

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



**MJSSH**  
Muallim Journal of  
Social Science and Humanities

# ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, REWARD SATISFACTION, AND TEACHER COMMITMENT IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/460>

## Abstract

Sustaining a committed academic workforce has become an increasing challenge for private higher education institutions operating under resource constraints. Drawing on social exchange theory, this study investigates how organizational resources, namely perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction, are associated with teacher commitment through the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy. Data were collected from 417 faculty members employed at private higher education institutions in eastern China using a cross-sectional survey design. The findings suggest that reward satisfaction holds particular importance in shaping teachers' long-term organizational attachment, while teacher self-efficacy functions as a key psychological mechanism through which organizational resources are translated into sustained professional commitment. By contextualizing teacher commitment within resource-sensitive higher education environments, this study extends the application of social exchange theory and provides implications for institutional management in emerging higher education systems.

**Keywords:** Perceived organizational support, Private Higher Education, Reward Satisfaction, Self-efficacy, Teacher Commitment

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Received 25<sup>th</sup> June 2026, revised 12<sup>th</sup> July 2026, accepted 1<sup>st</sup> August 2026

## **Introduction**

Private higher education institutions account for roughly 28–29% of all higher education institutions in China, yet remain less well funded than public counterparts and face substantial financial pressures relying heavily on tuition fees (Borsi et al., 2021; Mok, 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Duan et al., 2023). Compared with public universities, private universities in eastern China operate in a highly competitive educational market characterized by stronger performance pressure, higher faculty mobility, and greater dependence on organizational support mechanisms. These contextual characteristics make teachers' psychological resources particularly important for sustaining organizational commitment. Teacher commitment is essential to institutional effectiveness and reform (Yang et al., 2019), and serves as a key predictor of job stability and retention (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cohen et al., 2016).

## **Perceived organizational support and teacher commitment**

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' overall assessment of the degree to which their organization recognizes their contributions and prioritizes their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). A substantial body of research has established that higher levels of perceived organizational support are consistently associated with stronger organizational commitment across diverse educational settings (Musyaropah & Sari, 2024; Celep & Yilmazturk, 2012). However, perceived organizational support may be non-significant without mediating variables in some educational settings (Wang, 2023), underscoring the need to examine mechanisms through which perceived organizational support operates, particularly in Chinese private universities characterized by intense competition and constrained resources (Li et al., 2025).

## **Reward satisfaction and teacher commitment**

While job satisfaction and commitment have been widely studied (Bashir & Gani, 2019; Cayupe et al., 2023), existing research often overlooks the specific influence of reward satisfaction (O'Driscoll & Randall, 1999). However, focusing only on general job satisfaction may obscure the distinct contribution of reward-related experiences, which represent a critical mechanism through which institutions communicate recognition, value, and support to employees. Reward satisfaction encompasses both intrinsic rewards (recognition, autonomy, growth opportunities) and extrinsic rewards (salary, promotion, job security). Financial incentives such as salary and timely compensation have been shown to reinforce teachers' dedication to their institutions (Bawalla & Adenugba, 2021; Frimina & Sikawab, 2023). When reward structures extend beyond material benefits to encompass recognition and professional respect, teachers' sense of institutional belonging and long-term commitment is further strengthened (Berjaoui & Karami-Akkary, 2020; Li & Ye, 2021).

## **The mediating role of self-efficacy**

Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence in their capacity to carry out instructional responsibilities and make a meaningful impact on student learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This internal belief system serves as a psychological conduit through which organizational resources are converted into sustained professional commitment. Supportive environments and adequate rewards bolster teachers' professional confidence (Bandura, 1997; Jentsch et al., 2022), which in turn translates into sustained commitment (Zhang et al., 2023; Shu,

2022). However, existing research has often examined the effects of organizational support or reward-related factors separately, leaving the integrated mechanism through which multiple organizational resources jointly enhance teacher commitment insufficiently understood. Self-efficacy has been identified as a significant mediator linking organizational support to positive work outcomes (Jiao et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2020), and reward satisfaction to commitment (Mokhtar et al., 2021; Canrinus et al., 2012).

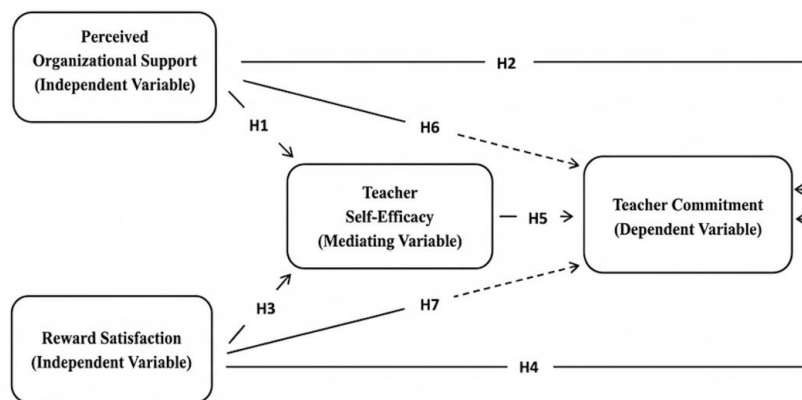


**Figure 1:** Hypothesis model tested in the research

The proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1. In resource-sensitive private higher education institutions, organizational support and reward systems may function as important institutional resources shaping teachers' professional attitudes, psychological capability, and organizational attachment. Drawing on social exchange theory, teachers who perceive stronger organizational support and fairer rewards are more likely to develop higher self-efficacy and stronger commitment toward their institutions. Drawing on the theoretical arguments above, this study designed and tested a partial mediation model in which teacher self-efficacy serves as a mediating mechanism linking perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction to teacher commitment. Specifically, perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction are each hypothesized to positively predict both teacher self-efficacy (H1, H3) and teacher commitment directly (H2, H4). Teacher self-efficacy is further expected to positively predict commitment (H5), and to mediate the effects of perceived organizational support on commitment (H6) and reward satisfaction on commitment (H7).

## Theoretical Framework

This study draws on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958) to explain how organizational resources shape teacher commitment in private higher education institutions. Within this perspective, perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction are viewed as institutional resources that may strengthen teachers' organizational attachment through reciprocal professional responses. In addition, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) provides the psychological basis for understanding teacher self-efficacy as teachers' beliefs in their professional capability (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Combining these perspectives, this study conceptualizes teacher self-efficacy as a psychological mechanism through which organizational resources are translated into sustained professional commitment.

## **Materials and Measures**

The study comprised 417 faculty members from five private universities in Qingdao, China, selected through a two-stage sampling procedure. In Stage 1, the ten private universities in Qingdao (total faculty: 8,487) were grouped into five geographic clusters, with one university randomly selected from each. In Stage 2, 100 teachers were randomly selected from each university using official administrative lists, yielding 500 distributed questionnaires and 417 valid responses (response rate: 83.4%), consistent with Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling guidelines. The five universities represented 50% of all private higher education institutions in Qingdao, ensuring substantial population coverage. Data were collected via online platforms (80 per university) and paper-based forms (20 per university). The sample was predominantly female (61.9%), aged below 40 (81.7%), highly educated (86.1% holding Master's or Doctoral degrees), and early-career (65.5% with five or fewer years of teaching experience).

### **Perceived organizational support**

Perceived Organisational Support Scale originally developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986). The scale contains 17 items. The measure of perceived organisational support consists of two types, a statement involving an evaluation judgment of the organisation, and a statement involving an action that the organisation might take in a hypothetical situation affecting an employee.

### **Reward Satisfaction**

Reward satisfaction was adapted from the scale developed by O'Driscoll and Randall (1999). The scale contains 17 items. This section consisted of four items of intrinsic reward satisfaction and seven items focused on extrinsic reward satisfaction. Intrinsic reward satisfaction encompassed task diversity, challenge, skill utilization, and autonomy, while extrinsic reward satisfaction covered financial compensation, job security, promotion opportunities, collegial relationships, physical work environment, peer support, and performance recognition.

### **Self-efficacy**

Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the 12-item scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), which captures three dimensions: teachers' confidence in engaging students, their belief in the effectiveness of their instructional approaches, and their perceived ability to manage classroom dynamics.

### **Teacher commitment**

Teacher commitment was assessed using a 17-item instrument adapted from Thien *et al.* (2014). The scale captures four dimensions reflecting teachers' dedication to their institution, their students, their instructional practice, and their broader professional identity.

### **Data analysis**

Data management and preliminary analysis were conducted in SPSS 27.0, while hypothesis testing employed SmartPLS 4.0 via PLS-SEM. Internal consistency was strong across all constructs, with Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, and CR values between 0.927 and 0.968, surpassing the 0.70 benchmark (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Convergent validity was established through factor loadings ranging from 0.725

to 0.869 and AVE values between 0.579 and 0.702. The Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio confirmed discriminant validity (Tables 1 and 2), and VIF values (1.252–1.612) remained well under 3.3, ruling out multicollinearity concerns (Table 3). Normality assessment via skewness and kurtosis indicated the data met the requirements for PLS-SEM (Kline, 2015).

**Table 1**

*Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)*

|     | POS   | RS    | SE    | TC    |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| POS | 0.807 |       |       |       |
| RS  | 0.448 | 0.761 |       |       |
| SE  | 0.575 | 0.432 | 0.822 |       |
| TC  | 0.577 | 0.581 | 0.570 | 0.838 |

**Table 2**

*Discriminant validity (HTMT Ratio)*

|     | POS   | RS    | SE    | TC |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|----|
| POS |       |       |       |    |
| RS  | 0.468 |       |       |    |
| SE  | 0.599 | 0.447 |       |    |
| TC  | 0.598 | 0.607 | 0.591 |    |

**Table 3**

*Variance inflation factor*

|     | POS | RS | SE    | TC    |
|-----|-----|----|-------|-------|
| POS |     |    | 1.252 | 1.612 |
| RS  |     |    | 1.252 | 1.327 |
| SE  |     |    |       | 1.583 |
| TC  |     |    |       |       |

## Results

Figure 2 illustrates that both perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction were significant predictors of self-efficacy, with path coefficients of  $\beta = 0.477$  and  $\beta = 0.218$  respectively (both  $p < 0.001$ ), accounting for 36.8% of variance in self-efficacy. Direct effects on teacher commitment were also significant for both perceived organizational support ( $\beta = 0.268$ ) and reward satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.346$ ), with reward satisfaction demonstrating greater predictive strength. Self-efficacy similarly predicted teacher commitment positively ( $\beta = 0.266$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the overall model explained 50.8% of variance in teacher commitment ( $R^2 = 0.508$ ).

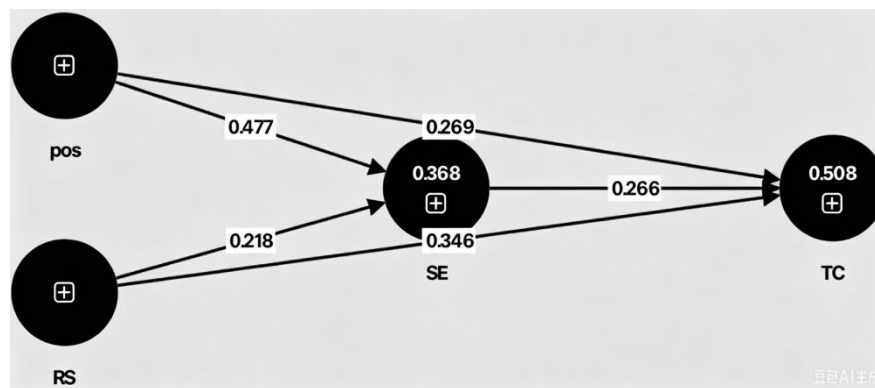


**Figure 2:** Final model

*POS, Perceived Organizational Support; RS, Reward Satisfaction; SE, Self-efficacy; TC, Teacher Commitment*

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples confirmed all five direct hypotheses (H1–H5,  $p < 0.001$ ), with reward satisfaction exerting a stronger effect on teacher commitment ( $\beta = 0.346$ ,  $f^2 = 0.183$ ) compared to perceived organizational support ( $\beta = 0.268$ ,  $f^2 = 0.092$ ) (Table 4). Mediation analysis further confirmed that self-efficacy significantly transmitted both the perceived organizational support - teacher commitment ( $\beta = 0.127$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and reward satisfaction - teacher commitment ( $\beta = 0.058$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) relationships, lending support to H6 and H7 (Table 5). All seven hypotheses were supported.

**Table 4**  
*Path coefficient*

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Path coefficient | T value | P value | Effect size | Decision  |
|------------|--------------|------------------|---------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| H1         | POS → SE     | 0.477            | 12.178  | 0.000   | 0.288       | Supported |
| H2         | POS → TC     | 0.268            | 5.739   | 0.000   | 0.092       | Supported |
| H3         | RS → SE      | 0.218            | 5.336   | 0.000   | 0.060       | Supported |
| H4         | RS → TC      | 0.346            | 9.353   | 0.000   | 0.183       | Supported |
| H5         | SE → TC      | 0.266            | 5.933   | 0.000   | 0.091       | Supported |

**Table 5**  
*Mediation effects*

| Hypothesis | Relationship  | Path coefficient | T value | P value | Decision  |
|------------|---------------|------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| H6         | POS → SE → TC | 0.127            | 5.627   | 0.000   | Supported |
| H7         | RS → SE → TC  | 0.058            | 3.753   | 0.000   | Supported |

## Discussion

Under the framework of social exchange theory, this study explored how perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction shape teacher commitment, and the extent to which self-efficacy

mediates these effects. PLS-SEM analysis yielded consistent support for all proposed hypotheses, offering meaningful insights into the organizational and psychological dynamics that sustain teacher commitment in resource-constrained private universities.

### **The impact of perceived organizational support on teacher commitment**

The findings confirm that perceived organizational support is a significant antecedent of teacher commitment, particularly in private higher education institutions where financial and structural resources are limited. When teachers perceive strong institutional support, they are more likely to develop long-term attachment and a willingness to remain within the organization, contributing to workforce stability and institutional effectiveness.

Consistent with the theoretical mechanisms proposed by Eisenberger et al. (2020), perceived organizational support operates through both social exchange and self-enhancement processes. Through social exchange, supportive treatment fosters a sense of obligation and reciprocity, leading to stronger commitment. Within China's private higher education sector, where material incentives may be constrained, these psychological mechanisms play an even more crucial role in supporting the long-term sustainability of the teaching workforce.

Previous studies have demonstrated that perceived organizational support strengthens teachers' retention intentions through affective commitment and self-efficacy (Lu & Ji, 2023; Ji & Zhao, 2020). The present study extends this line of research by highlighting its influence across specific dimensions of teacher commitment, such as dedication to students and classrooms. Organizational support may function as a critical institutional resource that strengthens teachers' sense of professional capability and attachment, thereby contributing to the long-term sustainability of higher education institutions.

### **The impact of reward satisfaction on teacher commitment**

The study reaffirms that reward satisfaction has a positive impact on teacher commitment, corroborating prior research. For instance, Nawab and Bhatti (2011) emphasized a strong relationship between financial compensation and teacher commitment. What's more, financial rewards (salary, timely payment, allowances) are strongly and positively associated with teachers' job commitment in Nigeria and Tanzania (Bawalla & Adenugba, 2021; Frimina & Sikawab, 2023). In the educational context, Inim (2023) highlighted the important role of reward systems in motivating teachers and enhancing their commitment, identifying promotion opportunities, work-life balance, and remuneration as significant predictors. Evidence from China further supports this relationship, with Li and Ye (2021) confirming a significant correlation between teachers' perceptions of reward systems and organizational commitment in secondary schools. These findings underscore the dual importance of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in shaping teacher commitment.

Reward satisfaction is a key mechanism for maintaining a stable and committed teaching workforce, especially in resource-constrained private higher education institutions. In private higher education institutions, reward systems may serve as an important organizational mechanism through which institutions reinforce teachers' sense of value, professional stability, and long-term organizational attachment. Moreover, the combination of reward satisfaction as an extrinsic motivator and perceived organizational support as an intrinsic factor creates a comprehensive

support system, highlighting that both material incentives and a supportive environment are necessary for long-term commitment. These external factors may also operate by strengthening teachers' self-efficacy, thereby translating organizational support into sustained professional commitment.

### **The mediating effect of teacher self-efficacy**

Beyond the direct influence of organizational resources, the most significant contribution of this study lies in identifying the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy functions as a critical psychological bridge that transforms external support and reward satisfaction into sustained professional commitment. Empirical evidence has shown that self-efficacy serves as a significant mediator between organizational support and positive work-related outcomes (Jiao et al., 2022), and also plays an important role in linking reward satisfaction with teacher commitment. Self-efficacy enhances commitment both directly and indirectly through factors such as job satisfaction (Mokhtar et al., 2021), and has been identified as a central driver within broader networks of motivation, engagement, and occupational commitment (Canrinus et al., 2012; Shu, 2022).

Teacher commitment in private higher education may be shaped not simply by institutional conditions, but by the extent to which teachers internalize organizational resources as professional confidence and capability. Supportive environments and fair reward systems are more effective when they strengthen teachers' confidence in their professional capabilities, thereby promoting higher levels of motivation, performance, and sustained commitment. These findings suggest that to sustain teacher commitment over time, institutions should integrate both external support and strategies aimed at enhancing teacher self-efficacy, ensuring that organizational inputs are effectively internalized into enduring professional engagement.

### **Limitation**

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional quantitative design limits causal inference and does not capture the deeper reasons behind the observed relationships. Second, the sample is confined to private universities in Qingdao, which may limit generalizability to other regions or institution types. Third, the model explains approximately 50% of the variance in teacher commitment, suggesting that other variables such as job burnout, school culture, or leadership style may also play important roles and warrant inclusion in future research.

### **Recommendations**

Future research could adopt longitudinal approaches to capture how organizational support and reward satisfaction dynamically influence teacher self-efficacy and commitment over time. Introducing moderating variables such as organizational justice, or incorporating constructs such as work engagement and psychological capital, would provide a more comprehensive explanatory model. In practice, private universities should prioritize fair and multi-dimensional reward systems encompassing both competitive compensation and intangible recognition, while fostering a supportive organizational climate through mentorship programs and inclusive decision-making. Investment in professional development initiatives that enhance teachers' confidence in their capabilities can further translate organizational inputs into sustained long-term commitment.

## Conclusion

This study examines the effects of perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction on teacher commitment in private universities in East China, as well as the mediating role of self-efficacy. The results indicate that both perceived organizational support and reward satisfaction significantly enhance teacher commitment, and self-efficacy plays an important mediating role in this relationship. This study contributes to the existing literature in the following three main ways.

First, this study expands our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the formation of teacher commitment in private universities. Previous research has primarily focused on the direct effects of organizational resources on teacher commitment, while offering little in-depth exploration of the internal psychological mechanisms through which these resources translate into teacher commitment. By incorporating perceived organizational support, reward satisfaction, and teacher self-efficacy into a unified analytical framework, this study reveals how external organizational resources are transformed into teacher commitment through internal psychological resources, thereby enriching the understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying teacher commitment. Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with those of recent research on faculty at private universities in China. Previous studies have indicated that organizational support can further promote positive work outcomes by enhancing faculty members' self-efficacy, suggesting that the role of organizational resources can only be fully realized through the mediation of individual psychological resources (Li et al., 2025). This study further extends this psychological mechanism to the domain of faculty commitment, revealing the critical bridging role of faculty self-efficacy in the process by which organizational resources are transformed into faculty commitment.

Second, this study deepens the theoretical explanation of the formation mechanism of teacher commitment in the specific context of Chinese private universities. The East China region has a high level of economic development and a highly competitive job market. Public universities, foreign-invested enterprises, and other employment channels provide faculty with a wider range of career options, subjecting faculty at private universities to greater career mobility and pressure to seek alternative employment. Against this backdrop, whether faculty members can internalize the support provided by the organization as their own professional confidence becomes a key factor influencing their organizational commitment. Therefore, this study provides new empirical evidence for the application of organizational behavior theory within specific cultural and institutional contexts.

Third, the results highlight that maintaining a stable and committed teaching workforce requires more than short-term incentive structures. Instead, long-term teacher commitment depends on the combined effect of supportive organizational environments and the strengthening of teacher self-efficacy. By fostering these conditions, private universities can enhance workforce stability and contribute to the long-term sustainability of educational quality. Meanwhile, the findings carry implications beyond the Chinese context, offering lessons for private and under-resourced higher education institutions in other emerging economies seeking to sustain committed academic workforces under similar structural constraints.

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