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STORIES THAT STILL MATTER: REFLECTIONS ON STUDYING LITERATURE AMID DIGITAL NOISE

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Abstrak

Ada tren penurunan minat yang stabil terhadap studi sastra, seperti yang terlihat dari penurunan signifikan jumlah mahasiswa baru di Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra dan Bahasa, Universitas Kristen Indonesia (FSB-UKI)—dari 70 mahasiswa pada tahun 2021 menjadi hanya 25 pada tahun 2023 dan 2024. Tren ini memunculkan pertanyaan penting: Mengapa semakin sedikit calon mahasiswa yang memilih sastra sebagai jurusan mereka? Faktor apa yang memengaruhi pergeseran ini? Alih-alih hanya berspekulasi tentang faktor eksternal, penelitian ini berfokus ke dalam untuk merefleksikan apa yang terjadi di dalam program itu sendiri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana persepsi mahasiswa saat ini tentang pengalaman belajar sastra di dunia yang terglobalisasi dan digerakkan oleh digital. Studi ini berfokus pada tiga area utama: apa yang dipikirkan mahasiswa tentang nilai sastra saat ini, bagaimana pandangan mereka berubah sejak bergabung dengan program, dan bagian mana dari pembelajaran mereka yang dirasa paling bermakna atau perlu perbaikan. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengajukan pertanyaan yang lebih dalam dan penting: Apakah sastra masih relevan saat ini? Jika demikian, sebagai pengajar sastra, kita perlu bertanya bagaimana kita dapat membuat sastra menjadi menarik dan bermakna lagi bagi generasi muda kita yang tumbuh di dunia digital. Hasil dari penelitian ini akan bermanfaat tidak hanya sebagai refleksi, tetapi juga sebagai alat evaluasi bagi program itu sendiri—memberikan informasi untuk upaya menciptakan kurikulum sastra yang lebih relevan, dinamis, dan menarik yang memenuhi kebutuhan pelajar masa kini sambil menghormati tradisi humanistik dan budaya yang kaya dari disiplin ilmu ini. Dalam mengeksplorasi pandangan mahasiswa, penelitian ini menggunakan kuesioner terbuka (*open-ended*) bilingual yang diisi oleh mahasiswa yang sedang menempuh studi di Program Studi Sastra Inggris FSB-UKI. Dengan menempatkan perspektif mahasiswa sebagai fokus utama, penelitian ini tidak hanya berkontribusi pada refleksi kurikulum internal, tetapi juga pada percakapan yang lebih luas tentang masa depan pendidikan sastra dan tempatnya dalam membentuk nilai-nilai budaya dan kemanusiaan di Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Pendekatan humanistik, dunia digital, keterlibatan budaya, kurikulum sastra inovatif, pendidikan yang bermakna

Abstract

There appears to be a steady decline in interest in literary studies, as seen in the significant drop in new student enrollment in the English Literature Study Program at the Fakultas Sastra dan Bahasa, Universitas Kristen Indonesia (FSB-UKI)—from 70 students in 2021 to only 25 in both 2023 and 2024. This trend raises important questions: Why are fewer prospective students choosing literature as their major? What factors influence this shift? Rather than solely speculating on the external, this study turns inward to reflect on what is already happening within the program. It seeks to understand how current students perceive the experience of studying literature in today's globalized and digitally driven world. The study focuses on three key areas: what students think about the value of literature today, how their views have changed since joining the program, and which parts of their learning feel most meaningful or need improvement. Furthermore, the research aims to ask a deeper and more important question: Is literature still relevant today? If so, as teachers of literature, we need to ask how we can make literature engaging and meaningful again for our younger generations who are now growing up in a digital world. The results of this research will be beneficial not only as a reflection but also as an evaluation tool for the program itself—informing efforts to create a more relevant, dynamic, and engaging literature curriculum that meets the needs of today's learners while honoring the discipline's rich cultural and humanistic traditions. In exploring the students' views, this research makes use of a bilingual open-ended questionnaire to be filled out by students currently studying at the English Literature Study Program at FSB-UKI. By centering student perspectives, this study contributes not only to internal curriculum reflection but also to broader conversations about the future of literary education and its place in shaping cultural and human values in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Humanistic approach, digital world, cultural engagement, innovative literary curriculum, meaningful education

1. Introduction

There have been questions about the relevance of studying literature in today's digital age since both the academic and job markets appear to favor skills deemed “practical” or “technical.” The steady decline is shown in the number of enrollment in Program Studi Sastra Inggris of FSB-UKI, from 70 students in 2021 to just 25 students in both 2023 and 2024.

However, reports show that this is not unique to this study program. Other literature programs across the globe are facing the same situation -- declining enrollments. Students all over the world prefer fields of study that are connected to technological and economic advancement. Despite such a phenomenon, we need to be reminded time and time again that literature remains one of the few academic pursuits that will produce individuals with empathy, critical thinking, and reflective engagement with the world. This assertion is aligned with Pennington and Waxler (2017), who argue that reading literature encourages a kind of deep, imaginative, and ethical reflection that is often missing from fast-paced digital culture. Schwarz (2006) mentions that literary study is not merely about acquiring content knowledge but about forming individuals capable of navigating the complexities of modern life with empathy and insight.

This research emerges in response to a growing concern within the English Literature Study Program at Universitas Kristen Indonesia regarding declining interest in literature among incoming students. Although literature is meant to develop a nuanced understanding of human

experience, many students choose the program without a clear awareness of what literary study entails. Some are drawn by the broader appeal of English language skills, while others view the program as a stepping stone to non-literary careers. As the number of new student enrollments has decreased in recent academic years, it becomes crucial to investigate students' initial motivations, expectations, and experiences related to studying literature.

Roche (2004) talks about the enduring humanistic values of literature, saying that literature has the role of cultivating moral and aesthetic sensibilities. Literature is significant because it has the capacity to educate the whole person, not just the intellect. However, what needs to change is how literature is taught. Owen Jr. (2011) asserts that if literary studies are to survive and thrive, they must deal with today's realities: the students' primary exposure to narratives that come from social media, gaming, and digital video.

This research, instead of looking outward to the above-mentioned trends and assumptions, invites us all to look inward: How do students currently studying literature perceive its value? How have their views changed since joining the program? Are we as educators doing enough to keep literature alive and meaningful in a world dominated by speed, efficiency, and digital saturation? "This article explores how literature is perceived and should be taught today, based on a reflective questionnaire among students of the English Literature Study Program at UKI."

Understanding why students choose the program—and whether they find meaning in it—can inform efforts to improve curriculum, pedagogy, and promotional strategies. It is also a matter of institutional identity and academic integrity. Paulo Freire (2000) emphasizes that education must begin with the lived experiences and perceptions of learners. In this spirit, the present study invites students to reflect critically on their own journeys in the English Literature program: what drew them to it, what changed their perspectives, and what still matters to them in their study of literature.

Thus, this research presents student reflections and opinions through a bilingual open-ended questionnaire, which focuses on what the students think of literature, how they relate to it in their daily lives, and what kind of teaching makes literature alive for them. This study aims not only to provide data for internal curriculum reflection but also to spark a conversation about the future of literature in education. By exploring these narratives, this research not only contributes to self-evaluation and program development but also affirms the enduring value of literature as a humanizing force. It seeks to bridge the gap between students' lived realities and the transformative possibilities of literary education in a time of great cultural and educational shifts.

To situate this discussion within existing scholarship, the following section reviews key perspectives on literature's value, pedagogical approaches, and its relevance for today's learners.

2. Literature Review

Contemporary society is shaped by algorithms, social media, and constant multitasking—an environment that poses a significant challenge to the practice of deep, reflective reading. In this context, literary reading offers both a form of resistance and a refuge. Pennington and Waxler (2017), in *Why Reading Books Still Matters*, argue that literature encourages sustained attention, introspection, and emotional engagement. Such experiences stand in stark contrast to the superficial engagement fostered by digital skimming and information overload. Literature, they argue, cultivates empathy, critical awareness, and imaginative depth, offering a mode of understanding that is increasingly rare in today's quick-consumption culture.

Owen Jr. (2011), in *The Need for Revision: Curriculum, Literature, and the 21st Century*, reinforces this urgency by asserting that literature should not be treated as static content but as a dynamic medium. He advocates for a curriculum that evolves with cultural and generational shifts. Literature, he contends, must help students “make sense of the way they feel” amid emotional complexity, youth alienation, and a media-saturated reality. To remain relevant, literary education must respond to how students interact with visual storytelling and digital platforms, framing texts in ways that resonate with their lived experiences.

Schwarz (2006) further emphasizes the educator's role in modeling a passion for literature. In a world fragmented by digital distractions, literature invites a slower, deeper pace—one that nurtures empathy, openness, and sustained focus. Far from being mere entertainment, literature serves as a formative force, preparing students to navigate the complexities of human experience.

Sumara and Gallagher (2008) expand on the pedagogical value of literature in identity formation, ethical reasoning, and critical inquiry. By exposing students to ambiguity, moral dilemmas, and multiple perspectives, literature becomes a space of intellectual and personal growth—particularly valuable in an ideologically polarized world.

Taken together, these perspectives underscore that the relevance of literature in the digital age lies not in its abandonment, but in its renewal. Literature must be taught not as a

distant canon but as a lived experience—an active, dynamic process through which students question, feel, and meaningfully engage with the world around them.

3. Research Method

Design & Rationale

This study makes use of a qualitative-dominant, mixed-methods survey approach, the purpose of which is to be able to capture the different nuances of student perception of studying literature in today's digital world. The questions are open-ended to elicit reflective responses. The closed-response items in the questionnaire are intended to generate descriptive indicators. This will allow for both quantitative trends (breadth) and qualitative insights (depth), which will align with the goals of the study to inform curriculum and to renew pedagogy.

The questionnaire was designed to explore three areas:

1. Students' current views on the relevance and value of studying literature.
2. How their perceptions have changed since joining the program.
3. Which aspects of the learning experience they find most impactful or in need of improvement.

Participants & Sampling

The questionnaire is sent to 135 active students enrolled in the English Literature Study Program at FSB-UKI in the second half of Academic Year 2024/2025. There are 57 valid responses, which means a 42.2% response rate. Participation was voluntary and uncompensated, and no incentives were offered to avoid response bias. The respondents are from different academic cohorts; however, newer students were more strongly represented.

Instrument Development & Validation

The survey instrument was bilingual (Bahasa Indonesia–English) to ensure accessibility for all participants. The final instrument consisted of three sections: (1) demographic information; (2) closed items using Likert-scale and multiple-choice formats; and (3) open-ended questions probing motivations, transformative experiences, digital reading habits, and suggestions for curriculum improvement.

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms. The first page included the study's purpose, confidentiality statement, and informed consent. Completion of the survey indicated consent.

Data Analysis

For quantitative analysis, the closed-item responses were summarized using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) generated in Microsoft Excel, and for the qualitative analysis, the open-ended responses were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The results of this mixed-methods survey, presented below, illustrate both the quantitative trends in student motivations and the qualitative themes that emerged from open-ended responses.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings derived from a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the questionnaire distributed to students of the English Literature Study Program. With 57 valid responses collected, the data sheds light on students' perceptions of literature, their experiences within the program, and their views on literature's relevance in the digital era. Out of the 57 respondents, 54.5% are females, 42.1% are males, and the rest prefer not to say (Table 1). They come from different batches or years of admission (Table 2). This is to see variety in the perspectives students have on literature and the teaching of literature in the English Literature Study Program, Universitas Kristen Indonesia.

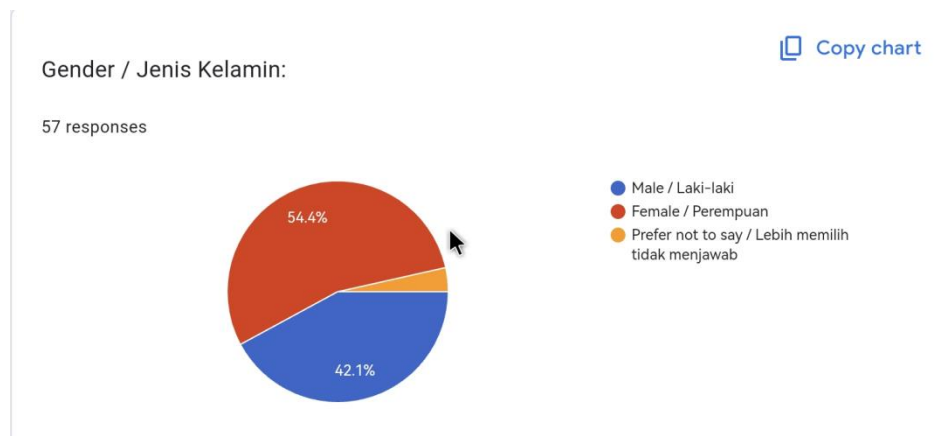


Table 1. Respondent Gender



Table 2. Respondents' Year of Admission

The findings are organized around key themes that emerged from both closed and open-ended questions. These include students' early engagement with literature, their expectations upon enrolling, the impact of the study program on their worldview, and how digital culture influences their reading habits. Responses also explore students' thoughts on the relevance of literature today, their reflections on specific classes or texts, and their suggestions for improving the teaching of literature.

Demographic data—such as year of admission, current semester, and gender—is also examined to contextualize trends in perception and engagement. The insights gathered offer valuable implications for curriculum development, student engagement strategies, and program relevance amidst the rapidly evolving educational and digital landscape. The subsections below discuss each thematic area in detail, supported by representative quotes and statistical breakdowns from the survey data.

2.1. Motivation for Choosing the Program

The data reveal that 29.8% of students chose the English Literature program primarily because of their personal interest in literature. 26.3% cited language learning (especially English) as their main motivation. 22.8% mentioned career prospects or future goals, such as becoming a teacher, translator, or working in international environments. The remaining students either chose it due to family influence, lack of other options, or external suggestions.

Implication: While a significant number of students genuinely enjoy literature, a large portion see the program as a means to gain language proficiency or secure practical careers. This dual motivation should shape how literature is introduced and taught—by balancing aesthetic appreciation with practical skills.

Figure 1. Motivation for Choosing the Program (n=57)

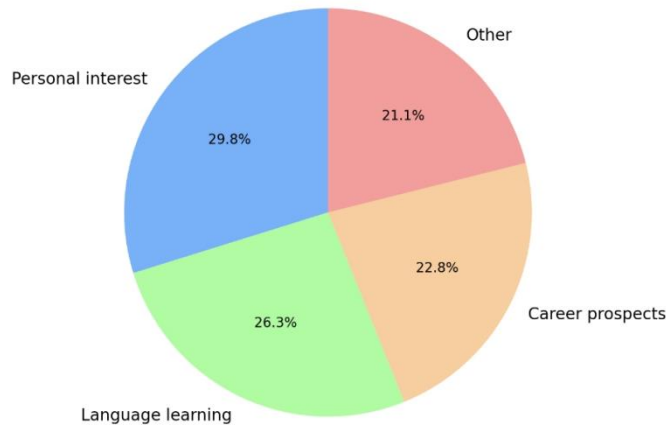


Table 3. Motivation for Choosing the Program

2.2. Transformative Experiences in Literature Classes

The analysis shows that 18.7% of students were transformed by exposure to literary theory and critical lenses (e.g., feminism, postcolonialism, structuralism). 16% cited specific texts or authors like *Bumi Manusia* and *The Alchemist* as eye-opening. 14.7% were particularly influenced by the Introduction to Literature course. 12% mentioned Cross-Cultural Understanding or global literature classes as shaping their new perspectives.

Implication: Students are most affected by literature when it is:

- a. Interdisciplinary (e.g., linked with history, psychology, or cultural studies),
- b. Taught with relevance to real-life issues,
- c. Offered with critical tools that allow them to unpack meaning beyond the surface.

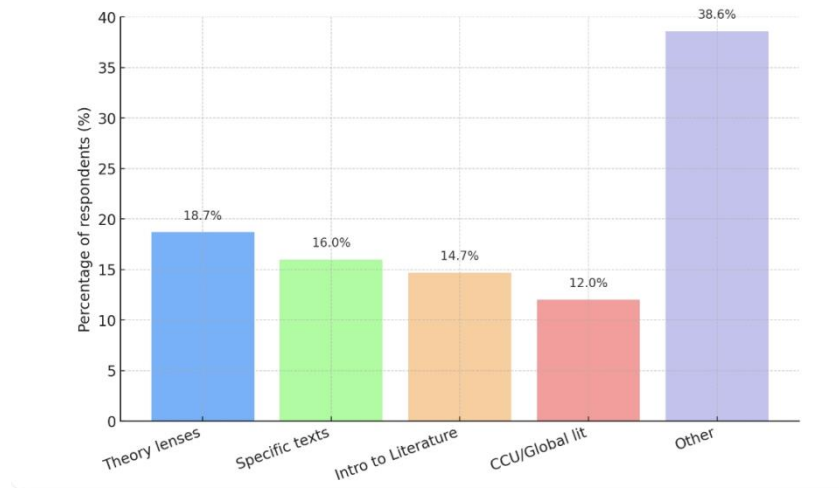


Table 4. Transformative Experiences in Literature Classes

2.3. Suggested Improvements in Teaching Literature

Students highlighted several areas:

- a. **Interactivity and Engagement:** Students desire literature classes that are less lecture-based and more participatory, including debates, group work, and multimedia integration.
- b. **Relevance to Everyday Life:** Many students asked for more contemporary and relatable texts, including local literature and diverse global voices.
- c. **Digital Integration:** Several respondents believe that technology and multimedia should be used more to make literature relevant in the digital age.
- d. **Critical Thinking Focus:** Literature should foster critical analysis, personal reflection, and identity exploration—not just memorization.

Some of the answers from the students that are worth reflecting on are:

"I think literature classes would be stronger if they mixed in other fields like psychology or digital tech."

"We need more texts that reflect our lives and our cultures, not just Shakespeare or Western canon."

"Teaching should not be boring and repetitive. It should be exploratory and exciting."

The questionnaire results point to a student body that:

- a. Is diverse in motivation: from a love of literature to practical aspirations.
- b. Appreciates transformative literary experiences, especially when literature connects with identity, history, and critical perspectives.
- c. Wants more dynamic and student-centered teaching methods.

Some recommendations for the Study Program from the questionnaire are:

- a. **Curriculum Renewal:** Include more courses that intersect literature with psychology, media studies, or social issues to remain relevant.
- b. **Textual Diversification:** Integrate local and contemporary texts, especially by Indonesian authors and Southeast Asian voices.
- c. **Pedagogical Innovation:** Promote interactive and reflective learning environments—storytelling projects, podcasts, short films, creative writing.
- d. **Skill Alignment:** Clearly articulate how literature builds skills like critical thinking, empathy, and cultural literacy—important for various careers.
- e. **Marketing Narrative:** Rebrand the program around identity, creativity, and critical engagement with the world—not just “literature for literature’s sake.”

Implications

1. Students Still Value Literature – But Need Relevance

Over 70% of respondents affirmed that studying literature changed their worldview, improved their empathy, and shaped their understanding of culture and identity. However, many entered the program without clear expectations or were more interested in language fluency than in literary analysis. The implication is that literature remains relevant, but students may not initially perceive its value—especially in comparison to practical or “career-ready” disciplines.

2. Digital Culture Alters Literary Habits

Students candidly admit that short-form digital content has shaped how they read: many now prefer shorter texts, rely on summaries, and struggle with deep focus. Yet, others noted that social media actually helped them discover new literary content or understand texts better through peer interpretations. One implication is that the study program must embrace digital culture rather than resist it—use social platforms, video content, and interactive media as teaching tools.

3. Students Want Modern, Diverse, and Practical Approaches

Many respondents called for less canon-heavy, more contemporary, and culturally diverse literature. Students also requested more discussion-based, interdisciplinary, and creative projects (e.g., podcasts, film analysis, performative criticism). This implies that the curriculum must evolve—move from theory-heavy to application-rich, and from Eurocentric to globally inclusive perspectives.

4. Why Literature Feels Relevant (or Not) to Young Readers: A Thematic Interpretation of Identity & Representation

Responses from the questionnaire consistently show the need for literature that mirrors their own cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Therefore, the curriculum in the English Literature Study Program should take into consideration the inclusion of works or narratives that resonate with the students' realities. This will deepen engagement and meaning as shown in Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory, which states that meaning emerges from the interaction between a reader's personal experiences and the text.

"We need more texts that reflect our lives and our cultures, not just Shakespeare or Western canon."

"Include more literature from different cultures and diverse voices... this would help students see themselves reflected in what they read."

Attention & Digital Reading

Some respondents admitted that their reading habits are shaped by short-form digital content, which poses challenges when it comes to the students' ability to have sustained engagement with long literary texts, which is a demand for literature students. This calls for the inclusion of digital tools (podcasts, YouTube videos) that can support deeper reading. Baron (2015) observes that today's students read differently, maybe not less. Baron further asserts that digital media can serve as an entry point, not a distraction. *"Literature classes would be stronger if they mixed in... digital tech."*

Interdisciplinarity & Real-Life Transfer

A proportion of respondents mentioned the importance of linking literature with other fields such as psychology, sociology, and media studies. This is in line with what is proposed by Owen Jr. (2011). He states that in order for literature to remain relevant, literary education must evolve alongside cultural and generational shifts. Literary analysis should be connected to emotional intelligence, social awareness, and contemporary issues so that

students may see literature as a tool for understanding both personal and societal complexities.

“I think literature classes would be stronger if they mixed in other fields like psychology or digital tech.”

Pedagogy & Agency

The responses generated from the questionnaire repeatedly highlight the importance of exploratory, discussion-based, and participatory learning. Students preferred classes that encourage them as active contributors. Students would like to participate more, not only on the receiving side of the classroom interaction. This aligns with Freire’s (1970) concept of dialogical education, which fosters critical consciousness and learner agency.

“Teaching should not be boring and repetitive. It should be exploratory and exciting.”

Literature is relevant to these young readers or students when the material they are reading reflects their identities. Literature should adapt to the students’ digital realities. It should connect meaningfully to other disciplines. Literature should empower students through curriculum and classroom experiences that allow them to be active participants. This means that for literature to stay relevant in today’s digital world, we have to “re-imagine” its delivery. Literature still exists, in probably more digital form. However, for literature to stay relevant, its classroom delivery should ensure the function of literature as both a mirror and a window for students to navigate today’s complex, interconnected, and media-saturated world.

While these themes illuminate why current students value literature, they also point to gaps in perception and experience that may contribute to declining enrollment.

Connecting the Findings to the Decline in Student Enrollment

Despite the rich reflections from current students on how literature has shaped their thinking, empathy, and communication, the decline in new student enrollment may reflect several critical disconnects between the program's value and how it is perceived externally:

1. Perceived Lack of Career Relevance

The response from the questionnaire shows that only 29.8% of respondents chose the program for a love of literature, while 26.3% cited language learning and 22.8% career goals (e.g., teaching, translation, international work). One student stated: *“I hoped to become fluent in English, improve public speaking, and get a good TOEIC*

score... I believe English Literature can help me grow both academically and personally.”

This implies that many students—and likely prospective ones—view the program primarily as a path to language proficiency or employment. The program’s career value is not clearly visible in its public identity.

Therefore, the study program needs to develop and promote industry-linked electives such as Narrative for Digital Media, Digital Storytelling, and Translation for Global Markets. The study program needs to publish alumni career profiles, embed internships with publishers/media/NGOs, and use student testimonials in promotional materials.

2. Lack of Connection with Real-World Issues

A recurring suggestion was to link literature more closely to social, cultural, and technological contexts—including multimedia projects, social issues, and everyday experiences. This is stated by one answer that says, *“Literature would be stronger if it mixed with psychology, sociology, and digital technology.”* This is in line with what is stated in Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2008) highlights the importance of connecting literature to ideology, culture, and power structures. Literature becomes more engaging when connected to contemporary issues and interdisciplinary contexts, enhancing both its intellectual and practical appeal. What should be done is to create cross-listed modules (e.g., Literature & Psychology, Narrative and Social Change), assess students via podcasts or issue briefs, and partner with guest speakers from related fields.

3. Narrow Representation of Texts

Multiple students noted that the literature taught is often limited to Western or classic texts, which feel distant from their lives. This can deter prospective students who seek representation, inclusivity, and cultural relevance. A narrow range of texts risks alienating students who seek cultural connection and inclusion, and may deter prospective students looking for broader representation.

One voice from the questionnaire says, *“Include more literature from different cultures and diverse voices... this would help students see themselves reflected in what they read.”* One possible action to take is to introduce a Contemporary Southeast Asian & Indonesian Literature course as a core requirement. Rotate global and marginalized voices in reading lists, and include multimodal texts (graphic novels, film, digital fiction).

4. Outdated Teaching Approaches

“It shouldn't be boring, it should be explorative... It depends on how teachers can approach students.” This one response suggests that lecture-heavy formats can limit engagement; tech-supported, student-centered methods signal that the program is adapting to the digital age. There is a strong desire for more interactive, project-based, and digital-friendly teaching methods, which would not only engage students more effectively but also signal to prospective students that the program is adaptive to the times. This is in accordance with Freire (1970), who says that there is a need for dialogical, participatory education to spark critical consciousness. The curriculum should adopt active-learning strategies—seminar discussions, collaborative projects, digital annotation forums, and social media-based literary challenges. Use platforms like Instagram for book reviews, TikTok for poetry challenges, and YouTube for debates.

By anchoring each challenge in clear student feedback and corresponding program actions, these implications demonstrate that declining enrollment is not a verdict on literature's value, but on its perceived relevance. Addressing career pathways, interdisciplinary connections, representation, and pedagogy can reframe literature as both intellectually enriching and professionally empowering.

Therefore, one question needs to be addressed: what should the study program do? Four key recommendations are:

1. **Rebrand Literature as Career-Relevant:** Clearly highlight how literary study builds 21st-century skills: communication, critical thinking, cultural literacy, and adaptability. Showcase alumni career paths and offer industry-linked electives like creative writing for digital media, translation for the global market, and narrative branding. Invest in recruitment through experience by using student testimonials from this study in brochures or short films and highlight how literature helped students grow emotionally, think critically, and express themselves better. Develop internships with publishing houses, media companies, NGOs, and cultural organizations. This is in line with David P. Owen Jr.'s (2020) argument that literature education must “engage students meaningfully in the present.”
2. **Diversify the Curriculum:** Integrate global and local voices, including contemporary Southeast Asian literature and popular culture texts. Include multimodal works (film,

- digital fiction, graphic novels) to increase engagement. David P. Owen Jr. (2020) argues that literature education must “engage students meaningfully in the present.”
3. **Innovate Teaching Methods:** Encourage collaborative projects, performances, podcasts, and creative writing alongside theory. Adopt tech-based tools like interactive platforms, AI-assisted reading tools, and online literary discussion forums. Leverage technology as a bridge, not a barrier. Naomi S. Baron (2015) states that students are not reading less -- but differently. Therefore, consider incorporating digital tools (e.g., annotation apps, podcasting assignments) and host literary content on social media—book reviews on Instagram, poetry challenges on TikTok, and live debates on YouTube.
 4. **Engage in Public Humanities:** Run literature-in-action programs such as community reading sessions, refugee literacy, and social issue-based performances. Increase social media presence to promote student activities, literature insights, and cultural events to the wider community. Host “Literature Day” workshops for high schoolers, showing the creative side of literary study—through performances, visual storytelling, and pop culture engagement.

The study shows that literature continues to offer profound personal and intellectual development for students—but these values must be translated into visible, relatable, and marketable benefits. By innovating pedagogy, broadening representation, and aligning literature with contemporary challenges and skills, the program can reignite interest among prospective students and reverse the enrollment decline. Literature doesn’t need to be defended—it needs to be reintroduced in ways that speak to the world today.

Considerations for Future Research Projects

Given the response rate and composition of the respondents, several potential weaknesses in the findings can be identified:

1. **Limited Representation of the Whole Population**
Out of 135 enrolled students, only 57 students (42.2%) responded. While this is a significant portion, it still leaves 57.8% of the student body unrepresented, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.
2. **Uneven Cohort Distribution**
The data is skewed toward newer students—notably, the 2024 cohort makes up 29.8% of all responses, while older cohorts (especially 2020 with only 1.8%) are

underrepresented. This may bias the findings toward the views of those who have had less exposure to the full curriculum and fewer literature classes.

3. Recency Bias

Because the majority of respondents are in lower semesters, their perceptions may reflect initial impressions rather than long-term experiences. As such, the survey may not capture the full transformation or development that literature education aims to instill by the end of the program.

4. Potential Nonresponse Bias

It's unclear why the remaining 78 students did not respond. Their views—especially if they include disinterested or disengaged students—might differ significantly, which could influence overall findings if captured.

5. Self-Selection Bias

Students who chose to respond to the questionnaire may be those who are more engaged, more opinionated, or more satisfied with the program. This could skew the data toward positive or reflective feedback, underrepresenting more neutral or negative experiences.

While the data collected offers valuable insights, any interpretation must take into account the limitations of response rate, cohort balance, and self-selection. Future studies should aim for broader participation, including incentives or class-based distribution, to ensure more balanced and representative results.

For future similar research projects aiming to evaluate student perceptions or experiences in the English Literature study program, the following suggestions are recommended:

- a. **Increase Participation Rate:** Distribute the questionnaire during class sessions or through course platforms (e.g., Google Classroom or LMS) with instructor endorsement. **Incentives:** Provide simple rewards (e.g., e-certificates, extra participation points) to encourage more students to respond.
- b. **Ensure Cohort Balance:** Actively track and manage the number of respondents from each cohort to avoid overrepresentation of early-semester students. Consider setting a target quota per year of admission (e.g., aim for 20–25% from each batch).
- c. **Combine Quantitative and Qualitative Methods:** Use a mixed-methods design: alongside multiple-choice or Likert scale questions, include open-ended reflective prompts or short interviews/focus group discussions for richer insights. This allows

the researcher to triangulate data and better capture students' depth of experience and interpretation.

- d. **Pilot the Instrument:** Before large distribution, pilot-test the questionnaire with 5–10 students to check for clarity, relevance, and bias in questions. Refine wording and structure based on feedback to improve reliability and validity.
- e. **Include Alumni Perspectives:** Future research can benefit from also involving recent alumni, as they offer retrospective insight into the long-term impact of studying literature, especially in professional or postgraduate contexts.
- f. **Address Nonresponse and Digital Access:** For students less active online, provide both digital and paper-based options. Follow up with students who haven't responded to understand barriers to participation and avoid nonresponse bias.
- g. **Thematic Focus:** Future projects might zoom in on specific elements (e.g., perceptions of literary theory, engagement with Indonesian vs. Western texts, impact of digital tools on reading habits). This allows deeper and more focused analysis, supporting curriculum improvement.
- h. **Collaboration with Lecturers:** Collaborate with literature lecturers to align research goals with classroom realities. This ensures the data collected is both contextual and actionable for curriculum development.

By following these suggestions, future research projects can be more inclusive, methodologically rigorous, and impactful in shaping how literature is taught and experienced in the digital age.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that the majority of students perceive literature as an impactful discipline that extends far beyond academic boundaries. A significant 78.1% of respondents believe that studying literature is still relevant today, with 74.6% stating that literature has helped them better understand themselves. More than 77% affirm that literature has changed the way they see the world, with students highlighting increased empathy, cultural awareness, and critical thinking as key outcomes.

The data also show that students do not view literature in isolation. Many emphasize its interdisciplinary relevance—especially with psychology, sociology, and digital media—suggesting that literature education should be more integrated and interactive. Students called for more relatable and diverse texts, alongside creative, technology-enhanced teaching approaches that bridge literary content with real-world issues.

These findings echo the arguments of theorists like Louise Rosenblatt (1978), who asserts that the reader's active engagement with a text is shaped by personal experience, and Martha C. Nussbaum (2010), who advocates for literature's role in cultivating democratic citizenship through imagination and empathy. Similarly, Terry Eagleton's (1996) perspective on literature as a cultural and ideological product aligns with students' growing interest in contextual and critical readings.

In conclusion, literature remains a vital field in shaping holistic learners. Its enduring relevance lies in its ability to deepen human understanding, build critical awareness, and connect individuals across time, culture, and experience. However, to maintain this relevance, literature education must adapt—embracing diversity, interactivity, and digital engagement—so it continues to inspire new generations of learners meaningfully and memorably.

Final words to remember by Pennington and Waxler (2017), “Reading is an act of resistance.” In the age of digital saturation and vocational pressure, studying literature becomes more necessary—not less. But it must be reframed, reconnected, and reanimated to align with the lives, values, and future visions of today's students. Literature is not outdated. The way we teach it might be.

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