

## Why do foreign teachers leave Türkiye? Case of foreign private schools

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**ABSTRACT** Teacher mobility has emerged as one of the most prominent issues in the field of education in recent years. Accordingly, the number of foreign teachers coming to work in Türkiye, as well as those leaving Türkiye and the schools they work at for various reasons, is increasing daily. The study aimed to determine the factors leading foreign teachers working in foreign private schools to leave Türkiye and the schools they work in. The phenomenology of qualitative research methods was used in the study, conducting in-depth interviews with 21 foreign teachers using semi-structured questions. The data obtained were categorised into themes using content analysis method. The factors causing foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and their respective schools were divided into six distinct themes: country-related, school-related, school management-related, personal, economic, and factors outside of school life. The research revealed reasons surrounding these six themes for foreign teachers who leave Türkiye and their schools, offering recommendations to researchers and school administrators on retaining qualified foreign teachers who come to Türkiye and ensuring their long-term stay.

**Keywords:** Foreign private schools, Foreign teacher, Teacher mobility, Teacher turnover

## Yabancı öğretmenler Türkiye'yi neden terk ediyor? Yabancı özel okullar örneği

**ÖZ** Eğitim sektöründe son yıllarda en çok dikkat çeken konulardan biri öğretmen hareketliliğidir. Buna uygun olarak Türkiye'ye çalışmak üzere gelen birçok yabancı öğretmenin yanı sıra çeşitli nedenlerle Türkiye'den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılan öğretmenlerin sayısında da her geçen gün daha fazla artış yaşanmaktadır. Araştırmada yabancı özel okullarda görev yapan yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye'den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma nedenleri belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olgubilim(fenomenoloji) deseni kullanılmış ve araştırma 21 yabancı öğretmen ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak temalara ayrılmıştır. Yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye'den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma nedenleri olan faktörler; ülkeye ilişkin, okula ilişkin, okul yönetimine ilişkin, kişisel, ekonomik ve okul yaşamı dışındaki faktörler olmak üzere altı farklı temaya ayrılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda bu altı tema etrafında yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye'den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma nedenleri ortaya konularak Türkiye'ye gelen nitelikli yabancı öğretmenlerin elde tutulması ve uzun süreler burada kalmalarını sağlamak üzere yapılması gerekenler konusunda araştırmacılara ve okul yöneticilerine önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar  
Sözcükler:**

Öğretmen devri, Öğretmen hareketliliği, Yabancı öğretmen, Yabancı özel okullar

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## INTRODUCTION

Education undoubtedly holds vital importance in the lives of societies and their sustainability. The quality and success of education can be seen as a guarantee for societies to live in prosperity and progress. The ability of education to fulfill its desired functions is contingent upon the quality and harmony of its constituent elements. Among the most crucial components of education is unquestionably teachers. It can be said that not only the quantity but also the quality of teachers is a prerequisite for the success of a country's education. Therefore, to teach at the selected level of education, all teachers should be academically qualified in the subjects they are expected to teach and receive sufficient, appropriate, and pertinent pedagogical training (UIS, 2023). Teachers are an indispensable resource for any learning program, and their presence ensures the success of education and the curriculum. Research indicates that nothing influences students' success as much as the quality of teachers (Noor et al., 2012). It is obvious that an unfavorable school environment, an authoritarian management approach, and a lack of peer support in a school environment can negatively affect teacher quality and performance. Incidents, individuals, or certain situations in a school setting can become sources of stress, tension, and unhappiness for teachers. Such an environment is not suitable for teachers to work in. Working conditions, school culture and environment, as well as collaboration among colleagues, are among the factors that influence teachers' decision to stay in a school (Rodríguez, 2009) and effective teacher retention is linked to strong collegial relationships and a supportive school context (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Teachers' main, and occasionally only, choice when their expectations aren't fulfilled, and they're dissatisfied with their surroundings is to transfer schools or even nations. On the other hand, teacher mobility (rotation), which involves changing schools or leaving the teaching profession to dedicate oneself to another job, results in a shortage of teachers and leads to a significant decrease in the teaching workforce (Borman & Dowling, 2008). A lot of research assumes that staff turnover is undesirable and ought to be kept to a minimum (Wynen et al., 2019). Retaining high-performing and qualified teachers in education is crucial for the success of schools, but achieving this is becoming increasingly challenging (Joiner & Edwards, 2008). When teachers believe that finding a job outside the education sector or moving to another school or country will solve their problems, they are likely to prefer either choosing a different profession or transitioning to another school (Vekeman et al., 2017). Teachers may view quitting their jobs or switching schools as an alternative, but schools face a number of difficulties as a result of this mobility. Thus, it is crucial to understand what teachers want and expect from the school and the nation. Different terms are used to describe the phenomenon of changing schools because it can happen in different ways. For example, the concept of teacher turnover can be used to signify either moving to another school after working in one for a certain period or completely leaving the teaching profession (Robinson & Lloyd, 2017). In the literature, the term "leaving school" is typically used to indicate a change in career, particularly in studies carried out in nations like Europe and America. Nonetheless, the notions of teacher mobility and turnover are regarded in this study as representing the movement from one school to another for a variety of reasons. On the other hand, nearly half of the total staff turnover for teachers involves transitioning from one school to another (Ingersoll, 1995, pp. 4-9). According to Evans (1998), teacher turnover occurs in five ways: transitioning to different roles at the school level, teachers moving between public and private schools, teachers being promoted, leaving the profession to pursue other jobs due to professional burnout, and international migration. In this research, the concept of teacher turnover focuses on the concept of international migration, which refers to teachers moving to work at other countries and schools. Accordingly, the study aims to identify the factors influencing the departure of teachers working in foreign private schools from Türkiye and the schools where they work.

On the other hand, increasing concerns about teacher shortages and employment have fueled the momentum of research on the supply and demand of teachers. Particularly in recent years, when looking at research, the reasons for teacher turnover vary, yet it remains an ongoing issue. Some studies indicate that the ongoing issue of teacher turnover has been particularly influenced by the pandemic (Matthews et al., 2022; Murnane et al., 1988; Nguyen & Springer, 2023; Räsänen et al., 2020; Thomas & Hammond, 2019). Besides, the professional problems that teachers experienced during the COVID-19 period accelerated their professional development by forcing them to seek solutions (Dempsey & Burke,

2020). The connection between teacher turnover and the teaching profession is among the important conclusions drawn from these studies. Accordingly, the fields with the highest teacher turnover have been found to be science, math, and special education (Boe et al., 1997) and early-career teachers of science, math, and languages have especially high rates of teacher turnover (Worth & De Lazzari, 2017). In addition, the majority of research on teacher turnover focuses on those who remain in the field but change schools or quit entirely (Ingersoll & May, 2012). Current studies indicate that reasons for leaving a job due to mobility are related to teachers' preferences regarding salary, class size, workload, student profile, facilities, and the socio-economic status of the school. Teachers tend to move from one school to another or from one region to another based on these preferences (Hanushek et al., 2004; Swars et al., 2009). This situation can be said to be applicable to teachers who prefer to work at another school or country on an international level. However, one of the policies adopted as a solution to teacher mobility and workforce turnover has been the employment of a larger number of teachers, and this situation still continues (Hirsch et al., 2001). According to the Teacher Shortage Statistics (2024), 51,000 teachers quit their jobs in the United States during 2023 and 35% of teachers plan to quit in the next 2 years, down from 44%. Similarly, it is evident that the issue of teacher mobility cannot be solved solely by hiring new teachers unless the retention of existing teachers is ensured. The way to prevent teacher mobility seems to lie not in hiring more teachers but in meeting the expectations of current teachers, thereby ensuring their retention in the profession and in the places where they work. Hiring more new teachers won't fix the issue or stop teacher mobility if current teachers aren't retained. Schools will face a number of administrative and academic challenges as a result of this circumstance.

The impact of teacher turnover on the general performance and operations of the school is one of the issues. Teacher turnover or mobility may not always be considered harmful, as it can provide some benefits to organizations by facilitating the departure of ineffective or uncooperative teachers from the school (Simon & Johnson, 2015) and may bring fresh perspectives, talent, and foster productive teacher-school connections (James & Wyckoff, 2020). However, it is essential to note that when teacher mobility reaches high rates and becomes a chronic problem, it has the potential to negatively affect the school's system and student performance. Frequent teacher mobility has a direct impact on the performance and efficiency of teachers who are either still adjusting or trying to adjust to the school they work in. Research on teacher effectiveness indicates that inexperienced teachers are generally less effective than those with more than three to five years of experience and teachers typically need an average of five years of experience to be fully effective in influencing student performance (Chingos & Peterson, 2011; Rivkin et al., 2005). This situation clearly underscores the importance of retaining both current and experienced teachers. Teacher mobility leads to the loss of experienced teachers, posing an additional cost for educational organizations in terms of the recruitment and training of new teachers (Levy et al., 2012). The issue of teacher turnover emerges as a problem worldwide, with varying rates from country to country. The increasing recognition of this issue as a growing problem globally has led to a growing interest in research shedding light on it over time. In the Netherlands, it is estimated that the teacher attrition rate is around 15%, and this rate has particularly increased in the last thirty years (Den Brok et al., 2017). Similarly, in Australia, there has been a decrease of approximately 40% to 50% in the proportion of teachers with five years of teaching experience (Ewing & Manuel, 2005). Increasing teacher job satisfaction is unquestionably the best strategy to lower teacher turnover and create a stable structure made up of seasoned educators. Because new hires need time to adjust and training, which also entails administrative expenses, and departing teachers take important school-specific knowledge (Gibbons et al., 2021).

In terms of attitudes and practices surrounding the teaching profession, similar situations can be observed in Türkiye. In a survey conducted by the Anatolian Education Union in Türkiye, it was found that a significant proportion of teachers, 43.2%, would consider leaving the teaching profession if they were offered a better job (Öğretmenlerin Ekonomik Durumu Anketi, [Survey on Economic Status of Teachers] 2024). While teacher turnover and mobility are concrete challenges, the crucial point here is to retain qualified teachers after bringing them to the school. In this regard, both the Ministry of National Education and private schools implement various practices to retain teachers. The introduction of the Teacher Profession Law by the government in 2022 is one significant step in this direction Öğretmenlik

Meslek Kanunu, [Teaching Profession Act] (2022, February 14) Resmî Gazete, (Issue: 31750). On the other hand, attracting and retaining qualified teachers is also crucial for private schools. Schools in Türkiye that employ foreign teachers strive to offer various attractive opportunities to attract them. These include providing plane tickets, private health insurance, special retirement options, and educational allowances for children to foreign teachers and their family members who come to work in Türkiye. It is also known that foreign teachers depart Türkiye and the schools they work in for a variety of reasons, even though they initially found these opportunities appealing and came to work. Some educational organizations in Türkiye, in line with the educational requirements of the 21st century, aim to cultivate their students as "global citizens," provide an effective environment for learning foreign languages, and create an international educational environment by employing foreign teachers. One of the primary goals and outcomes of international education is "to educate graduates who will be able to live and work in the globalized world" (De Wit, 2016, p. 75), which is also defined by the concept of global citizenship. For schools, this situation may be seen as a way to offer international education standards and globalize education. On the other hand, the inability to retain foreign teachers, who are recruited to schools with great effort and through lengthy processes, leads to various problems for schools both in terms of educational processes and economically. The frequent turnover of foreign teachers negatively impacts the school culture and climate, hindering the healthy functioning of school operations. In line with the importance of the topic, there has been a notable increase in the number of international studies on the subject. A number of articles have been published on the migration experiences of students and teachers from Anglophone countries and other foreign countries in China, both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic period (Bai & Nam, 2023; Bai et al., 2023; Nam et al., 2022). In the literature, the perspectives of foreign teachers working in private schools in Türkiye on various variables in the Turkish education system have been examined only by Aydın et al. (2019). Although the topic is crucial, there is no research in the literature on the factors influencing the decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the schools they work at. Therefore, the main purpose of the research is to identify the factors influencing the decisions of foreign teachers from different cultures and countries to leave Türkiye and the schools they work at, and to determine the underlying reasons for these factors based on real experiences. Social exchange theory is built on three fundamental principles: rationality, reciprocity, and specificity. The rationality principle assumes that employees will join an organization that meets their needs and desires. According to the reciprocity principle, social relations between employees and employers are inherently reciprocal. The principle of specificity holds that the relationship between employees and organizations can only exist as a reciprocal exchange relationship, and these principles are used to explain inter-organizational dynamics between employees and employers (Foa & Foa, 2012). On the other hand, social exchange theory is regarded as one of the most powerful tools for understanding workplace employee behavior (Malik et al., 2011). The social exchange theory serves as the foundation for this study, which focuses on foreign teachers' relationships with the schools where they work in Türkiye and their subsequent intention to leave. It is hoped that the data obtained in this research will contribute to addressing the deficiencies in the employment and retention of foreign teachers in Türkiye and among administrators in private schools. Consequently, the findings are expected to identify necessary actions. Moreover, such research is anticipated to contribute to the literature by providing scientific data for international comparisons, helping to identify the reasons for foreign teachers leaving the countries and schools they work at different countries. Additionally, this study should help scholars and administrators by identifying how, in comparison to other nations and educational institutions, the standing of Turkish and international private schools that hire foreign instructors has evolved over time. It also seeks to support legislators in creating laws pertaining to the hiring and retention of foreign teachers.

The aim of this research is to identify the factors influencing the decisions of foreign teachers working in foreign private schools to leave Türkiye and the schools they work at. Thus, "What are the reasons that lead foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the school they work at?" is the definition of the research question.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Method

Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, aims to identify the meanings individuals create as a result of experiencing a specific phenomenon (Baker et al., 1992; Creswell, 2021). Accordingly, the phenomenology design was employed in this study since the reasons for foreign teachers both leaving Türkiye their country and their school were sought directly based on their own experiences. Phenomenology design seeks to reveal the meaning and essence of an experienced phenomenon by starting from the experiences of individuals or groups. According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2017), phenomenology is the description of a person's fleeting experiences. In this research, the phenomenology design is considered suitable as the aim is to uncover the underlying reasons for foreign teachers leaving Türkiye and their schools and how they make sense of their experiences during this process.

### Study Group

The research was conducted in foreign private schools in Istanbul and Izmir. In phenomenological research, different opinions are expressed regarding the number of individuals to be interviewed. In phenomenological research, the aim is to reach a sufficient number of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon to delve into its essence (Neuman, 2017, pp. 319-320). While Yıldırım & Şimşek (2016, p. 71) state that the number of interviewees should be limited to 10 people, Wilson (2015, p. 41) suggests that the number of participants generally varies between 6 and 20, with no strict rule. Creswell (2021) mentions that in phenomenological research, the number of participants who have fully experienced the phenomenon can range from 5 to 25 individuals. In phenomenological research, experiences are directly investigated firsthand, and interviews are conducted with individuals who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon in question (Baş & Akturan, 2008, pp. 88-89). Accordingly, due to its easy accessibility the research included 21 high school teachers teaching in different branches in foreign private schools in Türkiye. In the study, the criterion sampling method was applied, considering teachers who have definitely decided to leave their current school in Türkiye, have communicated this decision to the school, or are currently working in another school. Furthermore, in the research, following the maximum diversity approach, it was anticipated that foreign teachers would come from different countries and have different specialties. It can be said that the inclusion of foreign teachers from different countries with different areas of specialization in the study provides the maximum diversity criterion and enables more variables to be taken into consideration in the study. This situation is also important in terms of determining whether teachers' reasons for leaving Türkiye differ between countries or branches. On the other hand, the willingness of foreign teachers to participate in the research was obtained by communicating through school administrators and Turkish teachers; subsequently, detailed explanations about the purpose of the research and how the data would be collected were provided to the teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate, using email addresses. It was emphasized that the identity information of the participants would remain confidential, code names would be used during the reporting process, the importance of voluntarily participating in the research was highlighted, and it was stated that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they wished. In line with this, the research focused on the real-life experiences of foreign teachers who are either planning to leave Türkiye or have already left, aiming to understand the reasons behind their decisions to leave Türkiye and their current schools. The researchers conducting the study suspended their own perspectives, refraining from making any hypotheses or assumptions, and instead, aimed to present the real experiences and perspectives of foreign teachers regarding the factors underlying their decisions to leave Türkiye and their schools comprehensively and impartially. Anticipating data saturation due to the repetition of information, the data collection process was concluded after conducting interviews with 21 teachers. Descriptive information about the participant teachers is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.***Distribution of Foreign Teachers According to Different Variables*

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Nationality	Educational Status	Professional Seniority
P1	Male	29	USA	M.Sc.	13
P2	Female	34	China	M.Sc.	16
P3	Male	49	USA	B.Sc.	27
P4	Male	41	Germany	B.Sc.	22
P5	Female	42	USA	B.Sc.	19
P6	Male	47	Romania	B.Sc.	26
P7	Female	60	USA	B.Sc.	34
P8	Male	53	Scotland	M.Sc.	30
P9	Male	43	USA	M.Sc.	18
P10	Female	40	USA	B.Sc.	19
P11	Male	52	England	M.Sc.	23
P12	Male	48	Philippines	M.Sc.	21
P13	Male	53	England	PhD	26
P14	Female	44	Germany	M.Sc.	28
P15	Female	55	USA	M.Sc.	24
P16	Female	53	England	B.Sc.	28
P17	Male	42	Canada	M.Sc.	33
P18	Female	58	England	PhD	35
P19	Female	33	USA	M.Sc.	17
P20	Female	54	Canada	B.Sc.	29
P21	Male	60	England	M.Sc.	30

As seen in Table 1, a total of 21 participants took part in the study, with 9 being female and 12 being male. The ages of the participants range from 29 to 60 years. Six teachers from the United States, four from the United Kingdom, two from Canada, and two from Germany participated in the study. Additionally, one teacher each from China, Scotland, and Romania. Regarding educational background, six participants have a bachelor's degree, eight have a master's degree, and two hold a doctoral degree.

### Collection of Data

The research data were collected using a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers based on the literature review. Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant ethics committee. Following the audit, the study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Marmara University, dated 10 April 2023 and numbered 530794. For content validity, the draft interview form was initially sent to two experts specializing in the field of education, examined by the experts, and based on the feedback received from them, necessary adjustments were made to ensure content validity. The interview form, prepared in English, was later reviewed by two language experts proficient in both Turkish and English. Finally, to test the comprehensibility of the interview questions, a pilot study (Female, 58 years old, from England) was conducted. Since there was no need to make any changes to the data obtained in the pilot study, the relevant data was later included in the study. In phenomenological research, as in other qualitative research designs, data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, document analysis, etc., are used (Creswell, 2018, p. 78-79). Accordingly, in this research, in-depth interviews were conducted as the data collection technique. According to Kvale (1996), in-depth interviews are the most suitable way to collect data about individual experiences. In the research, open-ended questions were directed to foreign teachers to encourage them to share their real-life experiences. The following questions were asked: (1) Why did you decide to leave Türkiye and go to another country? (2) Why did you decide to leave this school and work in another school? The interviews were conducted individually, in-depth, face-to-face or through video calls in English, using these questions. In phenomenological research, experiences are most commonly collected through in-depth interviews, focusing on expressions, meanings, and explanations related to the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Accordingly, additional probe questions were posed during the interviews to better understand the responses of foreign teachers and to reveal the underlying deep meanings of their experiences. Care was taken to conduct the interviews in a conversational environment

to enable teachers to express their real experiences more comfortably. Additionally, to ensure participants felt more at ease and to determine the underlying reasons for their experiences, it was emphasized at certain points verbally during the interviews that the shared information would be kept confidential, not shared with anyone other than the researchers, and that school and personal names would not be mentioned when reporting the research. Each interview was recorded using an audio recording device or video recording in video calls. Each interview lasted approximately 30-35 minutes. The recorded interviews were transcribed into text, resulting in an approximately 80-page dataset.

## Analysis of Data

The research data were analyzed using the content analysis method. In line with content analysis, the data were analyzed inductively, as the study's data focus on participants' experiences rather than on predetermined categories. To ensure the reliability of the data, the collected information was initially analyzed separately by the researchers. Then, the data were reviewed multiple times to identify common themes, following the steps recommended by Creswell (2012). Important words and phrases that were repeated, illustrating how participants experienced the phenomenon, were identified. The data were carefully examined by the researchers to determine codes, and subsequently, categories and subcategories were created. The researchers worked together to create the codes, and they all agreed on the analysis of each code. Common themes that were identified earlier were then explained and interpreted in alignment with these codes. Participant identities were protected by using codes such as P1-P21. The researchers developed the initial coding scheme based on reading, discussion, and initial coding of the first five interviews. The researchers then used Maxqda 22 software to carefully code and analyze the remaining transcripts. Including foreign teachers from different countries, various private schools, and different years of experience aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research. Additionally, in the research participant confirmation was realized by asking the participants to review the transcripts obtained after the interview. Additionally, extensive descriptions were included by quoting from the collected data. Through these approaches, the goal was to reinforce the findings and interpretations obtained in the research. So, in accordance with the phenomenological approach, care was taken to ensure that the themes captured the essence of the phenomenon under investigation, and the themes' relationship to the main research question of why foreign teachers leave Türkiye and their schools was taken into account. Furthermore, to enhance the validity and reliability of the qualitative data, participant confirmation was obtained. The obtained findings were supported by direct quotations from the data, and extensive descriptions were provided to further establish validity.

## FINDINGS

The findings obtained in the research have been presented under the themes of country-related (P3, P21, P4, P19, P11, P13, P18, P17, P2, P9) school-related (P11, P14, P18, P15, P7, P16, P9, P1, P11), school management-related (P19, P21, P4, P16, P5, P8, P9, P12), personal (P6, P20, P17, P13, P8, P10, P15, P14, P18), and economic factors (P4, P7, P9, P14, P20), as well as factors outside school life (P16, P9, P8, P13, P20) considering the general objectives of the research.

### Country-Related Factors

One of the reasons for foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the school where they work is country-related factors. Under the theme of country-related factors, sub-themes are illustrated in Figure 1.

As seen in Figure 1, participants' responses regarding the reasons for leaving Türkiye and their respective schools fall under the theme of country-related factors, with seven sub-themes: changing image of the country, security and freedom issues, concerns about the country's governance, societal changes and reactions, economic uncertainties, cultural differences, and fear of the future. These are explained below.

**Figure 1.****Country-Related Factors****Changing Image of The Country**

Foreign teachers participating in the research emphasized the factor of the changing image of Türkiye as a reason for leaving the country and their respective schools. Participants P3 and P21 expressed this situation as follows:

*Years ago, when I came here to work, the image of Türkiye was very different from what it is now. Currently, when I tell people in my close circle that I work in Türkiye, I can say that I encounter strange reactions. I must express that I now think similarly, and the image of Türkiye has changed negatively over time. (P3)*

*When you look at Türkiye from the outside, I think its image has changed very negatively over the years. Especially in recent years, despite some advantages due to the influx of immigrants from outside, I believe its old positive image has changed. I decided to leave, thinking that working here more would negatively affect my future career. (P21)*

**Security and Freedom Issues**

It is observed that foreign teachers express security and freedom issues as another reason for leaving Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P4 explains this situation as follows:

*The country's government, especially starting to act very control-oriented on social media and the press, began to make my colleagues around me, and naturally me, uneasy. Although we work in a safe environment within the school, the atmosphere in the country has influenced my decision to leave. (P4)*

Another participant, P19, expresses the reason for security and freedom issues as follows:

*Over time, even as a foreigner, I started to feel unsafe and unfree here. For example, the concern of my colleagues who share their thoughts on social media, whether something will happen to us or not, eventually made me uneasy and became one of the triggering factors in my decision to leave. I thought there was no point in staying under these conditions. (P19)*

**Concerns about The Country's Governance**

Foreign teachers participating in the research state that concerns about the country's governance have been influential in the process of leaving Türkiye. Participant P11 expresses his views on this matter:

*Inspectors coming to the school frequently is not a situation I am used to. The fact that inspectors come to the school almost every year and the negative atmosphere this creates in the school is an indicator of the general attitude of the country's governance. It is difficult to predict what else the*

*country's administration will try to control over time. Even this situation alone constituted a reason for me to worry, and it was effective in my decision to leave, along with other problems. (P11)*

### **Social Changes and Reactions**

Foreign teachers participating in the research emphasize social changes and reactions as one of the reasons for leaving Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P13 expresses this situation:

*The changing demographic structure due to the migration wave in Türkiye, the problems that arise as a result, and the occasional reactions from society have made me feel less secure outside the campus. One of the reasons for coming here was my interest in history and my desire to travel to different regions of Türkiye. The evolving social change and the associated reactions increased my concerns about doing this. I can say that this situation had an impact on my decision to leave. (P13)*

### **Economic Uncertainties**

Foreign teachers express economic uncertainties as another reason for leaving Türkiye and their respective schools. Participants P13 and P18 articulate this situation as follows:

*Although I receive my salary in US dollars, I believe that the high inflation and increasing economic uncertainties and fluctuations have made it difficult to accumulate savings here as I hoped. I don't think economic uncertainties will be resolved in the near future. Therefore, I preferred another place that offers a better opportunity for savings. (P13)*

*My children's education is one of my top priorities. The economic uncertainty and inflation in Türkiye have moved private school fees to a point significantly different from what was expected. Therefore, I decided to turn to countries where my children can receive education at much more reasonable fees. (P18)*

### **Cultural Differences**

Some foreign teachers note that cultural differences have impacted their decision to leave both Türkiye and the school where they were employed. P17 expresses his views: "Some behaviors I encountered outside the campus surprised me. The attitudes towards those living alone, especially the approach shown to female teachers living alone, prevented me from spending time outside the campus." (P17) Additionally, P2 shares his thoughts on cultural differences:

*Initially, I was happy to see that people outside the school, especially shopkeepers, treated us very respectfully and politely. However, over time, I realized that this attention was due to my foreignness and the intention to earn more money from us. This situation gradually led me to go outside the campus less. While it may not have been the sole reason for leaving, I can say that this situation influenced my decision to leave. (P2)*

### **Fear of The Future**

Foreign teachers who decided to leave Türkiye and their respective schools also emphasize the sub-theme of the fear of the future. P9 shares his thoughts on this, stating:

*In conversations with my Turkish colleagues at school, I could see that they were particularly pessimistic about the future in recent years. In almost every conversation, it was evident that they experienced a fear of the future, both for the country and, consequently, for the school, along with a lot of uncertainties. As I read more news and comments on this, I gradually began to feel a fear of the future for myself. Thinking that career planning is meaningless under these conditions, I decided to leave. (P9)*

## School-Related Factors

Foreign teachers who decided to leave Türkiye and their respective schools show that multiple factors related to the structure of the school play a role in their decisions. Under the theme of factors related to the school, sub-themes have been identified, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.**

*School-Related Factors*



As seen in Figure 2, the theme of factors related to the school, which led participants to leave Türkiye and their respective schools, is addressed in eight sub-themes: changes in the school, orientation deficiency, lack of international programs, inadequate career opportunities, frequent changes in administration, campus and living conditions, not contributing to the resume, and school culture. Below, these sub-themes are explained.

### *Changes in The School*

Some changes occurring at the school are highlighted as a factor leading foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the school they work in. Participants P11 and P14 express this situation as follows:

*Recently at the school, new practices (oral grading system, student behavior reporting system, teacher evaluation system, etc.) were implemented in a way I couldn't understand the reason for. Before these new practices could settle, others were added, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty within the school. This environment negatively affected both my classroom practices and interactions with students. Feeling that this situation was not temporary and that such practices would continue to increase, I decided to leave. (P11)*

*The implementation of new practices almost every year at the school has significantly increased the workload of the academic staff. Moreover, the feeling that the changes made were not well-analyzed and deviated from feasible policies was not only present in me but also in all my colleagues. After being thoroughly convinced that our agenda and the school's agenda were very different, I decided it was time to leave. (P14)*

### *Orientation Deficiency*

Some foreign teachers participating in the research emphasize the impact of orientation deficiency on their decisions to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P18 expresses this situation as follows:

*When I first came to the school, the orientation sessions that lasted for a few days were almost nonexistent afterward. This lack of orientation not only made it difficult for me to communicate with the school community but also caused problems in adapting to life outside the campus. If the school had assisted me enough in this regard, I might reconsider my decision to leave and might not have left the school so quickly. (P18)*

Additionally, participant P15 shares his thoughts on this issue:

*The orientation activities conducted in the early days were almost nonexistent later on. Especially for teachers like me with little experience abroad, I think this issue is crucial. I believe there is a significant orientation deficiency in the school regarding adapting to daily life, guiding us on what to do and where, and providing opportunities to integrate with the school community. The complete lack of action in this regard made me feel very lonely and influenced my decision to leave the school. (P15)*

### **Lack of International Programs**

Some foreign teachers state that the absence of international programs at the school has influenced their decisions to leave. Participant P7 expresses his views on this issue:

*Although the school prides itself on being an international school, the lack of an officially implemented international program negatively affects the career planning of foreign teachers here. Due to situations such as not gaining new skills and not being part of an internationally recognized program, I believe that staying here does not contribute to my professional and personal development. (P7)*

### **Inadequacy of Career Opportunities**

Foreign teachers mention that the inadequacy of career opportunities at the school has influenced their decisions to leave. Participant P16 shares his thoughts on this matter:

*After working at the school for a few years, I applied for the announced vice-principal position. After the application process, I was not accepted. When I asked for the reason, I received a response stating that such positions are more suitable for Turkish teachers due to regulations of the Ministry of National Education. If I had taken such a position, it would have been a new beginning for me and a means for me to stay here for longer years. I believe that not recognizing career opportunities by opening positions like this at the school will affect the decisions of foreign teachers to leave. (P16)*

### **Frequent Administrative Changes**

The factor of frequent administrative changes is highlighted as a reason for foreign teachers to leave the school where they work. Participant P9 expresses his thoughts on this matter:

*In recent years, there have been frequent changes in administration at the school. Each change brought new perspectives and policies. Many projects started in the previous period were put on hold during the new principal's tenure. I realized that the new policy of the school would move in this direction. Like everyone else, this situation created a sense of uncertainty and insecurity in me. Along with some other reasons, I can say that frequent administrative changes and related uncertainties had an impact on my decision to leave. (P9)*

### **Campus and Living Conditions**

Foreign teachers deciding to leave Türkiye and the school where they work mention campus and living conditions as a contributing factor. Participants P1 and P11 express this situation as follows:

*When I came here, I saw that the promised campus environment and living conditions were not as described. The lack of necessary improvements and arrangements, plus the difficulty of going out of the campus and returning to school, made it clear that my expectations were not met. Considering the campus and the benefits it would provide, I decided that it would not make sense to stay here under these conditions. (P1)*

*I decided to leave because I noticed that the conditions of staying on campus, such as taking shifts at certain times and some other duties, significantly increased over time, turning staying on campus from an advantage into a situation that restricted my private life. (P11)*

### Contribution to Resume

Foreign teachers state that the school's failure to contribute to their resumes is a factor influencing their decision to leave. Participants P1 and P11 express this situation as follows:

*Despite the school offering professional development opportunities, limiting these opportunities not based on our interests but according to their expectations did not suffice for my professional development. I believe that this system did not provide me with enough advantages in updating and enhancing my resume. (P1)*

*I consider the education program implemented at the school and the professional development opportunities provided to us to be insufficient. Before coming to this school, I received job offers from various parts of the world during the job application process. I can say that I have received negative responses from the applications I currently make, and I am criticized for not teaching in an international program. In the past three years, I have regressed in terms of my resume. Understanding that if I stay here longer, my opportunities will further decrease, I decided to leave. (P11)*

### School Culture

Foreign teachers state that the changing school culture over time also influences their decisions to leave the school. Participant P11 expresses this situation as follows:

*In the first years when I came here, there was a school culture that supported teachers and showed more respect to them. Over the years, with the influence of both the changing student profile and newly appointed administrators who were unfamiliar with the school culture, this situation changed. The establishment of a school culture that does not support the teacher in the face of any problem but questions them transformed this rooted institution into an ordinary school that constantly must be accountable to parents. I can say that this situation is one of the most important factors in my decision to leave the school. (P11)*

### Factors Related to School Administration

The decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the school where they work seem to be influenced by different characteristics related to school administration. The sub-themes created under the title of school administration factors are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.**  
Factors Related to School Administration



As seen in Figure 3, the responses of foreign teachers regarding the school administration factors theme are examined in five sub-themes: unmet expectations, the attitude of school administration, leadership issues, feeling undervalued, and the hierarchical structure of school administration. These sub-themes are explained below.

### **Unmet Expectations**

These are highlighted as a factor leading foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the school they work in. Participants P19 and P21 express this situation as follows:

*Despite the school administration appearing to closely deal with both campus facilities and academic matters, adopting a policy of evasion significantly affected my commitment to the school. The process of leaving the school began when I realized that some of the promises made before coming would never be fulfilled. (P19)*

*To see that the decisions made at the beginning of each year are not implemented during the year and the promises given are not kept really disappointed me. This dissatisfaction, stemming from both indifference and incompetence, has been effective in the process of leaving the school each passing year. (P21)*

### **The General Attitude of Administration**

Foreign teachers emphasize that the overall attitude displayed by the school administration is a significant factor in their decision to leave the school. Participant P4 expresses this situation as follows:

*I truly cannot comprehend a management approach of a well-established school that says, 'I do as I please.' The fact that decisions are shared only with us is a clear indicator of an undemocratic leadership style. I decided to leave because I didn't want to work with such management anymore. (P4)*

Similarly, participant P16 states the reason for this as follows:

*Especially decisions made without consulting anyone except a few close to the director and taking the school to a place it doesn't deserve deeply saddened me, as a teacher who truly loves the school. The director's so-called open-door policy, closing the door even halfway, clearly conveyed a message. Working with such a management was no longer possible for me. (P16)*

### **Leadership Issues**

Foreign teachers who decide to leave Türkiye and the school they work at highlight the factor of leadership issues within the school. Participant P5 expresses this situation:

*There are different leaders in various positions at the school. In fact, almost every year, a leadership position is designated for almost every task. However, understanding who exactly is responsible for which task is not possible. When I ask someone about anything, everyone says that it is the responsibility of another leader. This really indicates a leadership problem at the school." Similarly, participant P7 shares his thoughts on this issue: "The school administrators try to solve the problems we encounter as mere managers. I don't think school administrators have leadership qualities. The fact that they are not even open to discussion and debate on this issue is, in my opinion, a clear indication that they are not leaders. (P5)*

### **Feeling Undervalued**

Foreign teachers emphasize the factor of not feeling valued at the school as a contributing factor to their decision to leave Türkiye and the school they work at. Participant P8 articulates this situation:

*I have always had a high level of commitment to the place I am in and the institution where I work. In recent years, despite many activities and club activities I have undertaken beyond my job description, the school administration's failure to notice them eventually led me to feel undervalued. Additionally, the changing student profile of the school over the years, becoming more focused on grades, has accelerated this process, I can say. (P8)*

### **Hierarchical Structure of School Management**

Foreign teachers deciding to leave Türkiye and the school where they work highlight the hierarchical structure of school management as a factor influencing their decision to leave. Participants P9 and P12 express this situation as follows:

*The organization of the school management as an SLT (Senior Leadership Team) and creating new positions for all other tasks led to an undemocratic and dysfunctional hierarchical structure in the school. Over time, all decisions in the school were made by the SLT, and other lower positions were only tasked with implementing them. This hierarchical structure discomforted me and many colleagues. The management team ceased to be colleagues with whom we could discuss our problems and turned into a mechanism that only makes decisions and demands accountability. I can't believe such things are happening in a school with an international reputation. This is one of the most influencing factors in my decision to leave. (P9)*

*The hierarchical structure of the school management from top to bottom created both discomfort and serious confusion among employees. We became confused about whom to ask for help in which matter. Things used to run much smoother when there were fewer executives. As the number of executives increased, the school started to operate more slowly and became excessively bureaucratic. (P12)*

### **Personal Factors**

Foreign teachers' decisions to leave Türkiye and the schools where they work seem to be influenced by various personal factors. Different reasons have been identified under the theme of personal factors, as illustrated in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.**  
*Personal Factors*



As seen in Figure 4, foreign teachers' responses regarding the reasons for leaving Türkiye and the school where they work, in terms of personal factors, are categorized into five sub-themes: family situations, loss of motivation/excitement, changing expectations, desire for exploring new places/adventure, and relationship status. Below, these sub-themes are explained.

#### **Family Situations**

Some of the foreign teachers participating in the research mention that changing family situations over time have been effective in their decisions to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Participants P6: *"I had to leave the school where I worked with great love, and actually, I had not considered leaving. This decision was due to my children wanting to pursue their university education outside of Türkiye."* and P20 *"Initially, I came to Türkiye and this school with the intention of working for many years and gaining experience. However, due to health issues my father faced, I had to return to my home country."* share their opinions on this topic.

### **Loss of Motivation and Excitement**

Some foreign teachers participating in the research indicate that the loss of motivation and excitement they experienced over time has been influential in their decision to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P17 explains this situation: *“The change in my interests over time significantly affected my motivation. Additionally, the excitement of living and working in a different country gradually faded away, leading me to decide to leave.”*

### **Changing Expectations**

Some foreign teachers state that they decided to leave Türkiye and the school where they work due to the change in their expectations over time. Participant P13 shares thoughts on this matter:

*Years ago, I came here to gain experience and explore new places and people. As the years passed and the workload at the school increased, I decided to go to another school with less workload and more time for myself. The increasing workload at the school where I worked each year also had an impact, but I think the change in my expectations was more effective in my decision to leave. (P13)*

Similarly, participant P8 expresses the reason for leaving related to this issue:

*In the early years of my profession, my priority was economic factors. Over time, this was replaced by my career goals. I came to this school for campus facilities and salary, but now, making a career by going to another school that implements international programs seems more appealing. (P8)*

### **Desire to Explore New Places/Adventure**

Some participating foreign teachers highlight the desire to explore new places and seek adventure as a reason for leaving Türkiye and the school where they work. Foreign teachers P10 and P15 express their thoughts on this matter:

*When I came here, I already knew that I wouldn't stay for a long time. After seeing the places, I wanted to see in Türkiye and getting to know people, my desire to explore new places prevailed, and I decided to go to China. (P10)*

*Türkiye is actually a place I am satisfied with living, and the school where I work is a place I am satisfied with working. However, working in a different country also means embarking on new adventures for me. Therefore, even though I am satisfied here, I am aware that I can satisfy my desire for adventure while I am still young. That's why I decided to go to a different country, thinking that the time has come for a new adventure. (P15)*

### **Relationship Status**

Some foreign teachers participating in the research state that their relationship status has an impact on their decision to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Participants P14 explains this situation *“Along with other things that bothered me, my girlfriend's decision not to live in Türkiye anymore seriously influenced the process of leaving the school.” (P14)*

This situation is also expressed by P18 as follows:

*When we first came here, my boyfriend came with me to support me. He was planning to find a job and work here as well. He managed for a few years, but he couldn't find the job he wanted. The school didn't help us in this matter at all. I don't know if I would have left Türkiye so early if my boyfriend's job issue had been resolved. (P18)*

## Economic Factors

Figure 5 displays the sub-themes created under the theme of economic factors, as different elements play a role in the decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the school where they work.

**Figure 5.**  
*Economic Factors*

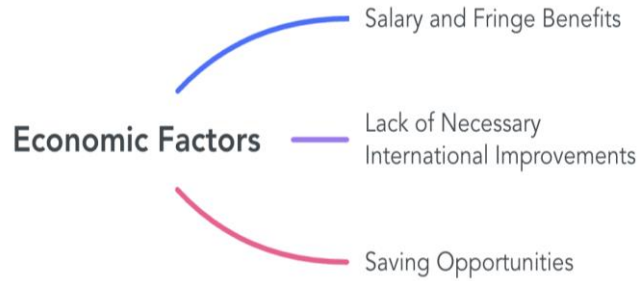


Figure 5 reveals that foreign teachers' responses regarding the reasons for leaving Türkiye and the school they work for, in terms of economic factors, are examined in four sub-themes: salary status, fringe benefits, the lack of necessary improvements internationally, and savings opportunity. These sub-themes are explained below.

### *Salary and Fringe Benefits*

Foreign teachers indicate that the salary and benefits offered by the school do not meet their expectations and play a significant role in the decision to leave the school. Participant P4 explains this situation as follows:

*When I first arrived, the salary and benefits provided by the school, such as child education assistance, proved to be inadequate over time when compared internationally with other schools. Considering the aspects of the school that I was already generally dissatisfied with, when the issue of salary and benefits was added, I decisively chose to leave." Participant P9 similarly states, "Although the salary and other benefits provided by the school may seem good for Turkish standards, they are far from competing internationally with other schools. Under these conditions, unless a foreign teacher has specific reasons, I cannot see a reason for staying in Türkiye and at this school. (P4)*

### *Lack of Necessary International Improvements*

Some foreign teachers participating in the research express that the lack of necessary international improvements over time has been effective in their decision to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Foreign teacher P7 shares thoughts on this issue:

*Especially in recent years, the school has started to make economic improvements, taking into account the conditions in Türkiye. While this may seem reasonable for the school, the lack of necessary international improvements means that foreign teachers earn less economically. This situation particularly indicates that the gap will widen internationally as the years go by. Except for special circumstances, staying longer under these conditions does not seem logical to me. (P7)*

Participant P9 also expresses thoughts on international job fairs:

*Although the school cites international schools as examples in terms of new programs or workload, it stubbornly avoids making necessary international improvements in terms of rights and salary. When I could not get any results from the discussions I had with the management on this issue, I decided to leave. (P9)*

### Savings Opportunity

Some foreign teachers participating in the research state that the opportunity to save is effective in their decision to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. The opportunity for savings is evaluated by foreign teachers as those who think they can achieve it and those who think they will never have this opportunity. Participants P14 and P20 explain this situation as follows:

*In fact, this is not the main reason for me to leave, but along with the negatives I have experienced in many aspects at school, having achieved the savings I aimed for when coming here made my decision to leave easier. (P14)*

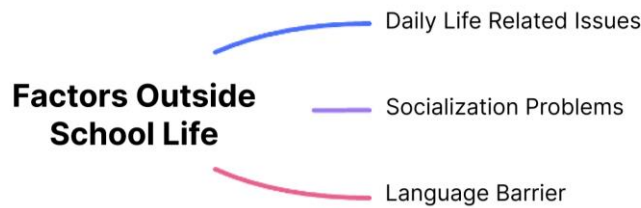
*The economic improvements the school has made so far and that I foresee for the future would not help me achieve the savings I aimed for when coming here. I need to save for the things I aim to do for the rest of my life, and I have come to the conclusion that this place is not the right one for that, so I decided to leave. (P20)*

### Factors Outside School Life

It is observed that multiple factors outside school life play a significant role in the decisions of foreign teachers working in Türkiye and deciding to leave. Sub-themes created under the theme of factors outside school life are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.**

*Factors Outside School Life*



As seen in Figure 6, responses of foreign teachers regarding reasons for leaving Türkiye and the school they work for, in terms of factors outside school life, have been analyzed in three sub-themes: daily life-related issues, socialization problems, and language barrier. Below, these sub-themes are explained in detail.

#### Daily Life Related Issues

Foreign teachers emphasize the problems they face in their daily lives as one of the reasons for leaving Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P16 explains the reason for this as follows:

*Living on campus was very nice at first, but later, factors such as shopping difficulties, unfamiliarity with the surroundings, the challenges of going outside the campus without a personal car, and finding a taxi, as well as issues like Istanbul's traffic and crowds, led me to spend more time on campus. I gradually felt like becoming more introverted and isolated. I believe the school did not provide any support to foreign teachers in this regard and left them on their own. When some other problems I experienced are added to this, leaving became inevitable. (P16)*

Similarly, participant P9 shares thoughts on this issue:

*Living on campus is nice, but there is no support from the school for foreign teachers in terms of life outside the campus. I expected more support from the school regarding where to shop, where to eat, which areas of the city are safe or not. The problems I faced in these matters started to spoil my mood gradually. Handling everything by asking and researching alone exhausted me. After realizing that some of my other expectations were not met, I decided to leave. (P9)*

### **Socialization Issues**

Foreign teachers participating in the research express that the socialization problems they experience have an impact on their decisions to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P8 shares thoughts on this issue:

*I came here to get to know Turkish culture and Türkiye. When I arrived, I saw that school life was much more intense than I expected. This intensity increased even more, especially with the tasks given to us outside of school hours on campus. This situation made it very difficult for me to get to know people outside the school and Turkish culture. Moreover, the school not creating opportunities for us to come together with other colleagues, except for formal meetings such as the end-of-year dinner that brings together all school staff, exacerbated this situation. This prevented me from socializing enough and meeting new people. I can't say I left the school only because of this, but I can say that this situation also had an impact on my decision to leave. (P8)*

Another participant, P13, states the reason for this situation:

*Our Turkish colleagues do not live on campus. The fact that only foreign teachers live on campus causes us to always and only be with certain people outside of school hours. I would expect some activities to be organized by the school outside of school hours where I could meet with my colleagues, but I saw no effort in this regard. The lack of opportunities to come together with some colleagues whom I think are very competent and whom I really want to get to know closely is the biggest obstacle to foreign teachers' socialization. (P13)*

### **Language Barrier**

Foreign teachers participating in the research indicate that the language barrier has an impact on their decisions to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Participant P20 expresses thoughts on this issue:

*Especially not being able to communicate with Turkish colleagues due to the language barrier in the school bothers me a lot. This is a problem, both because we do not know Turkish and because some Turkish teachers do not know a foreign language. This situation gradually led to a lot of isolation and communicating only with certain people. Also, the language barrier occurs when I go outside the campus for shopping or traveling. Although I try to solve this problem through some applications, it is necessary to accept the reality of a language barrier. (P20)*

Similarly, participant P2 mentions this situation:

*The issue I can describe as a language barrier is more related to cultural differences. Although I am trying to learn Turkish, I can say that I have communication problems due to cultural differences. Also, the presence of rich idioms and proverbs in Turkish makes it difficult for me to both learn Turkish and communicate in daily life. (P2)*

## **DISCUSSION**

Achieving the objectives established by educational institutions and meeting the demands of the 21st century heavily relies on having skilled educators. Nevertheless, teacher turnover, stemming from various factors, presents a significant challenge for educational organizations. Consequently, it is essential to comprehend the reasons and implications of teachers transitioning between schools for both academic research and the interests of policymakers and educators. Therefore, this research was conducted in accordance with the social exchange theory. According to the social exchange theory it is an established psychological principle that humans seek out rewards and avoid punishments. At the outset of an interaction, individuals seek to maximize profits and minimize costs. In line with this

perspective, the study aims to identify the factors that affect the choices of foreign teachers to depart from Türkiye and their associated private schools. Hence, the central research question is framed as, "What are the reasons that cause foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and their respective schools?" The findings of the study indicate that a number of factors influence foreign teachers' decision to leave Türkiye and the institutions where they are employed. One of these factors is related to the country of employment. Within the theme of country-related factors, changing country image, security and freedom issues, concerns about the country's governance, societal changes and reactions, economic uncertainties, cultural differences, and fear of the future are highlighted. For instance, the desire to experience the American educational system, higher salaries, and opportunities to explore new teaching methodologies have been identified as influential factors in the preferences of international teachers (Coates, 2005). Consequently, it can be stated that the image of countries plays a crucial role in teachers' choices of country and school. Examining the research results, a similar influence is observed in the decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the schools where they work. The changing demographic structure of Türkiye, especially due to increasing migration, has led to security concerns and uncertainties, coupled with governance issues and related economic and societal problems, creating uncertainties about the country's future. The negative impact of these factors on Türkiye's image and the influence of these overall factors on the decisions of foreign teachers working in our country to leave Türkiye and their current schools are evident. Despite schools mobilizing various resources to retain foreign teachers, the negative change in Türkiye's image poses a significant obstacle to retain qualified foreign teachers in schools employing them, ultimately contributing to their decisions to leave Türkiye and the schools where they work.

Nguyen et al. (2020) state in a study that student, school, and personal traits are the factors influencing turnover intention. To fully understand the reasons for employees leaving their jobs, it is pertinent to examine the characteristic features of organizations and working conditions. In the United States of America, teacher turnover rates were found to be higher in private schools than in public schools; for example, 21 percent of private school teachers changed schools or left teaching in 2000-2001, while this rate remained at 15 percent for public school teachers (Luekens et al., 2004). Similarly, according to the research results, factors related to the school where foreign teachers work are influential in their processes of leaving Türkiye and the school where they work. By working in a different context, teachers would develop greater adaptability, as well as openness to other practices, customs, and ideologies, which would benefit them not only professionally, but also personally (Cano, 2023). In particular, schools with administrators and staff who are more supportive, a collegial environment, and fewer student disciplinary issues have been demonstrated to be associated with lower rates of teacher turnover (Redding & Henry, 2019). Moreover, according to the International Education Recruitment Report (2024) 32.55% of teachers prefer a school-based orientation emphasizing the importance of understanding the institution's dynamics and procedures. According to the study's findings, factors such as school changes, a lack of orientation, the absence of international programs, insufficient career opportunities, frequent changes in administration, campus and living conditions, failure to contribute to the resume, and dissatisfaction with the school culture influence foreign teachers' decisions to leave. Factors such as dissatisfaction with changes in the school, lack of necessary orientation programs for foreign teachers, absence of international education programs in the school, lack of career opportunities that would retain foreign teachers in the school, frequent changes in management and the problems it causes, unmet expectations regarding the school campus and life, the lack of sufficient contribution to the resume despite years spent in the school, and dissatisfaction with the school culture are observed to contribute to the decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the schools where they work. In the literature, research on this topic demonstrates that not only the individual and personal characteristics of employees (Lee et al., 2017) but also the organizational structure and working conditions of workplaces significantly influence employees' organizational commitment (Kalleberg & Mastekaasa, 1998). These aspects play a pivotal role in fostering employee satisfaction and motivation, cultivating positive perceptions of the employer, and significantly contributing to business success and value creation (Shaikh et al., 2022). Similarly, organizational support, job satisfaction, commitment, burnout, emotional exhaustion, job stress, career plateau, personal organizational fit, work engagement, and job embeddedness are some of the factors that can influence turnover intention and contribute to job-hopping behavior (Huang et al., 2021). These studies reveal strong connections between organizational

conditions and employees' motivation, commitment, and intentions to leave. According to Expat Insider 2023 Report, while work appears to take precedence in the lives of many expatriates in Türkiye, career prospects are scarce: 32% of individuals assess their personal career opportunities unfavorably, which is ten percentage points higher than the global average of 22%. Accordingly, the study's findings also show that foreign teachers' decisions to quit are influenced by the dearth of opportunities for professional growth. On the other hand, as stated in International Education Recruitment Report (2024), 81.81% of teachers cite that professional development opportunities influence their decision to stay in a school. Some studies in this regard also show that a better working environment and opportunities for professional development can be crucial factors for teachers to stay in a school (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Freedman & Appleman, 2008). Also, according to Islam et al. (2013), HR benefits the most from organizational support and learning environments, which lead to increased commitment. Collaborative colleagues, supportive school management, trust of parents in teachers, a safe and positive learning environment for students have been identified as factors that reduce teachers' turnover rates (Allensworth et al., 2009). According to certain research, new teachers are more likely than their more seasoned counterparts to quit the field if they are not given the proper support (DFE, 2023). Furthermore, sufficient backing from school administrators, as highlighted by a study conducted in the UK (DFE, 2017), is crucial for inexperienced teachers (Allen & Sims, 2018). Therefore, it can be stated that schools wishing to retain qualified foreign teachers need to make necessary improvements and create an effective school climate based on the factors described above.

Boyd et al. (2011) research revealed that teachers decide whether to continue their careers at the same school based on their perceptions of school management. Similarly, Košir et al. (2020) emphasize that teachers who perceive higher levels of administrative support experience less stress in their professional lives. Similarly, some research shows that there is also evidence that early career teachers' intentions to leave the profession are influenced by the support they receive, such as mentoring and induction (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2018). Consistent with this, the research results indicate that factors related to school management are influential in foreign teachers' decisions to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Foreign teachers participating in the research emphasize negative aspects such as unfulfilled expectations by the school management, the attitude of school management, leadership issues in the school, feeling undervalued, and the hierarchical structure of school management. Some teachers express their disappointment due to unfulfilled promises and unmet commitments made before coming to the school. In connection with this, it is emphasized that the attitude adopted by the school management in terms of administrative processes leads to some leadership issues in the school, and this negative attitude also causes teachers not to feel valuable. Some research has shown that a principal's supervision, professional guidance, discipline, autonomy, school climate and culture, and professional and collaborative relationships that foster communication between principals and teachers are all important aspects of teacher retention (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Thomas et al., 2020). According to the research results, the hierarchical structure of school management creates a bureaucratic structure in the school, leading to some communication problems and influencing the departure processes of foreign teachers. It can be argued that individuals have certain expectations when they join an organization, and this expectation is that today will be better than tomorrow (Ramakrishnan & Macaveiu, 2019). The reputation, conditions, and location of the organization, the work, information, narratives, and stories, trust in the organization, other employees' experiences, and the company's history can all be considered factors that impact expectations from the organization. Also, given that human resources are the most important factor in an organization's development, it is critical to meet the expectations of its employees (Purgaz et al., 2010). These expectations will interact with the organization over time and create a sense of satisfaction. Other studies also indicate that personal characteristics, work experience, and organizational characteristics are not directly related to turnover but have a direct impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, leading to turnover (Williams & Hazer, 1986). Consistent with this, the research results show that unmet expectations create dissatisfaction among foreign teachers and that the organizational structure resulting from the understanding of school management negatively affects job satisfaction, reduces organizational commitment, and influences the decision of foreign teachers to leave. Organizational commitment and work satisfaction are related, and both have an impact on turnover risk (Carlson et al., 2017). One could argue that corporate communication effectiveness plays a major role in an organization's success. Since effective communication is a component of the

leadership strategy, it becomes the most crucial competency for leaders. Research and empirical studies both demonstrate a link between effective communication and successful management (Faupel & Helpap, 2021). Thus, contemporary managers are growing increasingly aware of the importance of communication (Dabrovolskas, 2022). Therefore, school managements aiming to retain foreign teachers should create an effective communication environment instead of a hierarchical structure in the school, ensure that promises are fulfilled, and create a school environment where teachers can develop organizational commitment by feeling valuable.

The research results also indicate that personal factors, family situations, a gradual loss of motivation/excitement over time, changing expectations over time, the desire to explore new places or seek adventure, and relationship statuses are influential in the decisions of foreign teachers to leave. Another significant finding obtained in the literature on this subject is the effect of age on teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession. There is a positive relationship between teachers' age or teaching experience and the rate of leaving their jobs. Accordingly, younger teachers seem to have a higher potential to leave. Although the percentage may drop to 19% in the third year of employment, first-year teachers in Israel leave the profession at an average annual rate of 41% (Israeli Central Bureau, 2019). In this context, the research results align with the idea that teachers who stay longer in a school tend to have lower rates of leaving their jobs during the mid-career period, and finally, the rates increase towards retirement years (Murnane et al., 1988). According to some estimates (Sims & Jerrim, 2020), nearly half of new teachers quit their jobs within five years. The research results similarly emphasize that younger teachers undergo changes in their expectations over time compared to experienced and child-rearing teachers, highlighting the desire to explore new places or seek adventure and changing relationship statuses as standalone reasons for leaving the school. On the other hand, it is observed that more experienced teachers with children decide to leave due to family reasons, such as the educational status of their children. Research has revealed that teachers' dreams of providing good education for their children are among the factors influencing the decision to change schools (Irene et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be said that younger teachers are more prone to leaving the school over time due to changing expectations, the desire to explore new places, seek adventure, or changes in relationship statuses. Schools aiming to hire and retain foreign teachers should take this factor into account. On the other hand, more experienced teachers with children prioritize issues such as their children's education, and schools wishing to retain such foreign teachers should provide opportunities that address the needs of teachers in this regard.

According to the research results, another factor influencing the decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and their schools is economic factors. The Expat Insider 2023 Report claims that Türkiye is ranked 53rd, the last country in the Working Abroad Index. 58% of expats are dissatisfied with the Turkish economy, compared to 17% worldwide. Additionally, 27% rate it with the lowest possible rating, which is nine times higher than the global average of 3%. Similarly, the research findings indicate that foreign teachers find the salary and benefits provided by the school insufficient due to economic factors, and the lack of necessary international improvements in this regard hinders the opportunity to save, affecting the decision of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and their schools. Some studies on this subject (Sharif et al., 2016; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004) have shown that teachers' salaries, as well as other benefits such as holidays and career opportunities, significantly impact their professional motivation and, consequently, their organizational commitment. In addition to other factors like working conditions, career prospects, professional development opportunities, and recognition, compensation is essential for drawing in new hires and making sure that current teachers feel valued and sufficiently motivated to provide high-quality instruction (OECD 2020; European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2021). According to International Education Recruitment Report (2024), 73.02% of teachers would accept a lesser salary for a better benefits package highlighting the value of comprehensive benefits and financial challenges are a major factor, with 26.04% considering leaving teaching due to low salaries. According to the Expat Insider 2023 Report, Türkiye is ranked 53rd, the last country in the Working Abroad Index 58% of expats are dissatisfied with the Turkish economy, compared to 17% worldwide, which is a major cause for concern. Additionally, 27% rate it with the lowest possible rating, which is nine times higher than the global average of 3%. Therefore, when these

factors are considered together, it can be said that if the salaries and benefits that foreign teachers receive, and the related opportunities for savings, are far from satisfying them, the probability of leaving Türkiye and their schools is higher. The research results also indicate that, despite the initially attractive salaries and benefits provided by schools, the lack of necessary improvements over time in international comparisons is effective in the decision of foreign teachers to leave. Pay is regarded as one of the most significant factors influencing teachers' decisions to leave or remain (Cassidy et al., 2017), and previous research examined the relationship between teachers' salaries and turnover intention or turnover behaviors (Schaack et al., 2020; Thorpe et al., 2020). Those considering teaching tend to prioritize factors such as salary, career development, job status and working conditions in their career decisions (See et al., 2022). Another research shows that factors such as school culture, administrative attitudes, as well as salaries and incentives have a great influence on teachers' retention decisions (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). According to International Education Recruitment Report (2024), 26.04% of teachers cite low salary as reasons for considering leaving teaching. Therefore, private schools wishing to employ and retain qualified foreign teachers should consider economic factors, expressed in terms of salary and other benefits, and additionally stay updated on international developments to make necessary improvements in this regard.

Finally, the research results indicate that language barriers and daily life challenges faced by foreign teachers, along with difficulties in socialization, play a role in their decisions to leave Türkiye and the school where they work. Language barriers are factors that make it difficult for people to understand one another, according to Ahmad (2019). Although language barriers exist in regular educational settings, they are more prevalent in international settings where relocating teachers must adjust to the language as well as the culture and society in order to participate in activities both inside and outside of the classroom. The core of the problems expressed by foreign teachers lies in the perception that they do not receive the necessary assistance from the school and colleagues when facing challenges in their daily lives, especially outside academic matters. Foreign teachers encounter difficulties in everyday activities such as going out, finding a taxi, shopping, and learning about the environment. Additionally, language barriers lead to problems both in socializing with colleagues within the school and in social interactions outside the school. When foreign teachers face such challenges, they feel unsupported by the school community, experiencing a sense of loneliness. Research in this area suggests that teachers perceive their administrators and colleagues as sources of support (Mondal et al., 2011), and teachers who perceive the school environment as collaborative, supportive, and positive are less likely to consider leaving the school (Billingsley, 2004). Similarly, some research shows that there is also evidence that early career teachers' intentions to leave the profession are influenced by the support they receive, such as mentoring and induction (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2018). Therefore, based on the research results, private and international schools aiming to retain qualified foreign teachers should consider addressing challenges related to daily life and support their social needs as individuals beyond academic concerns. In this regard, a suggested practice is to pair each new foreign teacher arriving at the school with a Turkish teacher who volunteers to work on these issues. This voluntary mentoring program aims to help foreign teachers familiarize themselves with the environment and overcome difficulties in daily life and language barriers. In the United States, it has been shown that receiving very little or no support from the district or school management, along with other factors, is effective in teachers' decisions to leave the profession (Weeks, 2019). Additionally, some studies show that teachers' well-being may suffer if they feel alienated from their peers or unwelcome in a community (Hascher & Waber, 2021). So, implementing such supportive programs will make foreign teachers feel more comfortable, increase their commitment to the school, and consequently enhance their likelihood of staying. As is evident, teachers may opt to leave the country in which they are employed for a variety of reasons. However, it is imperative to reiterate that the motivations of the foreign teachers included in the study for leaving Türkiye and the schools where they work are multifaceted and include factors such as country-related problems, school-related difficulties, concerns about school administration, personal circumstances, economic concerns, and factors outside the academic environment.

## Implications

The data obtained regarding the factors influencing the decisions of foreign teachers to leave Türkiye and the schools where they work, within the scope of the research, is crucial to be supported by further studies. Therefore, it can be argued that educational institutions that want to hire skilled foreign teachers must make the necessary adjustments and foster a productive working environment in line with the results of the research mentioned. This is highly important in determining what should and should not be done to retain foreign teachers. In this regard, it can be said that the Ministry of National Education, school owners, administrators and organizations such as Turkish Private Schools Association (TÖZOK) and All Private Education Institutions Association (TÖDER) have a responsibility to make improvements in accordance with the evaluations of foreign teachers. While limited research exists on this topic, this study is among the first to focus specifically on the reasons why foreign teachers leave Türkiye and the schools where they work. Moreover, the fact that there is no research in Türkiye focusing on the reasons why foreign teachers leave Türkiye and the schools they work in makes this study unique and pioneering in the literature. The limitation of the study is that it is based on the views and experiences of foreign teachers working only in foreign private schools in Istanbul and Izmir. Certainly, conducting further research with a greater number and diverse group of foreign teachers in different private schools will provide more comprehensive data on the reasons why foreign teachers leave Türkiye and their current schools. A similar study could be conducted with foreign teachers employed in different private schools and at different levels to identify common and different points regarding the reasons for leaving Türkiye and their current schools. Such studies would guide efforts to retain qualified foreign teachers in all foreign and private schools.

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## TÜRKÇE GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Eğitim hiç şüphesiz toplumların yaşamlarında ve varlıklarını sürdürmelerinde hayati bir öneme sahiptir. Eğitimin nitelikli ve başarılı olması bir anlamda toplumların refah içinde yaşamasının ve gelişmişliğinin teminatıdır denilebilir. Eğitimin arzu edilen fonksiyonları yerine getirebilmesi onu var eden bileşenlerin niteliği ve uyumuna bağlıdır. Eğitimin en önemli bileşenlerinden birisi hiç şüphesiz öğretmenlerdir. Öğretmenlerin niceliği kadar niteliği de bir ülkenin eğitimdeki başarısının ön koşuludur denilebilir. Öğretmen açığı ve istihdamı konusunda her geçen gün artan endişeler, öğretmenlerin arz ve talebine yönelik araştırmaların da ivme kazanmasını sağlamıştır. Özellikle son yıllarda araştırmalara bakıldığında öğretmen devrinin nedenleri değişiklik göstermekle birlikte halen devam eden bir sorun olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Yapılan bazı araştırmalar ise özellikle pandemi sürecinin öğretmen devri üzerinde etkili olduğunu göstermektedir (Matthews vd., 2022; Nguyen & Springer, 2023; Räsänen vd., 2020). Öğretmen hareketliliğini önlemenin bir yolu olarak daha çok öğretmen istihdam etmek yerine mevcut öğretmenlerin beklentilerinin karşılanarak onların meslekte ve çalıştıkları yerde kalmasını sağlamak olduğu söylenebilir. Zira, mevcut öğretmenler elde tutulamadığı sürece daha fazla sayıda ve yeni öğretmen istihdam etmek sorunu çözmeyecek ve öğretmen hareketliliğini önlemeyecektir. Bu durum ise okullar açısından hem yönetsel hem de akademik anlamda birçok belirsizlik ve sorunu beraberinde getirecektir. Öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik tutum ve yaklaşımlar Türkiye’de de benzer bir durum göstermektedir. “Türkiye’de Anadolu Eğitim Sendikasının yaptığı bir araştırmada, öğretmenlerin %43,2 gibi büyük bir oranda daha iyi bir iş teklifi almaları halinde öğretmenlik mesleğini bırakmayı düşündükleri tespit edilmiştir (“Öğretmenlerin Ekonomik Durumu Anketi”, 2024). Öğretmen devri ve hareketliliği somut bir olgu olarak karşımıza çıkmakla birlikte burada asıl önemli olan nokta nitelikli öğretmenleri okula kazandırdıktan sonra bu öğretmenleri elde tutmayı başarmaktır. Konunun önemine rağmen Türkiye’de alan yazında yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye’den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma kararlarını etkileyen faktörler üzerine yapılmış herhangi bir araştırma bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedenle araştırmanın asıl amacı, farklı kültür ve ülkelerden Türkiye’ye gelen yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye’den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma kararlarını etkileyen faktörleri ve gerçek deneyimlerden yola çıkarak bu faktörlerin altında yatan sebepleri tespit edebilmektir. Bu araştırmada elde edilen verilerin Türkiye’deki uygulayıcılara ve özel okullarda görev yapan idarecilere yabancı öğretmenlerin istihdamı ve elde tutulması konusunda yaşanan eksikliklerin giderilmesi, buna bağlı olarak da yapılması gerekenlerin tespit edilmesi yönünde katkı sağlaması umulmaktadır.

Araştırmada yabancı öğretmenlerin bulundukları ülke ve okuldan ayrılma nedenleri doğrudan kendi deneyimlerinden yola çıkılarak tespit edilmeye çalışıldığı için olgubilim (fenomenoloji) deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya Türkiye’de yabancı özel okullarda ve farklı branşlarda öğretmenlik yapan 21 lise öğretmeni dahil edilmiştir. Araştırmada öğretmenlerin Türkiye’de çalışmakta oldukları okuldan ayrılma durumlarının kesinleşmiş olması, bu kararlarının okula iletilmiş olması ya da halihazırda Türkiye’den ayrılarak başka bir okulda çalışıyor olması ölçütleri belirlenerek ölçüt örnekleme yöntemine başvurulmuştur. Araştırma verileri literatür taraması sonucunda araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak toplanmış ve araştırma verileri içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırma sonuçlarına göre yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye’den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılmalarına neden olan faktörlerle ilgili olarak; ülkeye ilişkin, okula ilişkin, okul yönetimine ilişkin, kişisel, ekonomik ve okul yaşamı dışındaki faktörler olmak üzere altı farklı temaya ulaşılmıştır. Ülkeye ilişkin faktörler teması kapsamında ülkenin değişen imajı, güvenlik ve özgürlük sorunları, ülke yönetimine ilişkin kaygılar, toplumsal değişim ve tepkiler, ekonomik belirsizlikler, kültürel farklılıklar ve yarın korkusu; okula ilişkin faktörler teması altında okulda yaşanan değişimler, oryantasyon eksikliği, uluslararası program eksikliği, kariyer fırsatlarının yetersizliği, sık idareci değişimi, kampüs ve yaşam şartları, özgeçmişe katkı sağlamama ve okul kültürü; okul yönetimine ilişkin faktörler temasına yönelik olarak beklentilerin karşılanmaması, okul yönetimin tutumu, liderlik sorunları, kendini değerli hissetmeme ve okul yönetiminin hiyerarşik yapılanması; kişisel faktörlere yönelik olarak ailevi durumlar, motivasyon/heyecan kaybı, beklentilerin değişmesi, yeni yerler keşfetme arzusu/macera

arayışı ve ilişki durumu; ekonomik faktörler teması kapsamında maaş durumu, yan haklar, uluslararası anlamda gerekli iyileştirmelerin yapılmaması ve birikim fırsatı ve son olarak okul yaşamı dışındaki faktörlere yönelik olarak ise gündelik yaşama ilişkin sorunlar, sosyalleşme sorunları ve dil engeli gibi alt temalara ulaşılmıştır.

Araştırma kapsamında yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye'den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma kararlarında etkili olan faktörlere yönelik elde edilen bu verilerin yapılacak başka araştırmalarla desteklenmesi yabancı öğretmenlerin elde tutulması konusunda yapılması ve yapılmaması gereken şeylerin tespit edilmesi açısından oldukça önemlidir. Bununla birlikte ülkemizde yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye'den ve çalıştıkları okuldan ayrılma kararlarında etkili olan faktörlerin belirlenmesine yönelik herhangi bir araştırmanın bulunmaması nedeniyle araştırma alan yazın açısından özgün ve öncül olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öte yandan araştırmanın yalnızca İstanbul ve İzmir'deki yabancı özel okullarda çalışan yabancı öğretmenlerin görüş ve tecrübeleriyle ortaya konulmuş olması çalışmanın sınırlılığı olarak gösterilebilir. Buna ek olarak bu konuda yapılacak araştırmalar Türkiye Özel Okullar Derneği (TÖZOK) ve Tüm Özel Öğretim Kurumları Derneği (TÖDER) gibi kuruluşların önderliğinde nitelikli yabancı öğretmenlerin Türkiye'den ayrılmamasını sağlayacak ulusal çapta politikaların geliştirilmesine ön ayak olacaktır.