



Lived Experiences of Non-Teaching Personnel Working as Job Order Employees in a State College: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel employed as job order (JO) workers at Davao de Oro State College–New Bataan Branch during the School Year 2025–2026. Guided by Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory, the study examined how JO employees navigated the challenges associated with their non-permanent employment status and the competencies they developed in the workplace. Eight purposively selected participants with direct experience in job order employment took part in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that participants encountered challenges such as limited employment benefits, job insecurity, and unclear work expectations. Despite these constraints, they demonstrated resilience, adaptability, accountability, and commitment to their responsibilities. Participants relied on intrinsic motivation, peer support, and effective coping strategies to manage workplace demands while maintaining positive work performance. Their experiences also fostered valuable professional competencies, including effective communication, self-discipline, flexibility, and a strong work ethic. Positive administrative support and collegial relationships further enhanced their capacity to cope with employment uncertainties. The study concludes that although job order employment is characterized by precarious conditions, it provides meaningful opportunities for personal and professional growth. It recommends institutional recognition of job order employees' contributions and policy reforms to improve their welfare, professional development, and long-term career opportunities.

Keywords

Job order employees, non-teaching personnel, Phenomenological study, Lived experiences, Workplace resilience

How to Cite

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Author Contributions

The authors contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, and supervision. The authors approved the final manuscript.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

INTRODUCTION

Non-teaching personnel played an indispensable role in higher education institutions by sustaining administrative efficiency, student services, records management, financial operations, and institutional support services that enabled academic functions to operate effectively. Despite their significant contributions, employees engaged under temporary or job order arrangements frequently experienced employment conditions characterized by limited job security, restricted employment benefits, uncertain career progression, and heightened workplace demands. These employment conditions attracted increasing scholarly attention because employment insecurity influenced employee engagement, psychological

well-being, organizational commitment, and work performance. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, prolonged job demands accompanied by inadequate organizational resources contributed to occupational strain and reduced employee well-being, whereas supportive organizational environments strengthened resilience and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Likewise, employee engagement increased when organizations provided adequate support, recognition, and opportunities for professional growth despite organizational uncertainty (Andrić et al., 2023). Furthermore, employees' psychological need to belong served as a fundamental determinant of workplace commitment, motivation, and emotional well-being, suggesting that supportive interpersonal relationships mitigated the adverse consequences of precarious employment (Allen et al., 2022). Collectively, these findings underscored that organizational support and adequate job resources remained critical in promoting employee well-being and sustaining performance under demanding work conditions.

Within the Philippine higher education sector, non-teaching personnel employed through job order arrangements performed essential operational responsibilities despite remaining outside the regular plantilla system. These employees experienced contractual insecurity, limited social protection, and constrained opportunities for career advancement while continuously supporting institutional operations. Previous studies reported that non-teaching personnel required continuous professional development to sustain administrative competence and organizational effectiveness (Lacsamana et al., 2018). Likewise, increasing technological demands and institutional digitalization required greater adaptability and continuous skills development among non-teaching personnel (Buot, 2024). Effective communication skills, professional competence, and lifelong learning were likewise identified as essential competencies that enabled non-teaching personnel to perform effectively within higher education institutions (Chaiyapoo, 2017). Moreover, employment security significantly influenced job satisfaction among contractual employees, indicating that employment stability remained an important determinant of organizational commitment and workplace motivation (Ayodele et al., 2022). Conversely, supportive organizational practices, positive workplace relationships, and internal corporate social responsibility initiatives enhanced employees' social performance despite employment-related challenges (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). Similarly, positive work attitudes were associated with improved job performance among non-teaching personnel, suggesting that organizational support partially compensated for the limitations associated with contractual employment (Nwosu et al., 2018). These findings collectively suggested that although contractual employment presented structural limitations, institutional support and employee development initiatives promoted workplace effectiveness and employee well-being.

Although previous studies examined employee engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, workplace stress, work-life balance, and employee well-being, relatively limited qualitative evidence explained how non-teaching personnel employed as job order workers constructed meaning from their lived employment experiences within Philippine state higher education institutions. Existing investigations primarily emphasized quantitative organizational outcomes, employee satisfaction, or work performance, whereas fewer studies explored how contractual employees interpreted workplace challenges, developed coping mechanisms, and transformed these experiences into professional growth. Recent evidence also highlighted psychological job control, sustainable careers, employee aspirations, workplace flexibility, and psychological capital as important determinants of employee well-being and performance (Boccoli et al., 2024; Callaghan & Collins, 2024; De Vos et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2024). However, these perspectives had not been sufficiently integrated into phenomenological investigations involving non-teaching job order personnel within Philippine public higher education institutions. Furthermore, limited evidence explained how contractual employees balanced employment insecurity with organizational commitment, psychological resilience, professional development, and workplace belonging under prolonged non-permanent employment conditions (Allen et al., 2022; Rajagopal et al., 2024). This empirical, methodological, and contextual gap limited understanding of how job order employees navigated employment precarity while sustaining meaningful work experiences and organizational contributions.

This phenomenological study aims to explore the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel working as job order employees at Davao de Oro State College–New Bataan Branch during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study examines their workplace experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanisms employed, and insights gained while working under non-permanent employment arrangements. Guided by Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory and interpreted through the Job Demands–Resources Theory, the study seeks to generate a comprehensive understanding of how contractual employees interpreted employment insecurity while sustaining organizational commitment, resilience, and professional growth. The findings are expected to contribute empirical evidence that may inform institutional human resource policies, employee welfare programs, career development initiatives, and organizational interventions designed to strengthen employee well-being and organizational support for non-teaching personnel in higher education institutions. Although the findings are limited to one public higher education institution and a specific group of participants, the study contributes context-specific qualitative evidence that enriches current understanding of contractual employment, workplace resilience, organizational support, and employee well-being within Philippine higher education.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design anchored in the interpretivist paradigm to explore and understand the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel working as job order employees at Davao de Oro State College–New Bataan Branch. Phenomenology was considered appropriate because it sought to describe and interpret the essence of participants' lived experiences as they perceived and understood a common phenomenon. Rather than measuring predetermined variables, the design facilitated an in-depth exploration of participants' meanings, perceptions, and

interpretations regarding their employment experiences, workplace challenges, coping mechanisms, and personal insights. The interpretivist paradigm further guided the inquiry by recognizing that reality was socially constructed through participants' experiences and interactions within their organizational environment. This methodological approach aligned with the study's objective of generating rich and contextually grounded descriptions that reflected the realities of job order employment in a public higher education institution.

Sampling

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who possessed direct and extensive experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Eight non-teaching personnel employed as job order workers at Davao de Oro State College–New Bataan Branch during the School Year 2025–2026 participated in the study. Participants were selected because they could provide comprehensive and information-rich accounts of their employment experiences. To ensure the credibility and relevance of the data, participants were required to be currently employed as job order personnel and to have rendered at least five years of continuous service within the institution. Permanent employees, teaching personnel, and job order employees with fewer than five years of service were excluded from participation. The sample size was considered appropriate because thematic saturation was achieved, indicating that no substantially new information emerged during the later stages of data collection.

Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews using a researcher-developed interview guide validated by qualitative research experts to establish clarity, relevance, and content appropriateness. Prior to data collection, approval was secured from the appropriate institutional authorities, and ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Assumption College of Nabunturan. Participants received complete information regarding the purpose of the study, research procedures, potential risks and benefits, voluntary participation, and confidentiality before signing informed consent forms. Interviews were conducted individually in a private setting within the institution at schedules convenient for the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted using the participants' preferred language to encourage openness and accurate expression of their experiences. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes documenting contextual observations and non-verbal behaviors. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and carefully reviewed to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected data prior to analysis.

Analysis

The study employed Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis to systematically identify, organize, and interpret meaningful patterns across the qualitative data. The analytical process began with repeated reading of the interview transcripts to facilitate familiarization with participants' narratives. Significant statements relevant to the research objectives were subsequently coded, and similar codes were organized into preliminary categories. These categories were examined further to identify coherent themes representing participants' lived experiences, workplace challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights gained from job order employment. Emerging themes were continuously reviewed, refined, and clearly defined to ensure conceptual consistency and accurate representation of participants' accounts. Direct participant quotations were incorporated to substantiate the identified themes and preserve the authenticity of participants' voices. Throughout the analysis, coding decisions and theme development were systematically documented to strengthen transparency, dependability, and analytical rigor.

Reflexivity

Because the researcher served as the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation, reflexivity was maintained throughout the entire research process. Continuous self-reflection enabled the researcher to recognize personal assumptions, beliefs, and prior experiences that could potentially influence data collection, interpretation, and reporting. Reflexive journaling was maintained to document methodological decisions, emerging insights, and potential sources of bias. Regular consultation with the research adviser and peer debriefing sessions further enhanced the credibility of the findings by ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participants' narratives rather than the researcher's personal perspectives. These strategies strengthened the trustworthiness and transparency of the qualitative inquiry.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Assumption College of Nabunturan before the commencement of data collection. Ethical principles governing voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, and respect for participants were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. To safeguard confidentiality, pseudonyms and identification codes replaced participants' names in all transcripts and research reports. Audio recordings, interview transcripts, and related research documents were securely stored in password-protected electronic files accessible only to the researcher. Data management procedures complied with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to ensure the protection of participants' personal information and privacy.

Limitations and Rigor

The findings of the study were limited to the lived experiences of eight job order non-teaching personnel from a single public higher education institution and therefore were not intended for statistical generalization. The study also relied on participants' self-reported experiences, which may have been influenced by personal interpretation and recall. Nevertheless, methodological rigor was maintained using the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through member checking and peer debriefing, transferability through detailed contextual descriptions, dependability through comprehensive documentation of research procedures, and confirmability

through the maintenance of an audit trail that documented analytical decisions throughout the study. These strategies strengthened the accuracy, consistency, and trustworthiness of the findings while ensuring faithful representation of participants' lived experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study based on the thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with eight non-teaching personnel working as job order employees at Davao de Oro State College–New Bataan Branch. The findings are organized according to the four research questions, namely: (1) the lived experiences of the participants, (2) the workplace challenges they encountered, (3) the coping mechanisms they employed, and (4) the insights they gained from their employment experiences. Each theme is supported by representative participant quotations and is interpreted in relation to relevant literature and the study's theoretical framework. Rather than merely describing participants' narratives, the discussion synthesizes the findings with existing empirical evidence to explain their significance and demonstrate how the experiences of job order employees contribute to a broader understanding of contractual employment, workplace resilience, and organizational support in higher education institutions.

Theme 1. Significant Workplace Experiences of Non-Teaching Personnel Working as Job Order Employees

The first research question explored the significant workplace experiences of non-teaching personnel employed under job order arrangements. The thematic analysis generated six interconnected themes: (1) Taught to Be Responsible, (2) Challenging and Meaningful Work, (3) Participation in Institutional Activities, (4) Shaped Career Aspirations, (5) Sense of Belongingness, and (6) Professional and Personal Growth. These themes collectively demonstrate that although participants experienced employment insecurity, they also perceived their work as an opportunity to develop valuable competencies, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and cultivate professional resilience.

Taught to Be Responsible

Participants described their job order experience as an important period for developing responsibility, accountability, and self-discipline. They explained that fulfilling multiple responsibilities under limited supervision required them to become more organized, dependable, and committed to accomplishing assigned tasks. Their experiences also strengthened their ability to collaborate with colleagues across different offices while maintaining professionalism in carrying out institutional responsibilities. Representative narratives illustrated how the participants regarded responsibility as one of the most valuable lessons acquired through their employment. The development of responsibility among participants suggests that contractual employment, despite its limitations, encouraged employees to become proactive and accountable in fulfilling organizational expectations. This finding supports previous evidence indicating that positive work attitudes and personal accountability contribute to improved job performance among non-teaching personnel (Nwosu et al., 2018). Similarly, organizational environments that promote employee support and meaningful work responsibilities enhance employees' social performance and commitment even under non-permanent employment arrangements (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources Theory, assuming greater responsibility represents a personal resource that enables employees to respond effectively to workplace demands despite limited organizational resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Consequently, responsibility emerged not only as an individual characteristic but also as an adaptive response that strengthened workplace effectiveness and professional development.

Challenging and Meaningful Work

Participants consistently described their work as both challenging and meaningful. They explained that balancing multiple responsibilities, meeting deadlines, and responding to diverse administrative demands required effective time management and adaptability. Although they acknowledged the limitations associated with contractual employment, they considered these challenges meaningful because they enhanced their competence, confidence, and commitment to public service. This finding indicates that employees interpreted workplace challenges as opportunities for learning rather than merely sources of occupational stress. Such experiences align with evidence suggesting that demanding work environments can stimulate employee engagement when sufficient personal and organizational resources are available (Andrić et al., 2023). Likewise, employees who possess greater psychological capital and work engagement demonstrate stronger job performance despite demanding work conditions (Liu et al., 2024). Conversely, studies have reported that excessive workload and time pressure may negatively affect employee well-being when organizational support is inadequate (Chen et al., 2022). The present findings therefore suggest that participants' positive interpretation of workplace challenges may have been influenced by supportive interpersonal relationships and their commitment to institutional service.

Participation in Institutional Activities

Participants emphasized that their involvement in seminars, extension programs, institutional celebrations, and other organizational activities broadened their workplace experiences beyond their routine administrative duties. These opportunities enhanced communication skills, teamwork, interpersonal relationships, and institutional engagement while fostering stronger collaboration with teaching and non-teaching personnel. Active participation in institutional activities reflects employees' growing engagement with the organization and their willingness to contribute beyond assigned responsibilities. Employee engagement has been associated with stronger organizational commitment, collaborative behavior, and workplace satisfaction, particularly when institutions encourage participation and professional involvement (Andrić et al., 2023). Furthermore, induction programs and collaborative organizational practices have been shown to strengthen employees' career aspirations and long-term organizational commitment by fostering meaningful workplace relationships (Callaghan & Collins, 2024). These findings imply that participation in institutional activities serves not only as an avenue for professional development but also as a mechanism for strengthening employees' psychological connection with the organization.

Shaped Career Aspirations

Participants reported that working as job order employees influenced their long-term career goals by encouraging continuous learning, professional improvement, and aspirations for permanent employment. Their workplace experiences motivated them to enhance their competencies, pursue additional educational qualifications, and prepare for future career opportunities within the public sector. This finding suggests that employment uncertainty did not diminish participants' professional aspirations but instead encouraged them to invest in personal and career development. Sustainable career development emphasizes that employees continuously adapt their knowledge, competencies, and career goals in response to changing employment conditions (De Vos et al., 2020). Similarly, future work aspirations evolve as employees develop greater clarity regarding their professional identity and career objectives throughout their employment experiences (Fang & Saks, 2022). The participants therefore demonstrated that temporary employment could function as a developmental stage that strengthened long-term professional ambitions rather than limiting career growth.

Sense of Belongingness

Despite their contractual status, participants described experiencing acceptance, collegial support, and positive workplace relationships that fostered a sense of belonging within the institution. Respectful interactions with supervisors and coworkers enabled them to feel valued despite the absence of permanent employment status. The emergence of belongingness demonstrates the importance of interpersonal relationships in maintaining employee well-being under precarious employment conditions. A strong sense of belonging has been recognized as a fundamental psychological need that promotes motivation, organizational commitment, and emotional well-being (Allen et al., 2022). Similarly, positive organizational support contributes to stronger employee engagement and improved workplace performance by fostering supportive organizational climates (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). However, previous studies also indicated that contractual employees frequently experience social exclusion because of differences in employment status (Ayodele et al., 2022). The present findings therefore suggest that supportive workplace relationships may lessen the negative effects commonly associated with job insecurity.

Professional and Personal Growth

Participants viewed their employment experiences as opportunities for continuous professional and personal development. They explained that exposure to various administrative responsibilities strengthened communication skills, adaptability, confidence, decision-making, and work discipline. These competencies extended beyond workplace performance and positively influenced their personal lives. This finding indicates that participants regarded job order employment as a valuable learning experience that facilitated holistic development despite employment uncertainty. Continuous workplace learning enables employees to acquire competencies necessary for organizational effectiveness and long-term employability (Lacsamana et al., 2018). Likewise, increasing workplace flexibility and psychological job control encourage employees to become more adaptive, resilient, and capable of responding effectively to changing organizational demands (Boccoli et al., 2024).

Theme 2. Workplace Challenges Encountered by Non-Teaching Personnel Working as Job Order Employees

The second research question examined the workplace challenges experienced by non-teaching personnel employed under job order arrangements. The thematic analysis revealed that participants encountered multiple employment-related difficulties that influenced their work experiences and personal well-being. The major themes that emerged included employment insecurity, limited employment benefits, financial constraints, increased workload and role expectations, limited opportunities for professional advancement, and psychological uncertainty. Despite these challenges, participants continued performing their responsibilities with commitment and professionalism, demonstrating resilience in navigating the realities of contractual employment.

Employment Insecurity

Employment insecurity emerged as one of the most pervasive challenges experienced by participants. They expressed persistent uncertainty regarding contract renewal, long-term employment stability, and opportunities for regularization. This uncertainty generated anxiety about their future while limiting their ability to plan long-term personal and professional goals. The findings suggest that contractual employment created continuous psychological uncertainty that extended beyond workplace responsibilities. Similar evidence indicated that job insecurity significantly reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment among contractual employees because uncertainty affected employees' perceptions of stability and career continuity (Ayodele et al., 2022). Likewise, sustainable career development became more difficult when employees lacked clear opportunities for long-term employment and career progression (De Vos et al., 2020). Conversely, some studies suggested that supportive organizational environments and meaningful work experiences partially mitigated the adverse effects of employment insecurity by strengthening employees' organizational attachment and resilience (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). These findings imply that employment stability remains an essential organizational resource that supports both employee well-being and institutional effectiveness.

Limited Employment Benefits

Participants consistently described the absence of employment benefits as a significant challenge associated with their contractual status. They reported limited access to health benefits, leave privileges, retirement security, and other forms of employee protection commonly provided to permanent personnel. These limitations reinforced feelings of inequity despite performing responsibilities comparable to those of regular employees. The absence of employment benefits reflected structural inequalities commonly experienced by contractual employees within public institutions. Previous research demonstrated that organizational support significantly influenced employees' perceptions of fairness, commitment, and workplace satisfaction (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). In contrast, inadequate employment protection reduced job satisfaction and weakened employees' sense of organizational security (Ayodele et al., 2022). The findings therefore suggest that

extending appropriate welfare programs and employee support mechanisms may enhance both employee well-being and organizational commitment among contractual personnel.

Financial Constraints

Participants explained that contractual employment often resulted in financial uncertainty because of relatively limited compensation and the absence of long-term financial security. They described difficulties in managing personal expenses, supporting their families, and preparing for future financial obligations while working under temporary employment arrangements. Financial uncertainty represented an important consequence of employment precarity that influenced employees' overall well-being. Previous studies reported that compensation and work recognition significantly contributed to employee motivation and job satisfaction among contractual personnel, emphasizing the importance of equitable compensation systems in maintaining productivity (Ayodele et al., 2022). Likewise, sustainable careers depend not only on professional growth but also on economic security that enables employees to achieve long-term career stability (De Vos et al., 2020). The findings therefore emphasize that financial security constitutes a critical component of employee welfare and organizational sustainability.

Increased Workload and Role Expectations

Participants reported performing multiple administrative responsibilities beyond their assigned duties while adapting to changing institutional demands. They explained that balancing numerous responsibilities required effective time management, flexibility, and continuous adjustment to organizational expectations despite limited employment resources. These findings indicate that contractual employees frequently experienced substantial job demands that required considerable personal effort and adaptability. According to the Job Demands–Resources Theory, excessive workload and role demands increase occupational stress when organizational resources remain insufficient (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Similarly, workplace time pressure has been associated with elevated stress levels and reduced employee well-being when employees experience prolonged work demands (Chen et al., 2022). However, employees possessing greater psychological capital, work engagement, and job autonomy demonstrated stronger job performance despite demanding work environments (Liu et al., 2024). Consequently, balancing organizational demands with adequate institutional support remains essential for maintaining employee effectiveness and psychological well-being.

Limited Opportunities for Professional Advancement

Participants expressed concern regarding the limited opportunities available for career progression and permanent employment. Although they continuously improved their competencies through work experience, they perceived few institutional mechanisms that supported career advancement or professional recognition. This finding suggests that prolonged contractual employment may restrict employees' long-term career development despite continued professional growth. Sustainable career theory emphasizes that organizations should create opportunities that enable employees to continuously develop their competencies while pursuing meaningful career pathways (De Vos et al., 2020). Similarly, employees' future career aspirations become stronger when organizations encourage professional development and recognize employee potential (Callaghan & Collins, 2024; Fang & Saks, 2022). The absence of structured career development opportunities may therefore reduce long-term organizational commitment despite employees' willingness to improve professionally.

Psychological Uncertainty

Beyond employment insecurity, participants described emotional strain associated with uncertainty regarding their employment status, future career prospects, and personal stability. Although they remained committed to their responsibilities, prolonged uncertainty occasionally affected their confidence, motivation, and emotional well-being. Psychological uncertainty reflected the cumulative effects of contractual employment on employees' emotional health. Previous investigations found that workplace uncertainty, occupational stress, and inadequate organizational resources negatively influenced employees' psychological well-being (Chen et al., 2022). Likewise, flexible work arrangements contributed positively to employee well-being only when accompanied by sufficient psychological job control and organizational support (Boccoli et al., 2024). Nevertheless, a strong sense of workplace belonging and supportive interpersonal relationships reduced psychological strain by strengthening employees' emotional resilience (Allen et al., 2022). These findings suggest that institutions should not only address structural employment concerns but also implement psychosocial support mechanisms that promote employee well-being.

Theme 3. Coping Mechanisms Employed by Non-Teaching Personnel Working as Job Order Employees

The third research question explored the coping mechanisms employed by non-teaching personnel to manage the challenges associated with job order employment. The thematic analysis revealed that participants adopted several adaptive strategies that enabled them to sustain their work performance despite employment insecurity. The major themes included maintaining a positive outlook, strengthening interpersonal relationships, demonstrating adaptability, pursuing continuous learning, practicing self-motivation, and relying on faith and personal resilience. Collectively, these coping strategies reflected participants' capacity to manage occupational demands while maintaining psychological well-being and professional commitment.

Maintaining a Positive Outlook

Participants consistently described maintaining optimism as an important strategy for coping with the uncertainties associated with contractual employment. Rather than focusing solely on the limitations of their employment status, they concentrated on performing their responsibilities effectively while remaining hopeful for future career opportunities. This positive perspective enabled them to sustain motivation despite employment instability. The findings indicate that positive cognitive appraisal served as an important adaptive strategy that enabled participants to reinterpret workplace challenges more constructively. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping explains that individuals continuously evaluate stressful

situations and adopt coping responses that reduce psychological strain while maintaining emotional stability. Similarly, adaptive coping strategies, including positive reframing and acceptance, promoted greater psychological adjustment among employees facing occupational stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Moreover, employees possessing higher levels of psychological capital demonstrated stronger work engagement and maintained better job performance despite employment uncertainty (Liu et al., 2024). These findings suggest that positive thinking functioned as a protective psychological resource that strengthened resilience under contractual employment conditions.

Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships

Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relationships with supervisors, coworkers, and other institutional personnel. They explained that collegial support, teamwork, and open communication provided emotional encouragement and practical assistance in completing workplace responsibilities. Supportive workplace interactions also contributed to their sense of belonging despite their temporary employment status. Supportive interpersonal relationships have consistently been identified as protective organizational resources that reduce workplace stress and strengthen employee engagement. Employees who experience workplace belonging demonstrate greater organizational commitment, motivation, and psychological well-being because supportive social interactions satisfy fundamental relational needs (Allen et al., 2022). Likewise, organizational support enhances employees' social performance by fostering trust, cooperation, and collaborative work environments (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). These findings imply that positive workplace relationships represent an essential coping resource that enables contractual employees to remain engaged despite employment uncertainty.

Demonstrating Adaptability

Participants reported that adapting to changing assignments, multiple responsibilities, and evolving institutional demands enabled them to cope effectively with contractual employment. They recognized that flexibility was necessary because their work frequently required them to perform duties beyond their assigned responsibilities while responding to institutional priorities. The findings demonstrate that adaptability represented an important behavioral response to dynamic workplace conditions. Employees who developed greater psychological job control and flexibility demonstrated higher levels of well-being and more effective adjustment to changing work environments (Boccoli et al., 2024). Similarly, continuous adaptation enhanced employees' capacity to maintain work engagement and productivity under demanding organizational conditions (Liu et al., 2024). However, adaptability became more effective when accompanied by supportive organizational environments that encouraged employee autonomy and professional growth. Thus, adaptability functioned not only as a coping strategy but also as a competency that strengthened participants' long-term employability.

Pursuing Continuous Learning

Participants explained that they intentionally sought opportunities to improve their knowledge, administrative skills, and professional competencies. They viewed seminars, institutional activities, and workplace experiences as valuable opportunities for continuous learning that increased their confidence and prepared them for future career opportunities.

Continuous learning reflected participants' proactive efforts to strengthen their professional capabilities despite employment insecurity. Previous studies reported that non-teaching personnel required ongoing professional development to sustain organizational effectiveness and respond to changing institutional demands (Lacsamana et al., 2018). Likewise, increasing technological changes required employees to continuously update their competencies to maintain workplace performance (Buot, 2024). Sustainable career development likewise emphasized lifelong learning as an essential mechanism for maintaining employability and career adaptability amid changing employment conditions (De Vos et al., 2020). These findings indicate that continuous learning enabled participants to transform workplace challenges into opportunities for professional growth.

Practicing Self-Motivation

Participants acknowledged that maintaining personal motivation was essential because external employment incentives were limited. They explained that commitment to public service, personal goals, and aspirations for career advancement motivated them to continue performing their responsibilities with diligence and professionalism. Self-motivation enabled participants to sustain work engagement despite limited employment benefits and uncertain career prospects. Employee aspirations and future work identity have been associated with stronger persistence, greater career commitment, and continuous professional development among employees facing employment transitions (Fang & Saks, 2022). Likewise, organizations that encourage employee aspirations through supportive workplace environments contribute to stronger organizational commitment and employee engagement (Callaghan & Collins, 2024). The findings therefore suggest that intrinsic motivation compensated for some limitations associated with contractual employment while promoting sustained workplace commitment.

Relying on Faith and Personal Resilience

Participants also described faith, perseverance, and personal resilience as important sources of strength that enabled them to cope with employment uncertainty. They believed that patience, determination, and trust in future opportunities allowed them to remain optimistic while continuing to perform their responsibilities responsibly. The findings demonstrate that resilience represented a multidimensional coping mechanism involving emotional regulation, perseverance, and confidence in overcoming adversity. Psychological resilience has been recognized as an important protective factor that enables employees to manage occupational stress while maintaining work engagement and emotional well-being (Liu et al., 2024). Furthermore, work-life balance and psychological well-being improve when employees develop effective coping resources that strengthen emotional stability and adaptive functioning (Rajagopal et al., 2024). These findings suggest that personal resilience complemented organizational support by enabling participants to sustain optimism, productivity, and professional commitment despite prolonged employment uncertainty.

Theme 4. Insights Gained by Non-Teaching Personnel Working as Job Order Employees

The fourth research question explored the insights gained by non-teaching personnel from their experiences as job order employees. The thematic analysis revealed that participants regarded their employment experiences as valuable opportunities for learning, self-improvement, and professional development despite the limitations associated with contractual employment. The major themes that emerged included valuing perseverance, appreciating continuous learning, recognizing the importance of organizational support, developing professional competence, and strengthening commitment to public service. These themes demonstrate that participants transformed workplace challenges into meaningful learning experiences that shaped both their personal and professional development.

Valuing Perseverance

Participants recognized perseverance as one of the most important lessons learned from working under contractual employment. They explained that enduring employment uncertainty, adapting to changing workplace demands, and remaining committed despite limited benefits strengthened their determination to pursue personal and professional goals. The findings suggest that perseverance emerged through participants' continuous exposure to workplace adversity, enabling them to develop resilience and long-term commitment. Sustainable career development emphasizes that employees continuously adapt to changing employment conditions by developing competencies and personal resources that support long-term career success (De Vos et al., 2020). Likewise, psychologically engaged employees demonstrated greater persistence in achieving work-related goals despite organizational uncertainty (Liu et al., 2024). These findings indicate that perseverance functioned as an adaptive personal resource that enabled participants to sustain both motivation and workplace performance despite employment precarity.

Appreciating Continuous Learning

Participants acknowledged that contractual employment encouraged them to continuously acquire new knowledge, improve administrative competencies, and broaden their professional skills. They viewed every assigned responsibility as an opportunity to learn, enabling them to become more competent and confident in performing institutional duties. This finding demonstrates that experiential learning became an important outcome of participants' employment experiences. Continuous professional development has been recognized as essential for strengthening the competencies of non-teaching personnel and improving organizational effectiveness (Lacsamana et al., 2018). Likewise, rapidly changing workplace technologies and institutional processes require employees to update their skills continuously to remain effective in their respective roles (Buot, 2024). Furthermore, sustainable career development emphasizes lifelong learning as a critical strategy for maintaining employability and adapting to evolving workplace demands (De Vos et al., 2020). These findings suggest that participants perceived learning not merely as a professional requirement but as a pathway toward long-term career advancement.

Recognizing the Importance of Organizational Support

Participants realized that supportive supervisors, cooperative coworkers, and a positive organizational environment significantly influenced their ability to remain motivated despite employment uncertainty. They appreciated organizations that recognized employee contributions, encouraged teamwork, and fostered positive workplace relationships. The findings underscore the importance of organizational support in promoting employee well-being and workplace effectiveness. Supportive organizational practices strengthened employees' social performance, organizational commitment, and workplace engagement even under challenging employment conditions (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2021). Similarly, employees who experienced a strong sense of belonging demonstrated greater motivation, psychological well-being, and commitment because supportive interpersonal relationships fulfilled fundamental psychological needs (Allen et al., 2022). Conversely, inadequate organizational support may intensify occupational stress and reduce employee satisfaction among contractual personnel (Ayodele et al., 2022). These findings emphasize that organizational support serves as a protective factor that promotes resilience and sustained employee engagement.

Developing Professional Competence

Participants viewed their employment experiences as opportunities to strengthen communication, problem-solving, adaptability, teamwork, and administrative skills. They believed that performing diverse responsibilities expanded their professional competence and prepared them for future employment opportunities. The findings indicate that contractual employment contributed substantially to participants' professional growth by exposing them to diverse workplace experiences. Increased job autonomy and psychological job control have been associated with higher employee performance because employees become more confident in making decisions and adapting to organizational demands (Boccoli et al., 2024). Likewise, employees possessing stronger psychological capital and work engagement demonstrated higher levels of productivity and professional effectiveness despite demanding work environments (Liu et al., 2024). Consequently, the experiences of job order employees extended beyond temporary employment by strengthening competencies that support long-term employability and organizational contribution.

Strengthening Commitment to Public Service

Participants expressed that their experiences reinforced their commitment to serving students, colleagues, and the institution despite the temporary nature of their appointments. They emphasized that dedication, integrity, and professionalism remained important regardless of employment status. This finding suggests that participants' commitment was influenced not only by employment conditions but also by intrinsic values associated with public service. Employee aspirations and future professional identity encourage individuals to remain committed to meaningful organizational roles despite career uncertainty (Fang & Saks, 2022). Likewise, organizations that cultivate employee aspirations through supportive workplace practices strengthen long-term organizational commitment and engagement (Callaghan & Collins,

2024). The participants' continued dedication therefore reflected a strong internal motivation to contribute positively to institutional goals despite structural employment limitations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study demonstrated that the lived experiences of non-teaching personnel working as job order employees were characterized by both workplace challenges and meaningful opportunities for personal and professional development. Although participants experienced employment insecurity, limited employment benefits, financial uncertainty, and constrained career advancement opportunities, they remained committed to their institutional responsibilities by demonstrating responsibility, adaptability, perseverance, and resilience. These findings indicate that employment precarity did not diminish participants' motivation to perform their duties; instead, it fostered the development of valuable competencies, including effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and continuous learning. Moreover, supportive workplace relationships, organizational encouragement, and positive interpersonal interactions strengthened participants' sense of belonging and contributed to their capacity to cope with occupational challenges despite their non-permanent employment status. The study further revealed that participants actively employed adaptive coping mechanisms, including maintaining a positive outlook, strengthening workplace relationships, demonstrating flexibility, pursuing continuous professional development, practicing self-motivation, and relying on personal resilience. These coping strategies enabled them to sustain psychological well-being and workplace performance despite prolonged employment uncertainty. The findings also highlighted that participants viewed their contractual employment as a valuable learning experience that shaped their professional competence, strengthened their commitment to public service, and encouraged long-term career aspirations. Consequently, the study contributes contextual qualitative evidence that extends understanding of contractual employment within Philippine public higher education institutions by demonstrating that the interaction between organizational support and individual resilience enables non-teaching personnel to transform employment adversity into opportunities for meaningful growth and sustained organizational contribution.

The findings suggest that higher education institutions should strengthen organizational policies and employee welfare programs that support the professional development and well-being of job order personnel. Institutional administrators are encouraged to establish equitable professional development opportunities, provide regular capacity-building programs, and implement mentoring initiatives that enhance employees' competencies and career readiness. Likewise, institutions should strengthen employee recognition programs, promote supportive supervisory practices, and cultivate inclusive workplace environments that reinforce employees' sense of belonging regardless of employment status. Improving access to appropriate employee welfare services, psychosocial support, and career planning initiatives may further strengthen organizational commitment, work engagement, and employee well-being among contractual personnel. At the policy level, government agencies and institutional leaders should examine existing employment practices affecting job order personnel to identify mechanisms that promote equitable employment conditions, transparent career progression, and sustainable workforce development while remaining consistent with applicable civil service policies. Future qualitative and mixed-methods investigations may further examine the long-term career trajectories, organizational commitment, psychological well-being, and work performance of non-teaching personnel across multiple higher education institutions and geographical contexts. Comparative studies involving permanent and contractual employees may likewise provide broader evidence regarding the influence of organizational support, employment security, and institutional practices on employee resilience, engagement, and professional development within the Philippine higher education sector.

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