



Original article

## “I’m a Teacher Material!”: Reasons of Preservice English Teachers for Choosing to Become a Teacher

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### Abstract

This qualitative single-case study aimed to explain the reasons why individuals choose teaching from the viewpoint of preservice English teachers, on which the number of qualitative studies with this study population are scarce. The case, in this direction, was a Turkish state university’s Department of English Language Teaching, and the sampled group comprised of 10 preservice teachers of English as a foreign language. Qualitative data was obtained through an online form, which included ten sentence completion prompts starting with the statement, “I want to be a teacher because...”. Then, through a rigorous coding and notetaking process, categorical analyses were done to identify the reasons why preservice teachers chose this career path. Out of 100 statements provided by the participants, 131 coding references emerged, fitting under a total number of 11 themes and 13 subthemes, categorized as intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic motivational reasons. Overall finding in the study was that preservice teachers were mostly intrinsically and altruistically motivated for being a teacher since the majority of them expressed their interest in teaching with personal values and commented on the place of the profession as a contributory element for the growth of the community and its members. On the other hand, one subcase exhibited immoderately elevated levels of altruistic motives, which may lead to job burnout or dropout in the future. As for extrinsic motivations, such as prestige, financial gains, or external influences like family members or peers, they held the least importance among the study’s participants, and only one subcase reported to have chosen teaching as a fallback career. The study’s results, in this regard, are anticipated to provide valuable insights into EFL preservice teachers’ own justifications for choosing a career path in teaching.

**Keywords:** Career Motivations, EFL Teachers, Preservice Teachers, Teaching Reasons, Teacher Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers in society has an impact on creating a system for social development, improvement, and change (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Without teachers who are properly equipped for this influential position, such a transformation is not conceivable. In this sense, teacher education is an essential tool for preparing future educators who are willing to live up to the expectation of being motivated for and committed to their work. Learners will be more driven to study and attain favourable outcomes if teachers exhibit prominent levels of professional motivation, satisfaction, and enthusiasm for their jobs (Dörnyei, 2001). Hence, for successful learning and teaching practices to be conducted with the desired outcome of development and change within educational domains, both pre-service and in-service teachers' general profiles should be in accordance with these criteria. To these domains, foreign language education does not constitute an exception but even a precedence in Türkiye, where graduates of English language teaching (ELT) departments are in a surplus (Erten, 2014), which is why the study focuses on the profile of these preservice teachers.

In general, preservice teachers' advancement and completion of teacher education programs are strongly associated with an awareness of the motivations behind those considering a profession in teaching (König & Rothland, 2012). To this end, scholarly research on teacher education and training aims to reveal and explain the motives of preservice teachers in choosing teaching as a career. In return, better-quality education is sought to be practiced by more motivated teachers (Lestari & Arfiandhani, 2019).

As in many other studies on this subject in teacher education in both global (Berger & D'Ascoli, 2012; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014; Rinke, 2008) and Turkish contexts (Başöz, 2021; Erten, 2014; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012), the present study situates its research element on the career choice reasons of preservice teachers. However, unlike most research studies on the subject, which embrace a quantitative design with a wide range of participants, this research, following a qualitative approach, focuses on preservice teachers' own justification as to why they are studying in an educational department. Therefore, the overall aim here is to explain the reasons why preservice teachers have enrolled in a teacher education program. So, the significance of this study is that it intends to elucidate the quantitative body of findings abundantly present in the literature. Three research questions were formulated in this direction.

**RQ1:** What are the most frequent motivations (intrinsic, extrinsic, altruistic) for wanting to become a teacher among preservice teachers of English?

**RQ2:** What are the reasons for choosing to be a teacher among preservice teachers of English?

**RQ3:** Is the profession of teaching seen as a fallback job among preservice teachers of English?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## **English Language Learning**

Educational procedures in Türkiye are administered by two macrolevel governmental institutions, the first of which is the Ministry of National Education (MONE), and the other is the Council of Higher Education (CHE). Curricula and instructional programs originate from these governing agencies and are handed down to educational institutions across the country. The ministry oversees all designs, developments, reforms, and rules pertaining to K-12 education, whereas CHE governs all procedures regarding higher education, to which teacher training programs are subject. Therefore, the teacher training programs are directly affected by any changes to K-12 education, which Türkiye is not any short of since the educational system has seen various curricular changes in the last two decades alone respectively in 2005, 2013, 2017, and 2018 (Özüdoğru, 2021). With the curricular change in 2013, a new model was adapted for educational stages, commonly known as the “4 + 4 + 4” model, in which primary school education formerly lasting 8 years was split into two halves, followed by a secondary education of 4 years (Sönmez & Köksal, 2022). Lowering the grade at which EFL instruction began was then a widespread practice around the globe because of the rising importance of foreign language education (Birdal & Vural, 2023). Adopting this trend, MONE designed the curriculum in such a way that it required students to begin getting English instruction in the second grade rather than the fourth. Therefore, English language learning in Türkiye starts from the second grade and lasts until the 12th grade, which is the end of the compulsory education. Thus, previously an 8-year instruction, ELT expands on a 10-year period now in Türkiye.

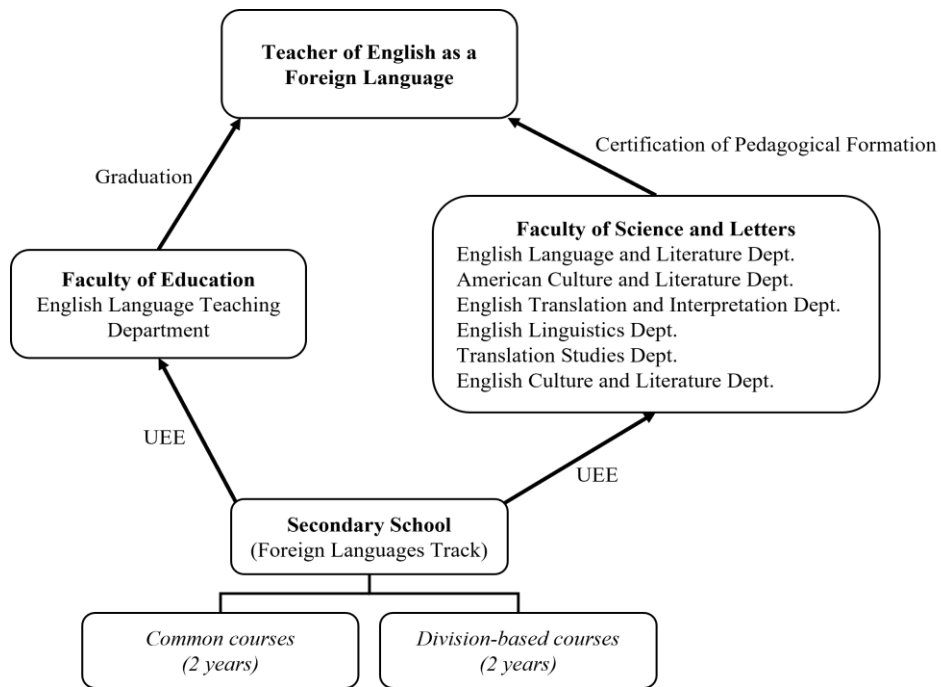
Do these prolonged durations of language study really lead to communicative English proficiency among Turkish students? When communicative proficiency is mentioned, within the Turkish context, it is meant that students should be able to converse in one or more foreign languages to excel in both higher education and the workforce after graduation, which is crucial to remain current with science and technology (Council of Higher Education, 2007). Nonetheless, a number of studies on the topic (British Council & TEPAV, 2013, 2015; Kara et al., 2017; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Tuzcu Eken, 2021) and PISA scores of Turkish students (Kaplan, 2011) indicate that their EFL proficiency levels remain far from desirable, which shows that quality matters more than quantity, and a key component of high-quality EFL instruction would, therefore, be teacher education.

## **Becoming an English Teacher in Türkiye**

In Türkiye, there is no one set route to becoming a teacher of English as a foreign language, but all possible ways intersect in the third year of secondary education. The field specific courses start to be taken in the 11th grade, when high school students are split into divisions according to their needs, desires, and future professional motivations (Yılmaz et al., 2020). In Anatolian high schools, these divisions are named as Positive Sciences track, Turkish-Mathematics track, Social Sciences track, and Foreign Languages track. Since students are only able to enrol in departments that correspond to their

divisions of graduation when they start university, this decision may be viewed as a pivotal moment in their academic careers (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). Hence, after receiving intense EFL instruction for two years prior to graduating from their high schools, students who choose the language division can enrol in foreign language departments of universities.

All high school graduates who seek to continue higher education are subjected to the University Entrance Exam (UEE) which governs the admission to universities or other higher education facilities (Hatipoğlu, 2015). UEE has been altered many times, but according to the one in practice since 2018, UEE has two stages, the first of which is the Core Proficiency Exam that measures candidates' general knowledge in the Turkish language, positive sciences, and social sciences. Following the first-stage exam, the graduates of aforementioned tracks other than the language division take the Field-Specific Proficiency Exam, in which their advanced knowledge and abilities are tested (ÖSYM, 2022). Language division graduates sit the Foreign Language Test instead, which consists of 80 questions and has to be completed in 120 minutes in a foreign language of choice as German, Arabic, French, English, or Russian (ÖSYM, 2022). After scoring a sufficient overall mark, those wishing to become an EFL teacher normally enrol in a teacher education program in a faculty of education. However, university graduates of other departments in English can also be a teacher. For a better understanding, the process in becoming an EFL teacher is schematized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The path to becoming an English teacher.

Note. The figure was adapted from Topkaya and Uztosun (2012).

## **Career Choice in Teaching**

There are several theories of professional motivation that may be used to explain why people choose to become teachers, which need to be clarified to underpin the theoretical framework of the current study. Self-determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) is the first of these theories and explains how three inherent psychological needs, which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness, drive people's motivation. In this regard, empowered teachers who are knowledgeable and devoted to their students are more likely to be motivated and pleased with their profession. The Job Demands-Resources Model is another theory, which contends that burnout and job satisfaction are influenced by extrinsic variables that encompass job demands and resources, including labour, time constraints, professional surroundings, and autonomy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Hence, teachers who have access to the resources they need to perform their jobs effectively are happier and more engaged at work. Thirdly, according to the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), individuals have a greater tendency to strive toward objectives they value and believe they can attain (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). As a result, teachers who believe in their own abilities and who genuinely like teaching are more likely to be inspired and satisfied in their jobs. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is the last theory for professional motivation, which proposes that a person's choice of profession is influenced by a variety of factors, including personal characteristics, environmental elements, and learning experiences (Lent & Brown, 2019). Teachers with elevated levels of self-efficacy who receive positive reinforcement for their work will thus be more driven and satisfied with their careers.

A tripartite framework, which divides professional motivations for teaching into intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic categories, is another frequently applied model to describe the reasons for becoming a teacher (Kyriacou et al., 1999; Tschannen-Moran & Wolfook Hoy, 2001). Extrinsic motivators are often those inherently associated with the occupation, such as pay, flexible scheduling, and prestige, while intrinsic factors are those that originate from within, such as loving to teach, enjoying education, and wanting to use knowledge and work with students. On the other hand, altruistic motivations, as the name implies, are about appreciating the profession as a contributory component to the advancement and progress of the community and its members (Erten, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Wolfook Hoy, 2001).

Lastly, much research used the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) model. Richardson and Watt's (2006) FIT-Choice model, rooted in the EVT, outlines how people make professional decisions depending on how well they fit with the teaching profession. Intrinsic features like interests, skills, beliefs, and personality as well as extrinsic variables like educational and employment possibilities affect this fit (Watt & Richardson, 2007). People look for occupations that suit with their ideas of who they are and let them exhibit their personalities. An individual's opinions about their compatibility with a profession is also influenced by cultural and societal expectations and

perceptions related to various occupations. With these features, the FIT-Choice model can thus be seen as a more detailed approach to explaining the career choice in teaching as it integrates the components of each framework discussed so far, including the tripartite framework aforementioned as well as the individual's own beliefs about self and profession, values, and social motivations.

Following both qualitative and quantitative approaches in research, several studies exist in Türkiye's local context that investigate preservice teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as career. Many of these studies report relatively positive findings regarding the overall professional motivation levels of preservice teachers in various fields of study (Acat & Yenilmez, 2004; Başöz, 2021; Özsoy et al., 2010). These motives are usually those which can be labelled as altruistic and intrinsic, such as wishing to help others, loving the profession, and valuing teaching as a contributory tool for the community's enhancement (Başöz, 2021; Kılınç et al., 2012; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). On the other hand, due to economic backgrounds, upbringing styles, and other related individual factors of some studies' participating preservice teachers, motives to become a teacher are reported to be more about extrinsic values like relaxed workhours, wage, and social status (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Ekinci, 2017), which do not necessarily undermine the overall body of findings that indicate teaching is seen as a valuable act of altruism, respected and loved by the society in Türkiye. As for the present research, the overall aim is to contribute to the body of these studies with a qualitative perspective and to reveal the preservice EFL teachers' motives in the case of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University's ELT Department.

## **MATERIALS and METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The present study utilizes a qualitative research methodology, specifically a case study design, to explore the motivations of preservice EFL teachers for wanting to be a teacher. The aim is to address the reasons for their desire to become teachers from their own perspectives. A case study involves a comprehensive investigation of a specific situation, individual, or complex instance, examining the research phenomenon in its real-life context (Creswell, 1994). This research design is particularly suitable for eliciting diverse perspectives on the desire to become a teacher in a specific context, as it can offer multiple insights into the reality of the phenomenon, as noted by Merriam (1988). Given that the present study investigates a particular group of preservice teachers with a single data collection, it can be considered a cross-sectional single-case study.

### **Setting and Participants**

The study focused on preservice EFL teachers in Türkiye, and the participant group was sampled purposively, also known as conveniently, as a representative subset of the population. The study's design may limit its generalisability to other contexts as it took place at a particular state university in Türkiye only but provided valuable insights into this specific case. To ensure a balanced distribution of ideas

and reasons for wanting to become a teacher, the initial aim was to sample students from all four grades at the department of English Language Teaching, but only a handful of individuals volunteered to take part in the study ( $N = 10$ ). The demographical information regarding these participants is presented in Table 1. Further information on their previous professional motives is also provided to draw better implications in the findings and discussion section. As for the participants' years of study, Emma and Grace (all names are pseudonyms) are second graders, whereas the rest of the participants are first graders.

**Table 1.** Demographical information of participants.

Name	Age	Gender	Previous Professional Motives		
			First choice <sup>a</sup>	Decision time <sup>b</sup>	Work as educator <sup>c</sup>
Emma	20	Female	+	In primary school	+
Fiona	20	Female	+	In primary school	+
Grace	20	Female	+	In primary school	-
Nora	21	Female	+	In primary school	+
Aideen	18	Male	+	In high school	+
Liam	20	Male	+	In high school	+
Lily	21	Female	+	During university choices	+
Caleb	20	Male	+	During university choices	+
Owen	20	Male	-	During university choices	-
Sadie	27	Female	+	During university choices	+

<sup>a</sup> Was enrolling in teacher education their first choice? <sup>b</sup> When did they decide to enrol in teacher education? <sup>c</sup> Do they want to work as an educator after they graduate?

### Data Collection Procedures

Initially, certain institutional and ethical considerations were to be addressed. To this end, two actions were taken. The first action was to obtain permission from the Faculty of Education at the state university to conduct the study. After that, teacher educators were contacted to assist in the recruitment of preservice EFL teachers as the study's participants. The preservice teachers were given relevant information on the study's aim, significance, and expected outcomes and asked to participate in the study. Volunteers received an online Google Form to provide qualitative data.

The Google Form included four parts. The first part contained an informed consent form that outlined the study's details, approximate time for responding to the form, and the confidentiality of participants' personal information. The second part collected demographic information, such as age, biological gender, and year of study. The third part aimed to identify the participants' professional motivations prior to their enrolment in the English teacher training program. Finally, in the last part, participants were asked to provide ten statements beginning with the given prompt, "I want to become a teacher because..." in free format.

For the third part of the data collection instrument, which provided the primary source of qualitative findings, the Twenty Statements Test (TST) by Kuhn and McPartland (1954) was adapted. In Kuhn and McPartland's study, the TST was initially developed as a structured self-attitudes assessment for gathering responses to the question, "Who am I?" In this study, however, instead of a question, a sentence completion prompt was provided in line with the research's overall purpose as aforementioned, and ten statements were used in lieu of the original twenty for practical reasons and to create a more general framework of preservice EFL teacher motivations for enrolling in teacher education.

### **Data Analysis**

The handling and analysis of the obtained qualitative data were done with the use of the computer program, QSR NVivo (version 12.3.0.599). Being a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo is one of the most frequently used applications in research, providing a practical and robust platform that aids researchers in the management of different sorts of qualitative data as well as coding and analysis thereof (Kuckartz, 2014). In the analysis of data through this program, the researchers initially transferred all participant responses to the program, creating a dataset. Then, the researchers did an initial reading to familiarize himself with the data. Afterwards, categorical analysis and thematization were done through coding the statements provided by the preservice teachers participating in the study, and a number of themes and subthemes emerged under motivational categorizations. Then, these findings were presented descriptively and narratively, if deemed necessary, to discuss with the relevant body of literature.

With the purpose of establishing trustworthiness in analysing and reporting qualitative data, the researchers maintained an objective tone and adhered to rich and thick explanations while presenting the data. The fact that students of different grades were sampled also contributed to the overall validity of the study. However, for further validity, neither the strategy of inter-coder reliability nor member-checking was implementable as there was only one researchers in the current research and the participants were anonymised, the researchers had no way to communicate with any other individual to discuss the categorisations to be produced in the analysis of data, which was one of the limitations of the current study, emerging due to time constraints.

### **RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

This section of the current research study presents the attained results in a descriptive manner, outlining the overall professional motivational themes that emerged from this specific case. Subsequently, the results are discussed in light of the relevant body of literature and the participants' own narratives, which were objectively pinpointed by the researchers from the statements the preservice teachers provided in the online form to draw implications and answer the research questions.

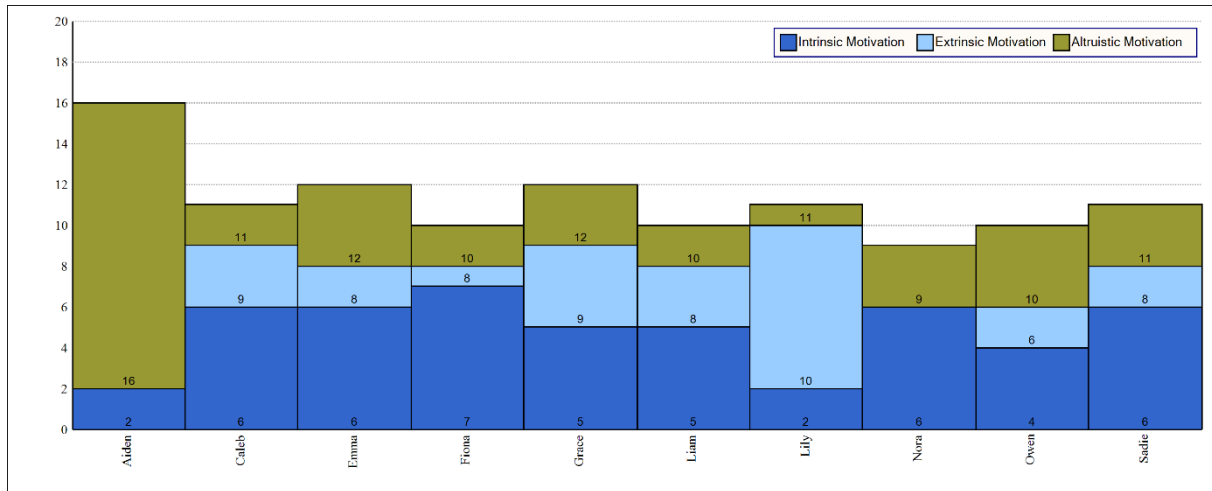


After conducting a thorough coding and rigorous notetaking process, during which the researchers utilized existing theoretical frameworks, specifically the tripartite framework and the EVT, the data analysis revealed 21 reasons under three professional motivation types, as seen in Table 2, from a total number of 100 responses. With some statements fitting under multiple codes, a number of 121 items emerged after the coding and categorisation process. In addition, the number of these reasons underlying motivations by each participant is depicted in Figure 2.

**Table 2.** Reasons for choosing to be a teacher by motivation type.

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Count (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (~%)</b>
Intrinsic	Desiring to influence others	18	14%
	Personal preferences	16	12%
	<i>Loving to teach</i>	9	7%
	<i>Dream job is to teach</i>	4	3%
	<i>Loving children</i>	3	2%
	Self-efficacy beliefs	13	10%
	<i>High self-efficacy beliefs in teaching</i>	11	8%
	<i>Low self-efficacy beliefs in other fields</i>	2	2%
	Desiring to be a lifelong learner	6	5%
Altruistic	Caring for and guiding learners	13	10%
	Shaping the future generations	13	10%
	Providing quality education	10	8%
	Feeling a sense of duty	9	7%
Extrinsic	The teaching profession's features	18	14%
	<i>Prestigious</i>	4	3%
	<i>Interaction with others</i>	3	2%
	<i>Daily movement and activity</i>	2	2%
	<i>Continuity of the profession</i>	2	2%
	Influenced by others	10	8%
	<i>Influenced by family members</i>	5	4%
	<i>Influenced by teachers</i>	5	4%
	Financial reasons	5	4%
	<i>Teaching as a fallback career</i>	4	3%
	<i>Job guarantee</i>	1	1%
Total		131	100%

*Note.* Italicised words and numbers indicate a subtheme and its emerging descriptive statistics as count and percentage.



**Figure 2.** Each participant's number of reasons for being a teacher by motivation type.

Answering the first research question, results showed that the preservice EFL teachers in this specific case enrolled in a teacher training program primarily due to reasons pertaining to intrinsic motivation ( $n$  intrinsic = 53), followed by altruistic motivational reasons in the second place ( $n$  altruistic = 45), while extrinsic motivational reasons held the least order of importance ( $n$  extrinsic = 33). Although professional motivation types are usually intertwined and cannot be strictly separated from one another, the results indicate that the participants are intrinsically motivated to teach with a high anticipation of contributing to the overall progression of the society, which comprises altruistic motivations, rather than purely focusing on the prestige and the financial gains that comes with the profession. In this regard, the results are congruent with the findings of similar studies (Başöz, 2021; Kılınç et al., 2012; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012) while also challenging the findings of some other research studies, which revealed that extrinsic motivation held more importance when compared to the other two (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Ekinci, 2017). However, it must be noted that the participants in the current study are of middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds, whereas those in the studies by Balyer and Özcan (2014) and Ekinci (2017) are reported to have experienced financial hardships during their upbringing, which, therefore, has an impact on their professional motivation as they look for better life conditions and a prestigious job catering for both their social and economic needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

As the reasons for choosing to be a teacher are gathered under the three sorts of professional motivation, it would be logical to answer the remaining research questions together. Accordingly, the second research question is detailed in the following headings, and the third research question, inquiring whether the profession of teaching is seen as a fallback career among the participating preservice EFL teachers is answered in the last heading, which discusses extrinsic motivational reasons.

### **Intrinsic Motivational Reasons**

Under the first category as intrinsic motivation, a number of four themes and five subthemes emerged as reasons for wanting to be a teacher. The most prevalent reason was revealed to be desiring to influence others ( $n = 18$ , 14.88%), confirming the results of similar research (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014). The preservice teachers in the study were intrinsically motivated to “influence other people” and “have a chance to make a good impact [on the] world, morals, [and] learners”, as respectively stated by the preservice teachers, Emma and Lily. The statements by Fiona and Caleb, among the rest that follows, indicated a resentment in their former teachers’ disinterest and lack of good impression on them, which led them to be intrinsically motivated to be different than them.

**Sadie:** I want to touch my students’ brains and lives.

**Fiona:** I want to influence kids in a way I wish I was... I want to show them there is a hope... I will have a chance to see the differences I create, not like other occupations.

**Caleb:** My English teachers were not interested about teaching, and I want to do the opposite.

Then followed personal preferences like loving to teach, dreaming of being a teacher since childhood, and loving pupils in general. Thirdly, self-efficacy beliefs emerged as reasons for wanting to be a teacher. Self-efficacy beliefs in education, in the most precise definition, refer to one’s confidence in their capabilities to perform given tasks in a particular context (Zimmerman, 2000), which are influenced by life experiences, socioemotional states, and may play a significant role in performance and motivation (Bandura, 1997). Subthemes emerging under this theme were high self-efficacy beliefs in teaching and low self-efficacy beliefs in other fields. In explaining the former, most of the participants reported to have high proficiencies in both linguistic and educational terms. For example, Liam humorously commented, “I am a teacher material”, a slang expression that indicates a prominent level of self-efficacy belief in his capacity to teach well, whereas Grace put more emphasis on her educational administrative skills and stated, “I see myself as a good leader in a group, and I get along well with big number of groups”. Under the second subtheme, a statement by Fiona read, “I cannot work in any other field”, and another by Liam read, “I do not know what else to do”, both of whom show low levels of confidence in other fields of study, so one of the reasons they chose to enrol in a teacher training program is that this is their comfort zone and the only profession they think they value and can attain, which can be explained in accordance with the EVT by Eccles and Wigfield (2002).

As the last intrinsic reason to be a teacher, the desire to be a lifelong learner emerged with the following statements by the participants. Such remarks indicate that these preservice teachers are open to learning at any stage of their professional development, which is a contributory factor to quality education. Although strong generalisations are to be avoided as these preservice teachers are still in their

first year of study and their thoughts might change as they progress further in their education, their overall profile in this regard is promising as future educators.

**Aideen:** I would like to not only teach new information to my dear students, but also obtain it since learning proceed throughout our lives.

**Nora:** I can improve myself for teaching, too... I can still be a student who wants to learn more things.

**Owen:** I want to understand English better... I want to try myself.

**Sadie:** I love to learn from people.

### **Altruistic Motivational Reasons**

As for the altruistic reasons for wanting to be a teacher, 45 items were coded under five emerging themes. The first of these themes was caring for and guiding learners with 13 items. The participants generally made affectionate remarks for their future learners and posited their desire to create a safe learning environment as well as providing a room for both personal and societal development. Some of their statements are given below.

**Emma:** I want to reduce bullying and create a safe environment... I really wonder how a student can succeed when they make effort.

**Sadie:** I want to touch my students' brains and lives.

**Fiona:** I want to change my students' life as much as I can.

**Aiden:** Giving more affection and motivation to students is crucial and I am here to ensure that... I want the children of my country to share my knowledge and experiences for they might use it throughout their lives... It is significant for me to make my students realize they can shape their own lives in accordance with their personal hobbies and tastes.

The second theme, highly related to the first, emerged as shaping the future generation. The majority of the participants showed prominent levels of anticipation for playing a role in raising the future generation. They reported that they wanted to be good role models for their learners, make them aware of their impact on society and the world, and contribute to their country's progress. Some relevant statements by the participants were as the following.

**Grace:** [Being a teacher] is the best way to create bonds with younger generations... I can see myself being a good role model for the young... It makes me feel powerful to teach and indirectly raise a generation.

**Fiona:** Young generations will represent this country in the future.

**Aiden:** I desire to strengthen my students and make them the new future of our country.

The third altruistic theme was providing quality education. The participants reported to have high expectations of educational performance, some of which was due to poor performing and disinterested teachers they came across with during their studies so far. Caleb is an example subcase in this regard as he stated that “[his] English teachers were not interested about teaching and [he] want[s] to do the opposite”. Note that this excerpt was also provided in the first theme of the intrinsic motivational reasons as the types of motivation cannot be precisely separated from one another and may usually be intertwined as aforementioned (Kyriacou et al., 1999). Returning to the third altruistic reason, the others’ statements varied, but the implications were parallel in that all of them pointed to seek for an improvement in educational quality.

**Owen:** I want to improve students... I want to convey my motivation to my students [and] change students’ perspectives about English.

**Emma:** I want my students to acquire English, not “learn”.

**Nora:** In my opinion, teachers are really essential for children. I want to teach everything I know to my students.

**Aiden:** I would like to offer a helping hand to all of my beloved students who are in the urgent need of a proper and qualified education as I deeply care for the education system of my country.

The last altruistic theme emerged as feeling a sense of duty. Although all of the participants can be inferred to possess a sense of duty in accordance with their overall remarks, some of them explicitly stated and underlined this as a reason for why they want to be a teacher, which may be an indication of higher sense of civic responsibility.

**Emma:** When I look back, I will [have] achieve[d] something in my whole life... I am sick of boring teachers, and I want to make a difference.

**Sadie:** I love to do my best for other people.

**Liam:** I want to offer something for the community.

**Owen:** I want to help the students.

**Aiden:** [It] would be a pleasure for me to play a significant role in the process of serving the education system of my country to raise more educated and qualified generations. Moreover, it is clear that the majority of our children lack the basic need of education in many areas; therefore, I also feel like it is up to me to change this predicament.

The results reached here in terms of altruistic motivations support those of similar studies investigating the reasons for becoming a teacher and are congruent with the most of the relevant literature because the majority of individuals pursuing a career in teaching do so with such motives as to make a difference to society and students in general by offering guidance (Başöz, 2021; Kılınç et al.,

2012; Özsoy et al., 2010; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Şaban, 2003; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Wolfhook Hoy, 2001). On the other hand, exhibiting immoderate level of altruistic motivations may lead to detrimental outcomes as teacher burnout and dropout in the end if a novice teacher gets in the classroom with high hopes of altruism in education and by setting high levels of expectations that cannot be fulfilled by their learners (Joseph & Green, 1986 as cited in Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Traces of immoderate altruistic motivational levels can be observed in the subcase of Aiden in this study. Out of 18 items analysed from Aiden's statements, 16 of them emerged as altruistic reasons, whereas the rest of his peers had more evenly distributed motivations (see Figure 2). The fact that he was the youngest participant and was reported to be born into a family of teachers might explain his plethora of altruistic motivations in this regard since he might have been influenced by his family and social environment in accordance with the SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2019). Being an educator that is idealist, affectionate, and supportive plays a crucial role in the development of education, society, and the country. However, still, this subcase suggests an overall need for building a moderate self-image in preservice teachers by instilling an awareness of the practical realities of the classroom in the appertaining context in order to prevent burnout in the future, rather than strictly embracing an idealistic viewpoint while training preservice teachers.

### **Extrinsic Motivational Reasons**

Extrinsic motivation held the least order of importance in the reasons for choosing to become a teacher among the preservice EFL teachers. A total number of 33 items were coded under three main themes for extrinsic motivation. The first of these included the reasons pertaining to the teaching profession's feature, which comprised of occupational prestige, interaction with others, daily movement and activity, and continuity of the profession. So, the participants highlighted the overall gains of being a teacher under this theme. The profession's reputability and prestige in society was the leading reason. In this direction, Grace commented that "educating a group of people is a highly complicated but also a prestigious job", and Liam stressed that "it is a reputable profession", both of which are parallel to Owen's statement in terms of their implications as "it's [viewed as] an occupation that stands out from others". The fact that teachers also get to "meet with new people [every year or periodically]" as Lily stated was deemed a sociable advantage for some participants as they believed "it would be nice to interact with [their] students about any topic" (Grace) and "be outgoing" (Owen) with them. The other statements grouped under the first extrinsic theme were as the following. Emma and Fiona's statements may be due to personal preferences if an implication is to be made, whereas those of Lily consider the inherent nature of being a teacher and the opportunities it provides.

**Emma:** It needs movement, thus being active every day.

**Fiona:** Rather than doing physical activities, I prefer studying.

**Lily:** I will have a wide range of opportunities to choose as where to teach or depending on other qualities I have, what to teach. It is a profession which never dies as the people live.

The second theme emerged as being influenced by others in career choice. In this regard, the impact of family members and teachers were the subthemes. Some of the relevant statements are presented below.

**Lily:** My dad and one of my teachers really did pressure on me to get in the ELT program.

**Emma:** My English teacher also influenced me in high school.

**Grace:** I always loved my teachers and wanted to be like them when I was younger.

Being influenced by other individuals in career choice is natural and possible (Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Şaban, 2003), but getting pressured to choose a career by others signify a critical problem as in the subcase of Lily, who reported to have been pressured to enrol in the ELT program by one of her parents and teachers. Lily continued her statement with the fact that “[she] actually wanted to give a shot to it”, indicating that she reluctantly gave in to the pressure, which might negatively affect her future job satisfaction and result in burnout or occupational dropout.

The last theme emerging in the extrinsic motivational reasons for choosing to be a teacher was financial reasons with two subthemes, one of which was job guarantee with only Liam stating that “[he] want[s] to work for a governmental institution”. His justification for this statement might be related to the economic environment present in his country since teachers working in the Ministry of National Education has a stable income with little occupational risks or losing their career when compared to those working in the private sector. When it comes to the choice of teaching as a fallback career, only one participant, Lily, responded in such a direction, who was also pressured to study ELT. Her statements regarding her choice for teaching as a fallback career are given below.

**Lily:** I did reject my chance to get in a medical school, and unfortunately, I need to earn money and fund my own self... It was the (second) best option for me to become... I actually wanted to give a shot to it. While leaving other faculties, suddenly, I felt I'm getting mature and don't have enough time to make my own money, so I decided to keep going here.

Since only one participant chose teaching as a fallback career, with four items out of 131 total coding references in the study's case, the third research question can shortly be answered negatively in that teaching is not seen as a fallback career in this state university's case. The results are similar with most research studies in the field, revealing that individuals choose the teaching profession with more intrinsic and altruistic motives like loving to teach, dreaming of being a teacher, or desiring to contribute to the lives of people and society in general rather than with motives that are extrinsic, such as choosing teaching for the prestige it brings, for financial reasons, or as a fallback career (Balyer & Özcan, 2014;

Başöz, 2021; Ekinci, 2017; Kılıncı et al., 2012; Özsoy et al., 2010; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Şaban, 2003; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Wolfhook Hoy, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

The primary objective of this qualitative case study was to identify and explain why a sample of undergraduate preservice EFL teachers at a state university in Türkiye chose a profession in education. The preservice teachers' viewpoint was crucial in achieving this research objective given that they provided their own reflections on and justifications for their decisions to pursue careers as teachers in the future. The analysis of their responses revealed that intrinsic motivation, such as personal fulfilment, a passion for teaching, and a desire to have a positive effect on other people's lives, was the main factor driving preservice teachers' career decisions. Altruistic motivations, such as seeking to enhance student growth and development, shaping future generations, delivering quality education, and feeling a sense of civic obligation, also significantly influenced the participants' career decisions as they were motivated by genuine care for others and a desire to make a difference in society. However, one participant was seen to be motivated with an immoderate level of altruism in teaching, which may end up in burnout and occupational dropout if expectations would not meet the practical realities in the classroom. Lastly, although extrinsic motivational factors were less prominent among these preservice teachers, extrinsic factors like the impact of teachers and family members on the participants' career choices were noticeable, which implies the importance of role models and support systems in influencing people's perceptions of the teaching profession. Related to extrinsic factors again, only one preservice teacher selected teaching as a fallback career, implying that for some, it was a pragmatic decision when other possibilities were restricted.

Given the prevalence of intrinsic and altruistic motivations, as demonstrated by this study and the majority of the literature, efforts should be made to foster and enhance these motivations throughout the preservice teachers' careers by offering opportunities for professional development, autonomy in the classroom, and recognition of their impact, with the aim of improving job satisfaction and general teacher wellbeing. With this objective in mind, teacher education can focus on developing and nurturing intrinsic motivations as well as further solidifying the altruistic components of the profession in order to build the required abilities to meet the various needs of learners. To address moderation among the types of professional motivations, notably in altruistic motivation, a fine balance should be struck in order to avoid potential undesirable consequences such as job burnout or dropout. To this end, preservice teachers can be informed about classroom reality so as to have realistic expectations when they start practicing teaching. Mentorship programs, advice, and support from experienced educators in general may also benefit preservice teachers in this regard.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**



The study's results might not be transferable to other contexts as the present research is a context specific one with limited sampling, from which cross-sectional data was obtained. Additionally, there were time constraints while conducting the study, which might raise concerns for overall validity of this qualitative study. Recommendations for further research would be to utilise a mixed method research design in which both quantitative and qualitative data are obtained in order to triangulate: an explanatory sequential mixed method design is suggested, where the researcher conducts a large-scale survey, ideally FIT-Choice scale, then to interview some participants in a semi-structured manner to draw more reliable and strong inferences. In addition to this, lastly, a larger sampling group would be more desirable in such a study so that more generalisable results can be fetched.

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