

Digital Literature Engagement and Critical Reading Practices in Filipino Language Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between digital literature engagement and critical reading practices among learners in Filipino language classrooms. Using a quantitative explanatory-predictive design, data were gathered through a validated Digital Literature Engagement Scale and a scenario-anchored Critical Reading Practices Inventory. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was employed to assess the measurement model, structural relationships, explanatory power, and out-of-sample predictive performance. Results showed that learners demonstrated high digital literature engagement but only moderate critical reading practices. Emotional involvement and behavioral participation received the highest engagement ratings, while cognitive investment and

interactive engagement remained comparatively lower. Among the critical reading dimensions, interpretive reasoning was strongest, whereas judgment of credibility and relevance obtained the weakest result. The measurement model established acceptable internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Digital literature engagement significantly predicted critical reading practices, with cognitive investment and interactive engagement emerging as the strongest contributors. Emotional involvement, although highly rated, did not independently predict critical reading when the other dimensions were considered. The model demonstrated moderate explanatory and predictive power, indicating that engagement contributed meaningfully to critical reading but did not fully account for learners' performance. The findings suggest that digital literature can support critical reading when classroom tasks require close analysis, evidence-based interpretation, collaborative discussion, evaluation of representation, and verification of digital information. Filipino teachers are encouraged to design literary activities that transform learners' digital interest into sustained and reflective reading.

Keywords: *critical digital literacy, critical reading practices, digital literature, Filipino language classrooms, learner engagement, multimodal reading*

INTRODUCTION

Literature instruction has long provided learners with opportunities to examine human experience, cultural identity, social relationships, and competing views of the world. In Filipino language classrooms, literary texts also serve as spaces where learners encounter the richness of Filipino language and culture while developing their ability to interpret meaning beyond the literal level. The forms through which literature reaches learners, however, are no longer limited to printed books and classroom anthologies. Poems, short stories, spoken-word performances, graphic narratives, serialized fiction, and other literary works are now accessed through websites, mobile applications, electronic books, social media, and multimedia platforms. Some works are written specifically for digital environments and make use of hyperlinks, animation, sound, reader choices, and networked participation as part of the literary experience. These forms have widened the meaning of literary engagement by

allowing readers not only to read but also to navigate, respond, share, annotate, and create texts through digital media (Rettberg, 2019).

Digital literature engagement may be understood as the learners' active involvement with literary texts presented or produced through digital platforms. Such involvement includes the frequency with which learners read digital literary materials, their interest and sustained attention, their participation in discussions, and their willingness to interpret or create literary content. Digital platforms can make literary works easier to distribute and can expose learners to texts that may not be readily available in school libraries. They can also support collaboration through online comments, shared annotations, audio recordings, and multimedia responses. Still, the presence of technology does not guarantee thoughtful engagement or improved learning. UNESCO (2023) explained that digital technology can expand access, vary the representation of content, and encourage interaction, but its educational value depends greatly on instructional design, teacher guidance, access conditions, and the quality of the materials used.

Research comparing print and screen reading has shown why digital engagement must be examined carefully. Learners may prefer digital devices because of convenience, portability, and familiarity, yet preference does not always correspond with comprehension. Singer and Alexander (2017) found that readers often believed they understood digital texts better even when their performance showed an advantage for print, particularly when questions required attention to specific details. A meta-analysis by Delgado et al. (2018) likewise reported a modest advantage for paper-based reading, especially when readers worked under time pressure and dealt with informational or mixed texts. Clinton's (2019) systematic review reached a similar conclusion and noted that readers' judgments of their own comprehension could be less accurate when reading from screens. These findings do not suggest that digital texts should be excluded from instruction. Instead, they show the need to teach learners how to slow down, monitor understanding, revisit difficult passages, and avoid treating screen reading as a quick or casual activity.

The demands of digital reading extend beyond decoding sentences and identifying the main idea. Digital texts may be nonlinear, visually dense, interactive, and connected to other materials through hyperlinks. Readers must decide where to direct their attention, which features are relevant, when to follow a link, and how information from different modes contributes to meaning. Reiber-Kuijpers et al. (2021), in a systematic review of digital reading in second or foreign language education, found that digital environments could promote motivation, interaction, and access to authentic texts. At the same time, these environments required additional concentration, memory, information-management skills, and reading strategies. The review also revealed differences between the strategies learners believed they used and their actual reading behavior. Although Filipino may occupy different linguistic positions among learners, these findings are useful for Filipino instruction because vocabulary knowledge, language proficiency, prior experience, and familiarity with digital forms can shape how learners approach literary texts.

Critical reading becomes especially important when literature is encountered through open and connected digital spaces. Critical reading involves questioning how a text constructs meaning, whose perspective is represented, what assumptions shape the message, and how language influences the reader's response. In literary study, this may include examining characterization, narrative voice, symbolism, cultural values, social conditions, and the silences or exclusions found within a work. Digital platforms add further concerns because texts may be altered, shortened, reposted without attribution, accompanied by misleading commentary, or mixed with unverified information. McGrew et al. (2018) found that students across middle school, high school, and college levels had difficulty evaluating online claims, sources, and evidence. Their findings indicate that familiarity with the internet should not be mistaken for the ability to judge credibility or recognize how online material has been framed.

The movement from print to screen also raises questions about the kind of attention learners give to complex texts. van der Weel and Mangen (2022) argued that the growing emphasis on digital reading may overlook forms of sustained and reflective reading that are essential for higher-level comprehension. Literary works often require readers to remain with ambiguity, connect details across several pages, consider alternative

interpretations, and return to earlier passages. These practices may be weakened when reading is interrupted by notifications, links, scrolling, or the habit of moving quickly between pieces of content. For this reason, Filipino teachers face the task of helping learners use the possibilities of digital literature without losing the patience, concentration, and interpretive discipline required for meaningful literary reading.

The need to strengthen reading instruction is particularly pressing in Philippine secondary education. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment showed that only 24 percent of Filipino participants reached at least Level 2 proficiency in reading in 2022, compared with an average of 74 percent across member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Almost no Filipino participants reached the higher reading levels associated with understanding lengthy texts, working with abstract ideas, and distinguishing fact from opinion through implicit cues (OECD, 2023). These results do not represent every dimension of literary reading or Filipino language proficiency, but they point to continuing difficulties in comprehension, reflection, and evaluation. The K to 12 Basic Education Program also expects schools to develop literate, communicatively competent, and critically thinking learners, making the study of reading practices relevant to the goals of secondary language education (Department of Education, 2019).

International scholarship has examined screen and print comprehension, online source evaluation, digital reading strategies, and electronic literary forms. Much of this work, however, has treated these areas separately or has focused on English-language and foreign-language settings. It remains necessary to examine how learners' engagement with digital literary texts is associated with the critical reading practices they demonstrate in Filipino language classrooms. A learner may frequently access digital poems, stories, or spoken-word pieces without closely examining their meanings, while another may engage less often but read with greater depth and judgment. Understanding this relationship can help teachers determine whether digital literary participation supports careful interpretation, questioning, evaluation, and reflection. Thus, the study investigate how learners' involvement with digital literature relates to the ways they analyze, interpret, and evaluate texts. Its findings may provide a basis for selecting appropriate digital materials and designing reading activities that join literary appreciation with disciplined critical inquiry.

Literature Review

Digital Literature as a Multimodal Reading Space

Digital literature differs from conventional electronic copies of printed texts because meaning may be carried through written language, images, sound, movement, hyperlinks, and interactive features. Readers must determine how these elements work together rather than interpret words alone. Bacalja et al. (2022) argued that digital literacy education should move beyond operational knowledge of devices and give greater attention to meaning making, authorship, creation, and the social forces that shape digital communication. This view is valuable for literary study because a digital poem, story, or narrative video may guide interpretation through visual arrangement, music, animation, and reader interaction. Hermansson and Olin-Scheller (2022) also found that encounters with digital narratives involved emotional, physical, spatial, and collaborative dimensions of reading. Learners responded not only to the story but also to the device, classroom setting, movements, and interactions surrounding the reading activity. Digital literature engagement should therefore be examined through learners' attention, emotional response, participation, interpretation, and interaction with multimodal features. These dimensions help distinguish meaningful literary engagement from passive exposure to text displayed on a screen. They also provide a basis for examining whether the features that attract learners' interest encourage careful interpretation or merely create momentary attention without sustained reading.

Learner Engagement and Self-Regulation in Digital Reading

Engagement in digital reading is shaped by the purpose of technology use, the learner's attitude, and the strategies used to control attention and comprehension. Hu and Yu (2021), using data from 767,511 adolescents across several cycles of the Programme for International Student Assessment, found that the relationship between social media use and digital reading performance varied according to the type and purpose of use. Positive attitudes

toward digital media were associated with stronger digital reading performance, while the use of social media at school was generally linked with lower performance. These findings show that frequency of access cannot adequately describe engagement because learners may spend considerable time online without engaging in demanding reading. Chen et al. (2021) likewise found that social media use did not directly harm digital reading literacy, but metacognitive knowledge played a positive mediating role. Learners who understood how to plan, monitor, and adjust their reading were better prepared to work with digital texts. For the present study, digital literature engagement should therefore include behavioral participation, emotional interest, cognitive effort, and self-regulated reading. A learner who rereads a digital story, checks unfamiliar expressions, compares sections, and reflects on the text demonstrates a different level of engagement from one who simply scrolls through literary content or reacts to its visual presentation.

Critical Literacy in Digital Text Interpretation

Critical reading of digital literature requires learners to examine both literary meaning and the conditions through which a text is produced, presented, and circulated. Aguilera and Pandya (2021) explained that critical digital literacies involve more than evaluating whether information is accurate. Readers must also consider how digital systems, identities, institutions, and power relations affect participation and representation. Applied to literature, this perspective invites learners to question whose experiences are represented, whose voices remain absent, how characters or communities are portrayed, and how visual or interactive elements influence interpretation. It also directs attention to the creator, platform, intended audience, and social assumptions surrounding a digital literary work. Blixen and Pannell (2020) found that teachers did not always share a clear understanding of critical literacy and often lacked a unified method for putting it into practice. Some classroom activities encouraged personal responses to texts but did not lead learners to examine ideology, inequality, or the authority behind textual representations. Critical reading practices should therefore include analysis, interpretation, comparison, questioning, evaluation, and reflection. In Filipino language classrooms, these practices can help learners connect literary themes with language, culture, identity, history, and lived social conditions instead of treating literary study as the simple identification of characters, settings, figures of speech, and moral lessons.

Teacher Mediation in Filipino Language Classrooms

The contribution of digital literature to critical reading depends largely on the way teachers select texts, frame questions, organize discussion, and guide learners through interpretation. Parba (2018) proposed a Filipino language classroom grounded in critical pedagogy, where learners' experiences and social realities become legitimate sources of knowledge. Such an approach allows literary texts to be examined in relation to identity, language hierarchy, inequality, culture, and national life. Digital literature can support this work when teachers choose culturally meaningful materials and ask questions that move from comprehension toward examination of perspective, representation, and power. Salmerón et al. (2023) found that frequent classroom use of digital devices was negatively related to reading comprehension, but digital reading projects were positively associated with achievement when compared with routine digital drills. The finding suggests that the educational value of technology lies in the intellectual quality of the task rather than the amount of device use. Gouseti et al. (2024) also reported differences between scholarly understandings of critical digital literacy and the narrower skills-based views that often guide classroom practice. Filipino teachers therefore need opportunities to design activities that combine close reading, collaborative interpretation, source examination, and reflective response. Examining digital literature engagement together with critical reading practices can show whether classroom participation with digital texts develops thoughtful literary judgment or remains centered on access, entertainment, and basic comprehension.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative explanatory-predictive research design using partial least squares structural equation modeling. This design was selected because the inquiry went beyond describing levels of digital literature engagement and critical reading practices. It examined how the underlying dimensions of digital literature engagement explained and predicted learners' critical reading practices in Filipino language classrooms. The explanatory component determined the strength and direction of the structural relationships among the constructs, while the predictive component assessed the model's capacity to estimate critical reading outcomes for observations not directly used in model estimation. Data were gathered at a single period during the school year, making the investigation cross-sectional in temporal scope. The use of latent-variable modeling allowed each major construct to be represented by several observable indicators while accounting for measurement error.

Research Locale

The investigation was conducted at Santo Tomas National High School. The school offered Filipino language subjects in which learners encountered literary works through printed, electronic, audiovisual, and internet-based materials. Its learning environment provided an appropriate setting for examining the ways learners participated in digital literary activities and applied critical reading practices during Filipino instruction. The locale was selected because digital texts, multimedia resources, and online platforms had become part of classroom activities, independent reading, literary responses, and performance tasks. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate school authorities before contact was made with the intended participants.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants consisted of learners who were officially enrolled in Filipino language classes during the period of data collection. Eligibility required current enrollment in a Filipino subject and prior classroom exposure to at least one form of digital literary material, such as electronic stories, digital poetry, spoken-word recordings, multimedia narratives, or online literary selections. Learners who participated in the pilot administration were excluded from the main investigation. Stratified systematic random sampling was applied to secure representation from the grade levels and class sections included in the study. Each grade level served as a stratum, after which eligible learners were arranged according to the official class lists. A sampling interval was computed for each stratum, and participants were selected from randomly determined starting points. This procedure reduced the possibility that the final sample would be drawn disproportionately from a particular class group.

Research Instrument

A two-component instrument was used to gather the required data. The first component, the Digital Literature Engagement Scale, measured behavioral participation, emotional involvement, cognitive investment, and interactive engagement with digital literary texts. Its statements covered sustained attention, voluntary reading, participation in digital literary discussions, interpretation of multimedia features, reflective response, and involvement in text-related creative activities. Responses were recorded using a five-point agreement scale. The second component, the scenario-anchored Critical Reading Practices Inventory, contained brief digital literary passages and classroom-based situations followed by items that assessed interpretive reasoning, recognition of perspective, analysis of textual evidence, evaluation of representation, comparison of ideas, and judgment of the credibility and relevance of accompanying digital information. The scenario-based format reduced dependence on learners' self-reported reading ability and provided evidence of how they applied critical reading decisions to specific literary and digital situations.

The initial version of the instrument underwent content and construct validation by specialists in Filipino language education, literature instruction, educational technology, research methodology, and educational assessment. The validators examined each item for relevance, clarity, cultural appropriateness, language accuracy,

and alignment with its intended dimension. Statements that received inconsistent evaluations were revised, merged, or removed. The item-level content validity indices ranged from 0.83 to 1.00, while the scale-level average content validity index was 0.95. These coefficients indicated excellent content validity and showed that the retained items adequately represented the constructs measured in the study.

The revised instrument was pilot-tested among learners from a comparable secondary school who were excluded from the main investigation. The pilot administration assessed item clarity, completion time, digital accessibility, internal consistency, and the functioning of the scenario-based tasks. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.46 to 0.78, indicating acceptable to strong item discrimination. Items with unclear wording or comparatively weak discrimination were revised before final administration. The Digital Literature Engagement Scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, while the Critical Reading Practices Inventory yielded a coefficient of 0.91. The complete instrument produced an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, indicating excellent internal consistency. Additional reliability estimates supported these findings. Composite reliability coefficients were 0.92 for digital literature engagement and 0.93 for critical reading practices, while McDonald's omega coefficients were 0.90 and 0.92, respectively. Taken together, the validity and reliability results indicated that the instrument was sufficiently sound for measuring digital literature engagement and critical reading practices in Filipino language classrooms.

Data Gathering

Formal authorization was secured from the school administration before the study began. After approval, the researcher coordinated with the Filipino teachers regarding the class schedules, eligible groups, and suitable administration periods. The purpose of the investigation, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality procedures, and the expected completion time were explained before consent and assent documents were distributed. Only learners who submitted the required permissions were included.

The validated instrument was administered during an agreed Filipino class period or another schedule approved by the school. The Digital Literature Engagement Scale was answered first, followed by the scenario-anchored Critical Reading Practices Inventory. Standardized instructions were used across all participating classes to limit differences in administration. Teachers were requested not to explain the meaning of individual items or suggest possible answers. Participants were allowed to ask only procedural questions. Completed instruments were checked for missing responses without requiring learners to disclose their identities. Each response set was assigned a research code, and names were not entered into the analysis file. The encoded data were checked against the original responses before statistical processing. Records with excessive missing information or evident response-pattern problems were evaluated according to predetermined data-screening rules.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through an explanatory-predictive partial least squares structural equation modeling procedure. Initial screening examined missing values, response variability, unusual response patterns, and influential observations. Because the agreement-scale responses were ordinal, medians and interquartile ranges were reported alongside means and standard deviations when the distribution of a dimension showed noticeable asymmetry.

The measurement model was evaluated before the structural relationships were interpreted. Indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and ρ_A were examined to determine internal consistency. Convergent validity was assessed through the average variance extracted, with a value of at least 0.50 treated as adequate. Discriminant validity was examined using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio, while indicator cross-loadings were inspected when construct overlap was suspected. Collinearity was evaluated through variance inflation factors before the structural paths were estimated.

The relationship between digital literature engagement and critical reading practices was tested through standardized path coefficients. Statistical significance was established through bias-corrected bootstrapping with 10,000 resamples and a 0.05 significance level. The coefficient of determination was used to determine the proportion of variance in critical reading practices explained by digital literature engagement. Effect sizes were

examined through f^2 values, while the model's predictive relevance was assessed through Stone-Geisser's Q^2 . Out-of-sample predictive performance was evaluated through PLSpredict by comparing the model's prediction errors with those produced by a linear benchmark model.

An importance-performance map analysis was also conducted to identify which dimensions of digital literature engagement had the greatest practical influence on critical reading practices. This procedure considered both the structural importance of each engagement dimension and the participants' average performance on that dimension. The analysis allowed the study to identify areas that had strong predictive importance but comparatively low observed performance, which could serve as priorities for instructional planning.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, assent, confidentiality, nonmaleficence, and responsible data management. Participants and their parents or legal guardians received clear information about the purpose of the research, the activities involved, the expected time commitment, and their right to refuse or withdraw without academic penalty. Participation did not affect grades, class standing, access to learning materials, or relationships with teachers and school personnel.

No identifying information was included in the statistical dataset or research report. Codes were used in place of names, and findings were reported only in aggregated form. Electronic records were stored in a password-protected file, while printed materials were kept in a secured location accessible only to the researcher. Data were retained only for the period required by the research institution and were scheduled for secure deletion or disposal afterward. Literary selections used in the instrument were screened for age appropriateness, cultural sensitivity, and potentially distressing content. Copyrighted materials were either used within permissible limits, properly attributed, or replaced with researcher-developed passages. The researcher also disclosed that participation was unrelated to classroom assessment and avoided any form of pressure arising from the teacher-learner relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Descriptive Results for Digital Literature Engagement and Critical Reading Practices*

Construct and dimension	Mean	SD	Median	IQR	Interpretation
Digital Literature Engagement	3.50	0.58	3.50	0.72	High
Behavioral participation	3.72	0.64	3.75	0.80	High
Emotional involvement	3.86	0.60	4.00	0.75	High
Cognitive investment	3.28	0.69	3.25	0.95	Moderate
Interactive engagement	3.14	0.73	3.00	1.00	Moderate
Critical Reading Practices	3.23	0.61	3.20	0.83	Moderate
Interpretive reasoning	3.42	0.65	3.40	0.80	High
Recognition of perspective	3.34	0.68	3.33	0.90	Moderate
Analysis of textual evidence	3.27	0.70	3.25	0.95	Moderate
Evaluation of representation	3.08	0.74	3.00	1.00	Moderate
Comparison of ideas	3.31	0.69	3.25	0.90	Moderate
Judgment of credibility and relevance	2.96	0.76	3.00	1.05	Moderate

Note. Scale interpretation: 1.00 to 1.80 = Very Low; 1.81 to 2.60 = Low; 2.61 to 3.40 = Moderate; 3.41 to 4.20 = High; 4.21 to 5.00 = Very High.

The findings showed that digital literature engagement was generally high, with an overall mean of 3.50. Learners displayed the strongest engagement through emotional involvement, followed by behavioral participation. This indicated that digital literary texts attracted interest, produced personal responses, and

encouraged learners to participate in reading-related activities. Digital poems, electronic stories, audiovisual narratives, and spoken-word performances appeared capable of drawing learners into literary experiences because they presented language through familiar and appealing digital forms. Hermansson and Olin-Scheller (2022) similarly explained that digital reading encounters involved emotional, physical, spatial, and collaborative experiences that shaped how learners responded to texts.

Despite the favorable level of general engagement, cognitive investment and interactive engagement remained moderate. Learners appeared interested in digital literature, but their participation did not consistently involve sustained analysis, careful rereading, collaborative interpretation, or active examination of multimodal elements. This difference suggested that attraction to digital literary content did not always lead to demanding intellectual involvement. Learners may have enjoyed the visual, auditory, and interactive qualities of digital texts while devoting less attention to the deeper meanings, structural features, and cultural assumptions embedded in the material. Bacalja et al. (2022) maintained that digital literacy instruction should extend beyond access and technical participation by emphasizing interpretation, authorship, representation, and meaning construction.

Critical reading practices obtained an overall mean of 3.23, which indicated a moderate level. Interpretive reasoning received the highest mean, suggesting that learners were generally able to identify themes, infer meanings, and explain selected literary elements. However, more demanding practices involving the evaluation of representation and judgment of credibility produced lower results. The lowest mean was obtained for judgment of credibility and relevance. This finding revealed that learners experienced difficulty determining whether accompanying online information, author claims, platform descriptions, quotations, or digital commentaries were dependable and relevant to the literary text.

The moderate critical reading result indicated a gap between understanding the surface or thematic meaning of a text and evaluating how meaning was constructed. Learners appeared more comfortable explaining what a literary work meant than questioning who produced it, whose views were privileged, what perspectives were excluded, and whether supplementary digital materials were trustworthy. Aguilera and Pandya (2021) emphasized that critical digital literacy required readers to examine representation, identity, institutions, and power rather than merely locate or understand information. The result also supported the concern of Blixen and Pannell (2020) that classroom critical literacy practices sometimes remained focused on personal reactions without sufficiently examining ideology, authority, and inequality.

Table 2. *Measurement Model Reliability and Convergent Validity*

Construct	Indicator Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Evaluation
Behavioral participation	0.71 to 0.83	0.82	0.83	0.87	0.58	Acceptable
Emotional involvement	0.74 to 0.86	0.85	0.86	0.89	0.62	Acceptable
Cognitive investment	0.77 to 0.88	0.88	0.89	0.91	0.67	Acceptable
Interactive engagement	0.72 to 0.85	0.83	0.84	0.88	0.60	Acceptable
Digital literature engagement	0.76 to 0.86	0.89	0.90	0.92	0.74	Acceptable
Critical reading practices	0.72 to 0.87	0.91	0.92	0.93	0.63	Acceptable

All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended minimum value of 0.70. The loading ranges showed that the indicators provided adequate representations of their assigned constructs. Cognitive investment had the strongest set of indicator loadings, ranging from 0.77 to 0.88, while the indicators of critical reading practices ranged from 0.72 to 0.87. No item required deletion because each contributed sufficiently to the measurement of its intended dimension.

Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.82 to 0.91, while composite reliability values ranged from 0.87 to 0.93. These coefficients indicated satisfactory to strong internal consistency. The rho_A values also remained

above 0.80, which confirmed that the construct scores were reliably measured. The results showed that the items within each scale consistently represented the same underlying concept without producing excessively high coefficients that could indicate unnecessary item duplication.

The average variance extracted values ranged from 0.58 to 0.74. Since every value exceeded the minimum criterion of 0.50, the constructs demonstrated acceptable convergent validity. More than half of the variance in the indicators was explained by their respective latent constructs. Digital literature engagement produced the highest AVE at 0.74, indicating that behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and interactive engagement converged strongly as dimensions of the broader engagement construct.

These results supported the use of digital literature engagement as a multidimensional construct. Learners' engagement could not be represented by frequency of reading or emotional interest alone. It included observable participation, personal involvement, intellectual effort, and interaction with texts and other readers. The strong reliability of the critical reading construct also indicated that interpretation, evidence analysis, perspective recognition, comparison, representation evaluation, and credibility judgment formed a coherent set of reading practices.

Table 3. *Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratios of the Measurement Model*

Construct	BP	EI	CI	IE	CRP
Behavioral participation					
Emotional involvement	0.72				
Cognitive investment	0.68	0.64			
Interactive engagement	0.74	0.70	0.78		
Critical reading practices	0.53	0.46	0.73	0.67	

Note. BP = Behavioral participation; EI = Emotional involvement; CI = Cognitive investment; IE = Interactive engagement; CRP = Critical reading practices.

The heterotrait-monotrait ratios ranged from 0.46 to 0.78. All values remained below the conservative threshold of 0.85, which established discriminant validity. Although the engagement dimensions were related, each dimension measured a distinct part of the learners' digital literary experience. For example, emotional involvement was associated with behavioral participation, but enjoyment and personal interest were not identical to actual reading participation.

The highest ratio was observed between cognitive investment and interactive engagement at 0.78. This result was reasonable because active discussions, shared annotations, and collaborative responses often required learners to explain, compare, and defend their interpretations. Nevertheless, the value remained sufficiently below the threshold, confirming that intellectual effort and interactive participation were distinguishable.

Critical reading practices were most strongly associated with cognitive investment, with an HTMT ratio of 0.73. Its weakest association was with emotional involvement at 0.46. This pattern suggested that critical reading was more closely connected with intellectual attention, monitoring, analysis, and reflection than with enjoyment or emotional attraction. Learners could appreciate or enjoy a digital literary work without necessarily questioning its viewpoint, assessing its evidence, or evaluating its representation of people and social experiences.

Table 4. *Structural Model Results*

Structural Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	95% Bias-Corrected CI	f ²	Decision
Digital literature engagement → Critical reading practices	0.58	11.24	< .001	0.48 to 0.67	0.51	Significant
Behavioral participation → Critical reading practices	0.13	2.28	.023	0.03 to 0.24	0.03	Significant
Emotional involvement → Critical reading practices	0.08	1.56	.119	-0.02 to 0.18	0.01	Not significant

Structural Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	95% Bias-Corrected CI	f ²	Decision
Cognitive investment → Critical reading practices	0.31	5.91	< .001	0.21 to 0.41	0.14	Significant
Interactive engagement → Critical reading practices	0.22	4.12	< .001	0.12 to 0.33	0.07	Significant
Structural Model Criterion Value		Interpretation				
R ²	0.337	Moderate explanatory power				
Adjusted R ²	0.333	Moderate explanatory power				
Q ²	0.273	Predictive relevance established				
SRMR	0.062	Acceptable model fit				

The structural model showed that digital literature engagement had a positive and statistically significant relationship with critical reading practices. The standardized path coefficient of 0.58 indicated that stronger engagement with digital literary texts was associated with better critical reading practices. The bootstrapped confidence interval did not include zero, and the probability value was below the 0.05 level. The effect size of 0.51 indicated a large contribution of digital literature engagement to the explanation of critical reading practices.

The model explained 33.7 percent of the variance in critical reading practices. This represented moderate explanatory power and showed that digital literature engagement was an important predictor of how learners interpreted, compared, questioned, and evaluated literary texts. At the same time, most of the variance remained attributable to factors outside the model. These factors could include prior reading proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, access to suitable texts, teacher questioning practices, language confidence, home reading habits, and exposure to explicit critical literacy instruction.

The Stone-Geisser Q² value of 0.273 was above zero, which established the predictive relevance of the model. The standardized root mean square residual of 0.062 was below the commonly accepted limit of 0.08. This indicated that the difference between the observed correlations and model-implied correlations was sufficiently small. The results therefore supported both the explanatory adequacy and statistical acceptability of the model.

Among the dimensions, cognitive investment produced the strongest specific effect on critical reading practices. Its coefficient of 0.31 showed that learners who concentrated, reread difficult sections, examined literary devices, connected ideas, and monitored understanding tended to demonstrate stronger critical reading. The result supported the finding of Chen et al. (2021) that metacognitive knowledge played an important role in digital reading literacy. Engagement became educationally valuable when learners regulated their reading and made deliberate decisions about how to understand a text.

Interactive engagement produced the second strongest significant effect. Learners who participated in discussions, shared interpretations, responded to classmates, and used digital tools to examine literary works demonstrated stronger critical reading practices. This result suggested that critical interpretation benefited from dialogue. Literary meanings were refined when learners encountered different viewpoints, defended their conclusions, and returned to textual evidence during classroom interaction.

Behavioral participation had a small but significant effect. Regular access, completion of reading tasks, and participation in assigned activities contributed to critical reading, but frequency alone was insufficient to produce a strong effect. This finding was consistent with Hu and Yu (2021), who found that the educational effect of digital media depended on the nature and purpose of its use. Frequent exposure to digital materials could not replace careful reading strategies and intellectually demanding activities.

Emotional involvement did not have a statistically significant specific effect when the other dimensions were considered. Learners' enjoyment, interest, and personal connection with digital literature contributed to the broader engagement construct, but these experiences did not independently predict critical reading. The result identified a central problem in the study. Learners could be highly interested in digital literary materials while remaining only moderately skilled in evaluating perspective, representation, and credibility. Emotional attraction

may encourage learners to begin or continue reading, but teacher-guided analysis remained necessary to transform interest into critical understanding.

Table 5. *PLSpredict Assessment of Critical Reading Outcomes*

Critical Reading Outcome	Q ² predict	PLS-SEM RMSE	Linear Model RMSE	RMSE Difference	Predictive Result
Interpretive reasoning	0.21	0.612	0.628	-0.016	PLS-SEM performed better
Recognition of perspective	0.18	0.648	0.660	-0.012	PLS-SEM performed better
Analysis of textual evidence	0.24	0.633	0.651	-0.018	PLS-SEM performed better
Evaluation of representation	0.16	0.701	0.694	0.007	Linear model performed better
Comparison of ideas	0.19	0.655	0.667	-0.012	PLS-SEM performed better
Judgment of credibility and relevance	0.14	0.728	0.720	0.008	Linear model performed better

All Q²predict values were greater than zero, indicating that the model had predictive relevance for each critical reading outcome. The PLS-SEM model produced lower prediction errors than the linear benchmark for four of the six outcomes. It performed better in predicting interpretive reasoning, perspective recognition, textual evidence analysis, and comparison of ideas.

The linear benchmark produced slightly lower errors for evaluation of representation and judgment of credibility and relevance. Based on the pattern of prediction errors, the PLS-SEM model demonstrated medium out-of-sample predictive power. The model was therefore useful for predicting several critical reading outcomes but was less effective in estimating the two areas in which learners obtained the weakest descriptive results.

The weaker prediction of representation evaluation suggested that this skill may depend on experiences not fully captured by digital literature engagement. Learners may need explicit instruction on stereotyping, cultural representation, marginalization, social position, and authorial choices before they can consistently evaluate how individuals and groups are portrayed. Similarly, credibility judgment may depend on prior knowledge of source verification, platform structures, authorship, evidence, and online information practices.

The predictive findings confirmed that engagement alone did not completely account for the most demanding critical reading skills. Gouseti et al. (2024) observed that classroom conceptions of critical digital literacy often emphasized practical digital skills while giving less attention to social, ethical, and critical concerns. The present result suggested that learners needed structured opportunities to examine not only what digital literary texts communicated but also how platforms, creators, and modes of representation shaped meaning.

Table 6. *Importance-Performance Map Analysis for Critical Reading Practices*

Engagement Dimension	Importance	Performance Index	Instructional Priority
Behavioral participation	0.17	73.20	Moderate priority
Emotional involvement	0.11	77.40	Lower priority
Cognitive investment	0.40	61.80	Highest priority
Interactive engagement	0.29	58.60	High priority

The importance-performance map showed that cognitive investment had the highest importance value of 0.40. Its performance index, however, was only 61.80. This combination indicated that cognitive investment should receive the greatest instructional attention. Improvements in learners' concentration, inferential reasoning, rereading, evidence use, and monitoring of comprehension were likely to produce the largest improvement in critical reading practices.

Interactive engagement ranked second in importance but recorded the lowest performance index. This result indicated that learners had limited opportunities or willingness to discuss interpretations, challenge viewpoints, collaborate through digital annotations, and respond critically to the ideas of others. The low performance of this dimension was important because literary interpretation became stronger when learners compared perspectives and justified conclusions through textual evidence.

Behavioral participation had a relatively high performance index but only moderate importance. Learners generally completed activities and accessed digital literary materials, yet additional increases in participation alone were unlikely to produce the largest improvement in critical reading. Classroom interventions should therefore avoid focusing only on the quantity of digital reading tasks, number of platform activities, or frequency of online submissions.

Emotional involvement produced the highest performance index but the lowest importance value. Learners already showed favorable interest and enjoyment, making this dimension a less urgent intervention target. The instructional concern was not primarily how to make digital literature attractive. The greater challenge was how to convert existing interest into disciplined analysis, critical dialogue, and reflective judgment.

The IPMA results suggested that Filipino teachers could strengthen critical reading by designing activities that required learners to annotate difficult passages, compare alternative interpretations, identify evidence for claims, evaluate character representation, question the cultural assumptions of texts, and examine the reliability of accompanying online information. Digital activities needed to move beyond watching, reacting, and completing tasks. Salmerón et al. (2023) found that routine digital device use did not necessarily improve reading comprehension, whereas well-designed digital reading projects showed more favorable associations with reading achievement. The quality of the reading task therefore mattered more than the mere presence of technology.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that learners demonstrated high engagement with digital literature but only moderate critical reading practices, showing that interest, enjoyment, and participation did not automatically lead to deeper interpretation, evaluation, and credibility judgment. Digital literature engagement significantly explained critical reading practices, with cognitive investment and interactive engagement emerging as the strongest contributors, while emotional involvement alone did not produce a meaningful independent effect. The study therefore concluded that digital literary materials could strengthen critical reading when classroom activities required sustained attention, evidence-based interpretation, collaborative discussion, comparison of viewpoints, and evaluation of representation and source credibility. It was recommended that Filipino teachers design digital literature lessons that move beyond viewing, reacting, and completing tasks by incorporating close reading, guided annotation, structured dialogue, source verification, and reflective writing. Schools should also provide professional development on critical digital literacy, multimodal text analysis, and the ethical use of online literary resources. Future studies may examine additional factors such as prior reading proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, teacher questioning practices, access to digital resources, and home reading habits, and may use longitudinal or intervention-based designs to determine how critical reading develops over time.

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