




## Article

# Investigating Economics Students' Perception of the Recent Trends in Globalization, Localization, and Slowbalization

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## Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of economics students from Romania's Central Region regarding the global phenomena of globalization, localization, and slowbalization (GLS), analyzed through the lens of environmental, economic, and educational sustainability. The research highlights a high level of awareness and understanding of globalization and localization, while the concept of slowbalization remains relatively unfamiliar and often perceived with uncertainty or neutrality. Most respondents view globalization as the most sustainable model for long-term economic development, emphasizing its contributions to international trade, market expansion, investment flows, and access to global education and research. At the same time, localization is recognized for its role in preserving cultural identity, strengthening local economies, and addressing pressing environmental issues through low-carbon solutions. Regarding educational sustainability, students support a hybrid model that balances global exposure with the appreciation of local knowledge and traditions—a glocal approach particularly endorsed by master's students. The study also reveals statistically significant differences between undergraduate and graduate respondents, indicating more mature perspectives among those in advanced studies. The paper could help in course design and lesson engagement and concludes by recommending curricular reforms in economic education and proposing future interdisciplinary, comparative, and qualitative research to deepen understanding of GLS dynamics, particularly in the context of emerging global trends and technological transformations.

**Keywords:** globalization; localization; slowbalization; sustainability; economic education



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## 1. Introduction

As Franco-Bedoya (2023) puts it, the debate on globalization uses various terms—slowbalization, deglobalization, reglobalization—and each tells us a very different story in the world economy. We have chosen GLS and students' opinions about them in the sustainability context, both to understand where the world economy stands at present and to contribute to incorporating these topics into national educational strategies.

The terms localization and slowbalization have been associated with globalization because, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic, globalization slowed down significantly, and two major countertrends became visible: localization (meaning the empowerment of local forces and endogenous identity) and slowbalization (meaning the waning of globalization).

This study was driven by the idea that understanding students' opinions about GLS can help teachers design courses that reflect their interests and concerns, making lessons more engaging and meaningful. Understanding students' perspectives also allows educators to introduce different viewpoints in their presentations, encouraging critical thinking and analytical skills.

The research objectives consisted of:

- O1.** *Analysis of the economics students' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions on globalization, localization, and slowbalization.*
- O2.** *Identifying the prospects of globalization, localization, and slowbalization from the economics students' perspective.*
- O3.** *Determining the impact of globalization, localization, and slowbalization on sustainability—estimated by economics students.*

Starting from the specialized literature and correlating with the research objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>).** *There is a link between the concept considered most sustainable for long-term economic growth (choosing a concept from GLS) and the cycle of studies followed.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>).** *There is a link between the cycle of studies followed and the idea that educational sustainability is best achieved through a mix of globalization and localization.*

The above-mentioned hypotheses derive from the following theoretical lenses: (a) Primary lens: Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), according to which different study cycles may reflect varying degrees of exposure to critical thinking and global awareness, influencing preferences toward globalization, localization, or slowbalization; (b) Complementary lens: World-systems theory (Wallerstein, 2004). Link to H<sub>1</sub>: Students in different stages of education might be more or less critical of global structures, influencing their sustainability preferences. Link to H<sub>2</sub>: The idea of mixing globalization and localization reflects a nuanced understanding of world-system dynamics (e.g., glocalization as an adaptive response).

The research problem was triggered by the fact that recent global economic developments, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have significantly slowed globalization, giving rise to countertrends as localization and slowbalization. These shifts carry important implications for sustainability, encompassing economic, environmental, and educational dimensions. However, there is limited understanding of how economics students, as future professionals and decision-makers, perceive these phenomena and their relevance for sustainable development. This gap in knowledge hinders the ability of educators to adapt curricula to reflect students' perspectives and prepare them for the evolving economic context. In these circumstances, our research questions are circumscribed around the following aspects:

- Perception analysis: How do economics students from the central Region of Romania perceive the GLS concepts?
- Sustainability dimensions: How do students associate GLS with the dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental, and educational?
- Educational implications: How can students' perceptions of GLS inform the integration of these topics into economics education to enhance critical thinking and engagement?

- Preferred model for long-run development: Which of the three phenomena (GLS) do students perceive as the most sustainable model for long-term economic development, and why?

Our study is deeply anchored in the existing literature, especially that written by authors like [Qiang \(2003\)](#), [Brooks and Waters \(2011\)](#), [Altbach and Knight \(2007\)](#), [Yamada \(2021\)](#), and [Verbolabs \(2024\)](#), stating that students should be encouraged to reflect on both global forces and local identity preservation.

This research can lead to interdisciplinary connections by integrating GLS-related topics into teaching subjects such as Macroeconomics, World Economy, Geopolitics, or International Economic Relations.

The research highlighted a series of relevant perceptions of economics students from the Central Region of Romania towards the phenomena of globalization, localization, and slowbalization, concerning the dimensions of sustainability, namely environmental, economic, and educational.

Globalization was perceived by most respondents as the most sustainable model for long-term economic development, being associated with expanded access to markets, trade, and investment facilitation, as well as opportunities in international education and research. As regards educational sustainability, it can be achieved, in the view of most respondents, through a mix between globalization and localization.

The paper is organized as follows: the next section contains the literature review, focusing on research conducted so far among students and expressing their perceptions and attitudes towards GLS. Then the Methodology section presents the participants' selection, materials, procedure, and data analysis techniques. It is followed by Results and Discussion, presented with the help of some tables and figures, which are discussed and interpreted. The last section is represented by the concluding remarks, limitations of the study, and future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review

The bibliographic sources included in this review were selected according to several criteria to ensure their relevance and contribution to the research objectives. First, thematic relevance was prioritized, with a focus on the concepts of globalization, localization, and slowbalization, alongside related frameworks such as glocalization, cosmopolitan education, and the internationalization of higher education. Second, preference was given to studies involving university students—particularly economics or business students—to align with the target population of this research. Third, both supportive and critical perspectives on globalization were included to capture the diversity of academic debate. Fourth, methodological variety was sought, incorporating qualitative, quantitative, and comparative approaches. Fifth, recent studies from the past two decades were emphasized to reflect current debates, while seminal works were included for theoretical grounding. Finally, the literature from diverse geographical contexts was chosen to provide a balanced view of global and local dynamics in education.

### 2.1. Conceptual Foundations of Globalization, Localization, and Slowbalization

The concepts of localization and slowbalization were chosen for discussion alongside globalization because recent studies show that these processes have gained increasing relevance in the past decade. [Wang and Sun \(2021\)](#) argue that localization and regionalization have been filling the vacuum left by the retreat of economic globalization, a trend intensified by the U.S.–China rivalry and its negative impact on both economies, as well as the global market. Similarly, [Ditta \(2022\)](#), analyzing the past, present, and future of business at times of slowbalization, stresses the need for greater attention to this phenomenon. The

term *slowbalization* was introduced by Bakas (2015) to describe the deceleration of globalization, marked by a moderation in the pace of global integration and a shift toward a more localized and fragmented economic landscape.

## 2.2. Students' Perceptions of Globalization

Given the focus of this study on students' perceptions, prior research in educational contexts offers valuable insights. Walker et al. (2011) examined students' attitudes toward globalization and study abroad programs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), finding that business students with a global mindset were more favorably inclined toward globalization than their non-business peers. Similarly, Zollinger et al. (2016) compared U.S. and Chinese undergraduates' awareness and perceptions of globalization, highlighting the implications for curriculum design in courses with significant globalization components. Jean-François (2014), using interviews and focus groups with non-traditional American and international students, identified both positive and critical views: non-traditional American students perceived offshore outsourcing as a threat to the U.S. economy and global influence, while non-traditional international students regarded globalization as transnational exploitation of workers in developing countries. Consistent with other studies, students in business-related programs expressed more favorable attitudes than those in the humanities and social sciences.

## 2.3. Integrating Global and Local Perspectives in Education

Several scholars have explored how global and local forces intersect in shaping educational policy and practice. Cheng and Albia (2024) examine globalization, education policy, and school reforms, introducing the idea that combining global and local perspectives can serve as an alternative to conventional internationalization in higher education. Patel and Lynch (2013) further developed the concept of *glocalization* in higher education, defining it as the integration of global and local community connections in curricula to promote social responsibility, justice, and sustainability. They argue that glocalization preserves cultural diversity while fostering mutual understanding, making it a powerful framework for educational reform. Although the present study does not explicitly focus on glocalization, it draws on similar principles by addressing globalization, localization, and slowbalization together.

## 2.4. Theoretical and Policy Frameworks for Higher Education

The internationalization of higher education has been a longstanding theme in educational research. Qiang (2003) proposed a context-sensitive model that balances global integration with local cultural preservation, supported by policy interventions to ensure inclusivity. Maringe and Carter (2007) similarly advocate for equitable partnerships between institutions in the Global South and North, aiming to balance international competitiveness with regional relevance. Brooks and Waters (2011) add that student mobility patterns are shaped not only by global economic forces but also by national education policies and labor market conditions. Altbach and Knight (2007) emphasize the uneven benefits of globalization in higher education, often favoring wealthier countries, and call for capacity-building and local engagement to address these disparities.

## 2.5. Case Studies and Comparative Analyses

Empirical studies from various contexts illustrate how globalization and localization influence higher education. Yamada (2021) describes an intercultural education course in Japan that uses global issues—such as racism and immigration in the U.S.—to stimulate students' reflection on local realities. Verbolabs (2024) offers a structured comparison between globalized and localized education, identifying features of the former (interna-

tional curricula, cross-cultural experiences, language diversity, technology integration) and the latter (cultural relevance, language preservation, community engagement, tailored curricula). Beine et al. (2014) reinforce the need for ongoing curriculum evaluation to meet the needs of both local and international students.

### 2.6. Cosmopolitan Education as a Balancing Framework

The idea of cosmopolitan education offers another perspective on reconciling global and local imperatives. Appiah (2006) advocates for fostering global citizenship while preserving local identity, arguing that universities should prepare students for global careers without detaching them from their cultural roots. This aligns with Nussbaum's (2010) vision of cosmopolitan education, which emphasizes critical thinking and global empathy as essential skills for navigating a complex, interconnected world.

The reviewed literature demonstrates a robust body of research on globalization, localization, and educational internationalization, with significant attention to students' perceptions. However, most existing research focuses either on globalization alone or on the binary contrast between globalization and localization. No studies have examined students' perceptions of slowbalization—the recent deceleration of global integration, and no one has considered these three concepts together within the same analytical framework. Furthermore, studies focusing specifically on economics students—particularly within a Central or Eastern European context—are notably scarce. This gap underscores the relevance of the present study, which investigates economics students' perceptions of globalization, localization, and slowbalization, aiming to inform curriculum development and higher education policy.

## 3. Methodology

The research methodology consists of quantitative research based on an opinion poll, using a questionnaire for data collection, and IBM SPSS Statistics to process the data recorded in the opinion poll. To determine how the cycle of study (Bachelor's or Master's) influenced the students' answers, the Chi-Square and Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests were applied.

### 3.1. Participants

Since students represent the respondents, the first step of the study was their geographical delimitation. For the 8 regions of Romania, data regarding the total number of students and the distribution of faculties by region are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Total number of students and distribution of faculties by development regions of Romania.

Faculty Distribution (Academic Year 2022–2023) **	Total Number of Students (Year 2023) *	Region
28%	172,205	Bucuresti–Ilfov
16%	94,049	Northwest
12%	71,768	Northeast
11%	59,191	Center
11%	59,025	West
10%	39,347	Southeast
6%	29,776	Southwest Oltenia
6%	19,262	South Muntenia
100%	544,623	Total

Sources: \* data collected by the authors from INSSE Statistical Database, Tempo-online, <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>, accessed on 3 April 2025. \*\* Ministry of National Education and Research, 2023, [https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/\\_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2023/Transparenta/Rapoarte\\_sistem/Raport-Starea-invatamantului-superior-2022-2023.pdf](https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2023/Transparenta/Rapoarte_sistem/Raport-Starea-invatamantului-superior-2022-2023.pdf), accessed on 3 April 2025.

Based on these data, the authors of the paper wanted to select a region that would be within the limits, somewhere around the national average in terms of the number of students but also the distribution of faculties. For this reason, analyzing the data, the Center and West regions were of interest. Of these two, the authors of the paper decided to choose only one region, namely the Center Region.

In the Central Region, the most prestigious universities are: “Babeş-Bolyai” University Cluj-Napoca (UBB), Transilvania University of Braşov, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca, and “Petru Maior” University of Târgu Mureş. The authors decided to target students studying economics, as they were considered to have the necessary foundation to understand the 3 concepts of globalization, localization, and slowbalization, which is why they stopped at only 2 university centers, namely: “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu and Transilvania University of Braşov. At these two universities, the following were targeted:

- Faculty of Economics at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu (where 2200 students are enrolled according to the official website (<https://economice.ulbsibiu.ro/despre-facultate/>))—accessed on 4 April 2025.
- Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at Transilvania University of Brasov (where in February 2025, 3063 students were enrolled, of which 2554 in the bachelor’s cycle and 509 in master’s studies (<https://econ.unitbv.ro/ro/despre/hotarari-rapoarte-si-alte-documente.html>))—accessed on 5 April 2025.
- Participants were recruited through institutional mailing lists and student networks. Inclusion criteria required participants to be actively enrolled in an economics program at the time of the survey.

A non-random sampling method was chosen, namely convenience sampling, using Sousa et al. (2004) and Peterson and Merunka (2014) as sources. The authors considered this method to be the most appropriate for the research objectives, although it also has a disadvantage—that the data cannot be extrapolated to the entire population. However, the results are of real use, as shown, for example, by Brough (2024), and can be used by researchers and individuals belonging to the academic environment, as well as by public institutions or decision-makers in the field of education.

The database recorded 469 responses from the Central Region of Romania. Following the data analysis, 71 responses were excluded from the database (of which 28 did not mention the specialization they were pursuing, which led to the idea that they might not be economics students, and 43 of them provided incomplete answers and did not answer all the questions). Thus, the final sample is 398 people, and the sample structure is found in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Sample structure.

Sample Structure (398 Respondents)	Criterion
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu 34.42% (137 respondents)	University
Transilvania University of Brasov 65.58% (261 respondents)	
Bachelor’s level 92.0%	Cycle
Master’s level 8.0%	
Year I 63.8%	Year of study
Year II 2.5%	
Year III 33.7%	

Table 2. Cont.

Sample Structure (398 Respondents)	Criterion
Masculine 21.1% Feminine 78.4% I prefer not to answer 0.5%	Gender
23.85 years	Average age

Source: realized by the authors using the results of the quantitative research.

### 3.2. Materials

Considering that the two university centers are located in different cities, respectively, Sibiu and Brasov, data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed for CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing). This technique was also chosen because young people prefer the CAWI design to the detriment of CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) and PAPI (Paper-and-Pencil Interviewing) (Kagerbauer et al., 2013, pp. 289–304).

Among the advantages of the CAWI technique is the elimination of the need for the interviewer to be present, thus allowing respondents to answer more honestly and openly. Some studies show that CAWI respondents spend more time answering questions, such as Feng and Huang (2024). Considering the characteristics of the researched population, namely young people pursuing economic studies, the CAWI technique was considered the most appropriate by the authors.

The instrument included demographic questions (age, gender, year of study, specialization) and Likert-type items rated on a 5-point scale (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree).

The data collection tool used is the questionnaire.

To achieve the objectives proposed in the research, the questionnaire included 26 questions and several sections. Before distributing it to the respondents, the questionnaire was pre-tested on 9 economics students to ensure clarity and face validity. Of the total of 26 questions, 5 were to identify the study participants (Q1–Q5), and the remaining 21 were to cover the proposed research topic (Q6–Q26). The questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

The data collection period is 1–31 March 2025, and the questionnaire takes approximately 7 min to complete.

The questionnaire was designed from scratch in such a way as to capture the research questions of the study. The questions were formulated based on the authors' experience gained from other quantitative research, without referring to previous publications investigating students' opinions. We used a 5-point scale, which has the following advantages: simplicity for respondents (five points are easy to understand and quick to answer); balanced options (we have two negative points, two positive points, and one neutral midpoint, allowing respondents to express varying degrees of agreement; and reduced respondent fatigue (compared to longer scales of 7 or 10 points). We considered that a 5-point scale assures a balance between reliability and simplicity.

### 3.3. Procedure

The CAWI questionnaire was distributed via an online platform (Google Forms) in the period 1–31 March 2025. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and students accessed the survey link through university communication channels. Respondents completed the survey individually on personal devices, with an estimated completion time of 7 min.

As with most other research conducted by the authors involving the completion of questionnaires by students, they proved to be very solicitous and eager to express their views.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Techniques

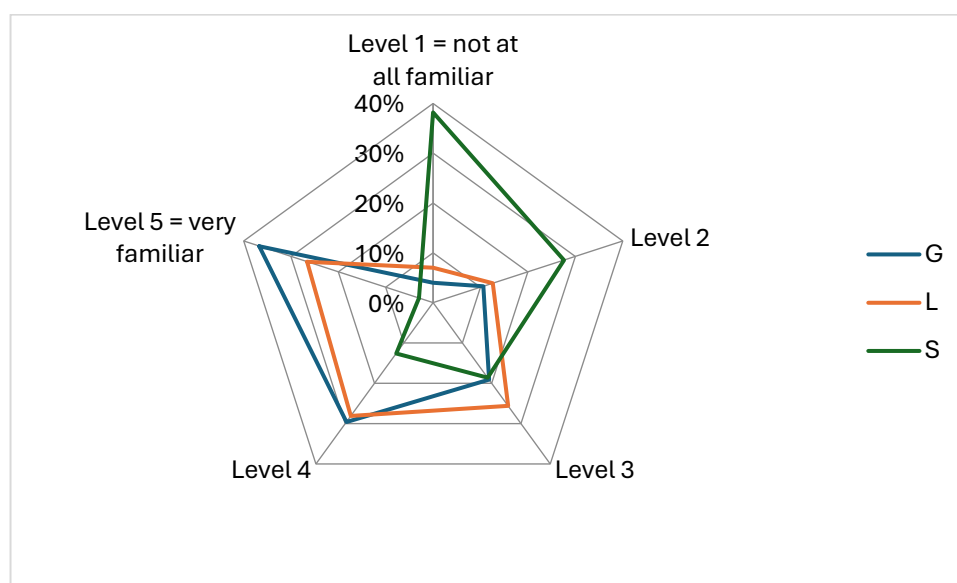
IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software was used to process the data recorded in this opinion poll. Data analysis was performed using statistical and descriptive indicator analysis, calculation of Mean, median, and frequencies (Malhotra, 2004). At the same time, to test the proposed hypotheses, the following were used:

- To test the correlations between variables (Hypothesis 1), descriptive statistics and Chi-Square analysis ( $\chi^2$ ) were applied, and the results confirmed the existence of a link between the concept considered most sustainable for long-term economic growth (choosing a concept from GLS) and the cycle of studies followed ( $\chi_{calc}^2 = 20.433 > \chi_{0.05;2}^2 = 5.99$ );
- To verify Hypothesis 2, the nonparametric Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was applied, using as a source Constantin (2006) ( $D_{obs} = 26.2\% > D_{\alpha} = 25.07 \rightarrow$  alternative hypothesis  $H_1$  is accepted).

## 4. Results and Discussion

We begin with the respondents' preference for a job, the distribution of responses showing that the majority want to start their own business (50.8%), followed by those who want to work for a global multinational corporation (25.6%), a local business (13.6%), and a regional company (10.1%). The first result reflects students' strong entrepreneurial aspirations, with the majority of respondents preferring to start their own business; it also suggests a high level of entrepreneurial mindset and confidence in their abilities. A significant portion (25.6%) would like to work for a global multinational corporation, meaning that global corporations still hold strong appeal. The least popular option is working for a regional company (10.1%), probably due to the perception of fewer growth opportunities or limited awareness of regional firms' potential.

Figure 1 below captures the extent to which respondents are familiar with the three analyzed concepts, providing an overview of these terms of great economic interest.



**Figure 1.** Graphical representation of the answers regarding knowledge of globalization, localization, and slowbalization. Source: compiled by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

From the results recorded (represented in Figure 1), it is observed that the concepts of globalization and localization are the most familiar to the respondents (globalization registering 66.3%, respectively, levels 4 and 5 cumulated, and localization 54.7%, respectively, levels 4 and 5 cumulated). The concept of slowbalization is the least familiar, registering 38.2% at level 1 = not at all familiar and 27.6% at level 2. At level 5—very familiar, the lowest percentage (3%) was recorded for the concept of slowbalization. It is, therefore, observed that the respondents are familiar with the terms of globalization and localization, while the term slowbalization is the least known to them. This is explained by the fact that the term slowbalization is relatively new, having only been introduced in 2015 by Bakas, as discussed in the literature review.

Regarding the impact that the three concepts have on today’s economy, it is observed that globalization registers 77.4%, followed by the answer option “I’m not sure” with 14.1%, the concepts of slowbalization and localization being far behind, with, respectively, only 5% and 3.5%. It results that, in the respondents’ opinion, the greatest impact on the economy is (still) that of globalization. Globalization indeed has historically had the greatest broad-scale impact on the world economy; these findings align with recent studies, for example, [Martín Cervantes et al. \(2020\)](#).

The research continued with a set of statements regarding GLS, centralized, and presented in a single table (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Summary of statistical results regarding respondents’ opinions on a series of statements regarding the phenomena of globalization, localization, and slowbalization.

Mean	Answer Options					Statement
	1 Very Unimportant	2 Unimportant	3 Neither/Nor	4 Important	5 Very Important	
3.99	43.2%	27.6%	15.6%	12.6%	1.0%	Globalization facilitates trade, investment and technology transfer
3.24	15.1%	23.6%	35.7%	21.1%	4.5%	Globalization increases economic inequality
3.82	34.2%	33.2%	17.6%	10.6%	4.5%	Globalization generates employment opportunities
3.72	32.7%	28.6%	20.6%	14.1%	4.0%	Local traditions can be overshadowed by dominant global cultures
3.98	38.2%	33.7%	18.6%	7.5%	2.0%	Globalization creates expanded access to markets
3.16	18.1%	18.6%	31.7%	24.1%	7.5%	Globalization contributes to environmental degradation
3.88	35.2%	36.2%	12.6%	14.1%	2.0%	Globalization leads to international collaboration in education and research
2.98	15.6%	16.6%	31.2%	24.1%	12.6%	Globalization causes the loss of national sovereignty
3.67	28.1%	26.1%	32.7%	11.1%	2.0%	Localization strengthens local economies
3.02	9.0%	19.6%	43.7%	19.6%	8.0%	Localization limits access to global markets and innovation

Table 3. Cont.

Mean	Answer Options					Statement
	1 Very Unimportant	2 Unimportant	3 Neither/Nor	4 Important	5 Very Important	
3.85	32.7%	31.2%	26.1%	8.5%	1.5%	Localization helps preserve cultural identity and traditions
3.62	29.6%	20.1%	36.2%	10.6%	3.5%	Governments should prioritize local industries over multinational companies
3.17	11.6%	26.6%	36.7%	17.6%	7.5%	Slowbalization helps protect national economies from external shocks
3.28	17.1%	23.1%	36.2%	17.6%	6.0%	Slowbalization hampers economic growth in developing countries
3.23	10.1%	26.1%	43.2%	18.1%	2.5%	Slowbalization leads to greater regional cooperation instead of global dependence
3.64	32.2%	23.1%	27.6%	10.6%	6.5%	The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated slowbalization

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

Analyzing the data in Table 3, it is observed that, regarding globalization, the highest values of Mean correspond to the following the statements: Globalization facilitates trade, investment, and technology transfer (3.99), and globalization creates expanded access to markets (3.98), which means that these register the highest percentages for the agreement and total agreement levels. The lowest level of Mean is recorded for the statement that globalization causes the loss of national sovereignty, which indicates that most respondents disagree with this statement.

Regarding localization, it is observed that the statement localization helps preserve cultural identity and traditions, registering the highest Mean value (3.85). At the same time, respondents believe that localization does not limit access to global markets and innovation (because the statement according to which localization would limit this access registers the lowest Mean value—3.02).

Regarding slowbalization, the distribution of responses shows that respondents believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this phenomenon (Mean = 3.64). Also, observing the Mean values for all statements regarding slowbalization, it is observed that they have values higher than 3.1, i.e., values registered in the upper part of the scale. The respondents' attitude towards the statement "Slowbalization refers to the slowing down of globalization due to factors such as trade restrictions, political tensions, and regionalization" is neutral (37.9%), negative (22.7%), uncertain (22.2%), and positive (17.2%). So, the fewest respondents agree with the above statement.

Next, students were asked to indicate which of the three GLS concepts is the most sustainable for long-term economic growth. To this question, two respondents did not want to provide an answer, which is why 396 answers were validated. The distribution of responses shows that 62.1% of respondents consider globalization to be the most sustainable model for long-term economic growth, followed at a relatively high distance by localization (by 23.7%) and slowbalization (by 14.1%).

Next, we tried to identify whether the study cycle followed (i.e., bachelor's or master's degree) was related to the respondents' opinion regarding the concept considered most

sustainable for long-term economic growth. For this, we applied the Chi-Square test, based on the following hypotheses:

**H0:** *There is no relationship between the study cycle and the choice of concept considered most sustainable for long-term economic growth.*

**H1:** *There is a relationship between the study cycle and the choice of concept considered most sustainable for long-term economic growth.*

The results of the Chi-Square test are shown in Table 4.

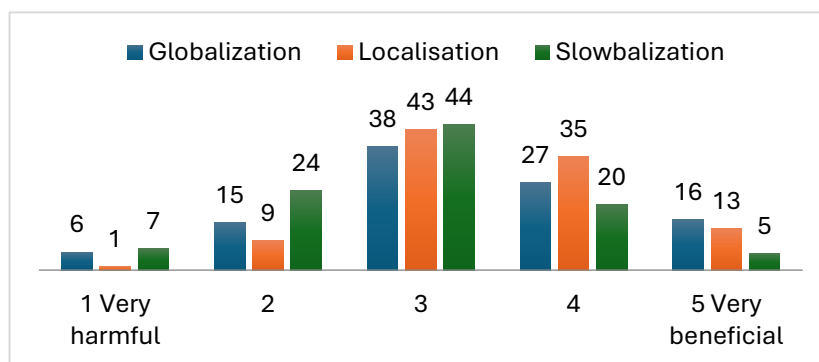
**Table 4.** Critical ratio for the  $\chi^2$  test.

Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)	df	Value	
0	2	20.433 *	Pearson Chi-Square
0	2	17.379	Likelihood Ratio
0.177	1	1.825	Linear-by-Linear Association
		396	N of Valid Cases

\* 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.53.

Since  $\chi^2_{calc} = 20.433 > \chi^2_{0.05,2} = 5.99$ , the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that there is a connection between the choice of the concept considered most sustainable for long-term economic growth and the cycle of studies followed. In other words, the differences between the observed and expected frequencies at the sample level are statistically significant. The same decision can be made by comparing the significance level Asymp. Sig (2-sided), which has a value of 0.000 (Table 4)  $< \alpha = 0.05$ .

The results recording respondents’ perceptions regarding the impact of globalization, localization, and slowbalization on sustainability are found in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The impact of globalization, localization, and slowbalization on sustainability. Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

From the data analysis, it is observed that the middle level (level 3) is the most frequently mentioned by the respondents. This illustrates the fact that most of the respondents view the impact of GLS on sustainability as neutral, neither beneficial nor harmful. The response options very beneficial and very harmful were chosen by a limited number of respondents. At these extremes, only globalization stands out, which registers 16% for level 5 of the scale—very beneficial.

Furthermore, given the complexity of the sustainability phenomenon, the responses in this area were grouped into three broad categories: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and educational sustainability.

A. Environmental sustainability

Table 5 shows the distributions of responses linked to respondents' opinions regarding the contribution of GLS phenomena to environmental sustainability.

**Table 5.** Distribution of answers related to respondents' opinions regarding GLS's contribution to environmental sustainability.

Mean	Response Option					To What Extent Do You Consider the Following Aspects to Contribute to Environmental Sustainability:
	5 Very Much	4	3	2	1 Not at All	
3.82	31.70%	33.70%	22.10%	10.10%	2.50%	The role of globalization in the development of renewable energy
3.78	32.20%	29.60%	25.60%	9.50%	3.00%	Localization promoting local low-carbon supply chains
3.84	31.70%	33.20%	25.60%	7.00%	2.50%	Slowbalization, reducing overconsumption and waste

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

Analyzing the distribution of responses, it is observed that most responses are recorded for levels 4 and 5, which means that most respondents consider that GLS phenomena contribute a lot and very much to environmental sustainability ( $G = 65.4\%$ ;  $L = 61.8\%$ ;  $S = 64.9\%$ ). This is also supported by the analysis of the Mean values, which are located at a short distance from each other, and which record values close to 3.8.

The environmental problems associated by respondents with globalization are resource depletion (21.0%), pollution (20.7%), waste generation (17.7%), carbon emissions (17.5%), deforestation (14.7%), and biodiversity loss (8.5%).

To the question, "To what extent do you consider localization to be a viable solution to global environmental challenges?" most respondents chose the answer option to a large extent (39.2%). A similar percentage (38.2%) chose the middle option, which represents the indifferent option, and only 7% of respondents marked the option to a very large extent. The answer options, "not at all" and "to a small extent", represented 15.1%. The distribution of the answers shows that the respondents, for the most part, consider that localization can represent a solution to current environmental challenges.

#### B. Economic sustainability

The results of identifying respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of GLS on economic sustainability are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Distribution of answers related to respondents' perception of the impact of GLS on economic sustainability.

Mean	Response Option					How Do You Perceive the Economic Impact of These Trends?
	5 Very Beneficial	4	3	2	1 Very Harmful	
3.59	22.60%	32.20%	30.20%	11.60%	3.50%	The effect of globalization on job creation and wages
4.03	40.20%	31.70%	20.60%	6.00%	1.50%	Localization supporting small businesses and entrepreneurship
3.61	22.10%	34.20%	29.60%	11.10%	3.00%	Slowbalization encourages resilient and sustainable economies

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

From the analysis of the data presented in Table 6, it is observed that the statement according to which localization supports small businesses and entrepreneurship recorded the most responses for levels 4 and 5, summed, respectively 71.9%. Then comes slowbal-ization, which records 56.3%, and globalization with 54.8%. Levels 1 and 2 recorded the lowest percentages, which means that the impact of GLS is considered beneficial and very beneficial on economic sustainability.

Most respondents answered that localization can strengthen the economy without de-pending on globalization, with certain limitations (77.4%). 14.1% believe that globalization is necessary, and 8.5% believe that localization is sufficient.

C. Educational sustainability

Regarding how the impact of globalization on education is perceived, most respon-dents consider it quite beneficial (47.7%) and very beneficial (15.6%). A percentage of 30.7% of respondents chose the neutral response option, while the options quite harmful (5%) and very harmful (1%) recorded very few responses. It is thus noted that respondents consider the impact of globalization on educational sustainability to be beneficial. To further investigate this aspect, respondents had to indicate the degree of agreement with 4 statements supporting the impact of globalization on educational sustainability (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of responses regarding the impact of globalization on educational sustainability.

Mean	Response Option					
	5 Totally Agree	4	3	2	1 Totally Disagree	
3.83	35.40%	27.8	24.70%	8.60%	3.50%	Globalization improves access to diverse educational resources
3.95	41.10%	25.90%	21.80%	9.10%	2.00%	International collaboration improves the quality of education
3.6	27.40%	27.40%	27.90%	12.20%	5.10%	Globalization increases competition among students
4.07	50.30%	18.30%	21.80%	7.60%	2.00%	Using a global language (e.g., English) benefits my education

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

Analyzing, in Table 7, the Mean variable (4.07) and the percentages recorded for each response option, it is observed that most respondents consider that using a global language (e.g., English) benefits education. At a similar level (Mean = 3.95) is the statement according to which international collaboration improves the quality of education.

Regarding localization, the importance of preserving local traditions, languages, and educational programs was measured. The distribution of responses was extremely impor-tant (50.8%), important (36.9%), neutral (9.7%), not very important (2.6%), and not very important (0%). We can, therefore, conclude that most respondents consider it important to preserve local traditions, languages, and educational programs. It is also noteworthy that the answer option “not at all important” was not chosen by anyone, which further supports the desire to preserve traditions. To deepen the perception of the impact of localization on educational sustainability, respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with three statements supporting the beneficial effects of localization on education (see Table 8).

**Table 8.** Distribution of responses regarding the impact of localization on educational sustainability.

Mean	Response Option					
	5 Totally Agree	4	3	2	1 Totally Disagree	
3.55	21.10%	32.70%	30.20%	12.10%	4.00%	Localization ensures that education meets the needs of the local community.
4.04	45.20%	23.10%	22.10%	9.00%	0.50%	Learning in the mother tongue improves comprehension.
3.95	39.20%	28.60%	23.10%	6.50%	2.50%	Global influences should be balanced with local knowledge in school curricula.

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

It is observed that most respondents (45.2%) gave a level of 5—total agreement for the statement “Learning in the mother tongue improves comprehension”, which is also reflected by the Mean variable. A small difference (Mean = 3.95) is also the statement that “Global influences should be balanced with local knowledge in school curricula”.

The research continued with identifying students’ opinions regarding the impact of slowbalization on educational sustainability. When asked “How do you think slowbalization affects education” most respondents said negative (reduces international opportunities)—at a percentage of 36.9%, followed by the answer I am not sure at 33.3%. The second answer may be motivated by the fact that, at the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents mentioned, at a percentage of 38.2%, that they are not familiar with this concept.

A percentage of 15.7% of respondents mentioned a positive effect (it strengthens local educational systems), and 14.1% mentioned that slowbalization has no significant effect on education.

Table 9 below contains the results of students’ responses related to the three statements in the questionnaire that help to outline a picture regarding the impact of slowbalization on the sustainability of the educational process.

**Table 9.** Distribution of respondents’ answers regarding the impact of slowbalization on educational sustainability.

Mean	Response Option					
	5 Totally Agree	4	3	2	1 Totally Disagree	
3.53	21.10%	28.60%	35.20%	12.10%	3.00%	A slower pace of globalization allows education systems to adapt better
2.94	10.10%	16.10%	40.70%	24.60%	8.50%	Dependence on international education models should be reduced
3.79	32.20%	26.60%	31.20%	8.50%	1.50%	Educational sustainability is better achieved through a mix of globalization and localization

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

Table 9 shows that, in the opinion of most respondents, educational sustainability is better achieved through a mix of globalization and localization (Mean = 3.79). To investigate this aspect in more depth, the authors of the paper created a contingency table (Table 10), illustrating the link between the study cycle followed and the support for the statement that educational sustainability is better achieved through a mix of globalization and localization.

**Table 10.** Contingency table.

Total	Study Cycle			
	Master’s Level	Bachelor’s Level		
1.50%	0.00%	1.60%	1 totally disagree	Educational sustainability is better achieved through a mix of globalization and localization.
8.50%	6.30%	8.70%	2	
31.20%	18.80%	32.20%	3	
26.60%	18.80%	27.30%	4	
32.20%	56.30%	30.10%	5 totally agree	
100.00%	100.00%	100.00%		Total

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

From the distribution of relative frequencies, it can be seen that the level of total agreement was higher among people enrolled in the master’s level program.

Next, to determine whether the differences between the variables are significant, the nonparametric Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is applied (Table 11). For this, the testing hypotheses become:

**H0:** *There is no connection between the cycle of studies followed and supporting the statement that educational sustainability is better achieved through a mix of globalization and localization.*

**H1:** *There is a connection between the cycle of studies followed and the support for the statement that educational sustainability is better achieved through a mix of globalization and localization.*

**Table 11.** Calculated values of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

Educational Sustainability Is Better Achieved Through a Mix of Globalization and Localization			
0.262	Absolute		
0.262	Positive		Most Extreme Differences
0	Negative		
1.421		Kolmogorov–Smirnov Z	
0.035		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	

Source: realized by the authors based on the quantitative research results.

The values are compared:  $D_{obs} = 26.2\%$  (Table 10)  $>$   $D_{\alpha} = 25.07$ , which means that the alternative hypothesis H1 is accepted. In conclusion, there are significant differences between the two groups. This is a real fact, because students in the master’s cycle have accumulated more knowledge and skills than those in the bachelor’s cycle.

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate which is the most sustainable educational model for the future. The distribution of answers is as follows: a highly globalized educational system 18.1%, a localized educational system 6.5%, a balance between globalization and localization 71.4%, a system that adapts based on slowbalization trends 4%. It is observed, once again, that the results recorded in the previous question are supported, and that most of the respondents (71.4%) consider that a balance between globalization and localization represents the most sustainable educational model for the future. This finding aligns with a growing body of scholarly literature advocating for a balanced “glocal” educational model, in which globalization and localization are integrated to create a more sustainable and contextually relevant system. Some examples are Zhao (2024), Yemini et al. (2023/2024), and Smaoui et al. (2025).

## 5. Conclusions and Future Research Directions

The research highlighted a series of relevant perceptions and attitudes of economics students from the Central Region of Romania towards the phenomena of globalization, localization, and slowbalization, related to the dimensions of sustainability, namely environmental, economic, and educational.

The results indicated a high degree of knowledge of the concepts of globalization and localization, in contrast to a limited knowledge of the concept of slowbalization, perceived predominantly neutrally or uncertainly. These findings are consistent with the analysis of [Ditta \(2022\)](#), which shows that slowbalization is a relatively new phenomenon, still in the process of being defined and understood by the general public, requiring further clarification, both theoretical and educational.

Globalization is perceived by most respondents as the most sustainable model for long-term economic development, being associated with expanded access to markets, trade, and investment facilitation, as well as opportunities in international education and research. This perception is also supported by the results of [Walker et al. \(2011\)](#) and [Zollinger et al. \(2016\)](#), who highlighted a favorable attitude towards globalization among business students. In contrast, localization is appreciated for its role in preserving cultural identity, supporting small businesses, and strengthening community cohesion. Respondents also perceive localization as a potential solution to environmental challenges, in particular by promoting local supply chains and reducing carbon footprints—a view also supported by [Verbolabs \(2024\)](#), which emphasizes the benefits of culturally contextualized education and economic development.

Regarding educational sustainability, the results indicate a clear preference for a balanced model, which combines the advantages of globalization with the valorization of local resources. This balance is perceived as the optimal solution for adapting educational systems to current and future challenges, being significantly supported especially by master's students. This approach is similar to the perspective of the glocalization of education, focused on the formation of global citizenship without losing anchorage in local values.

In conclusion, from the perspective of economics students, sustainability, in all its dimensions, is best achieved through a complementarity between globalization and localization.

The study thus contributes to the specialized literature by highlighting how these concepts are received in the Romanian academic environment and can serve as a starting point for educational policies better adapted to contemporary realities.

The research also showed that there is a link between the level of study followed (bachelor's or master's) and opinions expressed regarding GLS, reflecting the fact that master's students have indeed accumulated more knowledge and skills than undergraduate students.

It should be noted that our study also presents some limitations, the most important being the non-random sampling method, which prevents us from generalizing the responses. We did not calculate the selection error because we adopted a non-random sampling method. This is one of the reasons why we cannot extrapolate the data to the entire population. In general, in Romania, most economics students are female, but we did not control the percentage of respondents by gender, because we wanted to collect as many responses as possible. So, our results should be considered only as exploratory for Romanian economics students and not suitable for overgeneralization.

Another limitation stems from the fact that the analysis was conducted at only two universities, both located in Romania; it would have been interesting to also explore how cultural differences influence the understanding of the three concepts.

Given students' positive perception towards the globalization phenomenon, we propose to integrate GLS-related topics into teaching subjects like Macroeconomics, World Economy, Geopolitics, or International Economic Relations. Integrating the phenomena of GLS in the courses mentioned above would help educators meaningfully embed these concepts into curricula. Here are some concrete guidelines for this proposal: (a) Introduce case studies from different periods and regions, to ground abstract concepts in real-world dynamics; for example, presentation of case studies showing the rise in global supply chains (e.g., automotive sector, Apple); (b) Update traditional macroeconomic models with real-world shifts, for example, critically assess how macroeconomic models (IS-LM, Mundell–Fleming, etc.) address or fail to address phenomena like global supply chain disruptions, deglobalization pressures or nationalistic or protectionist measures; (c) Collaborate with practitioners and institutions, by inviting guest speakers from international trade organizations, local governance bodies, and think tanks focused on global trends.

With students mostly opting for the benefits of globalization, this may also encourage efforts to promote multilingualism, international student exchanges, and cross-cultural learning experiences.

Several essential directions for further research are outlined, based on the results obtained. First, extending the study to other categories of respondents, such as students from non-economic fields, teachers, or employers, would provide an interdisciplinary perspective and validate the results in a broader framework. Future research could control for covariates like prior study abroad participation and family income, which were not included in our questionnaire. Also, a longitudinal study would allow for the observation of the evolution of perceptions over time, in the context of major global changes.

Since slowbalization is a less well-known concept, a qualitative investigation through interviews or focus groups would contribute to a better understanding of it. At the same time, correlating students' opinions with their real behaviors, such as educational or professional choices, would provide clues regarding the coherence between attitudes and actions.

A comparison at a regional or even international level would highlight cultural and economic differences in the perception of GLS phenomena, outlining relevant global trends.

A future research direction could be the integration of the technological dimension, especially artificial intelligence, which would bring a current perspective on how new technologies influence the approach to globalization, localization, and sustainability.

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## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

- G Globalization
- L Localization
- S Slowbalization
- GLS Globalization, localization, and slowbalization

## Appendix A

### Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a study on students’ opinions on Globalization, Localization, and Slowbalization, conducted by researchers from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Transilvania University of Brasov.

Please be kind enough to answer a few questions.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and all information collected will be confidential and used strictly for statistical purposes.

Thank you for your contribution!

### 1. Demographic Information

1. Age: \_\_\_\_
2. Gender:  Male  Female  Prefer not to say
3. Year of study:  1st  2nd  3rd  4th
4.  Bachelor’s  Master’s
5. Specialization: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Understanding and Perceptions of GLS

6. How familiar are you with the following concepts? (Please mark the appropriate level with an X, considering the distances between scale levels as equal, where 1 = Not at all familiar, 5 = Very familiar)

	1 = Not at all familiar	2	3	4	5 = Very familiar
Globalization					
Localization					
Slowbalization					

7. In your opinion, which of the following has the greatest impact on the economy today? (Choose only one answer)

- Globalization
- Localization
- Slowbalization
- I’m not sure

### 3. Attitudes Toward Globalization

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

5 totally agree	4	3	2	1 totally disagree
				Globalization facilitates trade, investment, and technology transfer
				Globalization increases economic inequality
				Globalization creates job opportunities
				Local traditions can be overshadowed by dominant global cultures
				Globalization creates broader market access
				Globalization contributes to environmental degradation
				Globalization leads to international collaboration in education and research
				Globalization causes the loss of national sovereignty

#### 4. Opinions on Localization

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

	1 totally disagree	2	3	4	5 totally agree
Localization strengthens local economies					
Localization limits access to global markets and innovation					
Localization helps preserve cultural identity and traditions					
Governments should prioritize local industries over multinational companies					

#### 5. Perspectives on Slowbalization

10. Slowbalization refers to the slowing down of globalization due to factors such as trade restrictions, political tensions, and regionalization. How do you perceive this trend?

- Positive  
 Negative  
 Neutral  
 Unsure

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

	1 totally disagree	2	3	4	5 totally agree
Slowbalization helps protect national economies from external shocks					
Slowbalization hinders the economic growth of developing countries					
Slowbalization leads to greater regional cooperation instead of global dependency					
The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated slowbalization					

#### 6. Future Perspectives

12. Which model do you believe is the most sustainable for long-term economic growth? (Please choose only one answer)

- Globalization
- Localization
- Slowbalization

13. You would prefer to work for:

- A global multinational corporation
- A local business
- A regional company
- Your own business

**7. Perceptions of GLS Impact on Sustainability**

14. How do you perceive the impact of each of the following concepts on sustainability? (1 = Very harmful, 5 = Very beneficial)

	1 Very harmful	2	3	4	5 Very beneficial
Globalization					
Localization					
Slowbalization					

**8. Environmental Sustainability**

15. To what extent do you believe the following contribute to environmental sustainability? (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much)

	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Very much
The role of globalization in developing renewable energy					
Localization promoting low-carbon local supply chains					
Slowbalization reducing overconsumption and waste					

16. Which of the following environmental issues do you associate most with globalization? (Select up to three options)

- Carbon emissions
- Resource depletion
- Waste generation
- Deforestation
- Pollution
- Loss of biodiversity

17. To what extent do you believe localization is a viable solution for global environmental challenges?

- To a very large extent
- To a large extent
- Neutral
- To a small extent
- Not at all

**9. Economic sustainability**

18. How do you perceive the economic impact of these trends? (1 = Very harmful, 5 = Very beneficial)

---

1 Very harmful    2    3    4    5 Very beneficial

---

The effect of globalization on job creation and wages

---

Localization supporting small businesses and entrepreneurship

---

Slowbalization encouraging resilient and sustainable economies

---

19. Do you believe localization can strengthen the economy without relying on globalization?

- Yes, completely
- Yes, but with limitations
- No, globalization is necessary

#### 10. Educational sustainability

20. How do you perceive the impact of globalization on education?

- Very beneficial
- Quite beneficial
- Neutral
- Somewhat harmful
- Very harmful

21. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

---

1 totally disagree    2    3    4    5 totally agree

---

Globalization improves access to diverse educational resources

---

International collaboration improves the quality of education

---

Globalization increases competition among students

---

The use of a global language (e.g., English) benefits my education

---

22. How important is it to preserve local traditions, languages, and educational programs?

- Extremely important
- Important
- Neutral
- Slightly important
- Not important at all

23. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

---

1 totally disagree    2    3    4    5 totally agree

---

Localization ensures that education meets local community needs

---

Learning in one's native language improves understanding

---

Global influences should be balanced with local knowledge in school curricula

---

24. How do you believe slowbalization affects education?

- Positively (strengthens local educational systems)

- Negatively (reduces international opportunities)
- No significant effect
- Not sure

25. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree)

1 totally disagree    2    3    4    5 totally agree

A slower pace of globalization allows educational systems to adapt better

Dependence on international education models should be reduced

Educational sustainability is best achieved through a mix of globalization and localization

26. In your opinion, what is the most sustainable educational model for the future?

- A highly globalized educational system
- A localized educational system
- A balance between globalization and localization
- A system that adapts based on slowbalization trends
- Other (please specify)

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