

Working Beyond Assigned Duties: Non-Teaching Personnel as the Operational Backbone of the School

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel in sustaining school operations at a large public secondary school in Bacolod City. The study sought to understand how non-teaching personnel perceived their roles, found meaning in public service, navigated workplace challenges, sustained their commitment, and identified organizational conditions necessary for effective school operations. Eight purposively selected participants representing various non-teaching positions were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Five interconnected themes emerged: Working Beyond Assigned Duties: Non-Teaching Personnel as the Operational Backbone of the School; Finding Meaning in Service: Commitment, Fulfillment, and Purpose in Supporting the School Community; Carrying the Invisible Weight: Navigating Organizational and Personal Challenges; Remaining Steadfast Through Adaptation, Relationships, and Purpose; and Envisioning Better Support: Building Conditions Where Non-Teaching Personnel Can Thrive. The findings revealed that non-teaching personnel perform indispensable yet often unrecognized roles that extend beyond their formal responsibilities. Despite increasing workloads, limited resources, and evolving administrative demands, they sustained school operations through resilience, collaboration, adaptability, and a strong sense of public service. These lived experiences culminated in the eidetic insight that sustaining school operations is an expression of quiet stewardship, where non-teaching personnel uphold the daily life of the school through responsible and committed service. Based on these findings, the study developed the Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP) to strengthen professional development, organizational support, employee well-being, and participatory practices in public schools.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the objectives of the study, the conceptual framework, the significance of the study, the scope and limitations, and the operational definition of key terms.

Background of the Study

Schools depend on the combined work of people performing instructional, administrative, financial, technical, security, and facilities-related functions. Teachers and school heads are understandably given much attention when school effectiveness is discussed, yet the daily operation of a school also relies on personnel working outside the classroom. Non-teaching personnel handle records, finances, supplies, communication, facilities, learner services, and transactions with different stakeholders (Department of Education, 2024; Makki, 2023). Their work creates many of the practical conditions needed for teaching and other school activities to continue. Seen from the perspective of distributed leadership, sustaining an organization is not solely the work of those holding formal leadership positions. Responsibilities are carried through the contributions and interactions of different members of the school community (Harris & Jones, 2022). In this sense, non-teaching personnel form part of the wider network of people who keep the school functioning from day to day.

Their role has gained greater attention in the Philippine public school system as DepEd has moved to lessen the administrative work carried by teachers. Through DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024, administrative tasks were removed from public school teachers to give them more time for classroom instruction (DepEd, 2024). The policy placed greater importance on dedicated personnel who could attend to documentation, reports, property concerns, financial processes, and other administrative requirements. This direction was accompanied by the creation of 5,000 non-teaching positions approved by the Department of Budget and Management in 2023 and the continued engagement of additional administrative support personnel by DepEd in 2025 (Department of Budget and Management, 2023; DepEd, 2025). Taken together, these policy actions show a changing view of school support work. Non-teaching personnel are increasingly recognized not simply as employees who assist other offices but as operational partners whose work allows schools and teachers to perform their primary functions.

The transfer of administrative responsibilities, however, does not automatically resolve the pressures surrounding school operations. Existing literature points to concerns involving heavier workloads, broader duties, staff shortages, limited resources, unclear work boundaries, and inadequate recognition among non-teaching personnel (EDCOM 2, 2025; Pa-ay, 2025). In the Philippine school setting, this issue deserves closer attention because shifting tasks from teachers may simply relocate the administrative burden when staffing, training, and operational systems do not improve at the same pace. What appears important, therefore, is not only whether administrative duties have been reassigned, but how the personnel receiving these responsibilities actually experience the work. Their everyday encounters with changing demands, workplace limitations, and service expectations may reveal realities that staffing figures and performance indicators alone cannot fully explain.

This concern is especially relevant to the research locale, one of the largest public secondary schools in Western Visayas. A school of this size manages extensive learner records, financial and office transactions, communication, facilities concerns, security, and services for learners and other stakeholders. Non-teaching personnel assigned to administrative, financial, technical, custodial, utility, and security functions attend to these operational needs. Much of their contribution becomes visible through completed documents, available services, maintained facilities, and school activities that proceed with minimal disruption. Yet this also makes their work easy to overlook. When operational systems function well, attention is rarely directed to the people who keep them running. Their contribution may be evident within the institution, but the personal experiences behind this work remain less visible in educational research.

Recent studies on non-teaching personnel have largely examined organizational culture, job satisfaction, work performance, communication, research capability, and service delivery (Caday et al., 2023; Flaviano, 2025; Makki, 2023; Miasco, 2025; Pa-ay, 2025). These studies provide useful knowledge about workplace conditions and organizational outcomes, but they offer less understanding of how non-teaching personnel themselves live through their responsibilities and interpret their place in the school. In particular, phenomenological studies dealing with their roles, sense of meaning, workplace struggles, and ways of sustaining daily school operations remain limited. The gap is more noticeable in Western Visayas and Negros Occidental, where little documented inquiry has focused on these experiences within a large public secondary school. For this reason, the present study explored the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel and sought to understand the essence of their work in sustaining school operations. By listening closely to their narratives, the study brought attention to the people behind many of the ordinary but indispensable processes that keep a public school functioning each day.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the progression of the study from the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel to the development of a support program informed by their narratives. It begins with the view that sustaining school operations depends on the combined contributions of people performing different functions within the school. Teachers and school heads occupy central roles in instruction and formal leadership, but the continuity of school services also depends on personnel working in administrative, financial, learner support, security, records, maintenance, and other operational areas. Much of this work occurs outside the

classroom and may receive less attention, yet it forms part of the everyday structure that allows the school to function.

Viewed through distributed leadership, organizational work is not carried exclusively by those holding formal leadership positions. Responsibilities and contributions are also evident in the daily operational routines and social exchanges of other members of the school community (Harris et al., 2022). For the present inquiry, the experiences of non-teaching personnel provide an important point of entry for understanding this less visible dimension of school operations. Qualitative inquiry gives particular attention to how people interpret and give meaning to their experiences, allowing participants' accounts to become central to the development of an interpretive understanding of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The second component of the framework represents the analytical movement from participant narratives to patterns of shared meaning. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2021, 2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the interview transcripts were revisited closely, coded, and interpreted through sustained engagement with the data. The analysis was not limited to sorting similar responses into descriptive categories. Attention was given to the meanings expressed within the participants' accounts and to the broader patterns that connected their experiences. Reflexive thematic analysis recognizes the active interpretive role of the researcher and requires openness regarding how themes are developed from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022).

From this analytical process, five interconnected themes emerged: Working Beyond Assigned Duties: Non-Teaching Personnel as the Operational Backbone of the School; Finding Meaning in Service: Commitment, Fulfillment, and Purpose in Supporting the School Community; Carrying the Invisible Weight: Navigating Organizational and Personal Challenges; Remaining Steadfast Through Adaptation, Relationships, and Purpose; and Envisioning Better Support: Building Conditions Where Non-Teaching Personnel Can Thrive. Read together, these themes show that the participants' work cannot be understood only in terms of assigned duties. Their narratives also reveal personal meaning, unseen demands, ways of enduring difficulties, and expectations for a more supportive work environment. These interconnected experiences provide a fuller understanding of how non-teaching personnel contribute to the continuity of school operations.

The convergence of the five themes informed the study's eidetic insight, which expresses the essential meaning found across the participants' shared experiences. Sustaining school operations emerged as an experience of quiet stewardship. In their everyday work, non-teaching personnel help uphold the life of the school through responsibility, service, resilience, collaboration, and continuing commitment, even when their contributions are less visible and organizational difficulties remain. This insight moves the interpretation beyond a simple description of tasks. What appears significant in the participants' accounts is the manner in which ordinary work acquires meaning through their continued responsibility toward the school and the people it serves.

Such interpretation is consistent with the qualitative expectation that themes should contribute to an interpretive account of a phenomenon rather than merely reproduce or summarize participant responses (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Distributed leadership also provides a useful lens for reading these experiences because organizational contributions may be expressed through everyday practices and relationships beyond formally designated leadership roles (Harris et al., 2022). In the present study, the participants' narratives make this often-unnoticed work more visible. Their experiences suggest that the continuity of school operations is partly sustained by individuals whose contributions frequently occur behind the more visible instructional and leadership activities of the school.

The final component of the framework is the Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP), developed from the themes and the eidetic insight of the study. The proposed program is grounded primarily in the needs, concerns, aspirations, and recommendations expressed in the participants' narratives rather than being derived only from theoretical assumptions about organizational support. Six key learning areas comprise the program: Professional Competence and Capacity Building; Employee Well-being and Resilience; Organizational Communication and Collaborative Engagement; Service Excellence and Public Service Values; Leadership Participation and Organizational Support; and Continuous Improvement and Innovation in School Operations. Each area responds to concerns and possibilities identified through the

participants' experiences. In this way, the framework traces a clear movement from lived experience to interpretation and, finally, to a context-responsive intervention. The progression is important to the present phenomenological inquiry because the proposed program remains connected to the meanings participants attach to their everyday work. More than identifying the roles of non-teaching personnel, the framework recognizes their narratives as a basis for understanding what support may help them continue and strengthen their contribution to school operations.

The Backbone of School Operations

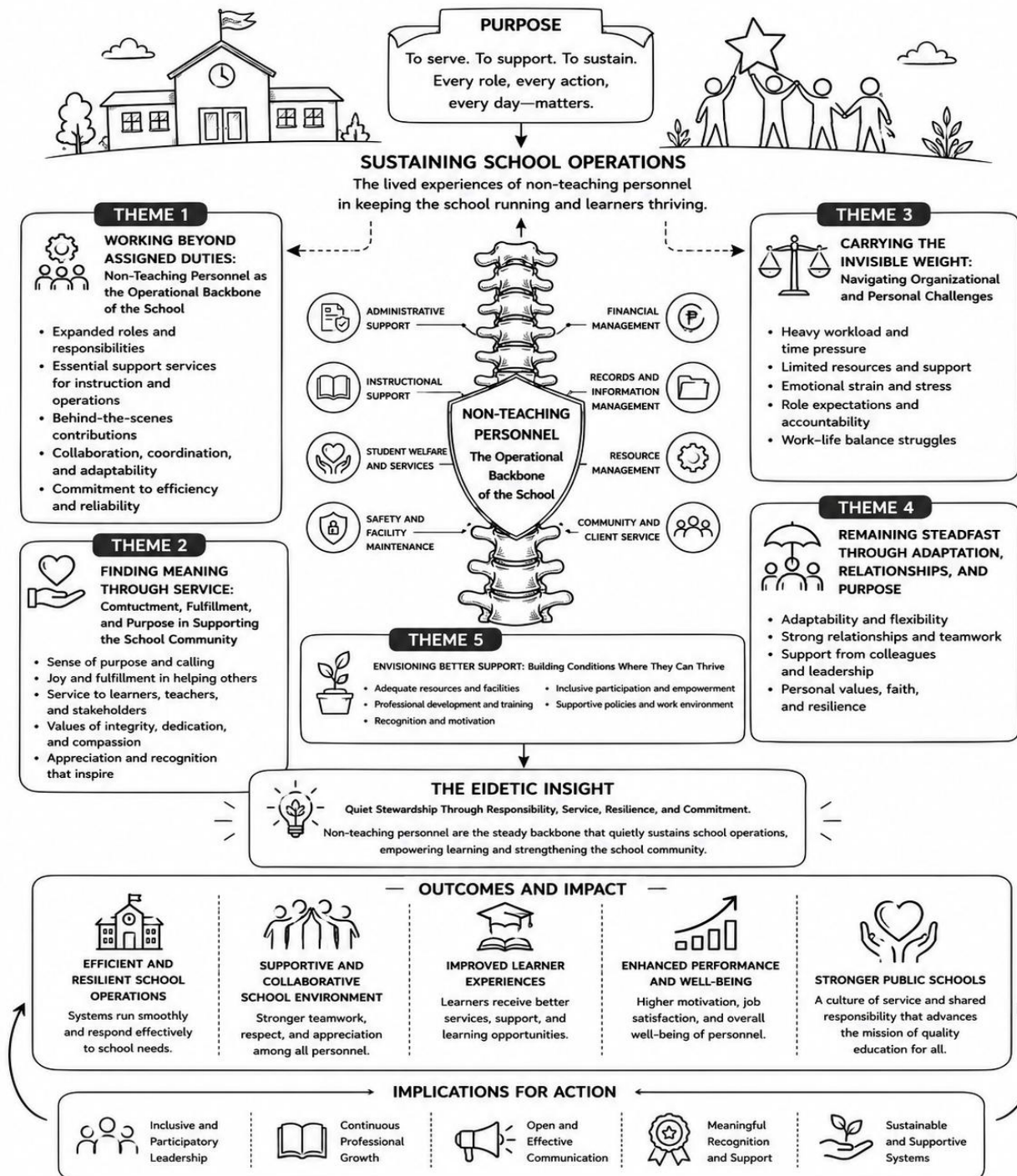


Figure 1. Simulacrum of the Study

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to investigate roles and experiences of non-teaching personnel in a public school and aimed to answer this overarching question: What are the lived experiences of the non-teaching personnel in performing their duties?

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the roles and functions performed by the non-teaching personnel of in a public school?
2. What insights can be drawn from the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel that may serve as the basis for a proposed support program to enhance their work performance and well-being?
3. What program can be proposed to improve school operations and maintain the well-being of non-teaching personnel?

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it brings attention to the experiences of non-teaching personnel whose work helps keep public schools functioning each day. By examining their duties, challenges, coping practices, and support needs, the study may provide useful information for improving school management and employee well-being.

Department of Education. The findings may help the Department of Education review staffing arrangements, training programs, and welfare initiatives for non-teaching employees. They may also guide the Schools Division Office in planning practical interventions and capacity-building activities based on the actual needs of personnel working at the school level.

School Heads. School heads may use the findings to better understand the contribution of non-teaching personnel and the conditions that affect their work. This understanding may support better communication, fair recognition, shared decision-making, and stronger workplace relationships. The study is especially valuable to non-teaching personnel because it gives space to their voices and makes their often-unnoticed contributions more visible. The proposed Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program may also offer practical support for their professional development, well-being, and participation in school improvement.

Teachers. Teachers may benefit indirectly from stronger and more organized school support services. Better coordination between teaching and non-teaching employees may lead to smoother administrative processes and a more cooperative work environment.

Learners. Learners may also experience more timely services, better-maintained facilities, and more responsive support systems. For educational leadership practitioners, the study may widen the understanding of leadership by showing that school operations depend on the shared work of people in both formal and non-formal leadership roles.

Future researchers. Future researchers may use the findings as a basis for related studies on employee support, school operations, organizational well-being, and the experiences of non-teaching personnel in other educational settings.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study explored the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel who helped sustain the operations of a large public secondary school during school year 2026–2027. It focused on the work they performed, the meaning they gave to their responsibilities, the challenges they encountered, and the ways they managed workplace demands. The study aimed to understand school operations through the perspectives of employees whose duties were mainly performed outside the classroom but remained necessary to the daily functioning of the school.

The participants included an administrative aide, registrar, librarian, utility worker, security personnel, dentist, guidance counselor, and administrative officer. They were selected through purposive sampling because of their direct involvement and experience in administrative, records-related, health, guidance, security, maintenance, and other support services. Their varied positions allowed the study to gather different accounts of how non-teaching personnel experienced their responsibilities within the same school setting.

A qualitative phenomenological design guided the inquiry. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words. The interview accounts were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis to identify patterns of shared meaning across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The study focused on interpretation and understanding rather than on measuring variables, comparing numerical scores, or establishing causal relationships.

The inquiry was limited to non-teaching personnel from one public secondary school. Teachers, school heads, learners, parents, and other stakeholders were not included as primary participants. The study did not measure job satisfaction, rate employee performance, or evaluate the effectiveness of school policies through statistical methods. Because the findings came from a particular group and setting, they were not intended to represent all non-teaching personnel or all public schools. Instead, they provide a detailed and context-based understanding that may be useful to readers and institutions with similar conditions.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined based on their general meaning in the literature and their specific use in this study.

Challenges. Challenges are work conditions or demands that make responsibilities more difficult to perform. They may involve heavy workloads, limited resources, unclear expectations, or other pressures that require greater effort and adjustment from employees (Fan et al., 2022).

In this study, challenges referred to the difficulties experienced by non-teaching personnel in performing their work. These include heavy workloads, limited resources and support, changing administrative demands, workplace concerns, and the limited recognition of their contribution to school operations.

Coping Mechanisms. Coping mechanisms are the thoughts, actions, and emotional responses people use to deal with stressful or difficult situations. These help individuals adjust to workplace demands and continue performing their responsibilities (Houtgraaf et al., 2024).

In this study, coping mechanisms referred to how non-teaching personnel manage work-related difficulties. These include seeking help from coworkers, maintaining positive relationships, learning new skills, relying on family support, remaining committed to personal and professional values, and finding purpose in their work.

Lived Experiences. Lived experiences refer to how individuals personally experience, understand, and give meaning to situations they directly encounter. Phenomenological inquiry explores participants' descriptions and interpretations of these experiences to understand the meanings they attach to them (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

In this study, lived experiences referred to the accounts and reflections of non-teaching personnel about their everyday work. These include how they understand their roles, find meaning in service, face workplace difficulties, adjust to changing demands, and view the support needed to improve their work and well-being.

Non-Teaching Personnel. Non-teaching personnel are employees of educational institutions whose main duties are performed outside direct classroom instruction. Their work may involve administrative, clerical, technical, financial, records, health, security, maintenance, and other support services needed for school operations (DepEd, 2024; EDCOM 2, 2025).

In this study, non-teaching personnel referred to the participants who perform administrative, records-related, health, guidance, security, maintenance, and other support functions in the research locale. Their experiences were examined in relation to their contribution to the daily operations of the school.

Operational Backbone. Operational backbone refers to the people and support functions that help an organization maintain its regular activities. The term recognizes that organizational work depends not only on formal leaders but also on individuals who maintain important services and processes through their everyday responsibilities (Harris et al., 2022).

In this study, operational backbone referred to the important role of non-teaching personnel in keeping school operations continuous. Their work in administration, records, health, guidance, security, maintenance, and other support areas helps the school carry out its daily activities.

Organizational Support. Organizational support refers to employees' perception that their organization values their work and shows concern for their well-being. Such perceptions can influence employee commitment, engagement, and other work-related outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2023).

In this study, organizational support referred to the assistance and workplace conditions that non-teaching personnel consider important in performing their duties. These include recognition, clear communication, professional development, supportive leadership, adequate resources, and positive working relationships.

Quiet Stewardship. Quiet stewardship refers to responsible and service-oriented work that continues even when it receives little attention or recognition. It reflects commitment, accountability, and concern for the welfare of the organization and the people it serves (Hsu & Zhang, 2024).

In this study, quiet stewardship referred to the essential meaning drawn from the participants' shared experiences. It describes how non-teaching personnel sustain the daily life of the school through responsible service, professionalism, collaboration, resilience, and continued commitment despite limited visibility and increasing work demands.

Roles and Functions. Roles and functions are the duties and responsibilities expected of individuals within an organization. Through these activities, employees contribute to regular operations and organizational goals (Orgvue, 2024).

In this study, roles and functions referred to the formal and actual duties performed by non-teaching personnel. These include administrative, records-related, health, guidance, security, maintenance, and other support work, including additional tasks carried out in response to school needs.

School Operations. School operations refer to the administrative, financial, logistical, and support processes that allow a school to carry out its regular activities and provide educational services (DepEd, 2024; EDCOM 2, 2025).

In this study, school operations referred to the daily processes and services that keep the research locale functioning. These include administrative work, records management, health and guidance services, security, maintenance, coordination, and other support activities performed by non-teaching personnel.

Support Program. A support program is an organized set of activities, resources, and strategies developed to address employee or organizational needs. Such programs aim to improve employee well-being, workplace functioning, and organizational effectiveness (Long & Cooke, 2022).

In this study, the support program referred to the proposed Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP). It was developed from the themes and eidetic insight of the study and focuses on professional competence, employee well-being, organizational support, collaboration, and quality service.

Work Environment. Work environment refers to the conditions in which employees perform their duties. These may include workplace relationships, resources, leadership, communication, and organizational culture (Pa-ay, 2025).

In this study, work environment referred to the conditions experienced by non-teaching personnel in the school. These include relationships with colleagues and supervisors, communication, workload, available resources, leadership support, and the general workplace climate.

Work Performance. Work performance refers to how employees carry out their responsibilities and contribute to organizational goals through their assigned duties and other helpful workplace behaviors (Koopmans et al., 2021).

In this study, work performance referred to how non-teaching personnel describe their performance of duties and contribution to school operations through service, cooperation, adaptability, and commitment. It is understood through their lived experiences and is not measured as a numerical performance score or formal employee rating.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RELATED STUDIES

This chapter reviewed relevant literature and empirical studies that provide the theoretical and contextual basis of the present study. The discussion covered the roles and responsibilities of non-teaching personnel, their changing roles in schools, meaning found through service and public commitment, workplace and personal challenges, resilience and adaptation, workplace relationships, and organizational support. Local and international studies were examined to identify common findings, differences, and areas that remain less explored.

Working Beyond Assigned Duties: Non-Teaching Personnel as the Operational Backbone of the School

The role of non-teaching personnel becomes clearer when they are viewed as operational partners rather than simply as support staff. Their work helps connect different areas of school operations. Records must be properly maintained, financial transactions must be processed, facilities need regular attention, and learners and stakeholders require timely services. Guidance, health, security, and administrative concerns must also be addressed. These functions are different from classroom instruction, yet they create the conditions that allow educational services to continue. As school organizations become more complex, effective operations increasingly depend on the collective work of personnel performing different responsibilities (Harris et al., 2022; Makki, 2023). Changes in digital systems, accountability requirements, and institutional reforms have also increased the need for technical skills, sound judgment, and adaptability among non-teaching personnel (Makki, 2023; Flaviano, 2025).

This changing role is particularly important in Philippine public schools. The transfer of administrative tasks from teachers under DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 reflects an effort to improve the distribution of work within schools (DepEd, 2024). While teachers are expected to focus more on instruction, non-teaching personnel have become more involved in maintaining administrative processes. However, this arrangement requires enough personnel to handle the work. EDCOM II (2025) reported that staffing shortages continue to affect the implementation of administrative task removal. The Department of Education has expanded the hiring of administrative support staff, but workload and resource concerns remain present in many schools (DepEd, 2025). A closer reading of these developments suggests that policy change must be matched by adequate staffing, relevant training, and continuing organizational support.

The value of non-teaching personnel is also seen in the quality and continuity of school services. Accurate records, timely administrative transactions, functional facilities, clear communication, and organized support systems affect the daily experience of teachers, learners, and other stakeholders. Through these functions, non-teaching personnel contribute to the wider goals of the school. Distributed leadership provides a useful way of understanding this contribution because it recognizes that important organizational work is shared across

different members of the school community (Harris et al., 2022). In the case of non-teaching personnel, this shared work can be seen in how they coordinate processes, manage resources, address operational problems, and carry out government and institutional requirements. Their contribution is operational in nature, but it remains important to the overall functioning of the school.

Philippine studies provide further support for this view. Pa-ay (2025) discussed the importance of organizational culture and workplace conditions in the performance of non-teaching personnel. Espina (2025) and Caay and Ebisa (2025) likewise pointed to institutional support, teamwork, professional commitment, and service quality as important factors in organizational functioning. Taken together, these studies show that non-teaching personnel contribute more than routine administrative assistance. Their work connects people, processes, and services across the school. For this reason, describing them only as support staff may not fully capture the extent of their contribution. The term **operational partners** provides a broader understanding of how their everyday work helps sustain school activities and services.

Despite this growing recognition, an important gap remains. Many studies examine non-teaching personnel in relation to job performance, organizational culture, job satisfaction, or administrative efficiency. These areas provide useful information, but they give less attention to the personal meanings attached to everyday work. There is still limited understanding of how non-teaching personnel experience increasing responsibilities, how they view their place in the school organization, and how they make sense of work that often receives little public recognition. Their contribution can easily become unnoticed when school processes are functioning well. Records are available, documents are processed, facilities remain usable, and services continue. These outcomes may appear ordinary, but they require continuous human effort. For the present study, exploring the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel is therefore necessary to understand the human side of school operations and the meaning behind their often less visible contribution to the daily life of a public school.

Finding Meaning in Service: Professional Identity Beyond Recognition

The meaning employees find in their work has received growing attention in organizational and educational research. In schools, many responsibilities of non-teaching personnel are administrative or operational. However, the value of their work goes beyond processing documents, maintaining records, or completing routine transactions. These services help create the conditions needed for teaching, learning, and other school activities to continue. Studies on meaningful work show that employees who see purpose in what they do are more likely to remain committed and continue performing their responsibilities even when work becomes demanding (Allan et al., 2021; Martela & Pessi, 2022). This is particularly relevant in schools because the value of work is often connected to its contribution to learners, colleagues, and the wider school community. In this setting, meaningful work may develop when employees recognize that their daily responsibilities serve a purpose beyond the completion of assigned tasks.

The idea of meaningful work is closely connected to public service motivation (PSM). Public service motivation generally refers to an individual's desire to contribute to society and serve the public interest through work in government or other public institutions (Ritz et al., 2021). In a school setting, this form of motivation may be seen in the willingness of personnel to assist learners, parents, teachers, and other members of the community. Their reason for continuing in public service may not be based only on salary or other employment benefits. For some employees, the opportunity to contribute to the work of the school may also provide a sense of personal purpose. This perspective is important in understanding non-teaching personnel because many of their contributions occur through ordinary and less visible forms of service.

The importance of service commitment is also reflected in Philippine education. Efforts to improve public education require not only capable teachers but also personnel who can maintain the different services and processes surrounding instruction (Department of Education, 2023). Research on public service motivation has linked a strong desire to serve with organizational commitment, work engagement, and a greater sense of responsibility toward institutional goals (Ritz et al., 2021). These findings offer one possible explanation for why some employees continue to perform demanding responsibilities despite workplace pressures. However, commitment should not be understood only as a response to organizational policies or employment conditions.

Personal values and the desire to contribute to public education may also influence how employees understand and approach their work.

Other concepts in the literature help explain this connection between work and personal meaning. Organizational commitment concerns an employee's attachment to and identification with the organization, while work engagement involves the energy and dedication given to one's responsibilities (Schaufeli, 2021). A sense of calling adds another dimension because it involves seeing work as personally meaningful and valuable to others (Duffy et al., 2022). These ideas may overlap in educational organizations. Employees can feel attached to the school, remain actively involved in their work, and at the same time believe that their service contributes to learners and the wider community. In the Philippine context, supportive workplace relationships, recognition, and a positive organizational culture have also been associated with stronger employee commitment and willingness to perform responsibilities beyond formal job expectations (Pa-ay, 2025; Flaviano, 2025). A closer reading of these studies suggests that service in schools is sustained by more than written job descriptions. Personal values, professional identity, workplace relationships, and a sense of purpose may also shape an employee's willingness to continue serving.

Still, much of the available literature examines motivation, engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction through quantitative measures. Such studies are useful in identifying relationships among workplace factors, but they provide less information about how employees personally understand the meaning of their service. Fewer studies have explored how non-teaching personnel develop a sense of commitment while facing increasing responsibilities or how their work in education becomes connected to their personal identity. This limitation is especially relevant in Philippine public schools, where non-teaching personnel perform important operational duties but remain less visible in educational research. Understanding why they continue to serve, what gives meaning to their everyday responsibilities, and how they view their contribution to learners and the school requires attention to their own narratives. A phenomenological inquiry can provide this perspective by exploring the lived meaning behind commitment and public service rather than examining these experiences only as measurable workplace outcomes.

Carrying the Invisible Weight: Navigating Organizational and Personal Challenges

As the responsibilities of non-teaching personnel increase, the difficulties connected with their work also become more complex. Schools now deal with many administrative, financial, technological, and regulatory requirements. Personnel responsible for support services are often expected to handle several tasks while maintaining accuracy, efficiency, and good service. This can be difficult when the amount of work increases but available personnel and resources remain limited. Studies have identified heavy workload, unclear roles, administrative burden, and lack of organizational resources as common concerns among personnel working in educational institutions (OECD, 2023; Pa-ay, 2025). These conditions can affect not only how employees perform their duties but also how they feel about their work and workplace. For this reason, understanding the challenges of non-teaching personnel requires attention to the actual conditions in which they perform their everyday responsibilities.

Workload is one of the major concerns discussed in the literature. In the Philippines, DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2024 directed the removal of administrative tasks from teachers so they could give greater attention to classroom instruction (DepEd, 2024). The policy also increased the importance of non-teaching personnel in handling administrative work. However, transferring responsibilities can create another concern when schools do not have enough personnel to manage the additional tasks. EDCOM II (2025) reported that shortages of non-teaching personnel remain a problem in many schools, contributing to an uneven distribution of administrative work. Similar concerns have been observed in other educational settings, where support personnel perform duties beyond their formal job descriptions because of staffing shortages, organizational changes, and increasing accountability requirements (OECD, 2023). In such situations, employees may find it difficult to determine where their assigned responsibilities begin and end. The problem is therefore not only the amount of work. Unclear work boundaries can also lead to confusion, overlapping duties, and additional pressure.

The difficulties experienced in school support services are not limited to workload. Non-teaching personnel regularly interact with learners, parents, teachers, colleagues, and outside stakeholders. These interactions sometimes require employees to remain calm and professional even when they are dealing with complaints, urgent requests, or difficult situations. This form of emotional regulation is often described as emotional labor. Although emotional labor has commonly been studied among teachers and health professionals, it is also present in administrative and service-related work (Grandey & Gabriel, 2021). A staff member may be experiencing personal stress or work pressure but is still expected to respond patiently and professionally to others. When these emotional demands occur together with deadlines, limited resources, and high expectations, everyday work can become more difficult. This shows that some workplace pressures are not immediately visible in job descriptions or performance records.

Digitalization has also changed the challenges faced by non-teaching personnel. Electronic records, online reporting systems, financial platforms, and digital communication are now part of many school processes. These technologies can make administrative work faster and more organized. At the same time, personnel are expected to learn new systems while continuing to complete their regular duties. Grepon et al. (2021) and the OECD (2023) noted that digital systems can improve administrative processes, but technological demands may also increase workload when employees receive limited training, technical assistance, or access to reliable infrastructure. In this situation, the difficulty does not come from technology alone. The challenge develops when employees are required to adjust quickly without enough time or organizational support. Continuous changes in digital and administrative systems may therefore add another form of pressure to already demanding responsibilities.

A closer reading of the literature shows that these workplace challenges are often connected. Heavy workload may become more difficult when roles are unclear. Limited staffing can require employees to take on additional duties, while digital changes may demand new skills and adjustments. At the same time, personnel are expected to maintain professional relationships and provide appropriate service despite these pressures. Workload, role ambiguity, emotional demands, technological adjustment, and limited resources can therefore occur at the same time and shape the overall work experience of non-teaching personnel.

Much of the existing research, however, examines these concerns through measures of stress, job satisfaction, perceived workload, or organizational climate. Such findings are useful in showing the extent of workplace problems, but numerical measures may not fully explain how employees experience these pressures in their everyday work. They provide limited insight into what it means to carry responsibilities beyond one's formal duties, remain professional during difficult interactions, or continuously adjust to changing school systems. For non-teaching personnel, these experiences may influence not only work performance but also how they understand their responsibilities and their place within the school organization. Exploring their narratives can therefore provide a deeper understanding of the personal and organizational challenges involved in sustaining school operations.

Remaining Steadfast Through Adaptation, Relationships, and Purpose

Schools continue to experience changes in policies, technology, administrative procedures, and public expectations. These changes affect not only teachers and school leaders but also the personnel responsible for school support services. Non-teaching personnel are expected to perform their regular duties while adjusting to new systems and organizational requirements. In many cases, they must respond to unexpected concerns without affecting the quality of services they provide. Because of these conditions, resilience has become important in understanding how employees continue working despite difficulties.

Resilience generally refers to the ability to recover from difficulties, adjust to changing situations, and continue functioning despite challenging conditions (Cooper et al., 2022). In the workplace, resilience is not simply a personal quality that an employee either possesses or lacks. It may also develop through work experiences, relationships, and the conditions provided by the organization. Britt et al. (2021) noted that resilient employees are often better able to deal with uncertainty and remain motivated when facing occupational demands. This does not mean that they experience fewer problems. Rather, they develop ways

of responding to difficulties that allow them to continue their responsibilities. This perspective is relevant to non-teaching personnel, who often manage several duties while responding to the changing operational needs of the school.

Coping and adaptability are closely connected to resilience. Coping involves the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral ways individuals manage difficult situations, while adaptability refers to their ability to adjust to changes in roles, technology, and workplace expectations (Houtgraaf et al., 2024). In schools, changes can happen in administrative procedures, reporting requirements, digital systems, and institutional priorities. Unexpected operational concerns may also require immediate attention. Non-teaching personnel must therefore adjust their work practices depending on the needs of the situation. Their ability to adapt becomes especially important when changes occur while regular responsibilities must still be completed.

Studies suggest that employees who use adaptive ways of coping are more likely to remain engaged in their work and protect their well-being during periods of workplace pressure (Houtgraaf et al., 2024; OECD, 2023). Adaptation, however, should not be understood as simply accepting every change or additional responsibility. It can also involve learning from experience, developing new skills, asking for assistance, and finding more practical ways of completing work. Over time, repeated experiences of dealing with difficulties may help employees become more confident in handling unfamiliar situations. From this perspective, resilience develops gradually through actual workplace experiences. It is shaped by how employees face difficulties, learn from them, and continue performing their responsibilities.

Employees do not always deal with workplace challenges alone. Relationships with colleagues can provide practical and emotional support during demanding situations. Positive workplace relationships allow employees to share information, ask for help, discuss problems, and assist one another when workloads become difficult (Schaufeli, 2021). In schools, teamwork can help distribute responsibilities and make urgent concerns easier to manage. A colleague who is familiar with a particular process, for example, may assist another employee who is adjusting to a new task or digital system. These everyday forms of support may appear simple, but they can influence how personnel respond to workplace pressure.

The importance of relationships also extends to organizational resilience. Schools are more capable of responding to changing demands when personnel communicate, cooperate, and solve problems together (Cooper et al., 2022). Philippine studies similarly indicate that supportive workplace relationships are associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employees' willingness to extend effort beyond their formal duties (Pa-ay, 2025). These findings suggest that resilience cannot be viewed only as an individual employee's ability to endure difficult conditions. The workplace environment also matters. Employees may find it easier to continue during demanding periods when they feel connected to colleagues and know that support is available when needed.

Still, much of the existing research examines resilience through measurable factors such as coping styles, stress, organizational climate, and job satisfaction. These studies help identify patterns, but they provide less understanding of how resilience develops through ordinary work experiences. There is limited discussion of how non-teaching personnel learn to adjust after repeated changes, how they rely on workplace relationships during difficult periods, or how their ways of coping change over years of service. This gap is particularly important in Philippine public schools, where expanding responsibilities and limited resources may require personnel to make continuous adjustments. Understanding resilience therefore requires more than identifying coping strategies. It also requires listening to how non-teaching personnel describe the difficulties they have faced, the relationships that helped them, and the experiences that shaped their ability to continue serving the school.

Envisioning Better Support: Building Conditions Where Non-Teaching Personnel Can Thrive

Employees perform better when the organization provides conditions that allow them to do their work effectively. Individual skills and commitment are important, but employees also need adequate resources, recognition, opportunities to improve their competencies, and support from the people they work with. These

conditions are especially important for non-teaching personnel because many of their responsibilities are necessary for daily school operations but may receive limited attention. When administrative and support services function well, their contribution can easily go unnoticed. For this reason, understanding the work of non-teaching personnel also requires attention to how the school supports them.

Organizational support theory provides a useful explanation of why workplace support matters. Employees who feel that the organization values their contribution and shows concern for their well-being are more likely to develop stronger commitment and engagement in their work (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2023). Support can be experienced in different ways. It may come through adequate resources, clear communication, fair treatment, recognition, or assistance from school leaders and colleagues. These forms of support can influence how employees view both their work and the organization. In this sense, organizational support is not only beneficial to employees. It can also affect the quality and continuity of the services they provide.

Recognition is one area that appears regularly in discussions of organizational support. Employees may feel valued when their efforts are noticed and acknowledged. Recognition can take the form of verbal appreciation, incentives, opportunities for advancement, or greater trust and responsibility. Studies suggest that employees who feel recognized are more likely to remain motivated and committed to their organization (Caesens & Stinglhamber, 2023). For non-teaching personnel, recognition may be particularly meaningful because much of their work takes place behind the scenes. A completed report, an updated learner record, or a properly maintained facility may appear to be part of routine operations. However, each requires time and effort. Recognizing these contributions may strengthen employees' sense that their work is seen and valued.

Professional development is another important form of organizational support. The responsibilities of non-teaching personnel continue to change because of new technologies, reporting systems, policies, and administrative requirements. Employees therefore need opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. Professional development can help them become more confident in performing unfamiliar or increasingly complex tasks. It can also reduce some of the difficulties associated with changes in workplace systems. In Philippine education, capacity building and competency development among teaching and non-teaching personnel have been identified as important in improving educational services (Department of Education, 2023). Continuous learning is therefore not simply an additional employee benefit. In a changing school environment, it has become part of maintaining effective operations.

Employee well-being is equally important in creating a supportive workplace. Well-being includes physical, psychological, emotional, and social aspects of an employee's work experience (WHO, 2022). Heavy workloads, limited resources, and inadequate organizational support can place continuing pressure on personnel. Over time, these conditions may affect motivation, work satisfaction, and willingness to remain engaged. Support for employee well-being should therefore go beyond responding only when serious problems occur. Attention must also be given to everyday workplace conditions that shape how employees feel and function at work. For non-teaching personnel, this may include manageable work demands, supportive relationships, open communication, and access to assistance during difficult periods.

The opportunity to participate in organizational discussions may also influence how employees experience support. Participatory leadership encourages employees to share ideas and become involved in decisions that affect their work. Research on distributed and participatory forms of leadership gives importance to collaboration, trust, shared responsibility, and the contributions of different organizational members (Harris et al., 2022). Within schools, non-teaching personnel have direct experience with administrative processes and operational concerns. Their everyday work may give them practical knowledge of problems that are not always visible to formal leaders. Allowing them to express concerns and contribute suggestions can provide useful information for school improvement. At the same time, participation may strengthen their sense of involvement and responsibility in school operations.

Supportive organizational conditions are therefore built through several connected practices. Recognition can help employees feel that their contributions are valued. Professional development can prepare them for changing responsibilities. Attention to well-being can help address the personal demands of work, while

participation allows employees to contribute their knowledge and experiences to organizational improvement. These conditions should not be viewed separately. An employee may receive training but still feel unsupported if the workload remains unreasonable. In the same way, recognition may have limited meaning when employees do not have the resources needed to perform their responsibilities. A supportive work environment requires attention to how these different conditions are experienced together.

Much of the existing literature, however, examines organizational support, recognition, well-being, and employee participation through surveys and quantitative indicators. These studies help identify workplace factors associated with employee performance and commitment. They provide less understanding of how support is personally experienced by non-teaching personnel. There is still limited knowledge of what forms of recognition they consider meaningful, what professional development they believe is relevant to their work, or how involvement in school decisions affects their sense of belonging. This limitation is particularly important in Philippine public schools, where non-teaching personnel continue to take on important operational responsibilities but remain less visible in educational research. A phenomenological inquiry can provide a closer understanding of how support is experienced, valued, or sometimes found lacking in their everyday work. Listening to their narratives may also help identify organizational conditions that are more responsive to the actual needs of those who help sustain the daily operations of schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods used in conducting the study. It discusses the research design, research locale, participants of the study, data gathering instrument, data gathering procedure, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of the study, and data analysis. These procedures guided the exploration and interpretation of the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel in sustaining school operations.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel in sustaining the daily operations of a public secondary school. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how participants described, interpreted, and gave meaning to their work rather than measure organizational variables or establish statistical relationships. Guided by a phenomenological orientation, the inquiry focused on the participants' everyday experiences as they carried out their responsibilities, responded to workplace demands, and made sense of their contributions to the school community. This approach allowed the researcher to examine the personal and practical dimensions of their work through the participants' own narratives (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

To analyze these experiences, the study used Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). RTA is a flexible qualitative analytic method that develops patterns of shared meaning across participants' accounts through the researcher's active and reflexive engagement with the data. Rather than assuming that themes simply emerge from the interviews, the method recognizes that themes are thoughtfully developed through repeated reading of the transcripts, systematic coding, interpretation, and continuous reflection throughout the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022).

The combination of a phenomenological orientation and Reflexive Thematic Analysis was well suited to the purpose of this study. While phenomenology provided the lens for understanding the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel, RTA offered a systematic yet interpretive process for examining the common patterns across those experiences. This enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of how participants perceived their roles, found meaning in service, navigated workplace challenges, and sustained school operations, while remaining transparent about the researcher's role in shaping the final interpretations.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were selected non-teaching personnel employed at a large public secondary school in a highly urbanized city. Through purposive sampling, they were chosen because of their direct and long-term involvement in the daily operations of the institution. Purposive sampling is widely used in

qualitative research because it focuses on selecting individuals who are capable of providing rich and meaningful descriptions of their experiences rather than statistically representing a larger population (Varpio et al., 2021). Criterion sampling further ensures that all participants satisfy predetermined characteristics considered essential to the study (Hennink et al., 2022).

After securing approval from the school principal, eight eligible participants were identified with the assistance of designated school officials. They included an administrative aide, registrar, librarian, utility worker, security personnel, dentist, guidance counselor, and administrative officer. Their varied responsibilities and substantial experience in their respective areas provided diverse perspectives and rich descriptions on how non-teaching personnel contribute to the continuous operation of the school.

Participants were personally informed about the purpose of the study, interview procedures, ethical safeguards, confidentiality measures, and voluntary nature of participation. Those who agreed to participate signed an informed consent form before the interviews were conducted.

To participate in the study, individuals had to meet the following criteria: (1) currently employed as non-teaching personnel of the school in focus; (2) have completed at least ten years of continuous service in the institution; (3) directly involved in administrative, records management, learner support, health, guidance, maintenance, security, or other school support functions; and (4) voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

The inclusion of experienced non-teaching personnel allowed the study to obtain detailed accounts of their everyday responsibilities, workplace challenges, coping practices, and understanding of their roles in sustaining school operations. Their experiences formed the basis for developing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Gathering Instrument

The main data collection instrument was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. Phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand how people experience and give meaning to a phenomenon. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate because they allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words. At the same time, the interview guide helped the researcher maintain focus on the main concerns of the study.

Interviews are widely used in qualitative and phenomenological research because they allow researchers to explore participants' experiences and interpretations in depth (Varpio et al., 2021). The semi-structured format provided both direction and flexibility. All participants were asked a common set of guiding questions, but follow-up questions were also used when clarification or further explanation was needed. This allowed the researcher to explore important experiences that emerged during the conversation without moving away from the purpose of the study.

The interview questions were developed from the objectives of the study and the conceptual framework of the study. They focused on the roles and functions of non-teaching personnel, their experiences in performing their responsibilities, the challenges they encountered, and the ways they managed workplace demands. The questions also explored participants' views on the support needed to improve their work and well-being. This connection between the research questions and the interview guide helped ensure that the information gathered was relevant to the objectives of the study.

The interview guide consisted of three main sections. The first section contained opening questions about the participants' positions, years of service, and general responsibilities. These questions also helped establish rapport and allowed participants to begin the interview by talking about familiar aspects of their work.

The second section contained the main phenomenological questions. It consisted of two overarching questions, with four sub-questions under each main question. These questions explored the participants' work experiences, responsibilities in sustaining school operations, significant events encountered in their duties, challenges, ways of coping, and the meaning they attached to their roles. Probing questions were used when

participants needed to clarify or further explain their responses. Probing helps qualitative researchers move beyond brief descriptions and encourages participants to elaborate on their experiences, resulting in richer and more meaningful data (Hennink et al., 2022). This section was intended to gather detailed narratives and identify shared meanings within the participants' experiences.

The final section included closing questions that allowed participants to share additional reflections, suggestions, or experiences that had not been discussed earlier. This gave them an opportunity to raise matters they considered important and provide further insights related to their work and the support needs of non-teaching personnel.

Before data collection, the interview guide underwent expert review. It was submitted to at least three individuals with relevant experience in qualitative research, educational leadership, and phenomenological inquiry. The reviewers examined the clarity, relevance, coherence, and alignment of the questions with the research objectives and conceptual framework. Their comments and recommendations were considered in revising the interview guide. This process helped improve the questions and ensured that they were suitable for exploring the lived experiences of the participants.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data were gathered through a careful and organized process that protected the rights of the participants and supported the purpose of the study. Since the research used a phenomenological design, the data gathering process focused on obtaining detailed accounts of how non-teaching personnel experienced their work in sustaining school operations. Semi-structured interviews were used because they allowed participants to speak about their experiences in their own words. They also gave the researcher the flexibility to ask follow-up questions when clarification or further explanation was needed (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Before gathering the data, the researcher secured approval from the Graduate School of La Carlota City College. Permission was then requested from the school principal of the research locale. The formal request explained the purpose of the study, the participants involved, the interview process, and the ethical measures to be followed. These approvals were obtained before potential participants were contacted.

After permission was granted, the researcher identified non-teaching personnel who met the inclusion criteria. The participants were selected through purposive criterion sampling based on their direct and sustained involvement in school operations. Qualified individuals were personally approached and informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Each participant received an informed consent form explaining the interview process, possible risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. They were also informed that refusing or withdrawing from the study would not affect their employment or standing in the school. This process followed the principle that consent should be based on clear information, understanding, and free choice (UK Statistics Authority, 2022).

Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to each participant and were conducted in a quiet and private place. Each interview lasted about 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the participant's responses. With permission, the conversations were audio-recorded to preserve the accuracy of the participants' accounts. The researcher also prepared brief field notes on relevant observations and reflections during the interviews.

The researcher followed the semi-structured interview guide during each session. The conversation began with simple questions intended to establish rapport before moving to the participants' roles, work experiences, challenges, ways of coping, and insights about needed support. Follow-up and probing questions were asked when a response needed clarification or further detail. This approach allowed the interview to remain connected to the research questions while giving participants enough space to describe experiences that were important to them (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

After each interview, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim. The researcher listened to the recording while reviewing the transcript to check its accuracy. Names and other details that could reveal the participants' identities were removed or replaced with participant codes from NTP1 to NTP8. The transcripts were returned

to the participants for member checking. They were given an opportunity to confirm their statements, clarify intended meanings, and identify possible errors in the transcript. Member checking was treated as a process of participant confirmation and clarification rather than as a simple procedural requirement (McKim, 2023; Urry et al., 2024).

The confirmed transcripts were organized and prepared for Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The researcher repeatedly engaged with the interview data, developed codes, and examined patterns of shared meaning across the participants' accounts. The transcripts and related research materials were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher. Through this process, the participants' experiences were documented and interpreted with careful attention to the meanings they attached to their everyday work in sustaining school operations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study to protect the rights, privacy, dignity, and well-being of the participants. This was important because the research involved employees discussing their personal experiences within their workplace. The study therefore gave particular attention to informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy, protection from harm, and respect for persons (UK Statistics Authority, 2022; World Medical Association, 2024).

Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher obtained the necessary academic approval and permission from the school principal. Each potential participant was then given the freedom to decide whether to join the study. No individual was required or pressured to participate because of their position or relationship with the school.

Informed consent was obtained before each interview. The consent form explained the purpose of the research, interview procedures, expected duration, audio recording, possible risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and the participant's right to withdraw. The researcher discussed these matters using clear and understandable language before the participant signed the form. This ensured that consent involved actual understanding rather than the simple signing of a document. The process was consistent with Philippine privacy guidance requiring consent to be informed, specific, and freely given (National Privacy Commission, 2023).

Participation remained voluntary throughout the research process. Participants could refuse to answer questions that made them uncomfortable and could withdraw without penalty. This protection was particularly important because the participants were employees of the research locale. The researcher avoided actions that could make participation appear required or connected to the participants' employment. Their decision to participate, decline, or withdraw was respected (UK Statistics Authority, 2022).

The identities of the participants were protected throughout the study. Their real names were not used in the transcripts, analysis, or final manuscript. Participant codes were used instead. Details that could indirectly reveal an individual's identity, including highly specific workplace incidents or personal information, were handled carefully. This was necessary because detailed qualitative narratives may sometimes make participants recognizable even when their names are removed.

Data privacy was observed in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and relevant guidance from the National Privacy Commission. Personal information and research records were handled only for the purposes of the study and were protected from unauthorized access (National Privacy Commission, 2023; Republic Act No. 10173, 2012). Digital files were stored in a secure, password-protected device or folder accessible only to the researcher. Printed research materials, when used, were kept in a secure location.

Possible emotional discomfort was also considered. Although the study did not focus on highly sensitive personal matters, discussions about workload, workplace relationships, recognition, and organizational difficulties could cause discomfort. Interviews were therefore conducted respectfully and without judgment.

Participants were not forced to discuss experiences they preferred to keep private. If a participant showed signs of discomfort, the researcher allowed a pause, moved to another question, or ended the interview when necessary.

The researcher also considered the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. The study sought to produce findings that could contribute to better support for non-teaching personnel. At the same time, care was taken to avoid harm, embarrassment, workplace conflict, or loss of privacy. Findings were presented through shared patterns and themes rather than by blaming or exposing individual participants.

Respect for the participants remained important throughout the study. They were treated as individuals with valuable experiences rather than merely as sources of research data. The researcher used respectful language, maintained appropriate professional boundaries, and listened carefully to the participants' accounts. Their contributions to school operations were represented as faithfully and responsibly as possible.

Research data were retained only for the period required by the institution or approved research protocol. After the required retention period, digital records were permanently deleted and printed materials were securely destroyed. This prevented participants' personal information from being kept longer than necessary.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the quality and rigor of the study, the researcher followed the four criteria of trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Stahl & King, 2021; Hennink et al., 2022). These criteria helped ensure that the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences and that the research process was conducted in a transparent and systematic manner.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the confidence that the findings truthfully represent the participants' lived experiences (Stahl & King, 2021). To strengthen credibility, the researcher built rapport with the participants during the interviews and encouraged them to share their experiences openly. Member checking was also conducted by allowing participants to review selected portions of their interview transcripts to verify that their statements were accurately recorded. Throughout the study, the researcher remained attentive to the participants' accounts and avoided making interpretations that were not supported by the data.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the consistency and transparency of the research process (Hennink et al., 2022). To achieve this, the researcher documented each stage of the study, including participant selection, interview procedures, transcription, coding, theme development, and interpretation. A research audit trail and reflexive decision log were maintained to record important methodological decisions and changes made throughout the study.

Confirmability. Confirmability means that the findings were grounded in the participants' narratives rather than the researcher's personal views (Stahl & King, 2021). To support confirmability, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study to document personal reflections, assumptions, and analytical decisions. Verbatim quotations were also included in the presentation of the findings to demonstrate that the interpretations were supported by the participants' own words.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings may be useful or applicable in similar contexts (Hennink et al., 2022). Although qualitative studies are not intended for statistical generalization, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research setting, participants, and procedures. This allows readers to determine whether the findings may be relevant to other public secondary schools or similar educational settings.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). This approach was chosen because it provides a flexible process for examining patterns of meaning across qualitative data. It also fits the interpretive purpose of the study by allowing the researcher to examine how

non-teaching personnel understood and gave meaning to their work experiences. In RTA, themes are not viewed as hidden patterns that simply emerge from the data. Instead, the researcher takes an active role in developing themes through careful and repeated engagement with the participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). The analysis followed the six phases of RTA.

1. Familiarizing with the Data. The analysis began with familiarization. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and checked against the audio recordings for accuracy. The researcher read each transcript several times to become closely familiar with the participants' accounts. Initial observations, questions, and possible points of interest were recorded in analytic notes. This stage allowed the researcher to gain an overall understanding of the data before beginning formal coding.

2. Generating Initial Codes. The researcher then coded the interview transcripts. Sections of the data that were relevant to the research questions were identified and given short codes that captured their possible meaning. Coding was mainly inductive, which meant that the researcher did not begin with a fixed list of categories. Attention was given to the participants' descriptions of their work, challenges, coping experiences, relationships, and views about organizational support. Codes were reviewed and revised as the researcher became more familiar with the data.

3. Constructing Initial Themes. Related codes were examined and brought together to develop initial themes. The researcher looked for broader patterns of shared meaning across the participants' accounts. The purpose was not simply to group similar answers or count how many participants mentioned a particular experience. Instead, the researcher considered how different experiences could be connected to explain important aspects of sustaining school operations. The developing themes were repeatedly compared with the coded data and the complete transcripts.

4. Reviewing and Developing Themes. The initial themes were carefully reviewed and refined. The researcher examined whether each theme presented a clear and meaningful idea and whether the themes were sufficiently different from one another. Some themes were combined when they addressed closely related meanings, while others were revised or removed when they did not contribute strongly to the overall interpretation. This process involved repeatedly moving between the themes, codes, and original transcripts.

5. Defining and Naming Themes. After the themes were refined, the researcher developed a clear focus and description for each theme. Theme names were selected to capture the main meaning of the participants' shared experiences. Where appropriate, subthemes were also developed to explain important aspects of a broader theme. Reflexive notes and analytic memos were maintained throughout the process to record changes in coding, theme development, and the researcher's interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

6. Producing the Report. The final phase involved writing the analytical account of the findings. The themes were organized to present a connected interpretation of how non-teaching personnel experienced their work in sustaining school operations. Selected verbatim excerpts were included to show how the analysis was grounded in the participants' accounts and to allow their voices to remain visible in the findings. The themes were then discussed in relation to relevant literature and the theoretical perspectives of the study. Through this process, the analysis moved beyond describing work responsibilities and examined the meanings participants attached to service, challenges, adaptation, relationships, and organizational support. The final thematic interpretation also provided the basis for the study's eidetic insight and the proposed Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the gathered data based on the participants' response during the interviews. It is by looking through their experiences as non-teaching personnel that their stories are known, and the significant roles they perform in the success of an institution. Information gathered during these interviews give a glimpse of the background and character of the participants.

RESULT

Participants Profiles

To provide context for the qualitative findings, brief profiles of the participants are presented in this section. These profiles introduce the participants' roles, years of service, and general responsibilities within the public secondary high school while maintaining their anonymity through the use of participant codes (NTP1–NTP8). The profiles are intended to familiarize readers with the backgrounds of the individuals who shared their lived experiences and to demonstrate that they possess the firsthand knowledge necessary to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation. Consistent with qualitative research practice, the profiles are descriptive in nature and are presented solely to establish the context of the participants before the thematic analysis is discussed in the succeeding sections.

Participant 1 (NTP1)

Participant 1 is a School Librarian of and has been in public service for about 28 years. The participant manages the daily operations of the library, including organizing library resources, assisting students and teachers with research needs, and promoting reading activities in the school.

During the interview, Participant 1 spoke openly about the importance of the library as a learning space that supports classroom instruction. The participant shared experiences related to limited resources, outdated library materials, and budget constraints, but also expressed satisfaction in helping students develop reading and research skills. Overall, the interview reflected a strong sense of dedication and commitment to providing quality library services despite existing challenges.

Participant 2 (NTP2)

Participant 2 has served as a School Security Guard for approximately 22 years. Daily responsibilities include maintaining school security, monitoring entrances, checking visitors, and helping ensure the safety of students, personnel, and visitors.

The participant described the role as an important part of keeping the school safe and orderly. Much of the discussion focused on balancing the implementation of school policies with maintaining good relationships with students and parents. Although the work can be physically demanding and sometimes stressful, the participant remained positive and emphasized patience, cooperation, and commitment to duty.

Participant 3 (NTP3)

Participant 3 is the School Dentist and has served the Department of Education for about 36 years. The participant provides dental services, promotes oral health among learners, and implements school-based dental programs.

Throughout the interview, Participant 3 reflected on many years of public service and shared how helping students maintain good oral health has been one of the most rewarding aspects of the profession. The participant also discussed challenges related to limited equipment and resources but remained committed to delivering quality health services to the school community.

Participant 4 (NTP4)

Participant 4 serves as an Administrative Officer II and is responsible for various administrative and personnel-related functions that support the daily operations of the school. The work includes preparing official documents, maintaining records, coordinating administrative transactions, and ensuring compliance with government and school policies.

The participant described the position as both demanding and rewarding because it requires constant coordination with teachers, school administrators, and external agencies. Throughout the interview, the participant emphasized the importance of adaptability, teamwork, and responsibility in ensuring that administrative processes run smoothly.

Participant 5 (NTP5)

Participant 5 is the School Registrar and has served in the position for nearly 10 years. The participant is responsible for maintaining student records, processing requests for academic documents, and assisting learners, alumni, and other clients requiring official school records.

The participant viewed the registrar's office as an important support unit that serves both students and the wider community. Helping clients complete documentary requirements accurately and efficiently was described as one of the most meaningful aspects of the job. The interview also highlighted the value of patience, good communication, and teamwork in providing quality public service.

Participant 6 (NTP6)

Participant 6 serves as the Guidance Coordinator and oversees the school's guidance and counseling services, testing programs, and learner development activities. The participant also works closely with teachers, parents, and school administrators in addressing students' academic, personal, and social concerns.

The participant described guidance work as an opportunity to help students overcome challenges and achieve personal growth. The interview also touched on the increasing mental health concerns among learners and the misconceptions surrounding the role of guidance personnel. Despite these challenges, the participant expressed a strong commitment to supporting students and promoting their overall well-being.

Participant 7 (NTP7)

Participant 7 has worked as an Administrative Aide I for 41 years, making the participant one of the longest-serving non-teaching personnel in the school. Primary responsibilities include maintaining the cleanliness of the campus and ensuring that the school environment remains safe and conducive to learning.

The participant spoke with humility and pride about many years of service in the school. Maintaining a clean environment was seen as a meaningful contribution to the welfare of students and employees. Despite the physical demands of the work, the participant remained committed to performing assigned responsibilities with dedication.

Participant 8 (NTP8)

Participant 8 serves as Administrative Officer IV and has been in the position for almost 12 years. Responsibilities include personnel administration, supervision of administrative functions, preparation of official communications, and coordination with different offices to support school operations.

The participant described the work as fast-paced and requiring careful organization because of the many responsibilities handled each day. Managing several tasks at once, coordinating with different stakeholders, and responding promptly to administrative concerns were common experiences shared during the interview. The participant emphasized that planning, teamwork, and commitment are essential in ensuring the smooth operation of the school.

Thematic Insights

The following are the themes generated from the individual interviews of the participants.

Theme1. Working Beyond Assigned Duties: Non-Teaching Personnel as the Operational Backbone of the School

The findings revealed that non-teaching personnel viewed their work as extending far beyond the routine duties stated in their job descriptions. Regardless of their assigned positions, participants consistently described themselves as contributing directly to the continuity of school operations by ensuring that administrative, health, security, guidance, library, and maintenance services remained functional. Their narratives demonstrated that while they may not be directly involved in classroom instruction, they create the conditions that allow teaching and learning to proceed effectively.

As one participant (NTP1) explained,

“I believe that the classroom alone is not enough to educate students. They need other sources of knowledge to supplement what they learn inside the classroom. That is why the library exists in a school.”

NTP1

With this statement, it clearly emphasizes that the library also plays a vital role in students' learning experiences.

Similarly, NTP3 remarked that:

“When students are healthy, they are able to focus better on their studies and are less likely to experience problems in the classroom. In that way, the clinic supports the school's teaching and learning process.”

NTP3

This simply illustrates how health services likewise contribute to educational outcomes. These accounts reinforce the view that school operations depend on the coordinated work of both teaching and non-teaching personnel. Libria (2025) similarly argued that non-teaching personnel perform essential administrative and support functions that sustain the effective delivery of basic education.

The interviews further showed that participants performed highly specialized responsibilities requiring accuracy, initiative, and sound judgment. Administrative personnel described preparing technical reports, supervising personnel, processing official documents, and ensuring compliance with government regulations, while the registrar highlighted the importance of accurately managing academic records and assisting clients with documentary requirements.

One participant (NTP8) emphasized that

“the school cannot function without funds for materials, repairs, and other needs,”

NTP8

reflecting how financial management directly influences the school's ability to operate.

Rather than perceiving these responsibilities as merely clerical, participants viewed them as integral to the school's daily functioning and service delivery. This finding supports recent literature recognizing that effective school administration relies heavily on competent non-teaching personnel who facilitate organizational efficiency and enable instructional activities to proceed smoothly (Libria, 2025; Ventura, 2026).

Beyond administrative responsibilities, participants also underscored their role in maintaining a safe, healthy, and orderly learning environment. One participant (NTP2) stressed that:

“The most important duty is protecting the students so that what happened in other schools will not happen here. Otherwise, our principal and the parents might blame us for allowing dangerous people inside the school. We are responsible for ensuring that no one is placed in danger”

NTP2

Meanwhile, NTP7 described maintaining cleanliness and order as an important contribution to the welfare of the entire school community. Despite differences in responsibilities, participants consistently portrayed themselves as working quietly behind the scenes, often without public recognition.

Another participant (NTP8) aptly described non-teaching personnel as the “*silent workers behind the success*” of the school, highlighting the often invisible yet indispensable nature of their work.

“We may not interact with learners in classrooms every day, but we work behind the scenes to ensure that the school operates effectively. Without non-teaching personnel, I believe it would be difficult for a school to function successfully.”

NTP8

These narratives reflect the principles of Distributed Leadership Theory, which recognizes that organizational effectiveness emerges from the collective contributions of individuals across different roles rather than from formal leaders alone (Nadeem, 2024).

In general, sustaining school operations is a shared organizational responsibility in which non-teaching personnel serve as the operational backbone of the institution. Their contributions extend beyond the completion of assigned tasks to include leadership through initiative, technical expertise, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to public service. Although much of their work occurs behind the scenes, participants consistently viewed their responsibilities as meaningful because they ultimately support students, teachers, and the broader school community. The findings affirm that recognizing and strengthening the contributions of non-teaching personnel is essential for achieving efficient school management and sustaining quality educational services.

Theme 2. Finding Meaning in Service: Professional Identity Beyond Recognition

Across the interviews, participants consistently described their work as more than a means of fulfilling assigned responsibilities or earning a livelihood. Regardless of position, they associated their roles with serving students, supporting colleagues, and contributing to the broader mission of public education. Their narratives suggested that the value they attached to their work did not primarily come from formal recognition but from the knowledge that their efforts helped the school function effectively.

The participant NTP1, for instance, shared that one of the most fulfilling aspects of the job was seeing students develop a love for reading and learning.

“Despite modern technology, students still love to read because learning retention is better when they read books compared to e-books or reading from the internet. We are happy to see them come here, stay, read, and do their assignments. It is a fulfilling feeling to see them making use of the library. Although there are e-books and e-libraries, students still come here to read printed books.”

NTP1

Likewise, NTP3 expressed satisfaction in seeing former students remember the care they had received years after leaving school, reflecting that these experiences made public service personally meaningful.

“While waiting, the teller recognized me and invited me over immediately. I was surprised because I thought my number had not yet been called. Experiences like that make me happy because they show that my students still remember me and appreciate the care I gave them. The same thing has happened with security guards,

traffic enforcers, and many other former students. Knowing that they remember me and appreciate my work brings me great fulfillment.”

NTP3

These accounts suggest that participants constructed a professional identity grounded in service rather than visibility or public acknowledgment.

This finding echoes a recent Philippine phenomenographic study (Hernandez and Canoy, 2025) in which DepEd administrative staff conceptualized efficiency not only as accomplishing tasks quickly but also as *ethical and purposeful public service*, indicating that public service values remain central to how non-teaching personnel understand their work.

Another important pattern concerned the quiet satisfaction participants derived from helping others despite the largely unseen nature of their work. The participant NTP5 explained that assisting clients in obtaining the correct academic records and guiding them through documentary requirements was one of the most rewarding aspects of the position, to quote:

“Being able to help clients, especially those who do not know the process or the requirements they need. It is very fulfilling to guide and assist them.”

NTP5

Meanwhile, NTP6 emphasized that helping learners overcome personal and academic difficulties gave deeper meaning to professional practice. To quote:

“The most meaningful part of my work is touching people’s lives. Guidance and counseling is not about telling students what to do; it is about empowering them to choose the best solutions after presenting alternatives and helping them understand their situation. It is very fulfilling to know that you have helped someone.”

NTP6

Similarly, NTP7, despite more than four decades of physically demanding service, emphasized that maintaining a clean and orderly environment for students and teachers was the most meaningful aspect of the role. The participant described school cleanliness as the primary responsibility and an important contribution to the smooth daily operation of the school.

“My most important responsibility is maintaining the cleanliness of the school. I make sure my assigned area is clean before students and teachers arrive.”

NTP7

These narratives indicate that fulfillment was largely derived from seeing the positive effects of one's work on others rather than from external rewards.

Comparable findings were reported by Pa-ay (2025), who found that organizational culture and job satisfaction among DepEd non-teaching personnel were strongly influenced by opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the organization and to maintain positive working relationships. Likewise, Hernandez and Canoy (2025) observed that DepEd administrative personnel viewed meaningful government service as extending beyond compliance to facilitating educational access and serving the public ethically.

Although participants frequently acknowledged limited resources, increasing workloads, and evolving institutional demands, these concerns rarely overshadowed their commitment to public service. Instead, many spoke with pride about continuing to perform their responsibilities because they believed their work mattered to the school community.

As non-teaching personnel referred earlier being the silent workers behind the success of the institution, professional identity is shaped by responsibility, stewardship, and commitment rather than position or status. Such findings reflect the assumptions of Organizational Support Theory, which suggests that employees' commitment is strengthened when they perceive their work as valuable and meaningful, even in environments where formal recognition may be limited (Eisenberger et al., 2020). They also resonate with more recent Philippine studies showing that support personnel often derive work satisfaction from fulfilling their public service responsibilities despite organizational constraints and limited recognition.

Altogether, the professional identity of non-teaching personnel is rooted in service, purpose, and commitment to the educational mission rather than in formal authority or public recognition. Participants consistently understood their work as contributing to students' welfare and to the effective functioning of the school, even when those contributions remained largely invisible. Their narratives reveal that meaning is created through everyday acts of service—guiding learners, safeguarding the school, maintaining records, supporting teachers, preserving a conducive learning environment, and responding to the needs of the school community. Consequently, the findings suggest that strengthening recognition and organizational support should not merely reward performance but also affirm the professional identity and indispensable contributions of non-teaching personnel as partners in sustaining quality public education.

Theme 3. Carrying the Invisible Weight: Navigating Organizational and Personal Challenges

The third theme captures the realities that non-teaching personnel encounter while carrying out their responsibilities in a large public secondary school. Although participants consistently expressed commitment to their work, they likewise acknowledged that sustaining school operations often required them to work under conditions marked by limited resources, increasing administrative demands, role expansion, and emotional strain. Rather than viewing these difficulties as isolated incidents, participants described them as part of their everyday professional lives.

Participant NTP1 explained that one of the persistent concerns was the inadequacy of library resources, sharing that there's no longer have a budget for books and library resources, prompting the library to depend on book donations from alumni and stakeholders. To quote:

"The number one challenge for us librarians... is our budget... We do not have enough funds to buy new books or subscribe to newspapers."

NTP1

and

"The alumni also help us... The community also donates books..."

NTP1

as well as

"I personally wrote letters to our alumni asking for book donations... they donated a set of encyclopedias to us."

NTP1

Similarly, the NTP3 discussed the recurring shortage of dental supplies and equipment, while the NTP8 emphasized that administrative work had become increasingly technical and demanding because of continuously evolving government requirements and reporting systems. To quote:

"I believe the budget for clinic supplies and equipment should be increased. Even if you want to provide quality service, it is difficult if you do not have enough supplies and facilities."

NTP3

These narratives illustrate that operational challenges are not confined to one office but are experienced across various support units within the school. Comparable findings were reported by Pa-ay (2025), who found that although DepEd non-teaching personnel generally demonstrated high levels of job satisfaction, organizational constraints, workload demands, and resource limitations remained recurring workplace concerns that influenced their daily work experiences.

A second pattern emerging from the interviews was the growing complexity of work resulting from expanding responsibilities and increasing expectations. Participant NTP8 described handling multiple assignments simultaneously while ensuring compliance with various Department of Education policies and deadlines. Also, the participant remarked that administrative personnel are expected to prepare technical reports, supervise personnel, monitor plantilla positions, coordinate with different offices, and respond to urgent concerns, all within limited timeframes. Likewise, the NTP5 explained that assisting clients often extended beyond simply releasing documents because staff were also expected to determine the specific documentary requirements appropriate for each request.

These accounts suggest that many responsibilities now require higher levels of technical competence, decision-making, and interpersonal communication than what is often associated with traditional support positions. This observation aligns with Bellibaş et al. (2024), who argued that increasing workload and organizational demands within schools can negatively affect employees' well-being and commitment when responsibilities continue to expand without corresponding organizational support. The findings also reinforce recent discussions on distributed leadership, which recognize that school effectiveness depends on shared responsibilities but also acknowledge that expanding roles may create ambiguity and additional pressures when institutional support is inadequate (Nadeem, 2024).

The interviews also revealed that many challenges extended beyond physical workload and entered the

emotional dimension of work. Participant NTP6 spoke about responding to increasing mental health concerns among learners while addressing the misconception that the Guidance Office exists only for disciplinary cases. Also, NTP2 described the need to remain patient when dealing with students, parents, and visitors, emphasizing that the primary responsibility of protecting the studentry while maintaining positive relationships with the school community.

These narratives demonstrate that non-teaching personnel regularly perform emotional labor alongside their technical responsibilities. They are expected not only to accomplish administrative and operational tasks but also to manage difficult interactions, respond to clients' concerns, and maintain professionalism under pressure. Similar observations have been reported in Philippine educational settings, where organizational support and manageable workload were found to be important contributors to employee well-being and sustainable performance (Disilio & Callo, 2024).

In retrospect, the theme reveals that the challenges experienced by non-teaching personnel are multidimensional. Participants encountered resource shortages, expanding administrative responsibilities, increasing technical demands, and emotional pressures while continuing to ensure that school operations remained uninterrupted. Despite these difficulties, none of the participants portrayed these experiences as reasons to disengage from public service. Instead, the narratives suggest that these organizational and personal challenges have become part of the often-invisible burden carried by non-teaching personnel in sustaining school operations. The findings therefore highlight the need for stronger institutional support, adequate resources, continuing professional development, and policies that recognize the evolving nature of non-teaching work. Addressing these concerns is essential not only for employee well-being but also for maintaining efficient and sustainable school operations.

Theme 4. Remaining Steadfast Through Adaptation, Relationships, and Purpose

This particular theme describes how non-teaching personnel continued to perform their responsibilities despite workload pressure, limited resources, physical exhaustion, emotional strain, and changing institutional demands. Across the interviews, coping was not expressed as a single strategy but as a combination of practical adjustment, patience, teamwork, self-care, and commitment to service. Several participants described simply continuing the work with available means.

The participant NTP1 shared that they make the most of the resources that are available, even when the library lacked enough funding for books, software, repairs, and student activities. NTP1 said:

"We simply make the most of the resources that are available to us."

NTP1

Similarly, NTP7 emphasized keeping the assigned area clean at all times and attending to it again whenever school activities required additional cleaning, reflecting a sustained commitment to daily responsibilities despite the physical demands of the work. NTP7 quipped:

"My responsibility is to keep my assigned area clean at all times. Whenever there are school activities, I clean the area again if necessary. My priority is always my assigned area, regardless of other tasks."

NTP7

These accounts suggest that resilience among participants was often ordinary and practical rather than dramatic. In related local literature, Maca (2023) found that non-teaching personnel in public secondary schools also developed coping mechanisms and innovative strategies to respond to administrative challenges, especially when school operations became more demanding during crisis conditions.

A second pattern under this theme is the importance of relationships as a source of support. Participants repeatedly mentioned co-workers, supervisors, family members, and school leaders as important in helping them continue their work. The participant NTP2 hoped that his *"coworkers continue supporting one another,"* while NTP5 described the office as being *"like a family,"* despite differences in personality. Likewise, NTP6 identified family as a major source of comfort during difficult situations, while also emphasizing the importance of collaboration between the Guidance Office, teachers, and school leaders.

These narratives show that coping was not purely individual; it was strengthened by relationships and a sense of belonging. This finding is consistent with Pa-ay's (2025) study of DepEd non-teaching personnel, which found that communication, work environment, job security, and professional growth were linked to satisfaction and organizational culture among non-teaching staff. Similarly, Quezon and Esmane's (2024) Bacolod-based study on non-teaching personnel found that opportunities such as training, mentorship, and recognition were associated with stronger job performance, suggesting that organizational support helps employees manage work challenges more effectively.

Participants also coped by drawing strength from personal meaning and professional purpose. For some, this purpose came from serving students; for others, it came from public service, family responsibility, or professional pride. The participant NTP3 described her work as a legacy and shared that former students still remembered the dental care she provided years earlier. Similarly, NTP7 explained that his job helped him support his children and keep the school clean throughout more than 40 years of service. Meanwhile, NTP6, described guidance work as *"touching people's lives,"* especially when students came to the office burdened and left feeling relieved.

These responses indicate that participants were able to endure challenges because they attached personal and social meaning to their work. International literature on resilience similarly notes that adaptive coping, planning, social support, and maintaining a growth mindset help educational workers manage difficult work conditions and sustain professional engagement (Williams, 2023).

Generally, the theme shows that non-teaching personnel remained steadfast not because their work was easy, but because they developed practical and relational ways of coping. They adjusted their routines, relied on colleagues and family, used humor, practiced self-care, sought support, and held on to the meaning of their work. These coping practices helped them continue serving the school even when resources were limited and demands were increasing. The findings suggest that support programs for non-teaching personnel should not focus only on technical training but should also strengthen peer support, wellness practices, communication, recognition, and opportunities for professional growth. In this way, individual resilience can be supported by a healthier and more responsive organization.

Theme 5. Envisioning Better Support: Building Conditions Where Non-Teaching Personnel Can Thrive

The final theme reflects the participants' shared aspirations for a work environment that provides the resources, assistance, and organizational support needed to help them perform their responsibilities more effectively. For example, NTP1 explained,

"The number one challenge for us librarians... is our budget. We do not have enough funds to buy new books or subscribe to newspapers,"

NTP1

While NTP3 emphasized,

"I believe the budget for clinic supplies and equipment should be increased. Even if you want to provide quality service, it is difficult if you do not have enough supplies and facilities."

NTP3

Although the participants rarely complained about their work, many expressed hopes for improvements that would strengthen both their performance and well-being. Their recommendations consistently centered on better access to resources, continuous professional development, stronger organizational support, improved communication, and greater recognition of the contributions of non-teaching personnel.

These suggestions did not arise from dissatisfaction alone but from a genuine desire to improve the quality of services they provide to students, teachers, and the school community. The librarian, for example, emphasized the need for updated books, improved internet connectivity, library software, and a larger budget to support learning resources, explaining that these improvements would allow the library to better serve learners and teachers. Likewise, the school dentist expressed hope for modern dental equipment and adequate supplies to improve the delivery of school health services. These narratives indicate that participants viewed institutional support as essential not only for improving their own work conditions but also for enhancing educational service delivery. Similar observations were reported by Libria (2025), who argued that strengthening institutional support systems for non-teaching personnel contributes directly to the efficiency and sustainability of school operations.

Beyond material resources, participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of continuous professional growth. Several participants recognized that educational policies, administrative procedures, and technologies continue to evolve, making continuous learning necessary for effective service delivery. The Administrative Officer IV explained that administrative work has become increasingly technical because of new government requirements, digital reporting systems, and policy changes, emphasizing the need for regular capability-building activities to help personnel remain competent in performing their duties. The Guidance Coordinator similarly stressed the value of attending professional seminars, graduate studies, and specialized training, describing lifelong learning as essential in responding to the changing needs of learners and educational institutions.

These accounts demonstrate that participants do not simply seek additional training for personal advancement; rather, they view professional development as a means of improving the quality of services they provide. Recent Philippine studies likewise indicate that professional development opportunities significantly enhance employee confidence, organizational commitment, and work performance among non-teaching personnel (Quezon & Esmame, 2024). Likewise, Ventura (2026) reported that administrative competence among non-teaching personnel improves when organizations invest in continuous capability development and technical support, ultimately contributing to greater organizational efficiency.

Another important aspiration emerging from the interviews was the need for greater recognition and stronger organizational support. Participants generally accepted that much of their work occurs behind the scenes, yet several expressed hope that the contributions of non-teaching personnel would be more fully acknowledged within the school community. One participant referred to non-teaching personnel as the "silent workers behind the success" of the school, emphasizing that administrative offices, security personnel, utility workers, health personnel, librarians, and guidance practitioners collectively sustain the institution's daily operations. Others emphasized the importance of open communication, supportive leadership, teamwork, and positive workplace relationships in maintaining motivation despite increasing workloads.

These findings align closely with Organizational Support Theory, which proposes that employees who perceive higher levels of organizational support, recognition, and concern for their well-being are more likely to demonstrate stronger commitment, greater job satisfaction, and improved performance (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Recent empirical evidence further supports this relationship. Pa-ay (2025) found that positive organizational culture, effective communication, and supportive leadership were significant contributors to job satisfaction among DepEd non-teaching personnel. Similarly, Disilio and Callo (2024) reported that organizational support positively influences employee well-being and contributes to a healthier and more productive school environment.

As such, Theme 5 demonstrates that participants do not simply desire improved working conditions for personal benefit. Rather, they envision a school environment where adequate resources, continuous professional development, meaningful recognition, collaborative leadership, and supportive organizational practices enable non-teaching personnel to perform their responsibilities more effectively. Their aspirations consistently reflect a commitment to strengthening the quality of educational services rather than reducing their workload alone. These findings provide a strong empirical basis for the proposed support program developed in the succeeding chapter. More importantly, they suggest that sustaining school operations requires sustained investment not only in physical resources but also in the professional growth, well-being, and organizational inclusion of non-teaching personnel. By recognizing them as essential partners in educational leadership and school management, public schools may further strengthen organizational effectiveness and improve the overall quality of educational service delivery.

Summary of Themes

The findings of the study revealed that non-teaching personnel play a vital role in sustaining the daily operations of the school despite working largely behind the scenes. Across the interviews, five interrelated themes emerged that captured their lived experiences. First, participants viewed themselves as the operational backbone of the school, performing responsibilities that go beyond their assigned duties to ensure that essential services continue without interruption. Second, they found meaning in service, describing their work as a source of personal fulfillment and professional identity rooted in helping students, teachers, and the school community rather than in receiving recognition. Third, they shared the organizational and personal challenges they regularly encountered, including limited resources, increasing workloads, and emotional demands, while continuing to fulfill their responsibilities.

The participants also described how they remained committed to their work by adapting to changing circumstances, relying on supportive relationships, and drawing strength from their sense of purpose. Finally, they expressed a desire for better institutional support, emphasizing the need for adequate resources, continuous professional development, stronger recognition, and a more supportive work environment. Taken

together, these themes illustrate that non-teaching personnel are indispensable partners in school operations whose dedication, resilience, and commitment significantly contribute to the effective functioning of public schools. Their experiences underscore the importance of recognizing and supporting their roles as essential members of the educational community.

Eidetic Insight: The Essence of Sustaining School Operations Through Quiet Stewardship

The lived experiences of the non-teaching personnel revealed that sustaining school operations was more than simply completing assigned duties. At the heart of their experiences was a quiet and steady form of service that often happened away from public attention. They processed documents, managed resources, assisted learners and stakeholders, maintained facilities, responded to urgent concerns, and performed tasks that sometimes went beyond their formal responsibilities. Much of this work remained unnoticed when everything went well. Yet, through their accounts, it became clear that the daily life of the school depended greatly on these ordinary but essential acts. Their experiences showed that school operations were sustained not only by systems and policies, but by people who willingly carried responsibilities to keep the organization moving.

This responsibility was closely tied to the meaning they found in their work. For many participants, service was not viewed merely as a requirement of employment. Their sense of fulfillment came from knowing that their efforts helped learners, teachers, school leaders, and the wider school community. Even when their work was demanding, they continued because they saw a purpose behind what they did. In their stories, commitment was expressed in simple ways: finishing an urgent task, helping a colleague, responding to a stakeholder, or staying beyond expected duties when the school needed them. These experiences suggest that public service became meaningful when the participants could see that their work, however less visible, contributed to something larger than themselves.

At the same time, their experiences carried an invisible weight. Heavy workloads, overlapping duties, limited personnel and resources, changing administrative demands, and personal concerns tested their capacity to continue. Some responsibilities extended beyond what they believed was originally expected of their positions. Yet, they learned to adjust. They relied on experience, patience, personal determination, and practical ways of solving problems. More importantly, relationships within the workplace became a source of strength. Colleagues helped one another, shared responsibilities, exchanged knowledge, and offered encouragement during difficult periods. Resilience, therefore, was not simply an individual ability to endure hardship. It was also built through everyday relationships and the shared understanding that school operations could not be sustained by one person alone.

Still, the participants' experiences showed that dedication should not be used as a reason to overlook their needs. Their desire for training, clearer communication, recognition, adequate resources, opportunities to participate, and greater concern for employee well-being reflected a simple expectation: they also needed to be supported while supporting the school. Their willingness to continue serving was strong, but their accounts revealed that commitment becomes more sustainable when the organization recognizes the people behind its daily operations. Empowerment, in this sense, was not limited to promotion or formal authority. It meant being heard, prepared, appreciated, and given the necessary conditions to perform one's work well.

From these shared experiences, the essence of sustaining school operations may be understood as quiet stewardship. It is the everyday practice of caring for the school through responsibility, service, resilience, and shared commitment, often without seeking recognition. Non-teaching personnel quietly hold together many parts of school life that others may rarely notice until these functions are disrupted. They are not simply employees working behind the scenes; their lived experiences revealed them as an operational backbone of the school. The essence of their experience lies in continuing to serve, adapt, and carry responsibility because they understand that their work matters to the life of the school. Yet quiet stewardship should not mean silent sacrifice without support. Its deeper meaning calls for a school organization that also cares for, listens to, develops, and recognizes the people who quietly sustain it every day.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the findings including the conclusions drawn from the detailed analysis on the individual interviews with eight (8) participants. Lastly, a set of recommendations based on the findings and conclusions are also presented in this chapter,

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study show that non-teaching personnel play a much greater role in sustaining school operations than is often recognized. Although they occupy different positions within the school, their experiences reveal a shared commitment to ensuring that the school functions smoothly each day. Their work goes beyond completing assigned tasks; it supports teaching and learning, maintains administrative systems, protects learners, provides health and guidance services, preserves school facilities, and delivers essential services to students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Together, these responsibilities demonstrate that school operations are sustained through the collective efforts of many individuals whose contributions frequently remain unnoticed.

A common thread running across all five themes is the participants' strong sense of service. Most of them did not measure the value of their work through position, salary, or public recognition. Instead, they found meaning in helping students, assisting colleagues, and contributing to the school's mission. Whether preparing important documents, maintaining a safe campus, caring for students' health, organizing learning resources, or ensuring that daily administrative processes continued without interruption, participants consistently viewed their work as an important contribution to education. At the same time, they openly acknowledged the realities of limited resources, increasing workloads, changing policies, and expanding responsibilities.

These challenges formed part of their everyday work, yet they rarely allowed these difficulties to lessen their commitment to public service. Similar observations have been reported among Philippine non-teaching personnel, where meaningful service, positive organizational culture, and supportive workplace relationships were found to strengthen work commitment despite organizational constraints (Pa-ay, 2025; Libria, 2025).

The findings also suggest that resilience among non-teaching personnel is not simply a personal characteristic but a process shaped by both individual and organizational factors. Participants described coping through patience, adaptability, teamwork, family support, professional experience, and a genuine desire to serve others. They adjusted to changing circumstances, learned new systems, relied on colleagues during difficult situations, and continued performing their responsibilities despite increasing demands. These experiences indicate that resilience develops when personal commitment is supported by positive relationships and a work environment that encourages collaboration and mutual respect. Previous studies likewise emphasize that organizational support, opportunities for professional development, and healthy workplace relationships contribute to employee well-being and sustained work performance (Disilio & Callo, 2024; Quezon & Esmane, 2024).

Another important finding is that participants consistently expressed hope for a more supportive organizational environment. Rather than focusing on personal benefits, they emphasized the need for adequate resources, continuous capability-building, open communication, stronger administrative support, and greater recognition of the contributions of non-teaching personnel. These aspirations reflect a desire to improve the quality of services provided to the school community. For the participants, investing in non-teaching personnel ultimately means investing in better school operations and better educational outcomes.

Taken together, the findings strongly support the study's theoretical foundations. The experiences shared by the participants reflect the principles of Distributed Leadership Theory, which views leadership as a shared organizational practice rather than the responsibility of formal leaders alone (Harris & Jones, 2022). Although the participants do not occupy formal leadership positions, they exercise leadership through initiative, coordination, technical expertise, problem-solving, and responsible service that enables the school to function effectively. Likewise, the findings support Organizational Support Theory by showing that employees perform more effectively when they feel that their work is valued and that the organization provides the resources, recognition, and support necessary to accomplish their responsibilities (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

Lastly, this study contributes to the growing body of Educational Leadership and Management literature by giving voice to a group that has received limited attention in qualitative research. While previous studies have largely examined non-teaching personnel using quantitative measures of job satisfaction, organizational culture, or work performance, this phenomenological inquiry offers a deeper understanding of how they experience, interpret, and give meaning to their work. More importantly, it helps address the limited qualitative evidence on the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel in public secondary schools in Western Visayas, particularly in Negros Occidental. The findings therefore provide a meaningful basis for developing a context-responsive support program that recognizes non-teaching personnel not simply as support staff, but as indispensable partners in sustaining effective, resilient, and learner-centered public schools.

Conclusions

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel in sustaining school operations in a public secondary school. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are hereby presented:

The findings revealed that the work of non-teaching personnel extends far beyond the technical responsibilities stated in their job descriptions. Their experiences demonstrate that they play an indispensable role in maintaining the daily operations of the school by providing administrative, technical, financial, health, guidance, security, maintenance, and other support services that allow teaching and learning to take place effectively. Although their contributions often remain behind the scenes, they form an essential part of the school's capacity to fulfill its educational mission.

The participants consistently viewed their work as meaningful because it allowed them to serve learners, support their colleagues, and contribute to the success of the institution. They found fulfillment not in public recognition or formal authority but in knowing that their work made a difference in the lives of students and in the functioning of the school. At the same time, their narratives revealed the realities of limited resources, increasing workloads, evolving administrative demands, and emotional pressures. Rather than allowing these challenges to weaken their commitment, they responded through patience, adaptability, collaboration, and a deep sense of responsibility. These experiences highlight that resilience among non-teaching personnel is built not only on personal determination but also on supportive relationships, shared purpose, and a genuine commitment to public service.

The findings further suggest that sustaining school operations should not depend solely on the dedication and personal sacrifices of non-teaching personnel. Their aspirations for better resources, continuous professional development, supportive leadership, open communication, and meaningful recognition reflect a desire to strengthen the quality of services they provide rather than simply improve their own working conditions. These recommendations underscore the importance of creating organizational environments where non-teaching personnel are adequately supported, empowered, and recognized as valuable members of the educational community.

Viewed as a whole, the study affirms that non-teaching personnel are not merely support staff working in the background of public schools. They are active partners in educational leadership whose daily decisions, professional expertise, and unwavering commitment sustain the continuity of school operations. Their lived experiences demonstrate that effective schools are built not only through excellent teaching and instructional leadership but also through the quiet, consistent, and often unseen work of those who ensure that every system, service, and operation functions as intended. Recognizing and investing in non-teaching personnel therefore becomes an investment in the overall effectiveness, resilience, and sustainability of public education.

Finally, this study contributes to Educational Leadership and Management by bringing greater attention to a group whose voices have rarely been explored through qualitative inquiry. By understanding how non-teaching personnel experience their work, the study provides evidence that can guide school leaders, policymakers, and education stakeholders in developing responsive programs and organizational practices that promote employee well-being while strengthening school operations. More importantly, it reminds us that the

success of every school is not sustained by one group alone, but by the collective efforts of people who, regardless of position, remain committed to serving learners and advancing the shared mission of public education.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and aligned with the significance of this study to school leaders, policymakers, non-teaching personnel, and the broader educational community, several practical and realistic recommendations are proposed.

First, school administrators are encouraged to intentionally recognize and include non-teaching personnel as integral members of the school community. This can be done through regular acknowledgment of their contributions during meetings, inclusion in planning activities when appropriate, and creating spaces where their insights can be heard. Simple practices such as feedback sessions or consultative meetings can strengthen communication and foster a sense of belonging, which is essential for organizational commitment and employee engagement (Kim & Park, 2022).

Second, there is a need to provide continuous and relevant professional development opportunities for non-teaching personnel. Trainings should not only focus on technical skills but also include areas such as comm.-

unication, stress management, and the use of emerging technologies. Where resources are limited, schools may collaborate with local government units, partner institutions, or utilize available online platforms to ensure that personnel continue to grow in their roles. Continuous professional development has been shown to enhance employee competence, motivation, and overall performance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021).

Third, school leaders and policymakers should work toward improving the availability of resources and support systems. While budget constraints are a reality in public schools, prioritizing essential tools, equipment, and materials can significantly ease the workload of non-teaching personnel. In addition, establishing clear systems and procedures can help reduce unnecessary stress and improve efficiency in daily operations, aligning with principles of effective organizational management (OECD, 2023).

Fourth, fostering a supportive and respectful work environment is essential. School heads are encouraged to practice empathetic leadership by being approachable, responsive, and mindful of the challenges faced by non-teaching personnel. Encouraging teamwork and collaboration among teaching and non-teaching staff can also strengthen relationships and create a more cohesive working environment. Research highlights that supportive leadership and positive workplace climates contribute significantly to employee well-being and productivity (Leithwood et al., 2021).

Fifth, mechanisms for recognition and motivation should be strengthened. While formal rewards may not always be feasible, simple gestures such as certificates of appreciation, public acknowledgment, or opportunities for career advancement can have a meaningful impact on morale and job satisfaction. Recognition is a key factor in motivating employees and enhancing job satisfaction (Deci et al., 2021).

Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to further explore the experiences of non-teaching personnel in different contexts, such as in larger school divisions or other educational settings. Expanding the scope of research can provide a deeper understanding of their roles and contribute to the development of more responsive policies and programs.

In general, these recommendations aim to support non-teaching personnel not only as workers who sustain school operations but as valued partners in achieving the goals of education. By addressing their needs and recognizing their contributions, schools can create more effective, inclusive, and sustainable learning environments.

Proposed Program: Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP) Rationale of the NTSEP

The Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP) is grounded in the findings of this study, which highlight the critical yet often underrecognized role of non-teaching personnel in sustaining school operations. Despite their significant contributions, these personnel face challenges such as limited resources, increasing workloads, and insufficient recognition and support. The NTSEP is therefore designed to respond to these needs by providing structured opportunities for professional growth, improving access to essential resources, promoting well-being, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment. By addressing these concerns, the program aims not only to enhance the performance and morale of non-teaching personnel but also to strengthen the overall efficiency, resilience, and effectiveness of school operations.

Description of the Program

The Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP) is a proposed program intended to address the needs and concerns shared by the non-teaching personnel. The program recognizes that non-teaching personnel play an important role in keeping the school operating efficiently and that strengthening their capacity and welfare can also contribute to better school performance.

The program includes activities that aim to improve both the professional and personal well-being of non-teaching personnel. These include capability-building activities, wellness initiatives, recognition programs, improved communication mechanisms, and opportunities for greater participation in school affairs. It also encourages the school administration to provide adequate resources and establish support systems that will help employees perform their responsibilities more effectively and confidently.

More than simply responding to workplace concerns, the NTSEP seeks to create a school environment where non-teaching personnel feel valued, supported, and included. When employees are given opportunities to grow, receive recognition for their contributions, and work in a positive environment, they become more motivated and committed to their responsibilities. In the long run, the program is expected to strengthen school operations by supporting the people who work behind the scenes and contribute every day to the success of the school.

Program Objectives

The NTSEP aims to:

1. Enhance the professional competence and well-being of non-teaching personnel.
2. Improve access to resources and support systems necessary for efficient work performance.
3. Foster a supportive, inclusive, and collaborative school environment.
4. Strengthen recognition and motivation mechanisms.
5. Promote effective communication and participatory decision-making within the school.

Proposed Program: Non-Teaching Personnel Support and Empowerment Program (NTSEP)

Key Learning Area	Objectives	Activities / Strategies	Time Frame	Persons Involved	Means of Verification	Remarks
1. Professional Competence and Capacity Building	• Enhance the technical and administrative competencies of	• Conduct capability-building workshops on office	Quarterly	School Head, Administrative Officer, ICT Coordinator, Resource	Attendance sheets, certificates, training evaluation	May be implemented through school-based INSET or

	non-teaching personnel.	management, digital literacy, records management, and customer service.		Speakers, Non-Teaching Personnel	forms, post-training reflection, accomplishment reports	Division-sponsored activities.
	• Strengthen confidence in performing evolving workplace responsibilities.	• Encourage participation in relevant webinars and learning sessions.				
		• Organize peer-sharing sessions on best practices among offices.				
2. Employee Well-being and Resilience	• Promote the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of non-teaching personnel.	• Conduct stress management and wellness seminars.	Twice a year	School Head, Guidance Counselor, School Nurse, Non-Teaching Personnel	Activity reports, attendance sheets, evaluation forms, photos, wellness survey results	Activities may be integrated into school wellness programs.
	• Encourage healthy coping strategies for workplace challenges.	• Organize team-building and wellness activities.				
		• Establish peer support and employee wellness sessions.				
3. Organizational Communication and Collaborative Engagement	• Strengthen communication and teamwork among teaching and non-teaching personnel.	• Hold regular consultative meetings with non-teaching personnel.	Quarterly	School Head, Department Heads, Administrative Officer, Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel	Meeting minutes, attendance sheets, action plans, feedback forms	Open communication helps strengthen workplace relationships and coordination.
	• Promote a culture of collaboration and mutual respect.	• Conduct communication and conflict management workshops.				
		• Organize collaborative school improvement planning sessions.				

4. Service Excel-lence and Public Service Values	• Reinforce professionalism, integrity, and client-centered service.	• Conduct orientation on public service ethics and workplace professionalism.	Semi-annually	School Head, Administrative Officer, Resource Speakers	Certificates, customer feedback forms, attendance sheets, documentation	Supports DepEd's commitment to quality public service.
	• Enhance the quality of public service delivery within the school.	• Share exemplary service practices during personnel meetings.				
		• Implement a simple customer feedback mechanism.				
5. Leader-ship Participa-tion and Organiza-tional Support	• Encourage greater participation of non-teaching personnel in school operations.	• Include non-teaching personnel in selected planning and consultation meetings.	Throughout the school year	School Head, Administrative Officer, School Management Team, Non-Teaching Personnel	Meeting minutes, recognition records, certificates, documentation, feedback forms	Recognition and participation help improve morale and organizational commitment.
	• Strengthen organizational support and employee recognition.	• Implement an employee recognition and appreciation program.				
		• Conduct periodic dialogue between school leadership and non-teaching personnel.				
6. Conti-nuous Improvement and Innova-tion in School Opera-tions	• Encourage innovation and continuous improvement in school support services.	• Conduct annual operational review and reflection sessions.	Annually	School Head, Administrative Officer, School Improvement Team, Non-Teaching Personnel	Improvement plans, suggestion logbook, accomplishment reports, documentation	Findings may be incorporated into the School Improvement Plan (SIP).
	• Develop practical solutions to improve operational efficiency.	• Gather employee suggestions through a suggestion and feedback system.				
		• Recognize innovative practices that improve school operations.				

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