



# Organizational Support as a Mediator of the Relation Between Parent Support and Teachers' Professional Identity: Evidence from China

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**Abstract:** Parent support and organizational support are of importance to the work of teachers. The questionnaire method was adopted in this study to explore the influence of parent support on the professional identity of primary and secondary school teachers and the mediating effect of organizational support between them. A total of 10,536 primary and secondary school teachers were selected from 19 regions in China. Through descriptive statistics, demographic variable difference, correlation and structural equation model (SEM) statistical analyses, the following findings were obtained: Firstly, our sample data show that parental and organizational support, and the professional identity of primary and secondary school teachers in China is at the upper medium level; and significant differences are shown in the professional identity of demographic variables such as gender, length of teaching, education levels and different stages of teaching. Secondary, we find a significant positive correlation exists between parental and organizational support, and the professional identity of teachers. Finally, organizational support significantly mediated the relationship between parental support and teachers' professional identity. This study provided empirical evidence from China about organizational support as a mediator, emphasized the significance of parental support on teachers' professional identity and suggested the the relationship of parental and teacher should attention the roles of organization.

**Keywords:** Parental Support, Organizational Support, Professional Identity of Teachers, China

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## 1. Introduction

Professional identity is defined as the extent to which professional employees experience a perceived oneness or bond with their profession [46]. Many studies have examined the professional identity and building of primary and secondary school teachers in various contexts [9, 16, 18], but the issue of teachers' professional identity and construction in social networks receives less attention. Tan et al. (2016) pointed out that the professional role, the professional identity that teachers have, and the professional responsibilities that they need to play should be determined by the objective

dependence of the individual teacher on the reality of society [54]. And Schellings & Beijaard (2023) emphasized that the process of identifying and constructing professional identity of teachers needs to be viewed largely as a unique and ongoing process of reconciliation between the individual and the network of relationships, or relational contexts [52]. However, as Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto (2009) observed, the issue of teachers' professional identities being shaped in social networks is often underestimated or overlooked by many scholars [59].

Primary and secondary school teachers are never alone in their work. They naturally re-conceptualize their professional roles, identities, and behaviors in relation to the expectations,

feedback, and support from their social networks, in which the process is specified as self-categorization in social identity theory [53] and as identification in identity theory [40]. Specifically, both theories focus on the self-reflexivity of teachers in their social networks, where teachers see themselves as an object in a relationship, categorizing and naming themselves according to the expectations, feedback and support of other social members in the relationship [48]. Teachers integrate these meanings into the construction of their own identity through self-reflection and internalization, thereby developing a set of specific standards to guide their behaviour.

In this vein, McNamee & Gergen (1999) highlighted the fact that individuals' identities are formed and developed through relationships [42]. Furthermore, teachers are required to play many professional roles in the social work, like mentor, educator, employee and parent [25]. With more detail, teachers need to actively take on the task of teaching and improving their professionalism to meet the expectations and requirements of their role within the school (organization, students, colleagues, directors) and outside the school (parents, other members of the community); and, they expect receiving more support from different members of the community, within and outside the school [2, 5]. Therefore, the professional identities of primary and secondary school teachers are formed and developed by balancing the 'demands' of relationships with the 'support' of relationships.

To summarize, this study differs from previous research on the professional identity of primary and secondary school teachers by focusing on the professional identity and construction of Chinese primary and secondary school teachers in social networks. The primary and secondary school teachers objectively exist within a network of social relationships within and outside the school, and that their professional identities need to be formed and developed through relationships. Therefore, this study focuses on the overall status of parental support (PS) and organizational support (OS) received by primary and secondary school teachers in China, the current development of teachers' professional identity (TPI), and the impact of PS and OS on TPI.

The paper starts with a review of the existing literature on PS, TPI and OS to develop the research hypotheses presented; then focus on design and administrate questionnaire to obtain datasets; finally, the study employed descriptive statistics to analyze the current situation and differences in PS, OS and TPI among primary and secondary school teachers in Mainland China and applied mediation analysis to explore the relationship between PS, OS and TPI.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Parental Support and the Professional Identity of Teachers

The teacher-parent relationship is extremely important for the healthy development of children and the professional

growth of teachers. A review of existing research reveals that scholars are more interested in the important impact of teacher-parent relationships on the learning and development of children of different ages [28, 10, 45]. For example, Keengwe Grace & Onchwari Ariri (2022) discovered that parents' education, income, and children's educational age influenced their attitudes towards teachers [28], and Đorđević Mirjana *et al.* (2022) found that parental involvement in schooling was effective in promoting greater educational outcomes [10]. Oyinloye Bukola (2021) analyzed parent-school relationships in rural African schools and found that positive teacher-parent interactions were effective in reinforcing the value parents placed on their children [45].

In contrast, scholars focused less directly on the important impact of teacher-parent relationships on teachers, and most research was embedded in studies of parental involvement [24, 41, 23, 30-33]. Lawrence-Lightfoot, (1978) and Lortie, (1977) pointed out that we should not ignore that parental involvement behaviors of certain types of parents can have a negative impact on the performance of teachers [31, 30]. Lareau (2000) further recognized that excessive parental 'blame' can be stressful not only for children but also for teachers [33]. Hargreaves & Fullan (2015) and Leitch & Tangri (1988) further noted that in the teacher-parent relationship teachers face parental scrutiny and challenges to professional competence [23, 32], but that excessive demands and lack of support can lead to a low morale in the workplace. Therefore, Hans de Frankrijker (2018) and Marsha Correll Rhodes (1979) argued that in addition to focusing on the impact of parental involvement on children, researchers should focus on the impact of parental involvement on teachers, especially the support for teachers that is demonstrated in parental involvement [24, 41]. The parental support is not only objective and visible external support, but more importantly, internal emotional support for the teacher, which includes the parent's supportive attitude towards the teacher with respect, trust and sincerity. Lareau (2000) further added that support from parents should also contain inclusive in the work of teachers [33]. This is, parents should not first react by blaming, reprimanding and shaming teachers when their children do not perform well, or by showing disrespect and intolerance towards the teaching profession, seeing teachers as mere subordinates of employees who are monitored and directed.

In exploring the impact of PS on TPI, the researcher reviewed the existing research on TPI and found that:

First, research on TPI has been a growing topic in the field of psychology since the 1990s [15]. Scholars in China and other countries have explained the TPI in different ways. For example, the TPI is mainly the synthesis of their positive cognition, experience and behavioral tendency towards their profession and individually internalized professional role [60]. The TPI is dynamic rather than invariable, which changes with the situation, and internal and external factors, and must be always rebuilt and negotiated [58]. In addition, the TPI is also the result of the interaction between teachers themselves and the environment [15].

In addition, current studies on the TPI are primarily about the status quo and its relationship with other variables. In the research on the status quo of TPI, researchers basically believe that the TPI in China is in the medium or upper medium level on the whole despite a slight difference in their research results. Research on individual-related variables and the relationship between the TPI and other variables has shown that the TPI in China is influenced by their gender, age, length of teaching and other factors. School location has a medium effect on the professional identity of teachers [35]. The social desirability of teachers can positively predict the explicit professional identity of primary and secondary school teachers [26, 34].

Finally, although no research directly addressed the study of the impact of PS on TPI, researchers have found that many scholars addressed relevant research when exploring issues of parental involvement, collaboration and communication [23, 47, 39, 30-33]. Hargreaves & Fullan (2015) and Lareau (2000) found that teachers are often faced with the conflict of having to balance their own needs with the needs of parents, who always put pressure on them to provide special care for their own children without considering the reality of the teachers' situation, resulting in teachers showing a significant resistance to parental involvement [23, 33]. Qin et al. (2022) found that the whether the primary and secondary school teachers receive sufficient replenishment of emotional energy such as respect, understanding, trust and sincerity from parents at work would directly affect the implementation of teachers' work and teachers' professional identity [47]. Lai (2020) explored that the relationship between parent-teacher communication and TPI and found that parents' intention in their expression, attitude and motivation in communication would directly affect the extent of TPI [39].

Some evidence suggested that parents' active support to teachers affects the professional identity of teachers. Hu et al. (2013) found that a positive significant correlation exists between the TPI, social support, and job satisfaction [21]. Canrinus et al. (2012), Kelchtermans (2009), Bascia & Hargreaves (2015), and Greenwood (1991) revealed that teachers are dependent on social networks for their survival and development [7, 27, 4, 14]. And whether or not teachers receive emotional support from parents in the course of their teaching role affects teachers' self-esteem [14] and role behaviours. That is, teachers are likely to show shifting responsibilities in the process of educating their children when teachers are overly 'sanctified' by parents as a 'transcendent' role [4]. Fang & Mou (2017) pointed out that the emotional and respectful support obtained by teachers has a significant impact on their sense of teaching efficacy and professional self-development [13]. Accordingly, we put forward the first research hypothesis below:

*H1: PS has a significant positive influence on the TPI.*

## **2.2. Parental Support and Organizational Support**

As individuals with defined professional roles and professional identities, primary and secondary school teachers are objectively present in a network of social relationships

within the school and with members outside the school. A preliminary review of the literature found that research focused more on what norms and requirements teachers should fulfil in different social networks [54, 8], but less focused on what support and care teachers need in different social networks. This problem is more prominent in Chinese society and is particularly apparent in the relationship between teachers and parents and organizations, namely that they are more concerned with the norms and requirements that teachers are expected to fulfil in the employment relationship and less concerned with the support that teachers are expected to receive in the employment relationship, which causes teachers to show a sense of contempt on the work [25, 54, 8, 29].

At the same time, in the context of the work of primary and secondary school teachers, the OS received by teachers principally comes from school managers, namely the attitude and behavior of internal organizational members such as principals, middle management and the teaching and research group towards the evaluation and interest concerns of teachers [55]. Specifically, the OS that primary and secondary school teachers receive within the school, namely an attitude and behaviour that evaluates the contribution of teachers' teaching work within the organization and forms a concern for interests [17, 43], can be largely influenced both by the degree of support that members of society outside the organization give to teachers and by teachers' perceptions of their identity or status in the organization [62, 44]. Accordingly, we put forward the first research hypothesis below:

*H2: PS has a positive impact on OS.*

## **2.3. Role of Organizational Support Between Parental Support and the Professional Identity of Teachers**

Van Knippenberg & Sleebos (2006) indicated that OS theory is essentially the process by which individuals define their selves within an organization's internal network of relationships [58], the process by which individuals incorporate their organizational identity into their self-concept and thereby develop a professional identity. On this basis, the social identity theory was further put forward. The way an organization treats individuals or its remuneration to individuals greatly influences the work attitude and behavior of individuals [11]. Ashforth & Mael (1989) explained this effect in more depth, suggesting that this influence process is particularly relevant to the individual's self-concept [1]. This is, the process by which the individual receives OS is essentially a process by which the individual compares him/herself to other target references within the organization, and is a process by which the individual develops a more integrated self-identity and self-evaluation. Therefore, when individuals receive a high level of support within the organization it helps to strengthen the individual's identification with the organization and with their self-professional identity, as evidenced by empirical studies [11, 38, 50].

In the domain of educational research, the existing literature revealed that although no direct evidence of PS and OS on TPI could be found, a further review of the literature on parent

involvement, communication and collaboration revealed that PS from outside the school and OS from within the school can jointly influence teachers' professional perceptions, experiences and behaviours, as evidenced by a number of existing studies [23, 33, 4, 25]. Meanwhile, Hargreaves & Fullan (2015) and Ingersoll (2009) liken the difficult situation faced by teachers caught between parents and organizational bureaucrats to 'living in the cracks' [23, 25]. That is to say, for teachers, increasing levels of parent involvement place 'more and more demands' on them, and these 'demands' from outside the school are implemented through internal school assessment 'standards'. Consequently, teachers often have a difficult task in dealing with different social relationships in which they have to deal with both sides [33] (Lareau, 2000). In detail, on the one hand, they have to consider parental support to prevent blame, dissatisfaction and complaints from parents, and on the other hand, they have to consider the support of the school organization to meet their own assessment and evaluation [23], and the former (PS) can be an important consideration for the latter (OS). Hargreaves & Fullan, (2015) pointed out that when parents are 'critical' towards teachers and teachers feel 'discouraged', this can lead to school organizations adopting institutional requirements once again that further cause teachers to become hyper-vigilant [23].

In addition, Ball (2003) and Leat (2013) found that with accountability systems put in place, school organizations often exhibit a 'give with one hand and take away with the other' phenomenon, which is apparent in Chinese society in particular [3, 36]. To reduce parental anger or simply pander to parents, organization considers to defence their benefit first and foremost might result in unjust assessment of teachers when parent complain to teachers [33, 49]. For example, When teacher was complained by parents, organization has a very low evaluation to teachers. This is precisely the point previously made that teachers are often caught between the outside of the school organization (parents) and the inside of the school organization (administrative bureaucrats), which can have a huge impact on the identification and construction of teachers' professional identity [25, 23]. In addition, Leat, Livingston & Priestley (2013) and Lareau (2000) found that when parents blamed teacher, the school organization prefer to prioritize its own honour and cater to parents that might trigger teachers to treat the interactions with parents contemptuously, care for their children less and professional identity low [36, 33].

Therefore, it can be inferred that the TPI level is further affected when external PS is transformed into internal OS. This is, OS plays a mediating role in PS and the TPI. The correlation between PS, OS, and TPI can be seen in Figure 1.

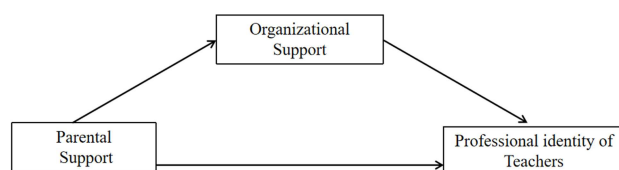


Figure 1. Mediating Effect of Organizational Support.

To sum up, the third and fourth hypothesis was put forward below.

H3: OS plays a mediating role in PS and TPI.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Study Population

This study focused on the TPI of primary and secondary school teachers, and therefore the main subjects of this study are primary and secondary school teachers who are engaged in education and teaching in primary and secondary schools. To balance the sample structure, this study covered most regions in China, including primary and secondary school teachers in 19 regions, like Guangdong, Guangxi, Hebei, Tibet, Shaanxi, Shandong and Jiangxi. From December 31, 2021, to January 13, 2022, the research group distributed and collected 10,779 questionnaires through the Internet, of which 10,536 were valid questionnaires, with an effective recovery rate of 97.75%. Sample information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic Situation of the Survey Sample.

Variables	Category	Number (N = 10536)	Proportion
Gender	Male	2825	26.81%
	Female	7711	73.19%
	5 years and below	2655	25.2%
Length of teaching	6-10 years	1525	14.47%
	11-20 years	2278	21.62%
	20 years or above	4078	38.71%
Education levels	Specialist and below	1319	12.52%
	Undergraduate	8562	81.26%
	Master's degree or above	655	6.22%
Class teacher	Yes	4474	42.46%
	No	6062	57.54%
stages of teaching	High School	1365	12.96%
	Junior High	3124	29.65%
	Primary School	6047	57.39%

#### 3.2. Methods

The study first developed a questionnaire based on the literature and pre-survey and focused on three core variables: TPI, PS and OS. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with teachers (on teaching) and trial questionnaires were completed by faculty members to ensure the readability of the initial questionnaire and the comprehensibility of the scale. The questionnaire was then modified using a pre-survey that was adapted to the local situation in China. Finally the questionnaire was formally administered using a convenience sampling method. Prior to data collection, the researcher communicated in advance with the individual school directors to determine the time, method and number of people to be surveyed and invited all school teachers to participate in the online questionnaire.

The Questionnaire had third parts. In the first part, questions were asked about respondents' demographic information. For example: age, length of teaching, education levels and different stages of teaching and so on. In the second part, questions were asked about variables of teachers'

professional identity. In the third part, questions were asked about variables of parental and organizational support. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1= *strongly disagree* to 5= *strongly agree*. The measure of core variables and the reliability validity test are shown below.

#### *Parental Support (PS)*

The construct PS was measured using items scale developed by Marsha (1979). The Marsha parental support scale has three dimensions, respect, trust, and sincerity. However, according to the guidelines of Lareau (2000) and the context of this study, dimension ‘*inclusiveness*’ was included [33]. We measured Parental support with three modified dimension inclusiveness, trust, and sincerity. To identify three dimensions of parents’ support according to the context of this study, we had a detailed discussion with experts. Also, we held a group interview of 33 practicing teachers from Guangdong, Hebei, and Shanxi regions using a stratified sampling method. This group of interviewees consisted of 16 primary school teachers and 17 secondary school teachers with experience teaching between 5 years to 20 years. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is 0.804, indicating good internal consistency reliability. Principal component analyzes and maximum variance rotation methods were applied to the parent support scale. The three factors of inclusiveness (Inc), trust (Tru) and sincerity (Sin) explained 64% variables in total, meeting the standard of more than 60% (Table 2).

#### *Organization support (OS)*

The OS was measured using Questionnaire on the POS of Secondary School Teachers developed by Tang (2017) was used [55]. Based on expert discussions and the context of this study, we included 18 items to measure three dimensions “interest concern, value identity, and organizational respect.” The example item for this scale was “Schools can create a favorable working atmosphere for teachers.” The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is 0.967. A principal components analyzes with great variance rotation of the scale showed that interest concern (IC), value identity (VI), and organizational respect (OR) together explained 69% of the variables (Table 2).

#### *Teachers’ professional identity (TPI)*

TPI was measured by using Professional Identity Scale for Primary and Secondary School Teachers developed by Wei et al. (2013) [61]. According to the experts discussions and context of this study, we measured four dimensions of “teachers’ role values and professional behavior tendency, values, and belongingness” of the TPI using 12 items. The example item for this scale was “I can accomplish my work tasks on time.” The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is 0.909. A principal components analyzes of the scales with great variance rotation was conducted and a total of 67% of the variables were explained by teacher role values (TRV), professional behavioural tendencies (PBT), professional values (PV), and professional belonging (PB) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Analyzes of reliability factors of the scale.

Variables	PS	OS	PI
Cronbach’s Alpha	0.804	0.967	0.909
Variables	64%	69%	67%

### **3.3. Data Analyzes**

First, SPSS26.0 was used to conduct an exploratory factor analyzes of the adopted questionnaire scales and test the internal consistency validity of the scale structure. Second, SPSS26.0 was utilized to carry out corresponding statistical analyzes on the data collected by questionnaires, including descriptive statistics, demographic variable difference and correlation analyzes. Finally, a structural equation model (SEM) was constructed using Mplus8.0 to explore the relationships of parent and organizational support with the professional identity of teachers. In terms of exploring the mediating role of organizational support, the bias-corrected nonparametric percentile Bootstrap method was mainly employed to test the mediating effect of organizational support. Common method bias might be caused in the results since the measurement of the subjects in the current research involved different scales. For this reason, Harman’s single-factor test was effectively performed before formal data analyzes to test common method bias to more accurately examine the hypothesis that a single factor explains multiple variables. The results show that the initial eigenvalues of six factors are greater than 1 in the non-rotational case, and the first factor explained 36.7% of the variance, which is less than 40% of the critical standard deviation. Thus, it can be concluded that no serious common method bias problem existed in the data of this study.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistical analyzes was performed on each variable. The total average score of PS is  $M = 3.36$ . The scores of the three dimensions of PS from high to low are Tru ( $M = 3.78$ ), Sin ( $M = 3.21$ ) and Inc ( $M = 2.77$ ). The total average score of organizational support is  $M = 3.68$ . The scores of the three dimensions of OS from high to low are VI ( $M = 3.76$ ), OR ( $M = 3.75$ ) and IC ( $M = 3.54$ ). The total average score of TPI is  $M = 4.23$ . The scores of the four dimensions of TPI from high to low are PBT ( $M = 4.50$ ), PV ( $M = 4.39$ ) and PB ( $M = 4.11$ ) and TPR ( $M = 3.90$ ). The research results show that parental and organizational support, and the professional identity of primary and secondary school teachers in China is at the upper medium level.

### **4.2. Analyzes of Differences on Demographic Variables**

This section focuses on the differences in TPI among primary and secondary school teachers by gender, length of teaching, education levels and stages of teaching, with specific analyzes finding that:

An independent sample t-test was used to investigate the differences in the overall levels of TPI between primary and secondary school teachers of different genders. Significant differences are shown in the overall level of TPI, TRV and PBT. The results are as follows: female teachers ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) were significantly higher than male teachers ( $M =$

4.18,  $SD = 0.65$ ) at the overall level of TPI ( $p = .000$ ); female teachers ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) are significantly higher than male teachers ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) at the level of TRV ( $p = .002$ ); and female teachers ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) are significantly higher than male teachers ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) at the level of PBT.

One-way analyzes of variance (ANOVA) and least significant difference (LSD) method were used. The differences in TPI levels between primary and secondary school teachers of different lengths of teaching were investigated. As illustrated in Table 3, we find: Primary and secondary school teachers of different lengths of teaching show significant differences in the overall level of TPI, PBT, PV and PB. After post hoc multiple comparison analyzes, we find that they all exhibited significantly higher rates at 20

years and beyond than at 5 years and below (TPI:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PBT:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PB:  $p = .000 < .001$ ), 6-10 years (TPI:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PBT:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PB:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PB:  $p = .003 < .01$ ) and 11-20 years (TPI:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PBT:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PB:  $p = .006 < .01$ ) of teaching years. There are also significant differences in the level of TRV between teachers of different ages, with post hoc multiple comparison analyzes revealing that teachers with 5 years or less are significantly more likely to have been teaching for 6-10 years ( $p = .000 < .001$ ) versus 11-20 years ( $p = .000 < .001$ ), and 20 years or more are also significantly more likely to have been teaching for 6-10 years ( $p = .005 < .01$ ) versus 11-20 years ( $p = .000 < .001$ ). 20 years ( $p = .000 < .001$ ) of teaching experience.

**Table 3.** Differences in TPI by length of teaching, education levels and stages of teaching.

Variables	Length of teaching		Education levels		Stages of teaching	
	Sig	Interpretation 1	Sig	Interpretation2	Sig	Interpretation3
PI	20.70***	4>1,4>2,4>3	12.20***	1>2, 1>3	39.67***	3>2>1
TRV	12.95***	1>2,1>3,4>2,4>3	32.17***	1>2, 1>3	56.33***	3>2>1
PBT	49.01***	4>1, 4>2, 4>3	6.50**	1>2, 1>3	23.98***	3>2>1
PV	23.67***	4>1, 4>2, 4>3	11.40***	1>2, 1>3	28.06***	3>2>1
PB	6.91***	4>1, 4>2, 4>3	6.34**	2>1, 2>3	4.77**	3>1,2>1

Note: Interpretation 1: 1 is five years and below, 2 is 6-10 years; 3 is 11-20 years, 4 is 20 years and above; Interpretation 2: 1 is five years and below, 2 is 6-10 years, 3 is 11-20 years; 4 is 20 years and above; Interpretation3: 1 is Higher, 2 is Middle, 3 is Primary;

\* Indicates  $p < .05$ , \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\* indicates  $p < .001$  for all statistics in this article.

ANOVA and LSD methods were used to investigate the differences in TPI levels between primary and secondary school teachers of different educational levels. As demonstrated in Table 3, we have the below findings: we find primary and secondary school teachers of different educational backgrounds show significant differences in the overall levels of TPI, TRV, PBT and PV. Post hoc multiple comparison analyzes reveal that TPI, TRV, PBT and PV levels are significantly higher for a junior college degree or below than for a bachelor's degree (TPI:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; TRV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PBT:  $p = .005 < .01$ ; PV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ), and a junior college degree or below is also significantly higher than a master's degree or above (TPI:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PBT:  $p = .001 < .001$ ; TRV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ; PV:  $p = .000 < .001$ ). Further descriptive statistical analyzes reveals that 56.7% of teachers with a junior college degree or below have a length of teaching of more than 20 years, while only 12.7% of teachers with a master's degree have a length of teaching of more than 20 years and 40.5% of them have a length of teaching of less than five years.

ANOVA and LSD methods were used to investigate the differences in TPI levels between primary and secondary school teachers at different stages of teaching. Refer the results of Table 3, we obtain the below findings: Primary and secondary school teachers at different stages of teaching showed significant differences in the overall levels of TPI, TRV, PBT, PV and PB. After post hoc multiple comparison analyzes, it was found that all levels except the PB level exhibited significantly higher levels in elementary schools than in middle schools (all  $p = .000 < .001$ ) and significantly

higher levels in elementary schools than in high schools (all  $p = .000 < .001$ ). Also, secondary schools were significantly higher than high schools (all  $p = .000 < .001$ ) and elementary schools were significantly higher than high schools (all levels  $p = .000 < .001$ ).

### 4.3. Correlation Analyzes

Correlation matrix analysis was performed on the total average score of PS and OS, and TPI of primary and secondary school teachers, as shown in Table 4. The results show that a significant positive correlation exists between PS and OS, and TPI ( $P < 0.001$ ). To be specific, the correlation coefficients between PS and OS, PS and TPI, and TPI and OS are 0.46, 0.35 and 0.49, respectively.

**Table 4.** Correlation Analyzes of PS, OS and TPI.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1 PS	3.37	0.46	—	—	—
2 OS	3.69	0.72	0.46***	—	—
3 TPI	4.23	0.61	0.35***	0.49***	—

\* indicates  $p < .05$ , \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\* indicates  $p < .001$

### 4.4. Mediation Effect Testing

The results of correlation analysis indicate that PS and OS, and TPI among primary and secondary school teachers are significantly correlated, which can be suitable for model building. According to the research hypothesis, Mplus8.0 statistical software was used for modeling to verify the mediating effect of OS between PS and TPI.



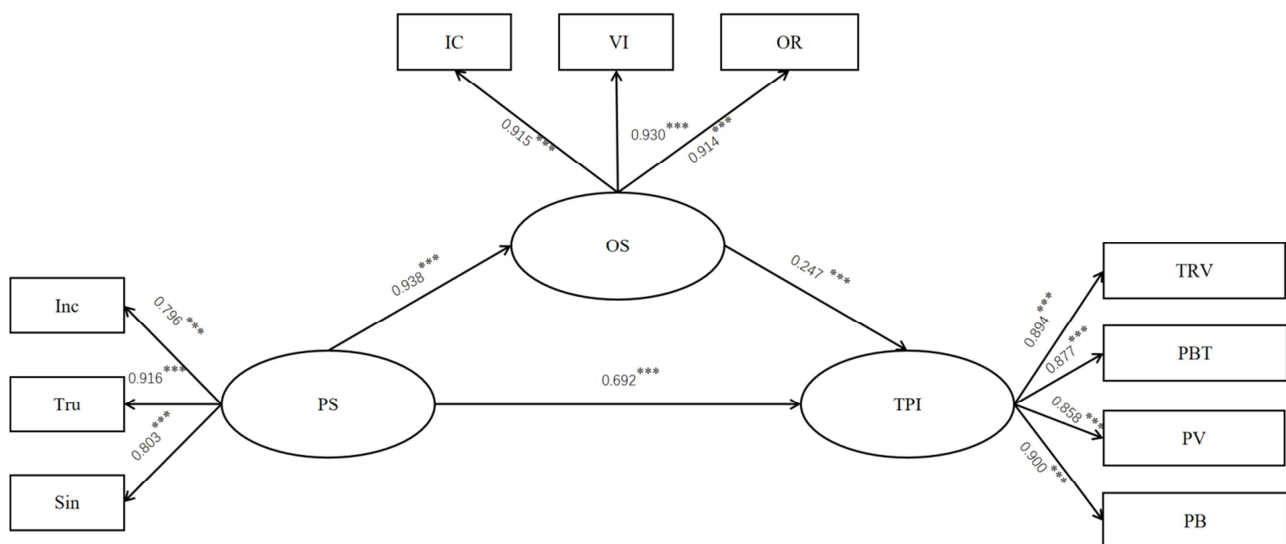
SEM was adopted to construct a mediating SEM for PS and OS, and TPI among primary and secondary school teachers. The mediating effect of OS between PS and TPI was tested by taking PS and OS, and TPI as independent, mediating and dependent variables, respectively (Figure 2). The fit indices of the mediating model are as follows:  $\chi^2 = 1713.180$ ,  $df = 32$ , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.071, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.985, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.979 and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.016. The results show that the model has good fit indices and

meets the standard of model adaptation.

Specific analysis was carried out according to model indicators. It was observed that PS has a significant direct impact on TPI ( $\beta = 0.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and OS plays a mediating role in PS and TPI ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, 95% confidence intervals for direct and mediating effects are [0.62, 0.77] and [0.16, 0.30], respectively. The confidence intervals for both excluded 0, indicating the significant mediating effect of organizational support (Table 5).

**Table 5.** The Mediating Model of PS, OS and TPI.

Path	Standardized coefficients	S-E.	Bias-corrected 95% confidence interval	
			The lower limit	Ceiling
Direct effect PS → TPI	0.69	0.04	0.62	0.77
Mediating effect PS → OS → TPI	0.23	0.04	0.16	0.30
Total effect	0.92	0.00	0.92	0.93



**Figure 2.** SEM for the Relationship between PS and OS and TPI ( $n=10536$ ).

## 5. Discussion

The results of the study indicated that a significant positive correlation existed between PS, OS and TPI. The mediation analyzes show that OS mediated the effect of PS on TPI.

Firstly, as Marsha (1979) highlighted: in the past we have focused more on the impact that the level and manner of parent support has on the child, while lacking the impact it has on the teacher's work and identity [41]. This study found that PS can directly and positively predict the TPI. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of previous studies that the social desirability degree of teachers and the quality of parent-teacher communication have positive effects on the professional identity of teachers [39]. Meanwhile, this further validates Hargreaves, & Fullan (2015), Leitch & Tangri (1988) and Lareau (2000) observation that teachers need to deal with parents' supervision in their relationships with them, but that

the lack of emotional support in the face of excessive demands is bound to contribute to a loss of morale and even affect their professional identity [23, 32, 33].

Furthermore, the level of organizational support within schools also has a direct impact on the professional identity level of teachers. As pointed out by the organizational support theory, employees have a sense of obligation and responsibility to repay their organizations when able to perceive a high level of organizational support. They adjust their behavior performance at work by increasing organizational commitment and a sense of organizational integration and demonstrating the behavior supporting organizational goals [37]. Therefore, the level of organizational support is an important factor affecting the professional identity of primary and secondary school teachers. In particular, teachers have strong belongingness and role identity when receiving more respect and interest concerns from organizations. This is also an issue that has

been considered by existing research, which has more often than not singularly considered the impact of the extent to which teachers are valued and cared for within the organization on their professional identity [6].

In addition, the OS that primary and secondary school teachers receive within the school serves as a holistic perception of the extent to which individual teachers care about their contribution to the organization and their perception of their own survival within the organization [12, 51]. This holistic perception needs to be fed back to teachers through the evaluation of their work contributions and their attitudes and behaviours in relation to their interests within the organization [17, 43]. This means that the level of support teachers receive from members outside the school directly affects the level of support they receive from members within the school.

Finally, PS can influence TPI through OS, for instance, the higher the level of PS, the higher the level of perceived OS, and finally the higher the level of TPI. In view of McNamee, & Gergen (1999), teachers' professional identities were shaped and developed through and within relationships [42]. Therefore, the level of support that teachers receive from their relational networks influences the extent to which teachers' professional identity [48]. Also, the level of parental support that teachers receive can impact organizational support, affecting teachers' professional identification [54].

This is corroborated by specific literature and interviews, which the researcher summarizes as two types of phenomena in the way in which Chinese school organizations manage teachers' work [36]. The first category, once parents have blamed or complained about teachers, or even turned into "complaints". This will directly affect the TPI, and will lead to teachers' negative work behaviour. The second category, to prevent teachers from facing unwarranted accusations from parents, or from complaining about their work, school organizations may use 'unease' as a reason to 'take back' the 'disciplinary power' that teachers have in their hands. This also will affect the TPI.

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, a sample of 10,776 elementary and secondary school teachers in 19 regions of China was surveyed to investigate the influence of parent support on teachers' professional identity and the mediating role of organizational support in the relationship between the two. The results of the study indicated that the overall levels of PS, OS and TPI were medium or medium to high. Significant differences were found between PS, OS and TPI across demographic variables such as gender, years of teaching experience, education, and whether or not they were classroom teachers. A significant positive correlation existed between PS, OS and TPI. The mediation analyzes show that OS mediated the effect of PS on TPI.

Specifically, the possible contributions of this study are as follows: Firstly, this study bridges the gap in current research on the impact of parent support on teachers' professional

identity. Secondly, this paper distinguishes from previous research on TPI by highlighting the issue of TPI and construction in social networks. Finally, the paper highlights the mediating role of organizational support in parent support and professional identity of teachers. Unlike existing research that has only considered the effect of organizational support on teachers' professional identity [6].

In addition, the following specific suggestions were put forward to improve the current situation of parents and social support for primary and secondary school teachers to effectively enhance teachers' professional identity: Firstly, Follow the Logic of Equal Dialogue and Continue to Arouse the Emotional Support of Parents for Teachers. Secondly, return to the True Nature of School Management and Create a Pleasant Ecological Environment to Support the Development of Teachers. Finally, improve the Support Utilization of Parents and Organizations by Teachers as Agents.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Approval Statement

The project is approved by the Ethics Review Committee (IRB) of Education School Guangzhou University, in accordance with the principle of ethics.

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