

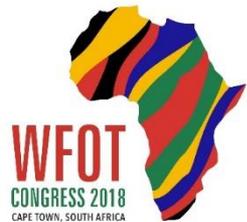


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**The need for Occupational Therapy
(OT) services in Zimbabwean urban
mainstream schools in the context of
inclusive education: A cross sectional
descriptive study**

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Introduction

- Inclusive education has been endorsed by the Zimbabwean Government and for it to be effective, Occupational Therapists (OTs) should work in mainstream schools to address special needs of pupils.
- Currently, there are no posts for OTs in mainstream schools.
- To expand into schools, there is need for documented evidence on the problems encountered by pupils in mainstream schools that can benefit from OT services.
- Teachers' perceptions of the need for OT services in schools are also important.

Objectives

- To determine problems encountered by pupils in urban mainstream schools that can benefit from OT services.
- To determine if there are significant differences in the problems encountered by pupils in public and private schools.
- To determine the perceptions of teachers on the need for OT services in schools.

Method

- Teachers were randomly selected from four primary schools stratified by school type and grade.
- A self administered questionnaire was used to collect data.
- SPSS 22 and STATA 13 were used for data entry and analysis.
- Two sample test of proportions was computed to determine if problems encountered as reported by teachers differed between public and private schools.

Results

- Thirty-two teachers from four urban schools participated.
- Majority (84.4%) were female.
- Mean age was 44.6 years (SD 9.8) and 19.5 years (SD 10.6) of teaching experience.
- Equal distribution by grade.
- Two schools were public and two were private.





Results

- Emotional, gross motor, fine motor, visual perception, auditory language, vestibular sensation and tactile sensation problems were reported by 70% of teachers.
- Proportions of teachers encountering the above problems were similar in private and public schools in most cases.

Results

- Exceptions were with difficulties in drawing, colouring, copying and cutting (fine motor) ($p = 0.0325$), and pupils who repeated directions to self (auditory language) ($p = 0.0221$) where more private school teachers reported encountering pupils with the problems.
- The majority of teachers indicated that the majority problems they encountered can benefit from OT services.
- However, some of the commonly encountered problems such fine motor and visual perception were not perceived to benefit from OT.



Conclusion and Recommendations

- Teachers from private and public schools encountered pupils with similar problems that can benefit from OT.
- Availability of OT services in these schools can support the inclusive education policy in Zimbabwe.
- Teachers from private and public schools realized a need for OT services in their schools despite the current unavailability.
- This information provides a basis on which OTs in Zimbabwe can use to advocate for creation of posts in Zimbabwean mainstream schools.