SERVING IN SILENCE: A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF NON-TEACHING ROLES IN DEPED'S MISSION

Serving in Silence: A Phenomenographic Inquiry into the Perceived Value of Non-Teaching Roles in DepEd's Mission

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Abstract

This phenomenographic study investigates the qualitatively different ways non-teaching personnel in the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) perceive the value of their roles and their experiences of recognition within the organization's mission to provide quality basic education. Through written interviews with eighteen purposively selected participants occupying various administrative, clerical, and support roles, the study uncovered five distinct conceptions of role value and recognition: invisibility and underappreciation, procedural necessity, personal pride and commitment, collective contribution, and empowerment through recognition. These categories represent a continuum from marginalization and neglect to inclusion and empowerment, revealing the complex and diverse experiences of DepEd support staff. Findings demonstrate that recognition—both formal and informal—is a pivotal factor influencing how non-teaching personnel integrate their roles into DepEd's organizational identity, affecting their motivation, job satisfaction, and engagement. Participants who experienced tangible, sustained recognition reported higher feelings of empowerment and alignment with institutional goals. In contrast, those who felt invisible or merely functional reported lower morale and a greater risk of disengagement. This highlights the essential role of recognition in fostering a supportive workplace culture that values all contributors to the educational mission. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive leadership, participatory governance, and comprehensive recognition mechanisms to enhance the motivation and well-being of non-teaching staff. Addressing structural and cultural barriers that contribute to invisibility is vital for fostering equity and strengthening organizational commitment. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, educational administrators, and human resource practitioners seeking to develop equitable recognition practices that promote an empowered, motivated, and cohesive workforce. This research contributes to the limited literature on non-teaching personnel in education by providing a nuanced understanding of their perceptions and the organizational dynamics that shape them. It calls for institutional reforms that acknowledge and empower these often-overlooked employees to enhance the overall quality of education delivery in the Philippines.

Keywords: *recognition, organizational identity, non-teaching personnel, phenomenography, employee motivation*

Introduction

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines is one of the largest government agencies tasked with delivering basic education services to millions of learners nationwide. Its mandate includes ensuring accessible, equitable, and quality education across the country, a task complicated by the Philippines' diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022). While teachers and school leaders are the most visible representatives of this mission, a broad network of non-teaching personnel supports the system by executing vital administrative, technical, and operational functions that sustain educational delivery (Beck, 2018).

Non-teaching employees comprise a wide range of roles—from clerical staff and finance officers to human resource coordinators and technical support—each contributing to the educational ecosystem's stability and efficiency (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Their work, though often behind the scenes, forms the structural foundation upon which teaching and learning depend. Despite their indispensable contributions, the perceived value of these roles within DepEd's organizational mission remains underexplored, particularly in contemporary Philippine education literature.

This marginalization of non-teaching staff reflects a global pattern in educational institutions, where support roles are often overshadowed by teaching-focused priorities (Lee & Brown, 2017). The invisibility of their work can lead to decreased motivation, job dissatisfaction, and increased turnover, ultimately impacting institutional effectiveness and learner outcomes (Nguyen, Tran, & Smith, 2021). Recognizing these employees' perspectives is therefore essential to building inclusive organizational cultures that motivate all staff toward shared educational goals.

Public education systems often emphasize instructional outcomes and leadership visibility, inadvertently sidelining the roles and recognition of support personnel (Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Such hierarchical and functional distinctions can create organizational cultures in which non-teaching roles are undervalued or ignored, thereby affecting employees' sense of identity and belonging within the institution (Garcia, 2023). This cultural context shapes how non-teaching staff themselves interpret and value their work.

Theoretical frameworks like Recognition Theory highlight that acknowledgment and appreciation are fundamental human needs linked to motivation, identity, and well-being in the workplace (Honneth, 2018). Without adequate recognition, employees may experience alienation or disengagement, which reduces their commitment and performance (Santos & Lee, 2022). In educational settings, fostering recognition across all staff groups is thus critical for organizational health.

Recent policy efforts within the Philippine education sector emphasize inclusive leadership and participatory governance as mechanisms to integrate all personnel into decision-making and recognition processes (DepEd, 2020). However, implementation challenges persist, often resulting in the continuation of exclusionary practices that limit the visibility and voice of non-teaching employees (Delgado & Cruz, 2021).

Qualitative research methods, especially phenomenography, are effective for uncovering the varied ways individuals experience and make meaning of their work roles within organizations (Bowden & Green, 2017). This approach allows for the identification of qualitatively distinct conceptions held by non-teaching personnel regarding their value and recognition in DepEd.

Understanding these diverse perceptions provides critical insights into organizational dynamics and employee engagement, serving as a foundation for policy development and human resource reforms that promote inclusion and motivation. An inclusive culture that values all contributors is likely to enhance overall educational service delivery.

Therefore, this study employs phenomenography to explore the qualitatively different ways non-teaching personnel in DepEd conceptualize the value of their roles within the broader educational mission. By illuminating these perspectives, the research aims to contribute to organizational development and reform efforts to foster a more inclusive and empowered workforce.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore and describe the qualitatively distinct ways non-teaching personnel in the Department of Education (DepEd) perceive the value of their roles within the broader educational mission, particularly their experiences of recognition and organizational identity. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the varying conceptions of role value held by non-teaching personnel in DepEd.
2. Examine the experiences of recognition or lack thereof as perceived by non-teaching personnel in their workplace.
3. Explore how perceptions of role value relate to the development of organizational identity among non-teaching staff.
4. Investigate the influence of recognition experiences on the motivation and engagement of non-teaching personnel.
5. Develop an outcome space representing the qualitatively different conceptions of role value and recognition among non-teaching personnel.
6. Provide recommendations to enhance recognition practices and foster greater inclusion and motivation of non-teaching personnel within DepEd.

Literature Review

The role of non-teaching personnel in educational institutions has been increasingly recognized as vital to the smooth operation and success of schooling systems worldwide (Beck, 2018; Smith & Johnson, 2020). These employees provide essential services that span administrative support, finance, human resources, maintenance, and technology (Lee & Brown, 2017; Nguyen, Tran, & Smith, 2021). While their work is often conducted behind the scenes, their contributions are foundational for creating the organizational infrastructure needed for effective teaching and learning (Martinez & Ramos, 2019). The invisibility of these roles in research and policy has been attributed to a traditional emphasis on instructional staff as the primary agents of education (Garcia, 2023; Honneth, 2018). Nonetheless, recent studies underscore the necessity of acknowledging the integral part that support staff play in realizing educational objectives (Santos & Lee, 2022; Delgado & Cruz, 2021).

Organizational recognition has emerged as a crucial factor affecting employee motivation, engagement, and retention in educational settings (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Walker, 2019). Recognition theory posits that social acknowledgment fosters self-esteem and professional identity, which in turn influence job satisfaction and performance (Honneth, 2018; Ramirez, 2020). The lack of recognition for non-teaching personnel leads to feelings of invisibility and marginalization, which can decrease morale and increase turnover intention (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2019). Empirical research shows that when support staff receive adequate acknowledgment, they demonstrate higher organizational commitment and are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit schools (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The structural hierarchy within educational institutions often privileges teaching and administrative leadership positions, inadvertently devaluing the contributions of non-teaching employees (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Garcia, 2023). This structural imbalance shapes workplace cultures that fail to adequately integrate support staff into decision-making and recognition processes (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020). The concept of "invisible labor" explains how essential work performed by these employees remains unacknowledged, despite its critical importance (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Smith & Johnson, 2020). Addressing this invisibility is key to fostering inclusive organizational cultures conducive to collaborative success (Lee & Brown, 2017; Ramirez, 2020).

Policy frameworks that promote inclusive leadership and school-based management have been shown to improve recognition and participation of non-teaching staff (DepEd, 2020; Walker, 2019). Inclusive leadership fosters shared governance and empowers all personnel, enhancing a sense of belonging and organizational identification (Garcia, 2023; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Nevertheless, implementation gaps frequently persist, resulting in limited practical changes in employee recognition and involvement (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). Such gaps highlight the importance of ongoing organizational commitment to inclusive practices and

the need for targeted interventions (Santos & Lee, 2022; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Phenomenography, as a qualitative research approach, is effective for exploring how individuals perceive and experience their roles within organizations (Bowden & Green, 2017; Adams & Harris, 2018). This methodology reveals qualitatively distinct conceptions held by employees about their work, identity, and value, facilitating a deeper understanding of workplace dynamics (Lee & Brown, 2017; Ramirez, 2020). Studies applying phenomenography in educational contexts have uncovered complex layers of meaning in both teaching and support roles, demonstrating diversity in employees' experiences and perceptions (Nguyen et al., 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

Research on employee identity highlights the importance of role integration and recognition in shaping motivation and commitment (Albert & Whetten, 2016; Santos & Lee, 2022). When employees perceive their work as aligned with organizational values and mission, they exhibit higher engagement and resilience (Ramirez, 2020; Beck, 2018). Non-teaching personnel who feel disconnected or undervalued report diminished well-being and are at greater risk of burnout (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Lee & Kim, 2019). Organizational efforts to foster identity alignment include formal recognition programs, inclusive communication, and professional development opportunities (Walker, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

Motivational theories further suggest that recognition and inclusion satisfy fundamental psychological needs, enhancing intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Tyler & Blader, 2017). Within schools, these factors contribute to a favorable climate and improved service delivery (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Conversely, environments characterized by neglect or exclusion erode motivation, leading to absenteeism and turnover (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2019). Leadership plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for recognition and fostering supportive environments (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Beck, 2018).

Empirical evidence supports the positive impact of recognition programs tailored to non-teaching staff on morale and institutional effectiveness (Santos & Lee, 2022; Walker, 2019). These programs often include formal awards, participatory decision-making, and career advancement pathways (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020). However, their success depends on genuine leadership commitment and systemic integration into organizational practices (Garcia, 2023; Ramirez, 2020). In some cases, tokenistic or inconsistent recognition may exacerbate feelings of marginalization (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Lee & Brown, 2017).

Organizational culture and climate are recognized as fundamental influences on employee perceptions and behaviors (Albert & Whetten, 2016; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Cultures that emphasize collaboration, respect, and shared purpose are more likely to engage all staff meaningfully (Beck, 2018; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Research within Philippine public schools indicates that culturally responsive leadership and communication strategies improve recognition and inclusion of non-teaching personnel (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023). These findings reinforce the need to align policy intentions with culturally sensitive implementation approaches (DepEd, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Recognition and motivation among non-teaching staff are influenced not only by formal policies but also by everyday interactions and informal workplace practices (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2019). The quality of supervisor support, peer acknowledgment, and opportunities for meaningful contribution shape employees' sense of value and belonging (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Studies have found that positive interpersonal relationships and recognition at multiple organizational levels contribute significantly to job satisfaction among support staff (Walker, 2019; Ramirez, 2020).

Non-teaching personnel often navigate complex role boundaries and competing demands that affect their perceptions of work significance (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Beck, 2018). Role ambiguity and unclear expectations may exacerbate feelings of invisibility or undervaluation (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023). Organizational communication plays a critical role in clarifying roles, enhancing transparency, and reinforcing recognition (Thompson & Evans, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017). Transparent communication channels enable staff to understand how their work fits within the broader organizational mission, strengthening role identity and engagement (DepEd, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Phenomenographic studies on organizational identity demonstrate that employees' experiences of their roles are multi-faceted and shaped by personal, social, and structural factors (Bowden & Green, 2017; Adams & Harris, 2018). These studies reveal variations in how support staff conceptualize their contributions—from mere task completion to essential collaboration in achieving institutional goals (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017). Understanding this variation is critical for developing human resource strategies that recognize and respond to diverse employee perspectives (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

Professional development and career growth opportunities are important mechanisms through which non-teaching staff can experience empowerment and increased organizational commitment (Garcia, 2023; Beck, 2018). When institutions invest in the skills and advancement of support personnel, they signal value and recognition that reinforce positive identity and motivation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Lack of such opportunities, however, may contribute to stagnation and disengagement (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

Job satisfaction among non-teaching employees is also linked to perceptions of fairness and equity within organizational policies and practices (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Santos & Lee, 2022). Perceptions of distributive and procedural justice influence how staff interpret recognition and rewards (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). Inequities or inconsistencies in recognition can undermine trust in

leadership and reduce organizational citizenship behaviors (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

In the Philippine education sector, research suggests that decentralization and school-based management reforms create both opportunities and challenges for inclusive recognition of all staff (DepEd, 2020; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Decentralized governance allows schools more flexibility to design recognition programs and participatory structures that suit local contexts (Garcia, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2021). However, disparities in leadership capacity and resource availability may limit the equitable implementation of such initiatives (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Walker, 2019).

Non-teaching staff perceptions of their value are also shaped by cultural factors, including societal attitudes toward support roles and the traditional status hierarchy within educational institutions (Lee & Brown, 2017; Garcia, 2023). In many cultures, including the Philippines, teaching roles are culturally valorized, whereas support roles may be seen as subordinate or ancillary (Santos & Lee, 2022; Ramirez, 2020). Overcoming these ingrained perceptions requires intentional cultural change efforts at the organizational and policy levels (DepEd, 2020; Beck, 2018).

Organizational commitment among support personnel is positively associated with leadership styles that emphasize empowerment, support, and participatory decision-making (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Transformational and servant leadership approaches have been found to increase employee motivation and foster inclusive workplace climates (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019). Such leadership behaviors encourage recognition not only in formal settings but also through everyday interactions and supportive practices (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The use of technology in administrative and support roles is increasingly changing how non-teaching personnel perform their work and experience recognition (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). Digital tools can enhance efficiency and provide new avenues for communication and visibility within organizations (Garcia, 2023; Ramirez, 2020). However, disparities in access to technology and digital literacy can create new forms of exclusion or marginalization if not carefully managed (DepEd, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Finally, research underscores the importance of ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of recognition practices for non-teaching staff (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Santos & Lee, 2022). Institutionalizing regular surveys, focus groups, and performance reviews that include support staff perspectives ensures that recognition efforts remain responsive and meaningful (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). This continuous improvement approach aligns recognition with evolving organizational needs and employee expectations (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

Support staff's sense of belonging within educational institutions has been linked to the presence of mentorship and peer support systems that facilitate professional and social integration (Beck, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2021). Mentoring relationships provide non-teaching personnel with guidance, validation, and opportunities for growth, which contribute positively to motivation and job satisfaction (Walker, 2019; Ramirez, 2020). Absence of such supportive networks often leads to isolation and feelings of undervaluation, which can detrimentally affect organizational commitment (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Lee & Kim, 2019).

The interplay between employee well-being and recognition has been extensively examined, highlighting how acknowledgement buffers the adverse effects of workplace stressors (Santos & Lee, 2022; Tyler & Blader, 2017). For non-teaching staff, who may face role strain and limited autonomy, recognition serves as a critical resource that fosters resilience and sustains engagement (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Neglecting the psychological needs of these employees can contribute to burnout and reduce organizational effectiveness (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Garcia, 2023).

Cross-cultural studies reveal that the expectations and experiences of recognition among support staff vary significantly across educational systems, influenced by societal values and institutional norms (Lee & Brown, 2017; Ramirez, 2020). In collectivist cultures such as the Philippines, group harmony and relational acknowledgment often carry more weight than individual rewards (DepEd, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021). Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for designing recognition systems that are perceived as authentic and equitable (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

Research focusing on gender dynamics within educational support roles indicates that women constitute a significant proportion of non-teaching staff, and their experiences of recognition may be shaped by intersecting gender and occupational identities (Beck, 2018; Santos & Lee, 2022). Gender-sensitive approaches to recognition address disparities and promote inclusivity by acknowledging the diverse challenges faced by female employees in predominantly female support roles (Garcia, 2023; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The link between employee empowerment and organizational innovation has been explored, with findings suggesting that recognized and engaged support staff contribute valuable insights and creativity to institutional improvement efforts (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2019). Empowered employees demonstrate higher initiative and collaboration, which positively impact school effectiveness and adaptability (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Conversely, environments lacking recognition stifle creativity and limit staff participation in innovation processes (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

Leadership training that includes components on recognizing and valuing all staff groups has been shown to improve school climate and staff satisfaction (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Developing leaders' emotional intelligence and inclusive practices equips them to create environments where non-teaching personnel feel respected and heard (Garcia, 2023; Beck, 2018). These leadership competencies are critical for sustaining recognition efforts beyond superficial or episodic gestures (Tyler & Blader, 2017;

Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

The phenomenon of "emotional labor" among support staff has attracted attention, with studies showing that managing emotions to meet organizational expectations can be taxing, especially when recognition is inadequate (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Lee & Brown, 2017). Emotional labor demands require organizational support and acknowledgment to prevent fatigue and disengagement (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Recognition acts as a compensatory mechanism that validates these often-unseen emotional efforts (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

Digital transformation in education has altered traditional support staff workflows, requiring continuous learning and adaptation (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). Institutions that recognize and support the development of technological skills among non-teaching personnel report higher job satisfaction and retention (Garcia, 2023; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Failure to acknowledge these evolving role demands risks alienating staff and increasing turnover (DepEd, 2020; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The concept of psychological contract between employee and employer underscores the importance of mutual expectations, with recognition constituting a key component of perceived organizational support (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Breaches in this contract, such as unmet recognition expectations, can lead to decreased trust and commitment among support staff (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Lee & Brown, 2017). Maintaining this contract through consistent recognition is vital for sustaining a motivated workforce (Ramirez, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Finally, school climate research has linked perceptions of fairness and inclusivity in recognition practices with improved student outcomes, as motivated staff contribute to a positive educational environment (Beck, 2018; Walker, 2019). Support staff who feel valued are more likely to engage in behaviors that support student success, illustrating the systemic importance of recognizing all school personnel (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020). This evidence highlights the far-reaching impact of recognition beyond employee well-being alone (Garcia, 2023; Ross & Solinger, 2017).

Educational reform efforts globally have increasingly acknowledged that inclusive recognition of all personnel is fundamental to school effectiveness and equity (Nguyen et al., 2021; DepEd, 2020). By promoting equitable acknowledgment of non-teaching staff, schools can foster a collaborative culture that harnesses diverse expertise and perspectives (Ramirez, 2020; Walker, 2019). Research suggests that when recognition is embedded in the organizational fabric, it leads to sustainable improvements in both employee morale and student achievement (Beck, 2018; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The use of participatory management models in schools offers a framework for expanding the voice and recognition of support staff (Thompson & Evans, 2020; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Such models encourage shared decision-making, creating formal spaces where non-teaching personnel can contribute to school policies and initiatives (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Garcia, 2023). The inclusive nature of participatory management has been shown to increase perceptions of fairness and organizational justice among all staff, thus enhancing motivation (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2019).

Employee recognition is closely linked to job crafting, where employees proactively shape their work roles to find meaning and satisfaction (Ramirez, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021). Non-teaching personnel who are acknowledged and supported in their efforts are more likely to engage in job crafting behaviors, which enhances their sense of agency and contribution (Walker, 2019; Santos & Lee, 2022). This proactive engagement benefits organizations by increasing adaptability and improving service delivery (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Beck, 2018).

Several studies have explored the barriers to effective recognition of non-teaching staff, identifying factors such as entrenched hierarchies, limited leadership awareness, and resource constraints (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Overcoming these barriers requires intentional strategies, including leadership development, policy reforms, and the creation of formal recognition systems (Garcia, 2023; Lee & Brown, 2017). Without addressing systemic obstacles, efforts to enhance recognition risk being superficial or short-lived (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Ramirez, 2020).

Non-teaching employees often report that peer recognition and informal acknowledgments are as meaningful, if not more so, than formal awards or incentives (Santos & Lee, 2022; Walker, 2019). This underscores the importance of cultivating a workplace culture that encourages everyday appreciation and respect among colleagues (Nguyen et al., 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Peer recognition has been linked to increased social cohesion and reduced feelings of isolation, which positively influence job satisfaction (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Beck, 2018).

The relationship between employee recognition and organizational identity is reciprocal: as non-teaching staff perceive greater recognition, their identification with the institution strengthens, which, in turn, motivates further contributions (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). This cyclical process has been observed in numerous educational settings, where recognition acts as a catalyst for reinforcing shared values and goals (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Garcia, 2023). Fostering organizational identity among all staff is therefore key to achieving cohesive and effective educational communities (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Gender and cultural factors further complicate recognition dynamics, as social norms influence who receives attention and how acknowledgment is expressed (Beck, 2018; Santos & Lee, 2022). In many contexts, female non-teaching staff face both occupational and gender-based marginalization, which affects their experiences of recognition and inclusion (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023).

Addressing these intersecting issues requires culturally informed and gender-responsive recognition policies (Walker, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

Workplace well-being initiatives that integrate recognition components have been found effective in improving overall employee health and reducing absenteeism among support staff (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Recognition acts as a psychosocial resource, buffering the impacts of stress and fostering a positive work environment (Santos & Lee, 2022; Lee & Brown, 2017). Educational institutions adopting comprehensive well-being frameworks report gains in staff morale and retention (DepEd, 2020; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Leadership commitment is repeatedly emphasized as a critical factor in the success of recognition initiatives for non-teaching personnel (Garcia, 2023; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Leaders who model inclusive behavior and openly value all staff set the tone for organizational culture and employee expectations (Walker, 2019; Beck, 2018). Training programs aimed at enhancing leaders' competencies in recognition and inclusivity have shown positive effects on staff perceptions and institutional climate (Ramirez, 2020; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Finally, the incorporation of recognition into institutional quality assurance systems has been recommended as a best practice for sustaining attention to non-teaching staff contributions (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Regular monitoring and reporting on recognition practices help ensure accountability and continuous improvement (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021). Embedding recognition metrics within broader performance frameworks links employee acknowledgment to organizational outcomes and strategic priorities (Lee & Kim, 2019; Walker, 2019).

Non-teaching personnel often experience role conflict and ambiguity, which influence their perceptions of recognition and job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2021; Beck, 2018). Role conflict arises when expectations from supervisors, colleagues, or organizational policies are inconsistent or unclear, causing stress and disengagement (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Addressing these challenges through clear communication and supportive supervision is critical to improving recognition experiences (Walker, 2019; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Studies highlight that institutional recognition practices are most effective when they align with employees' intrinsic values and cultural contexts (Garcia, 2023; Lee & Brown, 2017). For many support staff, recognition tied to meaningful contributions and relationship-building is more impactful than monetary rewards (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). This aligns with self-determination theory, which emphasizes relatedness and competence as core motivational drivers (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Tyler & Blader, 2017).

Organizational justice theory further explains how perceptions of fairness in recognition affect employee attitudes and behaviors (Ramirez, 2020; Santos & Lee, 2022). Distributive justice, concerning the fairness of outcomes, and procedural justice, related to the fairness of processes, both significantly influence non-teaching staff's trust and commitment (Nguyen et al., 2021; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Institutions that maintain transparent and equitable recognition systems tend to enjoy more positive staff relations and lower turnover rates (Walker, 2019; Garcia, 2023).

Phenomenographic research has provided nuanced insights into how non-teaching employees conceptualize their work and value within educational organizations (Bowden & Green, 2017; Adams & Harris, 2018). By categorizing qualitatively different experiences, this approach reveals variations ranging from feelings of invisibility to empowerment through recognition (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). These findings help tailor human resource interventions to address diverse employee needs (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

Professional identity formation among support staff is closely tied to the degree of organizational recognition and inclusion (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Beck, 2018). Employees who perceive their roles as integral to institutional goals develop stronger professional identities and higher motivation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walker, 2019). Conversely, lack of recognition contributes to identity fragmentation and diminished engagement (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Ramirez, 2020).

Career development pathways for non-teaching personnel remain underexplored despite their importance for employee retention and satisfaction (Garcia, 2023; Santos & Lee, 2022). Access to training, promotion opportunities, and skills development signal organizational value and investment in employees (Thompson & Evans, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017). Institutions that prioritize career growth foster a culture of recognition and long-term commitment among support staff (Walker, 2019; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Employee engagement frameworks underscore the centrality of recognition as a driver of discretionary effort and organizational citizenship behavior (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Ramirez, 2020). Engaged non-teaching staff are more likely to take initiative, collaborate effectively, and contribute to a favorable school climate (Nguyen et al., 2021; Beck, 2018). Recognition practices thus have a cascading effect on institutional performance and culture (Santos & Lee, 2022; Delgado & Cruz, 2021).

Recent advances in educational leadership research emphasize culturally responsive recognition practices that account for staff diversity, including ethnicity, language, and socio-economic background (Garcia, 2023; Lee & Kim, 2019). Culturally responsive recognition strengthens inclusion and supports equity goals within schools (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Failure to address cultural factors may perpetuate exclusion and hinder employee motivation (Walker, 2019; Ramirez, 2020).

The role of technology-mediated recognition, such as digital badges and online acknowledgment platforms, is gaining attention as a tool for increasing visibility and appreciation of non-teaching staff (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017). These innovations enable more frequent, timely, and accessible recognition, contributing to positive employee experiences (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). However, equitable access and digital literacy remain challenges that must be addressed to avoid new forms of exclusion (DepEd, 2020; Garcia, 2023).

Finally, integrating employee voice mechanisms into recognition systems enhances the relevance and authenticity of acknowledgment (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Opportunities for non-teaching personnel to express their needs, preferences, and feedback promote empowerment and trust (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Walker, 2019). This participatory approach aligns with contemporary human resource management principles emphasizing co-creation and shared responsibility (Ramirez, 2020; Beck, 2018).

Employee recognition in education settings has increasingly been linked to organizational sustainability and long-term success (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Schools that invest in meaningful recognition strategies create environments where non-teaching staff feel valued and motivated, thereby reducing turnover and fostering institutional memory (Beck, 2018; Ramirez, 2020). This sustainability is especially critical in resource-constrained settings, where retaining experienced personnel is essential (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023).

Non-teaching personnel often report that recognition enhances their sense of purpose and professional dignity, which are vital for maintaining enthusiasm in routine or challenging tasks (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Recognition thus serves as an intrinsic reward, complementing extrinsic incentives and contributing to holistic employee well-being (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2019). Organizations that neglect this psychological dimension risk diminishing workforce effectiveness despite material rewards (Walker, 2019; Beck, 2018).

A growing body of research highlights the role of emotional intelligence in leaders to effectively recognize and support diverse staff groups (Garcia, 2023; Santos & Lee, 2022). Leaders with emotional intelligence are better able to perceive employee needs and express genuine appreciation, thereby strengthening relational trust and staff engagement (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Leadership development programs that cultivate these skills have shown promising results in improving recognition culture (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Recognition mechanisms embedded in daily routines, such as informal praise and regular feedback, are more effective than infrequent formal ceremonies (Walker, 2019; Beck, 2018). This continuous recognition fosters ongoing motivation and a favorable organizational climate (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Lee & Brown, 2017). Studies also suggest that peer-to-peer recognition can be a powerful complement to leadership-initiated acknowledgment (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The psychological concept of belongingness is closely connected to experiences of recognition among non-teaching staff (Ramirez, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021). Belongingness refers to the human need to feel accepted and included within a group, which recognition directly nurtures (Beck, 2018; Garcia, 2023). Educational institutions that foster belonging through recognition promote higher levels of collaboration, well-being, and institutional loyalty (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

In contexts of rapid educational change, such as technology integration or curriculum reforms, recognition helps buffer the stress and uncertainty experienced by support staff (Walker, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2019). Recognizing adaptability and effort during transitions validates employees' contributions and reinforces resilience (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020). This recognition is critical to sustaining morale and preventing disengagement during periods of disruption (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020).

Some research indicates that recognition disparities exist across categories of non-teaching staff, with some roles more visible and appreciated than others (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Beck, 2018). For example, finance or administrative personnel may receive more formal acknowledgment compared to maintenance or janitorial staff (Garcia, 2023; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Addressing these disparities is necessary for developing equitable and inclusive organizational cultures (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Walker, 2019).

Workplace recognition has also been linked to improved mental health outcomes among non-teaching employees (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Recognition serves as a protective factor against stress, anxiety, and depression related to workplace challenges (Ramirez, 2020; Beck, 2018). Institutions that prioritize recognition within employee wellness programs report reductions in absenteeism and improved overall productivity (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023). Case studies from Philippine public schools reveal that initiatives to recognize non-teaching staff can transform school culture and contribute to greater equity (DepEd, 2020; Walker, 2019). Such initiatives include award ceremonies, participatory governance roles, and professional development opportunities tailored to support personnel (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). These localized efforts demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of intentional recognition practices within resource-limited settings (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Finally, systemic barriers such as bureaucratic inertia, limited funding, and prevailing cultural attitudes continue to challenge the institutionalization of recognition for non-teaching personnel (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023). Overcoming these barriers requires concerted policy advocacy, leadership commitment, and grassroots engagement to shift organizational priorities toward more inclusive and equitable recognition (Beck, 2018; Ramirez, 2020).

Effective communication strategies are foundational to fostering recognition and inclusion of non-teaching staff within educational

institutions (Walker, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021). Transparent, frequent, and two-way communication channels ensure that support personnel are informed, heard, and acknowledged in meaningful ways (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Research suggests that communication breakdowns contribute significantly to feelings of exclusion and undervaluation among non-teaching employees (Garcia, 2023; Beck, 2018).

The role of organizational culture in shaping recognition practices cannot be overstated (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Cultures that prioritize respect, collaboration, and mutual appreciation tend to facilitate higher levels of employee engagement and retention (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017). Conversely, cultures characterized by hierarchical distance and rigid norms often perpetuate inequities in recognition and status (Walker, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Transformational leadership is frequently identified as a catalyst for cultivating positive recognition cultures (Santos & Lee, 2022; Delgado & Cruz, 2021).

Employee recognition also interacts with organizational learning processes, wherein acknowledged staff contributions enhance knowledge sharing and innovation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Beck, 2018). Recognition reinforces desirable behaviors and empowers employees to contribute ideas and improvements (Garcia, 2023; Ramirez, 2020). In schools, this dynamic supports adaptive responses to policy changes, resource constraints, and evolving student needs (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Walker, 2019).

Studies examining equity in recognition highlight the intersectionality of factors such as race, class, gender, and role within educational institutions (Lee & Kim, 2019; Santos & Lee, 2022). These factors influence how recognition is distributed and experienced, with marginalized groups often facing systemic barriers to acknowledgment (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Garcia, 2023). Equity-focused frameworks advocate for inclusive recognition that addresses these disparities through intentional policies and practices (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Ramirez, 2020).

Recognition is a key component of organizational justice perceptions, which affect trust and cooperation among staff (Nguyen et al., 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Perceptions of justice influence whether employees view recognition as sincere and fair, thereby impacting their engagement and loyalty (Walker, 2019; Beck, 2018). Leadership transparency and consistent criteria for recognition contribute to positive perceptions of justice (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The psychological contract framework provides insight into how recognition fulfills employees' implicit expectations of respect and appreciation (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017). Breaches in this contract, such as overlooked contributions, can lead to dissatisfaction and withdrawal behaviors among non-teaching staff (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021). Maintaining the psychological contract through recognition is thus essential for sustaining commitment and performance (Garcia, 2023; Walker, 2019).

Research also points to the significance of peer recognition in fostering collegiality and morale among non-teaching personnel (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Peer-based acknowledgment complements formal recognition by creating a supportive social environment (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Beck, 2018). Encouraging peer recognition can mitigate hierarchical constraints and empower employees at all levels (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019).

Organizational support theory emphasizes that employees who perceive strong support from their institutions, including through recognition, demonstrate higher job satisfaction and well-being (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walker, 2019). Supportive environments buffer against work-related stress and foster resilience, particularly for employees in demanding or undervalued roles (Garcia, 2023; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Recognition is a tangible expression of such support, reinforcing employees' psychological safety (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Educational policy documents increasingly call for inclusive recognition practices that value the diverse contributions of all school personnel (DepEd, 2020; Walker, 2019). Policy mandates provide a framework for schools to institutionalize recognition and create equitable opportunities for all staff to be acknowledged (Ramirez, 2020; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Effective implementation requires capacity building, resource allocation, and leadership commitment to transform policy into practice (Beck, 2018; Garcia, 2023).

Finally, the integration of recognition into performance management systems has been advocated as a best practice to sustain employee motivation and align individual contributions with organizational goals (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Santos & Lee, 2022). Performance appraisals that include meaningful feedback and acknowledgment encourage continuous improvement and reinforce valued behaviors (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Such systems promote accountability and recognition as complementary aspects of human resource management (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

The implementation of recognition programs tailored to non-teaching staff has demonstrated positive impacts on employee morale and institutional cohesion (Beck, 2018; Santos & Lee, 2022). Such programs often include not only formal awards but also informal acknowledgments that affirm daily contributions, which are essential to sustaining motivation (Walker, 2019; Ramirez, 2020). Research indicates that authentic, timely recognition aligned with employees' values tends to have the most significant positive effect (Nguyen et al., 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Employee empowerment emerges as a critical outcome of effective recognition, enabling non-teaching personnel to take greater ownership of their roles and contribute to school improvement initiatives (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Empowered employees demonstrate enhanced problem-solving capabilities, creativity, and commitment to organizational goals (Garcia, 2023; Lee & Kim, 2019). These benefits highlight the reciprocal relationship between recognition and empowerment within

educational institutions (Ramirez, 2020; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The social identity theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how recognition reinforces employees' sense of belonging and organizational identification (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Beck, 2018). Recognition validates employees' membership within the school community, enhancing cohesion and cooperative behavior (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walker, 2019). Conversely, lack of recognition can foster alienation and disengagement, undermining team dynamics and organizational effectiveness (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Non-teaching staff frequently experience "invisible labor," where their efforts are essential but remain unacknowledged in formal metrics and organizational narratives (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Lee & Brown, 2017). This invisibility contributes to dissatisfaction and decreased motivation (Santos & Lee, 2022; Ramirez, 2020). Addressing invisible labor requires intentional recognition policies that explicitly value diverse roles and contributions (Garcia, 2023; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The role of emotional labor, especially among support staff who manage both technical tasks and interpersonal relationships, is significant yet often overlooked (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Beck, 2018). Emotional labor can be taxing, increasing the need for recognition and support from the organization (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Recognition acts as an important resource that buffers the effects of emotional labor and sustains employee well-being (Santos & Lee, 2022; Walker, 2019).

Leadership practices are fundamental in establishing cultures of recognition within schools (Garcia, 2023; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Leaders who prioritize inclusivity and regularly acknowledge the contributions of all staff foster environments conducive to high morale and productivity (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Leadership development programs focusing on emotional intelligence and inclusive behaviors have proven effective in enhancing recognition practices (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Walker, 2019).

Technology's increasing role in school administration offers new possibilities for recognition but also presents challenges (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). Digital platforms can facilitate timely recognition and enhance visibility of non-teaching staff contributions (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). However, equitable access to and training on technological innovations are necessary to ensure that all employees benefit from technological innovations (DepEd, 2020; Garcia, 2023).

Research shows that culturally responsive recognition practices are essential to address the diverse backgrounds and experiences of school personnel (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Lee & Brown, 2017). Recognition strategies that respect cultural values and social norms enhance authenticity and acceptance among staff (Ramirez, 2020; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Culturally insensitive recognition can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and inequity (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The psychological contract framework illustrates how recognition fulfills employees' expectations of respect and reciprocity in their employment relationships (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Ramirez, 2020). Violations of this contract, including lack of recognition, contribute to reduced trust and increased turnover intentions (Nguyen et al., 2021; Beck, 2018). Maintaining this contract through consistent, meaningful recognition is crucial to sustaining employee engagement (Walker, 2019; Garcia, 2023).

The relationship between organizational support and employee performance has been extensively documented, demonstrating that perceived recognition significantly enhances job effectiveness among non-teaching staff (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Supportive organizational environments, characterized by frequent acknowledgment and validation of contributions, motivate employees to exceed baseline job requirements (Beck, 2018; Ramirez, 2020). This enhanced performance positively influences overall school functioning and learner outcomes (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

Employee engagement theories emphasize recognition as a fundamental driver of engagement, particularly for support staff whose roles are often routine and repetitive (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Engagement leads to increased discretionary effort, innovation, and commitment to organizational goals (Lee & Kim, 2019; Garcia, 2023). Schools that foster a culture of recognition thus benefit from a more motivated and proactive workforce (Ramirez, 2020; Walker, 2019).

The concept of psychological safety is also closely linked to recognition, as employees who feel valued and respected are more likely to contribute ideas and participate actively in organizational processes (Santos & Lee, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021). Psychological safety facilitates open communication, collaboration, and learning, which are essential for school improvement efforts (Beck, 2018; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Recognition plays a key role in establishing such safe environments by affirming employees' worth and encouraging risk-taking (Ramirez, 2020; Garcia, 2023).

Non-teaching personnel's job satisfaction is significantly affected by the quality of their interpersonal relationships, including those with supervisors and peers (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Recognition acts as an important social lubricant, enhancing trust and cooperation among colleagues (Lee & Brown, 2017; Santos & Lee, 2022). Positive social dynamics foster resilience and reduce the likelihood of burnout among support staff (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walker, 2019).

Studies reveal that recognition initiatives that are co-created with non-teaching staff tend to be more relevant, accepted, and effective (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Beck, 2018). Participatory approaches empower employees by involving them in decision-making about how and when recognition is given (Ramirez, 2020; Garcia, 2023). Such co-creation strengthens ownership and aligns recognition practices with employees' intrinsic motivations (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Walker, 2019).

The literature also highlights the role of mentoring and coaching in enhancing recognition experiences and professional growth among non-teaching staff (Thompson & Evans, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). Mentoring provides individualized support, feedback, and acknowledgment, fostering career development and organizational commitment (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Coaching interventions that incorporate recognition components further contribute to employee empowerment and efficacy (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Ramirez, 2020).

Recognition is also an important factor in mitigating the effects of occupational stress and enhancing well-being (Beck, 2018; Walker, 2019). Acknowledging employees' efforts and successes buffers against work-related stressors and contributes to psychological resilience (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Schools that integrate recognition into well-being initiatives report better employee mental health and reduced absenteeism (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The alignment of organizational values and recognition practices is critical for coherence and authenticity (Garcia, 2023; Ramirez, 2020). When recognition is perceived as congruent with institutional missions and values, it reinforces employee identification and engagement (Lee & Brown, 2017; Santos & Lee, 2022). Misalignment, conversely, leads to cynicism and decreased motivation (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019).

In educational settings, recognition that highlights contributions to student success tends to be particularly meaningful for non-teaching staff (Nguyen et al., 2021; Beck, 2018). Framing recognition around shared educational goals reinforces collective identity and purpose (Ramirez, 2020; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). This focus strengthens collaboration across teaching and support roles, enhancing school effectiveness (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

Recognition practices are also linked to the development of organizational trust, a key factor influencing cooperation and morale among school staff (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Santos & Lee, 2022). When employees perceive that recognition is fair and consistent, trust in leadership and the institution increases, which promotes greater engagement and reduces conflict (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walker, 2019). Conversely, perceptions of favoritism or neglect in recognition can damage trust and lead to disengagement (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Beck, 2018).

Educational institutions face unique challenges in recognizing the varied roles and contributions of non-teaching staff, given the heterogeneity of positions and responsibilities (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Garcia, 2023). Tailoring recognition strategies to different job functions and contexts is necessary to ensure relevance and equity (Lee & Kim, 2019; Ramirez, 2020). Generic or one-size-fits-all approaches risk overlooking the specific needs and contributions of diverse staff groups (Santos & Lee, 2022; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The impact of recognition on employee turnover intentions has been widely studied, with consistent findings that valued recognition reduces the likelihood of voluntary departures among non-teaching personnel (Nguyen et al., 2021; Beck, 2018). Retaining experienced support staff is crucial for maintaining institutional knowledge and continuity, particularly in resource-constrained educational settings (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019). Recognition, therefore, serves not only as a motivational tool but also as a retention strategy (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Workplace diversity initiatives often incorporate recognition as a mechanism to validate the contributions of underrepresented groups among non-teaching staff (Garcia, 2023; Lee & Brown, 2017). Recognizing diverse identities and experiences fosters inclusion and equity, which are associated with improved job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ramirez, 2020; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Culturally responsive recognition practices support a more equitable and respectful school environment (Santos & Lee, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Social exchange theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how reciprocal recognition strengthens relationships between employees and organizations (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Ramirez, 2020). When employees feel appreciated and valued, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors that benefit the organization (Beck, 2018; Walker, 2019). This reciprocal dynamic enhances organizational citizenship and collective efficacy (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019).

Non-teaching staff who perceive alignment between their personal values and the school's mission report higher levels of recognition satisfaction and job engagement (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Value congruence strengthens identification with the institution and reinforces motivation (Ramirez, 2020; Garcia, 2023). Recognition that highlights shared values and mission-related achievements resonates more deeply with employees (Thompson & Evans, 2020; Walker, 2019).

Empirical evidence suggests that leadership communication styles significantly influence the effectiveness of recognition programs (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2019). Transparent, empathetic, and consistent communication fosters trust and reinforces the sincerity of recognition efforts (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Leaders who actively listen and respond to employee feedback create more inclusive and responsive recognition cultures (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020).

Recognition contributes to the psychological empowerment of non-teaching personnel by affirming their competence, autonomy, and impact within the organization (Beck, 2018; Walker, 2019). Empowered employees exhibit greater initiative and resilience, enhancing overall school performance (Ramirez, 2020; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Recognition, therefore, catalyzes the development of employee agency and leadership capacity (Garcia, 2023; Santos & Lee, 2022).

The role of recognition in supporting career transitions and role changes among non-teaching staff has received increasing attention (Nguyen et al., 2021; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Support during transitions, including acknowledgment of new responsibilities and achievements, facilitates adjustment and sustained engagement (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Walker, 2019). Recognition thus supports employee adaptability and career development within dynamic educational environments (Ramirez, 2020; Lee & Brown, 2017).

Recognition is also critical in addressing the challenges faced by non-teaching staff working in marginalized or underserved communities (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). These employees often encounter resource constraints, high workloads, and limited professional development opportunities, acknowledging their efforts are especially vital (Beck, 2018; Santos & Lee, 2022). Recognition in such contexts contributes to staff resilience and sustained commitment despite adverse conditions (Walker, 2019; Ramirez, 2020). Organizational justice and recognition are closely related constructs that impact employee engagement and satisfaction (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Martinez & Ramos, 2019). Employees who perceive fairness in recognition are more likely to trust leadership and exhibit positive organizational citizenship behaviors (Nguyen et al., 2021; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Ensuring procedural transparency and consistent criteria for recognition helps mitigate perceptions of bias or favoritism (Santos & Lee, 2022; Delgado & Cruz, 2021).

Recent scholarship has explored the intersection of technology and recognition, particularly the use of social media and digital platforms to publicly acknowledge staff contributions (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). These platforms enable wider visibility and peer-to-peer recognition, fostering a culture of appreciation (Garcia, 2023; Ramirez, 2020). However, the digital divide remains a barrier for equitable participation, necessitating thoughtful implementation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walker, 2019).

Mentorship programs that include recognition components have been shown to enhance job satisfaction and professional growth for non-teaching personnel (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Beck, 2018). Recognition from mentors validates employees' skills and contributions, fostering confidence and organizational loyalty (Santos & Lee, 2022; Ramirez, 2020). Such programs are particularly effective in supporting new or transitioning staff members (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020).

The relationship between employee recognition and organizational culture is dynamic, with recognition practices both reflecting and shaping cultural norms (Garcia, 2023; Lee & Brown, 2017). Cultures that embed recognition into everyday interactions foster greater employee engagement and collective efficacy (Ramirez, 2020; Walker, 2019). In contrast, cultures that neglect recognition risk disengagement and diminished performance (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Perceptions of recognition among non-teaching personnel are influenced by social identity factors, including professional status and group membership (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Beck, 2018). Recognition that affirms employees' social identity enhances self-esteem and organizational commitment (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Social identity theory provides a framework for understanding how recognition can promote inclusion and reduce intergroup tensions (Santos & Lee, 2022; Ramirez, 2020).

The effectiveness of recognition programs is often contingent on organizational leadership and management capacity (Walker, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Leaders who demonstrate commitment to inclusive recognition practices inspire similar behaviors across the institution (Nguyen et al., 2021; Garcia, 2023). Leadership training and development are therefore critical for sustaining recognition cultures (Delgado & Cruz, 2021; Ramirez, 2020). Recognition also plays a role in employee motivation theories, such as expectancy theory and self-determination theory (Tyler & Blader, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2019). When recognition meets employees' expectations and supports their intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, motivation and performance improve (Beck, 2018; Santos & Lee, 2022). Misaligned or absent recognition undermines motivation and reduces engagement (Nguyen et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2020).

The integration of recognition into human resource management systems supports comprehensive workforce development (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Delgado & Cruz, 2021). Recognition linked to performance appraisal, training, and career progression reinforces employee value and supports retention strategies (Walker, 2019; Thompson & Evans, 2020). Institutions adopting integrated recognition approaches report higher employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness (Garcia, 2023; Santos & Lee, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenographic research design, which is particularly suited for exploring the qualitatively different ways individuals experience, understand, and conceptualize a phenomenon (Bowden & Green, 2017). Phenomenography aims to uncover the variations in participants' perceptions and to organize these into a structured framework or outcome space. Given the study's focus on understanding the diverse ways non-teaching personnel in the Department of Education (DepEd) perceive the value of their roles and experiences of recognition, phenomenography offers a powerful methodological lens to capture the depth and complexity of these subjective experiences.

Participants

The participants of this study were carefully purposively selected to ensure that those included could provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives. Eighteen non-teaching personnel from various DepEd offices and schools in the Luzon region were invited to participate. The selection criteria included having at

least three years of continuous service in a non-teaching capacity such as clerical staff, administrative assistants, finance officers, coordinators, or other related roles. This criterion was set to ensure participants had adequate exposure and experience within the organization to meaningfully reflect on their roles and recognition experiences. In addition, efforts were made to include participants representing different ages, genders, and types of non-teaching positions to capture a wide spectrum of conceptions. Participants were contacted via official channels and informed about the study's purpose, assuring them of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Instrument

Data collection was conducted through a researcher-developed written interview guide that employed open-ended questions crafted to elicit detailed, reflective, and narrative responses. The interview questions focused on participants' understanding of the importance of their roles within DepEd's mission, their experiences with formal and informal recognition or appreciation, and the impact of these experiences on their motivation and sense of belonging. Prior to deployment, the interview guide underwent expert review by qualitative researchers and education professionals to ensure the questions were clear, unbiased, and capable of eliciting deep reflections relevant to the study's objectives. The written format was chosen to allow participants to respond thoughtfully at their own pace, promoting reflection and depth.

Procedure

The interview guide was distributed electronically to participants, who were given 2 weeks to submit their written responses. This approach accommodated the participants' varied schedules and allowed them to articulate their thoughts without the pressure of a synchronous interview. During the data collection period, follow-up communications were made to clarify responses or to encourage further elaboration where needed. Virtual meetings were also arranged selectively when certain responses required additional probing to ensure clarity and richness of data. Throughout the process, strict ethical standards were observed. Participants were assured that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. Informed consent was obtained, emphasizing that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any point without any repercussions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out through a rigorous phenomenographic process, as described by Bowden and Green (2017). Initially, the researcher engaged in repeated readings of all participant transcripts to become deeply familiar with the data, noting preliminary impressions and emerging patterns. The next step involved identifying significant statements and passages that addressed participants' perceptions of their role value and experiences of recognition. These statements were then grouped into categories of description that reflected distinct ways of understanding or experiencing the phenomena. This process was iterative and involved constant comparison within and across transcripts to ensure that categories were internally coherent yet qualitatively distinct. The final step was the construction of an outcome space, which visually and conceptually represents the hierarchical and relational structure among the categories, illustrating how participants' conceptions vary in complexity and depth.

To enhance the study's rigor, peer debriefing was employed, whereby qualitative research experts reviewed the emerging categories and the outcome space. Their feedback was instrumental in refining the categories to ensure credibility, confirmability, and trustworthiness of the findings. Additionally, the study maintained an audit trail documenting analytical decisions and processes, thereby enhancing the transparency and reliability of the research. The methodological approach combined purposive sampling, a reflective written interview process, and systematic phenomenographic analysis to generate a rich and nuanced understanding of non-teaching personnel's perceptions of role value and recognition within DepEd. This approach provides the foundation for developing actionable insights and recommendations to foster inclusive recognition practices that enhance employee motivation and organizational commitment.

Results and Discussion

The analysis revealed five distinct conceptions of work-life balance among DepEd non-teaching employees. These are summarized below and discussed with illustrative quotations and integrated with the literature.

Table 1. *Phenomenographic Analysis Revealed Five Qualitatively Distinct Conceptions of the Perceived Value and Recognition of Non-Teaching Roles within DepEd's Mission, Forming a Layered Outcome Space*

Category No.	Conception of Role Value	Description
1	Invisible and Underappreciated	Feeling unseen and undervalued within the organization
2	Procedural Necessity	Recognizing the role as functionally necessary but lacking special recognition
3	Personal Pride and Commitment	Deriving intrinsic motivation and identity from the role despite limited external recognition
4	Collective Contribution	Viewing the role as integral to team efforts aligned with DepEd's goals
5	Empowerment through Recognition	Experiencing motivation and belonging through formal acknowledgment and inclusion

The phenomenographic analysis of written interviews with 18 non-teaching personnel in the Department of Education (DepEd)

revealed five qualitatively distinct categories of conception regarding the perceived value of their roles and their experiences of recognition. These categories range from feelings of invisibility and procedural necessity to experiences of empowerment and collective contribution, illustrating a spectrum of perspectives that highlight the complex realities of non-teaching staff within the educational system.

The first category, Role Value as Invisible and Underappreciated, captures the experiences of participants who perceive their contributions as largely unrecognized and overlooked. Many described themselves metaphorically as "shadows," working diligently behind the scenes without acknowledgment from supervisors, teaching staff, or the institution at large. One participant shared, "Para kaming mga anino, gumagana pero walang napapansin." This experience resonates with the concept of "invisible labor" described in the literature (Ross & Solinger, 2017), where essential work remains hidden and undervalued, negatively impacting motivation and job satisfaction. Participants' narratives align with findings by Lee and Brown (2017) and Santos and Lee (2022), who documented similar sentiments of marginalization among educational support staff. The lack of formal recognition mechanisms and insufficient informal appreciation contribute to feelings of alienation and diminished organizational commitment, corroborating Tyler and Blader's (2017) assertions regarding the centrality of recognition in fostering employee engagement.

The second category, Role Value as Procedural Necessity, represents those participants who view their roles primarily as functional and administrative requirements necessary for the organization's operation. While these individuals acknowledge the importance of their tasks, they perceive their work as routine and not warranting special recognition. As one participant noted, "Hindi man kami pinapansin, mahalaga ang ginagawa namin para umandar ang opisina." This perception reflects structural and cultural factors within educational institutions that prioritize teaching roles and leadership positions, sometimes relegating support staff to mere task-completers (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Garcia, 2023). The functionalist view expressed by participants aligns with Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, in which frontline staff enact essential but narrowly defined roles. Though these participants do not express strong feelings of invisibility, their responses suggest limited opportunities for empowerment or professional growth, consistent with studies by Nguyen et al. (2021) and Delgado and Cruz (2021), highlighting the risk of disengagement when roles lack meaningful recognition.

A markedly different perspective emerges in the third category, Role Value as Personal Pride and Commitment, where participants express intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of pride in their contributions regardless of external recognition. These individuals derive satisfaction from fulfilling their duties well and from the knowledge that their work supports the educational mission. One participant expressed, "Alam ko ang ambag ko ay mahalaga, kahit hindi sinasabi ng iba." This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), emphasizing intrinsic motivation driven by competence and purpose. Participants' narratives resonate with the findings of Beck (2018) and Ramirez (2020), which show that personal commitment can sustain motivation even in the absence of formal acknowledgment. However, this category also reveals a potential vulnerability, as sustained motivation without adequate recognition can lead to burnout over time (Ross & Solinger, 2017).

The fourth category, Role Value as Collective Contribution, highlights participants' views that their roles are meaningful within the context of teamwork and shared institutional goals. These individuals perceive themselves as integral parts of a collective effort involving teaching staff, administrators, and community stakeholders. One shared, "Hindi kami hiwalay sa mga guro; magkakasama kami sa pagtulong sa paaralan." This conception reflects an inclusive organizational identity, consistent with Albert and Whetten's (1985) theory and DepEd's (2020) policies promoting shared governance. Participants emphasize the value of collaboration and mutual respect, echoing the benefits of inclusive leadership reported by Garcia (2023) and Thompson and Evans (2020). This category underscores the importance of social recognition and belongingness, aligning with Honneth's (2018) framework and the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2017).

The highest category, Role Value as Empowerment through Recognition, encompasses participants who experience tangible, sustained recognition, including involvement in decision-making, professional development opportunities, and formal acknowledgments. These individuals feel empowered, motivated, and aligned with DepEd's mission. One participant expressed gratitude, "Kapag nararamdaman naming nakikilala kami, lalo kaming naee-empower at natutulungan naming mas mapabuti ang paaralan." This reflects the ideal interplay between recognition and organizational identity, fostering high levels of engagement and job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2021; Santos & Lee, 2022). Their experiences align with empirical studies emphasizing the positive impact of inclusive recognition practices on employee well-being and performance (Martinez & Ramos, 2019; Walker, 2019). This category highlights the critical role of leadership and organizational culture in creating enabling environments for recognition (Delgado & Cruz, 2021).

Across these categories, it is evident that recognition operates as a pivotal mediator between role perception and motivation. The findings corroborate and extend Recognition Theory (Honneth, 2018) by illustrating how recognition not only affirms individual contributions but also shapes employees' organizational identity and engagement. The study also affirms the relevance of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) in understanding the reciprocal nature of recognition and commitment within DepEd.

Importantly, the diverse conceptions underscore that recognition experiences are not uniform but vary qualitatively, influenced by organizational structures, leadership practices, and individual psychological factors. The data highlight areas where DepEd could enhance inclusion, such as formalizing recognition programs, fostering participatory governance, and promoting leadership development that values all personnel.

The phenomenographic approach successfully illuminated the complex and varied ways non-teaching personnel perceive their role value and recognition, providing actionable insights for human resource development and institutional reform. Addressing the gaps identified across the spectrum of conceptions could contribute significantly to improving morale, motivation, and ultimately the quality of education delivery.

Conclusions

This phenomenographic study has elucidated the diverse and nuanced ways in which non-teaching personnel in the Department of Education perceive the value of their roles and their experiences of recognition within the organization. The findings revealed a spectrum of conceptions, ranging from feelings of invisibility and marginalization to empowerment through meaningful recognition and inclusion. These varied perspectives underscore the complexity of employee experiences and highlight the critical role of recognition in shaping organizational identity, motivation, and engagement among support staff.

The study confirms that recognition is not merely a symbolic gesture but a fundamental mechanism that validates contributions, fosters a sense of belonging, and enhances motivation. Recognition mediates the relationship between how employees perceive their roles and how they internalize organizational identity, influencing their commitment and willingness to contribute beyond formal job descriptions. The absence or insufficiency of recognition contributes to disengagement, diminished morale, and risks attrition, while effective recognition practices promote empowerment, job satisfaction, and organizational cohesion.

Moreover, the results emphasize that recognition experiences are embedded within organizational structures, cultures, and leadership practices. Inclusive leadership and supportive organizational climates are essential to ensure that recognition is distributed equitably and experienced authentically across diverse staff groups. The data also suggest that personal commitment can sustain motivation temporarily but that systemic recognition is necessary for long-term engagement and retention.

In light of these findings, fostering an organizational culture that acknowledges and values the indispensable contributions of non-teaching personnel is vital to advancing DepEd's educational mission. Institutional reforms that formalize recognition mechanisms, promote participatory governance, and develop inclusive leadership capacities will not only enhance employee well-being but also contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of education delivery.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the recognition and inclusion of non-teaching personnel within the Department of Education (DepEd): Develop Formal Recognition Programs: DepEd should institutionalize comprehensive recognition programs that formally acknowledge the contributions of non-teaching personnel. Such programs may include awards, certificates, commendations, and public appreciation ceremonies, designed to consistently and transparently highlight varied roles and achievements. Foster Inclusive Leadership Practices: Leadership development initiatives should emphasize inclusive, empathetic leadership that actively recognizes and values the contributions of all staff members. Training programs for supervisors and administrators must cultivate skills in interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, and equitable recognition. Encourage Participatory Governance: Non-teaching personnel should be meaningfully involved in decision-making processes and school governance. Mechanisms such as staff councils, committees, or forums can provide platforms for their voices to be heard, thereby enhancing their sense of organizational identity and belonging. Enhance Career Development Opportunities: Providing accessible and relevant professional development and career advancement pathways for non-teaching staff can reinforce their value within the organization. Opportunities for skills upgrading, training, and role enrichment will contribute to employee motivation and institutional capacity building. Promote a Culture of Daily Appreciation: Beyond formal recognition, school leaders and peers should cultivate a culture of regular, informal appreciation through verbal acknowledgments, written notes, and expressions of gratitude. Such practices reinforce positive social relationships and sustain ongoing motivation.

Implement Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms: Regularly assess recognition practices and employee engagement through surveys, focus groups, or interviews to monitor progress, identify gaps, and adapt strategies. Feedback loops involving non-teaching staff ensure that recognition efforts remain relevant and meaningful. Address Structural and Cultural Barriers: DepEd should review and reform organizational structures and policies that inadvertently marginalize non-teaching roles. Efforts to shift workplace culture towards inclusivity and respect are essential to dismantling hierarchical barriers to recognition. Leverage Technology for Recognition: Digital platforms and communication tools can facilitate timely, widespread recognition, increasing visibility and accessibility. DepEd should invest in user-friendly technology solutions and provide training to ensure equitable participation. Implementing these recommendations can foster a more inclusive and empowering work environment for non-teaching personnel, thereby enhancing their motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment. Ultimately, such efforts contribute to a stronger, more effective educational system aligned with DepEd's mission of quality basic education for all.

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