

Stress and Coping Strategies used by Special Education and General Classroom Teachers

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Abstract

This research was undertaken to shed light on sources of stress, effects and coping strategies used by general (mainstream) classroom teachers and special education teachers. A total of 139 teachers, from eight private schools in Beirut, Lebanon, were selected to participate in a study using the Pullis

Inventory of Teacher Stress (PITS). The teachers, 100 general classrooms and 39 special educators, were directly involved at one point in time in teaching students with special educational needs. The responses to the questionnaire items were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a correlation coefficient. Results showed that there was no significant difference between special education and general (and at times integrated) classroom teachers in relation to all sources and effects of stress. Moreover, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) showed that most sources of stress had a weak-positive correlation with the coping strategies; yet most effects of stress had a weak-negative correlation with the coping strategies.

Keywords: *Coping Strategies, Mainstream or General Education, Special Education, Teacher Stress, causes and effects, levels of stress*

Introduction

Teaching is considered a demanding and challenging profession, given that teachers have a range of responsibilities: classroom management, lesson planning, class preparation, student evaluation and resource management. In addition, teachers are the focal center of interactions with parents, their own and other students, and other faculty members especially when teaching students with learning difficulties. Research suggests that special education teachers exhibit higher levels of stress than mainstream education teachers (Lazarus, 2006). Students with special needs require extra attention, resources and time compared to regular students. Therefore, special education teachers require more time to communicate class instructions. As in any institution, effective communication channels between executives and employees are of great importance. It is essential for administrative staff in any school to identify the causes of stress and be serious-minded in their search for coping strategies that will lower teachers' stress levels in order to attain a relaxing work environment. The recent economic meltdown has affected [the country] Lebanon negatively in all aspects. Teachers' salaries are considered relatively low compared to other professional sectors, so that increases in prices of everyday goods and services has made it more stressful and difficult for teachers to work with equanimity. Teachers may feel less driven to come to work every day knowing that an unrewarding salary barely meets their basic needs. Along with the effects of this prevailing economic situation, there are many other factors such as poor working conditions, scarcity of teaching aids, heavy workloads, and unacceptable student behavior.

The purpose of the present study is threefold: (a) to identify the main sources and effects of stress that both general/mainstream and special education teachers encounter while educating students with special needs, (b) to identify the major coping strategies that help to reduce the level of teachers' stress; and (c) to examine the correlation between sources of stress, its effects, and coping strategies used by general/mainstream and special education teachers here in Lebanon.

The significance of this research is that in identifying possible stressors, teachers can be aided in deciding which positive coping strategies best suit their psychological makeup. If stressors are properly identified and positive coping strategies are chosen and practiced with success consistently, teachers will attain a more stress-free, friendly, class environment. In this way, and according to some researchers (e.g. Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Hepburn & Brown, 2001), more of their educational goals would be met.

Literature Review

Sources and Effects of Stress

Recent studies have revealed that teaching is becoming one of the occupations with higher stress levels (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart & Eloff, 2003). A study in Malaysia by Ghani, Ahmad and Ibrahim (2014), found that the workload and other sources of pressure caused moderate stress for the study participants. The findings also showed that there are no significant differences in terms of work-related stress among teachers based on gender, marital status, or highest academic qualification. Additionally, the study failed to establish any significant correlation between teacher stress and demographic factors such as age, length of teaching experience, and the respondents' monthly salary. According to previous studies in several countries, the causes of stress illness is more pointedly related to excessive teacher workload, higher pressure to finish within a limited time, large numbers of learners within the classroom and a growing number of students with behavioural problems among them (Kunkulol, Karia, Patel & David, 2013). Furthermore, a study demonstrated that teachers are exposed to burnout in at least six categories of stress, including work overload, lack of perceived success, frequency of direct contact with children, staff-child ratio, program structure, and responsibility for others (Johnson, 1990). Teaching is not an easy, straightforward job; it ranks as one of the most complex occupations. This very complexity makes it a demanding profession. Although job-related stress is a concern in all professions, studies in the last few years indicate that teaching has become one of the occupations tending to high stress

levels (Engelbrecht, et al., 2003).

Reports of high stress levels for special education teachers who teach special needs students within mainstream classroom settings are commonplace (Engelbrecht, et al., 2003). The findings of a study done by Platsidou (2010) imply that special education teachers' burnout and low job satisfaction that may emerge at some time in their career is likely to be preventable, if they are dealing with stress. In addition, the implementation of inclusive educational program is still not complete (Engelbrecht, et al., 2003). The findings of this study show that the large number of students with learning disabilities being integrated into classes brings additional challenges and stress to the general/mainstream education teachers. Such teachers will have increased workloads because they are required to modify every assessment depending on the individual special needs of every student. Teachers often need to re-explain a concept using different teaching strategies for different-abilities students to understand. Each term, teachers need to review the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) of each student with special educational needs and assess it depending on their past behavioral and academic success. These stress factors also need to be considered concerning special education need teachers themselves who often experience time constraints. Both the special needs and the general/mainstream teachers find themselves under tremendous stress while responding to special needs learners and using the government-prescribed curriculum (Gyimah, Sugden & Pearson, 2008).

Effects of Stress

Stress leads to internal conflicts that differ drastically from one person to another (McGrath, Houghton & Norma, 1989). Employees experiencing constant work stress developed unstable blood pressure, increased cholesterol levels, muscle tensions, and numerous health problems. According to Brackenreed (2005), stress is an external condition or event that affects our body and mind negatively. Moreover, research of teachers' efficiency indicates that teachers' opinions, behavior and values affect the decisions they make and the way they interact with the teaching-learning process in class discussions.

Teachers' work satisfaction is significant since it influences teachers' performance and overall achievement and interest. The effects of job-related stress can be very serious and may include psychological problems, depression, low performance and motivation, absenteeism, or fatigue culminating in eventual resignation from the job. The outcomes of teachers' work-related

stress are serious and may lead to a high rate of employee turnover in schools. Teachers' stress is inescapable. Teachers who have good social, interpersonal, communicational skills and who can express their emotions and concerns to the highest organizational levels would enjoy better job satisfaction and a strong commitment towards their school (Klassen, 2010). A study by Chan, Chen and Chong (2010) found that elementary and middle school teachers tended to manage stress by relaxing, socializing with friends, and watching TV; while secondary school teachers showed a preference to engage in sports and extra exercises in order to maintain a healthy level of stress.

Coping Strategies for Stress

The teaching profession is a stressful career that affects the actions, decision-making, and general job satisfaction of those engaged in it. McGrath et al. (1989) posit that the results of previous studies show that among elementary teachers, those coping effectively with stress prefer to use active methods rather than passive. On the other hand, those elementary teachers who burnout from stress often can no longer be involved in enjoyable activities, and moreover have their own anger at this very situation compound the distress. Furthermore, teachers who work in low-stress environments engage in more extensive activities than those in a stressful atmosphere. Emphasis, therefore, on the teachers' internal locus of control was recommended in order to help in reducing the negative effects of stress (McGrath, et al., 1989). Teachers' stress can be better managed through school rules and administrative support, and a strong team approach by members of staff towards the development of well-rounded students. Previous researches suggest that teachers' collective efficacy could have a substantial, desirable effect on job contentment; yet there are very few studies examining teachers' collective efficacy and work place stress (Klassen, 2010).

Special needs and general classroom teachers can use several coping strategies to offset stress in school. Waltz (2016) explains that stressors cannot be removed from the teaching environment, which is why teachers should learn strategies and techniques to manage them and maintain teaching and personal effectiveness. Waltz proposes a simple ABC (Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences) stress management model comprising three steps for consideration: first, understanding the main causes of stress and its likely consequences; second, changing the behavior that leads to stress; third, improving teacher-student interaction and social interaction with parents and other school colleagues. Given that teaching is full of challenges, it is plain that

teachers (and administrators) should be proactive and initiate effective change strategies. A raft of strategies should be developed, including personal stress management, cognitive-behavioral techniques and ways to introduce flexibility into education.

Lebanese Educational System

In Lebanon, the education system in public schools is somehow different than those in private schools in both the French and English sectors. They mostly use governmental books that include the traditional curriculum, which prepares students for the usual official governmental exams (Vlaardingerbroek, Al-Hroub, Saab, 2017). Moreover, years ago, having a special education department at schools was very rare; but nowadays it has been acknowledged as a necessary entity of the educational program, especially in the private schools. There are a good number of private schools in both the English and French sectors that contain special education departments, yet they are working independently depending on the number and cases of students with special needs. As for the public schools, there are very few schools that include services for students with disabilities (Mattar, 2012).

The Current Study

Research Questions

Three key research questions will be the focus of the article: (a) What are the main causes and effects of stress experienced by general/mainstream and special education teachers? (b) What are the main coping strategies that help reduce the level of teachers' stress? and (c) What is the correlation between stress sources, effects and coping strategies used by special education teachers?

Research Design

A quantitative survey design was utilized in this study. A correlation design was used as the central means of examining the relationship between stress sources, their effects and teachers' coping strategies.

A two-part survey instrument was used for the purpose of this study. Demographic data, along with the Pullis Inventory of Teacher Stress (PITS) were used. The first part consists of the teachers' demographic data, which gives particular insight into teaching students with special educational needs. The second part contains two sections. Section one identifies factors

triggering teacher stress, its effects, and the coping strategies. In section two a Likert scale was used to measure and rank teachers' responses to the questions.

Method

Procedure and Participants

The sample for this study comprised 100 general /mainstream and 39 special education teachers, teaching grades one to six, in eight Anglophone private elementary schools in Beirut. The number of general education teachers exceeded the number of special needs educators because in most schools with special education departments, special educators teach several subjects not just one. A list of Anglophone private schools with a special education department was obtained from the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).

A purposive sampling method for selecting participants was used since the researchers used their own judgement when selecting the schools to participate in the study. The researchers also used random sampling to select a sample from a larger group. They selected schools that had special education departments or units; randomly chose eight schools that included a special education department; they then selected six elementary classrooms, one each from grades one to six. The selected subgroups in the sample were special needs educators and general/mainstream classroom educators with at least some experience with special needs students. The researchers randomly selected one teacher from each classroom who could be a homeroom teacher, or subject teacher (e.g. English, Arabic, Mathematics or Science). The participants were categorized as follows: 25 teachers selected from each school, 16-17 general classroom teachers and 8-9 special education teachers. A total number of 200 surveys were distributed, but only 139 teachers completed the surveys.

Survey Adaptation

Data were collected using a modified version of the Pullis Inventory of Teacher Stress (PITS). In addition, several questions designed to elicit demographic information were added to the PITS. To validate the survey, three Lebanese private school counsellors participated in modifying and adapting the PITS to the Lebanese context. The adaptation of the survey was a very important procedure designed to examine whether all items were clear, understandable, and valid with regard to teaching students with special educational needs in the Lebanese context. As a

result, several items were either modified or deleted in the PITS. To validate the use of the surveys in the Lebanese Anglophone private schools, the researcher sent the Demographic Data Form and the PITS survey to three private school counsellors.

Data Analysis

The responses to the questionnaire items were analyzed using descriptive statistics for each item on the questionnaire. Mean and standard deviations and independent *t* test were calculated.

Relying on previous studies, diagnostic cut-off scores were established to analyse the quantitative data (Al-Hroub, 2019, 2010; Tannir & Al-Hroub, 2013). In accordance with the original PITS survey, the researchers used three different Likert response scales in the three different parts of the survey.

Table 1. Three Different Likert Response Scales in the Three Parts of the Survey

PITS survey	Cut-off points	Indicators
Part I	$x \leq 2.5$	Mildly Stressful
	$2.5 < x < 3.5$	Moderately Stressful
	$x \geq 3.5$	Extremely Stressful
Part II	$x \leq 2.5$	Infrequently
	$2.5 < x < 4.5$	Frequently
	$x \geq 4.5$	Very Frequently
Part III	$x \leq 2$	Mildly Effective
	$2 < x < 3$	Moderately Effective
	$3 < x$	Extremely Effective

In order to answer the third research question, a correlation coefficient technique was used to find the Pearson coefficient correlation (*r*) between the causes and effects of stress and coping strategies. Interpretation of positive or negative correlations was used, especially for interpreting the strength of correlations as follows (Derby, Seo, Kazala, Chen, Lee & Kim, 2005).

Table 2. Interpretation of Positive or Negative Correlations Used

(<i>r</i>)	Strength of correlation
+0.30 to +0.39	moderate positive correlation

+0.20 to +0.29	weak positive correlation
+0.01 to +0.19 or from -0.01 to -0.19	no or negligible correlation
-0.30 to -0.39	moderately negative correlation
0.20 to -0.29	weak negative correlation

Results and Discussions

Summarizing, the independent *t*-test showed no significant differences between special needs and general classroom teachers in relation to all sources and effects of stress. Also, from the results, we observe that there were no specific sources of stress that were experienced as ‘extremely stressful’ for either general or special education teachers, since none of these sources had a mean value that was equal to, or above three and a half. Most sources of stress were ‘moderately stressful’. The five highest ‘moderately stressful’ sources were “Demands on after-school time” with ($M=3.44$), “Too much work to do” ($M=3.42$), “Students impolite or rude behavior” ($M=3.32$), “Not enough time allotted to do the work” ($M=2.31$), “Inadequate salary” ($M=3.28$). Only 5 out of the 30 causes of stress were rated as ‘mildly stressful’: “Participation in IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings about students” ($M=2.02$), “Evaluation by principals or supervisors” ($M=2.20$), “Dealing with the parents of students” ($M=2.40$), “Being a teacher of students with special needs” ($M=2.42$), and “Attitudes and behavior of school principal or head of the special education department” ($M=2.45$).

From the results, it is noticeable that there were no effects that were experienced ‘very frequently’ by either general classroom or special education teachers who were teaching students with special needs, since none of them had a mean value that was equal to, or above four and a half. Yet, the five highest ‘frequently’ occurring effects of stress experienced by both types of teachers were “How often do you feel exhausted?” ($M= 3.72$), “How often does school stress affect other aspects of your life?” ($M=3.56$), “How often do you feel overwhelmed by your work?” ($M=3.41$), “How often do you feel frustrated” ($M=3.27$), and “How often do you have headaches?” ($M=3.07$). On the other hand, the highest ‘least frequently’ felt effects of stress were “How often do you feel distant from students with special needs?” ($M= 1.88$), and “How often do you feel like quitting teaching students with special educational needs?” ($M=1.94$).

In addition, the most effective coping strategies that teachers used when they felt stressed were “Organizing your time and setting priorities” ($M=3.51$) and “Doing relaxing activities

(hobby)” ($M=3.35$). However, the least effective coping strategies for both types of teachers were “Using substances or prescribed medication” ($M=1.29$) and “Smoking cigarettes” ($M=1.51$). Few teachers added any sources and effects of stress they encountered or coping strategies that they used which were not found in the lists presented in the survey; this depended on the teacher’s lifestyle. From the findings, we also concluded that there were no specific sources of stress that were extremely stressful for general classroom or special educators; while only 5 out of 30 causes of stress were mildly stressful, a full 25 were considered to be moderately stressful. Furthermore, while there were no specific effects of stress that occurred very frequently, 8 of the listed effects occurred infrequently, and another majority of 10 effects were experienced frequently. There were three ‘mildly effective’ coping strategies, five ‘moderately effective’ and seven ‘extremely effective’ coping strategies. Finally, after calculating Pearson’s correlation (r), we can conclude that most of the sources of stress had a weak positive correlation with the coping strategies, but most of the effects of stress had a weak negative correlation with the coping strategies.

Sources of Stress and its Ranking

Sources of stress can be classified into two groups: external and internal. Teachers need to be aware of these stress factors in order to work at changing some of these external and internal pressures societally (Burgees, 2000). We note here that in our questionnaire there were only two internal sources of stress “Inability to meet your personal or professional goals” and “Lack of fun or enjoyment involved in teaching”. External sources of stress either related to the school itself, namely its environment, staff and/or administration, or to other factors, mainly parents and students. While both “internal” sources were categorized as ‘moderate sources of stress’, the overwhelming majority (i.e. 28 out of 30) “external” sources fell into the moderate source of stress category. The top-ranking moderate sources were “Demands on after-school time” and “Too much work to do”. These results were consistent when looking at the combined mean scores of all the teachers, as well as the mean scores of the general classroom teachers. In the researchers’ opinion, the nature of the teaching profession (which usually requires post-class paperwork) and the added complexity arising from teaching special needs students were plausible reasons for the high rating of these sources by the majority of teachers. In fact, field experience has regularly shown that teachers miss breakfast or lunch in order to assess examinations, perform break duty, or attend meetings. These findings are in alignment with Brackenreed (2011) that for teachers, stress is a

reaction to negative causes associated with excessive workload. Likewise, previous studies have recognized that workplace stresses include excessive workload, limited time, lack of supportive opportunities, insufficient recognition and salary, being required to perform different tasks, and lack of resources (Gillespie et al., 2001).

However, referring to the mean scores of special education teachers only, results have shown that the most frequently encountered sources of stress are “Demands on after-school time” and “Inadequate disciplinary policy of the school”. While the former matches what we identified as the most common source of stress among all the teachers. Colligan and Higgins (2008) mentioned in their article that this can be traced to the fact that schools are not fully equipped in terms of resources and policies to handle special education students. Two teachers stated in the qualitative part of the survey that lack of classroom resources also led to stress. This actually confirms the results of Colligan and Higgins (2008).

Among the highly ranked moderate sources of stress were “Not enough time allotted to work” and “Inadequate salary”. Firestone (2014) mentioned that schools have clearly failed to establish a merit system that rewards the extra effort put in by teachers, leading to a feeling of frustration and demotivation. He added that external motivation theory relies on economics and extrinsic incentives and internal motivation uses psychology and intrinsic incentives (Firestone, 2014). Our results are also in tandem with the highly ranked internal source of stress “Inability to meet your personal or professional goals”. Thus, the absence of an effective reward system had translated into an internal source of stress for the majority of the teachers.

On the other hand, when looking at the combined mean scores, the mild sources of stress all fell into the “external” category and were evenly distributed among “School” and “Others”. For instance, “Participation of IEP meetings about students”, “Evaluation by principals or supervisors”, or “Dealing with parents of students”, were ranked as the least severe causes of stress since they involved tasks that were not as time-consuming as correcting examinations and which occurred on an occasional rather than daily basis.

Referring to the mean scores of special education teachers only, results showed that the least frequently encountered sources of stress were “Participation in IEP meetings about students” and “Lack of appreciation from your students”. Among the sources of stress that were mentioned twice in the qualitative part of the survey (which asked about other causes that the teachers encountered and were not found in the list), were “Lack of support at home” and “Parents’ denial”,

both of which fell into the category of “other” external sources, namely parent-teacher relationships. While the former matched what we identified as the least common among all teachers, the latter can be traced to particular attributes that are specific to the special education sector. For example, parents’ denial of their children’s special needs, students’ misunderstanding of the teacher’s role in class, and the common misconception that special education teachers are obliged to repeat the lecture over and over so that students might understand, are all fallacies attributed to the profession. These attributes often emanate from parents who usually communicate these misconceptions to their children. What parents discuss at home amid any lack of understanding about their children’s assessments leads to a “lack of appreciation” on the part of the students. McGrath and others (1989) mention that dealing with parents is really demanding and stressful for teachers. Furthermore, notable differences between general classroom and special education teachers were obvious. This shows that what might have been an important source of stress for general/mainstream teachers was not necessarily as important to special education teachers, and vice versa. The source “Lack of appreciation from your students” recorded a 0.77 difference between the mean scores in favor of special education teachers. Similarly, for the source of stress “Large number of students that result in lack of time to spend with individual kids,” the difference between the mean scores was 0.59 in favor of special education teachers. This difference may refer to the fact that the special education teachers were better equipped in terms of skills to tolerate the lack of appreciation from students. According to previous studies, the causes of stress are related to large class-sizes and the inability of teachers to deal with a large number of students exhibiting behavioral problems (Kunkulol et al., 2013).

On the other hand, some sources registered small differences in mean scores between the mainstream teachers and special education teachers who were teaching students with special needs. These sources were “Attitudes and behavior of other teachers/professionals” (mean score zero), and “Students' defiance of teacher authority” (with very low differences). This sheds light on the fact that despite the difference in skills between mainstream and special education teachers, some of the causes of stress were common in both categories and were therefore independent of the factor of special needs students. These causes of stress might therefore have been related to general professional challenges. There were five sources of stress that recorded a higher value among special education teachers when compared to the general/mainstream teachers. For example, “Lack of recognition of good teaching” and “Poor career opportunities”. Such causes of

stress shed light on professional challenges that are unique to special education teaching.

Table 3. Three Quantitative Indicators for the Sources of Stress

Mildly Stressful ($x \leq 2.5$)		Moderately Stressful ($2.5 < x < 3.5$)		Extremely Stressful ($x \geq 3.5$)	
Item	<i>M</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	Item	<i>M</i>
10. Attitudes and behavior of school principal or head of the special education department in school	2.45	19. Demands on after-school time	3.44		
1. In general, how stressful do you find being a teacher dealing with students with special needs?	2.42	9. Too much work to do	3.42		
16. Dealing with the parents of students	2.40	7. Students impolite or rude behavior	3.32		
26. Evaluation by principals or supervisors	2.20	4. Not enough time allotted to do the work	3.31		
6. Participation in IEP (Individualized educational plan) meetings about students	2.02	8. Inadequate salary	3.28		
		29. Inability to meet your personal or professional goals	3.26		
		25. Large number of students that lack of time to spend with individual kids	3.25		
		2. Loud, noisy students	3.17		
		5. Inadequate disciplinary policy of the school	3.16		
		30. Lack of fun or enjoyment involved in teaching	3.14		
		21. Students' defiance of teacher authority	3.08		
		15. Lack of recognition for good teaching	3.07		
		14. Poorly motivated students	3.05		
		18. Inadequate equipment and instructional materials	3.05		
		20. Lack of effective consultation and assistance	3.01		
		11. Responsibility for the students' progress/learning	3.00		
		13. Low status of the teaching profession	2.96		
		24. Lack of participation in decision-making	2.93		
		3. Poor career opportunities	2.84		
		27. Threat of aggression/physical harm	2.79		
		28. Lack of appreciation from your students	2.69		
		23. Having to punish students or use aversive techniques	2.63		
		22. Attitudes and behavior of other teachers/professionals	2.59		
		12. Writing and on-going evaluation of	2.58		

		IEPs for students for students with special needs			
		17.Constant monitoring of the students' behavior	2.52		

Effects of Stress and its Ranking

While the effects of stress vary in terms of feelings, thoughts and other physical symptoms, they also vary in degree of seriousness. Results showed that all the effects fell into the category of “frequent” and “infrequent/rare”, with the absence of any “very frequent” effects. Except for the physical effects “headaches” and “feeling exhausted”, all others were related to the psychological well-being of the teacher, for example “feeling sad”, “anxious”, “irritable”, “frustrated”, “anxious” or “tearful”. On another note, the highly ranked “How often does school stress affect other aspects of your life?” demonstrates that the teacher’s daily life is considerably affected by the stress that they carry away with them from school. It is important to mention that all frequent feelings, thoughts, and physical symptoms were stress-related factors affecting the teacher’s own well-being, rather than factors relating to external control. Therefore, all the effects of stress that were presented in the list had an internal locus of control. As mentioned in previous studies, the consequences of stress and its effects lead to inner clashes that differed from one person to another (McGrath et al., 1989).

In contrast, the least frequently encountered effects of stress were “How often do you feel distant from students with special needs?” and “How often do you feel like quitting teaching students with special educational needs?” Remarkably, ranking these two stress effects at the bottom of the list clearly showed that teachers, both mainstream and special needs, exhibited a strong commitment to the teaching profession (i.e. their lack of desire to quit teaching), and a highly professional attitude (i.e. disallowing stress to make them feel distant from students). This contradicts what Engelbrecht et al. (2003) report in their study, which stated that educators have negative opinions concerning the inclusive education programs for students with learning disabilities and behavioral problems. One plausible explanation for the mismatch between the findings of the current study and those of Engelbrecht et al. is that educators argue against an inclusive education program only when enough resources can be allocated to education programs that are tailor-made for students with special needs.

We noticed that feeling exhausted was common among all teachers, regardless of their grade or specialty. This effect could be attributed to sources of stress that were related to general

professional teaching challenges that were independent of special education students.

It was observed that both types of teachers, general/mainstream classroom and special educators, shared similar challenges but with some differences. These challenges affected the teachers negatively. Previous studies have shown that occupational stress leads to health problems that negatively affect the person concerned (Waltz, 2016). Furthermore, as Malak (2013) notes with regard to inclusive education, education should be offered as the right of all children in the developing world. Therefore, despite all the accompanying stress, mainstream classroom teachers should have a minimum level of exposure to special education students. With the lack of resources for special education departments, special students will more often attend inclusive classes; where general/mainstream teachers are expected to be competent and equipped to handle the accompanying challenges arising from teaching special needs students. The justification for this is the undertaking that all teachers make, namely: to deliver education to all children, and at the professional level it helps teachers gain field experience and develop more effective teaching methods for special, as well as regular students.

Table 4. Three Quantitative Indicators for the Effects of Stress

Infrequent/Rare effect ($x \leq 2.5$)		Frequent effect ($2.5 < x < 4.5$)		Very Frequent effect ($x \geq 4.5$)	
Item	<i>M</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	Item	<i>M</i>
7. How often do you feel your heart beating fast?	2.43	1. How often do you feel exhausted	3.72		
9. How often do you get an upset stomach?	2.39	18. How often does school stress carry over to other aspects of your life?	3.56		
3. How often do you feel angry from the students having special educational needs?	2.24	17. How often do you feel overwhelmed by your work?	3.41		
15. How often do you feel unsuccessful about teaching students having special needs?	2.15	2. How often do you feel frustrated?	3.27		
8. How often do you feel unable to cope?	2.13	6. How often do you have headaches?	3.07		
16. How often do you feel bored by your work?	2.10	5. How often do you feel nervous/anxious?	2.98		

13. How often do you feel like quitting teaching student having special educational needs?	1.94	11. How often do you feel guilty about not doing enough?	2.84		
14. How often do you feel distant from students having special needs?	1.88	4. How often do you feel depressed/ sad?	2.77		
		12. How often do you feel tearful?	2.70		
		10. How often do you feel irritable?	2.57		

Coping Strategies and its Ranking

From the results, it is noticeable that teachers resorted to various strategies to counteract stress. In general, all the coping strategies had an internal locus of control, apart from these four strategies, namely: “Taking courses and workshops to improve skill”, “Discussing problems with professional colleagues”, “Discussing problems with personal friends and family”, and “Getting professional counselling or therapy”. The only coping strategy that was directly related to the school was “Taking courses and workshops to improve skills”, since it was the school administration that sent the teachers to attend workshops and courses to update their knowledge and improve their skills. As for the rest of the external coping strategies, they were related to friends, family and other people who were not related to the school. Interestingly, the majority of the coping strategies that were deemed “extremely effective” were categorized as “internal”. Among the “extremely effective” coping strategies, “Organizing your time and setting priorities” corresponded to what we previously identified as the main sources of stress namely: “Demands on after-school time” and “Too much work to do”. In the researchers’ opinion, most teachers dealing with students with special needs were stressed because they lacked time to fulfil their duties; this explains why time management and setting priorities were effective ways to release stress. As a result, it was clear that teachers were controlling their stress by using different coping strategies to a certain extent. Therefore, schools and teachers themselves should help to develop improved coping strategies and find different ways of using them. They could apply the recommendations below, which might help to reduce the level of stress that teachers are encountering on a daily basis at school.

Another “extremely effective” coping strategy, “Doing relaxing activities”, agreed with the findings of Chan et al. (2010), who identified the most effective techniques as sleeping, social interaction, relaxing, and watching television. Furthermore, McGrath et al. (1989) mention that the

results of previous studies show that active strategies include pursuing their hobbies and other activities in their daily life, or even at school during their free time.

“Taking a day off” also ranks among the “extremely effective” coping strategies. We believed that taking a day off from working activities helped the teacher to relax, reduce stress and renew energy. In the same vein, Gillespie and colleagues (2001), mention in their study that taking regular vacation breaks from work, exercising, and applying therapies such as yoga and massage, also help in alleviating stress.

On the other hand, the coping strategies that were least used by the majority of teachers in the current study were “Using substances or prescribed medication” and “Smoking cigarettes”. The researchers believe that ranking these two strategies at the bottom of the list was a sign of the teachers’ healthy lifestyle. It is also worth noting that “Getting professional counselling or therapy” ($N= 91$) represented one of the least-used strategies when coping with stress. Again, the experience of the researchers in Lebanon show that resorting to psychotherapy to release stress is still not an option considered by Lebanese teachers, and continues to be looked upon as a social taboo in Lebanese culture.

Furthermore, the differences in the mean scores recorded between general/mainstream and special education teachers point to the fact that each category of teacher resorted to different coping strategies when dealing with stress. For instance, it is clear that the mean score for “Taking a nap, forgetting it, walk away for a while” registered a notable difference between general/mainstream and special education teachers in comparison to other coping strategies. Field experience shows that taking a nap is a common strategy among special education teachers, helping them to step back from the realm of teaching and all the accompanying stress.

As for the coping strategies “Taking a day off”, “Leaving the school problems at school”, “Discussing problems with personal friends and family” and “Getting professional counselling, special education teachers recorded a higher mean value than general/mainstream teachers. These results show that the special education teachers exhibited a more proactive attitude than the general/mainstream teachers did. Institutions can offer relaxation methods that help to reduce psychological and physiological effects of stress (Colligan & Higgins, 2008).

On another track, the coping strategies recording the least difference in mean scores between general/mainstream and special education teachers were “Smoking cigarettes” and “Organizing your time and setting priorities”. This shows that some of the coping strategies were

common to both groups. The researchers believe that the number of teachers who smoked cigarettes was low, since smoking on campus is forbidden in educational institutions in Lebanon. However, smoking remains very common in Lebanon and the Middle East as a whole. Continuing, all types of teachers teaching different subjects should work on organizing their time and setting priorities in their life. This could help in organizing their working environment inside the school, and in achieving their everyday priorities outside the school. This aligns with what Colligan and Higgins (2008) reported, that reducing the workload helps to achieve a more relaxing and well-balanced working environment. Antoniou, Ploumpi and Ntalla (2013) also emphasized that such job strategies and problem-solving techniques lead to personal success.

Table 5. Three Quantitative Indicators for the Coping Strategies of Level of Stress

Mildly Effective ($x \leq 2$)		Moderately Effective ($2 < X \leq 3$)		Extremely Effective ($3 < x$)	
Item	<i>M</i>	Item	<i>M</i>	Item	<i>M</i>
13. Gain or loss of appetite	1.83	1. Discussing problems with professional colleagues	2.98	5. Organizing your time and setting priorities	3.51
14. Smoking cigarettes	1.51	3. Leaving the school problems at school	2.97	6. Doing relaxing activities [hobby]	3.35
12. Using substances or prescribed medication	1.29	2. Discussing problems with personal friends & family	2.51	8. Taking a day off	3.31
		15. Getting professional counseling or therapy	2.33	7. Taking a nap; forgetting it; walk away for awhile	3.16
		11. Drinking coffee and energy drinks	2.30	10. Walking/jogging/maintaining diet and exercise	3.10
				9. Restructuring to improve personal/professional expectations or goals	3.08
				4. Taking courses and workshops to improve skill	3.03

Relationship between Sources/Effects of Stress and Coping Strategies

The findings showed that the majority of the sources and effects of stress had a weak correlation with the coping strategies. For example, the coping strategy “Discussing problems with professional colleagues” showed a weak positive correlation with eight sources presented in the list. The coping strategy “Organizing your time and setting priorities” was also shown to have a slightly negative correlation with 10 of the effects presented in the survey. Although the results of

this study did not provide conclusive evidence of the effectiveness of the mentioned coping strategies in dealing with stress, they were in line with the findings of previous studies that emphasized the importance of some of these strategies. Gillespie et al. (2001) state that social interaction among peers alleviates stress. In the same vein Engelbrecht and colleagues (2003) mention that lack of positive interactions between colleagues and poor working conditions are two sources of stress. Moreover, taking regular vacation breaks from work, exercising, and using therapies, such as yoga and massage, also help in dealing with stress (Gillespie et al., 2001).

It is also worth turning the spotlight on the coping strategies that had a moderate correlation with the stress effects, whether positively or negatively. Interestingly, “Discussing problems with professional colleagues” was negatively correlated with “How often does school stress carry over to other aspects of your life?” ($r=-0.326$), and “Discussing problems with personal friends and family” was negatively correlated with the effect “How often do you get an upset stomach?” ($r=-0.311$). While the majority of teachers did not resort to professional counselling or therapy, these results showed that they were seeking alternative outlets to release stress, such as talking to co-workers, friends, and family members. Furthermore, this aligned with the strategies reported in previous studies, such as the ABC (Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences) stress management model suggested by Waltz (2016).

The results emphasized the importance of improving one’s personal and professional skills in order to alleviate stress. “Taking courses and workshops to improve skill” had a moderately negative correlation with an increased feeling of exhaustion “How often do you feel exhausted” ($r=-0.321$). Therefore, teachers felt psychologically more comfortable attending these courses and workshops. Most teachers were affected psychologically rather than physically. “Organizing your time and setting priorities” had a moderately negative relationship with the effect “How often do you feel depressed/ sad?” ($r=-.348$) and “How often do you feel unable to cope?” ($r=-0.398$). We can thus deduce that when teachers organize their time and set priorities, they will feel less depressed, sad, and more able to cope. In the researchers’ view, a stress management workshop or training session would be an effective means for helping teachers deal with stressful situations. Finally, the coping strategy “Restructuring to improve personal/professional expectations or goals” had a moderately negative correlation with the effect “How often do you feel bored by your work?” ($r=-0.335$). This means that being more structured in one’s work leads to reduced levels of boredom. The researchers believe that if stressors were properly identified, and positive coping

strategies successfully used, teachers would achieve a stress-free, friendly classroom environment.

Table 6-A. Correlation between Sources of Stress and Coping Strategies

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Discussing problems with professional colleagues	Discussing problems with personal friends & family	Leaving the school problems at school	Taking courses & workshops to improve skill	Organizing your time and setting priorities	Doing relaxing activities [hobby]	Taking a nap; forgetting it; walk away for awhile	
1. How stressful do you find being a teacher dealing with special needs student?	.041	-.038	.111	-.091	-.150	.028	-.034	
2. Loud, noisy students	-.035	-.055	.060	-.213*	-.142	-.101	-.060	
3. Poor career opportunities	.200*	.088	.125	.057	-.125	.099	.092	
4. Not enough time allotted to do the work	0.000	.003	-.014	-.131	-.166	.034	.110	
5. Inadequate disciplinary policy of the school	.025	.135	.122	-.071	-.127	-.093	-.072	
6. Participation in IEP meetings about students	-.125	-.128	.043	-.117	-.067	.046	.103	
7. Students impolite or rude behavior	.085	-.070	.107	-.032	-.127	-.020	.003	
8. Inadequate salary	-.093	-.178	-.127	-.129	-.124	-.039	-.082	
9. Too much work to do	-.262**	-.150	-.176	-.216*	-.234**	-.066	-.074	
10. Attitudes & behavior of school principal or head of the special education department in school	-.231**	.044	-.018	-.113	-.128	-.066	.025	
11. Responsibility for the students' progress/learning	-.110	-.134	-.073	-.086	-.058	-.074	-.093	
12. Writing and on-going evaluation of IEPs for students with special needs [paperwork]	.147	-.249**	-.036	-.028	-.081	.168	.089	
13. Low status of the teaching profession	.069	-.114	.151	.048	.049	.281**	.183	
14. Poorly motivated students	.208*	-.136	.084	.210*	.031	.077	-.044	
15. Lack of recognition for good teaching	.049	.011	.031	.044	.032	.042	-.062	
16. Dealing with the parents of students	.082	-.118	.089	.077	-.111	.127	-.043	
17. Constant monitoring of the students' behavior	.084	-.024	.157	.060	-.013	.087	-.004	
18. Inadequate equipment and instructional materials	.093	.015	.123	.159	.033	.157	.036	
19. Demands on after-school time	-.053	-.038	-.094	-.133	-.222*	-.020	.027	
20. Lack of effective consultation and assistance	.063	-.004	.007	-.010	-.053	.136	.114	
21. Students' defiance of teacher authority	.171	.101	.183*	.088	.006	.051	.139	
22. Attitudes and behavior of other teachers/professionals	.118	.061	.152	-.004	.077	.003	.162	
23. Having to punish students or use aversive techniques	.222*	.023	.072	.112	.158	.195*	.186	
24. Lack of participation in decision-making	.082	.155	.074	.172	-.033	.223*	.108	
25. Large number of students that lack of time to spend with individual kids	.097	-.086	-.069	-.078	-.049	.115	.177	
26. Evaluation by principals or supervisors	.023	.002	.063	.090	.009	.086	.045	

27. Threat of aggression/physical harm	.185*	.044	.029	.248**	.238**	.126	.106	
28. Lack of appreciation from your students	.200*	.103	.059	.232*	.004	.117	.184	
29. Inability to meet your personal or professional goals	.241**	-.023	.011	.113	-.007	.030	.021	
30. Lack of fun or enjoyment in teaching	.149	-.101	-.022	.045	-.038	.180	.032	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In this situation, their educational goals would be met and their professional responsibilities accomplished (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998).

The results have shown that whenever the department's management, namely the principal or head of department, was not cooperative, teachers resorted to radical measures to cope with stress. The coping strategy "Using substances or prescribed medication" showed a moderately positive correlation with "Attitudes and behaviour of school principal or head of the special education department in school" ($r=0.371$).

Table 6-B. Correlation between Sources of Stress and Coping Strategies

Item	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Taking a day off	Restructuring to improve personal or professional expectations or goals	Walking, jogging or maintaining diet and exercise	Drinking coffee and energy drinks	Using substances or prescribed medication	Gain or loss of appetite	Smoking cigarettes	Getting professional counseling or therapy
1. How stressful do you find being a teacher dealing with special needs student?	.038	-.020	-.014	.071	.054	-.065	-.047	-.040
2. Loud, noisy students	.102	-.019	-.004	-.022	.128	.033	.126	.230*
3. Poor career opportunities	.015	.112	.096	-.040	.257*	.064	.058	.062
4. Not enough time allotted to do the work	-.019	.042	.044	-.019	.238*	-.051	-.017	.097
5. Inadequate disciplinary policy of the school	.100	-.002	-.020	-.016	.201	-.013	.027	.159
6. Participation in IEP meetings about students	.004	-.257**	-.034	.001	.102	.127	-.044	-.297**
7. Students impolite or rude behavior	.037	-.057	-.075	-.085	-.029	-.001	-.107	.074
8. Inadequate salary	-.048	-.018	-.161	.132	.251*	.147	.138	.109
9. Too much work to do	-.047	-.013	-.167	-.031	.191	.081	.068	.003
10. Attitudes and behavior of school principal or head of the special education department in school	-.138	-.115	.014	.113	.371**	.266**	.023	-.030
11. Responsibility for the students' progress/learning	-.198*	-.067	-.069	.005	.152	.028	-.067	.048
12. Writing and on-going evaluation of IEPs for students with special needs [paperwork]	.051	-.013	.071	-.057	.166	.102	-.132	-.092
13. Low status of the teaching profession	.019	.122	.099	-.033	.121	.021	-.093	.035
14. Poorly motivated students	-.121	.117	.015	-.206*	.082	-.021	-.252*	.162
15. Lack of recognition for good teaching	-.030	-.098	-.048	-.042	.035	.172	.059	.168
16. Dealing with the parents of students	.073	-.050	.076	.060	.049	.136	.070	-.053

17. Constant monitoring of the students' behavior	-.036	-.053	.015	.007	.133	-.007	-.025	-.114
18. Inadequate equipment and instructional materials	.107	.109	-.055	-.023	.137	.006	-.139	.069
19. Demands on after-school time	.068	-.048	-.079	-.156	.037	-.035	-.109	.159
20. Lack of effective consultation and assistance	.212*	.110	.029	-.084	.215*	.069	-.057	.264*
21. Students' defiance of teacher authority	.228*	.050	.069	-.061	.178	.055	-.034	.182
22. Attitudes and behavior of other teachers/professionals	.098	-.058	.047	-.003	.196	.082	-.083	-.047
23. Having to punish students or use aversive techniques	-.018	.086	.101	-.066	-.005	-.086	-.001	.157
24. Lack of participation in decision-making	.003	.138	.161	.032	.170	.108	.035	.260*
25. Large number of students that lack of time to spend with individual kids	.031	.230*	.044	-.060	.152	-.051	.009	.192
26. Evaluation by principals or supervisors	-.071	-.080	.059	-.111	.176	.012	-.054	-.124
27. Threat of aggression/physical harm	.065	.225*	.011	.063	.192	.046	.077	.198
28. Lack of appreciation from your students	-.175	.120	.056	.037	.037	.014	.039	-.014
29. Inability to meet your personal or professional goals	-.105	.252**	-.001	.108	.212*	.239*	.181	.223*
30. Lack of fun or enjoyment in teaching	-.049	.186*	.102	.028	.099	.152	.073	.205

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7-A. Correlation between Effects of Stress and Coping Strategies

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Discussing problems with professional colleagues	Discussing problems with personal friends & family	Leaving the school problems at school	Taking courses and workshops to improve skill	Organizing your time and setting priorities	Doing relaxing activities [hobby]	Taking a nap; forgetting it; walk away for awhile
1. How often do you feel exhausted	-.278**	-.153	-.087	-.321**	-.194*	-.115	-.147
2. How often do you feel frustrated?	-.217*	-.117	-.057	-.108	-.245**	.042	-.016
3. How often do you feel angry from the students having special educational needs?	.065	.046	.127	-.193*	-.265**	.054	.041
4. How often do you feel depressed/ sad?	-.080	-.117	-.188*	-.165	-.348**	-.043	-.071
5. How often do you feel nervous/ anxious?	-.062	-.164	-.284**	-.180*	-.190*	-.019	-.044
6. How often do you have headaches?	-.086	-.185*	-.148	.096	-.163	.022	-.041
7. How often do you feel your heart beating fast?	-.022	-.142	-.028	-.005	-.142	.051	.073
8. How often do you feel unable to cope?	-.034	-.158	-.112	-.247**	-.398**	.009	-.085
9. How often do you get an upset stomach?	-.103	-.311**	-.008	.074	-.122	.090	.018

10. How often do you feel irritable?	-.184*	-.276**	-.113	-.102	-.254**	.060	-.053
11. How often do you feel guilty about not doing enough?	.037	.037	.069	.159	-.110	-.017	-.050
12. How often do you feel tearful?	-.099	-.025	-.066	.001	-.082	-.032	.028
13. How often do you feel like quitting teaching student having special educational needs?	-.104	-.178	.069	-.095	-.218*	.060	.045
14. How often do you feel distant from students having special needs?	-.138	-.211*	-.014	-.156	-.194*	.003	.087
15. How often do you feel unsuccessful about teaching students having Special needs?	.004	-.145	.091	.013	.011	.103	.149
16. How often do you feel bored by your work?	-.275**	-.198*	-.107	-.222*	-.199*	-.041	-.104
17. How often do you feel overwhelmed by your work?	-.159	-.237*	-.032	-.108	-.075	.173	.027
18. How often does school stress carry over to other aspects of your life?	-.326**	-.249**	-.232*	-.216*	-.144	.043	-.069

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 7-B. Correlation between Effects of Stress and Coping Strategies

Items	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Taking a day off	Restructuring to improve personal or professional expectations or goals	Walking, jogging or maintaining diet and exercise	Drinking coffee & energy drinks	Using substances or prescribed medication	Gain or loss of appetite	Smoking cigarettes	Getting professional counseling or therapy
1. How often do you feel exhausted	-.156	-.065	-.163	-.053	.084	.102	.088	.024
2. How often do you feel frustrated?	-.032	.024	.046	.034	.053	.253**	.133	.131
3. How often do you feel angry from the students having special educational needs?	.167	-.031	.107	.079	.167	.091	.007	-.064
4. How often do you feel depressed/ sad?	.026	-.146	-.147	-.036	.006	.091	.018	-.015
5. How often do you feel nervous/ anxious?	.000	-.010	-.059	-.054	.074	.028	.066	.043
6. How often do you have headaches?	.011	.059	.015	.062	-.030	.135	.033	-.159
7. How often do you feel your heart beating fast?	.117	.053	.185	.086	.052	.179	.040	-.111
8. How often do you feel unable to cope?	.118	-.123	.042	-.141	-.037	.120	-.050	-.115

9. How often do you get an upset stomach?	.007	.040	.060	.014	-.102	.097	-.035	-.121
10. How often do you feel irritable?	.085	-.008	.070	.038	-.030	.117	.080	-.090
11. How often do you feel guilty about not doing enough?	-.117	.028	-.005	-.085	-.263*	.050	.002	.160
12. How often do you feel tearful?	-.072	.142	-.002	.192*	.043	.269**	.244*	.060
13. How often do you feel like quitting teaching student having special educational needs?	.122	.007	.143	-.027	.084	.000	.004	.116
14. How often do you feel distant from students having special needs?	.045	.047	.110	.036	.023	-.059	.089	.078
15. How often do you feel unsuccessful about teaching students having Special needs?	.085	.115	.208*	.011	-.201	-.218*	-.108	.102
16. How often do you feel bored by your work?	-.007	-.335**	-.054	.022	-.066	-.141	-.035	-.019
17. How often do you feel overwhelmed by your work?	.107	-.013	.024	.116	-.071	.104	.062	.104
18. How often does school stress carry over to other aspects of your life?	-.081	-.069	-.039	-.027	.002	.044	.119	-.017

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Future Directions and Study Limitations

Several implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. One implication could be the desirability of expanding the study sample. Differences between Anglophone and Francophone school systems might expose differences in perceptions of school personnel within each system. In addition, differences between public and private schools need to be explored. The systems of special education departments found in private Francophone schools are very different from those in the Anglophone schools. Along the same vein, public schools are not fully equipped to provide special education departments. In addition, the number of students with special educational needs found in both middle and secondary private Anglophone schools are not high. Schools with special education departments work mostly with elementary students. Consequently, this study was restricted to teachers in the elementary schools.

One limitation of this study was the small sample size of special education teachers. Of the 139 teachers, only 39 were special education teachers. However, this was beyond the control of the researchers due to the limited number of private schools with special education units/departments

in Lebanon. Another limitation was the discrepancy between participants' perceptions and actions as revealed by the quantitative data. In the quantitative part of the survey, there were teachers who did not complete the survey; and others who did not complete the questionnaire. Moreover, only a few participant-teachers responded to the open-ended qualitative question, which made us cautious about generalizing our findings. Some participants seem to have submitted socially desirable answers instead of their genuine opinions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The following concluding thoughts and recommendations are given in light of the findings:

- Schools in Lebanon need to provide formal training and internship opportunities for the different types of special educational needs that teachers may encounter in their classrooms. This could be through establishing partnerships with Lebanese universities, and in-service training for teachers who teach children with special educational needs.
- The roles and job descriptions of special educators should be clarified so that all teachers understand that it is not only special education teachers who are responsible for students with special needs.
- The findings revealed that most mainstream classroom teachers were unaware of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Accordingly, it is recommended that special education experts play a more active role in introducing the IEP and involving general classroom teachers, counsellors and administrators in implementing this plan. The IEP would be helpful to teachers in terms of overcoming their stress, since they would understand more about each case they might encounter among the special needs students. The entire team that is working with the child should be aware of the goals and learning objectives that the special educator is working on throughout the academic year.
- From the results, we noticed that new resources and equipment are needed for both the teachers and students with special educational needs. Therefore, schools should provide in-service training for teachers that would help teachers focus on reducing stress and improving their attitudes towards students, peers and teaching itself.
- It is clear that schools should identify and combat stress by developing awareness and understanding of stress, and provide individual and group programs to reduce this, and develop measures through organizational changes that would prevent the environment from becoming

a major contributor to teachers' stress. Schools could invite psychologists or education experts to help explain the ABC model that would help reduce the stress level of teachers. Workshops and trainings are always needed for teachers to deal with stress.

- Since an excessive workload increases the level of stress for teachers, it is recommended that the school administration should employ experienced assistants for those classes with a high number of special educational cases so that the general, assistant and special educator are able to work together to reach their goals. This would encourage co-teaching techniques and would help with workload and time management.
- The number of students should be reduced to e.g. 25/class to allow teachers to establish a one-to-one relationship with students. This would also lead to excellent classroom management and student behavior (Al-Hroub, 2014, 2015).
- Having “Too much work to do” was shown to be one of the sources of stress. Thus, regular and special education teachers need to work together to discuss teaching methods and instructional activities that will need to be modified for students with special needs. This collaboration could be done through co-teaching techniques that may reduce the workload for both the regular and special teachers.

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