
ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Why Do Foreign Teachers Come to Türkiye? Case of Foreign Private Schools

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Ethical Statement

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ABSTRACT

Parallel to the changes occurring in almost every field worldwide, globalization has also influenced the employment of foreign teachers in educational institutions. Correspondingly, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of foreign teachers coming to work in Türkiye. Regarding this situation, the aim of this study is to determine the reasons why foreign teachers prefer to work in Türkiye. In this study, phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used and in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 teachers using semi-structured questions. The data obtained were subjected to content analysis. In this context, the statements collected from the teachers were grouped into five categories: economic, personal, country-related, school-related, and recruitment-related factors. The study's findings reveal the factors that influence foreign teachers' preference for Türkiye. It also provides school administrators and educational institutions with recommendations for the effective recruitment of foreign teachers and seeks to enhance the existing literature on related research in this area.

Keywords: employment; Türkiye; foreign teacher; foreign private schools.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, individuals are increasingly inclined to choose different countries to work and live in due to better conditions and life expectations compared to the past. The term "expat" or "expatriate" refers to a temporary migrant who moves to another country, surpassing the borders of their own country, and changes their residence and workplace (Andersen et al., 2014). Therefore, emigration can be described as the voluntary movement of people who decide to leave their own countries and work in another country. Researchers are becoming more interested in the growing number of foreign teachers who choose to work in international schools as a result of their global expansion. (Poole & Bunnell, 2023). In relation to this situation, Türkiye is also seen as an important choice for foreign teachers and the number of teachers in the country is increasing day by day. In the context of Türkiye, private schools are more successful than state schools in foreign language teaching due to their employment of foreign teachers (Özerk et al., 2018). Anderson (2010) explains that the reason for this is parents' preference for foreign language education provided by teachers whose native language is English and who have a Western cultural background. Indeed, this situation can be seen as one of the reasons why private schools and foreign private schools in Türkiye prioritize employing foreign teachers for language teaching purposes. The term "Foreign Schools" refers to private schools established by foreigners (Law of Private Educational Institution, 2007). As of 1992, "Foreign Schools" were given the status of "Anatolian High Schools" and have continued their activities under the name "Foreign Private Schools" since that time (Nasuhbeyoğlu, 2007). Foreign private schools, in accordance with the agreements made under the framework of the Treaty of Lausanne, have been in existence since 1924 and are subject to the regulations of the Ministry of National Education through the regulation numbered 5580 for Private Educational Institutions. Additionally, they have status and practices specific to them (Law of Private Educational Institution, 2007). Indeed, these schools have held a significant place in the Turkish education community for many years. Their reputation is noteworthy due to their high-quality foreign language education and the achievements of their graduates. Furthermore, there is a growing global demand for international K-12 schools that adopt an international curriculum and commonly use English as the primary language of education (Nagrath, 2011). This trend is also observed in Türkiye, along with the rest of the world. Some private schools in Türkiye offer international curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Diploma Program (DP) which are typically presented in a bilingual format, in addition to the required national curriculum. Additionally, some other private schools, particularly foreign private schools, are preferred more by parents and students who wish to pursue education abroad, due to their successful foreign language education and diploma equivalencies. To achieve this, many of these private schools employ foreign teachers with the aim of enhancing foreign language proficiency and attracting parents and students who are seeking an international education experience by providing international visions to schools. According to research, today, there are more than 10,000 international schools worldwide, serving millions of students and employing teachers from all around the world. (Bunnell, 2016; Bunnell & Poole, 2020). Over 14,000 international schools are expected to exist globally by 2024, with over 600,000 employees and nearly seven million students enrolled (ISC, 2024). It is also estimated that around 800,000 foreign teachers (expats) will be working in international schools worldwide by the year 2026. (Bunnell, 2017). According to the reports of the General Directorate of the International Labour Organization's Labour Statistics the number of foreign teachers working in the education sector in Türkiye was 2,049 in the year 2013 which had increased to 3,446 by the year 2017 (Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services, 2017). This situation indicates that the number of foreign teachers working in our country continues to increase every year, parallel to the developments happening worldwide.



Being a foreign teacher in another country is not solely dependent on a single decision or reason, but it is the result of complex decisions and various factors (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). A progressive view of international education and professional values pertaining to international mindedness can be linked to the choice to teach abroad (Rey et al., 2020). In the literature, it is emphasized that there are three main reasons for teachers going abroad. The first reason is external factors such as receiving a lower salary in their previous job, the status of teachers in the workplace, and perceived job dissatisfaction (Clark & Paran, 2007; DeVillar & Jiang, 2012). According to Cassidy et al. (2017), pay is one of the most important factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay or leave and when choosing a career, people who are thinking about teaching frequently give top priority to aspects like pay, professional growth, employment status, and working conditions (See et al., 2022). Secondly, the internal reasons, which are referred to as intrinsic factors, including opportunities for personal development, the chance to advance in their careers, and acquiring universal thinking skills (Alpaugh, 2016; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008) and in addition to other factors like working conditions, career prospects, professional development opportunities, and recognition, it is crucial for drawing in new hires and making sure that current teachers feel valued and sufficiently motivated to provide high-quality instruction (OECD 2020; European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2021). The third reason is altruistic motives, such as valuing teaching on a global scale and the desire to contribute to the development of society (Moran et. al., 2001). Indeed, in addition to teaching being a challenging and often stressful profession (Alexander, 2008; Teven, 2007), it can be said that teaching in an international school brings some unique challenges as well. In any country, newly hired teachers are expected to learn many new systems and technologies, adapt to unfamiliar curriculum standards, and, at the same time, try to get used to a new culture and language while being expected to start preparations for the initial days at school (Eplin, 2020, as cited in Johnson, 2022:2). As a result, choosing to teach in an international school brings along unique challenges for both new and experienced teachers (Akhal & Liu, 2019). Teachers moving to an international school experience various stressors associated with relocating to a new work and living environment including obtaining visas and completing other paperwork, settling into a new living space, leaving behind friends and family, potentially learning a new language and culture, and expressing themselves in a new school environment (von Kirchenheim & Richardson, 2005). According to Burke (2017), it is required for foreign teachers to change their perspectives on students' expectations, interactions in classrooms, and their own teaching approaches. So why do foreign teachers still want to teach in a different culture and country despite these challenges? It can be said that there is no single answer to this question, it varies based on their individual preferences and expectations. As an example, according to the findings of Carson's (2013) research on foreign teachers in the United Arab Emirates, they are motivated by the exemption from paying taxes, high salaries, and the high standards provided by the country. According to Hayden & Thompson (2011), foreign teachers generally receive high salaries and are offered certain privileges (such as private health insurance, airfare, etc.) by schools. Compensation is crucial in attracting new employees and ensuring that current teachers feel appreciated and sufficiently motivated to deliver high-quality instruction, in addition to other elements like working conditions, career prospects, professional development opportunities, and recognition (OECD 2020; European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2021). Indeed, this situation is also evident in Türkiye. In Türkiye, schools that employ foreign teachers offer various benefits to the incoming teachers and their family members like providing airfare, private health insurance, special retirement options, and education allowances for their children. Additionally, the salaries provided to foreign teachers are usually higher compared to Turkish teachers as they are paid in foreign currencies. This practice, which causes dissatisfaction and a perception of unfairness among Turkish teachers who receive lower salaries than foreign teachers despite performing equally, has been continuing for many years. On the other hand, schools argue that they need to offer



these conditions to attract foreign teachers from abroad. Moreover, foreign teachers may have different perspectives as well as their different experiences depending on the countries they come from. In this regard, it can be argued that the presence of foreign teachers in education systems is significant. Foreign teachers, due to their diverse cultural, professional, and personal experiences, bring a multi-dimensional perspective to schools which enriches the educational environments and can be argued to be beneficial for the overall teaching and learning process. Foreign teachers from different countries not only facilitate cultural interaction but also take on the role of cultural ambassadors in a way. Considering the educational requirements of the 21st century, the path to educating students as "global citizens" undoubtedly involves their recognition and understanding of different cultures. Indeed, in line with this, it is possible to view foreign teachers not only as a means of learning a foreign language but also as a way of acquiring international educational standards and globalizing education. Therefore, providing the necessary facilitation for foreign teachers to work in different countries, motivating and supporting them in this regard, becomes crucial. There are some international studies on this issue in the relevant literature. For example, Nam, English, Bai and colleagues have published a series of articles on the migration experiences of students and teachers from Anglophone countries and some other foreign countries (e.g., Germany, Türkiye, Japan, and South Korea, and so on) in China before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and their intercultural communication or interaction experiences with the locals, including motivations, or the host community members' perceptions about their foreign visitors (Bai & Nam, 2023; Bai et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Nam & English, 2022, 2023; Nam et al., 2022; 2023a, 2023b, 2024). Further, Chen, Liu, and their colleagues discussed international faculty experiences in the Bay Area (e.g., Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau), Japan, and South Korea (Chen, 2022, 2024; Chen & Chen, 2023; Chen & Huang, 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Three core tenets of social exchange theory are specificity, reciprocity, and rationality. According to the rationality principle, workers will join a company that satisfies their wants and needs. Employers and employees have social relationships that are fundamentally reciprocal, according to the reciprocity principle. Inter-organizational dynamics between employees and employers are explained by the principle of specificity, which maintains that a relationship between employees and organizations can only be one of reciprocal exchange (Foa & Foa, 2012). However, social exchange theory is thought to be one of the most effective methods for comprehending employee behavior in the workplace (Malik et al., 2011). Thus, the social exchange theory serves as the foundation for this study, which focuses on foreign teachers' relationships with the schools where they work in Türkiye. On the other hand, despite the importance of the issue, in the literature, there is only one research conducted by Aydin et. al., 2019 in Türkiye that focuses on foreign teachers working in private schools which aimed to determine the views of foreign teachers regarding the educational, instructional, and administrative processes, as well as parent-student relationships. The research examined the views of foreign teachers on different variables in the Turkish education system. However, there is no research in the literature that explores the criteria foreign teachers consider when making country and school choices. Therefore, the main aim of the research is to identify the factors that influence the country choices of foreign teachers coming from different cultures and countries to Türkiye and to determine the underlying reasons behind these factors based on their experiences. It is expected that the data obtained from this research will contribute to addressing the shortcomings in the employment of foreign teachers and making necessary improvements in this regard for practitioners and administrators in Türkiye, especially those working in private schools. Indeed, such research is expected to contribute to the literature by providing scientific data on the country and school choices of foreign teachers working in various countries worldwide. It can also enable international comparisons, offering valuable insights into the factors influencing their decisions. On the other hand, this research is also expected to determine how Türkiye and foreign private schools are perceived and preferred compared to other countries and schools.



By doing so, the research may provide valuable insights into the reputation and perception of Türkiye and foreign private schools from an external perspective and contribute to the improvement of foreign teacher employment policies.

While international school teachers in general, and expatriate teachers in particular, have received limited but growing attention in educational research (Bright, 2022; Poole, 2019), the aim of this research is to identify the factors that attract foreign teachers to work in Türkiye. The main research question in this context is determined as "What are the reasons that lead foreign teachers to work in Türkiye?"

METHOD

Research Design

The phenomenological design (van Manen, 1990) was used in this research as the aim is to determine the factors that motivate foreign educators to teach in Türkiye. Phenomenology design, unlike other methods, is a research approach that focuses on describing the common meaning of individuals' experiences related to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The study aligns with the phenomenology design since its main purpose is to reveal the underlying reasons for foreign teachers' decision to work in a foreign private school in Türkiye and how their experiences during this process are interpreted and given meaning. When researchers aim to explore the meaning and essence of experiences related to a specific phenomenon, they use the phenomenology design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The strength of the phenomenology approach lies in its focus on exploring previously unknown areas and its ability to discover and illuminate the meaning of a phenomenon that is poorly understood (van Manen, 1997). Therefore, the phenomenology design is deemed appropriate for this study since the goal is to understand the fundamental motivations behind foreign teachers' come to Türkiye and as well as how they interpret their experiences while there.

Setting and Participants

The research is conducted in foreign private schools located in İstanbul and İzmir. Due to accessibility and feasibility considerations, the sample for this study was limited to İstanbul and İzmir. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this specific context. In phenomenological research, the data sources are individuals or groups who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation and can express or reflect on that phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Therefore, 25 high school teachers working in foreign private schools in different subject areas in Türkiye form the study group for this research. According to the criterion sampling method, the criteria established for the research include teachers who are currently continuing to work as teachers in foreign private schools in Türkiye, having foreign nationality, and coming to Türkiye with the purpose of teaching in foreign private schools. Additionally, to achieve maximum diversity, the research takes into consideration that the teachers come from different countries and have diverse academic backgrounds. The foreign teachers involved in the research were reached through the school administrators and Turkish teachers at those schools. They were asked if they wanted to participate in the research, and those who voluntarily agreed to participate provided their email addresses. Detailed information about the process was then shared with them through email. Within the scope of the study, each participating teacher was informed about how the data would be collected. It was explained that identities would remain confidential, and during the reporting process, code names would be used to ensure anonymity. They were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they wished, and the importance of their voluntary participation in the study was emphasized. In phenomenological studies, the aim is to gain a deep understanding by focusing on how participants perceive and describe the phenomenon,



as well as their feelings and emotions related to it. In this design, the focus is on how people describe the phenomenon they have experienced (Patton, 2014). Accordingly, the research specifically focused on the experiences that form the basis for foreign teachers to work in Türkiye. The researchers suspended their own perspectives and conducted interviews, and the data were analyzed. Throughout the research, no hypothesis or assumption was made, and the real experiences of foreign teachers regarding the factors underlying their country and school preferences were sought to be presented in a comprehensive and unbiased manner. Data collection was stopped after conducting interviews with 25 teachers due to data saturation and repetition of information. Descriptive information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Information

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Country	Education Level	Professional Experience	Subject Area
T1	F	27	US	M.S.	10	English
T2	M	32	US	M.S.	15	English
T3	M	51	US	B.S.	25	Biology
T4	M	40	Chile	B.S.	21	Mathematics
T5	M	45	US	M.S.	22	Chemistry
T6	M	47	Mexico	M.S.	24	Mathematics
T7	F	60	US	M.S.	30	English
T8	F	59	Netherlands	B.S.	32	German
T9	F	29	US	B.S.	7	Biology
T10	M	35	US	M.S.	12	Physics
T11	M	50	US	B.S.	25	Chemistry
T12	M	64	Canada	M.S.	35	Mathematics
T13	M	65	US	M.S.	38	English
T14	M	64	Germany	B.S.	40	German
T15	F	55	US	B.S.	30	Physics
T16	F	53	UK	B.S.	30	Art
T17	F	55	UK	B.S.	28	Music
T18	M	51	UK	Ph.D.	24	Physics
T19	F	35	China	B.S.	13	Mathematics
T20	M	52	Canada	M.S.	27	Visual Arts
T21	F	62	US	B.S.	28	English
T22	F	32	US	M.S.	9	Biology
T23	M	37	Scotland	M.S.	14	Physical Education
T24	M	43	US	M.S.	17	Art
T25	M	41	Canada	B.S.	14	English

F: Female - M: Male - M.S.: Master's Degree - B.S.: Bachelor's Degree - Ph.D.: Doctorate Degree



As seen in Table 1, there are 10 female and 15 male teachers. The ages of the teachers range from 27 to 65 years. The research includes 13 teachers from the United States, 3 teachers from the United Kingdom, 3 teachers from Canada, and one teacher each from Mexico, China, Scotland, Chile, Germany, and the Netherlands. Furthermore, 12 teachers have a bachelor's degree, 12 have a master's degree, and one teacher holds a doctoral degree. The subject areas of the teachers are as follows: 6 English teachers, 4 Mathematics teachers, 3 Physics teachers, 3 Biology teachers, 2 Chemistry teachers, 2 Art teachers, 2 German teachers, 1 Music teacher, 1 Visual Arts teacher, and 1 Physical Education teacher.

Instruments

The research data was collected using a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers. Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant ethics committee. Following the audit, the study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Marmara University, dated 9 September 2022 and numbered 371071. To ensure the scope validity, the draft of the interview form was reviewed by experts in the field of educational sciences, and necessary adjustments were made based on their feedback. The interview form, prepared in English, was checked by proficient experts in both languages (Turkish and English), and for comprehensibility of the questions, a pilot study was conducted with one participant (male, 64 years old, from the US). Since there was no need to make any changes to the data obtained in the pilot study, the relevant data was later included in the study. In-depth interview, which is a qualitative research technique and can provide more insight into a participant's subjective experience than other qualitative methods were used in the study (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). In the research, two open-ended questions were directed to foreign teachers to encourage them to share their experiences. The interview questions addressed to the participants are as follows: (1) Why did you choose Türkiye to work as a foreign teacher? (2) Why did you choose this school to work as a foreign teacher? In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted in English with each teacher, focusing primarily on these questions. During the interview process, additional questions were used to better understand the responses given by the teachers based on their experiences and to explore the underlying meanings. The interview sessions were recorded using an audio recording device. Each interview lasted approximately 35-40 minutes. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed into text, resulting in a data set of approximately 90 pages. Care was taken to establish a conversational atmosphere during the interview process so that the teachers could more easily share their experiences. Additionally, at certain points during the interviews, it was verbally emphasized that the shared information would be kept confidential, not shared with anyone other than the researchers, and that school and personal names would not be mentioned when reporting the research in order to make participants feel more at ease and to ascertain the underlying reasons for their experiences.

Data Analysis

In the study, the data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using a content analysis method. The audio recordings of the interviews were first transferred to a computer and transcribed. The transcribed data was then read multiple times to become familiar with the content and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. Next, the researchers followed the content analysis approach and created codes, categories, and themes based on the data. The data was systematically reviewed, and relevant codes, categories, and themes were identified. To ensure the reliability of the research data, a process of intercoder reliability was conducted. This involves each researcher independently analyzing the data, and then coming together to compare their individual analyses. Consensus was reached on common themes and patterns in the data. Finally, the identified themes were explained and interpreted in connection with the



codes in a coherent manner. The researchers worked together on the codes and conducted the analysis by reaching a consensus on each code. Through these approaches, the goal was to reinforce the findings and interpretations obtained in the research. So, in accordance with the phenomenological approach, care was taken to ensure that the themes captured the essence of the phenomenon under investigation, and the themes' relationship to the main research question of why foreign teachers come to Türkiye and their schools was considered. The data obtained was analyzed using the Maxqda 2022 software package. During the analysis process, foreign teachers were coded as T1-T25. In order to ensure the validity of the research data, each step of the study, including participant information, data collection procedures, and other relevant details, was thoroughly explained. Additionally, to enhance the validity and reliability of the qualitative data, participant confirmation was obtained. The obtained findings were supported by direct quotations from the data and extensive descriptions were provided to further establish validity. According to Creswell (2007), providing rich descriptions in qualitative research helps in making decisions about the transferability of the results to other contexts. This approach also ensures that while presenting the current situation, detailed information about the themes is conveyed. Additionally, to ensure the validity and reliability of the research, foreign teachers from different countries, working in different foreign private schools, and with various years of teaching experience were included in the study.

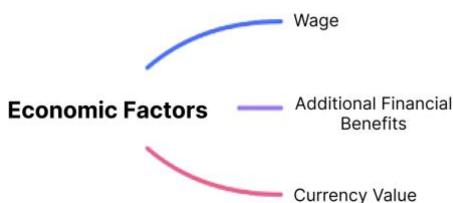
RESULTS

The results of the research have been presented in alignment with the overall objectives of the study.

Economic Factors

One of the reasons that affect foreign teachers' preference for working in Türkiye and the schools they work at is economic factors. Within the theme of economic factors, salary, additional financial benefits, and the value of the currency have been obtained as sub-themes and are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Economic Factors



As shown in Figure 1, the responses of the participants regarding the theme of economic factors in the process of coming to Türkiye are presented in three sub-themes: salary, additional financial benefits, and the value of the currency. These sub-themes are explained below.

Salary

Foreign teachers participating in the research expressed the salary factor as a reason for choosing to work in Türkiye and their current school. Participants T2, "I chose this school because out of the three schools I applied to work abroad, this one offered the highest salary." and T23, "I carefully evaluated all the schools I applied to and the conditions they offered.

My main goal for going abroad was to save money, and since this school made the highest salary offer, I came here." express this situation.

Additional Financial Benefits

Another economic factor influencing foreign teachers' preference for Türkiye and their current school is the availability of additional financial benefits. Within the scope of additional financial benefits, elements such as educational assistance provided by schools and housing facilities are highlighted. Foreign teacher T8 explains this situation as follows:

When making a decision about a country and school, I always take into consideration the educational opportunities available for my children. The educational assistance allowance provided by the school for my children had an impact on my decision to choose this school. (T8)

Participant T12 expresses their reason for additional financial benefits as follows: "As a single teacher, the comfortable and luxurious housing facilities provided within the school campus were effective in my decision to choose this school, along with other factors."

Currency Value

Foreign teachers participating in the research state that the value of the currency in the country where they will work is significant in increasing their chances of saving money in Türkiye, and this factor influences their country preferences. Participant T19 expresses their views on this matter as follows:

Receiving my salary, particularly in a foreign currency, along with housing and other benefits, will enable me to do the things I want in the country I am going to and also allow me to accumulate savings at a young age. That's why I chose this place. (T19)

Personal Factors

When foreign teachers choose Türkiye to work in, it is observed that under the title of personal factors, multiple factors are influenced by individual differences and expectations in their country and school preferences. The sub-themes formed within the scope of personal factors are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Personal Factors



As seen in Figure 2, the participants' reasons for country and school preferences under the theme of personal factors are addressed in four sub-themes: the search for adventure, the desire to experience different cultures, the aspiration to gain professional experience, and relationship status. These sub-themes are explained below.

The Search for Adventure

Some foreign teachers, especially those at the beginning of their professional careers, consider teaching in a different country as a form of seeking adventure. Participants T22 and T15 express this situation as follows:

The fact that the school is located in Türkiye, in a place I have never seen before, really excited me. As someone who has just started their career and has never lived abroad, I saw this as an opportunity for an adventure and thought, why not? (T22)

Living abroad was always a dream I wanted to fulfill. Seizing this opportunity to come to Türkiye, a place I've always heard about and wanted to see, and achieving it by working as a teacher, was the most significant factor in my decision to come here. (T15)

Desire to Experience Different Cultures

Some of the foreign teachers participating in the research mention that their desire to experience different cultures influenced their country and school preferences. Participant T13 expresses this situation as follows: "I was deeply interested in the history of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Persia, and the Hittites, so my first choice was to find a job close to these cultures, and that's why I chose Türkiye."

Desire to Gain Professional Experience

Some foreign teachers express that their desire to gain professional experience through getting to know different cultures and students influences their country and school preferences. Participant T17 shares their views on this matter:

I realized that working with students in the same environment and similar cultural backgrounds did not develop me professionally in the way I desired. That's why I decided to work in a different country. Additionally, this way, I could take my savings with me to the new place and contribute to the local environment as well. (T17)

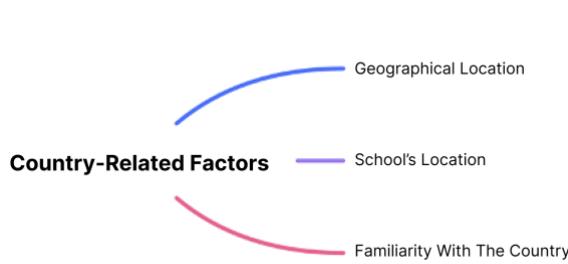
Relationship Status

Foreign teachers mention that being in a relationship with a Turkish partner influences their country and school preferences. Participant T14 expresses their thoughts on this matter: "My girlfriend, whom I met in America before coming to Türkiye, being a teacher here, had a significant impact on my decision to come here."

Country-Related Factors

Foreign teachers' country preferences highlight different features related to the destination country. The sub-themes formed under the title of country-related factors are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Country-Related Factors

As seen in Figure 3, the responses of foreign teachers regarding the theme of country-related factors have been examined under three sub-themes: geographical location, characteristics of the school's location, and familiarity with the country. These sub-themes are explained below.

Geographical Location

Some foreign teachers mention that the geographical location of the country plays a significant role in their country preferences. Participants T25 and T3 express this situation as follows: "I always wanted to have the opportunity to travel in Europe and Asia; the fact that Türkiye is close to these regions caught my interest, and it was also close to Greece." (T25)

I received job offers from some schools in the Middle East, but I chose Türkiye because of its proximity to Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Due to the location advantage, I would be able to travel easily to wherever I wanted. (T3)

Characteristics of the School's Location

Some foreign teachers mention that the location of the school also plays a role in their country and school preferences. Participant T1 expresses this situation as follows: "It was my first time going abroad to work, and Türkiye seemed like a really fantastic place. Additionally, I chose to work here because İstanbul is a beautiful city with many opportunities." Participant T24 shares their reason regarding this matter: "As a fan of Greece, the proximity and similarity of İzmir to Greece made me choose Türkiye without a second thought."

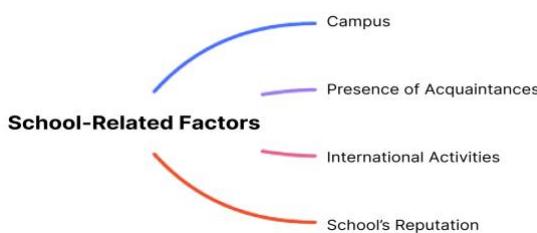
Familiarity with the Country

Some foreign teachers who participated in the research state that having visited the country before, either for vacation or travel, has given them a sense of familiarity with the country, and this has influenced their country preferences. Participant T4 expresses this situation as follows:

We have traveled a lot before, but when my spouse and I came to Türkiye, we fell in love with it. Despite receiving a similar job offer from another country, we chose Türkiye because we had previously visited and got to know its history, culture, and cuisine. (T4)

School-Related Factors

There are various reasons for foreign teachers' school preferences under the theme of school-related factors. The sub-themes formed under the title of school-related factors are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. School-Related Factors

As seen in Figure 4, the responses of foreign teachers regarding school-related factors are examined under four sub-themes: campus, presence of acquaintances, international activities, and the school's reputation. These sub-themes are explained below.

Campus

Some foreign teachers who participated in the research mention that the features of the school's campus influence their country and school preferences. Participants T5 and T20 express their thoughts on this matter as follows: "Among other factors, I especially wanted to come to this school because of its magnificent campus and its location in İstanbul." (T5)

When I started searching for schools, I saw the campus and physical facilities of this school on the internet; since the environment I live in is a top priority for me, despite other school alternatives, I still chose this school. (T20)

Presence of Acquaintances

Some foreign teachers mention that having acquaintances in Türkiye or in the school they want to work at influences their country and school preferences, as they value their recommendations. Participant T16 explains this situation as follows:

When deciding to live as a family outside of the United States, we were very cautious. At that time, a friend of mine was working at the school I wanted to work at. When I talked to him, he said, 'If you have the opportunity, you should definitely come to İstanbul, it's a wonderful place. And if you want to work, I highly recommend this school.' Based on this, I decided to apply and work at this school. (T16)

International Activities

It has been observed that extracurricular activities, specifically international summer school programs, influence the school preferences of foreign teachers who participated in the research. Participant T2 expresses their thoughts on this matter: "I initially came to Türkiye to participate in the international summer school activities organized by this school during the summer months. After coming here for this reason several times, I wanted to work here as soon as possible." Similarly, Participant T7 states their preference reason related to this issue:

Upon a friend's recommendation, I researched the school's summer school activities and saw that the school had a job advertisement for being assigned to the summer school. I applied to make use of the summer period and came here for the first time. Thanks to the summer school, I had the chance to learn about the school, its facilities, and also get to know the administrators. I loved the school and the environment. Our communication continued, and the following year, I came here to work. (T7)

School's Reputation

Some foreign teachers mention that the organizational reputation of the school they are applying to has an impact on their school preferences. Participants T6 and T13 express their thoughts on this matter as follows:

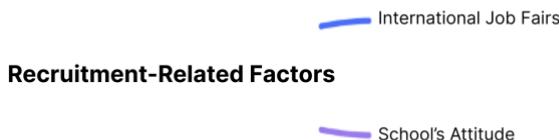
I had heard from my colleagues who had worked in Türkiye before that the school had very successful students, and it was also one of the most reputable schools in Türkiye. This aspect was highly influential for me in choosing the school. (T6)

My friend, who lived in Türkiye and worked as a teacher there for a while, once told me that if I ever wanted to work in a different country, I should definitely choose this school as it was known as the most reputable and successful school in that country. When I decided to work abroad, I first considered this school. (T13)

Recruitment-Related Factors

Various factors are found to be influential in the job application process in the country and school preferences of foreign teachers. The sub-themes formed under the theme of job application process factors are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Recruitment-Related Factors



As seen in Figure 5, the responses of foreign teachers regarding the job application process factors are examined under two sub-themes: international job fairs and the school's attitude. These sub-themes are explained below.

International Job Fairs

Foreign teachers emphasize that schools participating in international job fairs and sharing comprehensive information about the school play a significant role as one of the factors influencing their country and school preferences. Participant T1 expresses their thoughts on this matter:

When I met and talked to the school principal at an international job fair, what he told me about the school really impressed me; Türkiye and the school seemed like a perfect and incredible place for me. Later on, a strong connection was established between the school principal and me, and after another interview, I decided to come here. (T1)

Participant P9 also shares their views on international job fairs: "If the school had not participated in this job fair, and if I had not attended the fair, I don't think I would have known about such a school."

School's Attitude

Another factor that influences the country and school preferences of foreign teachers is the positive attitude and supportive approach of the school during the job application process. Participants T11, "The convincing explanation that they would be helpful in every aspect regarding potential difficulties during the application process, and their positive attitudes, were really influential in choosing this school among other options." and T18, "The most significant factor in my decision to apply to this school is the extremely humane approach and positive attitudes of the school administrators during the job application process. I believed that this positive attitude during the process would continue in the school life, and now I see that I made the right choice." express this situation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One could argue that mobility has occurred in practically every field today due to globalization and the new circumstances. Consequently, the number of international migrations is still on the rise (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2016), and it is unsurprising that one of the most prominent subfields within International Human Resource Management is expatriation or expatriate management (McNulty and Selmer, 2017). In 2023, 11.2 million non-Europe Union citizens were employed in the EU labour market, out of 196.8 million people aged from 20 to 64, corresponding to 5.7% of the total (Eurostat, 2023). In line with these developments, teachers also have more options regarding where they will work, thanks to the growing number of private and international schools. However, very little is known about the motivation of teachers to work as foreign teachers abroad, leaving ample room for potential research in this area (Bunnell, 2017). On the other hand, the "push" and "pull" factors that influence expatriate teachers' decisions to work overseas include the need for adventure and travel, financial or personal concerns, location-specific commitments, and discontent with domestic educational systems (Poole & Bunnell, 2023). As a result of globalization, the number of foreign teachers employed by educational institutions is growing daily. As a result, the number of foreign teachers in Türkiye has significantly increased. Therefore, this study aimed to ascertain the factors that influence foreign teachers' preference to work in Türkiye and according to the research results, foreign teachers' preference for working in Türkiye is influenced by economic, personal, country-related, school-related, and recruitment-related factors.

The "adventurer" is a teacher not necessarily connected to the location, culture, or the local expatriate community. Typically, young, and white, they are often unmarried, without children, and see teaching as a means of satisfying their desire for adventure and travel, considering it an instrument of mobility (Bright & Heyting, 2024). According to the research results, it is evident that different factors play a role in foreign teachers' preference to work in a foreign private school in Türkiye. One of these factors is the desire to experience a different culture and seek adventure. Teaching in international schools is commonly linked with the appeal of travel and adventure (Bailey & Cooker, 2019). Particularly, foreign teachers who are at the beginning of their careers prefer to teach in a different country to explore the world and different cultures, aiming to contribute to their professional development. In addition to personal transformation, teachers' decisions to work internationally were often motivated by a desire for professional growth and development, and linked to dissatisfaction with working conditions at home, as described by Rey et al. (2020). As stated in the International Education Recruitment Report (2024), 81.81% of teachers cite that professional development opportunities influence their decision to stay in a school. In the literature, in various contexts, the desire to travel and experience and learn new things in a different culture is frequently observed among the reasons for country and school preferences.



Teachers who choose to go to other countries to experience a different culture, travel, and discover new things are often referred to as "explorers" in the literature (Caravatti et.al., 2014; Mullock, 2009). Accordingly, Mullock (2009) states that the desire to travel and see the world is a significant motivational factor for expatriate teachers who decide to teach in Southeast Asia. According to the International Education Recruitment Report (2024), 13.82% of teachers are motivated to teach abroad for travel/cultural experiences, and 14.77% for global work experience. Similarly, the research findings suggest that foreign teachers who choose to work in Türkiye see their teaching experience here as an adventure in an unknown place, and the desire to explore a different culture, along with other personal factors, influences their country and school preferences.

The research shows that foreign teachers who participated in the study emphasize the importance of gaining professional experience and making a contribution to the culture they go to in their country and school preferences. Undoubtedly, experiencing a different country or culture will provide foreign teachers with the opportunity to encounter diverse student profiles, management approaches, and school cultures, which will contribute to their teaching profession by making them more experienced and competent. Additionally, foreign teachers will be able to enrich the social and cultural life of the places they go by bringing their existing knowledge and experiences, which will contribute to their own sense of meaning and fulfillment. In the context of Australia, Richardson & Watt's (2006) study on the professional motivations of teacher candidates revealed that the strongest motivations for beginning a teaching career were the intrinsic value of teaching and the social utility value (such as making a societal contribution, shaping the future, and a desire to work with children/youth). Similarly, Alexander (2008) highlighted that some teachers' decision to become teachers was driven by their desire to make a difference and contribute to society, surpassing all other factors. Likewise, based on the research results, it can be concluded that foreign teachers who choose to work in Türkiye see it as an important option to gain professional experience and explore different cultures.

According to research results, another factor influencing foreign teachers' country and school preferences is economic factors. In other words, foreign teachers take into account economic factors alongside other factors when making their country and school choices. Factors such as the salary they will receive in the country they go to, additional financial benefits provided to them, and the value of the currency they receive as their salary in that country affect their preferences. When these factors are considered together, it can be said that the more satisfying the salary and additional benefits foreign teachers receive, the higher the likelihood of choosing that country or school. Studies conducted in different countries (Chivore, 1988; Sharif et al., 2016; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2003; Yong, 1995) also show that the salary teachers receive, along with other benefits such as holidays and career opportunities, play an important role in their professional motivations. Financial difficulties are a significant factor, as evidenced by the International Education Recruitment Report (2024), which shows that 73.02% of teachers would accept a lower salary in exchange for a better benefits package. Based on this, it can be suggested that private and international schools wishing to employ foreign teachers must take into consideration economic factors, such as salary and other benefits, and provide attractive conditions in order to attract qualified foreign teachers to the school. According to research results, the relationship status of foreign teachers also plays a role in their country preferences. Foreign teachers who have a working or living partner in the host country indicate this as a reason for their preference (Mullock, 2009). The data obtained in the research similarly shows that having a partner or loved one in any country can influence foreign teachers' decision to choose that country, despite other factors.

Research results indicate that foreign teachers consider international job fairs when making their country and school



choices and evaluate the job opportunities available there. As an example, the method of "International Teacher Fair" can be mentioned, which provides teachers with international job opportunities. According to the International Education Recruitment Report (2024), approximately 20% of the 6687 teachers who participated in the research stated that they use job fairs in their international job search. This method brings together schools seeking to hire international teachers and teachers considering working in a different country in an environment. This facilitates finding schools and countries with current job openings, allowing teachers interested in working in a foreign country to become aware of unknown countries and schools and plan their careers accordingly. For human resources professionals and job seekers, these types of job fairs are essential tools for effective communication with potential candidates. These job fairs also serve as a means to attract the best talents to the organization (Silkes et al., 2010) and increase brand awareness, acting as a good starting point to acquire potential talents (Gordon et al., 2014). In summary, such international job fairs provide foreign teachers with awareness about countries and schools they were not previously familiar with, thus facilitating their relocation to different countries. Based on this, it is recommended that schools operating in Türkiye and seeking to employ foreign teachers should participate in these fairs to increase their visibility and utilize international job fairs more effectively. Effective promotional activities at these international job fairs can play a significant role in promoting both the school and the country, potentially attracting qualified foreign teachers who wish to work in Türkiye.

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, research results also indicate that Türkiye's geographical location and its proximity to Europe and the Middle East can be a deciding factor for foreign teachers. Based on this, for schools looking to attract foreign teachers, emphasizing the geographical location of the country and the unique features of the school's location in the job application process can be used as an opportunity to appeal to teachers seeking adventure and wanting to explore new places. Furthermore, according to research results, the characteristics of the school campus can also be a deciding factor for foreign teachers. This highlights the importance for schools seeking to employ foreign teachers to showcase the positive aspects of their campuses in job advertisements and also indicates that improving the existing campus conditions can provide them with an advantage in attracting teachers. A study conducted with teachers in Chicago and Columbia state schools in the United States showed that teachers who perceived the physical conditions of their school campuses as poor were much more likely to consider leaving their schools or the teaching profession compared to teachers who perceived them as good or excellent (Buckley et al., 2004). Based on this, it is recommended for schools to improve their campuses in a way that makes them an attractive factor for potential teachers and highlight this aspect in their job postings to both attract new teachers and retain existing ones.

On the other hand, research results show that the presence of acquaintances in the country or school where foreign teachers are applying can influence their preferences. For foreign teachers, having acquaintances in the country or school they are applying to instills confidence in them, and for some teachers, this factor can be more important than other considerations. Based on this, schools reaching out to potential foreign teachers through their current foreign teachers and utilizing their references can facilitate the recruitment of such teachers to the school. Particularly, by leveraging these teachers' help and making their current foreign teachers more visible, schools can gain an advantage in attracting new talent during international job fairs. Another noteworthy result from the research is the impact of the school's organizational reputation on foreign teachers' country and school preferences. Job seekers' opinions of an organization's image, brand, and reputation, as well as how well its values align, all influence how appealing the company is (Soeling et al., 2022). In this regard, the study also revealed that foreign teachers are influenced by the organizational reputation of the school during the decision-making process, and this aspect makes a significant difference in their preferences. Therefore, along with other factors, it can be emphasized that schools must pay utmost attention to their organizational



reputation when aiming to employ qualified foreign teachers. The better the school's organizational reputation, the more and better-qualified foreign teachers it can attract. Indeed, Turban and Greening (1996) state that organizational reputation enhances the attractiveness of an organization in the perceptions of its employees. Similarly, according to Zhang et al. (2020), a thorough representation of a desirable company encompasses treating customers and employees fairly, being dedicated to the public good, practicing social responsibility, and building relationships to improve reputation.

The research results also show that international events organized by schools, such as Model United Nations (MUN) conferences, summer schools, and other activities targeted at students and teachers from different countries and schools, can be a determining factor in foreign teachers' preferences. These international events, held at a global level, not only promote the school's reputation but also have a significant impact in capturing the attention of foreign teachers. Based on this, schools seeking to employ foreign teachers can enhance their international reputation by organizing international and widely participated events. Lastly, the research findings indicate that the positive attitude displayed by the school during the job application process influences the decisions of foreign teachers. Living in a different country brings along many uncertainties for foreign teachers. Dealing with these uncertainties can lead some teachers to be indecisive and even withdraw their applications. Therefore, showing a positive attitude towards teachers during the application process and providing them with reassurance about potential challenges they may face will be a deciding factor for foreign teachers. This study aims to add to the literature by identifying the factors that are effective in foreign teachers' choice of Türkiye, whereas previous work has focused on classifying teachers according to recruitment practices (Garton, 2000; Hardman, 2001) and motivations and backgrounds (Bailey & Cooker, 2019; Rey et al., 2020). However, it is essential to support the findings obtained in this study with further research. Relying solely on the results of one study to claim that these factors determine foreign teachers' country preferences would not be accurate. Moreover, the fact that there is no existing research on foreign teachers' country preferences in our country can be considered the original and pioneering aspect of this study. On the other hand, this study focuses on the reasons why foreign teachers come to foreign private schools and does not evaluate their qualifications. Furthermore, employment approaches between foreign and Turkish teachers and possible sources/reasons for conflict/discrimination are beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, in new studies, the subject can be examined from different angles by investigating the qualifications of employed foreign teachers, the positions/perceptions of Turkish and foreign teachers towards each other in the same school, and the problem areas that arise in management levels in this context.

Indeed, the research conducted is limited to the views of foreign teachers working in foreign private schools in İstanbul and İzmir. To obtain more comprehensive data on the factors influencing foreign teachers' country and school preferences, further research should be conducted with a larger and more diverse group of foreign teachers working in various foreign private schools. Additionally, conducting similar research in different private schools that employ foreign teachers at various levels can be beneficial. This approach would allow for the identification of similarities and differences in the country and school preferences of foreign teachers working in foreign private schools compared to those working in other private schools. These studies would not only provide guidance to foreign private schools on how to attract foreign teachers but would also shed light on foreign teacher recruitment strategies for other private schools. Moreover, the findings from these research endeavors could lead to the development and improvement of national-level foreign teacher employment policies under the leadership of organizations such as the Turkish Private Schools Association (TÖZOK) and the Association of All Private Educational Institutions (TÖDER). This, in turn, could contribute to the recruitment of more qualified foreign teachers to Türkiye.



Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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