



# The Status of Academic Achievement of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) and The Attitudes of Secondary School Teachers Towards Inclusion in Tura, Meghalaya

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is the best approach to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to attend school, learn, and acquire the skills necessary for success. The academic achievement of children with special needs is influenced by a combination of inclusive educational practices, parental involvement, teacher competencies, and the accessibility of resources. By fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment, stakeholders can significantly enhance the academic outcomes for CWSN. The teachers' favourable attitude towards inclusive education is paramount important for the academic achievement of any student and more particularly for CWSN. Hence, the present study is justifiable to study the status of academic achievement of CWSN and the attitude of the Secondary School teachers towards inclusion. For this purpose, five secondary schools where the Children with Special Needs read at Tura Township, West Garo Hills District, Meghalaya, were selected. From this study, it was found that the teachers possess favourable attitudes, among them, the female teachers show more positive attitude than the male teachers. Though, the CWSN perform well in their academic studies, it was found that they lack behind the non CWSN and the female CWSN reasonably better than the male CWSN.

**Key Words:** Inclusive education, Secondary Schools, Academic Achievement, Attitude.

## INTRODUCTION:

The academic achievement of children with special needs (CWSN) is influenced by various factors, including inclusive education practices, parental involvement, and the quality of educational support provided. Research indicates that when families actively participate in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, CWSN tend to achieve higher academic and social outcomes.

This collaborative approach fosters a supportive environment that enhances the educational experience for these children Yildirim & Akçamete (2018). Inclusive education has been shown to significantly impact the academic performance and socio-emotional development of CWSN. Studies suggest that placing children with special needs in mainstream classrooms alongside their typically developing peers can mitigate feelings of stigma and isolation, thereby promoting a positive self-concept and enhancing academic outcomes (Dalgaard et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the presence of supportive peers and teachers in inclusive settings contributes to improved engagement and motivation among CWSN, leading to better academic performance (Dalgaard et al., 2022). The role of teachers and their competencies in special education is crucial for the success of CWSN. Effective teaching strategies tailored to the unique needs of these children can greatly influence their academic achievements. Research has highlighted that teachers who possess adequate competencies in special education are more likely to facilitate positive educational outcomes for their students (Safitri, 2019). Moreover, the

quality of teacher-student interactions has been linked to the development of executive functions in children, which are essential for academic success (Vandenbroucke et al., 2017).

Behaviour of a person is influenced by his / her attitude. Attitudes characterize comparatively constant knowledge, emotions and responses towards people, singularities and circumstances (Rot, 1994). Behaviour pattern in various circumstance is predicted by the attitude of an individual. Readiness to engage oneself for a smaller or greater task depends on willingness of an attitude of a person.

The academic achievement of children with special needs is influenced by a combination of inclusive educational practices, parental involvement, teacher competencies, and the accessibility of resources. By fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment, stakeholders can significantly enhance the academic outcomes for CWSN.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:**

The attitudes of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education significantly influence the academic achievement of both Children with Special Needs (CWSN) and non-CWSN students. Research indicates that teachers' perceptions and willingness to include CWSN in regular classrooms are shaped by various factors, including their sociodemographic characteristics, emotional intelligence, and prior training experiences.

This research by Ouda et al. (2021) in his study examines the correlation between students' self-concept in mathematics and their academic achievement, suggesting that positive attitudes towards subjects can enhance performance. This is relevant when assessing the attitudes of teachers towards CWSN and how it affects students' self-concept and achievement.

Alquraini (2012) in the research highlights factors affecting teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, particularly for students with severe intellectual disabilities. It informs the study of teacher attitudes in Tura and their implications for CWSN.

The study Beyazoğlu (2021) investigates teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in physical education, which can be relevant for understanding broader attitudes towards inclusion in various subjects. Awan et al. (2011) examines the relationship between achievement motivation, academic self-concept, and achievement in English and mathematics, providing a framework for analyzing the academic performance of CWSN.

Jaiswal & Choudhuri (2017) explores the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement, which is crucial for understanding how CWSN perceive their abilities and how this perception affects their performance. Nwosu et al. (2021) highlight that teachers with varying levels of experience exhibit similar attitudes towards inclusive education, suggesting that experience alone does not dictate willingness to include CWSN. The finding is corroborated by (Alquraini, 2012), who notes that teachers often hold negative perspectives towards including students with severe intellectual disabilities, which can adversely affect the learning environment for these students. The implications of such attitudes are profound, as they can hinder the academic success of CWSN by limiting their access to supportive educational practices.

Moreover, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' attitudes towards their profession and their willingness to engage with CWSN. Öz & Kiris (2018) found a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence and their attitudes towards teaching, suggesting that higher emotional intelligence correlates with more positive attitudes. This is further supported by (Nwosu et al., 2021), who assert that a teacher's self-concept is directly linked to their willingness to include CWSN, indicating that teachers who perceive themselves positively are more likely to foster inclusive practices.

In terms of gender differences, studies have shown that female teachers tend to have more favorable attitudes towards inclusion than their male counterparts. Vaz et al. (2015) provide evidence that demographic factors, including gender, can influence attitudes towards inclusive education.

The impact of teacher training on attitudes towards inclusion cannot be overstated. Beacham & McIntosh (2013) emphasize that teachers' practices are heavily influenced by their attitudes and beliefs, which are shaped by their educational backgrounds and training experiences. This aligns with findings from Bukamal (Alharti & Evans, 2017), who noted that positive attitudes towards inclusion are often cultivated through comprehensive teacher preparation programs that address the specific needs of CWSN.

The proposed topic will provide valuable insights into the academic status of CWSN and the attitudes of secondary school teachers in Tura, Meghalaya. By leveraging the suggested references, the study can contribute to the existing literature on inclusive education and inform policy and practice aimed at improving educational outcomes for CWSN.

### **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:**

This topic is pertinent as it addresses two critical aspects of inclusive education: the academic performance of CWSN and the attitudes of teachers who play a pivotal role in facilitating or hindering their educational experiences. Understanding these dynamics is essential for improving educational outcomes for CWSN in Tura, Meghalaya. Further it is significant to state that there is no any such study in the literature such study has been conducted by any of the scholars in Tura township. Hence, the investigator thought appropriately to take up the following research problem in hand.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

By keeping in mind the above facts, the title of the present study has been put as “**The Status of Academic Achievement of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) and The Attitudes of Secondary School Teachers Towards Inclusion in Tura, Meghalaya.**”

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the status of academic achievement of CWSN in Tura township Secondary Schools.
2. To find out the difference between the academic achievement of CWSN and Non CWSN in Tura Township Secondary Schools.
3. To find out the difference between the academic achievement of Male CWSN and Female CWSN in Tura Township Secondary Schools.
4. To find out the attitude of Tura township Secondary school Male and Female teachers towards inclusive education.

### HYPOTHESES:

1. There is no significant difference between the academic achievement mean scores of CWSN and non CWSN at secondary school stage in Tura.
2. There is no significant difference between the academic achievement mean scores of male and female CWSN at secondary school stage in Tura.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school Male and Female teachers towards inclusive education in Tura

### METHODOLOGY USED:

i. **Method Adopted:** As per the nature of this piece of research work the investigator used survey method of educative research as the study intended to make out the status of current scenario of the CWSN in Tura at Secondary School stage. Further the investigator used cross sectional research design in the process of collection of the desired data.

ii. **Population and Sample of the Study:** The total number of secondary schools were found 16 in all with CWSN. Out of 16 secondary schools, the investigator selected a sample of 5 secondary schools by using the sample random sampling technique which falls under the probability sampling techniques. The selected sample of secondary schools with their CWSN and teachers has been shown in table – 1.

**Table 1: Selected samples of students and the teachers.**

S. N o.	Name of Schools	Total No. of CWSN	Male CWSN	Female CWSN	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Total
1.	Montfort Centre for Education	9	4	5	6	7	13
2.	St. Mary's Senior Secondary School	3	2	1	2	2	4
3.	St. Luke Secondary School	3	2	1	3	2	5
4.	Stephen Memorial Senior Secondary School	3	1	2	2	2	4
5.	Fairy Tale Secondary School	2	1	1	2	2	4
	Total	20	10	10	15	15	30

### iii. Tools used for the Study:

- a. Attitude scale to measure the attitude of teachers towards Inclusive Education.
- b. Academic achievement scores of CWSN and other students taken from the school record.
- c. Observation and interview also used as tools of this study to obtain better insight about the status of CWSN in Tura.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

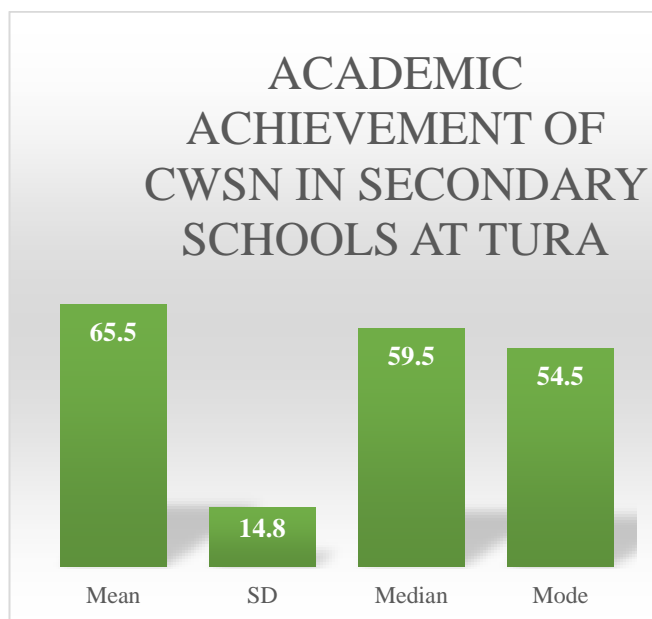
The researcher has made an observation on the different types of disabilities witnessed in the special children in the secondary schools of Tura. Thereafter, the following percentage distribution table is made:

**Objective -1: To find out the status of academic achievement of CWSN in Tura township Secondary Schools.**

For achieving this objective – 1, the researcher collected the data of CWSN the percentage of marks scored in the previous examination from the selected secondary schools at Tura Township as indicated in the objective – 1 and the academic achievement of the CWSN have been shown in Frequency Table –1

**Table – 1: Frequency Table showing the Academic Achievement of CWSN in Tura Township Secondary Schools.**

CI	90-99	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	40-49
F	1	4	3	2	8	2
N = 20    Mean = 65.5    SD ( $\sigma$ )= 14.80    Median = 59.5    Mode = 54.5						



**Figure 1: Figure showing the Mean, Median, Mode and SD ( $\sigma$ ) Scores of Academic Achievement of CWSN in Tura Township Secondary Schools.**

The mean score of 65.5 indicates a moderate level of academic achievement among CWSN. This score suggests that, on average, these students are performing at a level that may be considered below the expected performance for their grade level, especially when compared to their non-CWSN peers, who typically achieve higher scores Shaukat (2012). The standard deviation of 14.80 indicates a moderate level of variability in the academic performance of CWSN. This variability suggests that while some students are achieving scores significantly above the mean, others are performing well below it. Such a spread can be indicative of diverse needs and abilities within the CWSN population, which aligns with findings that highlight the heterogeneity of special needs students (Nne & Ekene, 2021). The median score of 59.5 and mode of 54.5 further illustrate the distribution of scores. The median being lower than the mean indicates a right-skewed distribution, where a few higher scores are pulling the mean up. The mode, being the most frequently occurring score, suggests that many students are clustered around lower performance levels, which may reflect challenges faced by CWSN in achieving academic success (Salim, 2019).

**Objective – 2:** To find out the difference between the academic achievement of CWSN and Non CWSN in Tura Township Secondary Schools.

**Hypothesis - 1:** There is no significant difference between the academic achievement mean scores of CWSN and non CWSN at secondary school stage in Tura.

For achieving the objective 2 and testing the hypothesis, the researcher computed taking the percentage they secured in the previous examination. The means score of 20 CWSN academic achievement scores and 20 non CWSN academic achievement score of Secondary Schools at Tura Town, Meghalaya and those computed values have been shown in Table 2.

**Table – 2: Showing the computed the Means, SDs, SE<sub>D</sub>, and t-value of Academic Achievement Scores of CWSN and CWSN studying in Secondary Schools at Tura, Meghalaya.**

Group	N	Mean	SD ( $\sigma$ )	SE <sub>D</sub>	df	t-value
CWSN	20	65.5	14.80	4.70	38	1.17
Non CWSN	20	71	14.92			

Computed t-value 1.17 is not significant at .05 level.

The t-value of 1.17, when compared against critical values from the t-distribution table, indicates that the difference in means is not statistically significant at the conventional alpha level of 0.05. hence the formulated hypothesis: **There is no significant difference between the academic achievement mean scores of CWSN and non CWSN at secondary school stage in Tura** got retained. This suggests that while there is a difference in performance, it may not be substantial enough to conclude that CWSN consistently underperform compared to their non-CWSN peers.

The findings highlight the ongoing challenges in achieving equitable academic outcomes for CWSN. Despite the lack of statistical significance, the lower mean score for CWSN underscores the need for targeted interventions and support systems to enhance their academic performance. Research indicates that effective teacher training and inclusive practices can significantly impact the academic success of CWSN Salim (2019); Bombardelli, 2020).

The relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement is also noteworthy. Studies suggest that self-efficacy can influence learning outcomes, and enhancing the self-efficacy of CWSN may lead to improved academic performance (Khairani, 2022). Therefore, fostering a supportive learning environment that builds confidence in CWSN could be beneficial.

While the data indicates a performance gap between CWSN and non-CWSN, the lack of statistical significance suggests that further research is needed to explore the factors influencing these outcomes. Emphasizing inclusive education practices, teacher training, and student self-efficacy could help bridge the achievement gap.

**Objective - 3: To find out the difference between the academic achievement of Male CWSN and Female CWSN in Tura Township Secondary Schools.**

**Hypothesis - 2: There is no significant difference between the academic achievement mean scores of male and female secondary school stage CWSN in Tura.**

For achieving this objective -3 and testing the hypothesis, the researcher computed the means, SDs, SE<sub>D</sub>, and t-value of academic achievement scores male and female CWSN in Tura Secondary Schools and those computed values have been shown in the following Table.

**Table - 2: Showing the computed the Means, SDs, SE<sub>D</sub>, and t-value of Academic Achievement Scores of Male CWSN and Female CWSN studying in Secondary Schools at Tura, Meghalaya.**

Group	N	Mean	SD ( $\sigma$ )	SE <sub>D</sub>	df	t-value
Male CWSN	10	66.5	12.49	5.98	18	0.84
Female CWSN	10	71.5	14.18			

Computed t-value 0.84 is not significant at .05 level.

The t-value of 0.84 suggests that while there is a noticeable difference in the mean scores of male and female CWSN, this difference has not been statistically significant at the 0.05 level, as it is generally lower than the critical t-value (approximately 2.10 for df = 18). Hence the formulated hypothesis: **“There is no significant difference between the academic achievement mean scores of Male CWSN and Female CWSN at secondary school stage in Tura”** got retained. Therefore, while female CWSN perform better on average, the evidence does not strongly support a significant difference in academic achievement between male and female CWSN in this sample.

The academic achievement of male and female Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in secondary schools in Tura does not show significant differences. However, the mean scores indicate that female CWSN outperform their male counterparts. This observation aligns with findings from various studies that suggest girls often achieve better academic outcomes than boys, particularly in certain educational contexts. For instance, research has shown that girls are less likely to receive low scores compared to boys, indicating a trend of higher academic performance among females (Subon et al., 2020).

Moreover, gender differences in academic achievement have been documented, with studies highlighting that personality traits and social status can significantly influence academic success, often favoring girls in educational settings (Janošević & Petrović, 2018). This is further supported by evidence suggesting that cumulative educational advantages can lead to a widening achievement gap favoring girls over time, particularly in subjects such as reading (Stoeger et al., 2022).

Additionally, while some studies indicate no significant differences in overall academic achievement between genders, they often note that girls tend to perform better in specific subjects or assessments, which may contribute to the observed higher mean scores among female CWSN (Atoum et al., 2018). The implications of these findings suggest that while both male and female CWSN in Tura may achieve similarly on a broad scale,



the nuances of their performance reveal a more favorable trend for females, indicating a need for targeted support for male CWSN to enhance their academic outcomes.

**Objective-4: To find out the attitude of Tura township Secondary school Male and Female teachers towards inclusive education.**

**Hypothesis-3: There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school Male and Female teachers towards inclusive education in Tura**

For achieving this objective - 4 and testing the hypothesis, the researcher computed the means, SDs, SE<sub>D</sub>, and t-value of the attitude scores of Secondary Schools Male and Female teachers, Tura and those computed values have been shown in the following Table.

**Table -3: Showing the computed the Means, SDs, SE<sub>D</sub>, and t-value of Attitude Scores of Secondary Schools Male and Female Teachers at Tura, Meghalaya.**

Group	N	Mean	SD ( $\sigma$ )	SE <sub>D</sub>	df	t-value
Male Teachers	15	63.83	13.40	4.65	28	1.29
Female Teachers	15	69.83	12.04			

Computed t-value 1.29 is not significant at .05 level.

The computed t-value of 1.29 indicates that the difference in mean scores between male and female teachers is not statistically significant at the conventional alpha level of 0.05. Typically, a t-value greater than approximately 2.05 (for df = 28) would be required to establish significance. Hence the formulated hypothesis: **“There is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school Male and Female teachers towards inclusive education in Tura”** got retained, Therefore, while female teachers have a higher mean attitude score, the evidence does not strongly support a significant difference in attitudes based on gender in this sample.

The findings suggest that while female teachers may generally hold more favorable attitudes, It Is essential to explore the underlying factors contributing to these differences. Professional development programs could be tailored to address the needs of male teachers, fostering more positive attitudes towards inclusive education and enhancing their engagement in inclusive practices.

### MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:

The findings highlight the ongoing challenges in achieving equitable academic outcomes for CWSN. Despite the lack of statistical significance, the lower mean score for CWSN underscores the need for targeted interventions and support systems to enhance their academic performance. Research indicates that effective teacher training and inclusive practices can significantly impact the academic success of CWSN Salim (2019); Bombardelli, 2020).

The relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement is also noteworthy. Studies suggest that self-efficacy can influence learning outcomes, and enhancing the self-efficacy of CWSN may lead to improved academic performance (Khairani, 2022). Therefore, fostering a supportive learning environment that builds confidence in CWSN could be beneficial.

While the data indicates a performance gap between CWSN and non-CWSN, the lack of statistical significance suggests that further research is needed to explore the factors influencing these outcomes. Emphasizing inclusive education practices, teacher training, and student self-efficacy could help bridge the achievement gap.

This trend of female students outperforming male students in various educational contexts is supported by existing literature. This may be attributed to various factors, including differences in motivation, social support, and educational engagement, which can influence academic performance (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2010).

Moreover, the findings align with research indicating that while overall achievement levels may not differ significantly, gender disparities can manifest in specific areas of academic performance. For example, female students are often found to excel in subjects that require verbal skills and collaborative learning, which are essential in inclusive education environments (Fernández-Archilla et al., 2020). This suggests that the educational strategies employed in Tura may inadvertently favor the learning styles typically associated with female students.

Furthermore, the importance of inclusive educational practices in enhancing the academic outcomes of all students, including those with special needs, cannot be overstated. Effective inclusive education is characterized by a supportive school culture and a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of students (Rosado-Castellano et al., 2022). Schools that implement inclusive practices effectively tend to see improved outcomes for all students, which may explain the higher mean scores observed among female CWSN in this study.

The statistical analysis indicates no significant difference in academic achievement between male and female CWSN in Tura, the higher mean score for female students suggests a trend that warrants further investigation.

Understanding the underlying factors contributing to this disparity could inform strategies to enhance academic performance among male CWSN, ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students.

The academic self-concept of CWSN can be influenced by their performance outcomes. Research indicates that students with a positive academic self-concept tend to perform better academically (Ngunu et al., 2019). Therefore, the relatively moderate mean score may impact the self-esteem and motivation of CWSN, potentially leading to a cycle of underachievement if not addressed through supportive educational practices. The data underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to support CWSN in Tura. This could include specialized teaching strategies, individualized education plans (IEPs), and enhanced teacher training to foster inclusive educational environments (Brunner et al., 2010; Erlinda, 2016). By addressing the unique challenges faced by CWSN, educators can help improve their academic outcomes and self-efficacy, which are crucial for long-term success.

The academic achievement data for CWSN in Tura highlights both the potential and challenges within this group. While the mean score reflects a moderate level of achievement, the variability in scores and the lower median and mode suggest that many students may require additional support to reach their full academic potential. Future research and educational strategies should focus on enhancing the learning experiences of CWSN to promote better academic outcomes and foster a positive academic self-concept.

The findings suggest that while female teachers may generally hold more favorable attitudes, it is essential to explore the underlying factors contributing to these differences. Professional development programs could be tailored to address the needs of male teachers, fostering more positive attitudes towards inclusive education and enhancing their engagement in inclusive practices.

The socio-cultural context of Meghalaya, particularly its matrilineal society, may also play a role in shaping the attitudes of female teachers. Research indicates that societal norms and expectations can influence educators' perceptions and attitudes towards their roles in the classroom. Understanding these cultural dynamics can inform strategies for promoting inclusivity in education.

The data indicates a trend where female teachers exhibit more favorable attitudes towards their roles compared to male teachers. However, the lack of statistical significance suggests that further research is needed to explore the factors influencing these attitudes and to develop targeted interventions that can enhance the attitudes of all teachers towards inclusive education.

### CONCLUSION:

The findings will provide valuable insights into the academic status of CWSN and the attitudes of secondary school teachers in Tura, Meghalaya. The socio-cultural context of Meghalaya, particularly its matrilineal society, also influences educational dynamics. While the region has made strides in promoting gender equity, there are still underlying issues that affect educational access and quality for CWSN. For instance, the socio-economic status of families can impact educational outcomes, although some studies suggest that socio-economic status does not significantly influence academic interest among students (Lamare & Myrthong, 2020). This indicates that while socio-economic factors are relevant, they may not be the sole determinants of educational success for CWSN.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

Future research on the attitudes of secondary school teachers towards Children with Special Needs (CWSN) and their academic achievement, as well as that of non-CWSN, should focus on several key areas that have been identified as significant in the existing literature.

- i. To explore how specific training programs aimed at improving lesson preparation impact teachers' attitudes and the academic performance of both CWSN and non-CWSN students.
- ii. To examine how workload management strategies influence teachers' attitudes towards CWSN and their academic achievements. Understanding the balance between workload and effective teaching practices could provide insights into fostering a more inclusive educational environment.
- iii. To find the role of teachers' personality traits and emotional intelligence in shaping their attitudes towards CWSN should be further examined.
- iv. To adopt a multifaceted approach that considers the interplay between teachers' preparedness, workload, personality traits, gender, and professional development in shaping attitudes towards Inclusion.

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