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## **CORRUPTION AND NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC VIABILITY: LEVERAGING SINGAPOREAN MODEL AS STRATEGIC PATHWAY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the influence of corruption on Nigerian economy with Singaporean model as a moderator and strategic pathways. Qualitative design was adopted as it is a review or advocacy paper. Secondary data predominantly were used in the conduct of the study. The critical findings from the review of extant literature have shown that series of incidences of corruption characterise and pervade the Nigerian economy in its entirety. The menace of corruption has had attendant impact on both the index of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the performances of businesses which constitute the life-wire of the economy. It was concluded that corruption is caused by wrong value system fueled by personality defect and trust deficit of people who are engaged in organisations or institutions. Therefore, corruption can be curtailed when the superego in the personalities of individuals has upper hand over the id which drives people to engage in unethical and corrupt practices as moderated by ego. The study, on the strengths of its findings and conclusion, recommends that organisations and institutions should install sound value system into which individual employees in public and private establishments should key in to upgrade their values so as to allow them to be driven and guided by the superego of their personalities in their actions at all times so that Nigerian economy can breathe and become competitively buoyant.

**Keywords:** Corruption, economic viability, personality defect, Singaporean model, trust deficit

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every country of the world has its economy and Nigeria as one of the 195 sovereign nations recognized by United Nations Organisation (UNO) is by no means an exception. Typically at the micro-economics level of analysis, an economy has three components notably: households, businesses and government (Akpan, 2004). Tangential however to this discourse is the existence of legal businesses of all kinds which serve as engines that drive the economy. The production of goods and provision of essential service for consumption to uplift the standards of living of the people of a country at a reasonable profit is the focal aims of businesses (Wehrich et al., 2013). Nigeria, the largest black country in the world and reputed as the giant of Africa has hitherto, had a buoyant economy courtesy of its stupendous human and material resources which put together, places it on the global map as the largest economy in Africa (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014).

Despite this impressive status however, Nigeria with a population of over 200 million people, suffers from corruption among other social vices at national and sub-national levels, including all facets of her national life, socio-economic performance and political structure (Ekpe, 2012; Olulu-Briggs, 2020). Corruption bred by “personality defect” and “trust deficit” is so deep-seated and widespread in Nigeria that President Mohammed Buhari whose administration ended in May 29, 2023, made the fight against corruption one of the three-point agenda of his administration. The others are revamping the economy and fight against insecurity (Umaru, 2020).

Overwhelmed by the depth of corruption, Buhari raised alarm to the effect that “if we do not kill corruption, corruption will kill us” as a country (Ebhomele, 2015). The critical and pertinent question becomes: at the end of Buhari’s administration, was corruption eradicated or even reduced in Nigeria’s national life and scheme of things? The answer to the simple but complex question is, in all honesty, in the negative. Premium Times (2022) confirms thus “tragically, cronyism and nepotism in Buhari’s key appointments have conflated with the working of government agencies at cross-purposes to fuel corruption.” The following select incidences of corruption and social vices during the administration can attest:

In the education sector, the case of snake swallowing 36 billion Naira is well-known and documented (Oyero, 2017; Aluko, 2018). In the finance sector, the former Accountant-General, Ahmed Idris, allegedly made away with 109 billion Naira (Ejekwonyilo, 2022) and the case is yet handled by appropriate government agency. In the oil and gas sector, several barrels of crude lifted via direct connection of pipes to ships in the sea was detected and reported by a private security firm called Tanita Security Outfit (Akintayo, 2023).

In the area of pension reforms, over 2 billion Naira have been stolen (Ejekwonyilo, 2021) and the same in aviation industry where a foreign airline was dubiously dubbed “Nigeria Air” (Sulaimon, 2023). The banking industry witnessed the menace of cashless policy from January to March, 2023 during which period hapless Nigerians were exposed to harrowing and excruciating hardships to get fund to support themselves, families and businesses. The incident is currently still pending in court as the former Central Bank Governor, Mr. Godwin Emefiele was arrested, detained and now facing financial crime charges in court (Adeyemi, 2023; Orjinmo, 2023). The sordid narrative of corrupt episodes in Nigerian economy is endless.

The 2023 elections conducted by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) is still an issue of on-going litigations. The bane of insecurity (armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, herdsman-farmers’ clashes) and looting of treasuries by political office holders at national, state and local government levels are commonplace and almost all these cases of financial infractions are under endless investigations by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corruption and Practices Commission (ICPC), (Ibanichuka, 2022). The record of performances of these commissions are in the public domains. Yet, corruption continues to bestride the national landscape of Nigeria as a colossus, consistently exacerbating the business environment and posing major threats to business survival.

The modus-operandi of corruption is not rocket-science in the sense that corruption is a self-inflicted malady committed by a person or a group of persons working either alone or in concert with others to carry out unethical practices. Corruption has stunted economic growth, caused major setback to national development and shuttered many businesses (Premium Times, 2022). Whenever and wherever corruption occurs, it means that sound management in line with best practices is negated.

Specifically, personality-defects of supposed national leaders and corporate executives come to the fore and are to blame as the fount of trust dries up and lays bare, resulting in what may be described as trust-deficit syndrome. Given the bad image that corruption has earned the country, the policy of ease-of-doing business has come under direct threats and businesses in the country become sure and ready victims. Since

personality defect and trust-deficit as identified earlier, are manifestations of corruption, it is pertinent that they are x-rayed and analysed critically.

In the same vein, the question that readily agitates the mind becomes: what is the way out of the corruption conundrum? Attempt to answer this perplexed question informs the need to appreciate the import of Allport's trait theory, Carl Rogers' humanistic theory, and Sigmund Freud's psycho-dynamic theory; and also leverage the Singaporean model as possible instruments to curb the menace of corruption, and moderate its effect on Nigeria's economy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

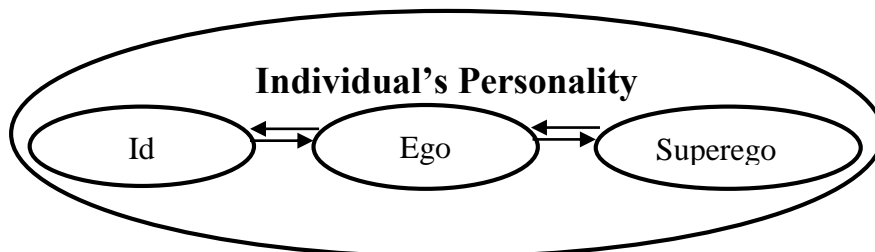
This research is grounded on trait theory, psycho-dynamic theory and humanistic theory.

**Trait theory:** Trait theory (Allport, 1936) focuses on the building blocks and source of individual's uniqueness which prompt and guide their actions in a consistent way aside from being enduring, general or broad in scope (Gibson et al., 2003; Cherry, 2023). In connection with trait theory, Raymond B. Cartell developed 16 personality factors (16PF) questionnaire. Trait theory hinges on the traits that leaders possess that are capable of making them effective in the discharge of their roles. Experience has shown that strategic leaders and managers create vision and chart strategic direction for organisations. Hence, they are inspirers and directors of action as they possess the combination of both personality and leadership competence and skills that should make subordinates and others want to follow their directions (Okoro, 2020).

This goes to explain why the problem of Nigerian is often attributed to poor leadership. Igwe and Ateke (2019) decried that rulership, rather than leadership has characterized governance and that mafias and privileged individuals with vested interest in what they can take from the country perpetuate themselves in power. The supposed Nigerian leaders in the garb of captains of industry, bureaucrats, administrators and politicians are wired to deify themselves; promote parochial and selfish initiatives that advance their interests and those of a few, hence, provides fertile grounds for corruption in Nigerian economy (Nkuda, 2023).

These distant leaders behave as socio-psychopaths who are largely bereft of integrity and moral fiber. As a result, public institutions with which individuals and businesses relate are weakened, and survival and growth of businesses are stifled and undermined (Nkuda, 2023). The major criticism of trait theory however, is that it has not established the "cause of trait" (Gibson et al., 2023).

**Psychodynamic theory:** Psychodynamic theory came to the lime-light around the 1900s. The focus of the theory is the psychological differences and fundamental drives of individuals which are distinguished into two major parts notably: id and superego with the ego as the moderator between the two distinct parts as shown in fig. 1.



**Fig. 1:** Schema of interaction between id, superego and ego

**Source:** Adapted from Gibson et al. (2003).

The Id is the primitive and unconscious part of individual's personality that store fundamental drives (Gibson et al., 2003). The id urges individuals to do things that feel and seem good without considering the moral consequences and implications of such actions. The superego is the repository of values and virtues which help individuals to insist on doing what is right at all times and in keeping with societal norms. The subtle and hardly noticeable conflict in individual's personality is moderated by the ego as it gratifies and goads the id, most of the times, to act without minding unpleasant consequences using some ego defence mechanisms such as rationalisation, identification, compensation and denial (Gibson et al., 2003). It is fitting therefore to hypothesise that acts of corruption in Nigeria can be linked to more active operation of the id in the personalities of individuals as opposed to the superego which becomes suppressed most of the times. Therefore, to tackle corruption head-on, the superego should be much more active in individuals' personalities than the id. Thus the following model is specified:

$$S > I \neq S > I$$

Where: S = Superego, > Greater than, I = Id and  $\neq$ , Not equal to.

**Humanistic Theory:** The humanistic theory is associated with Carl Rogers and thrust of the theory is growth and self-actualisation (Gibson et al., 2023; Sapru, 2013). The ambition of most individuals to succeed in life is normal. However, the awry part of the quest to realise one's ambition especially in Nigeria, becomes anti-social based on the adoption of Machiavellian approach of the "ends justify the means" (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 2002; Gibson et al., 2003). Take for instance, some Nigerians engage in corrupt practices reflected in ritual killings, kidnapping, abduction, terrorism and round-tripping, fraud etcetera in the bid to be perceived as successful and self-actualised. Meanwhile, these tendencies impact negatively on the image of the country, worsen the business environment and scare direct foreign investors.

### Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption is a pervasive socio-economic malaise with no consensual definition that has afflicted many countries of the world in varying degrees (Iyanda, 2012; Brooks et al., 2013). However, one best way to pinpoint corruption is when an individual's act negates ethical and moral principles that guide official conduct vis-à-vis the discharge of assigned responsibilities (Iyanda, 2012).

Corruption is conceptualized differently across cultures. The English calls it "corruption." In Nigeria, the Yorubas call it "Egunje", Igbos call it "Igbuozu", Hausas call it "Chauchua" (Iyanda, 2012) and Efiks/Ibibios call it "Ubok edem" which literally translates as kick-back. It is a pandemic and social disease that is not unique to Nigeria. This premise explains why countries of the world are rated and compartmentalised in relation to corruption as the most corrupt and least corrupt with other countries falling in between the two extreme divides.

Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore and Sweden are rated as the least corrupt countries in the world with consistent high ranking around financial transparency. While Somalia with a score of 12 points and Syria and South Sudan with scores of 13 points each are rated as the most corrupt countries in the world (Wikipedia, 2023). Nkuda (2008) states that corruption starts with gratification of self, followed by greed. Okowa (n.d) affirms that corruption has become institutionalised following the destruction of the nexus between inputs of factors of production and output with attendant consequences of rent-seeking mentality and narcissistic mind-set.

Sanni (2023) and Transparency International (2023) put the status of Nigeria with respect to corruption at 150<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries of the world rated having scored 24 points out of 100 points in 2022 ranking which is the same as in 2021. This ugly characterisation of corruption finds co-incidence in the graphic description of corruption according to NDIC Annual Report (2020), EFCC Operational Statistics (2010 – 2019), Fafowora, (2015), Akinmuntimi (2016) and Winsor (2016) cited in Ibanichuka (2022) as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Select Fraud-Related Petitions to EFCC from Private and Public Sectors of Nigeria**

S/No.	Sectors/Agencies	Cases in 2019	Cases in 2020	% Increase	Amount (N) Involved in 2019	Amount (N) Involved in 2020	Loss (N) in 2019	Loss (N) in 2020
1.	Banks representing private sector	52,754	146,153	177.10	204.65bn	120.79bn	5.46bn	5.33bn
2.	Public Sector	Cost to GDP % in 2016	Cost to GDP % in 2030	-	-	-	-	-
	-	20% translating into \$2,000.00 per individual or \$534 Billion	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC)	Cases in 2010	Cases in 2019	% Increase	-	-	-	-
		6,782	73,948	990.36%	-	-	-	-

**Source:** Adapted from Ibanichuka (2022) Inaugural lecture, series no. 179.

Extant literature is replete with dimensions of corruption. Relying on Singleton et al. (2006), Ibanichuka (2022) enumerates types and litany of fraud as a case of corruption to include: accounts payable fabrication, padding expenses, bid rigging, padding government contracts and budgets, benefit claim fraud, cheque forgery, price fixing, commercial bribery, procurement fraud, corporate fraud, tax fraud, theft of cash, conversion, shell company schemes, duplicity, electronic fund transfer fraud, looting, embezzlement, expense claim fraud, financial fraud, fraudulent financial statement, insider trading, lapping, misappropriation, diversion, kick-back, money laundering, over billing, oil and gas scams and scandals. Nwakanma (2023) also provides a litany of corrupt cases as enumerated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Allegedly Stolen Funds and Illicit Financial Flows**

Date	Illicit Financial Flow Event	Amount in Dollars (\$)	Amount in Naira (N)
1983	Abacha's Loot	\$320 million	-
1998	Abacha's US/Jersey account	\$311 million	-
2005	DSP Alamiyesigha	\$40million	-
2007	Joshua Dariye	-	N1.126 Billion
2007	Jolly Nyame	-	N1.64 Billion
2008	Lucky Igbinedion	\$24 million	-
2015	Alhaji Abdullahi	-	N42 Billion
2015	James Bala Ngilari	-	N167 Million
2015	Abubakar Malami	\$15 million	-
2015	Allison Deziani	\$20 billion	-
2015	Ziakede Akpobolokemi	-	N12 Billion
2015	Sambo Dasuki	-	N12 Billion
2017	Alex Badeh	-	N800 Million
2018	Musiliu Obanikoro	-	N6.7 Billion
2019	Patience Jonathan	-	N31.4 Million
2021	Farouk Lawan	\$3 million	-
2022	Former Accountant General	\$190 million	-
2022	Peter Nwaoboshi	-	N3.6 Billion
2022	Olisah Metuh	-	N400 Million
2022	Femi Fani Kayode	-	N4.6 Billion
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$21,223,000,000.00</b>	<b>N241,997,400,000.00</b>

N/B: Some values were converted to Dollar.

Source: Retrieved from <https://www.pulse.ng>, <https://www.ripplesnigeria.com> and Nwakanma (2023)

The above-listed instances are, no doubt, manifest cases of corruption which, in each case, remains an effect rather than the cause. In this study therefore, earnest efforts were made to look at corruption from the perspective of its cause(s). Corruption has to be tackled from its root cause and not its effect. Otherwise, all efforts and crusades against corruption will not yield the desired results. Hence, personality-defect and trust-deficit perceived as the root causes were adopted as proxies of corruption.

**Personality-Defect:** Personality as a concept in the discipline of management falls within the purview of organisational behaviour which deals with individuals, groups, and structure, and how these impact behaviour in organisations (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Personality is defined as “a stable set of characteristics and tendencies that determine commonalities and differences in people’s behaviour” (Gibson et al, 2003). The way an individual behave, act and interact intimately reflect their personality. Personality is holistically organised, observable, measurable, biologically rooted and socially and environmentally influenced as shown in fig. 2.

At one time, the features of an individual’s personality are similar to other people and at another, the features are unique. Technically, this underscores what is known as psychological differences. Extant literature enumerate factors that influence the behaviour of individuals (Gibson et al., 2003). Okoro (2020) advocates that since strategic leaders and managers create vision and chart strategic direction for organisations, they are inspirers and directors of action as they possess a combination of both personality and leadership competences as well as skills that should make subordinates and others to want to follow their directions.



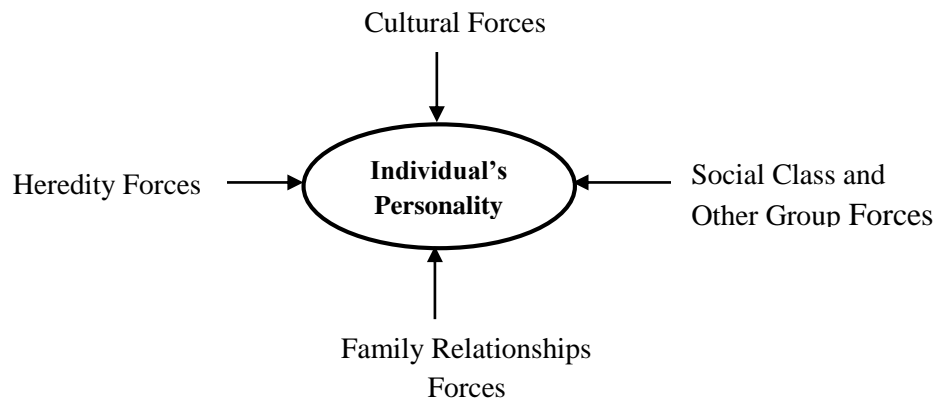


Fig. 2: Schematics of forces influencing human personality.

Source: Adapted from Gibson et al. (2003). *Organisations: Behaviour, structure and processes*.

**Trust-Deficit:** Trust is a generalized expectancy or opinion held by an individual or group that the verbal or written words or promises of another, could be relied upon (Asiegbu, 2012, as cited in Ateke et al., 2016). Trust describes one party's reliance on the actions of another, believing that the other party will always act in their interest (Markova et al, 2007, as cited in Ateke et al., 2016). Individuals earn the trust of others based on their dependability, competence, honesty and likeability.

Confidence is an important element in defining trust. As one parties expect each other to perform actions that would result in positive outcomes, there is an element of confidence that the parties would not take unexpected actions which would cause negative outcomes. Trust is the foundation of successful long-term relationships (Schumacher, 2006).

Business organisations are made up of people who work together to achieve set of goals (Robbins, 2005). Individuals decide to exchange their competences, expertise, skills and services for income that guarantee respectable standard of living (Sapru, 2013). The goal-induced relationship between employers and workers as providers of services triggers not only goal conflicts that require delicate balancing because it is underpinned by mutual suspicion and distrust but also introduces the equation of motivation which Amah and Nkuda (2014) represented as:  $M = N + I + C + R$ .

Where:

M = Motivation

N = Needs involving both employers and employees.

I = Incentives made available by employers.

C = Challenges employees face in the discharge of assigned tasks.

R = Responsibilities employees are expected to execute in exchange for available incentives.

In business transactions, customer do not always fully trust suppliers to deliver their order intact in terms of quantity, quality and time (Ogbuji & Azuma, 2022). Likewise, employers may elect to gamble with entitlements of employees when it is uncertain that employees would deliver on their own side of the bargain. Federal government's eight months face-off with Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 2022 is a typical case in point (Idoko, 2023).

By the same token, some employees out of anxiety that they may not be able to meet their stated needs come under pressure, rationalise and seize available opportunities to indulge in cutting corners and engaging in corrupt practices to short change their employer. In a scenario such as this, trust-deficit sets in and the once-trusted employees become "trust violators" (Cressey, 1949, as cited in Ibanichuka, 2022).

Trust is viciously breached and integrity as well as transparency are thrown over-board when the instinct to “get-rich-quick” seizes an individual and drives them into the cesspool of kleptomania. The attendant ruinous impact on overall performance puts the continued survival of organisations in jeopardy, and cause economies to nose-dive terribly.

### **Nigeria’s Economic Viability**

Countries institute government to administer their affairs. They also have economies that reflect their socio-economic, cultural and political configurations. Nigeria’s is no exception. Global economies are compartmentalised into: capitalism, socialism, communism and mixed-economic system (Onuoha & Ogbulu, 2011). In as much as no economy fits purely into these categories, Nigeria’s economy is, in practice, a mixed, as both government and private individuals play one role or another in the entire gamut of the economic activity.

An economy refers to the system or structure of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services among individuals, businesses and governments. Rees (2015) buttresses that economy is the chain of activities which include: “production, consumption, allocation and exchange of valuable goods and services as well as the behaviour of many agents engaged in the economic activity.”

The macro-economic imperatives of any economy demand that the formulation of economic policies, irrespective of the government in power, should be tailored to achieve price stability, maintenance of full employment, achievement of equilibrium in the balance of payments’ position and attainment of economic growth and development on a sustainable basis (Onuchukwu, 2016).

However, reality negates these tenets in Nigeria, as the economy is afflicted with several challenges Anikpo (2015), including hunger, poverty, youth unemployment, cultism and insurgency, political hooliganism, and inordinate greed whether as corruption or stealing, chronic environmental degradation, gas flares, oil theft and illegal refining of crude oil, socio-structural disequilibrium occasioned by conflicts of all types, kidnapping for ransom and ritual killings for monetary gains have created a social anomie with heightened anxieties among the Nigerian populace.

Given the economic imperatives targeted to be achieved at the macro-economic level and the reality x-rayed above, it is clear that all is not well with Nigeria’s economy. This is also demonstrated by the performance of business entities in Nigeria and major economic indices such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and business survival.

**Gross Domestic Product:** GDP refers to the total quantity of goods produced and services rendered in an economy within a specified period of time valued and expressed in monetary terms. When an economy thrives, there should be noticeable aggregate productivity gains pointing to expanding GDP (Tonye & Anthony, 2022). Productivity in this context refers to the disposition of a nation to generate outputs from its own resources. It is not difficult to discern when an economy expands, contracts or shrinks as the expansion can be real, inflated or nominal reflected in economic indicators such as: rise in per capita income, GDP, gross national product (GNP) and net national income (NI) as well as structural changes that impact the economy (Akpotor, 2021).

Extant economic literature informs that GDP remains the most credible barometer with which economic growth reflected in the expansion of a nation’s total output over time can be assessed (Mladen, 2015). While changes in material production point to economic development within a short period of time (Tonye & Anthony, 2022). While economic growth has to do with increase in the production of goods and services assessed from one period to another, economic development describes the capacity of the nation to leverage the growth to provide critical welfare needs of the citizenry in terms of education, infrastructure, security, food security, medical care, portable water, laws and order etcetera (Ibanichuka, 2022).



The Nigeria economy has not performed well for a very long time as it is burdened and riddled with corruption. Ibanickuka (2022) states that when either public or private sector of the economy is bereft of corruption, it performs optimally and the reverse becomes the case when it is over-burdened with corruption of unimaginable magnitude as in Nigerian situation.

**Business survival:** Business can be described as legal and organised set of economic activities involving either the production of goods or provision of services or even both to others at a profit. Since business entities have to be organised. Robbins (2005) defines them as social units where people come together fairly regularly to pursue common goals. Businesses are also viewed as socio-economic windows through which people get engaged and thus, be able to make a living to improve their general welfare (Baridam, 1993; Sapru, 2013). Businesses have stated goals to achieve within the environmental context in which they operate. However, the realisation of these goals is fundamentally contingent on the survival of the businesses in the first place. Extant literature attests to the fact that entrepreneurs who fail to factor in survival in their operational strategies may not go far and as such, should have serious re-think (Gross, 1968).

Threats to business survival which spans the life of an average business enterprise are both internal and external. Corrupt practices by employees across board constitute serious internal threats while disruptive, competitive and forces of globalisation and liberalisation both financial and otherwise are external threats with which businesses have to contend (Wehrich et al., 2015; Tonye & Anthony, 2022). The cumulative impact of these threats orchestrates and accounts for untimely winding-up of most business enterprises in Nigeria leaving in their trail unemployment among other social discomforts (Shermerhorn, 2010).

Ventura (2023) puts global unemployment figure at 208 million people (5.8%) as at March, 2023) out of which Nigeria's share stood at 23 million unemployed people in 2022 representing 11.1% of global figure apart from other direct consequences on the economy (George, 2022). The need to survive therefore compels and informs that strategy that works such as the Singaporean model which emphasises meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty (MPH) should be leveraged.

### **The Singaporean Model**

The idea of bureaucratic organisations was introduced into the field of management by Max Weber (1864–1920) to encourage and enthrone efficiency in the operations of businesses and government institutions. The Weberian characteristics and prescriptions include: division of labour, hierarchy of authority, centralisation, impersonality, career development based on merit, set of rules and procedures as well as documentation (Griffen, 2005; Sapru, 2013).

The Weberian characteristics that is pertinent and of particular relevance to this discourse is merit which resonates with the meritocracy emphasised in the Singaporean model. Significantly and imperatively, the practice of merit in career development as in meritocracy stresses the need to appoint people, officers and employees to positions based on merit and never on the basis of primordial sentiments such as ethnic, religious, political, marital, filial, clannish, connections (a.k.a., man knows man), false claims, bribery, bottom power and other queer or eerie and outlandish considerations.

Sadly, these negatives which define and spell mediocrity happen to be the afflictions of Nigeria and its economy in unimaginable ways. The pursuit of meritocracy in Singaporean clime meant that merit coupled with paying attention to details, reviewing plans regularly, emphasising strategic thinking and modifying course of action as situation dictates is the only yard-stick on the basis of which appointments to positions of authorities in private and public sectors of the Singaporean economy could be made (Chan et al., 2015).

Khan (2001) buttresses that meritocracy is a motivational system of reward and advancement which insists that only the “best” should be elevated to positions of power, authority, influence and responsibility and its

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by-product is mainly the fact that “government knows the best” reflected as usual refrain in statements of government officials and political leaders in Singapore. Whereas in Nigeria, merit and all its attendant benefits are, most of the times, neglected and consigned more or less to the trash can as they become substituted with sentiments, connections and dubious considerations.

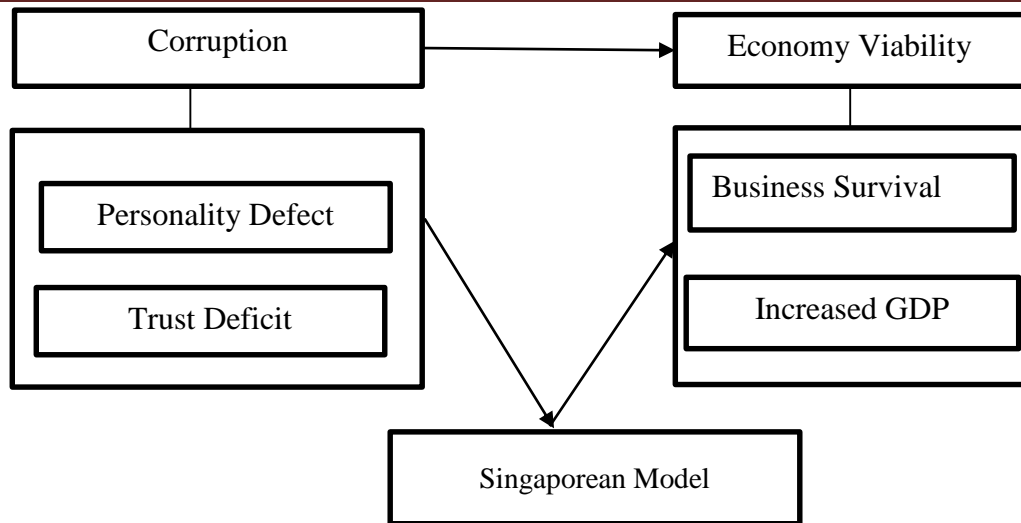
The two other principles conjunctively pursued by Singaporean government were pragmatism and honesty in private and public service. The practice of pragmatism emphasised what works and best practices as opposed to trite conventions and traditions that hitherto did not get the Singapore anywhere. The core of pragmatism is resonated in the statement credited to Dr. Goh Keng Swee thus “Kishoe, no matter what problem Singapore encounters, somebody, somewhere, has solved it. Let us copy the solution and adapt it to Singapore. Copying best practices is something any country can do (Abeyskera, 2022).

The idea of honesty meant that all workers across board in the private and public service must be above board and transparent in the conduct of their official affairs. The net effect of fidelity to the practices of meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty (MPH) succeeded in catapulting Singapore from a third world country in 1963 and 1965 when it obtained independence from United Kingdom and Malaysia respectively to a first world country under the able, self-less and astute leadership of the master builder and one-man intelligence agency, Lee Kuan Yew as the Prime Minister, his cabinet and successors in office (Islam, 2015).

Singaporeans fell in line as they were well aware of the grave consequences that awaited anyone who deviated or violated these noble principles of state craft (Islam, 2015). Singapore records the highest per capita GDP of \$56,000.00 between 1965 and 2014 and ranked as the third most competitive country in the world after United States of America and Hong Kong (Islam, 2015).

In contrast, Nigeria which obtained political independence from Britain in 1960 only recorded the highest per capita GDP of \$2,792 between 2012 and 2015 under Jonathan’s regime (Akinpelu, 2021) which subsequently declined to per capita GDP of between \$2,140 (Sasu, 2023) and \$2,184 in 2022 (Macrotrends, 2023). While Nigeria is endowed with abundant human and material resources in terms crude oil and gas deposits, Singapore is described as resource scarce country which, though not sure of its survival after independence, depends heavily on its strategic location at Malacca Strait to be the largest container port in the world after Shanghai in China and regional hub for regional and global air travel (Islam, 2015).

Unlike Nigeria with a population of about 200 million, with high crime rate and endemic corruption. Singapore, has a population of 5.5 million, low crime rate, no incidence of corruption in its public sector and draw 22% of its income from transactions overseas (Islam, 2015). The best practices: meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty that worked for Singapore can be leveraged to unleash a new Nigeria where politics and power work for the good of Nigerian economy reflected in business survival and all-round prosperity for all Nigerians. Moreover, the huge resources deployed to carry out forensic investigation of fraud cases can be saved and used for other areas of priority in the corporate organisations and public institutions as well (Ibanichuka, 2022).



**Fig. 2:** conceptual framework of corruption and economy viability: Leveraging Singaporean model as a strategic pathways.

**Source:** Researcher's Conceptualisation (2023).

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing discourse, it has been established that corruption is personality-driven virus with attendant damaging impact on Nigerian economy reflected in the decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and performances of businesses of all sizes which undertake the production of goods and provision of services to enhance economic growth and development. This paper therefore recommends that business managers and policy makers should leverage what works typical of Singaporean model which stresses incorporation of meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty in the scheme of things in private cum public institutions.

Adopt stringent measures such as prison terms on cases of corruption with prima-facie evidence, discourage recognition and promotion of corrupt individuals to positions of trust. Negative influences of traditional institutions, Churches and societies on individuals' personalities including State pardon for acts of corruption as in the cases of Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame should be discouraged. Instead, best practices successfully implemented by other countries of the world such as Singapore, Denmark, Finland, Norway, New Zealand and Sweden described as the least corrupt countries should be adapted as against the most corrupt countries in the world such as Somalia, Syria and South Sudan according to corruption perception index (Wikipedia, 2023).

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