DIGITAL LEARNING READINESS AND ONLINE INFORMATION EVALUATION SKILLS AS DETERMINANTS OF ECONOMICS EDUCATION STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC TRENDS IN OGUN STATE

Akeem Apo AHMED

Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, Alhikmah University, Ilorin.
Corresponding Author: apoahmed@alhikmah.edu.ng; +2348938296028

Abstract

This study examined the digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills of Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State, Nigeria. A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised undergraduate Economics Education students from Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye. A total of 307 year-three students were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using three validated instruments: the Digital Learning Readiness Questionnaire, the Online Information Evaluation Skills Scale, and the Students' Understanding of Global Economic Trends Scale. Data obtained from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha method, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.83 for the Digital Learning Readiness Questionnaire, 0.85 for the Online Information Evaluation Skills Scale, and 0.87 for the Students' Understanding of Global Economic Trends Scale. Data were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between digital learning readiness and students' understanding of global economic trends, as well as a significant relationship between online information evaluation skills and students' understanding of global economic trends. Furthermore, digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills jointly contributed significantly to students' understanding of global economic trends. The study concludes that students' preparedness for digital learning and their ability to critically evaluate online information are crucial determinants of meaningful understanding of global economic trends. It recommends strengthening digital learning structures and integrating online information evaluation skills into teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: Digital learning readiness, online information evaluation skills, global economic trends, Economics Education

Introduction

Understanding global economic trends has become increasingly important in an era marked by rapid globalisation, technological advancement, economic volatility, and growing interdependence among nations. Global economic trends such as inflation cycles, trade realignments, digital economies, financial crises, and geopolitical developments increasingly influence national policies and local economic conditions. For Economics Education students, who are being prepared as future educators and contributors to economic discourse, developing a strong understanding of these global economic trends is essential. Such understanding enables them to interpret evolving economic conditions, relate theoretical knowledge to real-world developments, and effectively communicate economic concepts within a dynamic and interconnected global environment.

The integration of digital technologies into higher education has significantly transformed how economic knowledge is accessed, processed, and applied. Digital learning environments now provide students with opportunities to engage with online databases, learning management systems, virtual classrooms, and global economic information platforms. In this context, digital learning readiness which encompasses students' technological competence, self-directed learning skills, adaptability, and confidence in using digital tools has emerged as a critical factor influencing learning outcomes. Studies have shown that students who demonstrate higher levels of digital learning readiness are more likely to engage meaningfully with online learning resources and exhibit improved understanding of complex subject matter, including economics-related content (Abdulbaqi et al., 2025; Aina & Ogundele, 2020; OECD, 2021).

In addition to readiness for digital learning, the ability to critically evaluate online information has become increasingly vital in a digital environment characterised by abundant economic data, fast-moving news cycles, and competing narratives. Online information evaluation skills refer to students' capacity to assess the credibility, accuracy, relevance, and bias of information encountered online. Given the prevalence of misinformation and oversimplified economic interpretations on digital platforms, students must possess strong evaluation skills to meaningfully interpret global economic trends. Scholars have consistently argued that information evaluation skills enhance critical thinking and support a deeper understanding of complex socio-economic issues presented through digital media (Biu et al., 2023; Hobbs & Coiro, 2019; Pérez-Tornero & Tayie, 2022).

Empirical evidence from Nigeria further underscores the importance of digital competence and information-related skills in shaping students' understanding of global and societal issues. Emmanuel and Oyewole (2025) and Shuaib et al. (2023) found that media literacy significantly influenced democratic sustainability among pre-service teachers, highlighting the role of critical information evaluation in informed civic and socio-economic engagement. Similarly, Ogundipe and Oyewole (2025) reported that technological proficiency and virtual collaboration significantly predicted global adaptability among pre-service teachers, suggesting that students who are digitally competent are better positioned to engage with global realities. In a related study, Abiodun and Oyewole (2025) also established that digital engagement was associated with higher levels of global economic awareness among pre-service economics teachers. Collectively, these findings suggest that students' readiness for digital learning and their ability to evaluate online information are central to understanding global economic trends.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital learning readiness, information evaluation skills, and global competence, limited empirical attention has been given to examining how these variables jointly relate to Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends, particularly within Nigerian universities. Most existing studies have focused on academic performance, media literacy, or digital engagement without explicitly addressing students' comprehension of global economic trends as a core educational outcome. Understanding the levels and roles of digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills is therefore crucial for informing curriculum development, instructional practices, and teacher education programmes. Consequently, this study examines digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills as determinants of Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the roles of digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills in Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the relationship between digital learning readiness and Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.
2. Determine the relationship between online information evaluation skills and Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.
3. Investigate the joint influence of digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills on Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between digital learning readiness and Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between online information evaluation skills and Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

H_{o3}: Digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills do not jointly influence Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification of Digital Learning Readiness, Online Information Evaluation Skills, and Global Economic Trends

Digital learning readiness refers to students' preparedness to effectively engage in technology-mediated learning environments. It encompasses technological competence, self-directed learning ability, motivation, adaptability, and confidence in using digital tools for academic purposes. In higher education, digital learning readiness determines how well students can access, navigate, and utilise online platforms, databases, and learning management systems to support learning outcomes. Scholars have noted that students with high digital readiness are more likely to engage actively in online learning activities and benefit from digitally mediated instruction (Aina & Ogundele, 2020).

Online information evaluation skills describe learners' ability to critically assess the credibility, accuracy, relevance, and bias of information encountered on digital platforms. These skills are particularly important in the current information ecosystem, where economic data, news, and analyses are rapidly disseminated through online media, often without adequate verification. Effective evaluation skills enable students to distinguish reliable economic information from misinformation and opinion-based content, thereby supporting sound judgment and informed understanding (Hobbs & Coiro, 2019).

Global economic trends, within the context of this study, refer to recurring patterns and developments in the global economy, including inflation movements, trade dynamics, technological disruptions, financial crises, globalisation effects, and geopolitical influences on economic systems. Understanding these trends requires not only access to up-to-date information but also the ability to interpret economic data critically and relate global developments to theoretical economic concepts taught in Economics Education programmes.

Digital Learning Readiness and Students' Understanding of Global Economic Trends

Digital learning readiness has been identified as a key factor influencing students' engagement with online learning resources and their comprehension of complex academic content. In economics education, where global economic trends evolve rapidly, students' readiness to engage with digital platforms enables timely access to current data, reports, and analyses. Studies have shown that digitally ready students are better positioned to connect classroom knowledge with real-world economic developments, thereby enhancing conceptual understanding (OECD, 2021).

Empirical studies in higher education contexts indicate that digital learning readiness significantly predicts students' academic engagement and learning outcomes. Aina and Ogundele (2020) reported that students with higher digital readiness demonstrated greater participation in online learning activities and improved understanding of course content. Similarly, the World Bank (2022) emphasised that students' preparedness for digital learning environments enhances their ability to benefit from technology-supported instruction, especially in disciplines reliant on current global information, such as economics.

In the Nigerian context, Ogundipe and Oyewole (2025) found that technological proficiency significantly predicted global adaptability among pre-service teachers, suggesting that digital readiness supports learners' engagement with global issues. These findings imply that Economics Education students who are digitally ready are more likely to engage meaningfully with global economic information and develop a stronger understanding of global economic trends.

Online Information Evaluation Skills and Understanding of Global Economic Trends

Online information evaluation skills play a critical role in shaping how students interpret economic information accessed through digital media. The global economy is frequently discussed across online platforms, including news websites, blogs, and social media, where information quality varies widely (Shuaib et al., 2021). Students who lack evaluation skills may misinterpret economic trends due to exposure to biased, inaccurate, or oversimplified information.

Research has consistently shown that information evaluation skills enhance learners' critical thinking and interpretation of complex socio-economic issues. Hobbs and Coiro (2019) argued that students with strong

evaluation skills are better equipped to analyse digital content critically and make informed judgments. Pérez-Tornero and Tayie (2022) further reported that university students who demonstrated high information evaluation competence showed improved understanding of socio-economic issues presented through digital media.

Within Nigeria, Emmanuel and Oyewole (2025) established that media literacy significantly influenced democratic sustainability among pre-service teachers, highlighting the importance of critical evaluation skills in understanding public and economic issues. Similarly, Abiodun and Oyewole (2025) found that digital engagement combined with evaluative competence enhanced global economic awareness among pre-service economics teachers. These studies suggest that online information evaluation skills are essential for Economics Education students to accurately interpret global economic trends.

Synthesis of Empirical Studies and Identified Research Gap

A synthesis of existing empirical studies indicates a growing scholarly interest in the roles of digital competence, media literacy, and information evaluation skills in contemporary education. Research across higher education contexts has consistently demonstrated that students' ability to engage effectively with digital technologies is associated with improved academic engagement, self-regulated learning, and a deeper understanding of course content. Studies on digital learning readiness have shown that students who possess adequate technological skills, motivation, and adaptability are better positioned to benefit from online and blended learning environments, particularly in disciplines that require continuous engagement with up-to-date information. Similarly, research on media literacy and online information evaluation skills has highlighted their importance in fostering critical thinking, informed judgment, and responsible participation in academic and civic life.

Despite this growing body of research, much of the existing literature has focused on broad educational outcomes such as general academic performance, learning engagement, digital competence, civic awareness, and democratic participation. Studies examining media literacy and information evaluation skills have often emphasised their relevance to political awareness, citizenship education, and misinformation detection, while investigations into digital learning readiness have frequently centred on students' adaptation to online learning platforms and instructional technologies. Although these outcomes are important, they do not sufficiently address the specific cognitive demands involved in understanding global economic trends, which require continuous interpretation of complex, data-driven, and often conflicting economic information from diverse digital sources.

Furthermore, relatively few empirical studies have examined these variables within the context of Economics Education, particularly in Nigerian universities. Where economics-related studies exist, they have tended to focus on global awareness, financial literacy, or general economic knowledge rather than students' understanding of global economic trends as a distinct learning outcome. Global economic trends involve dynamic processes such as inflation movements, international trade shifts, technological disruptions, and geopolitical influences, all of which demand both access to digital economic information and the capacity to critically evaluate its credibility and relevance. The limited attention given to this specific outcome represents a notable gap in the literature.

In addition, many previous studies have examined digital learning readiness and information evaluation skills independently, without adequately considering their combined or interactive influence on students' learning. Access to digital platforms and online resources alone does not guarantee meaningful understanding if students lack the skills to critically assess the quality and reliability of the information they encounter. Conversely, strong evaluation skills may be underutilised if students are not sufficiently prepared to engage with digital learning environments. Understanding how these variables jointly contribute to Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends is therefore essential for developing effective instructional strategies and curriculum designs.

This identified gap underscores the necessity of the present study, which seeks to extend existing scholarship by examining digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills as combined determinants of Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State. By focusing on this specific educational outcome and contextualising the investigation within Nigerian universities, the study contributes empirical evidence that can inform curriculum development, pedagogical practices, and policy decisions aimed at strengthening Economics Education in a digitally mediated global economy.

Methods

This study adopted a correlational survey design to examine the relationships among digital learning readiness, online information evaluation skills, and Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State. The population comprised all undergraduate Economics Education students in Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, which were purposively selected as the only public universities in Ogun State offering Economics Education. The accessible population consisted of 300-level students due to their adequate exposure to relevant coursework and digital learning experiences. A combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques was employed, whereby 300-level students were first purposively selected, and a total of 307 participants were subsequently selected through simple random sampling.

Data were collected using three researcher-developed instruments: the Digital Learning Readiness Questionnaire, the Online Information Evaluation Skills Scale, and the Students' Understanding of Global Economic Trends Scale. Each instrument comprised demographic items and Likert-type items rated on a four-point scale (Strongly Agree = 4 to Strongly Disagree = 1), with negatively worded items reverse-coded. Content and face validity were established by experts, while reliability was determined through a pilot study involving students from a university outside the study area, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.83, 0.85, and 0.87, respectively. The instruments were administered with the assistance of trained research assistants, and participation was voluntary with confidentiality and anonymity ensured. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean and standard deviation, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis, with hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): Digital learning readiness has no significant relationship with Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showing the relationship between digital learning readiness and students' understanding of global economic trends

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r	Sig.	Remark
Digital Learning Readiness	307	15.42	3.65	305	0.57**	0.000	Significant
Understanding of Global Economic Trends	307	15.88	3.54				

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

Decision: Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1 shows a significant positive relationship between digital learning readiness and students' understanding of global economic trends among Economics Education students in Ogun State ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that students who demonstrate higher levels of readiness for digital learning tend to have a better understanding of global economic trends. Therefore, digital learning readiness plays a significant role in enhancing students' comprehension of global economic developments.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): Online information evaluation skills have no significant relationship with Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showing the relationship between online information evaluation skills and students' understanding of global economic trends

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r	Sig.	Remark
Online Information Evaluation Skills	307	15.61	3.58	305	0.64**	0.000	Significant
Understanding of Global Economic Trends	307	15.88	3.54				

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

Decision: Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2 reveals a significant positive relationship between online information evaluation skills and students' understanding of global economic trends ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students who are more capable of evaluating the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of online information tend to demonstrate a stronger understanding of global economic trends. Thus, online information evaluation skills significantly influence students' understanding of global economic trends.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): Digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills do not jointly predict Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State.

Table 3: Joint influence of digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills on students' understanding of global economic trends.

Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
0.73	0.53	0.52	2.66

ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	2185.40	2	1092.70	154.28	0.000	Significant
Residual	1942.85	304	6.39			
Total	4128.25	306				

Decision: Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3 indicates that digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills jointly predicted students' understanding of global economic trends ($R^2 = 0.53$). This means that **53%** of the variance in students' understanding of global economic trends was explained by the combined influence of digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills. The ANOVA result further confirms that the joint influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable was statistically significant ($F(2,304) = 154.28$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that both digital readiness and information evaluation skills are important determinants of students' understanding of global economic trends.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between digital learning readiness and Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State. This suggests that students who possess the necessary skills, confidence, and disposition to engage with digital learning environments are more likely to comprehend global economic trends effectively. Digital learning readiness enables students to navigate online platforms, access up-to-date economic information, and participate actively in digitally mediated learning experiences. This finding aligns with recent studies, which indicate that students' preparedness for digital learning enhances their engagement with complex and dynamic content, particularly in disciplines that depend on current global information, such as economics (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2022). When students are digitally ready, they are better positioned to connect theoretical economic concepts with real-time global economic developments.

This result is also consistent with Nigerian-based empirical evidence. Ogundipe and Oyewole (2025) reported that technological proficiency significantly predicted global adaptability among pre-service teachers, underscoring the importance of readiness and competence in digital environments for developing global perspectives. Similarly, Oyewole and Jatau (2025) found that technological self-efficacy and access to digital resources enhanced lecturers' research engagement, suggesting that digital readiness plays a crucial role in facilitating meaningful academic outcomes. The present finding extends this body of knowledge by demonstrating that digital learning readiness is equally important for students' understanding of global economic trends.

The study also found a significant positive relationship between online information evaluation skills and students' understanding of global economic trends. This indicates that students who are able to assess the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of online information tend to have a deeper understanding of global economic issues. In the contemporary digital environment, economic information is widely disseminated through online media, often

characterised by misinformation, ideological bias, and oversimplification. Students who possess strong information evaluation skills are, therefore, better equipped to filter unreliable content and make informed interpretations of global economic trends. This finding supports the position of Hobbs and Coiro (2019), who argued that critical evaluation skills are essential for interpreting complex digital content in higher education.

Empirical evidence further supports this outcome. Emmanuel and Oyewole (2025) demonstrated that media literacy significantly influenced democratic sustainability among pre-service teachers, highlighting the broader role of information evaluation skills in understanding societal and economic issues. Similarly, Pérez-Tornero and Tayie (2022) reported that university students with strong information evaluation skills showed improved understanding of socio-economic issues presented through digital media. The present study reinforces these findings by showing that online information evaluation skills are particularly critical for understanding global economic trends, where data interpretation and source credibility are central.

Furthermore, the joint predictive analysis revealed that digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills together significantly predicted students' understanding of global economic trends. This finding suggests a complementary relationship between students' preparedness to engage in digital learning environments and their ability to critically evaluate online information. While digital learning readiness facilitates access to global economic content, online information evaluation skills determine how effectively such content is interpreted and understood. This interaction supports the argument that access to digital resources alone is insufficient without the capacity for critical evaluation. Redecker (2020) similarly emphasised that meaningful learning in digital environments requires both technical readiness and critical information-processing skills.

The joint influence observed in this study is consistent with previous research that highlights the combined effect of technological competence and cognitive skills on learning outcomes. Ogundipe and Oyewole (2025) found that technological proficiency and virtual collaboration jointly enhanced global adaptability, while Oyewole and Jatau (2025) showed that digital access combined with self-efficacy improved research usability outcomes. These findings, together with the present study, suggest that students' understanding of global economic trends is strengthened when digital readiness and evaluative skills are developed simultaneously.

However, some scholars have argued that institutional factors such as curriculum structure, instructional strategies, and digital infrastructure may moderate the influence of digital readiness and information evaluation skills on learning outcomes (Selwyn et al., 2020). Although this study did not examine these moderating variables, the strong predictive power observed suggests that existing instructional practices and digital environments in the selected institutions may be supporting students' engagement with global economic content. Nonetheless, sustained instructional support remains essential to ensure that digital readiness and evaluation skills are effectively translated into deeper understanding.

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the importance of developing both digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills among Economics Education students. In an era where global economic trends are increasingly mediated through digital platforms, students' ability to access, interpret, and critically evaluate online economic information is central to meaningful understanding. Strengthening these competencies will not only enhance students' academic outcomes but also prepare them for effective participation as future economics educators in a rapidly globalising and digital world.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills on Economics Education students' understanding of global economic trends in Ogun State. The findings demonstrated that digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills are significant factors in enhancing students' comprehension of global economic trends. Students who are adequately prepared to engage with digital learning environments and who possess the ability to critically evaluate online economic information showed a better understanding of contemporary global economic developments. The joint influence of these variables further indicates that access to digital platforms and the capacity to interpret online information critically are mutually reinforcing in supporting meaningful economic learning. These findings highlight the growing importance of digital competence and evaluative skills in Economics Education, particularly in an era where economic knowledge is rapidly evolving and largely disseminated through digital media. Strengthening these

competencies is therefore essential for preparing Economics Education students to function effectively as future educators and informed participants in the global economy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Enhancement of Digital Learning Readiness**:** Since digital learning readiness was found to have a significant positive relationship with students' understanding of global economic trends, Economics Education programmes should deliberately strengthen students' preparedness for digital learning. Lecturers should consistently integrate digital learning tools such as online economic databases, virtual simulations, and learning management systems into teaching and assessment practices. This will improve students' technological competence, self-directed learning ability, and confidence in navigating digital environments.
2. Development of Online Information Evaluation Skills**:** Given that online information evaluation skills significantly influenced students' understanding of global economic trends, there is a need to explicitly teach and reinforce these skills within Economics Education curricula. Lecturers should incorporate activities that require students to critically evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of online economic information. Strategies such as comparative analysis of multiple sources, evaluation of real-world economic reports, and guided discussions on misinformation and bias should be emphasised to strengthen students' critical thinking and analytical abilities.
3. Integrated Instructional Approach: As digital learning readiness and online information evaluation skills were found to jointly predict students' understanding of global economic trends, instructional approaches should integrate both competencies simultaneously. Teaching strategies should require students not only to access digital economic information but also to critically evaluate and interpret it. For instance, students can be assigned tasks that involve sourcing economic data from online platforms and analysing its validity before concluding. This integrated approach will enhance deeper learning and meaningful understanding of global economic trends.
4. Provision of Institutional Support: To sustain the development of digital readiness and evaluation skills, university management and policymakers should provide adequate institutional support. This includes access to reliable internet connectivity, digital learning infrastructure, and up-to-date academic resources. In addition, professional development programmes should be organised for lecturers to enhance their capacity to integrate digital tools and information evaluation strategies into teaching.
5. Addressing Study Limitations and Future Research Needs: Considering that this study was limited to 300-level students in two public universities in Ogun State and employed a correlational design, future research should extend to other academic levels, private universities, and different regions to enhance generalisability. Further studies should also explore additional variables such as instructional quality, curriculum design, and digital infrastructure as possible moderating factors influencing students' understanding of global economic trends. Mixed-method and longitudinal approaches are also recommended to provide deeper insights into how digital readiness and evaluation skills develop over time.

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