Greed, Deception and Organizational Collapse: Theological Insights into Business Ethics

Isaac Armah[1], Peter Agyekum Boateng[1], Jeanette Owusu[1], Beatrice Atta Mensah[2], Kojo Polley-Kwofie[1], Michael Ofosu Antwi[1]

[1]School of Graduate Studies, Valley View University, Ghana

[2]Management and Public Administration Department, Accra Technical University, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Greed and deception continue to undermine organisational integrity and have contributed to some of the most damaging corporate collapses in recent history. Despite extensive governance reforms and regulatory controls, unethical behaviour persists, suggesting deeper moral and cultural roots. This study examines the relationship between greed, deception, and organisational collapse through a Christian theological lens. Adopting a conceptual literature review approach, the paper synthesises recent scholarship in business ethics, organisational behaviour, corporate governance, and theology to analyse how greed and deception become systemic within organisational cultures. The analysis shows that greed operates as disordered desire embedded in incentives and norms, while deception functions as a sustaining mechanism that conceals dysfunction and normalises ethical compromise. The study argues that organisational collapse is best understood as a moral and spiritual breakdown rather than a purely technical failure. It further demonstrates that theological principles such as stewardship, justice, humility, and truth-telling offer practical correctives for ethical renewal. The paper contributes to business ethics by positioning theology as a valuable framework for strengthening organisational resilience and integrity.

Keywords: Greed; Deception; Organisational Collapse; Business Ethics; Christian Theology; Stewardship

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, there have been a number of organizational failures that have hurt economies, broken public trust, and ruined people's lives. The downfall of Enron in 2001, the global financial crisis of 2008, and the subsequent banking scandals in the United Kingdom all show how greed and deception can ruin businesses (Cole et al., 2021; Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025). Greed, frequently characterized as an unquenchable yearning for wealth or power, is evident not only in individual CEOs but also as a pervasive cultural phenomenon within firms (Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025).

On the other side, deception makes things less clear and accountable, which lets businesses change information and lie to stakeholders (Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025). Recent research in business ethics has shown how bad these vices may be. Friedman and Clarke (2022) contend that corporate avarice consistently elevates profit over human life, exemplified by the opioid crisis, hazardous product designs, and climate change denial. Heim and Mergaliyeva (2025) also talk about how white-collar crime is happening because of a bad mix of greed, opportunity, and weak oversight, which costs the world economy billions. Nevertheless, despite the increasing complexity of governance systems and regulatory structures, these flaws continue to exist.

This endurance indicates that organizational collapse is not merely a technical failure of governance, but also a profound moral and spiritual crisis. Theologically, avarice and dishonesty are acknowledged as expressions of sin that pervert God's intention for human labor and stewardship. The Bible says that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10) and that "dishonest scales" are bad for the Lord (Proverbs 11:1). These biblical teachings stress that greed and deception are not just wrong things to do; they are also moral failures that have spiritual consequences. So, theological contemplation is a very important way to understand

why companies fail and how they might be brought back to justice, stewardship, and integrity (Moya & Toledano, 2025; Chuvieco & Karnawalski, 2025; Megoran, 2023).

Research Problem

Corporate governance and ethics research can help us understand scandals, but they often miss the religious aspects of greed and deception. A lot of the writing about these things considers them as economic or psychological factors, ignoring their moral and spiritual underpinnings (Roy et al., 2024; Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025). Because of this, businesses still have trouble with cultural tendencies that make greed seem normal and deception seem reasonable. This study tries to fill a vacuum in the literature by looking at how comprehending theological insights into greed and deception can lead to the failure of a company and offer a framework for business ethics to be renewed.

Research Objective

The objective of this paper is to critically examine the relationship between greed, deception, and organizational collapse through a theological lens, with the aim of generating insights that can strengthen ethical business practices. Specifically, the paper analyzes how greed and deception manifest within corporate contexts by drawing on recent case studies and relevant theoretical perspectives, integrates theological insights—particularly Christian doctrines of sin, stewardship, and justice—with contemporary business ethics literature, and proposes a conceptual framework that positions theological principles as essential for preventing organizational collapse and for fostering sustainable and ethically grounded corporate cultures.

Significance of the study

This study is important for both academic and practical reasons which include the following: Contribution to Academia: The research addresses a deficiency in the literature by incorporating Christian theological perspectives into analyses of organizational failure, which are frequently governed by economic or psychological frameworks. It enhances the dialogue on corporate ethics by asserting that spiritual qualities like justice, humility, and stewardship are essential for the enduring sustainability of organizations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Key concepts

In business ethics, greed is defined as an excessive and insatiable desire for wealth, power, or resources that surpasses legitimate or fair needs, often disregarding the welfare of others or broader societal good. It is associated with self-interest taken to extremes, leading individuals or organizations to pursue profit maximization without regard for ethical constraints or stakeholder well-being (Zeelenberg & Breugelmans, 2022; Ohana, 2025).

Deception refers to deliberate acts of misrepresentation, concealment, or manipulation of truth to gain an unfair advantage in organizational or market contexts. In the field of business ethics, it includes practices such as falsifying financial records, misleading advertising, withholding critical information, or engaging in fraud (Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025).

Organizational collapse is the breakdown or failure of an organization resulting from systemic weaknesses, unethical leadership, or the cumulative effects of harmful practices such as greed and deception. Scholarly literature links collapse to the erosion of stakeholder trust, unsustainable practices, financial mismanagement, and failures in ethical responsibility (Cole et al., 2021; Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025).

Greed has traditionally been seen as a bad thing for businesses. Greed is basically wanting too much money, power, or fame beyond what you really need. The literature indicates that greed is not merely an individual vice but also a systemic phenomenon that influences corporate culture.

Susan Long's psychoanalytic examination of the Opes Prime collapse illustrates that corporate greed is perpetuated by systemic denial, unconscious dynamics, and collective complicity (Heim & Mergaliyeva,

2025). Instead, then being limited to dishonest CEOs, greed in organizations becomes part of their procedures, how they utilize money symbolically, and how they operate in general.

Friedman and Clarke (2022) build on this idea by highlighting how corporate greed puts profit ahead of human life, which often leads to deaths that could have been avoided, like in the case of the opioid crisis, dangerous consumer goods, and climate change denial. This shows how greed may have terrible moral effects, including putting money ahead of people's safety and dignity. Christian tradition has always preached that greed is wrong. The Bible says that greed is idolatry (Colossians 3:5), which is a sin that twists people's desires and weakens their ability to take care of things. Zeelenberg and Breugelmans (2022) connects greed directly to the Seven Deadly Sins, saying that its harmful effects have been recognized by all legal, moral, and religious traditions. Greed is not only an immoral act from a biblical point of view, but it is also a spiritual sickness that distorts the God-given duty of stewardship.

Deception, which is strongly related to greed, is another major reason why organizations fail. It entails the manipulation of information, the concealment of truths, or the presentation of distorted realities to achieve an advantage. Heim and Mergaliyeva (2025) utilize Information Manipulation Theory (IMT) within organizational settings, illustrating that deceit frequently manifests as lies, distortions, or strategic ambiguity. Their experiments validate that businesses and executives often utilize false communication to manipulate perceptions, diminish accountability, or safeguard financial interests. Enron and other case studies show how dishonest methods like fake accounting, hidden loans, and altered reporting may make it look like a company is doing well when it is really falling apart (Cole et al., 2021). Deception not only misleads investors, but it also damages the culture of the firm by making unethical shortcuts seem normal. From a theological standpoint, deception fundamentally opposes scriptural injunctions to maintain truth: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor" (Ephesians 4:25). Proverbs 11:1 says that "dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord," which means that cheating in business and trade goes against God's justice. Deception in organizations is not just a tactical mistake; it is also a moral wrong that breaks trust, community, and divine order.

Organizational Collapse as a Consequence of Greed and Deception

When habits of greed and deception become systematic, they can destroy governance, culture, and legitimacy, leading to the collapse of an organization. The literature shows that this happens in a number of ways. Cole et al. (2021) says that UK bank failures from 2004 to 2009 were directly linked to dishonesty, carelessness, and poor governance, which led to too much risk-taking and a decline in culture. Heim and Mergaliyeva (2025) also say that greed, opportunity, and inadequate oversight are the main causes of white-collar crime around the world. They point out that these crimes have tremendous economic and social implications. Craig Cole et al. (2021) says that Enron's downfall was not just a failure of leadership, but also a failure of followership, because employees, investors, and regulators all allowed unethical behavior to happen. This fits with psychoanalytic ideas that systemic greed grows through accomplices and societal denial (Ohana, 2025; Zeelenberg & Breugelmans, 2022). Research on corporate governance, like Cole et al. (2021), shows that ethical failures, not technical mistakes, are generally to blame for declines and scandals. This means that collapse is more of a moral and cultural catastrophe than something that has to happen because of the way things are set up.

Existing Theories Anchoring the Framework

The Christian perspective on work is founded on imago Dei, the conviction that humans are created in the likeness of God. This philosophy asserts that work and business are not solely transactional but vocational, oriented towards the flourishing of creation and the common good (Chuvieco & Karnawalski, 2025; Megoran, 2023). Theological anthropology asserts that human dignity is inherently linked to moral duty; hence, greed constitutes not merely poor management but a perversion of the divine intent for labor.

Genesis 1:28's "cultural mandate" gives us a biblical basis for our responsibility to "fill the earth and subdue it." This mandate sees businesses as caretakers, requiring honesty, fairness, and long-term thinking in their business dealings (Megoran, 2023). In this context, wealth generation is permissible solely when constrained by moral law and prioritized in service. This theory elucidates organizational failure, positing that greed

signifies a revolt against vocation; rather than stewarding resources for communal prosperity, leaders exploit others and resources for personal gain. Theological anthropology reinterprets collapse not just as a technological or administration failure, but as a spiritual disarray, whereby vocation is forsaken in favor of idolatrous wealth-seeking. This approach offers a comprehensive theological perspective for examining corporate crises like Enron or WorldCom, illustrating how mistaken anthropology leads to systemic organizational failure.

Virtue ethics focuses more on building moral character than on following laws set by others. Greed (avarice) is one of the Seven Deadly Sins in Christian theology. It is a sin that weakens judgment, breaks down unity, and leads to excuses for doing damage (Zeelenberg & Breugelmans, 2022). Modern techniques simplify ethics to checklists, while virtue ethics emphasizes the need for corporate leaders to develop prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. In this setting, organizational collapse is not incidental but the inevitable consequence of persistent vice. Greed makes leaders ignorant to the long-term effects of their actions, encourages deception, and leads to risky speculation or exploitation. The 2008 global financial crisis, which started in the housing and credit markets in the United States, might be seen as a systemic failure of virtue, as greed and pride took the place of caution and justice. Theological virtue ethics combines moral theology with practical ethics. The Golden Rule ("Do unto others...") is a universal, relational standard for business choices. Instead of only keeping an eye on people from the outside, education for morality becomes important. This means that business ethics must go beyond just following the rules and create organizational cultures that value virtue, where honesty is a part of everyday life and leadership styles.

Psychoanalytic/systemic theory shows how greed and deception become acceptable in organizations. Roy et al. (2024) says that organizations can develop "perverse" dynamics, where denial, complicity, and symbolic uses of money keep unethical behavior going even among people who do not see themselves as greedy. This idea helps us understand why collapse happens more often on a large scale than on a small scale. In perverse companies, unethical norms become habitual:

When denial hides financial weakness, complicity encourages silence and makes it less likely that people will blow the whistle and using money as a symbol turns profit into a sign of worth, overshadowing moral or social commitments. In theological terms, this illustrates the proliferation of structural sin, a notion from Catholic social teaching that delineates how sin becomes ingrained in institutions and systems. Both leaders and workers become complicit, making it acceptable to lie and making it impossible for the company to stay in business. This view connects organizational psychology with theology, arguing that ethical transformation must include changes to institutions and cultures, not just individual choices. It is important to have safeguards for whistleblowers, robust boards, and accountability procedures, but a fundamental problem is that institutions must be refocused on truth, justice, and the common good, or else they would surely fail.

Theological Insights into Greed, Deception, and Collapse

Theology provides a profound interpretive framework for comprehending the reasons for organizational failures and the pathways to their restoration. There are a few lines of theological thought that are very important. Christian theology sees sin as a perversion of God's plan for people to thrive. Moya and Toledano (2025) underscores that sin in leadership is evidenced by greed and duplicity, which undermine trust and integrity within businesses. This is similar to what Romans 3:23 says: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Stewardship as the Antidote to Greed: Chuvieco and Karnawalski (2025) places business within the framework of vocation, contending that trade is legitimate provided it embodies stewardship, equity, and adherence to moral law. This theological viewpoint reconceptualizes business not as a domain for unrestrained wealth but as a sacred vocation to promote the common good.

Justice and Truth as Remedies for Deception: Moya and Toledano (2025) contend that biblical ethics, grounded in love, justice, and humility, must directly influence business operations. Christian morals say that people should be honest and open, which helps them avoid dishonest behavior. Corporate Redemption: The idea of redemption, which is very important in Christian theology, means that businesses can change their ways, repent, and focus on justice. For example, Catholic Social Teaching says that human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity should guide business ethics (Moya & Toledano, 2025). This means that even companies that are failing can be changed in ways that put people's health and happiness ahead of making money.

Relationship Among Concepts and the Cycle of Collapse

The interplay between greed, deception, and organisational collapse cannot be understood adequately as a purely economic or managerial problem. Rather, it reflects a moral and spiritual dynamic in which disordered desire and compromised truth reinforce one another over time. Greed and deception operate together as mutually sustaining forces, creating a vicious cycle that corrodes the moral foundations of organisations and, by extension, the communities that depend on them. When this cycle becomes embedded in organisational life, ethical erosion is no longer episodic but systemic, gradually weakening legitimacy, trust, and moral coherence.

This process is illuminated by the epistle of James 1:14–15, which offers a theological mirror to organisational decline. The passage describes how individuals are drawn away by their own desire, how desire gives birth to sin, and how sin, when fully grown, leads to death. Applied to organisational contexts, greed corresponds to disordered desire, deception represents the concrete enactment of that desire through dishonest practices, and collapse reflects the eventual "death" that follows moral decay. Organisations driven by unrestrained quests for power, profit, or dominance thus sow the seeds of their own destruction. What may begin as seemingly minor ethical compromises often develops into widespread corruption, culminating in the loss of credibility, stakeholder confidence, and long-term viability.

Greed plays a central role in this progression because it narrows moral vision and weakens ethical restraint. When self-interest is pursued at the expense of communal wellbeing, leaders become increasingly unable or unwilling to recognise moral limits. This often results in the falsification of information, exploitation of workers, or concealment of losses and risks. In such environments, deception becomes a means of organisational survival, used to preserve reputation and maintain the appearance of success. Yet this concealment only increases vulnerability, as it prevents honest self-assessment and undermines the organisation's capacity to respond to crises with integrity and transparency.

Organisational collapse, whether financial, structural, or moral, should therefore be understood not as an isolated accident but as the cumulative outcome of sustained ethical failure. Theological discussions often describe this process as moral entropy, whereby unrestrained vice gradually erodes internal coherence and institutional stability. As Friedman and Clarke (2022) observe, corporate failures frequently reveal that greed and dishonesty have been degrading both ethical and operational systems long before collapse becomes visible. Once moral disorder reaches maturity, its effects extend beyond individual wrongdoing to damage the wider organisational community, leaving institutions hollowed out from within.

Against this destructive cycle, theology also identifies restorative counterforces capable of interrupting moral decline. Stewardship, justice, and humility function as virtues that reorient organisational life toward responsibility and service. Stewardship reframes leadership not as ownership but as entrusted responsibility, emphasising the management of resources for the benefit of others rather than personal gain (Chuvieco & Karnawalski, 2025; Megoran, 2023). Justice promotes fairness, transparency, and accountability, resisting exploitation and reinforcing ethical decision-making. Humility counters pride and the illusion of self-sufficiency by reminding leaders of their dependence on moral wisdom and communal trust. Together, these virtues provide organisations with a constructive moral architecture that prioritises integrity, sustainability, and resilience over short-term advantage.

Ultimately, theology does more than condemn greed and deception; it offers a moral compass for organisational transformation. By grounding business life in values that transcend human desire, theology supports a more comprehensive understanding of success, one that integrates profitability with moral responsibility and efficiency with care for others. From this perspective, resilient organisations are not defined solely by their capacity to endure adversity, but by their commitment to righteousness, humble service, and justice as expressions of faith. In doing so, they replace the destructive cycle of greed and deception with a redemptive pattern oriented toward truth, trust, and enduring moral purpose.

Proposed Conceptual Model

This paper proposes Greed–Deception–Collapse Theological Ethics Model, which integrates organizational behavior, business ethics, and Christian theological insights. The model posits that unchecked greed and deception when embedded in organizational culture, create systemic vulnerabilities that inevitably lead to

collapse. However, theological virtues such as stewardship, justice, humility, and truth-telling act as counterforces that can break this cycle and foster resilience. The model is supported by the following four essential components:

1. Systemic Greed and Deception: The biblical identification of greed as idolatry (Colossians 3:5) and deception as falsehood (Ephesians 4:25) is reflected in the fact that greed is the driving force behind selfserving accumulation, while deception is the means by which illusions of success are maintained. Together, these two factors distort the purpose of an organization and erode trust.

2. The Cycle of Collapse: Collapse emerges not just as a technological failure but as a moral and spiritual breakdown, which fits with James 1:14–15, where desire leads to sin, and sin leads to death. Greed and deception reinforce each other, causing cultural fragility and moral compromise.

3. Theological Correctives (Virtues): Stewardship reorients resources toward service and the common good, while justice and humility disrupt self-centered motives and ensure fairness, and truth-telling restores transparency and accountability, all of which together provide a redemptive framework for transforming the institutional culture of an organization.

4. Organizational Resilience and Ethical Renewal: When leaders and institutions integrate theological virtues into culture and practice, they transition from structures that are prone to collapse to structures that are resilient. Ethical renewal helps to foster long-term sustainability, accountability, and trustworthiness, which aligns with God's purpose for human work and stewardship.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a conceptual literature review design to synthesise scholarly explanations of greed, deception, and organisational collapse, and to interpret these themes through a Christian ethical lens. A conceptual review was suitable because the purpose of the paper is not to test hypotheses with primary data, but to clarify key ideas, integrate insights across disciplines, and develop an interpretive model that connects organisational ethics to theological reasoning. The review therefore focused on identifying how scholars define greed and deception, how they explain their organisational mechanisms, and how theological traditions frame these patterns as moral and spiritual disorders with practical consequences for governance and corporate life.

The literature search drew on major academic databases and discovery platforms that index peer-reviewed work across business ethics, organisational behaviour, corporate governance, psychology, and theology. Searches were conducted using JSTOR, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. These sources were chosen because they provide access to journal articles, scholarly books, and reputable edited volumes that reflect both mainstream management research and faith-informed ethics scholarship. The search strategy used combinations of keywords designed to capture both secular and theological discussions, including "greed in organizations," "corporate deception," "organizational collapse," "theological business ethics," and "Christian stewardship in commerce." Variations and related terms were also explored through iterative searching, using alternative phrases such as "organizational wrongdoing," "ethical failure," "white-collar crime," "truth-telling," "stewardship," "sin," and "virtue ethics," in order to reduce the risk of missing relevant work that uses different terminology to describe similar constructs.

The time frame for included sources was selected to ensure a balanced coverage of foundational corporate cases and more recent scholarly developments. The selection process was conducted in stages. First, titles and abstracts were screened for clear relevance to at least one of the three core concepts (greed, deception, or organisational collapse) within corporate or organisational settings, or for explicit engagement with theological interpretation of business ethics. Second, full texts were reviewed to confirm substantive relevance and to identify how each source contributed conceptually to the paper's argument.

Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and scholarly reports that offered conceptual, theoretical, or empirical insights into greed, deception, organisational collapse, or their ethical and theological interpretation. Greater weight was given to works that connected organisational behaviour and governance to moral reasoning, including studies that discuss leadership ethics, corporate culture, institutional

complicity, and accountability. Works that explicitly integrated theology with business ethics, corporate governance, or organisational culture were also prioritised because they directly supported the purpose of the study. Exclusion criteria removed sources that were purely technical or descriptive, such as texts that discussed financial collapse only in operational terms without ethical analysis, or theological materials that did not engage organisational realities in a meaningful way. Popular media commentary and non-scholarly opinion pieces were excluded unless they were used only to contextualise widely known corporate cases.

After selection, the literature was synthesised through thematic analysis. Concepts and arguments were coded into recurring themes, such as systemic greed, deceptive communication, governance failure, organisational perversion, stewardship, justice, humility, and truth-telling. The synthesis then compared points of convergence and tension across disciplines to build an integrated account of how greed and deception become normalised, how they weaken governance and culture, and how theological ethics reframes both diagnosis and remedy. This process culminated in the development of a conceptual model that links organisational collapse to moral and spiritual breakdown while identifying theological virtues as practical counter-forces for ethical renewal.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Trends in the Literature: There are three important insights that emerge from the body of literature regarding greed, deception, and the breakdown of organizations. The first insight concerns the systemic nature of greed. Greed is not only a personal sin; rather, it is a systemic force that is ingrained in the culture of an organization. Heim and Mergaliyeva (2025) demonstrates how denial, complicity, and symbolic uses of money are the factors that sustain systemic greed. Similarly, Friedman and Clarke (2022) show that the avarice of corporations' results in deaths that could have been avoided, which is reflective of a cultural trend that prioritizes profit over human life. Based on this tendency, it appears that in order to combat greed, it is necessary to not only discipline CEOs but also alter organizational systems.

The second insight relates to the use of deception as an organizational strategy. Deception is frequently institutionalized, and it serves as a device to safeguard corporate images or to maintain illusions of success. Deception in organizations is characterized by predictable patterns such as distortion, ambiguity, and omission, as validated by Heim and Mergaliyeva (2025). Through the use of case studies such as Enron, Cole et al. (2021) demonstrates how misleading behaviors can become the norm until they eventually lead to the company's demise.

The third insight emphasizes that the collapse of an organization is primarily the result of ethical failings, not technical flaws. This is because ethical failures are the most fundamental cause of collapse. It was discovered by Cole et al. (2021) that dishonesty, irresponsibility, and cultural deterioration were the core causes of bank failures in the United Kingdom. To add insult to injury, Heim and Mergaliyeva (2025) point out that white-collar crimes flourish in environments with little control, which makes collapse a foreseeable outcome of moral compromise. This assertion is supported by Cole et al. (2021), who provide evidence that scandals are not simply the result of governance failures but rather reflect moral breakdowns.

Contradictions and Gaps in Literature: Despite strong evidence, several contradictions and gaps remain in the literature. One major concern is an excessive focus on regulation. Despite the fact that numerous studies (Cole et al., 2021; Heim & Mergaliyeva, 2025) advocate for stricter regulations, the lessons of history demonstrate that regulation alone is not sufficient to prevent collapse. In spite of the established oversight structures, Enron was able to occur. Another gap is the neglect of theological perspectives. Moya and Toledano (2025) note that the literature on business ethics frequently leaves theological insights out of the discussion. The spiritual dimension of greed and deception is frequently disregarded, despite the fact that ethics and corporate social responsibility are widely discussed.

A further contradiction lies in the limited integration of leadership and followership. It is important to note that Cole et al. (2021) underlines that collapse is not only about leaders but also about complicit followers. But a significant amount of research continues to concentrate solely on the accountability of leadership. Finally, there is insufficient attention to culture. Few studies explain how values such as generosity, humility, or stewardship may be nurtured as counterforces to greed (Moya & Toledano, 2025), despite the fact that organizational culture is widely acknowledged as a factor that contributes to the failure of businesses.

Theological Insights: By presenting greed and deception as symptoms of sin, theological concepts impart a sense of depth to the discussion. Sin, according to Moya and Toledano (2025), distorts leadership, which in turn creates situations that are conducive to the growth of greed and deception. Collapse, when viewed from this angle, is not only a failing of the structure but also a crisis of the spirit. Proverbs 26:27 says, "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them." This verse emphasizes the inevitability of collapse when greed and duplicity are allowed to continue unchecked. This is a manifestation of the moral rule that immoral activity will eventually lead to the destruction of both individuals and institutions both. Not only that, but theological approaches also emphasize the concepts of redemption and renewal. When it comes to overcoming greed and deception, Chuvieco and Karnawalski (2025) and Moya and Toledano (2025) say that stewardship, justice, and humility offer useful frameworks that can be utilized. Rather than exploiting the common good, such characteristics motivate businesses to serve the general good.

Proposition Development: Based on the synthesis, three propositions emerge. The first proposition is that systemic greed and deception, when normalized within organizational culture, inevitably lead to collapse. The second proposition is that Christian theological principles, especially stewardship, justice, humility, and truth telling, serve as counter-forces to organizational greed and deception. The third proposition is that organizational resilience depends not only on governance reforms but also on cultivating ethical and spiritual cultures grounded in theological virtues.

Integration of Ideas: Through the incorporation of both secular and theological perspectives, this review emphasizes that the prevention of organizational collapse involves more than only the implementation of structural and technical improvements. In spite of the fact that governance, legislation, and compliance frameworks are necessary for assuring procedural accountability, they continue to be insufficient in the absence of moral reform on both the individual and institutional levels. In James 1:14–15, the pattern of greed, deception, and collapse is a reflection of the moral degeneration described in the passage. According to this passage, unbridled desire gives birth to sin, and sin ultimately results in death. This pattern represents not only the spiritual destruction of organizations but also the ethical disintegration of organizations.

According to Chuvieco and Karnawalski (2025), stewardship reframes business not simply as a venture that generates profits but rather as a divine vocation, which is a calling to manage resources responsibly and to serve the common good. This is a significant departure from the traditional view of business. According to this point of view, the workplace transforms into a moral arena in which one's faith is reflected in action through acts of integrity, honesty, and service to others. In a similar vein, justice and humility, as stressed by Moya and Toledano (2025), encourage fairness, transparency, and respect for human dignity. This serves as a weapon against the exploitative inclinations that frequently accompany excessive ambition. These characteristics are in accordance with the biblical requirement stated in Micah 6:8 to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." This mandate continues to be the cornerstone of ethical decision-making in the corporate world.

This expansion of the discourse beyond utilitarian or compliance-based approaches is accomplished through the incorporation of such theological virtues into contemporary frameworks for corporate ethics. It lays the groundwork for a holistic ethical worldview, one that acknowledges the significance of moral formation to the accomplishment of sustainability. According to this model, leadership is not defined by control or accumulation; rather, it is defined by the concept of servant leadership, ethical duty, and moral obligation to both God and society. Therefore, the resilience of an organization is dependent not only on effective management methods but also on the cultivation of moral values that shape the attitudes and habits of those who lead and serve inside the organization.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study carry important implications for theory, policy, and practice, particularly in how greed, deception, and organizational collapse are understood and addressed within contemporary business ethics. By framing organizational failure through a theological lens, the study extends existing conversations beyond technical, legal, or behavioural explanations and re-centres ethics within a moral and spiritual worldview. This shift has consequences for how scholars conceptualise unethical behaviour, how policymakers design governance frameworks, and how managers lead and shape organisational culture.

From a theoretical perspective, the study challenges dominant approaches in business ethics and organisational theory that treat greed and deception primarily as economic incentives, governance failures, or psychological traits. While these explanations remain valuable, they are incomplete. The theological framing advanced in this paper reframes greed as disordered desire and deception as a distortion of truth, both rooted in deeper moral and spiritual conditions. This perspective expands theory by introducing sin, vocation, and virtue as analytical categories for understanding organisational life. In doing so, it encourages scholars to see organisations not merely as rational systems or contractual arrangements, but as moral communities shaped by shared values, narratives, and ultimate commitments.

This approach also deepens theoretical explanations of organisational collapse. Collapse is often explained as a sudden breakdown triggered by market shocks, poor risk management, or leadership incompetence. The theological lens instead highlights collapse as a gradual moral process in which repeated ethical compromises erode trust, integrity, and institutional coherence over time. This aligns with the biblical insight that "each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14–15). Applied to organisations, this pattern suggests that collapse is rarely accidental; it is the outcome of moral decay that has been tolerated, justified, and normalised. Theoretically, this reframing invites future research to integrate moral formation, spiritual anthropology, and virtue ethics into models of organisational resilience and failure.

In addition, the study contributes to theory by repositioning stewardship as a central organising principle for business ethics. Rather than viewing firms solely as profit-maximising entities, stewardship frames business as a trust, where leaders are accountable not only to shareholders but also to employees, communities, and ultimately to God. This theoretical shift has implications for leadership theory, corporate purpose, and stakeholder models. Leadership, in this view, is defined less by control or dominance and more by responsibility, service, and moral accountability. Such a perspective enriches leadership studies by offering a normative foundation that integrates competence with character.

The implications for policy are equally significant. The study highlights the limits of compliance-based regulation in preventing greed-driven misconduct and deception. Modern corporate history shows that scandals often occur in highly regulated environments, suggesting that rules alone cannot restrain unethical desire or cultivate moral responsibility. The theological perspective presented here implies that effective policy must go beyond deterrence and punishment to address the moral culture within which organisations operate. Policies that focus exclusively on reporting requirements, sanctions, and enforcement risk treating symptoms rather than causes.

A more holistic policy approach would recognise that ethical behaviour is shaped by values, incentives, and institutional norms. This suggests the need for governance frameworks that encourage transparency, accountability, and long-term responsibility rather than short-term financial performance alone. Policies could, for example, reward ethical leadership, protect whistle-blowers, and promote inclusive decision-making structures that reduce the concentration of power. Such measures align with the biblical concern for justice and fairness, expressed in the call to use "honest scales" and reject practices that exploit others (Proverbs 11:1).

Furthermore, the findings imply that policymakers should take moral education and leadership formation seriously. Business education and professional training often emphasise technical competence while neglecting moral character. A policy environment that supports ethics education, values-based leadership development, and reflection on the social purpose of business can help address the deeper roots of greed and deception. Faith informed perspectives, while not imposed, can contribute to this process by offering rich moral narratives about responsibility, humility, and service. At a global level, the study also supports stronger international cooperation to address systemic corporate wrongdoing, recognising that greed and deception often operate across borders and affect vulnerable populations worldwide.

For practice, the implications are especially direct and demanding. Managers and organisational leaders are called to rethink the meaning of success and the purpose of leadership. The study suggests that leadership rooted in unchecked ambition and self-interest creates fertile ground for deception and eventual collapse. By contrast, leadership understood as stewardship promotes restraint, accountability, and concern for the common

good. Practically, this means that leaders must model integrity, resist the normalisation of unethical shortcuts, and create environments where truth can be spoken without fear.

Organisational culture emerges as a critical arena for ethical renewal. Greed and deception thrive in cultures that reward results at any cost, silence dissent, and equate worth with financial performance. Leaders therefore have a responsibility to shape cultures that value honesty, fairness, and humility. This includes setting clear ethical expectations, aligning incentives with long-term values, and addressing misconduct consistently, regardless of status or performance. The biblical exhortation to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8) offers a concise moral vision that can guide everyday managerial decisions.

The study also implies that organisations should invest in ongoing ethical formation rather than treating ethics as a one-time training or compliance exercise. Ethical formation involves cultivating habits, attitudes, and shared meanings that support virtuous behaviour over time. This may include reflective practices, mentoring, ethical dialogue, and leadership accountability structures that reinforce moral responsibility. Truth-telling, in particular, must be protected and encouraged, as deception often becomes entrenched when employees fear retaliation or believe that honesty is futile. The call to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) captures the balance between honesty and relational responsibility that organisations should seek to embody.

Finally, the study's implications for practice extend to organisational resilience. Resilient organisations are not only those with strong systems and strategies, but those with moral depth. When crises arise, organisations grounded in stewardship, justice, and humility are better equipped to respond transparently, learn from failure, and rebuild trust. In contrast, organisations driven by greed and sustained by deception may appear successful for a time, but their foundations are fragile. As Proverbs 26:27 warns, "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them." This wisdom underscores the practical truth that unethical practices ultimately undermine those who rely on them.

In sum, the implications of this study suggest that addressing greed, deception, and organisational collapse requires a fundamental reorientation of theory, policy, and practice. Ethical renewal cannot be achieved through technical fixes alone; it demands moral vision, character formation, and a renewed understanding of business as a vocation oriented toward service and justice. By integrating theological insights into business ethics, organisations and societies are better positioned to cultivate integrity, sustain trust, and pursue forms of success that endure.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the relationship between greed, deception, and organizational collapse by bringing business ethics into direct conversation with Christian theological reflection. Across the reviewed literature and corporate cases, the central message is that collapse is rarely just a technical failure. It is often the end point of a slow moral decline in which greed becomes culturally acceptable, deception becomes a survival strategy, and accountability weakens until trust finally breaks. The analysis shows that greed should not be treated only as an individual flaw in a few "bad leaders." It frequently becomes systemic—built into incentives, routines, and even the symbolic meaning of money and success. In such settings, people may participate in harmful practices through denial, silence, or complicity, while still seeing themselves as decent and professional. Deception then works as the companion vice. It sustains false narratives of performance and stability through distortion, omission, and strategic ambiguity, allowing organizations to protect their image while concealing deeper dysfunction. Over time, these patterns damage ethical culture, normalize shortcuts, and make major wrongdoing feel ordinary.

By interpreting these dynamics as expressions of sin and disordered desire, the paper offers a deeper diagnosis of why governance reforms and compliance regimes can fail. Scripture's warnings are not abstract moral lessons; they describe the real consequences of moral compromise in human communities. The reminder that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10) and that "dishonest scales" are an abomination (Proverbs 11:1) frames greed and deception as forces that corrode relationships and institutions. The pattern in James 1:14– 15 also captures the organisational pathway from desire to sin and from sin to "death," helping to explain why collapse is often predictable in hindsight.

Importantly, the paper does not end with condemnation. It argues for ethical renewal through theological correctives that are also practical: stewardship redefines leadership as entrusted responsibility; justice restores fairness and protection for the vulnerable; humility restrains pride and excess; and truth-telling rebuilds transparency and trust. The proposed Greed–Deception–Collapse Theological Ethics Model brings these insights together by showing how virtues can function as counter-forces to systemic moral drift. In this sense, resilient organizations are those that cultivate moral culture, not merely stronger controls. Lasting integrity requires both sound governance and a renewed ethical imagination shaped by responsibility, service, and the common good.

REFERENCES

1. Cole, R. A., Johan, S., & Schweizer, D. (2021). Corporate failures: Declines, collapses, and scandals. Journal of Corporate Finance, 67, 101872. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2020.101872
2. Friedman, H. H., & Clarke, C. (2022). Corporate greed and preventable deaths: An ethical indictment. Journal of International Management and Ethics, 3(3). https://doi.org/10.35478/jime.2022.3.03
3. Zeelenberg, M., & Breugelmans, S. M. (2022). The good, bad and ugly of dispositional greed. Current Opinion in Psychology, 46, 101323. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101323
4. Megoran, N. (2023). Imago Dei and human resource management: The implications of Christian anthropology for people management. Journal of Global Responsibility. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/14769948.2023.2255776
5. Roy, S., Puyou, F.-R., Bapuji, V., Kennedy, T. M., & Fort, T. C. (2024). Ethical culture in organizations: A review and agenda for future research. Business Ethics Quarterly, 34(1). https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2022.44
6. Chuvieco, J., & Karnawalski, K. (2025). Work as vocation: A vocational reading of Genesis 1–3 in the light of work theology. Religions, 16(5), 596. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050596
7. Heim, B., & Mergaliyeva, A. (2025). Organizational wrongdoing: Evolution, ramifications and future research directions. Journal of Business Ethics. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-02405806-9
8. Moya, S., & Toledano, N. (2025). The space for religion and spirituality in business, management, and entrepreneurship education: Reflections on sacred texts as a resource for business ethics. Journal of
9. Business Ethics. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-024-05787-9
10. Ohana, M. (2025). It's sheer greed! How does greed lead to counterproductive work behaviors in the case of mortality salience? Journal of Business Research, 199, 115556. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115556