

## Sources and Levels of Stress among Mainstream and Special Needs Education Teachers in Mutare Urban in Zimbabwe

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**ABSTRACT** This study attempted to identify, describe and compare the sources and levels of stress as well as the coping strategies among teachers in four mainstream schools (n=40; males=20; females=20) and three Special Needs Education schools (n=40; males=20; females=20) in the Mutare Urban district of Education in Eastern Zimbabwe. The seven schools were conveniently selected. A comparative survey design was used. The respondents were requested to complete a stress diagnostic questionnaire. Respondents were also asked to report on how they coped with stress and what system changes in the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture in Zimbabwe could prevent or ameliorate their stress. Cross tabulations were used. The study revealed that both groups of teachers were stressed by perceived lack of government support, lack of resources and heavy workload, and time spent on individual pupils for those in Special Needs Education. Stress levels for the teachers were in general elevated but those of women both in the mainstream and in Special Needs Education were more elevated than those of their male counterparts. Main stress management methods included sharing problems with colleagues, physical exercise, cheering with family and friends. Suggested system-wide improvements to reduce stress included provision of more resources, reduction of class size and better remuneration.