

Why Do Teachers Leave the Profession: A Case Study

Burhan Keçeci¹ S. Bilge Keskinliç Kara²

Article History:

Received 31.05.2023

Received in revised form

28.07.2023

Accepted

Available online 01.10.2023

This case study aims to explore the reasons for teachers leaving the profession by examining a specific context. The study investigates the factors that contribute to teacher attrition and provides insights into the experiences and perspectives of teachers who have chosen to leave their teaching careers. By understanding the underlying causes of teacher turnover, this research seeks to inform policy and practice to improve teacher retention and address the challenges faced by educators. The study employs qualitative research methods, including interviews and surveys, to gather data from former teachers and analyze their responses. The findings shed light on the complex factors influencing teachers' decisions to leave and offer recommendations for creating a more supportive and fulfilling teaching environment.

© IJERE. All rights reserved

Keywords: Teacher retention, leaving profession, teaching profession

INTRODUCTION

One of the key factors which have a great impact on people's lives is undeniably their occupation. Professions play a significant role in determining individuals' social standing, financial situation, daily routines, social circles, residential choices and viewpoints (Eke, 1987). To ensure lifelong happiness, it is essential for people to have a genuine passion for their career, experience joy in their daily work, derive satisfaction from their profession and ensure alignment with their personal traits. Without all this, the probability of leaving a job could arise. According to the Global Teacher Status Index (2018) implemented by the Varkey Foundation, which compares the levels of respect for teachers in various indicators, Turkey was ranked as the third country where teachers experienced the most decline in status between 2013 and 2018. The professional prestige of teachers in Turkey had decreased by 10 points and 4 ranks. There can be many reasons for this decline. According to various studies, the lack of professionalism, the decrease in employment rights, negative news coverage and social media reports regarding harassment and violence, and negative political discourse have all played a role in the devaluation of the teaching profession (Atmaca, 2020; Kıran, Durmuş & Sucu, 2019). According to the Teaching Profession Report from the Perspective of Teachers published by the Turkish Education Association's think tank, TEDMEM (2014), a majority of the participants did not agree with the idea of 'being able to teach for a lifetime'. Similarly, more than half of the participants stated that they would not consider teaching as a profession if they were encouraged to pursue a different career. Furthermore, the report indicated that only one in five participants would support their children choosing teaching as a profession. The report showed the lack of strong commitment to the teaching profession among teachers and a tendency to leave the profession. For example, more than half of the teachers believed that teaching did not provide a comfortable life in Turkey, and a similar proportion thought that teaching was not a suitable profession for career advancement. In terms of professional respect, 41.9% of the teachers surveyed said that respect for the profession and its image had irreparably deteriorated. Additionally, half of the participants reported experiencing a loss of respect and trust as they continued their teaching careers and 67.1% of them stated that working conditions in the teaching profession were actually much worse than perceived. Many of the participants believed that the reason that teaching is perceived as an ideal profession in society is not due to respect for the profession but rather factors such as working hours and holidays.

Research conducted to assess the professional perceptions of teachers in Turkey does not paint a positive picture (Esen, 2004; Eğitim Bir-Sen, 2004; Gök & Okçabol, 1998; TEDMEM, 2014). With the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, teachers played an active role in the new management style and were determined to accept and understand the new political system in the public eye, which contributed to promoting their societal aspects. This was effective in the development of social status and increasing the prestige of the teaching profession. The prestige and image of the teaching profession in Turkey have, however, been subject to changes recently due to various economic, social and political developments (Özdemir & Orhan, 2019). According to Arslanoğlu (1992, as cited in Atmaca, 2020) the perception that highly lucrative professions are

¹Lucas Onderwijs,kececiburhan@icloud.com orcid.org/ 0000-0003-0800-3794²Istanbul Kultur University, s.kara@iku.edu.tr orcid.org/ 0000-0003-1951-7838

more prestigious has led to a decline in the status of the teaching profession after the cultural, economic and social structure changed after the 1950s.

In parallel with the changes in the social structure of which they are a part, the perception of professions also changes. Due to the requirements of life, there are changes in the types, varieties, characteristics, functions, images, opportunities provided, ways of practice, values and rules of professions. The status of professions is affected by these changes and can rise or fall depending on the era. The teaching profession is one of the professions that has experienced a decline in status. In particular, with the increasing number of unemployed teachers after graduation, complaints about the decreasing status of the teaching profession have arisen in the public eye, leading to numerous studies on the status, reputation and working conditions of the teaching profession (Aydın, Canavar & Akkın, 2018; Bozbayındır, 2019; Coşkun-Keskin & Yüceer, 2017; Kıran et al., 2019; Özdemir & Orhan, 2019; Ünsal, 2018). The loss of prestige of the teaching profession in many countries has led to the International Labour Organization (ILO) referring to teaching as a "besieged profession" (Yurdakul, Çelik, Gür & Kurt, 2016). Feeling alienated from their profession can not only change teachers' work life but also affect their social communication and completely alter their perspective on life and work (Elma, 2003). The alienation which teachers feel from the school and the profession can have a negative impact on the learning process and institutional progress (Yıldız, Akgün & Yıldız, 2013). The disillusionment of employees in educational institutions and their avoidance of the teaching and learning processes can turn education into a dull and unenjoyable activity (Eryılmaz & Burgaz, 2011). This can lead to teachers leaving the profession and continuing their careers in a different sector. In addition, factors such as insufficient support from school administrators, problems with students, limited participation in decision-making and low salaries all influence the decision to leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2001).

The status and perception of professions, as well as the level of respect towards them, are important factors influencing the choice and practice of a profession, and the status of professions can vary across societies (Andersen & Werfhorst, 2010; Heinz, 2009). Some factors which influence respect towards a profession include financial income, personal rights and societal opportunities (Erzen & Epçaçan, 2018). Furthermore, job satisfaction, job security, recognition, specialization in the field, self-awareness and a sense of superiority all have a significant impact on the respect and attitude accorded to a profession (Czeranowska, 2016). In the teaching profession, as in other professions, the status of the profession is sometimes overshadowed. These diminishing human and professional values have a negative impact on the social prestige of teachers. Various social developments, changes in teacher education systems, factors influencing career choices, social dynamics, financial reasons and qualifications have contributed to the changing societal status of the teaching profession (Buyruk, 2013; Işık, 2014; Yıldız, 2014).

According to the 2021 Administrative Activity Report published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey, 2,030 teachers left their positions due to resignation or death in 2021. In 2020, this number was 1,632, indicating a significant increase within a year. Although the exact number of teachers who resigned is not reported by the ministry, it is a fact that teachers leave their profession for various reasons, and it is important to investigate these reasons and take necessary measures to address the situation.

In Turkey, there have been many studies related to the teaching profession but there seems to be a lack of research on the reasons why teachers leave the profession. On the other hand, some studies on this topic can be found abroad (Buchanan, 2010; Cieśliński & Szum, 2014; Fuchell, Horn & Harris, 1966; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). These studies have identified reasons for teachers leaving the profession such as burnout, low salary, an undemocratic school environment, administrative issues, the low status of teaching profession, student behavior and classroom management challenges, parental behavior, excessive workload and working conditions.

Teachers leaving the profession can be associated with negative conditions, but can also be viewed from a different perspective. Especially in the twenty-first century, it is considered normal for people to change professions. With the emergence of flexibility and temporariness in the work environment, similar to changing institutions, it is more common for individuals to leave one profession and work in another more suitable or preferable field. Teachers too might change their profession in pursuit of something better or more suitable from this perspective. However, the crucial point here is the experience of disappointing and distressing factors during the practice of the profession, and the failure of administrators to develop and implement policies that would allow such changes.

The purpose of this study is to examine the opinions of teachers who have left the profession regarding their work experiences and reasons for leaving. The research was designed to identify the difficulties, experiences and reasons for teachers leaving the profession after starting their career in teaching. In this context, the research question was determined as 'What are the reasons and experiences of teachers who have left the profession?' In order to investigate the research problem more systematically and in greater depth, the following sub-questions were addressed:

1. What are the factors influencing teachers' decision to leave the profession?
2. What are the emotions experienced by teachers during the process of leaving the profession?
3. What are the emotions experienced by teachers after leaving the profession?
4. What are the experiences of teachers who have left the profession regarding school administrators during this process?
5. What are the reactions of the social environment towards teachers who have left the profession?

Although it is acknowledged that experience is not the sole source of success for an experienced teacher, it is generally preferred for teachers to stay in the profession if they are considered superior to their inexperienced selves from years earlier. Through this research, it is hoped to gain insights into factors which can affect teachers' decision to leave the profession, such as their perception of the profession, professional satisfaction, professional commitment and working conditions. Recommendations can then be made to improve and develop these aspects. Additionally, the research results might inspire further studies on the teaching profession and contribute to organizational effectiveness, continuity and teacher well-being. The findings can provide data to the MoNE regarding career orientation, to pre-service teacher education faculties regarding the improvement of working conditions, rights, and status, to school administrators for the enhancement of the working environment and organizational culture, and to the Directorate General of Teacher Training for the selection and development of teachers within the service. This can lead these institutions to reassess their policies and the views which guide these policies concerning the teaching profession. Consequently, steps can be taken to improve the status and working conditions of the teaching profession. Furthermore, it is believed that the opinions of the thirteen participating teachers who have left the profession can shed light on the views of prospective teachers regarding the profession.

METHOD

Research Design

This study was qualitative research designed as a case study. Case studies are widely used in qualitative research. Since each study can have different circumstances, it is not possible to generalize the findings, but it can serve as an example for similar situations. An individual, an organization, a community or a group can be an example of a study case (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this study, the group of interest consisted of teachers who have left the profession.

Study Group

The study group for the research consisted of thirteen teachers who resided in Istanbul and had resigned from the teaching profession. They were reached through the chain sampling technique. Pseudonyms were given to the participating teachers in order to maintain their sociological context without disclosing their personal, academic or institutional identities. Detailed information regarding the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about the study group

Name	Gender	Age	Teaching Field	Education Level	Teaching Experience	Institution Type	Current Profession
Lina	Female	29	English	Master's Degree	5 years	Private	Interpreter/Translator
Defne	Female	26	English	Bachelor's Degree	4 years	Private	Flight Attendant
Ayşe Nur	Female	30	Mathematics	Bachelor's Degree	3 years	Private	Software Developer
Bartu	Male	32	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	Master's Degree	4 years	Public	Psychological Counselor
Esmâ	Female	33	Turkish Language and Literature	Bachelor's Degree	7 years	Private	Not working
Sena	Female	33	Physical Education and Sports	Bachelor's Degree	6 years	Private	Sports Education Specialist
Nil	Female	28	German Translation and Interpretation	Master's Degree	4 years	Private	Flight Attendant
Miray	Female	29	German	Bachelor's Degree	4 years	Private	Flight Attendant
Bade	Female	34	Computer and Instructional Technologies	Master's Degree	1 year	Paid	Banker
Erkan	Male	42	Mathematics	Bachelor's Degree	3 years	Public	Software Developer
Mehmet	Male	28	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	Master's Degree	2 years	Private	Psychological Counselor
Tarık	Male	26	Physical Education and Sports	Bachelor's Degree	3 years	Private	Coach
İpek	Female	36	Turkish Language Teaching	Bachelor's Degree	5 years	Private	Sales Representative

Table 1 shows that of the thirteen recruited teachers who had left the profession, nine were female and four were male. Two of them had worked in public schools, one in a private-paid school and ten in private schools when they resigned. Ten of them had a bachelor's degree and three had a master's degree. The ages of the participants ranged from 26 to 42.

Data Collection

For the study, the interview technique was used as the data collection tool to gather the participants' experiences. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions. According to Büyüköztürk et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews not only elicit responses to the prepared interview questions but also allow for new questions to explore details related to the research topic.

The interview form contained open-ended questions designed to address the sub-objectives of the study and questions to gather participants' personal information. Additionally, as the final question, participants were asked if there was anything they wanted to add before concluding the interview. There was no insistence on answering this question.

After obtaining the necessary ethical approval for the study, interviews were conducted with the participants. Due to the global threat posed by the coronavirus pandemic and the measures taken to combat it, the planned face-to-face interviews were conducted online remotely. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed with their permission. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participating teachers and maintain their sociological context. The interviews started in May 2020 and were completed in June 2020.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the research, the interview questions prepared by the researcher were reviewed by two experts in the field of educational sciences before finalizing them. Based on the suggestions of the experts, the interview form was adjusted and finalized. To increase the reliability of the research and correct any possible shortcomings or errors, it is important to work first with a smaller pilot sample using the proposed data collection techniques (Seggie & Bayyurt, 2017). Therefore, before conducting interviews with the participants, a pilot application was conducted with two English teachers who were not recruited to participate in the main study, using the planned semi-structured interview questions. The pilot study confirmed that the interview form met the content of the research and that the prepared questions were understood correctly by the participants.

To ensure reliability during the data analysis process, the acquired data analysed by the principal researcher were examined by another researcher, and it was concluded that the analyses reflected the truth.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the acquired data in this study. In qualitative research, data are analysed in four steps: data coding, identification of themes, organization of codes and themes, and description and interpretation of findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). As already explained, the interview transcripts were examined and analysed. The transcripts were read line-by-line in a detailed manner multiple times in order to categorize and code the acquired data. After organizing the data and codes under specific headings/categories, themes were developed.

RESULTS

In this section, the analyses of the data collected from the interview responses and subjected to thematic analysis technique are presented in the order of sub-problems set out above. The first sub-problem of the research, which was the factors influencing teachers' decision to leave the profession, is tabulated as follows:

Table 2. Factors influencing teachers' decision to leave the profession

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Economic Reasons	Low salary
	Delayed payment of salary
	Feeling of not receiving fair compensation
	Part-time work after regular hours
Personal and Environmental Reasons	Desire for personal and family time
	Lack of motivation
	New career opportunities
	Expectation of respect
	Distance/commute to work
	Intense stress
	Health issues
	Low job satisfaction
	Family and peer recommendations
	Childcare responsibilities
Organizational Reasons	Lack of sense of belonging to the profession
	Negative attitude of colleagues
	Long working hours and weekend overtime
	Job insecurity
	Overcrowded classrooms
	Negative attitude of educational administrators
	Pressure from the parents of the students
	Negative attitude of students towards teachers
	Excessive workload and tasks
	Bullying/harassment
	Unethical behavior demands
	Misunderstanding of the subject area
	Lack of recognition
	Academic achievement pressure
	Mandatory service requirement
Excessive paperwork	
Perception of the subject area as difficult by students	
Lack of parental involvement	
Disengagement from the profession	
Perception of the subject area as difficult by students	

As Table 2 shows, it can be observed that the reasons for teachers leaving the profession were grouped into three themes: economic reasons, personal and environmental reasons, and organizational reasons. Among the economic reasons, teachers mentioned low salary, delayed payment of salary, the feeling of their work not being valued, and engaging in part-time work after working hours.

... I was working as a contracted teacher. The salary I received did not compensate for my efforts in any way. The classrooms in the school where I worked were overcrowded. It was my first job experience after graduating from university. I quit because I couldn't receive the value of both my efforts and expectations ... (Bade)

... When I was assigned to Istanbul due to mandatory service, I couldn't make ends meet with the money I earned. I also knew English, so I started working part-time at a company. Then I realized that I was

more comfortable and free in that job. There are no intense procedures in the Ministry of National Education lately, no student problems, and I can receive more rewards for my efforts. I resigned. In my current job, I can receive the rewards for my efforts both in terms of success and income, but when I was a teacher, even if I tried hard, very few students listened and understood in class. Especially teaching mathematics is very difficult. Unless you are in a good high school, you feel like you're working in vain. Students are always joking around, and parents no longer visit the school. Even a student who doesn't know basic math can pass with exemptions and continuous exams. This situation made me lose interest in my profession ... (Erkan)

Among the personal and environmental reasons, teachers reported the desire to allocate time for themselves and their families, lack of motivation, new career opportunities, the expectation of respect, long commuting distance or remote location of the workplace, intense stress, low job satisfaction, health problems, advice from family and friends, child-care responsibilities and lack of belongingness to the profession.

... The increasing competitive environment in the education system and the intense stress and workload it creates have had a negative impact on my life. The negative consequences brought by this competitive environment exhaust not only all education employees but also me. The physical and mental pressure exerted by the employers and the influence of parents on the teachers are constantly increasing, which made me increasingly distant from the profession I loved. While I was asked to devote more time to the institution I worked for every day, my working conditions and financial well-being deteriorated. The intense workload and pressure from administrators led to serious health problems. After consulting with my family and friends for a long time, the consensus was that I should prioritize my health. Despite delaying my resignation for a long time and with great sorrow, I had to leave my students and the profession I loved, even in the middle of the term ... (Esma)

... Teaching is a wonderful profession, but I couldn't get a government appointment, so I worked in private schools. The salaries in the school where I worked were very low, and we had to work on Saturdays as well. I used to come home very late. Since we prepared the students for tournaments, the expectations were high, but I couldn't earn the corresponding value and money. Even after getting married, I continued working, but when I had a child, I quit the profession. The money I earned would go to my child's caregiver. I found this meaningless; taking care of my child was more profitable and better for him, so I resigned. I believe that there is complete exploitation in private schools. When teachers cannot find a job, they are forced to accept very low salaries and long working hours. School owners take advantage of this ... (Sena)

Among the organizational reasons given by the teachers were negative attitudes of colleagues, long working hours and weekend overtime, insecure employment, overcrowded classrooms, negative attitudes of educational administrators, parental pressure, students' negative attitudes towards teachers, excessive workload and duties, bullying, unethical behavior demands, lack of understanding of the subject area, lack of appreciation for the work, pressure for academic achievement, mandatory service duty, the MoNE's policy on class and course passing, excessive paperwork, difficulty for students in comprehending the field, parental indifference, and becoming disillusioned and distant from the profession.

... Being a guidance counselor means that they expect you to do every task in the school outside of your field. They never understood or valued the work I was doing. The principal expected me to assist him, coordinate trips, and so on. When I didn't want to do it, I would be labeled as a rebellious and lazy teacher. Although I was very open to learning, I didn't have the opportunity to apply what I learned in school. While working at the school, I was only working with a specific age group and encountering similar cases. Professionally, this situation didn't satisfy me at all. While working as a teacher, I also obtained various certificates in psychology and therapies and pursued a master's degree in clinical psychology. This allowed me to open my own clinic where I can work freely ... (Bartu)

... I needed an appointment for the village school project I dreamed of, but I couldn't achieve it. In an elementary school in Istanbul, I was teaching 40 hours a week and also working half a day on Saturdays. My salary was the minimum wage. Not being able to receive and realizing that I wouldn't be able to receive the value of my efforts was the biggest factor in my decision to leave. Neither the parents nor the students nor the administrators were people who valued or respected teachers. The administration had the idea that if you leave, your place will be easily filled, and the parents had the mentality of 'You should educate my child, shouldn't you, not with your money, but with mine?' The same spoiled

attitude was present in the children as well. They had the notion that 'Your salary is paid by my father'. I realized that I couldn't achieve my ideals within this system ... (Ayşe Nur)

Table 3. Emotions Experienced by Teachers in the Process of Leaving the Profession

Themes	Codes
Positive Emotions	Hope for returning to the profession
	Longing for the profession
	Feeling of relief after making the decision
	Excitement towards the new job
Negative Emotions	Determination
	Feeling of sadness
	Feeling of anxiety
	Feeling of fear
	Struggling with the decision to resign
	Feeling of disappointment
	Feeling of giving up
	Feeling of acceptance
	Feelings of resentment and anger
	Sense of obligation
	Feeling of wasting effort in vain
	Feeling of insecurity
Anxiety about losing salary security	
Anxiety about job loss	

Table 3 summarizes the emotions experienced by the teachers during the process of leaving the profession, categorized into two themes: positive emotions and negative emotions. In the positive emotions theme, teachers expressed hope for returning to the profession, longing for the profession, a sense of relief after making the decision, and excitement about a new job.

... I was already considering it for a long time, so I was confident in my decision. I was so unhappy that I didn't even go to school to pack my belongings in the middle of the term (in December), I wrote my resignation through a notary. Since that day, I have been a much happier person ... (Lina)

... In the first few days after leaving, I felt a sense of relief. I was freed from having to do a job I didn't want ... (Dilek)

In the negative emotions theme, the teachers mentioned feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear, difficulty in making the decision to resign, disappointment, a sense of giving up, acceptance, resentment and anger, a sense of obligation, a feeling of wasting effort in vain, a sense of insecurity, anxiety about losing salary security, and anxiety about losing the job.

... The idea of opening my own clinic and working there as I wish excited me, but leaving a job with government security was a bit scary. It was a big risk for me. I worried about not being able to establish myself in my new job or that nobody would come ... (Bartu)

... I felt a little sad about being separated from my children [students]. I also felt more insecure. Previously, I never worried about my salary because I knew it would be deposited at the beginning of the month, but now I have anxiety about losing my job during the slightest crisis, thinking about the situation of the company I work for ... (Erkan)

... I struggled to accept the difficult decision to resign due to my deteriorating health problems. I felt resentment and anger towards the employers and managers who caused me to move away from the profession I loved ... (Esma)

... As I mentioned in the previous questions, although we live in a society that has turned into materialism, there was a pure and sincere connection between my students and me because they were young. The most upsetting thing for me in quitting teaching was being separated from my students. Because I loved teaching them and making a difference in their lives ... (Tanık)

Table 4. Emotions Experienced by Teachers after Leaving the Profession

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Longing	Longing for students
	Longing for the profession
	Longing for colleagues
	Longing for conversations in the teachers' room
Hope	Hope for the teaching profession and the future
	Possibility of returning to the profession and confidence in it
	Excitement about the new profession
	Joy about the new job
	Considering providing benefits to people as a moral source, just like in teaching
Relief	No regret about resigning
	Feeling of being freed from the teaching profession
	Feeling of freedom
	Feeling of relief
Sadness	Sadness about leaving the profession
	Sadness about parting from the students
Anxiety	Thoughts about not being as happy in the new profession as in the school

In Table 4, the emotions experienced by the teachers after leaving the profession are grouped under five themes: longing, hope, relief, sadness and anxiety. In the theme of longing, teachers expressed longing for students, longing for the profession, longing for colleagues and longing for conversations in the teachers' room.

... School is a beautiful environment. I miss my students, the conversations in the teachers' room, my teacher friends. I miss the innocence of middle school students. But I don't regret my decision to resign. The possibility of returning gives me confidence ... (Erkan)

... After resigning, I never regretted my new decision because everything went well. Sometimes I miss the students, but other than that, there's nothing ... (Bartu)

... After resigning, I occasionally felt longing for the profession. I had to adapt to my new life; I'm a person who loves extremes, but there was no drama in my life ... (Nil)

... Resigning was certainly difficult, but I didn't realize it much because I was taking care of my baby. In fact, sacrificing my job for my baby prevented me from feeling guilty. I would have been upset if I neglected my child. Two years after my first child, I had my second child. Now both of them go to school, and they don't need me as much. Right now, I miss my profession ... (Sena)

In the hope theme, the teachers mentioned their hope for the teaching profession and the future, their hope for the possibility of returning to the profession and their confidence in it, their excitement about the new profession, their joy about the new job, and the moral source of providing benefits to people in the new profession, similar to teaching.

... I tried to suppress my existing resentment by imagining the days when I will return to my beloved profession, my students, and a working environment where I feel comfortable. The intense emotion I felt was hope for the future ... (Esma)

... As I mentioned before, I was sad about leaving my students. In the ongoing process, my greatest consolation was bringing individual achievements to the people I coached. For example, a person who comes to you to get rid of excess weight and feels that you can help them in this regard is one of the greatest joys for a coach. So, continuing to provide benefits to people became my biggest moral source after teaching ... (Tarık)

In the relief theme, the teachers spoke about not regretting the decision to resign, the feeling of being free from the teaching profession and the feeling of lightness.

... I felt free. It was liberating to be able to stop doing something I didn't want to do just because I could do it and I somewhat enjoyed it. Maybe getting by would keep me away from what I really wanted in life ... (Defne)

In the sadness theme, teachers mentioned their sadness related to leaving the profession and the sadness of parting from students.

... I was sad because I left my students after resigning. However, I didn't leave in the middle of the year, and I was a subject teacher. So, I found solace in the thought that I didn't abandon them halfway ... (Bade)

In the anxiety theme, a teacher expressed the thought of not being as happy in the new profession as in school.

... Before resigning, I was very excited and happy to open my own office, but after resigning and parting from the students, a strange sadness filled me, and I thought that I couldn't be as happy in my own office as I was in school, even for a moment. However, this feeling and thought didn't last long because I love my profession ... (Mehmet)

Table 5. Experiences of Teachers Who Left the Profession in regard to School Administrators during the Process

Themes	Codes
Supportive Behavior	Welcoming with understanding
	Facilitating the bureaucratic process of resignation
	Being indifferent
Obstructive Behavior	Failure of the administrator to process the resignation letter
	Obstructing communication regarding the resignation process (with students, parents, administrators and colleagues)
	Administrator emphasizing the unethical nature of mid-term resignation
	Administrator insisting on the teacher not resigning
	Administrator using students as a pressure tactic to change the teacher's decision.

Table 5 sets out the experiences of teachers who resigned from the profession in regard to school administrators during the process, and they are categorized into two themes: supportive behaviors and obstructive behaviors. In the theme of supportive behaviors, teachers reported being met with understanding, facilitation of the bureaucratic procedures related to resignation, and indifference.

Below are some of the responses given by teachers regarding their experiences with school administrators during the resignation process:

... The institution I worked for had a system based on hiring new graduates at minimum wage and continuing with new graduates after one or two years. Therefore, I did not face any difficulties when resigning ... (Ayşe Nur)

... When my school principal learned where I would work and my monthly income, they understood my resignation decision and did not create any problems. They made statements like 'students and we loved you' and processed the resignation letter ... (Erkan)

... I think my principal was glad that I left because we constantly clashed during my teaching period. When I submitted my resignation letter, they only said 'good luck' ... (Bartu)

In the theme of obstructive behaviors, teachers reported experiences such as administrators not processing their resignation letters, blocking communication related to the resignation process with students, parents, administrators and colleagues, emphasizing the unethical nature of resigning mid-term, insisting on teachers not resigning, and using students as a pressure tool to change their decision.

... My principal was very pleased with me. I was one of the few teachers they followed even on social media. Every year, during contract renewal, we would go through a persuasion-resignation process. There were even times when they did not process my resignation letter. However, in the face of the problems I experienced, their failure to intervene as administrators led me to submit my mid-term resignation through a notary. I did not allow anyone to contact me regarding the issue, so I don't know their true opinions ... (Lina)

... The administrators tried to convince me not to resign for a long time. When they said that resigning mid-term was unethical, I was already teaching 45 hours of classes and tutorials per week. Their

repeated statements were that I needed to make more sacrifices. One day, without my knowledge, the deputy principal came to my class and told my students that I wanted to leave them, putting me in a difficult situation to prevent me from leaving ... (Esma)

... The school management, as I mentioned, expects you to leave without receiving any of your entitlements by coming up with various excuses. When they want to make you resign from a school that you don't want to work in any more next year, they try to put you in classes unrelated to your field during the summer and even try to include you in the kindergarten group. They threatened not to pay my salary during the summer, in short, they tried every means to wear me down. In the end, I left before something that was already over became gangrenous ... (Miray)

Table 6. Reactions of the Surrounding People to the Decision of Teachers Who Left the Profession

Themes	Codes
Support	Parents', spouse's and friends' support
Attempts to dissuade	Insistence from parents on staying in the profession
	Insistence from students on staying in the profession
	Colleagues' insistence on staying in the profession
	Family's insistence on not leaving the profession
Emotional pressure	Parents' strong reaction/sadness towards leaving the profession
	Disappointment and sadness experienced by parents and students
	Concern from the family

As Table 6 shows, the reactions of the teachers who left the profession from their social circles regarding their decision can be grouped into three themes: support, attempts to dissuade, and emotional pressures. Several of the teachers reported the support theme, which includes the support of parents, spouse and friends. Below are some responses from the teachers regarding the reactions they received from their social circles regarding their decision:

... I did not receive any negative reactions from my family and spouse as they understood that there was a better career opportunity for me and that I would be happier in this new job. They supported my decision ... (Bade)

... Since my friends, family and spouse witnessed my health problems and the working environment, I did not face any negative attitude. They encouraged me to leave ... (Esma)

... My father was even offering to give me the money and asking me to sit with them. So, he supported my decision. Most of my friends understood that dealing with the tantrums of the new generation is not easy, and they reacted positively, saying that I did the right thing ... (Ayşe Nur)

Teachers reported attempts to dissuade them from leaving in terms of parents' insistence on them staying in the profession, students' insistence on them staying in the profession, colleagues' insistence on them staying in the profession, and the insistence of family members on them not leaving the profession.

... Teaching is considered an indispensable profession for women. It has holidays, a patient temperament required to deal with children, and respect. Therefore, some people thought I was on the wrong path. I received phone calls and emails from parents, and my students sent me many letters. My colleagues and family also believed that I would change my mind and tried to convince me to stay, citing the usual reasons, but I was determined and never regretted my decision ... (Defne)

... My family, students, parents and teacher friends constantly tried to dissuade me from this decision and, of course, did not want me to leave ... (Mehmet)

Under the theme of emotional pressures, teachers mentioned the strong reactions and the sadness of parents towards them leaving the profession, the disappointment and sadness experienced by parents and students, and the concerns of the family.

... My students and their parents were genuinely saddened, and they wanted to know which school I would go to next. But when I told them that I completely quit teaching, they were truly disappointed. My family, who has always been against my teaching career, had a reaction that implied relief because they were the biggest witnesses to the effort and treatment I had received ... (Miray)

... My students and their parents were not aware that I had left. I resigned after the end of the academic year. However, my mother and father showed a strong reaction. They said things like, 'Can you really quit a government job?' 'Is there a better job than being a math teacher? You have holidays, extra classes. If the salary is not enough, give private lessons, work in coaching centers.' They were upset ... (Erkan)

... My spouse was very supportive during this process. If it weren't for their support, I wouldn't have been able to make this decision. My mother and father showed a strong reaction. Especially my father didn't talk to me on the phone for a month. But eventually, they understood that I was determined ... (İpek)

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the reasons for teachers leaving the profession. The findings showed that the participating teachers had left the profession for economic reasons, personal and environmental reasons, and organizational reasons. Among the economic reasons, low salary was an important factor supported by various reports and it also affects the social status of teachers (TEDMEM, 2014). The reasons for teachers leaving the profession are listed as follows: low salary, delayed payment of salary, feeling of not being rewarded for their effort, part-time work after school hours, desire to spend time for oneself and family, new career opportunities, expectation of respect, long distance/commute to work, high stress, health problems, recommendations from family and friends, childcare responsibilities, lack of sense of belonging to the profession, lack of motivation, negative attitude of colleagues, long working hours and weekend work, job insecurity, crowded classrooms, negative attitude of school administrators, pressure from parents, negative attitude of students towards teachers, excessive workload and duties, low job satisfaction, harassment, unethical requests, misunderstanding of the subject area, lack of recognition for the work, academic achievement pressure, compulsory service, the MoNE's policy on class and grade promotion, excessive paperwork, difficulty in students' understanding of the field, parents' indifference, and disillusionment and distance from the profession.

The findings showed that economic reasons ranked first among the reasons for the teachers leaving the profession. It was found that particularly those teachers working in private schools had lower salaries and delayed salary payments. Teaching is not a profession chosen with the dream of becoming rich, but having a regular income does provide a sense of security. Salary is an important measure of professional respect and also has an impact on retirement. Although salary is important, it did not emerge as the most important factor in entering or leaving the profession in a study conducted in Singapore by Buchanan (2010). This can be explained by the difference in purchasing power between teacher salaries in Turkey and teacher salaries in Singapore. Boreham, Gray and Blake (2006) found that a low salary reduces teachers' job satisfaction. Atmaca (2020) stated that the first indicator of the approach to professions in today's world is considered to be the welfare provided in the job. At the forefront of job benefits is income. In this context, teaching does not rank high in the status hierarchy based on economic gain as it is not among the professions with high income levels in Turkey. The concern of teachers about their livelihood and their economic income being lower than the welfare level of big cities contribute to this perception. The number of teachers in Turkey, including those working in private schools, which constitutes a population of over a million, makes it difficult for the government to improve the economic situation of teachers. More importantly, the situation of salaried teachers working for less than the minimum wage is a concern. The uncertainty of salaried teachers' continuity for the next year and the absence of their positions, the fact that specific and high-level qualifications are not required from applicants, and the employment of almost three salaried teachers for the salary paid to a regular teacher undermine confidence in the profession.

Another reason identified for teachers leaving the profession was the expectation of respect. It was found that teachers who had left the profession were subjected to negative attitudes from school administrators, students, parents and colleagues. Just as in all job groups, respect for the teaching profession sometimes fades into the background. These human and professional values which have been eroded over time have a negative impact on the social well-being of teachers. Various social innovations and changes, developments in teacher training systems, social mobility, economic reasons and professional expectations have negatively affected the social status of the teaching profession (Buyruk, 2013; Işık, 2014).

The feeling of not being rewarded for their effort was another factor affecting teachers' decision to leave the profession. In their responses to the interview questions, teachers reported that they felt that their hard work was not appreciated and that they did not receive the recognition which they deserved. Teachers' efforts and achievements in terms of improving students' academic success and personal development are often ignored or undervalued. This negatively affects teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. Teachers who do not receive the expected recognition for their efforts may lose their enthusiasm and passion for the profession, which leads to a higher probability of them leaving the profession.

Organizational reasons also contributed to teachers leaving the profession. Factors such as excessive workload, long working hours, administrative pressure, excessive paperwork, crowded classrooms and job insecurity were cited as organizational factors which had negatively affected the participating teachers' job satisfaction and well-being. Teachers are expected to fulfill various roles and responsibilities, and the increasing workload can be overwhelming and stressful. Additionally, administrative pressure and excessive paperwork can take away from teachers' time and energy which could be spent on teaching and supporting students. The lack of job security and uncertainty about future employment can also contribute to teachers' decision to leave the profession.

In conclusion, teachers leave the profession for a combination of economic, personal, environmental and organizational reasons. Low salary, lack of recognition and respect, feeling of not being rewarded for their effort, excessive workload and job insecurity were some of the factors which had influenced the participating teachers' decision to leave. Addressing these factors and improving working conditions for teachers could help in retaining qualified and motivated educators in the profession.

Based on the findings reported and discussed above, the following recommendations can be made:

- The MoNE could improve the economic conditions of teachers. Necessary regulations could be introduced to address the wage disparity between teachers working in private schools and those in public schools. Teachers should receive salaries above the poverty line. This would raise their professional status and make teaching a more desirable profession.
- Education administrators could encourage teachers' participation in symposiums, seminars and panels which would benefit their professional development and attitudes towards the profession. This would help to sustain their personal motivation and effectiveness in implementing educational programs. It is important to prevent both low job satisfaction among teachers and alienation from the profession.
- Long working hours and weekend work in schools could be prevented through inspections by the Social Security Institution and the MoNE. Working conditions for salaried teachers and those working in private schools could be improved. Moreover, unequal distribution of teaching assignments and workload, particularly in private schools, could be addressed. It is important for school administrators to be fair in this regard.
- The number of students in classrooms should be regulated as overcrowded classrooms can lower the quality of education and hinder effective communication between teachers and students. This can lead to problems such as ineffective classroom management, insufficient feedback and an inability to discover students' interests and talents.
- School administrators could support teachers' professional development through constructive meetings and discussions. School administrators and teachers could work together to identify and address negative working conditions in order to create a peaceful and productive working environment where rights and laws are respected.
- Information sessions on bullying could be held in schools, focusing on the impact of bullying on teachers. School administrations could take measures to prevent bullying. The MoNE's inspections, meetings, discussions and surveys could be effective in preventing bullying.
- Instead of an exam-oriented education system, supporting the widespread adoption of a student-centered education system would help to prevent criticisms of the promotion regulations in the MoNE's policy.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval

The formal ethics approval was granted by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Istanbul Kultur University. We conducted the study in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration in 1975.

Funding

No specific grant was given to this research by funding organizations in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of the Istanbul Kültür University (Approval Number/ID: 2020.37). Hereby, we as the authors consciously assure that for the manuscript " Why Do Teacher's Leave the Profession: A Case Study" the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

Acknowledgement

This article is derived from the master's thesis of the first author and some parts of it was presented in Educon 2022.

REFERENCES

- Andersen, R., & Van de Werfhorst, H. G. (2010). Education and occupational status in 14 countries: the role of educational institutions and labour market coordination. *The British journal of sociology*, 61(2), 336-355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01315.x>
- Atmaca, T. (2020). Examining factors that negatively affect teachers' social dignity and image. *Journal of Education for Life*, 34(1), 152-167. <https://doi.org/10.33308/26674874.2020341165>
- Aydın, R., Canavar, O. ve Akkın, A. (2018). Teachers' views on teaching profession and social status of teaching. *Education And Society In The 21st Century* 7(21), 965-990. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/66071>
- Boreham, N., Gray, P., & Blake, A. (2006, September). Job satisfaction among newly qualified teachers in Scotland. In *Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, September, at the University of Warwick*. https://pure.strath.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/31477524/NB_BERA06.pdf
- Bozbayındır, F. (2019). Investigation of teachers' views in the basis of the factors affecting the status of teaching profession.. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, 18(72), 2076-2104. <https://doi.org/10.17755/esosder.583274>
- Buchanan, J. (2010). May I be excused? Why teachers leave the profession. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 30(2), 199-211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791003721952>
- Buyruk, H. (2013). A political economy analysis relating to the historical transformation of teacher's labour in Turkey. (PhD Thesis, Ankara University). Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara. <https://teav.ankara.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12575/80298/354784.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Cieśliński, R., & Szum, E. (2014). Burned out or just frustrated? Reasons why physical education teachers leave their profession. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 63(1), 29-35. <https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2014-0020>
- Coşkun Keskin, S. & Yüceer, D. (2017). Teaching as a profession according to teachers from past to today. *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 12(14), 85-104. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.11694>
- Czeranowska, O. (2016). Social Definition of Occupational Prestige. *Warsaw Forum of Economic Sociology*, 7(13), 67-88. <https://econjournals.sgh.waw.pl/wfes/article/view/528>
- Eke, B. (1987). Bir sosyal sınıf belirleyicisi olarak meslek faktörü. *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 43(1-4), 377-401. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/8537>

- Elma, C. (2003). Teachers work alienation in elementary school (Ankara case study) (PhD Thesis, Ankara University). Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>
- Eryılmaz, A. & Burgaz, B. (2011). Levels of Organizational Alienation of Private and Public High School Teachers. *Education and Science*, 36(161), 271-286. <http://egitimvebilim.ted.org.tr/index.php/EB/article/view/1007/301>
- Erzen, Z. & Epçaçan, C. (2018). Examination of teacher's respectability in society according to teacher's opinions. *Journal of Institute of Economic Development and Social Researches*, 4(9), 331-345. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/920888>
- Esen, Y. (2004). Teachers evaluations about their own social/professional identities and roles: A research on social studies teachers. (PhD Thesis, Ankara University). Institute of Educational Sciences, Ankara <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.jsp?id=f8G8UkUkpFir-19qHcPFSA&no=9reVQx7Y9uqfhGptkdZuqQ>
- Fuchel, J. C., Horn, E & Harris, B. (1966). *An interview study of teachers who leave the profession*. The Research Foundation of The City University of New York. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED010021.pdf>
- Halpin, G., Harris, K., & Halpin, G. (1985). Teacher stress as related to locus of control, sex, and age. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 53(3), 136-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1985.10806374>
- Heinz, W.R. (2009). Redefining the Status of Occupations. In: Maclean, R., Wilson, D. (eds) *International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5281-1_10
- Ingersoll, R. (2001). Teacher Turnover, Teacher Shortages, and the Organization of Schools. CPRE Research Reports. https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/12
- Işık, S. (2014). 2000'lerde öğretmenler ve anti entelektüalizm. A. Yıldız (Ed.). In, *Öğretmenliğin dönüşümü* (p. 27-57). Kalkedon Yayınevi.
- İlhan, S. (2008). On the new capitalism and the changing meanings of the occupation phenomenon. *Dumlupınar University Journal of Social Sciences*, 21, 313-329. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/55473>
- Kelly, N., Cespedes, M., Clarà, M., & Danaher, P. A. (2019). Early career teachers' intentions to leave the profession: The complex relationships among preservice education, early career support, and job satisfaction. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3). 93-113. <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol44/iss3/6>
- Kıran, A. B., Durmuş, E. & Sucu, N. N. (2019). A study on the causes of loss of reputation in teaching profession. *Uluslararası Türk Kültür Coğrafyasında Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 4(1), 8-13. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/940659>
- MEB (2021). 2020 Yılı İdare Faaliyet Raporu http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2021_03/03134336_2020_YYIY_Ydare_Faaliyet_Raporu.pdf
- Özdemir, T. Y. & Orhan, M. (2019). The opinions of the teachers on "the image of the teaching profession. *Trakya Journal of Education*, 9(4), 824-846. <https://doi.org/10.24315/tred.532641>
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and teacher education*, 27(6), 1029-1038. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.04.001>
- TEDMEM. (2014). *Öğretmenlerin Gözüyle Öğretmenlik Mesleği Raporu*. <https://tedmem.org/yayin/ogretmen-gozuyle-ogretmenlik-meslegi>
- Ünsal, S. (2018). A Pareto Analysis of Status of Teaching Profession in Turkey. *Sakarya University Journal of Education*, 8(2), 111-130. <https://doi.org/10.19126/suje.379040>
- Varkey Foundation. (2018). *Global Teacher Status Index*. Retrieved from <https://www.varkeyfoundation.org/what-we-do/research/global-teacher-status-index-2018#:~:text=The%20Global%20Teacher%20Status%20Index,rank%20their%20own%20education%20system>.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2016). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Yıldız, K., Akgün, N. & Yıldız, S. (2013). The relationship between work alienation and organizational cynicism. *International Journal of Social Science*, 6(6),1253-1284, <http://dx.doi.org/10.9761/JASSS1193>.
- Yıldız, A. (2014). Türkiye'de öğretmenlik mesleğinin dönüşümü: İdealist öğretmenden sınava hazırlayıcı teknisyen öğretmene. A. Yıldız (Ed.) In, *Öğretmenliğin dönüşümü* (p. 13-26) Kalkedon Yayınevi.

Yurdakul, S., Gür, B., Çelik, Z. & Kurt, T. (2016). *Öğretmenlik mesleği ve mesleğin statüsü*. Ankara: Eğitim-BirSen Stratejik Araştırmalar. https://ebs.org.tr/ebs_files/files/mesleginstatusu_web.pdf