



# Study on the Relationship of the Teacher's Perceived Organizational Support, Psychological Contract and Their Job Satisfaction in Private Universities: A Cross-Sectional Survey in Shanghai, China

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## Abstract

**Aims:** From the perspective of organizational support and psychological contract, the present research explored the internal and external factors influencing the job satisfaction of teachers in private universities, and explored effective ways to reduce their turnover rate. **Methods:** The present research investigated 162 Shanghai local private universities teachers with the scale of psychological contract, organizational support and job satisfaction. **Results:** It showed that the private universities teachers' job satisfaction presented with the medium level, and there was a significant positive correlation between perceived organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction. Especially, the organizational support and the psychological contract significantly predicted the teachers' job motivation satisfaction. **Conclusion and Enlightenment:** Such results indicated that giving the positive feedback and valuing in the process of teachers' work is an effective way to improve Chinese private universities teachers' job satisfaction and reduce their turnover intention and behavior.

## Subject Areas

Psychology

## Keywords

Private Universities Teachers in China, Job Satisfaction, Perceived Organizational Support, Psychological Contract

## 1. Introduction

The Private colleges and universities play an important role in promoting the reform and popularization of the higher education in China and the popularization of higher education in China. In the past two decades, the development of the domestic private colleges and universities could be described as “rapid development”. However, due to various objective and subjective factors, the difference between the public university and the private university teachers in terms of the establishment, salary and social status has become more and more prominent, which has led to the high frequency of teachers’ turnover in private university. According to a survey, the annual teacher turnover rates account for 8% - 10% of the total number of teachers, and so, all teachers in the university should be recycled about every 10 years, *i.e.*, the average tenure of teachers is only about 5 years (Yu, 2012 [1]; Yan & Zhou, 2018 [2]). In terms of the current situation of private universities in Shanghai of China, the turnover rate fluctuated between 15% and 20%, which was much higher than the reasonable standard of 5%, and showed a rising trend year by year (Xu, 2017) [3]. The main cause for this was teachers’ low job satisfaction in private colleges. Recently, studies of the domestic in China as well as international have shown that there was a significant correlation between the level of psychological contract and organizational support for employees and their job satisfaction. It was found that the lower the level of psychological contract, the lower the corresponding organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and the higher the employee turnover rate (Rousseau, 1994 [4]; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018 [5]; Pi, 2021 [6]). In addition, among the main factors (such as job characteristics, leadership factors, personal factors, colleague relationships, compensation and wages, benefits, and working conditions) affecting employees’ job satisfaction, the organizational support factors such as leadership, colleague relationships, and working conditions have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction (Muse & Stamper, 2007 [7]; Buhari, Yong, & Lee, 2020 [8]; Tian & Suo, 2020 [9]).

In view of the above research findings, the core target variable of the present study was Job Satisfaction, a concept that refers to the emotional response from the employees to work that is raised from the balanced the gap between the work benefits they expected and the actual benefits they received (Wilkin, 2013) [10]. Combined with the analysis of key influenced factors of the job satisfaction with the existing literature, two other related core variables were introduced: Psychological Contract and Organizational Support. Psychological Contract (PC) referred there the implicit, informal, and unstated mutual expectations in the employee-organization interrelationship besides the formal employment contract, which were also the main determinants of employee attitudes and behaviors; such as the employees’ understanding of the organization’s policies, practices, culture and the various forms of commitment made by agents at all level of the organizational construe (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006) [11]. Organizational Support (OS) refers to the overall perception of employees’ well-being stemming

from the organization's attention and concern for their contributions, it included both the perceived level of employer concern for employee contributions and for employee well-being (Watt & Hargis, 2010) [12].

While the numerous studies continued to provide support for the significant positive correlation between psychological contract and organizational support and job satisfaction, it had also been shown that psychological contract and organizational support respectively have significant predictive validity for job satisfaction variables (Antonino, *et al.*, 2014 [13]; Wang, *et al.*, 2013 [14]); moreover, there is a significant correlation between psychological contract and organizational support (De Boeck, *et al.*, 2018 [15]; Kim & Moon, 2021 [16]). However, the results of the regression analysis of the relationship between psychological contract and organizational support in Chinese researchers were inconsistent; Ling, *et al.* (2006) [17] and Lu *et al.* (2013) [18], found that organizational support had the significant predictive validity of psychological contract, while another study, such as Zhang *et al.* (2015) [19] reported that psychological contract was more suitable as a predictor variable of the perceived the organizational support.

Taking the above literatures as a clue, the present study intended to analyze the relationship between the organizational support received by the private colleges' teachers and their job satisfaction from the perspective of psychological contract with taking into the personal characteristics and the organization support as the social factors, to test the hypothesis model that taking the psychological contract as an mediating variable to influence the relationship between organization support and job satisfaction of the private colleges' teachers.

The corresponding hypotheses were as follows.

H1: There was a significant positive correlation between psychological contract and job satisfaction.

H2: There was a significant positive correlation between organizational support and job satisfaction.

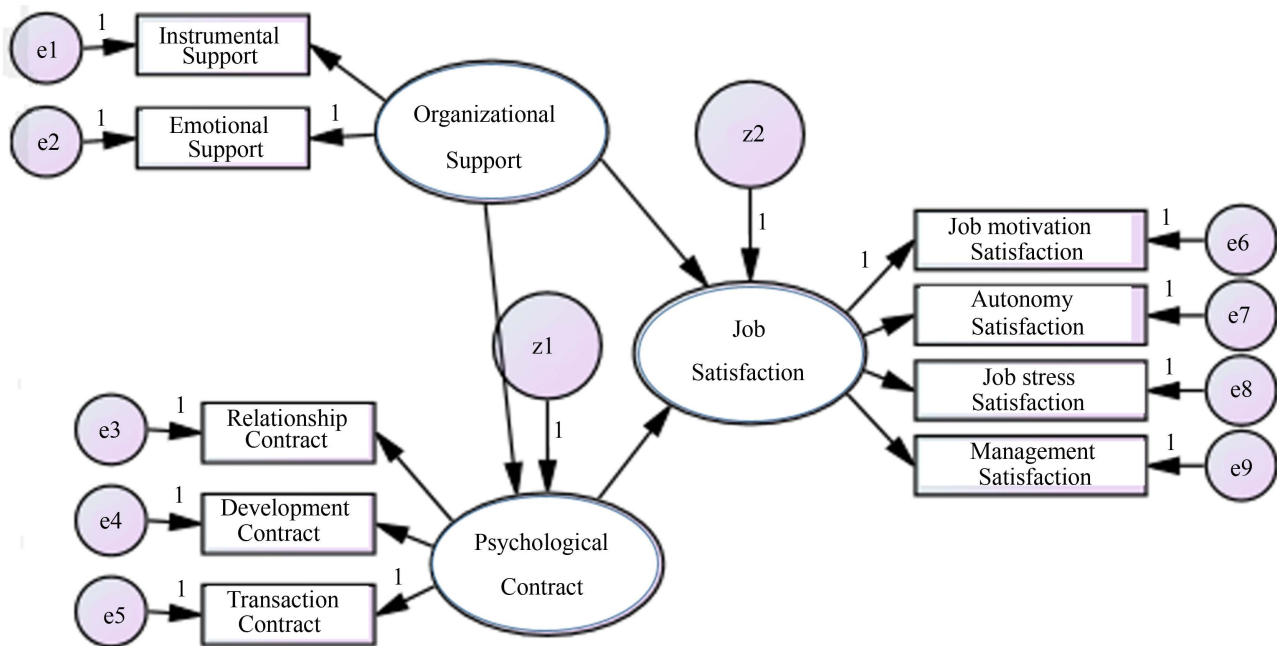
H3: There was a significant predictive validity of psychological contract with the variance in job satisfaction.

H4: There was a significant predictive validity of psychological contract with the variation in job satisfaction.

While analyzing the system characteristics and the current work situation of teachers in private university of China, the consolidation of the psychological contract for private university teachers was more likely to be established and consolidated followed with the presentation of organizational support, therefore, regarding the mutual predictive relationship between the psychological contract and organizational support, the additional assumptions of the present study was:

H5: Organizational support predicted the psychological contract of private college teachers.

Synthesizing the above five hypotheses, a hypothetical model of the relationship between job satisfaction, organizational support and psychological contract of teachers in private universities was further proposed in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** The relationship model among teachers' organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction in private universities in Shanghai, China.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

162 private universities teachers in Shanghai, China. Their demographic information was shown in **Table 1**.

### 2.2. Measurements

#### 2.2.1. Psychological Contract Scale

It adopts a Chinese version modified by Peng (2008) [20] with reference to Rousseau (1996) psychological contract structure, with five-point Likert score (1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree"). A total of 15 questions covered three dimensions such as "transactional contract", "relational contract" and "development contract". The Cronbach coefficient of the scale was above 0.813.

#### 2.2.2. Organizational Support Scale (Xu, 2004) [21]

The scale included two parts: instrumental support and emotional support. The instrumental part included 7 items, which were divided into three dimensions: material support, personnel support, and information support; the emotional part included 10 items, which were also divided into three dimensions: closeness support, respect for support and network integration. All items use a five-point Likert score (1 means "strongly disagree" to 5 means "strongly agree"). The internal consistency coefficient of each item of the scale is greater than 0.735.

#### 2.2.3. Job Satisfaction Scale

The version modified by Wang (2005) [22] with reference to the short MSQ. The scale use a five-point Likert score (1 means "strongly disagree" to 5 means

**Table 1.** The demographic information of the subjects.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Gender	Male	37	22.8
	Female	125	77.2
Age	under 25 years old	14	8.6
	26 to 35 years old	93	57.4
	36 to 45 years old	29	17.9
	46 to 55 years old	11	6.8
	over 56 years old	15	9.3
Marital status	Single	47	29.0
	Married	115	71.0
Education	Junior college	6	3.7
	Undergraduate	62	38.3
	Master degree and above	94	58.0
Working years	Less than 1 year	36	22.2
	1 to 4 years	57	35.2
	5 to 10 years	47	29.0
	More than 10 years	22	13.6
Job position	Teaching and research	58	35.8
	Administrative management	60	37.0
	Teaching Assistant	40	24.7
	Other	4	2.5

“strongly agree”). It included 20 items, covering the four dimensions of “job motivation satisfaction”, “autonomy satisfaction”, “job stress satisfaction” and “management factor satisfaction”. The Cronbach coefficient of each dimension was between 0.73 - 0.810.

### 2.3. Survey and Data Collection

Use the Questionnaire Star to distribute the scales and collected the data on line. The notification of the participants' informed consent was contained in the questionnaire to participate in the study. 163 subjects were recruited totally, and the data of one of them was deleted because it was not completed. The test time was from June to July 2021. Use SPSS16.0 and AMOS24.0 for data sorting and analysis.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Status Descriptive

A descriptive statistical analysis was made based on the scores of Shanghai pri-

vate colleges' teachers on the organizational support, psychological contract, and job satisfaction scales. The results were shown in **Table 2**.

In general, the participants' perceived organizational support, psychological contract and the job satisfaction were at a moderate level. In detail, the emotional support was evenly higher than instrumental support, while the transactional contracts score more than relational contracts and developmental contracts. However, among the job satisfaction variable, the score of the job motivation satisfaction was lower than the scores of the autonomy satisfaction, job stress satisfaction and management factor satisfaction.

### 3.2. Correlations

Person Correlation Analysis was carried out on the scores of the subjects in the three scales. The results were shown in **Table 3**: There is a significant correlation between each of the three variables at the level of 0.01.

### 3.3. Model Structure Tests

Since the conceptual structure of the three core variables concerned in this research covers two or more dimensions, the structural equation model was used

**Table 2.** Description of the Shanghai private colleges' teachers on the organizational support, psychological contract, and job satisfaction.

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>
<b>Organizational Support_Total</b>	162	3.4077 ± 0.50990
Instrumental support	162	3.2755 ± 0.56754
Material support	162	3.2685 ± 0.66381
Personal support	162	3.2305 ± 0.64486
Information support	162	3.3164 ± 0.60072
Emotional support	162	3.5531 ± 0.52125
Respect for support	162	3.5469 ± 0.55852
Closeness support	162	3.3704 ± 0.59327
Network integration	162	3.8426 ± 0.66983
<b>Psychological Contract_Total</b>	162	3.2700 ± 0.56445
Transactional contract	162	2.9136 ± 0.73843
Relational contract	162	3.4609 ± 0.56238
Development contract	162	3.3259 ± 0.64448
<b>Job Satisfaction_Total</b>	162	3.5222 ± 0.49069
Job motivation Satisfaction	162	3.3716 ± 0.57607
Autonomy Satisfaction	162	3.6806 ± 0.48841
Job stress Satisfaction	162	3.5077 ± 0.55478
Management Satisfaction	162	3.5476 ± 0.54141

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis results among teachers' organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction in private universities.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1) Instrumental support	1								
2) Emotional support	0.732**	1							
3) Transactional contract	0.742**	0.680**	1						
4) Relational contract	0.779**	0.724**	0.806**	1					
5) Development contract	0.699**	0.572**	0.724**	0.769**	1				
6) Job motivation satisfaction	0.731**	0.660**	0.754**	0.834**	0.745**	1			
7) Autonomy Satisfaction	0.575**	0.346**	0.555**	0.519**	0.535**	0.472**	1		
8) Job stress Satisfaction	0.807**	0.651**	0.718**	0.732**	0.644**	0.712**	0.608**	1	
9) Management Satisfaction	0.774**	0.625**	0.664**	0.687**	0.659**	0.720**	0.633**	0.783**	1

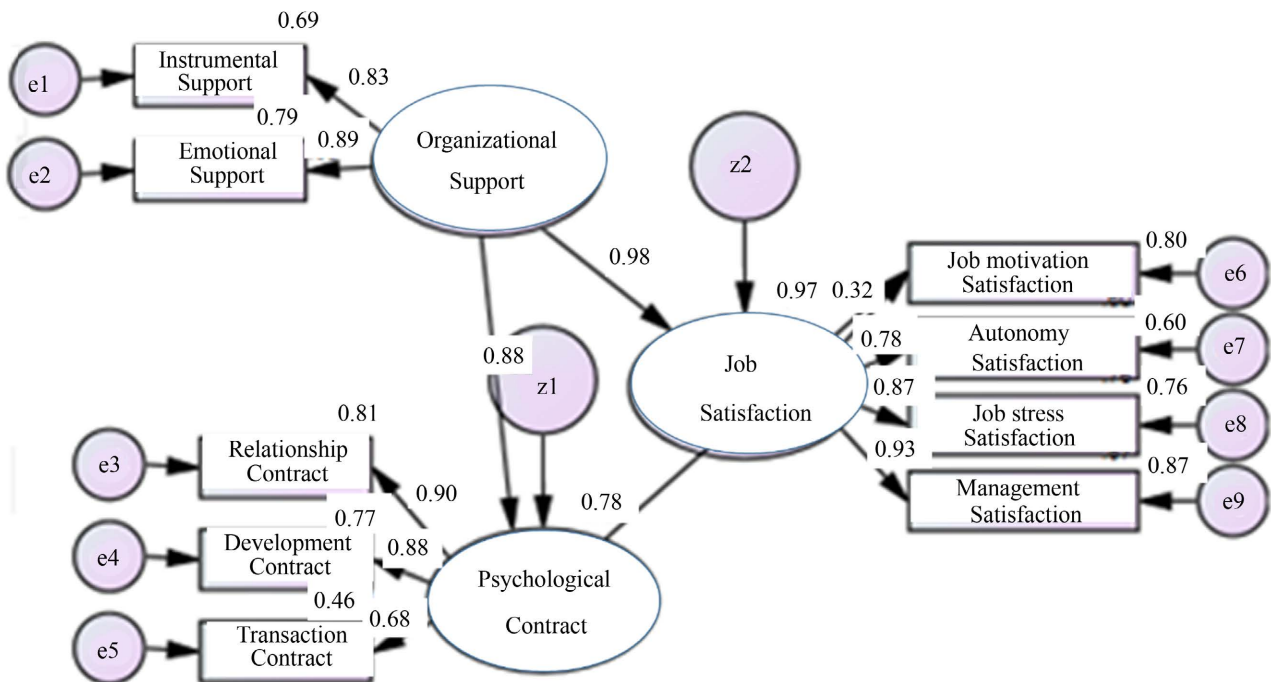
Note: \*\* means statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

to test the interaction between the three variables. Before implementing such test, it should be determined and purified the predictive power of each demographic variable on the three variables. Therefore, the regression analyses were performed with the general information of the subjects (including gender, age, marital status, working years, and education level and job position) as predictors, and the organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction as the predictive variables. The results were shown in **Tables 4-6**: the subjects' basic information variables had no significant effect on the scores of organizational support, psychological contract, and job satisfaction.

Based on the above, the conceptual model of the relationship between the three variables in **Figure 1** was tested and analyzed with using the AMOS24.0. The results are shown in **Table 7** and **Table 8**: the model Chi-square value/degree of freedom was 3.256 with the significant p value of 0.000 levels; among the estimated results of the path coefficients in the model, except for the path coefficients with "psychological contract" pointing to "job satisfaction", other path coefficients were all significant, In terms of model fitting degree, CFI, NFI, GFI and IFI indexes were all greater than 0.9, but the RMSEA index did not meet the standard, indicating that the model need to be revised.

Subsequently, removed the path from "psychological contract" to "job satisfaction", and added the path from "psychological contract" to "job incentive satisfaction" according to the model revision index to output the revised model (see **Figure 2**); The revised structure model was tested again using AMOS24.0. The path coefficient estimation and model fitting index were shown in **Table 9** and **Table 10**.

The above results showed that the revised model fits well and it was an acceptable model.



**Figure 2.** Revised structural model of relationship among teachers' organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction in private universities in Shanghai, China.

**Table 4.** Regression analysis results of subjects' basic information variables to organizational support variables.

	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>adj-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> ( <i>p</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> ( <i>p</i> )	<i>TOL</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Constant	3.455						9.036	0.000		
Gender	0.062	0.051					0.603	0.548	0.876	1.142
Marital status	0.106	0.095	0.024	-0.013	0.646	0.694	1.005	0.317	0.706	1.416
Age	-0.022	-0.045					-0.476	0.635	0.705	1.419
Education level	-0.056	-0.063					-0.716	0.475	0.822	1.217
Working years	-0.060	-0.115					-1.283	0.201	0.783	1.277
Job position	0.028	0.050					0.584	0.560	0.871	1.148

**Table 5.** Regression analysis results of subjects' basic information variables to psychological contract variables.

	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>adj-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> ( <i>p</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> ( <i>p</i> )	<i>TOL</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Constant	3.014						7.080	0.000		
Gender	-0.042	-0.032					-0.371	0.711	0.876	1.142
Marital status	0.098	0.079	0.013	-0.025	0.341	0.914	0.833	0.406	0.706	1.416
Age	0.031	0.059					0.616	0.539	0.705	1.419
Education level	0.027	0.027					0.310	0.757	0.822	1.217
Working years	-0.011	-0.018					-0.202	0.841	0.783	1.277
Job position	0.007	0.011					0.131	0.896	0.871	1.148



**Table 6.** Regression analysis results of subjects' basic information variables to job satisfaction variables.

	<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>adj-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> ( <i>p</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> ( <i>p</i> )	<i>TOL</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Constant	3.630						9.804	0.000		
Gender	-0.031	-0.026					-0.307	0.759	0.876	1.142
Marital status	0.104	0.097	0.013	-0.026	0.329	0.921	1.020	0.309	0.706	1.416
Age	-0.018	-0.039					-0.411	0.682	0.705	1.419
Education level	-0.050	-0.058					-0.659	0.511	0.822	1.217
Working years	-0.022	-0.044					-0.488	0.626	0.783	1.277
Job position	0.022	0.040					0.465	0.643	0.871	1.148

**Table 7.** Hypothetical model coefficient estimation results.

			Unstandardized path coefficient	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>	Standardized path coefficient
Psychological contract	←	Organizational support	0.951	8.850	***	0.884
Job satisfaction	←	Organizational support	0.833	5.325	***	0.766
Job satisfaction	←	Psychological contract	0.241	1.782	0.075	0.239
Transactional contract	←	Psychological contract	1.000			0.678
Development contract	←	Psychological contract	1.128	9.923	***	0.877
Relational contract	←	Psychological contract	1.013	10.140	***	0.903
Job motivation satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	1.000			0.879
Autonomy satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	0.751	12.695	***	0.779
Job stress satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	0.949	15.515	***	0.866
Management factor satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	0.978	17.452	***	0.914
Emotional support	←	Organizational support	1.000			0.894
Instrumental support	←	Organizational support	1.015	14.460	***	0.834

**Table 8.** The commonly used fitting index of the hypothetical model.

Fitting index	Chi-square value ( <i>df</i> )	CFI	NFI	GFI	RMSEA	IFI
data	78.1 (24)	0.959	0.943	0.906	0.118	0.959

**Table 9.** Estimated coefficients of the revised model.

			Unstandardized path coefficient	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>	Standardized path coefficient
Psychological contract	←	Organizational support	0.952	9.171	***	0.885
Job satisfaction	←	Organizational support	0.388	2.937	**	0.984
Transactional contract	←	Psychological contract	1.000			0.677
Development contract	←	Psychological contract	1.134	9.971	***	0.879

## Continued

Relational contract	←	Psychological contract	1.016	10.175	***	0.903
Job motivation satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	1.000			0.318
Autonomy satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	2.069	2.922	**	0.776
Job stress satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	2.635	2.949	**	0.870
Management factor satisfaction	←	Job satisfaction	2.756	2.958	**	0.933
Emotional support	←	Organizational support	1.000			0.891
Instrumental support	←	Organizational support	1.014	14.428	***	0.830
Job motivation satisfaction		Psychological contract	0.698	5.025	***	0.606

**Table 10.** Revised commonly used fitting index.

Fitting index	Chi-square value ( <i>df</i> )	CFI	NFI	GFI	RMSEA	IFI
data	51.294 (24)	0.979	0.62	0.935	0.085	0.979
	2.164**					

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. The Status of Organizational Support, Psychological Contract and Job Satisfaction of Teachers in Private Universities in Shanghai

The present research firstly focused on the current status of the private university teachers in terms of organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction. The survey results showed that, overall, the scores of the three variables were generally above the mean level, those indicated that the status of organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction of teachers in private universities were normally good. However, it was worth noting that the transactional contract scores on the psychological scale indicated that the subjects' attitudes to the positive statements of each test item ranged from "disagreeing" to "unclear". It could be inferred that the condition of the teacher in the transactional contract was not very well. Such results were consistent with the survey results of teachers' job satisfaction from other private universities in Guangdong and Henan in China recently years (Wang, *et al.*, 2019 [23]; Feng, 2013 [24]).

Such results indicated that the job satisfaction of teachers in private universities were generally low. It was consistent with the results which the domestic scholars in China conducted a comparative study on the job satisfaction of teachers in private universities and public universities and found that the job satisfaction of teachers in private universities was significantly lower than that of teachers in public universities. The root cause of such phenomenon due to work pressure caused by factors such as staffing system, social welfare, and income, therefore, teachers in public universities difficultly established and consolidated their psychological contracts was that compared with public universities. It was

required urgent attention (Yang, 2017) [25].

#### **4.2. The Influence of Organizational Support and Psychological Contract on the Job Satisfaction of Teachers in Private Universities**

Consistent with the results of existing researches in domestic China (Tian & Suo, 2020 [9]; Wang, *et al.*, 2013 [14]; Lu *et al.*, 2013 [18]; Zhang, *et al.*, 2015 [19]), the present research found a significant positive correlation between organizational support, psychological contract and job satisfaction, indicating that there was a covariant relationship between strong organizational support and the consolidation of psychological contract and the effective improvement to employee job satisfaction. On this basis, the focus on the present research was, for a relatively special group of private university teachers, what was the “individual-organization” interaction mechanism for a change in job satisfaction. That is, to explore how the organizational support and teachers’ psychological contract affect their job satisfaction.

In this regard, we analyzed data onto constructing a structural equation model. The steps were as follows: Firstly, to build a hypothetical model of job satisfaction, organizational support and psychological contract among private university teachers based on the existed literature. Secondly, used AMOS24.0 to test it. Thirdly, combining the significance results of each path coefficient of the model and the fitting index to revise the hypotheses model; and at last, the adjusted model was drawn according to the model revision index. The result showed that the hypotheses of the model about the “job satisfaction” were predicted by the “organizational support” as well as the “psychological contract” was predicted by the “organizational support” were confirmed. And then, as the path of the “psychological contract” to the “job satisfaction” was adjusted with “psychological contract” to “job incentive satisfaction”, the theoretical model and data fit better. The inference could be made was that for private universities teachers, organizational support had a significant impact on the consolidation of their psychological contract and the improvement of job satisfaction at all levels. However, in terms of the relationship between psychological contract and job satisfaction, there were inconsistent results which “psychological contract has a significant impact on all dimensions of job satisfaction” that obtained from other subjects’ groups of the existing surveys. The results of the present research showed that the psychological contract for the teachers with their university was significantly impacted by the support that they gained from their organizations, but its effect did not generalize to affect the satisfaction indicators involving all levels of work, but only made a significant contribution to the job satisfaction of the teacher’s own sense of the job motivation.

#### **4.3. Implications for Teachers’ Development of Private Universities in China**

In order to gain a deeper insight into the meaning of this result, we further ana-

lyzed the five test items of “job motivation satisfaction”, the specific contents were: “My job gives me the opportunity to develop my talents”, “I often experience it at work. I am satisfied with different things”, “This job allows me to get good evaluation and recognition among relatives, friends and neighbors”, “The current job can give me opportunities for promotion” and “I can get a sense of accomplishment from my work”. We found that among the various dimensions of job satisfaction, the score of “job incentive satisfaction” was the lowest compared with the other three dimensions. In addition, the effective support provided by the organization based on the two-pronged approach from instrumental and emotional could strengthen the psychological contract of the teachers to the university and work they engaged in, and directly predict the degree of the job motivation satisfaction.

In fact, this result fits perfectly with the current living conditions of teachers in private universities in China. From the perspective of phenomenon, the staff of private universities in China was not within the government public educational system, and caused by this, the low government investment, low income and welfare, limited development space made this group was very special; and when a teacher was learned that he (she) was working in a private university, his (her) professionalism and authority were instantly discounted, and even the original respect to them as the “college teachers” was also greatly discounted. Although the private universities teachers’ academic structure, professional qualities, academic qualifications, and research capabilities had all made qualitative leaps in recent years, but their social status had not been improved accordingly.

However, as the employment situation of highly educated talents has become more and more tense in the recent past, private universities have broadened their horizons, and their ideas for running schools have become more flexible. Many individual teachers of private universities had also gradually changed their self-identity, their recognition of the development of private universities and the profession of teachers in private universities had been significantly improved. The foundation of such change was that they found that private universities had paid more attention to the introduction and practice of advanced educational concepts in the way of running schools to reflect the essence of education, and to highlight the diversified development of teachers’ careers in teacher training. In terms of salary management, it could reflect the fairness of “ability-job-salary” matching. These factors were gradually enhancing the professional identity confidence in private universities and individual teachers. That is to say, for teachers in private colleges and universities, on the scale of weighing their professional status, their attentions to the recognition and sense of accomplishment from their work has gradually exceeded the weight of social evaluation standards.

The conclusions mentioned above could provide the enlightenment for the teachers development practice of the private university in China: under the condition that the staff system of the government and other macro support could not be changed, to recognize of teachers’ value, to affirm their work results, and

to pay attention to their development space in the internal schooling process of private universities, were all the key way to enhance the job satisfaction with teachers, consolidate their psychological contract, and reduce their turnover rate of the current era.

## 5. Conclusions

1) The job satisfaction with teachers in private colleges and universities in Shanghai was at a moderate level.

2) Organizational support had a significant positive impact on the job satisfaction of private college teachers; psychological contracts had a significant positive impact on job incentive satisfaction.

3) The organizational support and the psychological contract significantly predicted the teachers' job motivation satisfaction.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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