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Teachers' Sources of Motivation: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the motivational sources of relatively highly motivated teachers and explore the meanings they attribute to their professional motivation. In accordance with the nature of the study, the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. The collected data were analyzed by content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis approaches. Twenty teachers working in public basic education institutions were interviewed using a semi-structured interview technique. In this study, we examined the themes of school, teaching, and achievement from the perspective of teachers. We also identified the sources of inspiration that led them to choose the teaching profession and their ideal vision of teaching. In addition, sources of motivation, demotivating factors, strategies for coping with challenges, and changes in motivation over time were examined. Finally, teachers' self-evaluations and personal development processes were taken into consideration. In light of these findings, recommendations were made for the development of strategies that support and sustain teacher motivation.

Key Words

Motivation • Motivation sources • Teacher motivation

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Introduction

The exploration of teacher motivation in educational settings is a subject of critical importance due to its direct impact on both teaching quality and student outcomes. Understanding what drives teachers, especially those who exhibit high levels of motivation, is vital in developing effective educational strategies and fostering a positive learning environment. This study aims to delve into this significant area by identifying the sources of motivation among highly motivated teachers and deciphering the meanings they attach to their professional drive.

In the realm of education research, the motivation of teachers has been a focal point, with various studies shedding light on their multifaceted nature. However, there is a gap in comprehensively understanding the nuanced experiences of highly motivated educators. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the motivational factors and experiences of highly motivated teachers.

To address this, we conducted interviews with twenty teachers, carefully selected to represent a diverse range of backgrounds including gender, age, branch, education level, institutional level, and tenure. Through these interviews, we employed content analysis to meticulously dissect and interpret the data, aiming to uncover the underlying motivational elements that drive these educators in their professional journeys.

By contrasting our findings with existing literature, this study not only contributes to a broader understanding of teacher motivation but also highlights the unique perspectives and experiences of highly motivated teachers. This exploration is crucial for shaping future educational policies and practices that aim to enhance teacher motivation and, consequently, improve the overall quality of education.

Main Question. What are the sources of motivation for teachers, and what meanings do they attribute to professional motivation?

Sub Problems. 1. What do school, teaching, and success mean to teachers?

2. What inspires them to become teachers?

3. What does the ideal teacher mean to teachers, and which of these characteristics do they think they have?

4. From where do teachers derive the energy and strength needed for their work?

5. What are the factors that decrease teachers' motivation? How do the difficulties encountered in teaching affect their motivation?

6. How has teachers' motivation changed over time?

7. How would teachers evaluate themselves if they were graded?

The research aims to provide valuable information that can assist in the development of strategies to enhance teachers' motivation. The results of this research can aid education policymakers, school leaders, and teachers in gaining a better understanding of the impact of motivation on teachers' job performance, student achievement, and overall school climate. This may contribute to the design of more effective motivational strategies that can increase teachers' job satisfaction and overall student achievement.

Review of the Literature

Teacher motivation is a critical factor in the educational landscape, influencing not only the well-being and retention of educators but also the quality of teaching and student outcomes. This literature review includes various theoretical frameworks and empirical studies to unravel the complexities of teacher motivation, including its sources, challenges, and the impact of professional development and educational environments.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Self-Efficacy (1997) highlight the role of observational learning and belief in one's capabilities in shaping motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1997). For teachers, seeing positive outcomes from their efforts and believing in their ability to effect change can enhance motivation, inspire them to pursue teaching, and positively impact self-evaluation processes.

Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985, 2000) emphasizes the importance of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations in finding meaning and satisfaction in one's profession (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). For teachers, intrinsic motivations—such as the desire to contribute to students' development—often serve as a more sustainable source of motivation than extrinsic rewards.

Schön's Reflective Practice (1983) proposes that continuous reflection on one's experiences promotes learning and professional growth, influencing motivation over time (Schön, 1983). Reflective practice allows teachers to adapt and refine their approaches, thereby maintaining their motivation through a sense of progress and professional efficacy.

Day & Gu's Research on Teacher Lives (2010) and Day's Passion for Teaching (2004) explore how teachers' motivation evolves through their careers, highlighting the central role of passion in sustaining teaching efficacy and motivation. Their research suggests that passion for teaching acts as a buffer against challenges and burnout, fostering long-term commitment to the profession.

Dewey's Experience and Education (1938) underscores the importance of experiential learning and the environment in shaping the educational experience (Dewey, 1938). A supportive and engaging school environment can enhance teacher motivation by providing meaningful experiences and opportunities for growth.

Fullan's Educational Change (2007) examines how systemic changes in education impact teacher motivation, emphasizing the need for change processes that involve teachers and respect their autonomy (Fullan, 2007). Effective educational reforms support teacher motivation by promoting professional growth and collaborative practices.

Noddings' Care Ethics (1992, 2005) highlights the significance of caring relationships in education, suggesting that fostering a caring environment enhances teacher motivation by creating a sense of purpose and connection (Noddings, 1992, 2005).

Maslach & Leiter's Work on Burnout (1999, 2001) and Ingersoll & Smith's Teacher Shortage Solutions (2003) address the impact of burnout and systemic challenges on teacher motivation, advocating for supportive policies and practices to mitigate these issues (Maslach & Leiter, 1999, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Wenger's Communities of Practice (1998) emphasizes the role of social learning in professional development, indicating that participation in communities of practice can inspire teachers and support their motivation through collaborative learning and shared experiences (Wenger, 1998).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) suggests that fulfilling basic and psychological needs is essential for motivation, including in the teaching profession (Maslow, 1943). Teachers' motivation is influenced by their needs for security, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Tait's Research on Resilience (2008) explores the importance of resilience in coping with professional challenges, indicating that resilient teachers are more likely to maintain their motivation and commitment over time (Tait, 2008).

Hochschild's Emotional Labor (1983) and Hattie's Visible Learning (2009) connect to the emotional and cognitive aspects of teaching, highlighting how managing emotions and understanding the impact on student learning can influence teacher self-evaluation and perceptions of success (Hochschild, 1983; Hattie, 2009).

Method

In this study, a qualitative research method was employed to uncover the motivational factors of basic education teachers. In this section, information about the research design, participants, data collection tools, and data analysis is provided, respectively.

Research Design

Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, was employed in this study. As van Manen (2016) states, phenomenology is not merely a description; it is a process in which the researcher interprets the meaning of experiences. This approach aims to analyze a specific phenomenon through the experiences and perspectives of individuals (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Here, the essence of meaning and experiences is illuminated based on the subjective experiences of individuals.

Phenomenology focuses on subjective experiences and their understanding (Creswell, 2007). In this method, researchers collect detailed and intensive information about the experiences of individuals and use this data to analyze them. Phenomenological studies are generally used to understand in detail the emotional, intellectual, and perceptual states of individuals about a particular experience. In this study, researchers analyzed teachers' sources of motivation and their professional motivation using a phenomenological method. This helped explore the source of motivation based on teachers' experiences and perceptions and its reflection on their professional lives. Phenomenology provides a detailed understanding of teachers' individual experiences and the meaning of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

This approach offers researchers important opportunities to collect in-depth information on teachers' professional motivation and to generate meaning.

According to Creswell (2007), phenomenology concludes with a descriptive section that integrates 'what' and 'how' is experienced. This section also discusses the essence of individuals' experiences. In this study, the term 'comprehensive description' was used instead of 'essence'. The choice of terminology aimed to capture a more expansive portrayal of participants' experiences.

Participants

Participants were chosen through the purposeful sampling method, a critical approach in phenomenological studies. This method ensures each participant has experiences directly relevant to the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2021). Specifically, we selected teachers who received accolades for achievement, actively participated in projects, and were recognized by their administration as hardworking and highly motivated. This approach, sometimes referred to as density sampling, prioritizes in-depth exploration of the most significant or enlightening experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation, rather than focusing on a statistically representative sample (Patton & Schwandt, 2014).

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with twenty teachers working in basic education institutions in the Beyşehir district of Konya province. Charmaz (2006) suggests that the data collection process should cease when data saturation is reached. For this reason, after interviewing twenty teachers, it was concluded that data saturation had been achieved, and the data collection process was completed. While Trigwell (2000) considers the required number of participants to be between 15 and 20, Larsson and Holmström (2007) state that in phenomenographic research, all perceptions of a phenomenon can be revealed with twenty participants.

The people in the study group were coded as P1, P2, ..., P20.

Table 1

Frequency data on demographic characteristics of participants

Variables		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Female	10	50
	Male	10	50
Age	21-30	2	10
	31-40	16	80
	41-50	1	5
	51 and above	1	5
Institution Level	Kindergarten	2	10
	Primary school	3	15
	Secondary School	15	75
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	11	55
	Master's Degree	9	45

	1-10 years	7	35
Term of Office	11-20 years	12	60
	21 years and over	1	5

Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview form created by the researchers was utilized. The interview form comprises two parts. The first part includes a personal information form with the participants' demographic details. In the second part, there is an interview form with seven open-ended questions. The questions were formulated based on the following observation: The researcher, working in a school and observing teachers in the surrounding area, has noticed a sense of fatigue, particularly after the pandemic. However, contrary to this trend, some teachers have not experienced a decline in motivation. This has sparked curiosity about the factors that sustain the motivation of these teachers and how their perspectives on school, teaching, success, etc., differ from other teachers on a motivational basis. After reviewing the literature and consulting expert opinions, the questions were developed. After preparing the questions, a pre-application was conducted with three teachers, and the questions were finalized after the researchers reviewed any incomprehensible expressions. Here are the questions:

1. What do school, teaching, and success mean to you?
2. What inspired you to become a teacher (influential people, events, situations)?
3. What does the ideal teacher mean to you, and which of these qualities do you think you possess?
4. Where do you draw the energy and strength you need while working? In other words, what is your source of motivation?
5. In your opinion, what factors decrease a teacher's motivation? How do the challenges you face in your profession affect your motivation?
6. How has your motivation changed over time? (How were you in the early years of your career? How do you see yourself now?)
7. If you were to grade yourself, how would you assess yourself?"

Participants signed the Voluntary Participant Consent Form, and the interviews commenced. In phenomenological research, obtaining the written consent of participants is crucial (Creswell, 2021). To enhance the analysis process, the participants' responses were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative data analysis approach. Content analysis is a research technique that systematically and objectively aims to analyze and interpret written, oral, or visual forms of communication (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The data were analyzed holistically. As manual coding is a time-consuming process, the audio recordings from the interviews were digitally transcribed and analyzed with the MAXQDA (2024) analysis program.

Participant interviews were transcribed verbatim and without intervention, thereby strengthening the internal validity of the study. The findings were compared with those of similar studies to evaluate their consistency. Additionally, the accuracy of the data was confirmed through participant validation. In the context of external validity,

the transparency of the researcher's role and the data collection and analysis processes were emphasized (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982), thus enhancing the reliability of the research. Preparatory meetings and plans made before the research, along with the explicit description of the data collection and analysis processes, are crucial steps toward ensuring external validity.

This study demonstrates internal validity as outlined by Maxwell (1992). We achieved this by ensuring the collected data aligns with the research objectives and that the findings directly support the research content. Content validity was further confirmed by evaluating the consistency between the data and the research focus. This process involved seeking the opinion of another expert to assess the generalizability of the findings. To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study design included teachers from various educational levels (preschool, primary, and middle school), capturing a broad spectrum of experiences.

The external validity of quantitative research relies on the replicability of results under similar conditions (Maxwell, 1992; Becker, 1991). The diversification of the sample in this study, to test the applicability of the research findings across different educational levels, is considered an indicator of external validity. The results display a coherent unity with the research themes, thereby contributing to the overall validity of the study.

Results

The data obtained from the conducted interviews have been analyzed through content analysis. The findings are presented in detail, including the participants' views. As a result of the content analysis, 10 themes, 40 categories and 169 codes associated with these themes have been identified.

School from the teachers' perspective

Teachers were asked the question "What do school, teaching, and success mean to you?" and according to the answers, the theme of school from the teachers' perspective was obtained. There are five categories and fourteen codes under this theme. According to the fourteen codes under this theme, teachers mostly see school as a second home, future, socialization environment, life, joy, and play. Following the content analysis, five categories emerged in this theme:

Table 2

Frequency data on school from the teachers' perspective

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
School from the teachers' perspective*	8	
Emotional Connection and Belonging		
Second home	4	20
Family	2	10
The place where I find myself	1	5
A sanctuary for psychological relief	1	5
Career and Professional Development	4	

The future of society	3	15
A place that directs toward a profession	1	5
Social and Community Engagement	5	
A setting for socialization	3	15
Governance of the community	1	5
The world of children	1	5
Personal and Academic Development	8	
Life	3	15
The place that nurtures individuals	3	15
Education Center	2	10
Motivation and School Engagement	4	
A place approached with joy and playfulness	3	15
A place that is missed	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P12): “School has become a home for me. Because I have always grown up in school since I was a child, I mean I have always been in school since kindergarten. Because my father and my sisters were teachers, I was never a stranger to the school environment. So, I was always in school. Therefore, the school became a second home for me. School was also a socializing environment. I mean, let's not say it's just like home, but as a teacher who doesn't have the habit of going to coffee houses, as someone who doesn't have many friends in the social life outside. Therefore, school is also a place of socialization for me. Socializing with the students at the same time.”

(P19): “School means the future for me. I mean, there are a lot of lives, I shouldn't say children, I mean people, and their future, or rather the future of the country.”

(P8): “It's a very important part of my life. Why is it a very important part of my life? After my children started school, I realized the value of teaching more and I felt its value and importance more. What can we do, how much influence do you have? The older I got, the more I realized how important we are in raising students, in raising the new generation. As I said, I became a mother, and I realized it after my children started school. That's why school is very important for me because we will raise the generation. We will influence them in every sense, not just math, and we are all part of this society. I will share the same society with those children and my children will share the same society with those children. Therefore, how much can I influence them? This always affects me. This always makes me think. That's why school is one of the two indispensable things in my life; one is my family and home, one is school.”

(P17): “I think of school like this, when I leave home in the morning, I come here happily. I want to come here every day. That's what I think of when I think of school. I like the smell inside the school. We cannot come to school on Sunday. When I don't come to school on Sunday, I miss it, that's what I think of when I think of school.”

Teaching from the teachers' perspective

Teachers were asked the question "What do school, teaching, and success mean to you?" and according to the answers, the theme of teaching from the teachers' perspective was obtained. There are six categories and seventeen codes under this theme. According to the seventeen codes under this theme, teachers mostly see teaching as being able to touch the future generation, building, being useful, a sacred duty, a job done with love, and being able to enter the world of children. Following the content analysis, six categories emerged in this theme:

Table 3

Frequency data on teaching from the teachers' perspective

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Teaching from the teachers' perspective*	20	
Impact and Contribution	20	
Being able to touch the future generation	8	40
Building	6	30
Being useful	4	20
Creating positive change	2	10
Professional Identity and Values	8	
A sacred duty	4	20
A job done with love	3	15
Parenthood	1	5
Personal and Professional Development	2	
Creating new things	1	5
Specializing in one's field	1	5
Social and Emotional Aspects	8	
Being able to enter the world of children	3	15
Showing love and respect	2	10
Communicating	2	10
Being a role model	1	5
Student-Centered Approach	2	
Being aware of each student	1	5
Motivating the student	1	5
Service to Society	2	
Serving the homeland	1	5
People who take positive steps	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P5): “The meaning of teaching for me is to be able to touch the next generation. That is, how well the next generation is raised. After graduation, the student becomes a generation that will affect my life in the first degree. When my car breaks down, my students fix it. When I get sick, my students heal me. When I get hungry and eat out, my students become the ones who cook my food. If they are not my students, they are someone else's students. After all, they are all our students. Therefore, for my standard of living to increase, my students need to become qualified in the work they do.”

(P10): “For me, teaching is a very sacred duty, maybe it will be a classic answer, but it is really important for me to be able to give something to little children, to add something, to change their lives, to touch their lives. It makes me very happy to see this result. Noticing that sparkle in the eyes of the student, seeing that happiness, that love, really adds energy to our energy.”

(P18): “It actually means accompanying them on their journey. Yes, education is also involved, teaching is also involved. But most of all it means accompanying their journey, being their guide.

Success through the eyes of teachers

Teachers were asked the question "What do school, teaching, and success mean to you?" and according to the answers, the theme of success from the teachers' perspective was obtained. There are four categories and twenty-seven codes under this theme. According to the twenty-seven codes under this theme, teachers mostly see success as achieving goals, individual-specific development, making the subject enjoyable, achieving the objectives in the curriculum, touching the student's life, completing one's duty, subjective meaning, and winning. Following the content analysis, four categories emerged in this theme:

Table 4

Frequency data on success from the teachers' perspective

Themes/Categories/Codes	f	%
Success from the teachers' perspective*		
Individual Development and Learning Process	19	
Achieving goals	6	30
Individual-specific development	3	15
Making the subject enjoyable	2	10
Achieving the objectives in the curriculum	2	10
Emotional development	1	5
Continuous development	1	5
Positive behavioral change	1	5
Changing perspectives	1	5
Talents	1	5
Understanding the student	1	5
Teacher-Student Relationship and Interaction	8	
Touching the student's life	2	10

Establishing healthy communication	1	5
Making the student smile	1	5
Satisfying the student	1	5
Harmony between school and teacher	1	5
Receiving gratitude from students	1	5
Being respected	1	5
Professional Attitude and Responsibility	10	
Completing one's duty	2	10
Subjective meaning	2	10
Proving oneself	1	5
Achieving what one sets out to do	1	5
Feeling good about oneself	1	5
Knowing oneself	1	5
Making sacrifices	1	5
Exerting effort	1	5
Success and Recognition	3	
Winning	2	10
Receiving praise	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P6): "For me, success is definitely not primarily grades, success is if the child has reached where he/she wants to be, morally, and then if he/she is confident, that is, if he/she can say I am this, yes, I am happy, I have achieved this, I think success in this sense, that is, I got 100. Yes, for children, maybe that is a quantitative indicator. Yes, success when you get it. But if we know that it makes you smile, I think this is also a success. For the teacher, for the child, if they enjoyed the lesson and understood something, this is also a success. If he did his homework and got a plus, that's also a success. If the teacher rewarded him for doing his homework and took him somewhere, that's also a success. So, it's not just grades, when I think of success, I think of all the relationships that students have with each other, and their communication with their parents, I think there is success in all of these. So, success in communication is also very important."

(P10): "We can talk about school, education, and training. There are the achievements we give. There are also things that we must give behaviorally apart from the outcomes. We work both ways. Exams are effective here when measuring achievements. When we see that the results of the exams are good or we are primary school teachers, we are very happy to see that you are reading and writing in the first grade. Apart from that, maybe there are some behaviors in the classroom that the child has not picked up in the family. They have behavioral problems and there are mistakes that the family knows to be true. When we can change these, we are really happy to see them when we change them. For example, at the beginning of the year, there are a few students who have hitting behavior, they

cannot speak, they cannot express themselves by talking. He expresses himself by hitting another child. When this behavior is extinguished, when it disappears, I mean, many similar behaviors can be counted, but it would be too long. This makes us really happy. I mean, it is very exciting to see that a student gets into an order, reaches a standard, and moves up a level.”

(P18): “Actually, when I think of success, I used to think of academic achievements until 3 years ago, but now that I realize that children's emotional states need to improve significantly - actually after the pandemic process, I think - success now has a more inclusive meaning for me. We used to care a lot about the psycho-emotional development of children, but now I have focused more on it. Let me put it this way; they can always learn academically at any age, but I think they should not miss that emotional period.”

Sources of inspiration for teachers' choice of profession

Teachers were asked the question "What inspired you to become a teacher (influential people, events, situations)?" and according to the answers, the theme of sources of inspiration for teachers' choice of profession was obtained. There are two categories and six codes under this theme. According to the six codes under this theme, sources of inspiration for teachers' choice of profession are teacher and family. Following the content analysis, two categories emerged in this theme:

Table 5

Frequency data on sources of inspiration for teachers' choice of profession

Themes/Categories/Codes		
Sources of inspiration for teachers' choice of profession*	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Professional Idol/Personal Influence	18	
Teacher	14	70
Family	4	20
Internal Motivations	6	
Loving children	2	10
Passion for teaching	2	10
Love of service	1	5
Books	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P9): “Of course, I decided to become a teacher much later. But well, if I think about my past as a preschool teacher, well, I loved children very much. In my private life, I was a person who could always get down to their level, not only on a school basis. Other than that, uh. One thing that inspired me was my class teacher when I was little, that's what teaching is for me. She is really one of the most important teachers in my life. I mean that class teacher. Yes, I think a teacher should be like that. She always inspired me. He was an idol for me, to be honest. Of course, he is probably retired now. I don't know, he's in Izmir, he's not here right now, but I can't reach him, but I'm always

grateful to him and he is my source of inspiration. I mean, I can still see him in front of my eyes, frankly, he still comes to me against children. Well. We had a very helpful teacher; I'm leaving the academic part aside. She was a teacher who understood the child's soul and the psychology of the family. I always try to nurture that side of me, I mean I think of her. She inspired me."

Ideal Teaching Horizon

Teachers were asked the question " What does the ideal teacher mean to you, and which of these qualities do you think you possess?" and according to the answers, the theme of ideal teaching horizon was obtained. There are four categories and twenty-seven codes under this theme. According to the twenty-seven codes under this theme, teachers mostly see ideal teaching as continuously improving oneself, being able to connect with students, being affectionate, establishing effective communication, fulfilling one's duty properly, following change, knowing students well, and being an example to others. Following the content analysis, four categories emerged in this theme:

Table 6

Frequency data on ideal teaching horizon

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Ideal teaching horizon*	22	
Professional Development and Competence		
Continuously improving oneself	8	40
Following change	3	15
Researching	2	10
Being well-equipped	2	10
Being aware of the environment	2	10
Reading books	1	5
Being productive	1	5
Providing guidance	1	5
Coping with challenges	1	5
Being consistent	1	5
Student Relationships	21	
Being able to connect with students	7	35
Being affectionate	6	30
Knowing students well	3	15
Loving students	2	10
Accepting students as they are	1	5
Being able to discover students	1	5
Being forgiving	1	5
Communication and Interaction	16	
Establishing effective Communication	6	30

Fulfilling one's duty properly	5	25
Making jokes	3	15
Being cheerful	1	5
Being authoritative	1	5
Role Model and Social Adaptation	9	
Being an example to others	3	15
Preparing for class	2	10
Adapting to the surroundings	2	10
Acting with conscience	1	5
Being able to make sacrifices	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P12): *"When I was a student, I used to imagine the ideal teacher as follows, that is when he or she came to the classroom, or let me say that I used to think like this, that is, if a teacher is smiling when he or she comes to the classroom if he or she makes jokes from time to time, or if he or she tolerates our minor mistakes, he or she is the ideal teacher for me. Of course, if I evaluate this in my teaching process, these are the characteristics that a teacher should have first of all. In other words, being humble, and communicating well with students, are very important, but this alone is not enough. Because just because a teacher is modest and has good communication with students does not mean that he/she performs his/her profession well. Therefore, he/she must be well-equipped, constantly educate himself/herself, and at the same time, he/she must be able to sacrifice some of his/her work from time to time. To sacrifice his/her time and work to be productive for his/her students. I think this makes a teacher a good teacher if it is combined with his/her humility and good communication."*

(P3): *"For me, the ideal teacher should be a person who has good communication with students and parents, who tries to improve himself/herself, and who follows innovations. Because it is not possible to do everything perfectly. I can't say that in terms of being ideal. I mean, no matter what we do, we will not be perfect, but it is important for us to have done our best or to have done the research that we can do our best. To follow the changing things, to know the students well, when you know your students because somehow you can go to research other ways to solve that problem. That's how it is. I can say that they are researchers and generally know their students well."*

Teachers' sources of motivation

Teachers were asked the question "Where do you draw the energy and strength you need while working? In other words, what is your source of motivation?" and according to the answers, the theme of teachers' sources of motivation was obtained. There are five categories and twenty-one codes under this theme. According to the twenty-one codes under this theme, teachers' sources of motivation are often student success, student, being appreciated, positive feedback, producing outcomes, and love for the profession. Following the content analysis, five categories emerged in this theme:

Table 7

Frequency data on teachers' sources of motivation

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers' sources of motivation*		
Student-Centered Motivations	17	
Student success	4	20
Student	4	20
Producing outcomes	3	15
Healthy communication with students	1	5
Student-parent relationships	1	5
Continuing communication with graduates	1	5
Being able to touch their lives	1	5
Noticing the sparkle in students' eyes	1	5
Colleagues	1	5
Personal and Professional Values	10	
Love for the profession	3	15
Perfectionism	2	10
National values	2	10
Intrinsic	2	10
Ambition	1	5
Social and Institutional Interaction	6	
Being appreciated	4	20
Relationships with school administration	1	5
Team spirit	1	5
Infrastructure and Resources	2	
New laboratory	1	5
Books	1	5
Other Sources of Motivation	6	
Positive feedback	5	25
Desire to use time efficiently	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P10): "Actually, the source of motivation for my own life right now is firstly my students and secondly the parents of the students. It is a great motivation for me when I get the academic and behavioral rewards I give to my students. At the same time, when the parents' feedback is good, and their expectations are met. I mean, when I see that expression

on their faces, it really motivates me a lot, it makes me more ambitious, and I feel that I have to work harder. I hope it will always continue like this.”

(P13): “I actually get the energy and power I need, that is, the motivation I need, from feedback. I am happy to receive feedback when my students solve a question when they have an idea about something, when they get somewhere, or even when I hear a groundbreaking answer from them. I am motivated when I hear these things, or when I hear about the places where students from previous years have come, the professions they have achieved or the positions they have acquired. After all, we have also contributed, they have come somewhere. I am motivated by thinking that my efforts have not been in vain. Of course, in addition to this, other than financial resources, the thanks we will receive from my colleagues, supervisors, etc. is to be appreciated.”

Factors that decrease teachers' motivation

Teachers were asked the question "In your opinion, what factors decrease a teacher's motivation? How do the challenges you face in your profession affect your motivation?" and according to the answers, the theme of factors that decrease teachers' motivation was obtained. There are six categories and fourteen codes under this theme. According to the fourteen codes under this theme, factors that decrease teachers' motivation are often student success, student, being appreciated, positive feedback, producing outcomes, and love for the profession. Following the content analysis, six categories emerged in this theme:

Table 8

Frequency data on factors that decrease teachers' motivation

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Factors that decrease teachers' motivation*	22	
Social and Communicative Challenges	22	
Negative parental attitudes	13	65
Negative student behaviors	8	40
Negative criticism	1	5
Institutional and Administrative Issues	9	
Negative school climate	5	25
Negative administrative style	2	10
Problems with administration	2	10
Personal and Professional Development Barriers	8	
Efforts going to waste	4	20
Lack of appreciation	4	20
Economic and Financial Challenges	6	
Financial difficulties	6	30
Working Conditions and Environmental Factors	5	
Increased workload	2	10

Illness	1	5
Unhappy people	1	5
Overcrowded classrooms	1	5
Education System and Policies	1	
System changes	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P10): "Here again, it seems that parents are the most important element who think about the teaching profession. This is the time we live in this process. You strive, you run, you try. You want to do something important, you want to do good things, but the parents can only look from the perspective of their child. They create expectations or special expectations for their child. Or their expectations are things outside of the curriculum or the events we are supposed to provide. When we fail to meet that expectation, the parents' attitude becomes negative. This puts us in a vicious circle and really lowers our motivation."

(P6): "Parents can lower our motivation; students' bad remarks can sometimes really lower it. The bad remarks of the administration on the teacher can also decrease our motivation."

How teachers cope with challenges

Teachers were asked the question "In your opinion, what factors decrease a teacher's motivation? How do the challenges you face in your profession affect your motivation?" and according to the answers, the theme of how teachers cope with challenges was obtained. There are two categories and seventeen codes under this theme. According to the seventeen codes under this theme, teachers feel demotivated and fatigued when faced with challenges and deal with them by continuing to work at a certain standard and focusing on the goal. Following the content analysis, two categories emerged in this theme:

Table 9

Frequency data on how teachers cope with challenges

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
How teachers cope with challenges*	20	
Feelings		
Short-term motivation decrease	6	30
Decrease in motivation	4	20
Fatigue	4	20
Getting angry	1	5
Withdrawal	1	5
Feeling down	1	5
Discouragement	1	5

Feeling of fed-up	1	5
Fear of failure	1	5
Behaviors	16	
Continuing to work at a certain standard	7	35
Focusing on the goal	2	10
Desiring to be useful	2	10
Directly intervening in problems	1	5
Sharing the problems experienced with one's surroundings	1	5
Keeping the desire to succeed alive	1	5
Taking breaks	1	5
With a love for the profession	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P1): *"Inevitably, sometimes people get bored. Because we are human. No matter how much we love our profession, no matter how much we love students and children, no matter how much we believe that knowledge is sacred, sometimes we get bored. Most of the time this happens for the reasons I just mentioned. But again, as I mentioned before, we motivate ourselves. There is a saying, "Whoever teaches me one letter, I will be his slave for 40 years." says Hazrat Ali. When I think in this way, teaching is a very sacred profession. I really don't say this just for the sake of saying it, sacred is a very important word. In this sense, teaching is a sacred profession. That's why I overcome all these things by thinking about the sanctity of teaching from my point of view, or sometimes I think like this; everything never goes straight in life. There will be thorns in our feet, we will be sad at times. We will cry at some point. We will encounter some negativities. But these negativities, as I said sometimes, do not discourage us, even if they give us boredom. We love our profession, and we try to strive to be productive in our profession in the best way."*

(P6): *"Like I said, it's short-lived. It goes out like a straw flame. Then I move on again. I say, you know, there was a saying that they stoned the crooked tree, what was it, hodja? There was such a saying. I say this is you, this is your work, your labor, or this is your goal, this is your life. He is like that, you are like this, so I say go on your way. You don't have to please anyone. If you are satisfied, when you put your head on your pillow, I earned halal money today, I did my job well, I taught my lesson well, and I am good with the students, if your mind is at ease, it is conscientiously and religiously okay for me. The money I get is halal."*

Changes in teachers' motivation during the process

Teachers were asked the question " How has your motivation changed over time? (How were you in the early years of your career? How do you see yourself now?)" and according to the answers, the theme of changes in teachers' motivation during the process was obtained. There is one category and two codes under this theme. According to the two codes under this theme, most teachers' motivation was high in the early years and motivation is high now. Following the content analysis, one category emerged in this theme:

Table 10

Frequency data on changes in teachers' motivation during the process

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Changes in teachers' motivation during the process*	20	
Motivational change		
Motivation was high in the early years and motivation is high now	15	75
Motivation was low in the early years and motivation is high now	5	25

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P10): "Believe me, I can say that I do it with the same love as the first day. I haven't experienced much change. I can say that I still go to class with the same love as I did on the first day."

(P7): "In terms of motivation, when you were first appointed, I guess I said, I don't know anything, I can't do this job. I mean, I really had a hard time, I always studied, even in my first years. Then, as I got used to it, I started to like it. But in my first year, thank God, it was always good. The exam results of my students, you know when I got there, I noticed the rise. Well, after that. It has always been like that. So, it was different at this school. It got better. I mean, this school has a laboratory. For example, I have just started to be able to do all the experiments. It wasn't like that before. When I graduated from university, I didn't know anything, I couldn't do anything, I didn't have any materials. I always worked in village schools, but as I tried to do it myself, as I watched it on the internet and in the comfort of this environment, I mean, it gave me a lot in that professional sense."

Teachers' self-evaluations

Teachers were asked the question "If you were to grade yourself, how would you assess yourself?" and according to the answers, the theme of teachers' self-evaluations was obtained. There are five categories and twenty-four codes under this theme. According to the twenty-four codes under this theme, teachers feel inadequate, find self-assessment challenging, strive for self-improvement, and have good communication with students. Teachers usually gave themselves 70, 80, and 90 points. Following the content analysis, five categories emerged in this theme:

Table 11

Frequency data on teachers' self-evaluations

Themes/Categories/Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers' self-evaluations*	14	
Self-Assessment and Competence Perception		
Feels inadequate	8	40
Finds self-assessment challenging	4	20
Has not achieved goals	1	5
Feels burnt out	1	5

Technological Proficiency	3	
Unable to keep up with technology	3	15
Professional Development and Attitudes	16	
Strives for self-improvement	3	15
Diligent	2	10
Acts impulsively	2	10
Proficient in their field	2	10
Questions their profession	2	10
Ambitious	1	5
Idealistic	1	5
Humble	1	5
Has a fighting spirit	1	5
Loves their profession	1	5
Communication and Interaction	4	
Has good communication with students	2	10
Gets angry with students	1	5
Prepares for classes	1	5
Scoring	17	
70	6	30
80	4	20
90	4	20
100	1	5
40	1	5
60	1	5

*Some teachers expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the responses of the teachers to the related question are as follows:

(P11): "Now I am less literate outside of science. Sometimes I learn new things from my friends, for example, you may not know the life cycle of a whale because it is very special, but it comes up in a question. You get it wrong. For example, it depresses you. I immediately research the life cycle of the whale again. You need to constantly improve yourself. You need to follow technology. I can think that we have a little bit of trouble in following the technology. Because technology changes very fast. I actually like technology and I can apply it, but it is very difficult to follow it one-to-one. So, it can be said that I am a little behind in terms of technology. But the smart board sent by our state made our work very easy. At the point of accessing technology, the smart board is very helpful, especially in my branch. Smartboard applications close this gap for me. Because when I give an example to the child, I can open it on the internet, I can open it on the smart board, I don't say think about the bat, I open the bat, the child sees it. So, technology may be the missing point. Some curricula are heavy, some are light. It is very difficult to transfer these to

children. I mean, some outcomes are open-ended. Whatever you tell is as valid as it is. Here, the boundaries need to be clear and unambiguous. Frankly, our ministry needs to change this plan a bit more. It needs to say that you will explain these, and you will not explain these. For example, I teach according to the annual plan, but the child gets very different questions in the mock exams. My teacher says, "You didn't explain this. It actually hurts us a lot, but they are two very different areas. That can create a bit of a gap, but I explained to the children the reason for this. I mean, I tell them that we must explain these things according to our annual plan. Sometimes, of course, I sometimes go out as an extra and say, "Look, when you face the test, these will also come up. These inconsistencies can lower success a little bit. Also, the student profile has changed a lot. The fact that students who do not want to listen to the lesson, who have disciplinary problems, or who have no goals are in the same class affects our success criteria a lot. In other words, there needs to be a solution such as an open secondary school so that if a child wants to go to industry, we don't force him/her to go to school. Because the child prevents other friends from listening to the lesson. This also affects our success. It necessarily interferes with the subject we are going to teach. It also lowers our success. So it can be that point."

(P18): "Should I give a grade? Actually, my boundaries are still too hard in certain areas. I think I need to soften a little bit more because we were taught differently. A little bit more... as I said, we were taught how to teach in a very academic sense, so after years and years of being in the profession, look, I am still changing, I am still developing, and I still don't feel enough. Because children are developing so fast, or rather the world is developing so fast and it is really hard to keep up with it, it is really hard to keep yourself up to date, and it is really hard to keep yourself up to date all the time. Change is a very difficult thing, but at least I'm in a constant effort to say that I will change. I'm not stubborn, just a little harder. First of all, I do what I know, and then when it doesn't work, I switch to a new one. I would probably break the score from there. Therefore, I would give myself 9 points out of 10."

Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions

This research provides a comprehensive description of phenomena in the field of education by exploring teachers' sources of motivation in-depth and the meanings they attribute to their motivation. The findings are organized around several themes that have a significant impact on teachers' motivation.

School from the teachers' perspective: This study's exploration into teachers' perceptions of school uncovers a rich, multidimensional understanding that spans emotional connection and belonging, career and professional development, social and community engagement, personal and academic development, and motivation and school engagement. The emphasis on "Second home" and "Family" within the Emotional Connection and Belonging category underscores a profound sense of attachment and identification with the school environment, suggesting that for many teachers, schools are more than just workplaces; they are communities where profound bonds are formed. This finding aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by [Noddings \(1992\)](#), who argued for the importance of nurturing relationships in educational settings, positing that care and mutual respect are fundamental to effective teaching and learning.

The data also indicate a strong perception of schools as pivotal in Career and Professional Development, underlined by references to schools as "The future of society" and "A place that directs toward a profession." This view reflects

the understanding that schools play a crucial role not just in student learning but also as institutions that contribute to societal progress through the professional growth of their staff, echoing the sentiments of Fullan (2007), who discussed the importance of continuous learning and innovation in educational environments.

In terms of Social and Community Engagement, the identification of schools as settings for socialization and as the governance of the community point to the significant role schools play in shaping social values and community leadership, resonating with the community of practice concept outlined by Wenger (1998), where learning is seen as a social process that occurs in communal contexts.

The Personal and Academic Development category, with schools described as "Life" and "The place that nurtures individuals," reflects an understanding of schools as vital in shaping individuals' personal and academic growth, a notion supported by Dewey (1938), who emphasized the importance of education in fostering reflective thinking and personal development.

The emphasis on Motivation and School Engagement, with codes like "A place approached with joy and playfulness," highlights the importance of creating engaging and enjoyable learning environments, which is in line with the intrinsic motivation theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), suggesting that fostering an environment of enjoyment and interest is crucial for effective learning.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that educational policies and practices prioritize the creation of school environments that foster emotional connections, encourage continuous professional development, and facilitate social and community engagement.

Teaching from the teachers' perspective: The data derived from the content analysis of teachers' perspectives on teaching reveals a multifaceted view that underscores the profound impact and contribution of teaching to both individual learners and society at large. The most significant aspect, as highlighted by the teachers, is the ability to "touch the future generation," which garnered the highest frequency. This perception aligns with the understanding of teaching as a forward-looking endeavor, where educators play a pivotal role in shaping the minds and attitudes of future citizens. Additionally, the emphasis on "building," "being useful," and "creating positive change" further illustrates teachers' recognition of their role in nurturing growth and fostering positive societal transformations.

The categories of "Professional Identity and Values," "Personal and Professional Development," "Social and Emotional Aspects," "Student-Centered Approach," and "Service to Society" reflect a comprehensive view of teaching that transcends the mere transmission of knowledge. Teachers view their profession as a "sacred duty" and a "job done with love," highlighting the intrinsic values and emotional investment inherent in teaching. The importance of personal and professional development, alongside the ability to engage with children on a social and emotional level, demonstrates a commitment to holistic education that values emotional intelligence, empathy, and personalized learning.

In comparison to existing literature, these findings resonate with the work of Hattie (2009), who emphasizes the significant impact of teachers on student learning outcomes and the importance of teacher-student relationships in educational success. Similarly, the emphasis on professional identity and values aligns with Day's (2004) exploration

of the complex interplay between personal and professional identities in teaching. However, the specific focus on "serving the homeland" and viewing teaching as a "service to society" introduces a patriotic dimension that is less prominent in global educational research, suggesting a unique cultural or national perspective among the respondents.

These insights contribute to the broader discourse on teaching and learning, affirming the critical role of teachers in shaping future generations and the multifaceted nature of teaching as a profession. Future research should further explore the cultural and contextual factors that influence teachers' perceptions of their roles, as well as the impact of these perceptions on educational practices and outcomes. Professional development opportunities that are centered on enhancing teachers' ability to engage with students on both an emotional and intellectual level should be provided by educational institutions. This approach is critical for nurturing a holistic educational environment that values emotional intelligence and empathy, as well as personalized learning, reflecting the profound impact and contribution of teaching highlighted by teachers themselves.

Initiatives aimed at recognizing and celebrating the role of teachers in fostering positive societal transformations and building the future generation should be established by policymakers and educational leaders. Such initiatives would not only honor the sacred duty and love with which teachers approach their profession but also support the development of a professional identity that is deeply connected to service to society and the nurturing of future citizens.

Success through the eyes of teachers: The analysis of teachers' perspectives on success highlights a comprehensive understanding that transcends traditional metrics of academic achievement. The emphasis on "achieving goals" and "individual-specific development" as the most frequently cited codes indicates a shift towards a more personalized and holistic view of success. This approach acknowledges the importance of aligning educational objectives with individual student needs and interests, thereby making the learning process more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, the significance given to "making the subject enjoyable" and "achieving the objectives in the curriculum" reflects an understanding of the role of enjoyment and curriculum alignment in facilitating effective learning.

The categorization into "Individual Development and Learning Process," "Teacher-Student Relationship and Interaction," "Professional Attitude and Responsibility," and "Success and Recognition" further elucidates the multifaceted nature of success from a teacher's standpoint. The data suggest that success in education is not solely defined by academic outcomes but also by the quality of interactions between teachers and students, the continuous professional and personal development of educators, and the acknowledgment of their efforts and achievements.

Comparing these findings to existing literature reveals alignment with the work of [Ryan and Deci \(2000\)](#), who argue that intrinsic motivation and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs are crucial for effective learning and personal development. The emphasis on individual development and making learning enjoyable resonates with their Self-Determination Theory, which highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in education. However, the focus on "winning" and "receiving praise" introduces elements of extrinsic motivation that contrast with the intrinsic motivation focus suggested by Deci and Ryan, indicating a nuanced understanding of success that incorporates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

These insights contribute to the educational discourse by advocating for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of success that encompasses both academic achievements and the development of positive relationships, emotional growth, and personal fulfillment. Future research should explore the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in defining success in educational contexts and examine how this balance impacts student motivation and learning outcomes.

It is recommended that educational strategies be developed to prioritize the alignment of educational objectives with the individual needs and interests of students, thereby enhancing the engagement and meaningfulness of the learning process. This recommendation is grounded in the understanding that success extends beyond traditional academic metrics to include personalized and holistic development, as underscored by teachers' emphasis on "achieving goals" and "individual-specific development."

The importance of incorporating both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in educational practices should be recognized, with a particular focus on creating learning environments that foster enjoyment and curriculum relevance. This approach is advocated to address the nuanced understanding of success that includes both academic achievements and the fostering of positive relationships, emotional growth, and personal fulfillment, aligning with [Deci and Ryan's \(2000\)](#) Self-Determination Theory on the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in education.

Sources of inspiration for teachers' choice of profession: The exploration of what inspires individuals to pursue a career in teaching reveals two primary categories of influence: "Professional Idol/Personal Influence" and "Internal Motivations". The most significant source of inspiration, as indicated by the frequency data, is the influence of teachers themselves, followed by family. This suggests that role models within the teaching profession play a crucial role in attracting individuals to the field, underscoring the impact of personal interactions and experiences with educators who embody the values and practices of effective teaching. Similarly, the role of family in influencing career choices highlights the importance of support and encouragement from one's immediate social environment in shaping career aspirations.

The secondary category, "Internal Motivations," which includes a love for children, a passion for teaching, a love of service, and the influence of books, points to the intrinsic motivations that drive individuals to choose teaching as a profession. This underscores the importance of personal fulfillment, a desire to contribute positively to society, and the influence of literature in shaping one's professional path.

Comparing these findings with existing literature, the emphasis on role models and personal influence aligns with the work of [Bandura \(1977\)](#), who highlighted the importance of observational learning and modeling in career choice. The significance of internal motivations is also supported by [Deci and Ryan's \(1985\)](#) Self-Determination Theory, which posits that intrinsic motivations are critical for sustaining long-term engagement in a profession. However, the specific influence of books as a source of inspiration is less commonly discussed in the literature, suggesting a potential area for further research into how literature can inspire educational career choices.

These insights contribute to the understanding of teacher recruitment and retention by highlighting the complex interplay of external influences and internal motivations in the decision to become a teacher. Future research should

explore how these sources of inspiration can be leveraged to attract and retain high-quality candidates in the teaching profession.

It is recommended that teacher recruitment strategies be designed to emphasize the significant role of professional idols and personal influences, as these have been identified as primary motivators for individuals choosing the teaching profession. This approach should involve showcasing real-life stories and testimonials from educators who embody effective teaching values and practices, thereby illustrating the profound impact that role models within the teaching profession can have on attracting new teachers.

The development of programs and initiatives that highlight the importance of internal motivations, such as a love for children, a passion for teaching, and a desire to contribute positively to society, should be prioritized by educational institutions and policymakers. These programs could include workshops, seminars, and reading groups that explore the role of personal fulfillment in shaping one's decision to pursue a career in teaching, acknowledging the critical role of intrinsic motivations as supported by [Deci and Ryan's \(1985\)](#) Self-Determination Theory in sustaining long-term engagement in the teaching profession.

Ideal Teaching Horizon: The concept of the ideal teaching horizon, as revealed through the perspectives of teachers, encompasses a multifaceted approach to the profession. The prioritization of continuous self-improvement and the ability to connect with students underscores a commitment to both personal and professional development. This dual focus is reflective of a holistic educational philosophy that values the dynamic interplay between teacher growth and student engagement. Furthermore, the emphasis on being affectionate, establishing effective communication, and fulfilling one's duty properly aligns with the understanding that teaching is not merely a transfer of knowledge but a complex, relational process that involves emotional intelligence and ethical responsibility.

The categorization into "Professional Development and Competence," "Student Relationships," "Communication and Interaction," and "Role Model and Social Adaptation" highlights the comprehensive nature of effective teaching. It suggests that ideal teachers are not only knowledgeable and skilled in their subject matter but also adept at building relationships, communicating effectively, and serving as positive role models within the community. This perspective aligns with the broader educational research that emphasizes the importance of teacher-student relationships, teacher efficacy, and the socio-emotional aspects of teaching ([Hattie, 2009](#); [Noddings, 2005](#)).

Comparing these findings to existing literature, the focus on continuous improvement and adaptability resonates with the principles of reflective practice as described by [Schön \(1983\)](#), suggesting that ideal teachers are reflective practitioners who continuously seek to enhance their teaching methods and understanding of student needs. However, the specific emphasis on humor and being cheerful presents a nuanced aspect of teacher-student interaction not extensively explored in traditional educational research, indicating a potential area for further study regarding the impact of teacher personality on learning environments.

These insights into the ideal teaching horizon contribute to the discourse on teacher education and professional development by underscoring the multifaceted competencies required for effective teaching. Future research should

further, investigate how these qualities can be cultivated in teacher preparation programs and professional development initiatives to enhance educational outcomes.

It is recommended that teacher preparation programs and professional development initiatives be specifically designed to foster the development of emotional intelligence and ethical responsibility among educators. This recommendation is based on the understanding that effective teaching encompasses not only the transfer of knowledge but also a complex, relational process that involves connecting with students on a deep, personal level. The integration of training that focuses on building relationships, effective communication, and serving as positive role models should be considered essential components of these programs.

The importance of incorporating humor and cheerfulness into teacher-student interactions should be recognized and explored further in educational research and practice. This recommendation arises from the observation that these personality traits contribute significantly to creating a positive learning environment and enhancing student engagement. Therefore, strategies to cultivate such qualities in teachers, acknowledging their potential to positively impact student learning experiences and outcomes, should be developed and implemented within the framework of teacher education and ongoing professional development.

Teachers' sources of motivation: The investigation into teachers' sources of motivation reveals a complex interplay of factors that fuel their commitment and drive. Predominantly, student-centered motivations, including student success and direct interactions with students, emerge as the primary sources of energy for teachers. This underscores the intrinsic reward system embedded within the teaching profession, where the progress and achievements of students serve as a significant motivational force. Moreover, the emphasis on producing outcomes and the impact teachers have on their students' lives highlight the importance of tangible results and personal fulfillment in sustaining teacher motivation.

In addition to student-centered motivations, the analysis identified personal and professional values such as love for the profession, perfectionism, and adherence to national values as critical motivational factors. These elements reflect a deep-seated passion for teaching and a commitment to excellence and societal contributions, indicating that motivation in teaching is not solely extrinsic but deeply rooted in intrinsic values and aspirations.

The role of social and institutional interaction, particularly being appreciated and receiving positive feedback, further illustrates the importance of recognition and support from the school community and colleagues in reinforcing teachers' motivation. These findings align with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which emphasizes the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological needs driving motivation.

However, the influence of infrastructure and resources, such as new laboratories and books, suggests that environmental factors also play a significant role in motivating teachers, indicating a blend of intrinsic and extrinsic factors contributing to their overall motivation.

Comparing these insights with existing literature, the strong focus on student success and engagement finds resonance with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), where the achievement and recognition aspects align with esteem needs, and the personal values and passion for the profession reflect self-actualization. Nevertheless, the

specific mention of national values and perfectionism as sources of motivation may differ from broader educational research, suggesting a unique cultural or individual perspective on motivation in teaching.

These findings offer valuable implications for policy and practice, suggesting that enhancing teacher motivation requires a multifaceted approach that addresses not only the professional development needs but also the emotional and psychological well-being of teachers. Future research should explore the implementation of strategies that foster a supportive and appreciative school environment, alongside opportunities for personal and professional growth, to sustain and enhance teacher motivation.

The implementation of recognition and support systems within educational institutions is recommended to reinforce teachers' motivation, as highlighted by the significant role of social and institutional interactions. Such systems should be designed to provide teachers with appreciation and positive feedback from both the school community and their colleagues, thereby addressing the fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as identified in the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The development of infrastructure and resources, including the provision of new laboratories and books, is recommended to enhance teachers' motivation by addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. This approach acknowledges the importance of environmental factors in motivating teachers and suggests that a balanced blend of support for personal and professional growth, alongside tangible resources, is crucial for sustaining and enhancing teacher motivation.

Factors that decrease teachers' motivation: The analysis of factors that decrease teachers' motivation highlights a complex landscape of challenges that educators face, which can significantly impact their professional enthusiasm and commitment. Predominantly, social and communicative challenges such as negative parental attitudes and negative student behaviors emerge as significant demotivators. These issues underscore the importance of a supportive and respectful environment for teachers, where constructive feedback and positive interactions predominate. Institutional and administrative issues, including a negative school climate and problematic administrative styles, further exacerbate the problem by creating an atmosphere that can stifle teacher motivation and innovation.

Personal and professional development barriers, such as the perception of efforts going to waste and a lack of appreciation, pinpoint the critical need for recognition and opportunities for growth and advancement within the profession. Economic and financial challenges also play a crucial role, with financial difficulties being highlighted as a significant stressor that can dampen teachers' motivation.

Working conditions and environmental factors, including increased workload and overcrowded classrooms, contribute to the stress and burnout that can detract from teachers' motivation. Lastly, education system and policy changes can induce uncertainty and frustration, particularly when such changes are frequent, poorly communicated, or implemented without adequate support for teachers.

These findings align with existing literature that identifies similar factors as detrimental to teacher motivation. For instance, research by Ingersoll and Smith (2003) and Maslach and Leiter (1999) has documented the impact of workplace conditions, administrative support, and professional autonomy on teacher burnout and motivation.

Furthermore, [Deci and Ryan's \(1985\)](#) Self-Determination Theory underscores the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental to sustaining motivation, suggesting that undermining these needs can lead to decreased motivation among teachers.

However, while the literature extensively discusses the impact of these factors on teacher motivation, the specific emphasis on certain factors such as the immediate impact of negative parental attitudes and student behaviors may vary across different contexts, indicating the need for context-specific strategies to address these challenges.

These insights underscore the necessity for a multifaceted approach to support teachers, encompassing improved communication, administrative support, professional development opportunities, and attention to economic and workload concerns. Future research should focus on developing and implementing interventions that address these factors comprehensively to enhance teacher motivation and retention.

The establishment of robust support systems within educational institutions is recommended to mitigate the negative impacts of social and communicative challenges on teachers' motivation. These systems should prioritize the creation of a supportive and respectful environment where constructive feedback and positive interactions are encouraged, directly addressing the demotivating effects of negative parental attitudes and student behaviors.

The development and implementation of comprehensive professional development programs are recommended to address personal and professional development barriers faced by teachers. Such programs should be designed to offer recognition, opportunities for growth, and advancement within the profession, thereby countering the perception of wasted efforts and a lack of appreciation, which have been identified as significant factors decreasing teachers' motivation.

How teachers cope with challenges: The exploration of how teachers cope with challenges in their profession sheds light on the resilience and strategies employed by educators to maintain motivation and performance despite adversities. The findings indicate a significant emotional and behavioral response to challenges, encompassing feelings of demotivation, fatigue, and a range of coping behaviors such as maintaining standards and goal-oriented focus.

The emotional responses, including short-term motivation decrease, fatigue, and feelings of being overwhelmed, underscore the psychological toll that challenges can have on teachers. These findings resonate with the concept of emotional labor in teaching, where educators must manage their emotions to fulfill the professional demands of their role ([Hochschild, 1983](#)). The reported feelings of anger, withdrawal, and discouragement highlight the need for emotional resilience among teachers to navigate the complex emotional landscape of their profession.

Behaviorally, teachers exhibit a strong commitment to professional standards and objectives, as evidenced by continuing to work at a certain standard and focusing on the goal. This determination is reflective of a deep-seated professional ethos and a commitment to the educational mission, despite the emotional toll. Strategies such as directly intervening in problems, sharing challenges with peers, and keeping the desire to succeed alive suggest a proactive approach to overcoming obstacles and fostering a supportive professional community.

These findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of resilience and adaptive coping strategies in the teaching profession. Research by [Tait \(2008\)](#) highlights the role of resilience in teacher retention and

job satisfaction, suggesting that the capacity to bounce back from setbacks is crucial for long-term success in teaching. Furthermore, the emphasis on goal orientation and maintaining standards aligns with goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002), which posits that specific and challenging goals can enhance motivation and performance.

However, the literature also suggests that relying solely on individual coping strategies may not be sufficient. There is a growing recognition of the need for systemic support, including professional development, mentorship, and well-being initiatives, to address the multifaceted challenges faced by teachers (Day & Gu, 2010).

These insights underscore the necessity of providing holistic support systems for teachers that address both emotional resilience and professional competencies. Education policy and school leadership should prioritize creating a supportive environment that acknowledges the emotional labor of teaching and provides resources for professional development and peer support. Encouraging a culture of openness and collaboration can further empower teachers to share strategies and support each other in overcoming challenges.

The provision of comprehensive support systems for teachers, addressing both emotional resilience and professional competencies, is recommended to be prioritized by education policymakers and school leadership. These systems should be designed to recognize and mitigate the emotional labor associated with teaching, offering resources for professional development, mentorship, and well-being initiatives that empower teachers to maintain motivation and performance amidst challenges.

The fostering of a culture of openness and collaboration within educational institutions is recommended to enhance the sharing of strategies and support among teachers for overcoming professional challenges. This culture should encourage direct intervention in problems, peer sharing of challenges, and sustaining the desire to succeed, thus contributing to the development of a supportive professional community that values resilience and adaptive coping strategies.

Changes in teachers' motivation during the process: The investigation into the changes in teachers' motivation over time reveals a significant insight into the dynamics of professional development and personal growth within the teaching profession. The data indicates that a majority of teachers experienced high levels of motivation both at the beginning of their careers and at the current stage. This sustained motivation over time suggests that despite the challenges and changes within the educational landscape, many teachers retain a strong sense of purpose and commitment to their profession.

The fact that motivation remained high for most teachers from the early years to the present highlights the resilience and adaptability of educators. This enduring motivation is often fueled by a passion for teaching, continuous professional development, and the intrinsic rewards of seeing student growth and success. Additionally, the increase in motivation over time for a smaller group of teachers suggests that as educators gain experience, they develop more effective coping mechanisms, a deeper understanding of their educational impact, and possibly a stronger connection with their students and community.

These findings are consistent with the literature on teacher motivation and professional development. Research by Day and Gu (2010) suggests that teachers' commitment and motivation can be maintained and even enhanced over

time through reflective practice, ongoing professional development, and supportive professional communities. Similarly, the concept of teacher resilience, as explored by Tait (2008), indicates that overcoming challenges can lead to a stronger sense of professional efficacy and motivation.

However, the literature also acknowledges that teachers' motivation can fluctuate due to various external and internal factors, including workload, educational policy changes, and student behavior challenges (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The relatively stable levels of high motivation reported in this study may not capture the full spectrum of experiences across the profession, highlighting the need for supportive measures that address the diverse challenges teachers face.

The findings suggest that supporting teacher motivation requires a holistic approach that addresses both the challenges and the opportunities within the teaching profession. Policies and practices that promote professional development, acknowledge and reward teacher effort and success, and foster supportive professional communities can contribute to sustaining teacher motivation. Additionally, recognizing and addressing the potential sources of stress and burnout is crucial for ensuring that teachers remain engaged and motivated throughout their careers.

The implementation of policies and practices that foster an environment conducive to continuous professional development and reflective practice is recommended to be prioritized by educational leaders and policymakers. Such initiatives should aim to sustain high levels of motivation among teachers by acknowledging and rewarding their efforts and successes, thereby addressing the diverse challenges and opportunities within the teaching profession.

The development of supportive professional communities and the provision of resources to address potential sources of stress and burnout among teachers are recommended to be integrated into the educational system. This approach would ensure that teachers remain engaged and motivated throughout their careers by offering mechanisms for coping with workload, educational policy changes, and student behavior challenges, thus contributing to a stronger sense of professional efficacy and motivation over time.

Teachers' self-evaluations: The theme of teachers' self-evaluations as gleaned from the provided data highlights a nuanced understanding of their professional competencies, challenges, and aspirations. The majority of teachers appear to engage in a critical self-assessment, indicating feelings of inadequacy and the challenge of self-assessment itself. This reflective practice is crucial for professional growth, yet it also underscores the internal pressures teachers face in striving to meet their standards and goals.

Teachers' self-reports of feeling inadequate or unable to keep up with technological advancements reflect a common concern within the profession about staying relevant and competent in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. The emphasis on striving for self-improvement and being diligent showcases a commitment to professional development and a continuous effort to enhance their teaching practice.

The mixed feelings towards their profession, ranging from questioning their career choice to expressing love and dedication to teaching, illustrate the complex emotional landscape teachers navigate. The range of scores (from 40 to 100, with the majority between 70 and 90) further indicates a broad spectrum of self-perceived competence and satisfaction with their professional abilities.

These findings align with the literature on teacher self-efficacy and reflective practice. Research by [Bandura \(1997\)](#) on self-efficacy highlights the importance of teachers' beliefs in their abilities to influence student outcomes and navigate challenges. The reflective practice, as discussed by [Schön \(1983\)](#), emphasizes the role of reflection in learning from experiences to improve teaching methods and outcomes.

However, the literature also points to the potential downsides of overly critical self-assessment, such as burnout and decreased motivation ([Maslach et al., 2001](#)). The balance between critical self-reflection and maintaining positive self-efficacy is crucial for teacher resilience and long-term job satisfaction.

These insights suggest that supporting teachers in their self-evaluation processes requires a balanced approach that fosters reflective practice while providing the tools, resources, and support systems necessary to address feelings of inadequacy and the challenges of keeping pace with technological and pedagogical advancements. Professional development programs should be tailored to encourage a growth mindset and resilience, emphasizing the value of continuous learning and adaptation. Furthermore, creating a culture that values and rewards ongoing learning and self-improvement can enhance teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction.

The development of professional development programs that are tailored to enhance teachers' self-efficacy and resilience is recommended to be undertaken by educational institutions. These programs should provide the necessary tools, resources, and support systems to address the feelings of inadequacy and challenges related to technological and pedagogical advancements, fostering a growth mindset and emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and adaptation.

The creation of a culture within educational settings that values and rewards ongoing learning and self-improvement is recommended to be prioritized by school leadership and policymakers. This culture should aim to balance critical self-reflection with maintaining positive self-efficacy, thereby supporting teacher resilience and long-term job satisfaction, while mitigating the potential downsides of overly critical self-assessment such as burnout and decreased motivation.

In conclusion, it is recommended that a series of strategies and training programs be developed to increase teachers' motivation. The implementation of these strategies can have a positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction. As a result, there is potential for an overall enhancement in the quality of education. In a rapidly evolving educational landscape, the continuous exploration and understanding of teachers' motivations remain paramount. Recognizing the profound connection between teachers' intrinsic motivations and the quality of education, ongoing efforts to support and enhance these motivations are crucial. The themes unveiled in this research, encompassing the personal meaning of school, the sacred role of teaching, and the diverse dimensions of success, contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the intricate factors shaping teachers' experiences. As we navigate the complexities of teacher motivation, the implementation of tailored strategies and training initiatives emerges as a pathway to cultivate a thriving educational environment, empowering teachers and, in turn, enriching the overall educational experience.

The study has two important limitations. First, the small sample size of only 20 teachers from a specific region of Türkiye limits the generalizability of the findings to different regions and school types. Second, the use of only semi-

structured interviews as the data collection method and the fact that these interviews were conducted face-to-face may lead to response bias and omitted topics due to time constraints.

Ethic

This study was ethically approved by the decision of the Necmettin Erbakan University Scientific Research Ethics Committee dates 09/06/2023 and numbers 2023/277.

Author Contributions

This article was jointly written by three authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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