

RESEARCH ARTICLE

College instructors' perspectives on the declining reading habits of students in Philippine literature classes

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ABSTRACT

The decline in students' reading engagement poses a significant challenge to literature instruction, particularly in Philippine Literature courses that aim to foster cultural awareness, empathy, and critical thinking. This qualitative study explored college instructors' perspectives on the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes. Sixteen instructors from public and private higher education institutions across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao participated in semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed three major factors contributing to students' disengagement: reliance on summarized content and digital shortcuts, diminished motivation and perceived relevance of literature, and the influence of digital distractions and cognitive fatigue. Instructors attributed these issues to both environmental and psychological factors, aligning with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal influence of personal beliefs, behavior, and environment. Despite these challenges, instructors demonstrated adaptive responses through contextualized teaching, integration of multimedia and creative outputs, and scaffolding techniques that make reading more accessible and meaningful. The study concludes that addressing the decline in

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 23 July 2025 | Accepted: 17 October 2025 | Available online: 29 October 2025

CITATION

Chavez JV, Samilo PJE, Cabiles NVA, et al. College instructors' perspectives on the declining reading habits of students in Philippine literature classes. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2025; 10(10): 3924 doi:10.59429/esp.v10i10.3924

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reading habits requires a systemic and multi-level approach that includes institutional support, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and renewed pedagogical innovation. By reimagining literature instruction as an interactive and reflective process, educators can revitalize students' engagement with Philippine literary texts and reaffirm the role of reading as a transformative cultural and intellectual practice.

Keywords: Reading habits, Philippine literature, college instructors, student engagement

1. Introduction

Reading remains one of the most powerful tools in developing students' critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural understanding—particularly in the study of literature. In the Philippine higher education curriculum, Philippine Literature is a general education requirement offered across all disciplines, including professional and technical programs. This means that even students outside the humanities are required to take at least one literature course, positioning literature instruction as a vital venue for cultivating not only literacy but also civic and cultural awareness. Philippine Literature courses are therefore instrumental not only in promoting national identity but also in cultivating empathy, reflection, and appreciation of local narratives. However, recent observations from college instructors in higher education point to an alarming decline in students' interest in and engagement with literary texts. These concerns are supported by research indicating that Filipino college students exhibit poor reading habits, limited comprehension, and low motivation to engage with academic texts ^[1]. This decline in reading engagement threatens the quality of literature instruction and may hinder the ability of students to connect meaningfully with the themes, language, and relevance of Philippine literary works.

Numerous studies have identified factors contributing to underdeveloped reading habits among students entering college. Ahmad, Tariq, Iqbal, and Sial ^[2] conducted a quantitative survey involving parents of middle school students in Lahore, Pakistan, revealing that excessive screen time, lack of school libraries, and limited parental interest hinder the development of reading habits. Similarly, Morni and Sahari ^[3] found that a positive home reading environment significantly influences students' reading attitudes, with access to reading materials and parental support playing crucial roles. Additionally, Chavez, J. V., Adalia, H. G., & Alberto, J. P. ^[4] emphasized the significant role of parental support and engagement in fostering children's reading habits, noting that parental motivation and provision of learning materials are crucial factors in children's language learning and literacy development. Furthermore, Butt, Marwat, and Gul ^[5] investigated reading habits among Pakistani university students, highlighting a predominant focus on academic texts and a lack of engagement with non-academic reading, which can impede the development of comprehensive reading skills. Similarly, Liswaniso and Mubanga ^[6] found that university students, particularly in teacher training programs, often read only for academic purposes, a result of poor reading habits formed earlier in their educational journey. These studies underscore the importance of addressing environmental and familial factors to cultivate robust reading habits among students. In addition, students now encounter reading through new technological platforms, often gravitating toward bite-sized, visual, and interactive content rather than long-form literary texts ^[7]. This shift from traditional to digital reading practices has not necessarily translated into deeper engagement or improved comprehension. In fact, several scholars argue that digital distraction contributes to declining attention spans and superficial reading behavior, especially among college students ^[8-9].

Although efforts to improve reading habits—such as visual aids, gamified strategies, cooperative learning, and even the use of social reading platforms like Wattpad—have been piloted with some success in secondary education, most of the literature focuses on the learners' side of the reading experience ^[10-11]. Studies on the perspectives of instructors, particularly those who teach Philippine Literature in higher

education institutions, remain scarce. Their firsthand experiences, insights, and interventions are largely undocumented, leaving a critical gap in the current body of research.

Anchored in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and informed by Freire's (1983) and Candido's (1995) views of reading as a social and ethical act, this qualitative study seeks to address that gap by exploring the perspectives of college instructors on the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes. Specifically, it aims (1) to examine their insights on the underlying factors that contribute to students' disengagement with reading literary texts and (2) to investigate how they respond to this issue through instructional strategies, classroom practices, and curriculum adjustments. The study hopes to uncover grounded, practice-based knowledge that may inform future pedagogical and policy decisions aimed at reviving literary engagement among college learners. It also intends to contribute to the growing conversation on how Philippine Literature can remain relevant and transformative amid changing educational landscapes and reading cultures.

2. Literature

Reading as an academic and cultural activity may take several forms—academic reading (focused on comprehension of informational or scholarly texts), general reading (related to leisure or personal interests), and literary reading (centered on interpretive and aesthetic engagement with creative works). Since this study focuses on Philippine Literature classes, it primarily concerns literary reading, where comprehension, imagination, and cultural connection intersect. This distinction clarifies that while the decline in reading habits has been studied broadly, the present study situates the discussion within the literary domain of higher education.

The decline in reading habits among college students has become a significant global concern, with the Philippines being no exception. Cadiz-Gabejan and Quirino ^[1] have highlighted how Filipino students increasingly exhibit poor reading habits, low comprehension, and weak motivation to engage with academic texts. The situation has been further aggravated by excessive social media use, which detracts from time that could otherwise be spent on purposeful reading. Gagalang ^[12] supported this claim, concluding that Filipino learners' reading competence is being compromised by their preference for browsing social media platforms, leading to a reduction in meaningful reading experiences.

From an international perspective, Subaveerapandiyan and Sinha ^[13] examined reading habits in India and found that despite students' technological proficiency, they still preferred reading printed books over digital texts. This suggests a disconnect between digital skills and effective reading behavior. This result parallels findings in the Philippine setting, where students often engage with digital platforms but not necessarily in ways that foster deeper reading comprehension or sustained literary engagement.

2.1. The impact of technology on reading behavior

As digital technologies continue to reshape educational landscapes, scholars have examined the dual nature of their impact on reading habits. Manuel ^[14] investigated students at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College and found that although students had access to technological resources and used them for reading purposes, their actual reading habits remained only moderate. Importantly, his study revealed a significant relationship between reading habits and academic performance, underscoring the need for purposeful pedagogical strategies alongside access to digital tools.

This idea is echoed by Pérez-Juárez et al. ^[15], who argued that digital distractions, including constant notifications and platform-switching, significantly undermine students' ability to concentrate and retain

information while reading. Therefore, while technology may make reading materials more accessible, it also introduces barriers that need to be managed effectively in instructional settings.

Social media and digital platforms play a paradoxical role in students' reading habits. Gagalang [12] pointed out that these platforms offer diverse reading materials and foster informal literacy; however, they also function as distractions that limit students' ability to engage with more challenging academic texts. Similarly, Ermita et al. [16], in their systematic review, concluded that excessive social media use had a negative correlation with reading comprehension among Filipino learners, with an average effect size of approximately -0.4. They emphasized the importance of integrating digital literacy education to mitigate these effects and promote more focused reading behavior.

2.2. Instructors' perspectives and pedagogical responses

Despite the abundance of studies on student reading behaviors, fewer studies directly examine instructors' perspectives—particularly in the context of Philippine Literature classes. However, indirect insights can be drawn from research like that of Sagabala et al. [17], which focused on English major students' behaviors related to social media distractions. The study implied that instructors often struggle to maintain student focus and foster consistent reading engagement amidst growing technological interferences.

This lack of focused research on instructors in the Philippine setting reveals a gap that demands attention. Understanding educators' views and teaching strategies could provide actionable insights into how reading engagement in literature courses can be improved.

Talenta and Himawati [18] explored how literature instructors respond to declining reading engagement. Their findings showed that teachers who applied adaptive strategies—such as using literature circles and encouraging peer discussion—saw increased student participation and engagement. Vernon-Feagans et al. [19] also emphasized the importance of targeted interventions, noting that teacher responsiveness and flexibility were crucial in addressing students' reading challenges. Additionally, Tomas, Villaros, and Galman [20] highlight issues such as lack of mastery in reading elements and absence of a reading culture, providing insights for instructors to develop targeted interventions to improve reading habits.

Concepcion-Rubas [21] and Encio [22] highlighted the impact of student preferences and attitudes on reading engagement. Their studies indicated that aligning reading materials with student interests and promoting positive reading attitudes significantly contributed to improved comprehension and motivation. Moreover, Sahib [23] investigates the reading habits and attitudes of pre-service English teachers in Western Mindanao State University. It finds that although students engage in reading, their attitudes vary, with some expressing anxiety and difficulty, suggesting areas where instructors can intervene to foster a more positive reading culture. Also, Reoperez [24], examined the factors influencing reading motivation among Filipino college students, highlighting that psychological satisfaction, social values, and multimodal learning experiences are significant drivers of motivation. It also emphasizes the challenges instructors face in engaging students with academic reading materials.

Finally, Sanchez, Taboada, and Derasin [25] investigated reading comprehension among Grade 7 students in a post-pandemic, face-to-face setting. Teachers reported persistent issues with reading fluency and inferential comprehension, attributing these to limited exposure to sustained reading during remote learning. Their findings suggest that recovery from pandemic-related learning disruptions will require focused remediation in literature and reading programs.

2.3. Academic performance and reading engagement

Studies continue to affirm the strong link between consistent reading habits and academic performance. Flavier ^[26] found that undergraduate students in Human Ecology programs who maintained regular reading schedules tended to perform better academically. Similar conclusions were drawn by Pagente et al. ^[27], who observed that consistent engagement in reading activities significantly influenced students' educational outcomes. These findings support Manuel's ^[14] assertion that access to reading technology must be paired with intentional reading strategies to be effective.

Manandhar et al. ^[28] extended these findings in an international context. Their study in Nepal showed a statistically significant correlation between frequent reading and higher GPA scores, suggesting that reading habits are a universal predictor of academic success.

2.4. Environmental and societal influences

The physical and social environment also plays a crucial role in shaping reading behaviors. Mahendra, Suprpto, and Apriza ^[29] emphasized that access to library resources significantly affects students' inclination to read. Inadequate facilities, according to the study, lead to diminished reading frequency. This is echoed by Quintano et al. ^[30], who found that a conducive reading environment was critical in encouraging consistent reading behavior.

Efforts to promote reading at the community level, such as the "library home" initiative discussed by Guanlao ^[31], demonstrate how access and social motivation can be leveraged to sustain reading culture. De Vera ^[32], in a national survey, reported a steady decline in Filipino readership, underscoring a societal challenge that extends beyond the academic realm.

In addition to these environmental and social perspectives, Freire (1983) in *The Importance of the Act of Reading* argues that reading is not a neutral act but a means of understanding and transforming one's world. Similarly, Candido (1995), in *The Right to Literature*, asserts that access to literature is a fundamental human right that enables personal and collective emancipation. These frameworks emphasize reading not only as a cognitive process but also as a moral and civic act—an understanding highly relevant to Philippine Literature education.

Bandura's ^[33] Social Cognitive Theory offers a valuable lens through which to understand students' declining reading habits and the instructional responses of college instructors. The theory emphasizes the dynamic interaction between behavior, personal factors, and the learning environment—a concept known as reciprocal determinism. In the context of Philippine Literature classes, students' disengagement from reading can be influenced by low self-efficacy, lack of motivation, and limited exposure to effective reading models. Conversely, instructors who model active reading, create supportive environments, and apply reinforcement strategies may positively shape students' attitudes and behaviors toward reading. When considered together, the perspectives of Bandura, Freire, and Candido illuminate both the cognitive and ethical dimensions of reading engagement—framing it as a personal, social, and transformative process.

The collected studies reveal a multifaceted issue involving technological access, personal motivation, environmental factors, and pedagogical approaches. While numerous studies document student perspectives, there remains a substantial gap in literature concerning how college instructors perceive and address declining reading habits, particularly in Philippine Literature classes. This study aims to address this gap by examining instructors' experiences, insights, and strategies in encouraging reading engagement among college students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which was appropriate for investigating the personal insights and teaching experiences of college instructors in higher education institutions regarding the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to capture rich, detailed narratives that could not be quantified but were essential to understanding the phenomenon from the perspectives of those directly involved [34].

Given the aim to explore and interpret meanings behind behaviors and instructional responses, the study aligned with the principles of interpretivism, which values subjective experiences and context-specific knowledge [35]. The focus was not on measuring the frequency or extent of reading decline, but rather on understanding why instructors believed this decline was happening and how they were responding to it in their teaching practices.

Moreover, the design followed a phenomenological orientation, allowing the study to delve into the lived experiences of instructors. This was crucial in capturing their first-hand accounts and reflective interpretations of classroom realities, challenges, and pedagogical decisions. Moustakas [36] emphasized that phenomenology is particularly useful when the goal is to explore how individuals experience a particular phenomenon—such as student disengagement with reading—and how they make sense of it.

This qualitative framework provided the flexibility necessary to examine both individual and shared meanings among instructors. It also offered opportunities for reflexivity, as the researcher continuously reflected on her role in interpreting participants' narratives, thereby ensuring transparency throughout the research process.

Overall, the qualitative research design served as a flexible and suitable framework for generating insights that could inform future instructional practices and policy decisions related to literature teaching in higher education.

3.2. Population and sampling

The participants of this study were college instructors who teach Philippine Literature as part of the general education curriculum in higher education institutions. A total of 16 instructors were selected to participate in the study. These participants were chosen using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to ensure that those selected possess specific knowledge or experience related to the research topic [37].

The selection of participants was guided by the following inclusion criteria (see table 1): (1) must be a current college instructor in a Philippine university or college. (2) must have at least four years of teaching experience in Philippine Literature courses. (3) must have observed changes in students' reading behaviors or attitudes during their teaching. (4) must be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview and provide reflective responses.

The purposive approach allowed the researcher to ensure that participants were not only qualified but also positioned to provide meaningful insights into the research problem. The goal was not to generalize findings to a larger population, but rather to obtain rich, context-specific data from individuals who had direct encounters with student disengagement in reading.

Participants came from a mix of public and private institutions and represented diverse academic backgrounds in literature, education, and the humanities. This variety helped broaden the understanding of the phenomenon across different institutional and pedagogical contexts.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Category	Details
Total number of participants	16 college instructors
Gender	Male – 8 Female – 8
Years of teaching experience	4-5 years - 9 6-8 years - 7
Type of institution	Public – 9 Private – 7
Geographical distribution	Luzon – 6 Visayas – 5 Mindanao – 5
Academic fields represented	Literature – 7 Education – 5 Humanities – 4

3.3. Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. The guide consisted of a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth insights into the participants’ experiences, observations, and perspectives regarding the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes. Semi-structured interviews are widely recognized in qualitative research for their flexibility and ability to generate rich, contextually grounded data ^[38].

The interview guide was structured around the study’s two main objectives: (1) to explore instructors’ insights on the factors contributing to the decline in reading habits, and (2) to examine how they addressed and responded to students’ disengagement with assigned literary texts. The questions were carefully framed to encourage reflective and descriptive responses while allowing flexibility for follow-up probes based on the participants’ answers—an approach aligned with Patton’s ^[39] recommendation to allow interviewees to construct meaning in their own terms.

Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent expert validation by three professionals in the field of literature and education. They reviewed the questions for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Based on their feedback, minor revisions were made to enhance the wording and logical flow of the questions.

A pilot interview was also conducted with one instructor (not included in the final sample) to assess the functionality and clarity of the interview guide. This pilot helped refine the phrasing of certain questions and confirmed that the instrument could effectively generate rich, meaningful data.

The use of this instrument enabled the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while remaining open to unique insights and unexpected themes that emerged during the discussions.

The **Table 2** below presents the instrument of this inquiry:

Table 2. Instrument of the study.

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants
To explore college instructors' insights on the factors contributing to the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What noticeable changes have you observed in your students' reading habits over the years? 2. What do you believe are the main reasons why students are less engaged in reading Philippine literary texts? 3. How do students typically respond when assigned lengthy or complex readings? 	College Instructors Teaching Literature among College Students
To examine how instructors respond to and address students' disengagement with reading assigned literary texts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What strategies or approaches have you used to encourage students to read and engage with the material? 2. What support or changes do you believe are needed—within or beyond the classroom—to improve students' reading habits? 	

3.4. Data gathering procedure

The data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews with sixteen (16) college instructors who had experience teaching Philippine Literature. Before the formal data collection, the researcher sought approval from the academic institution's ethics committee. Once clearance was granted, the researcher began recruiting participants who met the inclusion criteria through email invitations and professional networks.

After confirming participation, each instructor was provided with an informed consent form, which explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Upon signing the consent form, interview schedules were arranged based on the participants' availability.

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through online platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet, depending on the preference and location of the participants. Each session lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The use of a semi-structured interview guide allowed for consistency in the key questions asked, while also giving participants the freedom to elaborate on their responses.

All interviews were conducted in English or Filipino, based on the comfort of the participant. With permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of data collection. The researcher also took brief field notes during the sessions to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations.

After each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then reviewed and coded for accuracy and completeness. Participants were also given the opportunity to review their transcripts to validate the content and ensure that their views were accurately captured—an approach aligned with member-checking for enhancing credibility in qualitative research ^[40].

3.5. Data analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis allowed the researchers to systematically explore the instructors' perspectives, extract recurring insights, and interpret the underlying meanings related to students' declining reading habits in Philippine Literature classes. Following Braun and Clarke's ^[41] six-phase approach, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data, generated initial codes, searched for and reviewed themes, defined and named themes, and finally produced a coherent narrative that captured the essence of participants' experiences. This method was selected for its flexibility and its ability to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings across participants' accounts.

The analysis was done manually to maintain close interaction with the data, allowing for a deeper understanding of emerging themes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly read to ensure immersion in the data. Initial codes were developed inductively and grouped based on recurring patterns such as instructional adjustments, perceived causes of reading disengagement, and suggested interventions. To ensure rigor, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to validate their responses and interpretations. Peer debriefing was also employed to reduce researcher bias and strengthen the reliability of the themes. Data saturation was achieved by the fourteenth interview, as no new themes emerged in the final two sessions. In accordance with Lincoln and Guba's ^[42] criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research, the study observed credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability through careful documentation of procedures and consistent application of analytical strategies.

3.6. Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for persons throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, the researcher sought and obtained approval from the university's Institutional Research Ethics Committee.

Each participant received an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, the voluntary basis of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect participant identity, and all identifiable information such as institutional names was removed from transcripts.

All data—including audio recordings, transcripts, and notes—were stored securely in a password-protected digital folder accessible only to the researcher. Participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and were encouraged to speak freely. The researcher maintained a neutral stance and observed beneficence by ensuring that the research contributed meaningfully to the understanding of literature instruction without causing harm or discomfort.

3.7. Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights into college instructors' perspectives, it is not without limitations. First, the sample size of sixteen instructors, though appropriate for qualitative inquiry, limits the generalizability of findings to the broader population of Philippine literature educators. Second, the study relied on self-reported data through interviews, which may be influenced by recall bias or social desirability.

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore college instructors' insights on the factors contributing to the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes.

Question No. 1. What noticeable changes have you observed in your students' reading habits over the years?

1.1 Shift Toward Skimming and Reliance on Summarized Content

10 out of 16 college instructors observed a shift in how students engage with literary texts. This trend, while understandable in a fast-paced digital culture, diminishes students' capacity for close reading and reflective interpretation. Instructors lamented that while summaries convey basic plot points, they miss nuances such as tone, symbolism, and cultural meaning—key to literary appreciation.

“In the past, students would arrive in class with dog-eared photocopies... Now, I rarely see them bring anything. Instead, they open their phones and say, ‘Sir, I watched this video about the story last night.’”

A 3 instructors also observed that some students, despite these shortcuts, remained deeply engaged—reading full texts out of genuine curiosity or passion for literature. These “good readers,” though fewer, served as models within the class

1.2 Declining Motivation and Perceived Relevance of Literature

11 instructors noted that students often perceive literature as irrelevant to their career paths, particularly in non-humanities programs. The utilitarian academic mindset frames reading as peripheral, leading to minimal emotional or intellectual engagement. Instructors observed that bridging this gap requires situating texts within students’ lived experiences, reaffirming literature as a mirror of societal realities rather than a static academic relic.

“There’s a gap between the students and the texts. Many of them don’t speak Filipino fluently anymore, so they struggle with stories in the vernacular.”

“They treat literature like it’s an optional subject, not a mirror of society. And it’s hard to reframe that when even some academic structures deprioritize reading.”

1.3 Increased Digital Distractions and Multitasking During Reading

8 identified digital distractions as a major factor. Students multitask between reading and browsing social media, leading to fragmented comprehension. They acknowledged that this is less a sign of laziness than a reflection of how digital immersion has rewired attention spans. Interestingly, some students’ openness about not reading—admitting it casually—was seen by instructors as a new cultural norm. This candor, though concerning, also reflects a shift in social desirability norms where honesty replaces pretense, offering educators a clearer picture of actual habits

“One student was honest with me and said, ‘Sir, I tried reading but I kept checking my phone. I reread the same paragraph four times and still didn’t understand it.’”

“I had a class where we read a short play aloud. I noticed that while others were reading, some students were on their phones, half-listening.”

Question No. 2. What do you believe are the main reasons why students are less engaged in reading Philippine literary texts?

2.1 Lack of Cultural and Personal Relevance

12 out of 16 instructors cited that students often find Philippine literary texts difficult to relate to due to generational, linguistic, or cultural distance. Outdated Filipino, regional dialects, or historical contexts alienate readers whose experiences are rooted in modern digital culture.

“Even stories about family or love don’t land the same way anymore because the delivery feels outdated to them. They often ask me if there are ‘updated’ versions.”

“There’s beauty in our literature, but many of my students don’t see it... They often ask me if there are ‘updated’ versions.”

2.2 Dominance of Digital and Short-form Media Consumption

10 out of 16 instructors highlighted how students’ constant exposure to short-form digital content has reshaped their reading preferences and attention spans. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube

Shorts, and AI-assisted summaries have conditioned students to consume stories in bite-sized, entertaining chunks.

Several instructors emphasized that students are not resistant to reading because of laziness but because of a changing cognitive environment. Reading literary texts now feels “slow,” “inconvenient,” or “exhausting” for students who are used to receiving information through hyper-stimulating, fast-scrolling interfaces. This shift has led to a visible decline in patience, attention span, and the willingness to engage deeply with long-form texts.

"During a recent class, a student raised her hand and said, ‘Sir, I’m really sorry, but I couldn’t finish the chapter. It’s too slow for me.’”

"I remember a student telling me, ‘Sir, I can’t even finish a 10-page story without getting distracted. I just keep thinking about my notifications on Instagram.’”

2.3 *Reading as an Academic Obligation Task*

9 Nine instructors said students read only for compliance—driven by quizzes and grades rather than curiosity or pleasure. This transactional attitude reduces reading to an act of academic survival.

"One student told me, ‘Ma’am, we read because there’s a quiz—not because we want to.’”

“If I assign a reading without attaching points to it, only a handful of students actually do it. They treat reading the same way they treat any other deadline-driven task. Even when the stories are beautiful and rich in meaning, they don’t get the chance to feel them deeply.”

Question No. 3. How do students typically respond when assigned lengthy or complex readings?

3.1 *Avoidance and Dependence on Summarized or Secondary Sources*

11 instructors observed avoidance behaviors when texts were long or linguistically difficult. Students resorted to summaries or AI tools to save time, producing shallow interpretations. However, instructors acknowledged that this reliance also reveals students’ coping mechanisms in an overstimulated environment. Rather than dismissing it outright, some saw it as an opportunity to teach critical evaluation of sources and promote self-regulated strategies.

“I’ve noticed a pattern where students, when faced with a difficult text, will immediately search for a summary online or use AI tools to break it down for them.”

“It’s become so common for students to search for AI-generated explanations rather than read the book themselves.”

3.2 *Expressed Overwhelm and Cognitive Fatigue*

Ten instructors described students’ feelings of exhaustion when faced with dense, archaic texts. This highlights not only cognitive overload but also a lack of reading scaffolds. Instructors emphasized the need for gradual exposure and guided reading strategies to build stamina and confidence.

“It’s clear that the sheer effort of reading long, difficult texts wear them out. One student even joked, ‘I’m already exhausted just from reading the first few sentences.’”

“I had a student who said, ‘Ma’am, I feel tired just looking at the page.’ It’s not even the content itself, but the sheer length and the formal, classical Filipino language that makes them feel exhausted before they even begin.”

3.3 *Selective Reading and Skimming Techniques*

9 instructors noted that some students manage difficulty by skimming or selectively reading key parts. While this may yield partial understanding, instructors noted that it also shows adaptive effort—a pragmatic survival skill in demanding academic environments. Balancing efficiency with depth becomes essential, and recognizing this behavior as transitional rather than purely negative allows educators to build from students' existing strategies toward deeper engagement.

"I've noticed a lot of students skimming the text, especially when it's long. They'll focus on the dialogue or jump to the last few pages to see how the story ends."

"It's interesting because, in a way, selective reading shows their attempt to cope with difficult texts. One student said, 'I just can't handle the whole thing, so I go for the parts I think are important.'"

Research Objectives 2. To examine how instructors respond to and address students' disengagement with reading assigned literary texts.

Question No. 1. What strategies or approaches have you used to encourage students to read and engage with the material?

1.1 *Contextualizing Texts through Relatable Discussions and Personal Connections*

13 out of 16 instructors emphasized the importance of bridging the gap between Philippine literary texts and students' lived experiences. By initiating pre-reading discussions that link themes to contemporary issues—such as social inequality, toxic relationships, mental health, and family dynamics—they contextualize readings in ways that resonate with students' present realities.

Instructors also used reflective activities such as journaling and storytelling to encourage students to see themselves in the narratives. These practices shift reading from a passive academic requirement to an active, personal exploration of identity and culture.

"When we read *Noli Me Tangere*, I tie it to modern issues like social inequality and corruption. One student said, 'It feels like Rizal was writing about what's happening now.' That connection makes them engage on a deeper level."

1.2 *Integrating Multimedia, Modern Platforms, and Creative Output*

11 instructors described using multimedia and creative formats—such as short films, digital storytelling, podcasts, dramatic readings, or even memes—to make reading more engaging. This integration allows students with different learning styles to process literature visually and experientially, bridging traditional text-based analysis with contemporary expression.

"Last semester, I asked students to create a short film based on *Dekada '70*. Those who struggled with the written text came alive in the creative process. They understood the story's emotion and depth through visual storytelling."

1.3 *Scaffolding the Reading Process through Guided Support and Flexibility*

9 Instructors shared that they scaffolded reading tasks to reduce cognitive barriers and make complex texts approachable. This included breaking long works into shorter segments, providing vocabulary glossaries, reading aloud in class, or offering bilingual options (English and Filipino) to ease comprehension anxiety.

“In Banaag at Sikat, I divide chapters into weekly goals and provide vocabulary lists. Students feel more confident and engage more when tasks are broken down.”

Question No. 2. What support or changes do you believe are needed—within or beyond the classroom—to improve students’ reading habits?

2.1 Institutional Support and Investment in Reading Resources

12 instructors stressed the need for institutional action to promote reading culture—modernizing libraries, providing digital access, and integrating literature into extracurricular programs. They argued that schools must do more than assign readings; they must build ecosystems where reading is visible, celebrated, and resourced.

“If the institution really wants to foster a culture of reading, it needs to modernize the library and offer digital access to relevant, appealing texts.”

2.2 Cross-disciplinary and Home-Based Reinforcement of Reading Culture

10 instructors argued that reading should be a school-wide and family-supported effort. They proposed that reading be integrated across disciplines—science, social studies, and mathematics—and reinforced at home. Instructors also emphasized the role of families, noting that students exposed to reading at home tend to develop intrinsic motivation.

“Promoting reading shouldn’t just be a task for the literature department. Every subject should encourage reading so students see it as an everyday skill.”

2.3 Redesigning Instructional Approaches

7 instructors suggested that the grading and evaluation systems surrounding reading must evolve. They advocated for creative assessments—personal reflections, performances, and multimedia outputs—rather than purely factual quizzes or written tests. Instructors found that by giving students autonomy to interpret and express, reading became a form of personal empowerment rather than academic stress.

“When reading is tied only to quizzes and tests, students disengage. But when they express their understanding through poems or films, they feel ownership of the text.”

“I stopped using quizzes as a measure of how much students ‘understand’ a text. Instead, I allow them to choose their mode of reflection—whether it’s writing a poem, creating a short film, or presenting a podcast.”

5. Discussion

Research Objectives 1. To explore college instructors’ insights on the factors contributing to the declining reading habits of students in Philippine Literature classes.

The findings of this study illuminate a critical shift in students’ engagement with Philippine literary texts, corroborating national and international literature that signals a global concern regarding declining reading habits among college learners ^[1]. This study not only affirms the persistence of the problem but also deepens the understanding of its pedagogical and cultural roots through the voices of college instructors. A significant pattern that emerged is the increasing reliance on summarized content and skimming techniques. While digital resources have made content more accessible, they have also enabled a culture of academic shortcuts that diminish the critical depth of engagement with literature. These observations echo Pérez-Juárez et al. ^[15], who underscored that although technology improves access, it simultaneously reduces

students' capacity for sustained attention and reflective engagement—two qualities essential in appreciating the richness of literary works.

Such superficial reading behaviors signal what Freire described as the “banking model” of learning—where students passively receive information rather than critically co-construct meaning. This undermines the transformative potential of literary education, which depends on symbolic interpretation, emotional resonance, and dialogic reflection. The instructors' testimonies that students now prioritize videos or AI-generated summaries over full readings highlight the growing tension between convenience and cognitive investment. As Manuel ^[14] also pointed out, technological tools must be paired with pedagogical strategies that promote critical and reflective reading behaviors. In the current context, however, reading has increasingly become an act of information retrieval rather than an immersive intellectual experience.

A second theme that emerged was the declining motivation and perceived relevance of literature, with 11 instructors observing how students often view Philippine literature as peripheral, particularly in non-humanities courses. This finding aligns with those of Concepcion-Rubas ^[21], who emphasized the role of students' attitudes and interests in shaping engagement with reading materials. Instructors in this study reflected that students—shaped by a highly career-oriented and utilitarian educational mindset—often question the relevance of literary texts, especially those set in historical, linguistic, or cultural contexts distant from their lived experiences. This attitude underscores the need for culturally responsive pedagogy, which allows students to see Philippine literature as reflective of current realities and identities rather than as obsolete relics. As Vernon-Feagans et al. ^[19] emphasized, literature instruction must evolve to meet learners' contemporary contexts without losing its cultural integrity.

Instructors further reported that students often experience linguistic and cultural alienation when faced with classical or archaic Filipino texts. This affirms Gagalang's ^[12] conclusion that reading competence is shaped not only by interest but by accessibility. Language becomes both a cognitive and emotional barrier when learners cannot decode or relate to the text. Consequently, motivation declines, and literature risks being viewed as an academic burden rather than a site for reflection and empathy.

The third theme, increased digital distraction and multitasking, was supported by eight instructors who expressed concern over fragmented reading behaviors caused by mobile phones and social media. Their observations closely mirror the conclusions of Ermita et al. ^[16], who found that excessive social media use negatively correlates with reading comprehension, focus, and retention. Even students with strong intentions to read find themselves competing with the constant stimuli of the digital environment. This finding parallels Subaveerapandiyana and Sinha ^[13], who noted that technological fluency does not automatically equate to literary competence.

While it may be tempting to attribute students' disengagement solely to personal disinterest, the data reveal a more complex interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors—a dynamic that Bandura's ^[33] Social Cognitive Theory explains through reciprocal determinism. Students' behaviors (e.g., skimming), beliefs (e.g., irrelevance of texts), and environments (e.g., digital distractions) mutually reinforce one another. In this light, instructors become key mediators capable of altering the cycle through modeling, scaffolding, and environmental structuring. Without these interventions and institutional reinforcement, disengagement risks becoming normalized behavior.

Interestingly, the findings also suggest that students' disengagement stems not purely from unwillingness but from cognitive overload and reading fatigue. When faced with dense, historically contextualized works, students express anxiety or exhaustion. This resonates with Talenta and Himawati ^[18], who observed that scaffolding and differentiated engagement—through creative or multimodal tasks—can

help sustain motivation. Hence, the tendency to rely on summaries or AI tools can be interpreted not only as avoidance but as a coping mechanism in the absence of gradual reading skill development.

Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that the decline in reading habits among college students is deeply rooted in broader technological, cultural, and institutional contexts. These include the dominance of short-form media, reduced reading endurance, lack of culturally responsive teaching, and institutional neglect of reading culture. As Flavier ^[26] and Pagente et al. ^[27] emphasize, poor reading habits impact not only literary appreciation but also overall academic performance, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

Research Objectives 2. To examine how instructors respond to and address students' disengagement with reading assigned literary texts.

The results reveal that college instructors are far from passive observers—they actively respond with creativity, empathy, and adaptability. One of the strongest themes was contextualization of texts through relevant discourse, where instructors connected classic Filipino works to current issues such as toxic relationships, family dynamics, and social inequality. This approach, supported by Concepcion-Rubas ^[21], demonstrates that motivation increases when literature is perceived as socially and personally meaningful. Freire's dialogical framework further illuminates this: when teachers position literature as a conversation with the present, students reclaim it as part of their lived reality.

Another major theme was the integration of multimedia tools and creative outputs. Many instructors used short films, memes, podcasts, and digital storytelling to reimagine how students encounter texts. This adaptation reflects Vernon-Feagans et al. ^[19], who emphasize the necessity of aligning pedagogy with learners' media habits. In light of Pérez-Juárez et al. ^[15], the key insight here is that technology is not inherently detrimental—it becomes transformative when guided by intentional pedagogy. When students reframe *Dekada '70* or *Banaag at Sikat* through digital art or performance, they enact active reconstruction of meaning rather than passive consumption.

Scaffolding emerged as another central practice. Instructors segmented readings, simplified vocabulary, and provided translation options—methods that foster both cognitive accessibility and emotional safety. These findings echo Sanchez, Taboada, and Derasin ^[25], who reported lingering comprehension gaps post-pandemic and advocated for gradual literacy recovery. Such scaffolding reflects Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, emphasizing guided participation that supports students' emerging competence.

Systemically, instructors pointed to institutional barriers that weaken reading culture. Outdated materials, limited access to diverse texts, and minimal investment in libraries or digital platforms were identified as deterrents to engagement. This aligns with Mahendra, Suprpto, and Apriza ^[29] and Quintano et al. ^[30], who found that physical and social reading environments strongly influence frequency and motivation. Instructors also echoed Guanlao ^[31] and De Vera ^[32], advocating for community-based reading initiatives and national campaigns that treat reading as a shared cultural responsibility. This perspective resonates with Candido's assertion that literature is a human right—a vital means of belonging and ethical development.

Cross-disciplinary and home-based reinforcement also emerged as vital. Reading cannot thrive in isolation within the literature classroom. As Bandura's model suggests, the interplay between school, home, and media environments forms the ecology of literacy. Instructors noted that students from reading-supportive households showed stronger intrinsic motivation—a finding consistent with Sanchez et al. ^[25] and Sagabala et al. ^[17]. This highlights the need for teacher-parent collaborations, reading workshops, and school-wide policies that normalize reading as a collective value.

Finally, instructors advocated for a re-envisioning of assessment and pedagogy. Traditional grading methods (quizzes, summaries) often reinforce performance anxiety and discourage curiosity. Instead, creative assessments—performances, reflective essays, digital projects—allow students to claim ownership of their interpretations. This mirrors Talenta and Himawati ^[18] and Manuel ^[14], who found that student-centered, flexible teaching enhances engagement and academic performance. Such practices humanize reading, transforming it from compliance into participation and self-expression.

In sum, the findings reaffirm that the decline in students' reading habits is not a symptom of disinterest alone but of systemic misalignment between pedagogy, technology, and culture. Philippine college instructors, through contextualization, multimodal strategies, and empathetic scaffolding, are already crafting a counter-narrative—one that keeps literature alive as a mirror of self, society, and nation. With sustained institutional commitment, interdisciplinary collaboration, and critical pedagogy, there remains strong potential to reignite meaningful engagement with Philippine literature.

6. Conclusion

This study underscores the complex nature of the declining reading habits among college students in Philippine literature classes. The findings reveal that this phenomenon is not merely a matter of individual disinterest but is deeply embedded within broader technological, cultural, and institutional transformations. Students' increasing reliance on summaries, AI-generated content, and short-form media indicates a shift toward efficiency-driven reading behaviors that undermine sustained engagement and critical reflection. Such patterns illustrate the reciprocal relationship between environmental stimuli, learner attitudes, and behavior as posited by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory.

Despite these challenges, the study demonstrates that college instructors remain active agents of pedagogical innovation. Through contextualization, creative integration of multimedia, and empathetic scaffolding, they attempt to bridge the cultural and cognitive gaps that separate students from Philippine literary texts. These efforts align with Freire's conception of education as a dialogic and liberating process, where learners are guided to read the word and the world simultaneously. Similarly, the instructors' emphasis on relevance and personal reflection affirms Candido's argument that literature is a moral and social necessity—an essential medium for cultivating empathy, cultural consciousness, and ethical imagination.

The findings further emphasize that revitalizing students' reading habits requires systemic and collaborative intervention. Institutional investments in updated, accessible, and culturally resonant reading materials, alongside cross-disciplinary reinforcement of reading practices, are indispensable. Moreover, partnerships among schools, families, and communities can strengthen the culture of reading beyond formal instruction.

In sum, the decline in reading engagement among Filipino college students reflects the evolving dynamics of digital culture and academic priorities. Yet, the resilience and adaptability of instructors offer a path forward. Through sustained pedagogical innovation and institutional support, Philippine literature instruction can continue to nurture critical, reflective, and socially aware readers—ensuring that the study of literature remains integral to the formation of informed, imaginative, and ethically grounded citizens. Future research is encouraged to expand this line of inquiry by examining reader formation at earlier stages of schooling, particularly in primary and secondary education, to better understand how foundational reading experiences influence college students' engagement with Philippine literature.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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