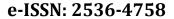# Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi

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The Effect of Teachers' Perceptions of Meaningful Work on the Corrosion of Character Level[*]

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
	In today's world, where the post-industrial transformation has begun to affect educational organizations, the roles and experiences of teachers are also changing. In this context, it is thought that the teacher's ability to find meaning in his profession can reduce the effects of experiences related to precariousness, sense of belonging, drift and individualization. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of teachers' meaningful job perception on the corrosion of character. In order to achieve this aim, both correlational and survey methods were used within the framework of quantitative research in the study. The sample consisted of 382 teachers working in Eyüp District of Istanbul Province in the 2019-2020 academic year. Participants were selected through simple random sampling, one of the probability sampling methods. Data collection tools used in the study were the Meaningful Work Scale and the Corrosion of Character Scale, and data were analyzed using the JAMOVI statistical program. The results showed that teachers' perception of meaningful work was high, while their perception of character corrosion was at a medium level. The study also revealed significant differences in teachers' perceptions of meaningful work and levels of character corrosion based on their personal characteristics. Additionally, the study concluded that the perception of meaningful work serves as a predictor of character corrosion; a higher perception of meaningful work among teachers led to lower levels of character corrosion. **Keywords:** Corrosion of character, meaningful work, meaningful in work, teacher
	Article Type: Research Article

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans have been in search of meaning since the dawn of time, and the era we currently inhabit is characterized by rapid, unprecedented change affecting both personal and professional lives. Historically, the concept of work has held different meanings across various epochs. While work was synonymous with slavery in antiquity, it became glorified and central to life during the industrial age. According to Kovacs (1986), work serves to "humanize" and shape the world. Beyond its economic productivity, work also functions to create and sustain values and meanings. Given that most adults spend the majority of their waking hours at work, it is not surprising that people increasingly seek more than just financial reward or a way to pass the time from their occupations. Today, the concept of meaningful work has garnered more attention than ever. Meaningful work can be defined as work that employees perceive as significant, serving a purpose beyond mere economic gain (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). In other words, it is work that provides a valuable experience for the individual. Within this context, meaningful work has evolved as an important avenue for adding value to people's lives through resources such as purpose fulfillment, personal development (or self-actualization), social rewards, and social reputation (Hansen & Keltner, 2019). In this regard, purpose, self-actualization, social rewards, and reputation serve as resources that imbue work with meaning.

Goals, as one of the key factors contributing to meaning in the workplace, hold the potential to enhance both meaning and motivation in individuals' work experiences. These goals serve as significant sources of meaning, contributing to overall well-being. According to Reker and Wong (1988), goals and values act as the motivating components of meaning, offering guidelines for life. While values are more abstract orientations that may or may not manifest in concrete actions, goals represent specific desired outcomes that an individual is committed to working towards (Emmons, 2005). When employees feel they are serving a clearly defined purpose they are more likely to find meaning in their work. Coleman (2019) states that goals of individuals are constructible, changeable, and multi-faceted in their professional lives. He suggests that individuals should focus on infusing their work with meaning during achieving these goals. This process can also make an important contribution to their personal development.

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As a venue for learning and growth, work provides employees the opportunity to develop new perspectives and self-awareness. It serves as an ideal setting for experiencing the joys of success and progress (Hansen & Keltner, 2019). In this regard, work enables individuals to derive meaning, offering a space where they can better understand themselves, develop professionally, achieve their goals, and attain a sense of spiritual fulfillment (Göçen & Terzi, 2019). As a result, the personal development opportunities provided by work can be important steps toward realizing potential of an individual. This process also affords employees the chance to build meaningful social bonds.

Work also plays a significant role in creating meaning through the provision of social rewards. These social rewards can be categorized under the themes of community membership, contribution, and independence (Hansen & Keltner, 2019). Humans are social beings who seek to connect with a community to achieve a sense of completeness. Like schools, neighborhoods, or other gathering places where people share common interests, the workplace serves as a setting for forming social bonds. The experience of meaningfulness is tied to establishing connections across time; that is, linking the past, present, and future contributes to a sense of meaningfulness (Baumeister & Landau, 2018; Sennett, 2002). Therefore, a sense of belonging is essential for creating meaning. In addition, positive work relationships are crucial for generating meaning in the workplace. Elements such as feeling valued, satisfaction with friendships, and a sense of family contribute to positive work relationships and thus to a sense of meaningful work (Göçen & Terzi, 2019). In this context, what makes work life meaningful can be related not just to social interactions, but also to participation in a cultural system that has shared values and understandings. Such a system allows experiences of kindness, gratitude, and connectedness to positively impact well-being (Baumeister & Landau, 2018). The process of finding meaning at work is intricately linked with social connectedness. So much so that many people would find it difficult to conceive of a meaningful life in isolation. While complex social relationships may bring challenges, stress, or conflicts, they are also fundamental for identity construction and self-expression. These two crucial elements are vital for people to derive meaning in life. Contributing to others within a social context can bolster this sense of meaning (Baumeister & Landau, 2018; Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014). Moreover, an increased awareness of the value one brings to the people and community positively impacted by one's work can further enhance the experience of finding meaning. This is because gaining social prestige not only boosts an individual's self-esteem but also establishes a framework where their contributions at work are recognized and valued by society.

Work also serves as a platform where employees can gain prestige, thereby creating a sense of meaning. According to Hansen and Keltner (2019), reputation in the workplace is built through status and power, which are key resources for generating meaning at work. Occupying a job that is perceived as high-status can often overshadow the effort and challenges encountered to attain that position. Additionally, the workplace provides an opportunity to acquire and exercise power. As a result, if employees place importance on achieving status or wielding power, they are likely to find their work meaningful.

However, Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) have explored meaningful work through three distinct dimensions: positive meaningfulness, the construction of meaning through work, and higher purpose motivations. Meaning at work is largely a subjective experience, making the dimension of positive meaningfulness important for how individuals evaluate the significance and meaning of their jobs. The aspect of constructing meaning through work underscores the notion that individuals derive a sense of their entire lives through their work, which in turn provides personal, social, and societal benefits as well as the creation of meaning on the job. Higher purpose motivations refer to the perception that one's work serves a greater purpose and makes a positive impact on the world. Employees driven by these higher purpose motivations are more likely to find their work meaningful. In addition to the subjectivity of finding meaning in work, the ongoing changes and transformations within organizations also play a crucial role in shaping employees' experiences of meaningful work.

Organizations have started to evolve with advancements in science, technology, and an increasingly globalized economy. Values like routine, authority, and bureaucracy, which organizations once prioritized, have given way to flexibility and individuality. Employees who can swiftly adapt to changes and assert their individuality have become crucial assets for organizations. However, this new flexibility also gives management the right to terminate employees at will, subtly altering the power dynamics and control structures that were more visible in traditional bureaucratic setups (Balfour and Grubbs, 2000). Sennett (2002) posits that this economic transformation has altered the meaning of work, which has, in turn, affected individuals' character. He refers to this impact as the corrosion of character.

Sennett (2002, p.11) defines character as "the personal qualities we find valuable in ourselves and expect others to value," and contends that the notion of a stable, predictable, often lifelong relationship with an employer has historically served as the foundation for people's character since the advent of industrial societies. The rise of new capitalism, governed by the principle of 'short-termism,' undermines the foundation for forming enduring identities. This leads to a futile search among individuals for a meaningful place in life, resulting in growing disillusionment. The term "corrosion of character" describes how people are affected amidst such transformative changes. In a rapidly evolving world, it is unrealistic to expect individuals to remain unchanged.

Akpolat and Çetin (2019) explored the corrosion of character through four dimensions: belonging, precariousness, drifting, and individualism. The dimension of belonging essentially gauges the weakening of an individual's commitment to an organization. This dimension encompasses a decline in the individual's organizational commitment, their inability or unwillingness to make career plans within the organization, and their lack of regard for the opportunity to work there. One of

the primary factors contributing to the corrosion of character is the focus on short-term goals at the expense of long-term connections with the past. The precariousness dimension refers to the psychological state induced by the perception of job precariousness. Given that the main shift in post-industrial transformation is towards flexible working practices, the mental conditions fostered by job precariousness can lead to corrosion of character. The drifting dimension focuses on the individual's inability to maintain a work-life balance and the sense that control over one's life has been lost. Finally, the dimension of individualism is characterized by the individual's pursuit of personal interests and a tendency to act on an individual basis rather than socially.

People frequently derive their social identities from their work (Casey, 1995). Work often serves as both a sense of belonging and a source of identity (Michaelson et al., 2014). Therefore, understanding the alternative sources of meaning available in the workplace can lead to organic growth and contribute to higher purposes within organizational systems that prioritize individual development (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Creating meaning at work is important, not only for the employees but also for the organization as a whole. Research indicates that employees who find their work meaningful are more likely to experience job satisfaction (Kamdron, 2005), exhibit greater trust in management (Wrzesniewski, 2003), engage in volunteer activities (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), demonstrate higher organizational commitment (Geldenhuys, Laba, & Venter, 2014), and perceive a high level of meaning in their lives (Dik & Steger, 2008). In this context, the sources that contribute to creating meaning at work—such as purpose, personal development, social rewards, and reputation—are believed to mitigate the factors that lead to the corrosion of character among employees.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The term "teacher" is defined in the Turkish Language Association dictionary as "one whose profession is to impart knowledge." However, teaching is more than just a profession focused on the transfer of knowledge; it is a multifaceted vocation that involves complex processes and numerous dimensions. The profession technically encompasses domain-specific knowledge, general culture, general aptitude, and pedagogical skills (Demirel, 1999). Prospective teachers begin acquiring these skills during their educational training and continue to develop them throughout their careers. Individuals in the teaching profession often take on multiple roles within the educational system. Çelikten, Şanal and Yeni (2005) have identified these roles as including representation, leadership, instruction, mediation, arbitration, guidance, and judgment. Beyond these idealized roles, teaching is a profession deeply entwined with emotional experiences due to its nature, and it involves making significant decisions that impact the lives of students. Therefore, it stands as a meaningful profession where one can directly experience the satisfaction of making a positive contribution to another person's life.

The central issue is how teachers find meaning in their profession, which inherently fits the criteria of meaningful work. There is limited research in the literature that examines teachers' perceptions of meaningful work. Ağ and Balcı (2019) studied the relationship between teachers' sense of meaning in life and the meaningfulness of their work, concluding that having a sense of meaning in life positively influences the perceived meaningfulness of one's work. Studies on teachers' motivation and job satisfaction, which are considered related to the perception of meaningful work, indicate that as age and tenure increase, job satisfaction also rises (Taş & Selvitopu, 2020). Moreover, teachers working in rural areas tend to have higher job satisfaction compared to their urban counterparts (Ertürk & Keçecioğlu, 2012). Factors such as organizational culture, expectations, and job characteristics also influence professional motivation and job satisfaction (Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2006; Taşdan & Tiryaki, 2010; Yılmaz & Ceylan, 2011; Yılmaz, 2009). In international literature, it is noted that low levels of psychological meaningfulness among teachers contribute to their intention to leave the profession (Fouche, Rothmann, & Vyver, 2017; Janik, 2015). The perception of meaningful work also enhances resilience through organizational commitment (Van Wingerden & Poell, 2019), fosters a positive work attitude (Willemse & Deacon, 2015), and increases commitment (Fouche et al., 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the attitude of meaningful work among teachers, considering both the inherent meaningfulness of the profession and the various personal or organizational factors within the educational system.

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement and increasing global connectivity, a new generation of teachers is required to educate children. The teaching profession has evolved, demanding that teachers acquire new skills and dispositions to keep pace with these changes (Van Wingerden & Poell, 2019). In today's Information Age, the accessibility of information is redefining what it means to be a "teacher." Teachers have always been more than mere "transmitters of knowledge"; they have played multifaceted roles within a complex network of relationships with stakeholders. Now, this is not just an option but also a necessity. As the world undergoes transformation, so too does the meaning and scope of the teaching profession, affecting the character of teachers in the process. The corrosion of character is typified by elements such as job precariousness, a low sense of belonging, drifting, and increased individualization (Akpolat & Çetin, 2019). While teachers in public schools in Turkey enjoy job security, those in private institutions often lack this benefit. Research shows that teachers generally exhibit medium to high levels of organizational commitment (Çoban & Demirtaş, 2011; Kurşunluoğlu et al., 2010). Studies addressing the concept of work-life balance indicate that teachers believe they maintain a moderate equilibrium between work and personal life (Polat & Özdemir, 2017). Ayalp (2005) explores the impact of various factors—such as shifts in parent-student attitudes, declining teacher incomes, the country's economic transformation, and higher unemployment rates among educated individuals—on the reputation of the teaching profession. These changes could potentially give rise to factors that contribute to the corrosion of character. Ayalp (2005) notes that the solidarity culture among teachers has become self-centered, respect for teaching experience has diminished due to easy access to information

and students' growing focus on technology, and teachers must diversify their skills to excel, which may result in them juggling multiple roles. The social structure has effectively commodified the teaching profession, creating conditions that may lead to the corrosion of character for teachers. Therefore, investigating this ongoing transformation within the teaching profession, especially in the context of the corrosion of character, is crucial for understanding the effects of neoliberal changes on educators.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

One of the elements that can have a positive impact on teachers amidst the evolving nature of work is the perception of their work as meaningful (Van Wingerden & Poell, 2019). Since the concept of corrosion of character rests on the premise that social transformations lead to rapid alterations in the work structure, thereby diminishing the opportunity to construct a meaningful life narrative (Sennett, 2002), it is hypothesized that an individual's perception of meaningful work could influence the level of corrosion of character. Within this framework, the aim of this study is to explore the impact of teachers' perceptions of meaningful work on their susceptibility to corrosion of character.

1.3. Problem of the Study

In this study, we sought to answer the question, "Do teachers' perceptions of meaningful work affect their levels of corrosion of character?" To address this primary question, the following sub-problems were formulated.

1.3.1. Sub-problems of the study

- What are teachers' perceptions of meaningful work and corrosion of character?
- Do the levels of meaningful work and corrosion of character among teachers show a significant difference according to demographic variables?
- Is there a relationship between teachers' perceptions of meaningful work and their levels of corrosion of character?
- Does teachers' perception of meaningful work predict their levels of corrosion of character?

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, both survey and correlational designs were employed as part of quantitative research methods. The survey model aims to describe the current or past states of particular situations. Meanwhile, the correlational design seeks to identify the presence and/or degree of relationships between two or more variables (Karasar, 2003).

2.1. Participants

The study population consists of 2,729 teachers employed in the Eyüp District of Istanbul Province during the 2019-2020 academic year. The study's sample was determined using simple random sampling from probability sampling methods. The sample size was established as 341, based on the table for determining the estimated sample size for specific population sizes with a confidence level of $\alpha = .05$ (Büyüköztürk, 2012). To account for non-returns or incompletely or incorrectly filled-out scale forms, 500 scale forms were distributed. The study sample ultimately comprised 383 teachers whose scale forms were returned. Information regarding the demographic characteristics of the sample is involved in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Demographic Information	Level	f	%
Gender	Female	305	%80
	Male	78	%20
Type of School	Public	266	%70
	Private	117	%30
Type of Employment	Permanent	175	%46
	Contracted	11	%3
	Paid	80	%20
	Contracted (Private)	117	%31
Education Level	Undergraduate	312	%81
	Postgraduate	71	%19
Marital Status	Single	193	%51
	Married	190	%49
Age Group	20-30	166	%43
	31-40	139	%36
	41-50	64	%17
	51 +	14	%4

Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	%20
	Branch teacher	305	%80
Seniority	1-5 years	153	%40
	6-10 years	85	%22
	11-15 years	62	%16
	16-20 years	42	%11
	21-25 years	27	%7
	26 years +	14	%4

Upon examining Table 1, it becomes evident that the sample is diverse in terms of demographic characteristics. Specifically, 80% of the participants are female and 20% are male. In terms of employment type, 70% work in public schools while 30% are employed in private schools. Concerning job security, 46% have permanent positions, 3% are contracted, 20% are paid employees, and 31% are contracted within private schools. As for educational attainment, 81% hold undergraduate degrees and 19% have postgraduate degrees. Regarding marital status, the sample is nearly evenly split with 51% being single and 49% married. In terms of age distribution, 43% are between 20-30 years old, 36% are between 31-40, 17% fall within the 41-50 age range, and 4% are 51 or older. Professional background also varies; 20% are primary school teachers, while 80% are specialized branch teachers. Finally, seniority within the teaching profession is also distributed, with 40% having 1-5 years of experience, 22% having 6-10 years, 16% with 11-15 years, 11% at 16-20 years, 7% with 21-25 years, and 4% with 26 years or more.

2.2. Assessment (Data Collection) Instruments Used for the Research

The data for this study were gathered using two scales: the Meaningful Work for Educational Organizations Scale (MWEOS), developed by Göçen and Terzi in 2019, and the Corrosion of Character Scale (CCS), developed by Akpolat and Çetin in 2019.

The MWEOS comprises 21 items spread across six dimensions. These dimensions are: "Meaning at Work", "Search for Meaning at Work", "Work Relationships", "Transcendence at Work", "Humility at Work", and "Meaning at Work Leadership". The reliability coefficients for these sub-dimensions are as follows: $\alpha=.84$ for Meaning at Work, $\alpha=.80$ for Search for Meaning at Work, $\alpha=.84$ for Work Relationships, $\alpha=.84$ for Transcendence at Work, $\alpha=.73$ for Humility at Work, and $\alpha=.80$ for Meaning at Work Leadership. The overall reliability value for the scale is $\alpha=.84$.

The CCS features 22 items divided into four dimensions: Belonging, Precariousness, Drifting, and Individuality. The reliability coefficients for these sub-dimensions are $\alpha=.85$ for the Belonging dimension, $\alpha=.81$ for the Precariousness dimension, $\alpha=.87$ for the Drifting dimension, and $\alpha=.81$ for the Individuality dimension. The overall reliability value for the CCS is $\alpha=.90$.

2.3. Analysis of the Data

The collected data were analyzed using the JAMOVI statistical software. Reliability analyses were carried out for both the Meaningful Work for Educational Organizations Scale (MWEOS) and the Corrosion of Character Scale (CCS). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the overall scales and their respective sub-dimensions are as follows: $\alpha = .82$ for the overall MWEOS, $\alpha = .80$ for the Meaning at Work dimension, $\alpha = .84$ for the Search for Meaning at Work dimension, $\alpha = .88$ for the Work Relationships dimension, $\alpha = .70$ for the Transcendence at Work dimension, $\alpha = .77$ for the Humility at Work dimension, and $\alpha = .72$ for the Meaning at Work Leadership dimension; $\alpha = .89$ for the overall CCS, $\alpha = .79$ for the Belonging dimension, $\alpha = .79$ for the Precariousness dimension, $\alpha = .89$ for the Drifting dimension, and $\alpha = .79$ for the Individuality dimension. It is generally agreed that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient higher than .70 shows good reliability. In this context, it can be asserted that the measurement tools employed in the study are reliable. To decide on the appropriate analytical method, the data were examined to see if they met the normality assumption by looking at the kurtosis and skewness values. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), the kurtosis-skewness value should fall within the range of ±1.5 to meet the normality assumption. The data from each scale were found to be within the acceptable range for their respective sub-dimensions, confirming that the data set met the normality assumption. Therefore, parametric tests were chosen for the analysis. The mean scores for the sub-dimensions were calculated to address the first sub-problem. The second sub-problem was analyzed using t-tests and ANOVA. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient was computed for the third sub-problem, and multiple regression analysis was conducted for the fourth sub-problem.

3. FINDINGS

The mean values for teachers' responses to the sub-dimensions of both the Corrosion of Character Scale and the Meaningful Work Perception Scale are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2.
Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Teachers' Perceptions of Meaningful Work and Corrosion of Character

Scale	Sub-Dimension		M	SD
Meaningful Work	Meaning at Work		4.21	.68
	Search for Meaning at Work		3.00	1.09
	Work Relationships		3.79	.86
	Transcendence at Work		4.15	.65
	Humility at Work		3.94	.70
	Meaning at Work Leadership		4.13	.70
Corrosion of Character	Belongingness		2.83	.93
	Precariousness		2.61	.97
	Drifting		2.95	1.04
	Individuality		2.77	.93

Upon examining Table 2, it is observed that teachers perceive the highest level of meaningful work in the "Meaning at Work" dimension and the lowest in the "Search for Meaning at Work" dimension. Teachers' perceptions in the "Search for Meaning at Work" category are at a moderate level, while their perceptions in the "Meaning at Work" category are notably high. Their perceptions across other dimensions are also generally high. In terms of corrosion of character, teachers experience the highest level in the "Drifting" dimension and the lowest in the "Precariousness" dimension. Overall, teachers experience a moderate level of corrosion of character across all dimensions.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether teachers' perceptions of meaningful work vary based on factors including gender, type of school in which they are employed, teaching field, educational background, and marital status. The corresponding findings are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3.
T-Test Results for Sub-Dimensions of Meaningful Work according to Gender, Type of School, Teaching Field, Education Status and Marital Status

Sub-Dimension	Variable	Level	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Meaning at Work	Gender	Female	305	4.22	.67	.603	381	.54
		Male	78	4.17	.60			
	Type of School	Public	266	4.26	.60	2.129	381	.03
		Private	117	4.10	.77			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	4.29	.56	1.16	381	.24
		Branch teacher	305	4.19	.68			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	4.22	.64	.209	381	.83
		Postgraduate	71	4.20	.72			
	Marital Status	Single	193	4.24	.67	.725	381	.46
		Married	190	4.19	.64			
Search for Meaning at Work	Gender	Female	305	4.22	.67	.835	381	.40
		Male	78	4.17	.60			
	Type of School	Public	266	2.92	1.12	-1.94	381	.05
		Private	117	3.16	1.10			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	2.61	1.09	-3.40	381	.000
		Branch teacher	305	3.09	1.11			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	3.04	1.11	1.775	381	.07
		Postgraduate	71	2.78	1.14			
	Marital Status	Single	193	3.23	1.07	4.26	381	.000
		Married	190	2.75	1.12			
Work Relationships	Gender	Female	305	3.02	1.13	-1.99	381	.04
		Male	78	2.90	1.07			
	Type of School	Public	266	3.80	.79	.84	381	.40
		Private	117	4.05	.72			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	3.84	.82	.770	381	.44
		Branch teacher	305	4.11	.68			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	3.79	.81	.593	381	.55
		Postgraduate	71	4.16	.74			

			N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
	Marital Status	Single	193	3.72	.82	-1.413	381	.15
		Married	190	2.75	1.12			
	Gender	Female	305	4.14	.62	-.167	381	.86
		Male	78	4.16	.74			
	Type of School	Public	266	4.18	.63	1.453	381	.14
		Private	117	4.07	.69			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	4.09	.67	-.86	381	.38
Transcendence at Work		Branch teacher	305	4.16	.64			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	4.13	.64	-1.05	381	.29
		Postgraduate	71	4.22	.66			
	Marital Status	Single	193	4.13	.70	-.53	381	.35
		Married	190	4.16	.59			
	Gender	Female	305	3.96	.71	1.35	381	.17
		Male	78	3.84	.62			
	Type of School	Public	266	3.94	.69	.238	381	.81
		Private	117	3.92	.68			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	3.83	.72	-1.48	381	.13
Humility at Work		Branch teacher	305	3.96	.68			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	3.94	.68	.298	381	.76
		Postgraduate	71	3.91	.75			
	Marital Status	Single	193	4.00	.67	2.00	381	.04
		Married	190	3.86	.70			
	Gender	Female	305	4.11	.69	-.603	381	.54
		Male	78	4.17	.63			
	Type of School	Public	266	4.16	.65	1.364	381	.17
		Private	117	4.05	.72			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	4.20	.63	1.040	381	.29
Meaning at Work Leadership		Branch teacher	305	4.11	.68			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	4.12	.66	-.53	381	.59
		Postgraduate	71	4.16	.74			
	Marital Status	Single	193	4.16	.62	.92	381	.35
		Married	190	4.09	.72			

Upon examining Table 3, it becomes evident that significant differences exist in teachers' perceptions in the "Meaning at Work" dimension based on the type of school, in the "Work Relationships" dimension according to gender, and in the "Humility at Work" dimension depending on marital status. When we delve into the averages for the variables where significant differences are observed, it is revealed that public school teachers have a higher perception of meaningful work compared to their private school counterparts. Likewise, female teachers score higher in their perception of work relationships than male teachers, and single teachers have a more elevated perception of humility at work than married teachers.

An ANOVA test was conducted to determine whether significant differences exist in teachers' perceptions of the sub-dimensions of meaningful work, according to the variable of seniority. The findings from this test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
One-Way ANOVA Results Regarding Teachers' Perceptions of Meaningful Work Subdimensions According to Seniority Variable

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Seniority	N	M	SD	F	p
Seniority	Meaning at Work	1-5 years	153	4.20	.69	.992	.42
		6-10 years	85	4.32	.58		
		11-15 years	62	4.15	.69		
		16-20 years	42	4.10	.67		
		21-25 years	27	4.20	.69		
		26 years+	14	4.27	.46		
	Search for Meaning at Work	1-5 years	153	3.30	1.04	6.515	.000
		6-10 years	85	3.08	1.07		
		11-15 years	62	2.77	1.20		
		16-20 years	42	2.42	1.07		
		21-25 years	27	2.60	.99		
		26 years+	14	2.55	1.17		
	Work Relationships	1-5 years	153	3.67	.84	2.010	.08
		6-10 years	85	3.89	.74		
		11-15 years	62	3.79	.89		
		16-20 years	42	3.81	.70		
		21-25 years	27	3.81	.81		
		26 years+	14	4.11	.49		
	Transcendence at Work	1-5 years	153	4.17	.68	.736	.59
		6-10 years	85	4.16	.59		
		11-15 years	62	4.01	.70		
		16-20 years	42	4.16	.63		
		21-25 years	27	4.14	.52		
		26 years+	14	4.33	.65		
	Humility at Work	1-5 years	153	3.94	.68	.569	.72
		6-10 years	85	4.00	.72		
		11-15 years	62	3.97	.76		
		16-20 years	42	3.85	.60		
		21-25 years	27	3.84	.50		
		26 years+	14	3.76	.92		
	Meaning at Work Leadership	1-5 years	153	4.15	.64	.557	.73
		6-10 years	85	4.10	.74		
		11-15 years	62	4.13	.65		
		16-20 years	42	4.07	.70		
		21-25 years	27	4.01	.74		
		26 years+	14	4.33	.59		

As a result of the ANOVA test, it was found that a significant difference exists in the sub-dimension of "search for meaning at work" based on the teachers' seniority levels. A Tukey post-hoc test was conducted to identify which specific groups the difference was between. The results indicated a significant difference in favor of teachers with 11-15, 16-20, and 21-25 years of seniority when compared to those with 1-5 years of seniority.

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether significant differences exist in teachers' perceptions of meaningful work sub-dimensions based on their employment type. The findings are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5.
One-Way ANOVA Results Regarding Teachers' Perceptions of Meaningful Work Subdimensions According to Employment Type

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Type of employment	N	M	SD	F	p
Type of Employment	Meaning at Work	Permanent	175	4.19	.63	4.834	.005
		Contracted	11	4.18	.67		
		Paid	80	4.42	.48		
		Contracted(private)	117	4.10	.770		
	Search for Meaning at Work	Permanent	175	2.77	1.12	4.616	.006
		Contracted	11	3.30	.79		
		Paid	80	3.20	1.11		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.16	1.10		
	Work Relationships	Permanent	175	3.80	.76	.288	.83
		Contracted	11	3.70	.64		
		Paid	80	3.81	.88		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.72	.83		
	Transcendence at Work	Permanent	175	4.13	.61	2.128	.110
		Contracted	11	4.06	.64		
		Paid	80	4.31	.65		
		Contracted(private)	117	4.07	.69		
	Humility at Work	Permanent	175	3.92	.70	1.423	.248
		Contracted	11	3.55	.82		
		Paid	80	4.03	.65		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.92	.68		
	Meaning at Work Leadership	Permanent	175	4.12	.67	2.469	.07
		Contracted	11	3.91	.44		
		Paid	80	4.26	.61		
		Contracted(private)	117	4.05	.72		

As Table 5 is provided, significant differences were found in the subdimensions of "meaning at work" and "search for meaning at work" based on teachers' employment types. A Tukey test was conducted to determine the specific groups between which these differences were significant. The results indicate a significant difference in the subdimension of "meaning at work" in favor of permanent teachers compared to contracted teachers in private schools. However, in the subdimension of "search for meaning at work", the difference was significant in favor of contracted teachers working in private schools, paid teachers, and permanent teachers.

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of meaningful work subdimensions based on their age. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.
One-Way ANOVA Results Regarding Teachers' Perceptions of Meaningful Work Subdimensions According to Age Variable

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Age	N	M	SD	F	p
Age	Meaning at Work	20-30	166	4.26	.64	2.648	.06
		31-40	139	4.19	.71		
		41-50	64	4.09	.59		
		51 +	14	4.44	.40		
	Search for Meaning at Work	20-30	166	3.36	1.02	13.402	.000
		31-40	139	2.82	1.13		
		41-50	64	2.46	1.03		
		51 +	14	1.83	1.12		
	Work Relationships	20-30	166	3.72	.82	2.519	.06
		31-40	139	3.77	.86		
		41-50	64	3.88	.66		
		51 +	14	4.11	.50		
	Transcendence at Work	20-30	166	4.12	.69	.480	.69
		31-40	139	4.18	.65		
		41-50	64	4.10	.55		
		51 +	14	4.26	.60		
	Humility at Work	20-30	166	3.97	.69	1.132	.34
		31-40	139	3.95	.74		
		41-50	64	3.80	.60		
		51 +	14	3.95	.56		

		20-30	166	4.11	.68	2.170	.10
Meaning at Work		31-40	139	4.15	.69		
Leadership		41-50	64	4.04	.65		
		51 +	14	4.45	.53		

Upon examining Table 6, it is evident that a significant difference exists in the sub-dimension of "search for meaning at work" based on the age of the teachers. A Tukey post-hoc test was performed to identify between which age groups this difference is significant. The results indicate that a noteworthy difference exists between teachers aged 20-30 and those in the 31-40 and 41-50 age brackets, in favor of the first group.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to explore whether teachers' perceptions of the corrosion of character vary according to factors such as gender, type of school in which they are employed, teaching field, educational status, and marital status. The relevant findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.
T-Test Results for Sub-Dimensions of Corrosion of Character According to Gender, Type of School, Teaching Field, Educational Status, and Marital Status

Sub-Dimension	Variable	Level	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Belongingness	Gender	Female	305	2.84	.93	.477	381	.634
		Male	78	2.79	.92			
	Type of School	Public	266	2.70	.87	-4.38	381	.000
		Private	117	3.14	.98			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	2.61	.84	-2.38	381	.018
		Branch teacher	305	2.89	.94			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	2.85	.94	.73	381	.466
		Postgraduate	71	2.76	.86			
	Marital Status	Single	193	3.01	.90	2.08	381	.038
		Married	190	2.65	.92			
Precariousness	Gender	Female	305	2.68	.97	2.691	381	.007
		Male	78	2.34	.95			
	Type of School	Public	266	2.39	.94	-6.83	381	.000
		Private	117	3.10	.89			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	2.33	2.17	-2.82	381	.005
		Branch teacher	305	2.68	2.67			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	2.64	.99	1.234	381	.218
		Postgraduate	71	2.48	.92			
	Marital Status	Single	193	2.97	.95	7.91	381	.000
		Married	190	2.24	.85			
Drifting	Gender	Female	305	2.99	.99	1.491	381	.137
		Male	78	2.79	1.17			
	Type of School	Public	266	2.74	.97	-6.07	381	.000
		Private	117	3.41	1.02			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	2.79	1.04	-1.54	381	.124
		Branch teacher	305	2.99	1.03			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	2.95	1.05	-.008	381	.993
		Postgraduate	71	2.95	.97			
	Marital Status	Single	193	3.10	1.10	2.88	381	.004
		Married	190	2.80	.94			
Individuality	Gender	Female	305	2.78	.95	.41	381	.681
		Male	78	2.74	.86			
	Type of School	Public	266	2.64	.89	-4.50	381	.000
		Private	117	3.09	.96			
	Teaching Field	Primary school teacher	78	2.70	.99	-2.38	381	.018
		Branch teacher	305	2.79	.92			
	Education	Undergraduate	312	2.73	.93	-1.79	381	.073
		Postgraduate	71	2.95	.95			
	Marital Status	Single	193	2.87	1.01	2.08	381	.038
		Married	190	2.67	.85			

When Table 7 is examined, significant differences are observed in the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character. Specifically, in the "belonging" sub-dimension, differences are noted according to the type of school, teaching field, and marital status. In the "precariousness" sub-dimension, differences exist according to gender, type of school, teaching field, and marital status. In the "drift" sub-dimension, differences are seen according to school type and marital status; and in the "individuality" sub-

dimension, differences are found according to the type of school, teaching field, and marital status. When examining the averages of the variables with significant differences, the following can be observed: Teachers working in private schools have lower levels of belonging compared to those in public schools. Branch teachers have lower levels than classroom teachers, and single teachers have lower levels of belonging than their married counterparts. Conversely, women perceive higher levels of precariousness than men, private school teachers perceive higher levels of precariousness than public school teachers, subject teachers perceive higher levels of precariousness than classroom teachers, and single teachers perceive higher levels of precariousness than married teachers. Additionally, private school teachers experience higher levels of drift compared to public school teachers, and single teachers experience higher levels of drift than married teachers. Lastly, private school teachers exhibit higher levels of individuality than public school teachers, subject teachers have higher levels of individuality than classroom teachers, and single teachers have higher levels of individuality than married teachers.

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in teachers' perceptions of the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character based on seniority. The findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.
One-Way ANOVA Results Regarding Teachers' Perceptions of the Sub-Dimensions of Corrosion of Character According to Seniority Variable

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Seniority	N	M	SD	F	P
Seniority	Belongingness	1-5 years	153	3.01	.93	3.37	.008
		6-10 years	85	2.83	.94		
		11-15 years	62	2.76	.96		
		16-20 years	42	2.64	.82		
		21-25 years	27	2.57	.82		
		26 years+	14	2.31	.75		
	Precariousness	1-5 years	153	3.14	.89	30.22	.000
		6-10 years	85	2.58	1.00		
		11-15 years	62	2.08	.79		
		16-20 years	42	2.20	.74		
		21-25 years	27	1.94	.54		
		26 years+	14	1.85	.46		
	Drifting	1-5 years	153	3.11	1.08	3.77	.004
		6-10 years	85	2.99	1.13		
		11-15 years	62	2.91	.86		
		16-20 years	42	2.66	.96		
		21-25 years	27	2.75	.85		
		26 years+	14	2.31	.71		
	Individuality	1-5 years	153	2.83	.99	3.92	.003
		6-10 years	85	2.82	.86		
		11-15 years	62	2.86	.92		
		16-20 years	42	2.72	.89		
		21-25 years	27	2.55	.97		
		26 years+	14	2.10	.59		

Upon examining Table 9, it becomes evident that there are significant differences in the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character based on teachers' seniority. The Tukey test, a type of post-hoc test, was conducted to identify the groups between which these differences occur. Specifically, teachers with 1-5 years of seniority experience lower levels of belonging and higher levels of drift compared to teachers with 26 years of seniority and above. Additionally, the perception of precariousness is higher among teachers with 1-5 years of seniority than in all other groups. On the other hand, teachers with 26 years of seniority and above exhibit lower levels of individuality compared to other groups.

An ANOVA test was performed to examine whether there were significant differences in teachers' perceptions of the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character based on their type of employment. The findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.
One-Way ANOVA Results Regarding the Sub-Dimensions of Corrosion of Character According to the Type of Employment of Teachers

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Type of employment	N	M	SD	F	p
Type of Employment	Belongingness	Permanent	175	2.71	.82	6.41	.001
		Contracted	11	2.33	.83		
		Paid	80	2.71	.97		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.14	.98		
	Precariousness	Permanent	175	1.95	.63	87.66	.000
		Contracted	11	2.65	.87		
		Paid	80	3.34	.79		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.10	.89		
	Drifting	Permanent	175	2.71	.95	11.98	.000
		Contracted	11	2.75	.69		
		Paid	80	2.82	1.04		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.41	1.02		
	Individuality	Permanent	175	2.70	.88	6.95	.000
		Contracted	11	2.53	.72		
		Paid	80	2.52	.92		
		Contracted(private)	117	3.09	.96		

There is a significant difference in the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character according to teachers' type of employment. The Tukey test, a post-hoc test, was conducted to identify between which groups these differences occur. According to the results, contracted teachers in private schools experience a lower sense of belonging compared to other groups. Permanent teachers perceive lower levels of precariousness compared to other groups. Furthermore, contracted teachers in private schools perceive higher levels of drift and individuality than do permanent teachers.

An ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether there are significant differences in teachers' perceptions of the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character based on their age. The findings are presented in Table 10.

Table 10.
One-Way ANOVA Results Regarding the Sub-dimensions of Corrosion of Character According to Teachers' Age

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Age	N	M	SD	F	P
Age	Belongingness	20-30	166	3.00	.92	5.20	.003
		31-40	139	2.79	.95		
		41-50	64	2.59	.82		
		51 +	14	2.38	.76		
	Precariousness	20-30	166	3.07	.90	32.93	.000
		31-40	139	2.37	.97		
		41-50	64	2.06	.66		
		51 +	14	2.02	.67		
	Drifting	20-30	166	3.21	1.10	15.65	.000
		31-40	139	2.87	.98		
		41-50	64	2.62	.86		
		51 +	14	2.17	.50		
	Individuality	20-30	166	2.92	.94	12.70	.000
		31-40	139	2.81	.95		
		41-50	64	2.51	.81		
		51 +	14	1.94	.56		

A significant difference is observed in the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character according to the age of the teachers. A Tukey test, one of the post-hoc tests, was conducted to identify the groups between which these differences occur. Accordingly, teachers in the 20-30 age group perceive a lower level of belonging compared to those in the 41-50 age group. Teachers in the 20-30 age group also perceive higher levels of precariousness and drift compared to other age groups. On the other hand, teachers aged 51 and over perceive lower levels of individuality compared to those aged 20-30 and 31-40. Teachers in the 20-30 age group perceive higher levels of individuality than those in the 41-50 age group.

The relationship between teachers' perceptions of meaningful work and the level of corrosion of character was examined using Pearson Correlation Coefficients. The findings from this analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11.
Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Meaningful Work and Corrosion of Character Scores

Sub-Dimension	Belongingness	Precariousness	Drifting	Individuality
Meaning at Work	-.478*	-.186*	-.310*	-.308*
Search for Meaning at Work	.161*	.319*	.207*	.215*
Work Relationships	-.453*	-.207*	-.321*	-.533*
Transcendence at Work	-.126*	-.096	-.151*	-.217*
Humility at Work	-.198*	.021	-.101*	-.053
Meaning at Work Leadership	-.387*	-.132*	-.202*	-.184*

*p<.001

Upon examining Table 11, it becomes apparent that there is a moderate negative relationship between teachers' perceptions of meaning at work and the sub-dimensions of belonging, drifting, and individuality. There is also a low-level negative relationship with precariousness. Furthermore, there is a low-level positive relationship between the search for meaning at work and precariousness, drifting, and individualism, along with a moderate positive relationship with belonging. Work relationships display a moderate negative relationship with belonging, drifting, and individualism, and a low-level negative relationship with precariousness. Transcendence at work shows a low-level negative relationship with belonging, immersion, and individuality, while humility at work is inversely related to belonging and drifting at a low level. Finally, meaningful leadership at work shows a low-level negative relationship with precariousness, drifting, and individualism, and a moderate negative relationship with belonging.

To see the effect of teachers' perceptions of meaningful work on levels of corrosion of character, multiple regression analyses were performed. The first regression analysis aimed to identify the impact of sub-dimensions of meaningful work on the belonging sub-dimension of corrosion of character, found that transcendence at work, humility at work, and meaningful leadership at work had no significant effect. Thus, these sub-dimensions were removed from further analysis. In next regression analysis focused on the precariousness sub-dimension of corrosion of character, the dimensions of transcendence at work and humility at work were excluded as they showed no relationship with precariousness. The results showed that meaningful leadership at work and the search for meaning at work also had no significant effect and were thus excluded from the analysis. Further regression analyses were carried out to see the effects of meaningful work sub-dimensions on the drifting and individuality sub-dimensions of corrosion of character. In both analyses, the dimensions of transcendence at work, humility at work, and meaningful leadership at work were found to be insignificant and were thus excluded. The results of the regression analyses for the sub-dimensions included in each analysis are involved in Table 12.

Table 12.
Multiple Regression Results on the Effect of Meaningful Work Sub-dimensions on Corrosion of Character Sub-dimensions

Meaningful Work Sub-Dimensions	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	p	VIF
(Constant) (Belongingness)	5.828	.305		19.11	.000	
Meaning at Work	-.459	.08	-.326	-6.70	.000	1.30
Search for Meaning at Work	.079	.03	.096	2.22	.027	1.03
Work Relationships	-.343	.05	-.298	-6.21	.000	1.27
R2=.307	Adjusted R2=.301		F= 55.9	p<.001		Durbin-Watson (d)= 1.81
(Constant) (Precariousness)	4.033	.330		12.21	.000	
Meaning at Work	-.171	.08	-.115	-2.06	.041	1.27
Work Relationships	-.186	.06	-.154	-2.73	.007	1.27
R2=.053	Adjusted R2=.048		F= 10.7	p<.001		Durbin-Watson (d)= 1.23
(Constant) Drifting)	4.779	.373		12.79	.000	
Meaning at Work	-.279	.08	-.178	-3.32	.000	1.30
Search for Meaning at Work	.156	.04	.168	3.54	.027	1.03
Work Relationships	-.297	.06	-.232	-4.38	.000	1.27
R2=.164	Adjusted R2=.158		F= 24.8	p<.001		Durbin-Watson (d)= 1.90
Constant) (Individuality)	5.061	.31		16.22	.000	
Meaning at Work	.155	.03	.185	4.40	.000	1.00
Work Relationships	-.584	.05	-.050	-11.64	.000	1.06
Transcendence at Work	-.131	.06	-.091	-2.11	.03	1.06
R2=.328	Adjusted R2=.323		F= 61.7	p<.001		Durbin-Watson (d)= 1.92

Upon examining Table 12, it is clear that there is no issue of multicollinearity between the independent variables (VIF < 10; 1.5 < Durbin-Watson < 2.5) (Albayrak, 2008; Kalaycı, 2009). The belonging dimension, one of the sub-dimensions of corrosion of character, is significantly predicted in the opposite direction by meaningful work sub-dimensions such as meaningful work, meaning at work, and work relationships. The sub-dimension of seeking meaning at work predicts the belonging dimension significantly in a positive direction. Teachers' perceptions of meaningful work in these dimensions account for 30% of the variation in levels of belonging. The precariousness dimension, another sub-dimension of corrosion of character, is

significantly predicted in the opposite direction by the dimensions of meaningful work and work relationships. Teachers' perceptions in these dimensions explain 4% of the level of precariousness. The drifting dimension, also a sub-dimension of corrosion of character, is significantly predicted in the opposite direction by the meaningful work sub-dimensions of meaningful work, meaning at work, and work relationships. Conversely, the sub-dimension of seeking meaning at work predicts the drifting dimension in a positive direction. Teachers' perceptions of meaningful work in these dimensions account for 15% of the drifting level. Lastly, the individuality dimension of corrosion of character is significantly impacted in the opposite direction by the meaningful work sub-dimensions of work relationships and transcendence at work. The sub-dimension of seeking meaning at work affects the individuality dimension in a positive direction. Teachers' perceptions of meaningful work in these areas explain 32% of the level of individuality.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this study, which investigated the impact of teachers' perceptions of meaningful work on corrosion of character, it was concluded that teachers perceive their work as highly meaningful while their perceptions of corrosion of character are moderate. An examination of existing literature reveals numerous studies indicating that teachers find their work to be highly meaningful (Gezen & Kaya, 2023; Gümüş, 2020; İmalı & Kaya, 2022; Karataş & Özdemir, 2022; Toptaş, 2018; Willey, 2016). Pontefract (2016) suggests that individuals can possess one of three types of work mindsets: job-oriented, career-oriented, and goal-oriented. A job-oriented mindset focuses on the salary an individual receives in exchange for their labor. A career-oriented mindset emphasizes career advancement, including increased salary, job title, scope of authority, and team expansion. In contrast, a goal-oriented mindset takes a broader view, encompassing enthusiasm, creativity, and a sense of responsibility toward one's work. This mindset emerges when an individual's personal and professional goals align. To find meaning in their work, individuals need to cultivate a goal-oriented mindset. Supporting this view, Toptaş (2018) argues that the factors positively affecting teachers' sense of meaningful work include the joy of teaching, being of service to society, and maintaining positive social relationships with stakeholders. Teaching is inherently a profession with high motivational power (Göçen, 2019). Both the individual outcomes of the teacher's role, such as guiding student learning, and the societal outcomes like producing well-educated human resources, contribute to the perception of teaching as a meaningful profession.

Public school teachers exhibit a higher perception of meaningful work compared to their private school counterparts. The term "meaning at work" pertains to self-recognition and personal development achieved through one's profession (Göçen & Terzi, 2019). While opportunities for self-evaluation and goal attainment are present in both public and private teaching settings, private school teachers reportedly experience higher levels of work-related stress (Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2006). This could contribute to their lower perception of meaningful work. Similarly, tenured teachers have a more elevated sense of meaningful work than do salaried or contracted teachers in private schools. This heightened perception among tenured teachers is likely influenced by their job security compared to those employed under different conditions. Indeed, Maslow's hierarchy of needs places "meaning at work" at the top of the pyramid, whereas the need for security appears lower down, as a more basic requirement. Although Maslow's concept of security is commonly associated with physical safety or shelter, he suggests that choosing a secure job serves to fulfill this fundamental need for security (cited in Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). This perspective could account for the higher levels of meaningful work perceived by tenured teachers. Additionally, teachers with extensive years of service in the profession tend to have a stronger perception of meaningful work compared to those who are just starting out. Long-standing teachers are more likely to identify with their job, perceive it as an integral part of their identity, and experience a greater level of spiritual satisfaction than entry-level teachers. Supporting this observation, Balcı, Akar, and Öztürk (2019) noted in their study on academic staff that individuals holding the title of professor had a higher sense of work-related integrity.

Contracted teachers in private schools exhibit a higher tendency to search for meaning at work compared to permanent teachers. The search for meaning at work can be defined as the quest to answer the question, "Why am I doing this job?" It involves identifying elements that imbue the job with significance (Göçen & Terzi, 2019). To find such meaning, there should be a congruence between personal values and organizational values. Taşdan (2010) argues that teachers in private schools have higher value congruence than those in public schools, attributing this to the school culture and staff selection processes. Consequently, teachers in private institutions may continue to explore aspects that make their work meaningful within an organizational culture that aligns with their individual values. Additionally, the study found that teachers in the 20-30 age bracket are more actively engaged in the search for meaning at work compared to those in the 31-40 and 41-50 age groups. This trend suggests that the drive to find meaning in one's work may diminish as one finds a better alignment between individual and organizational values, a process that often coincides with increasing age.

Female teachers have a higher perception of work relationships compared to male teachers. Toptaş (2018) notes that female teachers attribute greater significance to social relationships at work than their male counterparts do. According to Harpaz (1990), females generally have higher expectations than males when it comes to social relationships in the workplace. This could account for why female teachers find greater meaning in their work through the lens of work relationships.

The level of corrosion of character among teachers was found to be moderate. This could be interpreted as a sign that neoliberal transformations are beginning to affect employees in the education sector. The fact that the study sample was drawn from Istanbul, Turkey's largest and most cosmopolitan city, may have intensified the impact of this transformation. The

study found that teachers experience the highest level of corrosion of character in the form of drifting. Drifting is defined as a feeling of losing control over one's life, being responsible for keeping up with new developments, and struggling to maintain a work-life balance (Çetin & Akpolat, 2019). This finding aligns with Akpolat's 2019 study, which concluded that research assistants experience the highest level of corrosion of character in the form of drifting. Conversely, teachers experience the lowest level of corrosion of character in the form of precariousness.

Teachers working in private schools have a lower sense of belonging compared to those working in public schools. Additionally, contracted teachers in private schools experience lower levels of belonging than permanent, salaried, and contracted teachers in other settings. The literature suggests that private school teachers have higher organizational commitment than their public-school counterparts (Odabaş, 2014). At this juncture, it's worth noting that the sense of belonging, which contributes to corrosion of character, diverges from organizational commitment in one key aspect: the willingness to explore options and seize opportunities. Employees in private schools often have more employment autonomy than those in public schools. Many public-school teachers can continue to work in the same region until retirement, whereas private school teachers may be more inclined to pursue other opportunities, given their experience in the private sector. Single teachers have a lower sense of belonging than married teachers. This could be attributed to the lower likelihood of married teachers taking risks due to family responsibilities. Indeed, studies have shown that married teachers have higher levels of commitment than single teachers (Gören & Sarpkaya, 2014; Odabaş, 2014). Teachers in the early stages of their career (1-5 years) exhibit lower levels of commitment compared to those nearing retirement (26 years and above). Literature supports that teachers with higher seniority have greater organizational commitment than those with lower seniority (Altın, 2010; Odabaş, 2014; Sarıkaya, 2011). A sense of belonging tends to develop as a result of long-term organizational commitment (Harvey, Novicevic, & Speier, 1999). Thus, it is not surprising that more senior teachers have a stronger sense of belonging. However, teachers in the entry stage of their career may have a lower sense of belonging due to job security concerns (Aydın, 2018). In addition, teachers at this stage were obtained to have higher levels of precariousness compared to their counterparts in other stages. This could be due to the nature of their employment; often, these teachers are hired on annual contracts, lacking the permanence that would allow them to continue in the profession for many years.

The level of precariousness among teachers working in private schools is higher compared to those in public settings. This is largely because public schools generally don't employ precarious workers, with the exception of salaried teachers. Actually, the study revealed that the perception of precariousness among permanent teachers was lower compared to other groups. In line with the current study, Günerigök and Oğur (2018) revealed that salaried teachers often worry about their future and feel a sense of precariousness. The precariousness level among female teachers is higher than that of their male counterparts. Dede (2017) stated that female teachers who work in private schools perceive higher levels of job precariousness than male teachers, a finding that is corroborated by this study. Furthermore, teachers who are in the 20-30 age group have higher levels of precariousness compared to those in other age groups. The elevated perception of precariousness among teachers in this demographic can be attributed to their more frequent employment in private schools or as salaried teachers.

The levels of drift among teachers working in private schools are higher than those among their public-school counterparts. Additionally, contracted teachers in private schools exhibit higher levels of drift than permanent teachers. This heightened sense of drift can be attributed to the lack of job security in private schools compared to public schools, where teachers often have tenure. As a result, teachers feel compelled to work harder to maintain their employability, leading them to feel less control over their lives. A study by Yıldız, Ünlü, Alica, and Sarpkaya (2014) explored the changes wrought by neoliberal transformation in education as portrayed in Turkish films focused on education. The researchers found that education has become commodified, and the identity of teachers has shifted from idealistic educators to technical workers. This transformation has not only diminished the prestige of the teaching profession but also led to a sense of despair among teachers regarding their future. These observations align with the study's findings that teachers experience corrosion of character, particularly in the form of drift. Factors like intense workloads, ever-changing expectations, and flexible work models may exacerbate the feeling of drift. Moreover, single teachers have higher levels of drift compared to married teachers. Teachers in the initial stages of their careers (1-5 years) also show higher levels of drift than those nearing retirement (26 years and above). Additionally, teachers in the 20-30 age group experience higher levels of drift compared to other age groups. This suggests that these specific groups are more significantly impacted by the effects of neoliberal transformation.

The levels of individuality among teachers working in private schools are higher than those among teachers in public schools. Additionally, contracted teachers in private schools exhibit the highest levels of individuality compared to all other groups. This trend can be attributed to the competitive nature of private schools. In an environment marked by job precariousness and intense competition, employees are often compelled to take responsibility for their own successes and failures to maintain employment. Consequently, they rely on their individual achievements to distinguish themselves. Furthermore, because private schools are generally more focused on satisfying stakeholders—namely, students and parents—than public schools are, teachers in private institutions face higher expectations in this regard. On the other hand, teachers nearing retirement tend to have lower levels of individuality compared to other groups. In the context of the post-industrial transformation, the current era is often termed the "information age," which places a premium on individuality. In this age where individual success and failure hold significant weight, retired teachers may exhibit lower levels of individualism. This could be because they have either proven themselves over their careers or have developed a culture of solidarity due to their past experiences.

After 1980, it became evident that neoliberal policies began to influence the workforce, and the subsequent rise in the number of private schools can be viewed as one manifestation of these policies within the educational system. Uygun (2003) notes that the number of private schools in Turkey surged notably after 1985. Teachers in private schools, due to their exposure to the private sector, felt the repercussions of new capitalism more intensely. In fact, the study found that although the overall level of corrosion of character was moderate, it was significantly higher among private school teachers compared to their public-school counterparts across various sub-dimensions. Corrosion of character is rooted in the inability to create a "meaningful narrative," which is further impaired by constant changes that make it difficult to connect with the past (Sennett, 2002). Job precariousness, particularly among private school teachers or those who work hourly in public schools, may result in a lack of future predictability and a sense of entrapment in their professional lives. Hacısalihoğlu (2015) argues that the uncertainty stemming from job precariousness places pressure not only on the unemployed but also on those currently employed, as they find it difficult to envision a future. Structural job precariousness triggers anxiety and the fear of unemployment, driving employees to continuously seek alternative opportunities and prioritize individual achievements to maintain employability. To mitigate these effects of post-industrial transformation, the perception of meaningful work can be harnessed. The study indeed observed that dimensions of meaningful work—such as meaning at work and work relationships—negatively predicted feelings of drifting and precariousness, whereas the search for meaning at work positively predicted levels of individuality. In contrast, job relationships and transcendence at work negatively influenced individuality levels. Thus, as teachers' perception of meaning at work increases, their sense of belonging is likely to elevate, while their levels of drifting and individuality may decline.

Upon reviewing the literature, it is suggested that as teachers' perception of meaningful work increases, their level of job integration also rises (Karataş & Özdemir, 2022). Furthermore, Bekmezci and Mert (2018) have posited positive relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Meaning at work encompasses a sense of spiritual fulfillment through one's profession, while belonging incorporates elements of commitment. In this context, enhancing the sense of meaning at work is likely to boost feelings of belonging. Given that one of the key contributors to the perception of meaningful work is the belief that the job serves an important and positive purpose (Mautz, 2015), it can be concluded that a high perception of meaningful work among teachers will lead to a heightened sense of belonging within their organizations.

Teachers' perception of meaningful work serves as an indicator for the level of "corrosion of character" they experience in the form of drifting. Drifting encapsulates feelings of a lack of control over one's life, challenges in establishing a work-life balance, and a sense of being stuck in one's circumstances. These factors can detract from an individual's psychological well-being. Keleş (2017) argues that employees who find their work meaningful are more likely to experience positive psychological well-being. Similarly, Ağ and Balcı (2019) suggest that a meaningful work life positively influences the sense of meaning in life overall. The findings of the present study corroborate these observations. Mautz (2015) posits that one element contributing to a sense of meaning at work is operating with a high level of competence and self-esteem. In this context, it can be concluded that a teacher's perception of meaningful work may mitigate the experience of drifting in their professional life.

However, because the sense of meaning at work entails serving a higher good beyond merely completing individual tasks, it is likely to result in a decrease in the sense of individuality. Similarly, as the sense of transcendence at work increases, the level of individuality is expected to decrease. İmalı and Kaya (2022) revealed significant positive relationship between teachers finding their jobs meaningful and their engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors. Organizational citizenship behavior refers to the voluntary actions employees take that align with the organization's goals, beyond their defined roles (Morrison, 1994). Therefore, the observation that a perception of meaningful work lessens individualization supports this finding. Additionally, since the quest for meaning at work involves the process of seeking answers to the question "Why am I doing this job?", an increase in this search may create ambiguity concerning meaning and subsequently contribute to heightened levels of corrosion of character. Work relationships encompass the perception that there is positive communication and genuine sincerity shared among coworkers. Thus, such a perception is likely to mitigate factors that contribute to corrosion of character.

As a result, it was found that the perception of meaningful work helps to mitigate the levels of corrosion of character. This corrosion is characterized by job precariousness, a low sense of belonging, uncertainty about the future, and heightened individualism. In light of this, enhancing the perception of meaningful work is crucial for reducing the corrosion of character experienced by teachers. Although the sense of meaningful work is a subjective experience, it can be influenced by organizational management. Therefore, it is recommended that school administrators empower teachers to take the initiative in their roles. They can also make teachers' work feel more meaningful by providing regular feedback and fostering a holistic view of their contributions. The concept of meaningful work is linked to the belief that one's labor positively impacts others. With this in mind, school administrators should regularly communicate the beneficial outcomes of teachers' work, highlighting its value to both management and other stakeholders. In addition, fostering a positive work environment is essential for employees to find their work meaningful. This underlines the importance of positive interaction. Administrators are thus encouraged to collaborate closely with teachers to establish a school climate that values diverse perspectives and ideas. It has been revealed that teachers in private schools often experience corrosion of character, which could be described as a form of modern alienation. This situation is likely the result of a work environment marked by high levels of competition, job stress, and a sense of precariousness, leading teachers to focus on short-term goals at the expense of their sense of belonging. To address this issue, it is recommended that private school administrators improve working conditions, offer

ongoing training and support, and ensure that teachers have the resources and knowledge they need to excel in their roles. Furthermore, efforts should be made to help teachers achieve a work-life balance. By doing so, teachers can maintain a sense of meaningful work and thereby minimize the negative effects of corrosion of character.

The current study examined the effect of teachers' perception of meaningful work on their level of corrosion of character. Based on these findings, it is suggested that future researchers employ a qualitative approach to examine the factors contributing to the corrosion of character in teachers, particularly those lacking job security or who are new to the profession. Additionally, examining the relationship between positive and negative organizational behaviors and corrosion of character will provide a more detailed understanding of how this issue affects employee behavior within the organization.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This article has been evaluated by Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee and found ethically appropriate. Ethical rules were followed at every stage of the study. At the data collection stage, written ethical consent was given to the volunteer participants, including information about the study and stating that the personal information of the participants would not be used for any purpose.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

All processes of this article were carried out by a single author.

Statement of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest with any person or organization.

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