

Effects of Financial and Psychological Incentives on Performance of Resident Counselors in North West Region of Cameroon

Yongabi Judith Abit Nota¹ & Fomba Emmanuel Mbebeb²

Abstract

The role of resident counselors in school institutions cannot be undermined and in a bid to facilitate performance, incentives are designed and implemented. Despite incentive provisions in Cameroon, performance of counselors are often surrounded by skepticism, thereby questioning the effectiveness of existing motivation packages. This study investigated the influence of financial and psychological incentives on the performance of counselors. A sample of 124 resident counselors (29.8% Males; 70.2% Females) was surveyed in the North West Region of country. A scale with an aggregate alpha of .75 was deployed for data gathering, and descriptive and inferential statistics used for analysis. Results revealed that financial incentives failed to predict variation in performance of resident counselors ($\beta = .06$; $P > 0.05$). Furthermore, it was reported that psychological incentives gave enough support to variation in counselor's performance ($\beta = .54$, $P < 0.01$). From the analysis, financial incentives have to be improved and dormant provisions activated as predictors of performance, while the re-engineering of psychological packages is imperative. Policy and practice implications of the results have been discussed within the context of current incentive provisions, and areas for future research have been identified.

Keywords: Financial incentives, psychological incentives, performance, resident counselors

1. Introduction

Over the years, incentives have emerged as core antecedents of positive work behaviors, and designing incentive schemes have become an invaluable managerial activity. With regards to working conditions, incentives are critical in facilitating performance and this is built on the premise that performance is at its best when inputs equal outcomes. Incentives refer to the motivators that play an important role in increasing the rate of performance, wellbeing and satisfaction (Al-Aydi, 2000). Although incentives are rewards and compensation for work done by workers, it equally determines the extent to which employee work behaviour such as attraction, motivation and retention can be guaranteed by the compensation scheme of an organization. It has been recognized that the success and survival of organizations are determined by the way workers are remunerated and rewarded (Lawler, 2003), indicating that sustainable work behavior highly depends on incentive schemes. Therefore, good incentive strategies become key components of organizational policy and practice, and this cannot exclude Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in the Cameroon public service. Barbara et al. (2003) upheld that incentives stimulate a good understanding between the employer and the employee which cumulates into unprecedented performance for both the employees and the organization. This experience applies same to workers in the academic industry, particularly with school counselors who are at the cross-road of the learning process. The counselor's task, which includes inter-alia, the education and promotion of student's academic and socio professional aspiration, necessitates satisfactory compensation in order to enable them achieve their professional objectives. In this line of reflection, many researchers (Locke & Braver, 2008; Scott, 2012) found that financial and non-financial incentives are responsible for employee motivation, satisfaction and performance.

¹ Government Higher School Bali, NWR, Cameroon, Email abitjudith@yahoo.com

² The University of Bamenda, Cameroon, University of Dschang, Cameroon, Email fombaem@yahoo.com

With regards to human resource strategies, the Cameroon civil service has put in place incentive packages for civil servants, and school counselors as public servants, are beneficiaries of the scheme. Considering that the provision of incentive packages for teachers in Cameroon acts as a morale booster to job commitment (Besong, 2015), it becomes imperative to assess the role of incentive packages on work performance of counselors. This justifies the growing interest in research in the academic sector on how incentives direct behaviors of employees.

1.2. Incentive provisions and implementation challenges

Management in Cameroon educational sector involves people who are skillful in different areas in order to enhance national transformation or development (Besong, 2015). This extends to the effective management of people and in the process, incentive provisions have been recognized as key drivers of performance. Considering that Cameroon is among African countries currently experiencing human resources crisis due to inability to retain staff (Nghah, et al., 2013), the government has taken upon herself to motivate and satisfy workers in the public service with the design and implementation of incentive schemes. This effort is visible in the education domain. For instance, Article 1(2) of Decree no 2002/040 of 20 February 2002, Ministry of Secondary Education (MINISEC) spelt out technical, research, documentation and evaluation allowances for teaching staff of the Ministry. In this regard, the HRM Department and concerned decentralized services are charged with proper implementation and governance, but counselors are deprived of some allowances despite their involvement in assessment and psycho-technical testing. Despite high expectations the administration of the incentive schemes appeared to have been plagued by skepticism, doubts and justice crisis. This experience sows mental discords, and creates a situation of uncertainty that engender deep feelings of insecurity, desperation and dissatisfaction at work. More attention is given to the plights of teachers than the counselors, and they feel slighted with the distribution of justice despite their inputs in the production process. Even in terms of employee morale, counselors feel that the decentralized services (Regional and Divisional Delegations, schools) are not providing the necessary psychological motivators. Apart from career growth, counselors are not appointed to meaningful positions in the administration while teachers dominate the administration with the accompanying benefits. Furthermore, some counselors co-opted in administrative assignments but without allowances as compared to teachers. It is also frustrating that despite the load and pressure on counselors they are compelled by some principals to teach, thereby abandoning their own professional roles and responsibilities.

From policy efforts shown by the Government, incentive provisions are meant to satisfy workers such that they receive both financial and psychological rewards and express work behaviors that are instrumental to performance and productivity (Fomba, 2007). Though the incentives are perceived as a mechanism capable of fostering relevant work behaviors, it is common to find some counselors applying for change of ministry, abandoning their job to travel abroad, scramble for teaching subjects and out-source paid teaching assignments. This appears detrimental to their performance and attracts skepticism with regards to the incentive schemes. Considering that poor incentive packages and implementation have been a major factor affecting employees' performance (Dixit and Bhati, (2012), the question is whether deviant work behaviors observed among some counselors are due to inadequate and in effective policy strategies. This issue for a long time appears to have remained silent in academic and professional debates in the Cameroonian context. While a few studies in Cameroon have examined the relationship between incentives and performance in business circle (Fomba, 2007); health sector (Nghah, et al., 2013) and educational sector with teachers (Besong, 2014), no study has yet been realized on incentive schemes and performance of resident counselors. Counselors are seemingly invisible, but highly strategic in the teaching-learning business and often agitate with the treatment being meted on them by the administration. As an ex post factor study, it assesses incentive provisions of MINESEC to ascertain its effects on performance. The relevance of the subject matter cannot be undermined in sorting out deficiencies and generating homegrown people management strategies drawn from the felt needs of counselors in a given socio-cultural and political context. Therefore, the study addresses existing policy and implementation gaps by testing a model of incentive scheme in the public service, and how it predicts measures of performance. Using Adam's equity theory (1963, 1965) as theoretical framework, the proposition holds that if the output of counselors equal outcome, there will be a balance between the incentive schemes and performance of counselors in North West Region of Cameroon.

2. Literature review

This section presents conceptual explanation of variables in the manner that will be used in the study. In addition, it presents the theoretical framework and examines related empirical literature pertaining to the analysis of incentive schemes and performance of workers.

2.1. Conceptual orientation

The section logically starts with the conceptualization of variables. Financial incentives are monetary or cash motivators aligned with organizational goals and given to employees with the aim of influencing positive work behavior. According to Yousaf et al. (2014) financial incentive is monetary compensation given to employees by the employer which is proportionate to the skills, knowledge and expectations. They are perceived as extrinsic motivators generally based on tangible rewards. Scott (2012), further explained that the use of monetary incentives to reward employees for performance and productivity can take the form of employee stock options, profit sharing plans, paid time off, bonuses and cash awards as well as annual or semi-annual bonuses. These incentives actively play an important role in inspiring competition among employees, particularly when they are attached to job performance, hence motivating employees to produce optimally. Monetary incentives are used by employers of labor to retain their best brains and as well compensate them for a job done and excellence in performance (Kepner, 2003; Nelson, 2003). Financial incentives appear to be the most important and influential factors to the individual's desire to work, particularly when available provisions are capable of satisfying felt needs. On the contrary, low payment that is not appropriate to input leads to low efficiency of productivity (Al-Harhi, 1999).

Psychological incentive is intrinsic motivation which is an inward drive coming from within the person which makes him to work effectively and efficiently toward the realization of organizational productivity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). To Al-Jahni (1998), it is a set of motivators aimed at achieving emotional, psychological and humanitarian needs for employees by treating them properly and eliminating the causes of complains. This is derived from biogenic and socio-genic needs, such as desire for competence, autonomy, interesting work, recognition of a good performance, development opportunities, awards, feedback, a sense of challenge and achievement, participation in decision making and care (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). However, Al-Harhi (1999) cautioned that psychological incentives are not less important than financial incentives, implying that they have complementary roles to play in energizing workers' behaviour. Incentives are valuable because they give workers the opportunity to improve their skills and pursue advancement opportunities (Scott, 2012). There is no doubt that financial incentive has increasingly proven to be a much more effective tool in the workplace but the role of psychological incentives cannot be undermined in terms of job performance enhancement.

Performance is a core concept within work and organizational psychology. Employee performance refers to the job related activities expected of a worker and how well these activities are executed. For the past years, researchers have made progress in clarifying and extending the performance concept (Campbell, 1990). To Campbell (1990) performance refers to those actions or behaviors under the control of the individual, that contribute to the organization's goals, and that can be measured according to the individual's level of proficiency. With regards to dimensions of performance, Newman & Maylor (2002) measures job performance indicators and divides them into behavioral performance (employee attendance and retention rates, work or service quality) and service performance (customer satisfaction and re-visit rate). Lings (2004) reiterated that the job performance measurement indicators are further divided into behavioral performance (employee retention, employee motivation and morale, employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, work or service quality) and service performance (customer satisfaction, financial performance). This explores the different dimensions of performance necessary for particular assignments that should attract different incentive schemes. From another perspective, Borman et al. (1993) further distinct job performance into two categories: task performance and contextual performance. Task performance refers to an individual's proficiency with which he or she performs activities which contribute to the organization's technical core. Contextual performance refers to activities which do not contribute to the technical core but which support organizational, social, and psychological environment in which organizational goals are pursued. Rotundo (2000) explains that although researchers provide their own conceptualization of job performance, a typical definition focuses on behaviors or actions of individuals, not results or outcomes of these actions and behaviors.

2.2 Theoretical model

Many theories have been advanced to explain incentive as a factor of work motivation, satisfaction and performance. In the process many theories have been deployed such Maslow's motivation theory (1943), Vroom's Expectancy (1964), Equity theory of Adams Stacey (1963, 1964) and Job characteristic theory of Hackman and Oldman (1975). However, the present study singled out the Equity theory of motivation developed by John Stacey Adams (1963, 1965) as suitable to explain incentives and work behavior.

This theory is relevant because it provides an insight into scenarios of under-compensation, which is consistent with the current study meant to explore relationship between perceived under-compensation and work behavior of counselors. Equity theory explains motivation in the workplace as a cognitive process of evaluation, whereby the employee seeks to achieve a balance between inputs or efforts in the workplace and the outcomes or rewards received or anticipated. Employee inputs take the form of work volume and quality, performance, knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviors. The company-generated outcomes include rewards such as compensation, praise and advancement opportunities. The inputs and outcome of equity theory has been presented in Table 1. The theory simply explains that workers should be treated equally in order to be motivated for effective performance.

Table 1: Inputs and outcomes of equity theory

Inputs	Outputs
Education, intelligence, experience, training, Skills, seniority, age, sex, ethnic background Social status, job effort, personal appearance, health, spouse's characteristics	Pay, intrinsic rewards, satisfying supervision, Seniority benefits, fringe benefits, job status, Status symbols, job perquisites, poor working conditions, monotony, fate, uncertainty

Source: Al-Zawahreh, A.& Al-Madi, F. (2012)

As per the theory, a worker develops beliefs about what is a fair reward for one's job contribution, which is more or less an exchange. These exchanges are then compared with output from the employer. If the employee believes his treatment is inequitable, compared to others, he or she will be motivated to adjust his behavior to bring things into balance or seek justice. In this process, equity is defined as justice, and inequity considered as injustice. Miner, (1980) postulates that inequity exists for an individual when he or she perceives an imbalance in the ratio between outcomes (reward for work) and inputs (efforts at work) as other workers outputs and incomes. A state of perceived equity occurs when an individual perceives his or her inputs balanced with his or her outcomes and when he or she also perceives others inputs are balanced with others outcomes (Pritchard, 1969). Adams (1965) proposed that a state of equity exists only when $OP/IP=OA/IA$.

Where,

O= the sum of all outcomes,

I= the sum of all inputs,

P=Person,

A=Referent/Other

Thus, a state of inequity results if $OP/IP>OA/IA$ or $OP/IP<OA/IA$.)

Equity theory proposed that when a state of inequity is perceived, the individual would experience a state of distress (Walster, Berschied & Walster, 1973), and this uncomfortable state will move the worker to take action to restore equity (Lerner, Miller & Holmes, 1973). The greater the inequity, the more distress individuals feel, and the harder they will try to restore equity (Adams, 1965). Equity Theory has proven its relevance in situations where employees are under-compensated as is the current case of resident counselors in Cameroon. If an employee perceives that he is undercompensated, he can adjust his behavior to achieve equilibrium in several different ways. This is common with the behaviour of counselors who abstain and divert energy into non-counseling activities. Equity restoration techniques include altering or cognitively distorting inputs or outcomes, acting on or changing the comparison other, or terminating the relationship. In this regard counselors have abandoned their jobs for appointments to juicier positions in other sectors, and even gone abroad for greener pastures. Such adjustment strategies are perceived as resulting from imbalance between inputs and outcomes of counselors, thereby considering the equity theory as a relevant framework for the analysis of incentives and performance of counselors at work.

2.3. Evidence of past works

Several studies have been carried out on the relationship between financial incentives and performance at work. One of the evidences is the study of Stajkovic and Luthans (2001) that monetary incentives improved performance by over 30% as compared to performance of non-beneficiaries. This implies that unfair practices in the administration of incentives engenders feelings of under-compensation and unfavorably affect work behaviour. In another study, Mason and Walts (2009) assessed the effect of monetary incentives on performance of employees, and findings suggested that monetary incentives contributed to quantity of production, though quality was compromised.

It is obvious that workers who were highly paid usually increase their value as compared to lowly paid employees, and the tendency that overdose incentives will be a boomerang to the incentive strategy. The results of Al-Nsour (2012) with workers ranked financial incentives at the top of other incentives and this correlated with levels of performance. Using the hotel industry, Chiang and Birtch(2010) found that pay-for performance influenced employees to demonstrate more positive attitudes to work when they perceived a high pay for performance. Although the study was not directly on performance, attitude has been recognized as a core antecedent of work behaviour with effects on performance. With a study on interactive task complexity effect and attractiveness on efficiency of monetary incentives in improving task performance, Bailey and Fessleer (2011) reported that pay facilitated higher performance at the initial stage, but without improvement. This suggests that many employees are attracted primarily by salary, and apart from psychological incentives other factors such as attitude and satisfaction are necessary for sustainable performance at work. Using a local study with 580 technical school teachers, Besong (2015) reported a significant relationship between economic incentives and job involvement in Cameroon. The study does not explore relationship with performance, but it is invaluable because participants work in the same sector with counselors with the same incentive provisions, though distribution has often been subjected to challenges. Although most studies are out of Cameroon, they are essential in understanding the state of incentive administration with regards employees' performance in different sectors.

The effects of non-monetary incentives on employee's job performance have been studied and are very informative to the current investigation. The studies of Stajkovic and Luthans (2001) revealed that verbally conveyed social recognition improved employees' performance, corroborating with the findings of Nelson (2004) that 78 percent of employees preferred recognition by the managers over other incentives. This is evident because recognition has been perceived as a powerful mechanism in performance processes and has become a vital practice in driving work activities. In another study Ahmad et al. (2012), reported a positive relationship between non-financial compensation, particularly on feedback and employee participation in decision making and performance. The comparative perspective of Eccles, Ioannous, Liand Serafein(2012) equally revealed psychological incentives as being more effective than monetary incentives with regard to employee's compliance. The foregoing analysis gives a strong indicator with regards to the relevance of non-financial rewards on work behaviour and this is applicable to the understanding of counselor's performance in their respective job roles.

There is paucity of studies in Cameroon concerning incentives and performance particularly with counselors and the research gap is evident. In addition, most of the studies have been conducted in the West and Asia having different incentives schemes drawn from wider societal and work culture. This has prompted the testing of the following assumptions:

1. Financial incentives administered to counselors will significantly determine their performance
2. Financial and psychological incentives administered to counselors will significantly determine their performance

3. Methods

The study recruited 124counselors (29.8% Males; 70.2% Females) during a statutory regional coordination meeting of counselors in the North West Region of the country. Participants' mean age was 36.44 (SD=6.87), Min=24; Max=59, and 94.3% had the Post Graduate Certificate in Guidance and Counseling (DIPCO). An instrument with sub-scales was administered to measure the constructs in question. The sub-scale for financial incentives was drawn from literature (Al-Nsour, 2012;Bailey and Fessleer, 2011; MINSEC, 2002). It had 8 items (α , =.72), and explored staff bonus, transport allowance, technical allowance, evaluation allowance, counseling rubric fund, research and documentation allowances. Sample question include: "I receive evaluation allowance", "I receive technical allowance." Psychological incentive measure was drawn from literature (Ahmad et al., 2012;Eccles, Ioannous, Liand Serafein, 2012; Sammer, 2011).

It had 8 items (α , =.71), and collected information on recognition, appreciation, award, appointments and feedback. Sample question included "I receive appreciation for the work I do", "I have been appointed to a post of responsibility." With regards to task performance, the measuring device was drawn from Campbell's (1990) Performance Model, 8 items, (α , =.84) and measured job mastery, capacity development, work knowledge, work speed, work response and response to client. Sampled questions included "I have a good knowledge of my job", "Mastery of my work further develops my capacity."

In all, the aggregate alpha for the study instrument was .75, and data were collected, entered into SPSS, and descriptive and inferential statistics used for analysis. The American Psychological Association (APA) ethical code was strictly respected in the process of information gathering and treatment.

4. Results

Association among study variables, descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas has been presented in Table 2. Results unveiled that financial incentive had a positive relationship with psychological incentives ($R=0.283$, $p<0.01$), but was not significant with performance ($R=0.035$, $p<0.01$). However, a positive relationship was reported for dimensions of psychological incentive and job performance ($R=0.508$, $P<0.01$). In this case core variables were mutually influential where increase in one affects a corresponding increase in the other, and the stronger the psychological incentives, the higher the level of performance of counselors. Descriptive statistics for the core variables were presented. Employee performance had the highest mean score ($M=27.75$; $SD=5.51$), implying that workers demonstrates a higher level of performance with regards to work in the institution. A higher level of mean value was also reported for psychological incentives ($M=21.17$; $SD=5.90$) as compared to financial incentives ($M=16.10$; $SD=5.80$). The analysis of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of sub scales showed significant results with reliabilities ranging from .71 to .84, and having an aggregate score of .75. This shows that the scale was reliable in collecting information and data valid in the current analysis of the relationship between incentives and performance of counselors.

Table 2: Bivariate correlation and descriptive results for study variables

Variables	1	2	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Alphas
Financial incentives (1)	1		107	16.1028	5.80002	.72
Psychological incentives (2)	.283**	1	105	21.1714	5.90706	.71
Performance (3)	.035	.508**	108	27.7500	5.51824	.84

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to determine the effect of financial incentives, and a combination of financial and psychological incentives on performance of counsellors. Using a two-step model, results have been presented in Table 3. Step 1 predicted the effect of financial incentives on performance of counselors ($\beta=.066$, $t=14.247$, $P>0.05$), and financial incentives failed to determine the variation in performance of counselors ($R^2=0.004=00\%$). The b-value is .064 implying that for every one-unit increase in financial incentives, there is a one-unit increase in level of performance of counselors. Consequently, H_a for the first hypothesis was rejected implying the absence of a significant relationship between the predictor and outcome measure.

Table3: Hierarchical regression analysis predicting performance

Variables	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-values</i>	<i>Sign. level</i>
<i>Step 1</i>					
Constant	26.233	1.841		14.247	.000
Financial incentives	.064	.106	.066	.605	.547
<i>Step 2</i>					
Constant	17.884	2.214		8.079	.000
Financial incentives	-.105	.096	-.109	-1.093	.278
Psychological incentives	.521	.096	.542	5.420	.000

Step 1: $R^2=0.0066$; Adj. $R^2=0.004$; $\Delta R^2=-.008$; Sig. $F=0.547$; F-value = .367; performance; $p>0.05$

Step 2: $R^2=0.517$; Adj. $R^2=0.267$; $\Delta R^2=.249$; Sig. $F=0.000$; F-value = 29.371; performance; $p<0.01$

The second step, observed the predictors of counselors' performance derived from the combination of financial incentives ($\beta=-.109$, $t=-1.093$, $P>0.05$), and psychological incentives ($\beta=.542$, $t=5.420$, $P<0.01$). It was evident that psychological incentives contributed significantly to performance of counselors as the variation changed from 00% to 26%. In the second step, the b-value for financial incentive was -.105, indicating the insignificance of the predictor in the model. But for psychological incentive, b-value of .521 was reported with the understanding that a one-unit increase in the predictor will have a one-unit increase in level of performance of counselors. H_a was accepted with the evidence that only psychological incentives significantly predicted the outcome measure.

5. Discussion

This study investigated financial and psychological incentives as determinants of counselor's performance and two assumptions were analyzed using hierarchical regression. Correlation analysis reported positive relationships among core variables as mutually reinforcing and validating the study model on incentives and performance of counselors. The first assumption that financial incentive predicted performance was rejected, suggesting that monetary provision cannot determine performance of counselors. Results are in agreement with those of Wu et al. (2008) investigating monetary incentives and job performance in Taiwan. It further confirms series of significant investigations on financial incentives and performance (Al-Nsour, 2012; Entwistle, 1987; Stajkovic and Luthans, 2001). Although significant relationships were observed, counselors as public servants still complain of some monetary deprivations (evaluation and transport allowances, access to counseling fund) that might mitigate motivation and performance. This suggests that financial incentive provisions are not potent enough to trigger expected performance of counselors. Furthermore, working closely with teachers, counselors seem to perceive some injustices in the distribution of certain incentives that affect their morale. This equally affects policy practice considering that counselors have to be well remunerated to improve performance since their contributions are integral to the achievement of the strategic objectives of their respective institutions and services.

As compared to financial incentives, psychological incentives significantly predicted performance of counselors indicating the power of non-monetary compensation in the performance of counselors. Results concurred with previous studies on non-financial compensation and performance (Sopiah, 2013), particularly on career development opportunities, recognition and employee development and training and perception of fairness (Sammer, 2011), verbally conveyed social recognition (Luthans, 2001; Nelson, 2004), and feedback and participation in decision making (Ahmad et al., 2012). It is evident that psychological incentives have been portrayed as a powerful mechanism in performance management processes, and has become a vital practice in driving performance at work. Despite frequent outcry of non-recognition of counselors' efforts by some administrative officials, non-monetary reward appears to be an added value to existing incentive packages for counselors. Psychological incentives as compared to financial incentives were rated by counselors as a motivating factor in doing their work. This is consistent with the investigation of Eccles et al. (2012) projecting psychological incentives as more effective than monetary incentives with regard to employee's compliance at work. This expresses a dire need to improve financial incentives for counselors in order to enable them satisfactorily achieve their professional assignments. The foregoing analysis gives a strong indicator of the relevance of psychological and non-financial rewards on work behaviour of counselors, suggesting that quality improvement will make the incentive packages more relevant to employees' needs, motivation, satisfaction and performance.

4.1. Implications for design and incentive management

The findings of the study have some implications for theory and practice. A few studies have used the equity theory for the analysis of incentives, and the relevance of the theory has been demonstrated by the results of the present investigation. The results corroborate the claims of counselors through agitations and complain that their inputs are not equivalent to outcomes, and these results confirm the non-significant effect. Incentives are critical in work behaviour and should be recognized and treated as such. The Cameroon civil service has put in place incentive packages for counselors (technical allowance, awards/recognition, career growth, and salary increments), but these run short of effective implementation on the ground. Therefore, the lapses existing in the human resources services moderate performance of counselors in the process of achieving their strategic objectives. Perceived discriminatory distribution of incentives appears to have pushed counselors to develop feelings of injustice as compared to the teachers. The present study has no doubt unveiled gaps in policy implementation, and thereby expressing a dire need for improvement in order to effectively play their professional roles.

This will go a long way to moderate the current feelings of under-compensation and deviant behaviour of some counselors at work. In all, it is believed that the enhancement of performance through incentives is a great strategy towards sustainable growth of academic institutions. It is therefore in the interest of institutions to make sure that incentive schemes are properly harnessed to face the challenges of compensation in a changing and competitive work environment.

The fact that financial incentives failed to predict performance of counselors despite government efforts is a great cause for concern and requires immediate intervention. Apart from salary and associated benefits administered as per civil service norms, other financial benefits have appeared to be sources of dissatisfaction and this might be detrimental to performance. This should inform the decentralized services of the Ministry (Regional, Divisional and school) to develop positive attitudes and practices that can spur retention and performance of counselors. Particular emphasis is with the school counseling fund, which is not only meager, but difficult to access by counselors. Most often, professionally conscious counselors are compelled to use their pittance and pay for transportation for off-campus counseling and follow-up activities. The Parent Teachers Association (PTA), being a reinforcing financial arm of the school should be advised to motivate counselors via supporting the school with some relief packages.

4.2. Conclusion and directions for future research

Despite the fact that the study sample was drawn from North West Region, Cameroon, and findings cannot be generalized for the entire country, they constitute useful indicators. Psychological incentives were reported as significant predictors of performance, and reinforcing this non-monetary package is critical to the performance of counselors. Officials having rewards powers should recognize the critical role of counselors and provide or facilitate the necessary incentives that can spur performance. The competitive advantage is that psychological incentives do not attract financial and material costs, and depends on the knowledge resource strategies and human capital base of those in position of responsibilities. Apart from appreciable policy efforts, the principals of institutions should ensure an enabling environment for counselors to realize their professional assignments. There is a general outcry with regards to injustice and the provision of evaluation and risk allowance for counselors. Counselors could also be promoted to administrative positions in order to benefit from incentives like teachers in the administration. It should be noted that the counselor is at the center of the learning process, and need satisfaction is fundamental in realizing counseling activities. Furthermore, counseling is a demanding and delicate activity, and the actor should be willing to perform. It's therefore of prime importance that, the counselor who is at the pivot of counseling and orientation be well motivated to perform this daunting task without distress. Despite the limitations in incentive administration, possibilities for further research have been identified. Particular interest is in the expansion of the study to other parts of the country in order to validate the results, theories and tools used in order to ensure ecological validity of results.

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