



Christian Religiosity and Corruption in Ghana: A Case Study of Selected Churches in Hohoe Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The menace of corruption has been a multidimensional ethical and socio-economic phenomenon which has posed challenges to the Ghanaian society for many years. Considering the 71.3% of the Ghanaian population affiliated with Christianity and Christianity's moral advocacy for integrity, honesty, compassion, and accountability, it is prudent to expect the country to be void of corruption and its associated repercussions on the socio-economic and religio-cultural facets of the Ghanaian society. However, this is not the case in the country as corruption has surged and dented the moral fabric of the country. This study thus delved into the intricate interplay between Christianity and the surge in corruption in Ghana, to elucidate the correlation between Christian religiosity and the upsurge in corruption in the nation. To reach this goal, the study engaged Ghanaian Christians from the St. Augustine Catholic Church, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Revival Assemblies of God Church and Apostles Revelation Society in the Hohoe municipality of the Volta Region of Ghana. It also sought the thoughts of the clergy and professional Christians in authority (the Municipal Chief Executive, Municipal Director of Education and Municipal Police Commander in the Hohoe municipality). The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) was applied to examine the level of religiosity of the selected respondents. The present study discovered a divergent and contradictory correlation between the very high religiosity of Ghanaian Christians and the surge in corruption in the country. The findings revealed that both individual Christians and the Church are contributors to the surge in corruption in the country. A situation that is dreadful to the Christian faith and the image of the Church. The study therefore proposes the need for Christians and the church in Ghana to arise, put on its moral garment and fight against the plague of corruption.

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity is a religion that discourages sin and encourages its followers to live a righteous and Christ-like life, a lifestyle that will promote peaceful co-existence among humanity and promote socioeconomic development, worthy of emulation by others in the society (Matt. 6:33; 1 Jhn 2:29).

The Bible in Isaiah 1:4 warns against the act of corruption: “Woe to the sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged”. The text implies that a nation and people that engage in corruption have forsaken God. This signifies that the ultimate goal of Christianity is to whittle the morals of its members for an upright lifestyle, geared towards the promotion of peace, social belongingness and mutual coexistence in the community; and a person’s Christianity may be defined by the way he or she lives. That is, a person is considered Christian when he or she abides by the norms, ethics, rules, values and dogma of the religion. Therefore, it is prudent to conclude that a country or society with 71.3 % of its population affiliating themselves to Christianity and categorised as Christians is morally upright and free from immoral acts such as corruption.

However, available data and research such as the Transparency International Corruption Index, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) research for the year 2022,¹ Afro Barometer Survey,² and the Auditor General Report,³ revealed that Ghana has failed in its fight against corruption and the canker has devoured the society and has intensely swallowed the moral fabric of the Ghanaian society. Interestingly, there have been several corruption allegations against Christian religious institutions and the church⁴ just as it is similarly common among politicians, the judiciary, security services, bureaucrats and academics. The effect of the phenomenon has been aptly captured in a communique of the 2016 London Anti-Corruption Summit. The communique disclosed that corruption is at the heart of so many of the problems in the world. “It erodes public trust in government, undermines the rule of law, and gives rise to political and economic grievances that may, in conjunction with other factors fuel violent extremism”.⁵ As specified by the communique, corruption in Ghana has led to various economic, social and political problems that are considered inimical and debilitating.⁶ It has negatively obstructed economic progress and societal development.

The study aims to examine the correlation between Christian religiosity and corruption in Ghana. It analyses the beliefs, doctrines and practices of Christianity and their impact on corruption and identifies the reasons Christians engage in corruption in Ghanaian society. The paper begins with a review of literature on the relationship between Religion and Corruption in Africa, continues with the methodology of the study and method of assessing the religiosity of respondents. It further presents major findings from the field of study and discusses the correlation between Christianity and the surge in corruption in Ghana based on the data gathered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Relationship between Religion and Corruption in Africa

The section focuses on the correlation between religiosity and corruption in the African continent. Africans are known for their intense religiosity, however, the continent is considered one of the most corrupt regions in the world.

¹ UNODC, *Corruption in Ghana: People’s Experience and Views* (Vienna, German Cooperation, 2022).

² The Afrobarometer survey as at August 2022 indicates that 53% of Ghanaians think corruption in the country has risen in the past year. The Police and the office of the Presidency, Members of Parliament ranked as the top three corrupt institutions in the country. A phenomenon that must be of concern to every Ghanaian citizen and people living in Ghana. Afro Barometer, Ghana, accessed from www.afrobarometer.org/countries/ghana/ on 4th August, 2022.

³ The Auditor General report from January to December, 2020/1 indicates that some government institutions could not account for some huge amount of money. The report also reveals the payment of salaries to some “ghost names”. This is a clear indication of the rot of corruption in some major institutions in Ghana. Accessed from www.audit.gov.gh on the 10th August, 2022.

⁴ Michael Lang discloses in his research that the act of corruption is present in the church. He explains that monies meant to cater for the underprivileged and the needs of the church sometimes end up in the pocket of unscrupulous individuals. He adds that the financial resources of the church are mostly in the possession of Pastors and leaders which are misappropriated. As a result, amenities to be provided by the church become futile. Michael Lang, “The Pattern of Corruption in Christian Churches of Cameroon: The Case of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon”, *Transformation* 31, No 2 (2014): 132-144.

⁵ London Anti-Corruption Summit, 2016. Accessed from <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/WorkingGroups/ImplementationReviewGroup/20-24June2016/V1603744e.pdf> on 9th August, 2022.

⁶ International Monetary Fund, *Corruption: Cost and Mitigating Strategies* (2016). Accessed from <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1605.pdf> on 10th August, 2022.

The magnitude of corruption in Africa amid passionate religiosity inexorably calls for questions about the nature of morality preached and practiced by Christians, Muslims and traditionalists in unarguably a predominately religious region. Mbaku suggests the need to find answers to the question of the consequences of the form of religiosity in Africa and how its moral performance and experience conform to the requirements of the Bible, Quran and African traditional morality.⁷ He further asks for an explanation as to why there is a continuous rise in armed robbery, bribery, electoral malpractices, looting of public treasuries, occultism, kidnapping, and other forms of crime-related activities in many African communities even though Christianity, Islam and traditional religion are moral institutions. Mbaku also seeks clarification on the constitution of the moral authority of Christians, Muslims and traditional religionists in Africa. He further asks why Africans fail to live by their sound religious values when serving in elevated positions, especially political positions.⁸ Although the answers to the demands of Mbaku may be quite difficult, it calls for a deep reflection on the moral capabilities of the three major religions in Africa.

Gifford suggests that African religious leaders must partly be blamed for the increasing corruption in the continent as he classifies them as part of the elites in the African society that have done little to curb the problem of corruption.⁹ Agbiji and Swart pointed out that both political and religious leaders for many centuries infer their leadership philosophies and principles from similar ideological sources. Hence, the political, socioeconomic and religious spheres affirmatively or adversely influence each other.¹⁰ For instance, political parties and institutions recognise the influence of religion on political elections in Africa. Therefore, politicians rally the support of religious denominations and submit to religious leaders in the quest to foster their political agenda.¹¹ In affirmation of Gifford's assertion, Agi opines that religious leaders fail to exploit such opportunities to enact their influence to curb corruption in society.¹²

In addition, Agi states that the complacent characters of African religious leaders toward governments in power resulted in abdicating their religious roles. Agi cited the example of how religious and traditional leaders were influenced with money to endorse an unconstitutional agenda of Ibrahim Babangida a military ruler of Nigeria from 1985-1993.¹³ He further gave the example of how Sani Abacha, the head of state of Nigeria from 1993 to 1998 persuaded both local and foreign religious clerics to entrench his agenda to remain in power after he invited them to Abuja at his expense. Agi disclosed that the religious clerics condoned the agenda and sang Abacha's praise, except Pope John Paul II (Roman Catholic Pontiff) who instigated the release of political prisoners.¹⁴ The phenomenon is alike in Kenya as Professor Lumumba acquiescently chastised African Pentecostal clergies for their ungodly alliance with the political elites. Lumumba emphasised that most African Pentecostal preachers are business people and influence peddlers who offer spiritual legality to politicians whom he considers thieves.¹⁵ However, he acknowledged that some African preachers are good and selfless.¹⁶ Fela Olaniyan also stated that "religious leaders throw submissive theology at the adherents as solace for hard times whereas they form an elitist alliance with those in power for the grand prize of acquisitive venality."¹⁷ The instances cited by the scholars depict some African religious leaders being used by the political elites to accomplish their corrupt agenda, which creates the impression that such religious leaders are infested with the virus of corruption; making them incapable of addressing the enormous corruption in the African society.

⁷ John Mukum Mbaku, "Corruption in Africa", *History Compass*, 7, 6 (2009): 1416-1427.

⁸ Mbaku, "Corruption in Africa", 1416-1427.

⁹ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 250.

¹⁰ Obaji M. Agbiji and Ignatius Swart, "Historical Sources of Christian Religious Leadership Ideology: Implications and Challenges to Social Transformation in Post-Military Nigeria", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, XXXIX, 1 (2013): 221-246.

¹¹ Agbiji and Swart, "Historical Sources of Christian Religious Leadership Ideology", 221-246.

¹² S. P.I. Agi, "Religion and Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria", in O.E. Uya (ed.) *Civil Society and Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Daybis, 2008), 113.

¹³ Agi, "Religion and Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria", 118.

¹⁴ Agi, "Religion and Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria", 133.

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZvJ3XC3Qw

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZvJ3XC3Qw

¹⁷ Tejumola Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics* (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2009), 89.

Besides religious leaders' alliance with political elites, Appau and Bonsu apportioned a section of blame to Neo-Pentecostal prosperity preachers for the increasing corruption in Africa. They explicated that prosperity preachers take advantage of the poverty of the people to brace their theology of extortion.¹⁸ Appau and Bonsu researched into the general practice of spiritual consultation in Ghana. They indicated in their findings that religious history in Ghana supported the contemporary practice and marketisation of spiritual consultants. Such consultants include traditional priests, pastors, and Islamic spiritualists and extended to Neo-Pentecostal preachers. They disclosed that such religious leaders, especially, Neo-Pentecostal prosperity preachers extort the limited resources of the poor and get richer by the day as they offer spiritual solutions to members of the society embedded in poverty. Nonetheless, some prosperity preachers genuinely desire a socioeconomic transformation for their members through the prosperity gospel.¹⁹ In this instance, religion is been used as a tool to enrich its leaders, at the expense of its followers.

Scholars such as George Anderson and Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor among others have also expressed concern about the practices of Neo-Pentecostal preachers and prophets in modern-day Ghanaian society. They postulate that most contemporary preachers and prophets are principally focused on business, hegemony, wealth creation and the search for a niche.²⁰ Therefore, they embark on the sale of expensive spiritual and religious services and products to the followers. Furthermore, they focus on admonishing adherents to contribute their financial resources toward God's work with an expectation of financial blessings from God, instead cautioning the followers to abstain from corruption in their daily transactions.²¹ Wraith and Simpkins suggest that the demands and teachings of most contemporary preachers and prophets could put the members of the Church under severe pressure which could influence their decision to engage in corrupt practices to satisfy the demands of their religious leaders. They divulged that some members of churches use their status at their workplaces to heighten the prices of goods and services and syphon huge amounts of money to their advantage to contribute enormously to their churches.²²

The findings and positions of the above scholars may indicate that religion as an institution in Africa has not done enough to curtail the problem of corruption in society. It appears that religious institutions are extracting the limited resources of their adherents, which is inducing members to engage in corrupt activities. Nonetheless, the essentiality of African religious institutions as inculcators of morality cannot be downplayed. Religious groups and institutions continue to instill good moral consciousness and conscience into their followers through their teachings and practices to contribute to the development of a harmonious society.

METHODOLOGY

Considering the nature of the research, the study engages the phenomenological approach in the execution of its objectives. The approach seeks to understand the social reality of how respondents make meaning of their experiences in relation to the present study. The research approach influenced the use of the mixed method in the collection of data. Both primary and secondary data were utilised for the study. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured personal interviews, focus group discussions and observation. Pastors, Ministers and members of St Augustine Catholic Church, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Revival Assemblies of God Church and Apostles Revelation Society, Hohoe were interviewed and engaged in focus group discussions to seek their responses on the topic under study. Selected professionals in the churches in positions of authority in the secular world were also interviewed on the subject matter (including the Municipal Chief Executive,

¹⁸ Samuelson Appau and Samuel K. Bonsu, "The Spiritual Marketplace in Contemporary Ghana", in H. Roy Chaudhuri and R. Belk (eds.), *Marketization* (New York, NY: Springer, 2020), 165-191.

¹⁹ Appau and Bonsu, "The Spiritual Marketplace in Contemporary Ghana", 165-191.

²⁰ George Anderson Jnr., "Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity: Future Prospects", *ERATS*, 1, 1, (2019): 16-27; Jonathan EdwardTetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Sociocultural and Theological Assessment", *Herald Journal of Education and General Studies*, 2, 1, (2013): 62-68.

²¹ Anderson Jnr., "Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity", 16-27.

²² Edet Tom and Patrick Bamgboye, "The Role of Religion in Combating Corruption: The Nigerian Experience", *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 2, (2017): 138

Municipal Director of Education and Municipal Police Commander in the Hohoe municipality). In a nutshell, twenty (20) respondents were engaged in each denomination and three (3) Christian professionals in positions of authority. Hence, a total of 83 respondents were engaged in the study.

Accessing the Level of Religiosity

The study applied the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) to assess the level of religiosity of respondents. The CRS was developed by Stefan Huber and Odilo Huber. It consists of five core dimensions that include the ideological, intellectual, experience, public and private practices dimensions. Each dimension consists of three itemized questions requisite to unveil one’s level of religiosity.²³ These core dimensions involve the interaction of sociological and psychologically defined personal religious construct systems.

The ideological core dimension highlights the social expectation that adherents of a religious community believe in the existence of a supreme reality and they have certain ideas about the character and nature of this reality. The intellectual dimension refers to the social expectation that religious people have some level of knowledge about their religion and could further provide information about it. The third component is the experience. It involves the social expectation that religious people have experienced a form of contact with reality as it occurs. It is the level of the religious construct system where the religious member receives unquestioned conviction and pattern of plausibility. The fourth dimension refers to public practice. This dimension emphasises the communal and public participation in religious rituals and activities by adherents of a religious sect. The public dimension of the CRS promotes a sense of belonging with respect to a social organisation. The fifth dimension refers to the private practices of an individual to devote him or herself to transcendence.²⁴ These practices include private religious rituals and activities of the adherent to signify devotion to the religious construct system.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents key findings gathered from the field of study and the analysis of the data collected. It begins with the presentation of data and analysis of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) which examined the level of religiosity of respondents. It further presents data on interviews with the clergy, Professional Christians in authority (the Municipal Chief Executive, Municipal Director of Education and Municipal Police Commander in the Hohoe municipality) and on focus group discussions with members of the St Augustine Catholic Church, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Revival Assemblies of God Church and Apostles Revelation Society, Hohoe. The final section of the section involves a thematic analysis of the data presented.

Data On Respondents’ Level of Religiosity by The Five (5) Dimensions of The Centrality of Religiosity Scale

Religious Ideology

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Low	0	0%
High	22	8.8%
Very High	227	91.2%
Total	249	100%

The compiled data on religious ideology indicated that respondents’ belief regarding the existence of a transcendent and the afterlife is very high with a frequency of 227 (91.2%) of responses on items on religious ideology. Only 22 (8.8%) responses on items were rated high and 0 (0%) indicated low.

Religious Intellectuality

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
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²³ Stefan Huber and Odilo Huber, “The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)”, Religions, 3 (2012): 710-724.

²⁴ Huber & Huber, “The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)”, 710-724.

Low	45	18.1%
High	82	32.9%
Very High	122	49%
Total	249	100%

In the summarized data from the three items on religious intellectuality, 45 (18.1%) of responses indicated that they have low interest in thinking about religious issues, while 82 (32.9%) indicated high interest and 122 (49%) responses demonstrated a very high interest on issues of religious intellectuality.

Religious Experience

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Low	27	10.8%
High	83	33.3%
Very High	139	55.8%
Total	249	100%

The table shows that 10.8% of responses on religious experience indicated low religious experience. While 33.3% and 55.8% of responses indicated a high and very high religious experience respectively.

Private Religious Practices

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Low	17	6.8%
High	58	23.3%
Very High	174	69.9%
Total	249	100%

The data presented suggests that most respondents are highly involved in private religious practices. The percentage of 23.3% and 69.9% of responses indicating a high and very high participation in private religious practice respectively, means that respondents pray often and cogitate prayer as important in their daily lives. Only 6.8% of responses indicated low participation in private religious practices.

Public Religious Practices

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Low	2	0.8%
High	57	22.9%
Very High	190	76.3%
Total	249	100%

Public religious practices include respondents’ participation in church services or programmes, the importance respondents bestow on such programmes and the level of importance respondents ascribe to getting connected to the Christian community. From the data presented, 2 (0.8%) of responses showed low involvement in public religious practices. While 57 (22.9%) and 190 (76.3%) responses designated high and very high involvement in public religious services respectively. Although a minute number of respondents showed low participation in public religious practices, it could have significant implications on their faith and moral values.

Respondents’ General Level of Religiosity of Respondents

The section examines the general level of religiosity of respondents. The level of religiosity of respondents was calculated using the data presented in the five dimensions of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Low	91	7.3%
High	302	24.3%
Very High	852	68.4%
Total	1,245	100%

From the data gathered on the Centrality of Religiosity Scale, 7.3% of respondents have a low level of religiosity, 24.3% of respondents have a high level of religiosity, while 68.4% of respondents have a very high level of religiosity. It means that 92.7% of Ghanaian Christians have either a high or very high level of religiosity with only 7.3% of Ghanaian Christians having a low level of religiosity. It implies that 92.7% of Christians in Ghana have a stronger sense of faith and devotion, which could lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Christian beliefs. It further implies that Christians and the Christian community in Ghana must exhibit higher moral and ethical standards.

Responses on Perception of the Church on Corruption

On the discourse of the perception and teachings of the selected denominations on corruption, respondents unanimously disclosed that the churches understudied condemn corruption and perceive it as a sin and a violation of the commandment of God. Some respondents described corruption as evil, cruel, demonic, wicked and inhuman. They enlisted some effects and consequences of corruption in society and the church. Which included, low growth and development, lack of equity in the allocation of national resources, economic hardship, lack of respect for the laws of the country, mistrust of public institutions, low moral standards among citizens, increase in death, poor provision of services and damage to the image of the Christian church as major consequences of corruption.

Beliefs, Doctrines and Practices of the Church and Their Impact on Corruption in the Ghanaian Society

Respondents were expected to identify various beliefs, doctrines and practices of their denominations and the impact of such beliefs on corruption in Ghanaian society. The major beliefs, doctrines and practices identified included teachings on morality, teachings of the prosperity gospel, and financial demands from members (such as offering, tithing, seed sowing, appeal for funds etc).

Teachings on Morality: Both clergy and members responded in the affirmative on the impact of the teachings on morality by the church in the fight against corruption. However, some members asserted that their churches have failed in the facet of morality. They argued that the churches have not done enough to deal with issues of morality among the congregation. A situation they believe could lead to the increase in corruption in Ghana.

Financial Demands of Churches from Members (such as offering, tithing, seed sowing, appeal for funds etc.):

Participants divulged that offering, tithing, seed sowing, appeal for funds and other financial demands of their churches were commanded by God and when they live up to this command, they receive financial blessings and other forms of blessings from God. All participants agreed that the selected churches do not impose these financial obligations on their members. Members voluntarily give their tithes and offerings without imposition from the church. Hence, they believe that the financial demands of the churches should not lead a person to engage in corruption.

Although respondents unanimously agreed that financial obligations are voluntary and should not arouse corruption, a section of the respondents raised concern about some approaches and sanctions applied by churches to stimulate members to accomplish their financial responsibilities. They

questioned the style and methods used in the collection of offerings. They explained that the approach of members moving in roles to give their offerings could make a member who does not have anything to offer feel uncomfortable and could enact pressure on such a member. They also emphasise the attitude of some churches towards members who fail to fulfil their financial obligations, especially, tithing. Such members are sometimes chastised and not offered certain forms of attention and privileges. This group of respondents asserts that such attitudes could also enact pressure and discomfort on members, however, it should not influence members to engage in corruption.

The responses by the clergy and members of the selected denominations on financial demands indicate that the fulfilment of financial obligations by members to the church is not a stimulus to the increased corruption in the country. The present findings contradict assertions by some scholars²⁵ who reported that overburdening financial obligations on members of the churches and the attitude of the church towards the rich and poor members are major causes of rapid corruption in Ghana.

The Preaching of the Prosperity Gospel: The message and teachings of the prosperity gospel have been identified by some scholars as a major cause of corruption among Christians. An assertion that was refuted by three (3) of the Ministers interviewed. Two of the ministers argued that there is nothing called the prosperity gospel. In their view, the Gospel of Christ is holistic and includes the assurance of the financial and physical well-being or prosperity of believers. One of the ministers emphasised the role of the message of prosperity in building the faith of believers and empowering them to work hard to experience the prosperity preached by their Pastors. One of the ministers however mentioned that prosperity preaching has the possibility of influencing Christians to engage in corruption.

A majority (67) of respondents who are members of the churches under study identified the prosperity gospel as a possible cause of the menace of corruption in the country. They explained that though prosperity preaching increases the faith and gives assurance to believers of the physical, financial and material prosperity of believers, it could have a negative influence on some people. In their view, some believers want to attain prosperity as preached by their pastors irrespective of the process, which could lead such persons to engage in corruption. The minority of members sided with the position of the clergy as they believed the preaching of the message of prosperity should not influence people to engage in corruption.

Reasons Christians Engage in Corruption Though it is Against the Command of God

Respondents were required to state whether they have ever engaged in corruption, the reasons for the engagement in corruption as Christians and how they felt after the corrupt act. Interestingly, 75 (93.8%) out of 80 respondents stated they have engaged in corruption and its related activities. The kinds of corrupt acts engaged by respondents included bribery, favouritism, extortion, nepotism and election fraud. On election fraud, a participant offered an account of how he aided in changing electoral figures in favour of a parliamentary candidate.

Participants furnished the researcher with various reasons why they engaged in corruption. The most dominant reason offered by respondents was the assertion that the world is generally corrupt and a person cannot dwell in it without engaging in corruption. Respondents emphasised the payment of bribes to obtain admission to schools, to gain employment, for documents to be worked on in various institutions, to fast-track a service needed, etc. A respondent cited an example of tax revenue collectors requesting for bribe from him to reduce his taxes. A situation he could not resist but adhere to. Other reasons for engaging in corruption mentioned by respondents included: the quest for wealth and power, economic hardship in the country, greed, disregard for Christian doctrines, selfishness and failure of the church to deal with issues of corruption.

On the subject of how respondents felt after engaging in corruption, 58 out of the 75 respondents that have engaged in corruption stated that they did not “feel anything”. Which meant that

²⁵ For example, Wraith and Simpkins contended that the act of financially stressing members of the Church by some Pastors and Prophets put members under pressure to involve in practices that will help them to quickly accrue extra financial resources. Wraith and Simpkins as cited by Edet J. Tom, and Patrick O. Bamgboye, “The Role of Religion in Combating Corruption: The Nigerian Experience.” *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 2, (April –June, 2017): 138.

they did not feel guilty about the act. Some explained that corruption and its activities are part of the daily living of the Ghanaian, therefore, the high frequency of people engaging in corruption-related activities kills the conscience which could make people feel guilty of the sin of corruption. Others also explained that corrupt acts have become “normal” activities in society which makes people not feel guilt when they engage in such acts. However, 14 respondents stated that they always felt guilty when they were involved in corruption. They explained that corruption is a sin and against the teachings of their Christian faith and against God, therefore they felt guilty for going against their faith and against the commands of God. The 3 remaining respondents also mentioned that they sometimes feel guilty about the act of corruption and at other times they do not feel remorseful about the act.

Measures Initiated by the Christian Church to Curb Corruption in Ghana

From the interview with the Clerics, it was identified that there were no structured measures to identify corrupt members in their churches, especially in their secular work or professions. Their response was affirmed by the members of the selected Churches. On the subject of measures initiated by the church to curb corruption in the country, respondents revealed that there are no definite structures by the various churches to curb corruption in Ghana, especially in the secular world.

Interview with Christian Professionals in Positions of Authority in the Secular World on the subject of Christianity and Corruption in Ghana.

The researcher conducted personal interviews with Hon. Noble Daniel Awume (Municipal Chief Executive, Hohoe), Mrs. Janet Valerie Datsa (Municipal Educational Director, Hohoe) and A.S.P. Kofi Bosiako (Municipal Police Commander, Hohoe) to enquire about their experiences and thoughts on the correlation between Christianity and the surge in corruption in Ghana.

According to the three (3) respondents, the church has a different attitude towards persons in high authority compared to ordinary members, especially in the fulfilment of their financial obligations as Christians. They unanimously explained that their status in the society has influenced the financial expectations of the church towards them. The respondents mentioned that during programmes especially, programmes purported to raise funds, they are called to serve as chairpersons or supporters, and they are offered special seats which are mostly positioned in front of the congregation. According to them, these actions by the church are due to the financial expectations the church has towards them due to their status. Churches expect them to offer more and when a huge amount is mentioned during fundraisings, the leadership and the congregation are expecting them to be the first to offer. A situation they bitterly expressed puts loads of pressure on them. One of the respondents emphasised how he or she tries to overcome such pressure in church. He or she explained that he/she intentionally often declines the call to offer the mentioned amount. However, he/she offers what he or she purported in the heart when the least amount is called.

Respondents were asked whether such acts and financial pressure from the church could influence the person to engage in corruption. According to them, they try to overcome such pressure from the church. They, therefore, do not engage in corruption because of the attitude of the church towards them. However, the three (3) respondents, which represent 100% of participants in the present category stated that the attitude and financial expectations of the church towards Christian Professionals in high authority have great tenacity to influence some people to engage in corruption.

Discussion on the Correlation Between Christianity and the Surge in Corruption in Ghana

The findings on the level of religiosity and on the subject of Christianity and corruption among members of the Churches under study and Christian Professionals in positions of authority show that the religiosity of Ghanaian Christians has a divergent correlation with the aspect of morality associated with corruption in the country. Remarkably, 92.7% of respondents have either a high or very high level of religiosity, however, the high and very religiosity were not apparent in their moral behaviours as 93.8% of respondents indicated their involvement in corruption and its related activities. It suggests that if 92.7% (categorised as having a high and very high level of religiosity) of the 71.3% of the Christian population exhibit the characteristics associated with persons with high and very high

religiosity, the country might experience very low statistics on the level of corruption. Unfortunately, the inverse is the reality in Ghana.

The data gathered and findings further revealed reasons for the contradictory correlation between Christians' high and very high levels of religiosity and corruption in Ghana. These include:

- a) Insufficient religious intellectuality
- b) Disregard of religious experience
- c) Neglect of prayer in circumstances of corruption
- d) The believe that the nation is corrupt, making it impossible for Christians to live in it without engaging in corruption and lack of guilt for the sin of corruption
- e) Economic hardship and the quest to attain wealth
- f) Failure of the church to fight corruption, especially in the secular world
- g) The diminished interest of the church in issues of morality and the increase in the preaching of prosperity
- h) The attitude of the church towards Christian professionals in positions of authority.

It must be noted that insufficient religious intellectuality, disregard of religious experience and neglect of prayer in circumstances of corruption which are directly linked to the level of religiosity of the Christian could undesirably influence the cognitive moral decision-making process of the individual, especially in relation to the prominent four-component cognitive moral decision-making model initiated by James Rest. The model explains the process of ethical decision when a person encounters an ethical issue.²⁶ A person with low religiosity becomes more susceptible to cognitive biases in their moral decisions, which could stem from a lack of exposure to diverse perspectives, leading to a narrow understanding of morality and its consequences. Hence, a high possibility to engage in the act of corruption.

It must also be noted that a person's moral decision making is influenced by priming. Bargh and Chartrand explained priming as "an increased sensitivity to a certain stimulus due to prior experience, and which may occur either consciously or subconsciously."²⁷ In this instance, the approval of the assertion that the nation is corrupt, making it impossible for Christians to live in it without engaging in corruption by some believers becomes an implicit or subconscious prime which unconsciously and undesirably influences their moral and ethical decisions and actions to engage in corruption. It means that the perception has negatively influenced the moral conscience of some Christians by having justifiable reasons for their engagement in corruption without the feeling of guilt. Furthermore, the economic hardship of Ghana and the quest of Christians to attain wealth could also serve as primes, which could influence the moral decisions of some Christians. Based on the data from respondents, the present economic challenges are major reasons Christians in the county engage in corruption. However, Christians are expected to look to their faith and seek out legitimate ways to address their financial challenges.

In connection to the contribution of the Church to the surge in corruption in Ghana, respondents apportioned some proportion of blame to the Church in the country for the failure to fight corruption, her diminished interest in propagating the message of morality and her attitude towards Christian professionals in positions of authority. The present findings are unsurprising as some scholars raised various concerns about some practices and attitudes of the Church. For example, George Anderson, and Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, among others have expressed concern about the practices of Neo-Pentecostal preachers and prophets in modern-day Ghanaian society. They postulate that most contemporary preachers and prophets are principally focused on business, hegemony, wealth creation and the search for a niche.²⁸ Paul Gifford also suggests that African religious leaders must partly be

²⁶ James R. Rest, *Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1986).

²⁷ John A. Bargh and Tanya L. Chartrand, "The Mind in the Middle: A Practical Guide to Priming and Automaticity Research. In H.T. Reis and C.M. Judd, *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 253-285.

²⁸ George Anderson Jnr., "Ghana's Neo-Prophetic Pentecostal/ Charismatic Christianity: Future Prospects", 16-27; Jonathan EdwardTetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Sociocultural and Theological Assessment", 62-68.

blamed for the increasing corruption in the continent as he classifies them as part of the elites in the African society that have done little to curb the problem of corruption.²⁹ It is disturbing that the Church which is purported to serve as the agent of morality is turning to be a major contributor to the massive corruption in Ghana. A situation that could dent its moral image and affect its credibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher proposes some recommendations for Christians in the country, the Church and government of Ghana, and the field of academia.

- i. To effectively combat corruption, the Church needs its leaders as well as members and other faith-based organisations to enhance their ethical standards and lead by example. The Ghanaian society views the Church as a major upholder of morality, therefore, the canker of corruption may worsen when the Christian Church loses its moral authority or credibility.
- ii. Christians must assume the responsibility to fight against corruption in the country by collaborating with other advocacy groups to collectively address the problem of corruption. They must also set positive examples through their actions and words.
- iii. Religious leaders, particularly those of the Church need to actively make the effort to redirect their followers' focus to the transcendent (God). The followers need to know that God is the Supreme authority and He must reign in their daily human lives.
- iv. There is a need for the reassessment of how the society and the Church perceive wealth. Questionable riches among members of the Church must be investigated.

CONCLUSION

This study has assessed the interplay between Christianity and the surge in corruption in Ghana, to elucidate the correlation between Christian religiosity and the upsurge in corruption in the nation. The data presentation and analysis pointed out that Christian religiosity and corruption have a contradictory correlation, as Christians in Ghana have affirmed their enormous involvement in corruption and its related activities. Furthermore, the findings revealed that both individual Christians and the Church are contributors to the surge in corruption in the country. A situation that is dreadful to the Christian faith and the image of the Church. The church as the Body of Christ is expected to present itself in ways that reflect the character of Jesus Christ. It must be a community that embodies the values and teachings of Christ. It must prioritize its mission to serve and make a positive impact in the world. In this instance, the impact of helping the country to overcome the menace of corruption. The failure of the Ghanaian Christian Church to improve on its present image in connection to corruption could dent its credibility which leads to disillusionment among its members and those who look to it for moral guidance. Nonetheless, the role of members of the Christian community in enhancing the moral identity of the church cannot be overlooked. The high level of religiosity of Ghanaian Christians must be reflected in their ethical decision-making and moral character. The current situation of immense corruption in highly religious Christians could generate doubt and mistrust about the genuineness of the religiosity of Christendom in the country. The doubt and mistrust could negatively influence people's perception of the Christian faith, a situation that could lead to mockery of the Christian community. It is therefore prudent for Christians and the church in Ghana to arise, put on its moral garment and fight against the plague of corruption in the country.

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²⁹ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 250.

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