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Gender Differences in Global Economic Competencies Among Undergraduate Students in Universities in Ogun State

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Abstract

This research investigated gender disparities in access to online economic resources, economic media literacy, and awareness of global economic issues among Economics Education students in Ogun State, Nigeria. A descriptive comparative survey was used in the research. The simple random sampling technique was used to choose 313 third-year Economics Education students in total, consisting of 115 males and 198 females. Three valid research instruments were used to acquire the data, and independent samples t-test, mean, and standard deviation were utilized for data analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that no significant gender differences in online economic resource exposure (t = 1.06, p = 0.292), economic media literacy (t = 0.34, p = 0.736), and understanding of global economic issues (t = -0.61, p = 0.546); therefore, all three null hypotheses were not rejected. The study concluded that gender does not significantly influence students' digital economic engagement and global economic understanding.

Keywords: Gender differences, online economic resources, economic media literacy, global economic issues

Introduction

In an age of fast globalisation, the development of technology and ever increasing economic interdependence between countries, it is more important than ever to understand the problems of the world economy. National and local economies are affected by inflation, fluctuations in global trade, financial crises and international conflicts.

These questions are crucial for Economics Education students to learn and link economic concepts to the real world and convey their economic understanding. The digital revolution in Higher Education has revolutionized the way students can access, process and interpret information about the economy. Students access online economic resources such as electronic journals, economic databases, institutional websites, and economic blogs, as well as world economic news sites like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, World Bank Open Data, IMF Data Portal, OECD Data Portal, Bloomberg, and Financial Times to obtain up-to-date economic information from various angles. These websites allow students to engage with up-to-date economic news, research papers, and policy debates, which are often not covered in their classes. Evidence indicates that digital learning can help to improve independent learning, increase access to knowledge, and link classroom learning to the realities of the global economy (Aina & Ogundele, 2020; OECD, 2021).

Online economic resource exposure is defined as the exposure and interaction of students to online resources that contain economic information, research materials and information about the global economy. Using these resources will help students to gain an understanding of economic phenomena, including inflation, international trade, financial policies, and shifts in the global economy. In the field of Economics Education, students' capability to participate in online economic resources becomes more relevant as time goes on, as digital platforms are becoming more important in the way economic knowledge is gained. But there has been little or no focus on the use of online economic resources specifically for the development of Global Economic understanding related to the subject of Economics Education.

In the digital information age, economic media literacy is also a key competence needed. It encompasses the skills of finding trustworthy economic data, assessing the source, recognising misinformation and interpreting an economic message. As the amount of economic information spreads through various media, students should develop sufficient literacy skills to identify credible economic information and differentiate it from misleading information. Media literacy promotes critical thinking and the informed analysis of complicated social and economic information (Hobbs & Coiro, 2019; Pérez-Tornero & Tayie, 2022). There are, however, relatively few studies that have focused on the specific aspects of economic media literacy of Economics Education students, especially in regard to global economic understanding.

The ability to interpret economic events, policies and challenges that impact societies across the world provides students with an understanding of global economic issues. This competence is needed by the students of Economics Education to provide explanations on the realities of economics, analysis of economic trends in the world and to participate in discussions about economic development. The quality of information to which they have access and their ability to critically interpret information can impact their understanding of global economic issues. Despite the earlier findings that digital engagement is associated with students' awareness of contemporary global issues (Eze & Okey, 2022; Abiodun & Oyewole, 2025), few studies investigated this aspect in the background of Economics Education students.

Gender is a significant factor in educational studies as it is possible for males and female students to experience different learning environments, engagement with technology, and access to technology. Increased use of learning tools and resources in digital form has enabled children of various genders to access technology-assisted learning activities. While some previous research has found gender gaps in technology use, recent evidence indicates that unequal access to digital resources is narrowing the gap between male and female learners (Selwyn et al., 2020; World Bank, 2022). Thus, the analysis of gender differences gives evidence to determine the equality of learning opportunities from digital economy for male and female students.

There has been an increasing interest in digital learning, media literacy, and economic knowledge about the global economy, but few empirical studies have addressed gender disparity in exposure to online economic resources, economic media literacy, and knowledge of global economic issues among the students of Economics Education in universities in Nigeria. The majority of the past research has been on relationships and forecasts of variables without taking gender differences into account. Consequently, limited understanding exists regarding how male and female students differ in their utilisation of digital economic resources and interpretation of global economic issues. This study therefore investigates the differences between the gender of Economics Education students in Ogun State in terms of exposure to economic resources online, economic media literacy and understanding of global economic issues.

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate gender differences in online economic resource exposure, economic media literacy, and understanding of global economic issues among Economics Education students in Ogun State. The following specific objectives guided the study:

1. examine if significant difference exists between male and female undergraduate Economics Education students in their exposure to online economic resources in universities in Ogun State;
2. determine if significant difference exists between male and female undergraduate Economics Education students in their level of economic media literacy in universities in Ogun State; and
3. investigate if significant difference exists between male and female undergraduate Economics Education students in their understanding of global economic issues in universities in Ogun State.

Research Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses, which were tested at a 0.05 significance level:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between male and female Economics Education students in their exposure to online economic resources in Ogun State.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between male and female Economics Education students in their economic media literacy in Ogun State.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference between male and female Economics Education students in

their understanding of global economic issues in Ogun State.

Methods

A descriptive-comparative survey design was utilised in this study to examine gender differences in online economic resource exposure, economic media literacy, and understanding of global economic issues among Economics Education students in Ogun State. Since it allowed the comparison of the male and female students' mean ratings for the study variables in their natural circumstances, the design was thought to be acceptable.

From Ogun State's Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, and Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, a sample of 1,823 undergraduate Economics Education students comprised the research population. The male to female students ratio was 778 to 1,045. The institutions were selected purposefully since they are the only public colleges in Ogun State with established structures for providing Economics Education and associated economic information as a degree programme. A straightforward random sampling technique was used to choose the study participants. Since they possessed enough experience in important economic classes, educational research methodology, and teaching technologies required to engage with online economic materials, read media messages, and comprehend global economic concerns, students in year three (300-level) Economics Education at the two institutions were surveyed.

Depending on the study population under consideration, an appropriate and suitable size determination procedure was employed to determine the sample size. Therefore, a total of 313 students were selected, with 115 males and 198 females. Three adapted questionnaires were used to collect the data: Economic Media Literacy Scale, Exposure to Online Economic Resources Questionnaire, and Students' Understanding of Global Economic Issues Scale. The instruments have been customized for the context of the pupils in the area of Economics Education and the current study's goals. Each instrument had two sections. Sections A and B made up the instrument's two parts. Section A collected demographic data from respondents, such as gender and institution, while Section B had organized Likert-type questions aimed at evaluating the study's constructs. Reactions were assessed using a four-point Likert scale that went from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

In order to establish the face and content validity of the instruments, professionals in the areas of Economics Education, Measurement and Evaluation, and Educational Technology evaluated them. They made recommendations after observing, and those recommendations were accepted before the instruments' final implementation. By using content and face validation, three professionals in the fields of educational technology, economics education, and measurement and evaluation confirmed the accuracy of the tools. In order to make the tools more understandable and pertinent, their recommendations were implemented. To assess the instruments' reliability, a pilot study was carried out on students of Economics Education at a university (University of Ilesha, Osun State) located outside the study region.

In the universities chosen, the trained research assistants helped the researcher personally distribute the questionnaires. Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to examine the data, and the results are thought to be acceptable, with coefficient values of 0.81 for the Economic Media Literacy Scale, 0.84 for the Exposure to Online Economic Resources Questionnaire, and 0.86 for the Students' Understanding of Global Economic Issues Scale. The researcher gave the research assistants instruction on the study's goals, how to give the questionnaire, ethical considerations, how to engage with participants correctly, and how to get the completed surveys. To guarantee that the data gathering procedure is consistent and that there are no opportunities for mistakes, the training was conducted. Respondents were informed about the study's goal, and they were guaranteed anonymity and privacy. All questionnaires were gathered and utilized for the study, and they participated voluntarily.

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The students' levels of exposure to online economic resources, economic media literacy, and knowledge of global economic challenges were measured using the mean and standard deviation. To see if there were substantial differences between male and female Economics Education students in their exposure to online economic resources, economic media literacy, and understanding of global economic issues at the 0.05 level of significance, an independent samples t-test was performed to test the hypotheses that had been developed.

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Results

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): There is no significant difference between male and female Economics Education students in their exposure to online economic resources.

Table 1: shows t-test analysis of mean difference on students exposure to online economic resources based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	Sig.	Decision
Male	115	30.53	4.22	214.75	1.06	0.292	Not Significant
Female	198	30.03	3.72				

According to the results in Table 1, the mean score for male students' exposure to online economic resources was 30.53 (SD = 4.22), while the mean score for female students was 30.03 (SD = 3.72). The study's independent samples t-test analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in students' exposure to online economic resources based on gender (t = 1.06, p = 0.292). Since the p-value exceeded the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was maintained.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant difference between male and female Economics Education students in their economic media literacy.

Table 2: shows t-test analysis of mean difference on gender difference in economic media literacy

Gender	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	Sig.	Decision
Male	115	30.04	4.69	237.11	0.34	0.736	Not Significant
Female	198	29.86	4.66				

According to the findings in Table 2, male students scored an average of 30.04 (SD = 4.69) in economic media literacy, compared to female students' average score of 29.86 (SD = 4.66). No statistically significant differences in the economic media literacy levels between male and female students were found through an independent samples t-test analysis (t = 0.34, p = 0.736). Because the p-value was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was maintained.

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Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): There is no significant difference between male and female Economics Education students in their understanding of global economic issues.

Table 3: shows t-test analysis of mean difference on gender difference in understanding of global economic issues

Gender	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t	Sig.	Decision
Male	115	30.17	4.50	224.33	-0.61	0.546	Not Significant
Female	198	30.48	4.18				

According to Table 3, male students had a mean score of 30.17 (SD = 4.50) for their knowledge of global economic issues, whereas female students had a mean score of 30.48 (SD = 4.18). The result of the independent samples t-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female students' understanding of international economic issues (t = -0.61, p = 0.546). The null hypothesis was kept since the p-value that was discovered was higher than the 0.05 significance level..

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that no significant variation existed between male and female Economics Education students regarding their level of exposure to online economic resources. This suggests that male and female students demonstrated relatively equal levels of access to and use of digital economic resources. This finding supports Aina and Ogundele (2020), who reported that increased availability of digital resources has reduced differences in students' access to online learning materials. However, the finding contradicts earlier studies which suggested that gender differences exist in technology usage due to variations in digital confidence and access opportunities. The result of the present study may be due to the increased availability of smartphones, internet facilities, and the integration of online resources into university learning activities, making digital engagement necessary for both male and female students.

The study also found no significant gender difference in economic media literacy among Economics Education students. This indicates that male and female students demonstrated similar abilities in evaluating and interpreting economic information from media sources. The finding agrees with Hobbs and Coiro (2019), who observed that media literacy skills are developed through continuous exposure and guided learning experiences. However, some previous studies reported gender variations in digital and media competencies due to differences in technology interaction patterns among learners. The absence of gender differences in this study may be attributed to equal academic exposure, similar curriculum experiences, and the frequent use of digital media among university students regardless of gender.

Furthermore, the findings showed no significant difference between male and female students in their understanding of global economic issues. This suggests that both groups possessed comparable knowledge of global economic events and developments. This aligns with Eze and Okey (2022), who reported that students' understanding of economic issues is influenced more by engagement with economic information than gender. Conversely, some studies have argued that differences in information access and learning experiences may create gender gaps in students' understanding of global issues. The present finding may be explained by the uniform Economics Education curriculum, shared learning environment, and similar access to digital economic information among the students.

Overall, the findings suggest that gender may no longer be a major determinant of online economic resource exposure, economic media literacy, and understanding of global economic issues among Economics Education students. Differences reported in previous studies may be context-dependent, while the current digital learning environment provides more equal opportunities for male and female students to develop economic competencies.

Conclusion

Comparisons of male and female Economics Education students' exposure to online economic resources, economic media literacy and understanding of economic issues in the global economy were explored in this study and the results indicated that no significant difference existed between the two groups of students across the three measured constructs. The two groups showed comparable levels of involvement in using online economic resources, competencies in evaluating and interpreting economic media information, and knowledge about global economic problems (inflation, globalization, international conflict and roles of global economic institutions). The lack of significant differences by gender indicates that gender is not a primary determinant of access to digital economic resources, opportunities for engaging with media, and understanding of global economic issues but rather is largely determined by shared instructional experiences and institutional learning environments. It means that the programmes of Economics Education in Nigerian University level and the growing use of digital resources in Universities offer somewhat equal opportunities of learning for both male and female students. Overall, the findings of the study indicated that gender has no significant influence on Economics Education students' exposure to internet-based economic information, economic media literacy, and understanding of global economic issues in Ogun State, Nigeria. Rather, factors such as instructional approaches, curriculum content, and availability of digital learning resources appear to play more crucial roles in enhancing students' exposure to economic information, economic media literacy, and awareness of global economic issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Universities should provide the necessary resources to ensure equal access to online economic resources for both male and female Economics Education students, including stable Internet facilities, digital libraries, and access to relevant economic databases, so they can access up-to-date economic information.
2. 2. Economics Education lecturers should make economics education media literacy activities in the learning process so that students can be involved in the critical interpretation of economic media in the form of economic news, economic news source and economic report from the world.
3. Applied teaching methods should be part of the Economics Education programmes, including case studies, debates and analysis of current events in the global economy to enhance students' awareness of the real world economy.
4. University leaders and policy makers should regularly train the lecturers in the effective use of digital resources and media literacy to improve Economics Education in digital learning.

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