

FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHER RETENTION:
A CASE STUDY IN A PRIVATE PRESCHOOL IN ISTANBUL



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A CASE STUDY IN A PRIVATE PRESCHOOL IN ISTANBUL

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Factors Influencing Teacher Retention:
A Case Study in a Private Preschool in Istanbul

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- I am the sole author of this thesis and have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words—including digital resources—that have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- This thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- This is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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ABSTRACT

Factors Influencing Teacher Retention:

A Case Study in a Private Preschool in İstanbul

Teacher retention is a critical issue in early childhood education (ECE), as high teacher turnover negatively impacts educational continuity, student learning outcomes, and recruitment costs. While extensive research has explored teacher retention in public schools, studies focusing on private preschool institutions remain limited. This study investigates the factors influencing teacher retention in a private early childhood institution with low turnover rates.

Guided by Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) framework, Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model of Commitment, and Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 preschool teachers. Thematic analysis was utilized to examine the data.

Findings reveal that strong collegial relationships, open communication, and a collaborative school culture significantly enhance teacher commitment. Additionally, leadership practices emphasizing autonomy, fairness, and recognition strongly support teacher retention. Institutional policies prioritizing professional development opportunities, collegial support, and inclusive leadership structures effectively decrease turnover. This study contributes to the literature on teacher retention within private early childhood education contexts and provides policy recommendations to support teacher retention.

ÖZET

Öğretmenlerin Kurumda Kalma Kararını Etkileyen Faktörler: İstanbul'daki Özel Bir Okulöncesi Kurumunda Vaka Çalışması

Öğretmenlerin kurumlarında uzun süre görev yapmaları (teacher retention), okulöncesi eğitimde kritik bir konudur; çünkü yüksek öğretmen iş gücü devir hızı eğitim sürekliliğini olumsuz etkiler, öğrenci öğrenme çıktılarını bozar ve işe alım maliyetlerini artırır. Kamu okullarında öğretmenlerin okulda kalma davranışları üzerine kapsamlı araştırmalar yapılmasına rağmen, özel okulöncesi kurumlarda bu konudaki çalışmalar sınırlıdır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, düşük öğretmen iş gücü devir hızı ile öne çıkan, özel bir okulöncesi kurumunda öğretmenlerin okulda kalma davranışlarını etkileyen faktörleri incelemektir.

Araştırma, Wenger'in (1998) Uygulama Toplulukları (Communities of Practice - CoP) teorisi, Meyer ve Allen'in (1991) Üç Bileşenli Bağlılık Modeli ve Vygotsky'nin (1978) Sosyal Yapılandırmacı Kuramı temel alınarak yürütülmüştür. Araştırma kapsamında 18 okulöncesi öğretmeni ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiş ve elde edilen veriler tematik analiz yöntemi ile incelenmiştir.

Sonuçlar, güçlü mesleki ilişkiler, açık iletişim ve işbirlikçi okul kültürünün, öğretmenlerin kuruma bağlılığını; özerklik, adalet ve takdir içeren liderlik yaklaşımlarının ise öğretmenlerin okulda kalma eğilimlerini güçlendirdiği belirlenmiştir. Kurumsal politikalar, mesleki gelişim fırsatları, yapılandırılmış karar alma süreçleri ve kapsayıcı liderlik modellerine yapılan yatırımların, öğretmen sirkülasyonunu azaltabileceği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu çalışma, özel okulöncesi eğitim bağlamında öğretmen bağlılığı literatürüne katkı sağlamakta ve öğretmenlerin okulda kalmalarını desteklemeye yönelik politika önerileri sunmaktadır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teacher retention refers to the ability of educational institutions to keep teachers in their positions over time. It is a critical issue in education, as high turnover rates can negatively impact student learning and school stability.

Teacher retention is a key determinant of educational quality and institutional stability, particularly in early childhood education (ECE). The ability to retain experienced educators ensures that students benefit from continuity in teaching methods, stable relationships, and consistent emotional and instructional support (Darling-Hammond, 2017). A strong and stable teaching workforce contributes to a positive school culture, enhances student engagement, and fosters institutional growth. Conversely, teacher turnover disrupts instruction and stability, affects student learning outcomes, and increases recruitment and training costs for educational institutions (Holmes et al., 2019).

While teacher retention has been extensively studied in primary and secondary education, research focusing on ECE settings, particularly private institutions, remains limited (OECD, 2024). Retaining early childhood educators presents unique challenges, as the sector often experiences high attrition rates due to low salaries, heavy workloads, and limited career advancement opportunities (McDonald et al., 2018; Thorpe et al., 2020; Downey et al., 2024). Research highlights that teacher retention in early childhood education is essential, as young children benefit from stable and consistent relationships with educators for their cognitive, social, and emotional development (Pianta, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

In many education systems, private school teachers face unique retention challenges compared to their counterparts in public institutions. Factors such as lower salaries, fewer job security protections, and longer working hours contribute to higher turnover rates among private school educators (Esen et al., 2017; Cerev & Coşkun, 2020; Demir & Arı, 2013). Unlike public school teachers, who often receive government-backed tenure and structured career progression pathways, private school teachers frequently work on renewable contracts that do not guarantee long-term employment stability. This lack of job security discourages commitment to a single institution and leads many educators to seek employment in more stable public-sector positions (Yıldırım & Bulut, 2023).

In Türkiye, teacher attrition in private schools remains a pressing issue, as teachers experience uncertain employment conditions, heavy workloads, and financial dissatisfaction (Güneş & Şahin, 2023). Despite these challenges, some private institutions successfully maintain low turnover rates by implementing strong institutional support systems, providing career development opportunities, and fostering a collaborative work culture. Research suggests that career resources significantly influence private school teachers' turnover intentions (Eğritaş et al., 2023). Specifically, environmental career resources—such as professional development programs, mentorship opportunities, and administrative support—reduce the likelihood of teacher attrition. Conversely, career management resources, such as external career exploration and professional networking, may increase turnover intentions by exposing teachers to alternative employment opportunities. These findings indicate that private schools that invest in internal career growth pathways and strengthen collegial support are more likely to retain educators.

This study examines a private early childhood education institution recognized for its exceptionally low turnover rate, aiming to identify the institutional practices that contribute to teacher stability. This research provides empirical insights that can inform policy and decision-making in private educational institutions by analyzing how collegial relationships, professional development initiatives, and administrative policies influence teacher retention. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader discourse on teacher retention by examining the role of community-building and professional identity in fostering long-term commitment among educators. Through this analysis, the research highlights effective strategies that private schools can implement to create sustainable and supportive work environments for early childhood educators.

This study uses three theoretical frameworks to examine teacher retention in private ECE settings. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) provides insight into how collegial relationships and shared professional identities influence teachers' commitment. Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model of Commitment explains the psychological bonds that sustain teacher loyalty, encompassing affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Lastly, Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory highlights the role of collaborative learning and professional support in teacher retention. Together, these frameworks allow for a nuanced analysis of how institutional policies, workplace culture, and professional networks contribute to teacher stability in private preschools.

1.1 Problem statement

Despite the growing demand for high-quality early childhood education (ECE), research on teacher retention in Turkish private preschools remains largely

unexplored. Existing studies on teacher turnover in Türkiye primarily focus on public school settings or general education contexts, often overlooking the unique challenges faced by private school educators (Koç & Kök, 2023). Private school teachers frequently experience job insecurity, contractual instability, and salary discrepancies, which influence their long-term commitment to their institutions (Yıldırım & Bulut, 2023). Additionally, beyond financial concerns, institutional factors such as professional learning communities, workplace culture, and leadership support are crucial in shaping teachers' retention decisions.

This study addresses this research gap by examining a private preschool institution recognized for its exceptionally low teacher turnover rates. Unlike many private schools, where frequent teacher turnover disrupts learning and institutional culture, this institution has successfully retained a stable team of early childhood educators.

Understanding these factors will provide empirical evidence and practical insights for policymakers, administrators, and school leaders seeking to enhance teacher retention strategies. The findings aim to contribute to the broader discourse on teacher retention by examining the intersection of professional learning, institutional support, and teacher commitment.

1.2 Research aim

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the institutional factors that contribute to long-term teacher retention in private early childhood education institutions. By analyzing collegial relationships, professional development opportunities, leadership support, and organizational policies, this research seeks to identify the key mechanisms that encourage teachers to remain in their institutions long-term. The

findings aim to inform both educational policymakers and school administrators in developing effective strategies to enhance teacher retention in private preschools.

1.3 Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1.3.1 Main research question

What institutional factors support preschool teachers' retention, encouraging them to stay and perform their profession long-term at their current institution?

1.3.2 Sub-questions

- How do relationships between teachers, administrators, and parents affect teachers' satisfaction and commitment?
- What specific policies and practices do teachers identify as crucial to their decision to stay?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study contributes to the limited body of research on teacher retention in Turkish private preschools by examining an institution known for its exceptionally low turnover rate. Unlike many private schools where high teacher attrition disrupts organizational stability and negatively impacts student learning, this institution provides a valuable case for understanding how institutional support structures influence teacher retention.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enhances the understanding of teacher retention dynamics in private early childhood education settings. Previous

research suggests that teacher well-being, workplace relationships, and administrative policies play a significant role in teacher retention (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, studies focusing on these elements in private preschools, particularly in Türkiye, remain scarce. By investigating how these factors operate in a setting with high teacher stability, this research bridges an important gap in the literature.

From a practical perspective, the findings will offer actionable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and educational leaders seeking to reduce turnover rates in private preschools. As high teacher turnover not only affects children's learning through disrupted relationships but also creates challenges for resource management and institutional consistency (Doromal & Markowitz, 2023), developing effective retention strategies is essential. Identifying the policies and practices that contribute to long-term teacher commitment will enable school leaders to create stronger organizational structures, optimize resource allocation, and enhance the overall quality of early childhood education.

1.5 The school

This study was conducted in a well-established, private PreK-12 school that embraces a constructivist approach to education. The institution is known for its commitment to student-centered learning, innovative teaching methodologies, and holistic development. With a strong emphasis on fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and inquiry-based learning, the school provides an educational environment that encourages both academic excellence and personal growth.

The school was initially established with only an early childhood division and a first grade, with the intention of expanding organically as students progressed

through the grades. Each academic year, as the inaugural cohort advanced, the school expanded its staffing and facilities to accommodate the growing student body, eventually developing into a full PreK–12 institution. Some of the teachers participating in this study have witnessed and contributed to the school’s evolution since its founding years. Notably, one teacher has been with the institution since its very first year, providing a unique perspective shaped by firsthand experience of the school’s growth and organizational development. Many other participants similarly joined during the early stages of the school’s expansion, offering valuable insights into the institution’s evolving culture, practices, and community over time.

As a private school established by a foundation, it prioritizes equity, accessibility, and a mission-driven approach to education, ensuring that its pedagogical practices align with contemporary educational theories and global standards. The curriculum is designed to cultivate 21st-century skills, preparing students to be independent learners and active contributors to their communities. Additionally, professional development is highly valued within the institution, fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaboration among educators.

To support ongoing teacher development, the school houses a Professional Development Center, which provides structured training opportunities, mentorship programs, and research-based teaching practices. Teachers actively engage in various institutional committees that contribute to curriculum development, interdisciplinary projects, and school-wide decision-making. These committees allow educators to integrate innovative methodologies into their teaching, ensuring that professional growth directly impacts classroom instruction. Additionally, the school hosts dedicated centers focused on innovation, research, and student well-being, offering

teachers the opportunity to participate in collaborative initiatives that enhance both their own expertise and the educational experience of their students.

The school has approximately 1,500 students and 200 teachers. In the early childhood division, there are 8 Turkish homeroom teachers, 8 English homeroom teachers, and 8 assistant teachers, collectively supporting 8 preschool classrooms with a total of 24 teaching staff. Additionally, an extra English teacher provides support across all classrooms to enhance bilingual learning, alongside a Turkish teacher who similarly offers support beyond the homeroom settings. The leadership team for the early childhood division includes a principal, a vice principal, and a psychological counselor, ensuring comprehensive administrative and developmental support. Furthermore, four specialist teachers deliver instruction in specific subject areas, enriching the students' educational experience. Across the 8 classrooms, approximately 150 preschool children are enrolled. Classroom sizes adhere to the Ministry of National Education (MEB)'s space requirements, ensuring a safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment. The child-teacher ratio meets international accreditation standards, with preschool classes having fewer than 20 students. Each preschool classroom maintains a teacher-student ratio of 1:6 for 25% of the day and 1:9 for the remaining time. This structure ensures a low teacher-student ratio and promotes individualized attention, supporting a developmentally appropriate and inclusive learning environment.

This collaborative model ensures that students benefit from a bilingual and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Teachers are also encouraged to apply their professional learning to classroom practice through curriculum-aligned initiatives, interdisciplinary collaborations, and teacher-led research projects, further

reinforcing the institution's commitment to continuous improvement and pedagogical innovation.

The school follows a predetermined academic calendar approved by the MEB, ensuring compliance with national regulations. The academic year consists of 36 weeks, structured according to the MEB calendar, including quarter breaks and a mid-year break. The summer holiday is predefined, excluding professional development seminars. Working hours are carefully managed to minimize extra working time, with only occasional commitments outside regular hours for special events.

Additionally, the school's scheduling is designed to support collaborative planning among level teachers. The program allows teachers to have aligned planning time outside the classroom, facilitating joint curriculum development and participation in professional learning activities together. This approach not only enhances team collaboration but also strengthens the consistency and quality of educational practices across classrooms.

As the researcher, I have been working at the school for 11 years, initially serving as a preschool teacher for four years before transitioning into the role of vice principal of the preschool, which operates as part of the primary school. This dual experience in both teaching and administration provided me with a comprehensive understanding of classroom practices, school leadership, and the overall educational environment. Such insight contributes to the effective analysis of teacher retention, professional development, and institutional policies examined in this study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Constructivist theory

Constructivist theory is rooted in the belief that learning is an active, contextualized process in which learners construct knowledge rather than acquire it (Fosnot, 2005; Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective emphasizes the learner's role in creating meaning through experience and interaction with their environment

The theory is primarily based on the works of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and Albert Bandura. Each of these scholars contributed significantly to the understanding of how individuals learn and develop knowledge.

Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (1952) is one of the foundational pillars of constructivism. Piaget argued that knowledge is actively built through experiences and cognitive processes such as assimilation and accommodation. He proposed that learning occurs in stages and that individuals develop schemata that help them process new information. In educational settings, this perspective underscores the importance of hands-on learning, allowing students to explore and manipulate their environment to construct understanding. Piaget's theory also implies that teachers should consider the developmental readiness of learners when designing instruction, ensuring that tasks align with their cognitive abilities.

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (1978) expands upon Piaget's ideas by emphasizing the role of social and cultural factors in learning. He introduced the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other. Vygotsky's theory highlights the

importance of scaffolding, where teachers provide structured support that is gradually removed as students gain independence. This approach has direct implications for teacher professional development, as collaborative learning communities and mentorship programs align with Vygotsky's idea that knowledge is co-constructed within a social context.

Bruner's Discovery Learning and Spiral Curriculum (1960) further support the constructivist approach by advocating for an inquiry-based model of education. Bruner proposed that learners construct knowledge through discovery, and educators should facilitate this process by encouraging exploration and problem-solving. His concept of the spiral curriculum suggests that complex ideas should be revisited at different stages of learning, each time at a more sophisticated level. This iterative learning process aligns with professional development for educators, as teachers continually build upon their existing knowledge and refine their instructional strategies through experience and reflection.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) provides additional insights into the constructivist approach by emphasizing the role of observational learning and self-efficacy in education. Bandura argued that individuals learn by observing others and that their belief in their ability to succeed influences their motivation and performance. In a constructivist learning environment, teachers act as role models, demonstrating problem-solving strategies and reflective practices that students internalize. Moreover, Bandura's concept of self-efficacy is crucial in teacher development, as educators who feel confident in their abilities are more likely to engage in innovative teaching practices and continuous learning.

The foundational theories of constructivism, as developed by Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and Bandura, have significantly influenced educational practices.

Constructivism is not only a theory of learning but also an educational philosophy that informs instructional design, curriculum development, and teacher professional development (Fosnot, 2005). By emphasizing student-centered learning, constructivist educational philosophy shifts the focus from passive knowledge transmission to active knowledge construction, fostering environments where learners engage in meaningful inquiry, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Constructivist educational philosophy views learning as an active and dynamic process in which individuals construct meaning through their experiences and interactions with their environment. Rather than passively receiving knowledge, learners integrate new information with their prior understanding, shaping their cognitive development (Fosnot, 2005). This paradigm shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning emphasizes exploration, dialogue, and problem-solving as fundamental aspects of knowledge construction. In the context of teacher professional development, constructivism highlights the importance of valuing educators' prior expertise and experiences, fostering continuous growth through reflection, collaboration, and hands-on engagement in learning communities.

The constructivist perspective has profound implications for teacher professional development. By recognizing teachers as active learners who construct knowledge through experience, professional development programs can be designed to promote reflective practice, peer collaboration, and experiential learning. Scaffolding strategies, mentorship, and learning communities provide opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful professional growth, aligning with the principles of constructivism. Additionally, integrating constructivist methods in teacher training ensures that educators can foster student-centered classrooms where learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning.

2.1.1 Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) plays a central role in constructivist theory. The ZPD is defined as the range between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance and support (Vygotsky, 1978). For teachers, positioning professional development within their ZPD allows them to advance beyond their current capabilities, with support tailored to their individual growth needs. When schools provide mentorship, structured training, and collaborative opportunities within teachers' ZPD, they foster an environment that encourages incremental learning and skill enhancement.

Scaffolding, closely linked to the ZPD, involves providing structured support to help learners acquire new skills and knowledge progressively. In teacher professional development, scaffolding can take various forms, such as mentorship from experienced colleagues, step-by-step guidance through challenging tasks, and constructive feedback on instructional methods (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). The aim is to gradually remove this support as teachers gain confidence and competence, enabling them to apply new strategies independently. Scaffolding in professional development nurtures self-sufficiency, as teachers are empowered to take ownership of their learning and implement practices autonomously over time.

Peer learning, as emphasized in constructivist theory, aligns closely with Vygotsky's view of learning as a socially mediated process. In a collaborative professional development setting, teachers engage in peer learning by sharing experiences, reflecting on their practices, and solving problems together. Schools that adopt a constructivist approach to professional development often facilitate peer learning through team teaching, collaborative workshops, and professional learning communities. This collaborative process not only enhances individual skills but also

strengthens the professional community by building a shared repertoire of strategies and practices among educators.

2.1.2 Implications for teacher professional learning

By incorporating principles of constructivism—such as respecting existing knowledge, scaffolding, and peer learning—schools can create professional learning opportunities that are responsive to teachers' strengths and needs. Constructivist professional learning emphasizes self-directed and collaborative learning, where teachers actively reflect on their practices, engage in professional discussions, and construct their own teaching theories (Keiny, 1994; Postholm, 2012; Nugroho et al., 2024). This approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where teachers feel valued for their expertise and supported in their growth.

Social constructivism plays a critical role in professional learning, as it highlights the importance of collective learning and shared experiences. Programs that incorporate social constructivist principles, such as collaborative inquiry, mentoring, and peer learning, enable teachers to engage in reciprocal learning processes, exchanging pedagogical strategies and refining instructional approaches through reflective dialogue (Nugroho et al., 2024; Frederick-Jonah, 2022). Peer learning is central to this approach, fostering the co-construction of knowledge and allowing teachers to build a shared repertoire of best practices (Trnová & Trna, 2017).

Despite its benefits, implementing constructivist-based professional learning can present challenges. Teachers may encounter difficulties in accessing resources, adapting to new methodologies, or balancing learning with their daily responsibilities (Nugroho et al., 2024; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). However, when effectively designed,

constructivist professional learning strengthens teacher identity, boosts confidence in instructional decisions, and positively impacts student outcomes (Noonan, 2018). By promoting inquiry-driven and collaborative learning environments, constructivist professional learning fosters deeper engagement, agency, and a sense of belonging—principles that also form the foundation of communities of practice.

2.2 Community of practice theory

Etienne Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals develop professional identities, acquire knowledge, and sustain engagement within a shared domain. CoPs are social structures where learning occurs through participation in collective activities, fostering individual and group development. This theory extends earlier work by Lave and Wenger (1991) on situated learning, which emphasizes that learning is not an isolated cognitive process but is deeply embedded in social interactions and real-world contexts. CoPs function as environments where members engage in mutual learning, develop shared practices, and construct professional meaning through collaboration (Wenger, 1998).

A CoP is characterized by three fundamental dimensions: domain, community, and practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The domain refers to the shared area of interest that brings individuals together, forming the basis of their learning and engagement. In the context of education, the domain typically revolves around teaching methodologies, student development, and pedagogical innovation. The community aspect involves the relationships among members, which foster interaction, mutual support, and trust. Teachers within a CoP collaborate, exchange knowledge, and mentor one another, thereby strengthening

their professional networks. The practice element encompasses the shared repertoire of tools, experiences, and best practices that members develop over time. Through ongoing dialogue and collaboration, teachers refine their instructional strategies and contribute to the continuous evolution of their profession (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger's (1998) framework underscores that learning in a CoP is not merely about acquiring technical skills but also about developing an identity within a professional community. This perspective aligns with constructivist theories of learning, which posit that individuals construct knowledge through social interaction and active engagement with their environment (Fosnot, 2005). CoPs facilitate a shift from novice to expert status, where new members gradually gain expertise through participation and guided experience (Wenger et al., 2002). This process, often called legitimate peripheral participation, enables newcomers to learn by observing and collaborating with more experienced members (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

2.2.1 Implications for educational settings

In educational settings, CoPs have been widely recognized as instrumental in teacher professional development and retention. Research suggests that teachers who engage in collaborative professional networks experience greater job satisfaction and a stronger sense of belonging. Research highlights that teacher retention in early childhood education is essential, as young children benefit from stable and consistent relationships with educators for their cognitive, social, and emotional development (Pianta, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001), Dörfler, & Eden, 2016). These communities provide a platform for teachers to reflect on their practices, receive feedback, and explore innovative pedagogical approaches. Additionally, CoPs serve as support systems that mitigate professional isolation, particularly in environments where

teachers face high levels of stress and workload demands (Pattinson, Preece, & Dawson, 2016).

A critical function of CoPs is their role in fostering collective problem-solving and innovation. Members engage in shared inquiry, developing strategies to address common challenges in their profession. This collaborative process enhances institutional knowledge and improves teaching effectiveness (Seibert, 2015). Furthermore, CoPs provide a structure for mentorship and leadership development, allowing experienced educators to support the growth of newer members while continuously refining their own expertise (Irusta, 2023).

Despite their benefits, CoPs require intentional cultivation and sustained engagement to be effective. The success of these communities depends on factors such as leadership, institutional support, and an open culture of knowledge sharing (Webber & Dunbar, 2020). In structured educational environments, CoPs may operate formally through professional learning communities (PLCs) or informally through voluntary teacher networks (Wilson, 2019). Larger CoPs may necessitate governance structures to ensure that collaborative activities remain focused and productive (Pattinson et al., 2016).

In summary, Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice theory provides a robust framework for understanding how teachers develop professionally through social learning and shared engagement. By fostering collaboration, mentorship, and innovation, CoPs enhance teacher efficacy, support professional retention, and contribute to a culture of continuous learning within educational institutions. This theoretical perspective reinforces the idea that professional growth is most effective when embedded in meaningful, socially mediated interactions rather than isolated learning experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

2.3 Meyer and Allen's three-component model of commitment

While Meyer and Allen's model explains the psychological and practical factors influencing teacher retention, the role of professional learning communities (Wenger, 1998) in fostering commitment has also been widely discussed in the literature. This section explores the significance of professional learning communities in supporting teacher engagement and institutional commitment.

Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Commitment provides a structured framework for understanding employee commitment within an organization, emphasizing that commitment arises from both psychological and emotional factors (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This model, widely applied in organizational research, identifies three main types of commitment that influence employees' decisions to stay with their organization: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Applying this model to the context of teacher retention provides valuable insights into the complex reasons behind teachers' long-term commitment to a single institution.

2.3.1 Affective commitment

Affective commitment is the emotional attachment an employee has to their organization, reflecting a strong sense of belonging and identification with the institution's values and goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Teachers with high affective commitment view their institution as an integral part of their professional identity, leading them to remain with the school out of a sense of satisfaction and pride. This type of commitment is fostered through a positive work environment, supportive relationships with colleagues and administration, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. In a school context, affective commitment is strengthened by

factors such as recognition, a collaborative culture, and a sense of family within the school community (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). For teachers, a strong emotional bond with the school—enhanced by opportunities for meaningful work and a culture of appreciation—encourages them to continue working at the institution.

2.3.2 Continuance commitment

Continuance commitment refers to the practical, often financial, reasons that encourage an employee to stay in their current role (Meyer et al., 1993). This type of commitment is shaped by a perceived lack of alternative employment options or the potential financial losses associated with leaving the organization. For teachers, continuance commitment is linked to the benefits provided by the school, such as competitive salaries, comprehensive health insurance, retirement plans, and additional perks such as transportation and meal allowances. In this context, continuance commitment reflects a rational decision to remain at the school due to the financial stability and tangible support provided by the institution. Teachers with high continuance commitment recognize that these benefits may not be easily replicated elsewhere, making their current position more appealing from a financial perspective (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

2.3.3 Normative commitment

Normative commitment involves a sense of moral obligation to remain with the organization, often stemming from feelings of loyalty or gratitude for opportunities provided by the institution (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This type of commitment is common among employees who feel that their organization has invested in their professional development, creating a sense of responsibility to reciprocate by

staying. For teachers, normative commitment may arise from institutional support for advanced degrees, such as master's or doctoral programs, or from long-standing traditions of respect and appreciation within the school community. Teachers who experience high normative commitment often feel a duty to give back to the institution, honoring the support they have received and the trust placed in them by school leadership (Meyer et al., 1993).

2.3.4 Implications for teacher retention

Meyer and Allen's model provides a valuable framework for understanding the various factors influencing teacher retention (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Schools can leverage this model to develop targeted strategies that address the different types of commitment. For example, fostering affective commitment might involve creating a positive work culture with regular social events and recognition programs. Enhancing continuance commitment could include offering competitive financial benefits and social support systems. Finally, strengthening normative commitment might be achieved by supporting teachers' professional development and creating a culture of loyalty and respect within the school.

By addressing each type of commitment, institutions can create a supportive environment that not only fulfills teachers' professional needs but also promotes a sense of loyalty and satisfaction. Meyer and Allen's model highlights that a comprehensive approach to teacher retention, which incorporates both intrinsic motivations and practical support, can significantly reduce turnover and improve teacher satisfaction (Meyer et al., 1993).

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Understanding teacher retention: Insights from research and practice

Teacher retention is crucial to maintaining educational quality, ensuring student success, and fostering institutional stability. The ability to retain experienced educators contributes to continuity in teaching methodologies, enhances professional growth, and strengthens school culture (Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Conversely, high attrition rates disrupt student learning, increase the costs associated with recruitment and training, and place additional burdens on remaining staff members (Borman & Dowling, 2008). This issue is particularly critical in early childhood education, where stable teacher-student relationships significantly influence children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, 1999). Studies emphasize that children benefit from continuity in education, as experienced teachers better understand developmental needs and learning approaches (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Despite its importance, teacher retention in early childhood education remains a challenge due to financial constraints, limited career progression, and the emotional demands of the profession (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Teacher retention is shaped by various structural and contextual factors, including salary levels, workload intensity, opportunities for professional development, and the degree of administrative support (OECD, 2024). Research suggests that countries with effective teacher retention strategies, such as Finland, Canada, and Singapore, emphasize teacher autonomy, mentorship programs, and competitive salaries, which contribute to higher job satisfaction and reduced attrition

rates (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Toropova, Myrberg, & Johansson, 2021). In contrast, nations where teachers experience excessive workloads, rigid bureaucratic structures, and inadequate compensation often report higher turnover rates (OECD, 2024).

As stated, teacher retention in private schools is difficult due to job insecurity, limited professional development, and lower salaries compared to public schools. Unlike public educators who often benefit from tenure and long-term job stability, private school teachers are typically employed on short-term contracts that offer less security, prompting many to seek more stable positions in the public sector (Master et al., 2016, as cited in Small & Buckman, 2021). As previously stated, teacher retention in private schools is challenging due to job insecurity, limited professional development, and lower salaries (Esen et al., 2017; Cerev & Coşkun, 2020; Demir & Arı, 2013). Consequently, many private school teachers seek more stable and financially secure positions in public institutions (Yıldırım & Bulut, 2023; Güneş & Şahin, 2023).

Despite these challenges, research has identified several strategies that can improve teacher retention, including financial incentives, professional support networks, engagement from leadership, and policies that promote teacher autonomy (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). Studies indicate that schools that offer competitive salaries, structured mentorship programs, and leadership-driven professional development initiatives experience lower teacher turnover rates (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2017). Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice framework provides insight into how professional collaboration and shared learning experiences contribute to retention. Teachers who engage in structured

professional learning communities report higher job satisfaction, increased resilience, and stronger institutional commitment (Lieberman & Miller, 2008).

To explore these issues in depth, this review examines the factors that influence teacher retention, the challenges that contribute to attrition, and country-specific perspectives, with a particular focus on the Turkish education system and private school environments. Additionally, it evaluates policies and institutional practices that have been effective in improving teacher retention, providing a foundation for further analysis in this study.

Teacher retention is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including financial stability, collegial relationships, leadership involvement, professional development opportunities, and job autonomy. Implementing effective strategies within these areas is crucial to fostering long-term teacher commitment. The following sections provide a detailed analysis of each of these factors, discussing both the barriers to retention and potential solutions.

Although effective retention strategies exist, several key obstacles continue to drive teacher attrition in both public and private education systems. Excessive workload, job insecurity, financial instability, and insufficient institutional support have been consistently identified as primary causes of teacher turnover (OECD, 2024). Addressing these issues is critical for developing policies that reduce attrition and contribute to a more stable teaching workforce.

Teacher retention remains a global concern, with numerous studies highlighting its impact on educational quality, student outcomes, and institutional sustainability. Research consistently demonstrates that job satisfaction, administrative support, professional development opportunities, working conditions, and financial incentives significantly affect retention rates (Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson

& Birkeland, 2003). Consistent teacher-student relationships in early childhood education are essential for children's social and cognitive development, influencing long-term academic and emotional outcomes (Pianta, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Decisions regarding teacher retention and turnover in preschool settings have a direct impact on institutional stability and the quality of children's early learning experiences. Preschool educators play a fundamental role in shaping early development, and continuity in the teacher-child relationship is essential. However, challenges such as inadequate compensation, heavy workload, large class sizes, and difficult working conditions can negatively impact long-term teacher commitment (Demirtaş & Küçük, 2014). Many preschool teachers leave their positions due to a lack of professional fulfillment or institutional support. Studies suggest that strengthening financial incentives and enhancing professional support mechanisms could significantly improve retention rates among early childhood educators.

Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer (2007) estimated that teacher turnover costs schools between \$5,000 and \$18,000 per educator, reinforcing the financial burden of high attrition rates. Ingersoll (2001a, 2001b) found that teacher turnover rates (12-15%) are higher than in comparable professions like nursing (12%), with attrition driven largely by poor working conditions rather than retirement. Research further suggests that financial incentives influence retention, but working conditions and administrative support are equally critical (Boyd et al., 2011; Loeb et al., 2012). Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff (2013) demonstrated that high teacher turnover rates negatively affect student achievement, reinforcing the importance of workforce stability. Simon & Johnson (2015) highlighted that schools with high attrition rates often face a self-perpetuating cycle where remaining teachers experience increased workloads, ultimately leading to further attrition.

Teacher attrition is also a costly issue. Whitebook et al. (2014) reported turnover rates ranging from 13% to over 37%, with the highest attrition occurring within the first 2-3 years of employment. Research further indicates that teachers with higher levels of education are more likely to leave early childhood education settings, often due to better-paying job opportunities outside the field (Manlove & Guzella, 1997). Addressing these issues is essential to ensuring stability and quality in educational environments.

3.2 Financial stability and compensation

Financial stability is one of the most significant predictors of teacher retention. Without adequate compensation structures, schools struggle to retain qualified educators, leading to disruptions in instructional continuity and student outcomes (OECD, 2024).

3.2.1 Salary

Schools that offer competitive salaries, structured pay scales, and benefits such as health insurance, housing allowances, and retirement plans experience lower turnover rates (Ingersoll, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Research suggests that structured salary progression, ensuring regular raises and performance-based bonuses, significantly enhances teacher retention (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). A salary increase has been found to correlate with a lower likelihood of leaving the profession, particularly for mid-career teachers compared to early-career educators (Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1999, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008). In fact, for every \$1 per hour increase in wages, turnover decreases by 6% (Cooney, 2008, as cited in Totenhagen et al., 2016).

The study on childcare teacher retention in Singapore identified low wages and financial instability as key factors contributing to attrition, with many teachers struggling with cost-of-living expenses (Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017). However, teachers in childcare settings that offer competitive salaries and performance-based bonuses were more likely to stay (Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017). Findings revealed that over 50% of teachers had below-average motivation levels, primarily due to low salaries and irregular payments (Ndani & Kimani, 2010). Low wages and financial insecurity have also been identified as major contributors to teacher attrition, with early childhood educators earning below the self-sufficiency wage and being more likely to leave the profession (Torquati et al., 2007). High teacher turnover has been linked to workplace dissatisfaction, low wages, and lack of career growth (Cassidy et al., 2011).

The financial instability of teachers is a pressing issue, as low salaries, job insecurity, and lack of career pathways are among the biggest challenges contributing to turnover (Fenech, Waniganayake, & Fleet, 2009, as cited in Pek, 2014). Studies show that improving teacher salaries and financial incentives can significantly reduce attrition rates (McKee, 2003). Many childcare workers earn less than parking attendants and janitors, making financial insecurity a major challenge in the field (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2002, as cited in Totenhagen et al., 2016). Similarly, in Singapore, childcare teachers earn significantly less than other professionals, which reduces motivation and increases turnover (Ministry of Manpower, 2012, as cited in Pek, 2014).

The issue of delayed payments and insufficient compensation has been highlighted as a primary economic reason for teacher attrition (Keçeci & Keskinkılıç Kara, 2023). At the district level, financial incentives for teachers beyond their first

three years have been shown to improve retention rates, particularly in high-need schools (Loeb & Miller, 2006, as cited in Bergevin, 2018). External job-related factors such as salary, administrative support, and job-related stress strongly influence teacher well-being and retention (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014, as cited in Jeon & Wells, 2018). Research further indicates that teachers with higher qualifications often leave low-paying early childhood education (ECE) positions for better-paying K–12 roles, creating workforce instability in early education programs (Johnson, 2006, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021). Additionally, within-year turnover is particularly high in Head Start programs, where teachers often transition to better-paying jobs in public schools (Markowitz, 2019, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021).

Teacher retention is directly linked to salaries, workplace conditions, teacher preparation quality, and mentorship support (Darling-Hammond, 2003, as cited in Koerber et al., 2023). Studies show that teachers prefer positions with higher salaries and better working conditions, which contributes to mobility within the profession (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008). Increasing teacher salaries to reflect the cost of living and the demands of the profession has been shown to significantly reduce teacher attrition, ensuring higher retention rates (Loeb & Page, 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004).

Higher salaries and benefits have been found to improve retention rates, particularly in urban and high-poverty schools (Barbieri, Rossetti, & Sestito, 2011, as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). OECD data suggest that Swedish teachers earn less compared to their European counterparts, which may contribute to higher attrition rates (OECD, 2015, as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Additionally, improving salary structures and providing financial incentives for professional

development have been identified as critical strategies to enhance retention (Viac & Fraser, 2020, as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022).

Financial insecurity leads many teachers to seek alternative employment opportunities. Those working in schools with low salaries, delayed payments, or unstructured compensation plans are more likely to leave (Cerev & Coşkun, 2020; Demir & Arı, 2013). When teachers feel financially undervalued, job dissatisfaction increases, and institutional loyalty weakens (Güneş & Şahin, 2023). Compensation is a critical factor in teacher motivation, and when salaries fail to reflect workload, expectations, and qualifications, turnover rates tend to rise.

The correlation between increased salaries and retention is well documented. A salary increase has been found to correlate with increased job commitment and longer tenure (Williams et al., 2007, as cited in Pek, 2014). Many teachers leave due to low pay and lack of financial incentives (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014, as cited in MacDonald, 2018). Regional salary variations also play a role, as teachers in remote and disadvantaged areas may find it financially unfeasible to continue in the profession due to higher living costs (Ingersoll, 2003, as cited in Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022). Early childhood educators consistently earn significantly less than K-12 teachers, which contributes to financial stress and job dissatisfaction (Herzenberg et al., 2005, as cited in Cho & Couse, 2008).

Compensation and working conditions significantly affect teachers' career decisions. Competitive salaries, benefits, and financial incentives have been found to mitigate turnover rates (Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1995, 1999; Murnane & Olsen, 1989, 1990, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008). Research has consistently linked higher teacher salaries to lower attrition rates, with studies indicating that competitive compensation reduces the likelihood of teachers leaving their positions,

particularly when alternative employment opportunities with higher salaries exist (Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1995, 1999; Murnane & Olsen, 1989, 1990, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Teacher retention is further improved in schools and districts that offer financial incentives such as retention bonuses, housing stipends, and loan forgiveness (Springer et al., 2016, as cited in Koerber et al., 2023). Despite policy efforts to professionalize early childhood education, wages and job demands continue to be major barriers to retention (McDonald et al., 2018). Schools that offer competitive salaries, performance-based bonuses, and benefits such as health insurance have lower turnover rates (Shaheen, 2016). Additionally, urban districts where teachers have more alternative job opportunities tend to see higher attrition rates unless financial incentives are in place (Carver-Thomas, 2018, as cited in Rosenblatt et al., 2019).

Ultimately, wages and benefits remain the strongest predictors of early childhood teacher retention, though workplace climate and professional support also play essential roles (Totenhagen et al., 2016, as cited in Bryant et al., 2023). Competitive compensation packages that include structured salary increases, retention bonuses, and financial support for professional development are key to fostering a stable and committed teaching workforce.

3.2.2 Benefits

Institutions that prioritize holistic financial support for educators create more stable and committed teaching workforces. Many early childhood education (ECE) teachers lack access to employer-provided benefits, with only 15% receiving health insurance through their employer compared to 50% of the general workforce (Gould, 2015, as

cited in Hur et al., 2023). Beyond base salaries, financial well-being includes essential job-related benefits such as maternity leave, childcare support, and housing assistance, which play a vital role in retaining teachers, particularly in ECE settings where financial strain is common (Zinsser et al., 2016). Research highlights that paid planning time, child care assistance, and salary increases significantly improve retention rates (Schaack et al., 2022). However, the absence of paid leave and healthcare options negatively impacts retention, with teachers more likely to stay in schools that offer medical insurance and childcare subsidies (Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017). Similarly, lack of employment benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and maternity leave contributes to teacher dissatisfaction and attrition (Ndani & Kimani, 2010). Access to health services such as medical consultations and counseling positively affects teachers' overall well-being and commitment to the profession (Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022).

Schools offering additional benefits such as transportation, meals, and insurance report higher teacher satisfaction and stronger institutional commitment (Wells, 2015). Institutions that implement structured salary progression, retention bonuses, and financial benefits such as housing or childcare allowances see improved teacher retention rates (OECD, 2024). Assistant teachers, in particular, experience higher turnover due to limited benefits, with programs that fail to offer health insurance, paid leave, or full coverage of premium payments reporting significantly higher attrition rates (Nguyen et al., 2020, as cited in Hur et al., 2023). Teachers who receive cost-of-living adjustments, merit-based raises, and comprehensive health benefits are more likely to stay in their positions (Nguyen et al., 2020, as cited in Hur et al., 2023).

Fringe benefits such as school-provided meals, in-service training opportunities, and free housing are also cited as secondary motivators that positively impact teacher retention (Ndani & Kimani, 2010). The absence of such benefits increases attrition, with teachers who lack access to health insurance, paid leave, or retirement benefits being more likely to leave their positions (Hale-Jinks et al., 2006, as cited in Totenhagen et al., 2016). Many childcare workers similarly do not receive essential employment benefits, contributing to job dissatisfaction and an increased likelihood of turnover (Lavery et al., 2002, as cited in Hale-Jinks et al., 2006).

Professional development funding has been shown to improve retention, with teachers who receive financial support for further education more likely to remain in the profession (Fenech, Waniganayake, & Fleet, 2009, as cited in Pek, 2014). Expanding workplace benefits, including healthcare, additional leave, and flexible working conditions, enhances job satisfaction and reduces turnover (Holochwost et al., 2009, as cited in Pek, 2014). Additionally, research indicates that salary incentives and retirement benefits play a key role in influencing teacher career decisions, reinforcing the importance of comprehensive financial compensation (Podgursky, Monroe, & Watson, 2004, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Low salaries and the absence of financial incentives significantly contribute to teacher turnover. Research suggests that competitive wages, comprehensive benefits, and clear career advancement opportunities are critical to improving teacher retention (Loeb & Page, 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004). Offering health benefits, paid leave, and retirement packages has been identified as a key strategy for improving job stability and increasing teacher retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001). Providing housing incentives and financial aid for teachers in remote areas

has been shown to improve retention by mitigating financial burdens and increasing job satisfaction (Loeb & Page, 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004).

Programs like T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) provide financial support and salary increases for teachers pursuing further education, which has been shown to improve retention rates (Center for the Child Care Workforce, n.d., as cited in Cho & Couse, 2008). Some states also offer one-time bonuses or annual salary increments for teachers who remain in the field, a strategy linked to increased job satisfaction and lower attrition (Washington, 2008, as cited in Cho & Couse, 2008). Competitive pay and financial incentives such as bonuses and loan forgiveness have been identified as strategies to improve retention (Carver-Thomas, 2018, as cited in Gilmore, 2021). Similarly, retention programs offering career advancement opportunities—such as T.E.A.C.H. scholarships—help mitigate turnover (McLean et al., 2021, as cited in Bryant et al., 2023).

Schools that implement financial bonuses and career growth opportunities tend to retain more teachers, reinforcing the need for structured compensation models (Murnane & Olsen, 1989, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008). Access to health services, including medical consultations and counseling, has been found to positively impact teachers' well-being and long-term commitment to the profession (Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022). Some school districts have successfully introduced financial incentives such as retention bonuses, housing stipends, and loan forgiveness to encourage teachers to stay. While effective in the short term, research suggests that long-term retention depends on addressing broader systemic issues such as workload management and professional development opportunities (Springer et al., 2016, as cited in Koerber et al., 2023).

3.2.3 Public vs. private schools

Teacher retention rates vary significantly between public and private schools, with compensation and job security playing a crucial role in these differences. Research indicates that teachers in public schools tend to stay longer due to more stable salaries, structured benefits, and tenure protections, while private school teachers experience higher turnover rates due to financial instability and lack of long-term job security (Henke et al., 2000, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008). Teachers in private schools are 2.27 times more likely to leave their positions than those in public schools, largely due to lower salaries and limited benefits (Henke et al., 2000, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Studies show that public school teachers benefit from standardized salary scales, retirement plans, and access to government-funded benefits, making these positions more attractive in the long term (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Conversely, private schools often struggle to offer competitive compensation, leading many educators to transition to public institutions for better financial security (Toropova, Myrberg, & Johansson, 2021). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2015) reported that teachers in private institutions, particularly in lower-income settings, earn significantly less than their public school counterparts, contributing to higher attrition rates (as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022).

Financial constraints in private schools result in fewer benefits and professional development opportunities, making retention more challenging. Many private school teachers report dissatisfaction due to unstructured compensation plans, limited career growth pathways, and reduced access to retirement benefits (Cerev & Coşkun, 2020; Demir & Arı, 2013). Research indicates that when teachers perceive a

lack of financial security and institutional support, job dissatisfaction rises, leading to increased turnover (Güneş & Şahin, 2023).

Despite these challenges, some private schools have successfully implemented strategies to improve retention. Schools that offer structured salary progression, performance-based bonuses, and additional financial incentives such as housing allowances or childcare support report higher retention rates among educators (OECD, 2024). Additionally, private institutions that provide competitive salaries, health benefits, and professional development funding have been found to mitigate turnover risks and increase job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2020, as cited in Hur et al., 2023). Private schools offer competitive salaries, comprehensive health insurance, transportation, meals, and other benefits to retain teachers (Çelik & Bayraktar, 2014). Additionally, long-term employees may receive bonuses or annual raises, which enhance teachers' sense of job security and loyalty to the institution. Teachers are more likely to stay in schools that provide financial stability and job security (Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022).

Another key challenge in private education is the lack of employment security. Unlike public school teachers, who benefit from tenure protections, many private school educators work under short-term contracts that do not guarantee long-term job stability (Yıldırım & Bulut, 2023). The uncertainty surrounding contract renewals can lead private school teachers to seek more stable employment in the public sector (Güneş & Şahin, 2023). Additionally, limited access to government-funded pensions and health benefits further discourages long-term commitment to private institutions (Phillips et al., 2019, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021).

Public school teachers also benefit from structured career advancement pathways, which contribute to long-term job satisfaction and retention. Research

suggests that access to mentorship programs, leadership training, and state-sponsored salary progression encourages teachers to remain in public education (Bassok et al., 2013, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021). In contrast, private school teachers often face stagnation in professional development due to budget constraints, limiting their opportunities for career progression (Johnson, 2006, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021).

The disparity between public and private school salaries is particularly evident in early childhood education settings. Studies indicate that teachers in public pre-kindergarten programs receive significantly higher wages and better benefits than those in private childcare centers, leading to lower turnover rates in publicly funded settings (Phillips et al., 2019, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021). Childcare educators in private institutions frequently rely on government assistance due to low pay, which discourages long-term commitment to the field (Bassok et al., 2013, as cited in Bassok et al., 2021).

Overall, public schools provide greater financial stability and career growth opportunities, resulting in lower attrition rates. Private schools, on the other hand, must invest in structured salary progression, comprehensive benefits, and professional development opportunities to compete with public institutions in retaining qualified educators. Addressing these disparities through policy reforms and financial incentives remains essential for improving retention rates across all educational settings. Many private schools invest in their teachers' professional growth through domestic and international training programs, workshops, and even support for pursuing advanced degrees. Some institutions provide opportunities for teachers to attend international programs, host in-house training, and offer digital learning resources, which encourage professional growth and deepen teacher commitment (Demirtaş & Küçük, 2014).

3.3 Ever-learning and supportive community

A learning-oriented school culture plays a crucial role in teacher retention. Schools that prioritize collaboration, professional development, and strong administrative support create environments where teachers feel valued, engaged, and committed to their roles. Research indicates that teacher collaboration and professional learning communities enhance retention by fostering peer support and reducing isolation (Timmer, 2023). Financial incentives alone are insufficient to improve retention; policy solutions must also address work conditions, leadership, and opportunities for professional growth (Timmer, 2023).

Teachers who perceive strong administrative support, collegial relationships, and clear career pathways report greater job satisfaction and a stronger commitment to the profession (Ladd, 2011, as cited in Grant et al., 2019). Conversely, a lack of institutional support—such as inadequate mentorship programs, insufficient resources, and weak leadership—negatively impacts teacher retention. Schools that fail to invest in professional development and peer collaboration tend to experience higher attrition rates (Lieberman & Miller, 2008).

Van den Borre et al. (2021) found that schools with strong collaborative cultures report higher retention rates, whereas barriers to professional development at both the school and national levels correlate with increased attrition intentions. These findings parallel the results of Kraft et al. (2016), who emphasized the role of supportive leadership and access to professional development in reducing turnover rates. Schools that actively cultivate a culture of collaboration foster higher levels of institutional commitment among teachers. Leadership that supports peer learning, mentorship, and shared decision-making strengthens teachers' sense of agency and belonging (Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018).

Sustainable teacher retention is largely dependent on three key areas of professional development (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). First, learning from others—through mentorship programs, peer collaboration, and co-teaching—enhances confidence and teaching effectiveness. Second, self-directed learning, including reflective practices and participation in professional development opportunities, is linked to higher job satisfaction (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Wong, 2004, as cited in Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Research further suggests that multiyear induction programs and ongoing professional development positively impact teacher retention rates (Tvew, 2018, as cited in Cells et al., 2023).

The impact of mentorship and professional development on retention is well-documented. Teachers who participate in structured mentorship programs report greater confidence in their roles, whereas those who lack mentoring beyond their third year struggle with professional growth and classroom challenges (Cells et al., 2023).

Schools that foster inclusive and collaborative environments strengthen teachers' sense of belonging, thereby increasing their likelihood of remaining in the profession. Teachers experience greater job satisfaction when they work in environments that encourage teamwork and collaboration (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Creating a culture that values professional learning, administrative support, and mentorship is essential for improving teacher retention and sustaining a high-quality teaching workforce.

3.3.1 Collegial support

Collegial support plays a crucial role in fostering teacher retention, as strong professional relationships enhance job satisfaction and emotional resilience

(Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Teachers who feel supported by their colleagues develop a greater sense of belonging and commitment to their institutions. Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how teachers develop professional identities, share knowledge, and sustain engagement through social learning. Research highlights that teachers who engage in structured professional communities report higher job satisfaction and stronger institutional commitment (Lieberman & Miller, 2008). By fostering a culture of teamwork and mutual support, institutions create sustainable work environments where educators remain committed long-term (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

In addition to structured professional learning, informal collegial interactions also play a significant role in teacher well-being. Studies suggest that informal gatherings, peer check-ins, and social support networks reduce stress and build stronger professional communities (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). These networks enhance teachers' sense of belonging, increasing their likelihood of remaining at their institution. A strong sense of community among colleagues fosters a supportive atmosphere that reduces burnout and turnover (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Positive peer relationships create shared goals and mutual respect, leading to higher retention rates (Wells, 2015). Teachers who actively engage in reflective practices and collaborative learning environments are more likely to experience professional growth and satisfaction (Lambert, 2002).

The Community of Practice framework provides a compelling explanation for why teachers stay in an institution by emphasizing the role of collaboration and shared identity in professional well-being. Wenger (1998) argues that individuals derive professional identity from their participation in a CoP. Teachers who

experience strong collegial relationships, shared goals, and mutual support feel a deeper connection to their school community. Research shows that teachers who develop a strong sense of professional identity through collaboration are more likely to remain in their schools (Kelchtermans, 2009). A well-established Community of Practice also acts as an emotional buffer against teacher burnout. When teachers share their challenges and successes with colleagues, they feel less isolated and more supported (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Studies suggest that teachers who feel isolated or lack peer support are significantly more likely to leave their jobs (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Moreover, CoPs enable teachers to continuously develop their skills through discussions, observations, and peer feedback. Schools that encourage collaborative professional learning improve both teacher retention and instructional quality (Lieberman & Miller, 2008). Teachers who participate in professional learning communities report greater job satisfaction and commitment to their institutions (Hord, 2009).

Several studies demonstrate the relationship between CoPs and teacher retention. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) found that teachers who engaged in strong collaborative cultures were more resilient and less likely to leave their institutions. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that teachers who participated in mentoring programs and professional learning communities were 50% more likely to stay in the profession compared to those who lacked support networks. Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) showed that schools with structured collaboration practices had lower teacher turnover rates. These findings highlight that schools with strong Communities of Practice experience lower teacher attrition, as teachers feel more connected, valued, and engaged in their work.

Collegial support is not only beneficial for professional development but also serves as a key determinant of job satisfaction. Although job stress is a major issue in early childhood education (ECE), research suggests that supportive workplace environments help offset stress and improve retention rates (Hur et al., 2016, as cited in Bryant et al., 2023). Furthermore, collegial support is an essential contextual factor influencing retention intentions, even when workload is high (Pomaki et al., 2010, as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). However, negative interpersonal dynamics can also contribute to teacher attrition. Some teachers leave schools due to conflicts with colleagues, lack of cooperation, and exclusion (Demir, 2019b, as cited in Kazak, 2021).

Research suggests that teachers are not solely motivated by salary but also by professional fulfillment and social impact (Turner, 2018). A positive school culture and strong peer relationships play a significant role in teachers' decisions to stay (Turner, 2018). Teachers who experience a supportive work environment and strong peer relationships are less likely to leave (Gable & Hunting, 2002, as cited in Pek, 2014). Additionally, teachers who feel supported by both colleagues and administrators tend to remain in their roles even in high-stress environments (Cassidy et al., 2011, as cited in McCormick et al., 2022). Strong professional communities foster a sense of belonging, improve teacher morale, and promote long-term retention (Jeon & Wells, 2018; Zinsser et al., 2016, as cited in Schaack et al., 2022).

A positive school climate, where teachers feel valued and part of a team, contributes significantly to retention. Studies indicate that teachers in high-turnover schools report lower job satisfaction and higher levels of workplace conflict (Choy & Haukka, 2010; Jovanovic, 2013, as cited in Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017). On the other hand, schools with a collaborative environment, strong leadership support, and

robust peer networks create a sense of belonging and professional fulfillment (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Research also suggests that teachers who feel appreciated within their school communities experience greater job satisfaction and are more likely to remain in the profession (Johnson et al., 2012, as cited in Gilmore, 2021).

ECE teachers utilize both formal and informal channels to disseminate knowledge and share information. Formal channels include scheduled staff meetings, while informal channels involve spontaneous interactions and advice-seeking conversations. Informal communication is particularly prevalent and impactful for professional learning, as it allows teachers to seek advice based on colleagues' expertise and familiarity (Cramer et al., 2021). Collaborative efforts require clear communication between professionals to achieve desired educational outcomes (Mourão, 2021). Despite the benefits, building a collaborative atmosphere can be challenging due to teacher reluctance to share practices, lack of engagement, and insufficient training (García-Martínez et al., 2021). Strategies to overcome these challenges include promoting open communication, setting common goals, and sharing knowledge and ideas to build trust and cooperation among teachers (Ławecka, 2024).

A learning-centered work culture emphasizes continuous development, collaborative growth, and knowledge sharing rather than competition and individual achievement. In such an environment, teachers shift their focus from personal ambition to collective improvement, fostering a culture where they feel valued and supported in their professional growth (Senge, 1990). Schools that prioritize open communication, peer learning, and accessible professional development opportunities strengthen teacher commitment. Institutions that implement mentorship programs, organize regular training sessions, and encourage peer observation and

feedback create a non-competitive setting where teachers can learn from one another (Wenger, 1998; Fullan, 2001). This collaborative approach promotes resilience, innovation, and a sense of belonging among educators (Brown & Duguid, 2000).

In the context of teacher retention, a learning culture that values collaboration over competition has distinct advantages. When teachers work in environments that encourage continuous learning and professional growth without fear of judgment, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction and remain in their positions (Senge, 1990). Teachers in schools that support collaborative professional learning report higher retention rates and a stronger sense of institutional belonging (Berry et al., 2021). McKee (2003) also found that collegiality plays a critical role in retention, as teachers who feel supported by their colleagues are more likely to stay.

While collegial relationships form the foundation of a supportive work environment, effective school leadership plays an equally critical role in ensuring teacher retention. Administrators who provide professional autonomy, foster trust, and recognize teacher contributions contribute to long-term institutional commitment. The next section explores the impact of leadership support on teacher retention.

3.3.2 Supportive and autonomy-focused leadership

Teacher retention is strongly influenced by workplace environment factors such as administrative support, professional development opportunities, and organizational culture (Bryant et al., 2023). Research suggests that effective school leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, which enhances job satisfaction and institutional commitment (Boyd et al., 2011, as cited in Bryant et al., 2023). While salary increases can improve job satisfaction, teacher

retention is primarily driven by school leadership and professional working conditions rather than financial incentives alone (Brill & McCartney, 2008, as cited in Shuls & Flores, 2020).

Poor working conditions, including a lack of administrative support, excessive workload, and inadequate professional development, contribute significantly to teacher turnover. Schools that offer greater autonomy, mentorship, and a collaborative environment tend to experience higher retention rates (Guarino et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2012, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008). Leaders who adopt supportive and transformational leadership styles demonstrate higher teacher retention rates by fostering positive workplace relationships, ensuring professional growth opportunities, and involving teachers in decision-making processes (Appel-Drazin, 2016).

Effective leadership enhances teacher retention by providing adequate resources, recognition, and autonomy, which are essential for a sustainable and fulfilling work environment (Kelchtermans, 2017; Borman & Dowling, 2008). Schools where teachers feel valued and respected by their administrators report lower levels of job-related stress and higher institutional commitment (Wells, 2015). Positive relationships with school leadership cultivate a sense of belonging and professional fulfillment, further encouraging teachers to remain in their roles (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). To foster a sense of family and solidarity among teachers, some private schools promote open communication and encourage teachers to participate in decision-making processes (Ünal & Ünal, 2012). Teachers feel more committed to their institution when their opinions are valued and they have a voice in school policies.

The following sections explore three key dimensions of leadership that impact teacher retention; supportive leadership, autonomy-supporting leadership, and leadership that effectively manages workload without micromanagement. Each of these aspects plays a vital role in shaping a positive school culture and ensuring long-term teacher commitment.

3.3.2.1 Supportive leadership

Strong leadership significantly impacts teacher retention, as effective school administrators create supportive work environments, advocate for teachers' needs, and implement policies that enhance job satisfaction (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Dumler (2010) found that first-year teachers who receive strong principal support are more likely to remain in the profession. The study identified several key principal support behaviors that significantly impact teacher retention, including clear and consistent communication of expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and school policies. Regular classroom observations, followed by constructive feedback, provide teachers with guidance and opportunities for professional growth. Ensuring access to necessary resources and instructional materials enables teachers to implement effective teaching strategies, while reducing excessive non-teaching duties, such as administrative paperwork and additional supervision tasks, allows them to focus on instructional practices and student learning (Dumler, 2010). Teacher job satisfaction is often linked to a supportive workplace culture, reasonable workloads, and positive relationships with colleagues and administrators (Hong, 2012). Encouraging collaboration, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a supportive community help teachers feel valued and committed (Spindler & Biott, 2000, as cited in Hale-Jinks et al., 2006). Workplaces that emphasize morale,

collegiality, recognition, and supportive leadership are more likely to retain staff (Grant et al., 2019, as cited in Thorpe et al., 2020). Creating a "nurturing environment" where teachers feel valued strengthens institutional commitment (Arthur & Bradley, 2023).

Teacher attrition is most influenced by workplace conditions, salary, and administrative support (McKee, 2003). These findings align with research showing that improving teacher working conditions and leadership support is more effective for retention than increasing recruitment efforts (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Shen, 1998, as cited in McKee, 2003). Teachers are more likely to stay in schools that provide supportive leadership, sufficient resources, manageable workloads, and professional development opportunities (Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). School leadership plays a critical role in teacher retention (Cells et al., 2023). Findings showed that supportive principals increased teacher satisfaction and commitment. Teachers in schools with strong leadership and clear communication reported higher job satisfaction. Distributive leadership models, where responsibilities are shared across staff, contributed to a stronger sense of belonging (Sulit & Davidson, 2020, as cited in Cells et al., 2023). Previous research suggests that principals who prioritize teacher well-being and collaboration create school environments that foster retention (Urlick, 2020, as cited in Cells et al., 2023).

Teachers who received regular feedback from leadership were more likely to stay (Van den Borre et al., 2021). The most frequently cited reason for changing schools was problems with school principals, including favoritism, mobbing, unfair treatment, poor communication, and lack of support (Kazak, 2021). Teachers who receive strong administrative support, mentorship, and professional development are less likely to leave (Boyd et al., 2011, as cited in Nguyen et al., 2019). Childcare

teachers who receive mentorship and leadership support from supervisors report higher job satisfaction and longer retention (Nupponen, 2006, as cited in Pek, 2014). Schools with strong, supportive leadership were more successful in retaining teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019, as cited in Kurtz, 2015). Many early career teachers reported feeling isolated and unsupported, particularly in schools with high turnover rates and challenging student populations (Schuck et al., 2012, as cited in Buchanan et al., 2013).

Strong leadership is also crucial, as administrators play a key role in shaping school culture and ensuring teacher satisfaction (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2009, as cited in Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Principals who actively support teachers by recognizing their achievements and providing constructive feedback create a positive school culture that encourages teacher retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Dumler (2010) found that first-year teachers who receive strong principal support are more likely to remain in the profession. The study identified several key principal support behaviors that significantly impact teacher retention. Clear and consistent communication of expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and school policies helps teachers feel more confident and prepared in their positions. Regular classroom observations, followed by constructive feedback, provide new teachers with guidance and opportunities for professional growth. Additionally, ensuring access to necessary resources and instructional materials enables teachers to implement effective teaching strategies (Dumler, 2010).

Reducing excessive non-teaching duties, such as administrative paperwork and additional supervision tasks, allows teachers to focus on instructional practices and student learning. Assigning an experienced and well-matched mentor supports

new teachers in navigating their first year, while providing assistance with student discipline issues helps prevent burnout and frustration (Dumler, 2010).

Encouraging professional autonomy and innovation in instructional practices fosters teacher engagement and motivation. Creating a collegial and collaborative school culture enhances job satisfaction, while offering emotional support and recognizing teachers' efforts contribute to a positive work environment. Furthermore, guiding teachers in managing parent interactions and communication strengthens their confidence in handling external challenges (Dumler, 2010). These findings align with prior research, which suggests that principals who actively engage with new teachers through mentorship and professional development significantly increase teacher retention rates (Carver, 2003; Wynn & Brown, 2008, as cited in Dumler, 2010). Teachers who do not feel supported by school administrators are more likely to leave (Hentges, 2012, as cited in MacDonald, 2018). Conversely, schools with strong administrative support experience lower teacher turnover (Shen, 1997, as cited in Borman & Dowling, 2008).

While some studies suggest that administrative support is a primary retention factor, others indicate that it is not always a decisive element in teachers' decisions to stay (Turner, 2018). Although 27% of existing teachers cited the teacher evaluation system as a factor in their departure, other reasons such as school leadership (26%) and workload (24%) were equally important (James & Wyckoff, 2020). Teachers who perceive their school culture positively, including strong relationships with colleagues, administrative support, and professional respect, are less likely to leave (Boyd et al., 2011, as cited in Kurtz, 2015). Those who intend to move to another early childhood education (ECE) program often cite a lack of administrative support

and poor relationships with colleagues as reasons for their departure (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, as cited in Grant et al., 2019).

Teachers cited long working hours, lack of administrative support, excessive workload, job insecurity, large class sizes, student behavior issues, and pressure from parents as reasons for leaving (Ingersoll, 2001, as cited in Keçeci & Keskinliç Kara, 2023). The study found that strong administrative support plays a significant role in teacher retention. Teachers who felt supported by their administrators were more likely to stay in their positions (Grissom et al., 2016, as cited in Gilmore, 2021). Leadership behaviors that emphasize collaboration, recognition, and mentoring positively impact new teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). When teachers feel unsupported by administrators, they are more likely to leave. Teachers in the study expressed frustration over a lack of communication and inconsistent leadership (Ingersoll, 2001, as cited in Gilmore, 2021).

Ladd (2011) highlighted that teachers who perceive their principals as supportive are significantly less likely to leave, reinforcing the importance of administrative backing (as cited in Becker & Grob, 2021). Ingersoll and May (2012) found that administrative support was one of the strongest predictors of retention among math and science teachers, suggesting that principals play a key role in subject-specific teacher retention (as cited in Becker & Grob, 2021). Teachers who feel supported by school administrators are more likely to stay in the profession (Ingersoll, 2001a, as cited in Guarino et al., 2006). Effective leadership practices, including open communication and collaboration, improve teacher satisfaction and organizational commitment (Grant et al., 2019). Teacher retention efforts should focus on leadership support, professional identity, and reducing unnecessary workload (Tye & O'Brien, 2002; Sutchter et al., 2019, as cited in Timmer, 2023).

Contrary to some findings, managerial support was not a significant predictor of retention in this study. This may be due to the fact that the sample included experienced teachers, for whom principal support is less critical than for novice teachers (Chiong et al., 2017, as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Schools where administrators engage in participatory leadership styles, ensuring that teachers are involved in decision-making processes, report higher institutional commitment and lower turnover rates (Johnson et al., 2012). Research suggests that school leadership training focused on teacher well-being and career development is essential for fostering long-term teacher engagement (Kelchtermans, 2017). Transparent communication, equitable workload distribution, and recognition of teacher contributions have been found to strengthen institutional loyalty and reduce attrition (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Many educators felt undervalued and unsupported by school leadership, which led to job dissatisfaction and eventual departure (Hime, 2019, as cited in Paul, 2022). Schools that fail to establish supportive administrative structures often experience high turnover due to dissatisfaction with leadership practices (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Schools with a supportive organizational climate and strong leadership experience lower turnover rates. Research suggests that school culture, including the relationships between teachers and administrators, is a major predictor of teacher retention (Simon & Johnson, 2015, as cited in Gilmore, 2021).

While supportive leadership is a crucial factor in teacher retention, ensuring a balanced workload and avoiding micromanagement are equally important aspects of effective school administration. The next section explores how leadership practices that regulate workload and minimize micromanagement impact teacher satisfaction and retention.

3.3.2.2 Workload management & avoiding micromanagement

Workload and burnout remain significant challenges affecting teacher retention.

Teachers frequently report high levels of stress due to increased administrative tasks and expectations to participate in extracurricular activities. Studies indicate that educators who experience excessive workload without adequate institutional support are more likely to leave the profession (Esen et al., 2017). In many cases, teachers are required to extend their working hours beyond instructional duties, taking on administrative responsibilities, preparing lesson plans, assessing student progress, and communicating with parents. This workload intensification leads to exhaustion, stress, and, in many cases, a decline in job satisfaction.

Schools should focus on reducing non-teaching responsibilities and providing teachers with adequate planning time to balance their workload (Gilmore, 2021). Many early career teachers reported excessive workloads that led to stress and burnout, including lesson planning, marking, administrative tasks, and extracurricular responsibilities (Fetherston & Lummis, 2012, as cited in Buchanan et al., 2013). Providing work-life balance incentives such as "duvet days," reduced marking policies, and appreciation gestures (e.g., thank-you cards, meals, extra planning time) has been found to positively impact teacher retention (Arthur & Bradley, 2023).

Emotional exhaustion, particularly in early childhood education, is a major contributor to teacher burnout and subsequent attrition (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Early childhood educators often engage in emotionally demanding interactions with young children, which, when combined with external pressures such as parental expectations and performance evaluations, increase stress levels (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Schools that fail to implement workload management

strategies and mental health support systems tend to have higher teacher turnover rates. Research suggests that providing structured break times, reducing administrative burdens, and encouraging peer collaboration can significantly improve teacher well-being and retention (OECD, 2024).

Teachers who experience lower work-life interference are more likely to stay in the profession, suggesting that policies supporting work-life balance could enhance retention (Bjorklund et al., 2019, as cited in Casely-Hayford et al., 2022). Many childcare teachers cited excessive work demands, administrative tasks, and long working hours as key reasons for leaving (Fenech et al., 2009, as cited in Pek, 2014). Stress is one of the leading causes of teacher attrition, often linked to heavy workloads, long hours, and emotional exhaustion (Hentges, 2012, as cited in MacDonald, 2018). Many participants reported that excessive workloads, unrealistic expectations, and lack of work-life balance made them consider leaving the profession (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, as cited in Gilmore, 2021). Educators who experience job dissatisfaction, lack of recognition, and work-life imbalance are more likely to leave the profession (Heavey et al., 2013, as cited in Shaheen, 2016).

When teachers leave, the remaining staff often take on additional responsibilities, leading to greater burnout and further turnover (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2003, as cited in Hale-Jinks et al., 2006). Shifting teacher evaluation policies to emphasize professional growth rather than punitive measures has been suggested as an effective strategy for improving teacher retention (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Borman & Dowling, 2008). Reducing class sizes and administrative burdens enables teachers to focus on instructional quality and student engagement, improving retention rates (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Recent findings also suggest that workplace flexibility, such as hybrid teaching options, reduced non-teaching responsibilities, and collaborative scheduling, enhances teachers' job satisfaction and institutional commitment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Providing educators with control over their professional responsibilities allows them to maintain engagement and motivation, further reinforcing their decision to remain in the profession. Ensuring time for teaching and reducing administrative burdens is a key factor in retention (Berry et al., 2021). Many teachers left their jobs due to work-life balance concerns, family responsibilities, stress, and health issues, as well as the pursuit of new career opportunities that provided better compensation and work conditions (Eryılmaz & Burgaz, 2011, as cited in Keçeci & Keskinçiliç Kara, 2023). Many teachers struggle with heavy workloads, large class sizes, and administrative responsibilities, which lead to burnout (Billingsley, 1993, as cited in Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022).

3.4 Infrastructure and working conditions

The infrastructure and overall working conditions of a school play a critical role in teacher retention. Schools that offer well-maintained facilities, manageable class sizes, and a positive institutional reputation tend to have lower teacher turnover rates. Research highlights that physical conditions, workload, and school brand perception significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction and long-term commitment.

3.4.1 School facilities and physical environment

The quality of school infrastructure directly impacts teacher retention. Schools with modern, well-maintained buildings and access to adequate teaching resources create a more supportive and productive work environment. Studies indicate that teachers

working in deteriorating buildings with poor ventilation, outdated resources, and insufficient infrastructure are more likely to leave their positions (Buckley, Schneider, & Shank, 2004, as cited in Johnson, 2006).

Schools that invest in safe and resource-rich facilities report higher teacher satisfaction and lower turnover rates (Boyd et al., 2011, as cited in Koerber et al., 2023). Poor working conditions—such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate ventilation, and a lack of instructional materials—negatively affect teacher morale and retention (Ngome, 2002; Waithaka, 2003, as cited in Ndani & Kimani, 2010). Investments in school infrastructure and working conditions are considered cost-effective strategies for improving retention, as teacher turnover costs districts between \$355 and \$5,166 per teacher (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000, as cited in Johnson, 2006).

Private schools strive to meet teachers' physical and psychological needs by improving working conditions, such as reducing class sizes, increasing classroom resources, and maintaining a clean and secure campus. Teachers who feel their work environment is conducive to teaching are more likely to remain in their roles long-term (Demirtaş & Küçük, 2014).

3.4.2 Class size and student-teacher ratio

Class size and student-teacher ratios significantly impact teacher workload and job satisfaction. Schools that maintain small class sizes and ensure sufficient support staff create a more manageable and effective teaching environment. Research shows that schools with lower student-teacher ratios experience lower turnover rates, as teachers can provide more individualized instruction and classroom management (Totenhagen et al., 2016). Conversely, excessive workloads, large class sizes, and

student discipline issues contribute to teacher dissatisfaction and burnout (Kelly, 2004, as cited in Guarino et al., 2006). Teachers working in well-resourced schools with reasonable class sizes report higher job satisfaction and lower attrition rates (Simon & Johnson, 2015, as cited in Kurtz, 2015). Programs with lower staff-to-child ratios also experience reduced turnover, as teachers feel less overwhelmed and better supported in their roles (Totenhagen et al., 2016).

3.4.3 School location and institutional reputation

The geographic location and brand reputation of a school influence teacher retention. Teachers who work in schools located far from their residences or in areas with limited resources often seek transfers or alternative employment (Kolawole, 2019, as cited in Kazak, 2021). Some educators cite proximity to home as a practical reason for staying in a school, emphasizing the role of commute time in job satisfaction (Turner, 2018). Schools in rural or lower-cost-of-living areas may have higher retention rates due to reduced financial stress among teachers (Ndani & Kimani, 2010). However, schools in underserved regions with inadequate resources and insufficient infrastructure frequently experience higher attrition rates (Ngome, 2002; Waithaka, 2003, as cited in Ndani & Kimani, 2010).

School brand perception also plays a role in retention. Institutions with strong academic reputations, community engagement, and leadership recognition tend to attract and retain teachers more effectively (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Teachers working in schools with recognized achievements and positive work environments report higher professional pride and commitment (Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022). Research suggests that teachers who view their school as high-quality and student-centered are more likely to remain in their roles (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022).

Additionally, public and nonprofit child care centers retain staff better than for-profit centers, as they offer more competitive salaries, benefits, and job security (Whitebook et al., 1998, as cited in Totenhagen et al., 2016). Schools that meet accreditation standards and maintain strong institutional policies are more likely to retain qualified educators (Bloom, 1996, as cited in Totenhagen et al., 2016).

In conclusion, school infrastructure, workload, and institutional reputation collectively shape teacher retention rates. Schools that invest in high-quality facilities, manageable workloads, and strong brand identities create environments where teachers feel valued and supported. Addressing these structural factors through targeted investments and policy interventions is essential for sustaining a stable and committed teaching workforce.

3.5 Teacher retention in Türkiye

Teacher retention in Türkiye is influenced by an intricate combination of policy frameworks, employment regulations, and institutional conditions. Public schools operate under the authority of the MEB, with structured employment models and standardized benefits, whereas private institutions often face challenges such as contractual instability, salary inequity, and limited career progression. Understanding teacher retention within the Turkish context necessitates a comprehensive review of the teacher qualification process, public-private employment distinctions, and the evolving legal framework, particularly the implementation of the Teacher Profession Law (Öğretmenlik Meslek Kanunu, ÖMK).

3.5.1 Teacher employment structures in Türkiye

Teacher employment in Türkiye is structured under two main sectors; public and private. Public schools operate under the authority of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), and teachers are either appointed as tenured civil servants (memur öğretmenler) in accordance with Law No. 657 or as contract-based personnel (sözleşmeli öğretmenler) under Law No. 652. Contract-based teachers serve under fixed-term appointments, generally in regions with teacher shortages, and may later gain tenured status through defined procedures and performance evaluations (MEB, 2024; Eurydice, 2023).

To become a public school teacher, candidates must complete a four-year undergraduate degree from an accredited faculty of education (eğitim fakültesi) recognized by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). These programs follow a concurrent model of teacher training, integrating subject matter, pedagogy, and general culture courses (Eurydice, 2023). Graduates must also pass the Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS), followed by an oral examination, to qualify for appointment. Upon selection, newly hired teachers are classified as "candidate teachers" (aday öğretmen), who must complete a structured induction program, including a 654-hour professional development process and two semesters of performance assessment. Those who succeed are granted full "qualified teacher" status (MEB, 2023).

Private school teachers, in contrast, are employed directly by individual institutions. Although private school teachers are required to hold a valid teaching qualification, they are not hired through a centralized placement system. Their employment is governed by general labor law (Law No. 4857), which typically

involves annually renewable contracts without the protections afforded to civil servants (Yıldırım & Bulut, 2023; Güneş & Şahin, 2023).

The distinction between public and private employment structures has significant implications for teacher retention. Public school teachers benefit from structured career pathways, long-term job security, pension entitlements, and defined salary scales. In contrast, private school teachers, particularly those in for-profit settings, often experience job insecurity, limited social benefits, and fewer opportunities for professional growth (Demirtaş & Küçük, 2014; OECD, 2024).

3.5.2 The teacher profession law (ÖMK) and career pathways

Enacted in February 2022, the Teacher Profession Law (Öğretmenlik Meslek Kanunu - ÖMK) aims to establish a structured career progression for teachers in Türkiye by formally defining the titles of *Candidate Teacher (Aday Öğretmen)*, *Teacher (Öğretmen)*, *Expert Teacher (Uzman Öğretmen)*, and *Head Teacher (Başöğretmen)* (Resmî Gazete, 2022). The 2024 implementation guide by MEB provides a detailed roadmap for advancement, requiring teachers to complete specific professional development training, fulfill minimum service years, and pass standardized assessment exams (MEB, 2024).

While these career steps are officially open to both public and private school teachers, important structural inequalities remain. Public school teachers benefit from automatic salary increases and financial incentives upon receiving expert or head teacher status. In contrast, private school teachers are not guaranteed any compensation adjustment unless their institution voluntarily aligns its salary policies with public sector standards (Güneş & Şahin, 2023; MEB, 2024).

Furthermore, private school teachers are not protected under the tenure system of Law No. 657, leaving them more vulnerable to frequent contract termination and job insecurity (Koç & Kök, 2023). Many educators express concern that ÖMK's merit-based exams, while aiming to standardize quality, do not adequately reflect professional competencies and place additional pressure on teachers already facing precarious employment (Gül & Güngör, 2022).

3.5.3 Impact on teacher retention

These structural distinctions have significant implications for teacher retention. Teachers in the public sector are more likely to remain due to long-term employment, pension rights, and structured advancement pathways (OECD, 2024). In contrast, private school teachers face higher attrition rates due to salary disparities, contractual instability, and limited access to institutional support (Yıldırım & Bulut, 2023; Demirtaş & Küçük, 2023).

Moreover, workload remains a key issue across all school types. Teachers frequently report extended hours beyond teaching duties, including administrative work, assessments, and parent communication (Esen et al., 2017; OECD, 2024). In the absence of supportive leadership, protected planning time, and manageable class sizes, burnout and dissatisfaction rise, contributing to turnover (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Whitebook & Sakai, 2003).

To mitigate these challenges—especially in private institutions—research suggests that policies must focus on promoting equitable employment conditions, ensuring structured salary progression that recognizes professional growth, providing access to meaningful professional development and mentorship programs, and

establishing fair workload regulations with dedicated time for collaborative planning (Gilmore, 2021; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; MEB, 2024).



CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research approach

This study employs a qualitative research methodology using a descriptive case study design to explore the experiences of preschool teachers who have remained at the same institution for an extended period. The case study approach was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing teacher retention in a specific private preschool in Istanbul. This design aligns with Zainal's (2007) assertion that case studies allow researchers to investigate complex real-world phenomena from the perspectives of the participants.

A qualitative case study is particularly appropriate for examining teacher retention, as it enables a detailed investigation of teachers' lived experiences, motivations, and institutional factors contributing to their long-term commitment. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012), a descriptive case study is ideal for studies that aim to capture rich, real-life insights without manipulating variables. This method facilitates a deeper exploration of how institutional culture, professional relationships, and personal experiences shape teachers' decisions to remain at the same school over time.

4.2 Research design

This study follows a descriptive case study design, focusing on a single private preschool known for its low teacher turnover in Istanbul. The qualitative design allows for an open-ended exploration of the teachers' perspectives and experiences,

ensuring a comprehensive understanding of teacher retention factors in this unique educational setting.

The case study design was chosen because it enables an in-depth examination of teacher retention within a specific context rather than aiming for generalizability across different institutions. By centering the research on a single school environment, this study provides a holistic account of the institutional factors, support mechanisms, and individual motivations influencing teachers' decisions to remain.

4.3 Sampling and participants

This study utilizes purposeful sampling, selecting teachers based on their years of service at the institution to ensure that participants provide meaningful insights into long-term teacher retention. The primary criterion for selection was a minimum of five years of experience at the school, as this tenure reflects a substantial commitment to the institution.

Initially, 20 teachers who met this criterion were invited to participate. However, three teachers declined due to personal reasons, and one could not schedule an interview. To maintain a sufficient participant pool, two additional teachers with three years of experience were included. While they do not fully meet the initial five-year criterion, their perspectives offer valuable insights into factors that contribute to retention even in the early years of employment.

Teachers who had confirmed plans to leave the institution in the upcoming academic year were excluded from the study. This exclusion ensured that the data reflected perspectives from teachers who had demonstrated a genuine long-term commitment to the institution.

The study included 18 teachers working at the private school, categorized as Turkish homeroom teachers, English homeroom teachers, and assistant teachers. Participants varied in terms of educational background, years of teaching experience, tenure at the school, and age. The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 55 years.

Demographic information regarding participants' education levels, tenure at the school, and total teaching experience is summarized in Table 1. To protect participant confidentiality, detailed individual demographic data beyond group-level information was intentionally not disclosed. This approach was adopted to further ensure anonymity, especially given the relatively small sample size and institutional setting.

Among the participants, eight were Turkish homeroom teachers, all holding a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or higher. Their years of experience at the school ranged from 3 to 26 years, with an overall professional experience between 8 and 34 years. On average, this group had 17 years of experience at the school and 24 years in total.

The assistant teachers ($n = 5$) had vocational high school diplomas or associate degrees. Their tenure at the school ranged from 9 to 27 years, with total experience spanning 13 to 32 years. This group had an average of 19 years of experience at the school and 24 years in total.

The English homeroom teachers ($n = 5$) held either bachelor's or master's degrees. Their tenure at the school varied between 3 and 19 years, while their overall experience ranged from 8 to 30 years. The average experience for this group was 11 years at the school and 18 years in total.

Overall, the participants had an average of 15 years of experience at the school and 22 years of total teaching experience. This diverse group provided

insights based on long-term experience within the institution, contributing to a well-rounded understanding of teacher retention factors.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Teacher Group	n	Education Level	Years of Tenure in this School (M)	Total Experience (M)
Turkish Homeroom	7	Bachelor's		
Teachers	1	Master's	17	24.5
Assistant Teachers	4	Vocational HS		
	1	Associate	17.8	22
English Homeroom	1	Bachelor's		
Teachers	4	Master's	11.4	19.4
Total/Average	18	-	15.5	22

4.4 Data collection methods

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection method to explore preschool teachers' educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and perspectives on long-term retention at their school. Semi-structured interviews were selected due to their flexibility, allowing participants to share their experiences in depth while also providing a structured framework for gathering relevant data. This method is widely used in qualitative research as it facilitates a deeper exploration of complex social phenomena and enables participants to articulate their views freely while maintaining consistency across responses (Ruslin, 2022).

Interviews were conducted in Turkish or English, depending on the participants' language preferences. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes

and was conducted face-to-face, then transcribed for analysis. The interview process was designed to capture both demographic information and qualitative insights into teachers' professional motivations, institutional experiences, and workplace satisfaction. Unlike structured interviews that rely on a fixed set of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews allow for probing and follow-up questions, enabling a deeper understanding of the specific factors that contribute to teacher retention (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Each interview began with general demographic questions to gather information on participants' years of teaching experience, educational background, and tenure at the institution. This initial section helped establish context and guided subsequent discussions. The main section of the interview consisted of open-ended questions exploring participants' professional perspectives, including their views on teaching as a profession, school leadership, collegial relationships, institutional support, and challenges faced throughout their careers. These questions were designed to assess whether teachers' professional priorities aligned with their experiences at the institution.

In addition to the core interview questions, alternative prompts were incorporated to explore specific institutional factors identified in the literature as key contributors to teacher retention, including leadership style, professional development opportunities, workload, and financial stability (Ingersoll, 2001; Guarino et al., 2006). Participants were encouraged to evaluate how these factors influenced their decision to remain at the institution, allowing for an indirect comparison between their expectations and actual experiences.

Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent to ensure accuracy in data collection. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, and the

researcher conducted translations where necessary. To enhance the reliability of the translated transcripts, three bilingual English teachers who participated in the study reviewed the translations. Additionally, a forward and back-translation process was carried out with two English teachers proficient in Turkish to ensure linguistic consistency and maintain the integrity of participants' narratives.

The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring consistency in data collection. Teachers were encouraged to provide real-life examples, facilitating a richer dataset for thematic analysis. The open-ended nature of the interviews also allowed for a comprehensive exploration of individual motivations and institutional factors influencing teacher retention.

To ensure a comfortable and confidential interview environment, all interviews were conducted in private spaces familiar to the participants. This approach helped establish trust and encouraged open communication while minimizing the potential influence of the researcher's administrative role at the school. Throughout the interviews, active listening techniques were employed to ensure that participants felt heard and understood, reinforcing the credibility and depth of the data collected.

The use of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method provided a holistic understanding of teacher retention in the institution while ensuring that participant voices remained central to the study. This approach allowed for a detailed exploration of the personal and institutional factors influencing long-term teacher commitment within a private preschool setting.

4.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews. This method allows identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the data, providing insights into the factors influencing teacher retention in the selected preschool. The analysis followed a structured process, beginning with transcription, coding, and theme development, ensuring that the findings were systematically derived from the data.

4.5.1 Transcription and coding

All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness in data representation. The transcription was conducted on a secured personal computer, and any identifiable participant information was removed to maintain confidentiality. Once transcriptions were finalized, an open coding process was initiated, in which key phrases and concepts were identified within the data. Open coding allowed for the initial categorization of responses without predetermined themes, ensuring that themes emerged directly from participant narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Following open coding, axial coding was conducted to establish relationships between codes and refine thematic categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This process involved grouping similar concepts and identifying overarching themes that reflected teachers' motivations, challenges, and institutional influences on retention. Selective coding was then applied to integrate and finalize core themes that captured the most significant insights from the dataset. This multi-stage coding process ensured a comprehensive understanding of teacher retention within the case study setting.

4.5.2 Tools and materials

To maintain accuracy and confidentiality in data collection and analysis, several tools were utilized throughout the research process. All interviews were recorded using a password-protected device to ensure data security. The transcriptions were conducted manually and stored on a secured personal computer with restricted access. Data analysis was carried out using a qualitative analysis software, which facilitated the systematic organization of codes and themes. This software-assisted approach enabled the researcher to track recurring patterns and enhance the reliability of the thematic analysis.

4.5.3 Evaluation of methods

The qualitative case study approach was chosen for its suitability for in-depth exploration of teacher retention in a specific institutional setting. This methodology allowed for a nuanced understanding of teachers' lived experiences and the contextual factors that contributed to their long-term commitment. One of the primary challenges encountered during data collection was ensuring participant comfort and openness when discussing sensitive topics such as job satisfaction, workplace relationships, and professional challenges.

To address these concerns, all interviews were conducted in a familiar and private setting to foster a sense of ease and encourage candid responses. Additionally, the voluntary nature of participation was emphasized throughout the research process, ensuring that teachers felt no obligation to answer questions they were uncomfortable discussing. Despite these challenges, the chosen methodology effectively generated rich qualitative data that provided valuable insights into the key factors influencing teacher retention in the selected preschool.

4.5.4 Confidentiality measures

Maintaining confidentiality was a fundamental priority throughout the research process. To protect participant identities, all audio recordings were securely stored on a password-protected device and permanently deleted after transcription and verification. The transcriptions were anonymized by removing any identifiable information before beginning the coding and analysis process.

Informed consent forms and any physical documentation related to the study were securely stored in a locked cabinet, ensuring restricted access to sensitive information. Only anonymized data was shared with the thesis advisor and used solely for research purposes. These confidentiality measures ensured the integrity and ethical standards of the research, reinforcing the trust between the researcher and participants while safeguarding their personal and professional information.

4.6 Researcher's role and reflexivity

As the vice principal at the preschool where this study was conducted, my dual role as both a researcher and an administrator presented unique challenges and opportunities. While my position provided participants with deep institutional knowledge and access, it also introduced potential biases and ethical considerations. Being in a leadership role, I was aware that my presence could influence teachers' willingness to participate and the way they responded to interview questions. The possibility of power dynamics affecting participant responses was a key concern, as teachers might have felt pressured to participate or shape their answers to align with perceived expectations. There was also the risk that some participants might fear potential consequences, such as additional responsibilities or favoritism, based on

their decision to participate or the perspectives they shared. These factors could have implications for the credibility and reliability of the findings.

To mitigate these concerns, I prioritized ethical research practices by ensuring transparency, voluntary participation, and confidentiality throughout the study. Participation was strictly voluntary, which was clearly communicated to all potential participants. As evidence of this, three teachers (two assistant teachers and one English teacher) chose not to participate, and one additional teacher initially agreed but later withdrew due to scheduling conflicts. None of these decisions resulted in any consequences, reinforcing the voluntary nature of participation. The institution's existing mechanisms for anonymous feedback, such as staff satisfaction surveys and open communication policies, further supported a climate where teachers felt safe expressing their views without fear of professional repercussions. This emphasis on trust and confidentiality was essential to maintaining the integrity of the research process.

Beyond addressing potential challenges, my role as a leader also offered significant advantages. Having worked closely with teachers, I had firsthand knowledge of the institutional culture, professional expectations, and support systems in place. This familiarity enabled me to contextualize participants' responses and gain deeper insights into the factors influencing their long-term retention. Additionally, my long-standing professional relationships with the participants fostered an atmosphere of openness during the interviews, allowing teachers to express their experiences candidly. The study provided a valuable opportunity for self-reflection, helping me understand what aspects of the institution contributed to teachers' satisfaction and commitment.

Throughout the research process, I maintained a reflexive approach, continually examining how my positionality might influence data collection and interpretation. I remained conscious of the need to separate my administrative role from my researcher identity, ensuring that participants' voices remained central to the study. By upholding ethical guidelines and prioritizing transparency, I sought to mitigate any potential biases while deriving meaningful insights to benefit both the institution and the broader field of teacher retention research.

My journey within this institution, beginning as a teacher before transitioning into a leadership role, shaped my approach to this study. Having shared experiences with many participants as colleagues before assuming an administrative position, I was mindful of how these past relationships influenced their willingness to engage in the research. My history as a teacher allowed me to build strong professional relationships based on mutual trust, which, in turn, contributed to the authenticity of the findings. This trust was reflected in participants' openness during interviews and reinforced the collaborative, supportive culture that has been cultivated within the school over time.

Through this research, I not only explored teacher retention from an academic perspective but also gained a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the educators within my institution. The findings will serve as a foundation for further improving teacher support mechanisms and fostering a professional environment where educators feel valued, supported, and motivated to continue their careers within the school.

4.7 Contextual assets and strengths

This study was enriched by several contextual strengths that enhanced the depth, authenticity, and relevance of its findings. First, the research was conducted within an institution that demonstrated a strong commitment to professional openness and reflective practice. The school's leadership supported the study's implementation, providing access to participants and facilitating a research environment characterized by trust, transparency, and professional autonomy. This institutional openness and support enabled teachers to share their experiences candidly, without fear of professional repercussions.

A key strength of the study was the institutional stability of the school itself. The study took place in an educational setting with relatively low staff turnover and a mission-driven culture that promotes long-term teacher commitment. This environment provided a rich backdrop for exploring factors influencing teacher retention over extended periods. Teachers participating in the study reflected a collective sense of professional belonging and institutional loyalty, offering insights grounded in sustained experience rather than transient impressions.

Another important contextual asset was the researcher's positionality as an insider. Having worked at the institution for eleven years—first as a preschool teacher and later as a vice principal—the researcher possessed deep contextual knowledge of the school's culture, values, and organizational practices. This long-term embeddedness allowed for a nuanced interpretation of participant responses, capturing subtle dynamics that might have been overlooked by an external researcher. Additionally, the pre-existing professional relationships between the researcher and participants fostered an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, encouraging authentic dialogue during interviews.

Furthermore, the study's design intentionally emphasized giving voice to teachers—a group whose experiences and perspectives are often underrepresented in institutional research. By foregrounding participants' lived experiences, the study not only examined retention trends but also highlighted the professional identities, motivations, and values that contribute to sustained engagement in the teaching profession.

In addition, it is worth noting that four teachers—three assistant teachers and one English homeroom teacher—either declined to participate. Their ability to make this choice freely, without fearing any professional consequences or disruption in their working relationship with the researcher, further illustrates the institution's climate of psychological safety and trust. This reinforces that participation was genuinely voluntary and that power dynamics did not compromise the integrity of the data. It also reflects the researcher's commitment to upholding ethical standards and creating an environment where teacher autonomy and voice were respected.

Taken together, these contextual strengths contributed to the robustness and authenticity of the study, enabling a comprehensive exploration of teacher retention within a real-world, institutionally embedded case.

4.8 Trustworthiness

To ensure the overall trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, this study adopted the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985); credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants, including in-depth semi-structured interviews and the opportunity for follow-up communication after initial data collection. This iterative interaction enabled the

researcher to clarify ambiguities, deepen understanding, and foster mutual trust throughout the research process. In addition, all participants were provided with their verbatim transcripts and were asked to verify the accuracy of the content by signing a transcript verification form. This step ensured that the data accurately reflected their intended meanings. Furthermore, a member-checking process was conducted, during which preliminary codes and themes were shared with one of the original participants who volunteered for this stage. Their feedback contributed to confirming the authenticity of the interpretations. These procedures collectively enhanced the study's credibility by promoting transparency, co-interpretation, and contextual accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Campbell & Walter, 2016).

Transferability was addressed through rich, thick descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures. By providing detailed contextual information and direct quotations from participants, the study aimed to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other educational settings.

Dependability was ensured through rigorous documentation of the research process, including verbatim transcriptions of interviews and an audit trail of analytic decisions. This transparent approach allowed for a clear demonstration of how the findings were derived and supported consistency throughout the study.

Confirmability was strengthened through multiple strategies designed to reduce researcher bias and ensure objectivity. Peer debriefing was conducted with a colleague who was not involved in the study; this individual reviewed the generated codes and themes and provided independent feedback regarding their coherence and neutrality. Furthermore, anonymized transcripts and thematic analyses were shared with the research supervisor, who critically examined the analytic process and offered methodological guidance throughout the study. All data shared respected

participant confidentiality. These combined strategies ensured that the findings remained grounded in participants' narratives rather than researcher assumptions, enhancing the transparency and confirmability of the research.



CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

5.1 Introduction to findings

This chapter presents findings from semi-structured interviews with 18 teachers at a private preschool in Istanbul, exploring retention factors. Data collection involved two approaches. First, teachers answered open-ended questions: “What are your priorities in the workplace?” and “What motivates you to stay at this school?” These responses, which were analyzed comparatively, are summarized in Tables 5.2 and 5.3, capturing spontaneously articulated themes’ prevalence and frequency. Second, teachers provided targeted evaluations of domains like collegial relationships, leadership, and resources, offering nuanced insights into their school-specific experiences. Four core themes emerged through thematic analysis—Collegial Relations and Dynamics, Leadership, Institutional Resources, and Reflections— as detailed in Table 5.1.

The analysis draws on Vygotsky’s Constructivist Theory (1978), Wenger’s Communities of Practice (CoP) framework (1998), and Meyer and Allen’s Three-Component Model of Commitment (1991), applied selectively. Collegial relations align with CoP and affective commitment, leadership with normative commitment and Vygotsky’s ZPD, resources with continuance commitment, and reflections blend these lenses. While this chapter employs thematic analysis to identify retention drivers, Sections 5.2 and 5.3 adopt a comparative lens, contrasting teachers’ initial priorities with their motivations for staying, with methodological details in Chapter 3.

Table 2. Overview of Themes and Sub-Themes

Parts	Themes	Sub-Themes
Part-1: Teachers' Pathways into the Profession	Intrinsic Motivations	-
	Extrinsic Influences	Influence of Role Models
		Early Educational Experiences
		Career Adaptation
Part-2: Expectations vs Motivations:	A Comparative Overview	-
Part-3: Core Drivers of Retention at This School	Collegial Relations and Dynamics	Relationships,
		Communication
	Leadership	Sense of Community,
		Supportive Leadership,
		Autonomy and Professional Trust
		Recognition, Institutional Commitment,
		and Policies
		Financial Support and Benefits,
	Institutional Resources	Educational Philosophy and Growth
		Mindedness
	Organizational Governance	Predictability
		Institutional Support
Part-4: Teachers' Reflections	Feelings at School,	-
	Areas for Growth	
	Suggestions	

5.2 Part-1: Teachers' pathways into the profession

Teachers' career choices are shaped by multiple factors, including early exposure to teaching environments, influential role models, personal passion for education, and external circumstances. This section examines the key themes that emerged from teachers' narratives about their journey into the profession and their sustained commitment.

5.2.1 Intrinsic motivations: Passion, emotional bonds, and lifelong learning

Four teachers described their intrinsic motivation to work with children as central to their job satisfaction and long-term commitment. A deep love for children and an inherent passion for teaching emerged as primary motivators. For example, Teacher 12 shared, "I chose child development because I loved children," while Teacher 13 reflected similarly, saying, "I always wanted to work with children and be part of their world." Teacher 7's upbringing in a close-knit, playful family environment naturally strengthened their bond with children, and Teacher 9 described their passion for child development as a clear motivator, explaining how it shaped their educational path.

Teachers also viewed their role as mentors and guides, fostering children's academic and personal growth. Teacher 15 reflected, "Teaching is about helping children learn life skills beyond academics," while Teacher 9 resembled teaching to "being a coach, walking alongside children as they take steps into life." Teacher 4 described how their teaching approach aligned with their school's philosophy, emphasizing the importance of creating an exploratory learning environment. These perspectives illustrate the teachers' commitment to supporting children beyond the classroom and align with the community of practice theory, which emphasizes the

role of collaboration and shared professional growth in shaping long-term commitment to a profession.

Additionally, many teachers highlighted the joy of continuous learning within the profession. Teacher 1 described teaching as "learning every day," with each new child representing a unique opportunity for discovery. Teacher 19 described the cycle of teaching and learning as "endlessly joyful," while Teacher 13 highlighted the personal reward of "touching lives and sharing knowledge." Teacher 20 framed teaching as an act of "opening doors for children, sparking curiosity, and encouraging exploration." This perception reinforces constructivist theory, which suggests that teachers who actively engage in reflective practices and professional learning environments experience greater job satisfaction and sustained commitment to their institutions.

5.2.2 Extrinsic influences

Beyond personal passion, many teachers emphasized the importance of external factors such as structured teacher training programs, role models, and unforeseen career opportunities.

5.2.2.1 Influence of role models

Three teachers described mentors, family members, or influential educators as playing a critical role in shaping their career aspirations. Teacher 20 recounted how an ESL teacher's encouragement led them to explore teaching: "She observed me helping a new student and asked if I had thought about teaching. Her words sparked my interest." Teacher 10 shared how their sister encouraged them to pursue

preschool teaching after a setback in a Fine Arts exam. Teacher 16 reflected on their father's brief experience as a teacher and noted, "Perhaps it was in my background."

This highlights the role of professional adaptation and identity formation, as social interactions within communities of practice provide cognitive and emotional scaffolding that reinforces teachers' sense of purpose and direction. Constructivist theory further suggests that professional identity is shaped through mentorship and modeling, where career decisions are influenced by interpersonal interactions and external guidance.

5.2.2.2 Early educational experiences

Four teachers cited their educational background in teacher training high schools as a pivotal factor in their decision to enter the profession. These schools not only provided early exposure to pedagogical principles but also facilitated a smooth transition into university teaching programs. Teacher 19 explained, "I have always been inclined towards helping others and explaining things clearly. I continued my path into university, leveraging the advantage of attending a teacher training high school." Similarly, Teacher 1 recalled how graduating from a vocational high school motivated their decision to pursue teaching to maintain a GPA advantage, adding, "I also grew up as the child of a teacher, so I always wanted to become one." Teacher 17 emphasized both the GPA benefit and their early love for English: "By then, you are already on this path."

This structured pathway reflects constructivist learning principles, where individuals shape their professional identity through hands-on experiences and real-world engagement in educational settings. The transition from student to educator within a supportive community of practice fosters a strong sense of belonging and

early professional commitment to the field. Teachers in this study who experienced structured vocational training were more likely to articulate a deep-rooted confidence in their career choice and a strong attachment to the profession.

5.2.2.3 Career adaptation

Not all teachers initially planned to pursue teaching. Some entered the profession by chance, while others transitioned from different fields before discovering their passion for education. Teacher 8 admitted they did not feel connected to children at first but, over time, "I grew to love and appreciate teaching as I developed my skills." Teacher 5 echoed this sentiment, explaining how their natural aptitude for teaching became evident despite it not being their first choice. Teacher 2 reflected on pursuing preschool teaching reluctantly after missing their goal of studying law but eventually embracing it. Teacher 18 described themselves as an "accidental teacher," initially focusing on business before realizing the fulfillment of working with children. Similarly, Teacher 19 transitioned from microbiology to English teaching, finding unexpected joy in kindergarten education after moving to Türkiye.

This highlights the role of professional adaptation and identity formation. Meyer and Allen's continuance commitment suggests that external factors such as job availability and financial stability may initially lead individuals to stay in a profession, but intrinsic factors later solidify their dedication. Over time, these teachers found purpose and fulfillment, reinforcing their commitment through experiential learning and personal growth.

5.3 Part-2: Expectations vs. Motivations: A comparative overview

This section compares teachers' general workplace priorities with their specific motivations for staying at this school, based on responses to "What are your priorities in a workplace?" and "What motivates you to stay at this school?"

Thematic coding identified factors such as collegial relationships, financial support, and institutional policies, with prevalence (number of teachers) and frequency (mentions) detailed in Tables 5.2 and 5.3. Meyer and Allen's (1991) Analysis integrates Vygotsky (1978), Wenger (1998), and Meyer and Allen (1991).

Table 3. Factors Mentioned by the Number of Teachers

Factor	Teachers Mentioning It as a Priority	Teachers Mentioning It as a Retention Factor
Salary, Financial Support & Social Benefits	6	10
Feelings Toward the School	6	6
Communication & Relationships with Colleagues	14	11
Workload & Working Hours	4	3
Structured & Well-Organized Institutional Systems	4	5
Professional Development	1	0
Institutional Policies	6	4
Sense of Belonging to the Institution	1	0
Relationship with Management	6	6
Feeling Valued as a Teacher	6	3
Physical Location	1	1

This table shows how many individual teachers mentioned a specific factor in their responses.

Table 4. Frequency of Mentions in Teacher Narratives

Factor	Number of Times	Number of Times
	Mentioned as a Priority	Mentioned as a Retention Factor
Salary, Financial Support & Social Benefits	8	17
Feelings Toward the School	6	7
Communication & Relationships with Colleagues	21	15
Workload & Working Hours	4	3
Structured & Well-Organized Institutional Systems	5	4
Professional Development	1	0
Institutional Policies	7	5
Sense of Belonging to the Institution	1	1
Relationship with Management	6	6
Feeling Valued as a Teacher	7	3
Physical Location	1	1

This table shows the number of times each factor was referenced across all teacher responses, offering a broader perspective on how frequently these themes emerged. Collegial Relations and Dynamics: Prioritized by 14 teachers (21 mentions), Teacher 15 said, “We understand each other... a strong team bond,” motivating 11 (15 mentions), with Teacher 9 noting, “Friendship is key.” Wenger’s (1998) CoP frames

this as a collaborative learning community, fostering affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Leadership: Six teachers each (6 mentions) prioritized and were motivated by management, with Teacher 20 valuing “being heard,” reflecting normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Teacher 18’s “no micromanagement” aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD, where autonomy supports growth.

Institutional Resources: Financial support shifted from 6 (8 mentions) to 10 (17 mentions), Teacher 3: “Best in terms of salary”—continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Professional development, minimally cited (1 priority, 0 motivators), ties to Vygotsky’s growth opportunities (see 5.3.3).

Reflections: Feelings (6 teachers, 6 and 7 mentions), Teacher 18: “I’m grateful,” blend affective commitment with CoP’s sense of belonging (Wenger, 1998).

5.4 Part-3: Core drivers of retention at this school

5.4.1 Collegial relations and dynamics

Teachers in this study emphasized that collegial relationships play a crucial role in shaping their professional satisfaction and long-term commitment to the institution. Thematic analysis revealed three interconnected aspects of collegiality that influence retention; relationships, communication, and sense of community. While emotional bonds and mutual trust reinforce affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), structured collaboration and shared practices contribute to a strong Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998), allowing teachers to engage in continuous professional growth and social learning.

5.4.1.1 Relationships

Strong interpersonal relationships emerged as a key factor in teacher retention, with many participants describing their colleagues as a second family. Deep emotional connections, trust, and mutual support contribute to teachers' affective commitment, reinforcing their desire to remain in the institution. Cramer & Cappella (2019) highlight that such emotional bonds can mitigate workplace stressors, providing teachers with a psychological safety net in high-demand environments like early childhood education. As teachers state;

"They're warm, helpful... like family... this school is my family now."
(Teacher 3, Q1)

"They've become like family over the years... coming here doesn't feel like just going to work." (Teacher 5, Q2)

"My team has deeply supported my sense of belonging—it's why I've stayed so long." (Teacher 7, Q3)

These reflections align with findings from Kelchtermans (2017), who argues that strong professional relationships enhance teachers' sense of belonging and professional identity. Teachers who feel valued and emotionally connected to their workplace are less likely to leave, as they perceive their institution not only as a professional setting but also as a significant part of their personal and social identity.

Additionally, collegial relationships serve as an informal support system, helping teachers navigate challenges and maintain motivation. As expressed by teachers;

"I can share my feelings with the people I have worked with for many years. Believe me, I talk about my daily life with them even more than I do with most of my family or relatives." (Teacher 13, Q4)

"We have friendships that continue outside of school as well. I can talk about the problems I experience both inside and outside of school."
(Teacher 1, Q5)

"Even short moments with them lift my spirits... they're a source of motivation." (Teacher 17, Q6)

"Relationships with friends and even the kids are so intertwined—it's a unique closeness." (Teacher 10, Q7)

Polizzi et al. (2021) emphasize that such peer support systems are particularly beneficial in early childhood education (ECE) settings, where high emotional labor and job-related stress are prevalent. The ability to rely on trusted colleagues fosters emotional resilience, reducing the likelihood of burnout and turnover.

5.4.1.2 Communication

Open and respectful communication was another dominant theme influencing teacher retention. Effective communication not only strengthens collegial bonds but also fosters a collaborative and psychologically safe work environment, where teachers feel heard and valued. Hewett & La Paro (2019) found that clear, trust-based communication enhances organizational culture, reduces workplace stress, and improves teacher well-being. Findings that align with participants' reflections,

"Being open to communication has helped me build strong bonds." (Teacher 9, Q8)

"Respect and trust are at the highest level—it's foundational." (Teacher 12, Q9)

"Even with differing ideas, we can talk openly." (Teacher 3, Q10)

"We respect each other's ideas... we truly understand one another." (Teacher 18)

The absence of competition and hierarchical communication barriers in this institution was perceived as an important factor in fostering trust and job satisfaction. Teachers described how informal interactions—such as casual hallway conversations or morning chats—contributed to a positive and engaging work environment,

"Morning chats, even joking with the assistant principal, keep me motivated."
(Teacher 17, Q11)

"A welcoming place where we feel respected, and we share ideas freely."
(Teacher 16)

However, Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2018) caution that poor communication or unclear expectations can lead to increased stress and teacher disengagement. While most teachers in this study reported strong communication practices, institutional growth may pose challenges in maintaining these dynamics. As schools expand, leadership teams must be proactive in sustaining open dialogue and reinforcing communication policies to ensure all teachers continue to feel heard and valued.

5.4.1.3 Sense of community

Beyond one-on-one relationships, teachers described a broader sense of community as a defining feature of their workplace. Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) framework suggests that shared practices, collaboration, and mutual engagement create a strong professional identity, which fosters retention. Majority of teachers in this study reinforced this idea, emphasizing the school's culture of collective responsibility and teamwork,

"I trust my colleagues completely... if I can't do something, someone steps in... everyone supports each other in the moment." (Teacher 6, Q12)

"We understand each other, and that creates a strong team bond. We help one another without hesitation, and that sense of shared responsibility is what holds us together." (Teacher 15, Q13)

This institution was described as a non-competitive, collaborative environment where teachers feel motivated by peer learning rather than rivalry,

"Even though there are schools offering better financial packages, I don't feel the need to leave because the environment here is unique and supportive. There's no jealousy or competition, just camaraderie." (Teacher 15, Q14)

"We're a team... if something comes up, we solve it together." (Teacher 2, Q15)

"No one crushes another... the school encourages learning from each other—it's inspiring." (Teacher 9, Q16)

This aligns with Hargreaves & Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital, which argues that a strong sense of shared purpose and mutual trust enhances teacher satisfaction and retention. Schools that prioritize collaboration over competition foster an environment where teachers feel professionally and emotionally invested in their institution.

The sense of community was particularly valued by expatriate teachers, who noted that their workplace provided a stable and welcoming social network,

"For someone from abroad, coming to school is like coming to a community. It makes you feel connected." (Teacher 18)

To sustain a strong sense of community, research suggests that schools should invest in structured team-building initiatives, professional learning communities, and mentorship programs (Burke et al., 2015). Encouraging informal socialization opportunities and peer networking events can help counteract institutional detachment and reinforce a culture of collaboration and belonging.

Findings from this study underscore the pivotal role of collegial relationships, communication, and a strong sense of community in teacher retention. Emotional bonds and trust-based interactions reinforce affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), while structured collaborative learning environments align with Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice framework. Schools that prioritize open communication, professional trust, and collective engagement create workplaces where teachers feel valued, connected, and committed to long-term service.

To sustain these positive dynamics, particularly in expanding institutions, leadership teams must actively foster professional collaboration, maintain open

communication channels, and create policies that reinforce workplace cohesion. By doing so, schools can reduce turnover rates, enhance teacher well-being, and ensure long-term institutional stability.

5.4.2 Leadership

Teachers' reflections on their interactions with preschool and upper management surfaced a triad of supportive leadership, fair policies with autonomy, and recognition of their value, which we distilled into Supportive Leadership, Policies/Fairness/Autonomy, and Recognition/Value based on their descriptions of trust, freedom, and appreciation.

5.4.2.1 Supportive leadership

Supportive leadership plays a fundamental role in teacher retention by fostering a work environment built on trust, respect, and constructive communication. When teachers feel valued and supported by their administrators, they are more likely to remain engaged and committed to their roles (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Research indicates that school leadership that prioritizes relational trust and professional respect contributes significantly to long-term institutional commitment (Kelchtermans, 2017). The Communities of Practice (CoP) framework (Wenger, 1998) reinforces this perspective, emphasizing that professional learning and teacher identity development are strengthened when individuals engage in shared discourse and feel a sense of belonging in their work environment.

In this study, eleven teachers explicitly stated that they experience a leadership style that is non-oppressive, respectful, and supportive, which positively impacts their motivation to stay. As teachers stated:

“I’ve never experienced a top-down, oppressive approach here. The administration doesn’t impose rigid directives or exert pressure unnecessarily.” (Teacher 5, Q17)

“If you work in a place where a manager targets you or constantly criticizes you, it becomes psychologically unbearable. Positive and constructive communication is crucial for staying in a school.” (Teacher 1, Q18)

“Being supported by a management team that trusts and enables me to grow is one of the reasons I stay.” (Teacher 17, Q19)

“There’s no mobbing or oppressive behavior here. I can work without feeling constantly monitored.” (Teacher 9, Q20)

“Our preschool principal isn’t oppressive... there’s no mobbing or psychological pressure—it’s a relief.” (Teacher 1, Q21)

These findings align with Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2018), who found that schools fostering a leadership culture of trust and professional respect experience lower turnover rates. Leaders who create environments free from intimidation or excessive oversight contribute to higher teacher engagement and job satisfaction (Webber & Dunbar, 2020).

Beyond trust, constructive feedback and professional dialogue also emerged as crucial factors. Seven teachers expressed that leadership provides clear expectations and constructive guidance, helping them improve professionally. As teachers shared:

“Mistakes have always been communicated to us constructively, with guidance on how to improve. Rules, such as respect and boundaries, are clearly established, creating a professional and respectful environment.” (Teacher 4, Q22)

“When we face challenges, we can approach the administration and feel supported.” (Teacher 16)

“My principal at that time called me back when I was considering other options... I returned because of that trust and personal connection.” (Teacher 3, Q23)

“Feedback on my teamwork from my principal motivates me... they see my contributions.” (Teacher 13, Q24)

“I expect my manager to support me quickly and accurately. The prompt transmission of information from upper management and the manager's clarity in all matters are truly elements that can keep an employee in an institution for a long time.” (Teacher 7, Q25)

This perspective supports Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, which suggests that structured autonomy within a supportive framework fosters professional confidence. When teachers receive constructive feedback rather than rigid oversight, they experience greater job satisfaction and commitment (Seibert, 2015).

Additionally, two teachers emphasized that leadership creates a balanced and respectful environment where work-life harmony is considered. As teachers noted:

“It's about finding harmony—everything needs to be balanced to keep teachers motivated.” (Teacher 3, Q26)

“We're human. We need to relax, and we need to understand each other better.” (Teacher 7, Q27)

These reflections align with Kelchtermans (2017), who highlights that leaders who prioritize work-life balance and professional respect contribute significantly to teacher retention. Institutions that actively cultivate a leadership approach based on trust, constructive guidance, and respect are more likely to retain motivated and engaged educators.

Overall, the findings emphasize that supportive leadership is a multifaceted factor in retention, encompassing relational trust, constructive feedback, and a balanced work environment. Schools that foster these qualities through their leadership practices create a sustainable and committed teaching workforce (Wenger, 1998; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

5.4.2.2 Autonomy and professional trust

Teachers' perceptions of autonomy and professional trust significantly influence their commitment to an institution. Research highlights that teachers who experience greater professional autonomy and trust from leadership demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction and are more likely to remain in their positions (Kelchtermans, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). The ability to make independent pedagogical decisions, develop curriculum content, and exercise judgment in the classroom fosters a sense of ownership and professional agency (Guarino, Santibáñez, & Daley, 2006).

In the context of early childhood education, institutional trust plays a pivotal role in teacher retention. Schools that promote a culture of trust empower teachers to implement their expertise without excessive oversight or micromanagement (Pyrko, Dörfler, & Eden, 2016). When teachers feel that their professional opinions are valued, they develop a stronger connection to their workplace, which enhances both their motivation and institutional loyalty. As teachers explained:

“Even though this is a private school, there has never been an expectation for teachers to act in a way that simply pleases parents. None of my administrators or managers have ever asked me to adjust my observations or feedback about a student. I present my professional opinion regarding a child’s development objectively, and the school supports me in this. The message I receive is clear: ‘Our teacher knows what they are doing and does it well.’ I have never felt pressure to soften or alter my professional judgments.” (Teacher 5, Q28)

“We are treated as professionals, and our knowledge and skills are respected. This gives us the freedom to adapt to the needs of the children without being micromanaged.” (Teacher 16)

“They trust me to plan my curriculum... I’m free within a framework, which I need. My effort is seen by management and parents—it’s precious to me.” (Teacher 7, Q29)

These reflections align with Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that professional autonomy within a structured environment fosters confidence and innovation in instructional practices. Teachers who are given decision-making

power within defined parameters are more likely to feel valued and remain engaged in their roles. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) framework further supports this perspective by emphasizing that teachers develop a stronger professional identity when they can contribute meaningfully to institutional decisions.

“Management here strikes a fair balance. There’s no micromanagement; nobody hovers over us, telling us what to do all the time. That relaxed environment and mutual understanding keep me motivated to stay.” (Teacher 18)

Findings indicate that micromanagement negatively impacts teachers' perceptions of trust and autonomy, leading to dissatisfaction and increased attrition rates (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In contrast, leaders who establish clear expectations while respecting teachers' expertise foster a culture of trust that enhances institutional commitment (Kelchtermans, 2017). As teachers stated:

“As an English teacher, we have a degree of freedom in our curriculum. That matters to me.” (Teacher 15)

“The management does not interfere with our work as teachers. We are trusted to do our job, and that trust is invaluable.” (Teacher 13, Q30)

“There’s a feeling of being respected and having the freedom to create and adapt programs.” (Teacher 16)

Teacher autonomy is closely linked to professional confidence and motivation. Schools that strike a balance between structured guidance and individual freedom create environments where educators thrive (Seibert, 2015). When teachers feel trusted, they are more likely to experiment with innovative teaching strategies, reflect on their practices, and engage in continuous professional development (Bryant et al., 2023).

“I feel that they (leaders) know me very well now, and I can express myself freely. The people I work with trust me, and this makes my presence here more meaningful.” (Teacher 9, Q31)

“Leadership is fair... separate from teaching, which I appreciate.” (Teacher 18)

These statements align with Meyer and Allen's (1991) Affective Commitment framework, which suggests that teachers who feel respected and trusted in their professional environment develop stronger emotional attachments to their institution. The distinction between administrative oversight and instructional autonomy contributes to a more balanced and effective working culture, ultimately leading to improved teacher retention (Webber & Dunbar, 2020).

Overall, findings suggest that when schools cultivate an environment that values autonomy and professional trust, teachers experience higher job satisfaction and long-term commitment. By balancing clear institutional guidelines with professional flexibility, educational leaders can foster a culture of respect, innovation, and collaboration, ultimately reducing turnover rates and strengthening overall institutional stability.

5.4.2.3 Recognition, institutional commitment, and policies

Institutional commitment and recognition of teachers' contributions play a crucial role in fostering long-term engagement and retention. Teachers are more likely to remain in institutions where they feel valued, supported, and included in decision-making processes. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of commitment explains that affective commitment (emotional attachment to an institution), continuance commitment (practical benefits of staying), and normative commitment (a sense of obligation to remain) all contribute to teacher retention. Schools that recognize teachers' professional contributions and implement supportive policies strengthen all three dimensions of commitment, fostering institutional loyalty and job satisfaction (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Affective commitment is particularly influenced by how institutions acknowledge teachers' efforts and create an inclusive, respectful work culture. Feeling valued within a school community encourages teachers to remain engaged and invested in their work. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice framework supports this idea by emphasizing that professional belonging and shared experiences reinforce institutional loyalty. Schools that implement inclusive policies and recognize teachers' voices in decision-making create a sense of ownership and belonging, which strengthens affective commitment (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As teachers stated:

"When I returned back to the institution after a break, Human Resources sent an e-mail saying 'Welcome Home' and I really liked it." (Teacher 5, Q32)

"Decisions come from a pool of voices... it's not a boss-driven school, which makes me feel secure in my role." (Teacher 19, Q33)

"Committees give me responsibility... I feel part of the school's whole—it's empowering." (Teacher 17, Q34)

"The school environment is democratic... they listen, even if they don't always act on it." (Teacher 15)

Schools that prioritize employment security and institutional loyalty enhance teachers' continuance commitment. In times of crisis, retaining teachers despite financial difficulties fosters trust and stability (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Teachers who experience job security are more likely to remain committed, even during external challenges (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Several teachers emphasized that their institution's policies on employment security strengthened their sense of loyalty:

"This school has faced financial crises and student enrollment issues, yet it never let go of its teachers. The administration reassigned staff to other roles temporarily, saying, 'Once student numbers are back to normal, you can return to your original position.' This decision prevented the loss of talented teachers." (Teacher 5, Q35)

“During COVID, while other schools let teachers go, this school didn’t let our music teacher go. That creates a deep sense of loyalty and belonging.” (Teacher 9, Q36)

Additionally, fair and transparent institutional policies foster trust and respect among teachers. When educators perceive school leadership as responsive and equitable, their normative commitment increases, reinforcing a moral obligation to contribute to the institution’s growth (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Institutional structures that promote respect, inclusivity, and fairness play a key role in sustaining long-term teacher retention (Webber & Dunbar, 2020). Teachers shared experiences that reflect these principles:

“I feel protected when it comes to parents. I don’t feel uneasy or vulnerable in those interactions.” (Teacher 19, Q37)

“It’s important to me to be respected and valued by parents and colleagues. Not just for myself, but for everyone in this environment. It helps me do my job well and feel appreciated.” (Teacher 2, Q38)

Furthermore, institutional commitment extends beyond individual relationships to shared values and professional alignment with the school’s mission. Teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they feel their professional principles are acknowledged and integrated into institutional policies. Schools that align their values with teacher development and well-being foster stronger engagement (Kelchtermans, 2017). Teachers highlighted this connection:

“I would call it shared values. In critical areas like child protection, communication with parents, and well-being, I can see that the steps taken and the training provided apply to everyone. I feel understood by the people I work with.” (Teacher 19, Q39)

“The environment is welcoming, open-minded, and changing for the better. The school seeks to integrate new ideas, philosophies, and methods that align with its mission.” (Teacher 20)

“The structure and trustworthiness of this institution stood out to me. Due to less numbers in preschool I accepted a reassignment as a support teacher for first grade, where I was valued for my expertise in positive discipline

methods. I thought they didn't want to lose me, and that felt good.” (Teacher 2, Q40)

Inclusivity and fairness in institutional policies also contribute to a sense of belonging and professional respect (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Schools that promote equity and responsiveness in decision-making enhance both individual and collective commitment. Teachers emphasized the importance of inclusive policies:

“Even in personal moments, when we see that a cleaning staff member is being treated unfairly and raise it with someone, immediate effort is made to resolve the issue.” (Teacher 19, Q41)

“It’s important to feel that personal differences are respected and valued.” (Teacher 2, Q42)

In summary, institutional commitment, teacher recognition, and inclusive policies significantly impact retention by strengthening teachers’ affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Schools that foster a culture of appreciation, provide job security, and uphold fair policies create an environment where educators feel valued, leading to increased job satisfaction and long-term dedication to their institution. Recognizing teachers as essential contributors to institutional growth enhances retention and reinforces a strong professional community (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

5.4.3 Institutional resources

Teachers’ evaluations of the preschool’s offerings highlighted a blend of financial stability, campus support, and growth opportunities, which we categorized as Financial Support and Benefits, School Support, and Professional Development and Growth, drawn from their emphasis on practical resources and professional advancement.

5.4.3.1 Financial support and benefits

Teachers rely on financial incentives and benefits as a bedrock of stability, anchoring their decision to stay. As teachers pointed out:

“Salary isn’t everything, but if it were half, I’d leave... benefits like free master’s programs are a draw.” (Teacher 1, Q43)

“Insurance was critical during my surgeries—it’s why I stayed.” (Teacher 10, Q44)

“The fact that my daughter studied here was a huge economic support for my family. That connection made staying here meaningful for me.” (Teacher 13, Q45)

“Without strong financial support—salary, benefits—I might look elsewhere.” (Teacher 12, Q46)

Meyer and Allen’s (1991) continuance commitment suggests that tangible benefits increase the cost of leaving, making staying the rational choice. Financial incentives such as salary, insurance, and tuition assistance for family members serve as both practical and emotional anchors for retention. Ingersoll (2001) highlights that competitive compensation is a key factor in reducing teacher turnover in private schools, a pattern reflected in Teacher 3’s emphasis on salary comparisons between institutions. Other teachers’ insights also reveal that:

“I believe there is significant effort at the end of the year to provide us with a good salary.” (Teacher 19, Q47)

“The school ensures my insurance premiums are paid based on my full salary, offers private health insurance, provides transportation, and covers meals, including breakfast, lunch, and snacks. I’ve never faced issues in these areas. I have never worried about whether my salary would be paid or whether my social security contributions would be made properly since I started working here. Benefits like transportation and private health insurance further build trust in the employer.” (Teacher 5, Q48)

“Financial conditions are very important. Compared to other schools, including public schools, our salaries used to be significantly higher. Recently, the gap has narrowed, but I still believe this school is one of the best in terms of salary and financial benefits among private institutions.” (Teacher 3, Q49)

Structured salary progression, comprehensive insurance coverage, and timely compensation contribute to teachers' long-term institutional loyalty. Research by Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) underscores that consistent pay increases significantly enhance retention, particularly in private institutions where teachers do not benefit from tenure protections. The financial stability provided by the school fosters institutional commitment, as Teacher 6 noted:

“Salaries are paid on time, insurance contributions are made without delay, and the school offers private health insurance. It actually feels good when the school or the administrators support you during difficult times and allow you to use your leave rights.” (Teacher 6, Q50)

Despite these financial incentives, some teachers emphasized that salary alone was not their primary reason for staying. Instead, they valued a balance between financial stability and workplace satisfaction, as Teacher 3 stated:

“You could earn a lot of money but still be unhappy, or you could be happy but earn less. Both aspects are equally important.” (Teacher 3, Q51)

This aligns with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (1966), which posits that salary and benefits act as hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily drive intrinsic motivation or professional fulfillment.

The school's brand reputation emerged as a secondary but relevant factor in retention, with mixed perspectives among teachers regarding its influence. Teachers illustrated this by stating:

“This school has a certain respect. When you say you work here, there's a sense of recognition, but that's not the reason I stay.” (Teacher 1, Q52)

“It's a very good school; almost everyone in Istanbul knows it. Saying I work here feels like a privilege.” (Teacher 3, Q53)

“It's definitely impactful. When I tell people I work here, they see the school differently and ask about it.” (Teacher 13, Q54)

“It is good to be able to say that I work at this school because it is well-known and highly regarded in Türkiye. It's nice to be here for that, though it doesn't affect my decision to stay.” (Teacher 18)

Research suggests that schools with strong academic reputations and leadership recognition tend to retain teachers more effectively (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). Teachers working in high-performing institutions often report a sense of professional pride and commitment (Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022). However, in this study, brand prestige was not universally seen as a determining factor for retention. As noted by teachers:

“I stay because of my sense of belonging, not because of the school’s brand.” (Teacher 5, Q55)

“It has no effect at all. I don’t even mention the school’s name unless I’m asked. For me, what matters is the contribution I make to children and their development. I could work at a school in Anatolia—it’s about what I can give to the students, not the brand.” (Teacher 7, Q56)

These perspectives align with findings by Casely-Hayford et al. (2022), who noted that while institutional reputation can contribute to job satisfaction, it does not always translate into long-term retention. Some teachers viewed the school’s prestige as an advantage for professional growth, leveraging it as a career asset:

“Of course, working in such a prestigious school has added a lot to me. I’ve taken advantage of the opportunities this school offers, such as professional development centers, innovation hubs, and training programs. If I choose another career path in the future, the experience of working here for 18 years will open many doors for me.” (Teacher 17, Q57)

“It’s like a ladder. If I were to leave, I would only go to another school with a strong name; I wouldn’t want to go backwards.” (Teacher 15)

This aligns with research suggesting that educators in well-regarded institutions have greater career mobility and access to professional networks (Kolawole, 2019, as cited in Kazak, 2021). However, not all teachers viewed prestige as a career advantage, emphasizing instead their workplace relationships and commitment to students. Teachers illustrated this by stating:

“I don’t think that influences me.” (Teacher 16)

“Yes, there’s a certain prestige. You’re working with a specific socio-economic group, and that has an effect. I’d say 90% of the time I like it because I appreciate being part of a structured and organized system with a defined status.” (Teacher 8, Q58)

“It’s one of the top 3-4 schools in Istanbul, and of course, that makes it a strong reference.” (Teacher 12, Q59)

Overall, while financial incentives and institutional reputation contribute to retention, they function as stabilizing factors rather than primary motivators. Teachers who emphasized salary and benefits viewed them as necessary conditions for long-term commitment, while those who valued brand prestige did so in the context of career growth rather than immediate job satisfaction. Meyer and Allen’s (1991) continuance commitment is evident in the role of financial stability, whereas affective commitment—loyalty driven by emotional attachment—was more closely linked to relationships and professional fulfillment.

In conclusion, institutional resources such as financial support, benefits, and school reputation play a crucial role in shaping teacher retention. While financial incentives provide stability, teachers remain primarily for reasons beyond salary—relationships, professional growth, and workplace culture. Schools that offer competitive salaries, structured benefits, and strong institutional branding create an environment where teachers feel secure and professionally valued, reinforcing long-term commitment.

5.4.3.2 Educational philosophy and growth mindedness

Teachers in this study emphasized the role of professional development, institutional philosophy, and opportunities for intellectual and pedagogical growth as central to their commitment to the school. The findings align with Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of

proximal development (ZPD), which suggests that structured yet flexible support fosters continuous professional advancement. Similarly, Meyer and Allen's (1991) normative commitment framework explains that teachers who perceive their institution as investing in their growth develop a moral obligation to reciprocate with loyalty. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) theory further highlights how professional learning communities enhance teacher retention by fostering a shared sense of identity and continuous learning.

Teachers find motivation and growth through a range of learning opportunities provided by the institution. As teachers described:

"Financed master's programs and overseas training motivate me... they're a big pull." (Teacher 1, Q60)

"Coursera, foreign teachers, and diverse experiences have opened new horizons—it's transformative." (Teacher 19, Q61)

"Seminars and trips keep me engaged... they spark my curiosity." (Teacher 6, Q62)

"HighScope accreditation looks great on my CV—it's a career boost." (Teacher 18)

"This school is always trying to get better. It's not the same thing year after year—it's evolving. That culture of learning and collaboration really suits me." (Teacher 20)

The professional development opportunities provided by the institution reflect best practices in teacher retention, as research suggests that teachers who engage in structured learning experiences report higher job satisfaction and institutional commitment (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Yang et al. (2024) found that continuous professional development not only improves teaching quality but also enhances job satisfaction, mirroring Teacher 19's perspective on broadening pedagogical horizons. The opportunity to earn certifications such as HighScope accreditation, as noted by Teacher 18, underscores the dual benefits of professional learning; personal career

advancement and institutional stability. Fonsén and Ukkonen-Mikkola (2019) argue that such leadership-driven professional learning initiatives cultivate pedagogical leadership among teachers, reinforcing the interconnectedness of personal and collective efficacy.

Teachers also emphasized how committee participation and interdisciplinary collaboration enhanced their professional identity and engagement with the broader school community. As noted by a teacher:

“The committees have contributed significantly to my development. I have built new networks for myself. I now know what’s happening in middle school and high school. Understanding the bigger picture gives me a sense of ownership and professional curiosity. I see myself not just as a preschool teacher but as an integral part of the school.” (Teacher 17, Q63)

Committee participation aligns with CoP theory (Wenger, 1998), where individuals actively engage in shared decision-making and collaborative learning, reinforcing professional identity and long-term institutional commitment. This also reflects constructivist learning principles, as teachers actively construct their professional growth through engagement in real-world institutional challenges.

Beyond structured professional development, teachers valued the school’s educational philosophy, which they described as progressive, child-centered, and aligned with 21st-century learning principles such as STEM, inquiry-based learning, and skills development. As teachers reflected:

“The school is forward-thinking; it is like a Kemalist school. There are always things like STEM projects, not being prescriptive, being skills-based.” (Teacher 16)

“Our school closely follows developments in education. Therefore, I believe the students we nurture are modern and well-equipped with 21st-century skills.” (Teacher 1, Q64)

“The fact that we raise inquisitive and questioning children is something I really value about this school.” (Teacher 2, Q65)

“I think the school's stakeholders adopt an attitude that genuinely prioritizes

children's well-being, academic success, and keeping up with the demands of the modern age.” (Teacher 19, Q66)

These reflections align with constructivist educational philosophy, which prioritizes critical thinking, inquiry, and student-centered learning (Fosnot, 2005). Teachers valued the balance between structure and freedom in the school’s pedagogical approach, particularly within the constructivist theory, which allows for guided exploration while providing a structured framework for learning. As teachers expressed:

“A framework should be provided for the child, but within that framework, they should have the right to make choices.” (Teacher 5, Q67)

“I do believe that this school is closer to my philosophy of teaching, where the children are free—they can explore their world freely.” (Teacher 15)

“There’s a broad philosophy about putting the learner first and also the learner learning from others.” (Teacher 16)

Constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1960) supports the notion that when teachers are able to apply their teaching philosophy in a way that aligns with their personal values, they experience higher job satisfaction and stronger institutional commitment. Research by Casely-Hayford et al. (2022) suggests that schools with strong pedagogical alignment between teachers and institutional values experience lower attrition rates, as teachers feel more fulfilled and motivated in their professional roles.

The connection between philosophical alignment and retention was a recurring theme, with teachers emphasizing their long-standing commitment to the institution due to its alignment with their personal teaching philosophies. As teachers articulated:

“From all the places that I have taught in, I think this school is the closest to my philosophy of teaching.” (Teacher 15)

“In general, this school aligns closely with my outlook on education. My previous institution, where I spent 25 years, was similar in that respect. I

don't think I would have been happy in a place that didn't match my perspective." (Teacher 12, Q68)

"I have supported and admired this school's educational philosophy and practices for many years. That's why I have stayed here for so long." (Teacher 3, Q69)

This alignment between institutional values and individual teaching philosophies is a strong predictor of retention, as noted in Borman and Dowling (2008), who found that teachers are more likely to remain in schools that support their pedagogical identity. As one teacher states:

"The way the school approaches education aligns with how I believe teaching should be. Here, I don't feel pressured to compromise on my values or the children's well-being. However, these certification decisions should involve more teacher consultation." (Teacher 19, Q70)

In addition to the institution's pedagogical alignment, one teacher also noted the compatibility of the parent community with the school's educational philosophy, which facilitated smoother communication and professional comfort.

"The parent profile was also very strong and refined. They were individuals with a certain level of education and cultural background, capable of understanding your communication over time—so I continued without any difficulty" (Teacher 3, Q71)

This critique aligns with constructivist professional learning models, which emphasize teacher agency in shaping their own growth (Postholm, 2012). Research by Schaap and de Bruijn (2018) found that schools that actively involve teachers in decision-making regarding their professional development report higher retention rates and institutional commitment.

Teachers also highlighted the school's commitment to fostering professional development, describing it as an essential factor in their motivation and engagement. From teachers' perspectives:

"The school brings in the best experts in their fields, and the training we receive is very contemporary and impactful." (Teacher 1, Q72)

“Over the past 20 years, we’ve received excellent training tailored to what is needed.” (Teacher 3, Q73)

“If I had stayed in the public sector, I wouldn’t have grown as much professionally. I owe the level I’ve reached in my career to the opportunities this school provided.” (Teacher 5, Q74)

Professional development was viewed by some as critical to their retention, while others saw it as a secondary motivator.

“Professional development matters, but honestly, the main reason I stay is the competitive salary.” (Teacher 5, Q75)

“It’s nice to have these opportunities, but they don’t impact my decision to stay.” (Teacher 12, Q76)

These mixed perspectives reinforce findings from Kutsyuruba et al. (2018), who identified that while professional development enhances job satisfaction, it is most effective when combined with financial stability and workplace autonomy.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that professional development, institutional philosophy, and opportunities for pedagogical growth are critical factors in teacher retention. These elements, when aligned with teacher values and professional aspirations, foster a deep sense of commitment and belonging. The integration of constructivist principles, participatory leadership, and personalized growth opportunities strengthens teacher engagement, professional satisfaction, and long-term retention. Institutions seeking to improve teacher retention should prioritize pedagogical alignment, professional learning communities, and teacher agency in shaping institutional policies.

5.4.4 Organizational governance

Teachers’ evaluations of the preschool’s organizational structure highlighted a blend of predictability, institutional support, and workload balance, which we categorized

as Predictability and Structure, Institutional Support, and Workload Management, drawn from their emphasis on systemic efficiency and professional well-being.

5.4.4.1 Predictability

Teachers consistently emphasized the significance of structured, predictable, and well-organized systems in supporting their roles and ensuring a productive, reliable work environment. As teachers pointed out:

“A predictable work environment where unexpected challenges don’t arise is key.” (Teacher 19, Q77)

“Planning and having things clearly defined are crucial for me. Spontaneity doesn’t suit my character.” (Teacher 2, Q78)

For many educators, structure provides clarity and order, which in turn enables effective teaching while maintaining emotional and mental balance. Meyer and Allen’s (1991) *continuance commitment* suggests that institutional stability and predictability serve as fundamental components in teacher retention. Wenger (1998) further argues that structured institutional frameworks foster a sense of belonging and professional security, enhancing educators’ commitment to their roles. Research also supports that well-structured environments reduce stress and improve long-term retention by minimizing unpredictable workplace challenges (Esen et al., 2017).

5.4.4.2 Institutional support

Teachers benefit from a robust infrastructure of campus resources, materials, and institutional stability that enhances their daily practice. As noted by teachers:

“When we need classroom changes, orders are met... the school is open to our suggestions—it’s empowering.” (Teacher 19, Q79)

“Our preschool managers help with parent issues... it’s a lifeline.” (Teacher 6, Q80)

“Veteran staff in printing or dining know my needs... they streamline my work—efficiency matters.” (Teacher 7, Q81)

“The campus supports our educational philosophy with rich materials—it’s enabling.” (Teacher 4, Q82)

“During the earthquake, my principal checked on me... that support was unforgettable.” (Teacher 13, Q83)

This reflects Meyer and Allen’s (1991) *continuance commitment*—reliable resources ensure a stable work environment—while Wenger’s (1998) *Community of Practice (CoP)* frames this as a collaborative network bolstered by institutional support. Guarino et al. (2006) argue that tangible resources are key to retention in teaching, a dynamic evident in Teacher 19’s flexibility and Teacher 13’s crisis support, which extends beyond routine to exceptional care. As three other teachers pointed out:

“Management decisions regarding scheduling and resource allocation allow us to plan together and avoid working in isolation.” (Teacher 18)

“Whenever I need support, whether for myself or the children, I can immediately reach out to the PDR department or the preschool administrators, who are always available.” (Teacher 10, Q84)

“The PDR department is excellent, whether for children or ourselves.” (Teacher 20)

The school environment plays a critical role in teacher retention. As teachers emphasized:

“There’s so much space. I can relax wherever I want—whether it’s the library, the tea area, or the garden.” (Teacher 12, Q85)

“The garden and green areas are refreshing. I can relax and take a breath even during breaks.” (Teacher 8, Q86)

“The physical environment is beautiful. Even having air conditioning is a plus... There are plenty of materials and resources for both children and teachers.” (Teacher 2, Q87)

“I’d say 90% of the time I like it because I appreciate being part of a structured and organized system with a defined status.” (Teacher 8, Q88)

5.4.4.3 Workload management

Teachers consistently emphasized the significance of fair workloads and structured working hours as critical factors for their motivation, well-being, and long-term commitment.

“It’s about having working hours I compared the conditions don’t demand inhumane levels of performance but are fair and reasonable.” (Teacher 19, Q89)

“Working hours are important.” (Teacher 1, Q90)

Three teachers linked manageable workloads to their emotional well-being and effectiveness in the classroom.

“When my workload is manageable, I feel peaceful, and this peace reflects in my teaching and benefits the children.” (Teacher 2, Q91)

“The school ensures that administrative tasks don’t overwhelm us, allowing me to focus on my students.” (Teacher 18)

“I like the working hours in terms of it not being lots of paperwork, unlike the UK.” (Teacher 18)

A key aspect of workload management in this school is the autonomy given to teachers in planning. The school structures lesson schedules to allow teachers to collaboratively plan their classes, ensuring that they have dedicated time for preparation. This autonomy in scheduling fosters a sense of ownership and professional agency. Teachers’ insights reveal that:

“Our planning time is protected, and we get to decide how best to organize it. That flexibility makes a difference.” (Teacher 12, Q92)

“We are not micromanaged. Having a say in planning gives me confidence in how I structure my lessons.” (Teacher 8, Q93)

Teachers also addressed broader workload pressures. As noted by teachers:

“There’s a sense of weariness due to micro-management, heavier workloads caused by fewer staff, and financial dissatisfaction. Still, compared to previous workplaces, people acknowledge this school remains better.” (Teacher 19, Q94)

“I try to keep my individual motivation high, despite the challenges.”
(Teacher 17, Q95)

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) emphasize that emotional exhaustion is a major contributor to teacher burnout, particularly in early childhood education. Schools that fail to implement workload management strategies and mental health support systems tend to have higher teacher turnover rates. Research suggests that providing structured break times, reducing administrative burdens, and encouraging peer collaboration can significantly improve teacher well-being and retention (OECD, 2024). Additionally, studies suggest that excessive workload is a primary driver of teacher attrition, particularly in private schools where teachers often take on additional administrative responsibilities (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Teachers thrive in schools with clear, well-organized systems that ensure effective planning, communication, and coordination. Predictable processes reduce uncertainty, foster trust, and enhance job satisfaction. Additionally, a fair workload, supportive infrastructure, and a structured environment contribute significantly to teacher motivation and long-term commitment.

The literature confirms that schools investing in institutional stability, workload management, and well-maintained physical environments experience higher teacher retention and satisfaction levels. Reducing administrative burdens, ensuring fair working hours, and fostering a supportive school climate are key strategies in enhancing teacher well-being and reducing turnover (Casely-Hayford et al., 2022).

Ultimately, aligning organizational structures with teachers’ professional and emotional needs is critical in fostering a sustainable and effective educational environment. Schools that prioritize workload management, institutional support, and

a strong physical environment create workplaces where educators feel valued, engaged, and committed to long-term service.

5.5 Part-4: Teachers' reflections

Teachers' reflections on their experiences revealed a spectrum of emotions, challenges, and suggestions, which we grouped into Feelings at School, Areas for Growth, and Suggestions based on their expressions of satisfaction, critique, and improvement ideas.

5.5.1 Feelings at school

Teachers expressed a deep sense of joy, gratitude, and attachment to their roles, reflecting their emotional investment. As teachers articulated:

“I enjoy coming here... it's fun—it's a luxury to feel this way.” (Teacher 1, Q96)

“It's like a second home... I spend more time here than anywhere else.” (Teacher 5, Q97)

“It's peaceful most days... happy, despite occasional stress.” (Teacher 15)

“It's a lovely place to work... my mood lifts when I arrive and see the kids.” (Teacher 18)

“I enjoy being here, even with financial or other issues—it's still rewarding.” (Teacher 20)

This embodies Meyer and Allen's (1991) *affective commitment*—positive emotions anchor teachers' desire to stay—while Thomas et al. (2020) link such feelings to job satisfaction in early childhood education (ECE), sustaining retention despite challenges. The joy (Teacher 1) and home-like comfort (Teacher 5) contrast with typical workplace fatigue (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), suggesting a unique emotional resilience tied to the preschool's culture.

Teachers' emotional connection to their school emerged as a significant factor influencing their job satisfaction, motivation, and long-term commitment. As two teachers emphasized:

"It's about coming to work feeling happy and not spending the day just waiting to go home." (Teacher 19, Q98)

"Love." (Teacher 2, Q99)

The importance of comfort and peace in the workplace was a recurring theme. Some of the teachers illustrated this by stating:

"I want to feel peaceful and comfortable in my workplace." (Teacher 5, Q100)

"Feeling comfortable is important." (Teacher 12, Q101)

"Feeling peace and happiness when coming to school, enjoying the experience, is essential." (Teacher 13, Q102)

"A relaxed environment, not feeling under pressure, makes a big difference." (Teacher 18)

A supportive and peaceful environment contributes significantly to teachers' well-being and satisfaction. Wenger's (1998) *Community of Practice (CoP)* framework suggests that the relational aspects of an institution—peer collaboration, shared practices, and social identity—play a crucial role in retention. Teachers' reflections reinforce this, as many emphasized a family-like sense of belonging within the institution. As teachers articulated:

"I feel safe here, almost like being in a family environment. I also feel supported." (Teacher 9, Q103)

"I started here, and I've grown so accustomed to this place that I often wonder how I'd manage in a different setting. Leaving this familiar environment feels daunting." (Teacher 10, Q104)

"It starts to feel like home." (Teacher 16)

These sentiments align with research indicating that *belongingness* enhances retention by fostering emotional security (Cramer & Cappella, 2019). Institutional

attachment appears to mitigate stressors, reinforcing teachers' tenure. Some of the teachers also expressed appreciation for their school environment,

"I'm very grateful to be in this school—it's an easy and great place to work. I want to stay because it's such a nice environment. You never know what kind of school you might move to. Is the grass always greener? Probably not. I'm happy here, so why look elsewhere?" (Teacher 18)

"I think I enjoy working. If I were to stop, I don't know what I would do. This is what I know, and I feel good here." (Teacher 8, Q105)

"I want to feel like I belong here. Why am I still here? Because I have a sense of belonging." (Teacher 5, Q106)

Constructivist perspectives on motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasize that autonomy and intrinsic motivation contribute significantly to professional satisfaction. Teachers' reflections highlight this dynamic—many view their role as not just a job but an integral part of their identity.

"This school gives me a known and trusted space, and that's hard to replicate elsewhere." (Teacher 10, Q107).

"I love this profession. I would surely be happy teaching elsewhere too, because I love being a teacher. But practicing it here is also a beautiful experience." (Teacher 9, Q108)

"I could do this job anywhere. My motivation is personal, not tied to the school." (Teacher 17, Q109)

However, one teacher acknowledged that institutional familiarity plays a role in their stability, stating,

"There may be problems, but I know this school will try to find solutions and think about their teachers' well-being." (Teacher 20)

While emotional attachment is strong, the difficulty of transitioning to another job was cited only once, indicating that while job stability is valued, it is not a dominant factor in most teachers' decision-making. As one teacher pointed out:

"Honestly, it's tough to move schools anymore. As an expat here, there's so much paperwork. It's all the paperwork." (Teacher 18)

Some teachers perceive all schools as similar in fundamental ways, leading them to prioritize personal relationships over institutional specifics.

“You know the place, you know the expectations. As you age, you realize small things that might tempt you elsewhere become less important.” “I’ve worked at five Turkish schools, so I know that each has good and bad sides. That knowledge helps me appreciate what I have here.” (Teacher 16)

Teachers’ reflections reinforce theories of *affective commitment* (Meyer & Allen, 1991), *Community of Practice* (Wenger, 1998), and *constructivist motivation theory* (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Their attachment to their school extends beyond logistical benefits, reflecting a deeper emotional connection and intrinsic motivation.

These findings align with research on teacher retention. Studies indicate that job satisfaction is a key predictor of retention (Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). High turnover rates disrupt student learning, increase recruitment costs, and overburden remaining staff (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Emotional bonds to institutions, as seen in this study, mitigate these risks by fostering stability (Cramer & Cappella, 2019).

Moreover, teachers in early childhood education (ECE) are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to emotional labor (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). A strong sense of belonging and institutional support helps counteract this (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Wenger’s (1998) *CoP* framework suggests that professional collaboration and peer relationships significantly impact retention—an idea echoed in teachers’ appreciation for their work environment.

Teacher retention strategies that emphasize professional support networks, job autonomy, and leadership engagement have been found to improve long-term commitment (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). Schools that foster intrinsic motivation and belonging create environments where teachers remain despite challenges (Whitebook & Sakai, 2003). These findings further support the argument

that institutional culture—rather than just salary or workload—plays a crucial role in sustaining a committed teaching workforce (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Teachers' reflections highlight the significant role that emotional investment, workplace culture, and institutional stability play in retention. While some teachers view their profession as independent of the school, most emphasized their deep attachment to the institution. A sense of belonging, familiarity, and peer relationships reinforce their long-term commitment. These findings align with theoretical frameworks on teacher motivation and institutional attachment, reinforcing the importance of emotional and social factors in sustaining retention in ECE settings.

5.5.2 Spaces of strain: Teacher morale, micromanagement, and loss of connection

Teachers identified several challenges that impacted their morale, sense of belonging, and perception of institutional culture. These challenges were reflected in their comments:

“People used to be warmer and more friendly; we would greet each other and chat when we met. Now, as the school has grown and newer generations have joined, I feel there is a certain distance among teachers and a loss of that close connection.” (Teacher 13, Q110)

“This is the same in every place but financial issues the last couple of years brought morale down... teachers are unhappy with pay rises.” (Teacher 15)

“It's like ‘if you go, someone else comes’ now... it's less family-like than it used to be.” (Teacher 17, Q111)

“There's weariness and micromanagement in other departments... it tires people out.” (Teacher 19, Q112).

“It's become more corporate, less family... people walk with heads down.” (Teacher 16)

"If my spouse hadn't been working, I would have had to leave the school to afford my children's education elsewhere. Years ago, educational benefits were available, but I couldn't access them because I wasn't married or a parent at the time—it felt like a lost right. Although I dedicated many years to

the institution, seeing how other schools value such support made me realize what was missing." (Teacher 4, Q113)

These reflections suggest a weakening of affective and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), where loss of community, perceived unfairness, and diminished recognition contribute to declining morale and engagement.

Kelchtermans (2017) emphasizes that teachers' sense of belonging and institutional recognition are crucial for their sustained commitment. When teachers perceive shifts in their workplace culture—such as reduced collegiality, financial dissatisfaction, and perceived expendability—they may experience decreased motivation and professional fulfillment. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) link such dips in morale to heightened risks of burnout, a risk evident in Teacher 19's comments on exhaustion. Furthermore, Makopoulou and Armour (2014) suggest that structural changes, including school expansion, can isolate teachers, weakening the once-tight professional communities that previously nurtured resilience.

Beyond these emotional strains, teachers also pointed to issues related to leadership visibility, decision-making processes, and communication structures within the growing institution. Teacher 20 emphasized the need for visible administrative recognition:

"We feel support from the administration and others, but there is room for improvement. In the past, administrators were more visible and approachable. Small gestures, like popping into classrooms or acknowledging work in the hallways, made us feel more seen and appreciated." (Teacher 20).

Institutional growth was another concern, impacting communication and interpersonal relationships.

"As we grew, the dynamics changed. While experienced staff know how to solve problems quickly, newcomers take time to adapt, which can slow down processes." (Teacher 7, Q114).

"There's a growing feeling that teachers are replaceable, which affects the sense of value we once felt." (Teacher 17, Q115)

“Sometimes, school policies feel distant, and by the time we try to understand them, a disconnect occurs. When decisions come from above, we wonder if our perspectives were considered, which can make us feel distant from each other.” (Teacher 4, Q116)

“I wish we had more say in decisions about the classroom or the school. I would like assistant teachers to also be consulted when decisions are made.” (Teacher 10, Q117)

“These certification decisions should involve more teacher consultation.” (Teacher 19, Q118)

Teachers’ concerns about decreased involvement in decision-making processes reflect the relational challenges that often accompany institutional growth. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) highlight that large-scale expansion can dilute interpersonal trust and erode teachers’ sense of influence within their professional environments. Similarly, Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasize that strong school trust and the maintenance of social capital are essential for sustaining positive professional relationships and long-term engagement.

Some teachers’ feelings of diminished influence can also be contextualized historically. When the institution was smaller, teachers reported having more direct interactions with leadership and greater influence over decision-making.

Institutional expansion may have unintentionally fostered a hierarchical structure that created emotional distance between teachers and leadership. These evolving dynamics suggest that while growth can bring organizational strength, it also demands intentional efforts to preserve collaboration, trust, and belonging—elements crucial for sustaining teacher morale and retention (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Wenger, 1998).

Additionally, specific environmental stressors were highlighted, such as,

“The chaotic atmosphere in the cafeteria affects the day negatively. It’s stressful having to raise my voice constantly just to communicate.” (Teacher 20)

“We haven't had a proper teachers' lounge for years. At first, it was on the ground floor, a sunlit space, and it was twice the size of the current one. The current lounge isn't appealing at all, but beyond these physical aspects, there is an emotional bond attached to it.” (Teacher 7, Q119)

“We have our desks and chairs, but nowhere to just sit with a cup of tea and decompress. It's a professional break, not a relaxing one.” (Teacher 18)

“Teachers don't have quiet, clean, and comfortable spaces to spend time in. Creating such areas would support us in staying longer.” (Teacher 19, Q120)

Furthermore, maintaining supportive professional spaces is critical to sustaining collegiality and a sense of belonging within growing institutions. Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice framework underscores the importance of creating environments that nurture informal collaboration and shared identity. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) similarly emphasize that cultivating a strong, trust-based school culture reinforces teacher engagement and mitigates the risks associated with organizational growth and change.

5.5.3 Suggestions for improvement

Teachers proposed actionable strategies to enhance their work experience and strengthen retention. As noted by some teachers:

“Team trips or weekend events could help... bonding matters—we've done it before and it worked.” (Teacher 2, Q121)

“Balance experience levels... too many veterans skew dynamics—it needs fresh energy.” (Teacher 19, Q122)

“Structured planning time strengthens us—it's practical.” (Teacher 18)

“More whole-school gatherings... I don't know who's who anymore—we've lost that unity.” (Teacher 20)

“It used to be much more positive; there was a real family atmosphere.” (Teacher 17, Q123)

These align with Wenger's (1998) *CoP*—enhancing community through collaboration fosters retention, as Teacher 2's bonding idea suggests. Vygotsky's

(1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) frames structured support (Teacher 18) as a scaffold for professional growth, while Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) argue that collective initiatives bolster morale, a need reflected in Teacher 20's call for more gatherings.

Burke et al. (2015) note that peer support initiatives—like Teacher 19's balance suggestion—can rejuvenate early childhood education (ECE) settings, restoring fading institutional cohesion. Additionally, Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2018) found that informal socialization opportunities, such as team events and mentorship programs, enhance collegiality and reduce teacher stress.

Teachers also raised concerns about redundant tasks and the impact of workload on their core responsibilities, such as,

“Sometimes, when I feel overwhelmed by the workload, I find myself thinking, 'I wish I could just focus on teaching.' That burden sometimes stresses me out and prevents me from bringing out my true self in the classroom..” (Teacher 2, Q124)

This aligns with Borman & Dowling's (2008) research on teacher workload, highlighting that excessive administrative tasks reduce instructional quality and contribute to job dissatisfaction. OECD (2024) also reports that balancing teacher workload with instructional time is a critical factor in retention.

Institutional expansion has further affected communication and interpersonal dynamics. As teachers pointed out:

“We've grown significantly. When we were smaller, it felt like one big family, and communication was much easier. Now, as we've expanded, it's inevitable that some connections are lost, and interactions decrease.” (Teacher 7, Q125)

“It feels slightly less like a family than it used to, with a more corporate feel creeping in.” (Teacher 16)

“We've become more detached as we've grown, and newer generations seem to lack the warmth and closeness we once had.” (Teacher 13, Q126)

Transparency in decision-making was another area of concern, such as,

“Sometimes decisions are made without much input, and when we raise concerns, it feels like they’re brushed aside with quick justifications. It creates a sense of not being heard.” (Teacher 6, Q127)

“The mission and vision are clear in written documents, but we sometimes struggle to see them fully realized in practice.” (Teacher 7, Q128)

Despite these challenges, teachers recognized the value of collaborative structures like committees in fostering participation.

“The committees create a space for decisions to be analyzed and for ideas to go through a collective process. It feels reassuring to know that decisions aren’t made by one person but rather through a broader team effort.” (Teacher 19, Q129)

“Being part of committees helps me understand the school’s broader agenda and where I fit as a preschool teacher. I feel a sense of ownership and contribution to the school’s development.” (Teacher 17, Q130)

Teachers’ reflections on growth areas highlight a shifting institutional culture that impacts retention. The decline in affective and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), coupled with increased workload and detachment due to expansion, aligns with research on burnout risks (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Wenger’s (1998) *CoP* framework underscores the importance of fostering professional bonds, while Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2018) suggest that strong teacher networks help mitigate feelings of institutional detachment.

While teachers value collaboration and institutional support, they highlight concerns about morale, transparency, and communication as the school expands. Addressing these issues through structured team engagement, leadership visibility, and more inclusive decision-making could reinforce a sense of belonging and professional fulfillment. By integrating these strategies, the school can sustain a committed teaching workforce while adapting to institutional growth.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study investigated the factors influencing teacher retention in early childhood education (ECE) within a private PreK–12 institution. The study focused on understanding the complex interplay between professional relationships, leadership practices, institutional resources, and workplace culture in shaping teachers' long-term commitment. Data were collected through interviews with 18 teachers, including Turkish homeroom teachers, English homeroom teachers, and assistant teachers, all of whom had varying levels of tenure and professional experience.

The findings of this study highlight that a complex interplay of professional relationships, leadership practices, institutional resources, and workplace culture influences teacher retention in early childhood education (ECE). While financial stability and job security remain important, teachers in this study primarily cited collegiality, leadership support, autonomy, and professional growth as central to their decision to remain in their institution. These findings align with research indicating that teacher retention is more influenced by intrinsic motivation, workplace culture, and leadership support than by salary alone (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001). Ensuring that teachers feel valued and professionally supported is key to fostering long-term commitment, requiring targeted strategies that address both systemic challenges and individual teacher needs.

A significant factor contributing to teacher retention is the presence of strong collegial relationships. Many participants emphasized that a sense of belonging and trust among colleagues provided them with motivation and emotional resilience,

reinforcing their affective commitment to the institution (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) framework supports the idea that a collaborative professional culture enhances retention, as teachers who engage in shared experiences and mutual learning are more likely to remain in their roles. However, as the school expanded, some teachers expressed concerns about the weakening of close professional ties and the increasing sense of institutional detachment. Research suggests that as organizations grow, maintaining strong interpersonal relationships requires intentional efforts, such as whole-school gatherings, mentorship programs, and team-building activities (Turner, 2018; Turhan & Memduhoğlu, 2022). Encouraging professional networks, fostering a culture of peer support, and providing structured mentorship for new teachers can help sustain the collegial environment essential for long-term retention (Kutsyruba et al., 2018).

Leadership also emerged as a central factor in shaping teachers' commitment to their institution. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of accessible, non-micromanaging, and supportive leadership in fostering trust and professional autonomy. Teachers valued the ability to voice their concerns and be involved in decision-making processes, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), which suggests that professional growth is maximized when individuals are provided with structured autonomy within a supportive framework. However, some teachers expressed concerns about decreasing administrative visibility and shifting toward a more corporate leadership style, leading to perceptions of reduced teacher agency. Research suggests that strong leadership is essential in retaining educators, particularly when it promotes shared decision-making, open communication, and professional trust (Arthur & Bradley, 2023; Hur et al., 2023). Schools should prioritize leadership training programs emphasizing

distributed leadership models, ensuring administrators actively engage with teachers and recognize their contributions. Increasing leadership visibility—through classroom visits, direct engagement with teachers, and more participatory decision-making structures—can help mitigate concerns about detachment while reinforcing institutional commitment (Shuls & Flores, 2020).

Another key finding was the importance of workload management and institutional resources. While teachers appreciated structured schedules and protected planning time, many expressed concerns about increasing administrative burdens that detracted from their core instructional responsibilities. Research confirms that excessive paperwork and bureaucratic demands are primary contributors to teacher burnout, particularly in early childhood education settings where emotional labor is already significant (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; OECD, 2024). Ensuring that teachers have adequate time for lesson planning, peer collaboration, and student engagement is crucial for maintaining job satisfaction and preventing attrition. Schools can address this challenge by streamlining administrative tasks, reducing redundant documentation, and providing dedicated support staff to handle non-instructional responsibilities (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Additionally, structured workload policies that balance instructional time and administrative duties can enhance professional well-being and improve overall retention rates (Cassidy et al., 2011).

Professional development and career growth opportunities also significantly influenced teachers' motivation to stay at the institution. Participants valued access to continuous learning opportunities, including professional certifications, mentorship programs, and leadership pathways. The presence of a Professional Development Center within the institution played a crucial role in fostering a culture

of learning, collaboration, and professional growth. This structure not only provided formal training opportunities but also enhanced peer learning through structured committees, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ongoing professional dialogue. Wenger's (1998) CoP theory suggests that structured professional learning communities contribute to retention by reinforcing a shared identity and fostering continuous learning. However, some teachers expressed concerns about the relevance and accessibility of professional development programs, highlighting the need for more teacher-driven training initiatives. Studies show that schools that provide structured, incentivized professional development programs experience higher teacher engagement and retention (MacDonald, 2018; Schaack et al., 2022). Expanding access to funded training opportunities, increasing teacher involvement in professional development planning, and creating clearer career progression pathways can significantly enhance teacher commitment to their institution (Pek, 2014; Kutsyuruba et al., 2018).

The study also revealed that institutional expansion and changing workplace culture challenged teacher morale. Several participants noted a shift toward a more corporate environment, with a decreased emphasis on interpersonal relationships and informal interactions. This aligns with research indicating that as institutions grow, the risk of professional isolation increases, leading to reduced workplace satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). In private institutions, where the presence of Professional Development Centers and structured communication policies play a key role in retention, ensuring that these structures remain adaptable and responsive to teacher needs is essential. Maintaining a school culture that prioritizes connection, recognition, and shared experiences can help counteract the potential negative effects of institutional growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). While it is natural within a

constructivist approach for decision-making to occur at different levels—where institutional leadership makes decisions appropriate to its scope and teachers act within their own professional domains—meaningful communication remains critical. Even when direct teacher involvement in high-level decisions (e.g., accreditation processes) is not obligatory, collecting teachers' input and maintaining transparent, respectful dialogue throughout the process reinforces their sense of value and belonging within the institution.

In conclusion, teacher retention in early childhood education requires a holistic approach that prioritizes workplace culture, leadership engagement, professional autonomy, and career growth. While financial stability remains a foundational factor, the intrinsic rewards of teaching, collegiality, and professional development are more influential in shaping long-term commitment. Schools that reduce workload burdens, strengthen leadership visibility, and foster a collaborative professional environment will be better positioned to retain high-quality educators and improve overall program quality. Addressing institutional challenges such as increased workload, evolving workplace culture, and leadership visibility through targeted policy interventions can create an environment where teachers feel supported, valued, and professionally fulfilled.

Considering these institutional practices collectively, it becomes evident that the school not only addresses factors critical to teacher retention but also strives to meet broader indicators of educational quality. Based on my experience and observations as an embedded researcher within the institution, it is evident that both structural and process quality factors play a significant role in sustaining a supportive professional environment. Structurally, the school maintains low teacher-student ratios, ensures high levels of educational attainment among teaching staff, and

provides well-resourced, developmentally appropriate learning environments aligned with national and international standards. Process quality is reflected in the institution's collaborative professional culture, child-centered pedagogical approaches, and continuous professional development initiatives.

The school's commitment to maintaining and enhancing quality is further evidenced by its pursuit of international accreditations, which align with global best practices in education. These accreditations not only validate the institution's adherence to high-quality standards but also demonstrate its ongoing dedication to providing a nurturing, equitable, and academically rigorous environment. Collectively, these structural and process strengths reinforce teacher satisfaction, institutional loyalty, and long-term professional engagement.

This study highlights that private institutions play an active role in teacher retention beyond simply responding to teacher motivations. Unlike public schools, where tenure systems largely govern employment stability, private schools must deliberately choose to retain their staff, often requiring proactive retention strategies. The institution examined in this study has implemented several initiatives to prevent teacher turnover, including reassigning teachers to alternative roles during periods of financial strain and ensuring job security during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such efforts foster institutional loyalty and reduce long-term hiring and training costs, demonstrating a strategic retention policy's economic and professional benefits (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Eğritaş et al., 2023).

While the study provides valuable insights into teacher retention, limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize the findings. The researcher's dual role as both vice principal and researcher may have influenced participant responses due to perceived power dynamics. Although measures were taken to ensure voluntary

participation and confidentiality, participants might have moderated their responses consciously or unconsciously.

Future research could further explore the dual nature of teacher retention in private institutions—not only examining why teachers choose to stay but also investigating how institutional decision-making processes influence staff retention outcomes. Examining retention from both the teacher's and the institution's perspective could provide valuable insights into sustainable employment models within private education. Additionally, comparative studies across different types of private and public schools, as well as across various cultural contexts and grades, could deepen our understanding of how structural and process quality factors interact with teacher motivations and institutional strategies to foster long-term professional commitment.

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS IN TURKISH

Quotation Number	Original Turkish Quotation
Q1	"Sıcaklar, yardımseverler... aile gibi... bu okul artık benim ailem." (Öğretmen 3)
Q2	"Yıllar içinde aile gibi oldular... buraya gelmek sadece işe gitmek gibi hissettirmiyor." (Öğretmen 5)
Q3	"Arkadaş ekibim aidiyet duygumu derinden destekledi—bu yüzden bu kadar uzun süre kaldım." (Öğretmen 7)
Q4	"Uzun yıllardır birlikte çalıştığım insanlarla ben duygularımı paylaşabiliyorum. İnan ki ailemdeki çoğu insan, belki akrabalarımın daha çok onlarla günlük hayatımı konuşuyorum." (Öğretmen 13)
Q5	"Okul dışında da devam ettirebildiğimiz dostluklarımız var. Okul içinde yaşadığım, okul dışında yaşadığım problemlerimi konuşabiliyorum." (Öğretmen 1)
Q6	"Onlarla geçirilen kısa anlar bile moralimi yükseltiyor... onlar benim motivasyon kaynağım." (Öğretmen 17)
Q7	"Arkadaşlarla ve hatta çocuklarla olan ilişkiler o kadar iç içe ki—birbirine bağlı böyle." (Öğretmen 10)
Q8	"İletişime açık olmak güçlü bağlar kurmama yardımcı oldu." (Öğretmen 9)
Q9	"Saygı ve güven en üst düzeyde—bu temeli oluşturuyor." (Öğretmen 12)
Q10	"Farklı fikirler olsa bile açıkça konuşabiliyoruz." (Öğretmen 3)
Q11	"Sabah sohbetleri, hatta müdür yardımcısıyla şakalaşmak bile motivasyonumu artırıyor." (Öğretmen 17)
Q12	"Meslektaşlarıma tamamen güveniyorum... bir şeyi yapamazsam, biri devreye giriyor... herkes anında birbirini destekliyor." (Öğretmen 6)
Q13	"Birbirimizi anlıyoruz ve bu güçlü bir takım bağı oluşturuyor. Hiç tereddüt etmeden birbirimize yardım ediyoruz, bu ortak sorumluluk duygusu bizi bir arada tutuyor." (Öğretmen 15)
Q14	"Daha iyi maddi olanaklar sunan okullar olsa da, buradaki ortam benzersiz ve destekleyici olduğu için ayrılma ihtiyacı hissetmiyorum. Kıskançlık veya rekabet yok, sadece dostluk var." (Öğretmen 15)
Q15	"Biz bir takımız... bir sorun çıktığında birlikte çözüyoruz." (Öğretmen 2)

Q16	"Kimse diğeri ezmiyor... okul, birbirinden öğrenmeyi teşvik ediyor—bu çok ilham verici." (Öğretmen 9)
Q17	"Burada hiçbir zaman yukarıdan aşağıya baskıcı bir yaklaşım yaşamadım. Yönetim sert direktifler dayatmıyor ya da gereksiz baskı uygulamıyor." (Öğretmen 5)
Q18	"Yönetici tarafından hedef alındığınız veya sürekli eleştirildiğiniz bir yerde çalışmak psikolojik olarak dayanılmaz hale geliyor. Bir okulda kalabilmek için olumlu ve yapıcı iletişim şart." (Öğretmen 1)
Q19	"Bana güvenen ve gelişmemi destekleyen bir yönetim ekibi tarafından desteklenmek, burada kalmamın sebeplerinden biri." (Öğretmen 17)
Q20	"Burada ne mobbing ne de baskıcı davranış var. Kendimi sürekli izleniyormuş gibi hissetmeden çalışabiliyorum." (Öğretmen 9)
Q21	"Okulöncesi müdürümüz baskıcı değil... burada ne mobbing var ne de psikolojik baskı—bu büyük bir rahatlık." (Öğretmen 1)
Q22	"Hatalar bize her zaman yapıcı bir şekilde iletildi, nasıl gelişebileceğimiz konusunda rehberlik edildi. Saygı ve sınırlar gibi kurallar açıkça belirlendi, bu da profesyonel ve saygılı bir ortam yarattı." (Öğretmen 4)
Q23	"Başka seçenekler düşündüğüm bir dönemde, müdürüm beni arayıp geri dönmemi istedi... bu güven ve kişisel bağ nedeniyle geri döndüm." (Öğretmen 3)
Q24	"Müdürümün ekip çalışmaya dair verdiği geri bildirim beni motive ediyor... katkılarımın görüldüğünü hissediyorum." (Öğretmen 13)
Q25	"Yöneticimden hızlı ve doğru destek beklerim. Üst yönetimden gelen bilgilerin zamanında iletilmesi ve yöneticinin her konuda net olması, bir çalışanın bir kurumda uzun süre kalmasını sağlayan önemli unsurlar." (Öğretmen 7)
Q26	"Uyum sağlamak önemli—öğretmenleri motive etmek için her şeyin dengede olması gerekiyor." (Öğretmen 3)
Q27	"Biz insanız. Rahatlamaya ve birbirimizi daha iyi anlamaya ihtiyacımız var."
Q28	"Burası bir özel okul olmasına rağmen, öğretmenlerin sadece velileri memnun etmek için davranışları yönünde bir beklenti hiç olmadı. Hiçbir yönetici ya da müdürüm, bir öğrenciyle ilgili gözlemlerimi veya geri bildirimimi değiştirmemi istemedi. Bir çocuğun gelişimi hakkında profesyonel görüşümü objektif şekilde sunuyorum ve okul bu konuda arkamda duruyor. Bana verilen mesaj çok net: 'Öğretmenimiz ne yaptığını biliyor ve işini iyi yapıyor.' Profesyonel yargılarımı yumuşatmam veya değiştirmem için hiçbir baskı hissetmedim." (Öğretmen 5)

Q29	"Müfredatımı planlarken bana güveniliyor... bir çerçeve içinde özgürüm, ki buna ihtiyacım var. Çabam hem yönetim hem de veliler tarafından görülüyor—bu benim için çok değerli." (Öğretmen 7)
Q30	"Yönetim bizim işimize müdahale etmiyor. İşimizi yapmamıza güveniliyor ve bu güven paha biçilemez." (Öğretmen 13)
Q31	"Artık liderlerimizin beni çok iyi tanıdığını hissediyorum ve kendimi özgürce ifade edebiliyorum. Çalıştığım insanlar bana güveniyor ve bu da burada varlığımı daha anlamlı kılıyor." (Öğretmen 9)
Q32	"Kuruma ara verdikten sonra geri döndüğümde, İnsan Kaynakları bana 'Evinize Hoş Geldiniz' diye bir e-posta gönderdi, bu gerçekten hoşuma gitti." (Öğretmen 5)
Q33	"Kararlar birçok sesin katkısıyla alınıyor... burası patron odaklı bir okul değil, bu da rolümde kendimi güvende hissetmemi sağlıyor." (Öğretmen 19)
Q34	"Komiteler bana sorumluluk veriyor... okulun bütünü içinde bir parça gibi hissediyorum—bu güç verici." (Öğretmen 17)
Q35	"Bu okul, maddi krizler ve öğrenci kayıt sorunları yaşamasına rağmen, öğretmenlerini kaybetmedi. Yönetim, personele geçici olarak başka görevler vererek 'Öğrenci sayısı normale döndüğünde kendi pozisyonunuza geri dönebilirsiniz' dedi. Bu karar, yetenekli öğretmenlerin kaybedilmesini önledi." (Öğretmen 5)
Q36	"COVID döneminde, diğer okullar öğretmenleri işten çıkarırken, bu okul müzik öğretmenimizi bırakmadı. Bu durum derin bir aidiyet ve sadakat duygusu yarattı." (Öğretmen 9)
Q37	"Velilerle olan ilişkilerde kendimi koruma altında hissediyorum. Bu etkileşimlerde huzursuz veya savunmasız hissetmiyorum." (Öğretmen 19)
Q38	"Veliler ve meslektaşlar tarafından saygı görmek ve değer verilmek benim için önemli. Sadece kendi adıma değil, bu ortamda herkes adına önemli. Bu, işimi iyi yapmama ve değerli hissetmeme yardımcı oluyor." (Öğretmen 2)
Q39	"Buna ortak değerler derdim. Çocuk koruma, velilerle iletişim ve iyi oluş gibi kritik alanlarda atılan adımların ve verilen eğitimlerin herkese uygulandığını görebiliyorum. Çalıştığım insanlar tarafından anlaşıldığımı hissediyorum." (Öğretmen 19)
Q40	"Bu kurumun yapısı ve güvenilirliği benim için öne çıktı. Okulöncesinde öğrenci sayısının azalması nedeniyle birinci sınıfta destek öğretmeni olarak görev yapmayı kabul ettim. Olumlu disiplin yöntemlerindeki uzmanlığım takdir edildi. Beni kaybetmek istemediklerini düşündüm ve bu his çok iyi geldi." (Öğretmen 2)

Q41	"Kişisel anlarda bile, bir temizlik personeline adaletsiz davranıldığını görüp bunu birine ilettiğimizde, hemen çözüm için çaba gösteriliyor." (Öğretmen 19)
Q42	"Kişisel farklılıkların saygı ve değer gördüğünü hissetmek önemli." (Öğretmen 2)
Q43	"Maaş her şey değil ama yarıya inse giderdim... ücretsiz yüksek lisans programları gibi olanaklar cazip geliyor." (Öğretmen 1)
Q44	"Geçirdiğim ameliyatlarda sırasında sigorta çok kritikti—bu yüzden kaldım." (Öğretmen 10)
Q45	"Kızımın burada okuması ailem için büyük bir ekonomik destek oldu. Bu bağ, burada kalmamı anlamlı kıldı." (Öğretmen 13)
Q46	"Güçlü bir maddi destek—maaş, yan haklar—olmasa başka yerlere bakabilirdim." (Öğretmen 12)
Q47	"Yıl sonunda bize iyi bir maaş sunmak için ciddi bir çaba olduğunu düşünüyorum." (Öğretmen 19)
Q48	"Okul, sigorta primlerimi tam maaş üzerinden ödüyor, özel sağlık sigortası sağlıyor, ulaşım imkanı sunuyor ve kahvaltı, öğle yemeği ve atıştırma hakları dahil olmak üzere yemek masraflarını karşılıyor. Bu konularda hiçbir sorun yaşamadım. Burada çalışmaya başladığımdan beri maaşımın ödenip ödenmeyeceği ya da sosyal güvenlik primlerimin düzgün yatırılıp yatırılmayacağı konusunda hiç endişe duymadım. Ulaşım ve özel sağlık sigortası gibi olanaklar, işverene olan güveni daha da pekiştiriyor." (Öğretmen 5)
Q49	"Maddi koşullar çok önemli. Diğer okullarla, hatta devlet okullarıyla kıyaslandığında, maaşlarımız geçmişte ciddi şekilde yüksekti. Son zamanlarda fark azaldı, ama yine de bu okulun özel kurumlar arasında maaş ve maddi haklar açısından en iyilerden biri olduğuna inanıyorum." (Öğretmen 3)
Q50	"Maaşlar zamanında ödeniyor, sigorta primleri gecikmeden yatırılıyor ve okul özel sağlık sigortası sunuyor. Zor zamanlarda okulun veya yöneticilerin sizi desteklemesi ve izin haklarınızı kullanmanıza olanak tanınması gerçekten iyi hissettiriyor." (Öğretmen 6)
Q51	"Çok para kazanıp mutsuz olabilirsiniz ya da az kazanıp mutlu olabilirsiniz. Her iki yön de eşit derecede önemli." (Öğretmen 3)
Q52	"Bu okulun belli bir itibarı var. Burada çalıştığınızı söylediğinizde bir tanınmışlık oluyor, ama bu burada kalma sebebim değil." (Öğretmen 1)
Q53	"Çok iyi bir okul; İstanbul'da neredeyse herkes biliyor. Burada çalıştığımı söylemek bir ayrıcalık gibi hissettiriyor." (Öğretmen 3)
Q54	"Kesinlikle etkisi var. İnsanlara burada çalıştığımı söylediğimde okula farklı bakıyorlar ve hakkında sorular soruyorlar." (Öğretmen 13)

Q55	"Burada kalma sebebim aidiyet duygum, okulun markası değil." (Öğretmen 5)
Q56	"Hiçbir etkisi yok. Okulun adını ancak sorulursa söylüyorum. Benim için önemli olan çocuklara ve gelişimlerine katkı. Anadolu'da bir okulda da çalışabilirim—önemli olan markadan ziyade öğrencilere verebildiklerim." (Öğretmen 7)
Q57	"Tabii ki böyle prestijli bir okulda çalışmak bana çok şey kattı. Profesyonel gelişim merkezleri, inovasyon merkezleri ve eğitim programları gibi olanaklardan yararlandım. Gelecekte farklı bir kariyer yolu seçersem, burada 18 yıl çalışmış olmanın bana birçok kapı açacağını biliyorum." (Öğretmen 17)
Q58	"Evet, belli bir prestij var. Belirli bir sosyo-ekonomik grupla çalışıyorsunuz ve bunun etkisi oluyor. %90 oranında hoşuma gidiyor, çünkü yapılandırılmış ve organize bir sistemin, tanımlı bir statünün parçası olmayı takdir ediyorum." (Öğretmen 8)
Q59	"İstanbul'daki en iyi 3-4 okuldan biri ve tabii ki bu güçlü bir referans oluşturuyor." (Öğretmen 12)
Q60	"Finanse edilen yüksek lisans programları ve yurtdışı eğitim olanakları beni motive ediyor... bunlar büyük bir çekim gücü oluşturuyor." (Öğretmen 1)
Q61	"Coursera, yabancı öğretmenler ve çeşitli deneyimler bana yeni ufuklar açtı—bu gerçekten dönüştürücü bir etki yarattı." (Öğretmen 19)
Q62	"Seminerler ve geziler beni canlı tutuyor... merakımı tetikliyorlar." (Öğretmen 6)
Q63	"Komiteler gelişimime büyük katkı sağladı. Kendime yeni bağlantılar kurdum. Artık ortaokul ve lise kademelerinde neler olduğunu da biliyorum. Büyük resmi görmek bana sahiplenme duygusu ve profesyonel merak kazandırdı. Kendimi sadece bir okulöncesi öğretmeni olarak değil, okulun ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak görüyorum." (Öğretmen 17)
Q64	"Okulumuz eğitime dair gelişmeleri yakından takip ediyor. Bu nedenle, yetiştirdiğimiz öğrencilerin modern ve 21. yüzyıl becerileriyle donanımlı olduğuna inanıyorum." (Öğretmen 1)
Q65	"Sorgulayan ve merak eden çocuklar yetiştirmemiz, bu okulda en çok değer verdiğim şeylerden biri." (Öğretmen 2)
Q66	"Okulun paydaşlarının çocukların iyiliğini, akademik başarıyı ve çağın gereklerini önceliklendiren bir tutum sergilediğini düşünüyorum." (Öğretmen 19)
Q67	"Çocuğa bir çerçeve sunulmalı, ancak o çerçeve içinde seçim yapma hakkı da tanınmalı." (Öğretmen 5)

Q68	"Genel olarak bu okul, eğitim anlayışına oldukça uygun. Önceki kurumumda da (25 yıl çalıştım) benzer bir yapı vardı. Bakış açımı yansıtmayan bir yerde mutlu olabileceğimi sanmıyorum." (Öğretmen 12)
Q69	"Bu okulun eğitim felsefesini ve uygulamalarını yıllardır destekliyor ve takdir ediyorum. Bu yüzden burada uzun süre kaldım." (Öğretmen 3)
Q70	"Okulun eğitim yaklaşımı, öğretmenliğe nasıl bakmam gerektiğine dair kendi inancım ile örtüşüyor. Burada ne kendi değerlerimden ne de çocukların iyiliğinden ödün vermem için bir baskı hissetmiyorum. Ancak sertifika kararlarının alınmasında öğretmenlerin daha fazla görüşünün alınması gerektiğini düşünüyorum." (Öğretmen 19)
Q71	"Veli profili de çok güçlü ve nitelikliydi. Belirli bir eğitim ve kültürel birikime sahip bireylerdi; zamanla iletişiminizi anlayabilecek bir yapıdaydılar—dolayısıyla herhangi bir zorluk yaşamadan devam ettim." (Öğretmen 3)
Q72	"Okul, alanlarında en iyi uzmanları getiriyor ve aldığımız eğitimler son derece çağdaş ve etkili." (Öğretmen 1)
Q73	"Son 20 yılda, ihtiyacımıza yönelik mükemmel eğitimler aldık." (Öğretmen 3)
Q74	"Devlette kalsaydım bu kadar profesyonel gelişim gösteremezdim. Kariyerimde geldiğim noktayı bu okulun sunduğu fırsatlara borçluyum." (Öğretmen 5)
Q75	"Profesyonel gelişim önemli, ama dürüst olmak gerekirse burada kalmamın ana nedeni rekabetçi maaş." (Öğretmen 5)
Q76	"Bu fırsatlara sahip olmak güzel, ancak kalma kararımı etkilemiyor." (Öğretmen 12)
Q77	"Öngörülebilir bir çalışma ortamı, beklenmedik sorunların çıkmadığı bir yapı benim için çok önemli." (Öğretmen 19)
Q78	"Planlı olmak ve her şeyin net bir şekilde tanımlanmış olması benim için çok kritik. Spontane durumlar bana uygun değil." (Öğretmen 2)
Q79	"Sınıf değişikliklerine ihtiyacımız olduğunda talepler karşılanıyor... okul önerilerimize açık—bu çok güçlendirici." (Öğretmen 19)
Q80	"Okulöncesi yöneticilerimiz, veli sorunlarında bize destek oluyor... bu adeta bir can simidi gibi." (Öğretmen 6)
Q81	"Matbaa ya da yemekhane gibi birimlerdeki deneyimli personel benim ihtiyaçlarımı biliyor... işimi kolaylaştırıyorlar—verimlilik çok önemli." (Öğretmen 7)
Q82	"Kampüs, eğitim felsefemizi zengin materyallerle destekliyor—bu çok güçlendirici." (Öğretmen 4)

Q83	"Deprem sırasında müdürüm benimle ilgilendi... o destek unutulmazdı." (Öğretmen 13)
Q84	"Kendim ya da çocuklar için ne zaman desteğe ihtiyacım olsa, okulöncesi yöneticilerine ya da PDR (Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik) bölümüne hemen ulaşabiliyorum; her zaman ulaşılabilir durumdalar." (Öğretmen 10)
Q85	"Bu kadar geniş alan olması çok güzel. İstedğim yerde—kütüphane, çay alanı ya da bahçe—rahatlayabiliyorum." (Öğretmen 12)
Q86	"Bahçe ve yeşil alanlar çok ferahlatıcı. Molalarda bile nefes alıp rahatlayabiliyorum." (Öğretmen 8)
Q87	"Fiziksel ortam çok güzel. Klima olması bile bir artı... Hem çocuklar hem öğretmenler için bolca materyal ve kaynak var." (Öğretmen 2)
Q88	"%90 oranında hoşuma gidiyor, çünkü yapılandırılmış ve organize bir sistemin, belirli bir statünün parçası olmayı takdir ediyorum." (Öğretmen 8)
Q89	"Çalışma saatlerinin insani performans sınırlarını zorlamayan, adil ve makul olması önemli." (Öğretmen 19)
Q90	"Çalışma saatleri önemli." (Öğretmen 1)
Q91	"İş yüküm yönetilebilir olduğunda kendimi huzurlu hissediyorum ve bu huzur öğretimime yansıyor, çocuklara da fayda sağlıyor." (Öğretmen 2)
Q92	"Planlama zamanımız korunuyor ve bu zamanı nasıl organize edeceğimize kendimiz karar verebiliyoruz. Bu esneklik gerçekten fark yaratıyor." (Öğretmen 12)
Q93	"Mikro yönetim yok. Planlama sürecinde söz sahibi olmak, derslerimi yapılandırırken bana güven veriyor." (Öğretmen 8)
Q94	"Personel sayısının azalmasıyla artan iş yükü, mikro yönetim ve maddi memnuniyetsizlik bir yorgunluk yaratıyor. Yine de, önceki işyerleriyle kıyaslandığında, bu okulun hala daha iyi olduğu kabul ediliyor." (Öğretmen 19)
Q95	"Zorluklara rağmen kişisel motivasyonumu yüksek tutmaya çalışıyorum." (Öğretmen 17)
Q96	"Buraya gelmekten keyif alıyorum... eğlenceli—böyle hissetmek bir lüks." (Öğretmen 1)
Q97	"Burası ikinci evim gibi... başka hiçbir yerde bu kadar çok zaman geçirmiyorum." (Öğretmen 5)
Q98	"İşe mutlulukla gelmek ve bütün günü eve gitmeyi bekleyerek geçirmemek önemli." (Öğretmen 19)
Q99	"Sevgi." (Öğretmen 2)

Q100	"İş yerimde huzurlu ve rahat hissetmek istiyorum." (Öğretmen 5)
Q101	"Rahat hissetmek önemli." (Öğretmen 12)
Q102	"Okula gelirken huzur ve mutluluk hissetmek, bu deneyimden keyif almak çok önemli." (Öğretmen 13)
Q103	"Burada kendimi güvende hissediyorum, adeta bir aile ortamındaymışım gibi. Ayrıca desteklendiğimi de hissediyorum." (Öğretmen 9)
Q104	"Burada başladım ve bu ortama o kadar alıştım ki, başka bir yerde nasıl idare edeceğimi bazen düşünüyorum. Bu tanıdık ortamdan ayrılmak göz korkutucu geliyor." (Öğretmen 10)
Q105	"Çalışmayı sevdiğimi düşünüyorum. Eğer çalışmayı bıraksaydım ne yapardım bilmiyorum. Bildiğim şey bu ve burada kendimi iyi hissediyorum." (Öğretmen 8)
Q106	"Buraya ait olduğumu hissetmek istiyorum. Neden hâlâ buradayım? Çünkü bir aidiyet duygum var." (Öğretmen 5)
Q107	"Bu okul bana bilinen ve güvenilen bir alan sağlıyor, bunu başka bir yerde bulmak zor." (Öğretmen 10)
Q108	"Bu mesleği seviyorum. Ama başka bir yerde de öğretmenlik yapsam illa ki mutlu olurum, bu mesleği seviyorum. Burada icra etmek de güzel.." (Öğretmen 9)
Q109	"Bu işi her yerde yapabilirim. Motivasyonum kişisel, okula bağlı değil." (Öğretmen 17)
Q110	"Eskiden insanlar daha sıcak, daha samimiydi; karşılaştığımızda günaydın der, sohbet ederdik. Şimdi ise okul büyüdükçe ve yeni nesil öğretmenler geldikçe, öğretmenler arasında genel bir mesafe oluştuğunu ve bu samimiyetin azaldığını hissediyorum." (Öğretmen 13)
Q111	"Artık 'sen gidersen biri gelir' gibi bir anlayış var... eskisi kadar aile gibi değil." (Öğretmen 17)
Q112	"Diğer bölümlerde mikro yönetim, artan iş yükü ve maddi memnuniyetsizlik nedeniyle bir yorgunluk var. Yine de önceki işyerleriyle kıyaslandığında buranın daha iyi olduğu kabul ediliyor." (Öğretmen 19)
Q113	"Eşim çalışmamış olsaydı, çocuklarımın eğitim masraflarını karşılayabilmek için okuldan ayrılmak zorunda kalacaktım. Yıllar önce çocuk desteği imkânı vardı, ancak o dönemde evli ya da çocuk sahibi olmadığım için bu haktan yararlanamadım—bu da kaybedilmiş bir hak gibi hissettirdi. Kuruma yıllarımı vermeme rağmen, diğer okullarda bu desteğin daha çok önemsendiğini görmek, burada eksikliğini hissettiğim bir noktayı fark ettirdi." (Öğretmen 4)

Q114	"Okul büyüdükçe dinamikler değişti. Deneyimli personel sorunları hızla çözmeyi biliyor, ancak yeni gelenler uyum sağlamakta zaman alıyor, bu da süreçleri yavaşlatabiliyor." (Öğretmen 7)
Q115	"Öğretmenlerin kolayca değiştirilebilir olduğu hissi giderek artıyor; bu da eskiden hissettiğimiz değer duygusunu etkiliyor." (Öğretmen 17)
Q116	"Bazen okul politikaları çok mesafeli hissettiriyor ve biz onları anlamaya çalışana kadar kopukluk yaşıyor. Kararlar yukarıdan geldiğinde, görüşlerimizin dikkate alınıp alınmadığını merak ediyoruz, bu da birbirimizden uzaklaşma hissi yaratabiliyor." (Öğretmen 4)
Q117	"Sınıfla ya da okulla ilgili kararlarda daha fazla söz hakkımız olmasını isterdim. Yardımcı öğretmenlerin de karar süreçlerine dahil edilmesi gerektiğini düşünüyorum." (Öğretmen 10)
Q118	"Bu sertifika kararlarında öğretmen görüşlerinin daha fazla alınması gerekiyor." (Öğretmen 19)
Q119	"Yıllardır doğru düzgün bir öğretmenler odamız yok. İlk önce giriş katında güneş alan bir alandı. Şu andakinin iki katı boyutundaydı. Şimdiki ise hiç cazip değil ama bu nesnel şeylerin dışında duygusal bir bağ var." (Öğretmen 7)
Q120	"Öğretmenlerin sessiz, temiz ve rahat vakit geçirebilecekleri alanları yok. Böyle alanlar oluşturulması, burada uzun süre kalmamıza destek olurdu." (Öğretmen 19)
Q121	"Takım gezileri veya hafta sonu etkinlikleri yardımcı olabilir... kaynaşmak önemli—bunu daha önce yaptık ve işe yaradı." (Öğretmen 2)
Q122	"Deneyim seviyeleri dengelenmeli... çok fazla kıdemli çalışan olması dinamikleri etkiliyor—yeni bir enerjiye ihtiyaç var." (Öğretmen 19)
Q123	"Eskiden çok daha olumluydu, aile ortamı vardı." (Öğretmen 17)
Q124	"Bazen şeyi çok yaşıyorum çok sıkıştığım da hani iş yükü olarak Böyle diyorum, keşke sadece öğretmenlik yapabilsemi kendi kendime söylüyorum. Yani o yük bazen beni strese sokup, hani sınıfta gerçek beni ortaya koyamamama sebep oluyor." (Öğretmen 2)
Q125	"Okul ciddi şekilde büyüdü. Eskiden daha küçükken, bir büyük aile gibi hissediliyordu ve iletişim çok daha kolaydı. Şimdi büyüdükçe bazı bağların kaybolması ve etkileşimlerin azalması kaçınılmaz oldu." (Öğretmen 7)
Q126	"Okul büyüdükçe daha kopuk hale geldik ve yeni nesil, eskiden var olan sıcaklık ve yakınlığı pek taşıyor gibi görünüyor." (Öğretmen 13)
Q127	"Bazen kararlar fazla istişare edilmeden alınıyor ve biz itiraz ettiğimizde, hızlı ve yüzeysel açıklamalarla geçiştiriliyormuş gibi hissediyoruz. Bu da 'dinlenmediğimiz' duygusunu yaratıyor." (Öğretmen 6)

Q128	"Misyon ve vizyon belgelerde net olarak yazılı, ancak bunların uygulamada tam olarak yansıtıldığını her zaman göremiyoruz." (Öğretmen 7)
Q129	"Komiteler, kararların analiz edildiği ve fikirlerin kolektif bir süreçten geçtiği bir alan oluşturuyor. Kararların tek bir kişi tarafından değil, daha geniş bir ekip tarafından alındığını bilmek güven verici." (Öğretmen 19)
Q130	"Komitelerde yer almak, okulun genel gündemini ve okulöncesi öğretmeni olarak benim bu yapı içindeki yerimi anlamama yardımcı oluyor. Okulun gelişimine katkı sağladığımı hissettiriyor." (Öğretmen 17)



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ENGLISH)

Demographic Information

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. How many years have you been working at your current school?
3. What is your current role at the school?
4. What is your educational background?

Experience and Opinions

1. How would you define teaching?
2. How did you start your career as a teacher?
3. What would you like to say about the educational philosophy of the school?
4. How would you describe your school environment?
5. What are your priorities when you think about your work environment?
6. What motivates you to stay at this school during your time working here?
7. Can you describe specific experiences that have influenced your decision to stay here?

Alternative Questions;

- How do you evaluate the impact of your feelings towards the teaching profession on your decision to stay at the school?

- How do you evaluate the impact of working at this school on your decision to stay at the school?
- How do you evaluate the impact of the overall atmosphere of the school on your decision to stay at the school?
- How do you evaluate the impact of the physical working environment on your decision to stay at the school?
- How do you evaluate the impact of the school's policies and management style on your decision to stay at the school?
- How do you evaluate the impact of the school's educational philosophy on your decision to stay at the school?
- How do you evaluate the impact of your relationships with your colleagues on your decision to stay at the school?
- What are your views on the professional development opportunities and teacher support systems provided by the school?

Öğretmenlerle bir oturumda aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt bulunmaya çalışılacaktır.

APPENDIX C

GÖRÜŞME SORULARI (TÜRKÇE)

Demografik Bilgiler

1. Kaç yıldır öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz?
2. Mevcut okulunuzda kaç yıldır çalışıyorsunuz?
3. Mevcut okulunuzda hangi görevi icra ediyorsunuz?
4. Eğitim durumunuz?

Deneyim ve Görüşler

1. Öğretmenliği nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. Öğretmen olarak kariyerinize nasıl başladınız?
3. Okulun eğitim felsefesi hakkında neler söylemek istersiniz?
4. Okul ortamınızı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
5. İş ortamınızı düşündüğünüzde öncelikleriniz nelerdir?
6. Bu okulda çalıştığınız süre boyunca kalmaya motive eden ne(ler)dir?
7. Burada kalma kararınızı etkileyen belirli deneyimleri anlatabilir misiniz?

Alternatif Sorular;

- Öğretmenlik mesleğine yönelik hislerinizin sizin okulda kalmanız ile ilgili etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Bu okulda çalışmanın sizin okulda kalmanız üzerindeki etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Okulun genel atmosferinin sizin okulda kalmanız üzerindeki etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

- Fiziksel çalışma ortamının sizin okulda kalmanız üzerindeki etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Okulun politikalarının ve yönetim tarzının sizin okulda kalmanız üzerindeki etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Okulun eğitim felsefesinin sizin okulda kalmanız üzerindeki etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Meslektaşlarınızla ilişkilerinizin sizin okulda kalmanız üzerindeki etkisini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Okul tarafından sunulan profesyonel gelişim fırsatları ve öğretmen destek sistemleri hakkında görüşleriniz nelerdir?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH)

Supporting Institution: Boğaziçi University

Project Title: Factors Influencing Teacher Retention: A Case Study in a Private
Preschool in İstanbul

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Office Phone: 0 212 XXX XX XX

Name of the Researcher: Ezgi Çebi

E-mail: xxx@gmail.com

Phone: 0 212 XXX XX XX- internal (XXX)

Dear Teacher,

We are conducting a scientific research project as part of the Master's thesis in Early Childhood Education at the Boğaziçi University Institute of Social Sciences. The aim of this study is to examine the views of private school teachers on why they have worked at the same school for many years. School administrators have deemed it appropriate for their teachers to participate in this study and have granted permission for its execution. We invite you, the teachers, to participate in our study to help us with this research. We would like to inform you about our research before you make your decision. If you would like to participate in the study after reading this information, please sign this form and send it to us in a sealed envelope.

Purpose and Process of the Research:

If you agree to participate in this research, we will ask you to participate in an interview where up to 19 questions, including 8 alternative questions, will be asked, and an audio recording will be taken. This semi-structured interview will help us better understand the factors that influence your decision to work at the same school for many years. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be conducted in Turkish or English, according to your preference, within the school during a time that does not interfere with your responsibilities.

Data Protection:

Audio recordings taken during the interviews will be recorded on a password-protected phone accessible only to the researcher. All audio recordings will then be transferred to a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher and immediately deleted from the phone. These recordings will be stored in a folder on this computer for the duration of the research project and will be permanently deleted from the computer after the verification forms are obtained from the teachers.

The audio recordings will be transcribed, and the transcripts will be transferred to an encrypted cloud storage system. At the end of the research, the information and consent forms, written verification forms of the audio transcripts, and the audio transcripts themselves will continue to be stored in a locked cabinet and an encrypted cloud system to be potentially used in publications or conference presentations.

If you choose to withdraw at any stage of the research, all your collected data will be destroyed.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

This research is conducted for scientific purposes, and the confidentiality of participant information will be maintained. All collected data will be used for the researcher's thesis. The anonymity of the participants will be protected at every stage of data collection and analysis. The data may be anonymized and used in academic publications, conference presentations, or scientific studies.

In the audio recordings, teachers' names will not be recorded, and a number will be used instead. Each audio transcript will be numbered with the number assigned to the teacher for anonymization purposes and shared only with the relevant teacher via the encrypted cloud system for verification. After obtaining written confirmation from the teachers through the verification form, the audio transcript files will be removed from the teachers' access and then shared with the project coordinator.

Possible Risks and Precautions:

No physical, sociological, legal, or economic risks are anticipated in this study.

However, psychological risks may arise if teachers recall stressful or negative events while sharing their experiences. In such cases, participants will be reminded of their right to not answer questions or withdraw from the interview. Due to my dual role as a researcher and vice principal at the same institution, there might be a potential ethical concern regarding the power dynamics between the researcher and participants. Teachers might feel obligated to participate or continue participating even if they wish to withdraw; however, participation in the research is entirely voluntary.

Participation and Withdrawal Rights:

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and, if you choose to participate, you may withdraw your consent at any stage of the research without any reason and withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no penalties or negative consequences if you choose to withdraw.

Contact Information:

If you participate, you also have the right to withdraw your consent at any stage of the study without giving any reason. If you would like to receive additional information about the research project, please contact Boğaziçi University Faculty Member Assoc. Dr Zeynep Berna Erdiller Yatmaz (Phone: 0 212 359 7374 Address: Boğaziçi University, Kuzey Kampüs, 34470 Sarıyer, Istanbul). You can also consult Boğaziçi University Social and Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (sbinarek@bogazici.edu.tr) regarding your rights in this study.

Consent of the Participant:

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign this form and return it to us in a sealed envelope.

I, (name of participant) have read the text above and fully understand the scope and purpose of the study I am asked to participate in, and my responsibilities as a volunteer. I had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I understood that I could leave the study whenever I wanted and without having to give any reason, and that I would not face any negative consequences if I

quit. In these circumstances, I agree to participate in the research in question voluntarily, without any pressure or coercion.

I have / do not want to have a sample of the form (in which case the researcher keeps this copy).

Participant Name-Last Name:.....

Signature:

Date (day/month/year):...../...../.....

If audio or video recordings will be made:

☐ I agree to audio recording.

Name-Last Name of the Researcher:

Signature:

Date (day/month/year):...../...../.....

APPENDIX E

KATILIMCI BİLGİ VE ONAM FORMU (TÜRKÇE)

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Araştırmanın adı: Öğretmenlerin Kurumda Kalma Kararını Etkileyen Faktörler:

İstanbul'daki Özel Bir Okulöncesi Kurumunda Vaka Çalışması

Proje Yürütücüsü: Doç. Dr. Zeynep Berna Erdiller Yatmaz

E-mail adresi: xxx@bogazici.edu.tr

Telefonu: 0 212 XXX XX XX

Araştırmacının adı: Ezgi Çebi

E-mail adresi: xxx@gmail.com

Telefonu: 0 212 XXX XX XX- dahili (XXX)

Sayın öğretmenim,

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans tezi kapsamında bilimsel bir araştırma projesi yürütmekteyiz. Bu çalışmanın amacı, özel okulda çalışan öğretmenlerin aynı okulda neden uzun yıllar boyunca çalıştıkları hakkındaki görüşlerini incelemektir. Okul yönetimi tarafından bu çalışmaya onay verilmektedir. Bu araştırmaya yardımcı olmanız için sizi projeye katılmaya davet ediyoruz. Kararınızdan önce araştırma hakkında sizi bilgilendirmek isteriz. Bu bilgileri okuduktan sonra araştırmaya katılmak isterseniz lütfen bu formu imzalayıp kapalı bir zarf içinde bize ulaştırınız.

Araştırmanın Amacı ve Süreci:

Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde, 8 alternatif soru ile birlikte en fazla 19 sorunun sorulacağı ve ses kaydı alınacak bir görüşmeye katılmanızı rica edeceğiz.

Bu yarı yapılandırılmış anket, aynı okulda uzun yıllar boyunca çalışmayı etkileyen faktörler hakkındaki görüşlerinizi daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olacaktır. Görüşme, okul içerisinde okuldaki sorumluluklarınızı aksatmayacak şekilde yaklaşık 45 dakikanızı alacak ve tercihinize göre Türkçe ya da İngilizce dilinde gerçekleştirilebilecektir.

Veri Koruma:

Yapılan görüşmelerde alınacak ses kayıtları sadece araştırmacının ulaşabileceği şifreli bir telefona kaydedilecektir. Tüm ses kayıtları daha sonra sadece araştırmacının erişebileceği, şifreli bir bilgisayara aktarılacak ve hemen ardından telefondan imha edilecektir. Ses kayıtları bu bilgisayarda bir klasörde araştırma projesi süresince yüklü bulunacak ve öğretmenlerden alınacak doğrulama formları sonrasında bilgisayardan da kalıcı olarak silinecektir.

Ses kayıtları transkript edilecek ve transkriptler şifreli bir bulut depolama sistemine aktarılacaktır. Araştırma sona erdiğinde, bilgi ve onam formları, ses kayıt metinlerinin yazılı doğrulama formları ve ses kayıt metinleri/transkriptleri yayınlarda ya da konferans sunumlarında kullanılma ihtimaline yönelik sırasıyla şifreli bir dolapta ve şifreli bir bulut sistemde saklanmaya devam edilecektir.

Araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasından çekilmeyi tercih etmeniz durumunda toplanmış olan tüm verileriniz imha edilecektir.

Gizlilik ve Anonimlik:

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmaktadır ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Toplanacak tüm veriler araştırmacının tezi için toplanmaktadır.

Katılımcıların anonimliği, veri toplama ve analiz süreçlerinin her aşamasında korunacaktır. Veriler anonimleştirilerek akademik yayınlarda, konferans sunumlarında veya bilimsel çalışmalarda kullanılabilir.

Yapılacak ses kayıtlarında öğretmenlerin ismi kayda alınmayacak ve isim bir numara kullanılacaktır. Her bir ses kaydı metni/transkripti anonimleştirme amacıyla öğretmene verilen numara ile numaralandırılacak ve şifreli bulut sistemi yolu ile sadece ilgili öğretmenlerle paylaşarak doğruluğunun kontrol edilmesi istenecektir. Doğrulama formu ile öğretmenlerden alınacak yazılı doğrulamadan sonra ses kaydı metin dosyaları öğretmenlerin erişiminden çıkarılacak ve ardından proje koordinatörü ile paylaşılacaktır.

Olası Riskler ve Önlemler:

Bu çalışmada fiziksel, sosyolojik, yasal veya ekonomik riskler öngörülmemektedir.

Ancak, öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini paylaşırken stresli veya olumsuz olayları hatırlamaları durumunda psikolojik riskler oluşabilir. Bu gibi durumlarda, katılımcılara soruları yanıtlamama veya görüşmeden çekilme hakları hatırlatılacaktır.

Araştırmacı ve aynı kurumda müdür yardımcısı olmam sebebiyle araştırmacı ve katılımcılar arasındaki güç dinamiklerine ilişkin potansiyel bir etik kaygı açığa çıkabilir. Öğretmenler, bu sebepten dolayı kendilerini katılmak ve/veya ayrılmak istese dahi sonuna kadar katılım göstermek zorunda hissedebilirler ancak araştırmaya katılmak gönüllülük esası üzerinedir.

Katılım ve Çekilme Hakkı:

Araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Araştırmaya katılmama ve katıldığınız durumda çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında, herhangi bir sebep göstermeksizin verdiğiniz onamı geri çekme ve istediğiniz zaman araştırmadan geri çekilme hakkına sahipsiniz. Bu durumda hiçbir yaptırım ve olumsuz sonuç ile karşılaşmayacaksınız.

İletişim Bilgileri:

Araştırma projesi hakkında ek bilgi almak istediğiniz takdirde lütfen Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Temel Eğitim Bölümü Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Zeynep Berna Erdiller Yatmaz ile temasa geçiniz (Telefon: 0 212 XXX XX XXAdres: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Kuzey Kampüs 34470 Sarıyer İstanbul). Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu'na (SBINAREK) (sbinarek@bogazici.edu.tr) danışabilirsiniz.

Katılımcının Onayı:

Eğer bu araştırma projesine katılmasını kabul ediyorsanız, lütfen bu formu imzalayıp kapalı bir zarf içerisinde bize geri yollayın.

Ben (katılımcının adı), yukarıdaki metni okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkanı buldum. Bu

çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzluk ile karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

Katılımcının Adı-

Soyadı:.....

İmzası:.....

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

Video Veya Ses Kaydı Alınacaksa:

☐ Ses kaydı alınmasını kabul ediyorum.

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı: Ezgi Çebi

İmzası:.

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

APPENDIX F

AUDIO RECORDING VERIFICATION FORM (ENGLISH)

Dear Teacher,

This form is prepared to verify whether the transcript of the interview conducted with you has been accurately transcribed. Please read the following information carefully and fill out the form as appropriate.

Research Title:

A Case Study on the Perceptions of Teachers' Working in a Private Preschool in Istanbul Regarding Factors Influencing Teacher Retention

Researcher:

Ezgi Çebi

Participant's Name:

Interview Date:

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Transcript Verification:

This transcript is a written record of the audio recording of the interview conducted with you. Please review the transcript carefully and check the appropriate option below:

☐ The transcript contains everything accurately and completely as per the audio recording.

Approval:

I have reviewed the above information and the transcript. I confirm that the audio recording has been accurately transcribed.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

-

☐ The transcript does not contain everything accurately and completely as per the audio recording. The following corrections need to be made:

[illegible]

Researcher's Approval:

I confirm the accuracy of the above information and the corrections made by the participant.

Researcher's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____



APPENDIX G:

SES KAYDI DOĞRULAMA FORMU (TÜRKÇE)

Sevgili öğretmenim,

Bu form, sizinle gerçekleştirilen mülakatın ses kaydının doğru bir şekilde transkript edilip edilmediğini doğrulamanız amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Lütfen aşağıdaki bilgileri dikkatlice okumanızı ve uygun bulduğunuz şekilde doldurmanızı rica ederim.

Araştırma Başlığı:

İstanbul'daki Özel Bir Okulda Okulöncesinde Çalışan Öğretmenlerin Aynı Kurumda Çalışmaya Devam Etmesini Etkileyen Faktörlere İlişkin Algılarına Yönelik Bir Vaka Çalışması

Araştırmacı:

Ezgi Çebi

Katılımcının Adı Soyadı:

Görüşme Tarihi:

Tarih: ____ / ____ / ____

Transkript Doğrulama:

Bu transkript, sizinle gerçekleştirilen mülakatın ses kaydının yazılı bir dökümüdür.

Lütfen transkripti dikkatlice gözden geçirin ve aşağıdaki seçeneklerden uygun olanını işaretleyin:

☐ Transkript, ses kaydında geçen her şeyi doğru ve eksiksiz bir şekilde içermektedir.

Onay:

Yukarıdaki bilgileri ve transkripti inceledim. Ses kaydımın doğru bir şekilde transkript edildiğini onaylıyorum.

Katılımcının Adı Soyadı: _____

Katılımcının İmzası: _____

Tarih: ____ / ____ / ____

☐ Transkript, ses kaydında geçen her şeyi doğru ve eksiksiz bir şekilde içermemektedir. Aşağıda belirtilen düzeltmeler yapılmalıdır:

[illegible]

Arařtırmacının Onayı:

Yukarıdaki bilgilerin ve katılımcının yaptıęı düzeltmelerin doęruluęunu onaylıyorum.

Arařtırmacının Adı Soyadı: _____

Arařtırmacının İmzası: _____

Tarih: ____ / ____ / _____



APPENDIX H

ETHIC BOARD APPROVAL



T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (Sbınarek)

Sayı : E-84391427-050.04-205002
Konu : 2024-29T Kayıt Numaralı Başvurunuz
Hakkında

30.10.2024

Sayın Doç. Dr. Zeynep Berna YATMAZ

Tez danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz öğrenciniz Ezgi Çebi'nin "A Case Study on the Perceptions of Teachers' Working in a Private Preschool in Istanbul Regarding Factors Influencing Teacher Retention" başlıklı projesi ile Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (SBİNAREK)'e yaptığımız 2024-29T kayıt numaralı başvuru 30.10.2024 tarih ve 2024/08 sayılı kurul toplantısında incelenmiş ve projeye etik onay verilmesi uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya on-line olarak katılımıyla ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu tüm üyeler adına Komisyon Başkanı tarafından e-imzalanmıştır. Bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Saygılarımızla,

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Işıl ERDUYAN
Kurul Başkanı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Belge Doğrulama Kodu : 0BGD-72GH-0T1E

Belge Doğrulama Adresi : <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/bogazici-universitesi-ebys>

Adres: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi 34342 Bebek/ İstanbul
Telefon No: Faks No:
e-Posta: İnternet Adresi: www.bogazici.edu.tr
Kep Adresi: bogaziciuniversitesi@hs01.kep.tr

Bilgi İçin: Nursen MUNAR
Mühendis

Telefon No: 0 212 359-6749



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