

# The Effects of Corruption in the Church and Its Consequences: Case of Yaounde I Municipality in the Center Region of Cameroon

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## Abstract

Corruption is a phenomenon with serious consequences that affects all communities in the world. In Cameroon, its effects are widespread in all sectors. In both 1998 and 1999, Transparency International identified Cameroon as the globe's leading corrupt nation. Corruption has cut across every sector of the country, and that is why this study was therefore carried out to determine the effects of corruption in the church. Survey data for this study were quantitatively analyzed by use of Semi-structured questionnaires, to test the statistical relationships using descriptive statistical methods and regression methods with the Structural Equation Model [CB-SEM], and with the aid of SPSS and AMOS 24 statistical packages. The study examined the causes of corruption in the church, the consequences of corruption on church growth, and the extent to which corruption can be curbed in the church. The respondents concurred that corruption was a serious issue and that its existence resulted from a lack of accountability, transparency, and awareness of its repercussions.

**Keywords:** corruption, church, consequences

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Greed is the root cause of corruption, which is an act that departs from the formal codes of conduct that regulate the behavior of public officials due to personal goals like wealth power, or status (Ackerman, 1999; Khan, 1996). It entails a pervasive failure to tap self-interest for productive purposes. Hence, corruption whether in the public or private sector, symbolizes an abuse of institutional trust for private gain. Cameroon has a total land area of about 475,440 sq. km and its coastline on the Gulf of Guinea stretches to about 402km. Its international land borders are shared with the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Nigeria (Britannica.com, 2023). The country has 10 Regions. It is an obvious fact that corruption is a major problem confronting sustainable development in Cameroon. Some public administrators embezzle public funds with impunity. In the private sector, insider trading and gross abuse of office is the order of the day. The state of Cameroon is presently experiencing a pandemic of corrupt practices in both the public and private sectors. Numerous instances of public administrator corruption have been documented, but they have not been successfully prosecuted. This is a reflection of the judiciary's corruption. Corruption has become the culture of many Cameroonians from the lower to the upper strata of society. The nation holds the distinction of being named the world's most corrupt state twice, in 1998 and 1999 (Transparency International 1998 & 1999).

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The number of churches has significantly increased, but corruption and other social vices have also increased in tandem. It is assumed that if Churches are increasing, their positive impact on the lives of the people should be greater than when there were few Churches. Therefore, the researcher questioned whether the expansion of the

Church and the increase in corruption in these societies are related. This is the reason the researcher plans to look into the effects of church corruption.

### *1.3 Objective of the Study*

Examining the effects of corruption in the church is the study's main goal, but to finish it, the researcher hopes to accomplish the following specific objectives;

- 1) To determine the causes of corruption in the church.
- 2) To examine the consequences of corruption on the growth of the church.
- 3) To analyze the extent to which corruption can be curbed in the church.

### *1.4 Research Questions*

To aid with the study's completion, the researcher developed the following research questions;

- 1) What are the causes of corruption in the church?
- 2) Do the consequences of corruption affect the growth of the church?
- 3) To what extent can corruption be curbed in the church?

### *1.5 Research Hypotheses*

Based on the positivism epistemology and objectivism ontological philosophy, this study is anchored on the deductive approach charged to test theories and empirical evidence using hypotheses as shown below:

- 1) The causes of corruption have a significant effect on the church.
- 2) The consequences of corruption have an impact on the growth of the church.
- 3) The strategy to curb corruption has a significant effect on the church.

### *1.6 Significance of the Study*

As the study aims to investigate the effects of corrupt practices on the body of Christ, it is anticipated that the results will be extremely significant to pastors and church administration upon completion. Since the study aims to investigate the effects of corrupt practices in the church, it will be of importance to all of Christendom. Because the study will be used as a reference for future research, it will also be significant to researchers planning to conduct a study on a related subject.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 The Challenge of Corruption in Cameroon: The Present Offensive State of Affairs*

The trend of corruption in Cameroon is alarming, and it is a cause for concern (Nchise D. N. & Alain V. N. I, 2019). The country has the record to have been classified twice as the most corrupt state in the world; in 1998 and 1999 Transparency International indices, (1998 & 1999). The corruption classification index for 1998 & 1999 can be seen below.

According to the Transparency International Index for 2021, Cameroon was ranked 144<sup>th</sup> country of 180 countries which were classified. The 2022 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Cameroon 142<sup>nd</sup> out of 180 countries. Having a deep look at the results above, the researcher landed on the fact that corruption has become a killer disease in the social, economic, political, and spiritual environment of the country.

### *2.2 Corruption and the Many Responses to It*

Corruption is not an easy word to define. For instance, defining it as having to do with abuse of office excludes those aspects of it not related to abuse of office but which are eminently corrupt practices. A public officer can be guilty of corruption just like a private citizen. Corruption is both legal and moral; it can be economic, political academic, or religious. A seemingly good-intentioned action could be charged with corruption or what has been called noble cause corruption.

According to Bechem (2018), its effects in Cameroon are widespread in Public, Private, and Religious organizations. These organizations are characterized by acts of embezzlement, corruption, misappropriation of funds, and the list goes on. To strengthen the aforementioned view, TITI-NWELL (2009), further highlights that corruption is an offense committed by "any citizen who, for him/herself or third party, solicits, approves, or receives offers, promises, gifts or presents to do, abstain from doing or defer an act from its function". Otite (1986) shares a similar perspective with Titi-Nwell, (2009) by framing corruption as any action, intention, or means that attempts to distort the integrity of the state or influence the state of affairs through acts of bribery, favoritism, or moral depravity.

### *2.3 Corruption from a Theological Perspective*

Corruption has become a disease plaguing all of humanity and no country is exempted from its influence. It has already been noted that even the countries that come top in the ratings of Transparency International are not corruption-free. The T.I. report itself makes that clear. And the problem did not start today; it has always been the case throughout human history. A casual perusal of historical documents, biblical and non-biblical, will make anyone wonder how what is true of contemporary people was also true of the ancients. All of this should lead us to go beyond the issue of corruption itself to examine what could be at the root of all this.

### 2.3.1 Going back to the Roots: Creation and Fall

To begin to understand the universality and perennial nature of corruption through human history, we need to go back to the genesis of human existence on earth. The Bible traces the origin of humanity to Adam, created by God to be his vice-regent on the earth. Adam was created good, equipped to glorify God and to enjoy a close relationship with him (Gen. 1:26 - 27; 3:8). A calamitous event happened which theologians refer to as the fall; Adam and Eve turned their backs on God deciding to go their ways. The historical implications of this event have been a big theological debate over the years.

### 2.3.2 The Divine Game Plan: Redemption and Recreation

Theologically, the incarnation is God's answer to the question of human fall. According to some interpreters God served notice of this right in the same account that reports the fall (Gen. 3:15). Others argue that the incarnation had already been ordained even before the fall because God foreknew the fall was going to happen; a case of God answering the question before it was asked. The incarnation, the event at which God took on human form to redeem humanity, and the concomitant work of regeneration that it produces in believing humans represent a reversal of the fall and all its consequences.

### 2.3.3 The Process of Spiritual Corruption in Cameroon

Cameroon is a very religious society no doubt. Churches, mosques, and shrines dot the country's landscape. Because so many Cameroonian citizens are followers of Christianity, Islam, or African Indigenous Religions, the country's atheist population is negligible. Our religious identity is reflected in our names and dress in addition to the ways we worship. Religious festivals are commonplace here. Easter and Christmas celebrations are observed annually by Christians. These are apart from the annual church congresses, rallies, and conventions. The feast of the Ram and Ramadan is also celebrated by Muslims every year.

Encyclopedia.com describes spiritual corruption as "a light satiric comedy that aims at religious hypocrisy in the form of a charlatan, or fraud"; a certain Brother Jerie, who preached to his followers at Beach Hotel during a convention; Jerie is a master of manipulation and keeps his followers in a subservient position because he understands that they long for money, social status, and power; and convinces them that they will soon be able to fulfill these materialistic desires. That got the researcher thinking. Indeed, spiritual corruption thrives in this country with millions of people being daily scammed by supposed religious leaders.

### 2.3.4 The Endgame: All Things Made New

Erickson (1994) speaks of optimism and pessimism, the optimism of the change God can make in a man canceling out the pessimism about the goodness of an unregenerate man. The transformation that regeneration brings about in the life of a person is only the beginning of a process that will be consummated in the eschaton (doctrine of the end-time). In reality, the transformation spoken about here does not happen all at once and will only be completed at the consummation of time and this process is supervised by the Holy Spirit of God.

Interestingly, there is a theological connection between the doctrine of the end-time (eschatology) and the doctrine of the Spirit (Pneumatology). In the Bible, the link between the Spirit and eschatology is easily manifested. In the Gospels, the life and ministry of Christ are seen as the beginning of the biblical end of days, especially with the depth of the Spirit's manifestation in Jesus' life and ministry (Matt. 12: 22, Luke 11: 14). Indeed, in prophetic history the last days are portrayed as the age of the Spirit. This connection between the Holy Spirit and the last days helps us to make an important point namely the progressive nature of God's transforming work in the life of the believer and the role of the Holy Spirit in that process.

## 2.4 Forms of Corruption

Corruption can take different forms. It can occur in the misappropriation of money or property or in an illicit influence on decisions by bribery, which always involves both active and passive participants. Some of the forms that have been observed can be seen as follows:

### 2.4.1 Misappropriation of Funds

Misappropriation may consist of private use of the funds or resources, use for purposes other than designated, unjustified disbursement, or stealing of these funds or resources. Examples: Funds are used for purposes other than agreed. For example, buildings constructed with project funds are used for purposes not agreed upon in the

project contract, in extreme cases for private purposes, or luxury vehicles are bought.

#### 2.4.2 Nepotism, Patronage, Preferential Treatment

In placing orders and recruiting personnel, persons are preferred who are close to the principal (by religious, ethnic, social, or family relations) lead to recruiting rules and quality standards being neglected. The beneficiaries of this treatment may even take up jobs that are not needed or may be granted higher salaries. Jobs may also be obtained by bribery — ranging from teaching and nursing jobs in church institutions to bishop posts in Protestant churches. In many Protestant churches, the bishop is elected by the synod, sometimes for a limited period, and sometimes for life. In certain churches, these elections have been distorted by the payment of bribes to the electors. The candidates know that the invested sums can be recovered later, but not through their regular salary.

#### 2.4.3 Conduct Towards People with Knowledge of Corruption

Protection by bribery: an office-holder who needs to cover his abuse with forged receipts or other forms of corruption may bribe those who know of it to make them cooperate. In extreme cases, this method may even cripple the work of supervisory bodies which were created to prevent corruption.

### 2.5 *Consequences of Corruption*

Corruption always has terrible consequences. In the words of Salaudeen Hashimu & James Ancell (2017), corruption is not a victimless crime. Jose Ugaz, chair of Transparency International, is certain of this. Because of corruption, people in far too many nations lack access to their necessities and go hungry every night, while the wealthy and dishonest live extravagant lives with impunity. This is the reason the majority of Cameroonians believe corruption is the cause of the country's underdevelopment, poor infrastructure, comatose healthcare delivery, and falling educational standards, among other things. Across the country, road projects are poorly done or abandoned outright, hospitals lack up-to-date functional equipment needed for effective health care services, public utilities are not properly maintained and there is so much waste as a result.

Unfortunately, what is true of the public space is true also of the church. There are well-publicized as well as unreported cases of church leaders embezzling church funds, tribalism, nepotism, position grabbing, and so on. There are many church leaders and Christians who are sincerely serving their Lord, but several have turned instead to serve Mammon both in the church and in the community.

Shall we talk about the church's penchant for expecting large donations from its members and others who are political officeholders without bothering to consider if their legitimate earnings can support such large donations? At a recent lecture given at Victory Life Bible Church International, the speaker challenged church leaders who not only celebrate but venerate those whose sources of wealth are questionable. They don't ask questions when they accept gifts or offerings from anyone. This creates the idea that anything can be accepted in God's house. The speaker also discussed how the church's teachings promote corruption; genuine believers expect miracles, signs, and wonders, and these must be founded on righteousness. Proclaiming that one can become wealthy without working for it (miracle money/worth) is not only dishonest, but it also encourages corruption. It is false preaching and it is sinful.

### 2.6 *The Fight Against Corruption: An Interim Agenda*

The following approaches to the fight against corruption represent an action plan that both the nation and the church can engage in for better effectiveness. As we have noted, corruption can only be completely eradicated by God at the consummation of time under the machinery he has already set in motion. But we can work today to minimize it such that it no longer continues to slow down our collective growth and well-being as a nation.

In Catholic social teaching, the principle of human dignity, the social principle, and the principles of solidarity and justice are especially applicable to the fight against corruption. According to the principle of human dignity, which is definitively stated in the encyclical (*Mater et Magistra*, 1961), the human being should be at the center of all social activities, and human dignity is inviolable and must be protected and promoted. Human beings must not be regarded as disposable, as means to an end. According to the social principle, a human being is a social entity and dependent on other people. This leads to the solidarity principle, which states that people should be willing to help each other, and appeals to the golden rule formulated in Matthew 7:12 ESV: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets." And the principle of justice means that the social order must be preserved which ensures that all human beings are granted what they are justly entitled to.

Protestant and Pentecostal social ethics formerly focused on the ethics of love, with the doctrine of duty as a regulatory force, but recently there has been an increasing trend towards the ethics of responsibility. In 1948 in Amsterdam at the meeting to constitute the World Council of Churches, the ecumenical movement formulated the principle of a "responsible society". It states that human action always takes place in an interpersonal, social

context. Each person must be accountable for his/her actions to society, to future generations (Picht & Jonas, 2007), and to God as the judge of the whole world (Körtner, 2004).

The Christian churches jointly formulated their positions on social ethics in 1997 in a church statement on social and economic matters entitled “A future in justice and solidarity”. It includes the following statement: “The priority of the option for the poor as a guiding principle of social action gives concrete form to the unity of God’s love and human love”. It also formulates “the idea of justice as a fundamental organizational principle for society”.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design, Data Collection Method & Sampling Technique

This study is guided by the epistemology of positivism and follows the causal research design in a quantitative method of analysis. This is because quantitative research is often used to question relationships between variables yielding results that are predictive, explanatory, or confirmatory (Williams, 2011). It aims to produce generalized findings in the form of theories and formulae, and so is sometimes associated with positivistic and deductive studies (Bryman, 2012). The researchers seek to establish a relationship between the effects of corruption in the church. The study applied simple random probability sampling i.e., selecting the sample randomly from the sampling frame using random numbers obtained from tables or generated by a computer. (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill A., 2009). A sample of 200 participants constituted mainly of Christians from 20-90 years of age, drawn from several churches in the capital city of Yaoundé, Cameroon. Research questions were administered with the use of questionnaires because they can harness data from a large sample that may be geographically dispersed, and provide broad statistical analysis options (Zikmund, 2003). A well-structured questionnaire was used in this study to provide a hypothetical response of 200 respondents on SPSS worksheet using a 5 Likert scale (SA-SD) and Mean as the measurement of central tendency.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

Statistical inferences and modeling with the use of statistical software like SPSS and AMOS were used in this research. Data obtained from questionnaires with open-ended questions was coded and analyzed with the use of SPSS 25 and AMOS 24 to have valid and reliable research results.

### 4. Results

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.815
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	759.273
	df	28
	Sig.	.000

Source: Field Data 2024.

Based on the results  $KMO > 0.05$ . This implies  $0.815 > 0.05$ .

Bartlett’s test is significant at  $<0.05$ . This implies  $0.000 < 0.05$ .

Table 2. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	6.653	83.158	83.158	6.443
2	2.785	9.812	92.970	3.846
3	1.213	2.665	95.635	3.762

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Source: Field Data 2024.

A component can only be retained with Eigenvalues of more than 1. so components 1, 2, and 3 have Eigenvalues of 6.443, 3.846, and 3.762 respectively which means they will be retained.

Table 3. Coefficients of Multicollinearity

Model		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.731	2.194		
	CC_ORG	-.062	.196	.501	1.994
	CG_ORG	-.280	.304	.501	1.994
	CE_ORG	-.481	.100	.501	1.994

a. Dependent Variable: CV

Source: Field Data 2024.

Construct CC, CG, and CE

Tolerance > 0.1 whereby 0.501 > 0.1 which is admissible.

VIF < 10, whereby 1.994 < 10 which is admissible.

In this case, there is no multicollinearity among these variables.

#### 4.1 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

In this study, EFA allowed the researcher to establish the factor structure for the study variables through a scrutiny of the factors that load on the various components.

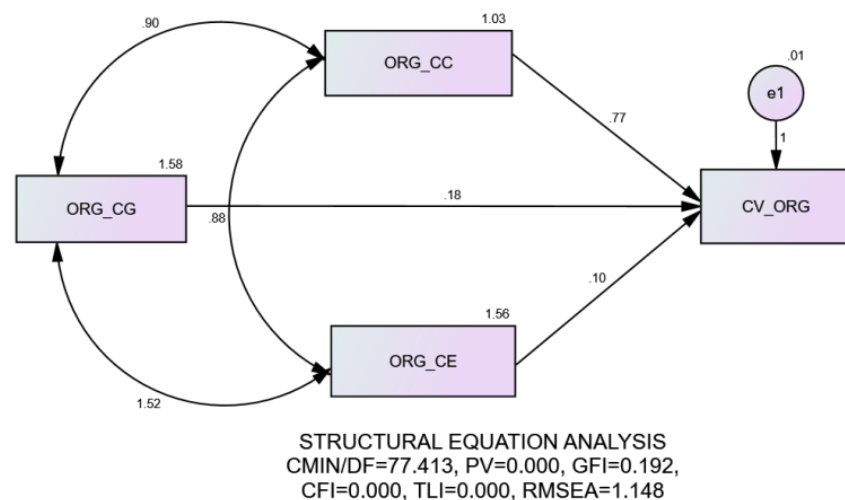


Figure 1. SEM — Causes of Corruption, Consequences of Corruption, and Extent to Curb Corruption

Source: Field Data 2024.

Table 4. Regression Weights: (Group number 1 — Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
CV_ORG <--- ORG_CG	.184	.044	4.183	***	par_2
CV_ORG <--- ORG_CC	.767	.020	39.336	***	par_3
CV_ORG <--- ORG_CE	.101	.044	2.299	.022	par_4

Source: Field Data 2024.

Looking at the regression weights table above, based on the regression paths for all established constructs and indicators, they are all significant at 10%, 5%, and 1%.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	P-value at 95% CI	Decision/ Conclusion
The causes of corruption have a significant effect on the church (CC_ORG on CV_ORG)	PV=0.000<0.05 (significant at 1%, 5% and 10%)	Reject the null hypothesis
The consequences of corruption have an impact on the growth of the church (CG_ORG on CV_ORG)	PV=0.000<0.05 (significant at 1%, 5% and 10%)	Reject the null hypothesis
The extent to curb corruption in the church	PV=0.022<0.05 (significant at 1%, 5% and 10%)	Reject the null hypothesis

Source: Field Data 2024.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study have shown the causes of corruption in the church, is a significant impact. Based on the structural equation model (Path Analysis), we realized that the causes of corruption in the church have a 77% significant impact on voiding corruption in the church. With the effect of consequences of corruption on the growth of the church, we can realize from the path analysis that there is a significant impact. In the diagram, we have an 88% significant impact on voiding corruption in the church. The extent to curb corruption in the church, we will realize from the path analysis that it has a 10% significant impact on voiding corruption. As we have noted, corruption can only be completely eradicated by God at the consummation of time under the machinery. He has already set in motion. But we can work today to minimize it such that it no longer continues to slow down our collective growth and well-being as a nation. The church should be an oasis of transparency and honesty in this ocean of rot and decay.

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