INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIETY, CULTURE & LANGUAGE

Integrating Emotional Intelligence into Literature Education in a Kuwaiti Cultural Context

Shahd Alshammari[1*], Wadhhah Ahmed[1,2]
[1]Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait, [2]Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

Abstract Traditional literary instruction may inadequately develop emotional competencies necessary for lifelong learning and human-centric education. This mixed-methods study investigates how integrating emotional intelligence (EI) constructs into literature curriculum enhances Kuwaiti English majors' empathetic understanding and critical thinking while supporting UN Sustainable Development Goals for well-being and quality education in Society 5.0. A mixed-methods design examined 32 literature students using validated EI constructs. Structural Equation Modeling assessed the relationships between EI Impact, EI Awareness, EI Integration, and Humanity constructs. After satisfying the reliability and validity measures, path analyses showed that EI Impact significantly predicted EI Awareness and EI Integration. However, Humanity outcomes remained statistically insignificant through direct and mediated pathways. Qualitative analysis of reflections from 10 participants was also conducted using thematic coding through NVIVO 15. The extracted themes inferred that personal insights prioritize actions over rendering love and empathy expressions. To conclude, EI integration in literature education needs to develop emotional awareness and recognize literary impact on personal growth.

Keywords: *Literature pedagogy, Emotional intelligence, Structural equation modeling, Culture, Society*

***Corresponding Author:**
Shahd Alshammari
alshammari.s@gust.edu.kw

Received: August 10, 2025
Revised: October 12, 2025
Accepted: October 27, 2025
First Published: November 9, 2025

© 2026 Alshammari and Ahmed.
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

1. Introduction

Given the current rise in educational and academic focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI), there remains a missing component in the framework of students' education: Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI has gained recognition comprising five core components: self-awareness (e.g., understanding strengths/weaknesses, identifying triggers, acknowledging limitations), self-regulation (e.g., controlling impulses, managing stress, adapting to change), empathy (e.g., recognizing emotional cues, showing compassion, valuing viewpoints), motivation (e.g., maintaining optimism, finding purpose), and social skills (communicating and collaborating, resolving conflicts, influencing others) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). These competencies

https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2025.2071980.4201

match United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS), specifically SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). Both of these SDGS are required for human-centric development as we move forward into Society 5.0, which integrates cyberspace and physical space. In this new paradigm, the balanced integration of human qualities, such as creativity and EI, with advanced technology is essential (Carayannis & Morawska-Jancelewicz, 2022; Shevchenko, 2023; Yaccob et al., 2022; Zaleniene & Pereira, 2021).

Research on EI interventions in Arabic universities remains limited, although they appreciate interpersonal relationships and social harmony. Based on Kuwait's Vision 2035, aiming to create a financial and cultural hub, graduates need skills to navigate diverse environments. Students require resilience (bouncing back from setbacks, maintaining flexibility, learning from failures, sustaining hope, adapting to uncertainty) and coping strategies (managing pressure, dealing with disappointment, seeking support, maintaining balance, processing emotions). This study examines literature students' perceptions and experiences of EI, as previously defined. To include EI as a component in reading poetry and reiterate the necessity of reading and enhancing one's language competencies, the syllabus for a literature class (Modern Poetry) was restructured. Beyond reading literary texts, the class was considering ways that poets and authors had or lacked EI skills, such as self-awareness, empathy, coping, resilience, and connection to the world through love and compassion. As students read poetry by 20th-century poets with a focus on confessional poets such as Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Robert Lowell, and others, they also engaged with psychologists, counsellors, and life coaches who came in as guest lecturers to teach the students about EI and its components: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills. Each of these components was addressed by various speakers in relation to both the texts discussed and life skills. Overall, the study posed the following questions:

1. To what extent does a pedagogical intervention predict students' ability to integrate EI as a practical tool?
2. What is the structural relationship between the impact of literature pedagogies and the development of EI Awareness versus EI Integration?
3. What is the relationship between students' perceived EI development and their sense of humanity?
4. How do students describe the developmental process and perceived outcomes of integrating EI through literature-based pedagogies?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Core Components of EI

EI, defined as the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively, aids in the acquisition and conceptualization of outcomes and supports learners in managing anxiety and motivation fluctuations (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI has five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills. Self-awareness involves recognizing one's emotions, understanding personal strengths and weaknesses, identifying emotional triggers, acknowledging limitations, and maintaining confidence in one's abilities. Baagbah and Ganapathy (2025) reported that self-awareness, which is associated with cultural schema awareness, is shaped differently in classroom settings by linguistic proficiency levels as a covariate. Barrett (2017) explained that individuals first develop deep personal awareness by engaging with reflective practices, then translate these insights into concrete behavioral changes in their daily lives, before extending such an understanding. This progression indicates that the brain constructs emotional understanding through embodied experience and abstract knowledge.

As the second component, self-regulation includes controlling impulses, managing stress, adapting to change, maintaining composure, and demonstrating accountability. It was revealed that learner autonomy supports emotion regulation during foreign language education (Botes et al., 2025). Empathy, as the third component, encompasses understanding others' perspectives, recognizing emotional cues, showing compassion, responding to needs, and valuing viewpoints. As indicated by Syam et al. (2025), collaborative tools such as Think Pair Share show different impacts on empathy development. The fourth component, motivation, involves setting goals, maintaining optimism, demonstrating initiative, persevering through challenges, and finding purpose in tasks. Intrinsic motivation indicators correspond

to reflective thinking development and interact with academic achievement demotivation. Students with higher intrinsic motivation engage more deeply with literary texts (Miao & Shi, 2025). Finally, social skills include communicating effectively, building relationships, working collaboratively, resolving conflicts, and influencing others positively. Written corrective feedback practices develop teacher-student social engagement (Liu, 2025). The five components interact to create emotionally intelligent learners. Emotionally intelligent students demonstrate enhanced self-efficacy, resilience, and interpersonal communication required for developing students' metacognitive and emotional skills (Halimi et al., 2021).

2.2. Studies on EI Development

Literature students may intuitively recognize the connection between literary analysis and EI (Revelle et al., 2020). Creative narratives are powerful tools for exposing students to diverse emotional experiences and metacognition through close reading practices. Students who engage with literature across different cultures and time periods develop professional and interpersonal capabilities, including improvisation, puppetry, EI, and empathy (Sextou & Karypidou, 2018).

Students who receive explicit instruction in literary analysis and EI indicators often make stronger connections between their studies and personal development, recognizing literature as a pathway to intellectual growth, emotional resilience, spiritual intelligence, and self-compassion (Liu et al., 2024). Although studies on EI development and integration in literature education are scarce, EI has been frequently studied in other pedagogical contexts. A study conducted with 450 Pakistani students across various grade levels found that effective emotional co-regulation enhances students' motivation, self-regulation, and academic success (Ajmal et al., 2025). Among heritage language speakers, those with higher EI used more emotional words in their autobiographical memories, especially when recalling anger, illustrating how EI enhances expression, even in heritage languages (Noguera & Mavrou, 2024).

It is worth mentioning that constructivist and sociocultural frameworks emphasize that learning emerges through active construction, positioning learners' existing cognitive and affective structures as foundational to what instructional interventions can accomplish. Relevantly, it was demonstrated that reflective tools such as journaling, self-interrogation techniques, and structured writing exercises function neurologically by providing repeated opportunities for learners to revisit emotional experiences and progressively refine their conceptual understanding through iterative engagement with the same material from shifting perspectives (Almutawa & Alfahid, 2024). The transition to online classes during the pandemic weakened emotional contagion, manipulation, and prediction, as students reported reduced emotional engagement and a breakdown in the usual relationship between enjoyment and anxiety, operating in physical and virtual spaces (Teoh & Liau, 2021). AI-assisted digital intelligence can help with literary engagement, particularly in poetry therapy, affective computing, and adaptive virtual classrooms. If integrated properly, linguistic style tracking and adaptive text generation may help refine instructional personalization and learner–machine emotional calibration. Affective natural language processing and multimodal sentiment analysis now quantify affective valence, tone modulation, and metaphor density in student writing (Tóth & Abdelzaher, 2024).

3. Methodology

This investigation employed a mixed-methods design to evaluate the effectiveness of a literature-based EI curriculum. The design drew upon established frameworks for educational intervention research (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) while incorporating contemporary approaches to EI measurement developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), integrating quantitative assessment through a validated questionnaire with qualitative analysis of participant reflections to achieve methodological triangulation.

3.1. Participants

3.1.1. The Quantitative Phase

The study recruited 32 participants from the English Literature program at Gulf University for Science and Technology. The demographic profile reflected typical trends in humanities education, with a

majority of female students (81.2%) and a smaller proportion of male students (18.8%). Participants ranged in age from 20 to 22 years, consistent with undergraduate cohorts. The modal age was 22 years (43.8%), followed by 21-year-olds (28.1%) and 20-year-olds (28.1%). In terms of academic standing, most participants were juniors (56.2%), while seniors constituted 43.8% of the sample. This composition was advantageous for the study, as both groups possess well-developed literary analytical abilities yet continue to show growth potential in EI, as previously reported (Brackett & Rivers, 2014).

3.1.2. The Qualitative Phase

For the qualitative phase, a purposive subsample of 10 participants (coded R1-R10) was selected from the cohort to expound on their EI learning experiences. These 10 Kuwaiti undergraduate students from Gulf University for Science and Technology were mainly female (80%), aged between 20 and 22 years. Their self-reported personality traits were neutral (43%), strongly introverted (19%), and somewhat introverted (38%). All participants were native Arabic speakers enrolled in English-medium instruction and had completed the same EI curriculum courses.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. The Quantitative Phase

The primary quantitative instrument consisted of a comprehensive questionnaire (see Appendix 1) designed specifically to assess four theoretically grounded constructs (i.e., EI Impact, EI Awareness, EI Integration, & Humanity) central to EI development in literary contexts. These constructs are conceptually grounded in the five-component model of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Specifically, EI Impact aligns with the motivational component, gauging students' drive to engage with EI material. EI Awareness directly reflects the components of self-awareness and empathy, measuring the recognition of emotions in oneself and others. EI Integration represents the practical application of EI, encompassing the components of self-regulation (managing one's emotions) and social skills (applying EI in interactions). Finally, the Humanity construct captures the prosocial and ethical dimensions of EI, representing an advanced synthesis of empathy and social skills oriented toward compassion and helping behaviors. Thus, while the five-component model provides the foundational theory of EI, our four constructs represent its measurable enactment within an educational intervention.

The *EI Impact* construct was measured through three carefully crafted items (EI-Impact1-3) designed to assess participants' perceived influence of EI concepts on their personal and academic development. This construct draws upon Bar-On's (2007, 2010) conceptualization of EI as a set of competencies that determine how effectively individuals understand and express themselves. The *EI Awareness* construct employed five items (EI-Awareness1-5) to evaluate participants' EI. The *EI Integration* construct utilized three items (EI-Integration1-3) to measure the extent to which participants successfully incorporated EI concepts into their daily practices and decision-making processes. This construct reflects Goleman's (1995) emphasis on the practical application of emotional competencies in reality. Finally, the *Humanity* construct was assessed through two items (HumAInity1-2) that evaluated participants' development of empathetic understanding and compassionate responses to others' experiences, drawing upon the social awareness components of EI (Goleman, 1998; Van Dyne et al., 2015).

3.2.2. The Qualitative Phase

As for the qualitative phase, the participants were asked to explore their skills (corresponding to the core components of EI) in response to the following questions.

1. How has engaging with literary characters helped you better understand your emotions? (Intrapersonal Skill, corresponding to self-awareness)
2. Can you describe a moment when reading literature made you more aware of your personal strengths or limitations? (Intrapersonal Skill, corresponding to self-awareness)
3. Can you recall a literary situation that helped you develop better coping strategies for your own challenges? (Stress Management, corresponding to self-regulation)

4. How has exposure to diverse literary contexts enhanced your flexibility in dealing with change? (Adaptability, corresponding to self-regulation)
5. How has literature contributed to your overall emotional resilience? (Mood Regulation, corresponding to self-regulation)
6. Can you describe how reading has influenced your ability to maintain emotional balance? (General Emotional Well-Being, corresponding to self-regulation)
7. In what ways has literature improved your ability to empathize with others in real-life situations? (Interpersonal Skill, corresponding to empathy)
8. How do you think your relationships have been garnered from reading? (Interpersonal Skill, corresponding to social skills)
9. What specific emotional skills from literature have you consciously applied in your academic or personal life? (Integration of EI into Daily Practice, corresponding to social skills)
10. How do you walk through situations differently than before? (Integration of EI into Daily Practice, corresponding to social skills)

3.3. Procedure

3.3.1. Data Collection

The intervention implementation followed a carefully structured protocol spanning one academic semester, incorporating multiple pedagogical modalities to maximize learning effectiveness. The literature-based curriculum incorporated diverse textual materials, including poetry analysis sessions focusing on emotionally evocative works, prose fiction exploring complex character psychology, and personal narrative presentations by guest speakers representing various professional and cultural backgrounds. The questionnaire was distributed among the students after the intervention.

Guest speaker presentations constituted a crucial intervention component, featuring individuals from diverse professional backgrounds who shared personal narratives. These presentations were designed to bridge the gap between literary study and practical application, providing authentic examples of emotional competency development and implementation. Structured reflection activities were integrated throughout the intervention period, requiring participants to engage in regular written analysis of their emotional responses to literary materials and personal experiences. These activities established reflective writing practices in EI education and incorporated elements of bibliotherapy, and were further developed by contemporary practitioners.

Interview data were gathered through semi-structured individual sessions conducted at the conclusion of the intervention phase, allowing participants to reflect comprehensively on their experiences after completing the full curriculum. Additionally, written reflections submitted by participants during structured reflection activities served as ongoing qualitative data sources, providing temporal snapshots of their emotional and cognitive processing throughout the study period. Field notes were maintained by the researchers during guest speaker presentations and classroom discussions to document spontaneous insights, behavioral observations, and emergent themes that arose during interactive sessions.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

Following the implementation of the pedagogical intervention, quantitative data (RQ1-3) were collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using a two-stage Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The analysis first established the robustness of the measurement model, confirming excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.902$), strong composite reliability for all constructs, and satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity as per Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated to test the research hypotheses.

For the qualitative analysis of participant reflection transcripts (RQ4), the systematic thematic analysis was employed. Thematic categorization followed an inductive approach. Qualitative data analysis employed QSR NVivo 15, a qualitative data toolkit that facilitates systematic coding, thematic analysis, and pattern identification in textual data (Edwards-Jones, 2014).

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.6 is regarded as average, and 0.7 or above indicates good reliability, while more than 0.9 indicates excellent reliability (Gebremedhin et al., 2022). The Cronbach's alpha values are summarized in Table 1. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the study constructs was 0.902. Further, if an item is dropped, Cronbach's alpha for the study items varies from 0.885 to 0.905, signifying the reliability of the questionnaire. It has also been shown that no item possesses a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value below 0.20 (Abdulameer & Sahib, 2019; Streiner & Norman, 2003).

Table 1
Item Reliability Statistics

				If item dropped
	Mean	**SD**	**Item-rest correlation**	**Cronbach's α**
EI_Impact1	4.22	1.013	0.683	0.891
EI_Impact2	4.19	1.111	0.803	0.885
EI_Impact3	3.93	1.035	0.795	0.885
EI_Awareness1	4.59	0.501	0.414	0.902
EI_Awareness2	4.56	0.577	0.360	0.904
EI_Awareness3	4.33	0.877	0.377	0.905
EI_Awareness4	4.30	0.823	0.728	0.890
EI_Awareness5	4.48	0.893	0.556	0.897
EI-Integration1	3.63	1.149	0.576	0.898
EI-Integration2	3.93	0.829	0.754	0.889
EI-Integration3	3.89	1.050	0.775	0.886
HumAInity1	3.93	0.829	0.617	0.895
HumAInity2	4.30	0.669	0.475	0.900

Overall Cronbach's alpha=0.902

A measurement model, referred to as the outer model, describes the relationship between constructs and their indicators. SEM allows researchers to measure one variable using multiple indicators (Hair et al., 2012). Many researchers (e.g., Hair et al., 2012; Henseler et al., 2016; Henseler, 2017) do not recommend structural model evaluation until the measurement model evaluation meets the minimum requirements for reliability and validity. A set of guidelines was provided (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009; Henseler et al., 2015) for evaluating and reporting the measurement model, including the measurement model's indicator reliability, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Composite reliability (CR) is used to assess the reliability of individual items, i.e., item reliability and internal consistency; average variance extracted (AVE) was used to evaluate the convergent validity of the measures; and discriminant validity was examined using Fornell-Larcker's criterion and the indicator's outer loadings.

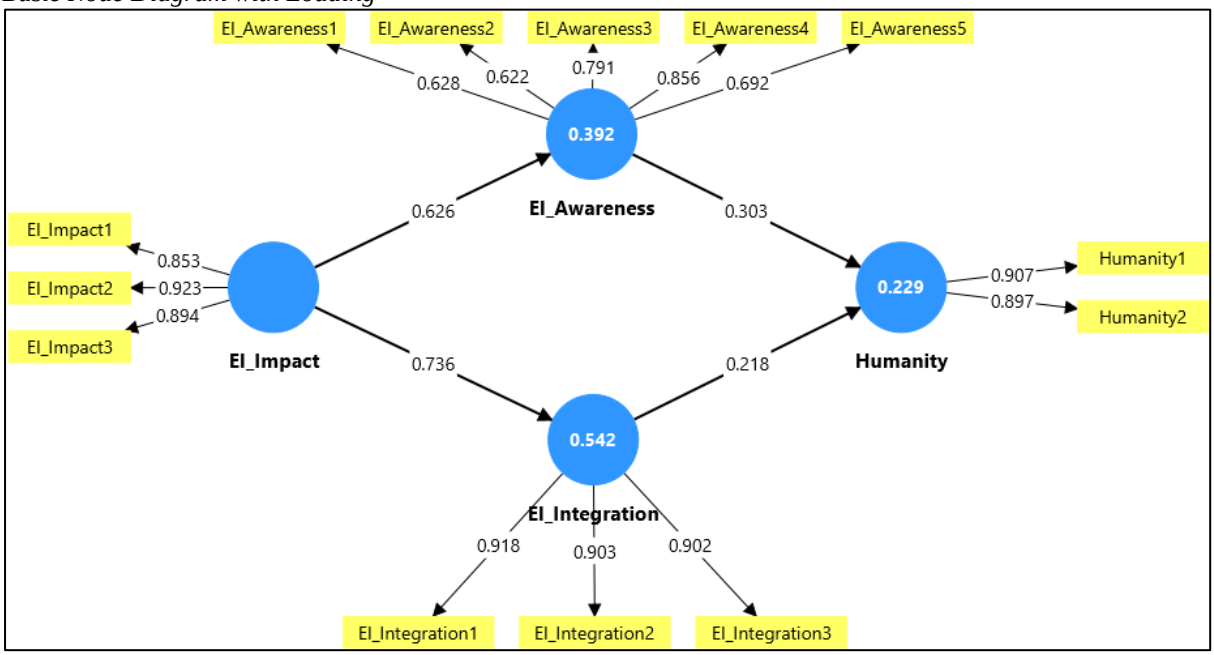
Table 2 shows the results of the outer model summary. The value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability exceeded the threshold value of 0.7 (DeVellis, 2016; Kline, 2015), respectively. Accordingly, the construct reliability is confirmed, i.e., all constructs are considered to be completely reliable. In order to test convergent validity, Hair et al. (2017) recommend the use of factor loading and average

variance extracted (AVE). In the present study, the value of factor loading ranged between 0.622 and 0.923, and AVE ranged between 0.524 and 0.824, which were higher than the threshold value of factor loading (0.60) and AVE (0.50), respectively. All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.361 to 3.330, well below the recommended threshold of 5.0, indicating no multicollinearity concerns among the indicators. Considering these results, convergent validity for all constructs has been met. Figure 1 demonstrates the basic node diagram of the PLS-PM model with loadings.

Table 2
Outer Model Summary for the PLS-PM Model

Construct	Items	VIF	loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EI Awareness	EI-Awareness1	1.526	0.628	0.776	0.816	0.844	0.524
	EI-Awareness2	1.702	0.622				
	EI-Awareness3	2.012	0.791				
	EI-Awareness4	1.950	0.856				
	EI-Awareness5	1.361	0.692				
EI Impact	EI-Impact1	2.037	0.853	0.869	0.877	0.920	0.793
	EI-Impact2	2.886	0.923				
	EI-Impact3	2.382	0.894				
EI Integration	EI-Integration1	3.330	0.918	0.894	0.904	0.934	0.824
	EI-Integration2	2.408	0.903				
	EI-Integration3	2.717	0.902				
Humanity	Humanity1	1.644	0.907	0.770	0.771	0.897	0.813
	Humanity2	1.644	0.897				

Figure 1
Basic Node Diagram with Loading



Discriminant validity indicates that a construct is distinct from other constructs and effectively captures the intended variable (Hair et al., 2014). According to Hair et al. (2017), a construct's indicators should be associated more closely with its own construct than with those of another construct. Discriminant validity is assessed by cross-loading, Fornell-Larcker criteria, and heterotrait-monotrait ratios, as outlined by Henseler et al. (2016) and Hair et al. (2017). Cross loadings are the primary approach for assessing discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). The cross-loading method precludes the misassignment of an indication to an alternative construct (Henseler et al., 2016). According to Hair et al. (2017) and Hair et al. (2011), it is recommended that an indicator's outer loading on the respective construct should be more than its cross-loading on the other. Table 3 illustrates the outcomes of the cross-loading analysis, confirming the criterion of discriminant validity.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity – Cross-Loading

	EI Awareness	EI Impact	EI Integration	Humanity
EI-Awareness1	0.628	0.251	0.325	0.254
EI-Awareness2	0.622	0.229	0.338	0.298
EI-Awareness3	0.791	0.413	0.443	0.285
EI-Awareness4	0.856	0.599	0.777	0.428
EI-Awareness5	0.692	0.588	0.420	0.326
EI-Impact1	0.560	0.853	0.531	0.389
EI-Impact2	0.567	0.923	0.711	0.394
EI-Impact3	0.548	0.894	0.710	0.375
EI-Integration1	0.597	0.550	0.918	0.373
EI-Integration2	0.668	0.734	0.903	0.426
EI-Integration3	0.573	0.697	0.902	0.349
Humanity1	0.436	0.422	0.363	0.907
Humanity2	0.376	0.357	0.402	0.897

Fornell and Larcker (1981) present an alternative method for assessing discriminant validity, asserting that the square root of a construct's AVE must exceed its correlation with other constructs. Table 4 illustrates the findings of Fornell and Larcker, indicating discriminant validity among the constructs, since the square root of each construct's AVE (diagonal element) exceeds its correlation with other constructs.

Table 4
Discriminant Validity - Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	EI Awareness	EI Impact	EI Integration	Humanity
EI Awareness	0.724			
EI Impact	0.626	0.891		
EI Integration	0.678	0.736	0.908	
Humanity	0.451	0.433	0.424	0.902

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is a contemporary method for assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM, established by Henseler et al. (2015). The researchers assert that neither the Fornell-Larcker criterion nor cross-loadings is effective in reliably determining discriminant validity. A lack of discriminant validity cannot be detected by the cross-loading method when two constructs are perfectly correlated. The Fornell-Larcker criteria also showed poor performance when the outer loadings are closely aligned. Henseler et al. established a threshold of 0.90 for the similarity of constructs and 0.85 when the constructs are conceptually distinct. In the present study, all the HTMT values were below 0.90 (Table 5), with the highest value being 0.818 between EI Impact and EI Integration.

Table 51
Discriminant Validity - Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	EI Awareness	EI Impact	EI Integration	Humanity
EI Awareness	1			
EI Impact	0.698	1		
EI Integration	0.757	0.818	1	
Humanity	0.566	0.529	0.508	1

The results of path analysis (Table 6) include path coefficients, t-values, and p-values for each RQ. The finding shows that EI Impact significantly predicted EI awareness (β=0.626; t=9.421; p=0.000) and EI Integration (β=0.736; t=10.714; p=0.000). In contrast, the effect of EI Awareness (β=0.303; t=1.819; p=0.069) and EI Integration (β=0.218; t=1.179; p=0.239) on Humanity was not statistically significant.

Table 6
Path Analysis and Hypothesis Validation

Path	Original	SD	*t*-test	P	Validation
EI Awareness -> Humanity	0.303	0.167	1.819	0.069	Not Supported
EI Impact -> EI Awareness	0.626	0.066	9.421	0.000	Supported
EI Impact -> EI Integration	0.736	0.069	10.714	0.000	Supported
EI Integration -> Humanity	0.218	0.185	1.179	0.239	Not Supported
EI Impact -> EI Integration -> Humanity	0.161	0.141	1.139	0.255	Not Supported
EI Impact -> EI Awareness -> Humanity	0.190	0.112	1.701	0.089	Not Supported

The mediating effect of EI Integration and EI Awareness was examined for EI Impact and Humanity. The effect of both EI Integration (β=0.161; t=1.139; p=0.255) and EI Awareness (β=0.190; t=1.701; p=0.089) was insignificant for EI Impact and Humanity.

Regarding RQ1, the EI Integration construct was strongly predicted by the EI Impact (β=0.736, t=10.714, p<0.001), with an R^2 value of 0.542 indicating that 54.2% of the variance in students' ability to integrate EI as a practical tool was explained by the pedagogical intervention.

For RQ2, the pedagogical effectiveness was confirmed through two significant pathways: EI Impact → EI Awareness (β=0.626, t=9.421, p<0.001) and EI Impact → EI Integration (β=0.736, t=10.714, p<0.001). The stronger relationship with EI Integration than EI Awareness suggests the pedagogy successfully moved beyond cognitive understanding to behavioral application, enabling students to read beyond literary texts.

Addressing RQ3, high mean scores across all constructs (ranging from 3.63 to 4.59 on a five-point scale) with particularly elevated EI Awareness construct means (4.30-4.59). The corrected item-total correlations all exceeded 0.20 (range: 0.360-0.803), confirming that students perceived EI integration as meaningful and transformative to their academic and personal development, though the non-significant relationships with the Humanity construct (β=0.303, p=0.069; β=0.218, p=0.239) suggest their self-perception of prosocial growth may exceed or differ qualitatively from measurable behavioral outcomes.

Overall, students who possess existing capacity for emotional integration might be precisely those individuals most receptive to EI-oriented pedagogical interventions. Their pre-existing integrative abilities could be an affective schema that renders them more attuned to recognizing and benefiting from emotionally intelligent pedagogical approaches. In this scenario, EI Integration would be a moderating variable that determines how pedagogical interventions impact their awareness and further development. Students' reflections on applying EI principles to real-world contexts, journaling practices, and reformed living could thus represent activation or refinement of pre-existing capacities rather than de novo skill development.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

To address RQ4, the qualitative analysis was performed on ten transcripts of the participants' reflections on the courses that they took on EI. Based on autonomous open queries and text queries, the research ranked the data on the top one hundred most repeated words in the sources, which were later reduced to one hundred and finally twelve thematic areas. Based on commonalities and relevance, the research classified these twelve themes into three broad thematic areas converging with sustainable development goals. The analysis revealed a total of twelve sub-themes, which were categorized into three major themes: personal insights (five sub-themes), action and achievements (three sub-themes), and love and empathy (four sub-themes). These three major themes appeared to be sequential. Table 7 shows the frequency of each of the major themes and sub-themes.

Table 7
Integrated Thematic Analysis of EI Course Impact

Major Theme	Sub-themes	No. of References	% of Total References
Personal Insights	Emotions (45) Feeling (47) Intelligence (51) Personally (27) Reflections (25)	195	56%
Action and Achievements	Achievements (32) Applying to Tasks (20 Reformed Living (10)	62	18%
Love and Empathy (Goodness)	Helping (35) Positivity (34) Being Vigilant (21)	90	26%

The Action and Achievements theme (62 references, 18% of total) provided concrete evidence of students utilizing creative skills to cultivate EI as a practical tool, with sub-themes of Achievements (32 references), Applying to Tasks (20 references), and Reformed Living (10 references), demonstrating tangible implementation beyond theoretical understanding. Several students reported applications beyond academic settings, with one participant explaining, *"emotional intelligence applies to work and life trials. It helps in making you a better friend, a better student, and a better person."* This transfer appeared to be facilitated by explicit connections between literary emotional themes and real-world scenarios. Another student emphasized the lasting impact: *"These tools are something that I will be able to take with me wherever I go, and I am very grateful for that."* Participants reported that real-world stories significantly enhanced their understanding of EI concepts. One student described the impact: *"Every week we heard various people from all walks of life and professions. They told their personal stories... they all had the same major point to convey to us, the significance of knowing yourself and the other person."* These authentic narratives appeared to bridge the gap between literary study and practical application. Students connected speakers' experiences to their own lives, with one participant noting how a speaker's story about loss and emotional control *"made me reflect upon my life."* The findings suggest that integrating real-world narratives with literary content enhances the authenticity and relevance of EI learning.

The Personal Insights theme dominated the corpus at 195 references (56% of total), encompassing sub-themes of Emotions (45 references), Feeling (47 references), Intelligence (51 references), Personally (27 references), and Reflections (25 references) that demonstrated students' capacity to read beyond surface text meanings to extract emotional, psychological, and interpersonal insights applicable to reality. One of the students' reflections stated: *"This module, especially the latter part, invited us to focus on poets' mental well-being, what went wrong with the modern poets like Plath, and how we can avoid it as future poets, authors, and literary scholars."* Another student emphasized, *"One of the most significant lessons I learned was emotional awareness, not simply the ability to identify my emotions, but to comprehend how to express them."* Moreover, participants engaged with bibliotherapy concepts

and reflective writing practices, with one student specifically mentioning learning about *"reflective writing and bibliotherapy, and how writing can help us process and deal with our emotions."* Journaling emerged as an effective tool for emotion regulation, with participants describing sustained benefits from regular writing practices. One student noted that journaling *"helps maintain emotional regulation and makes sure that I am on target when trying to achieve my goals."* Participants engaged with various reflection practices, including self-interrogation techniques and goal-setting exercises. One student described the value of these approaches: *"self-interrogation, and self-reflexive writing have been useful for our project and in my own personal life."* Students reported continued use of these practices beyond the course.

Students' overwhelmingly positive self-perception was evident across all thematic areas, with explicit reflections spanning the Personal Insights (56%), Action and Achievements (18%), and Love and Empathy themes (90 references, 26% of total). The Love and Empathy theme, with sub-themes of Helping (35 references), Positivity (34 references), and Being Vigilant (21 references), revealed students' perceived development of prosocial values and humanitarian orientations, demonstrating how they believed EI consolidation had expanded their capacity for compassion and ethical relational behaviors.

5. Discussion

This study investigates how literature students' engagement with fiction can be integrated with EI competencies and reflective thinking for academic and personal growth. In this study, literature students reported struggling to recognize, assess, and transfer these competencies to their personal and social lives.

With regards to RQ1-3, the results of the present study prove the importance of EI Integration in literature curricula, which currently lack such integration. Literature teaching does not currently encourage students to consider alternative endings to literary works from different characters' perspectives, nor to analyze how emotional responses change from different viewpoints. Literature students could retell classic stories through digital storytelling platforms, taking turns to narrate different sections in podcast episodes in which they discuss emotional articulation skills. Alternatively, visual feedback systems could enhance self-awareness of emotional expression patterns, particularly in language production (Baagbah & Ganapathy, 2025). Scholars can also customize the reported techniques of EI Integration to the Kuwaiti pedagogical contexts. Structured online discussions with assigned emotional cues could provide scaffolding for digital emotional management, giving students practice in responding empathetically in mediated environments. Creative problem-solving activities that incorporate emotional scenarios could help to build both analytical and emotional competencies while developing technological literacy. Students could engage in collaborative creative projects with peers from different cultural backgrounds to learn how to navigate diverse emotional expression patterns and communication styles (Tabatabaee-Yazdi & Baghaei, 2022). Students could learn to empathize with others facing challenges while developing practical skills for collaborative problem-solving through service-learning projects that map social justice to real community issues. Furthermore, students could also benefit from explicit training in managing emotions through digital interactions and from developing empathy through virtual communication channels. For instance, teachers could create structured online discussions and assign written emotional cues to help prompt appropriate responses. Service-learning projects linking literary insights to real-world social justice issues provide opportunities for collaborative problem-solving while fostering empathy.

The qualitative results of the present study (RQ4) showed variations in the expression of the major and sub-themes among male and female participants. Students with different self-reported personality traits also expressed the themes differently. Therefore, EI integration in literature curricula should consider such variations in the perception of a literary text and the adoption of a critical approach. How students engage with emotional themes in literature varies based on their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences with emotional expression, and teaching such engagement may therefore be controversial (Sadirova et al., 2025). Students from cultures that emphasize collective emotional responsibility may approach literary EI differently than students from individualist cultures (Zadanova et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, those who apply emotional insights from literature to their personal and social contexts show stronger reflective thinking and demonstrate greater understanding of real-world relationships, conflict resolution, and personal growth through their literary engagement. Furthermore, students with well-developed reflective thinking attitudes have stronger language achievements and a better understanding of learning tactics (Davoudi & Heydarnejad, 2020). Notably, learner autonomy in online learning environments predicts both positive emotions and willingness to communicate while also influencing academic achievement through emotional pathways (Botes et al., 2025). Conversely, cooperative learning strategies can have significant positive effects on student achievement and help to build cultural schema awareness while maintaining cultural sensitivity (Syam et al., 2025); indeed, a collaborative annotation platform that prompts students to comment on fiction while seeing how peers from different backgrounds interpret emotional content has been found to be particularly effective.

Direct implications for literature education in the cultural context of Kuwait arise from the results of the present study. EI has been linked to empathy, social relationships, and academic achievement, despite the international inconsistencies in how EI is conceptualized, assessed, and linked to outcomes. In Kuwait, where cultural expectations regarding gender shape emotional expression and learning behaviors, awareness can guide educators to adapt their pedagogy in ways that acknowledge, rather than overlook, students' social and emotional profiling (Halimi et al., 2021). Sentimental discourse and arsenal of words often expose people to diverse emotionality that can be contextualized as springboards for empathetic outputs (Abdelzaher & Essam, 2019).

To conclude, the outcome of the research allows us to consider ways that we can foster lifelong learning and go beyond teaching language and literature, as well as other disciplines, by focusing on the SDGS of Good Health and Well-being and Quality Education. In the age of digital transformation and technologies such as AI and various language models, we should be keen on focusing on a human-centric approach to learning and education. To create lifelong learning, we need to start within the classroom and integrate EI as part of students' learning and well-being. A holistic approach that blends EI with AI could also provide interesting results, and further research into the area could be beneficial as we reform education moving forward.

Disclosure Statement

The authors claim no conflict of interest.

Funding

The research did not receive any specific grants from funding agencies.

References

Abdelzaher, E. M., & Essam, B. A. (2019). Weaponizing words. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *18*(6), 893–914. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.18048.abd

Abdulameer, S. A., & Sahib, M. N. (2019). Cross-cultural adaptation and psychometric properties of osteoporosis knowledge tool-Arabic version among Iraqi population. *The Open Rheumatology Journal*, *13*(1), 30–38. https://doi.org/10.2174/1874312901913010030

Ajmal, M., Maqbool, S., Pavlikova, M., Alam, S., & Banu, S. (2025). Investigating teacher-student emotional dynamics in English language teaching: Examining co-regulation techniques and their impact on learning outcomes. *World Journal of English Language*, *15*(3), 215–224. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v15n3p215

Almutawa, H., & Alfahid, M. (2024). Reflective Journal Writing: EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions during Practicum. Language Teaching Research Quarterly, 45, 140-156. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2024.45.08

Baagbah, S. Y., & Ganapathy, M. (2025). Examining the use of PRAAT to improve English lexical stress production: Insights from self-directed learning within the framework of self-determination theory. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *49*, 170–193. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.49.09

Bar-On R. (2007). The Bar-On model of emotional intelligence: A valid, robust and applicable EI mode. *Organisations and People*, 14(2), 27–34.

Bar-On, R. (2010). Emotional intelligence: An integral part of positive psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *40*(1), 54–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124631004000106

Barrett, L. F. (2017). *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain.* Pan Macmillan.

Botes, E., Resnik, P., Moskowitz, S., Dewaele, J. M., Mercer, S., & Greiff, S. (2025). A tangled web: Learner autonomy as a predictor of learner emotions, willingness to communicate and academic achievement in online language learning. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *48*, 10–29. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.48.02

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research on teaching. In N. L. Gage (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 171–246). Rand McNally.

Carayannis, E. G., & Morawska-Jancelewicz, J. (2022). The futures of Europe: Society 5.0 and industry 5.0 as driving forces of future universities. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, *13*, 3445–3471. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-021-00854-2

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Davoudi, M., & Heydarnejad, T. (2020). The interplay between reflective thinking and language achievement: A case of Iranian EFL learners. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *18*, 70–82.

DeVellis, R. F. (2016). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Edwards-Jones, A. (2014). Qualitative data analysis with NVIVO. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 40*(2), 193-195. https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2013.866724

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(3), 382–388. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800313

Gebremedhin, M., Gebrewahd, E., & Stafford, L. K. (2022). Validity and reliability study of clinician attitude towards rural health extension program in Ethiopia: Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. *BMC Health Services Research*, *22*(1), Article 1088. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-08470-9

Goleman, D. (1998). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, *76*(6), 93-102.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage.

Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Mena, J. A. (2012). An assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *40*(3), 414–433. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0261-6

Halimi, F., AlShammari, I., & Navarro, C. (2021). Emotional intelligence and academic achievement in higher education. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, *13*(2), 485–503. https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-11-2019-0286

Henseler, J. (2017). Bridging design and behavioral research with variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of Advertising*, *46*(1), 178–192. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1281780

Henseler, J., Hubona, G., & Ray, P. A. (2016). Using PLS path modeling in new technology research: Updated guidelines. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, *116*(1), 2–20. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-09-2015-0382

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(1), 115–135. https://doi.org/10.1007/S11747-014-0403-8/FIGURES/8

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing. *Advances in International Marketing*, *20*(20), 277–319. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1474-7979(2009)0000020014

Kline, R. B. (2015). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Li, B., Shen, W., Ding, Y., Pawlak, M., & Kruk, M. (2025). Chinese EFL learners' task control-value appraisals, emotions and behavioral engagement during after-class app-assisted vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *48*, 216–235. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.48.13

Liu, H., Liu, B., & Zhou, X. (2024). Exploring the mediating role of EFL teachers' emotion regulation in the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12672

Liu, W. (2025). A bibliometric analysis of written corrective feedback in second language writing. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *49*, 133–150. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.49.07

Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. J. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* (pp. 3–34). Basic Books.

Miao, C., & Shi, J. (2025). Self-positioning and critical thinking: Demotivated students in English for academic purposes. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *49*, 226–246. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.49.12

Noguera, C. V., & Mavrou, I. (2024). The "emotional brain" of adolescent Spanish–German heritage speakers: Is emotional intelligence a proxy for productive emotional vocabulary? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *28*(1), 217–231. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728924000348

Revelle, C., Wilson-Youngblood, A., & Schneider, C. (2020). What's in your feed?: Navigating the digital divide to advocate for diverse texts. *English in Texas*, *50*(1), 14-19.

Sadirova, K., Agymedullayeva, N., Yessenova, K., Ismailova, F., & Imangazina, A. (2025). Political media discourse in the post-truth era: A cross-linguistic analysis of rhetorical strategies in Kazakh and English. *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, *13*(1), 289–307. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2025.2054162.3933

Santoso, D. R., Affandi, G. R., & Basthomi, Y. (2024). 'Getting stuck': A study of Indonesian EFL learners' self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and speaking achievement. *Studies in English Language and Education*, *11*(1), 384–402. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i1.30969

Sextou, P., & Karypidou, A. (2018). What does the actor need to perform in health care? Emotional demands, skills and competencies. *Applied Theatre Research*, *6*(2), 107–119. https://doi.org/10.1386/atr.6.2.107_1

Shevchenko, K. (2023). Quality education trend in the employment development strategy of the Amur region. *Strategizing: Theory and Practice*, *2*(4), 584–599. https://doi.org/10.21603/2782-2435-2022-2-4-584-599

Streiner, D. L., & Norman, G. R. (2003). *Health measurement scales: A practical guide to their development and use* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Syam, S., Andayani, A., Suwandi, S., & Suhita, R. (2025). Cultural insights into reading learning models: A comprehensive meta-analysis. *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, *13*(1), 11–25. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2024.2027111.3465

Tabatabaee-Yazdi, M., & Baghaei, P. (2022). Persian translation and Rasch model-based validation of an intercultural intelligence scale. *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, *10*(1), 71–82. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2021.245308

Tóth, Á., & Abdelzaher, E. (2024). BERT may help in lexicographic sense delineation. International Journal of Digital Humanities, 6(3), 291–311. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-024-00093-2

Teoh, G. B. S., & Liau, A. W. L. (2021). Emotional intelligence in distance learning: A case study of English as a second language via distance learning. *Journal of Language and Education*, *7*(3), 151–165. https://doi.org/10.17323/JLE.2021.12624

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2015). Development and validation of the CQS: The cultural intelligence scale. In S. Ang & L. Van Dyne (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications* (pp. 16-38). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315703855-10

Yaccob, N. S., Yunus, M. M., & Hashim, H. (2022). The integration of global competence into Malaysian English as a second language lessons for quality education (Fourth United Nations sustainable development goal). *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, Article 848417. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.848417

Zadanova, E., Fazylzhanova, A., Dyakov, D., Ayupova, G., & Galiyeva, B. (2024). Ethnospecific perceptions of success: A socio-psychological analysis across Kazakh, American, and Russian cultures. *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, *12*(3), 120–136. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2024.2029713.3497

Zaleniene, I., & Pereira, P. (2021). Higher education for sustainability: A global perspective. *Geography and Sustainability*, *2*(2), 99–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.GEOSUS.2021.05.001

Appendix

The Questionnaire on Emotional Intelligence Integration in Literature Studies

Section 1: Demographic Information

• Age: _____
• Gender: Male / Female / Prefer not to say
• Level of Study: Undergraduate / Graduate / Other
• Years Studying Literature: _____

For the following sections, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section 2: EI Impact

1. Explicit instruction on Emotional Intelligence (EI) has increased my emotional self-awareness, helping me recognize and label my emotions accurately.
2. Integrating EI into literature studies has enhanced my emotional understanding, enabling me to identify and interpret emotional dynamics in texts and real-life situations.
3. Learning EI explicitly has improved my ability to transfer emotional insights from literature to real-world interactions.

Section 3: EI Awareness

1. Recognizing my own emotional responses enhances my interpretation of characters' inner states.
2. Empathic attunement allows me to understand characters' intentions, emotional struggles, and moral choices more deeply.
3. Regulating my emotions while analyzing literature helps me evaluate characters' motivations objectively.
4. Intrinsic motivation enhances my engagement when exploring complex emotional or ethical themes in literature.
5. Understanding emotional exchanges between characters improves my perception of social dynamics and relationships in real life.

Section 4: EI Integration

1. EI-focused instruction has improved my ability to manage emotions in academic and real-life contexts.
2. Exposure to EI frameworks has increased my self-awareness, helping me identify emotional triggers.
3. Studying EI has enhanced my ability to perceive and interpret emotional cues such as tone, expression, and body language.

Section 5: Humanity

1. Learning EI within literature courses has strengthened my understanding of human empathy, ethical sensitivity, and moral imagination amid AI-driven environments.
2. EI-based literary study has increased my awareness of emotional authenticity and relational depth as essential human traits.

Section 6: Open-Ended Questions

1. How has engaging with literature helped you recognize, understand, or reflect on your own emotions, personal strengths, or limitations?
2. In what ways has reading literature influenced your ability to empathize with others, understand relationships, or navigate social interactions in real life?
3. Which emotional skills or insights gained from literature have you consciously applied in your daily life, academic work, or in maintaining human-centered values in a digitizing world?