

Investigating The Effect of Administrative Sanctions On Anxiety Among Teachers of Non-Functional Secondary Schools During The Anglophone Crisis

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Abstract.

The problem of anxiety among secondary school teachers in the North west region of Cameroon has been a matter of concern in recent times among stakeholders and policy makers in the country. As part of the contribution to address the situation, this study was set out to investigate the effect of administrative sanctions on the anxiety among teachers of non-functional secondary schools during the anglophone crisis in the North west region of Cameroon. To carry out the study, two research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated. After reviewing both theoretical and empirical literature, the descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. The study was carried out among teachers of non-functional secondary schools in the area. Sample for the study consisted of 390 teachers and 10 principals. Data was collected using close-ended questionnaires and interviews. The study employed the ordinary least square regression techniques to analyze the data that were collected, the Cronbach alpha to test for reliability of instruments and the student t-test to verify the significance of the hypothesis. The thematic content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data collected and the overall results revealed that, Salary suspension and query letters all have significant positive effect on the anxiety level of teachers in the area. Based on the above findings, it was therefore recommended that, school administrators, Stakeholders should implement supportive administrative practices in handling teacher misconduct and even replacing the harsh administrative approaches with more friendly and moderate approaches to human resource management.

Keyaords: Administrative sanctions; salary suspensions; query letters and anxiety.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the use of administrative sanctions in schools has become a matter of concern among nations in recent times. These measures often include salary suspension for teachers who fail to report to work and the issuance of query letters demanding explanations for absenteeism (UNESCO, 2015; Cameroon News Agency, 2025). While such measures are intended to uphold educational continuity, they may also contribute to heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and job insecurity among teachers (Wiegner, Balke, & Kristensen, 2015; Colak & Altinkurt, 2022). In the Cameroonian context, particularly in the North West Region already destabilized by the Anglophone crisis, these sanctions take on even greater significance. Teachers grappling with insecurity and displacement due to the conflict often face further discouragement when subjected to financial penalties such as salary suspensions (BBC News Pidgin, 2020; Kouega, 2018). For example, during the height of the crisis, thousands of teachers were reported to have had their salaries withheld, either partially or completely, by administrative authorities who justified the move as a disciplinary response to prolonged absenteeism (Galindo-Silva & Tchunte, 2023; Mimi Mefo Info, 2022). Such actions have been linked to financial anxiety, defined as the fear of not meeting personal and family obligations, which exacerbates stress and undermines teachers' morale in already challenging conditions.

According to Mimi Mefo Info (2022) the salaries of over 1400 teachers in the North west region during the anglophone crises were suspended in 2020. They reported partial salary payments or complete suspension for months following decisions from administrative authorities in the region. The government claimed these measures were temporary and aimed at restoring order and discipline in the career of teachers

whom they considered as not working due to the insecurity caused by the anglophone crises. However, while some of these salary suspension cases of teachers are justified, most of them are simply a manifestation of administrative sanctions, abuse of power and a way to instill fear and consciousness of work in the lives of teachers (Kouega, 2018). Query letters are another administrative sanction used to uphold and maintain professional standards among educators in Cameroon and in the North west region in particular. The primary purposes of a query letter include; Seeking an explanation for specific actions or inactions that are deemed inappropriate or unprofessional (UNESCO, 2015). Query letters are a legitimate administrative tool, but their application in Cameroon is often criticized for lacking fairness. Teacher's report receiving vague or overly punitive queries, with unrealistic response deadlines or without clear evidence of wrongdoings. The Implications of these Query Letters are devastating, especially on the morale and anxiety of the teachers (Colak & Altinkurt, 2022).

Some teachers are bound to retaliate, while others ignore such letters and remain silent. Guilt, discouragement, and depression are the order of the day under this situation. These experiences appear to compound the pressures teachers face as they navigate the conflicting demands of separatist fighters and government administrators. While standard administrative sanctions, such as those for absenteeism or failure to follow curriculum guidelines, may apply in other contexts, they may not be appropriate in this unique situation (Kouega, 2018). Nevertheless, the issue of teachers reportedly being pressured by the administration raises concerns that administrative sanctions may be a significant factor contributing to their anxiety. This study aims to examine the effect of administrative sanctions on the anxiety of secondary school teachers during this crisis period. The following research hypothesis was suggested to guide the study:

H1: Salary suspension has no statistical significance on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis in the North West Region

H2: Query letters have no statistically significant effect on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis in the North West Region.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of Salary Suspension

Salary suspension refers to the temporary withholding of an employee's wages as a form of punishment for misconduct or failure to meet contractual obligations. According to National Education Association (2023). Salary suspension is commonly used as a disciplinary measure within schools, especially when an educator fails to fulfill their duties or violates institutional policies. For example, many school systems implement "no work, no pay" policies that directly link attendance to salary payments (Brookings Institution, 2020). While such sanctions are intended to enforce accountability, they are often viewed as severe because they can exacerbate financial stress for teachers. Research on teacher well-being indicates that punitive measures such as unpaid suspensions contribute to increased anxiety, job insecurity, and burnout (Colak & Altinkurt, 2022).

A teacher who is found guilty of serious misconduct, such as cheating on an exam or engaging in inappropriate behavior with students, might have their salary withheld for a certain period as a form of administrative punishment. Salary suspension can also be seen as a tool for addressing ongoing issues such as chronic absenteeism or inadequate performance. Jones (2006) suggests that this measure is not only a form of punishment but also serves as a reminder of the consequences of neglecting professional duties. A teacher who fails to submit grades on time may be subject to salary suspension until they correct their administrative lapses. According to Skaalvik, and Skaalvik (2015) salary suspension is a practice often applied when a teacher's actions are deemed in violation of the terms of their employment. For instance, a teacher who engages in repeated tardiness might face salary suspension until they demonstrate an improvement in their punctuality

The concept of Query Letters

Query letters to teachers are formal written communications from school administrators seeking clarification regarding a teacher's actions or decisions that are perceived as problematic. According to UNESCO (2015), such written notices are intended as an initial step in disciplinary processes, giving

teachers an opportunity to explain themselves before more severe measures are imposed. For instance, a teacher who has failed to submit grades on time may first receive a query letter requesting justification. In African school systems, including Cameroon query letters are often issued as a precursor to formal sanctions and serve as a mechanism to investigate possible misconduct or neglect of duty (Akinyi, 2019; Cameroon News Agency, 2025).

While they function as legitimate tools of accountability, their application is not without controversy. Teachers frequently report that queries can be vague, overly punitive, or tied to unrealistic deadlines, leading to stress and feelings of job insecurity (Colak & Altinkurt, 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). In conflict-affected contexts like the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, these effects are amplified, with query letters often interpreted as punitive measures designed to enforce compliance in already unstable working conditions (BBC News Pidgin, 2020). Nevertheless, query letters remain a common administrative tool, offering teachers a chance to present their side of the story before final disciplinary decisions are made. For example, If a teacher's classroom behavior has been questioned, they may be asked to respond to a query letter outlining the specifics of their actions, which will be considered in the disciplinary process.

The concept of Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotional phenomenon that was first identified in the research by Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud in the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that research before to Freud looked at anxiety and fear as a whole, experts claim that the differences between the notions of anxiety and fear emerged over time, and fear was defined as an individual's reaction to external threats and hazards. On the other side, anxiety is a person's reaction to psychological threats (Molin et al., 2021). Additionally, anxiety emphasizes our fears about the future, although it frequently reveals itself in a brief moment. Anxiety is frequently associated with upcoming events in this scenario.

Anxiety has a variety of causes, most of which are unknown. In contrast to dread, the anxious person's life does not appear to be in any danger. When comparing fear with anxiety, one may say that anxiety is a more abstract, difficult-to-define emotion that manifests over time. There are, however, a variety of anxiety disorders (Umuzdas et al., 2019). It suggests a persistent psychological state that causes a vague fear or a feeling that something unpleasant may happen. In a similar vein, Shortness of breath, jumping into a rage, stress, scorching, stomach discomfort, and heart throbbing are all symptoms of a high anxiety level as a result, a high level of anxiety leads to unfavorable health and psychological outcomes. The intensity of pressure has a strong correlation with the degree and severity of anxiety. Anxiety leads to sleeplessness and a lack of focus hence, it's one of the most unwelcome stress reactions (Demir, 2018). Below is a conceptual diagram showing the dependent and independent variables of the study.

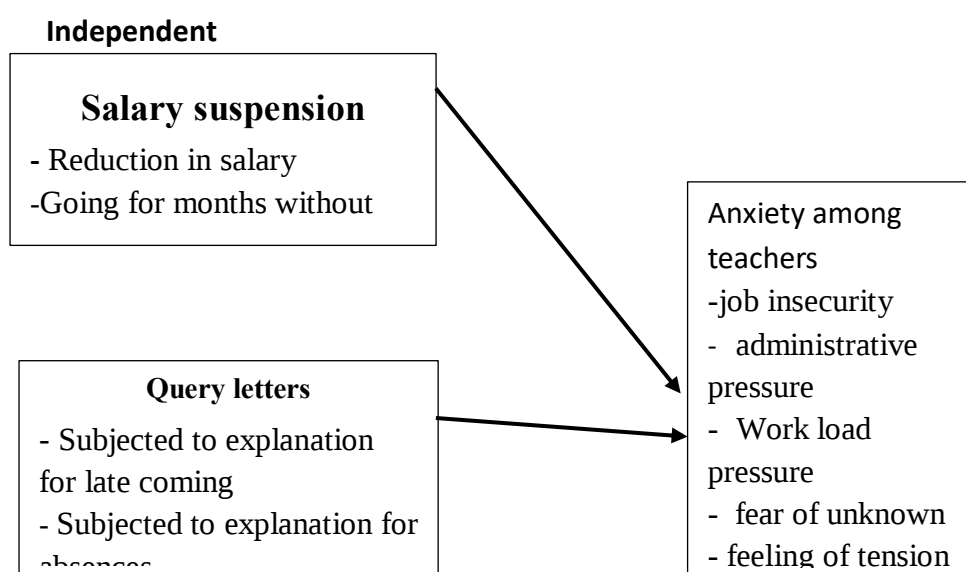


Fig 1. Conceptual diagram showing the dependent and independent variable of the study.

Source: Researcher (2025)

From figure one above, administrative sanctions are the independent variables and have a direct effect on the dependent variable which is the anxiety among teachers as indicated by the arrows linking the boxes of the independent variable indicators to the box of the dependent variable. The independent variable of administrative sanctions is further broken down into two indicators which are salary suspension and query letters. Each of these two indicators of the independent variables are captured by the constructs inside their boxes. The lone dependent variable of anxiety among teachers is captured here using indicators such as job insecurity, administrative pressure, Work load pressure, fear of unknow and feeling of tension.

Review Of Related Literature

Salary suspension and the anxiety of secondary school teachers

Chilufya (2025) wrote on the effect of salary suspension on the anxiety of secondary school teachers among public schools in Zambia. This study examined the impact of salary suspension on the anxiety levels of secondary school teachers in public schools across Zambia, employing a mixed-method research approach. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 250 teachers affected by salary suspensions, while qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic coding was employed for qualitative responses. Findings revealed that salary suspension significantly contributes to heightened anxiety among teachers, with many reporting emotional distress, financial instability, and decreased professional commitment. The qualitative findings further highlighted experiences of frustration, hopelessness, and a sense of neglect by the education authorities. The study concludes that salary suspension is not only an administrative sanction but also a critical stressor that undermines teacher well-being and educational quality. Recommendations include the adoption of supportive policies that prioritize timely remuneration, the provision of psychosocial support for affected teachers, and reconsideration of punitive financial measures during crisis or administrative disputes.

Bawalla et al (2021) Employees' rewards and job commitment among public secondary school teachers in Ogun state, Nigeria.

This study was therefore, designed to investigate employees' rewards and job commitment among public secondary school teachers in Ogun State, Nigeria. Structural Functionalist and Expectancy theories provided the framework. Research design was cross-sectional. Multi stage sampling was adopted; Ogun State was stratified into three senatorial districts: Ogun Central, Ogun West and Ogun East. Thirty secondary schools were randomly selected, while Cochran's (1977) formula was used to identify 750 respondents selected from public secondary school teachers. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit information on socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, types of rewards, and effects of rewards on teachers' job commitment. Job commitment was measured using Meyer's scale, categorized as low (>2.49), moderate ($2.50-3.99$) and high (>4.00). Employees' rewards were measured using 3-point scale with 18-items categorized as low rewards (≤ 26), moderate rewards ($27-45$) and high rewards (>46). Nine key-informant interviews were conducted with three officials each from Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Teaching Service Commission, and retired educationists to elicit information on the challenges faced by the government and the perceived decline in the quality of public secondary education in the State. Eleven In-depth interviews were conducted with Teachers union executive members to ascertain their effort towards improved teachers' rewards.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics $p \leq 0.05$ and qualitative data were content-analyzed. Respondents' age was 40.5 ± 3.3 years, 57.0% were female, 85.5% were married, 91.2% had tertiary education and 14.7% earned less than N50,000 monthly. Types of rewards available included financial rewards- (medical allowance; 26.2%; 2.46; leave bonuses; 22.9%; 2.26; transport allowance; 77.1%; 4.01 and Teachers Peculiar Allowance; 75.1%; 4.03) and non-financial rewards- (recognition; 35.4%; 2.43 and On-the-job training; 37.4%; 2.39). There was a positive but weak relationship between financial rewards and teachers job commitment ($r = .56$). Non-financial rewards ($r = .72$) had negative effects on teacher's commitment. There was strong correlation between rewards and job commitment in terms of intention to quit ($r = .86$), lateness to work ($r = .88$), and low morale ($r = .79$). The State government was faced with financial challenges due to drastic fall in federal allocations.

Unemployment and economic recession were the major reasons why teachers engaged in teaching, which resulted in low job commitment and decline in quality of public secondary education. The NUT mobilized its members to embark on strike actions to press home their demands for improved condition of service. Low rewards led to low job commitment among public secondary school teachers in Ogun State. Therefore, the State government should appreciate and reward teachers adequately and employ only interested and competent teachers.

Yuyun et al (2023) wrote on Distributive justice and psychological well-being among teachers of catholic schools in the archdiocese of Bamenda, north west region of cameroon. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between distributive justice and the psychological wellbeing of teachers in the Archdiocese of Bamenda North West Region of Cameroon. The main research question for the study was to find out the effect of distributive justice on the psychological well-being of teachers in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. The sample for the study comprised of 270 male and female teachers working in Catholic nursery, primary and secondary schools within the Mankon and Bambui Deaneries of the Archdiocese of Bamenda. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative data were analyzed using the linear regression technique. Findings revealed that 65% of teachers' responses indicated dissatisfaction with distributive justice in the Catholic Education Agency of the Archdiocese of Bamenda and also that there was no relationship between distributive justice and the psychological well-being of teachers and thus no significant effect of distributive justice on the psychological wellbeing of teachers of the Archdiocese of Bamenda. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the government should effectively follow-up, monitor and audit the channels of paying subvention funds to beneficiary private sector teachers to ensure that the money reaches the intended beneficiaries uncompromised. The study further recommended that private sector education employers should uphold honesty, accountability and transparency in the management of subventions and payment of salaries to teachers and that they allow private sector education teachers to exercise their right to form trade union to defend their labour interests.

Query letters and the anxiety of secondary school teacher

Fomba et al (2021) researched on Psychological Health Effects of Psychosocial Risk Factors in Crisis Context: Evidence from Mental Workload and Work Intensity among Workers during the Anglophone Crisis. Within the theoretical frame of Job Demand Control model, the study assessed the prevalence of psychosocial risk factors as predictors of psychological health of workers under uncertainty. The study tested the psychological health effects of mental workload and work intensity within the context of the Anglophone crisis. Participants were made up of 109 workers of both sexes (males, 55%; females, 45%) drawn among teaching and support staff of the University of Bamenda. An instrument with commendable reliability coefficient (aggregate $\alpha=0.746$,) was used for to gather data, and descriptive and inferential statistics used to test the relationships. Testing the psychological health effects, mental workload ($\beta=0.484$; $R=0.234$) and work intensity ($\beta=0.447$; $R=0.200$) were found to be significant predictors during crisis. Furthermore, the overall component of psychosocial risk factors was able to determine variation in psychological health of participants ($\beta=0.242$; $R=0.271$). The paper submits that dimensions of occupational hazards could pose a serious threat to the health of workers already at risk of wider environmental risk factors and that the situation is even more critical in times of crisis with heightening pressure from organizational and extra-organizational stressors.

Udo-Anyanwu et al (2020) conducted a study on Disciplinary measures and job anxiety of library staff in academic libraries in Imo State. The main objective of the study was to find out the relationship between disciplinary measures of teachers such as query letters, administrative threats and suspensions on the level of job anxiety of library staffs. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is thirty (34) Heads of Departments in the five academic libraries studied. The instrument for data collection was an online questionnaire rated using the four-point scale. Out of the 34 copies of instrument sent, 28 were returned showing 82% return rate. Data generated from the study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The Cronbach alpha was used to test for reliability, while the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was use to do the analysis. The hypothesis was tested using

the Pearson correlation and the results reveal that, there is a significant positive relationship between disciplinary measures such as query letters, administrative threats and suspension on job anxiety of library staffs. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that, every act of indiscipline should be given a matching disciplinary measure with caution. there should be an improvement in the use of these disciplinary measures among staffs by the stakeholders.

Okonkwo (2025) researched on Query letters and their impact on teacher anxiety in Nigerian public secondary schools. This study examines the effect of query letters on the anxiety levels of secondary school teachers in Nigerian public schools using a quantitative research approach. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, with 320 teachers randomly selected from 12 public secondary schools across three states. Data were collected through a standardized questionnaire measuring administrative sanctions and teacher anxiety, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression. The results show a significant positive correlation ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) between receipt of query letters and teacher anxiety. Regression analysis revealed that query letters explain 34% of the variance in anxiety levels, highlighting their substantial psychological impact. Teachers who reported frequent exposure to query letters exhibited higher levels of job-related stress, reduced concentration in class delivery, and an increased intention to leave the profession. The findings suggest that query letters, when used excessively or punitively, serve as a counterproductive management strategy that undermines teacher morale and well-being.

III. METHOS

The study made use of the descriptive survey research design in investigating the subject under consideration. Geographically, the study was carried out among some selected teachers and principals of the secondary education sector in the North west region of Cameroon. The accessible population constitutes teachers of non- functional schools from some selected subdivisions where schools are not functioning at the time the study was conducted for the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample size for the study was suggested from the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. According to the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) when a population size is 1243 and above at 95% confidence level and sampling error of 5%, the sample size is at 297 and more. Based on the above information, 400 respondents were deemed appropriate as the sample size for the study. It consisted of 390 teachers and 10 principals.

The purposive sampling was used to select the schools to participate in the study based on their non-functionality. The disproportionate sampling was used to get the number of respondents from each subdivision to participate in the study. With this technique, subdivisions perceived to have a high level of teachers of non-functional schools who have been victims of administrative sanctions and anxiety were given a higher proportion of participation in the study while the simple random sampling was used to select the divisions, subdivisions, teachers, and principals to participate in the study. Primary data was collected mainly with the use of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were constructed in conformity with the research questions and design to collect data from the teachers while the interviews were design to collect data from the principals. The reliability of the instruments was determine using the Cronbach alpha test for internal consistency while validity was obtained using expert judgment.

Method of data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected. For descriptive statistics, frequency counts, and percentages, were used while the data collected during the interview were analysed using a well demarcated thematic phase labelled thematic content analysis and precoding. The hypothesis was tested for significance using the student t-test while the ordinary least square regression technique was used to do the analysis with the help of SPSS software version 25.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What is the effect of salary suspension on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis in the North West Region.?

To answer this research question, data on salary suspension was collected from the respondents and the results are presented as follows

Table 1. Summary statistics Results of questionnaire items related to Salary suspension and the Anxiety of secondary school teachers

Items		SD	D	Disagree	A	SA	Agree
I am scared that my salary could be suspended since my school is not functioning	Count	39	39	78	140	172	312
	Row N %	10.0%	10.0%	20.0%	35.9%	44.1%	80.0%
I know of teacher colleagues whose salaries were suspended	Count	40	39	79	156	155	311
	Row N %	10.1%	10.0%	20.1%	40.0%	39.9%	79.9%
I feel my salary could be suspended due to pressure from government authorities	Count	38	40	78	140	172	312
	Row N %	9.9%	10.1%	20.0%	35.9%	44.1%	80.0%
Towards payout, I am often scared that I will not have a salary	Count	39	39	78	78	234	312
	Row N %	10.0%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	80.0%
Cases of salary suspension in inaccessible schools have been rampant during the crisis	Count	165	156	321	69	0	69
	Row N %	42.3%	40.0%	82.3%	17.7%	0.0%	17.7%
Delay in salary often makes me feel my salary has been suspended	Count	140	71	211	131	48	179
	Row N %	35.9%	18.2%	54.1%	33.6%	12.3%	45.9%
Principals often withhold incentives of teachers who cannot access their institutions	Count	124	23	147	149	94	243
	Row N %	31.8%	5.9%	37.7%	38.2%	24.1%	62.3%
TOTAL		585	407	992	863	875	
1738							
%		21.4%	14.9 %	36.4%	31.6%	32.1%	63.6

Table 1 reveal that, 63.6% of the respondents agreed that, salary suspension greatly contribute to the anxiety of teachers of non-functional schools in the NW region during the anglophone crises while 36.4 % of them disagreed. Specifically, 312 (80%) agreed that, they are scared that their salary could be suspended since their school is not functioning. The same proportion agreed that, towards payout, they are often scared that they will not even have a salary. This indicates the level of fear and uncertainty created by the administrative sanction of salary suspension to the point that most teachers are not even sure of receiving their salaries by the end of the month. Further, it is observed from the table that, 243(62.3%) of the respondents agreed that, Principals often withhold incentives of teachers who cannot access their institutions. This is a way of sanctioning them which further adds to their worries and predicament under the anglophone crises. It can be deduced from this item that; salary suspension is not just an administrative sanction from the

Cameroon government but it is also promoted by school principals through withholding of teacher's incentives. Again, 311 respondents agreed that, they even know of teacher colleagues whose salaries were suspended. This action can greatly produce an impact on their anxiety level as it can keep them thinking of it coming their way. Contrarily, some of the respondents 211, believed that, Delay in salary does not often makes them feel their salary has been suspended and they do not believe that Cases of salary suspension in accessible schools have been rampant during the crisis. This shows that, salary suspension as an administrative sanction is not practiced regularly in some parts of the region for the sample chosen. Perhaps other forms of administrative sanctions are been used other than salary suspension in those areas. Again, the table depicts that, salary suspension is a good predictor of teacher's anxiety for the sample chosen as majority of the respondents agreed that, it contributes to teacher's anxiety.

Verification Of Hypothesis One

H01: Salary suspension has no statistical significance on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis in the North West Region

Table 2. Regression Coefficients on Salary suspension and the anxiety of secondary school teachers

		Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	22.757	1.711		13.298	.000	19.393 26.122
	Salary suspension	.181	.087	.105	2.074	.039	.009 .353

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

In Table 2, the regression coefficient (B) for Salary suspension is 0.181, with a standard error of 0.087 and a t-value of 2.074. The associated p-value is .039, well below the 0.05 threshold. The 95% confidence interval for the B value ranges from 0.009 to 0.353, which does not include zero, further supporting the significance of the result. Hence, Salary suspension is a significant predictor of the anxiety of secondary school teachers, $B = 0.181$, $SE = 0.087$, $t(388) = 2.074$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI [0.009, 0.353]. The positive coefficient implies that an increase in the use of Salary suspension by one unit is associated with a corresponding increase in the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools by 0.181 units.

Hypothesis Testing Decision

Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}). Therefore, we conclude that Salary suspension has a statistically significant positive effect on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the Northwest region of Cameroon.

Table 3. Code – Grounding- quotation table on salary suspension and anxiety

Category of Variable	Questioning Themes	Response Themes	Key Statements from Interviewees
salary suspension	Can teachers whose schools are inaccessible due to crises be worried about administrative sanctions? Explain?	Yes, due to Fear of the Sanctions, yes, due to unfairness, strict procedures, No, they are not worried.	" Yes, some are worried because they do not work" "Yes, Teachers absolutely worry about sanctions, and in my opinion, it is unfair" "Technically, yes while the teacher sees it as unfair, the administrative office sees it as procedure" "No, they cannot be worried because they are not the cause"
	What do you think about salary suspension of teachers in schools that are not functioning?	It is unjust, it is ineffective or counterproductive, It is context dependent, it is also justifiable for some cases.	" Should not apply because teachers are not responsible" "Counterproductive—removes last source of stability" "Not possible where insecurity persists" "Acceptable, some teachers have taken advantage of the situation"
	Do you think salary suspension can create fear in these teachers who are unable to have access to their schools due to the crises? Explain.?	Direct Source of Fear, destroy Morale, create panic, Fear is the Intended Outcome	" Yes, fear comes from unpredictability and lack of safety" "Yes, lowers morale and discourages" "Yes, creates panic, abandonment, resentment." "Yes, fear is intended, but compliance impossible in crisis zones"

These qualitative insights on Table 3 enrich and contextualize the quantitative results, which showed that, Salary suspension is a significant predictor of the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the anglophone crises in the North west region of Cameroon. The principals interviewed advanced various reasons why teachers whose schools are inaccessible due to the crises can be worried about administrative sanctions on them, ranging from Fear of the Sanctions, unfairness, and strict procedures. This is captured through their statements such as "Yes, some are worried because they do not work" "Yes, Teachers absolutely worry about sanctions, and in my opinion, it is unfair" "Technically, yes while the teacher sees it as unfair, the administrative office sees it as procedure" The responses show that

anxiety about administrative sanctions is real and widespread among teachers in non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis. Even when sanctions are not applied in practice, the perception and fear of them is enough to generate anxiety. However, A minority of principals argued that teachers should not be worried, since they are not responsible for the crisis and sanctions are not realistically applied in inaccessible areas. Concerning the opinion of these respondents to the issue of salary suspension of teachers in schools that are not functioning, majority of them advanced that, it is unjust, it is ineffective or counterproductive, and It is context dependent.

This is captured through key statements such as “Should not apply because teachers are not responsible” “Counterproductive—removes last source of stability” “Not possible where insecurity persists”. These statements confirm that, the principals overwhelmingly perceive salary suspension as unfair, inhumane, and counterproductive in non-functional schools. This is because, such measure erodes trust, worsens economic hardship, and destabilizes the teaching profession during the Anglophone crisis. However, a minority of them believe that, Salary Suspension as Justifiable with the argument that, A few teachers exploit the crisis to carry out provocative actions. The principals also gave their opinion on whether salary suspension can create fear in these teachers who are unable to have access to their schools due to the crises. Here, majority of them declared that, salary suspension is a direct Source of Fear, destroy Morale, create panic, and that fear is the Intended Outcome of salary suspension. This was captured through key statements such as “yes, fear comes from unpredictability and lack of safety” “Yes, lowers morale and discourages” “Yes, creates panic, abandonment, resentment.” “Yes, fear is intended”. These responses show that, salary suspension inevitably creates fear among teachers in crisis-affected areas that is manifested not only as financial anxiety but also as panic, helplessness, resentment, and professional demoralization. Therefore, instead of encouraging compliance, salary suspension entrenches fear-driven paralysis, undermining both teacher well-being and the stability of the education system.

Research Question two: What is the effect of Query letters on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis in the North West Region.?

To answer this research question, data on Query letters was collected from the respondents and the results are presented as follows

Table 4. Summary statistics Results of questionnaire items related to Query letters and the Anxiety of secondary school teachers

Items		SD	D	Disagree	A	SA	Agree
Teachers in non-functional schools received query letters for not being available	Count	63	39	102	144	144	288
	Row N %	16.2%	10.0%	26.2%	36.9%	36.9%	73.8%
The issue of query letters to teachers has been a disturbing during the crisis period	Count	51	31	82	165	143	308
	Row N %	13.1%	7.9%	21.0%	42.3%	36.7%	79.0%
Query letters to teachers by administrative authorities are perceived as threats	Count	58	79	137	101	152	253
	Row N %	14.9%	20.3%	35.1%	25.9%	39.0%	64.9%
Teachers received query for non-participation in professional development programs	Count	53	48	101	106	183	289
	Row N %	13.6%	12.3%	25.9%	27.2%	46.9%	74.1%
The query letters often make teachers anxious about future sanctions	Count	121	94	215	119	56	175
	Row N %	31.0%	24.1%	55.1%	30.5%	14.4%	44.9%
Many have been scared of receiving query letters from administrators	Count	95	60	155	129	106	235
	Row N %	24.4%	15.4%	39.7%	33.1%	27.2%	60.3%
Many teachers feel the use of query letters is often abusive	Count	85	37	122	121	147	268
	Row N %	21.8%	9.5%	31.3%	31.0%	37.7%	68.7%
TOTAL		526	388	914	885	931	1816
		19.3%	14.2%	33.5%	32.4%	34.1%	66.5%

From table 4, majority of the respondents 66.5% agreed that, the use of query letters greatly contributes to the anxiety of teachers of non-functional schools in the North west region of Cameroon. Specifically, 288 (73.8%) of the respondents agreed that, Teachers in non-functional schools received query letters for not being available. This means that, most teachers in non-functional schools are formally challenged for absenteeism. Although this is considered a great strategy for job commitment and accountability by most administrators, it usually creates anticipatory stress due to constant monitoring and the constant Fear of administrative rebuke or reprimand on teachers especially for circumstances often beyond their control like the case of the non-functioning of their schools increases work-related anxiety. Again, 79% of the respondents agreed that, the issue of query letters to teachers has been disturbing during the crisis period. That is, query letters are particularly stress-inducing during such moments. Teachers are therefore faced with a dual burden of the crisis itself plus the threat of administrative sanctions through query letters. This greatly Heightened psychological strain, as they feel scrutinized despite the difficult conditions in which they find themselves. A closer look at the table indicates that, 253 (64.9%) of the teachers agreed that, Query letters to teachers by administrative authorities are perceived as threats. This means that, a majority of the teachers see these letters as more than a routine practice but as something that symbolizes punitive power exerted on them. This perception of the use of query letters can trigger fear-based stress on teachers, lowering morale and increasing work-related tension as most teachers may anticipate negative consequences even before any action is taken. Furthermore, the table reveal that, 289 teachers with a percentage of 74.1% agreed that, teachers received query letters for non-participation in professional development programs.

This imply that, the query letters are not limited only to absenteeism but they extend to professional engagements of teachers. This can lead to chronic self-monitoring to the point where teachers feel constantly evaluated and raise their anxiety regarding career progression and fear of negative labeling. The table also confirms that, 68.7% of the teachers agreed that, the use of query letters is often abusive. That is, query letters are often perceived as overly punitive or unfair. This Abuse perception can lead to emotional distress, erosion of trust in administration as most teachers may feel powerless, amplifying stress and long-term anxiety. Although less than half of them (44.9%) believe query letters often make teachers anxious about future sanctions, some of them are likely to overthink future decisions based on the query letters they have received, anticipate sanctions prematurely leading to anticipatory stress among them. Lastly, the table reveal that, 60.3% of the teachers are scared of receiving query letters from administrators. This Fear is a pervasive emotional reaction to administrative scrutiny and just the Fear alone is sufficient to impair decision-making, productivity, and job satisfaction. As a matter of fact, Teachers may adopt avoidance behaviors, potentially worsening absenteeism. In all, query letters are not neutral administrative tools. While the administrators use them for the purpose of controlling the teachers and instilling job consciousness among them, the results from the table shows that, these letters are also consistent stressors, directly linked to the anxiety levels of teachers.

Verification Of Hypothesis Two

H02: Query letters have no statistical significance on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools during the Anglophone crisis in the North West Region

Table 5: Regression Coefficients on Query letters and the anxiety of secondary school teachers

		Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	22.192	1.510		14.696	.000	19.223	25.161
	OL	.206	.075	.138	2.746	.006	.058	.353

a. Dependent Variable: Anxiety

In Table 5, the regression coefficient (B) for administrative threats is 0.206, with a standard error of 0.075 and a t-value of 2.746. The associated p-value is 0.006, well below the 0.05 threshold. The 95% confidence

interval for the B value ranges from 0.058 to 0.353, which does not include zero, further supporting the significance of the result. Hence, query letters are significant predictor of the anxiety of secondary school teachers, $B = 0.206$, $SE = 0.075$, $t(388) = 2.746$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI [0.058, 0.353]. The positive coefficient implies that an increase in the practice of query letters by one unit is associated with a corresponding increase in the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools by 0.206 units.

Hypothesis Testing Decision

Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a). Therefore, we conclude that query letters have a statistically significant positive effect on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the Northwest region of Cameroon.

Table 6. Code – Grounding- quotation table on Query letters and anxiety

Category of Variable	Questioning Themes	Response Themes	Key Statements from Interviewees
Query letters	What do you think about query letters to teachers from administrative authorities and you principals to teachers in schools that are not functioning??	Unnecessary and Misapplied Measures, Wrong and Ineffective Administrative Approach, Fear, Stress, and Discouragement, Bitterness and Breakdown of Trust	"They are not necessary" "It is a wrong approach" "It is a wrong solution" "it is unfair" "I have seen query letters discourage teachers Instead of motivating them" "Query letters contribute to fear and silence"
	Do you think administrative threats can create fear in these teachers who are unable to access their schools?	Reduced Productivity Environment, Widespread and Contagious Fear, Punishment for Uncontrollable Circumstances, Breakdown of Trust and Communication	" Yes, it does and reduces output and interest when applied" "Yes, in fact, Fear spreads quickly when threats are made" "Yes, they cause teachers to be more unstable", "Yes, instead of motivating teachers, threats paralyze them"
	What are the possible consequences of these sanctions on the well-being of the teachers in the non-functional schools? What do you think can be done to improve on the working condition of teachers in this situation?	Social and Professional Displacement, Frustration and Perceived Injustice, Stress and Emotional Instability, Depression and Burnout, Physical Health Deterioration and Trust Breakdown. Financial Motivation, Safety Guarantees, Psychosocial Support, Flexibility	"It affects their social welfare", "They lead to frustration and feelings of injustice" "The sanctions cause severe stress." "The consequences include depression and burnout" "Sanctions damage teachers' physical health" "Add their salaries", "Improve their safety", "Psychosocial support is essential"

The result of the interview again agrees with the quantitative results that, query letters have a statistically significant positive effect on the anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the Northwest region of Cameroon. In responding to the question, what do you think about query letters to teachers from administrative authorities and you principals to teachers in schools that are not functioning, majority of the respondents declared that, query letters are unnecessary and Misapplied Measures, they are wrong and ineffective administrative approach, they instill fear, Stress, and discouragement, and that query letters lead to Bitterness and Breakdown of Trust. This is captured through their statements such as "They are not necessary" "It is a wrong approach" "It is a wrong solution" "it is unfair" "I have seen query letters discourage teachers Instead of motivating them" "Query letters contribute to fear and silence". These responses clearly depict that, the principals consistently criticized query letters to teachers in non-functional schools, describing them as unfair, demoralizing, and counterproductive. This imply that, queries mainly shift the blame onto teachers who are also victims of the crisis, erode trust with administrators, and worsen psychological trauma. While query letters have administrative justification in normal contexts, their use in crisis situations is seen as highly inappropriate and destructive.

Concerning the question of whether administrative threats can create fear in these teachers who are unable to access their schools, most of the respondents advanced that, it Reduced Productivity Environment, create Widespread and Contagious Fear, it is a Punishment for Uncontrollable Circumstances, and it leads to Breakdown of Trust and Communication. This is captured through key statements such as “Yes, it does and reduces output and interest when applied” “Yes, in fact, Fear spreads quickly when threats are made” “Yes, they cause teachers to be more unstable”, “Yes, instead of motivating teachers, threats paralyze them”. Therefore, the principals unanimously acknowledge that administrative threats create fear among teachers who are unable to access their schools. However, this fear is destructive, not motivational. It manifests as job insecurity, collective anxiety, silence, and psychological trauma, ultimately weakening teacher morale and educational resilience during the crisis. Instead of enforcing compliance, administrative threats fuel disengagement and attrition. The respondents also gave their opinion regarding the possible consequences of these sanctions on the well-being of the teachers in the non-functional schools. A greater portion of them confirmed that, administrative sanctions lead to Social and Professional Displacement, Frustration and Perceived Injustice, Stress and Emotional Instability, Depression and Burnout, Physical Health Deterioration and Trust Breakdown. This is captured through key statements such as “It affects their social welfare”, “They lead to frustration and feelings of injustice” “The sanctions cause severe stress.” “The consequences include depression and burnout” “Sanctions damage teachers’ physical health”.

This indicates that, administrative sanctions on teachers in non-functional schools have damaging consequences for their well-being. Instead of solving problems, these sanctions deepen teachers’ suffering, reduce their motivation, and can even push many toward abandoning the profession. The implication is clear: during crises, the education system must replace punitive measures with supportive interventions that protect teachers’ mental health and sustain their commitment. The interview exercise also sought to find out the possible strategies to improve the working condition of teachers in this crisis’s situation. In this direction, most of the respondents highlighted Financial Motivation, Safety Guarantees, Psychosocial Support and Flexibility as possible strategies to improve the working conditions of teachers in this situation. This is captured through key statements such as “Add their salaries”, “Improve their safety”, “Psychosocial support is essential”. These range of measures proposed by the respondents to improve teachers’ working conditions collectively shift the focus from punishment to support, ensuring that teachers feel valued, safe, and motivated during crises. Without such reforms, sanctions will continue to undermine the profession and worsen the collapse of education in conflict zones.

Discussion Of Results

Salary suspension and teachers Anxiety

The findings in this study according to the respondents shows that Salary suspension is a significant positive predictor to the Anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the North West region. That is, the more school administrators practice salary suspension as a way of sanctioning the teachers, the higher the level of anxiety among these teachers everything being equal. This is crucial here in that, Salaries are the primary source of livelihood for teachers. Therefore, suspending them undermines basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare and when these survival needs are threatened, they can directly trigger intense anxiety and fear among these teachers. This result is in Agreement with the work of Yuyun et al (2023) who wrote on Distributive justice and psychological well-being among teachers of catholic schools in the archdiocese of Bamenda, north west region of cameroon and Found out that, 65% of teachers’ responses indicated dissatisfaction with distributive justice in the Catholic Education Agency of the Archdiocese of Bamenda and also recommended that the government should effectively follow-up, monitor and audit the channels of paying subvention funds to beneficiary private sector teachers to ensure that the money reaches the intended beneficiaries uncompromised. This is because, when the money is compromised before reaching the teachers, it will likely trigger worry and restlessness among them.

Moreover, this result is also in conformity with the descriptive findings of the study where majority of the respondents agreed that, salary suspension greatly contribute to the anxiety of teachers of non-functional schools in the NW region during the anglophone crises, that they are scared that their salary could be suspended since their school is not functioning, that towards payout, they are often scared that they will

not even have a salary, also that Principals often withhold incentives of teachers who cannot access their institutions and that they even know of teacher colleagues whose salaries were suspended. This again agree with the study of Bawalla et al (2021) who wrote on Employees 'rewards and job commitment among public secondary school teachers in Ogun state, Nigeria and found that, Low rewards especially financial rewards led to low job commitment among public secondary school teachers in Ogun State. The interview results are not different from that of the questionnaires as majority of the respondents opined that, salary suspension is a direct Source of Fear, destroy Morale, create panic, and that fear is the Intended Outcome of salary suspension. This was done through key statements such as "yes, fear comes from unpredictability and lack of safety" "Yes, lowers morale and discourages" "Yes, creates panic, abandonment, resentment." "Yes, fear is intended".

This result agrees with the work of Chilufya (2025) who wrote on *the* effect of salary suspension on the anxiety of secondary school teachers among public schools in Zambia and revealed that salary suspension significantly contributes to heightened anxiety among teachers, with many reporting emotional distress, financial instability, and decreased professional commitment. This demonstrate that salary suspension functions less as a corrective administrative measure and more as a catalyst for psychological distress among teachers in non-functional schools.

Query letters and teachers Anxiety

The findings in this study according to the respondents shows that Query letters have a significant positive effect on the Anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the North West region. That is, the more school administrators use Query letters as a way of sanctioning the teachers, the higher the level of anxiety among these teachers everything being equal. This is in agreement with the work of Udo-Anyanwu et al (2020) who conducted a study on Disciplinary measures and job anxiety of library staff in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria and found out that, there is a significant positive relationship between disciplinary measures such as query letters, administrative threats and suspensions on job anxiety of library staffs. The result also agree with the descriptive findings of this study where majority of the respondents agreed that, the use of query letters greatly contributes to the anxiety of teachers of non-functional schools in the North west region of Cameroon, teachers in non-functional schools received query letters for not being available, the issue of query letters to teachers has been disturbing during the crisis period, query letters to teachers by administrative authorities are perceived as threats, teachers received query letters for non-participation in professional development programs, the use of query letters is often abusive, and that teachers are scared of receiving query letters from administrators. This is in conformity with the work of Fomba et al (2021) who researched on Psychological Health Effects of Psychosocial Risk Factors in Crisis Context:

Evidence from Mental Workload and Work Intensity among Workers during the Anglophone Crisis and established that, dimensions of occupational hazards like query letters could pose a serious threat to the health of workers already at risk of wider environmental risk factors and that the situation is even more critical in times of crisis like the anglophone crises with heightening pressure from organizational and extra-organizational stressors. This shows that query letters instead of being mere bureaucratic communication rather serve as weapons of psychological intimidation. This finding also agrees with the interview results from the respondents where majority of the respondents declared that, query letters are unnecessary and Misapplied Measures, they are wrong and ineffective administrative approach, they instill fear, Stress, and discouragement, and that query letters lead to Bitterness and Breakdown of Trust. This is through statements such as "They are not necessary" "It is a wrong approach" "It is a wrong solution" "it is unfair" "I have seen query letters discourage teachers Instead of motivating them" "Query letters contribute to fear and silence". This imply that, as a result of query letters, Collaboration between staff and principals breaks down, there is Loss of motivation and passion for teaching which accelerates attrition and the presence of Negative climate in the teaching profession which greatly affects the school system. This is in alignment with the study of Okonkwo, (2025) who examine Query letters and their impact on teacher anxiety in Nigerian public secondary schools and revealed that query letters lead to high anxiety levels in teachers, highlighting their substantial psychological impact.

V. CONCLUSION

Firstly, the study found out that, Salary suspension has a significant positive effect on the Anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the North West region. Specifically, it can be concluded that many teachers of non-functional schools in the North west region are scared that their salary could be suspended any time since their school is not functioning, some are afraid that towards payout, they will not even have a salary and that they even know of teacher colleagues whose salaries were suspended. Secondly, it came out of this study that, query letters have a significant positive effect on the Anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the North West region. It was therefore concluded that, query letters to teachers by administrative authorities are perceived as threats, the use of query letters is considered often abusive by some teachers, and that teachers are scared of receiving query letters from administrators. This study therefore holds that, according to the respondents, the more administrators use query letters on teachers in this locality, the higher the level of anxiety among teachers everything being equal.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that, Salary suspension has a significant positive effect on the Anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the North West region, it is recommended from this study that, salary suspension practices such as withholding of teacher's incentives, blocking the salary of teachers should not be used as a primary disciplinary measure due to its harmful psychological effects. Instead, school administrators, and policymakers should implement constructive alternatives, and establish fair procedures to maintain teacher motivation while addressing misconduct. This can be done through, training of school principals and other educational administrators on effective, non-punitive disciplinary methods that uphold professionalism without destroying morale, implementing policies that balance discipline with staff welfare and introducing some constructive measures instead of using the financially crippling sanction of salary suspension.

This will go a long way to instill some level of professionalism in the teachers and school administrators thereby addressing issues of misconduct or poor leadership. Given that, query letters have a significant positive effect on the Anxiety of secondary school teachers of non-functional schools in the North West region, it is recommended from this study that the abusive use of query letters by school administrators should be avoided. In fact, issuing these letters should be limited to few genuine cases of professional misconduct, rather than using them as a generalized tool of intimidation. This can be done through implementing supportive administrative practices like collaborative problem-solving sessions rather than punitive queries, training administrators on the psychological impact awareness of query letters on their teachers, constructive feedback delivery, and professional communication ethics. This will greatly moderate the practices of school administrators in this direction and reduce the level of anxiety among the teachers.

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