

**DECENTRALISATION POLICIES AND PERFORMANCE OF COUNCILS  
IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the impact of decentralisation policies on the performance of councils and the implications towards sustainable development. The study adopts the quantitative research method and through the prism of the Public Policy Process Model uncovered that supervisory policy, personnel policy, financial policy and contract award Policy have a positive and significant effect on the performance of councils. These policies bring a significant amount of information to explain variations in councils' performance. On the other hand, the policy of devolution of powers has a positive but insignificant effect on the councils' performance. The devolved powers bring an insignificant amount of information to explain variations in councils' performance. Based on the findings, the paper recommends: suspension of prior control of legality; creation of commission of recruitments; regular advancement and reclassification of workers, regular staff training; participatory budgeting and execution, respect of contractual deadlines and perfect execution of transferred competences.

**Keywords:** Decentralisation, sustainable development, performance, Councils and administrative autonomy

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Agrawal and Ribot (1999) defined decentralisation as the transfer of powers from central government to lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy. According to Rondinelli (1981) decentralisation involves the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource mobilisation and allocation of funds from the central government and its agencies to: delegations under government ministries; semi-autonomous public institutions; and non-governmental or voluntary organisations. According to section 5 of the General code of Regional and Local authorities (Law N<sup>o</sup> 2019/024 OF 24<sup>th</sup> December 2019) decentralisation is the devolution by the State of special powers and appropriate resources to councils. Decentralisation is an administrative technique to bring decision making closer to the people and for this to bring about sustainable development at the local levels, some conditions have to be fulfilled such as a high degree of administrative and financial autonomy, accountability, local participation, efficient human resource, good contract award system and political will of the central administration which permits the transfer of functions and resources to local units. At the global scale, Onyalo (2022) observed that the adoption of decentralisation policy by governments is motivated by the need to: improve citizen participation (like the case of Peruvian government); response to actual or potential conflict (like the case of Ukraine); confront inequality; strengthen democracy; strengthen public accountability; improve the effectiveness of government and the need to sustain development through effective service delivery at local levels. It is observed by Gadenne and Singhai (2014) that developing countries when compared to the developed countries have less decentralisation particularly fiscal decentralisation.

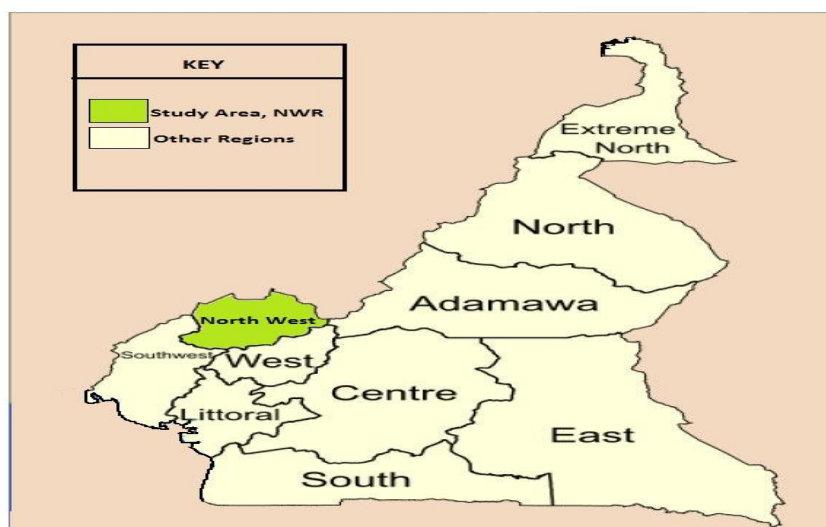
The adoption of decentralisation in Africa stems from a diversified set of reasons. The cities in Africa are fast growing (UCLG, 2013:1). The population of these cities may double over the next twenty years. The increase in population necessitates an increase in the political, social, cultural and economic function of governments in order to sustain the development of the municipalities. Thus, local governance has emerged as a major issue to address the growing challenges. In an attempt to bring decision making closer to the local population, improve the performance of councils, increase local participation and improve on service delivery, some African countries have adopted decentralisation as its form of State. Ndeh (2015) holds that some African countries have adopted decentralisation as a result of pressure from the Breton woods and other international donor organisations who instructed the move towards good governance as a condition for debt cancellation.

Cameroon's decentralisation in its current form is rooted on the Constitutional amendment of 1996 (law N<sup>o</sup> 96/06 of 18 January 1996). Article 55 of the above law stipulated that "decentralised local entities of the republic shall be regions and councils... decentralised Local Authorities shall be legal entities recognised by public law". Thus decentralisation here refers to territorial decentralisation which transfers powers to Regional and Local Authorities or councils. There is also technical or vertical decentralisation which relates to the transfer of some powers by the state to some autonomous institutions within the state such as the Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (FEICOM) and National School of Local Administration (NASLA). Decentralisation practices in Cameroon can be traced back to the colonial period and the existence of municipal Administration. Concerning the colonial period, Owona (2012: 15) stated that during German colonisation (1884-1919), the country was divided into administrative districts. The districts under civilian administration were the coastal areas and measure towns of Assidinge, Victoria, Buea, Douala, Yabassi, Edea, Yaounde and Kribi. The military districts included: Ebolowa, Lomie, the Doume station, Dschang, Bamenda, Banyo, and

Tinto (Campo). In British Cameroon, the colonial authority created the Native Court in 1922 capable of judging their natives and rendering judgment on cases among natives (Banlilon, *Abangma & Ambe*, 2012).

The geographical scope of the study is limited to the North West Region of Cameroon. The North West Region is one of the ten regions in Cameroon. The North West Region lies between latitudes 5 °43” and 7 °9”N and longitudes 9 °13”and 11 °13”E. The Regional capital of the North West Region is Bamenda. The North west Region of Cameroon has seven Divisions; Bui; Donga-Mantung; Menchum; Mezam, Momo, Boyo and Ngoketunjia. Figure 1 below shows the map of the study area.

**Figure 1:Administrative Map of North West Region:**



Source: Author, 2022

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The driving force behind decentralisation stems from the recognition that decentralised decision making would make the government machinery to deliver local public services more effectively and efficiently than centralised structures. Decentralisation strengthens citizen participation, community empowerment and local decision making (Onyalo, 2022: 189-191). Decentralisation promotes sustainable development in rural areas and brings about a fair regional balance (World Bank, 2004). In fact proponents of decentralisation consider it a panacea for reforming public sector and boosting performance in developing countries (Shah, 2004)

Despite the numerous merits emanating from the implementation of the decentralisation policies across the globe, the introduction of the decentralisation policy in Cameroon through the 1996 constitution and the implementation for the past twenty six years seems to have little impact on the performance of local governments in Cameroon when viewed from the point of existing literatures. Mbah and Franz (2021) exposed that councils located in rural areas in Cameroon have high levels of poverty, poor living conditions and are void of sustainable development and that the lack of economic, social and physical infrastructure opportunities have made these councils unsustainable. Cheka (2007: 189) observed that there is a vital missing link in the instruments of decentralisation in Cameroon. Manyi (2007:101) revealed that the

achievements of councils when compared to the growth in population and the needs of the people, is inadequate and inefficient.

The preoccupying problem is why councils continue to perform below expectation despite the improved human, material, financial and technological conditions brought about through decentralisation. In an attempt to explain this, the available literature has put up opposing views. These controversies in the literature prompted the question of what impact decentralisation policies have on councils' performance in Cameroon.

The objective of the research is to investigate the impact of decentralisation policies on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon. To investigate this, the following hypotheses were developed:

H0<sub>1</sub>: Supervisory policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

H0<sub>2</sub>: Personnel policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

H0<sub>3</sub>: Financial policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

H0<sub>4</sub>: Contract award policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

H0<sub>5</sub>: The powers devolved by the State have an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

## **THEORITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study uses the Public Policy Process Model as a framework of analysis. The Public Policy Process Model was postulated by Harold Lasswell of The University of Chicago and Yale University in the 1950s (Benson and Jordan, 2015). Public policy originated in the 1950s in American political science as a distinct field of knowledge.

The public policy process model assumes that public policy is made up of several stages (Mafuleka, 2005; Peters, 1996; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). The stages are composed of the following: (1) problem identification; (2) agenda setting; (3) policy formulation; (4) policy legitimisation; (5) policy implementation; (6) policy evaluation; and (7) policy termination. This process model introduced by Lasswell (1956) has maintained their validity and prevalence in public policy analysis. The policy making process is assumed to be in progressive stages.

In applying the Public Policy Process Model in this study, it is observed that the decentralisation policy passes through some stages of the policy cycle and is aimed at achieving sustainable development. According to Brundtland Report (1987) sustainable development is development that meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Thus, sustainable development entails that people should be able to improve their living standards while taking into consideration the needs of others in future. The achievement of sustainable development in rural and areas through the use of decentralisation policies depends greatly on how well these policies are formulated, legitimised, implemented and evaluated. Furthermore, if these policies reflect the choices of the masses, they become easier to gain the support of the people and lead to sustainable development. In Cameroon, councils have a key role to play in upholding sustainability, because of their social, economic, political, cultural, sports and educational responsibilities and functions. As political and administrative structures, councils are closely associated to local

infrastructural and service delivery. As agents of development, councils play a key role in the implementation of decentralisation policies.

The need to request for devolved powers is identified through the challenges of centralised State structure. The issue is then brought to the table of policy designers for agenda setting. The decentralisation policies are formulated through bills which may be government bills or private member bills and are adopted or legitimised by parliament to give it a legal status. Also some decentralisation policies which take the form of decrees, ministerial orders, mayoral orders and circulars are formulated by the authorities and legitimised through signing of the said policies. In other words, in the policy formulation stage a set of policy alternatives and solutions is generated and also narrowed so as to ease the final decision (Sidney, 2007: 79). In formulation stage which is one of the most functional stages of the stages model, the answers of some of the necessary questions are sought. According to Onur & Hüseyin (2017:147) these questions are usually expressed as follow: What is the plan to deal with the problem? What are the goals and priorities? What are the costs and benefits to achieve goals? What are the positive and negative externalities in each alternative?

The implementation of the decentralisation policy is done through the actual transfer of powers by the central government to councils which began in 2010 financial year. Councils depend highly on the central government for funding (Muyomba, Ssemakula, Ssempala & Segujja, 2010:21). This high dependency makes councils less autonomous. To sustain development at the local levels, some ministries have carved out some powers and have through decrees transferred these specified powers to councils. However, the complete transfer of powers by the central government to the councils has not been effected in Cameroon and the rural masses have not been fully involved to participate in the development of their councils (Manyi, 2007). At the local levels, local actors exercise these powers in the form of execution of projects, provision of services or both. As stated by Fitz Haplin, & Power (1994) policy goals are transformed into actions in the implementation stage.

The evaluation of the decentralisation policy is done by government, CIGs, NGOs and individuals through various forms of controls. Evaluation is mainly to examine whether the policies or programs have achieved the stated goals and objectives (Jones, 1977; Peters, 1996). Moreover, the conscious or unconscious impacts of the policies on the society are assessed during evaluation (Dye, 2008: 55). In many public policy analyses, various numerical models and techniques are applied in evaluation of the impact of the population (Jones, 1977: 174). This has often established the gap and led to policy reforms in the form of new decrees and laws.

In integrating the Public Policy Process Model in our work, the local population (Civil Society Organisations, Locally elected officials, the media and local development associations) and the central government work as integral partners in the identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation and evaluation. The positive effects of decentralisation are dependent on several preconditions such as inclusive and participatory systems that enable citizens to express their opinions and influence decision-making processes (Mbate, 2017). The local population and its constituent elements based on local realities identify the problems that are hindering sustainable development at the council areas and come out with suggested policies that can be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the development endeavours. Interest in the performance of local governments has become high in public management (Zakaria, 2014). The population is sensitised on these problems by the Civil Society Organisations and the Media. These identified problems are channeled through the representatives of the local population (councilors, mayors, Members of Parliament and Senators) to the central administration in Yaounde. At this level, some of these problems are included in the agenda of policy makers. The locally elected officials who act representatives of the local

population sometimes make use of lobbyists to guarantee the possibility of having their problems included in the agenda of policy makers. Once agenda setting is completed, the members of executive, (the various ministers, Prime Minister and the President of the Republic) translate the problems into policies or solutions. This translation is in the formulation of bills, decrees, orders and circulars depending on the nature of the problem. In some cases, the policies that are formulated are passed through the parliament for legitimation while in other cases, the signatures of the issuing authority gives the policy a legal backing. The formulated and legalised policies are then thrown back at the central and local authorities for implementation by their trained officials. This may be accompanied by the transfer of financial, human or material resources. Some powers are transferred without accompanying resources and this leaves councils with difficulties to implement. Local councils face tremendous challenges to adequately generate finances to meet community needs (Takwa, Babila & Teno 2020). Wilson (2000) on his part opined that there are enormous changes and innovations occurring throughout the world in the practices of governments which has made local governance to become a focus in many countries. The evaluation of the policies usually takes place after some period of implementation and it is aimed at establishing whether the policies have solved the identified problems or not.

In public policy processes such as decentralisation, the public policy process model may be favoured because it clearly brings out the various stages in the public policy process, the activities at each of the stages and the actors involved at each of the stages. This makes the understanding of the conception, formulation, legitimation, implementation and evaluation easier. Furthermore, it presents the policy making process as a bottom-up affair which makes the common man on the street as the owner of the policy. The process of policy making is presented as a continuous process and has within it an element of evaluation which is decisive in the continuous implementation, reformation or discarding of the policy under consideration.

The merits of the model notwithstanding, it is criticised for constituting an idealised conception of the policy development process. Policy analysts find that this ordered sequence does not reflect the reality of their work (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). In practice it is too static, thus failing to understand that policy makers are often consulted prematurely, some times before an agenda is made for careful reflection. Some policies do not pass through some of the stages. Some policies originate within the system itself while others after implementation are never evaluated. Thus the strict order may not be respected.

Despite the limitations, the general view held by the Public Policy Process Model is still very practical in our country today. Any given public policy follows some stages even if it does not go through all the six stages. For regular policies, the problems are identified, agenda setting takes place, policies are formulated, legitimised, implemented and later evaluated after some period of implementation. Thus, this theory is very essential to this work.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a survey research design that involves using a quantitative research approach in collecting and analysing data. A survey research design is deemed best for this research because of its robustness in gathering information that reflects the attitudes, behaviour, and opinions of the population that cannot be observed directly. To investigate the phenomena under study, the study focuses on local authorities in the North West Region of Cameroon.

The study population is the sub set of the sample population from which the sample is actually selected (Bickman & Rog, 1998). The study population is composed of the officials of councils, Supervisory Authorities and representatives of Civil Society Organisations.

In terms of respondents, there are two hundred and six two (262) respondents included in the study population categorised as follows: two hundred and ten (210) respondents from the councils ( Mayors, Secretaries General, Municipal Treasurers, Stores Accountants, Council Development, and Council Finance Officers); fourteen (14) respondents from the supervisory authorities of councils ( Senior Divisional Officers and Divisional Delegates of MINDDEVEL) and thirty eight (38) representatives from the Civil Society Organisations.

From the study population of two hundred and sixty two (262), and going by the Sloven’s formula which the study adopts, the sample size for the study is one hundred and fifty nine (159) respondents. However to account for the possible attrition, an additional six persons were added to the calculated sample. This gave a total of one hundred and sixty five (165) respondents. The formula used is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Na^2}$$

Where,"*n*" is the sample size, “N” stands for study population and “a” is 0.5 level of significance. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the sample size

**Table 1: Distribution of Sample Size**

Category	SDOs	DDs	Mayors	SGs	MTs	SAs	CDOs	CFOs	CSOs	Total
N <sup>o</sup> of Persons	7	7	29	29	29	18	14	14	18	165

**Source: Author, 2022**

The study uses stratified random sampling technique to draw the sample from the study population. This technique helped to divide the respondents of the population into nine (9) mutually exclusive, non-overlapping groups of sample units. A simple random sample was then used to select the sample from the various strata that made up the study population.

Data was collected through Primary source through Likert scale questionnaires. The questions in the questionnaire were guided by the research objectives. The structured questionnaire was sent to those in the sample through a link on whatsapp and the respondents answered and submitted online. The researcher used the presidents of the various categories of respondents to come out with the contact of the respondents. For respondents who could not have access to the online platform due to non-possession of android phones, network related problems or non availability of internet credit; the researcher had to contact them face to face. In these cases, the hard copies of the questionnaires were administered. The researcher then transferred the physically collected data through the link to the data base.

The data is analysed by the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. These are facilitated by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (S.P.S.S.). For inferential statistics, Ordinary Least Square is used for the analysis of data. The data used for inferential statistics is primary data. A multiple regression analysis is done to establish the causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The Fisher's F test at 0.05 level of significance is used as a reference to determine the risk of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true. The model used in the study to capture this causal relation takes the form below:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \epsilon$$

Where:  $Y$ = Performance of RLAs;  $\alpha$ = Constant term;  $X_1$ = supervision policy;  $X_2$ = personnel management policy;  $X_3$ = financial policy;  $X_4$ = Contract award policy;  $X_5$ = Policy of devolution of powers;  $\epsilon$ = Error term and  $\beta$ = Measure of change in the performance of RLAs due to change in independent variables.

## **PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSION OF RESULTS**

This section presents the results of measurement model evaluation, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

### **Results of Measurement Model Evaluation and Descriptive Statistics**

To assess the validity and reliability of the research tools and data used for the study, a series of validity and reliability tests were performed. These include:

**Factor Loadings:** This shows how well an item represents the underlying construct. A factor loading above 0.708 is usually recommended (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). In addition to factor loading, the measurement model must include reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability).

**Convergent Validity:** This is established when elements converge to some extent to represent the underlying construct. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is calculated as the mean of the squared loadings of each indicator associated with a construct. Statistically, convergent validity is established when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is  $\geq 0.50$  (Hair et al., 2019).

**Discriminant Validity:** This is assessed to establish the distinctiveness of the constructs in the study. It shows that constructs in the study have their own individual identity and are not overly correlated with other constructs in the study. Discriminant validity is determined using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, as it has been shown to be the most robust measure of discriminant validity among all methods proposed in the literature (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 below gives the construct reliability and validity.



**Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity**

Latent Construct	Indicator	Indicator Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
SP	SP_1	0.844	0.896	0.902	0.927	0.761
	SP_2	0.882				
	SP_3	0.869				
	SP_4	0.895				
PMP	PMP_1	0.802	0.887	0.909	0.923	0.751
	PMP_2	0.936				
	PMP_3	0.942				
	PMP_4	0.773				
FP	FP_1	0.776	0.768	0.773	0.85	0.587
	FP_2	0.725				
	FP_3	0.775				
	FP_5	0.787				
CAP	CAP_1	0.889	0.898	0.899	0.93	0.767
	CAP_2	0.821				
	CAP_4	0.909				
	CAP_5	0.884				
PDP	PDP_1	0.7	0.826	0.854	0.883	0.655
	PDP_2	0.847				
	PDP_3	0.806				
	PDP_4	0.872				
PRLAS	PRLAS_1	0.772	0.774	0.793	0.868	0.688
	PRLAS_3	0.844				
	PRLAS_5	0.869				

**Source: Author, 2022**

Table 2 above shows all measures of construct validity and reliability for the first order constructs. The first step in assessing the validity and reliability of a reflective latent construct is to assess the indicator reliability. The reliability of the indicator is evaluated based on the external loading of the indicator. According to Hair et al. (2019), an indicator is reliable if it has a loading of 0.708 and more. Also, indicators can be removed from the model if they load more into latent constructs other than the latent construct to which they primarily belong. According to Hair et al. (2019), even if an indicator has a loading <0.7, it should only be removed if its removal improves in general on the model reliability and validity. Otherwise, the indicator should be left in the model if the other measures of validity and reliability are acceptable.

Looking at table 2, items that did not meet conventional standards for construct validity and reliability were removed from the model if their removal significantly improved on the validity and reliability of the model (SP\_5, PMP\_5, FP\_4, CAP\_3, PDP\_5, PRLAS\_2 and PRLAS\_4). All other items retained for each latent construct met all conditions for

construct validity and reliability as prescribed by Hair et al., 2019. The Cronbach alpha, Rho<sub>a</sub> and Rho<sub>c</sub> are all greater than 0.7 and the average variance extracted (AVE) are all greater than 0.5 for all latent constructs). The discriminant validity following the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio is presented in table 3 below.

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity Following the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio**

Latent Construct	SP	PMP	FP	CAP	PDP
PMP	0.148				
FP	0.504	0.181			
CAP	0.538	0.111	0.513		
PDP	0.231	0.074	0.191	0.363	
PRLAS	0.702	0.222	0.568	0.772	0.345

Source: Author, 2022

For discriminant validity to be established, the HTMT ratio should be below 0.85 for conceptually different constructs and below 0.9 for conceptually similar constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, since all HTMT ratios are less than 0.9, we conclude that discriminant validity was established for all latent constructs. The latent variable descriptive statistics and the correlation of latent constructs are presented in table 4 and 5 below.

**Table 1: Latent Variable Descriptive Statistics**

	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Std Dev	Kurtosis	Skewness
SP	1	5	3.516	3.756	1.046	-0.232	-0.69
PMP	1	5	4.451	4.75	1.198	-0.055	-0.721
FP	1	5	3.436	3.552	0.97	-0.08	-0.443
CAP	1	5	2.552	2.515	1.415	-1.001	-0.139
PDP	1	5	1.701	1.478	0.802	1.743	1.311
PRLAS	1	5	3.279	3.354	0.88	-0.45	-0.415

Source: Author, 2022

**Table 5: Correlation of Latent Constructs**

Relationship	CAP	FP	PDP	PMP	PRLAS
FP	0.43**				
PDP	0.331**	0.16**			
PMP	0.1	0.156**	0.046		
PRLAS	0.658**	0.45**	0.296**	0.185**	
SP	0.49**	0.421**	0.212**	0.135*	0.594**

Source: Author, 2022

## Results of Inferential Statistics on the Impact of Decentralisation Policies on the Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

This section presents the structural model assessment and the verifications of hypotheses. These are presented in tables 6 and 7 below.

**Table 2: Structural Model Assessment**

	<b>Coeff</b>	<b>Std Err</b>	<b>T Stat</b>	<b>P values</b>	<b>L95% BCa CI</b>	<b>U95% BCa CI</b>
R <sup>2</sup>	0.552	0.037	14.818	0.000	0.488	0.634
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	0.545	0.038	14.377	0.000	0.488	0.634
Predictive Relevance (Q <sup>2</sup> )	0.529					

**Source: Author, 2022**

Inferring from the R<sup>2</sup> of Performance of councils of 55.2% and the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (Coefficient of multiple determination) of 54.5% we can deduce that approximately 54% of variations in the Performance of councils is accounted for or explained by variations in SP, PMP, FP, CAP and PDP. Given a bootstrap p value of <0.01 which is lower than the level of significance of 0.05, we can conclude that SP, PMP, FP, CAP and PDP do bring a significant amount of information in explaining Performance of councils (Hair et al., 2019). Thus, decentralisation policies can be used to bring about sustainable development at rural and urban areas, given that a greater change (54%) in the performance of councils is accounted for by variations in decentralisation policies. The predictive relevance of the model was assessed using the Stone Gaizer's Q<sup>2</sup>. Given a value of 0.529 for Performance of councils, we can infer that the model has a large predictive relevance in predicting council performance (Hair et al., 2019). This means that the variables chosen are good predictors of council performance

**Table 7: Verification of Hypotheses**

	<b>Coeff</b>	<b>Std Err</b>	<b>T Stat</b>	<b>P values</b>	<b>F<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>L95% BCa CI</b>	<b>U95% BCa CI</b>
SP -> PRLAS	0.313	0.052	6.007	0	0.153	0.208	0.411
PMP -> PRLAS	0.086	0.04	2.129	0.033	0.016	0.016	0.168
FP -> PRLAS	0.109	0.053	2.055	0.04	0.02	0.005	0.214
CAP -> PRLAS	0.426	0.051	8.429	0	0.265	0.324	0.52
PDP -> PRLAS	0.067	0.043	1.555	0.12	0.009	-0.019	0.153

**Source: Author, 2022**

### **H0<sub>1</sub>: Supervision Policy (SP) has an insignificant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon**

At a 95% confidence interval, Supervision Policy has a positive and significant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon ( $\beta = 0.313, t = 6.007, p < 0.01$ ). For every 1 standard deviation increase in Supervision Policy, Performance of Councils increases by 31.3. Inferring from the significance of the t-statistic of 6.007, we assume less than 0.1% risk if we assume that Supervision Policy has a significant impact on Performance of Councils

in the North West Region of Cameroon, which is below the 5% significance level. Furthermore, the effect size for Supervision Policy is 0.152, implying that Supervision Policy has a medium impact on Performance of Councils (Hair et al., 2019). We therefore reject the null hypothesis which stated that Supervisory policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon and retain the alternative hypothesis. The risk of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is less than 0.1%, which is below the 5% significance level. We therefore concluded that Supervision Policy brings a significant amount of information to explain variations in Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

### **H0<sub>2</sub>: Personnel Policy (PP) has an insignificant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon**

At a 95% confidence interval, Personnel Policy has a positive and significant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon ( $\beta = 0.086_{[0.016 - 0.168]}$ ,  $t = 2.129$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon increases by 8.6% for every one standard deviation increase in Personnel Policy. Inferring from the significance of the t-statistic of 2.129, we estimate a risk of 3.3% if we conclude that Personnel Policy has a major effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon at a significance level of less than 5%. Additionally, the effect size for Personnel Policy is 0.016, which indicates a small influence on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon (Hair et al., 2019). We thus reject the null hypothesis which stated that Personnel management policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon and uphold the alternative hypothesis. The likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is 3.3%, which is lower than the significance level of 5%. We therefore concluded that Personnel Policy provides a substantial amount of information to explain variances in Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

### **H0<sub>3</sub>: Financial Policy (PP) has an insignificant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon**

At a 95% confidence interval, Financial Policy has a positive and significant effect on the Performance of Councils ( $\beta = 0.109_{[0.005 - 0.214]}$ ,  $t = 2.055$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon increases by 10.9% for every one standard deviation increase in Financial Policy. Inferring from the significance of the t-statistic of 2.055, we estimate a risk of 4% if we conclude that Financial Policy has a major effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon. The likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is 4%, which is lower than the significance level of 5%. Additionally, the effect size for Financial Policy is 0.02, which indicates a small influence on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon (Hair et al., 2019). We thus reject the null hypothesis which stated that Financial policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon and uphold the alternative hypothesis. The likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is 4%, which is lower than the significance level of the 5% We therefore concluded that Financial Policy provides a substantial amount of information to explain variances in Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

#### **H04: Contract Award (CAP) has an insignificant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon**

At a 95% confidence interval, Contract Award Policy has a positive and significant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon ( $\beta = 0.426, t = 8.429, p < 0.01$ ). For every 1 standard deviation increase in Contract Award Policy, Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon increases by 4.26%. Inferring from the significance of the t-statistic of 8.429, we assume less than 1% risk if we assume that Contract Award Policy has a significant impact on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon. The likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is 1%, which is lower than the significance level of the 5%. Furthermore, the effect size for Contract Award Policy is 0.265, implying that Contract Award Policy has a medium impact on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon (Hair et al., 2019). We therefore reject the null hypothesis which stated that Contract award policy has an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon and retain the alternative hypothesis. The risk of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is less than 1%, which is below the 5% significance level. We therefore concluded that Contract Award Policy brings a significant amount of information to explain variations in Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

#### **H05: Policy of Devolution of Powers (PDP) has an insignificant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon**

At a 95% confidence interval, Policy of Devolution of Powers has a positive and insignificant effect on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon ( $\beta = 0.067_{[-0.019-0.153]}, t = 1.555, p = 0.12$ ). Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon rises by 6.7% for each one standard deviation increase in policy of devolution of powers. Inferring from the significance of the t-statistic of 1.555, we anticipate a 12% likelihood that Policy of Devolution of Powers has a substantial influence on Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon, which is higher than the 5% significance threshold. We cannot thus reject the null hypothesis. The likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true is 12%, which is above the significance threshold of 5%. We therefore retain the null hypothesis which stated that the powers devolved by the State have an insignificant impact on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon. We therefore concluded that the Policy of devolution of powers brings an insignificant amount of information to explain variations in Performance of Councils in the North West Region of Cameroon.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The paper examines the impact of decentralisation policies on the performance of councils in the North West Region of Cameroon and the implications towards sustainable development. From the findings of the research, councils in the North West Region of Cameroon are subjected to State Supervision. To ensure sustainability of the effectiveness of the policies, these State Supervisory bodies are entrusted to offer advice and supports to the councils and assist in the control of legality. However, majority of respondents feel that the imposition of these supervisory authorities have deprived the councils of administrative and financial autonomy. This finding is in line with Zakaria (2014) who found out that central-local government relations allow the former to influence the latter's priorities by imposing on them. On the part of personnel policy, the practical implementation of personnel policies on job description, recruitment, training, motivation

and advancement is not very satisfactory. Most councils do not have a recruitment nor disciplinary commissions. Advancements are not done timely, job descriptions are at times conflicting and staff training is not given the importance that it deserves. With regards to financial policy, a majority of councils lack adequate sources to mobilise revenue and this makes them to continue to depend on the central government. This supports Muyomba et al (2010:21) who revealed that councils highly dependent on the central government for finances and that this dependency makes councils mere agent of the central government rather than a full-fledged local government as previewed in the constitution. This finding also confirmed Takwa et al (2020) who opined that local development authorities face tremendous challenges to adequately generate finances to meet community needs. Majority of councils do not practice participatory budgeting and execution. This is contrary to Mbate (2017) who revealed that the positive effects of decentralisation are contingent on several preconditions such as inclusive and participatory systems that enable citizens to express their opinions. Councils have problems with the respect of contractual deadlines and this delays the award and execution of projects; some powers are devolved to councils without a corresponding transfer of resources, thus making implementation difficult. This confirmed Manyi (2007) who postulated that power has not been devolved in its entirety from the central government to the Councils. Despite these drawbacks, decentralisation is seen to have impacted positively on the performance of councils in the North West region of Cameroon, thus contributing significantly to sustainable development in the region. In line with the findings of Bravia (2014) councils are playing a significant role in promoting service delivery in their municipalities.

Based on the study's findings, we recommend that: councils should be given more administrative autonomy in the management of their affairs; the government should undertake a reform to modify the mode of recruitment in councils by creating a commission of recruitment and thus repeal the powers given to the mayors by virtue of Section, 209 (1) of the law of 2019/024 of the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 to recruit, suspend and dismiss staff governed by the labour laws and collective agreements; council authorities should adopt a friendly attitude towards supervision by moving closer to the supervisory authorities and request for supports and advice whenever the need arises; council executive members should adopt a worker-friendly approach to the management of council personnel by regularly doing advancement and reclassification, staff training and better definition of job descriptions to motivate the workers to increase output, the councils should adopt a participatory budgetary approach to the preparation and execution of their budgets ,councils should respect the deadlines in the contract award chain and the councils should ensured that all transferred competences are well executed so as not to give the Central Government reasons to hold back power.

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