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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55272

Title: Trade Liberalization the tool to Promoting Sustainable Economic Growth: A case study of Nigeria (1993 – 2023).

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality	✓			
Clarity	✓			
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bishwajit Rout

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(To be published with the manuscript in the journal)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

- Significance:** This study is significant as it extends trade liberalisation analysis beyond GDP growth to incorporate sustainability-related indicators such as infrastructure, employment, and capital formation. By focusing on Nigeria over three decades, it provides context-specific evidence relevant for policymakers, especially under AfCFTA implementation. The findings inform balanced trade strategies that combine openness with domestic institutional strengthening .
- Strength:** The major strength of the paper lies in its comprehensive econometric framework, combining ADF tests, Johansen cointegration, and VECM analysis over a long time horizon. The integration of control variables such as electricity distribution and capital formation enriches the analysis. Additionally, the policy orientation and strong theoretical grounding enhance its academic and practical relevance.
- Key Insight:** The key insight of this research is that trade liberalisation positively influences Nigeria's long-run economic growth, but its sustainability depends critically on complementary domestic policies. Without effective infrastructure, productive capital formation, and institutional capacity, openness may exacerbate import dependence and structural inefficiencies. Trade liberalisation is therefore necessary but not sufficient for sustainable economic development.

Reviewer's Comment / Report

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The paper titled “*Trade Liberalization the tool to Promoting Sustainable Economic Growth: A case study of Nigeria (1993 – 2023)*” examines trade liberalisation's role in fostering sustainable economic growth in Nigeria (1993–2023) using time-series methods (ADF, Johansen cointegration, VECM) on secondary data. Findings confirm a significant long-run positive relationship with GDP growth, diversification, and employment, but short-run benefits are undermined by inflation, exchange rate instability, and policy inconsistencies. While ambitious and policy-oriented, the study suffers from numerous grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, and occasional overgeneralisation, diminishing its scholarly rigor. Valuable insights nonetheless for complementary reform strategies.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Explicitly articulate the research gap earlier (e.g., sustainability-focused trade liberalisation studies for Nigeria).
2. Reduce descriptive history of WTO/GATT and focus more on Nigeria-specific challenges.
3. Improve logical flow by clearly linking trade liberalisation to sustainability dimensions.
4. Explicitly define what is meant by “sustainable economic growth” in the Nigerian context.
5. Clearly distinguish between global evidence and Nigeria-specific findings.
6. Include more recent empirical studies (post-2020) on trade and sustainability.
7. Include a conceptual framework diagram linking trade liberalisation to growth channels.
8. Provide clearer justification for choosing VECM over ARDL.
9. Explain proxy selection for “sustainable economic growth” more rigorously.
10. Clarify data transformation decisions (log form, scaling).
11. Include a brief discussion of potential endogeneity issues.
12. Address residual issues more explicitly, especially for electricity and exports. Discuss policy trade-offs implied by negative long-run effects.

The paper makes a meaningful contribution by empirically examining trade liberalisation within a sustainability framework for Nigeria using robust econometric techniques. While methodologically sound

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and policy-relevant, the manuscript requires substantial revision in language quality, synthesis of literature, and clarity of interpretation. With focused refinement and improved presentation, the study has strong potential for publication in IJAR. A minor revision is recommended before publication. Addressing the identified weaknesses will make it suitable for publication in IJAR.

I recommend this paper for publication after minor revision.