



Factors Influencing Teacher Enthusiasm: A Qualitative Study in Turkish Context

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Article history

Received:
24.06.2024

Received in revised form:
08.09.2024

Accepted:
14.10.2024

Key words:

enthusiasm; qualitative study;
teacher enthusiasm

This study explores the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in Turkish public schools through a qualitative, exploratory case study design conducted in two provinces in the northwestern region of Türkiye. Data were collected from 28 teachers using semi-structured interviews, with participants selected through convenience and maximum variation sampling methods. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data. The research identified three primary themes: personal factors, contextual factors, and external factors. Personal factors include motivation, affection for teaching and job satisfaction. Contextual factors encompass students' academic performance and behaviors, school leadership practices, relationships with colleagues, and working conditions. External factors involve parental attitudes, educational policies, the value perception of the teaching profession, and incentives and rewards. The findings emphasize the critical role of personal motivation, affection for teaching, and job satisfaction in fostering teacher enthusiasm. Additionally, supportive leadership, positive student interactions, and a collaborative work environment are crucial contextual factors. External factors such as positive parental attitudes, consistent educational policies, societal recognition of the teaching profession, and appropriate incentives and rewards also play a vital role in fostering teacher enthusiasm. These results suggest that policymakers should prioritize consistent educational policies as well as recognition and rewards for teachers, while school principals should create supportive and collaborative environments. By addressing these areas, stakeholders can enhance teacher enthusiasm, ultimately improving teaching quality and student outcomes.

Introduction

In recent decades, an expanding body of research has underscored the pivotal role of teachers in achieving improved student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hanushek et al., 2019; Marzano et al., 2001; Thoonen et al., 2011). This role requires not only professional competence but also motivational characteristics, acting as a driving force for teachers to navigate the challenges and obstacles within the complex educational context (Kunter, 2013). Motivated teachers dedicate greater diligence and persistence to their work,

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leading to enhanced teaching outcomes (Frenzel et al., 2019; Han & Yin, 2006). Therefore, the significance of teacher motivational factors has been widely acknowledged by scholars and policymakers, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic which complicated the teaching profession and overshadowed certain positive relational aspects of teaching, leading to heightened stress, greater demands, and increased concerns for teachers (Jones & Kessler, 2020; Porter et al., 2022). As an affective and motivational factor, teacher enthusiasm, characterized by a positive emotional state, stands out as an essential quality that significantly impacts school environments and teaching effectiveness (Bettencourt et al., 1983; Long & Hoy, 2006). Regarded as a fundamental trait of effective teachers, enthusiasm is thought to play a critical role in enhancing student learning (Kunter et al., 2008, 2011; Mahler et al., 2018; Witcher & Onwuegbuzie, 2001).

In the realm of educational research, the investigation of teacher enthusiasm as a subject of scientific inquiry has garnered increasing prominence in recent years (Kunter et al., 2011; Lazarides et al., 2018, 2019; Mahler et al., 2018). This growing focus can be attributed to the potential of teacher enthusiasm to enhance various aspects of teaching and learning outcomes, including teaching effectiveness (Feldman, 1976; Keller et al., 2013), job satisfaction (Kunter et al., 2011), teacher support (Lazarides et al., 2019), student performance (Bettencourt et al., 1983, Brophy & Good, 1986; Mahler et al., 2018; OECD, 2019), student interest (Keller et al., 2014; Kim & Schallert, 2014; Lazarides et al., 2018) and student motivation (Frenzel et al., 2019; Lazarides et al., 2018; Palmer, 2020; Patrick et al., 2000; Wood, 1998). Teacher enthusiasm is recognized as an affective teacher characteristic closely associated with intrinsic motivation, serving as a catalyst for functional, adaptive, and enduring teacher behaviors, leading to beneficial effects on students (Kunter et al., 2011). Enthusiastic teachers are more adept at conveying their passion to students, thereby inspiring them to learn. This enthusiasm also has a positive impact on teachers' classroom behaviors and practices, which contributes to higher student motivation and engagement, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes (Keller et al., 2013; Kunter et al., 2008).

Despite the line of research indicating that teacher enthusiasm positively influences teaching quality and student learning (Frenzel et al., 2019; Keller et al., 2013; Mahler et al., 2018) there are notable gaps in the existing literature that warrant further investigation. Firstly, the nature of enthusiasm for teaching exhibits variability among teachers, which can be attributed to the situational factors and contexts inherent in the teachers' professional duties within and beyond the classroom setting (Keller et al., 2016). However, while previous research has extensively concentrated on the impacts of teacher enthusiasm on teaching quality and student outcomes, there is limited understanding regarding the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm (Burić & Moè, 2020; Kunter et al., 2011). Secondly, existing literature predominantly comprises quantitative analyses of teacher enthusiasm, mostly using pre-determined variables, highlighting a deficiency in comprehensive qualitative studies that delve into the potential determinants of teacher enthusiasm (Wenström et al., 2018). Thirdly, in the Turkish context where this study was conducted, empirical research on teacher enthusiasm is scant, highlighting the need for more in-depth investigations in this area (Bedir & Yıldırım, 2000; Kasalak & Dağyar, 2021; Sürücü & Ünal, 2018).

Overall, our study seeks to address the following research question: "What are the factors that influence teacher enthusiasm in Turkish schools?" By identifying these factors, we intend to provide valuable insights for educational policymakers and practitioners, aiding in the development of strategies to enhance teacher enthusiasm, particularly in Türkiye and similar centralized educational contexts where a lower level of teacher enthusiasm is reported

(OECD, 2019). Furthermore, our findings hold promise for improving the psychological conditions necessary for teachers to enhance their instructional effectiveness, thus elevating teaching quality and student achievement.

Teacher enthusiasm

The term ‘enthusiasm’ in everyday speech denotes the pleasure and excitement individuals experience from engaging in particular tasks (Kunter et al., 2008). Defined as ‘*radiating excitement*’, enthusiasm is closely linked with intrinsic motivation, demonstrating a close association between the two concepts, as discussed by Frenzel et al. (2019). However, teacher enthusiasm lacks a universally accepted definition and carries varied connotations across different domains of educational research (Kunter et al., 2011). In their prominent literature review, Keller et al. (2016) classified the conceptualizations of teacher enthusiasm into two groups: ‘*displayed*’ and ‘*experienced*’ enthusiasm. Some researchers, adopting a behavioral approach, view teacher enthusiasm as a blend of expressive nonverbal behaviors, including body movements, gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions (Bettencourt et al., 1983; Collins, 1978; Murphy & Walls, 1994; Patrick et al., 2000). In this approach, teacher enthusiasm was regarded as an effective instructional strategy and evaluated based on observable behavioral indicators (Frenzel et al., 2019).

Later research expanded the scope to include teachers’ experienced enthusiasm as a significant affective and motivational factor (Kunter et al., 2008, 2011). By conceptualizing enthusiasm as a subjective teacher experience, Kunter et al. (2008, p. 470) redefined teacher enthusiasm as “*the degree of enjoyment, excitement and pleasure that teachers typically experience in their professional activities.*” In this reconceptualization, teacher enthusiasm is construed as a positive emotional teacher characteristic, signifying the experience of joy and satisfaction in teaching rather than nonverbal instructional behaviors (Keller et al., 2014). The studies of Kunter (2008, 2011) distinguished between two types of teacher enthusiasm: subject enthusiasm and teaching enthusiasm. *Subject enthusiasm* pertains to the enjoyment and excitement that teachers experience in the subject they teach, whereas *teaching enthusiasm* focuses on the excitement and pleasure derived from the teaching profession. Similar to Kunter et al. (2008), Frenzel et al. (2019) also viewed teacher enthusiasm as the experienced enjoyment that teachers feel in the teaching context. Keller et al. (2014), integrating the aforementioned two prevalent conceptualizations of teacher enthusiasm in educational literature, introduced a model termed ‘*dispositional teacher enthusiasm*’. By adopting a more holistic approach, they defined teacher enthusiasm as the simultaneous manifestation of positive affective experiences, specifically enjoyment related to teaching, along with the outward expression of these experiences, primarily through nonverbal behaviors indicative of expressiveness. In this new conceptualization, teacher enthusiasm is perceived as a blend of both displayed behaviors and the affective characteristics of teachers.

In educational literature, teacher enthusiasm is regarded as a vital attribute of effective teachers (Bettencourt et al., 1983; Witcher & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). It serves as a tactic to impact students’ performance through high energy levels and genuine interest in teaching (Keller et al., 2016; Mahler et al., 2018). The enthusiasm displayed by a teacher in the classroom can profoundly impact students’ perceptions of both the educator and the subject matter. The effectiveness of educators in engaging their students frequently relies on the enthusiasm they demonstrate for the act of teaching. Students typically respond first to enthusiasm, as it is the enthusiastic teachers whom they remember most, and it is these educators who have taught them most effectively (Spotkov, 2018). Enthusiastic teachers



likely demonstrate elevated levels of work engagement reflected in participation in continuous professional development, meticulous lesson planning, and receptiveness to innovative methodologies. Teachers with higher enthusiasm typically experience greater job and life satisfaction, along with decreased emotional exhaustion. As a result, this may lead to enhanced instructional quality, contributing positively to student achievement (Kunter et al., 2008, 2011).

Enthusiastic teachers offer increased support for their students, leading to a positive impact on student motivation (Lazarides et al., 2019). Additionally, they facilitate a more enjoyable learning experience and foster increased interest among students (Keller et al., 2014). They infuse the classroom with excitement and enjoyment, encouraging active participation and inspiring students to explore (Spotkov, 2018). According to a recent report released by the OECD (2019), teacher enthusiasm positively impacts student achievement, as well as student motivation and disciplinary climate. Keller et al. (2013) delineated three indirect mechanisms by which teacher enthusiasm can enhance student learning: firstly, it can captivate and sustain students' attention during class; secondly, enthusiastic teachers may act as influential role models, nurturing students' own enthusiasm for a topic; and thirdly, enthusiastic teachers can convey their positive emotions, known as emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1993). Besides enhancing student academic performance, teacher enthusiasm is assumed to impact students' affective outcomes such as enjoyment and motivational outcomes such as interest (Keller et al., 2014; Mahler et al., 2018).

While the previously mentioned research offers evidence supporting the beneficial effects of teacher enthusiasm on various motivational and academic aspects within educational environments, the literature falls short in providing empirical evidence regarding the factors that influence teacher enthusiasm. Keller et al. (2016) assert that teacher enthusiasm is embedded within a broader context of teacher and school-related factors. Similarly, Kunter et al. (2011) emphasize the context specificity of teacher enthusiasm and highlight the need to explore potential contextual factors that can influence teacher enthusiasm. Therefore, in this study, we aim to unveil the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in the Turkish educational context. We adopted Kunter et al.'s (2008, 2011) conceptualization of teacher enthusiasm as an affective characteristic denoting the enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure teachers experience in their teaching. Accordingly, we utilized teacher self-reports to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the factors that influence their enthusiasm.

Method

Design

This research was conducted employing a qualitative research method and an exploratory case study design. Qualitative research provides a means to delve deeply into and comprehensively study issues (Patton, 2014). Case studies facilitate an in-depth exploration of a specific case, maintaining a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin, 2018). In situations requiring comprehensive and in-depth analysis, case studies are considered robust guiding frameworks, facilitating the understanding and exploration of complex subjects (Leymun et al., 2017). This approach involves a holistic investigation of factors associated with a case, focusing on how these factors impact the relevant case and are influenced by it (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The selection of an exploratory case study design in this study was motivated by the need to conduct a comprehensive exploration of the factors contributing to teacher enthusiasm from the perspective of teachers themselves and provide recommendations for

further research (Yin, 2018). In alignment with the study’s objective, this research was guided by the following central question: What are the factors that influence teacher enthusiasm in Turkish schools? This question informed the data collection and analysis processes, ensuring a rigorous examination of the issue from the perspectives of the participating teachers.

Participants

This study involved 28 teachers who were employed in two provinces located in the northwestern region of Türkiye. In determining the sample size, our initial aim was to include a minimum of 20 participants to ensure a comprehensive range of perspectives. We proceeded to recruit additional participants until data saturation was achieved (Guetterman, 2015). Participants were selected using both convenience and maximum variation sampling methods as purposeful sampling techniques. Convenience sampling adds speed and practicality by selecting easily accessible situations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Maximum variation sampling captures diverse perspectives and identifies common patterns in experiences and outcomes (Patton, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that variations in participant characteristics enhance a study’s potential for generalization. Therefore, participants were selected from diverse demographic backgrounds, covering a wide range of age groups, genders, teaching experiences, areas of expertise, educational attainment and school types (see Table 1). This selection aimed to elucidate diverse facets of the issue and gather a comprehensive range of data from participants representing various characteristics. To ensure confidentiality, a coding system (e.g., P1, P2, P3) was used for participant identifiers.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Seniority	Educational Attainment	Area of Expertise	School Type
P1	47	F	26	Bachelor’s degree	Maths	Academic High School
P2	28	F	7	Bachelor’s degree	Music	Secondary School
P3	31	F	9	Bachelor’s degree	Primary Education	Primary School
P4	39	F	18	Bachelor’s degree	Turkish Language	Secondary School
P5	35	F	11	Bachelor’s degree	Turkish Language	Secondary School
P6	36	M	12	PhD degree	Science	Secondary School
P7	45	M	22	Bachelor’s degree	Turkish Literature	Academic High School
P8	48	F	25	Bachelor’s degree	Biology	Academic High School
P9	39	F	16	Bachelor’s degree	Primary Education	Primary School
P10	40	M	14	Bachelor’s degree	Science	Secondary School
P11	29	F	6	Bachelor’s degree	Science	Secondary School
P12	40	M	18	Master’s degree	Maths	Academic High School
P13	38	M	8	Bachelor’s degree	Education of Religion	Secondary School
P14	48	F	24	Bachelor’s degree	Turkish Language	Secondary School
P15	24	F	1	Bachelor’s degree	Primary Education	Primary School
P16	56	M	36	Bachelor’s degree	Primary Education	Primary School
P17	37	M	15	PhD degree	Science	Secondary School
P18	42	M	19	Master’s degree	Maths	Secondary School
P19	46	M	18	Bachelor’s degree	Philosophy	Vocational High School
P20	50	M	20	Bachelor’s degree	Electronics	Vocational High School
P21	42	F	9	Master’s degree	Education of Religion	Secondary School
P22	48	M	24	Bachelor’s degree	Chemistry	Academic High School
P23	41	F	18	Master’s degree	History	Academic High School
P24	48	F	25	Bachelor’s degree	Arts	Academic High School
P25	38	M	16	Master’s degree	English Language	Secondary School
P26	32	F	7	Master’s degree	Social Sciences	Secondary School
P27	37	F	11	Bachelor’s degree	Physical Education	Academic High School
P28	41	F	18	PhD degree	English Language	Secondary School



Data collection

This study employed the interview technique, commonly utilized in case studies, as it is beneficial in suggesting explanations for key events and offering insights that reflect participants' relativist perspectives (Yin, 2018). The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol crafted by the researchers, chosen for its flexibility, allowing the incorporation of additional questions during the interview process. The interview protocol included two sections: demographic data and participants' experiences and perspectives regarding teacher enthusiasm. Some of the questions asked during the interviews included, "What specific situations or experiences in your professional practice have enhanced your enthusiasm for teaching?", "What challenges or obstacles have you encountered in your teaching profession that negatively affect your enthusiasm?", and "Can you think of any other factors that have influenced your enthusiasm for teaching?"

For reliability, we sought feedback from one professor and two associate professors specializing in teacher behavior (Miles et al., 2014). Based on their feedback, the interview protocol was refined and finalized. During the interviews, with participants' permission, the conversations were recorded, typically lasting between 30 and 40 minutes. After the interviews, the researchers transcribed the recorded audio onto a Word document using a computer.

Data analysis

This study employed content analysis, a method for systematically interpreting qualitative data by classifying it into categories within a coding frame (Schreier, 2012). Accordingly, in our study, similar data were grouped based on specific conceptual and thematic frameworks. In data analysis, we first transcribed the data gathered from interviews. After transcription, we presented the data to the participants for approval of accuracy. The researchers examined the texts line by line to understand nuanced themes and details. Subsequently, the coding was performed, and the initial codes were formulated employing the open coding technique, which involves coding based on concepts directly derived from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The codes were subsequently organized into categories according to their similarities. Similar categories were aggregated under a common theme. The analysis results were validated through peer debriefing with three external experts. After completing the coding and theme formation processes, the data interpretation phase began. This phase involved a thorough interpretation of the codes, categories and themes by the researchers to attain a broader understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The researchers analyzed the generated themes and codes, in conjunction with existing literature, presenting their interpretations in the discussion section.

Ethics and trustworthiness

The study received ethical approval from the Bartın University Ethics Committee (2024-SBB-0412). Before the interview process, written informed consent was obtained from volunteers after explaining the study in detail. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their identities and informed of their right to decline answering any questions or terminate the interview at any time. We adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) qualitative criteria of 'trustworthiness' (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. Credibility, similar to internal validity, was ensured by extending the interviews and conducting member checks to verify the findings with participants (Creswell, 2007). Transferability, which is akin to generalizability, was

established through detailed descriptions of participant demographics, enabling readers to evaluate the relevance of the findings to similar contexts. Dependability was ensured by maintaining audit trails documenting every research step, including consent forms, recordings, transcripts, coding memos, interview notes, and participant information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability was ensured through external checks by three experts who reviewed the findings (Creswell, 2007). Their expertise was sought for both the development of the interview protocol and data analysis.

Findings

This study explores the factors that influence teacher enthusiasm in Turkish public schools. Based on content analysis, three themes were identified: personal factors, contextual factors and external factors. Each theme includes various categories linked to the factors mentioned by the participants. Examples of the themes, categories and codes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Examples of the themes, categories and codes of the study

Theme	Category	Codes
Contextual Factors	School leadership practices	Supporting teachers Appreciating teachers' efforts Establishing close relations Treating fairly Providing resources

Personal factors

The views of participants highlighted the significance of personal factors in enhancing their enthusiasm for teaching. This theme encompasses the following categories: motivation, affection for teaching and job satisfaction.

Motivation

One of the personal factors influencing teacher enthusiasm is motivation. Participants commonly expressed that their enthusiasm is positively affected by their level of motivation. Specifically, when teachers feel motivated, they exhibit higher enthusiasm in their professional roles. A participant (P4) stated, *“Being successful and improving myself are primary motives for me. When I feel motivated, I tend to be more enthusiastic about teaching.”* Another participant viewed (P7) mentioned, *“intrinsic motivation”* as a key source of enthusiasm.

Conversely, findings revealed that a decline in teachers' motivation leads to a decrease in their enthusiasm. One teacher (P12) described this issue by stating, *“One big reason my enthusiasm dips is when I'm not feeling motivated, especially if I'm having trouble getting my students' attention and engaging them. It is like a cycle - when I'm not motivated, I lose my enthusiasm for teaching.”*

Affection for teaching

The majority of participants articulated a profound affection for their profession, emphasizing various aspects that enhance their enthusiasm. One teacher (P5) described her source of enthusiasm as *“touching upon the lives of the students.”* Several teachers highlighted the importance of their love for the teaching profession as a significant factor



influencing their enthusiasm. A teacher (P16) noted, *“My love for the teaching profession is the source of my enthusiasm. Similarly, another teacher (P1) stated, “Teaching is a profession that doesn’t have a monetary reward. It’s something you do because you love it.”* Moreover, some teachers expressed a sense of reverence for their profession, viewing teaching as a *“sacred endeavor”*. This affection for teaching, rooted in the desire to make a positive difference in students’ lives, serves as a powerful motivator that fuels teachers’ enthusiasm.

Job satisfaction

The interviews revealed that feeling satisfied with their teaching roles enhances teachers’ enthusiasm. Teachers derive job satisfaction from various aspects of their work, such as seeing their students succeed, witnessing their progress, and contributing to their growth. This sense of accomplishment and the positive impact they have on their students promote their satisfaction, leading to increased enthusiasm. One teacher (P26) described this issue by stating, *“Seeing my students succeed and knowing that I have contributed to their growth gives me a profound sense of satisfaction. This sense of achievement boosts my enthusiasm for teaching.”* Another teacher (P23) added, *“When I see my students understanding and applying what they have learned, it makes all the hard work worthwhile and makes me more enthusiastic.”* These reflections underscore the impact of job satisfaction on teacher enthusiasm, highlighting the importance of recognizing and fostering the intrinsic rewards of teaching.

Contextual factors

Contextual factors emerged as one of the prominent themes regarding the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm. These factors include students, school leadership practices, relationships with colleagues, and working conditions.

Students

Nearly all teachers reported that various aspects related to students significantly affect their enthusiasm. These aspects include students’ academic performance, interest in lessons, motivation levels, efforts and positive behaviors. One teacher (P19) underscored the importance of student academic performance and interest by stating, *“I teach at a vocational high school, and my students aren’t very interested in my subject, so there are many times when my enthusiasm drops. But when I teach extra hours at other schools, where the students are academically stronger and eager to learn, teaching becomes a real pleasure.”* Another teacher (P6) remarked, *“One of the things that really makes me enthusiastic as a teacher is seeing how motivated my students are. It’s like their energy just rubs off on me and keeps me pumped up for teaching.”*

The interviews revealed that some teachers view student effort as a key driver of their enthusiasm. This perspective is echoed by a teacher (P5), who stated *“The effort students put forth is like fuel for my enthusiasm in teaching.”* Positive behaviors of students, including their love and respect, were also highlighted as crucial factors. A teacher (P4) noted *“It’s amazing to feel how students’ love and respect boost my enthusiasm. Their positivity makes teaching even more rewarding.”* Additionally, the contagion effect of enthusiasm was pointed out. One teacher (P1) mentioned, *“Students’ enthusiasm transfers to me. What makes me enthusiastic is the enthusiasm of the students themselves.”* Students’ post-graduation behaviors were also highlighted by some teachers as a crucial factor for their enthusiasm. A teacher (P7) described this by expressing, *“When students make an effort to stay in touch,*

visit, and continue communication after graduation, it greatly enhances my enthusiasm.” Overall, the research findings underscore a unanimous consensus among teachers regarding the pivotal role of students in shaping their enthusiasm for teaching.

School leadership practices

The majority of participants articulated the significant role of school principals' leadership practices in promoting their enthusiasm. The interviews revealed that school principals' support, appreciation for teachers' work, establishment of close relationships, fair treatment, and provision of resources are considered leadership practices that enhance teacher enthusiasm. One teacher (P18) stated, *“When I feel the support of our school principal I become more enthusiastic about teaching.”* Another teacher (P1) emphasized, *“Establishing a close relationship with our principal and feeling valued for our efforts contributes to my enthusiasm in the classroom.”* Moreover, a teacher (P5) noted the impact of the provision of resources stating, *“Whenever I request resources for my classroom practices and projects from my school principal, he always makes an effort to provide those resources. This effort is highly valuable for me and boosts my enthusiasm for teaching.”* Conversely, some teachers highlighted the negative impact of school principals' lack of awareness or neglect of their efforts in schools. One teacher (P6) stated, *“The negative attitudes exhibited by the school principal could diminish my enthusiasm for teaching, potentially leading me to consider to leave the school if this situation persists.”* These insights collectively underscore the pivotal role of school leadership, as their actions can either foster or hinder teacher enthusiasm.

Relationships with colleagues

Teachers emphasized that their relationships with colleagues play a crucial role in enhancing their enthusiasm. Sharing experiences, collaborating on teaching practices, receiving support, and maintaining positive communication were frequently highlighted. One teacher (P17) stated, *“Working with my fellow teachers, sharing my experiences, and learning from them really boosts my enthusiasm.”* Teachers highly value the opportunity to work together, finding that collaboration not only enhances their teaching practices but also fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose. This was echoed by another teacher (P11) stating, *“When we collaborate, it feels like we are all in it together, and that teamwork really keeps my enthusiasm high.”* The importance of support from colleagues was underscored by a teacher who stated, *“Getting support from my colleagues really lifts my spirits. It makes teaching so much more fun and effective.”* Additionally, trust was identified as another crucial element. One teacher (P4) expressed this by saying, *“I believe trust is very important in a school environment. It is very difficult to work enthusiastically in a school where there is no trust among teachers.”*

Working conditions

The interviews revealed that various aspects of working conditions significantly affect teacher enthusiasm, including workload, availability of physical resources, class size, and excessive formalism. A teacher (P6) stated, *“Even though we manage to achieve certain things related to the teaching, there are issues that we cannot overcome as teachers. Therefore, I believe that a comfortable working environment with adequate facilities positively contributes to my enthusiasm for teaching.”* Similarly, another teacher (P9) highlighted, *“There are many things I want to do to improve the students, but the lack of financial and physical resources in our rural school hinders these efforts.”*



Workload was also identified as a crucial factor impacting teacher enthusiasm. One teacher (P14) remarked, *“Sometimes, the unnecessary workload prevents me from focusing adequately on teaching. Apart from my lessons, I am also dealing with numerous other responsibilities, which further adds to the workload and affects my enthusiasm level.”* Several teachers expressed being negatively affected by the large class sizes. One teacher (P18) stated, *“The overcrowded classrooms exhaust me and this decreases my enthusiasm. I can’t even spare time for my family because I go home tired. I don’t know how long I can continue working like this.”* Some teachers also pointed out that the overly formal structure of the school affects their enthusiasm negatively. For instance, a teacher (P17) noted the *“excessive formalism”* at their school creating stress and negatively affecting teachers.

External factors

External factors emerged as a significant theme in understanding the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm. This theme includes parents, educational policies, the value perception of teachers and incentives and rewards.

Parents

Interviews revealed that parents’ attitudes have a considerable impact on teachers’ enthusiasm. One teacher (P4) stated, *“The support and trust I receive from parents in my educational efforts contribute to increasing my enthusiasm.”* On the other hand, negative parental attitudes were identified as factors that diminish teacher enthusiasm. The interview results revealed that teachers are generally uncomfortable with parents who tend to avoid taking responsibility and instead try to shift it onto teachers. One teacher (P9) expressed, *“Even when their child is doing well, parents expect special attention for their child and criticize or oppose me when their demands are not met. This negatively affects my enthusiasm.”* Another teacher (P11) similarly remarked, *“Parental interference in my work reduces my enthusiasm.”* These reflections illustrate how parental attitudes can considerably influence teacher enthusiasm both positively and negatively.

Educational policies

Teachers highlighted educational policies as one of the factors affecting their enthusiasm, noting several issues within the Turkish education system. They pointed out that policy decisions are frequently made without solid justification and change too often. One teacher (P13) stated, *“Policies in our education system keep changing all the time, and most of them just don’t make any sense to me. This uncertainty negatively affects my enthusiasm.”* Some teachers also expressed that some practices within the education system, such as the teaching career exam, lead to unfairness among teachers and negatively impact their enthusiasm. Interviews also revealed *“the inconsistent practices”* of policymakers as another factor that diminishes teachers’ enthusiasm. Another teacher (P17) stated, *“The inconsistency in approach from those who have a say in education is quite disheartening. One moment, they praise us as dedicated professionals, but the next, we are treated as mere civil servants. It’s quite disheartening.”* These findings underscore the impact of educational policies on teacher enthusiasm, highlighting the need for more consistent and supportive approaches within the education system.

The value perception of teachers

The interviews delved into the societal dynamics surrounding the recognition and value attributed to the teaching profession, revealing it as a pivotal social issue that significantly influences teachers' enthusiasm. One teacher (P28) expressed deep concern about the status of teachers in society by stating, *"Seeing the decreasing prestige of the teaching profession in society negatively impacts my enthusiasm."* Another teacher (P17) emphasized, *"Tangible steps from the authorities to dignify teachers are crucial for me to execute my profession with enthusiasm."* These perspectives underscore the importance that teachers place on the recognition and value they receive from society and higher authorities, considering it a crucial factor in sustaining their profession with enthusiasm.

Incentives and rewards

The interviews revealed that some teachers consider factors such as economic expectations, rewards, and achievement certificates to have a significant impact on their enthusiasm. These teachers generally believe that the salaries and extra-lesson payments provided to teachers are insufficient. One teacher (P19) stated, *"The low fees for extra lessons and the inadequate salaries are indeed negatively affecting the enthusiasm of teachers due to economic conditions. Economic concerns are on everyone's agenda. However, discussions about education should be held in schools, not about the economy."* Moreover, some teachers emphasize the importance of rewards such as extra salary and achievement certificates. A teacher (P2) stated, *"Just as students feel happy with positive feedback from their teachers, rewards like extra salary and achievement certificates also motivate me and contribute to my more enthusiastic work."*

Discussion

This study aimed to uncover the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in the Turkish educational context. Our findings highlight the significant roles of personal, contextual, and external factors in shaping this enthusiasm.

Among the personal factors, motivation emerged as a crucial factor, aligning with previous research indicating that motivated teachers tend to be more enthusiastic in their teaching (Atkinson, 2000). Teachers driven by internal rewards such as accomplishment or personal growth are more passionate and energetic (Engin; 2020; Kunter et al., 2011). Conversely, decreased motivation leads to reduced enthusiasm, negatively affecting teachers' emotional states and teaching practices (Han & Yin, 2016). This underscores the importance of maintaining high motivation levels to sustain teacher enthusiasm. Affection for teaching was another significant personal factor. Teachers who love their profession and view it as meaningful reported higher enthusiasm, consistent with previous research (Burić & Moè, 2020; Stenlund, 1994). In Turkish culture, teaching is highly respected, which enhances teachers' enthusiasm (Karamustafaoğlu & Özmen, 2004). This cultural respect likely drives teachers to see their work as meaningful, further promoting their enthusiasm. Job satisfaction also influenced teacher enthusiasm. Teachers who derived satisfaction from their students' success were more enthusiastic. This finding corroborates past research showing the job satisfaction of teachers impacts their enthusiasm (Burić & Moè, 2020; Moè & Katz, 2022).

Contextual factors played a significant role in influencing teacher enthusiasm. Students' academic performance, interest, motivation levels and positive behaviors were frequently mentioned as crucial drivers of enthusiasm. Successful, highly-interested and motivated students positively influenced teachers' enthusiasm, consistent with previous studies (Frenzel



et al., 2019; Keller et al., 2014; Stenlund, 1994). This can be explained by emotional contagion, where shared emotional experiences enhance enthusiasm (Hatfield et al., 1993). When students exhibit high levels of interest, motivation, and positive behavior, these emotions can be mirrored by teachers, thereby enhancing their enthusiasm. This highlights the strong emotional connection between teachers and students in Turkish schools, emphasizing their close-knit relationships. School leadership practices were highlighted as another critical contextual factor. Supportive and appreciative leadership, close relationships, fair treatment, and resource provision by school principals were identified as key elements that enhance teacher enthusiasm. This aligns with the previous research suggesting that effective school leadership positively impacts teacher motivation and enthusiasm (Sheppard et al., 2010; Thoonen et al., 2011). Conversely, negative attitudes and lack of support from school principals were reported to diminish teacher enthusiasm (Stenlund, 1994). This finding can be attributed to the centralized and hierarchical structure of the Turkish educational system (Bektaş et al., 2022), which amplifies the role of school leadership in shaping teacher enthusiasm.

The relationships with colleagues also emerged as a vital contextual factor. Interviews revealed that fostering positive relationships, collaboration, support, and trust among colleagues greatly enhances teacher enthusiasm. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of collegial relationships and professional collaboration (Cobb & Foeller, 1992; Öngel & Tabanlı, 2022; Stenlund, 1994). This finding can be attributed to the collectivist nature of Turkish society, where strong interpersonal relationships and mutual support are prominent. In such a context, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment is crucial. Teachers who feel connected to their peers and supported in their professional endeavors are more likely to exhibit higher levels of enthusiasm.

Working conditions such as workload, availability of physical resources, class size, and excessive formalism were critical determinants of enthusiasm. High teacher workloads, including both teaching and extracurricular duties, often lead to stress and burnout, diminishing enthusiasm. Previous studies confirm that excessive workload correlates with reduced motivation and job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Additionally, the scarcity of physical resources and excessive formalism further hinder teachers' enthusiasm (Stenlund, 1994). Large class sizes exacerbate these issues by limiting personalized attention to students and increasing teacher stress (Hojo, 2021). These findings can be attributed to the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the Turkish educational system, emphasizing the significant role that resource availability, manageable workloads, class sizes, and bureaucratic constraints play in shaping teacher enthusiasm.

External factors also significantly shape teacher enthusiasm. Positive parental attitudes and support were identified as crucial in enhancing teacher enthusiasm, while negative attitudes and interference diminished it. This aligns with research indicating the importance of parental involvement (Stenlund, 1994). This finding may derive from the close interaction teachers have with parents, directly impacting their daily experiences and emotions. Frequent and inconsistent policy changes also negatively impacted enthusiasm, highlighting the need for stability and consistency in educational policies. Teachers may feel instability and unpredictability due to the swift adaptation required by new policies. The value perception of the teaching profession was highlighted as an external factor influencing teacher enthusiasm. Teachers expressed concern over the decreasing prestige of the profession and emphasized the need for higher authorities to elevate the value of teachers, consistent with the literature on teacher status (Pişkin & Parlar, 2021). This finding likely originates from teachers' need for

professional respect and acknowledgement, which significantly affects their enthusiasm. Incentives and rewards, such as economic benefits and achievement certificates, also impacted enthusiasm, as affirmed by previous research (Stenlund, 1994). Teachers may have reported this because tangible rewards and recognition provide motivation and a sense of accomplishment, making their hard work feel valued and appreciated.

Overall, this study provides a deeper understanding of the interplay of personal, contextual, and external factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in Turkish public schools. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions by educational policymakers and practitioners. This study contributes to the knowledge in the Turkish context, where empirical research on teacher enthusiasm is scarce, by identifying novel and specific factors that influence enthusiasm. These findings are particularly valuable for addressing the relatively lower levels of teacher enthusiasm in centralized educational contexts like Türkiye, as highlighted by OECD (2019). Our results provide crucial clues to improve the psychological and professional conditions necessary for teachers to thrive, thereby benefiting the overall educational landscape.

Conclusion and implications

This study investigated the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in Turkish public schools, identifying three primary themes: personal factors, contextual factors, and external factors. Personal factors such as motivation, affection for teaching and job satisfaction impact enthusiasm. Contextual factors, including students' academic performance and behaviors, school leadership practices, relationships with colleagues, and working conditions, also play a crucial role. External factors, such as parental attitudes, educational policies, the societal value of the teaching profession, and incentives and rewards, further influence teacher enthusiasm. The findings emphasize the complex interplay of these factors, demonstrating that teacher enthusiasm is shaped through the interaction of internal and external elements. They have significant implications for educational policymakers and school principals, particularly in Türkiye and similar contexts.

For policymakers, stability and consistency in educational policies are essential, as frequent changes can negatively affect teacher enthusiasm. Creating a predictable and supportive work environment allows teachers to focus on educating students. Elevating the societal status and recognition of teachers through initiatives that highlight their importance can boost their enthusiasm and motivation. Additionally, ensuring that schools are well-equipped with adequate physical and financial resources is vital. Investing in infrastructure and providing necessary teaching materials can alleviate stress and enhance teacher enthusiasm. Policymakers should also address issues such as class size and excessive formalism by implementing policies that promote smaller class sizes and reduce bureaucratic burdens, thereby creating a more conducive teaching environment.

For school principals, adopting supportive leadership practices is crucial for teachers' enthusiasm. Principals should recognize and appreciate teachers' efforts, establish close relationships, and treat staff fairly. Providing resources and creating a supportive environment can significantly enhance teacher enthusiasm. Encouraging collaboration and support among teachers by creating opportunities for professional development and team-building activities can strengthen collegial relationships and overall enthusiasm. Principals should manage teachers' workloads effectively by delegating tasks, streamlining administrative processes, and advocating for additional support staff. Principals should focus on fostering open



communication, offering regular feedback and cultivating a climate of respect and trust within the school. Additionally, engaging with parents to ensure their support for teachers can be achieved by organizing regular parent-teacher meetings and creating channels for open communication. Building strong relationships with parents can help create a supportive community that enhances teacher enthusiasm. By addressing these implications, stakeholders can create a more supportive and motivating environment for teachers, fostering their enthusiasm and ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

Limitations and further research

While this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in Turkish public schools, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research was conducted in a specific region of Türkiye, which could potentially restrict the applicability of the findings to other regions or countries that have different economic, cultural and educational contexts. Future studies should consider including participants from various regions and types of schools to capture a broader range of experiences.

Secondly, the use of qualitative data, despite offering rich and detailed insights, inherently involves subjectivity due to the personal experiences and perspectives of the participants. Future research employing quantitative methods or mixed-method approaches could enhance the generalizability of the findings by including larger and more diverse samples. Third, the study utilized data based on participant self-reports, which may be influenced by biases such as social desirability. Employing various data collection methods such as observations could offer a more thorough understanding of the factors affecting teacher enthusiasm. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of this study constrains the capacity to establish causality. Longitudinal research is required to examine how teacher enthusiasm evolves over time and to identify long-term factors that sustain or diminish enthusiasm. Moreover, while the study identified numerous factors influencing teacher enthusiasm, it did not delve deeply into the complex interplay between these factors. For example, how personal, contextual, and external factors interact to influence teacher enthusiasm remains an area for further exploration. Despite these limitations, the study offers a foundational understanding of the factors influencing teacher enthusiasm in Turkish public schools and provides a basis for future research to build upon.

Note

This study was presented as an oral presentation at “EDUCongress2024” held in Diyarbakır between 18-21 September 2024.

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