

Structural Violence, Conspiracy Theorizing and Collective Mobilization of the Disadvantaged for Group Empowerment: A Study in the Context of the Secessionist Crisis in Cameroon

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Abstract Structural violence can be considered a contextual determinant of conspiracy beliefs, as adverse socio-political circumstances (discrimination, discontent, and victimization) are associated with an increase in conspiracy beliefs. These beliefs, directed toward outgroups or governments perceived as conspirators, are likely to amplify marginalized groups members' grievances, frustration, and anger, potentially increasing their hostility that can lead to their collective mobilization for group empowerment or, in extreme cases, to war, particularly when they believe the threat to their groups can be prevented, mitigated, or countered. These logical links, not yet empirically established, are the subject of this study, conducted in the context of the ongoing secessionist crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, which allows us to contribute to the recent literature on the antecedents of conspiracy beliefs, which focused its attention on the social and intergroup aspects of conspiracy thinking, highlighting how conspiracy theories can reflect perceptions of social, political and historical reality structured around antagonistic groups. The hypothesis being tested posits that structural violence is indirectly linked to the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment through conspiracy beliefs. This hypothesis was tested on a sample of 998 participants of Cameroonian nationality, aged between 18 and 56 years ($M=23,541 \pm 5,777$), who were administered a questionnaire measuring various constructs. The results provide empirical support for this hypothesis.

Keywords Structural violence, Conspiracy beliefs, Collective mobilization for group empowerment, Secessionism, Cameroon

1. Introduction

Structural violence, which is situated in the perspective of the conflictual relationship between the system and the individual, within institutional, cultural, or social frameworks, can be defined as the intentional or unintentional violation or limitation of individuals or groups' rights resulting from systemic conditions [18]. It is expressed, for example, through the attitudes and behaviors that constitute oppression, conceived as a state or process of domination in which the possibility for the oppressed to access well-being is

obstructed by exploitation, marginalization, discrimination, and violence [46]. Indeed, emanating from the structure, that is to say the underlying societal systems, institutions and models that shape behaviors, relations and power dynamics [94], structural violence corresponds to all forms of constraints (exploitation, segmentation, marginalization or fragmentation; [34]) weighing on an individual's potential. These constraints, which cannot be attributed to a clearly identified actor (i.e., an individual, for example; see [108]), result in unequal access to resources, political power, education, health, and justice for the people or groups who are their victims (see [109]). This is why structural violence can be considered, to some extent, as social injustice (see [29] [34]), or more broadly as a human rights violation [90]. It follows that despite its relative invisibility compared to personal or physical violence, it is by far the most lethal form

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of violence, due to the consequences of the inequalities it creates and the potential for stimulation it has on physical violence (homicides, suicides, mass murders, and wars; [59]).

For their victims, the search for the origins of structural violence could give rise to conspiracy theorizing, since the belief that others are conspiring against the ingroup is more likely to emerge when individuals consider their group as undervalued, disadvantaged, or threatened (see [25]). In this vein, it should be noted that even though the literature available to date has not yet explicitly assessed the potential link between victimization by structural violence and conspiracy theorizing, studies linking the feeling of relative deprivation to conspiracy theorizing suggest that this link is plausible, since the feeling of relative deprivation can be felt as a result of perceived injustice (see [38]), in a conceptual context where social injustice is, to some extent, comparable to structural violence (see [34]). Indeed, particularly in the economic sphere, relative deprivation, conceived as an increased perception of vulnerability linked to a disadvantageous position generated by perceived injustice [62], may be connected to the prevalence of conspiracy theorizing [92], since members of marginalized groups may adopt conspiracy beliefs to explain sociopolitical events with negative implications [43]. Along these lines, structural violence can be considered a contextual determinant of conspiracy beliefs, since adverse sociopolitical circumstances, such as low socioeconomic status, discrimination, discontent, and victimization, are associated, in the literature, with an increase in conspiracy theorizing (see [24]).

Conspiracy theories (see [16] [23] [22] for some reviews of the available literature) are characterized by providing a narrative that attributes ingroup's victimization to hidden agendas, secret power structures, or intentional acts perpetrated by a powerful and malevolent outgroup (see, for example [82])—or by some ingroup members (see [48]). As a result, the literature reports that these beliefs are prevalent among minority and disadvantaged groups, i.e. those who suffer from power asymmetry [77] and who, consequently, struggle to meet their material and psychological needs. The reason for this is that, in their search for meaning in their unfavorable situation [5], they are inclined to subscribe to the idea that members of powerful groups conspire against them daily (see [19]); this leads them to make external attributions for their unfavorable situation, particularly blaming outgroups, even though in many cases, the conspiracy theories that underpin their position towards these groups are unviable, untrue, or misleading [81]. In situations of failure, these attributions, which consist of explaining events by external causes (see [96]), are underpinned by self-serving strategies aimed at protecting and enhancing individuals' self-esteem (see [37]), by highlighting that they are not responsible for these situations due to their potential limitations or shortcomings.

The consequence of outgroup-oriented conspiracy beliefs (or "*out-group*" *conspiracy theories*; see [67]) is that they

are likely to amplify marginalized groups members' grievances, frustration, and anger. In turn, these emotional reactions are likely to increase their hostility toward alleged conspirators [66], fuel collective action against them (see [35]), or, in extreme cases, constitute a motive for armed conflict (see [106]). Indeed, victimization is a potential catalyst for feelings of injustice and collective action among members of disadvantaged groups (see [95]), particularly because the social inequalities it carries can activate feelings of restricted collective autonomy among their members (see [89]). This collective action is catalyzed, in particular, by the feeling of relative deprivation (see [38]) which can fuel perceived injustice and related emotions, such as anger (see [3] [12]) or moral outrage (see [12] [100]), which the literature reports are linked to mobilization for social change (see [57]), potentially leading groups' collective empowerment (see [93]). It can target both specific outgroups and governments considered to be conspirators whose malicious methods and actions are known with some certainty, and are likely to negatively impact ingroup members' well-being, particularly in cases where they feel that the threat posed by these conspirators can be prevented, mitigated or confronted (see [87]).

The aim of this research is to examine the nexus between structural violence, conspiracy theorizing, and collective mobilization for group empowerment; a relationship not yet formally documented, but whose existence is suggested by the available literature on these various constructs. However, understanding this nexus requires an analysis that takes into account factors such as the historical and sociopolitical contexts of the research. Indeed, social psychologists have been emphasizing for decades that failing to consider context exposes researchers to the essentialization and individualization of phenomena inextricably rooted in the social [80]. In connection with this concern, the literature on the antecedents of conspiracy beliefs has recently focused its attention on the social and intergroup aspects of conspiracy thinking, highlighting how conspiracy theories can reflect perceptions of social, political and historical reality structured around antagonistic groups [83]. In the field of intergroup conflict specifically, this reality now appears self-evident, particularly in light of the interethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia (see, for example [64]). In this vein, the study is conducted in Cameroon, a former German protectorate (1884-1916) which experienced dual French and British administration between 1916 and 1960 [73]. This situation divided it into two territories, one French-speaking majority (80% of the population) and one English-speaking minority (20% of the population); thus laying the foundations for a hegemonic decolonization, characterized by an asymmetry of power between the two linguistic communities (see [9]). Several decades after the unification of the populations of these two territories into a single state in 1961, Cameroon is gripped by a secessionist conflict, which constitutes the culmination of a past of structural violence against the Anglophone minority group (discrimination, marginalization and disregard;

see [31] [79]), whose members feel threatened in terms of identity, politics and economy [70] by a political system which they consider oppressive and assimilationist [45]. This threat inclines them to believe in the existence of a strategy implemented by Francophone institutional authorities, with a view to their annihilation (see [31] [71]), through the erasure of all the cultural and institutional foundations of their identity (see [97]). This could explain the violent extremism embraced by some of them (see [15] for a review of the empirical literature on the links between conspiracy beliefs and violence) and which is manifested in the ongoing secessionist crisis in their region.

The secessionist crisis in the Cameroonian context: From structural violence to collective mobilization for group empowerment

The secessionist crisis that has been unfolding in Cameroon since 2016 is simply the culmination of a history dating back to the end of the First World War. This history comprises both distant and recent events, the analysis of which allows us to understand how and why a country that had been relatively stable since its independence in the early 1960s is experiencing a major crisis, namely an armed secessionist conflict with significant human, financial, and material consequences (see [6] [7]). To account for this history, this study structures its analysis around three points: 1) structural violence, threats to group identity, and conspiracy theorizing; 2) popular protests for group empowerment and state repression; and 3) radicalization leading to secessionism.

Structural violence, threats to group identity, and conspiracy theorizing

The triple European colonization/administration suffered by Cameroon gave it a certain specificity in Central Africa [2]. Indeed, colonial history reveals that this territory, under German protectorate since 1884, was placed, at the end of the First World War, under the mandate of the League of Nations, which entrusted its administration to France and England until its independence [69] [71]. From then on, these two colonial powers implemented a policy of de-Germanization, consisting not only of eradicating the traces of the German colonial legacy, but also of imposing their own cultures on the two parts of the territory placed under their respective administration. After French-administered Cameroon gained independence in 1960, British-administered Cameroon chose to unite with the former French Cameroon to form a federation of two states with equal status, in a plebiscite organized by the United Nations in 1961. It is important to note that this plebiscite did not offer the possibility of independence for this territory. It gave voters the choice between achieving independence by joining Nigeria or French Cameroon; hence their grievances and frustrations, fueled by the fact that they would have preferred an independent state (see [32] for a detailed account of these events). However, it is alleged that while Anglophones considered the federation as the definitive form of the state, Francophones saw it only as a veiled preparatory phase

for the total assimilation of Anglophone Cameroon into a highly centralized Francophone unitary state. In this vein, a referendum, marred by irregularities, aimed at creating this unitary state, held in 1972, brought an end to this federation, without consulting the existing federal legislative institutions (see [8]) and in violation of Article 47 of the 1961 Federal Constitution, which stipulated that: “any proposal for the revision of the present constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the Federation shall be inadmissible”. In the Anglophone community, this constitutional revision, considered unilateral and illegal, is seen as the main source of *the Anglophone problem* in Cameroon [99].

In Cameroon, the Anglophone problem refers to the structural violence of which the minority populations in the former British Cameroons consider themselves victims, in numerous sectors (education, health, employment, infrastructure, and resource distribution, for example; see [27]), due to a central government held by the Francophone majority since 1961 [71]. According to them, this central government opts for a systematic policy of assimilation and marginalization of the Anglophone populations [36], which exposes them to socio-cultural victimization [4], the deprivation of their rights, their treatment with suspicion, the neglect of their interests, and the limitation of their participation in national life to non-essential functions [31]. This is why they feel treated as second-class citizens [11] or even as foreigners [31] in a country dominated by their Francophone compatriots. Similarly, these populations allege that the natural resources of the Anglophone regions are being exploited excessively, and that the revenue generated is primarily used for the development of the Francophone regions of the country [102].

The structural violence that Anglophones believe they experience in Cameroon contributes to the construction of a minority Anglophone community that feels subjugated, marginalized, and assimilated [70]. In other words, this community is made up of citizens who consider themselves members of an oppressed and captive group whose territory has been annexed [54] by their Francophone compatriots who they perceive as colonizers [70], notably because they would have imposed their language, as well as their educational and judicial systems on them [69]. Consequently, they feel threatened by their group identity, as is the case for many linguistic minorities around the world who face linguistic assimilation, language-based discrimination, and the non-recognition of their groups' linguistic specificities (see [110]). In short, in Cameroon, Anglophones would experience intercultural domination stemming from intergroup asymmetry, in which the dominant group imposes its culture on the subordinate group [40]; hence their grievances against the governing system [75].

The threat to group identity felt by Anglophones, due to the structural violence they experience, leads them to explain their negative situation by the existence of a conspiracy orchestrated by Francophone institutional authorities aimed at their annihilation (see [31]). An analysis of the literature

on conspiracy theories helps to understand this explanation. Indeed, conspiracy theories refer to the belief that certain individuals or organizations, or even secret and powerful groups, intentionally conspire to achieve malicious and illicit goals [25]. Individuals and groups in an unfavorable or threatening situation, such as the Anglophones in Cameroon, are particularly susceptible to these theories [5] [77], notably in crisis situations which have the potential to exacerbate this tendency, due to the increased uncertainty, anxiety and perceived loss of control that they are likely to generate in individuals (see [28] for details). To combat this feeling of threat, these populations decided, at the end of 2016, to resort to collective action with a view to empowering their group.

Popular protests for group empowerment and state repression

From a certain perspective, the Anglophone problem in Cameroon can be analyzed within the theoretical frameworks of internal colonialism (see, for example [50]) and ethnonationalism (see, for example [31] [47]). Internal colonialism refers to structural, social, cultural, and political inequalities between different regions of a country [39]. These inequalities manifest themselves through the unequal distribution of economic resources, political domination, and cultural marginalization [4]; hence the emergence of two types of groups: privileged and disadvantaged. The former establish mechanisms to maintain the status quo, while the latter, who may develop a nationalist consciousness, may fight for social change. Ethnonationalism, for its part, argues that ethnonational identities are important in conflict situations because they impact the emergence of the *them(outgroups) /us(ingroups)* syndrome [20], which can turn into *them versus us* [4] which, in the case of Cameroon, has marked the shift, since 2016, from the *Anglophone problem* to the *Anglophone crisis*.

A review of the literature reveals that the current crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon is simply the culmination of a situation that has persisted for decades (see [4] for details). In fact, since the end of 2016, protests and strikes have been organized by groups including lawyers and teachers [49] in opposition to what they perceived as the increasing marginalization of the Anglophone minority, particularly through the alleged destruction of its heritage and culture. In practice, lawyers have taken to the streets to demand the translation of certain legal texts into English and to denounce the appointment, in Anglophone courts, of Francophone judges trained in the *Civil Code*, and therefore unfamiliar with the *Common Law* system inherited from the British colonial power, and supposedly applied in the legal system of the Anglophone regions [63]. Teachers, for their part, went on strike to condemn the appointment of French-speaking staff in schools and universities of Anglo-Saxon tradition, as well as the degradation of the Anglophone education system by these administrative acts [6]. Thousands of ordinary people from other sectors of professional life (students, shopkeepers, and transporters, among others)

joined these demonstrations to express their solidarity and voice other grievances, such as youth unemployment and the deteriorating infrastructures in the Anglophone regions. These demonstrations were structured around various tactics of civil disobedience, including school boycotts and “ghost town” operations. Although generally—though not always—peaceful in nature, these popular protests were met with disproportionate, indiscriminate, and brutal repression [84] [98]. These repressive tactics constitute a well-established *modus operandi* among Cameroonian institutional and security authorities in their response to dissent (see [1] [26] [73] [74] [76] for details on authoritarian practices in the Cameroonian context), that they nevertheless take the precaution of covering with a seal of legality (*autocratic legalism*; see [61]) to give them the appearance of practices of a democratic country simply facing threats to its stability. As a result, hundreds of people were arrested, civil society organizations were banned, and internet and telephone access was cut off for several months. Unfortunately, this repression affected even the more moderate voices within the movement, i.e. those who favored either decentralization or a return to federalism [49]. This left the field open to the most radical elements, marking an escalation in the conflict between the Anglophone populations and the governing system [51].

Radicalization leading to secessionism

Within the Anglophone community of Cameroon, secessionist tendencies did not originate with the ongoing crisis since October 2016. They date back to the unification of French and British Cameroon in 1961. Indeed, nationalists in British Cameroon experienced the *de facto* association between the French and British parts of Cameroon as an annexation, and therefore a colonial occupation of British Cameroon by the authorities of French Cameroon. Adding to this was the illegal and illegitimate dismantling, in 1972, of the 1961 federal agreements, and the unilateral change of the country’s name in 1984, now called the *Republic of Cameroon*, that is to say, the name that French Cameroon bore at its independence in 1960; thus erasing the country’s dual colonial past [32]. To address the consequences of these events for their community, Anglophone elites began to reintroduce concepts such as federalism and even secession into the political agenda. In this vein, they created a regional organization in 1995 to represent the aspirations of the population. This organization, called the *Southern Cameroons National Council* (SCNC), is a self-determination entity whose goal is the independence of Anglophone Cameroon from the Republic of Cameroon. Because of this declared and embraced secessionist ideology, that organization has been declared illegal by institutional authorities who consider its members terrorists and not freedom fighters, as they define themselves (see [21]). Consequently, its meetings are regularly disrupted, and its members are often arrested and detained [10].

Due to various factors, including maneuvers by

institutional authorities to undermine all efforts by the Anglophones to develop a sense of belonging, as well as infighting among local elites driven by their own interests, the secessionist tendency mentioned above, however, remained a minority and very little visible for decades (see [32]). One such maneuver involves highlighting ethnic divisions between Anglophone populations from the North-West Region (the *Bamileke*) and those from the South-West Region (the *Sawa*). For example, in most towns in the Southwest region, non-indigenous people or settlers are referred to as “Graffi” (a distortion of the word *Grassfields*, which represent the highlands from which the Anglophone populations of the North-West Region originated) or “come no go” (strangers); derogatory terms used to describe people from the North-West Region, who are accused of sympathizing with separatist ideas [10]. For these authors, the aim of this maneuver is to add to the Anglophone identity, which unites the populations of the former British Cameroon, an ethnic identity that differentiates them from one another. This constitutes an obstacle to the idea of a separate Anglophone territory, which presupposes Anglophone cultural homogeneity, even if most separatist movements (*Southern Cameroons National Council* (SCNC) or *Southern Cameroons Youth League* (SCYL) for example) are less interested in the idea of making an ethnocultural space correspond to the territory of a State than in that of controlling resources considered vital [68].

The violent repression of demonstrations by lawyers, teachers, and students exacerbated feelings of marginalization and inhumane treatment of Anglophones by institutional authorities, thereby promoting separatist ideas. As a result, on October 1, 2017, secessionist leaders gathered within the *Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front* unilaterally declared the independence of Southern Cameroons, under the name *Federal Republic of Ambazonia*, and created armed militias to defend their self-proclaimed territory (see [33]). The situation deteriorated sharply following popular demonstrations organized to celebrate this symbolic independence of the Anglophone regions [6]. Indeed, in response to this secessionist act, security forces fired on the crowd, killing unarmed people. In the aftermath, many people were arrested, while others fled their homes, forming the first waves of internally displaced persons and refugees in neighboring Nigeria [1].

Consequently, the more moderate voices of the Anglophone cause were gradually overshadowed by separatist groups (*Bui Unity Warriors*, *Mountain Fako Lions*, *Lebialem Red Dragons*, *Marine Forces of Bamalang*, or *Buffalos of Bali Nyonga*, for example [7]), which advocated armed struggle. These groups began perpetrating violent attacks against the defense and security forces, symbols of the Cameroonian state, and even civilian populations. This escalation of armed violence coincided with the militarization of the Anglophone regions and its consequences for civilian populations, who were sometimes equated with separatists and therefore treated as such [6]. Far from finding a peaceful

solution to the crisis, this militarization and the human rights violations that accompany it (see the case of the massacre of civilians in the locality of Ngarbuh for example; [42]), has provided the fuel that has powered the emergence of more radical and violent separatist movements (see [30] for the analysis of some explanatory factors of violent extremism), focused on secession and armed struggle, thanks to their increasingly sophisticated arsenal [7]. The actions of these separatist movements fall under the category of violent extremism, which can be understood as the set of beliefs, attitudes, and actions that advocate, commit, or support ideologically motivated violence with social, economic, or political objectives. According to the specialized literature, those who perpetrate this type of (defensive) violence often act not as rational actors seeking to maximize their utility, but as devoted agents guided by ethical principles and sacred values; hence, they often perceive it as “virtuous”, that is, as a morally necessary means of regulating, maintaining, or restoring essential social relations, and not, as one might think, as a loss of self-control (see [56]). Within the framework of social dominance theory, this form of violence falls under the category of strategies for mitigating intergroup inequalities. This hierarchy-attenuating violence is therefore motivated by the desire to redress intergroup power imbalances and improve the condition of subordinate groups. Its objective is to liberate oppressed groups from their dominators (see [86]). As a result, a decade after its outbreak, the Anglophone crisis has caused several thousand deaths; hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees in neighboring countries; as well as significant economic and infrastructural damage (see [88]).

Hypotheses

This research tests the following hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 1*: Structural violence, conspiracy beliefs, and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment are linked;
- *Hypothesis 2*: Structural violence is linked to contextual variables;
- *Hypothesis 3*: Conspiracy beliefs and contextual variables are linked;
- *Hypothesis 4*: Contextual variables and the inclination towards collective mobilization are linked.

The study assesses the structural relationships between the main variables by incorporating conspiracy theories as an intervening variable in the model. In this context, a model of structural relationships is examined to test Hypothesis 5 below:

- *Hypothesis 5*: Structural violence is indirectly related to the intention to engage in collective mobilization for group empowerment through conspiracy beliefs.

This hypothesis is broken down into sub-hypotheses. Specifically, Hypothesis 5a (Path a) argues that structural violence does not have a significant direct structural relationship with intention of collective mobilization for

group empowerment. Hypothesis 5b, on the other hand, posits that structural violence positively and significantly predicts conspiracy beliefs (Path b). Hypothesis 5c posits that conspiracy beliefs positively and significantly explains intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment (Path c).

2. Method

Participants

To participate in this research, each participant had to: 1) belong to one of the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon; 2) be able to read and write English; and 3) agree to participate voluntarily and without compensation. From an ethical standpoint, participants signed an informed consent form guaranteeing that the information they provided for the research would be anonymous and used solely for scientific purposes. Their numbers and sociodemographic characteristics are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristic of sample

Gender	n	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
1. Male	380	38.076	38.076	38.076
2. Female	618	61.924	61.924	100
Total	998	100		
<i>Region</i>				
1. North-West	456	45.691	45.691	45.691
2. South-West	542	54.309	54.309	100
Total	998	100		
<i>Economic status</i>				
1. Wealthy	474	47.495	47.495	47.495
2. Middle class	518	51.904	51.904	99.399
3. Poor	6	0.601	0.601	100
Total	998	100		

Table 1 reports that the number of participants was 998 Cameroonians (380 men, or 38.076%, and 618 women, or 61.924%), aged between 18 and 56 years ($M=23.541 \pm 5.777$). 474 of them can be considered rich, 518 as members of the middle class, and 6 as poor.

Measures

Participants' sociodemographic characteristics were collected in addition to the eight study variables listed below:

- *Structural violence* (PSV, $\alpha=.73$; $\omega=.73$) was assessed using a psychometric instrument developed for this study (e.g., "Anglophone populations are unfairly deprived of their rights and their interests are neglected in this country in favor of those of Francophones");
- *The Responsibility of the authorities for the injustice* (RAI, $\alpha=.70$; $\omega=.701$) was measured using statements formulated for the purposes of this study (e.g., "The socio-political situation that pushed the Anglophone regions into crisis was created by government authorities");

- *Generic Conspiracy Beliefs* (GCB, $\alpha=.75$; $\omega=.75$) were assessed by adapting [17] scale's items to the research focus (e.g., "The adoption of the national flag with a single star in the center was a secret plan by the Francophone authorities to annihilate Anglophones' specificity represented by the second star");
- *Grievances against political authorities* (GAPA) were measured using an item inspired by [14] ("I am furious because of the treatment that the political authorities subject the Anglophone populations of this country to");
- *Political distrust* (PD, $\alpha=.622$; $\omega=.626$) was assessed using items inspired by [91] (e.g., "If I had a difficult problem, I would rather be quiet than resort to the authorities of this country");
- *Perceived economic inequalities* (PEI, $\alpha=.70$, $\omega=.701$) were measured using items adapted from [103] scale (e.g., "In Cameroon, the real opportunities for success in life are available only to rich people");
- *Legitimization of radical political actions* (LRPA, $\alpha=.848$; $\omega=.849$) was assessed using items inspired by [107] (e.g., "In the Anglophone crisis, it is legitimate for people to physically harm a government official to express political discontent");
- *Support for secessionism* (SS) was measured using items formulated for the purposes of this research ($\alpha=.73$; e.g., "To promote their specificity, Anglophones must definitely separate from Francophones");
- *Intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment* (ICMGEs, $\alpha=.670$; $\omega=.666$) was assessed using a measure developed for this research (e.g., "To put an end to Anglophones' mistreatment, I am ready to block the streets and physically attack this country").

Data were collected through self-administration of these instruments by participants, who were asked to respond to each item using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree).

Data analysis

The study data were processed using JASP 19.2 and SPSS 27 statistical software. Preliminary analyses present descriptive statistics (Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD), median and normality statistics, minimum and maximum) and correlational statistics (Pearson's correlation coefficient). The correlation test examines the links between the study's main variables and the relationships between these variables and contextual variables. The structural equation modeling (SEM) method, which tests the structural relationships between variables, allowed for the evaluation of direct and indirect relationships, taking into account contextual variables that could play the same role as structural violence. Each structural relationship constitutes a hypothesis. Thus, the prediction coefficients (R²) and the beta coefficient (estimated at the 5% threshold within the 95% confidence interval) were estimated to test the direct and indirect relationships of the established mediated structural model. The results are presented in tables and figures (structural model).

Table 2. Descriptive statistic and Pearson's correlations

Correlations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. PSV	1								
2. GCB	.57***	1							
3. ICM	.23***	.37***	1						
4. LRPA	.07*	.28***	.33***	1					
5. RAI	.52***	.56***	.27***	.09**	1				
6. GAPA	.34***	.45***	.20***	.21***	.46***	1			
7. SS	.29***	.39***	.27***	.32***	.27***	.21***	1		
8. PD	.49***	.51***	.38***	.18***	.51***	.39***	.30***	1	
9. PEI	.45***	.47***	.31***	.26***	.45***	.41***	.27***	.50***	1
<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>									
Me.	42	35	19	22	27	11	10	22	31
M.	40.09	33.93	19.01	20.87	25.52	10.40	9.069	20.49	30.26
S.D.	8.76	7.90	5.05	8.12	5.72	2.91	3.28	4.81	6.77
Skewness	-.49	-.49	-.37	-.37	-.52	-.75	-.51	-.59	-.57
Kurtosis	-.20	-.16	-.36	-.91	-.31	.03	-.56	-.13	-.07
Minimum	9	7	4	5	6	2	2	4	6
Maximum	56	49	28	35	35	14	14	28	42

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; RAI: Responsibility of the authorities for the injustice; GAPA: Grievances against political authorities; ICM: Intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment; SS: Support for secessionism; LRPA: Legitimization of radical political actions; GCB: Generic conspiracy beliefs; PD: Political distrust; PEI: Perceived economic inequality; PSV: Perceived structural violence; Me.: Median; M.: Mean; S.D.: Standard deviation.

3. Results

Descriptive statistics and testing of the relationships between the main and the contextual variables

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlations (r), as well as the descriptive statistics of the study variables. First, the normality test of the data indicates Skewness (-0.49 to -0.37 with an absolute value < 3) and Kurtosis (-0.36 to -0.03 with an absolute value < 10) values well below the thresholds. According to the criteria for normality of a statistical distribution [52], this indicates that the data perfectly meet the conditions for normality or for the use of parametric tests (Pearson correlations and structural equation modeling). Second, these results generally indicate that the standard deviations are proportionally consistent with the means, suggesting that there is no problem of extreme concentration of responses. Third, Table 2 presents the correlation indices between the main variables of the study on the one hand, and the correlation indices between these variables and the control variables on the other hand; indices that test the study's hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Structural violence, conspiracy beliefs, and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment are linked.

The results (see Table 2) reveal significant relationships ($p < .001$) between the study's main variables. Specifically, a positive and significant relationship was observed between structural violence and conspiracy beliefs ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$).

This suggests that the more participants perceive structural violence against ingroup, the more likely they are to adhere to conspiracy beliefs about the origin of this violence. These beliefs are significantly related to the intention to collective mobilization for group empowerment ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that high levels of conspiracy beliefs are associated with a strong intention to collectively mobilize for group empowerment. At the same time, the results report a positive but weaker correlation between structural violence and intention to collectively mobilize for group empowerment ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). Although there is a direct link between structural violence and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment; this link is less robust than that mediated by conspiracy beliefs. This reinforces the idea that conspiracy beliefs could be a key mediator. Structural violence is strongly linked to conspiracy beliefs. These two variables are, in turn, linked to intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment.

Hypothesis 2: Structural violence is linked to contextual variables

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that structural violence has positive and significant relationships with the study's contextual variables. Specifically, structural violence is strongly and significantly linked to the responsibility of the authorities for injustice ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), grievances against political authorities ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), political distrust ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.001$), perceived economic inequalities ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), and support for secessionism ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that structural violence and these

contextual variables follow the same direction. In contrast to these observations, structural violence is weakly and significantly linked to the legitimization of radical political action ($r=0.07, p<0.05$).

Hypothesis 3: Conspiracy beliefs and contextual variables are linked

The observations made in this research (see Table 2) report the existence of positive and significant relationships between conspiracy beliefs and contextual variables. Specifically, these beliefs are strongly linked to the responsibility of the authorities for injustice ($r=0.56, p<0.001$), political distrust ($r=0.51, p<0.001$), and perceived economic inequalities ($r=0.47, p<0.001$). These beliefs are also significantly linked to grievances against political authorities ($r=0.45, p<0.001$), support for secessionism ($r=0.39, p<0.001$), and tendency to legitimize radical actions ($r=0.28, p<0.001$).

Hypothesis 4: Contextual variables and the inclination towards collective mobilization are linked

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the intention to mobilize collectively for group empowerment is significantly linked to certain factors in the context of the ongoing separatist crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Specifically, this intention is associated with political distrust ($r=0.38, p<0.001$), perceived economic inequalities ($r=0.31, p<0.001$), grievances against political authorities ($r=0.20, p<0.001$), legitimization of radical political actions ($r=0.33, p<0.001$), and support for secessionism ($r=0.27, p<0.001$).

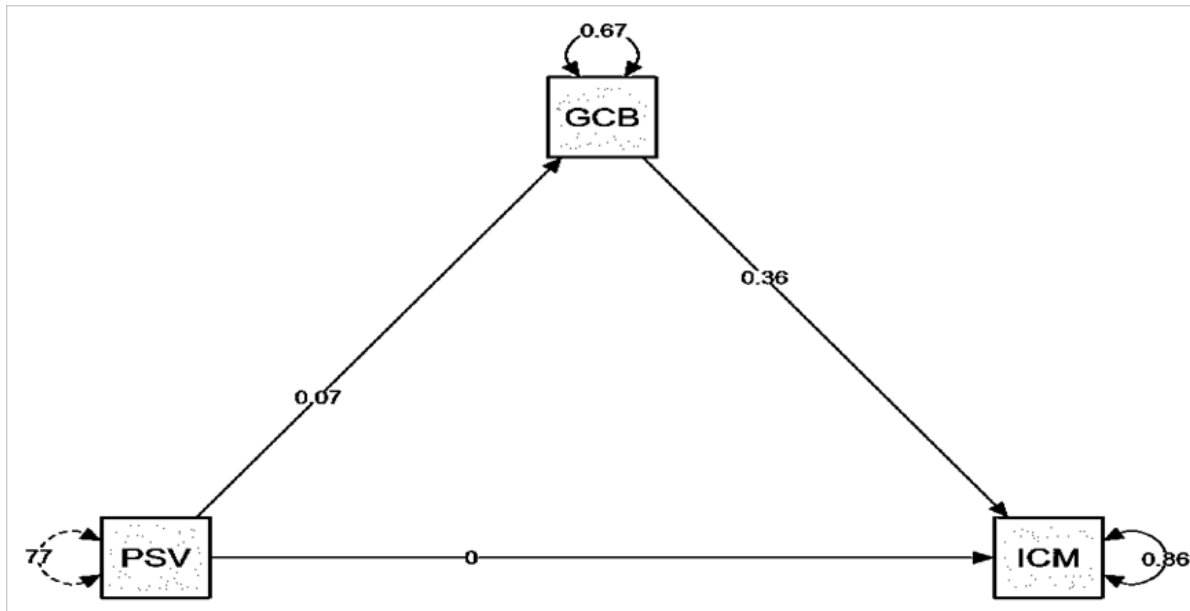
In conclusion, regarding the correlation analyses, it should be noted that all the relationships reported for the three main variables are positive and strictly significant at the 0.1% level. Furthermore, strong links between structural violence

and conspiracy beliefs appear to impact the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment, and even the legitimization of radical political actions and the support for secessionism. These links thus reinforce the prerequisites for testing a mediation model involving structural violence (independent variable), conspiracy beliefs (mediating variable), and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment (dependent variable).

Mediation test between the main variables of the study

Table 2 presents the results of the mediation analysis between the variables. It assesses the structural relationships between the main variables of the study. In this vein, a model of structural relationships is examined, with the aim of testing the hypothesis that structural violence is indirectly linked to the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment through conspiracy beliefs (Hypothesis 5).

Table 3 presents the results of a path analysis using structural relationships. The objective is to understand sequentially whether conspiracy beliefs (GCB) explain the link between structural violence and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. To achieve this objective, observations focused on structural relationships, each corresponding to a sub-hypothesis of Hypothesis 5, indicate in a processual manner that: Hypothesis 5a (Path a) is supported by non-significant results. Indeed, Table 2 indicates that structural violence does not have a significant structural relationship with intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment ($\beta=0.003; z\text{-value}=0.682, p=0.495, 95\% \text{ CI}=-0.005, 0.011$). The 95% confidence interval contains zero, which confirms the absence of a residual direct effect. This justifies the existence of a possible indirect or mediated link between these two variables; hence the relevance of analyzing the indirect relationship through conspiracy beliefs.



Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator, PSV=Perceived Structural Violence, GCB=Generic conspiracy Beliefs, ICM=Intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment.

Figure 1. Mediation role of Generic conspiracy beliefs

Table 3. Mediation parameters analysis

				95% CI							
				R ²	β	Std. Error	z-value	p-value	Lower	Upper	
<i>Path coefficients/Direct effects</i>											
PSV	→	GCB		0.334	0.066	0.003	22.354	< .001	0.060	0.072	
GCB	→	ICM		0.142	0.362	0.036	10.074	< .001	0.291	0.432	
PSV	→	ICM			0.003	0.004	0.682	0.495	-0.005	0.011	
<i>Indirect effects</i>											
PSV	→	GCB	→	ICM		0.024	0.003	9.184	< .001	0.019	0.029
<i>Total effects</i>											
PSV	→	ICM			0.027	0.004	7.587	< .001	0.020	0.034	

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator, CI: Confidence Interval, PSV: Perceived structural violence, GCB: Generic conspiracy Beliefs, ICM: Intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment.

Structural violence positively and significantly predicts conspiracy beliefs (Path b, Hypothesis 5b). In fact, the analysis of the baseline path coefficient (direct effect) of the mediation reveals a positive and significant direct relationship between structural violence and conspiracy beliefs ($\beta=0.066$, $z\text{-value}=22.354$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.060, 0.072). Furthermore, the predictive value of the change in conspiracy beliefs under the influence of structural violence is estimated at approximately 33.40% (R^2). Thus, the more participants perceive the existence of structural violence against the ingroup, the more they adhere to conspiracy beliefs about the origin of the said violence, thereby supporting Hypothesis 5b.

Conspiracy beliefs positively and significantly explain intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment (Path c, Hypothesis 5c). Indeed, the prediction coefficient indicates a significant direct increase of 14.20% ($R^2=0.142$) in this intention, depending on conspiracy beliefs ($\beta=0.362$, $z\text{-value}=10.074$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.291, 0.432). This means that conspiracy beliefs explains a significant increase in the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment among participants; a trend that provides empirical support for Hypothesis 5c.

The assessment of the indirect effect (PSV → GCB → ICM) Representing the shift from structural violence to the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment via conspiracy beliefs, a significant indirect effect ($\beta=0.024$, $z\text{-value}=9.184$, $p<0.001$) is indicated, with the 95% confidence interval [0.019, 0.029] not including zero. Based on this result (see Figure 1), since the indirect effect is significant while the direct effect (Path c) is not, we conclude that mediation is complete. This means that structural violence does not directly increase intention collective mobilization for group empowerment, as one might expect. This increase only occurs when structural violence first impacts conspiracy beliefs, and subsequently, these beliefs significantly impact intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. In light of these relationships (see Figure 1), a significant overall effect of structural violence on intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment is observed ($\beta=0.027$;

$z\text{-value}=7.587$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.020, 0.034). This mediated passage is summarized by models that explain 33.4% of the variance in conspiracy beliefs and 14.2% of the variance in the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. These results provide significant empirical support for the idea that structural violence is linked to the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment through conspiracy beliefs (Hypothesis 5).

The results of this study further indicate that conspiracy beliefs play a significant mediating role in the relationship between structural violence and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. While structural violence influences this intention overall, this influence disappears in favor of conspiracy beliefs when these are introduced into the model. In short, structural violence appears to mobilize individuals primarily by reinforcing their conspiratorial worldview within the context of the Cameroonian separatist crisis; a context in which the analysis of the specific variables collected further enriches the study's findings by providing information necessary for understanding the process of collective mobilization aimed at group empowerment.

Analysis of the effects of variables in the context of the separatist crisis

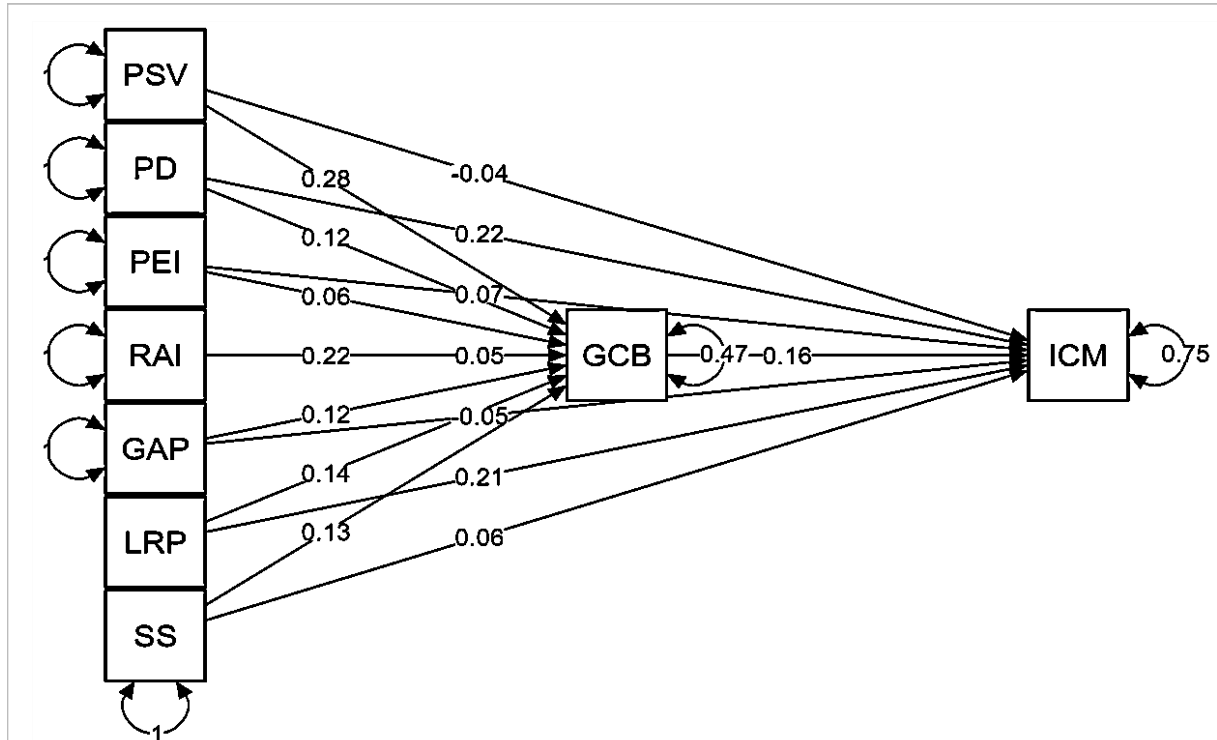
The contextual variables measured in this study are analyzed alongside structural violence to identify those directly or indirectly linked to the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment.

These results, derived from a structural equation modeling analysis, explore the significant direct and mediated determinants of the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. The model tests the influence of several psychosocial variables through conspiracy beliefs. The results indicate, according to the three respective levels of relationships (direct, indirect/mediated and total), that political distrust of the authorities ($\beta=0.219$; $z\text{-value}=6.186$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.149, 0.288), legitimization of radical political actions ($\beta=0.213$, $z\text{-value}=7.092$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI=0.154, 0.272) and support for secessionism ($\beta=0.063$, $z\text{-value}=2.033$, $p<0.05$, 95% CI=0.002, 0.124) are the most

relevant direct significant determinants of the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment in the context of the separatist crisis in Cameroon. In short, these variables directly predict the inclination towards collective mobilization for group empowerment. On the other hand, as observed previously (Path a, hypothesis 5a, Figure 1, Table 4), grievances against political authorities ($\beta=-0.046$, $z\text{-value}=-1.407$, $p=0.159$, 95% CI= -0.111 , 0.018), perceived economic injustice ($\beta=0.065$, $z\text{-value}=1.865$, $p=0.062$, 95% CI= -0.003 , 0.134) and the responsibility of authorities in the face of injustice ($\beta=0.052$, $z\text{-value}=1.379$, $p=0.168$, 95% CI= -0.022 , 0.125) do not directly generate collective mobilization for group empowerment. In other words, although they seem relevant, these determinants are not sufficient to induce an intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. They would only act through conspiracy beliefs about the origins of the structural violence of which the ingroup is the victim. Along these lines, the assessment of indirect relationships via conspiracy beliefs shows how these variables (grievances against political authorities, perceived economic inequalities, and responsibility of the authorities for the injustice) significantly fuel intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment by first feeding conspiracy beliefs (see Table 4, Figure 2).

These variables only lead to intention of collective

mobilization for group empowerment because they reinforce conspiracy beliefs (total mediation or effect). In the specific context of the separatist crisis that Cameroon has experienced since 2017, this catalyst for the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment thus constitutes a universal pathway, as all indirect or mediated relationships are statistically significant ($p<0.05$). Furthermore, partial mediation relationships are observed between intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment and political distrust, support for secessionism, and legitimization of radical political actions. In this case, conspiracy beliefs partially and significantly reinforce intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment already present in the direct relationships between these variables. Similarly, the analysis of the overall factor weights (total effect) indicates that political distrust ($\beta=0.238$, $z\text{-value}=6.750$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI= 0.169 , 0.307) and legitimization of radical political actions ($\beta=0.236$, $z\text{-value}=7.923$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI= 0.177 , 0.294) are the variables that best explain intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. The overall effect of structural violence cancels out ($\beta=0.002$, $z\text{-value}=0.063$, $p=0.950$, 95% CI= -0.067 , 0.072), suggesting that its positive impact via conspiracy beliefs is offset by a non-significant direct tendency towards demobilization or resignation (see Table 4, Figure 2).



Note. RAI: Responsibility of the authorities for the injustice; GAP: Grievances against political authorities; ICMGE: Intention for collective mobilization for group empowerment; SS: Support for secessionism; LRP: Legitimization of radical political actions; GCB: Generic Conspiracy Beliefs; PEI: Perceived economic inequalities; PD: Political distrust; PSV: Perceived structural violence.

Figure 2. Structural relationships between the direct/indirect contextual determinants of the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment

Table 4. Direct/indirect contextual determinants of the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment

				β	Std. error	z-value	p	95% CI		
								Lower	Upper	
PSV	→		ICM	-0.044	0.037	-1.196	0.232	-0.116	0.028	
PD	→		ICM	0.219	0.035	6.186	<.001	0.149	0.288	
PEI	→		ICM	0.065	0.035	1.865	0.062	-0.003	0.134	
RAI	→		ICM	0.052	0.037	1.379	0.168	-0.022	0.125	
GAPA	→		ICM	-0.046	0.033	-1.407	0.159	-0.111	0.018	
SS	→		ICM	0.063	0.031	2.033	0.042	0.002	0.124	
LRPA	→		ICM	0.213	0.030	7.092	<.001	0.154	0.272	
<i>Indirect effects</i>										
PSV	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.046	0.012	3.834	<.001	0.023	0.070
PD	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.019	0.007	2.936	0.003	0.006	0.032
PEI	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.011	0.005	2.018	0.044	0.000	0.021
RAI	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.037	0.010	3.657	<.001	0.017	0.057
GAPA	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.020	0.006	3.120	0.002	0.008	0.033
SS	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.021	0.006	3.251	0.001	0.008	0.034
LRPA	→	GCB	→	ICM	0.022	0.007	3.350	<.001	0.009	0.035
<i>Total effects</i>										
PSV	→		ICM	0.002	0.035	0.063	0.950	-0.067	0.072	
PD	→		ICM	0.238	0.035	6.750	<.001	0.169	0.307	
PEI	→		ICM	0.076	0.035	2.154	0.031	0.007	0.145	
RAI	→		ICM	0.089	0.037	2.415	0.016	0.017	0.160	
GAPA	→		ICM	-0.026	0.033	-0.796	0.426	-0.091	0.038	
SS	→		ICM	0.084	0.031	2.724	0.006	0.024	0.145	
LRPA	→		ICM	0.236	0.030	7.923	<.001	0.177	0.294	
<i>Path coefficients</i>										
GCB	→		ICM	0.164	0.040	4.148	<.001	0.087	0.242	
PSV	→		ICM	-0.044	0.037	-1.196	0.232	-0.116	0.028	
PD	→		ICM	0.219	0.035	6.186	<.001	0.149	0.288	
PEI	→		ICM	0.065	0.035	1.865	0.062	-0.003	0.134	
RAI	→		ICM	0.052	0.037	1.379	0.168	-0.022	0.125	
GAPA	→		ICM	-0.046	0.033	-1.407	0.159	-0.111	0.018	
SS	→		ICM	0.063	0.031	2.033	0.042	0.002	0.124	
LRPA	→		ICM	0.213	0.030	7.092	<.001	0.154	0.272	
PSV	→		GCB	0.282	0.028	10.243	<.001	0.228	0.336	
PD	→		GCB	0.117	0.028	4.153	<.001	0.062	0.172	
PEI	→		GCB	0.064	0.028	2.309	0.021	0.010	0.118	
RAI	→		GCB	0.224	0.029	7.813	<.001	0.168	0.280	
GAPA	→		GCB	0.123	0.026	4.750	<.001	0.072	0.174	
SS	→		GCB	0.128	0.024	5.238	<.001	0.080	0.175	
LRPA	→		GCB	0.135	0.024	5.659	<.001	0.088	0.182	

Note. RAI: Responsibility of the authorities for the injustice; GAPA: Grievances against political authorities; ICMGE: Intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment; SS: Support for secessionism; LRPA: Legitimization of radical political actions; GCB: Generic conspiracy beliefs; PEI: Perceived economic inequalities; PD: Political distrust; PSV: Perceived structural violence; CI: Confidence interval; $R^2_{GCB}=.525$; $R^2_{ICM}=.248$; Estimator is ML.

4. Discussion

The aim of this research was to assess the relationships between structural violence, conspiracy beliefs, and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. Several

hypotheses establishing relationships between the main and contextual variables were tested using Pearson correlation and the structural model. The results showed significant linear relationships between structural violence, intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment, and

conspiracy beliefs. These variables were also associated with contextual variables such as the responsibility of the authorities for injustice, grievances against political authorities, political distrust, perceived economic inequalities, support for secessionism, and legitimization of radical political actions. These results supported the formulated hypotheses. In a structural model, the study tested the hypotheses establishing a structural relationship between structural violence and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment, mediated by conspiracy beliefs. The results also supported this hypothesis. Furthermore, the assessment of the relationships between contextual variables and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment revealed that political distrust, legitimization of radical political actions, and support for secessionism directly and significantly determine participants' intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment, unlike grievances against political authorities, perceived economic injustice, and authorities' responsibility for injustice. In this context, conspiracy beliefs partially and fully catalyze the effect of these determinants of the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment.

The data collected in this study indicate that structural violence positively and significantly predicts conspiracy beliefs, thus supporting the propositions in the specialized literature which argue that conspiracy beliefs are prevalent among disadvantaged minority groups suffering from power asymmetry [77]. In the context of the secessionist crisis in which this study is conducted, the disadvantaged Anglophone minority falls within this perspective, since it believes in the existence of a secret strategy by the Francophone majority to make it disappear [31], notably through the erasure of all the cultural and institutional foundations of its identity [97]. This conspiracy belief is fueled by the numerous instances of harm this minority has suffered, linked to discrimination, marginalization, and assimilation over several decades [99]; situations likely to generate a feeling of lack of control over its future in a state controlled by the Francophone majority since its unification in 1961 [70]. In this vein, observations suggesting that conspiracy beliefs can stem from a lack of control (as is the case for the Anglophone minority in Cameroon) seem relevant here. Indeed, theoretically, evidence suggests that the feelings of aversion people experience in times of crisis, fear, uncertainty, and a sense of lack of control are likely to stimulate the motivation to make sense of the situation [19]; in turn increasing the likelihood of perceiving conspiracies in social situations [105].

The results of this research also report a positive and significant link between conspiracy beliefs and intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment. Along these lines, the specialized literature suggests that beliefs that an outgroup is implementing a secret strategy that results in harm to the ingroup are likely to generate grievances, frustrations, and emotions among its members against that outgroup, and fuel collective action against it (see [35]). This connection between conspiracy beliefs and collective

action against conspirators is linked to the fact that unfavorable sociopolitical circumstances in which a group finds itself are likely to push it toward conspiracy theorizing [24]. This theorization itself is likely to push individuals to collective mobilization against conspirators, including through radical extremist actions (see [13]), to put an end to their malicious action, the consequence of which is that it threatens the said group's well-being [87].

We noted earlier that victimization is a potential catalyst for feelings of injustice and collective action among members of a disadvantaged group seeking empowerment (see [93]), particularly because the social inequalities it carries can activate feelings of restricted collective autonomy among its members [89]. The results of the present study support this view, reporting a positive link between structural violence and support for secessionism; a link, however, mediated by conspiracy beliefs, through which institutional authorities are seen as conspirators acting against the ingroup. As a reminder, these conspiracy beliefs are also positively linked to strong expressions of grievances against political authorities, legitimization of radical actions, a propensity for collective mobilization for group empowerment, and support for secessionism. This supports the idea that separatist tendencies, in which individuals opt for one of the most extreme forms of intergroup conflict, are underpinned by the lived experiences of the members of the groups employing this strategy. Generally, these experiences stem from dissatisfaction among the populations concerned with the socio-economic, political, and structural conditions offered by the state from which they wish to separate (see [53] for the analysis of secessionism). These unfavorable conditions are a source of grievances that are often left unaddressed by authorities in the long term [101]; grievances that ultimately lead to the radicalization of segments of the affected populations, particularly because they are prone to developing a sense of distrust toward political institutions, which the literature indicates is a potential catalyst for support for political violence, due to its relationship with grievances [85]. However, the results of this study also indicate that while conspiracy beliefs can transform certain attitudes into a willingness to take concrete action for group empowerment, some contextual factors that can directly influence the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment should be controlled for a better explanation and interpretation of the results. These include political distrust, support for secessionism, and legitimization of radical political actions, which have been shown to have direct effects on the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment.

5. Conclusions

The separatist crisis that has been ongoing in Cameroon since 2017 provides a fertile ground for examining the nexus between structural violence, conspiracy beliefs, and collective mobilization for group empowerment; a relationship not

yet formally documented, but whose existence is suggested by the available literature on these various constructs. In the specific case of this crisis, the grievances accumulated by the Anglophone community since unification with French Cameroon in 1961, the change in the form of the Cameroonian state in 1972, with the end of the two-state federation in favor of a unitary state, as well as the brutal repression used by the authorities to stem the waves of popular demonstrations in 2016, can be considered responsible for the resurgence of separatist movements. To date, attempts at dialogue to end the crisis have been met with the refusal of both sides to budge from their positions, with the separatists determined to create a new state, and the government authorities unwilling to hear of either secession or even a return to federalism [33]. From this perspective, as the results of this study show, conspiracy beliefs highlighting the role of authorities in the trajectory of events in the distant and recent past, particularly the repression following mobilizations by Anglophone populations to voice their grievances, are clearly brought to light. These theories underpin the perception of economic inequalities, grievances against political authorities, authorities' responsibility for injustice, and support for secessionism. On the other hand, political distrust and legitimization of radical political actions, which are also key contextual determinants of the intention of collective mobilization for group empowerment, impact that intention without resorting to conspiracy beliefs. Under these conditions, given that secessionism is sometimes a (radical and extreme) response to structural violence, made up of discrimination, segregation [60], and subjugation of a population by institutional authorities, how can we envision peace in the near future if the two opposing groups remain entrenched in their positions, despite the Grand National Dialogue organized in October 2019? Time will tell!

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