

The Pedagogies of Precariat and Symbolic Violence in the Neoliberal Education System: A Case Study*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of neoliberal policies on the teaching profession through the lens of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and the perspective of precarity. A qualitative case study method is employed with maximum variation sampling, involving participants composed of tenured, contracted, and hourly-paid teachers from public schools as well as teachers from private schools in the Gaziemir District of İzmir Province. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and subjected to content analysis. Five major themes emerged from the findings. The theme of restriction of professional autonomy by political and administrative expectations illustrates how centralized policies and ideological expectations exclude teachers from pedagogical decision-making. The perception of audit mechanisms as symbolic violence reveals that performance-oriented, continuous supervision creates implicit pressures on teachers. Teachers' position in decision-making processes indicates that they are reduced to passive implementers in terms of school policies and curriculum development. Inequalities in recognition and professional development highlight discriminatory practices in career advancement and professional opportunities. Lastly, the erosion of teacher authority demonstrates the declining respect and authority of teachers in their relationships with parents and students. The results underline the need for structural and cultural transformations to strengthen teachers' professional standing.

Keywords: Precariat, symbolic violence, neoliberal education policies, precarity in education, case study

About the Article

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Introduction

The implementation of neoliberal policies over the last three decades has fundamentally changed education systems (Davies & Bansel, 2007), steering schools towards competition, performance measurement, and market logic (Hursh, 2007). These have necessitated new modes of governance, emphasizing quantitative outputs over content (Evans et al., 1996) and practices like “high-stakes testing” and “performance audits,” which, while fostering competition, have sidelined public interest (Apple, 2015) and required acceptance of capital-focused policies at social and cultural levels.

This market-driven shaping of education has transformed the teaching profession, with privatization leading to varied employment forms, increased nontenured positions, weakened unionization, and heightened insecurity (Castro, 2022). Flexible employment models have commodified teachers’ labor, eroding protection and autonomy and increasing competition and anxiety (Dağ, 2020; Ozbay et al., 2016), pushing teachers into disadvantaged positions and precarization (Ergin et al., 2018; Standing, 2011). The precariat, a social segment defined by insecure, unpredictable, and flexible working conditions (Standing, 2011), provides a perspective to understand the economic dynamics and accompanying sociosubjective vulnerabilities shaping teachers’ work. This often translates to an erosion of professional identity and devaluation (Connell, 2013), affecting not just low-skilled workers but also highly educated professionals (Standing, 2014) due to accountability policies and pressure for “results.”

These neoliberal impacts are reinforced by “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu & Nice, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1990; 2015), a form of domination operating through internalized acceptance of dominant values, often mediated by educational institutions reproducing these norms through formal and hidden curricula (Beck, 1997; Pryke, 1997). Reducing teaching to market logic deters teachers from criticizing policies (Murphy, 2018; Sklar, 1980). Neoliberal policies also diminish professional autonomy by evaluating educators’ cultural and social capital via market criteria (Brown, 2003; Bourdieu, 1986), creating disparities in job security and satisfaction. This can generate consent to insecure conditions through symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1990; 2015), weakening collegial solidarity (Crozier & Reay, 2011).

The research context is Türkiye’s educational framework, shaped by long-term neoliberal repercussions since the 1980s, including privatization and marketization (Başaran et al., 2024), weakening education as a public service amidst rising competition (Aslan, 2014; Kartal, 2020). Increased private schooling (Altun-Aslan, 2019; Atay, 2024; Polat, 2013) has deepened public–private disparities. Global education reform trends also prompt comparisons between practices such as Türkiye’s “project schools” and England’s “academy schools,” with the former often critiqued for new forms of stratification and issues in appointment processes (Baktır, 2022). Neoliberal policies have significantly affected the teaching profession, with flexible employment since the 2000s concretizing intraschool inequalities along tenured-contracted-hourly-paid lines (Dağ, 2020), fostering precarization with adverse psychological and institutional consequences

(Buckworth, 2018), including quiet quitting (Özen et al., 2024; Yılmaz, 2024). High-stakes examinations (LGS and YKS) have narrowed curricula and increased psychological pressure (Çetin & Ünsal, 2019; Baştürk, 2022; Baş & Kılıncım, 2019; Özdaş, 2019), alongside persistent regional inequalities in teacher distribution and infrastructure (Ilgar, 2023; Işık & Bahat, 2021).

While the literature addresses neoliberalism's impact on students and curricula, the symbolic violence and precarization affecting teachers remain under-researched (Scott, 2012). The "normalization" of precariat status promotes performance-driven, competitive atmospheres over solidarity (Reygadas, 2015). It is crucial to analyze neoliberalism's effects from precariat teachers' perspectives, as precarization reinforces employer power and restricts teachers' self-expression (Standing, 2014), potentially leading to consent to job insecurity (Freire, 2005; 2014) -a clear manifestation of symbolic violence where individuals adopt status-quo-maintaining practices (Bourdieu, 1979; 1986). The specific literature gap lies in insufficiently addressing precarity within education and teaching through the lens of symbolic violence. Thus, how teachers experience and legitimize precarization and its effects on education warrants in-depth investigation (González, 2015), prompting the central question: As teachers become precaritized, how do they internalize this situation instead of questioning it?

The present study is significant as it offers a critical perspective on teachers' working conditions and contributes to understanding inequality mechanisms within education, particularly through employment policies (Reygadas, 2015; Standing, 2011). In the Turkish context, by highlighting the critical role of tenured employment and professional autonomy for educational quality (Dağ, 2020; Kılınc et al., 2018), practical contributions are proposed for improving teacher employment policies.

The current research posits that the neoliberal order incorporates teachers into the precariat class, legitimizing this process through symbolic violence. It is aimed to reveal how teachers experience precarization within neoliberal educational structures and the ways these experiences are linked to symbolic violence. Within this general objective, the research questions are as follows:

1. In what dimensions and how do teachers experience precariat conditions stemming from neoliberal education policies?
2. What are the mechanisms of symbolic violence associated with teachers' precariat experiences, and how are these mechanisms reflected in teachers' perceptions?
3. Through which mechanisms of consent is the precarization process internalized by teachers legitimized via symbolic violence, and what resistance strategies do they develop in response?
4. When evaluating the experiences of teachers with different employment statuses, in which areas is symbolic violence most intensely experienced?

5. How can policy recommendations for the improvement and empowerment related to teacher employment policies be developed?

Method

Research Design

This qualitative study employed a case study design, an approach allowing in-depth examination of complex phenomena in real-life contexts through “how” and “why” questions, using multiple data sources to understand phenomena holistically (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Debout, 2016; Creswell, 2017). Unlike narrative research, it emphasizes contextual dynamics rather than individual life stories. The “case” was the perceptions of precarization and symbolic violence among teachers in public (tenured, contracted, and hourly-paid) and private schools in İzmir, Türkiye. This design was chosen to analyze in-depth how neoliberal education policies manifest in teachers’ experiences and reflect symbolic violence mechanisms, thus addressing the study’s core aims. The perceptions of teachers under varied employment conditions regarding these phenomena constitute the central case, assumed to be linked to neoliberal practices and policies.

Participants

The participants were teachers from public and private schools in İzmir’s Gaziemir District, a first-tier socioeconomically classified area (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2022). From 54 schools, 20 were selected, and 15 teachers were identified using maximum variation sampling to capture a broad spectrum of experiences concerning precarization and symbolic violence across diverse school contexts and employment statuses (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002).

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Code Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Teaching Experience	School Type	Employment Status	School Level
P-1	Female	22	Single	1 year	Public	Hourly-paid	Middle School
P-2	Female	44	Married	23 years	Public	Tenured (Expert)	High School
P-3	Female	47	Married	8 years	Public	Hourly-paid	Special Education
P-4	Female	42	Married	15 years	Public	Tenured	Vocational High School
P-5	Female	28	Married	5 years	Public	Tenured (Excess Staff)	Primary School
P-6	Female	30	Single	2 years	Public	Contracted	Middle School
P-7	Female	31	Single	3 years	Public	Contracted	High School
P-8	Female	29	Married	2 years	Public	Contracted	Middle School
P-9	Male	40	Married	20 years	Private	-	High School
P-10	Male	41	Married	22 years	Public	Tenured	Middle School
P-11	Female	37	Married	14 years	Public	Tenured	High School
P-12	Male	26	Single	3 years	Public	Hourly-paid	Primary School
P-13	Male	33	Married	10 years	Private	-	Middle School

P-14	Female	36	Married	13 years	Private	-	High School
P-15	Female	30	Single	7 years	Private	-	Middle School

All 15 teachers who participated in the research exhibit diversity in terms of school types and employment statuses. Accordingly, 11 of the participants work in public schools; in this group, five teachers are tenured (P-2, P-4, P-5, P-10, P-11), three are contracted (P-6, P-7, P-8), and three have hourly-paid status (P-1, P-3, P-12). The other four participants are teachers working in private schools (P-9, P-13, P-14, P-15). Gender distribution consists of ten female and five male teachers. The participants' ages range from 22 to 47. In terms of marital status, ten teachers are married while five are single. Their teaching experience varies between 1 and 23 years. School level distribution is as follows: six teachers work at middle schools, six at high schools (including vocational), two at primary schools, and one at a special education institution. This participant diversity provided an opportunity to comparatively analyze the effects of neoliberal education policies on teachers' experiences in different institutional contexts and employment statuses, considering variations in gender, seniority, school type, school level, and employment conditions.

Data Collection Tools

The primary data collection tool was a semistructured teacher interview form, developed to explore in-depth perceptions of precarization and symbolic violence. Initial draft questions, based on an extensive literature review (neoliberalism in education, teacher precarity, symbolic violence, autonomy, and working conditions), were revised in accordance with feedback on clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness from three field experts (two in educational administration and one in sociology of education) and one qualitative method consultant. A subsequent pilot study with four nonsample teachers (one tenured, one contracted, one hourly-paid, and one private school teacher) tested question comprehensibility, interview flow, and data generation effectiveness, leading to minor wording and sequence adjustments. The final form contained 13 open-ended main questions (e.g., "How do political and administrative expectations affect your professional autonomy?") and potential probes, designed to allow free expression while addressing the research questions.

Researcher Role

The researcher, as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002), acted primarily as a facilitator and active listener during interviews. Efforts focused on building rapport and trust to encourage open sharing, by ensuring a comfortable environment, clarifying research purposes, and reiterating confidentiality. Mindful of potential biases from the literature and personal perspectives, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and utilized the structured interview guide, expert consultations, and peer debriefing with supervisors to mitigate these. The researcher maintained an ethically responsible stance throughout the study, prioritizing the well-being and rights of the participants.

Data Collection Processes

After official permissions (MEB[MoNE].TT.2024.007771) and ethics committee approval were obtained, school principals were contacted for permission to reach out to teachers. Teachers meeting the maximum variation sampling criteria were then invited, provided with an information sheet, and gave written informed consent. Face-to-face, individual, semistructured interviews were conducted by the researcher during the 2024-2025 academic year at a time and place convenient for each participant, typically in a quiet room at their school or a neutral location. Interviews, averaging 55 minutes (range 45-70), were audio-recorded with consent. Detailed field notes captured context, nonverbal cues, and researcher reflections to ensure data richness. Data collection ceased after the 12th interview upon observing thematic saturation, with three additional interviews confirming this point and ensuring comprehensive understanding. Interview flexibility allowed for follow-up questions and probes based on responses (Merriam, 2013).

Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher within 48 hours, with field notes integrated for richer context. The data were analyzed using three-stage inductive content analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Open coding involved line-by-line assignment of initial codes to meaningful text segments after multiple readings. Axial coding grouped similar codes into broader subcategories through comparative analysis. Selective coding consolidated subcategories into overarching themes that interlinked the structural and subjective dimensions of teachers' experiences with precarization and symbolic violence, directly addressing the research questions.

Coding procedures were carried out manually by the researcher using Word documents for transcripts and Excel spreadsheets for organizing codes, categories, and themes. Each code was recorded in a coding sheet, specifying the participant pseudonym, date, and page/line number from the transcript for easy retrieval and verification. For consistency, the code list and emerging categories were discussed and cross-checked by two independent researchers, establishing over 90% intercoder agreement on a sample, with disagreements resolved through discussion. The final thematic schemes were validated by two field experts.

Credibility and Ethics

The study was performed in accordance with established principles for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced by fostering trusting relationships with the participants for genuine responses, expert consultation for question clarity, and allowing free expression. Meticulous data handling involved direct transcription and repeated coding. Dependability and confirmability were supported by a consistent data collection approach (same semistructured guide) and systematic, collaboratively analyzed data, with emerging themes discussed to reach a consensus. The findings were interpreted within the study's theoretical framework.

Ethical considerations were paramount. The participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and confidentiality via an informed consent form, from which signed consent (including for audio recording) was obtained. The confidentiality of the participants' identities and their schools was rigorously maintained through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., P-1, P-2) in all research outputs, and care was taken to ensure that no identifying details were decipherable in reported data. All ethical principles were strictly followed before, during, and after the interviews to prevent any harm to the participants and to uphold the integrity of the research process.

Findings

This section thematically analyzes teachers' symbolic violence experiences linked to precarization via Bourdieu's framework. The findings reveal constrained professional autonomy from invisible domination (institutional, administrative, audit, and social factors) as external pressures and internalized norms. Neoliberal policies reportedly weaken professional status, normalizing symbolic violence like exclusion from decisions, persistent audits, and discriminatory practices. Five main themes emerged from these experiences: (1) restriction of professional autonomy by political and administrative expectations, (2) perception of audit mechanisms as symbolic violence, (3) teachers' position in decision-making processes, (4) inequality in recognition and professional development, and (5) erosion of teacher authority. Each theme is subsequently detailed with supporting participant quotes.

1. Restriction of Professional Autonomy through Political and Administrative Expectations

The participants' statements indicate that their professional autonomy is limited by factors such as the political dependency of education policies and institutional hierarchy, interfering with pedagogical decision-making. Within Bourdieu's framework, this pressure occurs through overt coercion and internalized norms.

Political interventions frequently limit professional autonomy. P-2 described the Ministry's political involvement: *"Our Ministry of National Education is very involved in politics... No lie. Unfortunately, this is the situation in our country."* P-6 noted the effect of ideological orientations on pedagogical practices: *"In this country, every year teachers struggle with a different political wind, a different curriculum. Good teaching isn't expected of us, but good compliance is."* P-8 pointed to the political nature of frequent educational changes: *"So many changes happen... often political, not pedagogical."* P-14, a private school teacher, highlighted externally imposed formats: *"Every year a new project is imposed. They say, 'Teach according to this format,' as if we were robots. All our years of experience are disregarded."* P-10 noted that even idealistic practices could be labeled: *"I teach my lesson the best way I can... But sometimes even with this approach I can be accused of 'taking sides.'"* Conversely, some offered different perspectives. P-11 found some top-down implementations helpful: *"I mean, sometimes implementations from above make our job easier. We shouldn't criticize everything."* P-

12 acknowledged political aspects but felt less affected: *"Yes, political things happen, but we still do our own work. Honestly, we aren't much affected."*

Inequality in audit mechanisms also significantly impacts professional autonomy. P-3 highlighted nepotism favoring tenured teachers: *"The administration can't say anything to a tenured teacher... Everyone already has an acquaintance in the Ministry; everyone gets things done that way."* P-1 reported differential treatment for similar mistakes: *"When tenured teachers make a mistake, it's [considered] a human error; when we do, necessary procedures are initiated."* This sense of unequal treatment was underscored by P-8, who reported that *"some teachers are untouchable"* and that nontenured teachers often feel they *"cannot cross an invisible line."* In contrast, P-4 attempts to maintain autonomy by disregarding such pressures: *"It doesn't affect my professional autonomy because I generally deliver my teaching without heeding these expectations."* Regarding private schools, P-9 linked audits to job security: *"I'm in a private school; if a parent complains, my job is at risk."* P-13 expressed a sense of commodification: *"Our sector is all about auditing anyway, like production in a factory."*

2. Perception of Audit Mechanisms as Symbolic Violence

Audit processes in education can be perceived as pressure and become instruments of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1990; 2015), operating through internalized norms to limit autonomy.

2.1. Increased Audit Pressure on Insecure Teachers

Hourly-paid and insecurely employed teachers often face stricter audits. P-1 linked this increased scrutiny directly to job insecurity and a form of consented control:

"If you are tenured, you will be working in the same school... next year. But I might be thinking I won't be here next year anyway... and consequently, the administrator might be more inclined to audit more, wondering 'is this person doing their job properly...?'"

This precarity was vividly expressed by P-7 (contracted public school): *"Tenured ones are comfortable. The principal doesn't pick on them. But us? Anything can happen at any moment,"* and P-9 (private school teacher): *"While it's uncertain if I'll be here next year, I weigh every word I say in case my behavior offends someone now."* The constant feeling of scrutiny had tangible effects, as P-8 stated they *"cannot start a lesson without checking if someone is watching."* P-10 described the classroom as a sanctuary: *"When I close the door, another world begins. Inside, there are only me and my students."* However, P-11 offered a justification for systemic oversight: *"I mean, frankly, it's necessary for the system to check. After all, this is a service provided to children."* In private schools, this pressure manifested intensely. P-14 recounted experiences of direct intimidation:

"The administrator stands at the classroom door and listens to the lesson. Then they shower you with feedback like 'this part is missing, that part is faulty.' But they haven't been in a classroom to teach for 10 years. It's not auditing; it's intimidation."

P-15 highlighted multiple layers of evaluation: *“As if curriculum changes weren’t enough, the school also has its own quality standards. At the end of every term, they make students fill out surveys. I don’t even know what to say.”*

2.2. Inadequacy of Audits and Teachers’ Criticisms of Administration

Views on audit functioning varied, with some participants finding current audits insufficient or ineffective. P-3 emphasized a need for more auditing in special education due to student vulnerability: *“The school where we work is very open to abuse... children cannot express themselves. I think principals should audit more frequently.”* P-2 also preferred more administrative oversight, stating a lack of it increased pedagogical burdens: *“The school I currently work at is a bit relaxed in this regard. But I would have preferred a bit more control.”* P-7 noted that some colleagues might benefit from stricter auditing: *“Especially some colleagues, when the system gives them an empty space, they stray from the line of teaching.”* In private schools, P-9 argued auditing was necessary for equitable workload distribution: *“When there is no audit, responsibility is not distributed equally.”* However, P-15 critiqued the perceived superficiality of some audits: *“Nobody really knows what or how they are auditing... shortcomings they find are forgotten the next day.”*

2.3. Ideological/Individual Perception of Audits and Teacher Strategies

Teachers’ individual perceptions of audits varied, often linked to audit purposes and school relationships. P-4 saw certain audits as necessary to prevent abuse: *“Our administration keeps us under audit in certain aspects, generally not regarding teaching methods.”* P-12 highlighted the subjective nature of some audits, influenced by personal relationships: *“how they see you is important. If you are not liked, you’ll get caught in an audit even if you’re good.”* Some felt audit mechanisms were limited. P-5 found their school’s observation process reasonable: *“I find what my own administrator does to be reasonable.”* In response, teachers developed various strategies. P-6 described engaging in self-auditing: *“nobody interferes with them; they audit themselves anyway.”* P-8 prioritized student perception: *“sometimes how the student looks at you is more important than what the principal says.”* P-9 developed internal standards against arbitrary external ones: *“they establish their own criteria; otherwise, those coming from outside are always arbitrary.”* P-13 expressed conditional acceptance of audits, demanding fairness: *“I am not afraid of audits, but I will not forgive one that is done with a malicious purpose.”*

3. Teachers’ Position in Decision-Making Processes

Decision-making processes critically affect teachers’ professional satisfaction, belonging, and motivation. The participants reported varied inclusion levels, often facing exclusion and unilateral administrative decisions, limiting their autonomy and positioning them as “implementers.”

3.1. Systematic Exclusion of Teachers from Decision-Making Processes

Most participants felt insufficiently included in decision-making by the school administration. P-2 described the administration's dismissive and threatening response to objections: *"When we objected in meetings, I was met with the sentence, 'if you don't like something, request a transfer.' The assistant principal said it directly in front of 80 people."* P-7 stated the feeling of being merely informed: *"Decisions are already made in their minds; we are just informed."* This lack of voice was particularly emphasized by P-9, a private school teacher: *"We don't even have a say at the class level. Especially here, we have no right to speak at all."*

This exclusion was vividly expressed through metaphors: P-10 *"felt like a guest rather than a teacher"*; P-6 perceived decision-making as an *"administration monopoly"* with teachers as *"just extras"*; and P-8 found meetings *"like theater because whatever they suggest, what is to be done has already been determined."* P-12, an hourly-paid teacher, highlighted the precarious position of voicing opinions: *"When we express an opinion, we are told we're 'talking too much,' and when we keep quiet, we're 'indifferent'."* In private schools, P-13 noted that administrators often prioritize external pressures: *"When administrators make decisions, they only look at parent satisfaction. No one takes the teacher into account."* P-14 described tokenistic consultation: *"In meetings, they start by saying, 'let's get your ideas,' but the decisions have already been made... 'The market demands it.'"*

3.2. Participation in Decision-Making Processes Being Dependent on School Culture

Inclusion in decision-making, when it occurred, often remained symbolic. P-1 questioned the impact of solicited opinions: *"Especially if it's something teachers can also contribute to, they ask for their opinions. But of course, how much of it is actually implemented?"* P-6 found these comments more frustrating than no consultation at all: *"They ask for our ideas, but then nothing changes. That's even worse."* P-15, a private school teacher, offered a striking comparison highlighting power imbalances: *"In parent-teacher association meetings, parents have more say than we do... I felt like a vendor in a marketplace."* However, some participants reported positive, collaborative experiences. P-5 described a culture of shared decision-making: *"decisions are entirely made by the majority... We all choose together."* P-11 noted active participation and a responsive administration: *"I speak in all meetings, and our principal... tries his best to implement what I suggest."*

4. Inequality in Recognition and Professional Development Processes

The visibility of teachers' efforts and access to professional development significantly affect their motivation and satisfaction. The participants reported systemic injustice in recognition and unequal distribution of development opportunities.

4.1. Unfair Distribution of Recognition and Discriminatory Attitudes of the Administration

Hourly-paid teachers frequently faced systematic exclusion from recognition. P-1 expressed how their efforts are often unrecognized or viewed negatively: *"I get feedback like 'you try so hard even though you are hourly-paid,' but sometimes 'are you going to save the world?'"* P-3 confirmed this oversight: *"everyone was given a certificate from the MoNE, but there was nothing like that for hourly-paid teachers."* P-7 felt ignored by the administration despite parental appreciation: *"I teach most of the lesson, I receive appreciation from parents, but the administration ignores me."* P-9 (private school) never recalled even a verbal *"well done."* P-13 linked recognition to external metrics: *"being recognized depends on 'how many parents you please' and 'how many students you help pass exams.'" P-10, a tenured teacher, sarcastically stated they "have never seen a certificate of appreciation."*

In contrast, P-12 adopted a self-reliant stance: *"Frankly, I don't expect recognition. I get my reward from the students."* Favoritism was also prevalent. P-8 bluntly stated: *"Those close to the administration win. Relationships, more than success, determine recognition."* P-6 elaborated on the predictability of such favoritism: *"If an award is to be given, it's already clear who will get it. No one notices the one who does their job quietly."* P-14 highlighted this in private schools: *"The best teacher competition is held, but the winners are always the same names... parent satisfaction... So, the popular one wins."* P-11, however, offered a system-justifying perspective: *"Projects bring schools to the forefront, so the administration recognizes them. This is natural."*

4.2. Access Inequalities in Professional Development Opportunities

Significant inequalities in accessing noncompulsory professional development were also reported. P-1 stated direct exclusion due to status: *"Naturally, I was not included in these, because I am an hourly-paid teacher."* P-3 echoed this, noting how they seek alternatives: *"These courses are available for tenured teachers. We try to develop ourselves in places like public education centers."* P-9 described this exclusion as normalized in private schools: *"We are not even accepted into courses. This exclusion is like the norm now."* The selection process was questioned by P-7, who perceived it as predetermined and tokenistic: *"Teachers who will receive training are predetermined by the administration; selections are made for show."* P-5, however, reported accessible opportunities: *"Teachers can apply for and participate in all of these themselves."*

5. Erosion of Teacher Authority

Teachers' authority, critical for healthy pedagogy, is weakening due to neoliberal policies and societal changes (Apple, 2006a; Ball, 2003). The participants discussed challenges to their authority and coping strategies. Within the symbolic violence framework, this involves systematic weakening of the teacher's position, with diminishing prestige leading to increased questioning.

5.1. Effect of Parent Attitudes on Student Behaviors

Parent attitudes were seen as major contributors to authority issues. P-1 explained the foundational impact of parental respect on student behavior: *"I think one of the biggest reasons students overstep the boundaries of respect is the parents. If parents don't respect teachers, expecting it from the child may be very utopian."* P-14 illustrated heightened expectations in private schools: *"Parents constantly send messages on WhatsApp 'Why did you give my child 95 for the project?' Even giving grades isn't free anymore."* P-15 shared an experience of administrative siding with parents over professional judgment: *"The principal also said, 'act according to the parent.' Now I think twice before giving a warning."* P-7 highlighted the direct impact of parental actions on classroom authority: *"Parents scold us in front of the child. What can I say to the student then?"* P-6 noted a different dynamic linked to parental indifference: *"The more indifferent the parent, the more relaxed the child."* P-8 described challenges to their professional role: *"Someone wanted their child to change classes... 'the teacher was too rule-based.' Yes, because I am a teacher."* P-13 observed a shift in parent-teacher dynamics: *"There used to be parent-teacher cooperation. Now it's the parent versus the teacher."* However, P-11 offered an alternative view on parental influence: *"It ultimately comes down to the student; parents only influence them up to a point."*

5.2. Teachers' Strategies to Maintain Authority

The participants described individual strategies to deal with authority violations. P-2 focused on stepping back with parents: *"I try not to react too much; never get into a verbal altercation with a parent."* P-12 and P-6 emphasized establishing clear rules: they *"set clear rules from the beginning."* P-7 adapted their communication style to "survive": *"I learned to speak firmly without being offensive. You can't survive otherwise in this age."* Silence was a reflective or stepping back tool for P-8: *"Sometimes just listening is enough,"* and P-9: *"If I react, things worsen. I keep quiet."*

5.3. Parents' Selective Information Sharing and Teachers' Sense of Exclusion

Parents' selective communication reportedly led to exclusion for some teachers. P-5 found this lack of information frustrating: *"We are expected to know some things, but information is not given. This is very wearing."* In contrast, P-3, a special education teacher, relied on professional experience: *"We already understand a child's psychological state. The parent doesn't need to say anything."* P-8 tolerated such situations by focusing on student relationships: *"My bond with my student is more precious."* P-4 acknowledged a reciprocal dynamic in communication: *"I also have parents with whom I have special communication."*

Results and Discussion

The findings obtained in the present research indicate that teachers in Türkiye face significant limitations in their professional activities, particularly in pedagogical decision-making, which often relegates them to being passive implementers of centrally

determined curricula. This long-standing curtailment of teacher autonomy is a frequently voiced problem in the Turkish literature (Canbolat, 2020; Çelik et al., 2017; Çolak & Altinkurt, 2017; Özaslan, 2015; Yirci, 2017). The top-down determination of educational content and methods transforms teachers into technical implementers, hindering the development of individual pedagogical competencies (Frostenson, 2015) and negatively affecting professional satisfaction and innovation. Conversely, research shows that greater autonomy fosters more creative, motivated, and effective teachers (Ertürk, 2023; Evers et al., 2023; Kiemer et al., 2018; Worth & Van den Brande, 2020). Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977; 1990) concept of "symbolic violence" aptly explains these implicit, internalized restrictions on teacher autonomy, where seemingly consented political or bureaucratic interventions represent systematic control. This deprivation of decision-making will, even without direct coercion, signify an implicit suppression of professional freedom. Insufficient inclusion in decision-making not only reduces job satisfaction but also impedes the development of student-sensitive teaching practices, despite the literature emphasizing autonomy as fundamental to educational quality (Akan & Ulaş, 2023; Akgündüz et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Seferoğlu, 2004; Üzüm & Karslı, 2014). The Finnish example, where high teacher trust and initiative yield positive outcomes (Chung, 2023; Erss, 2018; OECD, 2023; Sahlberg, 2010), underscores that positioning teachers as pedagogical decision-makers enhances satisfaction and educational quality. Thus, professional autonomy is a structural issue impacting the education system's efficiency, justice, and sustainability, especially in centralized systems like Türkiye where teacher exclusion suppresses initiative and promotes uniformity.

Research data also reveal that teachers perceive audit and evaluation practices not as support but as pressure mechanisms. Symbolic violence, as control through internalized norms without direct coercion (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2015), is manifest in hierarchical audit processes that establish invisible yet effective control, undermining pedagogical autonomy. Recent Turkish qualitative studies corroborate this; Yıldız et al. (2021) found that administrator and inspector attitudes in audits are perceived as pressure, with teachers feeling that they are "tilting at windmills." Similarly, Konal Memiş and Korumaz (2024) showed that project school teachers experience symbolic violence from multiple actors, often consenting to this intensely felt pressure. Such audits lead to negative outcomes like lost motivation, reduced self-efficacy, and diminished innovation. Continuous quantitative performance measurement can sideline creative pedagogical decisions, a situation not unique to Türkiye, as seen in analyses of Ofsted inspections in England (Gallagher & Smith, 2018). Ball (2003) notes such systems force a "legitimate pedagogical stance," a form of symbolic violence. In Türkiye, guidance-oriented audits often become punitive, with feedback focusing on deficiencies, transforming audits into a "professional disciplinary tool." This judgmental positioning creates latent tension, suppressing classroom creativity. Audit processes should therefore be restructured to be teacher-centered, developmental, and innovation-encouraging, rather than control-oriented, to prevent ongoing negative impacts on teacher satisfaction and educational quality.

Another prominent finding is teachers' extensive exclusion from decision-making at school and policy levels. Especially in traditionally centralized schools, teachers' opinions are often not sought, positioning them as passive implementers, a situation known to negatively affect professional satisfaction (Can & Ozan, 2020; Ulusoy et al., 2023). This structural exclusion fosters dissatisfaction, conflict, and weakened institutional belonging, undermining the principle of participation even within their own classrooms. The literature highlights that such exclusion hinders innovation and professional development (Ingersoll, 2003; Somech, 2002). Conversely, participatory school cultures, where teachers are viewed as decision-makers, positively impact educational quality, job satisfaction, and student achievement (Alanoğlu, 2019; Demirtaş & Alanoğlu, 2015; Farris, 2021; Ingersoll et al., 2017). International data, such as the OECD TALIS (2018) survey, starkly illustrate Türkiye's limited teacher involvement in decision-making (4% vs. 42% OECD average) (OECD, 2019), reinforcing their role as duty-fulfillers rather than strategic stakeholders (Erbıyık & Köybaşı Şemin, 2024; OECD, 2011; TEDMEM, 2014; Ulusoy et al., 2023; Yurdakul, Gür, Çelik & Kurt, 2016). Even when teachers participate in routine meetings, it is often a formality, lacking strategic impact, which can lead to feelings of worthlessness and reduced commitment (Dorukoğlu et al., 2023; Erdemli & Kurum, 2021; Kamalı & Kırıl, 2023). Ignoring teachers' valuable opinions limits the system's developmental potential, whereas participatory cultures enhance job satisfaction and belonging, and create better learning environments (Aksay & Ural, 2008; Kaşal et al., 2024; Somech & Bogler, 2002). Viewing teachers as pedagogical visionaries, and not just technicians, is crucial for their satisfaction and overall educational quality and sustainability.

The present research also reveals serious injustices in the recognition of teachers' labor and their access to professional development. When teachers' efforts are not objectively evaluated or recognized by management, motivation and commitment wane (Ada et al., 2013; Gümüştas & Gülbahar, 2022; Ertürk & Aydın, 2017; Uştu & Tümkaya, 2017) and miscommunication can lead to errors (Atmaca, 2020). Administrative favoritism in recognition undermines organizational justice and team equality (Okçu & Uçar, 2016), reducing trust and solidarity, leaving some feeling "favored" and others "ignored." This inequality extends to professional development, with Turkish in-service training programs long criticized as insufficient and misaligned with teachers' actual needs (Gencer et al., 2023; Ince vd., 2019; Özdemir, 2021; TEDMEM, 2014). Teachers in disadvantaged regions often have less access (Can, 2019), limiting their development and preventing equal opportunity. Yirci (2017) attributes these issues partly to the system's "status quoist" nature and misalignment of programs with field needs, noting teachers' desire for a supportive career system. While the Teacher Profession Law [ÖMK] No. 7528 (2024) introduced career stages, it faces criticism for creating discrimination and its examination-based structure negatively affecting motivation. The ÖMK's hierarchical system may produce symbolic violence, overshadowing pedagogical diversity, while its academy-based training's cultural capital focus and norm-based evaluations can disadvantage teachers and weaken organizational justice, negatively impacting motivation and satisfaction.

This perceived injustice in development and reward processes detrimentally affects individual motivation, job performance, and school culture, with damaged organizational justice weakening institutional commitment and job satisfaction (Okçu & Uçar, 2016). In contrast, countries in which teaching is highly regarded see more willing participation in professional development (Dolton et al., 2018), demonstrating a direct link between professional growth, appreciation, and equal opportunities. A system that makes individual contributions visible and equitably distributes development opportunities positively impacts educator satisfaction, student achievement, and system sustainability. Thus, restructuring recognition and development processes based on equality and inclusivity is essential.

Finally, the data provide strong evidence for the erosion of the teaching profession's societal standing and weakening teacher authority, consistent with concerns raised by Apple (2006a) and Ball (2003). The participants reported difficulties maintaining classroom discipline and authority in student-parent interactions, a situation supported by empirical findings linking declining prestige to negative parental attitudes and damaging media discourse (Bozkurt & Kutlu, 2021). Public portrayals devalue professional identity, while "customer-centric" parental expectations sometimes escalate into violence (Bayındır, 2024; Çimen & Karadağ, 2019), often linked to socioeconomic factors but severely impacting teacher authority and motivation (Atmaca & Öntaş, 2014). Teachers also face psychological violence and devaluation from various actors (Yener, 2023), making it difficult to feel valued. Furthermore, the proliferation of digital information has undermined the teacher's role as the "sole authority" (Çetinkaya et al., 2025; Fitria & Suminah, 2020), as students are more inclined to question. While pedagogically potent, this can decrease respect and increase discipline issues. This aligns with neoliberal shifts positioning teachers as "service providers" and parents as "customers" (Apple, 2006a; 2006b), eroding historical prestige. Multifaceted interventions (economic, cultural, and symbolic) are needed to strengthen teacher status, as high teacher prestige correlates with educational quality and commitment (Dolton et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the findings point to multidimensional problems concerning teachers' professional position. Lack of autonomy relegates them to technicians, oppressive audits damage dignity and stifle innovation, exclusion from decision-making reduces motivation, and injustices in recognition and development can alienate even dedicated teachers. Declining respect and authority further complicate their roles. Collectively, these issues signify a weakening of the teaching profession's professional status, risking teacher alienation due to structural and cultural barriers, demonstrating how power relations and policies can operate to their detriment. While Giroux (1988) advocates for teachers as "intellectual professionals," current conditions often compel passive role fulfillment. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is explanatory for the invisible pressures faced. The research confirms the unbreakable link between educational quality and teachers' professional status. Empowering teachers is critical not only for protecting their rights but also for ensuring student success and overall educational quality. Thus,

improving teacher status and centering them in decision-making processes are key to educational transformation.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is derived from the first author's doctoral dissertation, which was conducted at Eskişehir Osmangazi University under the supervision of the second author and explored the themes of neoliberalism, precarity, and symbolic violence through three-dimensional semistructured interviews with teachers. To achieve a detailed and in-depth examination for this article, its scope was narrowed to focus solely on findings related to the "symbolic violence" dimension. Consequently, the dimensions of neoliberalism and precarity, while evaluated in the full dissertation, are partially excluded here. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within its focused theme of symbolic violence, acknowledging that they represent one aspect of a more extensive dataset.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that teachers' professional autonomy be increased, audit and evaluation processes be made guidance-oriented, teacher participation in decision-making mechanisms be ensured, fair recognition and incentive systems be established, professional development and career opportunities be improved, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the status of the teaching profession be implemented. These steps will increase teachers' professional motivation and job satisfaction, thereby preparing the ground for students to receive a higher quality education. Lasting improvement in the education system will be possible through a transformation in which the teacher is centralized and empowered. Therefore, policymakers and school leaders should see teachers as solution partners rather than engaging in power struggles with them and should demonstrate determination to take the steps mentioned above. In this way, the societal prestige of the teaching profession will be re-established, and educational environments will become more productive for both teachers and students.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Neoliberal politikaların son otuz yılda eğitim sistemlerini piyasa dinamiklerine göre yeniden şekillendirmesi (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Hursh, 2007), öğretmenlik mesleğini derinden etkilemiştir. Rekabet, performans ölçümü ve niceliksel çıktılara odaklanan yönetim biçimleri (Evans vd., 1996; Apple, 2015), öğretmenleri değerleri düşürülerek baskı altına alınan bir emek kategorisine dönüştürmüştür. Bu süreç, çalışma koşullarının esnekleşmesi ve güvencesizleşmesiyle karakterize olan prekaryanın (Standing, 2011) eğitim alanında da yaygınlaşmasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Öğretmenler, mesleki kimlik erozyonu ve sosyo-duygusal kırılganlıklarla (Connell, 2013; Standing, 2014) karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Türkiye’de de 1980’lerden itibaren benzer bir dönüşüm yaşanmış, özelleştirme ve piyasalaşma hız kazanmış (Başaran vd., 2024), eğitimin kamusal niteliği zayıflamıştır (Aslan, 2014; Kartal, 2020). Artan güvencesiz istihdam biçimleri (Dağ, 2020; Güvercin, 2014; Kablay, 2012) öğretmenler arasında prekaryalaşmayı artırmış, bu durum mesleki statülerini ve çalışma koşullarını olumsuz etkilemiştir (Buckworth, 2018).

Bu neoliberal etkiler, Bourdieu’nün (Bourdieu & Nice, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1990; 2015) “simgesel şiddet” kavramıyla analiz edilebilir. Simgesel şiddet, egemen değerlerin içselleştirilmiş kabulüyle işleyen bir tahakküm biçimidir ve eğitim kurumları bu normların yeniden üretiminde rol oynar (Apple, 2015). Öğretmenlerin mesleki özerkliklerinin piyasa kriterleriyle değerlendirilmesi (Brown, 2003; Bourdieu, 1986), onların bu durumu sorgusuzca kabullenmelerine yol açan bir rıza üretebilir (Freire, 2005; 2014). Alanyazında, öğretmenlerin deneyimlediği simgesel şiddet ve prekaryalaşma süreçlerinin kesişimi yeterince incelenmemiştir (Scott, 2012; González, 2015). Bu çalışma, bu boşluğa odaklanarak, neoliberal politikaların öğretmenlik mesleği üzerindeki etkilerini prekarya perspektifi ve simgesel şiddet kavramlarıyla, öğretmen deneyimleri üzerinden anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Temel araştırma sorusu, öğretmenlerin prekaryalaşırken bu durumu nasıl içselleştirdikleridir. Çalışma, mevcut duruma eleştirel bir bakış sunmayı ve öğretmen istihdam politikalarının iyileştirilmesine katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemektedir (Reygadas, 2015; Standing, 2011; Dağ, 2020; Kılınc vd., 2018). Araştırma, neoliberal düzenin öğretmenleri prekaryalaştırırken bu süreci simgesel şiddetle meşrulaştırdığını ve bu mekanizmaların öğretmen anlatılarıyla nasıl ortaya konduğunu incelemektedir.

Bu nitel araştırma, karmaşık olguları gerçek yaşam bağlamlarında derinlemesine incelemeye olanak tanıyan durum çalışması deseniyle (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2017) yürütülmüştür. Araştırılan durum, İzmir Gaziemir’deki kamu (kadrolu, sözleşmeli, ücretli) ve özel okul öğretmenlerinin prekaryalaşma ve simgesel şiddet algılarıdır. Katılımcılar, sosyo-ekonomik gelişmişlik endeksine göre birinci kademede yer alan (Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı, 2022) bu ilçeden, maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesiyle (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Patton, 2002) seçilen 15 öğretmenden (11 kamu, 4 özel) oluşmaktadır. Veriler, ilgili alanyazın ve uzman görüşleriyle geliştirilip pilot uygulaması yapılan 13 açık uçlu soruluk yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formuyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmacı, veri toplama ve analizde birincil araç rolünü üstlenmiş (Patton, 2002),

yansıtıcı günlük tutmuş ve uzman görüşlerinden yararlanmıştır (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Gerekli resmi ve etik kurul izinleri alındıktan sonra, 2024-2025 eğitim yılında yapılan ve ortalama 55 dakika süren görüşmeler ses kaydına alınmış, ayrıca alan notları tutulmuştur. Tematik doygunluğa (Creswell, 2013) ulaşıldıktan sonra veri toplama sonlandırılmıştır. Veriler, üç aşamalı tümevarımsal içerik analiziyle (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013) manuel olarak analiz edilmiş, kodlayıcılar arası güvenirlik %90'ın üzerinde sağlanmış ve temalar uzman görüşleriyle son haline getirilmiştir. Araştırmanın güvenirliği için üye kontrolü, uzman değerlendirmesi, ayrıntılı betimleme ve yansıtıcılık gibi stratejiler (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) kullanılmış; bilgilendirilmiş onam, gizlilik ve anonimlik gibi etik ilkelere titizlikle uyulmuştur.

Araştırmada, öğretmenlerin prekaryalaşma ve simgesel şiddet deneyimleri beş ana tema altında toplanmıştır: (1) politik ve idari beklentilerle mesleki özerkliğin kısıtlanması, (2) denetim mekanizmalarının simgesel şiddet olarak algılanması, (3) karar alma süreçlerinde öğretmenlerin konumu, (4) takdir ve mesleki gelişimde eşitsizlik, (5) öğretmen otoritesinin erozyonu. Mesleki özerkliğin kısıtlanması temasında, öğretmenler eğitim politikalarının siyasi yönelimleri, merkeziyetçi uygulamalar ve kurumsal hiyerarşi nedeniyle pedagojik karar alma süreçlerinde sınırlı kaldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu durum, Bourdieu'nün simgesel şiddet kavramıyla uyumlu olarak, içselleştirilmiş bir kabulle sonuçlanabilmektedir. Denetim mekanizmalarının simgesel şiddet olarak algılanması temasında, özellikle güvencesiz öğretmenlerin daha yoğun bir denetim baskısı hissettiği, denetimlerin gelişimden ziyade kontrol ve gözdağı aracına dönüşebildiği, ancak bazı öğretmenlerin de yetersiz veya göstermelik denetimden şikâyetçi olduğu görülmüştür. Öğretmenlerin karar alma süreçlerindeki konumu incelendiğinde, çoğunlukla süreçlere dahil edilmedikleri, katılımın sembolik kaldığı ve kendilerini "misafir" ya da "figüran" gibi hissettikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Özel okullarda veli memnuniyeti ve piyasa talepleri bu dışlanmayı pekiştirmektedir. Takdir ve mesleki gelişimde eşitsizlik teması altında, öğretmenlerin çabalarının yeterince görülmediği, takdirde kayırmacılık yapıldığı ve özellikle güvencesiz öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişim fırsatlarından dışlandığı bulguları öne çıkmıştır. Son olarak, öğretmen otoritesinin erozyonu temasında, veli tutumlarının öğrenci davranışları üzerindeki olumsuz etkisi, öğretmenlerin mesleki yargılarının sorgulanması ve "müşteri odaklı" taleplerle karşılaşmaları öğretmen otoritesini zayıflatan temel unsurlar olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu baskılar karşısında öğretmenler çeşitli bireysel başa çıkma stratejileri geliştirmektedir. Tüm bu temalar, öğretmenlerin neoliberal politikalar ve güvencesizleşmeyle birlikte mesleklerinde yaşadıkları simgesel şiddetin farklı veçhelerini yansıtmaktadır.

Bu araştırmanın bulguları, Türkiye'deki öğretmenlerin neoliberal politikaların etkisiyle mesleki özerkliklerinin ciddi şekilde kısıtlandığını, denetim süreçlerini baskı ve simgesel şiddet olarak algıladıklarını, karar alma mekanizmalarından dışlandıklarını, takdir ve mesleki gelişimde adaletsizlikler yaşadıklarını ve öğretmen otoritesinin aşındığını göstermektedir. Bu deneyimler, öğretmenlik mesleğinin profesyonel statüsünün zayıflamasına ve öğretmenlerin mesleklerine yabancılaşmasına yol açmaktadır. Bulgular, Bourdieu'nün simgesel şiddet kavramının (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; 1990; 2015), öğretmenlerin maruz kaldığı bu görünmez baskıları ve bunlara gösterdikleri rızayı

anlamada önemli bir çerçeve sunduğunu teyit etmektedir. Öğretmenlerin edilgen uygulayıcılara indirgenmesi (Canbolat, 2020; Frostenson, 2015), eğitim kalitesini olumsuz etkileyen bir durumdur (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Baskıcı denetimler (Yıldız vd., 2021; Ball, 2003), karar alma süreçlerinden dışlanma (OECD, 2019; Ulusoy vd., 2023) ve takdirde adaletsizlik (Okçu & Uçar, 2016; Yirci, 2017), öğretmen motivasyonunu düşürmektedir. Otorite erozyonu ise (Apple, 2006a; Bozkurt & Kutlu, 2021), eğitimin piyasalaşmasının bir sonucudur.

Sonuç olarak, öğretmenlerin mesleki konumlarını ve dolayısıyla eğitimin niteliğini güçlendirmek için yapısal ve kültürel dönüşümlere ihtiyaç vardır. Giroux'nun (1988) vurguladığı gibi, öğretmenler "entelektüel profesyoneller" olarak eğitimde söz sahibi olmalıdır. Bu doğrultuda, öğretmenlerin mesleki özerkliklerinin artırılması, denetim süreçlerinin rehberlik odaklı hale getirilmesi, karar alma mekanizmalarına etkin katılımlarının sağlanması, adil takdir sistemlerinin kurulması, mesleki gelişim olanaklarının eşitlikçi bir temelde iyileştirilmesi ve öğretmenlik mesleğinin toplumsal statüsünün yükseltilmesi önerilmektedir. Politika yapıcılar ve okul liderleri, öğretmenleri çözüm ortağı olarak görerek bu adımları atmalıdır. Bu sayede, öğretmenlik mesleğinin saygınlığı yeniden tesis edilebilir ve eğitim ortamları daha üretken hale getirilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Prekarya, simgesel şiddet, neoliberal eğitim politikaları, eğitimde güvencesizlik, vaka analizi

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