


2015

# Small and Medium Enterprises' Profitability Elements in Green Energy Transactions

Humphrey Edereka Great  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Humphrey Edereka-Great

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Walden University  
2015

Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises' Profitability Elements in Green Energy Transactions

by

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MBA, Lagos State University, 1997

M. Tech, Rivers State University of Science & Technology, 1987

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2015

## Abstract

As the primary drivers of Nigeria's economy, small and medium scale enterprise (SME) leaders rely on standby generators for sustainable business operation. Because of this reliance, over 56% of the SMEs operate far below capacity from the effects of power shortages. Guided by the strategic contingency theory, this study explored the profitability strategies of business leaders faced with electricity disruptions within Abuja Federal Capital Territory while adopting corporate social responsibility (CSR) and green practices. Data collection was through face-to-face semistructured interviews using open-ended questions. Participants consisted of 12 business leaders selected from 4 SME categories within Abuja that have imbibed CSR and green practices successfully or were in the process of doing so. The data analysis process involved labeling and coding all data that arose from participant interviews using the modified van Kaam method to identify dominant themes. Data coding and analysis led to the identification of 12 predominant meta-themes, including innovativeness for sustainable green business, strategy challenges and how they were addressed, and the power disruption impact on the effectiveness of CSR and organizational profitability. Findings from this study might contribute to new knowledge and success insights for SME business leaders faced with power shortages, CSR shortages, and losses in Abuja. Social change might result as SME business leaders embrace CSR practices with new environmentally friendly tenets, make sustainable profits, employ more people, and dedicate part of the profits to social services to benefit citizens of Abuja and Nigeria.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the gift of life, resources, and opportunity to undertake the DBA Doctoral Degree and to complete the program. I dedicate this work to the Holy Spirit for the gift of wisdom required to meet the demands of the study. I also dedicate this study to my wife and bosom friend, Angela, for the colorful consistency, love, and understanding. Finally, I dedicate this work to my two lovely sons, Tego and Ben, and my two sweet daughters, Jessy and Kirsteen, for their commitment and support needed to complete this program successfully.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizational leaders require strategic and efficient management of scarce resources to survive in the face of myriads of operational challenges that are capable of threatening their enterprise's survival. Government regulations and environmental concerns are contributory features of such challenges. Lemke and Luzio (2014) stressed the overwhelming negative effect of lack of adequate and reliable energy supply on Nigerian businesses and households. Alarape (2014) corroborated that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria were at the receiving end of the struggle for sustainable success in the face of a paucity of the supply of power. Only about 44% of SMEs operated optimally. Notwithstanding the obvious challenges, business organizations are required to adapt corporate social responsibility (CSR) approaches, as well as emergent green practices (GADO & Nmadu, 2012). SMEs often resorted to using fossil-fired generators or captive power sources (CPS) for operational sustainability. This phenomenon eroded profitability, polluted the environment, and influenced climate change by contributing to the depletion of the ozone layer (Oyedepo, Fagbenle, Adefila, & Adavbiele, 2014). Chofreh, Goni, Shaharoun, Ismail, and Klemeš (2014) noted that SME business managers are positioned at the cutting edge of social change towards a healthy environment in Nigeria. Power cuts and related infrastructural deficiency are a negative influence on SME managers (Lemke & Luzio, 2014). SME organizations have the responsibility to contribute towards adherence to green initiatives and clean business practices and in a socially responsible manner. This qualitative descriptive study aimed to

provide a contribution to knowledge for industry leaders to be socially responsible in the pursuit of business profitability.

### **Background of the Problem**

Business leaders of small and medium-size enterprises and micro business (MBs) are in business to secure sustainable success, just as leaders of large corporations do. Holt and Powell (2015) described the European Commission's definition of SMEs as micro (less than 10 employees), small (less than 50 employees), and medium (less than 250 employees) respectively. Furthermore, SMEs are varied in size and type of business. Enterprise sustainability depends on diverse factors, which include strategic management of resources. In a green environment, business leaders use strategic management to explore profit-oriented sustainability with a commitment to CSR practices.

One of the greatest challenges facing business managers in Nigeria is sustainability arising from frequent power outages (Alarape, 2014; Oyedepo et al., 2014). Business leaders responded to the energy crises and strategized for sustainability by acquiring various types of private generators to remain in business (Chofreh et al., 2014). Constrained by financial limitations, SMEs frequently purchased used generators. Used power generators, however, emit harmful fumes into the environment, which adversely affect the ozone layer and depleted business profits (Adaramola, Paul, & Oyewola, 2014; Rayman-Bacchus & He, 2014).

In modern business ethics, environmentally responsible managers adapt to green practices. Chofreh et al. (2014) defined green practices as those that lead to more environmentally friendly and ecologically responsible strategic decisions, which sustain

natural resources and increased profitability. Skouloudis and Evangelinos (2014) revealed that industry managers have used environmental management systems, such as Life Cycle Management (LCM) to reduce the pollution content of their operations successfully.

### **Problem Statement**

Yusuf, Ana, and Umar (2013) noted that due to the acute energy shortage in Nigeria, over 80% of businesses and households rely on standby generators for a sustainable operation. Furthermore, about 56% of SMEs in Nigeria operate far below capacity from the effects of power shortages (Yusuf et al., 2013). A business opportunity exists in strategic management for SME leaders to secure profitability in the face of the weak power infrastructure in Nigeria (Lemke & Luzio, 2014).

The general business problem is that some Nigerian business leaders confronted with frequent power cuts are unable to render services profitably. Incorporating environmentally friendly green practices and CSR in their overall management strategies becomes hindered (Halme & Korpela, 2013). The specific business problem is that SME business leaders who are facing electricity disruptions within Abuja Federal Capital Territory (FCT) lack information on strategies for achieving profitability while engaged in CSR and green business practices.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the strategies that some Nigerian SMEs and MB leaders took when faced with electricity disruptions in achieving profitability while adapting CSR and green practices. The pertinent



information was on how Abuja SME business leaders secured profitability, embraced green environment oriented practices, and integrated CSR practices despite being faced with electricity disruptions. The study contain revelations of the extent to which SMEs and MBs management strategies affected profitability (Capon et al., 2013; Oyedepo et al., 2014).

Data from this study might contribute to new knowledge and insights to improve strategies for the green environment, and CSR-minded SME business leaders who are seeking profitability amidst power interruptions. The research population was comprised of green environment and CSR-minded SME leaders that developed profitability strategies in spite of energy constraints. They have operated businesses within Abuja FCT, a Nigerian geographical location. This population might benefit from the sustainability principles of leaders who have successfully implemented the strategies (Caulfield & Woods, 2013; Liu, Ko, Fan, & Chen, 2012). Social change might occur as SME leaders can make profits, employ more people, and dedicate part of the profits to social services to benefit citizens of Abuja FCT.

### **Nature of the Study**

Runhaar, ten Brinke, Kuijpers, Wesselink, and Mulder (2013) investigated interdependence in research and educational innovation and posited that the character of the study is a brief description of the research method and design. Three research methods could apply to this study; namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. A qualitative research method features different research designs such as phenomenology, case study, descriptive, ethnography, and grounded theory (Myers,

2013). A mixed-method research involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative features in one research study. Under the mixed-method design, a researcher would be required to complete all quantitative, as well as qualitative research processes.

Quantitative methodology in research involves investigating trends, conducting experimental and comparative designs, measuring, variables, and using statistical tools for analyzing the results (Runhaar et al., 2013). The focus of this study was not on trends, and there were no variables to examine; hence, the quantitative methodology was inappropriate for conducting the investigation.

The descriptive qualitative design had some inherent elements that could aid in gathering the information that might be lacking among CSR-minded Nigerian SME organizational leaders facing electricity disruptions within the Abuja FCT. Myers (2013) stipulated that where study designs existed, that they contribute to the meaningfulness of research studies. An ethnography would require dwelling in the participants' world to learn what participants do under the circumstances of the study (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012). Phenomenology would require learning the lived experiences of research subjects. Grounded theory design is an iterative process used in developing theories that explain how cosmopolitan social networks in a population group might pursue their endeavors and customs that guide their livelihood (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014). However, a descriptive study in a learning environment involves investigation of a subject matter that required exposure. Research users and the academic community might thereby receive a new contribution to existing body of knowledge (Congdon, Baker, &

Cheesman, 2013). Therefore, the descriptive qualitative design was more appropriate for this study.

### **Research Question**

The central qualitative descriptive research question was to explore profitability strategies among Nigerian SME leaders within the Abuja FCT. Such leaders must have adopted, or were in the process of adopting, CSR and green practices as a business strategy, in a manner that would facilitate this research. Therefore, the primary research question was what sustainable strategies do Nigerian SME and MB leaders adopt concomitant with CSR and power disruptions within Abuja FCT?

### **Interview Questions**

This qualitative descriptive study involved the use of an interview protocol containing open-ended interview questions to interview research participants in a semistructured interview atmosphere. Only leaders of SMEs in Abuja FCT, who had developed profitability strategies while seeking to adopt or have adopted green environmental practices with CSR initiatives in the face of energy interruption, served as participants. The narrow focus on those leaders that adapt the green energy and CSR solutions were for generating industry-specific results. The questions constituted prompts that created opportunities for follow-up questions. The prompting interview questions were as follows:

1. How did you identify innovative and sustainable green energy strategies for achieving, maintaining, or increasing the profitability of your business?
2. What challenges did you encounter in implementing the strategies?

3. How did you address the associated challenges?
4. What measures have you utilized to assess the success of your business plans and focus?
5. To what extent have your profitability strategies revealed your alignment of sustainability and CSR tenets?
6. How well have your CSR strategies worked in the face of energy disruptions?
7. What has the leadership of your SME did differently to secure competitive business success in the area of Green Practices and CSR in comparison with other Abuja-based SMEs?
8. What effects did electricity disruptions have on your organization's commitment to the continued implementation of your CSR strategies?
9. What creative ways (if any) did you deploy the strategies to convert energy interruptions to enabling environments for organizational profitability?
10. In assessing your organization, would you say that embracing green and CSR practices resulted in the loss of profitability or otherwise?
11. What gave you the courage to make decisions that assured profitability while remaining eco-friendly in the face of disrupted electricity?
12. From your experience, what possible effects could green environment practices have on SMEs seeking business profits through transactions?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Fielder's (1964) strategic contingency theory (SCT) contained stipulations that leadership effectiveness depended on environmental factors to which the organization

was subjected. The SCT theory formed the conceptual framework for this study. Dinh et al. (2014) supported SCT and noted that leadership style had no universal application; rather, each leader must understand the environment and take strategic steps to secure sustainable success. The SCT model provided a roadmap for future research into daily SME operations to improve corporate social performance and financial sustainability (Klotz, Hmieleski, Bradley & Busenitz, 2014). Fielder's (1964) SCT theory envisioned the forces at play in leaders' organizational domain of operation and that an organization whose leaders did not consider the environment had indirectly embraced the route to potential business failure.

Maas, Schuster, and Hartmann (2014) expounded on pollution prevention and service stewardship strategies and noted that environmental communication played a moderating role in firm differentiation. Mass et al. (2014) therefore stressed the capacity and integrity of the SCT theory that further reinforced Fielder's (1964) postulation. Leaders whose business decisions resulted in minimization of environmental degradation contributed to a healthy society in a socially responsible manner. Such leaders create a balance between responding to environmental challenges and securing enterprise profitability (Maas et al., 2014).

The SCT was applied to this study of SMEs profitability because leaders devised contingency plans to secure ultimate success while stimulating consumer responsiveness to their products, and performance (Wei, Samiee, & Lee, 2014). The relationship between SCT theory and this study hinged on the understanding of SME functionalities, that the changes in business environments required proactive management strategies.

## Definition of Terms

Below is a review of operational definitions of terms in this study:

*Captive power source:* A private power generating plant or energy modeling scheme (Callou, Ferreira, Maciel, Tutsch, & Souza, 2014).

*Environmental footprint:* The collective effects of an organization, community, or society on the natural environment. Measurable attributes include greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and resource use (McMichael, 2013).

*Environmental management system (EMS):* The alignment of strategic practices within an organization that considers environmental issues, performance metrics, as well as health and safety matters (Semenova & Hassel, 2014).

*Going green:* These are activities and transactions that consider how their effects would alter the environment; actions that focus on ecological restoration and ways of reducing adverse impact on the activities environment. They also find ways of ensuring environment-friendly natural setting that is healthy for human habitation, business success, and sustainability (Kettenring, Mercer, Reinhardt-Adams & Hines, 2014).

*Greenwashing:* A form of public relations activity in which green marketing could become a tool for deceptive use. Business leaders use it to promote the perception that an organization's products, aims, and policies are environmentally friendly. Lemke and Luzio (2014) confirmed that greenwashing becomes visible when significantly more money or time is spent advertising being *green* (that is, operating under consideration for the environment) than on green practices itself. Although greenwashing is not new, its

use has increased over recent years to meet consumer demand for environmentally friendly goods and services (Lemke & Luzio, 2014).

*Life cycle analysis (LCA)*: A cradle-to-grave approach for assessing systems in a holistic manner. The approach allows an overall view of the environmental aspects of a product or process. The aim is to control perceived organizational support toward the environment in the process of creating a sustainable world (Lamm, Tosti-Kharas & King, 2014; Senge, 2008). The result is a realistic perspective of the environmental trade-offs involved in the selected product or process (Santillán-Soto, Garcia-Cueto, Ojeda-Benítez & Lambert-Arista, 2014).

*Meta-themes*: These are a higher order or high-level subject matter under consideration, a major thought, or idea or topic of discussion (Randall & Bewick, 2015).

*Micro-business*: This term refers to an SME family business with 10 or fewer workers (Jayaram, Dixit, & Motwani, 2014).

*SME CSR stakeholders*: An individual or organization whose activities closely relate to CSR-oriented SMEs. They are rules of organization for stakeholders and business leaders for managing CSR matters and business ethics, especially in state-owned enterprises (Rodríguez-Bolívar, Garde-Sánchez & López-Hernández, 2014)

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

An assumption is a fact that seems to be true without actual verification, and the conjecture of a notion that lacks authenticity (Semenova & Hassel, 2014). I assumed in this study that data collection from SMEs shall occur promptly. I also assumed that the

data would be valid, reliable, and measurable, and that the level of honesty of participants' responses would be a determinant factor for the reliability of data and study findings. All replies from each SME operator appeared to be an accurate reflection of participants' experience and I assumed that all the members would understand the nature of the study. I also assumed the use of a minimum of 12 participants would provide me with all the necessary information required to understand the phenomenon of SMEs sustainability elements that generate profit with CSR practices in green energy transaction in Nigeria.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study refer to elements of the research with some potential weaknesses that could affect the study. These were problems areas of this study on SMEs profitability elements for business managers who embrace CSR practices (Stewart & Gapp, 2014). The effect of insecurity, corrupt tendencies, and other environmental challenges that could influence the research process were not in consideration. The Abuja area, which constituted the FCT, was the focus of the study. Limiting the number of participants to 12 in the FCT imposed a constraint ameliorated by the increased number of interviewees until the point of data saturation was reached in the interview process.

Another limitation was that findings from participants' data in Abuja might not mirror other areas of SME business operations in Nigeria because the economic situation in one area might not be reflective of another. The scope of the study had limitations within the frame of a population of SMEs in Abuja in the FCT of Nigeria. Although I expected honest responses, ensuring that all participants provided truthful answers was



beyond the researcher's control. This limitation pertained to the assumption that participants offered truthful answers.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations constitute the borders within which the study efforts must domicile. A researcher makes the determination of delimitations before commencing the study (Ndu & Agbonifoh, 2014; Semenova & Hassel, 2014). The reason this is done is so that readers and research users may know to interpret the findings within the context of such boundaries. Therefore, the bounds of the study constitute SME and MB business leaders invited to face-to-face interviews were those who had developed or were developing strategies for supporting CSR and green initiatives along with solving energy outage problems. Only leaders who possessed experience as SME owners, with businesses operated within Abuja FCT geographical space, qualified for participation and interview. Business owners who lacked captive power generation experience did not participate. Furthermore, all the research process occurred within two weeks. These parameters were in line with Walden University's doctoral study guidelines that placed a limit on the overall magnitude of the research. The study of business profitability among SMEs whose leaders focused on CSR and green practices in Nigeria was relatively new, thereby affecting the amount of available information on the subject (Ndu & Agbonifoh, 2014).

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Value of Study to Business**

The compelling justification for this study was the business knowledge gap that the findings might fill. The contributions could include providing leaders with

information on business profitability, required to grow businesses as well as engender ethical business practices. Stewart and Gapp (2014) noted that there was a lack of adequate information and a gap in leaders' understanding of green environment strategies required for business profitability.

Power failures, as well as other factors, have negatively impacted SME business profitability in the Abuja FCT to an incalculable measure. Consequently, the gap in effective business strategies and practice was noticeable in the nonapplication of social responsibility initiatives that simultaneously supported profitability as well as prevention of environmental pollution in Abuja FCT. Such knowledge was critical to success for organizational leadership planning for the sustainability of their enterprises in Nigeria.

#### **Contribution to Effective Business Practice**

Included in this study was the potential to aid SME organization leaders to adapt green practices that contribute to profitability and business sustainability strategies. Therefore, SME leaders could take advantage of environmental programs that benefited their shareholders to demonstrate their adoption of international best practices. The additional potential benefit was an improvement in earnings per share. Support for operators of green organizations in the Abuja FCT in healthy development programs contributed to social change (Garcia, Rodrigues, Gibbon, Bernaudat, & Omedo, 2013; Garzella & Fiorentino, 2014). The resultant improved revenue among SMEs in the green environment practitioners of Nigerian economy might bolster the national economy and also create a business-friendly Abuja.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Findings from this study included securing SMEs business profitability and sustainability through strategic management practices that promoted the creation of social impact. Other consequences of social change included a quiet business district of Abuja FCT and elimination of fume-producing generators dotting the district, which were harmful to humans and the environment. Implementing the findings and recommendations might eliminate contingent environmental hazards such as the impact of biodiesel fuels from engine exhaust systems and noise emissions (Rizwanul-Fattah et al., 2013).

Included in the results from this study are a contribution to positive social change and an improvement of business practices. This study served as an avenue to address the use of generators by well-to-do SMEs who can afford to invest in renewable and environmentally friendly alternative sources of energy, such solar power with electric infrastructure. The practice of using generators as the primary sources of power in business is detrimental to the environment and psychologically defeated other entities that could not. It further resulted in providing uncompetitive products because of the high costs of acquiring and operating generators and meeting CSR expectations (Rahim & Wisuttisak, 2013).

Lack of product competitiveness resulted in business failure, job losses, and unemployment, which is the recipe for insecurity. Business leaders were often less proactive in implementing environmentally friendly CSR practices. Hence, they could not give voluntary disclosure of climate change information because of the possible erosion

of profitability (Ben-Amar & McIlkenny, 2014). This study contained elements for bridging the knowledge gap, increasing profits, and contributing to social change.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore SME green and sustainable success strategies. Some Nigerian SME leaders when faced with electricity disruptions within Abuja FCT, achieved profitability despite being committed to CSR. I investigated the effect of sustainable practices on SME business profitability.

#### **Sources**

My literature search involved peer-reviewed articles focused on my research question. Other sources included government publications, books, and articles that are not peer-reviewed, but were critical to an understanding of the subject of this research.

Table 1

#### *Reference Tracker*

Titles	Recent	Older than five years	Total	% Percentage of Each Source Type
	References (within last five years from anticipated graduation)	References		
Books	5	2	7	71%
Dissertations	1	0	1	100%
Peer-Reviewed Articles	146	0	146	100%
Web Pages	0	0	0	0
Other Sources	2	2	4	50%
Total	154	5	158	97%
PEER REVIEWED				93%

Table 1 contains the distribution of sources to achieve the 85% rule and the 5-year rule. Sources supporting the study were of a status in the business environment related to the topic of this study. *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* was a useful tool that allowed me to confirm the peer-review position of articles. Articles that did not contribute critical knowledge are absent from this study. This strategy was to keep the research as current as possible.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Fielder's (1964) SCT contained stipulations that leadership effectiveness depended on environmental factors to which an organization was subject. Fielder's SCT aptly circumscribed the situation in which SME leaders found themselves. The issue of captive power plants revealed the strategic contingency in solving energy outages and power disruptions. Parry (2012) showed that SME leaders' inclusion of profit-orientation galvanized the evolution of MB environmental practices. Hence, the SMEs segment of the economy created a long-term impact on socially responsible organizational behavior.

Therefore, understanding the subject of this research required a foundational appreciation of Parry's (2012) consideration of profitability. Conversely, Caulfield and Woods (2013) underscored the strategic importance and urgent need for profits for sustaining CSR objectives. Dinh et al. (2014) supported SCT and noted that leadership style had no universal application; rather, each leader must understand the environment and take strategic steps to secure sustainable success.

Environmental changes that arose from the Abuja FCT energy generators might be negligible in the broad sense of environmental degradation. However, Dinh et al.'s

(2014) observations corroborated Pinkse and Groot's (2013) blunt notation. Pinkse and Groot (2013) confirmed that most top executives of large corporations could be familiar with the green phenomenon and the benefits accruable for its implementation. The same assertion could not apply to SMEs by reason of knowledge limitation and poor financial resources needed for capacity development. therefore, a market barrier occurred.

Fielder's proposition would warrant a re-engineering of CSR, based on SCT and CSR initiatives, and must stretch beyond securing environmental sustainability awareness. As a consequence, businesses finance was subject to increased pressure (Cheng, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014). Contained in SCT model are provisions for fulfilling environment-friendly initiatives to aid managers developing and deploying CSR practices at strategic levels. SCT also incorporated a roadmap for future research into daily SME operations for improving corporate social performance and financial sustainability (Klotz et al., 2014).

Seinfeld and Pandis (2012) noted that the practice of CSR concerning environmental pollution has proven less useful than it could be, on both urban and regional scales. Hence, knowledge management and skill set requirements for SMEs has to be in alignment. This paradigm would be clearer from the lenses of cultural diversity and strategic management of SMEs. Culture is describable as a social construct with three levels: artifacts and behavior, values and beliefs, and their underlying assumptions. Adapting these constructs are some of the known the drivers that could operationalize SMEs' strategic leadership thinking (Goldman, 2012; Wei et al., 2014).

Many a time, the challenging economic conditions in many parts of the world prompted mass migration which ultimately further compounded the status quo. Therefore, SME profitability and sustainability strategy required corporate understanding that CSR is at the intersection of entrepreneurialism, business management, and business citizenship (Creed & Zutshi, 2013). Corporate leaders could achieve greener organizations if the corporations they lead followed standards aligning with related activities in environment-conscious economies (Oyedepo et al., 2014). Such economies thrived where the postulations of Fielder's SCT circumscribed the operations of SMEs. Consequently, leadership requirements hinged on the role of SMEs boards, whose compositions reflected the minds of strategists who saw the urgent need to succeed under CSR initiatives. Bakare (2012) noted that SMEs are the majority players in such economies.

### **Captive Power Plants**

This research might yield relevant information to business practitioners on CSR practices in a pollution ridden economic environment and specifically on the impact of SMEs' sustainable management strategy on profitability. Ibrahim, Jamali, and Karatas-Ozkan (2012) noted that power-related challenges negatively influenced SMEs ability to adapt CSR practices in Nigeria. Liu et al. (2012) corroborated this information and explained that the use of strategic LCM and greener energy sources worked well with a careful captive power plant selection by SME managers. Correct application of LCM by SME leaders ultimately reduced industrial pollution in the process of rendering business services in an environmentally responsible manner. Accessing information that might

already be available to business leaders helped to secure business change and adaptation to greener practices that have become a primary focus in the evolving economic paradigm (Banks, 2013). Sustainable practices that could guarantee profitability along with green practices were the major constituent factors.

The idea of sustainability in the Abuja energy business was to contribute to global objectives of reducing ozone layer depletion and environmental degradation. Research has demonstrated that green practices minimized pollution trends on the environment without unduly affecting the survival of SME businesses (Parry, 2012). Orienting business managers toward the care of their operating environment was a critical requirement and the search for sustainability through business profitability among SMEs has continued. Gado and Nmadu (2012) examined the role of infrastructure as an essential resource for survival in the case of textile firms that Caulfield and Woods (2013) corroborated. Liu et al. (2012) were more authoritative on this subject than other researchers were, and noted that in Nigeria, SMEs predominantly provide alternative energy supply through CPS. Such reliance on stopgap energy solutions resulted in severe environmental pollution (Caulfield & Woods, 2013; Ibrahim et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2012; Parry, 2012).

The predominant use of CPS to provide alternative energy supply by Nigerian SMEs is unfortunate, being an important source of environmental degradation. Observations showed that power cuts were prevalent in the Abuja FCT neighborhood satellite towns such as Suleja, Nyanya, Karu, Kubwa, and Gwagwalada. The business districts of Wuse Zones, Gwarimpa, Kado Estate, Life Camp, Garki, and Apo, faced the



same problems. Adegboye and Dawal (2012) investigated power system integrity and warned that the phenomenon could apply to Nigeria as a whole. The reason being that the enormity and frequency of power outages and their environmental hazard has impacted all the major cities (Mbamali, Stanley, & Zubairu, 2012).

### **Environmental Changes**

Judging by SMEs leaders' practices in the captive energy business, business innovation within the environmental sector of Abuja has gained new heights. . The SMEs have also become increasingly popular within the FCT and beyond. The activities of the SMEs aligned with some scholarly propositions that lead to success and profitability in the energy and environmental business areas (Parry, 2012). Banks (2013) stated that organizational leaders with responsive CSR programs and focused green practices inspired holistic perspectives of environmental effects of processes, products, or services. Such corporate leaders consequently facilitated the creation of a clear image of how SME managers might assess the environmental trade-offs of their decisions. Amran, Lee, and Devi (2014) labeled the economics of CSR as the voluntary integration of environmental, social, and governance factors in firms' strategies. Amran et al. (2014) reviewed the theoretical and empirical literature and provided a unified framework of the forces that drive business profitability. The driving forces were market imperfections of (a) the existence of externalities and public good, (b) consumer heterogeneity, and (c) imperfect contracts.

The impact of sustainable management strategy on corporate performance also underwent a survey process; the lack of knowledge of the latter has led to various

research agendas. Pat-Mbano and Alaka (2012) investigated the phenomenon and conveyed that the issues of climate change reduction were merely a mirage in Nigeria. Pinkse and Groot (2013) claimed further that SME survival might so often face challenges arising from limited resources, hence implementing profitable environment-friendly and socially responsible business initiatives continued to elude the SMEs.

While writing on the impact of CSR practices in the mobile telecommunications industry in Nigeria, Osemene (2012) underscored the adverse effects visible within the environment. The littering in the urban cities and every telecom node with a diesel generator has characterized the environment. Pat-Mbano and Alaka (2012) harped on climate change difficulties in Nigeria and noted that the way and manner in which large corporations benefitted from accruable benefits of CSR was inapplicable to the situation of SMEs. Therefore, Osemene's (2012) attention to the adverse effects of environment on business profitability conveyed the connection with Pat-Mbano and Alaka (2012), as well as Pinkse and Groot (2013).

Discerning organizations would want to secure sustainable success by devising ethical doctrines that guarantee public happiness. Focusing on sustainable management strategies, Hommes (2014) conducted a study on the time element of problem-based learning using collaborative health education. Through that study, Hommes revealed findings of business capability and organization's strategies to provide greater good to a larger number of people in its operational domain. Hommes contended that sustainable management strategies included the capabilities approach and utilitarianism. The issues

involved were related to the anthropological perspectives underpinning both theories of CSR.

Managers of smaller organizations exhibit a growing inertia towards a paradigm shift to green practices due to cost-benefits ratios. This position has been corroborated by other scholars (Ikoh & Ukpong, 2013; Lewis, Cassells, & Roxas, 2014; Subedi et al., 2014). In an earlier investigation of this phenomenon, Boaventura, Silva, and Bandeira-de-Mello (2012) revealed that organizational size explained the difference in the leaders' motivation to create and launch initiatives of green practices. Lewis et al. (2014) and Subedi et al. (2014) added that SMEs lack knowledge or information surrounding green practices, apart from adequate financial and human resources. The initiatives were the challenges to business profitability with particular attention to energy and the environment in Abuja FCT. Therefore, in this study, bringing to the fore the adverse effects of SME operational practices on the environment due to the increasing use of CPS naturally attracted my interest. Being a developing economy also made the study appropriate to developmental efforts in Nigeria, and possibly to other developing economies.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility in SMEs**

Literature about CSR also constituted a part of the overall information on the linkages of social responsibility and profitability. The specific target was the strategic integration of best practices in a greener Nigerian business environment. The effects of organization size on CSR activities were also of importance. Above all, profiting from green transactions constituted a significant direction in the inquiry. On corporate

governance, Renouard and Lado (2012) investigated the environmental profile of the Niger Delta and noted that CSR has a strategic connection with the political, social, and cultural ramifications in different countries. Therefore, in the Nigerian context, I considered those relationships and their countrywide effects as well as on SMEs operating in and around the FCT of Abuja. Leaders of successful multinational corporations reposition operations in consideration of organizational roles in society. A case in point was the pollution that existed in parts of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, which attracted international condemnation (Ikoh & Ukpong, 2013).

Administrative failure and community-related restiveness resulted from a lack of strategic business management among SMEs. Abugre (2014) drew empirical lessons from Ghana and assured practitioners that the practice of CSR in the oil producing areas in particular within Nigeria resulted in a mixed reaction from the beneficiary communities. The oil producing communities suspected injustices in the administration of CSR projects and benefits. Ikoh and Ukpong (2013) added that environmentally unfriendly business strategies were prevalent, arising from corrupt tendencies on the part of community leaders, on the one hand, and corrupt administrators, on the contrary. The absence of SME strategies have caused acute youth restiveness and insecurity in the oil-producing Niger Delta region in particular (Ikoh & Ukpong, 2013). CSR practices have not appealed much to SMEs and large corporations in Nigeria. Business entities are mainly interested in maximizing sustainability and profit. Ibrahim et al. (2012) harped on this subject, presenting the matter as a direct result of unpredictable social, political, and economic elements of the business environment.

**SMEs environmental management practices and CSR.** An adequate information gap exists in literature focusing on efficient green practice with both small and large corporations. Going further, the potential application of LCM by SME businesses to secure compliance with international ecological requirements has undergone investigation (Boaventura et al., 2012). Business considerations about the organic phenomenon in captive power selection in Nigeria have not enjoyed a similar inquiry, primarily because the development of the financial market is limited (Gado & Nmadu, 2012). The literature gap in adoption of green practices in Nigeria is evident (Niroomand, Hajilee, & Al Nasser, 2014). A visible characteristic of high growth SME firms in Nigeria, and indeed the emerging economies, is that of contributing to environmental pollution hazards. The minimum inherent involvement of SMEs in green activities or CSR best practices has rendered SMEs wanting.

A relationship exists between lean manufacturing practices, LCM strategies, and environmental and social responsibility. In a related investigation on business performance, Roh, Hong, and Min (2014) postulated that prior lean manufacturing experiences positively relate to environmental management practices in the global supply chain. Environmental management practices alone can have a negative relationship with market and financial performance. Conversely, improved environmental performance substantially reduces the adverse impact of environmental management practices on market and economic performance. When generalized, environmental management practices could become significant mediating variables to resolve the conflicts between lean manufacturing and environmental performance (Banks, 2013; Roh et al., 2014).

While the debate goes on, scholars have sought understanding of how practitioners quantified the gains from a healthy environment in contrast with business profitability.

### **Knowledge Management and Skill Set**

The knowledge and skill available to an organization's leader affect the organization's sustainability positively or otherwise. Alegre, Sengupta, and Lapiedra (2013) learned that lack of leadership skills has always also been a major hindrance to SMEs development and overall performance. Alegre et al. (2013) conceptualized knowledge management (KM) as a set of practices and dynamic capabilities. Alegre et al. (2013) hypothesized that KM dynamic capabilities act as mediating variables between KM practices and innovation performance. Research studies on small firms had consistently confirmed that when owners of the Firm lack financial skills and resources, a significant impediment to business success occurred (Carragher & Van Auken, 2013; Nwosu, 2007a).

SME leaders require competency in transformational leadership, financial decision-making skills, and delegation (Carragher & Van Auken, 2013). These were antecedent competencies for success in the face of infrastructural deficiencies such as power interruptions and other forms business challenges. Lack of consensus exists in the literature regarding the risk-taking capacities of SMEs for competitive success. Vila, Fornoni, and Palacios (2013) noted that the gap emanating from social, capital, financial and human resources have pushed the green agenda further away from becoming a reality. SME leaders are probably also unwilling or unable to curtail the anti-green agenda trends primarily because of possible impact, such as erosion of profitability.

Abdulraheem and Muammed (2014) identified a link between corporate governance and the cost of higher education in Nigeria. The bane of the small business owners in adopting sustainable environment-friendly practices is that there has existed a dearth of information on financial resources for capacity development.

Historically, the study of urban air pollution and its effects occurred more or less separately, and examining relationship between the two was beyond the scope of this research study (Kilian & Hennigs, 2014). The primary geographical location for this study was Abuja FCT. Here, the need for green practices and pollution control assumed some significance. However, a reference to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is necessary as an indication of the environmental pollution level that has taken on a crescendo, thereby ravaging the region and raising international concerns. Business leaders should learn the essence of maximizing business returns from sustainable management strategies and with responsibility for the environment (Kilian & Hennigs, 2014). Conceptually, through such best practices, CSR communication could lead to business returns maximization. In practical terms, however, supplier assessment was often a function of sustainable management strategy criteria in industries, such as automotive and textile industry sectors (Baskaran et al., 2012).

Theyel (2013) in a survey investigated 293 small and medium-sized US manufacturing companies in an empirical research. The results suggested a broad use of open innovation practices with customers and suppliers throughout the firm's value chain. Overall, Theyel contributed to the understanding of open innovation as an effect of

SME strategic business management process, beyond its traditional research and development focus.

### **Cultural Diversity and Strategic Management of SMEs**

Cultural differences have an influence on the process and management of a business. Success or failure of an organization can depend on how organizations address business matters (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). Certain management techniques may have constituted a part of the success factors in the social environment of the United States. However, some of the techniques could spell doom for businesses in Europe or Asia seeking to apply such techniques wholesale. Business leaders in Europe or Asian can nonetheless consider adapting those techniques to their prevailing cultures. SMEs in Nigeria might learn from such adaptations, in the sense that variations in social and institutional antecedents among organizational stakeholders could result in extra costs. For instance, large construction and engineering projects require emergent virtual leadership competencies on team effectiveness to secure success in a socially responsible manner (Ziek & Smulowitz, 2014).

**Cultural differences and risk on SMEs.** Cultural differences have become more perceivable, and at the same time, national borders have become less relevant. Hence, economic systems were increasingly dependent on each other. Concepts about culture did not help in understanding the differences and effects in practice. Despite prior efforts in project management discipline, a variety of ideas, and lack of practical solutions mitigated the innovation potential of cultural diversity (Sabah, Carsrud, & Kocak, 2014).



Business members, managers, and executives find themselves dealing with colleagues and customers, who grew up, often in cultures other than theirs (Eisenberg, Hartel, & Stahl, 2013). These vagaries are responsible, in many ways, for the emergence of a business functionary who speaks a different language. PM is a product of the intense globalization of companies and societies over several decades. The appearance of a new world necessitates abandoning the parochial one-size-fits-all assumption in management practices and SMEs incorporated at the downstream of the supply chain. Cross-cultural business operators acknowledged culture as a factor that shaped social interactions and behaviors. Culture also motivated and affected attitudes, feelings, and actions at the workplace (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

**The role of culture in SME deployment of CSR.** Azmat and Zutshi (2012) demonstrated from the experience in Sri Lanka, the parallel in the existence of the significant influence of home-country culture and regulatory environment on CSR perceptions. Unfortunately, the pollution generated by industry operators is massive to the extent that social responsibility advocates regard CSR intervention as grossly inadequate in the case of textile industries (Baskaran et al., 2012). Consequently, the contents of this study could serve as contributions to the growing body of literature on the role of culture on business leaders in the successful deployment of CSR strategies in securing sustainable success.

The implementation of socially responsible business practice occupies a critical niche in the SMEs evolution process. Securing profitability in a greener environment through the strategic management of profitable SMEs constitutes a significant

contribution to best practices. When national borders become less relevant and economic systems more dependent on each other, the social differences tend to become more perceivable. Zilber (2014) deduced that cultural research has its origins in anthropology, whereas most traditional methods of studying culture relied on ethnography. Successful project implementation cannot readily emerge in a cultural environment other than through ethnography due to challenges and opportunities associated with field activities (Sabah et al., 2014).

An explorable gap has existed in the literature between culture and SME business managers' responses to the environment. The impact of cultural diversity on SMEs was visible in various spheres of human and organizational life: national, political, regional, and industrial circles. Goldman (2012) drew attention to the impact of cultural affiliations on approaches to professional and functional project management. Excellent organizational leadership practices must embrace strategic business thinking and cultural relevance. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) theorized that when company operators have the ability to conduct company activities globally; the customer could receive products and services faster and with improved quality. However, a significant part of the engineering industry such as energy has faced serious social and environmental challenges when the leaders act globally. Leaders of multinational businesses in Nigeria withdrew their services on several occasions, arising from socio-cultural and environmental challenges, as well as face-offs from pollution, energy and poverty-related conflicts (Ikoh & Ukpong, 2013).

### **SMEs Commitment to Adoption of CSR Strategy**

Battaglia, Testa, Bianchi, Iraldo, and Frey (2014) investigated commitments that SMEs make towards social responsibility within their operational environments.

Considering the strategic contribution of SMEs as well as the greater recognition of the role SMEs played in the European economy, Battaglia et al. (2014) provided insight into SME CSR practices. Battaglia et al. surveyed a large sample of SMEs in Portugal to assess CSR practices at social, economic, and environmental levels and noted SME motivation, perceived benefits, and existing obstacles as drivers. Battaglia et al. (2014) explained that as opposed to the focus of leaders of big business, leaders of SMEs focused CSR efforts inwards. This internal focus resulted from attention to the potential benefits. The benefits accrue to companies from (a) gains in eco-efficiency, (b) a better social climate, or (c) a higher profile in the local community.

Observation revealed that leaders of different business organizations survived by emphasizing the adoption of simple, readily applicable, and cheap measures. Creed and Zutshi (2013) examined SMEs strategies on this subject and the result of the integration of learning on continuous improvement, as well as application of innovation theories, and emerging interdisciplinary literature. Creed and Zutshi concluded that the challenge was in the ability to indicate how continuous innovativeness can mesh with green practices to secure sustainable success, especially for SMEs, as a motivation for best practices.

**CSR and environmental responsibility.** CSR and environmental responsibility affect the motives and pressures by SMEs to adopt green management practices.

Battaglia et al. (2014) observed that when motives and forces characterized the

atmosphere in which SME executives operated, organizational failure became inevitable. Environment management initiatives vary between business success and failure modes. Motives, pressures, success, and failure uncertainties, with environmental management efforts, roles, and responsibilities, affect leaders who adopt specific practices in emerging business situations. Dogl and Behnam (2014) also noted on this subject that environmentally responsible practices usually fell within the frames of the umbrella of CSR strategy. These considerations are the causal drivers of environmental performance. In particular, Trendafilova and Babiak (2013) investigated professional sports team and league executives who showed both strategic and legitimacy motives and found that those moves encouraged practitioners to adopt environmental management practices. SME leaders with green practices integrate sustainable profitability elements while executing control. Leaders of corporations mostly pursued profits within the borders of developing countries (Capon et al., 2013; Oyedepo et al., 2014).

Over the years, scholars such as Peiró-Signes, M. de Miguel-Molina, and B. de Miguel-Molina (2013) have studied eco-innovation aspects and understood the defining characteristics of companies whose leaders ascribed high priority to the environment. Such companies innovated in designing sustainable business strategies that lead to profitability. Peiró-Signes et al. (2013) study focused on manufacturing concerns or industries. While this may hold true for the developing and emerging economies, leaders of developed nations are fundamentally reliant on the service industry economic model.

### **Business Ethics and Firm's Profitability**

Peiró-Signes et al. (2013) assessed the similarities and differences between four groups of service and manufacturing industries. They included: (a) knowledge manufacturing, (b) operational manufacturing, (c) knowledge service, and (d) operational service. Peiró-Signes et al. (2013) results showed that environmental and economic variables affecting the eco-innovative orientations of firms are similar, with only minor differences. This finding has constituted a resource for public policymakers to consider in planning actions and profitability of the company based on the level of deployment of CSR.

Policymakers may also strengthen environmental campaigns proactively while innovating in consonance with industry characteristics. Garay and Font (2012) carried out a survey on about 400 enterprises. The survey responses contained what could constitute the primary reason for adapting CSR practices as altruistic and competitive. Issues of corporate profitability received validation from the positive impact of environmental cost-savings in financial performance; hence, a sustained implementation of CSR practices is necessary to achieve the full potential of competitive advantages.

Parry (2012) also examined the process drivers that affect MBs' desire to go green, building upon previous researchers containing different drivers of the process. Apart from specific drivers, Parry (2012) articulated the development of environmental practices in the past, and used a comparative qualitative descriptive study of six MBs to build a composite sequence analysis. The study contained a plotting of the greening process from its roots through to large-scale and ambitious environmental projects. Parry

(2012) discovered that appropriate support was often lacking at certain key points of the business of green development. This lack of support often occurred while an entity pursued an understanding of small business environmental responsibility.

Business related activities and drivers change with the level of engagement; therefore, CSR and profitability pointers pertain to improvement in SME business support. Jordan, Lemken, and Liedtke (2014) investigated the 2009 declaration on green business and green growth strategy about business innovation and confirmed the usefulness of the change process. Environmental and business performance outcomes and financial performance require individual success indicators. Adaramola et al. (2014) suggested that matching the relative cost of hybrid energy systems and their environmental effects from the use of diesel electricity generators revealed that CSR costs significantly affect profitability. Incidentally, the SME leaders within the green energy sector of Nigerian economy showed a growing financial commitment to CSR in the Abuja FCT area (Adaramola et al., 2014). Firms readily embraced the need to measure environmental performance in terms of impact on business performance, profitability, and business sustainability for practical implementation of environmental management strategies. However, environmental management practices have negative relatedness to business performance.

**SMEs' perceptions of business ethics and CSR.** Small-business owner-managers' perceptions of business ethics and CSR-related ideas have a growing overlap and vagueness in the research community. This viewpoint of SME business leaders is in conflict with the perspectives of academicians. Lund-Thomsen, Lindgreen, and

Vanhamme (2014) expressed that small business owner-managers seeking compliance have the ability to form the corporate culture and to enact values other than profit. By adopting a cognitive perspective, Lund-Thomsen et al. (2014) identified how the small business owner-manager makes sense of notions linking sustainable management approach, CSR, and business ethics. Wickert and Schaefer (2014) studied the imperialist nature of SMEs in CSR practices and noted that economic growth challenges have largely drowned the voices of local manufacturers in the developing world. This problem affected academic and policy debates, thereby increasing the information gap in the literature and introduced another change management dimension amongst SMEs.

The mission of securing a sustainable approach for SME extractive industries has appeared impossible. A questionable measure of commitment by business leaders to CSR became critical to sustainable management strategy in terms of actual implementation of measures that affect profitability (Esau & Malone, 2013). The challenges consisted of costs and benefits, project and technology selection, respect for community consent, and performance incentive structures. Business leaders facing these challenges experienced negative impact similar to those of the gold mines in Guatemala. Sharp contradictions consequently emerge between stated CSR commitments and actual performance.

**Companies' competitiveness and reputation.** In a related work on sustainable management strategy and environmental responsibility, Battaglia et al. (2014) reviewed the theoretical approaches to strategic CSR in a voluntary action that may enhance a firm's competitiveness and reputation. Battaglia et al. (2014) harped that CSR activities motivated leaders to consider an improvement in business and economic performance of

their organizations. Based on an overview of empirical evidence they concluded that economic theories of strategic business CSR have the potential for advancing profitability alongside theories of strategic leadership in the first place. Secondly, the agenda for future research on strategic CSR and environmental sustainability was hinged on the profitability advancement potential.

The travel industry has adversely contributed to environmental pollution in Nigeria. As a result of poor economic conditions and weak infrastructure, transport vehicles do not comply with any known pollution standards (Abdulraheem & Muammed 2014; Bakare, 2012). The consequence is that transportation business operators procure worn out engines as second-hand, and these engines uncontrollably pollute the environment. Park and Levy (2014) stated that the travel industry and antecedent business concerns depended significantly on environmental and social resources. This dependence increases transporter responsibility in business practices to achieve sustainable tourism. Comparatively, the U.S. travel industry has rules of business engagement with CSR. Membership of Travel Industry Association of America enforced these rules. Park and Levy noted further that regulators examine the most common CSR business activities and identify the drivers and inhibitors required to promote enterprise development.

**SME development and environmental institutions.** Lack of concentration by schools is a core challenge to developing profitability and sustainable management among SMEs in developing economies. Chen, Tang, Jin, Li, and Paille (2014) examined how business schools in North America and Europe drove educational programs with



initiatives in CSR. CSR education in business schools was found to be growing in prominence on both continents. Research studies have had no association with this trend with the emerging economies (Chen et al., 2014).

While extending this conversation, Munoz, Welsh, Chan, and Raven (2014) examined the role of strategic positioning that emerging economies could harness. Citing the case of Nepal, Nwosu (2007b) postulated that Nepal took strategic advantage of the neighboring emerging triangulation of Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani economies. Though Nepal was in the midst of political turmoil, economic giants surrounded her with beneficial business activities that arose from her sheer presence in that region. Munoz et al. (2014) and Nwosu stated that internal political factors radiating from the Asian business district affected Nepal's economy and defined the extent of SMEs success in Nepal.

African countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroun, have a responsibility to draw from the experience and gains of CSR business practices in emergent Asia Tigers, Europe, and The USA. The African countries could engage in strategic business positioning and secure best practice compliance in waste management and environmental health (Nwosu, 2007b). Khan, Lodhi, Akhtar, and Khokar's (2014) analysis revealed that microeconomic and macroeconomic business innovation and profitability issues affect CSR big picture. Such effects were noticeable in labor markets, trade balance, currency stability and instability, and structural adjustments (Khan et al., 2014). Economic burdens of severe poverty and inadequate infrastructure constituted the primary drivers of threats to the CSR strategies required for securing enterprise profitability in Nigeria.

### **SME Board Composition, Branding and Environmental Pollution Perspective**

SME boards of directors play vital roles through resolutions that pertain to sustainability, business profitability, adherence to regulations, and satisfying consumer needs at a profit. Studying the role of board composition on a firm's sustainable strategy, Ben-Amar and McIlkenny's (2014) extended the discussions to the environmental domain. Ben-Amar and McIlkenny's evaluated the relationship between the composition of boards of directors and sustainable management approaches. Boards, whose leaders averaged about 56 years, as well as Western European directors, were receptive to implementing environmental governance structures or processes. Younger board members, as well as non-West European leaders, were not receptive to implementing CSR processes.

Orlitzky and Swanson (2012) viewed CSR in the light of reputation and legitimacy. To Orlitzky and Swanson status and legitimacy constituted the determinants of an organization's measurement of CSR. By so doing, advancing a new supplemental method for assessing a firm's reputation for social legitimacy became possible. Scholars and practitioners have adjudged social performance as a major contributor to the environmental friendliness of enterprises, and describable as a measure of green practices by the firm (Ben-Amar & McIlkenny, 2014).

**SMEs Branding Perspectives.** Ben-Amar and McIlkenny (2014) emphasized the sense in understanding SMEs management perceptions of branding. The importance of differentiation and nurturing the generation of growth has increased. Orlitzky and Swanson (2012) also learned from a management perspective that SME Branding is

subject to several factors. The factors include the variables of the features of the SME, the value of the customer, SMEs management role, staff, and brand equity. SME Branding was equally at a disadvantage because of budgetary constraints, procrastination, the desire for success, and the influence of the owner/manager for a change. SME Branding constitutes an emergent area of management literature.

Jansen, Curseu, Vermeulen, Geurts, and Gibcus (2013) conducted a study in which the effect of SME business confidence level, decision effectiveness, and areas of decision-making underwent a thorough examination. The study also contained reviews of (a) decision evaluative judgments, (b) social capital risk recognition, and (c) social capital on organizational effectiveness. Jansen et al. identified the extent to which these characteristics and social ties affected decision effectiveness. Of further interest to Jansen et al. was the degree to which evaluative judgments of the decision situation mediate that effect. Jansen et al. suggested that human capital and social capital affect decision outcomes via evaluative judgments. The content of such decisions moderated this result in such a way that entrepreneurial experience and the breadth of social capital were either assets or liabilities for decision effectiveness.

**Pollution effect of SMEs operation in cement industry.** Abdulraheem and Muammed (2014) noted that CSR and sustainable community development in Nigeria would relate to cement industry activities as a primary driver. Although not classified as cement manufacturing business, SMEs have played a significant role in the supply chain. Cement manufacturing operations leaders in Nigeria are major drivers of the pollution content in the environment. Bakare (2012) ascribed unfavorable environmental

conditions to significant effects of cement manufacturing business, an offshoot of rapid economic growth in Nigeria and massive urbanization. Slums and overcrowded conditions were a common feature in the city centers because rapid migration to towns resulted in overstressed infrastructures (Bakare, 2012).

Rapid unplanned urbanization has given rise to sub-standard living conditions as well as poverty, which is a vicious cycle of cause and effect. Abdulraheem and Muammed (2014) examination of the various factors that contributed to environmental degradation in the face of government's efforts to combat them as a learning curve in rapid urbanization. Conclusions from the study included propositions to encourage adult environmental education programs. Such encouragement might serve as means of enlightenment and long-term competitive success for environmental sustainability and economic empowerment.

### **ICT Impact and Economic Perspectives of CSR on SMEs**

The role of information technology in securing a green environment is a good example of the benefits of innovation that SMEs can explore. Vickery and Mickoleit (2013) opined that smart information and communication technology applications are potential agents for developing the necessary conditions for growth and success. Such agents have become factors and utilities for tackling climatic changes. Vickery and Mickoleit described areas where information and communications technology (ICT) could lead development as manufacturing, energy, transportation, and building. Sustainable consumption and greener lifestyles boosted economic growth and development of productive efficiency.

ICT is a major contributor to climatic change solutions dealing with environmental preservation challenges. Vickery and Mickoleit (2013) addressed the balance of greenhouse gas emission emergent in the development, production, and operation of ICT products. ICT possessed guaranteed energy efficiency as a negative driver of the greenhouse phenomenon. Lewis et al. (2014) studied the drivers and barriers of CSR and sought to know how organizational size might affect CSR implementation. Lewis et al. (2014) noted that CSR drivers and obstacles varied in complexity with regard the factors of organizational size and increase in the process of transformation of an SME into a multinational enterprise. Public policies for CSR are adaptable in the contexts of growth, internationalization of the firm, overcoming barriers and boosting drivers for CSR to secure sustainable success.

**SMEs information management gaps on CSR.** Identifiable gaps existed in the body of knowledge requiring bridges to chart future research directions on the subject of SME information management. Durst and Edvardsson (2012) studied the management of business knowledge, understanding, and transfer and concluded that these were popular and well-researched areas. On the contrary, research into information identification, storage, and utilization was incomprehensive. Further research would be required to provide business and industry leaders with the needed innovations and business profitability information. Business leaders would require those pieces of information for securing sustainable success to chart the required direction for SMEs (Durst & Edvardsson, 2012). This descriptive study on ensuring profitability among Nigerian

SMEs through strategic management and CSR practices was to provide business leaders with additional insight on innovations and profitability.

Leadership requires insight into crises management to succeed, among other factors. Crises often play roles in organizational management and SMEs have had their shares of crises. Hong, Huang, and Li (2012) noted that SME crises had a bearing on strategic vision, leadership, contingency planning, and technical capabilities. Such tenets were rarely under any investigation within the literature to build a sound management theory for practical guidance.

**The Economic Perspectives of CSR.** While examining the economic perspectives of CSR among SMEs, Kitzmueller and Shimshack (2012) defined CSR from an economic perspective and developed a CSR taxonomy that connects disparate approaches to the subject. Kitzmueller and Shimshack examined the relevance of SME existence and investigated conditions under which CSR might result in higher welfare than other public good provision channels could. Kitzmueller and Shimshack identified limited systematic empirical evidence in favor of CSR mechanisms as related to induced innovation, moral hazard, shareholder preferences, or labor markets and the environment as well.

Boulouta and Pitelis (2014) considered the celebrated explosion of the BP-leased Deepwater Horizon and its impact on the environment. The scholars warned that the blast and attendant oil leak and spill constituted economic indictment as well as a charge of the national energy and environment law. Boulouta and Pitelis argument corroborated the expressions of Spencer and Fitzgerald (2013) on the BP environmental degradation

accident. Qin (2013) studied the impact of interest rates on micro and macro-organizations and noted that SMEs finance could barely sustain their development process in an environment of interest rate marketization. To survive, SMEs must evaluate the potential consequences of interest rates on the prevailing market and how that would likely impact on SME sustainability. This evaluation would include factors that SME finance operatives could use to improve creditworthiness. Ultimately, SME business performance and financial management could consequently quicken the pace of economic development.

### **Sustainable Green Practices and SME Corporate Governance**

In terms of green and sustainable practices and corporate governance, Jansen et al. (2013) identified elements that encouraged business leaders to engage only superficially in sustainable management strategy. Business leaders trumpeted those efforts to eager consumers and investors. Triguero, Moreno-Mondéjar, and Davia (2013) suggested that setting up a bureau for consumer financial protection could play a leading role in policing fraudulent claims of sustainable management approach by businesses leaders.

**Effect of entrepreneurial relationships.** Triguero et al. (2013) studied entrepreneurial relationship with research entities. The authors revealed that business organizations that collaborated with research institutes, agencies, and universities with an increase in market demand for green products were more active in all types of eco-innovations than entrepreneurs who do not. Hence, supply-side factors seemed more important as drivers of environmental processes and organizational innovations than for environmental product innovations. This understanding has provided a platform for

investigating environmental change (eco-innovation) in terms of drivers of innovation, SME product, process, and organizational innovation (Triguero et al., 2013).

**Africa development and a post-carbon economy.** Acey and Culhane (2013) examined how green jobs, livelihoods, biofuels, and informal economy have influenced development in Africa. Acey and Culhane traced the possible contribution of household scale off-grid renewable energy generation to a post-carbon economy. This large-scale focus of the green jobs agenda in high-income countries overshadowed how small-scale technologies can be a transformative source of employment in developing economies (Acey & Culhane, 2013). However, green job debates and their values have not included the everyday practice of green livelihoods that the poor in urban areas exhibited across the African continent. The exclusion is significant primarily because the debates take place in unfavorable institutional contexts, where nonrenewable fuel attracts subsidies, and renewable energy inputs are subject to heavy taxation. Acey and Culhane identified Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya as sample African countries with practical a pursuit of strategies of income generation, community empowerment, and environmental preservation.

### **SMEs' Confidence Levels and Risk Management**

Another challenge in SME sustainability arises from their leaders' capabilities in the management of level of trust and risk. Scholars have researched into confidence level and risks (Marcelino-Sádaba, Pérez-Ezcurdia, Echeverría-Lazcano, & Villanuev, 2013). Both SMEs and large corporations have had the perception that although captive energy



business portray not only high risk for the economy, it also represent high potential for profitability under real sustainability strategies.

Marcelino-Sádaba et al. (2013) studied the methodology for managing project risks about small firms. The scholars examined the effect of risk management on small businesses' strategies as well as on portfolio and programs methods that pertain to environmental performance. The study that took place in Spain contained a project management methodology and design for SMEs that ran projects beyond standard operations. The projects studied were those that were critical to the survival of the organizations. Chief among several other projects was the development of new products to adapt to the market, new legislation, or management systems. Marcelino-Sádaba et al. found that SME project managers were rarely professionals, needed guidance to demonstrate significant autonomy, and used minimal time and documentation resources.

**Risk management with green advocacy and social justice.** Furthermore, the risk management process included factors that SME leaders characteristically neglect. Project alignment with the company's strategy, issues management, and other contingent value elements represented such factors. In line with project risk management, their methodology included templates, risk checklists with indicators, and recommendations for action. Marcelino-Sádaba et al. (2013) tested different types of real-time projects, including innovation, management systems and ICT implementation of industrial and service companies with different features to verify the process. Similar to the planning and development of major projects, observation showed that SME projects were complicated exercises in the management of risk. Hence, a simple 'expert system' would

be necessary for measurement and comparison of social influences on SMEs decision-making processes. The use of such system could reduce the risk management of project development.

Acey and Culhane (2013) argued that scholars and practitioners concerned with both social justice and environmental preservation should embrace a particular definition of green jobs. To the scholars, the definition was bottom-to-top or people-centered. The reason was that grassroots experience revealed the important role of non-governmental organizations. That part manifested in supporting transformative livelihoods and locally sustainable green employment. Acey and Culhane noted that piloted demonstration projects foster innovation and support research as a strategy for the formation of coalitions and engagement in advocacy. Such advocacy manifest, when local organizations and market conditions make both consumers and providers, risk averse to off-grid renewable energy adoption.

### **Transition and Summary**

Through this literature review, the issues of SMEs profitability, culture, and environmental protection came into focus thanks to the body of knowledge that scholarly progenitors made available. Included in Section 2 are the steps I took for conducting the investigation on the subject of this study, which were: the role of the researcher, (b) the participants, (c) the research method and design, (d) data collection, and (e) the data analysis techniques. The importance of protecting human subjects also received due attention. The National Institute of Health mandates the exposure of study participants to little or no risk. Therefore, contained in Section 2 are explanations of the minimal risk

level of this research. Included in Section 3 is a report of the findings along with recommendations for action and further study. Reflections on the study process also constituted a part of the contents along with particular participants' comments that were instrumental in confirming the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

## Section 2: The Project

Effective strategies for designing and conducting SME-based studies are of considerable interest. While methods and results of SME-based studies emerged in the literature, little information existed on the practical aspects of recruiting companies and leaders as participants for a study in Nigeria (Oyedepo, 2014). The contents of this study reflect the experiences of an Abuja-based SME's sustainability from the lens of applicable business leaders. The study contains elements such as (a) profitability mentality, (b) beliefs, (c) attitudes, and (d) behaviors relating to developing sustainable CSR management strategies.

This qualitative descriptive study includes highlights of the significant aspects of planning and managing successful SMEs that practice CSR and sought profits in the midst of energy crises. Focusing on the process of conducting the research and its outcome furthered the agenda of contributing to the existing body of knowledge. Hence, the research design for this study may benefit those intending to sample SME populations. Seidman (2012) stipulated SMEs areas of practical and feasible research. They included (a) adopting suitable research tools, (b) selecting and contacting organizations, (c) selecting leaders within SMEs, and (d) locating the fieldworkers. On-site and post-data collection feedback from leaders were constituent parts of the research discussion to ensure good practice in working with SME business leaders.

In matters of CSR, sustainability, ethics and governance, Halme and Korpela (2013) showed that securing profits in green energy transactions was achievable. Profitability was dependent, however, on the strategic management of SMEs and the

instrumentality of responsible innovation toward sustainable development. Halme and Korpela noted further that social and environmental regulation and legislation has by default, set a fixed and adequate framework for nationally operating SMEs. Such SME leaders create a business by, for example, recycling various materials or offering social services and businesses innovation.

Activities in this study involved exploring management strategy information that business leaders require for profit making in the process of green energy transactions. Such information pertained to SMEs profitability mentality along with sustainable practices in the course of green energy operations (Alarape, 2014). Furthermore, considerations for maintaining a high level of consciousness in the pursuit of SMEs involved prioritizing profitability. That consciousness manifested through the responsible selection of sustainability elements choices by leaders of SME organizations (Liu et al., 2012). Such awareness and the organizational self-discipline contributed significantly to business growth among SMEs within the target population.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the strategies that some Nigerian SMEs and MB leaders facing electricity disruptions within Abuja FCT used in achieving profitability while adapting CSR and green practices. Management plans that included profitability in business transactions constituted important factors. Pertinent information needed was on how Abuja FCT SME business leaders evolved profitability despite (a) facing electricity disruptions, (b) adapting green practices, and (c)

integrating CSR practices. The study contained revelations of the extent to which their management strategies affected profitability (Capon et al., 2013; Oyedepo, 2014).

Data from this study might contribute to new knowledge and leadership insights for improved strategies in green environment and CSR-minded SME profitability amidst power interruptions. The research population was comprised of green environment and CSR-minded SME leaders that desired to develop, or have developed, profitability strategies in spite of energy constraints within the geographical location of Abuja FCT, Nigeria. This population may benefit from the sustainability principles of leaders who have successfully implemented the strategies (Caulfield & Woods, 2013; Liu et al., 2012). Social change might occur as SME leaders make profits, employ more people, and also dedicate part of the profits to social services to benefit citizens of Abuja FCT.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, my role was to (a) recruit participants, (b) collect data, and (c) organize the data, (d) analyze the data, (e) secure the data, and (f) interpret the data. Furthermore, in selecting the participants, it was my responsibility to seek out the prospects, screen and qualify them before recruiting them, and then conduct face-to-face interviews with a minimum of 12 participants. I took responsibility for the interviews, took notes, kept logs, and performed an objective analysis and interpretation of the themes emerging from the research. Following the collation of data, I organized and used the data to identify concurrent themes in a coding process. I used the modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994) to analyze, transcribe and, code the data and to secure all documentation.

My connection with the geographic study area was that I worked in the power sector for 2 decades and have had a long-standing desire to convert social and infrastructural challenges to business profits. As a result, I initiated this scholarly investigation into ways and means of turning power cuts challenges into SME business profitability on a sustainable basis. My exposure did not create any bias, as I did not interfere with the content of participant responses, nor influence participants in the interview and data handling processes.

An investigation into sustainable SME profitability elements in green energy and CSR transactions required the correct application of established ethical research principles. The Department of Health's (2014) Belmont Report contained an outline of the objective principles necessary to assure that the ethical principles are being met when conducting researches. The essence was to ensure the respect for persons, beneficence, and justice in the selection of research participants. Lantos and Spertus (2014) expansion of the application of the Belmont Report, raised issues of informed consent, proper assessment of the risk, and a benefits element of engagement. In this study, the Belmont Report tenets constituted a factor in the selection of participants, as applicable in the ethical principles and guidelines for research that involve human subjects.

Lantos and Spertus (2014) noted, in particular, the aggravation of the risk element of participating in research by the standard of the likelihood of care or proposed solution being evaluated in a study. Lantos and Spertus (2014) advanced the concept that widely used solutions were inherently riskier than is obtainable outside the research protocol that portends a foreseeable risk of harm. In this research, therefore, I adapted the Belmont

Report principles. I (a) limited the boundaries of practitioners' behaviors in the light of the research topic, (b) assessed the risk-benefit criteria appropriate in the determination of samples (c) followed appropriate guidelines in the selection of participants, and (d) engaged a well defined informed consent platform. The Belmont Report principles set the pace and guidelines for the protection of human rights throughout the research process (Department of Health, 2014).

### **Participants**

The goal of this research activity was to explore SMEs contribution to responsive sustainability practices aligned with business profitability in transactions concomitant with CSR. As a qualitative descriptive study, it evolved the use of stratified purposive sampling design to reach and recruit a minimum of 12 SME functionaries – leaders and business managers – from SMEs and MBs within Abuja FCT region. Purposeful sampling allowed recruitment from a particular group to gain the greatest amount of data. Researchers design purposeful sampling criteria by creating a list of attributes essential to the study and locating members within the target group who meet such criteria (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014). I interviewed members who have developed or were in the process of developing strategies for addressing energy pollution within the context of an existing demonstrable commitment to CSR as part of their SMEs' general business plan. The interviewees lived in Abuja FCT and experienced the challenges of frequent power cuts. I coordinated participant recruitment in a manner that was non-coercive. I did not already know any of the participants prior to the interview period. The snowball processes led me



from one participant to another, based on a referral from a just-concluded interview. The interview was a one-on-one activity.

Strategies used for gaining access to members for this study included talking with casual contacts at events to see if they were interested in the subject of the green environment, sustainability, and business profitability. Those who showed interest provided their contact information and then mutual communication commenced. Securing access to subsequent prospective members was by referral from those who had already indicated interest. Seidman (2012) suggested that one of the most significant tasks relating to qualitative research study fieldwork lies in gaining access. This work involved securing entry into a particular business and ensuring that associated individuals, such as employees or users, also referred their counterparts for interviews.

In terms of securing entry into a particular business, Stam, Arzlanian, and Elfring (2014) noted a range of strategies that I considered for adoption. The methods included using professional colleague introductions and gradually phasing entry into the business. To secure the cooperation of people associated with the company, I established a connection with SME operators who were interested. Some major activities of the process included making the acquaintance of prospects, making them comfortable, and assuring them the proposed study was only for educational purposes.

### **Research Method and Design**

To explore the profitability potentials among Nigeria's SME business leaders in Abuja FCT, the adoption of an appropriate research method and design was necessary. I was guided by the principles entrenched in Walden University Institutional Review

Board (IRB) approval No. 07-16-15-0336092 granted to me to implement this research on Sustainable SME profitability elements in Green Energy and CSR transactions.

### **Research Method**

The research method I used for this study was qualitative. The qualitative methodology and descriptive design choices adequately served in executing this study. Nelson and Evans (2014) as well as Crede and Borrego (2013) deduced some of the strength of qualitative descriptive research to include, (a) that data are based on participants own categories of meaning, (b) it allows in-depth study of cases. The other reason to support my choice of methodology are, (c) its usefulness in discussing complex phenomenon, (d) it provides understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena, i.e., insider's viewpoint, and finally, (e) that data are collected in a naturalistic setting.

By engaging qualitative approaches I found the research participants responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs. Another benefit was that qualitative data in the words and categories of participants lend themselves to my exploration of how and why phenomena occurred and hence the selected cases might vividly demonstrate the phenomenon to the readers of this study. The findings and conclusions secured from this study highlighted a contribution to the body of knowledge in this topic area. Other SME business leaders might use the new knowledge for enterprise development, irrespective of the organizations location within the green energy sector or other sectors of Nigerian economy or the municipal territories.

I had the opportunity to choose from the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches to conducting this study. Crede and Borrego (2013) examined a mixed methods approach to developing a survey and noted that depending primarily on the nature of the research questions; the choice of design ultimately shaped the data collection strategies. A quantitative research process deals with numbers, statistical data formation, and reasoning with a large quantum of figures. It also involves formulating a hypothesis, testing of the hypothesis, drawing reasonable conclusions, and devising models as a rule of thumb (Nelson & Evans, 2014).

Additionally, quantitative research could involve a construct and design of mathematical themes, using predefined instruments, hypothetical structures, with questionnaires that researchers might replicate to present a theoretical analysis. Aykol and Leonidou (2014) noted the trends that apply to quantitative research would not apply to the pursuit of in-depth knowledge required in a qualitative study. These quantitative features are contrary to those of the qualitative inquiry. The focus of this study was not on trends, and there were no variables to examine; hence, the quantitative methodology was inappropriate for conducting the investigation. A qualitative method was, therefore, more appropriate for this study on SME integration of profitability in green environment business strategies than other designs.

Mixed-method researchers utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative features in one study. Under the mixed-method, a researcher would complete all required quantitative research methods as well as all required qualitative research methods. This study of SME business profitability through the integration of green environment

practices in business strategy could have also benefited from the mixed-method research. It could also have benefited from the use of the quantitative method. However, efforts in this study did not pertain to focus on trends in green environment strategies. Rather, the search was to secure information on particular circumstances surrounding SMEs operating in a green environment and adapting strategic management practices for business profitability.

The essence of this study included exploring strategies for achieving profitability in green transactions. To achieve this objective, each participant's in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of profits or losses while transacting business within the Abuja green energy sector with a CSR mindset was a vital consideration. A critical challenge of the research process was the underlying lack of information on green-targeted CSR practices by SME leaders in Abuja City in Nigeria. An in-depth analysis, therefore, involved asking questions for a deeper understanding of SME leaders' perceptions of green practices. Using the qualitative method facilitated broader perspectives on the entire issue of sustainability. Participants provided the views required on the strategic management approaches of SMEs. Üsdiken (2014) posited that aspects of the factors that participants provided lead to a deeper understanding of research phenomena through the lenses of different SME and MB functionaries. As expected, the use of the qualitative method resulted in obtaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon to address the particular business problem, and research question earlier identified (Üsdiken, 2014).

## **Research Design**

The research design I used for this study was a descriptive investigation of SMEs, as well as MBs domiciled within the FCT of Abuja. Nelson and Evans (2014) presented a description of significant qualitative approaches that included case study, ethnography, descriptive study, phenomenology, grounded theory, and narrative designs. Nelson and Evans showed that the most appropriate strategy for a scholar practitioner's research investigation of sustainability elements that generate profit in a green environment concomitant with CSR was the qualitative descriptive study approach.

A qualitative descriptive study design has inherent features that could help in gathering the information that might be lacking among SME business operators to address the purpose of this study. Nelson and Evans (2014) implied that descriptive qualitative design enabled researchers to explore a specified number of entities within particular geographic bounds. The descriptive design also possessed individual attributes and the ability to escalate interest into finding the information that is lacking (Hannes & Macaitis, 2012). The choice of a qualitative descriptive study design facilitated an investigative analysis process and was most suitable for the process.

The other possible research designs such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and the narrative study did not have the attributes relevant to the study in view. Ethnography involves a researcher's participation in the world of research subjects (Zilber, 2014). Phenomenology investigation likewise is involved with an inquiry into the lived experiences of study subjects (Moustakas, 1994). CSR-minded Nigerian SME leaders facing electricity disruptions in business are not a unique group

with a notable advantages or disadvantages that warrant a phenomenological investigation. Grounded theory design involved demonstration of seeking ideas and answers to pertinent questions surrounding peoples and cultures in their respective habitats while exploring the propensity for leadership change (Lai, 2014; Yin, 2014). However, since a need does not exist to learn new lessons regarding the lives of SME leaders, using the grounded theory design for this study was not appropriate and therefore not considered further.

Using a descriptive qualitative design, however, facilitated the exploration of sustainable SME leaders' business practices. The purpose of the investigation was to learn about the strategic pathways that realized profitability potentials in green transactions among SMEs within the Nigerian economic environment. The descriptive qualitative philosophy agreed with Costley's (2013) postulation that practitioner doctoral research works were *hands-on* oriented and that the research design pertained primarily to life applications within a researcher's field of interest.

Blackburn (2014) noted additionally that the descriptive study involved an objective investigation of a subject matter in its change process. Based on the previous analysis, I used a descriptive qualitative design, which reported on a person's or a company's leaders-specific experiences for its appropriateness in presenting Nigeria's SME leaders in the context of green energy transactions, profitability, CSR, green environment, and management strategy mix.

Overall, and to put it more succinctly, details that might ordinarily be negligible in broad studies such as quantitative research studies could become valuable for the

qualitative method. SMEs were of interest in this research study, especially those who strategize for profit through business activities related to environmental protection. The qualitative approach was more appropriate than other methods of investigating subjects of interest where detail is consequential (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Although the mixed approach could also serve in conducting this study, the appropriate breadth and depth of this study did not warrant the use of such a combination of methodologies and the time that would require. Researchers could use qualitative methods to gather knowledge from particular members of business entities within specific geographic bounds (Meyer, 2013).

### **Population and Sampling**

In this section, I discussed the population within which the chosen samples existed. The goal was to secure a clear understanding of the selected community applicable to this study. Zeyen (2014) speculated that an understanding of research community helps to successfully apply research outcomes to other business platforms. Furthermore, the way and manner in which a researcher samples the population to arrive at participants affects the overall success and acceptability of a study.

#### **Population**

The population for this study consisted of MB and SME business leaders in Abuja FCT who have developed or were in the process of developing profitability strategies that support CSR initiatives that address energy disruptions. All prospective members of the population included individuals who have demonstrated experience in overcoming CSR challenges to a sustainable operation caused by frequent power failures.

Furthermore, potential participants were also conversant with constraints that existed in the Nigerian energy sector.

I conducted the interviews at SMEs and MBs operating site or offices, such that I was in a position to directly observe the environment and access the operating modalities of the participants. The following factors constituted part of the criteria used in the selection of appropriate members of the study population:

1. SME and MB leaders that employed 10 or more workers.
2. SME leaders who had a minimum of 6 years management experience
3. SME and MB leaders who have independently-owned the businesses.
4. SME and MB leaders located within Abuja FCT.
5. SME and MB leaders had to be available for the study, and
6. SME and MB leaders that accepted to provide their contact information.

I invited the individuals who met the selection criteria in the order in which they receive my request for participation invitation. Adoption of private power generation as a survival or success strategy constituted a familiar terrain for the prospects. The chosen sites had elements of pollution effects on the environment. Costs and benefits of adopting an SCR platform that reduced the operational impact on the immediate surroundings were of concern to the entities. The business leaders also owned and operated their SMEs within Abuja FCT. The procedure was to improve the research quality and the eventual reliability of its outcome. It also served as an avenue to prevent potential bias in the population selection process.



## **Sampling**

The success of this study depended on a rich database and depth of extensive responses obtained from the participant members. Such depth would potentially lead to the validity of the findings. Halverson, Graham, Spring, Drysdale, and Henrie (2014) noted on data collection that sample size was justifiable through ensuring optimum participation, and monitoring responses to identify data saturation point. Halverson et al. noted however, that recommendations for sample size could vary from a dozen participant members to a significantly lesser value. This threshold was maintained to secure detailed interview responses for easy identification of any elements essential for answering the research question. Additionally, any increase in the number of members could relatively reduce my ability to explore the phenomenon.

The sample for this research activity included a minimum of 12 leaders of MBs and SMEs. The foundational sample of 12 arose from finding four qualified SMEs types within the City of Abuja and interviewing three business leaders from each of those SMEs. Each participant represented particular business areas within the FCT. A combination of purposeful and snowball sampling techniques was used to make a homogenous sampling of participants. Under the circumstance, participant groups matched criteria relevant to the research question, and individual interviewees could refer me to their contacts. Nasirzadeh, Eslami, Sharifirad, and Hasanzadeh (2013) stipulated that a homogenous sample allow the researchers to obtain individuals who shared similar and different features.

Justification for the sampling process resulted from the fact that many of the entities fell within the categorizations of SME and MB. However, snowball sampling process leads to contacting appropriate functionaries of those types of businesses (Zeyen, 2014). Purposeful sampling served as the way to achieve the research access. However, I was able to locate individuals with the requisite experience and knowledge in SME operation, with the requirements for participating in this study through references from already recruited individuals. Through snowball sampling, such persons referred others similar to them, to accomplish the sampling strategy of the qualitative data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

## **Ethical Research**

### **The Informed Consent Procedure**

The achieving of the consent process for this study involved the following steps:

- I spoke with each prospective participant to secure a commitment.
- I established a working relationship with members through email, telephone, or face-to-face communication, and
- I delivered the consent form to each prospect to read and sign it.

Participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study by conveying such a desire in writing or verbally. In either case, the withdrawing member was required to make the comment on the consent form he or she initially signed, and signed again to verify the withdrawal intention. No member suffered any penalty for withdrawing from the study. Participants received any incentives for participating in the study. Upon completion of the research activity, data would reside in a safety box for 5 years, under

lock and key, and within a filing cabinet to which I alone have access. The purpose of this security measure was to protect the privacy rights of the members. The consent form stated clearly a participant's right to withdraw without penalty. Participants also understood that there would be no remuneration for participation. I made available designated Walden University contact to participant members if the need arose for them to communicate with appointed University officers.

Weinberg and Campbell (2014) discussed ethical considerations for a researcher as a reflection of practice direction. Scholars expected researchers to pay close attention to a matter related to future training programs, moral and legal considerations, social considerations, and environmental justice. Weinberg and Campbell noted the major areas of bias avoidance centered in research codes of practice, protocols, and the principle of informed consent. Weinberg and Campbell noted further other areas like ethics review committee, safeguarding confidentiality, and information dissemination by computers. I incorporated in my research ethical steps and critical thinking required to heighten my sensitivity to the ethical aspects of research with such level of sensitivity.

Avoiding bias and its adverse effects were of utmost importance to this study. Ultimately such deliberate attentions to eliminate harmful effects lead to the minimization of my personal idiosyncrasies that could have affected the validity of the findings and conclusions. In a research study for investigating the dangers and possibilities inherent in research, P. M. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) stressed that recognizing the possibility of bias was power. Trujillo, Arroyo, and Carrete (2014) examined how insights about selection bias applied to the qualitative design and

noted that research work had to define its limits of abstraction to be acceptable.

McDermott's (2014) contribution was that personal research biases were identifiable through feelings, which arose during interviews and other questioning sessions.

## **Data Collection**

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The research instrument involved collecting data from the participants through a one-on-one interview protocol conducted by me on each the participants, and using open-ended questions to showcase their responses and perceptions of their lived experiences. Participant responses necessitated follow-up questions. This process served in collecting data from participants in a semi-structured interview atmosphere. Kibaru and Njoroge (2013) noted that researchers typically observe events, visit sites, and conduct interviews in the research process.

The interview instrument consisted of a typed list of 12 questions developed to explore the phenomenon of sustainable SME profitability elements in green energy and CSR transactions. For each interview session, I recorded the interview questions and the responses of each participant using a recording device. A recording device captured the conversations that ultimately underwent transcription using the appropriate software. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy and to clarify their responses.

The pilot study did not take place because participant responses, recording accuracy, and member checking were enough to satisfy the need to verify the efficacy of the interview protocol. Member checking is a quality control methodology in qualitative

research inquiry through which a researcher seeks to improve the credibility transferability and validity of the recorded interview. Member checking is an informant feedback or a respondents validation of the interview process that helps to improve the applicability or internal validity of the study. In this study, I employed the interview protocol and questions to address the principal research question which satisfied Turner's (2013) speculation that a qualitative research has elements that must be in alignment with particular details of a topic under study. Jones and Sherr (2014) identified the process as collection and analyzing of data with a creative dimension of fieldwork.

Gallagher et al. (2013) discussed the subject of aligning diverse research elements to a study of qualitative perspectives in research. The authors opined that the relative balance in the recursive relationship between research methods and data collection techniques would depend on the research question and the data type. Consistent with research practices, I secured an in-depth understanding of the profit orientation strategies of SMEs' transaction practices in connection with green CSR.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Yin (2014) stated that data collection techniques depend on the choice of research design that drives data acquisition to answer the research questions. Data collection may take diverse forms, depending on the research approach. In application of Yin's concept data collection efforts involved gaining access through the *gatekeepers* as well as gaining the confidence of the informants. The principal means of collecting data for addressing the research question was to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the

participants. Under such circumstances, a set of open-ended questions constituting the instrument served the data collection purpose.

The qualitative interview questions were open-ended, to incorporate positive rigor, participant subjectivity, and creativity in the research process (Hannes & Macaitis, 2012; Myers, 2013). As a researcher, I located a site or person to study, gained access and cultivated the necessary rapport required to gain the confidence of the prospect. These achievements depended on my use of combination of purposeful and snowball sampling to collect information through interview protocols

After the transcription of the interviews, I used member checking procedure for quality control methodology, and ensured that participant responses were accurate and reflect respondents' answers to the interview questions. Englander (2012) described transcript review as a technique for improving the rigor of interview-based qualitative research. In qualitative research, transcript review concept is used in various forms to evaluate research findings, in processes like member checking, or triangulation to determine the accuracy of a verbal exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Member checking, however, is a quality control methodology in qualitative research inquiry through which a researcher seeks to improve the credibility, transferability and validity of the recorded interview (Jones & Sherr, 2014). It is an informant feedback or a respondents validation of the interview process. In this study, member checking was achievable through presenting each manuscript to the specific participant who provided the answers. This process took place as soon as the transcription

was complete. By so doing, participants we remember their original thoughts about the questions (Englander, 2012).

### **Data Organization Techniques**

In organizing the data files, I categorized and labeled the data such that everything in one category held together in some meaningful way (Gringeri, Barusch, & Cambron, 2013). The differences between classes were bold and bright. For this study, my data organization and coding approach involved ensuring that data were retrievable and viewable with ease. From the interview, scripts underwent transcription, relevant themes emerged. Subsequently, coding and analysis took place. Coding, word processing, and file labeling preceded the study.

Data backup for all related files held at regular intervals throughout the study, to prevent any accidental data loss or erasures. I also created identifiable files for specific categories in the system. Finally, data presentation and interpretation took descriptive forms arising from the interview notes and recordings. All data about the study went under lock and key for 5 years in a filing system that is accessible to only me. After that period, all raw data would undergo destruction. Included in my data retention plans are securing for 5 years all media that that has participant contact information, communication with members, interviews, and raw data. The purpose of securing the data was to ensure the privacy rights of the members are not in jeopardy (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014).

An Excel database was the primary logging tool for this study. Three categorical sections namely, narratives, case-study notes, and bibliographic data served the database

purposes. Al-Debei, Al-Lozi, and Fitzgerald (2013) explained that keeping track of data from a study would involve the creation of a database for strategic success. Furthermore, the practice is innovative and sustainable in a business process, and filing system with dates and subtopics would help in organizing notes emanating from the study. With these resources, recording, transcription, and review of each interview for accuracy became possible. Protecting the identity of the participants required developing codes that were useful in protecting the identity of the participants. The information in the database comprised all interview transcriptions needed to facilitate searches by the member, number, theme, or keyword.

The process of data organization began as soon as the first prospect indicated interest in the study. Every activity involving names of human subjects also included documentation and organization. After that, the interview transcription stage occurred. Compiling all data from the collection process then took place. Such compilation emanated from interview transcripts, notes, and audio recordings. All data from the collection activity had a backup storage facility throughout the inquiry duration. Paper copies and backed-up password-protected soft copies contained the data. I have stored all the data in a safe location to prevent any loss of data due to unforeseeable circumstances. The interview data further underwent proper organization into different files, in chronological order, dependent on the type, date, and time of data collection. A digital journal for all the interview notes, including different categories and meanings arising from the participants' responses and other files, contained data that directly relate to the study topic.



### **Data Analysis Technique**

Qualitative data analysis of this research involved labeling and coding all data that arose from participant interviews. Such an analysis process made similarities and differences recognizable. Best practices could also result from that process that might lead to continued good business decisions. Data coding and analysis lead to the identification of dominant themes (Miles et al., 2014). Characteristic elements considered in the analysis were, (a) participants who embraced transformational leadership strategies; (b) leadership competencies for strategic business success, business innovativeness, and change, (c) capacity development strategies and business training for increased self-awareness; and (d) elevated developmental needs (Miles et al., 2014). Consistent with the research questions and the underlying conceptual framework, data analysis technique, and characteristic elements were instrumental to analyzing participants' responses to the interview questions asked.

Miles et al. (2014) also noticed that such an analysis technique might open a scholarly Inquirer up to deeper insight. My choice of qualitative descriptive study research design was based the van Kaam's methodology. Van Kaam's method underwent a critique for applicability to qualitative data analysis in social work. Jones and Sherr (2014) stressed that van Kaam's approach remained a viable method for qualitative inquiry, with an appeal for the analysis of qualitative data. I used the thematic analysis method to apply and ascribe meaning to responses that arose from the interview strategy. This thematic application helped in offering the necessary accessibility and theoretical flexibility in my qualitative data analysis process.

## Interview Questionnaire

The prompting interview questions were as follows:

1. How did you identify innovative and sustainable green energy strategies for achieving, maintaining, or increasing the profitability of your business?
2. What challenges did you encounter in implementing the strategies?
3. How did you address the associated challenges?
4. What measures have you utilized to assess the success of your business plans and focus?
5. To what extent have your profitability strategies revealed your alignment of sustainability and CSR tenets?
6. How well have your CSR strategies worked in the face of energy disruptions?
7. What has the leadership of your SME did differently to secure competitive business success in the area of Green Practices and CSR in comparison with other Abuja-based SMEs?
8. What effects did electricity disruptions have on your organization's commitment to the continued implementation of your CSR strategies?
9. What creative ways (if any) did you deploy the strategies to convert energy interruptions to enabling environments for organizational profitability?
10. In assessing your organization, would you say that embracing green and CSR practices resulted in the loss of profitability or otherwise?
11. What gave you the courage to make decisions that assured profitability while remaining eco-friendly in the face of disrupted electricity?

12. From your experience, what possible effects could green environment practices have on SMEs seeking business profits through transactions?

Participant responses constituted input data for my analysis. Over 12 members provided the data format as *S1P1* for SME at Site 1, with Participant 1 and *S2P2* for SME at Site 2, with Participant 2. Similarly, others were *S3P3* for Site 3, with Participant 3; and *S4P1* for SME at Site 4, Participant 1 respectively. This labeling system enabled the establishment of an identification of participants with equal dispersal; across four SME areas were selected. This data analysis system efficiently served in processing input that arose from participant interviews. My design for analysis system was in sorting the data and helped to reveal similarities and dissimilarities, exposing saturation points, and producing precise representations of answers to the interview and research questions.

My approach to data analysis involved reading the texts and noting the prominent words frequently used by the respondents. Then I ascribed meaning to thematic expressions that arose from the above process. Thorne (2013) interpretive, descriptive work postulated that with van Kaam's approach, expressions in particular cases emerged from the analysis of participant responses. The Van Kaam approach helped in identifying what influenced SCR practices in SME management strategy. Thorne also identified seven steps for analysis of participant responses. The steps included (a) preliminary groupings of phrases, statements, and expressions; (b) reduction and eliminations with the coding of expressions; (c) clustering of the main themes, and constituents; (d) identification of invariant components and issues; (e) use of relevant, validated

constituents; and (f) construction of co-researchers individual expressions and participants' textual and structural dispositions.

In my data analysis process, I identified the relationship that existed between leaders and their followers under SCT in the conceptual framework (Fielder, 1964). I reviewed the three stages of environmental hazard contingency and analyzed their raw data. The three analysis stages were (a) organizational strategy viewpoint, (b) response to local environmental needs, and (c) response of local business to catastrophic global challenges. I also examined the profitability disposition and plans for success in consideration of the situation in which power failure had incrementally eroded SMEs' profit opportunities.

This procedure helped in evaluating the challenges that SMEs face by stimulating contingencies to see if the strategies the participants stated would match the stipulations of Fielder's (1964) work. Prior to data collection and analysis, what might exist from the application of SCT in this qualitative descriptive study mix is unknown. Therefore, SCT had an influence on my initial perceptions of participant responses; hence, the final reports in conjunction with corporate needs for net profits faced tests with the contingency theory.

The central research question was as follows: What sustainable strategies do Nigerian SME, and MB leaders adopt concomitant with CSR and power disruptions within Abuja FCT? Securing profits through strategic management of SME businesses within the green energy sector constituted the participants focus using the 12 interview questions. Analysis of participant response data aided my understanding of the thoughts

of members at a holistic level, which revealed answers to the central research question. By using the thematic analysis technique similar to that of van Kaam's approaches in Thorne (2013), I applied the 12 interview questions complementary to the central research question for the foundational 12 participants. This thematic analysis technique helped in securing an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants.

Monitoring data and theme saturation required due attention paid to the similarities that emerged. Monitoring was also necessary for similarities that occurred during the interview and analysis stages. Such revelation contributed to the development of data themes that were reflective of participant perceptions. Themes stipulated on how SMEs might have adopted green SCR initiatives emerged in business. Other themes also emerged to reveal how environmental forces and trends influenced the SMEs and MBs.

Findings from the fieldwork yielded several themes, including (a) profitability, (b) environmental consciousness diversity, (c) research group organization, (d) environmental perception, (e) sustainable management strategy, and (f) eco-efficiency learning. Final themes from the analysis formed part of the material used to compose this study. Further discussions pertain to how those data came about, data relationship with the configuration of the conceptual constructs, and interview questions.

### **Dependability, Creditability, Transferability, and Confirmability**

#### **Dependability**

Dependability was one of the four elements used for judging this qualitative research. One of the essences of conducting research was to set a stage for a general understanding of phenomena. By extension, the ability of the researcher to repeat a set of

steps in a specific research and get the same order of results showed how dependable the study could be (Johnston & Dijkers, 2012). The strength of the study lied on the premise that other researchers may be able to produce similar results at anytime and anywhere, based on this work. I was also cognizant of occasional vagaries of studies in which factors or variables may not be available for replication. Yin (2014) suggested that variable or factor differentiation measure of the difference between the original results and new results is made clear. Dependability also arose from cross-checking diverse data sources in the members checking and transcript review process, which helped to strengthen and stabilize data in terms of quality and quantity.

To achieve dependability, multi-level evaluation of the data took place. Level 1 evaluation involved contacting participants after transcribing interview recordings. Participants had the opportunity of affirming that the transcripts reflected their original thoughts and intentions when they were answering the questions. The Level 2 evaluation involved interpreting the data for meaning and context. I also shared the interpretations with each participant to affirm that the interpretation exercise reflected the sense that the member intended. This member is checking process enhanced the dependability of the study (Landu, 2014; Lester, 2012).

Data bracketing constitutes a researcher's effort to strengthen the reliability of research. Qualitative research often involved some latitude for a researcher's thoughts. Bracketing is a process by which a researcher forestalls the effects of such ideas. Mörtl and Gelo (2015) described some circumstances, in which a researcher's views might constitute preconceived notions that might be positive or negative. The ultimate quality

of a study might suffer if a researcher fails to adopt a study-specific policy against preconceptions. Such a system would consider the timing, nature, subject, and object (predicate) of bracketing in the study (Tufford & Newman, 2012). This study adopted the bracketing process to foreclose all possible contexts that might influence my direction or participant responses. Any extraordinary facts about the SMEs, their leaders, or immediate business districts did not constitute significant factors in the interview process. Dependability constituted one of the benefits of bracketing.

### **Creditability**

Diverse factors prove a study credible. Those factors consisted of the lenses of the participants amongst others. Participant interest in the study is an element of judging the qualitative research. A lackluster member might only fill the vacuum without contributing to the knowledge that I require in the field of this study (Sirriyeh, Lawton, Gardner, & Armitage, 2012). A participant possesses the capacity to dictate the creditability of a study. Therefore, in this study, I selected members who had an interest in the study at a level that would convey creditability to the study. Every phenomenon can attract and distract elements. In a qualitative investigation of this sort, the elements possess the capacity to influence the behavior of prospects at the time of recruitment (Landu, 2014; Runhaar et al., 2013).

The importance of participant lenses necessitates entrenching member checking and transcript review. If a participant's lens manifests in observation reports and archival review records, research users will consider the study credible. To ensure creditability of recruitment, I probed intending participants to determine their interestedness in the study

topic. Podsakoff et al. (2012) noted that the interest of the participants was likely to be contagious, to the point of increasing or decreasing a researcher's interest in the study. The manifestations of interest on the part of the participants formed part of my initial criteria for confirming their selection. Studies showed that contexts could change elements, such as (a) time, (b) interest levels, and (c) human circumstances interference with activities. Therefore, confirmed more participants than the study plan postulated (Johnston & Dijkers, 2012; Landu, 2014). This excess helped me in two ways: (a) it served as a buffer for participant change of behavior, and (b) as an extended pool that enabled me to take more responses towards saturation.

### **Transferability**

Transferability of a study might be realizable through eliminating militating boundaries. Some studies are geography-bound. Others are process-bound. Other categories of research bounding have existed that create apparent difficulty in transferability. Within the context of such boundaries, and the intersection of transferability, however, judging qualitative research has inclusiveness of seeking ways to making the study generalizable (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014; Landu, 2014). The platforms upon which the study stood in terms of contexts, paradigms, and worldviews is explained by the researcher (Johnston & Dijkers, 2012; Sirriyeh et al., 2012). With my completion of this study, any future researchers are in a position to determine how transferable this study might be to other platforms that attract them. However, transference of context might not be applicable in all observational situations.



Judging a qualitative study is not the job of one reader. The researcher has a first level duty to judge the research. Likewise, scholarly community members should also be in a position to judge the research. Proof of transferability of research through contexts, paradigms, and worldviews lies with the individual researcher (Johnston & Dijkers, 2012; Sirriyeh et al., 2012). I performed the first judging act during the process of this study. This first judging act intersected with the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. However, the fact that transferability eligibility rests on the intending researcher does not preclude me from seeking out the transferability potentials of this study in ensuring its validity (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

### **Confirmability**

While an early detection of data errors can affect the success of a study, flaws are most noticeable at the end of the study. The process of logging might help in setting the research study pegs during which initial flaws might be evident (Mok & Clarke, 2015). Confirmability exercise that is an element of judging qualitative research occurred at the end of the study. Ongoing logging activities were necessary to guard against flaws that may warrant a total recall of the entire research process. A research should also be able to step outside the research box to view the study from the point of view of others. This dissociation gives the researcher an opportunity to pick holes in the study before outsiders do (Hannes & Macaitis, 2012; Landu, 2014).

In this study, I paid close attention to data to catch any negative antecedents. I also conducted checks and balances that ran parallel with the research steps, to identify and observe contradicting phenomena about substantive stages of the investigation. For

purposes of confirmability, I conducted quality audits of all data arising from interviews and observations. I also verified the process of data collection, organization, and analysis. This audit activity contributed to confirmability and helped in eliminating bias (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014; Lester, 2012). Furthermore, the bracketing exercise in use aided me to guard against any elements that might impinge on the study confirmability.

### **Data Saturation**

Halverson et al. (2014) study noted that sample sizes were dependent on experience and available publications in methodological and topical trends in terms of the depth of data collected. Another consideration was the number of participants required for achieving data saturation. Halverson et al. observed that most qualitative researchers did not identify any new information from transcripts obtained after an interview of 20 or more people. For the above reasons, using a minimum of three members from each of four applicable SMEs served as a foundation for adequate breadth and depth of this study. Since no content or response repetitions occurred, the snowball sampling technique helped in reaching more participants until data saturation became noticeable. This consideration circumscribed my justification for the 12 foundational participants in the study. The sample frame became available for further recruiting of additional prospects had saturation been unattainable after interviewing 12 participants.

In data collection, the researcher receives pertinent information from research subjects. Data collection activity constitutes the actual research. In qualitative research, once the interview aspect of research is underway, the research has the responsibility to deploy all the reliability and validity elements (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012).

Incorporating dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability of study aided me in securing data audit, and all quality assurance activities ran simultaneously with the investigations. Under these circumstances, I knew when data quality begins to change (Walker, 2012). On some occasions, participants repeated elements other interviewees have covered. Such repetition occurred alongside the new information. The presence of new data, however, warranted continuation of interviews.

A researcher experiences data saturation when participant responses contain repetitions of answers prior interviewees provided. I patiently collected data until responses were apparently repetitive. Answers I received from members included explanations, especially from follow-up questions. Robinson (2014) observed that a good interview protocol would eliminate gaps after an incisive probing through interview questions and follow-up questions. Stipulation of participant numbers in the research proposal did not cast any limitation on the final number of participants as data saturation was the only appropriate reason to stop, even after I exceeded the number in the plan. I used all the quality assurance steps to ensure data saturation before the interview process ended (Pezalla et al., 2012).

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 contained measures used for investigating strategic management antecedents among SMEs and considered environmental protection along with corporate profitability. The concomitant issues discussed included my role as the researcher, which involved (a) participant recruitment, (b) data collection, (c) organization, and (d) data analysis. Ethical protections for research participants, research method, and research

design for this study, and avoidance of threat to validity and reliability were also part of my consideration in this section. Section 3 contains the presentation of findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, and my reflections.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the strategies that some Nigerian SMEs and MB leaders faced with electricity disruptions within Abuja FCT used in achieving profitability while adapting CSR and green practices. The overarching research question was what sustainable strategies do Nigerian SME and MB leaders adopt concomitant with CSR and power disruptions within Abuja FCT? This central research question formed the centerpiece of the analysis that yielded many great themes.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The themes are presented on a question-by-question basis to ensure relevance to the study. For instance, question 6 asks, “How well have your CSR strategies worked in the face of energy disruptions?” All themes consequently arose from participant responses to the question above to identify the finding regarding CSR strategies and success. I was able to uncover three different categories of items using this methodology:

1. Twelve *meta-themes*, each corresponding with exactly one question from the interview, and each having its set of findings.
2. About 52 results occurred in all:
  - a. Thirty existed under a single meta-theme, making them *localized*.
  - b. Twenty were not limited to a single meta-theme and instead occurred across two or more meta-themes, thereby making them *non-localized*.

Proper organization of the resultant themes ensured that contents remained intact. Such a presentation of the findings fosters understanding of their relevance, both with relation to each question and the study at large. Additionally, it allowed me to probe further to discover the relevant nuances that defined participant responses with respect to SME sustainability and CSR transactions.

### **General Overview of Findings**

The sheer multitude of emergent findings had made apparent the impracticality of discussing the results of research on a theme-by-theme basis. This impracticality emphasized the fact that 58% of emergent outcomes (a total of 30 results out of 52) constituted only 22% of the total, coded responses. On the average, 0.73% per subtheme (22% distributed across 30 findings). Putting this into perspective, if one considers percentages as a measure of relevance of the study, then an average of 0.73% per subtheme further revealed each of the 30 findings above to hold less than a 1% connection to the participants and the study at large. The importance of the emergent themes or the lack of connection altogether was not ignored. Rather, it is used to highlight the necessity of context. With respect to this study, the 12 meta-themes formed the basis for the setting. The meta-themes were essential in establishing the necessary, intermediary step between the holistic picture and the low-level nuances that were both reflective of participant responses and representative of the interconnectedness of themes. As a bonus, the meta-themes allowed for the exploration of even those findings holding less than 1% relevance.

**General participant attitudes.** It is often necessary and beneficial to begin from a more holistic perspective and then drill down to uncover the subtle layers of nuances (Jones & Sherr, 2014). With that point of view, the eight most recurrent themes helped in capturing a general overview of participant attitudes.

In the final analysis, the following pattern emerged from my investigation. Whereas 12 meta-themes arose from the study, one each from the 12 interview questions, only eight themes or strategic findings emerged as the most recurrent themes. There exists, therefore, a relationship between the original 12 meta-themes and the eight issues or strategic findings analyzed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Distribution of Overall Responses*

Eight most recurrent themes	Frequency of responses	Percentage of responses
Lack of consistent power	14	5%
Use of alternative power	21	8%
Costs	42	15%
No measure for assessing success	10	4%
Customer satisfaction	14	5%
Efforts unrelated to CSR strategies	15	5%
No indication of leadership initiative	12	4%
No measure of assessing profitability	11	4%

These eight most recurrent themes represent those ideas that held significant relevance to either the participants or expressed important issues of interest to the study,

reflected in the collective participant responses. While examining the subject of costs, for instance, I discovered that the expenditures associated with the implementation of sustainable strategies related to CSR were of utmost concern to the participants. More especially, they were of concern to the profitability of the SME. In fact, the theme of costs proved to be so relevant that it leads the second most consistent argument by a 7% margin. The following table examines relevance from the perspective of the 12 meta-themes.

Table 3

*Distribution among Meta-Themes*

Eight most recurrent findings	Frequency of recurrence <sup>a</sup>	Percentage of relevance
Lack of Consistent Power	6	19%
Use of Alternative Power	5	16%
Costs	8	26%
No Measure for Assessing Success	2	6%
Customer Satisfaction	5	16%
Efforts Unrelated to CSR Strategies	3	10%
No Indication of Leadership Initiative	1	3%
No Measure of Assessing Profitability	1	3%

<sup>a</sup> Frequency of recurrence / (Sum of all frequency of recurrence)

The distribution in Table 3 contains a reflection of the overall allocation of the eight most recurrent findings across the 12 meta-themes. The column designated as, Frequency of recurrence, is the number of times each respective subtheme emerged among the 12 meta-themes. For example, the frequency of recurrence for the subtheme,



lack of consistent power, is six. The subtheme or findings emerged in six out of the 12 meta-themes. Likewise, use of alternative power developed in five out of the total 12 meta-themes, and so on. The Percentage of relevance is derived from the sum of the eight most recurrent findings. In other words, it highlights each subtheme's relevance about the other seven findings, and not about the entire study. Table 3 further revealed a subtle layer of nuance not immediately identifiable in Table 2. This nuance concerns the degrees of interconnection between two or more findings. For instance, examining the higher frequencies of recurrence between the results of costs and lack of consistent power revealed the two to be driving forces behind participant responses. This higher rate of recurrence also caused me to determine if there existed any possibility of interconnectedness between the two findings. A simple metric led to exploring the possibility of interdependence. The metric determined the rate of concurrence between two or more findings, by the formula below.

$$\text{Rate of concurrence} = \frac{\text{Frequency of concurrence}}{\text{Frequency of recurrence}}$$

The frequency of concurrence is the number of times two or more findings occurred together among the 12 meta-themes. Continuing with the results of costs and lack of consistent power as a case-in-point, the frequency of concurrence was four, since both findings occurred together in four out of the 12 meta-themes. The rate of concurrence for costs then equated to 4/8 or 50%, while the rate of concurrence for lack of consistent power equated to 4/6 or 67%. In interpreting rates of concurrence, it is important to remember that the metric is simply a tool used to uncover a layer of subtle nuance between two or more findings. Calculated rates are accurate to the subtheme in

question, so two results need not share the same speed of concurrence, as the metric is not a measure of equality.

Additionally, the resulting rates need not total to 100% as they are not part of a whole. Instead, they are to be understood in *relative* isolation. In other words, the rates are simply one subtheme's degree of association with one or more other findings. With that understanding, the rate of concurrence for costs, for instance, was 50% with respect to lack of consistent power. On the other hand, the rate of consent for lack of consistent power, with respect to costs, equated to 67%. That confirmed my earlier suspicions of interconnectedness between the two findings, but not as envisioned. The rates of concurrence for costs and lack of consistent power had revealed costs to be the likely underlying element, influencing participants' responses concerning SME sustainability and CSR transactions. This occurrence too was confirmable once the calculation of the rate of concurrence for the other findings in Table 3 had taken place with respect to costs.

The dynamic represented in Table 4 shows the other seven emergent findings significantly interconnected with participant attitudes on costs. Some results, such as customer satisfaction, are even wholly concurrent with costs. Such a nuance, not immediately identifiable from the holistic perspective, confirmed costs to be the central pillar of SME sustainability efforts and CSR transactions. In other words, these findings revolved heavily around participant attitudes on costs. The results are below in Table 4.

Table 4

*Rates of Concurrence*

Seven of the eight most recurrent findings	With respect to costs	Costs with respect to sub-theme
Lack of consistent power	67.7%	50%
Use of alternative power	80%	50%
No measure for assessing success	50%	12.5%
Customer satisfaction	100%	62.5%
Efforts unrelated to CSR strategies	67.7%	25%
No indication of leadership initiative	100%	12.5%
No measure of assessing profitability	100%	12.5%

**The Major Findings of the Study**

Several findings emerged from the field investigation that gave credence to the chosen methodology. However, only eight prominent findings were escalated for in-depth analysis in this study. The findings were the primary drivers of SMEs and MBs sustainability, profitability, and environmental consciousness in Abuja, and by extension, Nigeria. These results are directly related to SMEs' CSR practices as well.

**Lack of Consistent Power Supply**

Lack of consistent power supply was the common denominator that emerged from all the participants interviewed. This was reflective of the frequent power cuts being experienced around Abuja FCT. Power cuts were noted to occur several times in 1 business day.

**Use of Alternative Power**

The finding on the use of alternative power was a measure of the degree of reliance of participants on captive sources of energy like generators and inverters to provide an alternative source of power supply for sustainable business operation. Virtually every organization had investments in acquiring one form of captive power supply source or another. Any organization without a contingent means of providing supply was considered prone to failure.

**Investment Capital and Operating Costs**

Participants were found to have incurred huge investment capital (CAPEX) on the purchase of standby generators. Participants also expended significant operating costs (or OPEX) as well. Such investment was expended on the day to day operations for the acquisition of fuels and maintenance of the alternative generating sources of power supply.

**Lack of Measure for Assessing Success**

The research findings showed that there were participants who had no internal mechanism in place for assessing enterprise success. Organization's sustainability and operational success are foundation to plans. Such assessment was an evaluation of the impact of current practices on business growth.

**Customer Satisfaction**

Business success is a measure of customer satisfaction. A couple of SME members were found not to place any significant premium on the satisfaction of their

customers or the safety of the environment. It was commonly understood that survival of their enterprises was a measure of profitability.

### **Efforts Unrelated to CSR Strategies**

CSR was commonly seen as an unnecessary and avoidable expenditure. Some participants were found to have no interest whatsoever in CSR strategies in their business plan. The general standpoint was that savings in operating cost in the face of the challenging business environment can be secured by avoiding CSR related expenses.

### **Leadership Initiative Indication**

Leadership quality is acquired and sustained by training. A good number of SME participant's leadership had no structured capacity development plans. Negligent of capacity development initiatives was reflected on poor skill-set deployed in such organizations.

### **Measures for Assessing Profitability**

Profitability was found to be the primary driver of some enterprise operations. Hence the impact of SME activities on the environment was not considered. However, there appeared to be no structures for assessing business profitability.

### **Relationship of Findings to Literature and Conceptual Framework**

The research findings above broadly confirmed the position of the peer-reviewed studies in the literature review section. Furthermore, the findings extend knowledge of the concepts by shedding new light on the impact of power cuts on SMEs and MBs sustainable operation. Hoogendoorn, Guerra, and van der Zwan's (2015) recent publication on drivers of environmental practices extended the insight. They posited that

the profitability mentality of SMEs regulates their environmental practices, thereby lending credence to the findings of this research.

The findings were connected to the strategic contingency conceptual framework of this study. The results revealed that SMEs were strategic in the deployment of alternative sources of power supply for business sustainability and ultimate profitability to minimize the impact of frequent power cuts. This agrees with the attributes of the SCT conceptual framework as well.

The role played by leadership initiatives as drivers of SMEs profitability and survival as embodied in literature review section was corroborated by the findings (Alegre, Sengupta, & Lapiedra, 2013). A skill set deficiency was apparent from the responses and themes that emerged from the data analysis. SMEs leaders lacked basic structural orientation, and leadership dynamism had no structured capacity development plans that were reflective on the poor skill-set deployed in such organizations.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Up to this point, the analysis has shown what participant attitudes were overall. The most recurrent findings identified the core results of participant responses. However, the foundation for those attitudes still needed to be established. As I earlier stated, context is important for the interpretation of findings. Context also served as an environment to understand the participants' responses. By seeking to establish context, I attempted to identify not only the distribution of participants' attitudes, but also why.

From the study I wanted to gain two levels of understanding. First, I wanted to determine participant positions on having government support related to sustainable SME

profitability elements in green energy and CSR transactions. Second, I wanted to determine the rationale behind those attitudes. With that said, the analysis of participant responses was on a question-by-question basis, and the following meta-themes emerged from the study:

1. Identifying Innovative & Sustainable Green Energy Strategies.
2. Challenges Associated with Implementation.
3. Addressing & Overcoming Challenges.
4. Assessing Business Strategies.
5. Profitability Strategies with Respect to CSR tenets.
6. CSR Strategies & Success.
7. SME Leadership & Green Practices.
8. Effects of Energy Disruption on CSR Strategies.
9. Creative Strategic Implementation.
10. Assessing Organizational Profitability.
11. Motivations
12. The effects of Green Practices & SME Transactions.

**Meta-Theme 1: Identifying Innovative and Sustainable Green Energy**

**Strategies.** Five findings emerged in participant responses when asked how their respective SMEs identified innovative and sustainable green energy strategies. Table 5 shows that participants' responses on lack of consistent power and the use of alternative power as primary motivation to adopt or innovate for energy supply strategies.

Table 5

*Identifying Innovative & Sustainable Green Energy Strategies*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Use of alternative power	7	35%
Use of efficient equipment	2	10%
Lack of consistent power	7	35%
No green energy strategies	3	15%
Efforts to reduce overhead	1	5%

In most participant responses, the use of alternative power often occurred as a necessity having risen from the lack of consistent power situation being experienced by numerous SMEs in the area. The need for steady power led to the use of alternate forms of energy. However, it would seem that only 10% of participant responses reflect any green energy strategies. Both Participants 5 and 9 were explicit in stating their SMEs' active usage of energy-efficient equipment. However, both also cited the desire to reduce electricity bills as a key motivator. With that understanding, I did not find it surprising that 15% of participant responses reflected no green energy strategies. Member 10 even noted the avid use of fume-emitting diesel generators for the long-term cost benefit and nicely summarized the sentiment of the other members by stating that the country's lack of consistent power supply affects SME profitability. A steady power supply is a panacea to the implementation of innovative strategies.



**Meta-Theme 2: Challenges Associated with Implementation.** Seven findings emerged when asked about the challenges they experienced in implementing their strategies above.

Table 6

*Challenges Associated with Implementation*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Weak alternative power	2	12.5%
Costs	8	50%
Environmentally unfriendly alternatives	1	6.3%
Fuel scarcity	2	12.5%
Lack of consistent power	1	6.3%
Meeting business expectations	1	6.3%
No challenges	1	6.3%

In Table 6, the sub-theme of costs can be attested for as an emergent sub-theme associated with the challenges of strategic implementation. Most participant responses associated costs with the purchase of fuel for generators. It became apparent that the use of generators formed the primary means by which SMEs deal with lack of consistent power, which still manages to be an emergent sub-theme associated with challenges of strategic implementation. The findings of fuel scarcity and weak alternative power followed costs. These indicated fundamental flaws in the adoption of innovative strategies. The economic environment of the SMEs obviously did more harm than good to their SME strategies in that the situation was barely manageable for some. Participant 8 noted the costs associated costs to include the generator purchase, set-up, and

maintenance components, which negate a considerable amount of profit. As Participant 2 explicitly added at the time of the interview, most companies were simply not willing to take on those costs. However, only one participant's response showed any concern with respect to CSR. Though most participants noted having implemented similar strategies (i.e. the use of generators), Participant 9 was the only one to admit to the challenge of dealing with gas and noise pollution resulting from use of generators.

**Meta-Theme 3: Addressing & Overcoming Challenges.** Seven findings emerged from participant's responses related to overcoming challenges to implementation of innovative strategies.

Table 7

*Addressing & Overcoming Challenges*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Cost sharing	1	8.3%
Minimizing equipment use	1	8.3%
Challenges not addressed	1	8.3%
Outsourcing	1	8.3%
Overlooking associated costs	2	16.7%
Use of secondary alternate source	3	25%
Tolerate inconveniences	3	25%

Some participant responses coded under a shared subtheme, however, varied considerably on overcoming the challenges above as reflected in Table 7. Even the answers coded under a single subtheme showed some degree of variation.

Notwithstanding, it is of interest to note that the majority of participants stated that their

SMEs had resolved to either directly *tolerate inconveniences* caused by the challenges above or implement the *use of secondary alternate source* of power. The response provided by Participant 4 captured the dynamics well. The participant noted that in periods of little or no electricity, more power demanding equipment are shut down and less demanding and necessary equipment is left on to enable inverters to last longer. The inverter serves as the alternate secondary source, which some participants admitted to using. However, the inconvenience with the inverter is its small capacity and, as Participant 10 noted, the need to occasionally charge it with a generator. On the opposite end of this spectrum, 16.7% of participant responses contained remarks that efforts geared towards overlook the costs to maintain ongoing business activities. The general perception, though, is one in which the members and their respective SMEs only tried to make do, whether it be by neglect, as Participant 5 noted or *cost sharing*, as Participant 6 noted.

**Meta-Theme 4: Assessing Business Strategies.** When asked about the measures used in assessing the success of their SME strategies, participant responses revealed 10 findings. Participant responses with regards to determining the success of their SME policies were as varied as the results concerning how they addressed challenges associated with strategic implementation. For the most part, emergent findings are self-explanatory. In some cases, some measures employed no associations with green energy strategies. The majority of responses indicated a lack of any form of assessment with regards to SME policies and green energy initiatives. In place of formal evaluation was the *use of alternative power* to maintain on-going business. However, what struck me as

odd, among the participant perspectives, was the neglect of *customer satisfaction*. As can be seen in Table 8 below, *customer satisfaction* constitutes just 4.8% of overall participant attitudes. Member 6 provided the 4.8% contribution, who stated that *customer satisfaction* had improved by the *use of alternative power*. Considering that the majority of participants SMEs sell goods and services, one might have expected *customer satisfaction* to be a measure by which SME strategies assessed. However, the lack of emphasis on *customer satisfaction* reveals otherwise.

Table 8

*Assessing Business Strategies*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Use of alternative power	5	23.8%
Use of efficient equipment	1	4.8%
Task automation	1	4.8%
Costs	2	9.5%
Customer satisfaction	1	4.8%
Fuel efficiency	1	4.8%
Fuel scarcity	1	4.8%
Use of business intelligence	1	4.8%
No measure for assessing success	5	23.8%
No green energy measures	3	14.3%

**Meta-Theme 5: Profitability Strategies with Respect to CSR Tenets.** At this point in the analysis, it had become apparent to me that the general participant attitudes did not emphasize active CSR strategies employed by SMEs. In most cases, green energy

initiatives and CSR policies are either neglected outright or only meagerly attempted. Consequently, in the analysis of meta-theme 5, I anticipated a continuing trend of under-emphasis on CSR. However, participant responses only served to confound matters. When asked about the extent to which SME profitability strategies reflected CSR tenets and sustainability efforts, 11 findings emerged.

Table 9

*Profitability Strategies with respect to CSR Tenets*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Boost in profits	1	3.6%
Unable to break common practices	6	21.4%
Use of efficient equipment	3	10.7%
Electricity inessential for operation	1	3.6%
Better environmental responsibility	1	3.6%
Fuel efficiency	1	3.6%
Alternative power good investment	1	3.6%
Influencing of business practices	2	7.1%
Lack of consistent power	1	3.6%
No indication of CSR tenets	3	10.7%
Not reflective of CSR tenets	8	28.6%

While certain findings, such as *no indication of CSR tenets* and *unable to break common practices* appeared normal, other results gave evidence of a growing adoption of CSR practices. Participant 9, for instance, indicated that their SME pioneered the usage of energy-saving bulbs within their plaza. Despite this, however, it still appeared to me

that the majority of participant responses highlighted the general lack of active CSR tenets. The findings of *unable to break common practices*, *no indication of CSR tenets*, and efforts *not reflective of CSR tenets*, collectively constitute over 60% of participant attitudes. Only one response indicated a *boost in profits* because of having invested in alternative power, such as inverters. However, this answer is also not actually indicative of the existence of any CSR tenets. However, it efforts were being made to adopt CSR tenets. Participant 5 remarked that despite their being *unable to break common practices*, they have though converted to the *use of efficient equipment in some cases*. Though this did not explicitly qualify as reflective of CSR tenets, it did show a gradual adoption of behaviors that could give rise to CSR principles and more green energy practices within the SME.

**Meta-Theme 6: CSR Strategies & Success.** When asked how well their CSR strategies had fared in the face of energy disruptions, six findings emerged.

Table 10

*CSR Strategies & Success*

Findings	Frequency	Percentage
No CSR strategies	5	22.7%
No energy disruptions	2	9.1%
No measure for assessing success	5	22.7%
Positive feedback on CSR	1	4.5%
Efforts unrelated to CSR strategies	2	9.1%
Unrelated to energy disruptions	6	27.2%

Participant responses coded under this meta-theme did not deviate much from what I had anticipated seeing. Also, 22.7% of participant responses confirmed *no CSR strategies* within their respective SMEs. Consequently, there also was *no measure for assessing success*. Only 4.5% of the answers indicate the presence of active CSR. That response came from Participant 1 who noted that their SME engaged in charitable donations and free training for people within the local community. The emergent findings of *efforts unrelated to CSR strategies* and *unrelated to energy disruptions* were essentially two sides of the same coin. Such a position reflected the dynamic in which some participant responses focused exclusively on one aspect of the interview question. The answer given by Participant 10 stood as a case-in-point of this dynamic. In answering the question, Participant 10 emphasized that they often times suffered extended periods of power disruptions at their businesses, but neglected to make a statement on how it affected CSR in their SME. Power disruptions also induced CSR challenges that were not emphasized by respondents. The two participant responses that indicated that they experienced *no energy disruptions* were seemingly outliers in this study. Participant 2 and Participant 3 both contributed that perspective, but for different reasons. Participant 2's SME, for instance, did not require the use of electricity as a significant part of their business, due to the nature of their work. As such, they admitted to either not experiencing energy disruptions or not being positively or negatively affected by an outage.

**Meta-Theme 7: SME Leadership & Green Practices.** When asked what their SME leadership has done to secure a competitive advantage in business, with respect to green practices and CSR, participant responses varied considerably. However, one thing seemed clear. There existed a general lack of leadership initiative in the area of CSR and green practices. Table 10 below shows the distribution of participant responses with respect to SME Leadership & Green Practices.

Table 11

*SME Leadership & Green Practices*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Costs	6	24%
Having government support	2	8%
No indication of leadership initiative	12	48%
Positive feedback on CSR	2	8%
Efforts unrelated to CSR strategies	3	12%

In many ways, the distribution of participant responses under meta-theme 10 was characteristic. As can be attested for in the table, the lack of leadership initiative with respect to the green practice and CSR constituted a significant block of participant responses. Often, in their answers, participants would cite *costs* as the primary reason for *no indication of leadership initiative*. Again, those responses that reflected the active practice of CSR is in the minority, constituting only 8% of participant responses under meta-theme 10.



Interestingly, but not surprisingly, these were the perceptions that surrounded the sub-theme of *having government support*. Participant responses showed concern for government support as far as sustaining business profits was concerned. However, no association with respect to green energy practices and CSR emerged. Only Participant 8, who barely highlighted the role of government in enforcing federal safety standards indicated such an association. However, this was not unique to any green energy measures, nor did it emphasize any encouragement by the federal government concerning CSR practices.

**Meta-Theme 8: Effects of Energy Disruption on CSR Practices.** When asked about the impact of an energy disruption on their SME's commitment to CSR, the following findings emerged.

Table 12

*Effects of Energy Disruption on CSR Practices*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Costs	6	23.1%
Customer satisfaction	4	15.4%
Electricity inessential for operation	1	3.8%
Lack of consistent power	1	3.8%
No CSR strategies	2	7.7%
No energy disruptions	4	15.4%
Efforts unrelated to CSR strategies	8	30.8%

The majority of the emergent findings in Table 12 above were overlapping. As a case-in-point, Participant 4 discussed the effects of an energy disruption on *customer*

*satisfaction* and its adverse effect on *costs*. Most of the overlapping though occurred in connection with *efforts unrelated to CSR strategies*. For example, the entirety of responses coded under *no energy disruptions*, *costs*, and *customer satisfaction* came under *efforts unrelated to CSR strategies*. From that scenario, I found that the primary concern with respect to energy disruption was on costs and profits as opposed to CSR strategies. 7.7% of responses explicitly stated the lack of CSR strategies in the SME. As such there existed no way to qualify the effects of energy disruptions on the strategy.

**Meta-Theme 9: Creative Strategic Implementation.** When asked about the ways in which their respective SMEs were able to convert energy interruptions into enabling environments for organizational profitability, the following findings emerged.

Table 13

*Creative Strategic Implementation*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Use of alternative power	1	5%
Costs	3	15%
Customer satisfaction	3	15%
Lack of consistent power	1	5%
Question not applicable	3	15%
Outsourcing	1	5%
Unfeasible	7	35%
Efforts unrelated to profitability	1	5%

What proved most revealing, though not surprising, was the overwhelming responses that emphasized the impossibility of converting energy interruptions into an

enabling environment for organizational profitability. Most participant emergent findings under this meta-theme overlapped considerably with other conclusions and often constituted both creative solutions and sources of difficulty when attempting to create a profitable situation from energy interruptions. For example, Participant 5 overlapped the findings of *unfeasible*, *customer satisfaction*, *costs*, and the *use of alternative power*. Participant 5 noted that nothing positive can result from energy disruptions because it served to lower customer satisfaction and increase business spending, as alternative sources of power, such as generators, would have to be purchased. Other participants echoed this sentiment as well. Member 4, stated however that *lack of consistent power* serves to motivate people into finding creative solutions for their business, but neglected to provide any solutions applied at their SME or any that could serve as a case-in-point for any SME.

**Meta-Theme 10: Assessing Organizational Profitability.** Participants provided six emergent findings of any loss of profitability from embracing green practices.

Table 14

*Assessing Organizational Profitability*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Use of alternative power	7	20%
Weak alternative power	3	8.6%
Costs	6	17.1%
No Measure for assessing profitability	11	31.4%
No profitability loss	1	2.9%
Use of solar power	7	20%

Participant responses were nearly unanimous in that most did not have a system in place to gauge profitability loss arising from green practices. From Participant 7, only 2.9% of total participant responses reflected *no profitability loss* from embracing green practices. I took into consideration the fact that Participant 7's SME engaged in significant outsourcing, which is the solution they adopted after having experienced the adverse effects of the inadequate power supply. Costs sub-theme had connections with the *use of solar energy*.

Participant responses showed that there existed an awareness of solar energy, and its use had become more prevalent. Admittedly, though, none of the participants could say that their SME used the technology. Member 9 articulated the sentiment of other members summarily stating that “Solar power is ... getting popular ... but installing it is still very expensive for us to afford.” A few participants also admitted to the use of weak, alternate forms of power, but could not state if it had any positive or negative effects on their SMEs' profitability.

**Meta-Theme 11: Motivations.** Six findings emerged from participant responses when asked to state the motive or what gave their SME the courage necessary to assure profitability while remaining eco-friendly in the face of energy disruptions. The sources of motivation would differ considerably between SMEs. Often, such variation can be confounding, but in this instance, it paints a very vivid picture of the nuances underlying participant responses.

Table 15

*Motivations*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Costs	1	7.7%
Customer satisfaction	4	30.8%
Electricity inessential for operation	1	7.7%
Lack of consistent power	3	23.1%
Maintaining business operations	2	15.4%
No answer	2	15.4%

From Table 15 above, it can be seen that *customer satisfaction* serves as the most prominent aspect of the dynamic that motivated SMEs to try to assure profitability in the face of energy disruptions. A little over 23% cited the *lack of consistent power* as a secondary key motivator in the dynamic. An overview of the responses given showed that the two findings, *customer satisfaction* and *lack of consistent power*, correlated in most instances.

Examining the table, one might find the weak emphasis on *costs* to be odd. However, such is not the case. As stated earlier, context is necessary. The context of the study thus far has established particular participant perceptions. For instance, the sub-theme of *costs* was in a consistent linkage with overcoming *lack of consistent power*. The participants of the study have set the undertone for *costs* to be that of an inhibitor more so than a motivator or enabler. For that reason, it is unsurprising that the majority of participants do not cite it as a factor in their decision to remain eco-friendly and assure

profitability while fighting energy disruptions. From this information, I further suspected that the economic situation in the area did not encourage truly eco-friendly behavior and that the business environment is focused more so on profitability than CSR.

**Meta-Theme 12: Effects of Green Practices & SME Transactions.** When asked about the possible effects of green energy practices on SMEs seeking profitability, 12 findings emerged. The distribution of participant responses across the 12 emergent findings also did not come as a surprise to me.

Table 16

*Efforts of Green Practices & SME Transactions*

Emergent findings	Frequency	Percentage
Use of alternative power	1	2.8%
Boost in profits	4	11.1%
Costs	12	33.3%
Customer satisfaction	2	5.6%
Environmentally unfriendly alternatives	1	2.8%
Better environmental responsibility	4	11.1%
Alternative power good investment	2	5.6%
Having government support	1	2.8%
Hurting profits	5	13.9%
Large organizations better off	1	2.8%
Save money long-term	2	5.6%
Small organizations worse off	1	2.8%

The distribution of responses under this meta-theme summarized the majority of participant perceptions throughout the study. Again, the recurrence of certain findings, such as *costs* and *customer satisfaction* come as no surprise, although I expected a bit more emphasis on *customer satisfaction*. The disparity between *costs* and *customer satisfaction* did confirm to me that SMEs primary focused is on costs and profitability. In fact, the findings of *costs*, *hurting profits*, and *small organizations worse off* constituted 50% of participant perceptions regarding the effects of green energy practices for SMEs seeking profitability. The other 50% of participant perceptions displayed more optimism, as represented by the findings *boost in profits*, *customer satisfaction*, and *better environmental responsibility*.

I suspected this 50-50 dynamic to be representative of SMEs' desire to become eco-friendly on one side and their inability to overcome the constrictions placed on their business by costs associated with such an eco-friendly attitude. In effect, most SMEs seem to remain in a limbo of sorts, unable to free themselves from the hurtful impacts of energy disruption. One participant even suggested the need for government support in helping encourage SME profitability and eco-friendly business behavior. For those who can, however, *use of alternative power* is a good long-term investment. Notwithstanding, the general perception seems to show SMEs as being largely incapable of making those expenses.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

I suspected a “50-50 dynamic” to be representative of SMEs' desire to become eco-friendly on one side. However, constrictions is placed on their business by costs

associated with such an eco-friendly attitude. However, the economic situation in the area did not encourage truly eco-friendly behavior and that the business environment was focused more so on profitability than CSR. For those who could, however, use of alternative power was as a good long-term investment. Notwithstanding, the general perception showed SMEs as being largely incapable of making those investments.

Strategic management options involved the allocation of the scarce resources of the firm, and that business environment, as well as unpredictable government policies, was among the key factors that affected the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. There was a predominance of inaccurate or misleading information on SMEs and micro business success relating to management and corporate social responsibility practices. Incorrect information led to poor business management decisions by the company owners and eventual enterprise failure. Data gathered from this study provided information on the nature and causes of polluting practices that were not Eco-efficient. Such information could help industry leaders to formulate intervention strategies to prevent the trend and facilitate SMEs embracing green practices in Nigeria.

The improved professional practice was derivable from this study through increased information made available to stakeholders. A better understanding of the phenomenon of CSR and green practices and the challenges associated with the strategy could lead to improved business management practices and development of Abuja and its environs. Application of this study by SME and MB business leaders could reveal opportunities for other organizations to adapt integration of green strategies into daily business practice. By implication, SME, and Micro business industry leaders might



accept quality control /or environmental safety consciousness as business practice tenets. Additionally, this study brought up required information for change in professional practice in quality CPS selection standardization with eco-friendly initiatives. Such environmentally friendly practices might become entrenched by SME business leaders with renewed emphasis on pollution control measures as a collective responsibility of the industry.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study's findings represented a contribution to positive social change through adoption and implementation of the recommendations; that could lead to the reversal of the pollution trends in Abuja and by extension, Nigeria. Rahim and Wisuttisak (2013) theorized that incorporating CSR could create difficulty for small- and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises. Incompetence in standardized CSR practices was an important issue that caused SMEs to either lose their access global market directly or to serve as subcontractors to large enterprises. Business leaders and community change agents, the government, and other stakeholders could use the study findings to formulate new policies, and guidelines to achieve a green environment. Researchers might also develop themes and business patterns to analyze how such behaviors contributed to the success or failure of companies and improved the quality of life to achieve a higher standard of living.

The study might also be of great importance to the Nigerian public and the global community who are being exposed to an ever-increasing environmental degradation and health hazards, and the depletion of the ozone layer. Availability of information required

to make green driven CSR decision could guarantee environmental green peace and harmony, as well as a positive social change in business leaders' attitude with positive effects on global social practices.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The study of strategic management and sustainability of SMEs and how their social responsibility action has affected the environment cover a broad academic spectrum that could not be addressed entirely within the ambits of this research. The major constraints were limitations of time, resources, and scope set for the study. In limiting the abstraction of this research to be able to maintain focus and do an in-depth study, some other factors might not have received a full examination.

Therefore, the sample participants did not necessarily represent the accurate picture of Nigeria SMEs and MBs as a whole. Ministries, departments and agencies, environmental regulatory organizations, NGOs, and Chambers of Industry might learn from information made available in this study to make environmentally friendly decisions for business practice.

Conferences, training opportunities, and literature publications might stimulate organizational learning. Capacity development forums could escalate awareness and enhance the learning curve of research and the academic society as well. Dissemination of the results of this study might and further literature publications on the subject could stimulate stakeholders interest. Conference discussions and training of SME leaders organized periodically by Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and Chambers of Industry will further advance this course. Such disseminating opportunities could be

converted to showcase the modalities and benefits of embracing clean energy and CSR responsible practices for profitability and organizational sustainability.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study, though limited to pollution generated by captive power sources in Abuja and the federal capital city. However, there are other more intense pollution issues in the Niger Delta caused by multinationals that are generating intense and life threatening environmental degradation in the affected zone. A study on the pollution activities of multinational business operations in the Niger Delta might be necessary. Such a study could provide information to help business leaders adapt a more socially responsible business practices in consideration of health, safety, and environmental matters affecting the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole.

### **Reflections**

The impact of inadequate infrastructure on business survival in Nigeria needs no over-emphasis, as it tantamount to sustainability or lack of it for SMEs. Inadequate power supply drives the prevalence of weak infrastructure, which has led to the massive acquisition of environmentally hazardous and fumes emitting generators. This study explored the hypothesis that lack of administrative and strategic management and financial skills were some major reasons for SMEs weak sustainability industry trend. The truth is entrepreneurs faced the compulsion to make business survival decisions that were often detrimental to health, safety and the environment.

Activities in the manufacturing sector were often considered the bedrock of an economy and a crucial driver of growth and development (Hoogendoorn, Guerra, & van

der Zwan (2015). Within Nigeria's manufacturing sector, deficiency of operational skills was often cited as a leading cause SMEs failure. The essence of this study on SMEs profitability elements in green energy transactions tested the fragile relationship between operations skills and SME sustainability. SMEs entrepreneurs faced with an unavoidable succession dilemma made either explicit or implicit strategic decisions about transitioning and ownership of the family business.

My experience in the BDA Doctoral study process has transformed my personal biases and preconceptions and idiosyncrasies on this subject. My ideas and value system on SME profitability elements in green energy transactions significantly altered as I interacted with the participants in the study process. My transformation encounters of this study were tripartite in nature: Adopting clean environment and CSR strategies or not came as an inevitable consequence of costs and not lack of willpower. For the participants, pollution-free business practices for profitability and sustainable growth to satisfied stakeholders interest was limited by lack of information, and intellectual handicap and poor financial and material resources. As for the situation, Abuja pollution situation could be transformed as best practices are disseminated and embraced by the generality of SMEs. Finally, social change could be created through SMEs sustainable development, improved employment opportunities and a healthy living environment in Abuja FCT and indeed, the rest of Nigeria.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

Leaders who are dependent on skills and knowledge base survived in tough economic times; hence, the training of workers is required to make strategic decisions for

sustainable success. Shortcomings of leaders that lacked transformational leadership contributed to SME business survival, especially with resources that have been poorly managed. Application of strategic contingency theory supported the need for swift, informed decision on alternative power source and improved marketing strategy to secure business market share and competitive success. Previous research on the global significance of SMEs and SCR did not address the missing link in the dearth of adequate information to the plight of the environment that this study sought to explore.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

### **Interview Questionnaire**

The prompting interview questions were as follows:

1. How did you identify innovative and sustainable green energy strategies for achieving, maintaining, or increasing the profitability of your business?
2. What challenges did you encounter (or are you encountering) in implementing the strategies?
3. How did you address (or are you addressing) the challenges?
4. What measures are you using to assess the success of your business strategies and focus?
5. To what extent have your profitability strategies revealed your alignment of sustainability and CSR tenets?
6. How well have your CSR strategies worked in the face of energy disruptions?
7. What has the leadership of your SME done differently to secure competitive business success in the area of Green Practices and CSR in comparison with other Abuja-based SMEs?
8. What effects did electricity disruptions have on your organization's commitment to the continued implementation of your CSR strategies?
9. What creative ways (if any) did you deploy the strategies to convert energy interruptions to enabling environments for organizational profitability?

10. In assessing your organization, would you say that embracing green and CSR practices resulted in the loss of profitability or otherwise?
11. What gave you the courage to make decisions that assured profitability while remaining eco-friendly in the face of disrupted electricity?
12. From your experience, what possible effects could green environment practices have on SMEs seeking business profits through transactions?

## Appendix B: NIH Certificate

**Certificate of Completion**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Humphrey Edereka-Great** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 01/19/2013

Certification Number: 1079534





## Appendix C: Maps of Geographical Location of Study

Figure 1  
*Map of Federal Capital Territory Location*



Figure 2  
*Map of Location of Abuja*



Figure 3

Map showing Abuja Business Districts

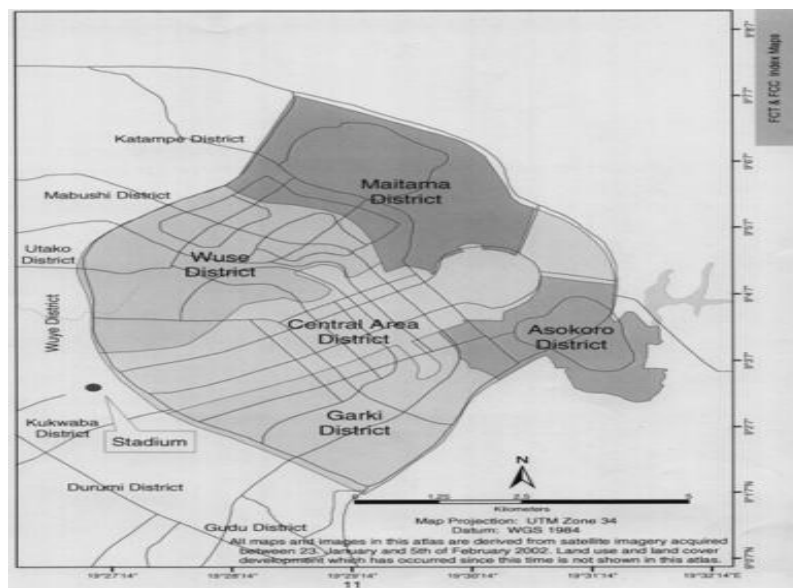


Figure 4

Map showing Federal Capital Territory Satellite Towns.

