EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN TVET INSTITUTIONS ACROSS SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/caijlser.v10i8.021

Abstract
One of the priorities of the Nigerian government is to provide high-quality, research-informed, and efficient skills development services that meet both individual and national economic needs. Although the country recognises and supports special needs education, existing approaches do not align with contemporary global best practices. Moreover, the absence of technology-driven classrooms and specialised laboratories, particularly within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, has left students with special needs at a significant disadvantage in accessing technical education. Against this background, this study examined the challenges facing special needs students in TVET institutions in Southwest Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design and utilised a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to collect data. Three research questions were addressed, and two null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A purposive sample of 200 students with special needs from Federal Polytechnics in the region participated in the study. Findings revealed major challenges including inadequate financial support, cumbersome transition processes, high cost of educational materials and equipment, personal and family constraints, and shortage of specialists and paraprofessionals. The study recommends increased investment in special needs education by government and education stakeholders, alongside the provision of sustainable financial support and assistive resources to enhance equitable access to technical education for students with special needs.

Key words: Disability, Special Needs, Technical Schools, Teachers

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed rapid technological advancement across virtually all sectors of the global economy, fundamentally reshaping expectations within education, skills development, and employment landscapes. These changes have intensified pressure on education systems to produce graduates with competencies relevant to dynamic labour markets, particularly in contexts where unemployment persists despite increasing educational qualifications (McGrath & Ramsarup, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2020). Consequently, many countries, including Nigeria, have intensified reforms in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a pathway to equip youths and adults with employable, productive, and sustainable skills capable of fostering socio-economic development and self-reliance (Adetola, 2021; Chinyere et al., 2015). TVET is widely conceptualised as a comprehensive educational framework that integrates general education with the

study of technology, applied sciences, and practical skills necessary for diverse occupational fields (Nugraha et al., 2020; Yeap et al., 2021). Beyond technical competence, TVET aims to prepare individuals for meaningful participation in economic life by enhancing productivity, innovation, and adaptability in response to evolving industrial demands (kohankhaki et al., 2021). Within this context, inclusive access to TVET becomes critical, ensuring that all categories of learners, including those with disabilities, are adequately empowered to contribute to societal and economic development (Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021).

However, evidence suggests that persons with disabilities continue to face structural, social, and institutional barriers within educational systems, including TVET institutions, particularly in Africa (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018; Delubom et al., 2020). The social model of disability emphasises that disability is not solely a medical condition but is significantly shaped by environmental, attitudinal, and systemic constraints that limit participation (Oliver, 2013; Chan-Seob Nam, 2009). In Nigeria, many individuals with special needs require not only academic learning but also adaptive technologies, mobility aids, communication devices, and specialised instructional support to facilitate participation, learning, and independence (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016; Kinsella, 2018). Unfortunately, inadequate assistive facilities, limited specialist personnel, and insufficient institutional support have continued to challenge effective inclusion within TVET systems across many developing contexts (Makopoulou et al., 2019; Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021). Given these realities, ensuring equitable access to quality technical and vocational education for students with special needs is essential to advancing inclusive education, social justice, and national development. It is against this background that the present study examines the challenges confronting special needs students in TVET institutions in Southwest Nigeria, with a view to informing policy and practice that can strengthen inclusive, technology-driven, and responsive vocational education systems.

Statement of the Problem

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was conceived as a strategic pillar to drive Nigeria toward technological growth, economic resilience, and self-reliance by equipping citizens with relevant skills for productivity and employment. However, this aspiration remains largely unrealised, as evidenced by persistent unemployment, weak technological innovation, skills–labour market mismatches, and limited economic opportunities (Adetola, 2021; McGrath & Ramsarup, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2020). Critiques of TVET delivery in Nigeria and comparable contexts highlight issues such as inadequate funding, high training costs, poor quality implementation, and programmes misaligned with socio-economic realities and labour market demands (Chinyere et al., 2015; Yeap et al., 2021; kohankhaki et al., 2021). These challenges underscore the urgent need for a robust and inclusive TVET system capable of developing competent manpower for national development. Within this broader concern lies an even more critical challenge affecting students with special needs. Evidence shows that learners with disabilities continue to face stigma, social exclusion, discrimination, and systemic barriers that undermine their educational rights and participation (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018; Torgbenu et al., 2018; Oliver, 2013). The social model of disability explains that these disadvantages arise not merely from impairment but from negative attitudes, institutional neglect, and environmental barriers embedded within educational systems (Chan-Seob Nam, 2009; Oliver, 2013).

In many African and developing country TVET contexts, including Nigeria, students with disabilities encounter inadequate learning environments, insufficient assistive technologies, lack of specialised facilities, and limited professional support services (Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021; Murgor et al., 2014). Furthermore, challenges such as poorly trained educators in special needs pedagogy, weak inclusive practices, negative teacher and peer attitudes, and resource constraints continue to hinder equitable participation in mainstream learning spaces (Delubom et al., 2020; Kinsella, 2018; Makopoulou et al., 2019; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016; Nkalane, 2018). These conditions create structural and psychological barriers that restrict academic progress, social inclusion, and skills acquisition among special needs students. Given the centrality of TVET to national development and the moral imperative of inclusive education, there is a pressing need to understand the specific challenges confronting special needs students within Nigerian TVET institutions. Therefore, this study investigates the challenges facing special needs students in TVET institutions in Southwest Nigeria, with the aim of informing policy, improving practice, and promoting equitable access to vocational education for all learners.

Objective of the study

i. To identify the educational, infrastructural, and support needs of students with physical disabilities in TVET institutions.
ii. To examine the consequence of the challenges on academic performance of the students.
iii. To propose feasible strategies for addressing the challenges faced by students with physical disabilities in TVET institutions.

Research Questions

1. What challenges are faced by students with special needs in TVET institutions?
2. What is the consequence of the challenges on academic performance of the students?
3. What strategies can be adopted to effectively address these challenges?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: Parental level of education has no significant effect on the challenges faced by students with special needs in TVET institutions.

H_{02}: Parental socio-economic status has no significant impact on the challenges faced by students with special needs in TVET institutions.

Historical Background of TVET in Nigeria

Historically, Nigerian societies placed strong emphasis on skill acquisition through indigenous systems of apprenticeship, where learning was rooted in observation, participation, and practical engagement in trades such as farming, craft production, hunting, and traditional medicine. Through this process, young people were equipped with vocational, social, and survival skills necessary for community integration and self-reliance. This form of traditional vocational training was holistic, contributing to physical, social, intellectual, and character development, and ensured that individuals productively contributed to their communities (Chinyere et al., 2015; Nugraha et al., 2020). With the advent of colonial administration in the early twentieth century, the increasing demand for skilled manpower to support administrative and infrastructural operations compelled the British colonial

government to formalise vocational and technical education. Technical-oriented departments such as the Nigerian Railways, Marine Department, and Posts and Telegraphs established structured training initiatives to develop a competent indigenous workforce capable of operating machinery and supporting colonial economic interests (Adetola, 2021; McGrath & Ramsarup, 2024). During this period, education policies began shifting towards technical development, including opportunities for advanced training both locally and abroad.

Subsequent commissions and reforms further shaped the trajectory of TVET in Nigeria. Institutional developments such as the creation of specialised technical colleges were intended to strengthen vocational capacity and produce middle-level technical manpower. However, while earlier initiatives emphasised relevance to socio-economic needs, later reforms did not always sustain strong support for vocational pathways, leading to periods of limited prioritisation and structural inconsistencies in TVET implementation (Chinyere et al., 2015; McGrath & Ramsarup, 2024). Despite these fluctuations, TVET has remained central to Nigeria's educational and economic development discourse, continually recognised as a catalyst for employability, innovation, productivity, and national growth (Adetola, 2021; Nugraha et al., 2020).

Challenges of Children with Special Needs

One of the most persistent constraints to effective inclusion of learners with special needs is the shortage of adequately trained teachers in special education pedagogy. Many institutions rely on teachers with limited professional preparation in inclusive instructional practices, resulting in weak classroom support, poor adaptation of curriculum, and inadequate instructional delivery for learners with disabilities. Studies across African and international contexts show that insufficient teacher preparation remains a critical barrier to meaningful inclusion, as many educators lack the competencies, resources, and confidence required to effectively address diverse learning needs (Delubom et al., 2020; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016; Kinsella, 2018). Consequently, learners with disabilities are often deprived of the quality educational experiences necessary to support their academic success and holistic development.

Lack of Adequate Support Systems for Special Needs Learners

Effective inclusion requires coordinated emotional, instructional, institutional, and parental support. However, many learners with disabilities continue to experience limited institutional assistance, inadequate administrative backing, and insufficient parental engagement. Research indicates that systemic weaknesses such as resource shortages, poor funding, delayed support services, and limited technical assistance undermine inclusive education delivery (Delubom et al., 2020; Makopoulou et al., 2019). In addition, parental attitudes significantly influence learners' outcomes. While some parents demonstrate strong advocacy and involvement, others lack adequate awareness or hold misconceptions, which affects motivation, confidence, and participation of children with disabilities in learning environments (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018; Torgbenu et al., 2018). These realities collectively exacerbate exclusion and hinder meaningful participation in learning.

Transitions, such as movement from primary to secondary education or from school to vocational and tertiary training, pose significant difficulties for students with disabilities. The absence of well-structured transition frameworks means that many learners encounter unfamiliar environments, unsupportive peers, poorly prepared teachers, and limited institutional readiness to accommodate

their needs. Research highlights that barriers including resource inadequacy, negative attitudes, weak policy implementation, and fragmented support services complicate transition processes for learners with disabilities in African contexts and beyond (Delubom et al., 2020; Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021; Kinsella, 2018). Without planned, inclusive transition strategies, students struggle with academic adaptation, social integration, independent living preparation, and employability pathways.

Guidance and counselling services are essential for addressing the emotional, psychological, social, and academic needs of students with disabilities. However, many educational institutions, including TVET environments, lack specialised counselling frameworks to adequately support this group. Studies indicate that students with disabilities often experience stigma, emotional distress, and exclusionary practices that negatively affect their confidence, self-perception, and learning engagement (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018; Oliver, 2013; D'Souza, 2019). Where counselling exists, it is frequently under-resourced or insufficiently integrated into inclusive school systems. Scholars therefore emphasise the need for structured counselling programmes that include disability-sensitive approaches, collaboration among multidisciplinary teams, early identification of needs, and targeted psychosocial support to enhance educational participation and outcomes (Nkalane, 2018; Kinsella, 2018; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Theory of Disability, also known as the Social Model of Disability, which argues that individuals are not disabled primarily by their physical or sensory impairments, but by social, institutional, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that restrict their participation in mainstream activities (Oliver, 2013; Chan-Seob Nam, 2009). The model shifts attention from viewing disability as a personal tragedy to recognizing it as a socially constructed condition arising from exclusionary structures and practices within society, including educational systems (D'Souza, 2019). Within the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the Social Theory of Disability provides a useful lens for understanding how inaccessible learning environments, inadequate instructional provisions, negative attitudes, and policy gaps create disabling educational experiences for students with physical challenges. When TVET institutions lack inclusive pedagogies, supportive instructional design, accessible infrastructure, trained personnel, or appropriate accommodations, they reinforce marginalisation rather than empowerment (Addo et al., 2023; Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021; Delubom et al., 2020). Studies in diverse contexts have shown that institutional cultures and implementation challenges significantly shape the educational participation of students with disabilities, rather than the disability itself (Kinsella, 2018; Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018; Subbey, 2018).

This theoretical perspective aligns with the present study by framing the challenges faced by physically challenged students in TVET institutions as products of systemic and social constraints rather than individual limitation. It also supports the examination of socio-contextual variables such as parental socio-economic background and educational exposure, which influence the level of support and capacity to navigate institutional barriers (Torgbenu et al., 2018; Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018). By grounding the study in the Social Theory of Disability, the research emphasizes the need for structural change, inclusive policy implementation, improved institutional practices, and enabling learning environments that promote equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities in TVET systems.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design, which is appropriate for investigating the experiences and perceptions of special needs students within real-life educational contexts (Wang, 2020; Watkins, 2017). The survey approach enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative insights on the challenges faced by students with disabilities in TVET institutions, the factors contributing to these challenges, and potential solutions. A stratified and purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents. The population comprised students with special needs in TVET institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. Stratified sampling was used to select three polytechnics, representing each senatorial district in the state, namely Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, ICT Polytechnic Igbesa, and Moshood Abiola Polytechnic Abeokuta ensuring geographic representation. From these institutions, 200 students with special needs were purposively selected based on their enrollment in relevant programmes and their willingness to participate (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Tongco, 2017; Novosel, 2023). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising two sections. Section "A" captured socio-demographic information including age, sex, course of study, and type of disability, while Section "B" contained items addressing the challenges faced by special needs students, contributing factors, and potential strategies for resolution. A 4-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' agreement with statements, facilitating quantitative analysis (Addo et al., 2023; Delubom, Marongwe, & Buka, 2020).

Collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, which allowed for the presentation of descriptive statistics and examination of relationships between variables. Independent sample t-tests were employed to test differences in challenges based on categorical variables such as parental education, while multiple regression analysis was used to assess the impact of socio-economic and demographic factors on the challenges faced by special needs students (Nkalane, 2018; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016). This methodological approach provided a systematic and reliable means to investigate the research objectives and test the formulated hypotheses in a rigorous and contextually relevant manner.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	110	55.0
Female	90	45.0
Age (Years)	**Frequency**	**Percent**
15-17 years	42	21.0
18-20 years	97	48.5
21-23 years	54	27.0
Above 23 years	7	3.5
Year of Study	**Frequency**	**Percent**
First year	34	17.0
Second year	92	46.0
Third year	74	37.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Researchers' Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 showed that (55.0%) of the respondents were male while (45.0%) were female which indicated that there were more male students than female students in this study. Also, (48.5%) of the respondents were within the age category of 18-20 years, (27.0%) were within the age category of 21-23 years, (21.0%) were within the age category of 15-17 years while (3.5%) were above 23 years.

Table2: Distribution of respondents by nature of disabilities

Nature of disability	Frequency	Percent
Paralysis	18	9.0
Dumb	1	0.5
Loss of the legs	75	37.5
Hearing impairment	106	53.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Researchers' Field Survey, 2022

From table 3, it was revealed that the nature of disabilities that the physically challenged come to the school with were diverse. It ranged from Hearing impairment (53.0%), loss of legs (37.5%), paralysis (9.0%) and dumb (0.5%). Each of these challenges come with its own peculiar challenge particularly when it comes to schooling with it.

Research Question One:
What challenges are faced by students with special needs in TVET institutions?
Table 3: Challenges faced by Special need students in TVET institutions

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand Deviation
The transferring process	79 (39.5%)	68 (34.0%)	20 (10.0%)	33 (16.5%)	1.59	0.54
Inadequate financial support	101 (50.5%)	46 (23.0%)	38 (19.0%)	15 (7.5%)	2.15	1.27
High cost of educational materials and equipment	158 (79.0%)	33 (16.5%)	9 (4.5%)	-	1.54	0.58
Personal/family issues,	104 (52.0%)	88 (44.0%)	8 (4.0%)	-	1.52	0.58
Lack of specialists and para-professionals	148 (74.0%)	51 (25.5%)	1 (0.5%)	-	1.78	0.96

Researchers' Field Survey, 2022

Table 3 showed that (39.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (34.0%) agreed, (10.0%) disagreed while (16.5%) strongly disagreed that the Transferring process was one of the challenges faced by Special need students in TVET institutions, (50.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (23.0%) agreed, (19.0%) disagreed while (7.5%) strongly disagreed that inadequate financial support was one of the challenges faced by Special need students in TVET institutions, (79.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (16.5%) agreed while (4.5%) disagreed that high cost of

educational materials and equipment was one of the challenges faced by Special need students in TVET institutions, (52.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (44.0%) agreed while (4.0%) disagreed that Personal/family issues was one of the challenges faced by Special need students in TVET institutions. Furthermore, (74.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (25.5%) agreed while (0.5%) disagreed that lack of specialists and para-professionals was one of the challenges faced by Special need students in TVET institutions. It also showed that inadequate financial support had the highest mean score of 2.15, followed by Lack of specialists and para-professionals with a mean score of 1.78 and the transferring process with a mean score of 1.59.

Research Question Two

What is the consequence of the challenges on academic performance of the students?

Table 4: Consequence of the challenges on academic performance of the students

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand Deviation
The challenges lead to poor academic performance among the students	79 (39.5%)	100 (50.0%)	20 (10.0%)	1 (0.5%)	1.72	0.68
The challenges lead to low level of motivation among students	76 (38.0%)	104 (52.0%)	11 (5.5%)	9 (4.5%)	1.77	0.75
The challenges may bring about drop of students from school	155 (78.0%)	20 (10.0%)	18 (9.0%)	6 (3.0%)	1.46	0.70

Researchers' Field Survey, 2022

Table 4 showed that (39.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (50.0%) agreed, (10.0%) disagreed while (0.5%) strongly disagreed that the challenges lead to poor academic performance among the students, (38.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (52.0%) agree, 11 (5.5%) disagree while 9 (4.5%) strongly disagreed that the challenges lead to low level of motivation among students. Also, 155 (78.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 20 (10.0%) agree, 18 (9.0%) disagree while 6 (3.0%) strongly disagreed that the challenges may bring about drop of students from school.

Research Question Three

What strategies can be adopted to effectively address these challenges?

Table 5: Strategies that can be adopted to effectively address the challenges

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Stand Deviation
Adequate provision of funding for Special Education	75 (37.5%)	94 (47.0%)	26 (13.0%)	5 (2.5%)	2.23	1.01
Provision of Infrastructural facilities for vocational institutions	174 (87.0%)	17 (8.5%)	2 (1.0%)	7 (3.5%)	1.25	0.79
Recruitment and training of more teachers for Special education	47 (23.5%)	97 (48.5%)	20 (10.0%)	36 (18.0%)	1.52	0.52

Researchers' Field Survey, 2022

Table 5 showed that (37.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (47.0%) agreed, (13.0%) disagree while (2.5%) strongly disagreed that adequate provision of funding for Special Education was one of the ways out of such challenges, (87.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (8.5%) agreed, (1.0%) disagreed while (11.7%) strongly disagreed that Provision of Infrastructural facilities for vocational institutions was one of the ways out of such challenges. Also, (23.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (48.5%) agreed, (10.0%) disagreed while (18.0%) strongly disagreed that recruitment and training of more teachers for Special education was one of the ways out of such challenges. The table further showed that adequate provision of funding for Special Education had the highest mean score of 2.23 followed by Recruitment and training of more teachers for Special education with a mean score of 1.52.

Hypothesis One

H_{01}: Parental level of education has no significant effect on the challenges faced by students with special needs in TVET institutions.

Table 6: T-Test Showing parental educational status and challenges of special need students

DV	Parental Education	N	X	SD	df	T	P
	Formally educated	124	7.05	2.04			
Challenges of Special need students					198	4.181	.000
	Not Formally educated	76	8.28	1.98			

Results from table 6 showed that there is a significant difference between educational status of parents with respect to the challenges of special need students ($t(198) = 4.181$, $p<.05$), such that students whose parents are not formally educated have a higher mean score ($X = 8.28$, $S.D= 1.98$) compared to students whose parents are formally educated ($X = 7.05$, $S.D= 2.04$). This implies that students whose parents are not formally educated have higher mean score in challenges faced by special need students compared to students whose parents are formally educated. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: Parental socio-economic status has no significant impact on the challenges faced by students with special needs in TVET institutions.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.353[a]	.125	.112	1.97757

a. Predictors: (Constant), Income, Employment Status, Parental Education

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	109.442	3	36.481	9.328	.000[b]
	Residual	766.513	196	3.911		
	Total	875.955	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Challenges

IJLSER: E-ISSN 3027-1827 P-ISSN 3026-880X

b. Predictors: (Constant), Income, Employment Status, Parental Education

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.001	.445		20.238	.000
	Parental Education	.456	.098	.317	4.632	.000
	Employment Status	.332	.154	.144	2.155	.032
	Income	.196	.086	.157	2.287	.023

a. Dependent Variable: Challenges

The second hypothesis was tested using Multiple Regression Analysis. The result showed that parental socio-economic status (parental education, employment status and Income) significantly impact challenges of special need students [(R^2 = .125; F (3, 199) = 9.328; p < .05)]. This infers that parental socio-economic status (parental education, employment status and Income) jointly accounted for about 12.5% of the variance observable in challenges of special need students.

In addition, the result of the coefficients of multiple determination for the model shows that the independent contribution of parental socio-economic status (parental education, employment status and Income) were significant ((β = .317; t = 4.632; p< .000), (β = .144; t = 2.155; p< .000) and (β = .157; t = 2.287; p< .000). In terms of magnitude, parental education has the highest magnitude of (β= 317), followed by Income with (β= . 157).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the challenges faced by special needs students in TVET institutions in Southwest Nigeria. A survey research design was employed, involving 200 students purposively selected from four polytechnics in Ogun State using a stratified approach (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Tongco, 2017). The respondents' disabilities included hearing impairments, mobility limitations (loss of legs or paralysis), and speech impairments, reflecting the diverse educational needs within the population (Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Khoza, 2016). Findings from the first research question revealed that the primary challenges experienced by special needs students were inadequate financial support (mean = 2.15), lack of specialists and para-professionals (mean = 1.78), and difficulties in the transfer process between institutions (mean = 1.59) (Delubom, Marongwe, & Buka, 2020; Addo et al., 2023). Regarding the second research question, respondents reported that these challenges negatively impacted academic performance, student motivation, and retention, often leading to school dropouts (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018; Kinsella, 2018).

For the third research question, strategies to address these challenges were identified, with adequate funding for special education (mean = 2.23) and recruitment and training of more special education teachers (mean = 1.52) emerging as key recommendations (Chinyere et al., 2015; Makopoulou et al., 2019). Hypothesis testing indicated that students whose parents lacked formal education experienced greater challenges compared to those with formally educated parents. Similarly,

parental socio-economic status—including education, employment, and income—significantly influenced the challenges faced by special needs students, accounting for approximately 12.5% of the observed variance (Torgbenu et al., 2018; Brydges & Mkandawire, 2018). Among the socio-economic factors, parental education had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.317$), followed by income ($\beta = 0.157$). These findings align with previous studies highlighting the shortage of trained special education teachers and limited parental involvement as critical barriers to effective learning for students with disabilities (Delubom, Marongwe, & Buka, 2020; Mosalagae & Bekker, 2021).

Recommendations

i. The government and educational stakeholders should increase funding for special education programmes to provide adequate learning resources and support services.
ii. Institutions should recruit and train more special education teachers to meet the growing needs of students with disabilities.
iii. Awareness programmes should be implemented to encourage active parental involvement, particularly among parents with lower education levels, to enhance student motivation and engagement.
iv. Policies that facilitate smooth transitions between educational levels for students with disabilities should be strengthened to reduce disruption and academic setbacks.

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