

## Emerging Barriers And Enablers Of Digital Inclusion For Students With Disabilities In Ethiopian Education

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**Abstract :** This research investigated the factors influencing digital inclusion for young students with disabilities in Ethiopian schools. In this context, socio-economic, infrastructural, and cultural challenges amplify educational disparities. In the era of digital technology's pivotal role in education, it is crucial to ensure equitable access for students with disabilities. Nevertheless, obstacles like inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and economic constraints impede the incorporation of digital tools in educational environments, especially for marginalised groups. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach involving data collection through a survey administered to 300 students. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 participants to provide comprehensive insights into their experiences. The quantitative analysis uncovered that students with disabilities have limited support for digital readiness, find digital technologies less accessible, and perceive digital tools as less easy to use. The study revealed that economic barriers, such as the high cost of devices and limited internet access, prevent students from fully utilising digital resources. Furthermore, infrastructural challenges, such as unreliable electricity and poor internet connectivity, exacerbate the issue. The qualitative data provided a more profound understanding by emphasising social and attitudinal obstacles, including a lack of empathy from both peers and educators, exclusion from participatory digital tasks, and enduring negative stereotypes regarding disabilities. The research highlights the importance of implementing interventions to enhance digital accessibility for students with disabilities. Essential suggestions encompass refining teacher training programs to effectively facilitate inclusive education, improving digital infrastructure, and offering financial assistance to procure digital tools. Furthermore, implementing policy reforms and public awareness campaigns is crucial to cultivate a cultural shift and nurture a more inclusive societal atmosphere. This study yields valuable perspectives on the digital inclusion scenario in Ethiopia, laying the groundwork for prospective research endeavours to narrow the digital gap for students with disabilities.

**Keywords :** digital inclusion, students with disabilities, ethiopian education, barriers and access

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