

## An Analysis on Private School Teachers Being Scapegoated for Organizational Problems

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to explore the views of private school teachers regarding the organizational problems they encounter. This research employs a phenomenological design, which is a qualitative research model. The participants of the study include 20 teachers working in private schools in Ankara in the year 2023. The selection of participants, determined on a voluntary basis, was carried out using the criterion and snowball sampling methods which are the purposive sampling techniques. Data for the research were collected through a semi-structured interview form. In line with the themes identified based on the relevant literature for the purpose of the study, the collected data were analyzed using content analysis method. According to the research findings, the themes related to the organizational problems teachers indicated they experienced include job insecurity/ temporary contracts, inadequate salary, excessive workload, role ambiguity, mobbing, hindered and/or lack of decision-making participation, administrative pressure, and insufficient physical conditions. The study also revealed that teachers reported receiving explicit and/or implicit messages during their in-service training sessions in their schools, suggesting that these problems*

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were their fault and they were solely responsible for improving themselves. In addition, teachers reported that they were not involved in deciding on these training sessions. These findings highlight how teachers felt unfairly held responsible for challenges largely beyond their control, with little attention given to addressing the root causes of these problems. The research also concluded that teachers felt scapegoated as they are unfairly blamed, experienced occupational alienation and a sense of occupational burnout. Accordingly, it is recommended that organizational problems beyond teachers' control be addressed and resolved first in order to empower education rather than holding teachers responsible for these problems.

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### Introduction

According to the ideology of neoliberalism, which is a political-economic practice, the most effective way to increase human welfare is to establish a framework based on private property rights, free markets, and free trade, and to have this framework supported and protected by the government (Harvey, 2021). In this theory, the privatization of public services, the commodification and commercialization of humanity, and support through decisions dictated by those who manage international capital are essential (Kumar and Hill, 2009). Neoliberalism argues that the services provided by the state are expensive, uncompetitive and of low quality. Therefore, the involvement of the private sector is necessary to improve quality and to offer lower prices (Freeman, 2015). Harvey

(2021) has stated that neoliberal ideology operates under the assumptions of “a rising tide lifts all boats” and “wealth generated at the top trickles down”. However, despite the rhetoric that focuses on the welfare of the people, in reality, it is the welfare of corporations that has taken precedence (Harvey, 2021).

One of the most distinct areas where the ideology of neoliberalism, which aims to privatize public institutions and create new opportunities for private investments through government policies, is felt is in the field of education (Hasting, 2019). With the commodification driven by neoliberal ideology, education, which has become both a battlefield and a marketplace, has pushed knowledge systems to be adjusted in a way that serves the needs of new forms of production processes (Kumar, 2015). Along with this ideology, need for a new society has emerged, and education has been used as a means to meet this need (Sever, 2017).

The effects of neoliberalism, which began to manifest itself in the world after the 1970s, can be particularly observed in Turkey, especially after the 1980s (Ünal, 2005). These effects gained momentum, especially with the structural adjustment and stabilization programs implemented in 1980, and privatization initiatives in education started to emerge through campaigns like "Build Your Own School" (Şentürk, 2010). One of the fundamental principles of Turkish National Education, the principle of "Equal Opportunities in Education," has seen a broader inequality in its definition (Ünal & Özsoy, 1999) with the reduction of the education right to market and commerce (Şentürk, 2010). Along with the process of commodifying education, one of the inequalities that occurred in education is the commercialization of education. The concept of rights-based understanding of education has

been replaced by a power and favouritism-based understanding of education. With this approach, educational inequalities emerged in a society where economic inequalities were also prevalent (Ural, 2022). The inequality already present in individuals' income and wealth distribution has, in turn, deepened both social inequality and inequality in education regarding access to educational services (Ünal & Özsoy, 1999). Furthermore, as Freeman (2015) points out, neoliberal ideology prioritizes market forces over the well-being of children. This neglect often leaves low-income families unable to afford quality education for their children, leading to significant educational, health, and skill deficits among disadvantaged youth. This disadvantage perpetuates a cycle of inequality, hindering their future prospects. The reduction of the right to education to a commodity within the market has led to a questioning of the concept of the welfare state (Şentürk, 2010). The neoliberal approach, viewing education as a distinct area of investment, has not only legitimized the commodification of educational services and teachers' work but has also facilitated the intensification of market principles in all areas of education, including the management of schools, thereby giving rise to a new form of corporate management (Ertürk, 2018).

As a result of the commodification of education, various commodities such as private schools, tutoring centres, courses, and private lessons have emerged, and teachers have been reduced to the position of sellers, with students' success being determined by constantly increasing numbers of exams. The competitive environment for students also became applicable to teachers, and teachers were pushed into the role of workers by dividing their labour into various tasks (Keskin Demirer, 2012). The teacher that the neoliberal ideology wanted to mould has become exam-oriented and has been turned into

a technician of a corporatized education system. This position to which teachers were pushed has led to the erosion of their professional reputation and the loss of their autonomy (Yıldız, 2013) as neoliberal education policies not only question teacher competence but also distance teachers from their professional identities, transforming them into technicians. Giroux (2010) stated that this ideology seeks not to create economic, social, and pedagogical conditions for teachers but rather to deskill them and prioritize standardization over creativity. The emergence of standardization in education negatively affects not only the quality of learning but also the quality of teachers (Ünal, 2005), and thus the role of teacher is devalued. The neoliberal ideology seeks to transform teachers, whose professional autonomy has been taken away, into technicians who must be constantly monitored (Yıldız et al., 2014). Giroux (2013) described this new position of teachers as high-level technicians who implement orders and decisions given by experts who are disconnected from the realities of classroom life. Along with this approach, the freedom of teachers has started to be taken away by making them a part of exploitation. Teachers have gradually been de-professionalized (Vatansever & Yalçın, 2015). They have been exposed to precarious working conditions, subjected to various tests and mobbing to conform to standards, and pushed towards occupational burnout (Ural, 2017).

In the neoliberal ideology that emphasizes personal responsibility, failures have often been associated with personal faults, and individuals are frequently chosen as scapegoats and blamed (Harvey, 2021). Kumashiro (2012) has expressed that the de-professionalization of teachers is defined as being a bad teacher. Kumashiro (2012) has suggested that teachers are turned into scapegoats to eliminate the bigger picture, and highlights the significant role of language in

masking the truth. In addition, the concept of a scapegoat is one of the long-standing primitive definitions, representing the sacrifice of something or someone else to rid oneself of trouble, problems, or evil and a concept that emerges from the psychology of searching for a scapegoat rather than finding the root cause of the problem (Akar Erbil, 2022). Throughout history, humans have shown a tendency to search for someone to blame for guilt and feelings of wrongdoing stemming from evil and troubles (Campbell, 2012). Scapegoating is often a projection in which a person attributes their own desires or traits to others (Orçin, 2022). According to Frazer (2019), the primitive belief that a physical burden can be transferred onto someone else has led to the notion of transferring sins and suffering to another being. Campbell (2012) stated that it results from avoiding responsibility for one's action. Kumashiro (2012) defines the situation where teachers are scapegoated as the constant questioning of teachers and holding them responsible for organizational problems that are beyond their control. He also adds that language is a powerful way to mask certain realities. By overstating a minor issue and blaming individuals who are actually crucial to the solution, accountability is avoided, and responsibility is disregarded. Thus, the entire foundation of education depends on teachers (Kumashiro, 2012).

Teachers who have been held responsible for any failing in education are largely among the ones affected by burnout (Ural, 2010). Robbins (2023) has listed the reasons for teachers' occupational burnout as the lack of adequate support at the workplace, overwhelming workload, the intensity of exams, time pressure, behavioural issues in students, and the lack of sufficient resources to meet students' needs. While discussing the negative impact of the stress and occupational burnout experienced by teachers on students, on the other hand, the sources of

stress experienced by teachers are being overlooked. In the system where students are seen as investment objects, teachers are often scapegoated for problems arising from fundamental issues such as inadequate classroom resources and lack of support staff, insufficient administrative support and lack of participation in decision-making and unpaid overtime (Robbins, 2023). The traditional understanding that a teacher is as good as the amount of information they can fill students with has been defined by Freire (2004) as the "banking model of education." In this model, teachers are seen as investors and students as objects of investment. In this model, which emphasizes memorization, but lacks dialogue, and questioning, the acquisition of knowledge is evaluated through a series of exams (Freire, 2004). Today, the perception of evaluating knowledge through exams places the responsibility for poor exam results squarely on the shoulders of teachers. In cases of educational failure, the blame is placed either directly on the teacher or on the teacher's training (Thomas, 2019). In the last decade, teachers have become a profession subjected to constant criticism. Among the aggressive criticisms directed at teachers are claims that they cannot teach students effectively, cannot control violence among students, and are not professional in demanding fair pay. When schools turn into battlefields, teachers are not only accused of starting the war but also of profiting from the spoils (Farber and Miller, 1981).

Under the influence of neoliberal education policies, the teacher is being transformed into an image that is constantly discussed and shaped to serve ideological purposes. Sub-disciplines of educational sciences such as the sociology of education, the economics of education, and education policy are ignored, and teachers are subjected to various training programs to be developed into technical

personnel who meet performance criteria (Ünal, 2005). Since the 1983 Nation at Risk report, countless studies and national reports have presented the low quality of teachers as one of the main problems faced by schools. Critics hold teachers responsible for many societal deficiencies, which has led to the development of various programs aimed at improving teacher quality in recent years (Ingersoll, 2007). These programs are delivered to teachers through in-service training in schools. In these training sessions, even if the issues are organizational, the focus is often on what teachers can do about them. Teachers, who are emphasized to be developed and made resilient by various sources, increasingly face professional alienation. Seeman's (1959) theory of alienation focuses on social stimuli as the cause of alienation. Influenced by Marxist sociological principles, this theory defines alienation as feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement resulting from social, organizational, or interpersonal problems (Seeman, 1959). Teachers are expected to improve themselves, overlooking the organizational problems occurring beyond their control. As teachers are expected to assume various roles simultaneously, they experience professional alienation as a result.

Based on these explanations, scapegoating the teacher in this study refers to holding the teacher responsible for issues at the workplace that do not originate from the teacher. Instead of addressing problems arising from conditions such as job insecurity, low wages, excessive workload, role ambiguity, bullying, non-democratic environments, and administrative pressure, the focus is placed on highlighting the inadequacy of teachers. This approach continually brings the teacher's competence into question. By emphasizing the teacher's inadequacy,



the term is used to describe the act of concealing, covering up, or making the real problem invisible.

In the literature on organizational problems, various factors have been identified as contributing to challenges faced by employees in educational settings. However, the categorization of these factors has often been broad and general. To provide a more structured understanding of the issues affecting teachers, this study introduces refined categorization of organizational problems.

The factors identified in this research are grouped into *three main categories*: factors related to the job and task, factors related to the environment and working conditions, and factors related to the organizational structure. This categorization was developed based on the specific context of the study. These categories not only help to clarify the organizational challenges teachers face but also serve to explain how these challenges may impact both their job satisfaction and sense of commitment to the organization. Job satisfaction refers to a pleasurable or positive emotional state that arises from evaluating one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). Enhancing employees' job satisfaction can lead to a higher level of commitment to their work (Wang, 2024). The factors related to the job and task include the scope of the job, role conflict, role ambiguity, excessive workload, empowerment, and learning opportunities. Factors related to the environment and working conditions include organizational culture, physical conditions, internal communication, managerial relationships, morale, and job satisfaction. Additionally, inadequate physical environments negatively affect employees' performance and commitment, making it necessary to arrange working conditions in ways that enhance motivation (Paşa, 2007; Aydın, 2008). Factors related to the organizational structure include sub-factors such as

unionization, organizational image, wage system, non-wage benefits, flexible working hours, performance system, and career opportunities (Türker, 2009). Employees want to trust the institution they work for, be able to plan for the future, and be confident that they will not lose their status and the associated rights (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2005). In this regard, the aim of this study is to explore the views of private school teachers regarding the organizational problems they face.

To achieve this aim, the following questions have been addressed:

1. What are the views of private school teachers on the problems arising from job and task- related factors?
2. What are the views of private school teachers on the problems arising from environmental and working conditions- related factors?
3. What are the views of private school teachers on the problems arising from organizational structure- related factors?
4. What are the views of private school teachers on the in-service training provided in their organizations?

### **Method**

In this descriptive study, the phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research models, was used. The reason for using the qualitative research method in this study stems from its nature as an inquiry-based, interpretative approach that seeks to understand the form of the problem in its natural setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Klenke, 2016). Additionally, the qualitative research method provides a deeper perception related to the problem being studied (Morgan, 1996).

Phenomenological studies observe the experiences that individuals have regarding a specific phenomenon and the meanings they attach

to these experiences in order to comprehend and explain the phenomenon. The fundamental question of phenomenological research is often expressed as, "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the experience that individuals or groups have regarding a phenomenon?" These studies represent a qualitative approach aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of individuals' specific experiences and exploring the core and meaning of these experiences (Creswell, 2007). To answer this central question, researchers interact with individuals, gather information about their experiences, and attempt to understand the underlying meanings and structures of these experiences. This allows researchers to gain deeper insights into individuals' experiences (Karadavut, 2022). In phenomenological research, the focus is on describing the essence of individuals' lived experiences rather than their different perceptions (Limberg, 2008). In this qualitative study, a semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool. The interview form, prepared by the researchers, consists of four sections. The first section consists of questions about the demographic information of the participants. The second section contains questions about organizational problems, prepared with consideration of the literature. The third section focuses on questions regarding the in-service training the participants received in their respective schools. Finally, the fourth section includes additional information the participants wish to express outside the scope of the preceding sections.

After the interview form was prepared by the researchers, it was reviewed by four experts, and revisions were made based on their feedback. The participants of the study consisted of 20 teachers working at the primary and secondary levels in private schools in Ankara in 2023. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling

methods, was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases, ensuring the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This approach focuses on identifying and selecting individuals or groups with significant knowledge or experience related to a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The key point in criterion sampling is that the selected cases should be rich in terms of providing information (Marshall, 1996). The main criterion for this study was that the participants must be working in private schools. To identify and reach teachers working in different private schools, snowball sampling method was also applied.

Snowball or chain sampling is used in situations where it is difficult to access the units that make up the population or when there is insufficient information about the population, such as its size or the depth of knowledge (Patton, 2005). This technique focuses on individuals or critical situations from which rich data can be obtained, and it reaches the population by following these individuals and critical situations (Creswell, 2013). The participants voluntarily participated in the study and signed an informed consent form before the research process began. The information about the teachers in the study group is as shown in Table 1.

## Participants

**Table 1.**  
*Information about the teachers in the study group*

| Code | Seniority(year) | Department | School Level   |
|------|-----------------|------------|----------------|
| P1   | 15              | Art        | Primary        |
| P2   | 2               | English    | Primary        |
| P3   | 1               | Turkish    | Primary-Middle |

|     |    |           |             |
|-----|----|-----------|-------------|
| P4  | 7  | English   | High School |
| P5  | 9  | English   | Primary     |
| P6  | 14 | Maths     | Middle      |
| P7  | 9  | English   | Primary     |
| P8  | 10 | English   | High School |
| P9  | 16 | Science   | Middle      |
| P10 | 34 | English   | High School |
| P11 | 10 | English   | Middle-High |
| P12 | 11 | English   | Primary     |
| P13 | 10 | Preschool | Preschool   |
| P14 | 3  | English   | High School |
| P15 | 6  | Turkish   | Middle-High |
| P16 | 7  | English   | Primary     |
| P17 | 4  | Guidance  | Primary     |
| P18 | 8  | Classroom | Primary     |
| P19 | 8  | Chemistry | High School |
| P20 | 8  | English   | High School |

To ensure the confidentiality of participants' real names, codes such as P1, P2, P3, etc., were used. Direct quotations from the participants' responses were included under relevant themes.

The data obtained from the interviews with participants were analyzed using the content analysis method. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a systematic approach for analyzing textual data, aiming to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within the data. First, the collected data were organized according to the sub-objectives of the research, and sub-themes were developed based on the main themes identified during the initial stages of analysis. These themes

were derived from the participants' responses and were continuously refined as the analysis progressed. Content analysis involves both a descriptive phase, where the data is categorized, and an interpretative phase, where deeper meanings and connections are explored. The sub-themes were then interpreted in relation to the data gathered from the participants' responses, allowing for a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns and meanings in their views. Patton (2002) suggests that an interesting and readable report provides enough description to enable the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation, and enough interpretation to help the reader understand the description.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The validity and reliability of the methods used in this research have been rigorously addressed to ensure the study's strong foundations and consistent results. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), in qualitative research, validity and reliability are not simply about replicability, but about ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and the context under study. They highlight that the credibility of qualitative research depends on the researcher's ability to present findings that truly represent the lived experiences of the participants. Thus, the methods used in this study were designed

to enhance both the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring they are reflective of the participants' views and the research context.

### ***Validity***

The internal validity of the study relies on the consistency of the process during data collection and analysis. In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used to collect valid data that align with the research questions. Each section of the interview form was designed to serve the purpose of the study, ensuring that the data collected from participants could address the research questions effectively. The validity of the semi-structured interview form used as the data collection tool was ensured through feedback from four subject matter experts. The experts reviewed the content of the interview form and confirmed that it was aligned with the research objectives and contained important topics consistent with the literature. This helped ensure the appropriateness and validity of the data collection tool. Phenomenological studies aim to understand participants' specific experiences, and therefore, external validity (the ability to generalize findings) is often limited. However, the results of this study may provide meaningful insights for similar groups of teachers. Thus, the external validity of this study holds limited for

generalization to similar educational contexts but can offer valuable perspectives on teachers' experiences in private schools.

### ***Reliability***

Reliability was ensured by carefully designing the data collection process to obtain consistent and repeatable results. The semi-structured interview form was prepared to align with the research questions, and the same questions were asked to all participants. Additionally, the interviews were recorded, which facilitated accurate data analysis and minimized potential errors during the data collection process. The reliability of the data analysis process was enhanced through a collaborative coding approach among the researchers. The data obtained through content analysis were grouped according to predefined themes, and the main themes and sub-themes were interpreted systematically in line with the participants' responses. This ensured consistency and reliability in analyzing the data. During the data analysis stage, inter-rater reliability was also ensured through the consistency of coding and theme creation among different researchers. Agreement between researchers on certain themes were strengthened the reliability of the data analysis. This process contributed to ensuring the trustworthy interpretation of the data and reinforced the overall reliability of the study.



## Results

### Findings on Problems Private School Teachers Face Due to Job and Task-Related Factors

#### *Excessive Workload*

The vast majority of participants have mentioned the intensity of teaching hours, the continuous preparation of additional materials, parent meetings, projects, duties, and an overwhelming workload. They stated that due to the excessive workload, they cannot find time for themselves and feel exhausted. Some participants, however, have stated that this situation may vary depending on the attitude of the schools.

*"I think there is a very heavy workload both physically and mentally. The physical exhaustion causes me to feel unenthusiastic. Because of this, I find it challenging, and I feel that I won't be able to continue this profession for many years. I believe that I'll need to find different paths when the time comes."*  
(P13)

*"The workload is burdening me to a level where it affects my social life, personal life, and family life both during and outside working hours. Within the official working hours when I don't have classes, I find myself obligated to handle administrative tasks, conduct parent-teacher meetings, or complete paperwork. Additionally, I am required to fulfill my duty without any extra payment. The guard duty program at our institution includes 10-minute shifts we keep during breaks between classes and the 55-minute shifts we take during lunch breaks. After performing these duties, I don't feel efficient in any of the classes I attend. The intensity and excessiveness of my workload, the tasks that I perform requiring the effort of two individuals without*

*exaggeration, overshadow my primary role as a teacher. This leads to not only physical exhaustion but also causes me to feel demoralized and mentally drained beyond measure. Most importantly, it makes me question my professional satisfaction. When I evaluate my living standards and my physical, mental, and emotional well-being, I frequently find myself wondering if it's all worth it." (P5)*

*"Since I am a native teacher, the school wants me to teach classes at all levels. My teaching workload is excessive!" (P11)*

### ***Role Ambiguity***

Majority of the participants expressed that they are compelled to perform various roles in private schools. This situation leads to role ambiguity and makes them feel more like employees of the institution rather than professionals in their field. In addition, it is clear that students are seen as investment objects in these schools from the participant's view.

*"Everyone is obliged to do everything." (P8)*

*"I've been working at a private school for 8 years. Over these 8 years, I had to take on many roles. On one hand, you are expected to be a disciplined teacher, and on the other, you should be a student coach who closely monitors the students. At the same time, you have to make calls to parents a few times a month to ensure their satisfaction and even invite them to the school for a cup of tea, making you feel like you have to become a public relations expert or a secretary instead of just being a teacher. They also say that students and parents are customers, so you're forced to act as a representative of the school." (P19)*

## Findings on Problems Private School Teachers Face Due to Environmental and Working Conditions- Related Factors

### *Mobbing*

Most participants mentioned that they face mobbing in the form of pressure from administrators when they resist doing tasks outside their job description, control of breaks, including coffee breaks, and calculating their time, as well as being blamed for not meeting parent satisfaction standards. They also mentioned experiences of sexist behaviour. Especially female teachers feel the gender discrimination.

*"Constant surveillance and any minor problem being seen as the teacher's fault is perceived as a form of intimidation." (P2)*

*"Also, having a contract presented to us every year creates a climate of fear. If a parent talks to the administration, they believe the parent and criticise me. Parents interfere too much. For the sake of parent satisfaction, the teacher is seen as wrong." (P10)*

*"I believe that I and some of my teacher colleagues are systematically subjected to mobbing in this regard. The principal particularly exhibits a sexist attitude towards female teachers and persistently targets them. Imagine a principal who proudly recounts making teachers cry with laughter." (P19)*

### *Prevention of Decision-making Participation*

Some participants mention that they have never been involved in decision-making processes and are obliged to implement decisions made by the management. Others note that while some level of participation is allowed, it is not to the extent desired.

*"There are no suggestions or opinions taken from the teacher about the work to be done within the school or in the classroom. There is no right to oppose excessive workload or not to perform a given task, even if it is not included in the job description." (P18)*

*"Generally, the founder or the principal makes a decision regarding the operation, and decisions are presented under the name of things to be done. So far, I don't think teachers' opinions have been considered much. In my own experience as a guidance counsellor, my opinion has often been sought in making educational decisions." (P17)*

#### ***Administrative Pressure***

Analysis of the participants' views reveals that they are subjected to administrative pressure related to excessive workload and the need to complete all tasks on time, as well as pressure regarding students' academic performance. Teachers are also subject to control in any educational process.

*"There are often coercive administrative attitudes about how a lesson should be taught, including the methods, techniques, assessment methods, and even the content of the lesson, considering parents' expectations and socio-cultural levels. There is strict control over student grades, assignments, and exam results." (P9)*

*"Pressure is created in various areas, from completing textbooks to talking to parents on the phone every two weeks. Positive behaviours and achievements are not praised, while the slightest deficiency becomes a subject of reprimand." (P4)*

### ***Inadequate Physical Conditions***

The majority of participants mentioned that private schools' physical conditions are inadequate, considering the fees paid by students and the expected level of work.

*"The teacher's room being disorganized, the need for computers, non-functional or damaged technological devices, struggling to teach when smart boards need replacement, having to go four floors up and down for basic needs like buying tea and coffee during short breaks, lack of proper ventilation and heating in winter, teaching materials that don't match classroom levels, improper storage of the outputs of activities and work, teachers having to use their private phones and computers for work, and not providing a genuinely quiet working environment for teachers are some of the problems they face."*  
(P6)

*"Providing only one low-quality meal, a cramped teacher's room, and a school that is like an apartment where socializing is impossible."* (P14)

### **Findings on Problems Private School Teachers Face Due to Organizational Structure Related Factors**

#### ***Insecure Employment***

According to participant views, fixed-term employment contracts generally create feelings of fear of unemployment, concerns about being left without a salary, and anxiety about the future among participants.

*"Job security is a crucial issue for maintaining a certain order and stability in one's working life. In today's private sector organizations, the increasing downsizing, restructuring of institutions or organizational changes can lead*

*to many people becoming unemployed. Even in institutions where you have been working for a long time, when you reach a certain contract date, you may experience concerns about unemployment. Alternatively, delays in job interviews and contract dates can occur in private institutions, leading to uncertainty. This also creates ambiguity because not knowing whether or not an event will happen makes decisions and responses related to the event uncertain. The uncertainty about how much longer the job will continue affects the decisions individuals make about their future negatively. Furthermore, changes that lead to a decline in employee rights and earnings concerning the nature of work and working conditions also increase job insecurity.” (P1)*

It is understood that the fear of unemployment leads to inefficiency among teachers. Some private schools have been known to exploit this situation for mobbing, as mentioned by the participants:

*“The fear of being laid off at any moment and mobbing implemented through the use of fixed-term contracts.” (P16)*

*“As someone in my first year of my career, this situation is very uncertain for me right now. It seems that I won’t receive a salary for 2 months in the 10-month contract. I’m worried about how I will get by during this period.” (P3)*

### ***Insufficient Salaries***

Most of the participants state that the work they do in private schools does not align with the salaries they receive. They perceive offering teachers the minimum or slightly above minimum wage as a devaluation of the teaching profession. It was also mentioned that the insufficiency of salaries is related to the profit-seeking nature of private

schools. Furthermore, it is understood that the inadequate salaries reduce the motivation of teachers.

*"The inadequacy of teacher salaries causes a significant loss of motivation among teachers and makes it difficult for teachers to dedicate themselves to their work." (P2)*

*"Although students help ease our existing problems, due to insufficient salaries, one's mind is preoccupied with rent and bills. This not only affects productivity but also takes a psychological toll." (P15)*

*"In many countries around the world, teachers are considered to be among the lowest-paid workers in society, and the situation is no different in our country. Since it is illegal to offer the minimum wage, private institutions pay their teachers slightly more than the minimum wage regardless of their professional seniority. Institutions make employment decisions by looking at how much additional workload a senior teacher is willing to take on for the given salary rather than considering what they will bring to the institution. It is questionable how much can be expected from a teacher who lives from hand to mouth in terms of being productive in class. The salaries of teachers trying to make ends meet are definitely inadequate in today's conditions." (P7)*

### **Findings on In-Service Trainings Provided by Organization**

The participants expressed that, despite the awareness of how important and challenging the teaching profession is, there is no effort to improve the conditions, and all the responsibility is placed on the teacher. They stated that they receive in-service training which hasn't been decided by them. In addition, teachers added that during these training sessions, they were implied how good conditions they have.

*"Our training courses and decisions about them were always made by the upper administration, and we teachers were constantly summoned and put to work like labourers. I worked in a private school for 5 years, but no one ever said, "The teacher is right." Parents, students, department heads, and the school principal were always seen as right, while the teacher, who actually did the work, was always seen as wrong. The work they did was always belittled, and they were never thanked for their efforts and achievements." (P16)*

*"I have attended similar training sessions. The common problem with these trainings is that they are far from meeting the needs of the teachers. The content of these trainings is shaped by the school administration, as proper needs analysis is either not well-executed or not desired. Involving teachers in the decision-making process is a problem that is often overlooked. When it comes to educational partnership, teachers, who are right at the centre of problems, pressure, and resilience, are the ones left out on the periphery in private schools." (P20)*

*"The mentioned training programs suffer from serious issues regarding the decision-makers and the content. Encountering negative aspects such as emphasizing their inadequacies diminishes our motivation and hinders the training programs from achieving their goals. While training on psychological support or stress management acknowledges the significant stress involved in this profession, there is a lack of efforts to improve the situation. Teachers are only expected to accept and cope with this situation by receiving training. Additionally, I believe there should be transparency in the decision-makers for these training programs, and teachers should be actively involved in these decisions. Teachers should have an active role in choosing the training they receive, and the topics should be determined in accordance with the actual needs of the teachers. "(P14)*



*"The management makes the decisions. These are generally training programs that have no relation to the actual needs. The person attending the training is given the message that "you are in good conditions" even if the conditions in other schools are worse, which is incorrect. There are always better or worse institutions. People who do not know how to communicate or even establish basic communication in daily life become principals, supervisors, or teachers" (P12)*

In the "**Other Factors**" section, the majority of participants did not feel the need to add any additional factors, but some who did add comments expressed concerns about teachers' morale, motivation, and feelings of being undervalued.

*"Teachers' morale and motivation are never considered. In every kind of negativity, the teacher is seen as the primary responsible party. Even in positive situations, the success is not attributed to our teacher, and not even a simple "thank you" is expressed to teachers through words or actions. Inadequate attention is paid to in-service training activities or not attending them, as well as the ineffectiveness of the training sessions. We work with administrators not having the necessary qualifications, administrators who see teachers as pawns and try to drag teachers along with themselves, administrators allowing teachers to be oppressed to retain customers. Meetings on education and teaching are not taken seriously and lack seriousness." (P5)*

*"During the pandemic, while schools were supposed to open for two days, our entire class was open for 5 days a week. After receiving reactions, the class was divided into two groups, and we attended school for 4 days. Later, we were asked to conduct online lessons during our free hours for those who couldn't come to school. As first-grade teachers, we attended face-to-face*

*lessons for 20 hours and additionally conducted 14 hours of online lessons. Despite all this, we received short-time work allowance. Our social security premium days are recorded as 10 days. That year, we were forced to sign a document stating "we have received all our rights during the pandemic" in order to make a new contract. However, such a situation never occurred. As a classroom teacher pursuing a doctorate, I reflect my knowledge and experience to my students. I closely monitor both their academic and social development. In return, I feel neither financially nor spiritually valued. I feel sad, angry, worthless, and tired. I am becoming alienated from my profession in the private school." (P18)*

*"During working hours, it is considered a taboo to be on the school grounds, even if you have no classes." (P4)*

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the responses of the research participants, it is evident that teachers working in private schools are subjected to various challenges. Teachers who lack job security, receive insufficient pay—some even working for minimum wage—and face issues such as administrative pressure and mobbing, find their efforts devalued, and they are not provided with an environment where they can express themselves. This growing issue leads to teachers becoming alienated (Seeman, 1959) from their profession and experiencing professional burnout. Ural (2010) also expressed that teachers are in one of the most affected groups by burnout. When examining the participants' statements, it appears that teachers, constantly under pressure, are struggling to secure basic living conditions while simultaneously performing their duties under oppressive and authoritarian attitudes. These schools, driven by commercial concerns, reduce students and parents to the role of customers, education to a product, and teachers

to salespeople. Those who fail to meet performance expectations or sales quotas face pressure or are pushed out of the system.

The tendency to focus on teachers when any issue arises in education can be seen as a manifestation of the scapegoating psychology. Kumashiro (2012) also indicated that scapegoating the teachers is a means to distort the bigger picture. Teachers, labelled as scapegoats, are often subjected to various in-service training programs in private schools, where the language used makes them feel inadequate. It is observed that these in-service programs emphasize that teachers are in favourable conditions, ignoring the difficulties and problems they face. As a result, teachers are reduced to mere executors of what is given to them as Ünal (2005) stated. Participants also express that the undervaluation of their labour and efforts, along with the reduction of their role to that of technicians as Ural (2010) mentioned, is a recurring theme.

Additionally, it is noted that the increasing commercial concerns in schools lead to unrealistic expectations of teachers. These training sessions reinforce the perception among participants that teachers are the ones who need to improve themselves. Thomas (2019) emphasized that teachers are being subjected as their education is not considered. For this reason, it is thought that teachers are the ones who should improve themselves. Similar results were found in a case study conducted in Bursa on the working conditions of private school teachers. The study highlighted issues such as excessive teaching loads, long working hours, lack of salary guarantees, and the perception by parents that teachers are "there because of their money," which leads to the devaluation of teachers and the teaching profession (Demirler, 2020). In another study by Ergen and Çokkeser (2022), it was

concluded that private school teachers work long hours, receive inadequate pay, and experience devaluation of their profession, while parents' high expectations cause role confusion. Furthermore, a study by Cerev and Coşkun (2020) on the working problems of private school teachers found that teachers face issues with administration, parents, and students, receive insufficient pay, and lack job security.

According to the participants' views, it is observed that teachers working in private schools are exposed to various challenges. These teachers are held accountable for everything even if it is beyond their control. Additionally, they face issues such as administrative pressure and mobbing. As Freire (1970) stated, they are the oppressed in the education system. Their intensive efforts are devalued (Buyruk, 2015), and it is noted that they are not provided with an environment where they can express themselves. This growing problem leads to teachers becoming increasingly detached from their profession. Apple (2021) states that teachers are increasingly being deskilled in schools due to the rising technical control procedures in curricula. As a result, teachers find themselves in an uncertain position between classes, resembling the bourgeoisie in terms of the status of the profession, while also being similar to the working class due to the de-professionalization of the teaching profession (Apple, 2021). This phenomenon is addressed differently by Standing (2014), who refers to this group as the "precariat," a new, dangerous class. Including individuals from different sectors, Precariat is a group formed as a result of commodification, marketization, insecurity, and labour exploitation (Standing, 2014). This group includes people from all walks of life who experience insecurity.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers can also be considered part of the precariat. Another research emphasizes the significant effects of neoliberal policies on Turkey's educational system and the teaching profession, highlighting the insecure employment conditions teachers experience due to market-driven transformations (Başaran et al., 2024).

Instead of addressing and reducing organizational problems, private schools tend to focus on providing in-service training to teachers, thus making them the subject of the issues. These schools often hold teachers responsible for many of the challenges within educational organizations. The language used in such training sessions is not aimed at resolving the problems teachers face but rather at transforming them into stronger individuals in the face of these challenges. Expecting teachers, who are burdened with excessive workloads, insufficient pay, mobbing, and temporary contracts, to undertake the serious task of educating society is far from realistic. Teachers who are unable to achieve job satisfaction, feel stressed and pressured, believe they are undervalued, and lack confidence in their future will need the conditions that caused these issues to be improved before they can feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically well.

The teacher, who has been turned into a technician by neoliberal economic ideology, has gradually lost their autonomy and is now expected to exert influence without being granted authority. Held accountable and blamed for all shortcomings in education, the teacher struggles with these challenges while simultaneously fulfilling the critical task of educating society. In order for the teacher to regain their role in education and to increase the quality of education, analyses should first be made regarding the root causes of these problems, and

the teacher should be given back the status they deserve. Problems that arise from sources such as school administration, parents, and students—issues not caused by teachers—must be resolved by those responsible so that teachers can continue in their profession. Teachers should be recognized as experts in their field and should participate in educational practices with the respect that their professional status requires.

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