	18.7
	B.Sc.	63	42.0	42.0	60.7
	M.Sc.	44	29.3	29.3	90.0
	PhD	7	4.7	4.7	94.7
	Others	8	5.3	5.3	100.0
Business Sector	Agriculture	58	38.7	38.7	38.7
	Manufacturing	52	34.7	34.7	73.3
	Services	40	26.7	26.7	100.0
Years in Export Business	0-5 years	56	37.3	37.3	37.3
	6-10 years	46	30.7	30.7	68.0
	11-15 years	37	24.7	24.7	92.7
	16+ years	11	7.3	7.3	100.0
Benefited from NEPC Policy	Yes	89	59.3	59.3	59.3
	No	61	40.7	40.7	100.0

The demographic data shows that 55.3% of respondents are male, while 44.7% are female. Most respondents (32.7%) are aged 18-30, followed by 31-40 years (28%). A majority (42%) hold a B.Sc., and 38.7% are in the agriculture sector. Most businesses have operated for 0-5 years (37.3%). Additionally, 59.3% of respondents have benefited from NEPC policies, while 40.7% have not. This data highlights the diversity in gender, age, education, business sector, experience, and policy impact among exporters in Nigeria.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on how effective are NEPC policies in balancing profitability and environmental sustainability?

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
NEPC policies provide clear guidelines on balancing profitability and sustainability.	150	3.00	1.412
NEPC incentives effectively encourage exporters to adopt sustainable practices.	150	3.03	1.411
The implementation of NEPC policies leads to increased business profitability.	150	2.98	1.398
NEPC regulations create a fair playing field for exporters practicing sustainability.	150	3.08	1.404
NEPC policies align with international environmental standards for exports.	150	3.06	1.370
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

The descriptive data provide a modest view of NEPC policies' profitability-environmental sustainability balance. Neutral or modest agreement is indicated by 5-point mean scores of 2.98 to 3.08. The fairness of NEPC rules is ranked best (M = 3.08, SD = 1.404), while profitability is rated lowest (M = 2.98, SD = 1.398). Standard deviations around 1.4 show respondents' opinions vary. The data imply that NEPC rules offer some direction and incentives, but their efficacy is disputed.

Table 3: Individual responses to how effective are NEPC policies in balancing profitability and environmental sustainability?

Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Total**
NEPC policies provide clear guidelines on balancing profitability and sustainability.	26 (17.3%)	25 (16.7%)	29 (19.3%)	32 (21.3%)	38 (25.3%)	150 (100.0%)
NEPC incentives effectively encourage exporters to adopt sustainable practices.	32 (21.3%)	27 (18.0%)	35 (23.3%)	30 (20.0%)	26 (17.3%)	150 (100.0%)
The implementation of NEPC policies leads to increased business profitability.	24 (16.0%)	33 (22.0%)	30 (20.0%)	34 (22.7%)	29 (19.3%)	150 (100.0%)
NEPC regulations create a fair playing field for exporters practicing sustainability.	26 (17.3%)	29 (19.3%)	35 (23.3%)	34 (22.7%)	26 (17.3%)	150 (100.0%)
NEPC policies align with international environmental standards for exports.	26 (17.3%)	27 (18.0%)	29 (19.3%)	27 (18.0%)	41 (27.3%)	150 (100.0%)

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025

The table shows respondents' views on NEPC's profitability and sustainability initiatives. While 34% disagree, 46.6% agree or strongly agree that NEPC policies give clear guidelines. Only 37.3% think NEPC incentives promote sustainability, while 39.3% disagree. Profitability perspectives are split at 42%–38%. The fairness and worldwide standardization of NEPC laws enjoy modest approval (40% and 45.3%, respectively). These data show mixed opinions on how well NEPC policies balance profitability and sustainability.

Table 4: Cumulative descriptive statistics on how effective are NEPC policies in balancing profitability and environmental sustainability?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How effective are NEPC policies in balancing profitability and environmental sustainability?	150	1	5	3.03	1.399
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025

Survey respondents' views on NEPC policies' profitability-environmental sustainability balance are shown in the table. With a sample size of 150, answers ranged from 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective), averaging 3.03, suggesting moderate efficacy. The standard deviation of 1.399 indicates wide opinion diversity. This suggests that although some respondents found the policies beneficial, others find them less so, indicating the need for policy changes.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on what are the key challenges faced by exporters in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC policies?

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The cost of implementing sustainable practices under NEPC policies is too high.	150	2.96	1.426
There is inadequate access to funding for sustainability initiatives.	150	2.89	1.451
Exporters lack adequate knowledge and training on sustainable business practices.	150	3.02	1.437
NEPC policies on sustainability are difficult to understand and implement.	150	2.96	1.422
Compliance with environmental standards affects profitability negatively.	150	2.91	1.409
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

This table shows exporters' main obstacles to sustainable business practices under NEPC rules. The 150-person sample mean scores range from 2.89 to 3.02 on a 5-point scale, suggesting significant concerns. Lack of knowledge and training (Mean = 3.02, SD = 1.437) is the highest-rated problem, indicating capacity-building needs. High implementation costs (Mean = 2.96) and policy complexity are other issues. The findings show that financial restrictions, knowledge gaps, and regulatory complexity hamper exporters' sustainability efforts.

Table 6: Individual responses on what are the key challenges faced by exporters in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC policies?

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
The cost of implementing sustainable practices under NEPC policies is too high.	25 (16.7%)	39 (26.0%)	24 (16.0%)	34 (22.7%)	28 (18.7%)	150 (100.0%)
There is inadequate access to funding for sustainability initiatives.	25 (16.7%)	33 (22.0%)	26 (17.3%)	27 (18.0%)	39 (26.0%)	150 (100.0%)
Exporters lack adequate knowledge and training on sustainable business practices.	33 (22.0%)	26 (17.3%)	28 (18.7%)	24 (16.0%)	39 (26.0%)	150 (100.0%)
NEPC policies on sustainability are difficult to understand and implement.	31 (20.7%)	25 (16.7%)	32 (21.3%)	36 (24.0%)	26 (17.3%)	150 (100.0%)
Compliance with environmental standards affects profitability negatively.	30 (20.0%)	31 (20.7%)	26 (17.3%)	34 (22.7%)	29 (19.3%)	150 (100.0%)

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025

The table shows exporters' problems implementing sustainable business practices under NEPC rules. The most common difficulties are lack of finance (44% agreement) and knowledge/training (42% agreement), indicating financial and capacity-building limitations. Additionally, 41.4% say high implementation costs are a hindrance. Policy complexity and profitability impact are more fairly split, however 41.3% find compliance financially difficult. These findings suggest exporters need stronger financial assistance, clearer rules, and better training to adopt sustainable businesses.

Table 7: Cumulative descriptive statistics on what are the key challenges faced by exporters in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC policies?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
What are the key challenges faced by exporters in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC policies?	150	1	5	2.95	.841
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025

In the table, respondents discuss the main obstacles exporters face in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC laws. With a sample size of 150, answers range from 1 (least tough) to 5 (most challenging), averaging 2.95, suggesting moderate perceived obstacles. The standard deviation of 0.841 indicates modest response variability. This suggests that problems are not insurmountable, but recurring concerns may require legislative changes to help exporters achieve sustainability.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics on how does the interplay between profitability and sustainability impact export growth in Nigeria?

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sustainable business practices enhance long-term profitability.	150	2.99	1.452
Exporters who balance sustainability and profitability have better market access.	150	3.00	1.378
Environmental compliance improves the reputation and competitiveness of Nigerian exports.	150	3.06	1.397
Profit-driven businesses struggle more with sustainability compliance than others.	150	2.99	1.419
Increased sustainability efforts can expand Nigeria's export market.	150	2.96	1.423
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025

The table shows how profitability and sustainability effect Nigerian export growth. The 150 respondents agreed that sustainability impacts profitability, market access, reputation, and export expansion, with mean scores from 2.96 to 3.06 on a 5-point scale. Opinion diversity is shown by 1.378–1.452 standard deviations. Sustainability boosts long-term profitability and competitiveness, yet profit-driven companies may face regulations. Balance financial incentives and sustainability norms to encourage exports.

Table 9: Individual responses on how does the interplay between profitability and sustainability impact export growth in Nigeria?

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sustainable business practices enhance long-term profitability.	29 (19.3%)	33 (22.0%)	32 (21.3%)	32 (21.3%)	24 (16.0%)	150 (100.0%)
Exporters who balance sustainability and profitability have better market access.	29 (19.3%)	38 (25.3%)	25 (16.7%)	27 (18.0%)	31 (20.7%)	150 (100.0%)
Environmental compliance improves the reputation and competitiveness of Nigerian exports.	34 (22.7%)	30 (20.0%)	31 (20.7%)	23 (15.3%)	32 (21.3%)	150 (100.0%)
Profit-driven businesses struggle more with sustainability compliance than others.	36 (24.0%)	29 (19.3%)	33 (22.0%)	26 (17.3%)	26 (17.3%)	150 (100.0%)
Increased sustainability efforts can expand Nigeria's export market.	31 (20.7%)	31 (20.7%)	25 (16.7%)	34 (22.7%)	29 (19.3%)	150 (100.0%)

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

The table reflects respondents' opinions on Nigeria's export growth's profitability and sustainability. Not all statements agree. Many doubts that sustainable business practices boost profits (37.3%) and exports (42%). Sustainability, market access, and environmental compliance are also disputed. This implies that sustainability is beneficial, but compliance costs and profitability restrictions require supportive policies to help exporters incorporate sustainability without sacrificing financial viability.

Table 10: Cumulative descriptive statistics on how does the interplay between profitability and sustainability impact export growth in Nigeria?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How does the interplay between profitability and sustainability impact export growth in Nigeria?	150	1	5	2.99	1.403
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

The table shows respondents' views on how profitability and sustainability affect Nigerian export growth. With a sample size of 150, responses range from 1 (least influence) to 5 (greatest effect), averaging 2.99, indicating moderate perceived impact. The standard deviation of 1.403 reflects diverse opinions. This implies that while some respondents recognized a strong linkage between profitability, sustainability, and export growth, others did not, emphasizing the need for policies that better align financial and environmental goals for export growth.

Table 11: Descriptive statistics on what policy recommendations can enhance the NEPC's ability to moderate profitability and environmental sustainability?

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
NEPC should provide more financial incentives for sustainable exporters.	150	2.96	1.423
The government should offer tax breaks for businesses adopting eco-friendly export practices.	150	3.06	1.370
NEPC should increase awareness and training on sustainability.	150	2.91	1.409
Collaboration with international bodies can improve the effectiveness of NEPC policies.	150	2.96	1.426
NEPC policies should be regularly reviewed to ensure they meet evolving business and environmental needs.	150	3.03	1.411
Valid N (listwise)	150		

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

This table offers descriptive information about NEPC's profitability and environmental sustainability policy concepts. With 150 samples, all suggestions received moderate support (2.91–3.06 on a 5-point scale). Tax breaks for green businesses are most popular (M = 3.06, SD = 1.370), followed by policy reviews (M = 3.03, SD = 1.411). Standard deviations reflect different perspectives. These data suggest financial incentives, awareness initiatives, and legal reforms might strengthen NEPC's sustainable export promotion.

Table 12: Individual responses on what policy recommendations can enhance the NEPC's ability to moderate profitability and environmental sustainability?

Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Total**
NEPC should provide more financial incentives for sustainable exporters.	40 (26.7%)	32 (21.3%)	28 (18.7%)	21 (14.0%)	29 (19.3%)	150 (100.0%)
The government should offer tax breaks for businesses adopting eco-friendly export practices.	33 (22.0%)	20 (13.3%)	38 (25.3%)	30 (20.0%)	29 (19.3%)	150 (100.0%)
NEPC should increase awareness and training on sustainability.	20 (13.3%)	38 (25.3%)	30 (20.0%)	28 (18.7%)	34 (22.7%)	150 (100.0%)
Collaboration with international bodies can improve the effectiveness of NEPC policies.	37 (24.7%)	26 (17.3%)	31 (20.7%)	32 (21.3%)	24 (16.0%)	150 (100.0%)
NEPC policies should be regularly reviewed to ensure they meet evolving business and environmental needs.	22 (14.7%)	29 (19.3%)	37 (24.7%)	26 (17.3%)	36 (24.0%)	150 (100.0%)

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

Table shows survey respondents' policy proposals to boost NEPC's profitability and sustainability. Sustainable exporter financial incentives were strongly opposed by 26.7% and supported by 19.3%. Tax rebates and sustainability training were neutral (25.3% and 20.0%). International body collaboration was modest (21.3%) and regular policy reviews were most popular (24.0% strongly agreeing). These findings suggest targeted incentives, training, and adaptive policy to balance profitability and sustainability.

Table 13: Cumulative descriptive statistics on what policy recommendations can enhance the NEPC's ability to moderate profitability and environmental sustainability?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
What policy recommendations can enhance the NEPC's ability to moderate profitability and environmental sustainability?	150	1	5	2.98	1.408
Valid N (listwise)	150				

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2025.

The table outlines respondents' NEPC profitability and environmental sustainability policy proposals. From 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective), 150 responses average 2.98, indicating modest policy success. The standard deviation of 1.408 suggests considerable opinion variance. This implies that while some respondents think present rules work, others think more should be done. Policy frameworks and linking environmental goals to profits may increase NEPC's regulatory effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The study on Moderating Profitability and Environmental Sustainability: A Study of Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) Policies highlights critical insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and policy recommendations related to sustainable business practices.

Effectiveness of NEPC Policies

The findings suggest that NEPC policies moderately balance profitability and environmental sustainability, with a mean score of 3.03. This indicates that while some progress has been made, there is room for improvement in policy implementation and effectiveness. The study aligns with Qaiser & Batool (2024), who emphasize that leadership styles such as transformative, paradoxical, and inclusive leadership play a key role in fostering innovation and accountability in sustainability efforts.

Challenges in Adopting Sustainable Business Practices

Exporters face moderate challenges in adopting sustainable business practices under NEPC policies (mean = 2.95). These challenges stem from regulatory complexities, financial constraints, and limited awareness of sustainability benefits. This finding resonates with Manu et al. (2024), who highlight governance weaknesses, including regulatory enforcement issues and institutional inefficiencies, as major barriers to environmental sustainability across African nations. Similarly, Ogunkan (2024) identifies corruption, political interference, and fragmented policies as key obstacles hindering effective governance and sustainability efforts in Nigeria.

Impact of Profitability and Sustainability on Export Growth

The study finds a moderate impact of the interplay between profitability and sustainability on export growth (mean = 2.99). This result is supported by Srivastava (2024), who highlights that multinational corporations (MNCs) integrating sustainability into their corporate strategies achieve competitive advantages. Additionally, Shireesha et al. (2024) emphasize that environmental responsibility enhances financial growth by reducing costs, diversifying revenue sources, and improving brand reputation, particularly in the renewable energy sector.

Policy Recommendations for NEPC

The study suggests that policy recommendations for enhancing NEPC's ability to balance profitability and sustainability have a moderate perceived effectiveness (mean = 2.98). This underscores the need for stronger institutional coordination, stakeholder engagement, and transparent reporting mechanisms. Akpa et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of economic diversification through non-oil exports, advocating for innovative and sustainable agricultural practices to boost productivity and economic growth.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) in moderating profitability and environmental sustainability, highlighting key challenges, policy effectiveness, and the impact on export growth. The findings reveal that while NEPC policies contribute to balancing these objectives, weak regulatory enforcement, financial constraints, and low stakeholder engagement hinder their full effectiveness. Exporters face significant challenges in adopting sustainable business practices, underscoring the need for financial incentives, policy coherence, and leadership-driven sustainability initiatives.

The study emphasizes that transformative, paradoxical, and inclusive leadership approaches can foster innovation, collaboration, and ethical accountability in balancing short-term profitability with long-term sustainability. Additionally, sustainable management strategies, financial support, and institutional coordination play crucial roles in promoting responsible business practices. For NEPC to enhance its effectiveness, strengthening policy implementation, supporting exporters financially, encouraging innovation, and increasing stakeholder participation are essential. A multi-stakeholder approach and commitment to sustainable economic diversification will ensure long-term profitability while minimizing environmental impact. Ultimately, integrating sustainability into Nigeria's export strategies can enhance competitiveness, drive economic growth, and position the country as a leader in sustainable trade practices.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the Nigerian Export Promotion Council's (NEPC) ability to balance profitability and environmental sustainability:

1. NEPC should enhance the enforcement of existing policies and introduce clear, actionable sustainability guidelines for exporters. Regulatory agencies must collaborate to streamline governance structures, ensuring that sustainability standards are well-integrated into export policies (Ogunkan, 2024).
2. The government should introduce financial incentives, such as tax breaks and grants, to support exporters in adopting sustainable business practices. NEPC should facilitate access to green financing and capacity-building programs to reduce exporters' financial constraints in implementing sustainable initiatives.
3. NEPC should adopt transformative and inclusive leadership strategies to drive sustainability initiatives and foster collaboration among stakeholders. Strengthening inter-agency partnerships and establishing sustainability-focused task forces can improve policy coherence and enforcement.
4. Exporters should integrate sustainable business models, such as eco-friendly production and supply chain management, to enhance profitability while minimizing environmental impact. Investments in research and development (R&D) for green innovations should be encouraged, especially in resource-intensive industries.
5. NEPC should enhance awareness programs on the long-term economic benefits of sustainability, targeting exporters, policymakers, and the public. A multi-stakeholder approach, involving exporters, consumers, and environmental organizations, should be adopted to ensure inclusive and effective sustainability policies.

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