



Available online at <http://www.bedujournal.com/>

BASE FOR ELECTRONIC EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

ISSN: 2718-0107

Base for Electronic Educational Sciences, 7(1), 89-114; 2026

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An Examination of Teacher Motivation in Rural Areas: The Case of Şanlıurfa Province

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APA Citation:

Ertop, D. & Güven, B. (2026). An Examination of Teacher Motivation in Rural Areas: The Case of Şanlıurfa Province. *Base for Electronic Educational Sciences*, 7(1), 89-114.

Submission Date: 15/01/2026

Acceptance Date: 28/03/2026

Publication Date: 29/03/2026

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the professional motivation levels of classroom teachers working in rural areas and the factors affecting this motivation. Conducted in Şanlıurfa, one of the socioeconomically disadvantaged provinces of Türkiye, the study aims to reveal the professional experiences of teachers working in rural areas and the reflections of these experiences on their motivation. The study was carried out using a qualitative research approach. A semi-structured form consisting of 13 open-ended questions was prepared through Google Forms, and teachers' sources of motivation at the individual, environmental, and institutional levels were examined. The findings indicate that the main factors negatively affecting teachers' motivation include insufficient physical infrastructure, social isolation, limited access to resources, and heavy workload. On the other hand, love for students, professional idealism, and dedication emerge as strong intrinsic sources that help sustain teachers' motivation. In conclusion, the sustainability of the motivation of teachers working in rural areas depends not only on individual efforts but also on structural arrangements such as institutional support, improvement of living conditions, and strengthening professional recognition systems. The study reveals the necessity of restructuring rural education policies with flexible and inclusive approaches that take the local context into account.

Keywords: Rural education, Teacher motivation, Classroom teacher, Equality of opportunity in education.



Introduction

One of the factors that plays an important role in the decisions individuals make in life is motivation. Motivation is defined as “a general concept that encompasses desires, wishes, needs, drives, and interests” (Cüceloğlu, 2005, p. 229). The concept of motivation holds an important place in psychology and educational sciences as it explains the fundamental force behind individuals’ behaviors.

Human beings, as psycho-social entities, possess various needs, both tangible and intangible. The fulfillment of these needs has a significant impact on an individual’s performance (Fındıkçı, 2009). Therefore, meeting individuals’ needs not only contributes to personal satisfaction but also directly affects productivity in professional life.

Through motivation, it is possible to direct the efforts of organizational employees toward specific goals. Employees’ adoption of their work, their willingness, and the level of effort they demonstrate largely depend on their level of motivation (Fındıkçı, 2009). This situation indicates that organizational productivity is closely related to individual motivation. Educational institutions, in this context, are also structures that are directly influenced by the motivation levels of their employees.

According to Self-Determination Theory, three different types of motivation can be identified: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. While intrinsic motivation originates from an individual’s own desires, interests, and enthusiasm, extrinsic motivation involves external factors such as rewards or status related to the situation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Amotivation, on the other hand, refers to the absence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, where individuals perceive their behaviors as being beyond their own control (Ersoy-Kart & Güldü, 2008). This theoretical framework helps us understand the dynamics underlying individuals’ behaviors in different contexts. In fields such as education, which are based on human interaction, the effects of these types of motivation become even more evident.

Although both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a role in the decisions individuals make throughout their lives, a high level of intrinsic motivation enables individuals to be more interested, confident, and enthusiastic about the work they perform, which in turn increases their performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

From this perspective, the level of teachers’ intrinsic motivation in educational settings can be considered a determining factor in teaching quality and student achievement.

Employees’ abilities and motivation levels have a significant impact on their performance. Motivation plays a critical role in the performance of both individuals and organizations (Ada et al., 2014). In terms of school effectiveness, the performance demonstrated by highly motivated teachers is of great importance (Şişman, 2002). The motivation level of teachers, who constitute the cornerstone of the education system, emerges not only as an individual factor but also as a strategic factor determining institutional success. Studies have shown that an increase in teacher motivation benefits not only teachers but also students. It is believed that motivated teachers demonstrate higher performance in achieving school goals (Ada et al., 2014).

Research on teacher motivation has developed since the late 1990s, and in the last decade there has been a noticeable increase in the literature on teacher motivation across various socio-cultural contexts (Han & Yin, 2016). This increase indicates that teacher motivation has gained importance not only as an individual issue but also as an area that directly affects the success of educational policies. In addition to meaning taking action in order to accomplish a task (Ryan & Deci, 2000), motivation can also be defined as “activation, persistence in behavior, and regulation of behavior” (Aksoy, 2006).

In addition to teachers’ motivation within the profession, the reasons why individuals choose the teaching profession are also important. Studies in this field emphasize that individuals choose teaching for different reasons (Yüce, Şahin, Koçer, & Kana, 2013). This situation indicates that the process of choosing teaching as a profession is influenced by multidimensional factors such as individual values, social status, economic conditions, and personal ideals.

The teaching profession is one of the occupations that requires a high level of motivation due to the responsibilities it places on individuals. Indeed, teachers’ motivation is not only essential for their own professional success but also for enabling students to experience positive classroom environments and for establishing a stable and effective education system (Simic, Puric, & Stancic, 2018).

For this reason, the sustainability of teacher motivation is considered a key factor not only for individual performance but also for societal progress. Since the teaching profession carries multifaceted social responsibilities—such as contributing to the national economy by preparing a qualified workforce and raising individuals who are compatible with and responsive to contemporary society—maintaining high levels of motivation among individuals in this profession is crucial for a country to achieve the desired level of development. The quality and willingness of teachers, who are the most important component of the education system, are regarded as the cornerstone of a country’s educational success, and efforts to understand and enhance teacher motivation continue to maintain their importance (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2010).

In this study, it is aimed to examine the factors affecting teacher motivation within both theoretical and practical contexts. The research seeks to reveal the current situation by addressing teacher motivation—one of the critical variables in the success of the education system—from individual, organizational, and environmental perspectives. In this context, identifying the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence teachers’ professional motivation levels will provide a guiding framework for increasing the effectiveness of educational institutions. In particular, examining the professional motivation levels of classroom teachers working in rural areas emerges as an important necessity for strengthening equality of opportunity in education and ensuring teacher stability. Accordingly, it is anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to the development of new approaches aimed at increasing teacher motivation and will guide future research in this field.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the professional motivation of classroom teachers working in rural areas of Şanlıurfa province and the factors affecting this motivation in line with teachers’ views. In this context, the study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- To determine classroom teachers' views regarding the process of starting their careers in rural areas and their adaptation to rural life.
- To examine the effects of working in rural areas on classroom teachers' professional motivation and professional experiences.
- To reveal the effects of rural conditions on the sustainability of teaching motivation and professional burnout.
- To determine the views of classroom teachers working in rural areas regarding the communication factor (communication with students, parents, and colleagues).
- To determine the views of classroom teachers regarding their professional, physical, and psychosocial support needs while working in rural areas.

Method

Research Model

This study was conducted within the framework of a qualitative research approach using a descriptive model based on semi-structured interviews. The research model aimed to present in a detailed and holistic manner the views of classroom teachers working in rural areas regarding their professional motivation. Accordingly, the data were collected through a semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions, and the qualitative data obtained were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. The model is based on reflecting the experiences of participants in their own expressions and allows the research findings to be explained and interpreted based on teachers' views.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool in order to determine the views of classroom teachers working in rural areas regarding their professional motivation. The interview form consists of two sections and a total of 13 open-ended questions. In the first section of the form, questions aimed at identifying the demographic characteristics of the participants were included, while in the second section, questions related to individual, environmental, and institutional factors affecting teachers' professional motivation were presented. The interview questions were prepared in line with the purpose of the research; in order to ensure content validity, the relevant literature was reviewed and attention was paid to ensuring that the questions were clear, understandable, and appropriate to the aim of the study. During the implementation process, the data obtained were recorded in written form with the consent of the participants, and transcript confirmations were obtained from the participants to increase reliability in the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data obtained at the end of the study were organized into tables under two separate headings: demographic questions and purpose-oriented questions. A detailed examination of the data was then carried out by the researcher.

Validity and Reliability

In this study, methodological measures appropriate to the qualitative research approach were taken in order to ensure validity and reliability. To increase internal validity, a semi-structured interview form was used during the data collection process; participants' views were presented through direct quotations, and the

findings obtained were interpreted solely based on participants' statements. After the interview data were transcribed, transcript confirmations were obtained from the participants to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data.

In order to ensure external validity, the research design, the characteristics of the study group, the data collection process, and the stages of data analysis were explained in detail. To enhance reliability, the data collection and analysis processes were conducted in a systematic and transparent manner; the obtained data were regularly classified in line with the purpose of the study and analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. In addition, artificial intelligence-supported tools were utilized in data management and analysis processes for data verification and content enrichment, thereby supporting the consistency and reliability of the research findings.

Findings

In this section, the findings obtained from the study are presented by analyzing the data in an order consistent with the sub-objectives of the research. The study group of the research consists of 20 classroom teachers working in Şanlıurfa province. The data obtained from the participants were analyzed using the content analysis method in accordance with the qualitative research design; the themes and sub-themes derived from the data were interpreted, and patterns related to teacher motivation were identified. The section begins with the presentation of the demographic information of the participants;

Table 1. Demographic Information

Variable	Category	F	%
Gender	Female	10	50
	Male	10	50
Age	25-26	6	30
	27-28	5	25
	29-30	9	45
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	16	80
	Graduate Degree	4	20
Professional Experience	1-3 years	8	40
	4-6 years	7	35
	7 years and above	5	25
Reason for Placement Score	41st preference	7	35
	Placement Score	5	25
	Length of Service	5	25
	Other	3	15
Total		20	100

When Table 1 is examined, it is observed that the teachers participating in the study show an equal distribution in terms of gender, with half of the participants being female (50%) and the other half male (50%). When the age ranges of the participants are considered, it is determined that the majority are in the 29–30 age group (45%), followed by teachers in the 25–26 age group (30%) and those in the 27–28 age group (25%). This situation indicates that most of the teachers participating in the study are young and in the early years of their profession.

When the education level variable is examined, it is found that 80% of the participants hold a bachelor's degree, while 20% have received postgraduate

education. This finding indicates that the majority of classroom teachers are undergraduate graduates, while a certain portion continue their professional development by pursuing postgraduate education.

In terms of professional experience, 40% of the participants have 1–3 years of experience, 35% have 4–6 years of experience, and 25% have 7 years or more of experience. This result reveals that most of the teachers participating in the study are in the early stages of their careers and that their level of experience is relatively limited.

When the reasons for job placement are examined, it is determined that the highest proportion (35%) belongs to teachers who were appointed due to their “41st preference,” followed by those who were appointed based on “appointment score” (25%) and “length of service” (25%). The remaining 15% in the “Other” category indicated that they were appointed for personal or special reasons. These findings suggest that, rather than individual preferences, the centralized appointment system and service duration are the determining factors in the placement of teachers.

Overall, the demographic findings reveal that the group of teachers participating in the study consists of young individuals with relatively limited professional experience who were mostly appointed to their positions through the centralized appointment system. This situation suggests that variables such as age, professional experience, and the process of determining the place of duty may be influential factors in examining teachers’ motivation levels.

Views on Preparedness for Working in Rural Areas

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their level of preparedness for working in rural areas were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants’ views regarding this question.

Table 2. Participants’ Views on Their Readiness to Work in Rural Areas

Themes	F	%
Insufficiency of faculty education in preparing teachers for rural life	12	60
Unpreparedness for rural living and physical conditions	4	20
Difficulty in adapting to language and cultural differences	3	15
Positive experiences during university that increased awareness of rural life	1	5
Total	20	100

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that a large proportion of the participants (60%) stated that their faculty education was insufficient in preparing them for rural living conditions. In addition, 20% of the participants reported that they had difficulty adapting to the physical and social conditions of the region where they worked, and that this situation negatively affected their professional motivation. Some participants (15%) indicated that they experienced difficulties in communication and adaptation particularly due to language differences and cultural habits. However, only one participant (5%) stated that an experience during their undergraduate education that raised awareness of rural life had been supportive for them. Overall, these findings indicate that teacher education programs do not sufficiently reflect the realities of rural life and that teachers experience an experiential learning process in this regard after starting their profession.

Participants' statements suggest that preparation for rural areas during faculty education is inadequate and that this situation leads to various difficulties during the initial stage of the profession. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

"During university, there were no courses or briefings about working in rural areas. When I graduated and went to my first place of duty, I had difficulty adapting both to the students' lifestyles and to the physical conditions of the school." (T4)

Similarly, another participant emphasized that working in rural areas requires not only professional but also social adaptation:

"In the village school where I was first appointed, electricity was frequently cut off, and I had difficulty communicating with the students because the way they spoke was different. I got used to it over time, but at first I felt very unfamiliar." (T10)

Some participants also stated that being unprepared for rural living conditions negatively affected their motivation:

"The physical conditions were very challenging. I experienced difficulties with heating, transportation, and even obtaining materials. Sometimes this situation reduced my professional enthusiasm." (T6)

However, a small number of participants stated that they gained positive awareness about rural life during their undergraduate education. One of these views is as follows:

"During my undergraduate education, I participated in social responsibility projects carried out in rural areas. This experience gave me an idea of what I might encounter in my first place of duty." (T13)

Overall, these statements reveal that teacher education programs do not sufficiently prepare teachers who will work in rural areas in both pedagogical and socio-cultural terms. The experiences of the participants indicate that a significant portion of the adaptation difficulties experienced during the transition to the teaching profession stem from the limited consideration of the rural context in faculty education.

Views on the Challenges of Teaching in Rural Areas

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views regarding the level of difficulty of teaching in rural areas were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' views regarding this question.

Table 3. Findings on the Challenging and Limiting Aspects of Teaching in Rural Areas

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Insufficiency of physical infrastructure and accommodation conditions	9	45
Limited social life and communication opportunities	5	25
Insufficiency of transportation facilities	4	20
Language differences and cultural barriers	1	5
Security concerns and lack of external	1	5
Total	20	100

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that a large proportion of the participants (45%) stated that the most significant challenge they face while working in rural areas is the inadequacy of physical infrastructure, housing opportunities, and school conditions. In addition, 25% of the participants indicated that the limited social life and restricted communication opportunities negatively affect their professional and personal adaptation processes. Furthermore, some teachers (20%) reported that insufficient transportation opportunities create difficulties in interactions both within and outside the village.

Five percent of the participants stated that local language differences and cultural barriers made it difficult for them to establish effective communication with students and parents. Similarly, another 5% of the participants identified security concerns and the lack of external support as limiting aspects of teaching in rural areas. Overall, these findings indicate that teachers working in rural areas face multidimensional challenges not only in educational aspects but also in terms of socio-cultural and environmental conditions.

Participants' statements show that teaching in rural areas requires not only professional competence but also physical resilience, social adaptation, and cultural awareness. One teacher expressed this situation as follows:

“I had difficulty finding a place to stay in the village. The school building was very old, and the lack of heating and materials made things very difficult for me.” (T7)

Similarly, another participant expressed the effect of social isolation on professional motivation as follows:

“It was difficult to live in the teacher housing in the village and build a social circle. Life outside the school was very limited, and sometimes the feeling of loneliness reduced my professional motivation.” (T14)

Some teachers also emphasized that cultural differences made the communication process more difficult:

“Sometimes I had difficulty communicating with parents because the local language was different. I had to get used to the way students spoke in order to communicate with them.” (T18)

In addition, several participants stated that transportation and security issues constitute serious problems for teachers working in rural areas:

“Moving around alone in the evening did not make me feel safe.” (T9)

These findings indicate that the challenges experienced by teachers working in rural areas are multidimensional and should be addressed across a wide range of factors, from physical conditions to social interaction, from cultural adaptation to security concerns.

Views on the Effect of Working in Rural Areas on Professional Motivation

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views regarding the effect of working in rural areas on professional motivation were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' views regarding this question.

Table 4. Findings on the Effect of Working in Rural Areas on Professional Motivation

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Increase in Professional satisfaction and idealism despite the difficulties	10	50
Decrease in motivation(loneliness,lack of support,burnout)	8	40
Feeling valued by the community	1	5
Increase in self-development and sense of responsibility	1	5
Total	20	100

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that half of the participants (50%) stated that despite the difficulties encountered in rural areas, their idealistic feelings toward the teaching profession strengthened and their professional satisfaction increased during this process. This situation indicates that working in rural areas is not only an experience limited to challenges but can also be considered a process that strengthens teachers' professional commitment and dedication.

However, a significant proportion of the participants (40%) reported that social isolation, lack of support, and the feeling of burnout they occasionally experienced negatively affected their professional motivation. This finding reveals that the inadequacy of social support mechanisms and professional sharing environments for teachers in rural areas is one of the main factors leading to a loss of motivation.

One participant (5%) emphasized that the appreciation and respect shown by the local community increased their sense of self-worth related to the teaching profession. In particular, being respected within the community and feeling that they directly contribute to the development of their students emerged as an important factor increasing teachers' professional satisfaction.

In addition, another participant (5%) stated that working in rural areas contributed to their sense of responsibility, self-efficacy, and personal development. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

"In a village school, we as teachers have to handle almost everything. Although this situation is sometimes challenging, it has helped me develop professionally in many areas." (T6)

On the other hand, another participant explained that loneliness and lack of support in rural areas negatively affected their motivation as follows:

"In the first years, I felt lonely both socially and professionally, and I experienced a lack of mentoring in terms of professional guidance. I got used to it over time, but there were periods when my motivation decreased." (T10)

Overall, these findings suggest that the motivation of teachers working in rural areas is influenced in two different ways. While rural conditions strengthen teachers' resilience, professional identity, and idealism on the one hand, factors such as social isolation, limited resources, and lack of support create pressure on their motivation on the other hand.

Therefore, in order to sustain teachers' professional motivation, it can be concluded that both financial and psychosocial support mechanisms should be strengthened in rural education policies.

Views on the Effect of Working in Rural Areas on Professional Development

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views regarding the effect of working in rural areas on professional development were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' views regarding this question.

Table 5. Findings on the Effect of Working in Rural Areas on Professional Development

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Increase in practical experience and problem-solving skills	8	40
Limitations in Professional development due to lack of resources and training	7	35
Increase in motivation for self-learning and independent research	5	25
Total	20	100

When Table 5 is examined, it is observed that 40% of the participants stated that working in rural areas positively contributed to their professional development. Teachers particularly emphasized that their skills in learning through practice, producing practical solutions, and adapting to different situations improved. One of the participants who expressed this view stated:

“Everything was different in the rural area, and I had to produce quick solutions to problems. This improved me professionally.” (T2)

Similarly, another participant noted that rural conditions increased creativity as follows:

“When resources are limited, you are forced to be creative, and this improves your skills.” (T15)

On the other hand, 35% of the participants stated that the lack of educational materials, guidance, and professional support resources in rural areas limited their professional development. One teacher explained this situation as follows:

“Access to the training I needed was very difficult due to the internet infrastructure, and therefore I felt inadequate during the time when I could have improved myself professionally.” (T8)

Another participant similarly stated:

“I had to learn new things on my own, which was sometimes challenging.” (T17)

Additionally, 25% of the participants emphasized that working in rural areas encouraged them to engage in self-directed learning and research. One of the teachers who expressed this opinion stated:

“When there was no support around me, I had to do my own research, and this helped me improve professionally.” (T12)

Another participant expressed this situation as follows:

“Working alone made me more independent and curious.” (T19)

Overall, these findings indicate that the professional development of teachers working in rural areas is shaped by a two-dimensional dynamic. While limited conditions make teachers more productive, solution-oriented, and research-oriented, structural deficiencies in support limit the sustainability of this

development. Therefore, in order to support the professional development of teachers working in rural areas, both infrastructure and resource support should be provided, and policies aimed at developing continuous professional learning opportunities should be strengthened.

Views on the Effect of Working in Rural Areas on Teaching Motivation

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views regarding the effect of working in rural areas on teaching motivation were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' views regarding this question.

Table 6. Findings on the Effect of Working in Rural Areas on Teaching Motivation

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Increase in motivation and job satisfaction	9	45
Low motivation and fatigue	8	40
Drawing strength from personal development and achievements	3	15
Total	20	100

When Table 6 is examined, it is observed that 45% of the participants stated that working in rural areas increased their motivation. These teachers indicated that working under rural conditions is meaningful because it allows them to directly contribute to the lives of students and strengthens their commitment to the profession. One of the teachers who expressed this view stated:

“Contributing directly to the education of children in rural areas motivates me and makes me feel more committed to my work.” (T9)

Similarly, another participant emphasized that working in rural areas adds an emotional meaning to the profession and stated:

“Despite the difficulties, being here gives meaning to my work.” (T15)

However, 40% of the participants emphasized that the physical challenges, insufficient social support, and isolation experienced in rural areas decreased their motivation. One of the teachers who expressed this situation stated:

“Loneliness and financial limitations sometimes make me lose enthusiasm for my work.” (T6)

Another participant who shared a similar opinion stated:

“My energy gets depleted, and I sometimes struggle to maintain my motivation.” (T11)

In addition, 15% of the participants stated that working in rural areas increased their motivation through individual achievement, self-efficacy, and personal development. One participant supporting this view expressed:

“Seeing my students' belief in their lessons and their academic success motivates me.” (T3)

Another participant explained the motivating aspect of progressing through personal effort in rural areas as follows:

“Seeing that I progress through my own effort makes me even more determined.” (T18)

Overall, these findings indicate that the motivation of teachers working in rural areas is shaped through a two-dimensional process. While rural living conditions strengthen teachers' sense of professional responsibility, social contribution, and self-efficacy, factors such as isolation, limited resources, and lack of support may lead to a decrease in motivation. Therefore, in order to sustain teachers' professional motivation, strengthening psychosocial support systems and improving working conditions in rural education policies emerges as a critical necessity.

Views on the Professional Contributions of Working in Rural Areas

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views regarding the professional contributions of working in rural areas were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' views regarding this question.

Table 7. Findings on the Professional Contributions of Working in Rural Areas

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Increase in practical skills and problem-solving competence	10	50
Strengthening of a student-centered approach and Professional commitment	5	25
Development of a sense of responsibility and Professional resilience	3	15
Increase in personal development and multifaceted teaching skills	2	10
Total	20	100

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that half of the teachers (50%) stated that working in rural areas improved their practical skills and problem-solving competencies. These teachers emphasized that despite limited resources, they enhanced their productivity and generated solutions through alternative approaches. Some participants expressed this situation as follows:

“Because of the limited opportunities, my productivity and problem-solving skills improved.” (T1)

“Providing education with limited resources encouraged me to develop alternative methods.” (T13)

Twenty-five percent of the participants stated that working in rural areas had positive effects in terms of a student-centered approach and professional commitment. Teachers emphasized that establishing one-to-one interaction with students made the teaching profession more meaningful:

“There are far more opportunities here to truly connect with students. This allowed me to experience teaching more deeply.” (T2)

“I put more effort into reaching the children, and this increased my commitment to the profession.” (T19)

Another prominent theme (15%) is the development of a sense of responsibility and professional resilience. Teachers stated that the challenges brought by rural conditions made them more resilient and mature in their profession:

“Working under difficult conditions increased my professional resilience.” (T3)

“You have to take more initiative, and this provides professional maturity.” (T10)

Finally, 10% of the teachers indicated that working in rural areas contributed to their personal development and multifaceted teaching skills. Participants expressed that rural conditions made them more flexible, aware, and versatile individuals:

“Your responsibilities are greater in rural areas, which contributes greatly to personal development.” (T4)

“We have to make decisions in every situation at any moment; this improved me professionally.” (T12)

Overall, these findings show that working in rural areas contributes not only to teachers’ professional development but also to their personal development. Teachers transform the challenges presented by the rural environment into learning opportunities, thereby increasing their awareness of the teaching profession and strengthening essential competencies such as problem-solving, resilience, and creativity.

Views on the Effect of School Physical Conditions on Teaching Motivation

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views regarding the effect of the physical conditions of the school on teaching motivation were analyzed. The table presented below includes the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants’ views regarding this question.

Table 8. Findings on the Effect of School Physical Conditions on Teaching Motivation

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Negative impact of inadequate physical conditions on teacher motivation	10	50
Maintaining motivation and increasing productivity under challenging conditions	7	35
Decrease in motivation due to transportation and financial difficulties	3	15
Total	20	100

When Table 8 is examined, it is observed that half of the participants (50%) stated that the physical and material inadequacies of schools in rural areas negatively affect teacher motivation. Teachers emphasized that the lack of technological equipment, insufficient instructional materials, physically inadequate classroom environments, and hygiene problems reduce the efficiency of teaching. Some participants expressed this situation as follows:

“There were times when my motivation decreased, especially when technological limitations became quite challenging.” (T6)

“There are no materials in the classroom, which makes concrete learning difficult.” (T13)

“The lack of materials can sometimes reduce the quality and efficiency of lessons.” (T19)

“Physical inadequacies slow down concrete learning.” (T18)

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the participants, on the other hand, emphasized maintaining motivation and increasing productivity under challenging conditions. Teachers stated that these deficiencies made them more creative and solution-oriented, and that they tried to improve the learning environment together with their

students despite limited opportunities. Participants' statements supporting this view are as follows:

"Sometimes the deficiencies are discouraging, but the light in the children's eyes makes everything worthwhile." (T1)

"We beautify our classroom with our own means, which increases our commitment to the school." (T12)

"Impossibilities do not discourage us; instead, they make us more productive." (T16)

"I think improving the school together with the students increases my motivation." (T15)

Fifteen percent (15%) of the participants emphasized that transportation and financial difficulties reduce their motivation. It was observed that transportation problems, long distances, and additional financial burdens negatively affect teachers' morale. Teachers expressed this situation as follows:

"Transportation is the biggest problem; the service hours and expenses are quite frustrating." (T3)

"The roads are winding and the journey takes a long time, which can lower my motivation even before I arrive at school." (T10)

"We spend extra money out of our own pockets, which financially strains teachers." (T20)

Overall, it can be concluded that the physical conditions of rural schools, lack of instructional materials, and transportation problems are significant factors affecting teacher motivation. However, many teachers also tend to transform these challenges into professional resilience and productivity. This finding indicates that teachers working in rural areas demonstrate high levels of dedication, resilience, and problem-solving skills.

Views on Suggestions for Preventing Professional Burnout

In order to determine the participants' views on suggestions for preventing professional burnout, the responses given to the relevant question were analyzed. The frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' opinions regarding this question are presented in the table below.

Table 9. Findings on Suggestions for Preventing Professional Burnout

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Activities focused on social bonding and moral support	7	35
Collegial solidarity and experience sharing	7	35
Development of institutional support and recognition systems	5	25
Maintaining work-life balance	1	5
Total	20	100

When Table 9 is examined, it is seen that all participants (100%) stated that measures should be taken at both individual and institutional levels in order to prevent professional burnout.

The two strongest areas of consensus (35% each) were social support and activity-oriented initiatives and collegial solidarity and professional sharing. Within the theme of social support and activity-oriented initiatives, teachers emphasized the

importance of organizing activities that would strengthen social interaction and contribute to teachers' well-being. Some participants expressed their views as follows:

"City and culture-themed school trips can be organized." (T1)

"Hobby and art workshop groups can be established." (T4)

"In-city activities such as nature walks should be organized." (T13)

Within the theme of collegial solidarity and sharing, teachers emphasized the importance of experience sharing and support groups among colleagues. Participants' statements reflecting this theme are presented below:

"Collegial solidarity should be strengthened." (T8)

"Experience sharing can be facilitated through sharing sessions." (T16)

"Support groups should be established." (T18)

In addition, 25% of the participants stated that institutional support and recognition mechanisms are effective in reducing burnout. Teachers emphasized that democratic management approaches, recognition of achievements, and fair reward systems could contribute to reducing burnout and increasing teacher motivation. Some participants expressed their views as follows:

"A democratic management approach reduces burnout." (T7)

"Achievements should be shared and acknowledged by the Ministry of National Education." (T10)

"The reward system should be made fair and transparent." (T11)

Overall, teachers' suggestions for reducing burnout converge around three main dimensions: psychosocial support, professional sharing, and institutional recognition. These findings indicate that a multidimensional support system is needed to ensure the sustainability of motivation among teachers working in rural areas.

Views on the Effects of Working in Rural Areas on Communication with Students

In order to determine the participants' views on the effects of working in rural areas on communication with students, the responses given to the relevant question were analyzed. The frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' opinions regarding this issue are presented in the table below.

Table 10. Findings on the Effects of Working in Rural Areas on Communication with Students

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Establishing closer and more sincere relationships with students	10	50
Cultural and linguistic difficulties in communication	6	30
Making additional efforts to improve communication	4	20
Total	20	100

When Table 10 is examined, it is observed that half of the participants (50%) stated that working in rural areas helps them establish more sincere, genuine, and trust-based communication with students. This situation indicates that the small community structure of rural life strengthens teacher-student relationships and

makes them more personal. One of the participants explained this situation as follows:

“Since I live in a small village and in the teachers’ residence, we have become like a family with the students, and our bond has strengthened.” (T5)

Similarly, another participant stated that the close relationship established with students increases professional satisfaction and expressed this as follows:

“I can touch the lives of students more, which strengthens communication.” (T18)

However, 30% of the participants stated that language and cultural differences create various challenges in the communication process. One of these teachers described the factors that make communication difficult in rural areas as follows:

“Communicating in a common language with some students and the cultural differences between us make communication difficult.” (T6)

Another teacher explained this situation by referring to local dialects:

“Due to different dialects and traditions, it can take some time to understand each other.” (T10)

In addition, 20% of the participants emphasized that despite communication difficulties, they make extra efforts to establish more effective interaction with students. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

“I organize extra activities and conduct one-on-one meetings to overcome communication difficulties.” (T9)

Another participant shared their experience of trying different methods as follows:

“I try creative methods to strengthen communication.” (T15)

Overall, these findings indicate that teacher–student communication in rural areas is generally based on more sincere, genuine, and strong interpersonal bonds. However, cultural and linguistic differences may occasionally make this communication challenging. Teachers attempt to overcome these differences by developing creative strategies to sustain and strengthen communication. This situation reveals that teachers working in rural areas develop communication skills that are flexible both emotionally and culturally.

Views on Parent Communication

In order to determine the participants’ views on effective communication with parents, the responses given to the relevant question were analyzed. The frequency and percentage distributions of the participants’ opinions regarding this issue are presented in the table below.

Table 11. Findings on Parent Communication

Topics Mentioned	F	%
The impact of parents’ low education levels, lack of awareness, and socioeconomic conditions on communication	10	50
Developing trust-based, one-on-one communication based on cultural awareness	6	30
Seasonal migration, absenteeism, and cultural barriers making communication more difficult	4	20
Total	20	100

When Table 11 is examined, it is observed that half of the participants (50%) stated that the most significant problem in parent communication is parental indifference and the lack of educational awareness. Participants reported that many parents have limited awareness regarding educational issues, and factors such as large family size, agricultural workload, and seasonal migration make communication more difficult. One of the participants explained this situation as follows:

“Parents are generally concerned, but since their education level is low, the process of convincing them on some issues takes longer.” (T1)

Similarly, another participant emphasized that although some parents appear uninterested in education, many still try to do their best for their children and expressed this as follows:

“Some parents are not very interested in education, but most of them try to do their best for their children.” (T4)

Another participant highlighted the limited participation in parent meetings due to occupational responsibilities:

“Participation in parent meetings is quite low; since many are engaged in agriculture and livestock farming, their schedules rarely coincide with school hours.” (T5)

Likewise, another teacher pointed out that although parents care about their children, their lack of knowledge makes it difficult for them to support their children's education effectively:

“Parents care about their children, but their lack of knowledge unfortunately makes it difficult for them to provide support.” (T9)

Furthermore, 30% of the participants emphasized the positive effects of trust-based and individual communication with parents. Participants stated that by demonstrating cultural awareness and establishing individual communication, they were able to build stronger relationships with parents, and that this trust directly contributes to students' academic success. One participant described this situation as follows:

“I knew Kurdish, which made communication with parents easier. Trust develops over time.” (T2)

Another participant highlighted the importance of home visits in strengthening relationships with parents:

“When I conducted home visits, I felt that trust with parents increased.” (T12)

Similarly, another teacher stated that parents often perceive teachers as community leaders, which facilitates communication:

“Parents perceive the teacher as a kind of community leader, which facilitates communication.” (T13)

Another participant emphasized that sincere communication with parents positively influences students' academic success:

“The sincere dialogue I establish with parents is also reflected in students' academic success.” (T20)

In addition, 20% of the participants stated that socioeconomic and cultural factors make communication with parents more difficult. Environmental conditions such as seasonal migration and economic hardship limit teachers' efforts to maintain communication with families. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

“Most families are seasonal workers; when they leave, communication breaks down and the entire responsibility and follow-up fall on the teacher.” (T6)

Another participant referred to cultural differences that sometimes complicate communication:

“It can be difficult to find a common language with some families; cultural differences can be influential.” (T10)

Similarly, another teacher emphasized that family responsibilities assigned to children may affect school attendance and communication with parents:

“I frequently try to communicate with parents about school attendance; some children take care of their siblings or help with livestock.” (T15)

Overall, these findings indicate that teacher–parent communication in rural areas is closely related to socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, and the level of educational awareness. Teachers reported that when trust-based relationships are established, parental support can be obtained more easily. However, communication becomes more challenging with families who do not prioritize education or who experience seasonal migration. These findings highlight the importance of programs aimed at increasing parental awareness and strengthening communication practices in rural education contexts.

Views on Communication with Senior Teachers and Professional Collaboration

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views on communication with senior teachers and professional collaboration were analyzed. The frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' opinions regarding this issue are presented in the table below.

Table 12. Findings on Communication with Senior Teachers

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Professional development through the guidance of senior teachers	10	50
Solidarity with senior teachers and its relationship with motivation	7	35
The effect of distance and cultural differences on communication	3	15
Total	20	100

When Table 12 is examined, it is observed that half of the participants (50%) stated that senior teachers contribute to their professional development by assuming a guiding role. This finding indicates that experienced teachers often function as mentors, especially in rural settings. One of the participants described this situation as follows:

“They were very helpful in classroom practices.” (T1)

Similarly, another participant emphasized the supportive role of senior teachers during challenging situations:

“They supported me by providing guidance during the moments when I struggled.” (T2)

Another participant highlighted their assistance during difficult moments:

“They were very supportive during crisis situations.” (T7)

Likewise, another teacher emphasized the importance of learning from experienced colleagues:

“I learned a lot from senior teachers who had experience with multi-grade classrooms.” (T9)

In addition, 35% of the participants evaluated their relationships with senior teachers in terms of solidarity and social support, stating that they received assistance particularly in practical matters such as communicating with the local community and accommodation. One participant expressed this as follows:

“They helped me a lot in understanding the local culture and how to behave accordingly.” (T5)

Another participant highlighted the cooperative nature of their relationship:

“We had a relationship based on cooperation.” (T12)

Similarly, another teacher emphasized that effective communication helped them feel less isolated at the beginning of their appointment:

“Thanks to good communication, I did not feel very lonely when I was first appointed.” (T17)

Another participant stated that the support of experienced teachers increased their professional confidence:

“As a newly appointed teacher, I gained self-confidence thanks to their support.” (T19)

However, 15% of the participants drew attention to generation gaps and communication difficulties. One participant described this situation as follows:

“Some of them are quite distant.” (T3)

Another participant stated that although generational differences exist, communication is maintained within the framework of mutual respect and professional ethics:

“Even though the generation gap is noticeable, we have good communication within the framework of respect and work ethics.” (T10)

Similarly, another teacher emphasized that the difficulties experienced at the beginning gradually decreased over time:

“I struggled at first, but over time our workplace relationships became stronger.” (T13)

Overall, the findings indicate that communication with senior teachers constitutes an important support mechanism for teachers working in rural areas in terms of professional adaptation, motivation, and sense of belonging.

Views on the Need for Support While Working in Rural Areas

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their views on the need for support while working in rural areas were analyzed. The frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' opinions regarding this issue are presented in the table below.

Table 13. Findings on the Need for Support While Working in Rural Areas

Topics Mentioned	F	%
The need to eliminate physical, technological, and infrastructural deficiencies	6	30
The need for Professional development, in-service training, and guidance support	7	35
Expectation of support based on social activities, morale and communication	5	25
The need to increase teachers' participation in decision-making processes in administrative procedures	2	10
Total	20	100

When Table 13 is examined, it is observed that 35% of the participants expressed opinions regarding the need for professional development and mentoring support. Participants emphasized that in-service training opportunities are insufficient in rural areas and that they particularly need support in areas such as multi-grade classroom management (MGC), working with students with special needs, and current teaching methods. One of the participants explained this situation as follows:

“It is an important need for us that in-service training programs are also accessible in rural areas.” (T2)

Similarly, another participant expressed the need for psychological and guidance services:

“We would like to benefit from psychological support and guidance services.” (T3)

Another teacher emphasized the lack of mentoring during the first years of appointment:

“The absence of mentoring in the first years of teaching is a major deficiency in terms of support.” (T6)

Likewise, another participant highlighted the need for practical training on multi-grade classroom practices:

“Practical support on multi-grade classroom experience should definitely be provided during university education.” (T13)

Another teacher emphasized the need for professional activities related to contemporary teaching methods:

“We sometimes need seminars and workshops related to current teaching methods.” (T18)

The second most frequently expressed opinion (30%) concerns the need for support in educational materials, infrastructure, and living conditions. Teachers stated that the limited physical resources in rural areas make both teaching processes and daily living conditions more challenging. One participant expressed this situation as follows:

“My educational materials are insufficient, and serious support is needed because the technological equipment is outdated.” (T1)

Another participant emphasized the importance of support regarding accommodation and transportation:

“Support regarding accommodation and transportation opportunities is important.” (T5)

Similarly, another teacher highlighted the need for increased financial resources to address infrastructure deficiencies:

“More funding is required to eliminate equipment shortages.” (T9)

Another participant suggested improving access to educational resources:

“Access to online materials should be possible even without internet connection.” (T15)

The third commonly expressed opinion (25%) concerns the need for psychosocial and communicational support. Participants stated that teachers working in rural areas often experience isolation and that the lack of social interaction negatively affects their motivation. One participant expressed this as follows:

“More social activities and motivation programs should be organized.” (T4)

Another participant emphasized the importance of morale support:

“Teachers in rural areas often feel isolated; moral support is important for motivation.” (T7)

Similarly, another teacher stated that increasing social activities may reduce professional loneliness:

“Increasing social activities may reduce professional isolation.” (T12)

Another participant highlighted the need for support in communicating effectively with the local community:

“I feel the need for support in establishing effective communication with the local community.” (T14)

Finally, 10% of the participants emphasized the need for institutional support and administrative participation. Teachers expressed their desire to be more involved in decision-making processes, to reduce administrative workload, and to make supervision processes more constructive. One participant stated this as follows:

“Teachers should be listened to more and their opinions should be consulted at the institutional level.” (T17)

Another participant emphasized the need for a more constructive supervision system:

“In the inspection system, teachers’ shortcomings should be addressed in a constructive manner.” (T20)

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers working in rural areas require a comprehensive support mechanism in terms of professional development, physical conditions, psychosocial support, and institutional participation. Meeting these needs is among the key factors that can increase teachers’ motivation, professional commitment, and the overall quality of education.

General Views on the Experience of Teaching in Rural Areas

The responses given by the participants to the question aimed at determining their general views on the experience of teaching in rural areas were analyzed. The

frequency and percentage distributions of the participants' opinions regarding this issue are presented in the table below.

Table 14. General Views on the Experience of Teaching in Rural Areas

Topics Mentioned	F	%
Visibility of rural teachers' voices and needs	6	30
Strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing the Professional Prestige of teaching	5	25
The need for financial and infrastructure support	4	20
The need for flexibility in the service appointment system	3	15
The moral and intrinsic value of teaching rural areas	2	10
Total	20	100

When Table 14 is examined, it is observed that 30% of the participants stated that the voices of teachers working in rural areas are not sufficiently heard and that their experiences should be made more visible. One of the participants expressed this situation as follows:

“The voices of teachers working in rural areas are not heard.” (T1)

Similarly, another participant emphasized that education policies should be shaped according to the realities in the field:

“Education policies should be shaped according to the realities in the field.” (T9)

Another participant highlighted the importance of making rural teaching experiences more visible:

“Experiences in rural areas should be made much more visible.” (T10)

In addition, 25% of the participants emphasized the need to strengthen institutional support and increase the professional prestige of teaching. One participant expressed this as follows:

“Teachers who contribute to education should be rewarded.” (T4)

Another participant emphasized the need for psychological counseling services in schools:

“Every school needs a psychological counselor.” (T7)

Similarly, another teacher highlighted the importance of reducing non-educational workload:

“Non-educational bureaucratic tasks should be reduced.” (T14)

Furthermore, 20% of the participants drew attention to the need for financial and infrastructural support, while 15% emphasized the need for greater flexibility in appointment and transfer processes. One participant expressed this as follows:

“Transportation support for teachers working in rural areas should be increased.” (T3)

Another participant emphasized the need for financial support for basic educational materials:

“Funding for stationery and basic educational needs should be increased.” (T6)

Similarly, another teacher highlighted the importance of improving internet infrastructure in schools:

“Internet infrastructure in schools should be strengthened.” (T12)

Finally, some participants (10%) emphasized the spiritual and voluntary aspects of teaching in rural areas. One participant expressed this view as follows:

“Teaching in rural areas requires sacrifice and patience.” (T19)

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers working in rural areas feel that their voices are not sufficiently heard and that institutional and financial support is inadequate. Nevertheless, they continue their profession with a strong sense of voluntarism, dedication, and social responsibility. These findings suggest that rural education policies should be aligned more closely with the realities experienced in the field.

Conclusion

This study examined the professional experiences, motivation sources, challenges, and coping strategies of primary school teachers working in rural areas. The findings indicate that teaching in rural regions involves multidimensional challenges in terms of physical conditions and socio-cultural factors. However, these challenges also appear to strengthen teachers’ professional resilience and their sense of social responsibility.

The results obtained are consistent with the findings of Palavan and Donuk (2016), who reported that the problems faced by teachers working in rural areas affect their motivation. Similarly, the data obtained in this study align with the study conducted by Kalman and Gür (2021), which found that female teachers working in villages demonstrate high levels of professional idealism and motivation to serve society. In this context, the present study supports the existing literature by revealing that the difficulties experienced by teachers in rural conditions may also strengthen their professional commitment and the meaningful relationships they establish with students.

The findings indicate that many teachers encounter challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, transportation problems, social isolation, language differences, and cultural barriers. These factors may negatively affect the professional motivation and adaptation processes of newly appointed teachers in particular. The findings are also consistent with the study of Sarı and Yıldız (2018), which emphasizes that teachers’ satisfaction with their working environment is closely related to motivation. Therefore, addressing the challenges faced by teachers in rural areas may increase their motivation and contribute to improving the quality of education.

The research findings also reveal that teachers demonstrate solution-oriented and devoted approaches in response to the challenges they encounter. Participants reported using strategies such as active listening, one-on-one communication, and organizing social activities to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. These findings suggest that teachers’ professional resilience and sense of social responsibility are strengthened through these efforts. The findings of the Köy Okulları Değişim Ağı (2024), which emphasize the importance of supporting the professional development of village teachers, are consistent with the results obtained in this study. Overall, the results indicate that strengthening teachers’ professional development opportunities may contribute to increasing educational equity and improving the quality of teaching in rural areas.

Discussion

This study examined the professional experiences, motivation sources, challenges, and coping strategies of primary school teachers working in rural areas. The findings demonstrate that rural teaching involves various challenges related to physical conditions, social environment, and cultural factors. Nevertheless, teachers develop professional resilience and a strong sense of social responsibility under these conditions.

Participants evaluated their profession within the framework of sacrifice, service to society, and idealism, and they stated that they were able to establish sincere relationships with students despite the limited opportunities in rural environments. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Kalman and Gür (2021) and indicates that teacher motivation is not solely based on financial or physical conditions but is also nourished by psychosocial factors such as meaning, belonging, and social contribution.

Teachers encounter various challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, transportation problems, social isolation, and linguistic and cultural differences. Newly appointed teachers in particular experience difficulties in adapting to rural life and often feel the lack of sufficient support. This situation is consistent with the findings reported by Palavan and Donuk (2016) regarding the physical and social challenges faced by rural teachers.

The findings also indicate that teachers develop solution-oriented approaches to cope with these challenges. Participants reported using strategies such as active listening, one-on-one communication, and organizing social activities to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers in communication with students. These results demonstrate that teachers are proactive problem-solvers and that their motivation is influenced by psychosocial factors, as also emphasized by Sarı, Canoğulları, and Yıldız (2018).

The study also highlights teachers' professional development needs. Participants stated that they have limited opportunities for professional collaboration and development in village schools. The findings of the Village Schools Transformation Network (2024) and Palavan and Donuk (2016) indicate that rural teachers require professional development support and that such support can contribute to increasing educational equality.

Overall, rural teaching emerges as a multidimensional professional experience. Although physical and social challenges may affect motivation, teachers who act with a strong sense of meaning, belonging, and social responsibility demonstrate a high level of professional commitment. Therefore, providing structural and psychosocial support is crucial for improving the quality of rural education and strengthening equality of opportunity.

Recommendations

Based on the results obtained from this study, the following recommendations have been developed:

Recommendations for Educational Policies

- Support mechanisms addressing the basic needs of teachers working in rural areas, such as accommodation, transportation, and school infrastructure, should be strengthened.

- Incentive mechanisms and additional service points for teachers working in rural areas should be enhanced by the Ministry of National Education.
- Teachers working in rural areas should be provided with access to psychosocial support and professional resilience programs.

Recommendations for Teacher Education Processes

- Courses such as “Rural Education and Community” and “Education in Culturally Diverse Contexts” may be offered as compulsory or elective courses in faculties of education.
- Teacher candidates should participate in long-term field practices (internships) in rural areas before graduation in order to experience real-life conditions.
- Rural internship programs may be developed through collaboration between universities and local administrations.

Research and Publication Ethics

In this study, all rules specified in the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were followed. None of the actions defined under the title *Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics* in the directive were committed.

Ethics Committee Approval

This study received ethical approval from the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee, and all necessary permissions were obtained.

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