STM JOURNALS

International Journal of Trends in Humanities

ISSN: 3049-1169
Volume 3, Issue 1, 2026
January–June
DOI (Journal): 10.37591/IJTH

https://journals.stmjournals.com/ijth

Research IJTH

Assistive Technology Advancements: Revolutionizing Support for Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

Assistive technology (AT) has become an offer to revolutionize the provision of support for people with specific learning disabilities (SLD), making the learning process more inclusive and equal. In this paper, the current developments in AT will be discussed that cater to fundamental learning issues in reading, writing, and mathematics. Text-to-speech and speech-to-text innovations, mind-mapping tools, and others are important innovations that improve reading comprehension and written expression, as well as strengthen organization, memory, and generate ideas, thus contributing to the improvement of literacy. Also, problem-solving and numerical comprehension can be accomplished with the help of specialized software in mathematics that is interactive and adaptive. Artificial intelligence (AI) also enhances the personalization of learning by examining the needs of the individual, instructional pacing, and real-time feedback, which encourages independent and self-directed learning. This paper notes the increased presence of AT in minimizing learning obstacles, enhancing accessibility, and supporting inclusive education. It concludes that AT, backed by the innovation of AI, is becoming an inseparable part of contemporary educational systems, and it can bring people with SLD to the full of their potential and enable them to engage in academic and social life in a meaningful way.

Keywords: Assistive technology advancements, specific learning disabilities, artificial intelligence, ethical concerns

INTRODUCTION

Assistive technology (AT) is increasingly becoming a revolution in the redesign of educational opportunities for individuals with specific learning disabilities (SLD). SLD is a term used to refer to a set of neurodevelopmental disorders that influence the way people acquire, process, and communicate information. The most frequent ones are dyslexia (inability to read), dysgraphia (inability to write), and dyscalculia (inability to do mathematics). These conditions are not indicative of low intelligence; as a matter of fact, several people with SLD exhibit average or above-average intelligence [1]. Yet they mostly experience constant challenges within the traditional learning settings that are based on the conventional teaching and assessment strategies. AT has in this case been developed as an effective mediator between the performance of learners and academic demands. In recent years, the rapid pace of technology has resulted in a great number of digital tools that are aimed at particular learning issues. Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, adaptive learning platforms, and AI-powered learning tools are changing the way students with SLD learn by engaging with

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Received Date: February 12, 2026
Accepted Date: February 16, 2026
Published Date: February 27, 2026

Citation: Bibi C.B., V. Mrunalini. Assistive Technology Advancements: Revolutionizing Support for Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities. International Journal of Trends in Humanities. 2026; 3(1): 1–6p.

information, accomplishing tasks, and showing knowledge [2]. The tools are also reducing barriers to academics and promoting independence, confidence, and self-efficacy. This paper discusses the recent developments in assistive technology, the implications of these developments in education, the challenges and future, and how the new technologies are transforming the support systems for individuals with SLD [3].

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emerging literature on AT indicates that it is a transformative technology that can assist people with SLD, especially in reading, writing, and mathematics. The initial studies were mainly concerned with compensatory technologies such as text-to-speech (TTS) and audiobooks, which were discovered to have a significant effect on enhancing reading fluency, comprehension, and academic confidence among dyslexic students. Research shows that multisensory strategies, which combine visual and auditory information, improve retention and lessen mental load, and therefore benefit reading-impaired learners. Speech-to-text (STT) technologies and word-prediction software have been widely reported as effective interventions for students with dysgraphia in the field of written expression. Studies have proven that these tools lessen the mechanical load of writing, enabling learners to concentrate on the generation and organization of ideas [4]. Likewise, digital graphic organizers and mind-mapping tools have been found to enhance skills in planning and coherence in academic writing. Mathematics-based assistive technologies have also been in the limelight recently. Interactive software, visual calculators, and step-by-step problem-solving applications can be used to improve conceptual learning and decrease mathematics anxiety in learners with dyscalculia. Empirical studies indicate that adaptive mathematics platforms offer immediate feedback and scaffolded instruction, leading to measurable increases in problem-solving skills [5]. Recent literature has focused more on the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in assistive learning systems. AI-based adaptive platforms study the behavior of learners, determine their strengths and weaknesses, and customize the course of instruction in real time. According to researchers, this type of system greatly increases the level of engagement, autonomy, and academic performance of learners compared to traditional assistive tools. Predictive analytics and machine learning models allow for the early identification of learning difficulties and intervention [6].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the effectiveness of AT tools in improving academic performance among students with SLD.
2. To analyze whether AI-enabled assistive technologies significantly enhance learner autonomy and engagement compared to conventional assistive tools [7].

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- *Null hypothesis (H_0):* No significant difference exists in the academic performance of students with SLD using different categories of AT tools.
- *Alternative hypothesis (H_1):* There is a significant difference in the academic performance of students with SLD using different categories of AT tools [8].

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current research is based on a descriptive and analytical research design, which has a quantitative focus, to determine the efficacy of AT on students with SLD in inclusive secondary schools. The sample is a student population that was formally diagnosed with SLD, and out of which a total of 90 students were selected using a stratified random sampling method to guarantee the balanced representation of three categories of AT use Group A (traditional assistive tools such as basic TTS and audiobooks), Group B (advanced digital tools including interactive mathematics software and accessible learning management systems), and Group C (AI-powered adaptive learning systems). Thirty students were randomly selected from each stratum. Primary data were gathered

using standardized academic performance scores, a validated learner autonomy scale, and structured teacher evaluation reports. Secondary data were obtained in the form of pertinent scholarly literature and policy documents. This combined design allowed for a comparative and statistical analysis of the differences in academic outcomes in the AT categories [9].

ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG STUDENTS WITH SLD

One-way ANOVA was used to analyze data to determine whether there were significant differences in the academic performance of students using various types of AT (T-1). The results of the analysis showed that the mean academic score of students in the three groups was significantly different; therefore, the kind of AT employed does have an effect on the outcomes of learning. Group C (AI-powered adaptive learning systems) recorded the highest mean performance score, followed by Group B (advanced digital tools), and Group A (traditional assistive tools) recorded a relatively lower mean score. The difference between the groups was greater than the difference within the groups, which rejected the null hypothesis. In addition, the scores for learner autonomy and teacher assessment showed the same tendencies, indicating that AI-based systems not only enhance academic performance but also promote independent learning and engagement [10]. Such results imply that more effective solutions for the various cognitive needs of students with SLD are provided by technologically advanced systems that are adaptive in nature (T-2) (Figure 1).

Discussion

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that the F-calculated value is 6.75, which is larger than the F-critical value (3.10) at the 5 percent level of significance. F-calculated was greater than F-critical; therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected. This shows that the academic performance of the students with the three types of AT was statistically different. The difference in the mean scores of the groups was not by mere chance but depended on the AT. Thus, it may be concluded that various levels of AT, especially AI-based adaptive systems, play a significant role in enhancing the academic performance of students with SLD (Tables 1 and 2).

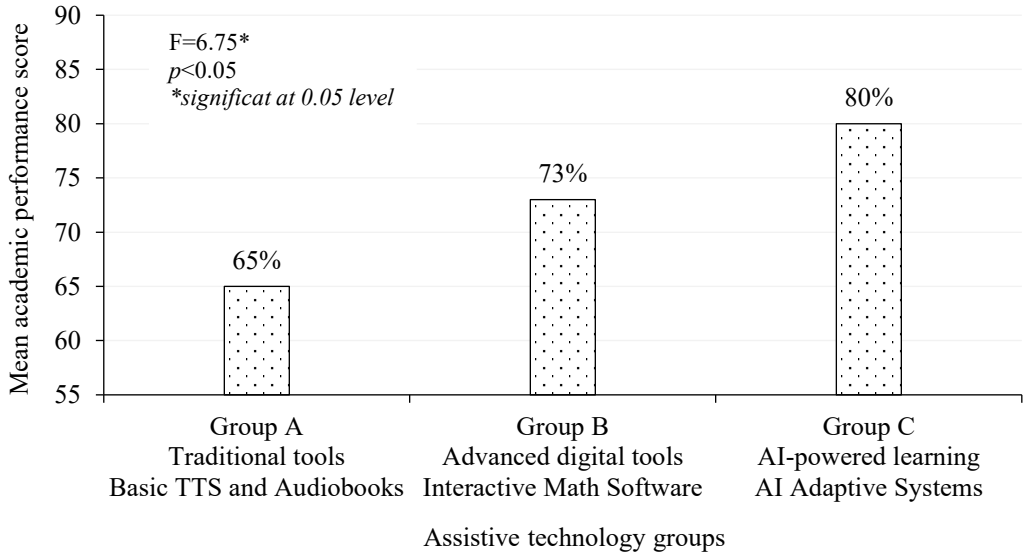

Figure 1. ANOVA results: mean academic performance of students with SLD.

Table 1. One-way ANOVA: academic performance among students with SLD.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F-value
Between groups	450	2	225	6.75
Within groups	2900	87	33.33	
Total	3350	89		

Calculated F (6.75) > F-critical (3.10 at 5% level)

Table 2. One-way ANOVA: learner autonomy scores.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value
Between groups	380	2	190	5.92
Within groups	2790	87	32.06	
Total	3170	89		

Calculated F (5.92) > F-critical (3.10 at 5% level)

ANALYSIS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY AND ENGAGEMENT

To analyze whether AI-based assistive technologies can have a notable positive impact on learner autonomy and engagement in comparison with traditional assistive technologies, the learners were assessed in terms of autonomy scores using an autonomy measurement scale and structured teacher evaluation reports. The indicators measured in the scale included independent task completion, self-regulation, sustained attention, initiative in learning activities, and confidence in solving problems. The scores obtained were divided into three categories of AT: Traditional assistive tools (Group A), advanced digital tools (Group B), and AI-powered adaptive learning systems (Group C) [11]. One-way ANOVA was used to identify the level of statistically significant differences among the mean autonomy scores of these three independent groups at the 5% level of significance. This statistical method was chosen because it enables comparison of mean scores in more than two groups, while considering variability within groups. The results of the ANOVA are shown below [12]. Because the calculated F-value exceeded the critical value at the 5% significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant difference in learner autonomy across the AT groups.

Discussion

The results obtained through ANOVA show that the calculated F-value (5.92) is larger than the critical F-value (3.10), which equals the 5 percent significance level; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This proves that there is a statistically significant difference in learner autonomy and engagement among learners who use different categories of AT [13]. The greater between-group variance than the within-group variance indicates that the nature of AT is significant in determining the level of autonomy. Specifically, students who received AI-powered adaptive learning systems scored relatively higher in autonomy, which is an indicator of better self-regulation, ability to perform tasks on their own, long concentration, and confidence in solving tasks. These results confirm that AI-based assistive technologies are better at facilitating self-directed learning and active participation among students with specific learning disability than traditional assistive technologies [14].

MAJOR FINDINGS

The key findings of the study are the following.

- The results of the one-way ANOVA show a statistically significant difference in the academic performance of students using various types of AT ($F = 6.75$, $p < 0.05$).
- The best mean academic performance scores were observed in Group C, which was AI-powered adaptive learning systems.
- Advanced digital tools (Group B) showed moderate improvement compared with traditional assistive tools.
- Traditional assistive tools (Group A) demonstrated better results in learning outcomes, but at relatively lower levels.
- The between-group variance was significantly greater than the within-group variance, proving that the difference in academic performance depends on the type of AT used.
- The scores for learner autonomy and teacher evaluation showed the same pattern, indicating that students using AI-based systems became more independent and engaged.
- The one-way ANOVA of the learner autonomy scores showed that the three groups of AT significantly differed in terms of autonomy ($F = 5.92$, $p < 0.05$), which proved that the nature of the technology applied to the learners had a significant impact on their level of independence and engagement.

- The learners who used AI-powered adaptive learning systems (Group C) had the highest self-regulation, ability to independently complete tasks, and sustained attention compared to Groups A and B.
- Learners using advanced digital tools (Group B) exhibited moderate improvement in their autonomy compared to those using traditional assistive tools (Group A); hence, technology development is positively associated with the development of autonomy [15].

IMPLICATIONS

This high between-group difference indicates that adaptive and individualized features incorporated in AI-based systems are important for increasing motivation, confidence, and active engagement among students with SLD. The overall results of the ANOVAs of the two variables, academic performance and learner autonomy, show that AI-assisted assistive technologies significantly impact students with SLD in a statistically significant and educationally meaningful way. These findings suggest that schools and colleges must cease using simple compensatory devices and gradually introduce AI-controlled adaptive learning systems into classrooms. Given that AI-enhanced technologies can promote academic success and learner agency to a large extent, schools should be ready to invest in intelligent assistive solutions that offer personalized feedback, adaptive pacing, and real-time assistance. In addition, the results demonstrate that teacher training programmes should be structured to foster effective pedagogical integration of assistive tools. Policymakers are urged to develop inclusive policies for digital education to minimize the digital divide, which would offer fair access to learning, particularly to learners in under-resourced environments. Institutional structures should also include ethical principles related to data privacy, responsible AI use, and transparency. Overall, the strategic use of advanced assistive technologies can enhance inclusive education, self-directed learning, and the long-term academic outcomes of students with SLD [16].

CONCLUSION

The current research was a systematic investigation of the effects of various types of AT on academic achievement and learner control among students with SLD using a quantitative research design and a one-way ANOVA test. The findings showed statistically significant differences between the three groups, with AI-based adaptive learning systems showing better results in terms of academic performance and learner autonomy than traditional and moderately advanced digital tools. The results affirm that adaptive and intelligent assistive technologies not only lower learning barriers but also encourage learners with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia to be independent, engaged, confident, and self-regulated. Although traditional tools can offer some background assistance, AI-based systems can offer a higher level of personalization and proactive intervention and, therefore, are more efficient in meeting various cognitive needs of older adults. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this type of technology requires equal access, proper infrastructure, teacher readiness, and ethical practice. Consequently, to realize the transformative power of AT, long-term investment, participatory policy, and professional training are necessary. In summary, AI-based assistive systems are currently a promising innovation in inclusive education and are instrumental in helping students with SLD realize their academic and social potential in the changing digital age.

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