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Teachers' Perceptions of Burnout and Quiet Quitting: A Qualitative Study in the Context of Learning Motivation

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Research Article

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Heavy workloads and the emotional demands of teaching can lead to burnout and, as has been discussed more recently, to quiet quitting. This study examined how teachers perceive burnout and quiet quitting and how they relate these experiences to their motivation to learn.

Materials/methods. A basic qualitative design was used. The participants were 31 teachers working in Bartın and Zonguldak, Türkiye, selected through maximum variation sampling. Data were collected with a semi-structured interview form and analyzed through content analysis.

Results. Teachers described lifelong learning in terms of adapting to change, development, responsibility, and discovery. They saw quiet quitting not as leaving the profession but as doing only required duties, avoiding extra work, reluctance, and withdrawal. Its triggers were grouped as system-, management-, student-, parent-, and individual-related, with lack of appreciation, exclusion from decision-making, and administrative pressure standing out. Some teachers said burnout and quiet quitting dulled their curiosity to learn, while others said burnout made them notice their own development needs. Most believed that learning something new raises motivation and self-confidence, though some doubted it could resolve burnout on its own.

Conclusion. Teachers' learning motivation should be supported not only through individual effort but also through administrative support, a fair distribution of work, and a positive school climate.

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1. Introduction

Teachers are at the heart of every education system, and over the course of their careers they face a wide range of difficulties. These difficulties can wear down their professional motivation and, over time, lead to burnout. Freudenberger (1974, as cited in Çelikkaleli, 2011) was the first to define burnout, describing it as a state of exhaustion that results from failure, wearing out, loss of energy and strength, or unmet demands on a person's inner resources. Usually treated as a form of work-related stress, burnout is a syndrome seen especially in occupations that involve direct contact with people. It shows itself through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization toward others, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1985). Teaching is therefore regarded as one of the professions most exposed to burnout. The difficulties teachers face affect not only them as individuals but also the way the education system works as a whole. Drawing on Maslach and Leiter's model, Klusmann et al. (2016) argued that teachers with high levels of burnout may put less effort into lesson preparation, struggle with classroom management, and give students less support for learning. In their study of 1,102 primary school teachers and their students, they found that teachers' emotional exhaustion was negatively related to students' mathematics achievement.

Burnout has also been linked to a weaker sense of belonging in schools and to a loss of motivation for carrying out one's duties. Çimen and Yılmaz (2023) note that a tendency toward burnout has been named among the causes of quiet quitting. Part of what lies behind quiet quitting is an attempt to keep work stress to a minimum and to cope with feelings of burnout (Hetler, 2024). A qualitative study with private school teachers found that quiet quitting appeared in behaviors such as performing at the minimum level, working carelessly, and low motivation (Yılmaz et al., 2025). This suggests that quiet quitting may also matter for teachers' motivation to learn and to teach. Looking at how teachers' experiences of burnout relate to their motivation to learn is therefore needed to understand their working lives and their attitudes toward learning. Examining how quiet quitting tendencies affect teachers' learning motivation is also necessary if teacher motivation is to be sustained in the education system. Clarifying the link between teachers' quiet quitting tendencies and their motivation for lifelong learning can add to theory and offer practical guidance to people who work in schools.

Rising levels of burnout may also weaken teachers' motivation to learn. In a study of teachers by Bakan and Amırlı (2022), the depersonalization dimension of burnout had a negative effect on affective and continuance occupational commitment, whereas emotional exhaustion had no significant effect on occupational commitment. A drop in commitment may, in turn, reduce teachers' willingness to learn and develop professionally. Deci and Ryan's (2008) Self-Determination Theory likewise holds that the risk of lost motivation and burnout grows in settings where intrinsic motivation is not supported and basic psychological needs go unmet. To stay committed to the profession and keep their motivation to learn, teachers therefore need school climates and in-school support systems that meet these needs.

Research in this area shows that burnout harms teachers' occupational commitment. Tümkaya (2024), for example, found a significant negative relationship between burnout and occupational commitment among special education teachers. In a study of physical education classes, Shen et al. (2015) found that teachers' emotional exhaustion was negatively related to the autonomy support students perceived, and depersonalization was negatively related to students' autonomous motivation. These findings indicate that teacher burnout can affect not only teachers but also the way students learn.

One of the people who brought the term quiet quitting into public debate was Zaid Khan from New York. His TikTok video, which read as a critique of hustle culture, reached a very large audience. In it, Khan summed up the idea by saying that quiet quitting does not mean leaving your job but

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refusing to let work take over your life: your job is not your life, and your worth is not measured by what you produce (Önder, 2022).

Quiet quitting began to spread through working life around the world in mid-2022. The term refers to employees gradually pulling back from tasks outside their job descriptions as their expectations of work and their commitment to it change. Rather than with shirking, it is associated with people looking for meaning and satisfaction in life outside work (Ahmed, 2022; Çimen & Yılmaz, 2023). Quiet quitting is related to job satisfaction, work alienation, and organizational citizenship behavior, but it differs from these concepts in one respect: employees do not leave their jobs; they only redraw the boundaries of their duties.

In recent years, many employees, teachers among them, have begun to reduce their commitment and effort because of growing workloads, high performance expectations, and burnout. Quiet quitting has thus become a visible issue in education as well (Yücedağlar et al., 2024). When teachers go down this path, their professional motivation may decline, and with it the quality of classroom interaction and instruction.

The level of burnout teachers experience may, in particular, lower their commitment and increase their tendency toward quiet quitting. Understanding how teachers' experiences of burnout relate to their learning motivation is therefore important both for education policy and for designing support programs for teachers.

Previous studies describe quiet quitting as a new concept in organizational behavior (Yücedağlar et al., 2024) that has drawn growing attention in recent years, especially under the pressures of the pandemic and economic crisis (Gün, 2024). The concept still has a limited place in the academic literature, although it has attracted interest in both academic and business circles (Yıldız & Özmenekşe, 2022). Early work was descriptive and dealt with how quiet quitting emerged, how it is defined, and what its causes and signs are (Yıldız & Özmenekşe, 2022). Empirical studies of its cognitive, affective, or behavioral dimensions remain rare (Çalışkan, 2023). More recently, quiet quitting scales for teachers have been developed (e.g., Karaman Kepenekci et al., 2024), and researchers have begun to study teachers' quiet quitting tendencies together with occupational stress, burnout, principal support, and psychological well-being (Dilekçi et al., 2025; Özmen, 2025; Yergin & Karabatak, 2026). None of these studies, however, has looked at quiet quitting alongside teachers' learning motivation and lifelong learning orientations.

A qualitative look at how teachers' quiet quitting tendencies relate to their learning motivation can help fill this gap. It can also give school leaders and policymakers a basis for strategies that support teacher motivation.

1.1. Aim and Research Questions

This study aimed to examine teachers' perceptions of occupational burnout and quiet quitting and to show how they interpret these experiences in relation to learning motivation. More specifically, it sought teachers' views on the causes of burnout and quiet quitting, how these show up in professional life, and how they relate to learning motivation. The study addressed the following questions:

1. What attitudes and behaviors appear in teachers who have lost their professional motivation?
2. What factors may lead teachers to withdraw their professional effort (quiet quitting)?
3. How do burnout and quiet quitting affect a person's motivation to learn?
4. How do teachers cope with feelings of burnout?
5. How do participants interpret the concept of lifelong learning?

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6. What role does learning play in overcoming professional burnout?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This qualitative study set out to describe teachers' perceptions of occupational burnout and quiet quitting and the way they interpret these phenomena in relation to learning motivation. Qualitative designs aim to capture people's experiences and perceptions, and the meanings they attach to those experiences, as a whole (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). We used a basic qualitative research design, which allows an in-depth look at participants' views, perceptions, and interpretations of particular phenomena. Data were collected with a semi-structured interview form and analyzed through content analysis.

2.2. Participants

The study group consisted of 31 teachers working in the provinces of Bartın and Zonguldak, Türkiye. Participants differed in the type of settlement where they worked (village, district, or provincial center). This variety helps show how burnout and quiet quitting are experienced in different contexts and at different career stages. Table 1 presents information about the participants.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Study Group

Variable	Category	*f*
Province	Bartın	16
	Zonguldak	15
Gender	Female	21
	Male	10
School location	Provincial center	12
	District	12
	Village/town	7
Total		**31**

Participants were selected through maximum variation sampling, a type of purposive sampling. This technique involves choosing people who differ on relevant variables so that the different dimensions and forms of a phenomenon can be seen. In this study, variety was sought in terms of school location and professional experience.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

Data were gathered with a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. The form was prepared on the basis of a literature review and expert opinion and was revised after a pilot application. The questions were designed to explore participants' perceptions and feelings about burnout, quiet quitting, and learning motivation in depth. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What does improving yourself and continuing to learn mean to you?
2. What kinds of attitudes and behaviors does quiet quitting correspond to in teaching practice?
3. What factors might lead teachers toward quiet quitting?
4. What does burnout mean for teachers? Could you share a few examples of such behaviors?
5. How do processes such as quiet quitting and burnout affect teachers' curiosity to learn? Please explain with examples.

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6. Based on your own professional experience, what would you suggest to a teacher trying to cope with burnout?
7. What do you think is the effect of learning something new on a teacher whose motivation for the profession has declined? Please explain with reference to your own experience.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

All interviews were held face to face during the 2025–2026 school year, at times that suited the participants. Each interview lasted about 15–25 minutes and was audio-recorded. Informed consent was obtained from every participant beforehand, and all interviews were conducted in line with confidentiality and ethical principles.

The data were analyzed through content analysis. The recordings were transcribed, and the data were then coded systematically. Members of the research team coded the data independently, and the themes were finalized once the coders reached agreement. The findings were organized and interpreted with support from participants' own words. In the quotations, participants are identified as T1–T31.

3. Results

After the interviews with the 31 teachers, the data were analyzed, producing codes, categories, and, finally, themes. The findings are presented below in the order of the interview questions.

3.1. Lifelong Learning

The findings for the question "What does improving yourself and continuing to learn mean to you?" are shown in Figure 1.

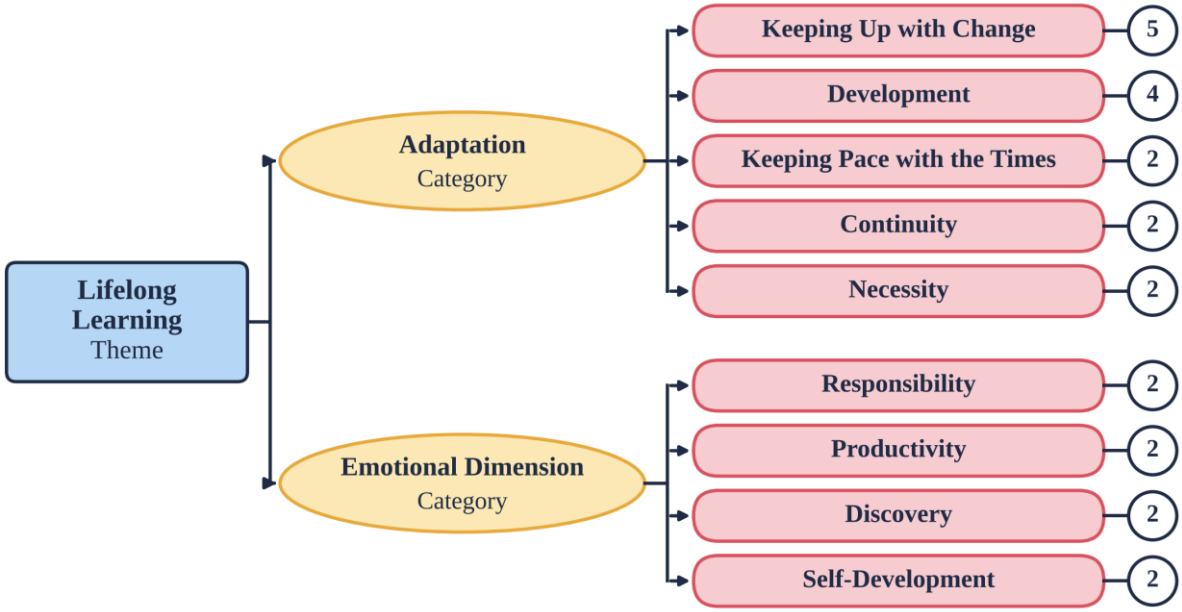


Figure 1. Categories and Codes for the Lifelong Learning Theme

As Figure 1 shows, teachers' views on lifelong learning fell into two main categories: Adaptation (15) and Emotional Dimension (8). Teachers' perceptions of lifelong learning therefore have more than one layer. They are shaped both by the need to adapt to outside change and by inner, emotional processes.

Under Adaptation, the codes Keeping Up with Change (5), Development (4), Keeping Pace with the Times (2), Continuity (2), and Necessity (2) stood out. These codes show that teachers see adapting to a changing world as a basic condition for their professional and personal growth. The

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weight given to change and development suggests that teachers feel a strong need to renew themselves and stay current. The codes necessity and continuity also show that lifelong learning is seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-off effort.

The Emotional Dimension category included the codes Responsibility (2), Productivity (2), Discovery (2), and Self-Development (2). Teachers do not limit continued learning to professional requirements; they also connect it with personal satisfaction, curiosity, self-fulfillment, and productivity, which are sources of intrinsic motivation. The emphasis on responsibility suggests that the ethical and professional obligations built into teaching support learning, while discovery and self-development point to the role of self-awareness and intrinsic motivation.

Overall, teachers think of lifelong learning in terms of adapting to changing conditions, sustaining professional development, and meeting personal responsibilities. Sample views are given below by category:

> T6: *"Our surroundings keep changing. Or teaching methods and techniques change. So we have to keep improving ourselves. We need to learn new things. Or a new computer application comes out. ChatGPT, for example, there are AI tools now. They [students] can get a lot out of them. We need to get ready for them ourselves. So learning is something that goes on throughout life. To be a better teacher, we have to adapt to these things too."* (Keeping Up with Change – Adaptation)
>
> T12: *"To help my students grow in every way, I need to grow in every way too."* (Development – Adaptation)
>
> T2: *"It's the plain truth of life. The moment we stop improving ourselves, it means we're actually burned out, we're finished. Because of our profession, we need to keep improving ourselves to keep up with a world that's always developing and changing. You could say that. I mean, to keep up with new generations we should always be thinking in new ways and improving ourselves."* (Continuity – Adaptation)
>
> T1: *"Continuing to learn, for me... because I'm a teacher, I keep learning as part of my responsibilities. For example, I have responsibilities in mathematics, so I keep learning."* (Responsibility – Emotional Dimension)
>
> T4: *"I mean improving myself in every area. That could be my hobbies. It could be my own body. Or work, I don't know. Improving myself in every sense. Learning new things, discovering new things."* (Discovery – Emotional Dimension)

Taken together, the findings show that teachers see lifelong learning not only as a requirement for adapting to changing conditions but also as something that supports their personal and professional growth. Change, development, adaptation, and responsibility came up most often, which shows that lifelong learning is regarded as central to both staying in the profession and growing as a person. For teachers working amid constant change, lifelong learning seems to be understood as a natural and unavoidable necessity.

3.2. Withdrawal

The findings for the question "What kinds of attitudes and behaviors does quiet quitting correspond to in teaching practice?" are shown in Figure 2.

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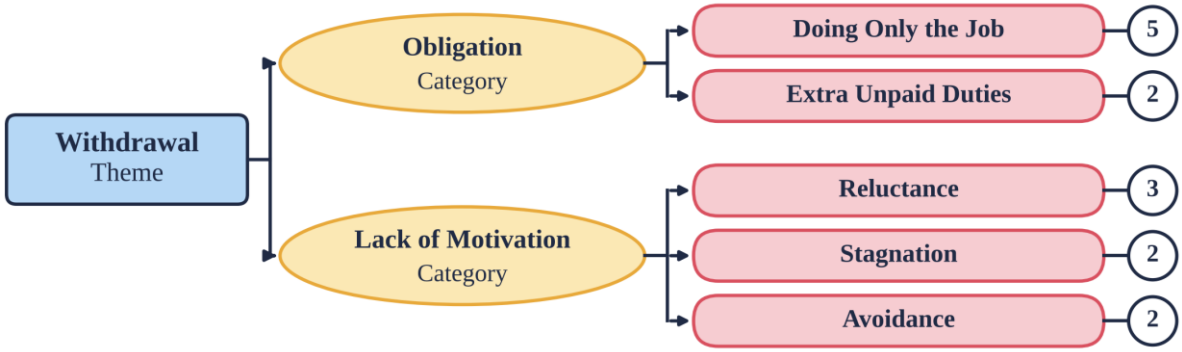


Figure 2. Categories and Codes for the Withdrawal Theme

Figure 2 shows that teachers' views formed the theme Withdrawal (14), organized under two categories: Obligation (7) and Lack of Motivation (7). Teachers define quiet quitting both as not going beyond the job description and as a fading desire for the profession.

The Obligation category includes the codes doing only the job and extra unpaid duties. In teachers' accounts, quiet quitting appears first as carrying out only the required part of one's responsibilities and not going beyond the job description. Teachers saw it as a clear sign of quiet quitting when a colleague stepped back from the extra responsibilities they used to take on voluntarily, from school activities, or from efforts to contribute to the profession, and did only what was expected of them. The code extra unpaid duties (*angarya* in Turkish) refers to teachers' reluctance toward tasks they do not see as part of their job or regard as pointless, and to their tendency to hold back from such work.

Under Lack of Motivation, the codes reluctance, stagnation, and avoidance were identified. Quiet quitting is therefore linked not only to teachers limiting their duties but also to a drop in professional motivation and a psychological distancing from work. Reluctance refers to teachers' declining willingness to take part in professional activities and responsibilities. Stagnation points to a halt in efforts toward professional development, adapting to innovations, or self-improvement. Avoidance describes a tendency to stay away from responsibilities, extra duties, or professional processes as much as possible.

Examples of teachers' views on what quiet quitting looks like in teaching practice are given below:

> T3: *"Someone like that only does their job. Nothing more. They don't take on extra responsibility. They don't try to shoulder everything."* (Doing Only the Job – Obligation)

> T5: *"So sometimes, when we're really burned out or feel worn down, the times we're in 'fine, I'll just go in, teach my lesson and leave' mode, I think that's what this term means."* (Doing Only the Job – Obligation)

> T6: *"None of the extra stuff we do outside teaching, those chores we call* angarya*, gives us anything back. [...] And that person keeps dodging those tasks. By keeping quiet, they try to get out of them."* (Extra Unpaid Duties – Obligation)

> T7: *"Reluctance, first of all, is quiet quitting. Not wanting to do anything, inside or outside the job description. I'd say that. Quiet quitting. Or not producing any extra projects."* (Reluctance – Lack of Motivation)

> T25: *"[They] wouldn't want to do anything; I'd want to stay where I am all the time. I might want to just stop, I'd cut myself off from things."* (Stagnation – Lack of Motivation)

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T30: *"That desire to work you have at the beginning, that eagerness, that joy of teaching inside you, the wish to explain and to teach, fading over time, I think."* (Reluctance – Lack of Motivation)

T23: *"[...] They do their basic responsibilities, and even those they run from, they try to get out of."* (Avoidance – Lack of Motivation)

Overall, teachers see quiet quitting not as physically leaving the profession but as pulling back psychologically and behaviorally while still doing the minimum the job requires. It takes several forms: doing only one's duties, staying away from extra responsibilities, professional reluctance, a halt in development efforts, and avoiding responsibility. In teaching practice, then, quiet quitting can be understood as a kind of withdrawal in which teachers stay in the profession but cut back on what they contribute voluntarily.

3.3. Triggering Factors

The findings for the question "What factors might lead teachers toward quiet quitting?" are shown in Figure 3.

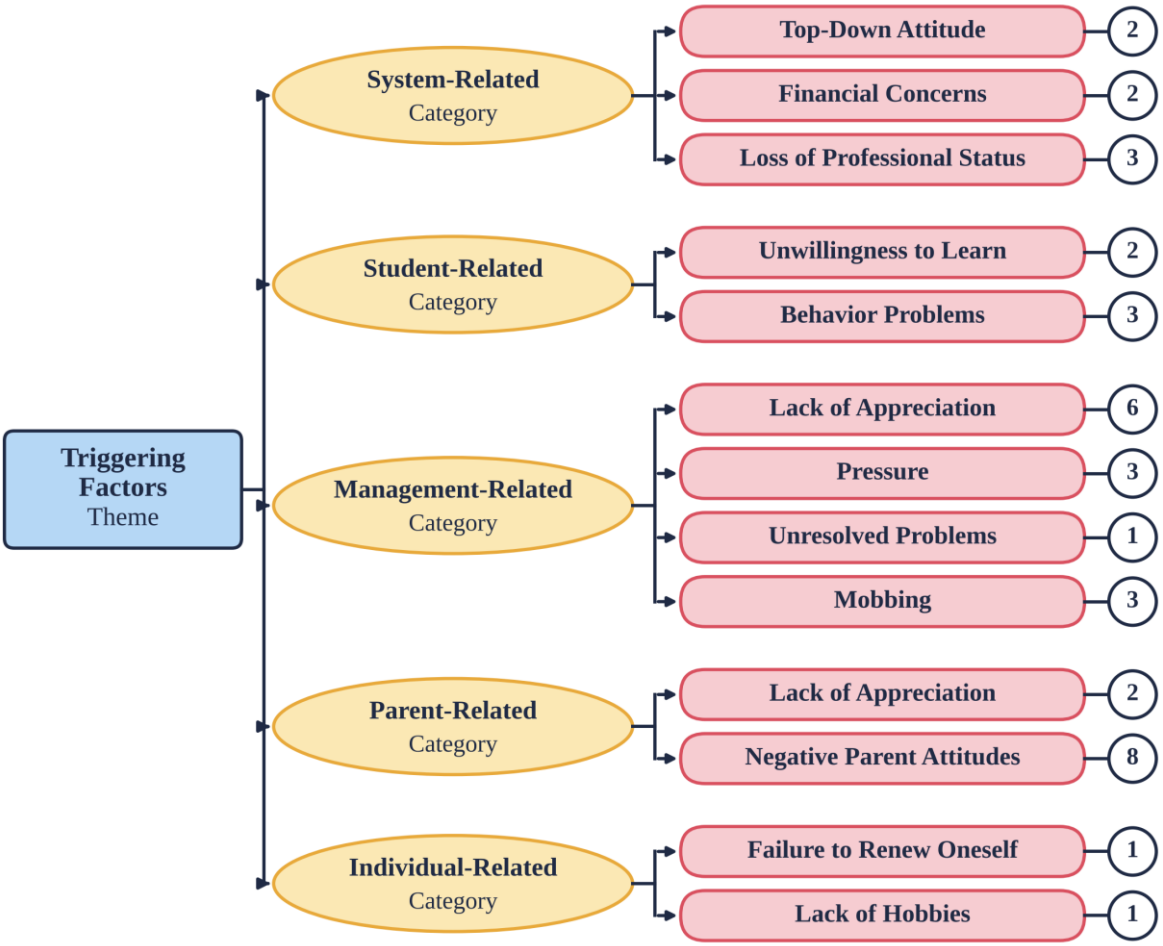


Figure 3. Categories and Codes for the Triggering Factors Theme

As Figure 3 shows, teachers viewed the factors that trigger quiet quitting from several angles. The findings were grouped into five categories: System-Related (7), Student-Related (5), Management-Related (13), Parent-Related (10), and Individual-Related (2). The triggers teachers encounter thus vary by stakeholder and context.

The codes under System-Related show that teachers are affected by structural and operational features of the education system. How teachers perceive the workings of the system shapes their

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professional attitudes and motivation, and their view of the profession is closely tied to these systemic factors.

In the Student-Related category, triggers arising from teachers' interactions with students came to the fore. Students' attitudes and behaviors toward learning can directly affect teachers' work. Students' unwillingness to learn and their behavior in class appear to influence teachers' motivation and their teaching.

The findings under Management-Related show that the attitudes and practices of school administrators have a strong effect on teachers. The way administrators approach teachers shapes teachers' job satisfaction and motivation, and the quality of this relationship directly affects how teachers perform.

In the Parent-Related category, communication and interaction with parents emerged as an important trigger. Parents' attitudes and expectations can affect teachers' work, and poor communication with parents or a lack of support from them can weigh on teachers in various ways.

The Individual-Related category shows that teachers' personal characteristics, interests, and level of personal development are also among the triggering factors. Teachers' own inner processes, motivations, and personal choices play a part in shaping their working lives.

Teachers' views on triggering factors thus cover both personal and environmental influences. Sample views are given below by category:

> T6: *"When decisions are made, we teachers, who are the ones actually doing the work, usually aren't asked about these things. [...] Because it's imposed from above, we usually can't put our heart into it. We expect some benefit. We expect a reward. And when there's no reward, these things just don't happen."* (Top-Down Attitude – System-Related)
>
> T10: *"I put so much work into this, I tried so hard, but my administrator doesn't see it. They don't even say thank you."* (Lack of Appreciation – Management-Related)
>
> T9: *"Here again, if we take student behavior, for example, the shortcomings at our school, I mean, the problems we have never getting solved."* (Unresolved Problems – Management-Related)
>
> T22: *"One of them is pressure from administrators. [...] I'm talking about political pressure coming from higher up. [...] I think the pressure on teachers is pushing them toward quiet quitting."* (Pressure – Management-Related)
>
> T25: *"For me, the most decisive factor is the students. [...] Students not being active in class, being disconnected from the lesson, that's the biggest factor for me."* (Unwillingness to Learn – Student-Related)
>
> T2: *"Not getting the support you need from students and parents despite all the sacrifices you make, or even running into the opposite attitude, could cause it."* (Lack of Appreciation – Parent-Related)
>
> T20: *"We teach the student one way or another. We try to develop the behavior we want. But the parent whose mind we just can't change..."* (Negative Parent Attitudes – Parent-Related)
>
> T28: *"Time, not being able to renew yourself, not being able to keep up with what's current in the profession, I think."* (Failure to Renew Oneself – Individual-Related)
>
> T29: *"If a person doesn't have a hobby or something, they can't refresh their life. People need a hobby. Music, traveling, painting."* (Lack of Hobbies – Individual-Related)

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Overall, the factors that affect teachers' work are varied and interact with one another. Teachers are influenced not only by their own characteristics but also by the system, students, management, and parents. Their professional experience emerges as a dynamic process shaped by many different stakeholders.

3.4. Professional Signs of Burnout

The findings for the question "What does burnout mean for teachers? Could you share a few examples of such behaviors?" are shown in Figure 4.

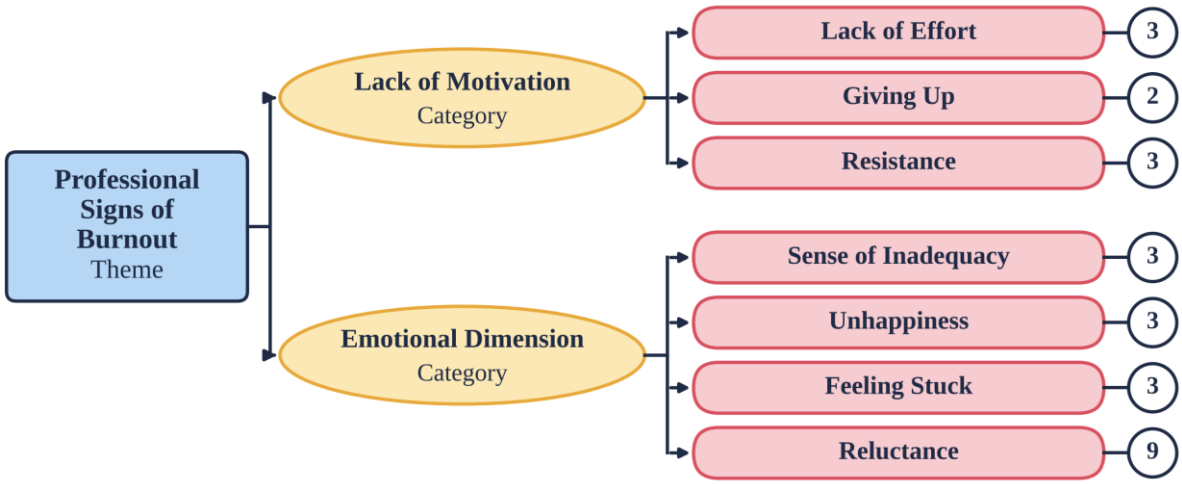


Figure 4. Categories and Codes for the Professional Signs of Burnout Theme

Figure 4 shows that teachers' views formed the theme Professional Signs of Burnout (26), organized under two categories: Lack of Motivation (8) and Emotional Dimension (18). Teachers make sense of pulling away from or giving up on their work through both loss of motivation and emotional experience.

The codes under Lack of Motivation point to situations in which teachers lose interest in and desire for their work. At times teachers put in little effort, give up, or resist development. The statements in this category show that a lack of motivation plays a decisive role when teachers distance themselves from their work.

The Emotional Dimension category brings out the emotional states that accompany teachers' professional experiences. Teachers may experience unhappiness, a sense of inadequacy, and a feeling of being stuck. The code feeling stuck refers to the sense of being trapped that teachers describe when, despite their effort, they get no response from students and see no change. Such emotional states can weaken teachers' commitment and their ability to keep going in the profession. In this respect, the emotional dimension is a major part of how burnout shows itself at work.

Teachers' views show that burnout does not rest on a single cause but arises from the interplay of motivational and emotional factors. Sample views are given below by category:

> T25: *"If I were a burned-out teacher, I'd probably be someone who just comes and goes from school, doesn't join any activities outside class, and gives students very little. I'd carry on with the students who want to learn and wouldn't push the unwilling ones much. I mean, I'd only work with those who want to learn and leave the rest to themselves."* (Lack of Effort – Lack of Motivation)

> T2: *"Burnout actually means you stop producing. It means you stop improving yourself. It's giving up, really, giving up on your ideals."* (Giving Up – Lack of Motivation)

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T26: *"Burnout is basically not improving yourself. When there's burnout, the teacher sticks to the lesson and does no activities. [...] They just do their job, teach, and leave when the bell rings."* (Resistance – Lack of Motivation)

T20: *"Burnout, like I said, is the teacher not wanting to come in. Not wanting to work. A kind of unhappiness. Even scowling on the way to school. 'What am I going to do today? What am I going to do with this kid? What if this parent gives me a hard time again? Or this administrator again...' It's coming in with these negative thoughts."* (Unhappiness – Emotional Dimension)

T12: *"I think burnout makes teachers feel inadequate. During the day we want to see the behaviors and the things we've taught the students, but we don't. Sometimes students act as if we haven't taught them anything at all. And that makes us feel inadequate."* (Sense of Inadequacy – Emotional Dimension)

T9: *"In that sense it's less burnout and more a feeling of being stuck. The child just stares blankly. I mean, we teach the lesson, but for them it's just like a chat. No lasting learning happens. That's how we end up burned out, because we don't get the response we need from the student."* (Feeling Stuck – Emotional Dimension)

T30: *"I think burnout is actually very similar to quiet quitting. Because with burnout, too, you don't come to school eager, and your desire to teach fades. When you can't get the response you want from the kids, I mean, when you don't get it the way you want, burnout is slowly drifting away from the wish to give."* (Reluctance – Emotional Dimension)

In short, teachers' tendency to pull away from their work has several sides. Loss of motivation, emotional exhaustion, and negative emotional experiences seem to feed one another. Sustaining teachers' commitment therefore calls for attention to both motivational and emotional aspects.

3.5. Effect on Curiosity to Learn

The findings for the question "How do processes such as quiet quitting and burnout affect teachers' curiosity to learn?" are shown in Figure 5.

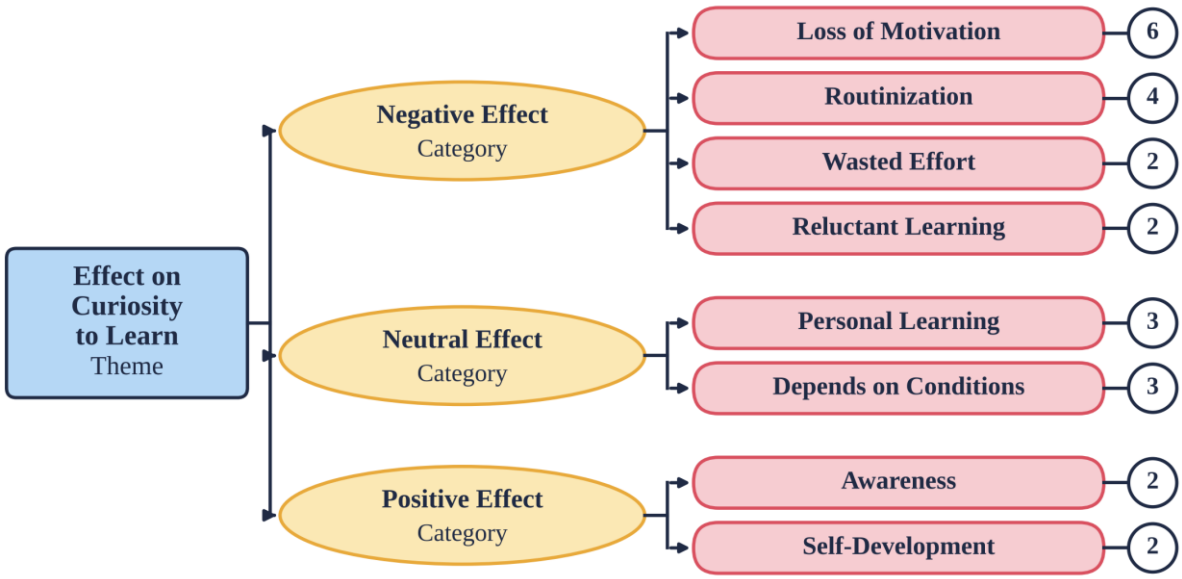


Figure 5. Categories and Codes for the Effect on Curiosity to Learn Theme

As Figure 5 shows, teachers' views on this theme fell into three categories: Negative Effect (14), Neutral Effect (6), and Positive Effect (4). Teachers' perceptions of curiosity to learn are not one-directional; they vary with different experiences and conditions.

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Under Negative Effect, teachers drew attention to factors that reduce or harm curiosity to learn. Loss of motivation, falling into routine, and a sense that learning has become pointless can weaken curiosity. A decline in the desire to learn voluntarily also stood out in this category. Negative factors thus appear to limit the inner drive and curiosity to learn.

The Neutral Effect category includes findings indicating that curiosity to learn can vary with circumstances. Learning is sometimes shaped by personal preferences or by environmental conditions, which suggests that curiosity to learn depends on both personal tendencies and current circumstances.

Under Positive Effect, teachers emphasized factors that increase and support curiosity to learn. Becoming aware of one's own shortcomings and a focus on self-development strengthen curiosity. Positive attitudes toward learning and the wish to improve oneself are the main elements in this category.

Teachers' views show that curiosity to learn is shaped by the interplay of personal, environmental, and situational factors. Examples from each category are given below:

T23: *"I think it brings it down anyway. With quiet quitting you don't want to do anything to begin with. I do things on autopilot, no new ideas come to mind. Or with burnout, 'ugh, I don't want to, I've got no energy', feelings like that don't spark a teacher's curiosity to learn."* (Loss of Motivation – Negative Effect)

T15: *"At this point, because they feel burned out and tired, they've actually developed a negative view of learning too. They don't want to learn, they keep using the techniques or activities they already have, and I'd say routine sets in at that point."* (Routinization – Negative Effect)

T20: *"Someone gets hung up on small details, and all the planning you did, all that effort, goes to waste. And then what? The teacher says, I won't do this activity again. I just brought trouble on myself."* (Wasted Effort – Negative Effect)

T19: *"We see that colleagues who are in quiet quitting generally don't even attend compulsory training, or attend while just going through the motions, and then stay silent when something similar is suggested later."* (Reluctant Learning – Negative Effect)

T21: *"Right now I'm trying to learn Spanish. I've been working on it for two years. As an amateur."* (Personal Learning – Neutral Effect)

T21: *"We have a public education center, but the courses I want, the training I'd like to take, aren't there. Because you're far away in the district, because you're a teacher, because you're at school five days a week, unfortunately... you can't go to every course."* (Depends on Conditions – Neutral Effect)

T12: *"The more burned out I feel, the more I see where I fall short. That pushes me to improve. It doesn't affect me negatively; it actually helps me."* (Awareness – Positive Effect)

T28: *"I look at it the other way round. If a teacher has curiosity to learn and is trying to keep themselves fresh professionally, I think quiet quitting gets pushed further away."* (Self-Development – Positive Effect)

Seen as a whole, teachers' curiosity to learn is layered and changes over time. It is influenced not only by personal characteristics but also by motivational states, environmental conditions, and the opportunities available. Raising curiosity to learn therefore requires attention to both personal and environmental factors.

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3.6. Coping

The findings for the question "Based on your own professional experience, what would you suggest to a teacher trying to cope with burnout?" are shown in Figure 6.

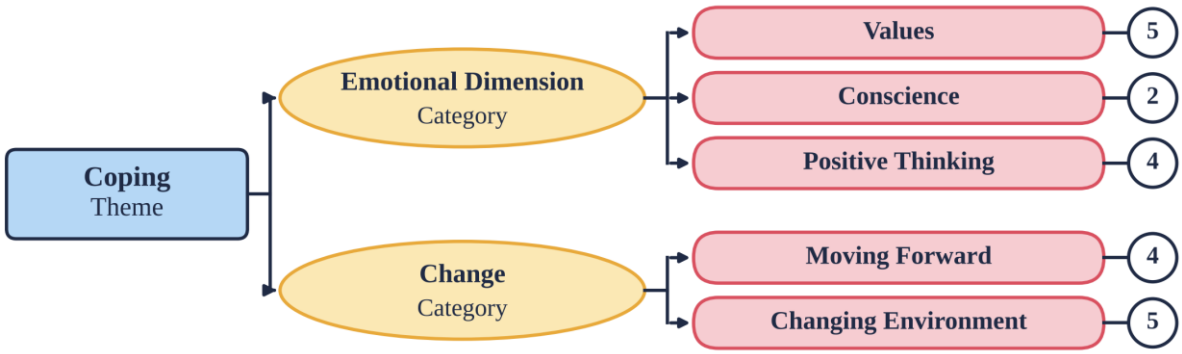


Figure 6. Categories and Codes for the Coping Theme

Figure 6 shows that teachers' views formed the theme Coping (20), organized under two categories: Emotional Dimension (11) and Change (9). Teachers think about coping with difficulties in terms of emotional resilience as well as adapting to and making change.

The codes under Emotional Dimension show that teachers rely heavily on inner resources and personal values when coping. Values, conscience, and positive thinking matter a great deal in how teachers deal with difficulties. Positive thinking in particular seems to help teachers reinterpret negative situations and handle them in a healthier way.

Under Change, teachers' coping strategies were more action-oriented and focused on transformation. Faced with problems, teachers try to make progress and change their current conditions. They do not simply accept the situation; they also tend to look actively for solutions and alternatives.

Teachers' views show that coping involves both emotional and behavioral paths. Sample views are given below by category:

> T28: *"And also not seeing the person in front of you as just a student. Seeing them as a human being. For me that's the most important value. [...] That every person is a world of their own, that every person is unique, I'll say this for myself. I really tried to make them feel that."* (Values – Emotional Dimension)

> T2: *"But when these things are missing, even if we drift toward burnout and quiet quitting, out of conscience, thinking of these children and of society, we need to pull ourselves together and keep producing and teaching, so that we can do this job with a clear conscience."* (Conscience – Emotional Dimension)

> T20: *"When I get bored or overwhelmed in situations like this, it's in my own hands. One, being patient, and two, if I can save even one child, if I can teach even one child, that's a win. [...] If I can save one child, that's enough."* (Positive Thinking – Emotional Dimension)

> T19: *"They need to comfort themselves: evening has come, that day is over, tomorrow is a new day, maybe the same things won't happen."* (Positive Thinking – Emotional Dimension)

> T25: *"I think we should tackle things head-on. If we don't, I think we drag ourselves further down. [...] For that, we shouldn't stand still. We always need to move forward. I mean, it could be doing research related to our profession, attending seminars, attending workshops."* (Moving Forward – Change)

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T30: *"I'd say a change of scene brings relief. Changing your place, your environment. [...] First a change of place, I think. Because if a person doesn't like where they are, I don't think they can be useful there. So they should leave. And then they should keep themselves busy with something."* (Changing Environment – Change)

Taken together, the findings show that teachers draw on inner resources when dealing with difficulties and also develop approaches aimed at change. Coping thus seems to depend on emotional resilience and openness to change working together.

3.7. Effect of Learning Something New

The findings for the question "What do you think is the effect of learning something new on a teacher whose motivation for the profession has declined?" are shown in Figure 7.

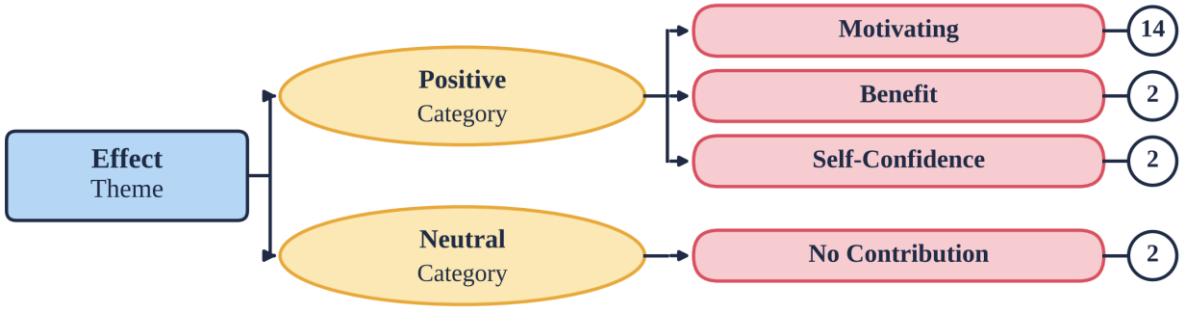


Figure 7. Categories and Codes for the Effect Theme

Figure 7 shows that teachers' views on this theme fell into two categories: Positive (18) and Neutral (2). Teachers mostly considered the effect of learning something new to be positive, although in some cases they saw little or no effect.

The codes under Positive show that teachers believe learning something new supports them professionally and personally. Increased motivation, practical benefit, and greater self-confidence stood out. Increased motivation was the most frequent element, showing that teachers draw strength from new learning. Benefit and self-confidence also seem to feed teachers' sense of professional competence and their performance.

The Neutral category contained only the code no contribution. Some teachers did not think learning something new would bring any clear change or benefit. This category matters because it shows that the effect is not equally meaningful for every teacher.

The general trend in teachers' views is positive, but there are differences depending on individual experiences and expectations. Sample views are given below by category:

T30: *"Learning something new makes me happy, personally. Learning new things, adding something to myself, means I'll add something to the people around me too. Learning something new increases professional motivation. [...] When I learn something new [...] I feel my mind coming alive. And of course that motivates me more professionally."* (Motivating – Positive)

T6: *"If what they've learned brings them some kind of benefit, socially or financially, that person will be inclined to learn these things. I think they'll want to learn."* (Benefit – Positive)

T25: *"The more new things we learn, the more we improve ourselves. And the more we improve ourselves, the more our motivation goes up, I think. Our self-confidence goes up. [...] This year my motivation is higher because I'm doing something related to my own field. I feel better about myself."* (Self-Confidence – Positive)

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T31: *"It doesn't add anything. I mean, if learning something new were going to have a positive effect on a burned-out teacher, I believe the burnout would already be fading little by little."* (No Contribution – Neutral)

To sum up, teachers largely view the effect of learning something new in a positive light, although some see the effect as limited or absent. Learning something new can raise teachers' motivation, support their self-confidence, and help them in their work, but this effect may differ from one teacher to another.

4. Discussion

This study examined how burnout, quiet quitting, professional learning motivation, and lifelong learning relate to one another, based on the views of 31 teachers working in Bartın and Zonguldak. Teachers experienced quiet quitting less as leaving the profession and more as a cut in voluntary contribution, a retreat from extra responsibilities, and a narrowing of professional development efforts. They linked these experiences to the workings of the education system, management approaches, relationships with students and parents, personal circumstances, and opportunities for professional development.

Teachers interpreted quiet quitting as carrying out their core duties while pulling away from responsibilities beyond the job description, not producing new projects, being unwilling to take on extra tasks, and limiting their professional development. Their accounts suggest that quiet quitting may be experienced as a reduced voluntary contribution and a psychological withdrawal rather than as physically leaving the profession.

In their qualitative study with private school teachers, Yılmaz et al. (2025) found that quiet quitting showed itself through minimum performance, limiting job responsibilities to the school's walls, careless work, and low motivation. Dilekçi et al. (2025) likewise found significant relationships between teachers' occupational stress, burnout, and change fatigue and their quiet quitting tendencies: as stress, burnout, and change fatigue rose, so did the tendency toward quiet quitting. These researchers frame quiet quitting as employees settling for their mandatory duties and losing emotional attachment to their work without physically leaving. Their results suggest that the reluctance, doing only required duties, and pulling back from extra responsibilities found in the present study are part of teachers' working reality. According to Karayaman (2024), employees going through quiet quitting show a range of mood changes, including sadness, slowing down, low motivation and reluctance, feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy, overreaction, a sense of exclusion, stigmatization, othering, humiliation, authoritarianism, and emotional numbing. Of these, reluctance and a sense of inadequacy also appeared in the teachers' accounts in this study. Still, quiet quitting did not look the same for every teacher. Some participants described it as a decline in professional effort; others described it as no longer producing new ideas, giving up on self-improvement, or not taking part in voluntary activities. This variation shows that quiet quitting cannot be reduced to a single behavior and has to be considered together with how teachers experience their working conditions.

In this study, the factors that may trigger quiet quitting were grouped into five categories: system-, student-, management-, parent-, and individual-related. Exclusion from decision-making, lack of appreciation, administrative pressure, unresolved problems, difficulties with students and parents, and too little time for personal development were among the most prominent. Yergin and Karabatak (2026) found that principal support and collegial relationships were significantly related to teachers' quiet quitting tendencies and that principal support was the strongest predictor. Their results parallel the experiences reported here, such as management pressure, limited say in decisions, and too little recognition of teachers' work. Administrators' attitudes and teachers'

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opportunities to take part in decisions may therefore have a strong influence on how teachers' professional attitudes and behaviors take shape.

In Yılmaz et al.'s (2025) study of private school teachers' experiences of quiet quitting, participants' views were grouped under four themes: pay and working conditions, administrative and communication problems, problems related to the logic of private schooling, and problems related to the education system. This shows that teachers' turn toward quiet quitting cannot be traced to a single cause; economic conditions, management style, institutional relationships, and perceptions of the profession's standing in society need to be considered together. Working with healthcare staff, Bakır and Özcan (2025) reported that work-life balance moderated the relationship between burnout and quiet quitting and argued that policies focused on work-life balance could lower burnout and, in turn, quiet quitting tendencies. In Avcı and Erdem's (2025) study of employees of a metropolitan municipality, work-life imbalance, lack of appreciation, low pay, negative leadership, and lack of autonomy were discussed as factors related to quiet quitting. Read alongside the present participants' remarks about working conditions and lack of time for personal development, these findings suggest that teachers' willingness to go beyond the minimum may depend both on relationships at school and on the balance between work and private life. Focusing on individual motivation alone is therefore not enough to support teachers' engagement; supportive management, a fair division of work, and healthy relationships at school also matter.

Burnout was described in this study through loss of energy, unhappiness, a sense of inadequacy, drifting away from professional ideals, and a weakening desire to teach. Some teachers said these experiences reduced their desire to learn, while others said their curiosity to learn continued or that burnout helped them recognize their development needs. Burnout, then, does not affect learning motivation in the same way for all teachers. Uysal (2023) notes that teachers' intrinsic motivation is positively related to their willingness to take part in professional development and keep learning, and negatively related to burnout. Meeting teachers' needs for autonomy, competence, and social belonging can support their professional motivation. This suggests that teachers experiencing burnout may lose some of their desire to learn. Because that study did not examine quiet quitting directly, however, this connection can only be drawn indirectly.

Özmen (2025) reported that teachers' psychological well-being declined in the context of quiet quitting. In a study of healthcare workers, Altun et al. (2024) found a positive, moderate, and significant relationship between burnout and quiet quitting and showed that feeling undervalued significantly predicted burnout. Although they come from different samples, these results resemble the present teachers' experiences of lack of appreciation, pressure, and professional reluctance. None of these studies, however, examined burnout, quiet quitting, and learning motivation together, and this is where the present study may add to the field.

Teachers' ways of coping with burnout were grouped into two categories: emotional dimension and change. Seeing students as individuals, recalling one's moral responsibilities, being patient, and thinking positively were among the emotional strategies. Doing professional research, attending seminars and workshops, continuing to learn, and considering a change of workplace stood out as change-oriented approaches.

Uzun and Yaprakdal Uzun (2022) stress the importance of psychological resilience, self-efficacy, and positive psychological resources, along with professional development opportunities and collegial relationships, in helping teachers cope with burnout. İş and Güçlü (2024) likewise point to the need for balanced workloads, psychological support, professional development opportunities, and a positive working environment. These findings match the present teachers' accounts of both personal coping strategies and their search for change. Even so, personal resilience and positive thinking cannot by themselves remove poor working conditions. For teachers to cope with burnout,

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their personal resources need support, and their workloads also need to be balanced, administrative support increased, and healthy working relationships built.

Teachers in this study associated lifelong learning with adapting to change, improving themselves, fulfilling professional responsibilities, and finding personal satisfaction. They saw learning not only as a way to meet professional requirements but also as something that supports personal growth and productivity.

At the same time, the study identified barriers such as lack of time, courses that did not match teachers' needs, and working conditions that made it hard to take part in learning. Teachers' perceptions of lifelong learning are closely tied to their desire for professional development and their learning motivation. Çetinkaya et al. (2019) found that teachers who wanted to pursue graduate study had higher learning motivation and persistence, a finding that helps in reading the present teachers' attitudes toward learning. The teachers in this study also understood learning as a process that lasts from birth to death and covers different areas of life. This is in line with Bulaç and Kurt (2019), who found that pre-service teachers saw lifelong learning as continuing at every stage of life and described themselves as curious people who were willing to learn. This similarity suggests that the teachers here see lifelong learning as part of continuous development.

Landberg and Partsch (2023) showed that teachers sometimes define lifelong learning as a natural process that unfolds on its own and sometimes as a purposeful activity in which a person consciously adapts to change, follows their curiosity, and directs their own learning. Their participants agreed that lifelong learning is continuous but differed on whether it should be treated as a conscious, purposeful process. In the present study, teachers described lifelong learning both as a requirement for adapting to change and as a development process they pursue by choice, which shows that the two views can exist side by side.

In this study, the effect of new learning on professional motivation was generally seen as positive. Participants said that acquiring new knowledge could help them feel more competent, raise their self-confidence, and make them keen to pass on what they had learned to their students. Some teachers, however, said that new learning alone would not be enough to overcome burnout.

Cemaloğlu and Dolapcı's (2022) study of teachers' views on professional learning shows that new learning can play an important role in supporting professional motivation. They found that teachers' efforts to improve themselves, follow current developments in their field, and learn different teaching methods and techniques were core components of professional learning. Teachers' wish to be more useful to their students, make lessons more engaging, and strengthen their professional competence showed how learning is tied to motivation. A positive school climate, personal motivation, and principal support were also among the main factors that supported teachers' professional learning.

New learning can thus support teachers' motivation, self-confidence, and desire to develop. For this to happen, however, what is learned must be usable in professional life, and working conditions must make room for learning. Professional learning should be seen not as a cure for burnout on its own but as a development opportunity that works together with institutional support and suitable working conditions.

5. Conclusion

This study looked at the relationships among burnout, quiet quitting, professional learning motivation, and lifelong learning through the views of 31 teachers in Bartın and Zonguldak. The teachers experienced quiet quitting mainly as giving less voluntarily, stepping back from extra responsibilities, and narrowing their development efforts, rather than as leaving the profession.

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The factors teachers associated with quiet quitting involved the system, management, students, parents, and personal circumstances, which shows that teacher motivation has to be considered from several angles at once. Lack of appreciation, exclusion from decisions, management pressure, negative parent attitudes, and too little time for personal development stood out as factors that may limit teachers' willingness to give more than the minimum.

Another key result is that burnout and quiet quitting may be connected with teachers' learning motivation. Some teachers said that fatigue and reluctance had dulled their curiosity to learn, while others recognized their development needs and kept their interest in learning. Burnout does not affect the desire to learn in the same way for every teacher.

Participants considered lifelong learning important for adapting to change, improving themselves, and keeping their professional competence. New learning seems able to support self-confidence and professional motivation, but lack of time, limited access to suitable learning opportunities, and lack of support can hold it back. Professional learning is an important support for teacher motivation, but it should not be treated as something that can remove burnout and quiet quitting on its own.

Overall, the study shows that supporting teachers' professional motivation and their orientation toward lifelong learning requires personal development opportunities to go hand in hand with institutional support, fair working conditions, and healthy professional relationships.

6. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has some limitations. The study group was limited to 31 teachers in Bartın and Zonguldak, and the findings are not meant to be generalized. Interviews lasted 15–25 minutes, which may have limited how deeply some topics could be explored. Some participants answered on the basis of their observations or of hypothetical situations rather than their own experience, so the findings reflect teachers' general perceptions of the profession as well as their direct experiences. In addition, because some participants did not answer every question, the number of teachers who expressed views varies from question to question.

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are offered:

1. School administrations should involve teachers more actively in decision-making, recognize their professional contributions, and build a working environment that supports open communication and collegial solidarity.
2. Teachers' workloads and extra duties should be reviewed, tasks should be distributed fairly, and conditions should allow teachers to protect their work-life balance.
3. Psychological support and preventive institutional practices against burnout should be strengthened. Teachers should also be given enough time and support to take part in professional development activities that are accessible, practical, and suited to their needs.
4. Schools should create settings where teachers can try out new ideas and keep up their development efforts.
5. Future research could examine the experiences of teachers in other provinces, school types, and seniority groups. Qualitative findings could be supported with quantitative or mixed-methods designs to study the relationships among burnout, quiet quitting, job satisfaction, and learning motivation more fully, and longitudinal studies could show how these experiences change over time.

In short, supporting teachers' professional motivation, desire to learn, and commitment requires institutional improvements alongside personal development opportunities.

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DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions. The literature review, conceptualization, methodology, data collection, and analysis were carried out jointly by all authors. All authors also took part in writing the original draft and in reviewing and editing the manuscript, and all of them have read and approved the final version.

Conflicts of Interest. No potential conflicts of interest were declared by the authors.

Ethical Approval. This study was approved by the Bartın University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (date: 18/06/2025, meeting no: 11, decision no: 1, protocol no: 2025-SBB-0670). Before the interviews took place, informed consent was obtained from every participant. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, participation was voluntary, and they were informed that the data would be used solely for scientific purposes.

Data Availability Statement. To protect participants' confidentiality, the interview data are not publicly available. They can, however, be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Generative AI Usage (GenAI): During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used generative AI solely to improve language and readability. All analyses, core manuscript drafting, and findings were conducted and generated entirely by the authors.

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