



Teacher Attrition: Insights from School Administrators¹Özge GÖKTEN BAYRAK², Ahmet OK³

Date submitted: 19.02.2025**Date accepted:** 16.05.2026**Type⁴:** Research Article**Abstract**

Teacher attrition has emerged as a critical issue globally, with numerous teachers leaving the profession voluntarily before retirement, negatively affecting educational quality and school climate. School administrators play a central role in shaping school environments that may influence teachers' decision to stay or leave. This basic qualitative study investigates public school administrators' perspectives on the influences contributing to teacher attrition in Türkiye. Data were collected from 10 administrators through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using inductive content analysis. Findings revealed two main themes: (1) work life experiences, including challenges related to classroom management, organizational climate, workload, and obligatory service requirements, and (2) career dissatisfaction, including the perceived status of the teaching profession, low salaries, and alternative job opportunities. The findings indicate that administrators' interpretations of their roles shape how attrition is understood and addressed within schools. Based on the results strengthening mentoring programs particularly for early career teachers, enhancing leadership development for administrators, improving workload management practices, reconsidering sociocultural factors of obligatory service, and improving financial conditions of teachers are recommended.

Keywords: organizational climate, school administrators, school leadership, teacher attrition, teaching profession.

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Introduction

Teacher attrition refers to teachers' voluntary departure from the profession before retirement. It creates a significant challenge for the sustainability of education systems and educational quality (Ingersoll & Collins, 2018; Kelchtermans, 2017). However, the concept is often used interchangeably with related terms, such as teacher turnover, which sometimes create conceptual ambiguity in the literature.

Teacher turnover broadly refers to a teacher leaving their job for any reason. This may include both leaving the profession altogether (e.g. retirement or career changes) and transferring to another classroom or school (Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Ingersoll, 2004). However, teacher attrition more specifically denotes voluntary exit of a teacher from the profession prior to retirement after working in a school for at least a year (Den Brok et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001).

While teacher mobility within schools or regions, to some extent, may indicate regular career transitions; teacher attrition, which reflects a permanent leave from teaching profession, indicates structural and instructional instability. Teacher attrition has several consequences for education systems. Extensive research demonstrates that when teachers leave classrooms, class sizes increase and remaining teachers' workload gets heavier, especially in disadvantaged school contexts (UNESCO, 2024). This situation also negatively affects remaining teachers' morale, causing burnout and stress. Losing experienced teachers who have been working in a school negatively influences school culture and disrupts program planning and implementation processes (University of Massachusetts, n.d.). For this reason, attrition cannot be reduced to an individual career decision; it reflects broader structural problems that affect educational quality and equity.

International research studies consistently identify various interacting factors causing teacher attrition, including heavy workload, limited administrative support, negative working conditions, and inadequate salary and compensation (Buchanan, 2010; Solomonson et al., 2019; Vuillermoz et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these factors cannot be considered separately from the social or economic contexts and educational policies within countries.

In Türkiye, teacher attrition has become an increasing concern in recent years. Although the precise number of teachers departing voluntarily from public and private schools in Türkiye remains uncertain, available data indicate that attrition is not negligible. According to the 2025 Activity Report of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 1,758 public school teachers have left the profession for reasons other than retirement in 2025 (Ministry of National Education, 2026). Comparable figures were 2,113 teachers in 2024; 2,772 teachers in 2023; 1,654 teachers in 2022; and 2,030 teachers in 2021 (Ministry of National Education, 2025; 2024; 2023; 2022). While these numbers show the attrition rate in public schools in Türkiye, the number of teachers who left the profession after working in private schools is still unknown publicly. In addition to these data, nationally-representative surveys also show the persistent dissatisfaction and intention to leave among teachers. A survey conducted by Türk Eğitim-Sen (2024) reported that 68.3% of teachers would leave teaching if they found better working conditions, and only 28% of teachers would choose teaching profession again if they had a second chance. Moreover, the findings of the survey indicated that 82.4% of teachers reported experiencing burnout to some extent, because of financial issues, lack of merit-based practices, students' misbehavior, and parents' negative

attitudes and behaviors. These findings prove continuous economic and working-condition related pressures in teaching profession in Türkiye.

Problem Situation

The reasons of teacher attrition have been widely addressed in the international literature, and the role of school administrators has been identified as one of the influential factors. Studies consistently highlight that administrators have a profound influence on teachers' job satisfaction and motivation, ultimately impacting teachers' decisions to leave or stay in the profession (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2008; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Yang, 2023). While many of these studies focus on teachers' self-reported experiences in school contexts, fewer studies have examined how school administrators interpret attrition and position themselves and their roles within this context. This literature gap is especially notable in the Turkish context, where research on teacher attrition is significantly more limited. Nevertheless, school administrators play a central role in shaping school climate, mediating parent-teacher relationships, and implementing policies; therefore, their interpretations of teacher attrition are significant.

The present study is informed by an organizational climate perspective, which conceptualizes schools as social organizations shaped by leadership, trust, and communication patterns (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). From this perspective, teacher attrition cannot be seen solely as teachers' individual decision, but it is also embedded in institutional dynamics. Therefore, it is significant to explore school administrators' perceptions on attrition. If school administrators conceptualize teacher attrition as an individual issue, this may result in limited institutional interventions aimed at retention.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study aims to shed light on the perspectives of public school administrators in Türkiye regarding teacher attrition within their school contexts. Since administrators have a central role in shape school environments, their interpretations influence how attrition is understood and addressed within schools.

Administrators' insights provide a valuable lens for understanding the institutional and contextual influences that drive teachers away from the profession. While previous research has frequently addressed school administrators' role in attrition, many of them focused only on the perspectives of in-service and leaving teachers, and fewer studies have examined how administrators themselves conceptualize their role, particularly in the Turkish context. By examining how administrators conceptualize teacher attrition and how they respond to it, this study goes beyond individual-level explanations and situates attrition within the organizational climate perspective.

In order to address the research aims, the following research question was formed:

- How do public school administrators in Türkiye interpret teacher attrition within their school contexts?

Method

Research Design

The current research study was derived from a broader doctoral dissertation study examining teacher attrition in Türkiye. This study aims to explore public school administrators' interpretations of the reasons of teacher attrition. School administrators hold a unique position in schools, since they are responsible for leadership, organizational management, and teacher support. Therefore, their interpretations provide insight into how attrition is understood and addressed at the organizational level. Selecting school administrators from schools where at least one teacher had left the profession enables participants to provide valuable insights for the research aim.

A basic qualitative study aims to understand how individuals experience and interpret a particular event or phenomenon within a professional or social context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It seeks to explore participants' interpretations and meaning-making processes regarding a specific issue. In line with this definition and the study's aims, this study was designed as a basic qualitative study.

Participants

The participants consisted of 10 public school administrators who volunteered to participate in the study. Criterion sampling was used to ensure that participants had experience with teacher attrition (Cohen et al., 2018). Specifically, administrators were required to be currently working in a public school where at least one teacher had left the teaching profession. This criterion ensured the collection of relevant and valuable insights on teacher attrition from the administrators based on actual cases encountered in their institutions.

After identifying potential participants, snowball sampling was employed to reach additional participants who met the same criterion (Cohen et al., 2018). Although snowball sampling has some limitations, it was particularly beneficial for this study. Since teachers who have left the profession are no longer present in school contexts, reaching them or the administrators who have experienced attrition can be challenging. In this regard, using snowball sampling method enabled the researchers to identify and connect with participants who volunteered to participate and could provide meaningful insights and perspectives on the issue of teacher attrition.

Overall, 10 school administrators (four females and six males) who were working in public schools participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 30 to 64 years old ($M = 44.3$). The participants represented different geographical regions of Türkiye (Aegean, Central Anatolia, Marmara, Black Sea, and Southeastern Anatolia) and different school levels (pre-primary, primary, and upper secondary), and their administrative experience ranged from four to 17 years ($M = 8.8$). The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1*Characteristics of the School Administrators Participated in the Study*

Participant	Gender	Age	Experience (years)	Geographical Region	Educational level
A1	Male	41	12	Aegean	Upper secondary
A2	Male	30	4	Central Anatolia	Primary
A3	Female	30	4	Marmara	Primary
A4	Female	42	7	Marmara	Upper secondary
A5	Male	47	6	Black Sea	Upper secondary
A6	Female	55	15	Central Anatolia	Primary
A7	Female	43	8	Central Anatolia	Primary
A8	Male	46	7	Aegean	Upper secondary
A9	Female	64	17	Southeastern Anatolia	Primary
A10	Male	45	8	Aegean	Pre-primary

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through a semi-structured interview guide for ensuring flexibility and gaining in-depth answers (Patton, 2014). The interview guide was prepared by the researchers. In developing the interview guides, the research objectives and literature review on teacher attrition, school leadership, working conditions, and organizational climate were transformed into specific questions. To promote flexibility without steering participants toward anticipated responses, open-ended questions were prepared (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The interview guide was prepared in Turkish, which is the participants' native language.

The interview guide consisted of two sections: the demographic questions that included gender, age, and the professional background (e.g. experience as an administrator, school type, and the educational level that they are working in), and the open-ended questions that focused on administrators' perspectives and ideas regarding teacher attrition. Examples of interview questions included: "In your opinion, what personal influences might lead teachers to leave the profession?", "In your opinion, what school-related influences might contribute to teachers' decisions to leave the profession?", "When a teacher in your school decided to leave the profession, how did you approach this situation?", and "In your opinion, what conditions or opportunities, if provided, might have prevented teachers who left from leaving the profession?".

Before finalizing the interview guide, the interview guide was reviewed by four experts. Two of them were professors in the educational sciences department and one was a professor in the elementary education department. Moreover, opinions and comments of a leaving teacher who is a doctoral candidate in the educational sciences field were also taken. Based on the feedback received, necessary changes were made. For example, wording of few questions were improved to form open-ended questions (e.g. "how..." questions instead of "yes/no" questions). Similarly, questions that intend to address related topics were combined under overarching questions (e.g. adding an overarching question related to the school climate that addresses relationships with students, parents, other teachers, and administrators). This revision enhanced content validity and increased clarity and openness of the interview questions.

Data Collection Process

Before collecting data, a pilot study was conducted with one administrator who was not in the original participant group. The goal was to eliminate ambiguity, refine questions, and ensure they elicited rich, in-depth responses (Fraenkel et al., 2012), and to test interview duration. The pilot study was conducted with a male administrator who has been working in a public high school for six years, and the interview lasted for 36 minutes. The pilot interview allowed for refinement of question sequencing and clarity.

For data collection, the interviews with participants were conducted online via Skype or Zoom, depending on participants' preferences, as travelling to different cities was not easily feasible for the researchers due to COVID-19 precautions at the time of data collection. Before each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality procedures, voluntary participation, their right to leave the interview at any time, and audio-recording that will take place during the interview. Informed consent was also obtained from each participant. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 to 48 minutes, with a total duration of 377 minutes and an average of 37 minutes, resulting in approximately 130 pages of verbatim transcription.

Interviews continued until data saturation was reached. After the tenth interview, no substantially new codes or categories were emerging, and the patterns became repetitive. Therefore, data collection process was concluded at this stage, as the interviews were not likely to add new insights for the research purposes.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis, as described by Patton (2014), involves transforming data into findings; however, condensing a large volume of data into manageable and meaningful segments without compromising data quality is a challenge. Content analysis is a method that addresses this challenge by classifying extensive text into a smaller number of categories, which can be derived from theoretical frameworks or areas of interest (Cohen et al., 2018).

To enhance reliability, before starting the content analysis, one interview transcript was selected and independently coded by three experts who are professors in educational sciences and have extensive experience in qualitative research. Each expert coded the same transcript separately. After that, inter-coder agreement was calculated using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula: $\text{Agreement} / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}) \times 100$. Agreement percentages were calculated separately for each comparison between the researchers and each expert. The average inter-rater reliability across coders was found to be 97%. Following the calculation, consensus was reached regarding code definitions and categories before proceeding with the analysis of transcripts.

Inductive content analysis was used to analyze the data in this study. An inductive approach was preferred because the study aimed to allow themes to emerge from administrators' interpretations, rather than imposing predefined theoretical categories from teacher attrition literature. The analysis followed a systematic and iterative process: First, all interview transcripts were read several times to gain an overall understanding of the data. Second, open coding was completed where meaningful texts were identified and labeled.

Codes were generated from participants' expressions. After that, codes were continuously compared across transcripts to identify patterns. Next, related codes were grouped into categories based on conceptual similarity, and finally into broader themes representing patterned meanings among participants.

Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1982) outline four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were applied in this study to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research findings. To ensure credibility, the interview forms were subjected to expert review and a pilot study was conducted. In-depth data collection was carried out and prolonged engagement with the data was ensured during iterative coding, and inclusion of direct participant quotations in the findings. To establish transferability, a thick description of the context, background, participants, data collection and analysis, findings, and interpretation of the results was provided so that the study can be transferred to a similar context and the readers can clearly understand the results and the perspectives of participants. To ensure dependability and confirmability, consistency and audit trail strategies were implemented (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021); three experts who are professors in the field of educational sciences monitored and provided feedback throughout all the stages of the study. Dependability was also ensured by documenting each stage of the research process. Finally, confirmability was strengthened through reflexivity; the researchers repeatedly reflected on their assumptions on the research topic and avoided personal judgements and interpretations.

Ethical Issues

In accordance with ethical principles, informed consent forms were obtained from participants in the study. They were clearly informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Moreover, ethical approval for the broader doctoral dissertation was obtained from Middle East Technical University (dated 06.08.2021, approval number 338-ODTU-2021).

Findings

The findings of the data analysis were organized under two main themes regarding the reasons of teacher attrition from administrators' perspectives. The first theme, work life experiences, includes classroom management, organizational climate, workload, and obligatory service of public school teachers. The second theme, career dissatisfaction, includes status of teachers and teaching, low salary, and other job opportunities. Table 2 presents the themes, categories, and representative codes derived from the analysis.

Table 2*Findings Regarding the Reasons of Teacher Attrition*

Themes	Categories	Representative Codes
Work life experiences	Classroom management	Establishing teacher authority; crowded classrooms; lack of support; lack of help for special needs students; early career teacher struggles
	Organizational climate	Parent-teacher conflicts; limited administrative intervention; political pressure; union influence
	Workload	After-hours work; overload; excessive parent communication; exhaustion; burden
	Obligatory service of public school teachers	Cultural adaptation; geographical isolation; disadvantaged regions; rural assignment
Career dissatisfaction	Status of teachers and teaching	Feeling undervalued; parental disrespect; weak professional identity
	Low salary	Insufficient income; inability to support family; unfair compensation
	Other job opportunities	Alternative employment; better working conditions; higher salary

Work Life Experiences

Classroom Management

Administrators believed that classroom management problems constitute a significant portion of the reasons of attrition. They explained that teachers, especially those who are at the beginning of their careers, struggle with establishing authority in crowded classrooms. Administrators also shared their observations that teachers are negatively affected by the lack of additional support for special needs students in the classrooms.

For example, one of the administrators stated that: “The teacher does not have much difficulty in anything other than classroom management. Classroom management, both in private and in public schools, can be difficult” [A3]. Administrators highlighted that establishing authority, especially for early career teachers who do not have much experience, can be difficult.

Several administrators also pointed to the excessive number of students in public school classrooms as a reason of attrition. One of the administrators stated: “The classrooms are too crowded. Teachers are struggling with that. But we cannot do anything to change that; we do not have enough number of classrooms or the fiscal resources” [A9]. Moreover, participants argued that particularly if there are special needs students in the classroom and if there are no additional help that teachers can receive, then novice teachers might start doubting their teaching skills and feel overwhelmed, which may lead to attrition.

These accounts indicate that administrators view classroom management not only as a routine challenge, but also as something some teachers may not be able to cope with. The findings show that administrators perceive struggles such as working in crowded classrooms with limited support could push teachers towards attrition.

Organizational Climate

Participants argued that the organizational climate in schools can influence teachers' decision to leave the profession. All administrators acknowledged that teachers struggle with their relationships with students, parents and sometimes administrators. However, many of them perceived it primarily as a "teachers' problem". They argued that teachers have to deal with problems stemming from their relationships to students/parents. One of the participants stated that: "Teachers cannot keep their distance with the students in the classroom or with parents" [A6] and they believed when this is the case, it is normal to have disputes with parents, and there is nothing that administrators can do about it. Almost all participants believed that administrators cannot regulate or interfere in teachers' negative relationships with students or parents. This perception suggests that attrition is often framed as an individual coping issue by school administrators, rather than a school-level responsibility.

In contrast, one administrator stated that he always tries to support his teachers no matter what. The participant stated:

My biggest thing is this: 'When you have a problem, don't let the parents come and wear you down about the school. When something related to school happens, don't take responsibility, I'm not standing here for nothing, let it come to me'. The fewer problems the teacher has, the better. That's why I go to parent-teacher meetings held by every teacher. I mostly deal with the parents to take the pressure off my teachers' shoulders. That's the best I can do. The first person a teacher sees at his school is the administrator. And if the administrator does not look after his teachers, the people at the top usually don't, either. They say: 'initiate an administrative inquiry, nevermind'. They do not care if the teacher is right or wrong. I think it shouldn't be like that. [A2]

This reflects a different approach, where administrative support is seen as a way to reduce teachers' emotional burden. The findings revealed that although all participants agree that teachers' negative relationships with students, parents or administrators can lead to attrition, the majority believe teachers have to deal with these negative interactions and that administrators cannot do much to support teachers or to establish a more positive environment.

Participants also highlighted that administrators' orientation in terms of their political views can play a role in teacher attrition. For example, one of the participants stated: "Political views and unionization... That is a very important factor in public schools. Teachers can feel under pressure to join a certain union, almost threatening..." [A3]. Almost all administrators agreed that if an administrator is oppressive and imposing about a certain political view, ultimately, this situation can cause teachers to feel threatened and leave the profession.

Overall, administrators' narratives indicate that organizational climate is perceived as influential on attrition; however, the majority of them did not see themselves as responsible for improving it. This perception is significant because it shows whether attrition is treated by administrators as an individual weakness or as a structural and systemic issue.

Workload

All participants believed that teachers' workload is too heavy. They mentioned that teachers have many responsibilities and it is not possible for them to work during work-hours

only. For example, one of the participants stated that:

Workload... It's something that doesn't exist in any other profession... While others can completely dedicate their time to their own once they step inside their homes; as teachers, we cannot experience that. It's like we go inside our home and start a new workday, as if we are walking into a second school as we walk through the door, because we have other things to do for the next school day. [A7]

Administrators emphasized that teaching responsibilities extend beyond formal working hours. Moreover, participants agreed that apart from the requirements of teaching profession like grading or course planning, the workload is increasing each year because of new educational projects created or external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, one participant stated that:

The extra workload is increasing day by day, every minister comes up with something new, starts a new project; before one ends, the other starts. The workload of the teacher increases. The purchasing power is decreasing. And of course, this negatively affects the teacher's point of view towards the system. It lowers your efficiency. So believe me, if they could find better and higher paying jobs; there would be many teachers who would have left already. [A9]

On top of these, some of the participants also agreed that parents expect too much from teachers, and it adds to their workload. One participant stated: "The parent calls and tells about his problem that day, the trouble at home. ... The parent can call the teacher and talk about irrelevant things for half an hour. The teacher also listens to these and extends her/his shift." [A6]

The findings reveal that heavy workload; particularly day-to-day responsibilities of teachers, extracurricular activities, new projects, and parent-teacher interactions that are too frequent and untimely can be a reason of teacher attrition. Administrators perceive workload not only as being busy or having extra burden, but as a boundaryless demand on teachers' professional and personal life.

Obligatory Service of Public School Teachers

Almost all administrators argued that obligatory service period can be a reason of teacher attrition among novice teachers. One participant stated:

We had friends who resigned; they couldn't stand the conditions of the places that they were assigned to. Because it is a completely different region, especially for those who grow up in the west. Life conditions are difficult, there is a cultural difference, it is very difficult to teach before learning the culture. There, when the two overlap, giving up is more common. [A7]

Administrators believed that if novice teachers are assigned to rural or disadvantaged regions, they may struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar conditions and cultural contexts, which can exacerbate feelings of isolation and frustration, leading to attrition. In this sense, the findings reveal that administrators associate attrition not only with individual choice or professional demands, but also with geographical and socio-cultural isolation, particularly during early career stages.

Career Dissatisfaction

Status of Teachers and Teaching

All participants argued that teachers often feel undervalued and disrespected by society. They expressed that this sense of disrespect can be frustrating and may contribute to attrition. Administrators noted that when teachers identify themselves as educators, they frequently encounter dismissive or negative reactions from others, who may see them as unsuccessful. This perception is deeply demoralizing for teachers.

Few participants mentioned that especially parents nowadays act as if teachers are “servants” who must serve their children. One of the administrators stated: “People now believe that teachers are obligated to provide service to their children. They can easily file a complaint and frighten them, but they cannot do that to a soldier or a police officer” [A2].

Similarly, another participant stated:

Years ago, teachers were held in high regard, but now it feels like society has lost its respect for the profession. Parents, and even students, often treat teachers as if they’re just another employee. This lack of respect is incredibly demoralizing and makes it harder for teachers to stay motivated. [A9]

These narratives show that perceived social devaluation and disrespect weaken professional identity of teachers and their long-term commitment to the profession. These findings indicate that administrators see the declining status and professional dignity of teaching as one of the factors causing teacher attrition.

Low Salary

Administrators agreed that low salary might be the most common reason of attrition. They argued that the “salary is far below what teachers deserve” [A6]. Another participant stated that:

If the head of the house is working as a teacher, they might not be able to provide for the family because life is expensive. Teachers are right to leave teaching, if they could find another job with better conditions and compensation. [A2]

The findings revealed that administrators believe teachers are struggling with low salary, and many more teachers would leave the profession if they could find alternative jobs that offer higher pay. Administrators described salary not only as a financial insufficiency, but also as an issue of fairness compared to heavy workload and increased societal expectations.

Other Job Opportunities

Also related to low salary and heavy workload, findings showed that administrators believe having another job opportunity, where teachers can earn more or work under more comfortable terms, is a reason of attrition. For instance, one administrator stated: “If a teacher finds better conditions, my question would be: ‘Are you sure? Have you thought about it?’. If they say yes, I say: ‘good luck, sir, bring your resignation’” [A2].

Notably, several administrators expressed their acceptance of teachers’ decision to

leave. Rather than attempting to retain teachers at all costs, they acknowledged resignation as a rational choice when better job opportunities come across. This finding indicates that many administrators accept teacher attrition as understandable under current structural constraints.

Conclusion, Discussion and Implications

This study explored how public school administrators in Türkiye perceive teacher attrition within their school contexts. The findings revealed that administrators conceptualize teacher attrition under two main themes: work life experiences and career dissatisfaction. The results also demonstrated how school administrators position themselves and their roles in attrition in relation to these factors.

In line with previous research (Hong, 2012; Weiner, 2002), classroom management problems emerged as one of the leading reasons of teacher attrition. Consistent with these findings, the results of a needs analysis conducted in a school context with alarming rates of teacher attrition showed that addressing student discipline problems, strengthening teacher capacity, and building relationships with local community can have an influence on decreasing attrition rates (Stefaniak et al., 2020). Building upon this, the present study extends this literature by demonstrating how administrators perceive classroom management problems as a challenge that many teachers fail to cope with. This perception shifts attention toward individual teacher (in)capacity rather than toward structural conditions. When classroom management is framed as a personal weakness, teachers may be left to deal with structurally demanding conditions on their own. In such contexts, insufficient institutional support may increase vulnerability to burnout and attrition (Çakır et al., 2024; Gökten Bayrak & Ok, 2026).

Regarding the organizational climate, the influence of administrators on teacher attrition was highlighted numerous times in the literature. Many studies argued that teachers' job satisfaction and performance decrease and their intention to leave or the attrition rates increase in the school contexts where a negative organizational climate is established (e.g. Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2015; Selamat et al., 2013). Recent research similarly suggests that teacher retention is closely tied to how administrators interpret their role in creating a supportive climate and responding to teachers' day-to-day needs (Balmer, 2024; Lochmiller et al., 2024; Riganti, 2025). In this context, administrators' relationships with teachers, as well as their role in facilitating positive interactions between teachers and parents, appear crucial. Interestingly, the majority of administrators in the present study did not perceive themselves as responsible for establishing a positive school climate in relation to teachers' interactions with school stakeholders. This result suggests that some administrators may underestimate how their actions shape teachers' experiences, potentially contributing to the challenges teachers face. In this respect, administrators' role extends beyond operational management and includes fostering a supportive and motivating environment for teachers, helping to facilitate their work and enhance their professional experiences (Krasniqi, 2021). The results indicated that the variability in how administrators assume responsibility suggests that organizational climate may also be a matter of leadership interpretation.

The results align with the literature associating heavy workload, particularly non-teaching workload, such as paperwork, attending meetings, and records of student behavior,

to burnout and attrition (e.g. Buchanan, 2010; Creagh et al., 2023; Solomonson et al., 2019). In the present study, administrators also described heavy workload as a boundaryless demand occupying teachers' personal lives as well. Nevertheless, administrators frequently framed workload as a systemic dysfunction, which is not an area that they can intervene within the scope of administrator roles and responsibilities. This perception may contribute to the normalization of heavy workload and teacher attrition under these conditions.

Obligatory service of public school teachers has been identified as a reason of attrition. In Türkiye, novice teachers are often assigned to public schools in remote regions or small towns/rural provinces, where they may experience feelings of isolation and cultural displacement due to geographical and social unfamiliarity. Previous research similarly found that geographic isolation, culture shock, and adjustment problems increase the risk of attrition, particularly for early career teachers (e.g. Güvendir, 2017; Roberts, 2005; Trinidad, 2011). Administrators in the present study also emphasized adaptation problems and cultural dislocation as central concerns. These findings align with broader international evidence showing that attrition rates tend to be higher in rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged schools, where teachers face geographic isolation, limited institutional support, and cultural adjustment challenges (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Guarino et al., 2006, Ingersoll, 2001).

The results of this study revealed that administrators emphasize the low status of teachers, coupled with low salaries and the availability of alternative job opportunities, are significant factors contributing to teacher attrition. Administrators consistently noted that the teaching profession is generally underestimated by society, with teachers often facing a lack of respect from both students and parents. Moreover, the results showed that administrators tended to view leaving the profession as a reasonable decision under better conditions. This perspective indicates that attrition may be seen as a natural career transition, rather than a problem that can be addressed within school contexts. This framing may reduce administrators' efforts to actively retain teachers.

Based on the study's results, several recommendations in light of administrators' interpretations of teacher attrition can be proposed. First, structured mentoring programs can be facilitated to support teachers, particularly early career teachers, with classroom management struggles. Given that classroom management was frequently framed as a reason of attrition, mentoring programs may help teachers feel less isolated in dealing with these challenges.

Second, leadership development programs may be offered for administrators. The results of the study showed that administrators tend to frame organizational climate out of their responsibilities within their schools. As a results, they might be unaware or overlook the challenges faced by teachers. Through a leadership development program, administrators can facilitate fostering school climates to address teacher attrition.

Third, administrators can play a role on transparent distribution of workload within their schools. The results showed that heavy workload can be an influence on teacher attrition. Although teaching profession has certain requirements that make up the workload, such as prior course planning and grading after work hours, it can be managed more effectively not to overwhelm teachers. Administrators should communicate responsibilities clearly and well in advance, avoiding last-minute tasks. Additionally, schools should be adequately staffed, as teachers in understaffed schools often face heavier workloads. By proactively addressing the

issue, administrators can help alleviate some of the burdens teachers face, ultimately contributing to lower attrition rates.

Fourth, in relation to obligatory service period of teachers, contextual preparation and socio-cultural orientation programs may help novice teachers in rural or disadvantaged regions. Policymakers should consider not only the logistical aspects of teacher placement but also the sociocultural factors that influence teachers' ability to thrive in diverse environments. Moreover, to enhance the appeal of teaching in these regions, "total compensation" strategies can be implemented, which include higher salaries, housing assistance, improved school facilities, access to counseling services, and opportunities for social and cultural activities (Guarino et al., 2006).

Finally, to enhance the status of teachers and the teaching profession, one crucial step is for administrators to establish clear and well-defined guidelines regarding the parent-teacher relationship. Administrators should take on the role of mediators, ensuring that the boundaries between parents' involvement and teachers' professional responsibilities are respected. This can include setting protocols for how and when parents can communicate with teachers, ensuring that parents' concerns are addressed in a constructive manner without interfering with the teachers' ability to manage their classrooms. This not only helps protect the integrity of the teaching process but also contributes to a more respectful and collaborative relationship between teachers and parents.

This study contributes to the literature by bringing administrators' interpretations into focus in the Turkish context, where research on attrition remains limited. Several recommendations for future research can also be made. Expanding the sample size would provide a deeper understanding of administrators' perspectives on teacher attrition. This study included only public school administrators; incorporating private school administrators could offer a broader perspective, as working conditions, expectations, and experiences of teachers differ significantly between public and private schools. Comparative studies examining these contexts may further illuminate how organizational conditions shape attrition dynamics.

Contribution Rate of the Researchers

The researchers have contributed equally to the study.

Statement of Conflict of Interest

The researchers have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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