

Perceived Organizational Support in Education: A Systematic Literature Review and Implications for School Management and Leadership

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Abstract

Perceived organizational support (POS) has attracted increasing attention in educational research, yet existing evidence remains theoretically fragmented and offers limited guidance for school management and leadership. This study aims to synthesize the literature on teachers' POS by mapping teacher outcomes, dominant theoretical frameworks, leadership and organizational antecedents, and their implications for educational leadership. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, 89 empirical studies published between 2019-2026 were identified through Scopus and ERIC and synthesized narratively. The findings: work engagement, teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and teacher performance are the most prominent promotive outcomes, whereas burnout and turnover intention represent the primary protective outcomes. Social Exchange Theory dominates the literature, alongside Organizational Support Theory, the Job Demands–Resources model, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Self-Determination Theory. The review further suggests that POS operates through both promotive and protective mechanisms and functions not only as a direct predictor but also as a mediator and moderator of teacher outcomes. For school management and leadership, POS should be understood as a system-level organizational outcome shaped by the alignment of leadership practices, organizational procedures, and material working conditions. Future research should adopt more longitudinal, mixed-methods, and cross-cultural designs, particularly in underrepresented contexts such as Islamic educational institutions.

1. Introduction

Teachers' workload pressures across countries have become increasingly serious. A meta-analysis by Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2023) reported a burnout prevalence of 52% among teachers in eight countries, exceeding that found among healthcare workers. Carroll et al. (2022) found that more than half of Australian teachers had considered leaving the profession, with insufficient institutional support among the main contributing factors. These findings correspond with the meta-analysis by Berkovich (2023), which showed that organizational factors play a substantial role in shaping teachers' turnover intentions.

In response to these challenges, discussions on school management continue to focus primarily on teacher performance and accountability, while teachers' perceptions of organizational support receive comparatively less attention despite their importance for teacher well-being, work engagement, and professional sustainability. Eisenberger et al. (1986) defined this concept as perceived organizational support (POS), referring to employees' perceptions of the extent to which organizations value their contributions and care about their well-being. Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory developed by Blau (2017) and later discussed in contemporary reviews of social exchange, POS operates through the principle of reciprocity (Cropanzano et al. 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Teachers who perceive institutional support positively tend to demonstrate higher levels of work engagement and contribute beyond formal role expectations, whereas low perceived support is associated with the withholding of contributions and stronger intentions to leave the profession (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

These perceptions are formed through the process of organizational personification described in Organizational Support Theory (OST) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Through this mechanism, teachers interpret principals' policies, procedural justice, and the provision of instructional resources as reflections of the institution's overall concern for them. Caesens et al. (2019) showed that perceptions of being valued by the organization are associated with stronger work engagement and organizational commitment. Within educational settings, the mechanisms through which POS operates have several distinctive characteristics.

Teachers exercise professional autonomy in the classroom while remaining dependent on institutional support and resources (du Toit et al., 2022).

At the same time, teaching requires sustained emotional and relational involvement in interactions with students, parents, and the broader school environment, making recognition and organizational support important for teachers' professional sustainability. In relatively structured institutional systems, principals' actions that go beyond formal obligations are more likely to be interpreted as meaningful forms of organizational support (Tiplic et al., 2019). These conditions make POS a particularly relevant construct for understanding and improving school management and leadership practices.

The development of perceived organizational support (POS) literature in educational contexts has been uneven. Although research on POS in education has expanded considerably in recent years, this growth has not yet been accompanied by sufficient knowledge synthesis to map the consistency of findings, dominant theoretical frameworks, and practical implications (Prysmakova & Lallatin, 2023). Several important gaps remain. Geographically, most empirical studies on POS are concentrated in China and East Asia, followed by Indonesia and several other Asian countries. This uneven distribution raises concerns because generalizing findings across different cultural contexts, particularly educational institutions grounded in religious values, requires more context-sensitive empirical validation. Although research from Indonesia has begun to grow (Bernarto et al., 2020; Putra et al., 2024; Sudibjo & Riantini, 2023), studies focusing specifically on *pesantren* remain very limited within the available literature on POS in education (Bernarto et al., 2020; Zhang & Li, 2025).

Methodologically, the literature is dominated by quantitative survey approaches, with almost no mixed-methods studies identified within the research corpus. The dominance of numerically driven approaches limits the ability of existing studies to capture the subjective processes through which teachers interpret principals' actions and make sense of the bureaucratic policies they encounter in everyday practice. These experiential dimensions are difficult to fully examine through Likert-scale instruments alone. As a result, understanding of how perceptions of organizational support are formed from teachers' own perspectives remains relatively limited (Prysmakova et al., 2023; Snyder, 2019).

A systematic search of Scopus and ERIC did not identify any review that simultaneously maps four key dimensions relevant to school management: teacher outcomes associated with POS, the theoretical frameworks that dominate the literature, leadership and organizational factors as antecedents of POS, and their practical implications for school management. This article addresses that gap through an integrated synthesis of 89 empirical studies published between 2019 and 2026.

The primary purpose of this review is not only to consolidate fragmented evidence on teachers' perceived organizational support but also to examine how the accumulated knowledge can inform school management and leadership activities. By identifying the outcomes of POS, the theories that explain it, the leadership and organizational conditions that foster it, and their practical implications, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive evidence base for principals and educational leaders in designing supportive organizational environments.

Accordingly, the synthesis is guided by four research questions: (1) Which teacher outcomes are most frequently associated with POS in educational contexts? (2) Which theoretical frameworks dominate POS research in education? (3) What leadership and organizational factors serve as antecedents of teachers' POS? (4) What are the practical implications of these findings for school management and leadership, including their relevance for Islamic educational institutions, which remain underrepresented in the literature? Answering these four questions is expected to generate both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the review provides a comprehensive map of the intellectual development of POS research in education and identifies areas requiring further investigation. Practically, the findings offer evidence-informed guidance for principals, school managers, and policymakers in strengthening leadership practices, organizational support systems, and teacher retention strategies. In addition, by considering the underrepresented context of Islamic educational institutions, the study contributes to the development of more context-sensitive approaches to educational management and leadership.

2. Method

2.1. Study Design and Location

This study adopted a systematic literature review approach guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework proposed by Page et al. (2021). PRISMA was chosen because it provides a rigorous and transparent procedure for integrating and synthesizing the literature on teachers' perceived organizational support (POS), with the aim of mapping (1) teacher outcomes associated with POS, (2) the dominant theoretical frameworks underpinning POS research, (3) leadership and organizational factors that shape teachers' POS, and (4) the implications of these findings for school

management and leadership, including Islamic educational institutions. Consistent with these objectives, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature selection process were established as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Criteria of Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
I-1: POS is positioned as a central variable in the research model (independent, dependent, mediating, or moderating variable)	E-1: Non-educational settings (healthcare, corporate, or military contexts)
I-2: Participants are teachers or educational staff in formal education institutions (early childhood to higher education)	E-2: Non-empirical publications (systematic reviews, conceptual papers, editorials)
I-3: Empirical study design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods)	E-3: Focus on student learning outcomes; teachers' POS is not measured
I-4: Published in peer-reviewed journals	E-4: Non-English publications
I-5: Published in 2019 or later	E-5: Full text not accessible

Source: Modified from Mengist et al. (2020)

2.2. Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted in April 2026 using two academic databases: Scopus and ERIC. Scopus was selected for its broad interdisciplinary coverage of peer-reviewed literature, while ERIC was included to capture education-specific publications that may not be indexed in Scopus. The Scopus search string was: TITLE-ABS-KEY("perceived organizational support" AND ("teacher" OR "educator" OR "school teacher" OR "teaching staff")). The ERIC search string was: abstract:"perceived organizational support" AND (title:teacher OR title:educator OR title:"school teacher" OR title:"teaching staff"). Searches were restricted to English-language peer-reviewed journal articles with full-text access.

The literature search identified 192 articles from Scopus and 81 from ERIC, yielding a total of 273 records. After removing 70 duplicates, 203 articles remained for title and abstract screening. At this stage, 38 articles were excluded: 25 were published before 2019, 4 were non-English publications, and 9 were conducted in non-educational contexts. This left 165 articles for eligibility assessment. Of these, 51 articles were not accessible in full text. The remaining 114 articles were reviewed in detail, leading to the exclusion of 25 studies in which POS was not positioned as a central variable in the research model. In total, 89 studies were included in the final synthesis. The full selection process is presented in Figure 1.

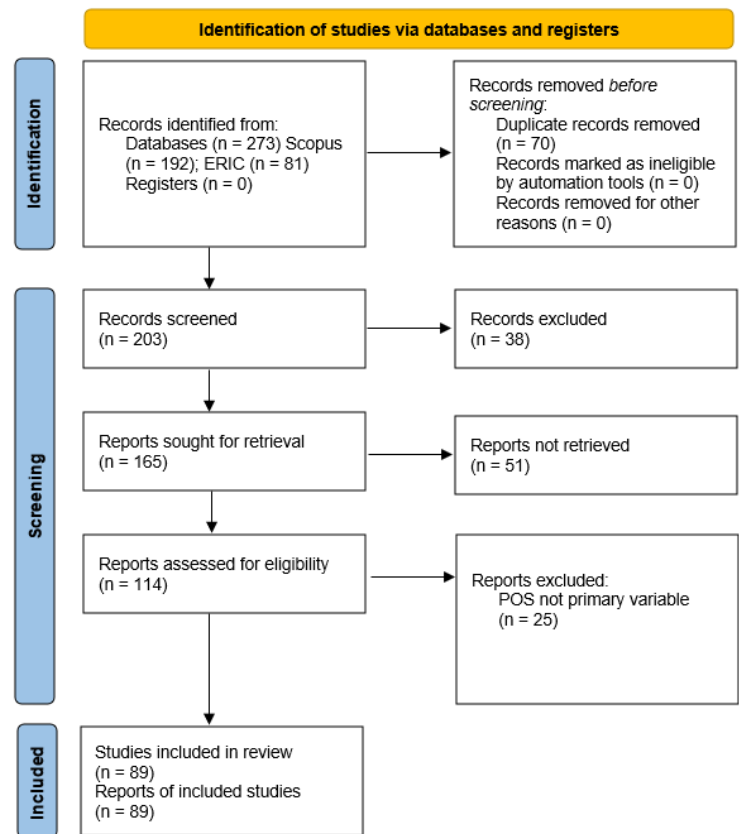


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

2.3. Data Extraction

Data extraction was conducted using a structured matrix that included bibliographic information, research design, participant characteristics, theoretical frameworks, outcome variables, the role of POS in the research model, main findings, leadership and organizational factors, and implications for school management.

2.4. Data Synthesis

Data were synthesized using a narrative synthesis approach following Snyder (2019). The process involved identifying recurring themes across studies, grouping findings according to the four research questions, and examining the consistency of patterns across different geographical contexts and educational levels.

2.5. Quality Assessment of Studies

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using an MMAT-based structured appraisal matrix adapted from the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) 2018. The appraisal focused on the clarity of research questions, appropriateness of data, sampling strategy, measurement instruments, completeness of reporting, and statistical analysis. The appraisal was used to guide the interpretation of findings rather than to exclude studies solely on the basis of methodological quality. Studies with clearer methodological reporting were given greater interpretive weight, while studies with limited reporting were interpreted more cautiously. Scispace relevance scores were not used as methodological quality indicators; they were used only as an auxiliary tool during screening and organization.

2.6. Outcome Variable Coding

Each study was coded according to the primary teacher outcome reported in the original research model. For the frequency analysis, a distinction was made between studies in which perceived organizational support (POS) was positioned as a direct predictor of the outcome variable and those in which POS served as a mediator, moderator, or secondary construct. Studies in the latter group were retained in the extraction matrix to preserve transparency but were not used to infer direct relationships between POS and teacher outcomes. When a study reported multiple outcomes, the outcome most directly linked to POS in the hypothesized model was selected as the focal outcome.

3. Results and Discussion

A close reading of the 89 studies produces three broader synthesis claims. First, evidence across the corpus indicates that POS operates through two complementary mechanisms. Promotive outcomes were more prevalent than protective outcomes, with work engagement (17 studies), teacher well-being (12 studies), and teacher performance (8 studies) emerging as the most frequently examined outcomes, whereas burnout and turnover intention each appeared in six studies (Table 2). This pattern suggests that intervention strategies should differentiate between strengthening positive professional functioning and preventing adverse work outcomes rather than treating organizational support as a single uniform approach.

Table 2. Distribution of Teacher Outcome Variables in POS Research

No	Outcome variable	Category	Broader POS association (n)	POS as direct predictor (n)
1	Work engagement	Promotive	17	8
2	Teacher well-being	Promotive	12	6
3	Teacher performance	Promotive	8	5
4	Voice, knowledge-sharing, practice, and digital behavior	Promotive	8	2
5	Innovative work behavior	Promotive	6	5
6	Job satisfaction	Promotive	6	4
7	Turnover/retention intention	Protective	6	3
8	Burnout	Protective	6	2
9	Professional/career outcomes	Promotive	5	4
10	Negative organizational outcomes	Protective	5	5
11	Organizational commitment	Promotive	4	1
12	Organizational citizenship behavior	Promotive	2	0
13	Psychological capital / efficacy	Promotive	2	1
14	Quality of work life	Promotive	1	1
15	Quiet quitting	Protective	1	1
Total			89	48

Second, the corpus consistently shows that Social Exchange Theory was the dominant theoretical framework (28 studies), followed by Organizational Support Theory (23 studies), the Job Demands–Resources model (21 studies), Conservation of Resources Theory (16 studies), and Self-Determination Theory (7 studies)

(Table 3). Rather than competing explanations, these perspectives complement one another by explaining why POS matters, how it develops, under which conditions it becomes most influential, and what forms of organizational support are meaningful for teachers.

Table 3. Theoretical Frameworks in Research on Teachers' POS: Propositions and Representative Studies

No	Theoretical Framework	Key Scholars	Core Proposition in the Context of Teachers' POS	Representative Studies (Context)
1	Social Exchange Theory (SET)	Blau (2017), Cropanzano et al. (2017), Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005)	Work relationships are shaped by the norm of reciprocity. Teachers who perceive genuine institutional care are more likely to feel obliged to reciprocate through engagement and performance that extend beyond formal job requirements.	Musenze et al. (2021) in East Africa; Hsieh et al. (2022) in Taiwan; Bernarto et al. (2020) in Indonesia; Palma & West (2023) in Philippines
2	Organizational Support Theory (OST)	Eisenberger et al. (1986), Eisenberger et al. (2020)	Teachers interpret school leadership policies as signals of the organization's broader concern for their well-being. Resources, fairness, and recognition perceived as discretionary tend to have a stronger effect on POS than support viewed as a formal obligation.	Tiplic et al. (2020) in Europe; Abdulaziz et al. (2022) in Saudi Arabia; Gou et al. (2025) in China; (Dallı & Sezgin, (2022) in Turkey
3	Job Demands-Resources (JD-R)	Bakker & Demerouti (2017)	POS functions as an organizational resource that helps balance work demands. When demands such as administrative burden and emotional labor are high, POS may serve as an important buffer for sustaining engagement and preventing burnout.	Rafsanjani et al. (2020) in Indonesia; Qin et al. (2025) in China; Saragih (2025) in Indonesia; Qin et al. (2025) in China
4	Conservation of Resources (COR)	Hobfoll (1989)	Teachers seek to preserve their psychological resources. POS provides an external resource reserve that may protect teachers from resource loss spirals caused by repeated work-related pressures.	Jamal et al. (2023) in Pakistan; Zargar et al. (2025) in Lebanon; Kong et al. (2026) and Han & Zhang (2025) in China
5	Self-Determination Theory (SDT)	Ryan & Deci (2000)	Teachers' motivation cannot be sustained by external incentives alone. POS may support the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, reflected in pedagogical freedom; competence, reflected in recognition of professional expertise; and relatedness, reflected in supportive relationships with the institution.	Zhang & Li (2025) and Kong et al. (2026) in China; Jankelová et al. (2025) in Europe

Third, contextual patterns identified across the corpus indicate that most empirical evidence originated from China and other East Asian countries and was predominantly based on cross-sectional quantitative designs. Leadership-related antecedents such as organizational climate, teacher autonomy, and transformational leadership were examined more frequently than material working conditions (Table 4). Consequently, although several findings appear consistent across studies, their transferability to other educational contexts, including Indonesia, should be interpreted cautiously because evidence from different cultural and institutional settings remains comparatively limited.

Table 4. Distribution of Leadership and Organizational Antecedents of Teachers' POS

No	Antecedent Category	n	%	Representative Studies
1	Organizational climate & culture	13	15%	Liu et al. (2023), Feng et al. (2022), Kong & Wang (2024)
2	Autonomy & teacher empowerment	12	13%	Jankelova et al. (2025), Zhang & Li (2025), Sudibjo & Riantini (2023)
3	Material & resource conditions	12	13%	Xu et al. (2025), Wang & Zhou (2025), Berkovich (2023)
4	Workload & role demands	8	9%	Kong et al. (2026), Qin et al. (2025)
5	Transformational leadership	7	8%	Singh et al. (2025), Musenze et al. (2021), Bernarto et al. (2020)
6	Professional development & recognition	7	8%	Shi et al. (2024), Liu et al. (2023)
7	Supervisor / principal support	6	7%	Tiplic et al. (2020), Aria et al. (2019)
8	Authentic / distributed leadership	5	6%	Huang (2023), Sudibjo & Manihuruk (2022)
9	Procedural & organizational justice	3	3%	Rafsanjani et al. (2020), Richards et al. (2020)

Across these three synthesis claims, the review also indicates that POS relationships were not uniformly significant. Several studies reported conditional, mediated, or nonsignificant effects, suggesting that the influence of POS depends on contextual, organizational, and methodological conditions rather than representing a universally direct relationship.

The category column classifies outcomes as promotive or protective. The broader POS association count refers to the primary teacher outcome examined in studies where POS appeared as an independent variable, mediator, moderator, or secondary construct. The direct predictor count includes only studies in which POS was positioned as a direct predictor. Each study was coded once based on its primary teacher outcome. Data compiled from the study database, 2026.

3.1. Distribution of Teacher Outcomes in POS Research

The distribution of outcomes in this corpus does not simply reflect the empirical conditions teachers face. It also reveals the patterns of attention within POS research. This pattern should be read with caution, as the selection of outcomes is not entirely neutral. The dominance of work engagement over burnout indicates that the literature has paid greater attention to promotive mechanisms, such as empowerment, engagement, and strengthening positive work conditions, than to protective mechanisms aimed at preventing work pressure and professional exhaustion. Beyond affective and motivational outcomes, several studies also examined POS in relation to teachers' professional practice orientations, including voice behavior, knowledge-sharing, evidence-based practice, and digital behavior. Paynter et al. (2022), for example, found that educators' adoption of evidence-based practices was positively associated with perceived organizational support for EBP, suggesting that institutional support may not only shape but also affect teachers' professional practice orientations.

From the perspective of school management, this imbalance is important. Efforts to strengthen work engagement are clearly relevant, but preventing burnout is no less urgent, particularly in contexts where teacher burnout has been reported at concerning levels (Berkovich, 2023; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023). As a result, current POS literature provides a stronger empirical basis for understanding how organizational support may enhance teachers' engagement and positive work functioning, while evidence on how POS may help prevent burnout remains comparatively more limited. This distinction also suggests that POS strategies should not be treated as a single uniform approach. Promotive outcomes such as work engagement are more closely associated with support that strengthens relationships, recognition, and opportunities for professional growth. Protective outcomes such as burnout, by contrast, require attention to resource availability, the reduction of excessive workload, and protection from prolonged work pressure. The uneven attention given to these two areas should therefore be understood as an important gap for future research and school management practice.

The dominance of work engagement can be explained through the mechanism of Social Exchange Theory. Teachers who perceive adequate institutional support are more likely to reciprocate through work engagement that extends beyond their formal obligations (Blau, 2017). This pattern is reflected in studies from Taiwan (Hsieh et al. 2022), Singapore and Thailand (Irudayaraj, 2019), East Africa (Musenze et al., 2021), Israel (Lavy et al., 2024), and Indonesia (Bernarto et al., 2020; Sudibjo & Riantini, 2023).

3.2. Position of POS in Research Models

An analysis of the position of POS within the research models adds a dimension that cannot be captured by the outcome distribution alone. An analysis of the position of POS within the research models shows that POS functioned as a direct predictor in 47 studies, as a mediator in 32 studies, as a moderator in 8 studies, and as a secondary or contextual construct in 2 studies. When POS functions as a mediator between leadership and work engagement, the study implies that leadership becomes effective through the perceptions it generates. When POS functions as a moderator between workload and burnout, the study implies that support buffers the impact of high job demands. These two configurations point to different intervention logics: mediation places leadership as the main intervention point, while moderation suggests that contextual conditions shape how POS operates. The absence of studies comparing these structural roles within the same context remains a design gap for future research.

In addition, variation in the operational definition of teacher well-being makes cross-study comparison more difficult. Some studies operationalize well-being as workplace spirituality and subjective happiness (Na'imah et al. 2023), while others frame it in terms of psychological health or work-life balance (Zhang & Li, 2025). This inconsistency should not be viewed only as a weakness in the literature. It also points to the need for greater conceptual and measurement standardization in future POS research. However, the effects of POS should not be interpreted as uniformly significant across all educational contexts. Several studies reported nonsignificant or conditional effects. For example, POS did not significantly mediate the relationship between intrinsic/prosocial motivation and work engagement among Slovak university teachers, whereas job autonomy played a more mediating role. In Indonesia, perceived school support and job autonomy did not significantly moderate the relationship between job demands and job crafting among primary school teachers. Similarly, among contingent college teachers in the Philippines, POS was correlated with organizational citizenship

behavior but did not mediate the relationship between organizational commitment and OCB. These findings suggest that POS may operate conditionally, depending on the outcome examined, the type of employment relationship, and the broader organizational context.

At the same time, this synthesis also reveals an important limitation in the existing literature. No study was found that explicitly examined the possibility that organizational support may be perceived negatively, for example, when certain forms of support are experienced as control that restricts teachers' professional autonomy. The absence of such findings suggests that POS research in educational contexts remains more focused on confirming its positive effects than on examining its boundaries and variation in effectiveness. The distribution of outcomes in this corpus generally supports and extends the findings of Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), who showed that POS is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance, and negatively associated with turnover intention. In this review, this pattern appears across multiple educational contexts, with greater contextual diversity than that covered in the earlier review. The most notable difference lies in the prominence of work engagement as the dominant outcome. This construct was not a central focus in POS literature in 2002, but in the present corpus, it exceeds organizational commitment as the most frequently examined outcome.

This finding points to a shift in how POS research conceptualizes work-related outcomes. In educational contexts, work engagement appears to have taken the position previously occupied more often by organizational commitment. However, this pattern should not be read as evidence of a direct relationship that applies uniformly across all studies. Jamal et al. (2023) for example, found that POS had no direct effect on either burnout or innovative work behavior. Its effect emerged only through the full mediation of thriving at work. This finding is important because it suggests that the relationship between POS and teacher outcomes warrants closer examination, particularly when psychological mediators are included in the research model.

The concentration of China-based studies should also be understood as a structural feature of the corpus, rather than merely as a matter of geographical distribution. China's education system has characteristics that may shape how POS operates in school-based relationships, including strong state control over the curriculum, teacher evaluation linked to student achievement, and hierarchical principal-teacher relations influenced by Confucian values of relational obligation. In such a context, the norm of reciprocity that underpins Social Exchange Theory does not operate in a culturally neutral social space. It remains unclear whether the consistent relationship between POS and work engagement in Chinese studies reflects the social exchange mechanism assumed by the theory or instead reflects a form of relational compliance that appears similar on the surface but differs mechanistically. Cross-cultural meta-analytic evidence across 54 nations suggests that in Eastern collectivistic cultures, POS effects operate more strongly through organizational identification than through social exchange reciprocity, the reverse of the Western pattern (Rockstuhl et al. 2020), raising questions about whether the SET framing fully captures how Chinese teachers respond to institutional support. Without comparative studies explicitly examining cultural values, generalizations from a China-dominant corpus to contexts such as Indonesia, Pakistan, or countries where Islamic values provide a normative basis for work relations should be treated as inferential rather than as established empirical evidence.

A potential publication bias should also be acknowledged. The 89 studies were sourced from peer-reviewed databases that tend to over-represent statistically significant findings; null or negative POS effects remain relatively uncommon in this field of research. The consistency of positive POS effects in this corpus should therefore be interpreted with this caveat in mind. Please look at Table 3.

3.3. Theoretical Frameworks in POS Research

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by Blau (2017), is the most frequently used theoretical framework in this corpus, appearing in 28 of the 89 studies analyzed. Within the social exchange tradition, work relationships are understood as being shaped by the norm of reciprocity. When organizations provide resources and support that individuals perceive as valuable, individuals are more likely to reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviors (Cook et al., 2020). This framework helps explain why teachers who perceive institutional support tend to show work engagement and contributions that extend beyond formal job requirements. This pattern is reflected in various educational contexts, including Taiwan (Hsieh et al., 2022), East Africa (Musenze et al., 2021), and public schools.

Organizational Support Theory (OST) from Eisenberger et al. (1986), was adopted in 23 studies as a complement to SET. While SET focuses on the behavioral consequences of support, OST explains how perceptions of support are formed through organizational personification: teachers interpret principals' policies and resource provision as signals of institutional care. Several studies use OST to explain how transformational leadership shapes teachers' POS (Musenze et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2025).

The mechanism of organizational personification that underpins OST needs to be read more carefully in the school context. OST assumes that individuals can attribute experiences of support to particular

organizational agents who are perceived as representing the institution. In corporate organizations, this kind of attribution is relatively easier to identify. In schools, however, the process is more complex. Principals often serve as the most immediate representation of the institution in teachers' eyes, but many policies that most directly shape teachers' work lives, such as curriculum, performance evaluation, salary, and administrative workload, often originate from education offices or ministries that lie beyond the principal's direct authority.

This condition is especially relevant in Indonesia's post-decentralization education context. Teachers may receive support from one organizational level while simultaneously facing demands from another. As a result, perceived organizational support cannot always be traced to a single institutional source. In this corpus, no study explicitly examined how teachers attribute POS across different hierarchical levels, such as to principals, local education offices, or the central government. The absence of this multilevel perspective points to more than a methodological limitation. It also reveals a conceptual gap in educational POS research. If the main sources of teachers' work pressure come from policies at higher regulatory levels, interventions focused only on school principals may have limited effects. Future POS research, therefore, needs to consider how teachers distinguish between sources of support and sources of demand within the layered structure of educational organizations.

The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model were examined in 16 and 21 studies, respectively, although they were applied with different emphases. COR was generally used in studies of burnout and work-related stress, with POS positioned as a resource that helps prevent the depletion of teachers' emotional energy. Wang and Zhou (2025) show that POS mediates the relationship between AI awareness and work exhaustion, supporting COR's assumption regarding the protective function of psychological resources. By contrast, JD-R was more often used to explain work engagement, with POS understood as an organizational resource that helps teachers cope with job demands. Liu et al. (2023) show that POS mediates the relationship between quality of work life and turnover intention within the JD-R framework.

The five theoretical frameworks in this corpus are more productively understood as complementary perspectives rather than competing theories. Read together, they offer a broad explanatory map of POS in educational contexts. Social Exchange Theory helps explain why teachers respond to organizational support by engaging and making positive contributions. Organizational Support Theory explains how perceptions of support are formed through attributions to institutional actions and policies. Conservation of Resources Theory highlights what occurs when support is absent, particularly through psychological resource loss and increased work pressure. The Job Demands-Resources model clarifies when POS becomes most critical, namely under conditions of high job demands. Self-Determination Theory, meanwhile, specifies the psychological mechanisms through which organizational support affects teacher motivation, particularly by influencing the fulfillment of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

In theoretical terms, these frameworks could be integrated into a more comprehensive model of POS for educational contexts. Yet this corpus does not show the presence of such an integrative model, despite the rapid growth of POS research in education over the past seven years. The absence of a shared framework may help explain why practical recommendations in educational POS literature are often difficult to compare. Many studies use terms that appear similar but are grounded in different theoretical questions. As a result, knowledge accumulation in this field remains limited and has not yet developed in a fully cumulative manner.

Although these frameworks are widely used in educational POS literature, several studies combine multiple theories within a single analytical model. This pattern suggests an effort to explain POS through multiple psychological mechanisms simultaneously. At the same time, the synthesis also reveals conceptual overlap that has not been fully clarified in the literature. Ahmad et al. (2023) observe that SET-based studies in education tend to focus on behavioral reciprocity, while the cognitive and evaluative processes through which teachers interpret organizational signals remain underexplored. In addition to the dominant frameworks, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was used in seven studies to explain work engagement through the dimensions of autonomy and competence.

These frameworks also reflect different ways of understanding teachers' relationships with their organization. SET and OST place teachers within reciprocal relationships with the institution, whereas COR and JD-R place greater emphasis on how teachers manage resources in response to job demands. These perspectives lead to different intervention implications. SET and OST tend to emphasize strengthening relational quality and leadership support, while COR and JD-R are more closely linked to strategies for managing workload and organizational resources. No study in this corpus explicitly compared the effectiveness of these two intervention approaches.

The conceptual question of whether SET, OST, COR, JD-R, and SDT generate genuinely different predictions can be addressed tentatively through the patterns identified in this corpus. The synthesis shows that SET is more often used in studies examining affective and behavioral outcomes, such as work engagement, OCB, and

organizational commitment. By contrast, COR and JD-R are more frequently used in studies focusing on protective outcomes, such as burnout and turnover intention. This pattern suggests that these frameworks are not fully interchangeable. SET emphasizes exchange and reciprocal responses, COR focuses on the preservation of psychological resources, and JD-R highlights the balance between job demands and available resources

This finding adds nuance to the view that these theories can be grouped simply as overlapping resource-based theories. At the same time, the combination of SET and OST in eight studies suggests that the two are better understood as complementary frameworks. OST explains how perceptions of organizational support are formed, while SET explains how these perceptions may encourage reciprocal responses in the form of work-related attitudes and behaviors. In this sense, SET and OST should not be conflated as conceptually equivalent frameworks.

This synthesis, however, also needs to acknowledge the possibility of methodological circularity within the corpus. Researchers' choice of theory is not entirely separate from the outcome they intend to examine. Studies focusing on burnout tend to use COR because the theory provides a strong explanation for resource loss and psychological strain. Conversely, studies focusing on work engagement tend to use SET because it is more readily linked to positive reciprocal behavior. The distribution of theories observed in the corpus, such as SET for positive outcomes and COR for protective outcomes, may therefore partly reflect researchers' theoretical selection patterns rather than the explanatory capacity of each framework alone. This limitation is important because no study in the corpus directly compared the predictions of SET and COR using the same outcome. Without such comparative designs, the claim that SET is more suitable for explaining work engagement, whereas COR is more suitable for explaining burnout, should be understood as a methodological tendency in the literature, rather than as an empirically verified conclusion.

3.4. Leadership and Organizational Antecedents of Teachers' POS

The distribution of antecedents across the corpus is summarized in Table 4. Principals' transformational leadership was the most consistently examined single leadership style as an antecedent of POS, appearing in seven studies. However, organizational climate and culture (13 studies), autonomy and empowerment (12 studies), and material and resource conditions (12 studies) were each identified in more studies, reflecting a broader set of organizational factors associated with POS formation. From the perspective of OST, supportive, appreciative, and visionary leadership behaviors are interpreted by teachers as representations of the organization's concern for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Singh et al. (2025) show that POS mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' work engagement, suggesting that leadership's effect on engagement is mediated by teachers' perceptions of institutional support. A similar finding is reported by Chen et al. (2024), who found that transformational leadership increased knowledge-sharing behavior through POS mediation in Chinese higher education.

Beyond leadership, several organizational factors were consistently associated with POS formation. Procedural justice in the distribution of tasks and compensation emerged as one of the most frequently reported factors (Rafsanjani et al. 2020). Work environments that provide teaching autonomy, support collaboration among teachers, and offer professional development perceived as a form of institutional care were also associated with higher teachers' POS (Bernarto et al. 2020; Feng et al. 2024; Liu et al. 2023; Sudibjo & Riantini, 2023; Zhang & Li, 2025). By contrast, role conflict and excessive workload tend to be associated with lower POS, although the number of studies that specifically examine these negative mechanisms remains relatively limited.

Most studies in this corpus used a cross-sectional design, accounting for 84 of the 89 studies. This pattern raises an important methodological limitation, particularly regarding the potential for common method variance (CMV). When teachers are asked to assess principals' leadership, procedural justice, POS, and work engagement through the same questionnaire at a single point in time, correlations among constructs may be influenced by individual response tendencies. In other words, some of the reported relationships may not fully reflect causal relations among variables but may also be shaped by how respondents evaluate their work experiences more generally.

Only a small number of studies in the corpus used design strategies to reduce the potential for CMV. Three studies used measurements at two different time points, while He et al. (2025) employed a three-wave longitudinal design. For this reason, the relationship between leadership antecedents and POS in this corpus may appear stronger than it would in studies with more rigorous designs. The extent of this possible inflation cannot be determined without a meta-analysis that explicitly controls for differences in research design. Nevertheless, this pattern points to the need for more longitudinal, multisource, or mixed-methods studies to examine POS relationships in educational contexts more robustly.

Beyond design limitations, most studies in the reviewed literature come from general education contexts in China, Pakistan, and East Asian countries. Most of these studies assume that antecedents such as transformational leadership and procedural justice operate universally, without examining whether the same

mechanisms also apply in *pesantren* or Islamic schools operating within different value and authority structures. This condition points not only to a limitation in contextual representation but also to a broader question: whether POS mechanisms are *etic* (universal across cultures) or *emic* (shaped by local social and value contexts). To date, this issue has received relatively limited attention in educational POS literature.

Additionally, the identified antecedents suggest that teachers' perceptions of support are shaped by a combination of leadership factors, organizational policies, and everyday work relationships. This pattern indicates that improving POS is unlikely to be achieved through intervention at a single level alone, because teachers form perceptions of support through the accumulation of simultaneous organizational experiences (Eisenberger et al., 2020). When the antecedents identified in this corpus are read together, rather than as a list of separate variables, the educational POS literature appears to place greater emphasis on leadership factors than on the structural conditions of teachers' work. Transformational leadership and procedural justice consistently emerge as important predictors, partly because they are relatively easy to measure, can be more readily translated into intervention recommendations, and fit well with the tendency in educational research to position school leaders as agents of change. However, the consistency of these findings does not necessarily mean that leadership is the strongest predictor of POS across all empirical conditions.

This limitation becomes important when teachers' material working conditions are highly constrained, as previous studies have shown that inadequate material resources and unfavorable working conditions can substantially influence teachers' perceptions of organizational support and their professional outcomes (Berkovich, 2023; Eisenberger et al., 2020). The corpus does not yet provide an adequate answer to how far transformational leadership continues to shape POS when teachers face inadequate pay, heavy administrative workload, limited work facilities, or imbalanced student-teacher ratios. Without direct evidence comparing the relative strength of relational and material antecedents, recommendations to improve leadership quality need to be understood in context. Such recommendations may be relevant in one type of school but may not be sufficient in another context where the main problem is a lack of basic resources (Liu et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2025).

The pattern of antecedents in the corpus also shows a systematic tendency in the choice of research variables. Transformational leadership, procedural justice, and organizational climate dominate the literature (Singh et al., 2025; Rafsanjani et al., 2020). These are relational and perceptual constructs that are relatively easy to measure using Likert-type scales and are supported by established instruments. By contrast, material factors that may be practically important for teachers rarely appear as explicitly tested antecedents of POS. Pay adequacy appears only indirectly in a small number of studies, while the physical condition of workspaces, student-teacher ratios, and the availability of teaching infrastructure have not been widely examined as predictors of POS (Liu et al., 2023; Berkovich, 2023).

This gap is particularly important for contexts such as Indonesia and Pakistan, which are also represented in the corpus. In these contexts, material constraints such as inadequate school facilities or uncompetitive compensation may plausibly shape teachers' perceptions of organizational support (Bernarto et al., 2020; Jamal et al., 2023). If policy recommendations focus only on developing leadership style while leaving material constraints unaddressed, the impact of such interventions may be limited. Educational POS research, therefore, needs to examine structural conditions more seriously as part of the formation of teachers' perceived support (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Berkovich, 2023).

These patterns are broadly consistent with the OST proposition that leaders' discretionary actions have a stronger effect on POS than support perceived as a formal obligation (Eisenberger et al., 1986). However, several findings also complicate this assumption. Berkovich (2023) shows that coercive bureaucracy from educational authorities can reduce teachers' POS regardless of the principal's leadership style. This finding suggests that POS is shaped not only by school-level leadership but also by higher-level authority systems, a level of analysis that is rarely examined in educational POS literature. While, Caesens et al. (2019) further show that lower POS was associated with higher interpersonal conflict among Belgian teachers, indicating that institutional support and collegial climate operate bidirectionally in shaping teachers' perceptions of support.

3.5. Implications for School Leadership and Management

The synthesis of these 89 studies yields three substantive implications for school leadership and management. First, POS consistently serves as a mediator between transformational leadership and various teacher outcomes, suggesting that leadership's influence operates through teachers' perceptions of institutional support (Chang et al., 2020; Musenze et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2025). This finding indicates that the effectiveness of school leadership depends not only on administrative and structural aspects, but also on leaders' ability to build perceptions of organizational care among teachers.

Second, the dual function of POS as both a promotive and a protective factor suggests that teacher performance evaluation focused solely on work outputs may overlook psychological factors such as burnout and intention to leave the profession (Berkovich, 2023; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023). Third, professional

development programs need to be designed with attention to how teachers interpret them, because support perceived as an additional burden may instead weaken POS (Hsieh et al., 2022). POS cannot be developed through a single, standalone intervention, because teachers' perceptions of support are formed cumulatively from multiple organizational signals received simultaneously. Improving the quality of principals' leadership, therefore, may not be fully effective unless it is accompanied by improvements in task distribution procedures, reward systems, and teachers' working conditions. Teachers evaluate the organization through their overall work experience, not only through the behavior of school leaders (Eisenberger et al., 2020).

Within this framework, even support programs that appear authentic may be perceived as inadequate if they are not accompanied by sufficient material support. The management of POS, therefore, needs to move beyond a single-intervention logic that seeks one most effective strategy. A more appropriate approach is to treat POS as a system-level outcome, requiring alignment among leadership, organizational procedures, and material working conditions, rather than optimizing any single dimension in isolation. Weaknesses in one of these dimensions may limit the effect of improvements in the others.

3.6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Evidence from Islamic educational contexts remains limited and does not yet allow strong generalization. One study on private Islamic schools affiliated with *Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah* in Indonesia examined teacher retention through teacher work engagement and Islamic moderation, with school culture, perceived organizational support, work environment, and teacher job demands as antecedent variables. However, the effects of POS were not uniformly significant across all pathways. This single study tentatively suggests that POS effects in Islamic educational institutions may be conditioned by contextual factors, such as religious moderation and organizational culture, though no generalizations are possible from this evidence alone. Therefore, further studies in *pesantren* and Islamic school contexts are needed to examine how spiritual authority, religious values, and material working conditions shape teachers' perceptions of organizational support. The limited use of longitudinal and mixed-methods designs represents a particular gap in *pesantren* and Islamic school contexts, as cultural and spiritual dimensions may not have been fully captured by dominant theoretical frameworks (Na'imah et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2024).

4. Conclusion

This systematic literature review synthesized evidence from 89 empirical studies published between 2019 and 2026 to provide an integrated understanding of teachers' perceived organizational support (POS) in educational settings. The review shows that work engagement, teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and teacher performance are the most prominent promotive outcomes associated with POS, whereas burnout and turnover intention represent its primary protective outcomes. Among the theoretical perspectives identified, Social Exchange Theory remains the dominant explanatory framework, complemented by Organizational Support Theory, the Job Demands–Resources model, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, which together provide complementary explanations of how organizational support is formed and influences teachers' work-related outcomes. The synthesis further indicates that organizational climate, teacher autonomy, material working conditions, and transformational leadership are the principal antecedents shaping teachers' perceptions of organizational support. Overall, the findings suggest that POS should be understood as a system-level organizational outcome that operates through both promotive and protective mechanisms and functions not only as a direct predictor but also as a mediator and moderator of teacher outcomes. Consequently, strengthening teachers' perceived organizational support requires an integrated school management approach that aligns leadership practices, organizational procedures, professional support, and material working conditions to promote teacher effectiveness and long-term professional sustainability.

Author Contributions

Hanyfa Shofia Azahra Zulfa: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Original draft preparation, and Writing - Reviewing and Editing. Eka Prihatin: Methodology, Data curation, and Visualization. Abubakar: Software, Supervision, and Validation. All authors contributed equally to this paper. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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