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Academic Status, Challenges, and Prospects of Students with Disabilities in Karat Town of Konso Zone Integrated Schools.

By

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Abstract

This study examines the academic status, challenges, and prospects of students with disabilities in integrated school settings in karat town of Konso Zone. The study utilized a convergent mixed research design. The findings revealed low academic statusamong students with disabilities in integrated school setting. Key challenges include a rigid curriculum, shortage of special needs education teachers, inaccessible physical environments, negative attitudes, communication barriers, lack of assistive learning materials, parental overload and limited participation in extracurricular activities. Academic prospects of students with disabilities have when schools provide accessible environments and sufficient assistive learning materials, students with disabilities are able to meet academic standards and pursue their education successfully. Moreover, the result of multiple regression (p=.00) proved that the predictor and residence variable had strong relationship and there is no multi-collinearity problem and they are auto-correlated. The result of two-way ANOVA indicated that the variables are statistically significant (P<0.05), we will reject the null hypothesis. Finally, the recommendations emphasize the school should make accessible and become active inclusion of students with disabilities.

Keywords: Academic challenges, Academic prospects, Academic status, Integratedprimary schools, Student with disabilities.

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1.1Background of the study

Educationrefers to the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through teaching, learning, and research. Students with disabilities refer to learners who experience physical, sensory, intellectual, or emotional impairments that may affect their educational performance and require specific accommodations or support services. This term is widely recognized in educational and policy contexts to advocate for inclusive education practices.Education for students with disabilities requires equal opportunities and tailored support to foster their academic, social, and emotional development. Inclusive education emphasizes integrating these students into mainstream schools to learn alongside their nondisabled peers. Integrated schools often lack the support and accommodations needed for students with disabilities leading to lower academic performance and limited future prospects (Drasgow, 2015; Loftin et al., 2014). Negative societal attitudes and discriminatory practices further marginalize students with disabilities, reducing access to quality education and social integration (Patterson &Biesecker, 2019). However, challenges such as limited access to specialized teaching methods, assistive technologies, and support services hinder their academic progress, as noted in integrated primary schools across Africa (Yakubu&Salau, 2019). In Ethiopia, the Education and Training Policy of 1994 emphasizes inclusive education through early intervention, teacher training, and accessible learning resources (MoE, 2016). Despite this, barriers like inadequate infrastructure, untrained teachers, and societal attitudes persist, limiting the success of these initiatives (Tirussew, 2018; Tilahun, 2018).

Studies highlight challenges like inadequate resources, limited social interaction, and emotional struggles for students with disabilities, especially those with visual impairments (Awetash, 2015).In Karat Town, Konso Zone, students with disabilities face significant barriers, including a lack of accessible materials, infrastructure, and trained special needs teachers. Negative societal attitudes and stigma exacerbate these challenges, leading many SWDs to struggle or drop out of school. Despite these issues, little attention has been given to their academic status in integrated schools, prompting this study to address gaps and advocate for dignity, respect, and better support for students with disabilities. Through informal observations and information gathering, I have noticed that many people tend to avoid engaging with these students solely because of their disabilities. This research is proposed to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the academic status of students with disabilities in integrated school settings?
2. What are the factors that hinder the academic status of students with disabilities in integrated school settings?
3. What are the academic prospects of students with disabilities in integrated primary school?
4. What is the association of academic status, challenges and the prospects of students with disabilities?

1.2 Research Significance

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge gaps in knowledge and practice regarding inclusive education for SWDs in Ethiopia. By identifying key challenges and opportunities, the research offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and communities. The findings aim to:

- Enhance understanding of the barriers affecting SWDs' academic progress.
- Guide the development of inclusive policies and practices.

- Promote the use of assistive technologies and adaptive teaching methods.
- Encourage community and parental involvement in supporting SWDs.

Research Method and Materials

3.1 Research Design and Approach

A mixed-methods research approach was employed. In this study, a convergent parallel research design was used. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), convergent parallel research design involves collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, with the intent of comparing and contrasting the two datasets to provide a more complete picture of the research problem.

3.2 Population of the Study

The survey was carried out in the Karat Integrated Primary School. The participants of the study were teachers, special needs teachers, students with disabilities and school principals in Karat Integrated Primary School. The total number of populations included in this study is provided below.

Table 1: *Population and Sampling Size of the Study*

S/N	School Name	Total population		Male	Female	Total	Sampling technique
1.	Karat Primary School	Teachers		35	49	84	Simple random and purposive sampling technique
		School Principal and Vice Principal		2	-	2	
		Students	Without Disability	926	1093	2019	
			Partially Sighted	3	2	5	
			Deaf	1	-	1	
			Hard of Hearing	3	1	4	
			Intellectual Limitation	2	0	2	
			Physical Disability	2	3	5	
2.	Gamble Primary School	Teachers		19	8	27	
		School Principal and Vice Principal		2	-	2	
		Students	Without Disability	424	397	803	
			Partially Sighted	3	2	5	
			Hard of Hearing	7	3	10	
3.	Jarso Primary School	Teachers		16	11	27	
		School Principal and Vice Principal		2	-	2	
		Students	Without Disability	433	228	661	
			Partially Sighted	5	4	9	
			Hard of Hearing	3	6	9	

3.3 Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

A random number table and purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for this study. This process involved selecting students with disabilities, teachers, and school administrators from the Karate town integrated school. Researchers use random number tables to select a sample from a larger population without bias. Each number in the table can represent an individual or unit in the population (Cochran, 1977). The researcher used random sampling to select 80 teachers (20 from Jarso, 20 from Gamble, and 40 from Karat), 50 students with disabilities (18 from Jarso, 15 from Gamble, and 17 from Karat), and purposively included all principals and vice principals (6) from three schools. Participants were chosen for their familiarity with the behavior and academic conditions of students with disabilities. Teachers provided insights on accommodations, social interactions, and

instructional strategies, while special needs teachers contributed expertise on challenges in students with disabilities' academic achievement. Principals offered information on support systems, teacher assignments, and relationships with stakeholders. Students with disabilitiesshared their experiences, challenges, and strategies for overcoming barriers.

3.4 Sources of Data

The researcher collected data through a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered using interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions and the secondary data includes document reviews, including records and attendance sheets and population statistics, was obtained from the Karat Town Education Office.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

This study used questionnaires, focus group discussions, document analysis, and interviews to gather the data. These instruments help researchers integrate information and enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity refers to how well a test measures what it's intended to measure (Kothari, 2005). The researcher developed the items with the advisor's guidance to ensure they matched the research objectives. Difficult questions were simplified for clarity. Experts in special needs education and the advisor reviewed and modified the instrument for content validity. To assess reliability, the questionnaires were piloted with 20 external participants across three schools, ensuring consistency in responses. Piloting also helped identify any weaknesses and confirm the suitability of the data analysis methods.

Table 2: *Reliability Results*

Reliability Statistics of items			
No	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
1	Academic Status of SWDs	.889	9
2	Academic Challenges of SWDs	.817	13
3	Academic Prospects of SWDs	.90	10
	All Cronbach α result	**.930**	**32**

Table 2 shows that the measure of students with disabilities academic status has a Cronbach's Alpha of .889, indicating high internal consistency. Academic challenges faced by SWDs have a Cronbach's Alpha of .817, showing reliability but slightly less consistency. The academic prospects of SWDs have a very high internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of .90. The overall Cronbach's Alpha of .930 demonstrates excellent reliability across all variables. These high reliability statistics suggest that the instruments used to assess SWDs' academic aspects are highly consistent and effective in capturing meaningful insights.

3.7 Data collection procedures

Data for this study were collected using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. The researcher obtained consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality for questionnaire responses. Quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires, administered by the researcher and two assistants, covering academic status,

challenges, support services, and prospects for students with disabilities. These were collected after four hours. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with school administrators and students with disabilities, focusing on academic challenges, curriculum, teaching strategies, and school relationships. Data collection instruments were used sequentially to ensure triangulation and cross-checking.

3.8 Data AnalysisProcedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20, employing descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) for demographic information. Inferential analyses, including Pearson correlation, two-way ANOVA, and multiple linear regressions, were conducted to assess the impact of academic status and challenges on the prospects of students with disabilities. These techniques examined variable relationships, model fit, autocorrelation, and normality.Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns in interviews, document analysis, and FGDs from Karat town Integrated Primary School. Transcribed interview data were categorized by themes, and FGD responses were coded into patterns. Document analysis examined past academic records of students with disabilities. Finally, data from all sources were triangulated to draw conclusions and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 RESULTS

4.1.1 Academic status of students with disability

The table utilizes a Likert scale where 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 indicates disagree, 3 indicates neutral, 4 indicates agree, and 5 indicates strongly agree.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics of the Results on Academic Status of students with disabilities*

No	Students with disability in the classroom	Scales						
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**M**	**SD**
1	Able to meet academic standards.	31 (38.8%)	27 33.8%)	13 16.3%)	7 8.8%)	2 2.5%)	2.80	1.326
2	Have access to the same learning opportunities as their peers.	27 (33.8%)	23 (28.8%)	9 (11.3%)	9 (11.3%)	12 (15.0%)	2.98	1.509
3	participating in outside the class like sport, clubs	31 (38.8%)	26 (32.5%)	9 (11.3%)	12 (15.0%)	2 (2.5%)	2.44	1.291
4	Come to class with completing assignments, classwork and readings on time.	24 (30.0%)	28 (35.0%)	10 (12.5%)	15 (18.8%)	3 (3.8%)	2.68	1.300
5	Have the power to decide the right way of decision in the school setting which cooperate with their peers.	27 (33.8%)	24 (30.0%)	16 (20.0%)	12 (15.0%)	1 (1.3%)	3.18	1.394
6	Actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions with asking questions.	16 (20.0%)	30 (37.5%)	16 (20.0%)	13 (16.3%)	5 (6.3%)	2.69	1.337
7	Able to keep up with the academic pace of their peers.	32 (40.0%)	15 (18.8%)	8 (10.0%)	13 (16.3%)	12 (15.0%)	2.59	1.240

8	Have got sufficient grade result.	28 (35.0%)	25 (31.3%)	14 (17.5%)	10 (12.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2.71	1.285
The mean result of mean ad standard deviation							**2.2722**	**.87469**

The overall mean value result is 2.27 indicates that the academic status of students with disabilities is perceived to be lower than average, suggesting that these students struggling academically compared to their peers. It means that the respondents response that disagreement in the statements. And also the result of standard deviation is 0.87, reflects that while there is a general agreement on the academic challenges students with disabilities face, there are some differences in the extent to which respondents believe these challenges are impacting academic performance. This result emphasizes the need for focused interventions to improve the academic status of students with disabilities, including providing accessible learning materials, tailored teaching methods, and support systems to help them succeed in the school environment.

The qualitative results supplement the descriptive analysis and highlight the challenges faced by students with disabilities in their academic pursuits. The interviews revealed that students with disabilities often have low academic achievements, with many students absent from school or failing to submit assignments on time. Respondent G2 noted that the community, including the school, often has a negative perception of students with disabilities, further hindering their education. G1 emphasized that the lack of accommodations, such as extra time during exams, contributes to low achievement. J2 added that many students with disabilities attend school only because their parents push them, often facing emotional neglect at home. K1 and K2 pointed out that the absence of special needs teachers and unsuitable learning environments limit students with disabilitiesparticipation and academic success. J1, a school principal, acknowledged that inadequate physical resources and lack of access to learning materials at home contribute to students with disabilities below-average performance.

The document analysis revealed that students with disabilities(SWDs) face significant academic challenges. The researcher classified the data by three integrated schools, calculating the overall average score for all SWDs in each school, as listing individual student averages was impractical. This analysis includes all disability types across each grade to provide an overall average for each school.The average score of SWDs at Gamole Integrated Primary School is 46.82, below expected levels. This is due to challenges like limited access to resources, inadequate accommodations, and lack of teacher training, which hinder SWDs from reaching their academic potential. Some students have dropped out due to these issues.At Jarso Primary School, the average academic achievement of SWDs is 47.39, indicating below-average performance. The consistent underperformance across all three schools (Gamole, Jarso, and Karat) highlights the need for improved support, resources, and interventions. Many SWDs face obstacles that impact their education, leading to dropout rates and feelings of hopelessness. To improve academic outcomes for SWDs, creating a more inclusive environment with better collaboration among educators, parents, and stakeholders is essential. Tailored support and interventions are necessary to address their unique needs and ensure equitable educational opportunities. The finding from FGD has described as follow. **Gr1** is from gamole primary school. They are 7 in number those who has students with hard of hearing and deaf, students with partial sighted and blind and students

who have crunch user. However, students with deaf were communicated with writing. So they stated that

We experience low academic performance due to various challenges, such as negative attitudes, unskilled teachers, a lack of materials, communication barriers, the absence of special needs teachers, and inaccessible physical environments. Additionally, we face bullying from parents and unequal treatment within our families. Despite these obstacles, our academic prospects depend on continuing our education with improved access to supportive school environments and fostering more positive attitudes toward us….

Challenges and Experiences of Students in **Gr2** (Karat Primary School) consisted of eight participants from karat Primary School, comprising students with disabilities, including those who are hard of hearing, deaf, partially sighted, and physically disabled.

Our academic performance is currently below expectations. Although we support one another, we encounter significant challenges, including bullying from other students, a lack of assistive materials, poor classroom conditions, and disrespectful behavior from some teachers. The school environment remains inadequate, and the long distance between our homes and the school adds further difficulty. Despite these obstacles, we remain resolute in our determination to continue our education, holding onto the hope for positive change.

Moreover, **Gr3,** they are from Jarso primary school, they are 10 in number and diversified disability type and different grade. As they respond that on regarding the academic status, academic challenges and academic prospects of SWDs in integrated school as follow

We haven't achieved good grades. Our teachers don't understand our needs and ignore our ideas, treating us as inferior. We don't get extra time for assignments or equal marks. We feel forced to drop out, and the government remains silent, with no one advocating for us.

In general, data result from questionnaires; interview, document analyses and FGD revealed that the academic status of SWDs remains a significant concern within the educational system, as it directly influences their potential for future success, career opportunities, and overall quality of life. As the finding is that SWDs tend to struggle academically, often failing to achieve satisfactory grades. This is partly due to the fact that many SWDs are unable to keep pace with their peers in the classroom. They often find it difficult to engage fully in classroom discussions and activities, which impede their ability to absorb information and develop critical thinking skills. Additionally, lack of active participation such as asking questions or contributing to group work further limits their academic growth.

4.1.2Academic Challenges of SWDs

This table is discussing the academic challenges of SWDs in integrated primary school. The respondents are corresponding with their responses based on the actual practice which performs in the school setting.

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics of the Results on Academic Challenges of SWDs*

No	Items	Scales

		1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1	There is appropriate accommodation for students with physical disabilities in integrated school setting.	29 (36.3%)	27 (33.8%)	14 (17.5%)	8 (10.0%)	2 (2.5%)	2.03	1.067
2	There are trained teachers and staff to support students with disability in integrated school setting.	28 (35.0%)	22 (27.5%)	9 (11.3%)	10 (12.5%)	11 (13.8%)	2.39	1.428
3	There is assistive technology to aid students with disability in the school setting.	33 (41.3%)	25 (31.3%)	9 (11.3%)	11 (13.8%)	2 (2.5%)	2.05	1.146
4	There are adequate supports from parents and guardians for students with disability in the school.	25 (31.3%)	28 (35.0%)	10 (12.5%)	14 (17.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2.28	1.190
5	There is flexibility in the curriculum to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students with disability in integrated school setting.	28 (35.0%)	24 (30.0%)	16 (20.0%)	11 (13.8%)	1 (1.3%)	2.16	1.096
6	The social inclusion experienced by students with disability in the school setting due to their differences.	19 (23.8%)	28 (35.0%)	16 (20.0%)	13 (16.3%)	4 (5.0%)	2.44	1.168
7	There is awareness and understanding of disability issues among the general population in integrated school setting.	29 (36.3%)	25 (31.3%)	12 (15.0%)	10 (12.5%)	4 (5.0%)	2.19	1.202
8	There is enough material to assist students with disability in their learning.	28 (35.0%)	24 (30.0%)	14 (17.5%)	11 (13.8%)	3 (3.8%)	2.21	1.177
9	There are special needs educators in my school to interpret the necessary support for students with disability	29 (36.3%)	21 (26.3%)	5 (6.3%)	15 (18.8%)	10 (12.5%)	2.45	1.457
10	There is adequate environmental accessibility of the school which welcomes students with disability.	27 (33.8%)	21 (26.3%)	10 (12.5%)	18 (22.5%)	4 (5.0%)	2.39	1.297
11	Students with disabilities are struggling to form relationships with their peers but feel isolated from social activities.	21 (26.3%)	18 (22.5%)	7 (8.8%)	23 (28.8%)	11 (13.8%)	2.74	1.465
12	Students with disabilities face barriers to participating in extracurricular activities, like social club, sports.	17 (21.3%)	13 (16.3%)	8 (10.0%)	20 (25.0%)	22 (27.5%)	3.00	1.534
The overall mean and standard deviation is							**2.37**	**.864**

The overall mean score of items is 2.37, which indicates disagreement response rate and the result of standard deviation is 0.864. i.e., significant concerns regarding the integration of SWDs in the educational setting with key areas includes; accommodations for students with physical disabilities, trainingfor staff and teachers, access to assistive technology and learning materials etc. therefore, there is a widespread belief that the academic environment presents substantial challenges for SWDs.

The interview result has explained as follow. The interviewee was principals, vice principals and special needs teachers in gamole, karate and jarso primary integrated schools. The participants respond the following. **G1** mentioned several academic challenges in the school, including a rigid curriculum, environmental issues, lack of specialized teachers, and poor physical accessibility.**G2** highlighted key challenges like inadequate teacher training, social exclusion, communication barriers for deaf students, and physical accessibility issues. Authorities cite budget constraints as a reason for inaction.**K1** noted challenges faced by SWDs, including lack of academic support, peer and societal attitudes, and insufficient assistive devices, leading to dropouts and family struggles.**K2** mentioned the lack of a dedicated section or trained staff for SWDs, as well as challenges in managing broad programs like inclusive education, adult literacy, and others, without adequate training for staff**J1** pointed out that rural schools face unique challenges, including limited resources, geographical constraints, and insufficient community engagement, which hinder SWDs' academic performance.**J2** reported that a lack of trained teachers is a significant challenge, with insufficient preparation and no on-the-job training for SWDs.

Inline to these, The FGD method is an essential qualitative tool used to explore the academic status of SWDs in educational settings. By engaging SWDs in an open dialogue, FGDs provide a platform for these students to express their challenges, experiences, and perceptions regarding their academic performance. FGD has describes as below. **Gr1** is from gamole primary school. They are 7 in number those who has students with hard of hearing and deaf, students with partial sighted and blind and students who have crunch user. However, students with deaf were communicated with writing. So they stated that we had a lot of challenges that faced them. Some of them are from school and others from parents. So based on their discussed these challenges are parents overload, negative attitude of students and teachers toward SWDs, unequal acceptance of SWDs in the school, inadequacy of the materials, harmful insulting form teachers, and lack of special needs experts…..**Gr2** (from karate primary school)mentioned challenges such as a lack of awareness towards SWDs, classroom disruptions, communication barriers, lack of support, unequal distribution of activities, and teachers' negative perceptions of SWDs.**Gr3** (Jarso Primary School) expressed frustrations about being seen as different and inferior, with discrimination and prejudice from the community. They emphasized that attitudes, rather than abilities, are the main barrier to their education.

Moreover, the FGDs provided direct insights into the lived experiences of SWDs, who expressed frustration with the lack of assistive learning devices, inaccessible school environments, and a general lack of understanding from their teachers. These students also pointed out that their teachers often lack the training needed to effectively support them, a sentiment echoed in both the questionnaire and interview findings. The physical barriers in the school environment, such as inaccessible classrooms and inadequate infrastructure, further hinder SWDs from fully participating in their education.

4.1.3 Academic Prospects of SWDs

This section explores the academic prospects of SWDs in integrated school settings. The table below-6 summarizes the academic prospects of SWDs, including opportunities for further education, access to resources and support, participation in classroom activities, and the impact of inclusion and environmental challenges.

Table 5: *Descriptive Statistics of the Results on Academic prospects of SWDs*

S/N	Items	Scales						
		1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1	Students with disabilities have opportunities for further education.	31 (38.8%)	27 (33.8%)	13 (16.3%)	7 (8.8%)	2 (2.5%)	2.03	1.067
2	By providing students with disabilities access to resources and support, we aim to enhance their personal development.	28 (35%)	22 (27.5%)	9 (11.3%)	10 (12.5%)	11 (13.8%)	2.43	1.430
3	Students with disabilities attend to their education through cope up with the pressure.	22 (27.5%)	8 (10%)	7 (8.8%)	24 (30%)	19 (23.8%)	3.13	1.570
4	Students with disabilities are included and actively participate in classroom activities.	18 (22.5%)	18 (22.5%)	6 (7.5%)	26 (32.5%)	12 (15%)	2.95	1.440
5	Students with disabilities can continue their education by giving assistive device	16 (20%)	18 (22.5%)	9 (11.3%)	20 (25%)	17 (21.3%)	3.05	1.466
6	Through accessing rich curriculum students with disabilities can achieve their education in the school setting.	13 (16.3%)	19 (23.8%)	13 (16.3%)	24 (30%)	11 (13.8%)	3.01	1.322
7	Train students with disabilities to enhance their career readiness.	31 (38.8%)	26 (32.5%)	9 (11.3%)	12 (15%)	2 (2.5%)	2.10	1.154
8	Students with disability will be expelled their education if they feel isolation.	27 (33.8%)	24 (30%)	16 (20%)	12 (15%)	1 (1.3%)	2.20	1.107
9	Students with disability have more active participation in the school when they have feeling of inclusion.	28 (35%)	25 (31.3%)	14 (17.5%)	10 (12.5%)	3 (3.8%)	2.19	1.159
10	Students with disability drop out their education due to environmental challenge.	16 (20%)	18 (22.5%)	5 (6.3%)	20 (25%)	21 (26.3%)	3.15	1.527
The overall mean and standard deviation result has							**2.622**	**0.712**

The mean value of the data is 2.622, it indicates that some of them are disagreement but some of them are agreed on some data. For example, SWDs drop out their education due to environmental challenges, SWDs can continue their education by giving assistive devices, through accessing rich curriculum students with disabilities can achieve their education in the school setting and SWDs attend to their education through cope up with the pressure. As well the value of standard deviation is between the ranges of 0.7122, it suggests that it is consistence between the data and indicates that the overall sentiment regarding the academic prospects of SWDs is widely held across the group.Therefore, it has consistent and reliable on the data.

And the interview result has putted as follow. The academic prospects of SWDs are a critical concern in the field of education, as ensuring equal access to quality education for all students is essential for promoting inclusive and equitable learning environments. In this section the interviewee reflects their idea on the regarding issue. Most of their idea has interrelated and the researcher had put inter-correlated these ideas.

As **G1** stated that on regards Academic Prospects of SWDs in integrated school
The academic prospects of SWDs are hindered by Ethiopia's rigid curriculum, which lacks flexibility despite existing policies. A flexible curriculum would enable SWDs to succeed alongside their peers, provided they receive the necessary support and are free from pressure or feelings of inferiority.

G2 reported that SWDs can succeed academically if the school is accessible, but negative attitudes from teachers and students, due to a lack of awareness, hinder their progress. They believe SWDs can excel if their needs are met, a sentiment supported by G3, K2, and J2.

J1 highlighted that environmental challenges, like inaccessible facilities, prevent SWDs from continuing their education. When the environment is accessible, SWDs can learn equally with their peers. K3 added that the school lacks accessibility, such as ramps, signage, and assistive materials, which are crucial for SWDs' success.

J3, the vice principal of Jarso Primary School, mentioned that SWDs are excluded due to unfair school systems, but their participation in activities improves their academic prospects. K1 agreed, noting the absence of assistive learning materials, which are essential for SWDs to succeed academically.

Gr1 from Gamole Primary School emphasized that accessible school environments are key to SWDs' academic prospects, but the lack of recreational areas and dust makes it difficult to continue education.Gr2, also from Gamole Primary, expressed that despite challenges from students and teachers, they persevere to continue their education and achieve their goals.Gr3 shared that access to assistive learning materials and technology is vital for SWDs to continue their education, as their school lacks these resources.Gr4 from Karat Primary expressed hope for their future education, as a flexible curriculum would help them achieve their educational goals.

Gr5 from Jarso Primary emphasized that when SWDs are included with their peers, they can participate freely in school activities, leading to success and goal achievement.Moreover, **Gr6,** they are from Jarso primary school, they are 10 in number and diversified disability type and different grade. As they respond that on regarding the academic status, academic challenges and academic prospects of SWDs in integrated school.

"*Our academic prospect is that when the school has include and don't ignore us in our school and in the community we can participate in every activities. Most of the people supposed us we can't do anything; we are the shame of parents and communities. However, when this bad supposition would be minimize and decline we can actively participate in our education."*

Therefore, the data from questionnaires, FGDs, and interviews revealed mixed perspectives. SWDs do not believe inclusion leads to active participation, nor do they think isolation would result in expulsion. They feel that training does not enhance career readiness, lack resources for personal development, and perceive limited opportunities for further education. However, some respondents shared positive feedback, noting that environmental challenges could lead to dropouts, but a rich curriculum and assistive devices could help SWDs succeed. They also

emphasized the importance of inclusion and participation in classroom activities and their ability to cope with educational pressures.

4.1.4 The association of Academic Status, Challenges and Prospects of SWDs

The Pearson correlation coefficient is a statistical measure that calculates the strength of the relationship between the relative movements of two variables.

Table 6:*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*

Correlations

		Academic status	Academic challenges	**Academic prospect**
Academic Status	Pearson Correlation	1	**.947****	**.863****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	**.000**
	N	80	80	**80**
Academic Challenges	Pearson Correlation	**.947****	1	**.899****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		**.000**
	N	80	80	**80**
Academic Prospects	Pearson Correlation	**.863****	**.899****	**1**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	80	80	**80**

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

The Pearson correlation coefficient between Academic Status and Academic Challenges is .947**, Academic Status and Academic Prospects is .863** and Challenges and Academic Prospects is .899**, indicating indicate that there are strong positive relationships among academic status, academic challenges, and academic prospects and they are statistically significant among variables.

Table 7: *Model Summery (R &R^2)*

Model Summary

Model	**R**	**R Square**	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					**Durbin-Watson**
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change	
1	**.900**	**.810**	.805	.31435	.810	164.302	2	77	.000	**1.964**

a. Predictors: (Constant), academic challenges, academic status

b. Dependent Variable: academic prospect

Table 7 shows a regression analysis model with an R value of 0.900, indicating a strong positive relationship between the predictors and academic prospects. The R-squared values of 0.810 means the predictors explain 81% of the variance in academic prospects. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.805 suggests the model accounts well for variability, with a standard error of 0.31435. The F-change statistic of 164.302 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that the model is statistically significant, confirming a good fit for the data.

Table 8: *Multi-collinearity Result*

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		**Collinearity Statistics**	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower	Upper	Toler	**VIF**

							Bound	Bound	ance	
1	(Constant)	.867	.103		8.414	.000	.662	1.072		
	Academic status	.086	.126	.106	.683	.496	-.165	.338	.102	**9.767**
	Academic challenges	.658	.128	.799	5.149	.000	.404	.913	.102	**9.767**

a. Dependent Variable: academic prospects

Table 8shows the multi-collinearity among the variables in a regression model, particularly focusing on Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values and tolerance. Multi-collinearity occurs when independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, which can inflate the variance of the estimated coefficients and make them unstable. Tolerance measures the amount of unique information that a predictor brings to the regression model. Both predictors have a VIF of 9.767 and the tolerance has .102. It suggesting there is no multi-collinearity problem among independent variables.

Table 9:*Two-way ANOVA Result*

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Dependent Variable: academic prospect			
F	df1	df2	**Sig.**
1.183	69	10	**.413**

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + academic status + academic challenges + academic status * academic challenges

Table 9 shows the results of assumption checking for Levene's test, with an F value of 1.183 and a p-value of 0.413. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant difference in variances across groups defined by academic status and challenges. This supports the use of two-way ANOVA, assuming other assumptions (normality, independence) are met, and confirms that variances are homogeneous.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: academic prospect

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	**Sig.**	**Partial Eta Squared**
Corrected Model	39.666[a]	69	.575	13.908	**.000**	**.990**
Intercept	453.151	1	453.151	10963.340	**.000**	**.999**
Academic status	2.422	18	.135	3.256	**.031**	**.854**
Academic challenges	5.165	26	.199	4.806	**.006**	**.926**
Academic status * academic challenges	1.536	15	.102	2.478	**.076**	**.788**
Error	.413	10	.041			
Total	590.280	80				
Corrected Total	40.080	79				

a. R Squared = .990 (Adjusted R Squared = .919)

The model explains 99% of the variance in academic prospects (R Squared = .990), indicating a strong influence of academic status, academic challenges, and their interaction. Both academic status and challenges have significant effects ($p < .05$), while their interaction

approaches significance (p = .076). There is a statistically significant difference in group means, so we reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that both factors significantly impact academic prospects, with their interaction potentially contributing as well.

Discussions

As to the findings, SWDs haven't got sufficient grade results. Consistence to this, World Bank (2019) found that SWDs struggle to meet grade-level expectations, resulting in insufficient grade outcomes.There is lack of appropriate accommodations, trained teachers and staffs for teaching SWDs in the school. It is confirmed with Oredein&Obadimeji (2023) there is a significant gap in professional development opportunities for educators, impacting their ability to effectively support SWDs. SWDs have lacks of assistive technology to aid them. It is supported by Vincent, Okeowo&Ariyo (2024) the underuse of assistive technologies due to lack of awareness and training among educators limits their potential to aid SWDs. SWDs have inadequate supports from parents and guardians.Flexibility in the curriculum to accommodate the diverse learning needs. Rigidity in educational frameworks makes it challenging to accommodate diverse learning needs effectively. This idea is supported by Joseph (2020) SWDs has lack of social inclusion. This idea is related with Kocha&Senapathy (2022) stated that SWDs often experience exclusion from social activities and peer interactions, impacting their overall integration.
Lack of enough material to assist/support SWDs, Papazoglou, Kalaitzi, Papazis, Vlachou, Tsermidou, Toulia&Fyssa, (2024) stated that insufficient access to specialized learning materials and technologies limits the educational opportunities for SWDs. absence of special needs educators in the school to interpret the necessary supports. This concept is directly intersected with Demirdag (2014) the absence of trained special needs educators further complicates the provision of necessary supports and accommodations.SWDs do find positive support such as accessing a rich curriculum, assistive devices, and opportunities to actively participate in classroom activities (Yıldız, 2022).Through providing assistive devices SWDs can help to continue their education. This is supported by Sefora&Ngubane (2023) providing an assistive device is crucial in helping SWDs continue their education. These devices can aid in overcoming physical and cognitive barriers, making education more accessible and enabling.The limited opportunities for SWDs to continue their education beyond primary levels are supported by existing literature. Peters (2004) emphasizes that SWDs often face barriers such as inaccessible infrastructure, inflexible curricula, and insufficient resources, which limit their academic progression.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

- ✓ The academic status of SWDs in integrated school had low and below expectations.
- ✓ The academic challenges faced by SWDs in integrated primary schools include inadequate physical accommodations, lack of assistive technology, insufficient teacher training, and a rigid curriculum that does not account for diverse learning needs. Social exclusion, negative attitudes from peers and teachers, and insufficient community and parental support further hinder SWDs' academic progress and emotional well-being.

- ✓ The academic prospects of SWDs are greatly affected by the environment and available support systems. However, a well-designed, inclusive curriculum and assistive devices can help SWDs succeed academically.
- ✓ There is a strong positive relationship between academic challenges, academic status, and academic prospects for SWDs, and it is statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Regression analysis shows that they explain 81% of the variation in academic prospects. However, multi-collinearity may affect model stability. Two-way ANOVA confirms that both factors significantly impact academic prospects, with their interaction potentially playing a role. These findings highlight the importance of addressing both challenges and status for better outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results obtained and the conclusions drawn from this study the following recommendations are suggested:

- ➢ General Teachers had better adopt differentiated instruction methods to cater to the diverse learning needs of SWDs.
- ➢ For Special Needs Education Teachers expected to provide personalized instructional support to SWDs, taking into account their unique learning styles and challenges.
- ➢ For School Administrators had better promote an inclusive school environment that celebrates diversity and ensures that all students, including SWDs, feel valued and respected.
- ➢ For Education Office, the curriculum had better put into the ground for supporting and the needs of SWDs as a whole through develop and enforce policies that promote the rights of SWDs to access quality education.
- ➢ The parents and guardians are expected SWDs became accepting and taking as part of their parents at home and even in the surrounding. The parents of SWDs should be educated and made aware of the importance of educating children with disabilities as well as making them active participants in the educational system.

5.3 Implications of the Study

This study has significant implications for various stakeholders:

1. **For Educators**
   - Implement differentiated instructional strategies to address diverse learning needs.
   - Receive specialized training to support SWDs effectively, ensuring they are equipped to handle unique challenges.
2. **For Policymakers**
   - Develop and enforce policies that prioritize inclusivity and resource allocation for SWDs.
   - Ensure curricula are flexible and adaptable to accommodate diverse learners.
3. **For Schools**
   - Create accessible physical environments with ramps, signage, and assistive technologies.
   - Foster an inclusive culture by combating stigma and promoting positive attitudes toward SWDs.
4. **For Parents and Communities**

- Increase awareness of the importance of educating SWDs and supporting them at home.
- Encourage active participation of parents and community members in creating an inclusive educational environment.

Availability of the Data and Material

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions. However, the data can be made available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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Conflict of interest

There is no competing interest.

Institutional Review Board Statement

The Ethical Committee of the department of special needs and inclusive education, Arba Minch University, Ethiopia, has granted approval for this study on Date 21-8-2024 (Ref. No.AMUSNIE/144/2024).

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