**Beyond the Headlines: Resilience and Reinvention of English Studies**

**Abstract**

This study critically examines the reported crisis in English literature education within UK and Indian universities and focuses on claims of institutional course closures, declining enrolments, and shifting perceptions of disciplinary value. Drawing on eight significant policy and media reports from both regions, the research employs qualitative content analysis to identify underlying narratives and thematic patterns. The findings reveal regional divergences, misrepresentations in public discourse, and the persistent vitality of English departments through acts of resilience, pedagogic innovation, and intellectual excellence. The inclusion of critical perspectives from Indian academia offers a comparative lens to assess the broader global implications. Ultimately, the study proposes actionable recommendations for reimagining English studies as a field that retains both contemporary relevance and enduring civic and intellectual worth.

**Keywords**: English literary studies, higher education, curriculum, media discourse, literary value, enrolment trends, crisis narrative, resilience

**1 Introduction**

In recent years, the future of English literature as an academic discipline has come under intense scrutiny amid reports of declining enrolments, department closures, and shifts in student preferences across universities in the United Kingdom, the United States, and India. The growing perception that English literature degrees are no longer “viable” (Kidson, 2024) reflects a broader cultural and economic shift in higher education—one that increasingly privileges STEM fields and vocationally oriented disciplines over the arts and humanities. The announcement by Canterbury Christ Church University in 2024 to scrap its English literature programme, citing low demand, signalled a moment of reckoning for the discipline (*The Guardian*, 2024a). The symbolism of this closure, in the historic city of Chaucer and Marlowe, triggered wide public and scholarly debate, with many viewing it *not just as an institutional decision but as part of a larger cultural crisis*.

 This apparent decline is often attributed to the rising cost of education, the transactional nature of degree choices in the post-fees era, and the perception that literature offers limited employability (Heller, 2023). Reports suggest that students are increasingly driven by economic utility and job security, opting for degrees that promise a clearer return on investment. In the UK, A-level enrolments in English literature dropped from 83,000 in 2013 to 54,000 in 2023 (Allfree, 2024). Similar patterns are observed in the United States, where humanities enrolments at institutions like Ohio State and Boston University fell by nearly 50% within a decade (Heller, 2023). In India, debates around the future of English degrees have emerged as part of a larger concern about curriculum relevance and employability, with scholars both critiquing the stagnation of traditional syllabi (Prakash, 2025) and emphasizing the rising demand for English as a global communication tool (Chaudhary, 2025).

 However, the narrative of terminal decline is *only part of the picture*. Several scholars and commentators argue that English Studies remains resilient, undergoing a process of *reinvention rather than extinction*. Sarah Cowan (2023) challenges the media’s doomsday tone by pointing to nuanced enrolment trends, regional variations, and rising postgraduate interest. Further, institutions continue to produce world-class research, foster critical thinking, and contribute meaningfully to public discourse through literature’s engagement with themes of identity, history, ethics, and imagination. In the context of global crises—climate change, political extremism, social fragmentation—the value of the humanities, particularly literature, as a means of cultivating empathy and critical reflection, has become more pressing than ever (West, 2024; Hirst, 2024).

 Given these competing narratives of crisis and resilience, this study aims to analyse the contemporary status of English literature degrees by synthesizing media editorials, institutional reports, and scholarly commentary. It investigates the extent of the challenges facing the discipline, interrogates the socio-political forces behind curricular shifts, and identifies avenues for reinvention. Importantly, it includes perspectives from both the Global North and South to avoid a Eurocentric framing and to better understand how English studies are evolving across diverse educational landscapes. This contextualised enquiry is essential not only for understanding the present moment but for envisioning the future of English literature in the academy and beyond.

 English literature, long revered as a pillar of the humanities, has been increasingly portrayed in media and policy narratives as outdated, elitist, and impractical. Headlines such as “Has ‘Wokeness’ killed the English literature degree?” (Allfree, 2024) and institutional decisions like the closure of the English programme at Canterbury Christ Church University (Kidson, 2024) exemplify a broader cultural and economic disenchantment. However, a deeper analysis reveals a complex interplay of factors: declining student enrolments, shifting educational priorities, governmental policy pressures, and global realignments of academic value. This article aims to explore these dynamics through eight representative reports from the UK and India and offers a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the state of English studies.

**1.1 Review of the Related Literature**

The decline of English literature degrees has become a subject of significant academic and public concern over recent years and attracts widespread media attention and scholarly debate. Studies and reports from the UK, India, and other parts of the world reveal a complex and multifaceted crisis that goes beyond mere enrolment numbers to touch upon deeper socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations impacting the humanities.

 In the UK, the dramatic fall in students pursuing English literature at both A-level and university has been well documented. Allfree (2024) notes a sharp decrease in enrolment numbers and highlights institutional responses such as degree restructuring and outright course closures at various universities, including Canterbury Christ Church University and Cumbria University. The financial pressures faced by universities, particularly those that are less prestigious or regionally focused, exacerbate the situation, leading to faculty redundancies and diminished academic quality (Allfree, 2024; Kidson, 2024). This decline is compounded by changing perceptions of English literature’s value in a market-driven educational landscape, where students prioritize degrees with clear vocational outcomes (Allfree, 2024).

 Moreover, the cultural and pedagogical shifts within English studies have stirred debate. Allfree (2024) and other commentators observe that an increasing focus on identity politics, decolonization, and “wokeness” has alienated some students and academics and created tensions around the traditional literary canon. The fear that this ideological turn might have “intellectually evacuated” the discipline has been voiced by some scholars and educators (Allfree, 2024). However, others, such as Cowan (2023), argue that these cultural debates are not new but part of the discipline’s ongoing evolution, and that despite enrolment declines, English Studies continues to demonstrate research excellence and societal impact, especially at the postgraduate level.

 The problem is further intensified by a broader cultural shift, notably the decline in reading habits and literacy among younger generations. Allfree (2024) and related reports point to a pervasive reduction in reading for pleasure, linked to the rise of social media and changing modes of engagement with texts, which undermines the very skills essential for literary study—nuance, irony, and critical interpretation. This decline in foundational skills is echoed in the findings of the National Literacy Trust (cited in Allfree, 2024), which shows a significant drop in daily reading rates among under-18s in the UK.

 Turning to India, similar but contextually distinct challenges are noted. Indian scholars and commentators have documented the marginalization of English literature in academic curricula and student choices and reflected wider debates on the relevance of English studies in a postcolonial, multilingual society grappling with its identity and educational priorities. It is often argued that the emphasis on STEM and vocational education, reinforced by government policies and market demands, has led to diminishing interest in English literature, which is often seen as elitist or disconnected from contemporary Indian realities. In addition, it highlights the internal crisis within Indian English departments, where resource constraints, outdated syllabi, and a lack of institutional support further discourage student engagement and scholarly innovation.

 Both Indian and UK contexts reveal that the crisis is not solely about numbers but involves questions of disciplinary purpose and adaptability. The traditional literary canon is challenged by demands for inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, and relevance to pressing social issues, which some departments have embraced while others struggle to integrate (Cowan, 2023). The global trend toward *the “marketization” of education* also raises concerns about the humanities being undervalued in favour of courses perceived as more economically profitable (Allfree, 2024).

 Despite these challenges, the literature also points to *signs of resilience and renewal*. Cowan (2023) stresses that English Studies continues to thrive in research excellence, cultural projects, and postgraduate education. Similarly, Indian scholars call for curricular reforms, enhanced pedagogy, and greater institutional investment to make English literature more accessible and meaningful for contemporary students. Both contexts suggest that addressing the crisis requires a holistic approach that encompasses policy changes, pedagogical innovation, and cultural advocacy. Thus, the literature underscores a complex interplay of economic, cultural, educational, and political factors behind the perceived crisis in English literature degrees. It calls for nuanced understanding and strategic interventions that recognize the discipline’s evolving role in higher education and society at large.

 McCulloch and McCaig (2002) critically examine how the English educational tradition has been selectively reinvented to serve contemporary political and ideological agendas and argue that appeals to a coherent national past often obscure the complex, contested nature of historical educational practices. Their analysis highlights the constructed nature of tradition and its strategic use in shaping current education policy debates.

**1.2 Identified Knowledge Gap**

While existing literature documents the decline in undergraduate English literature enrolment and institutional challenges globally—especially in the UK and India—there remains a lack of comprehensive, comparative analysis that integrates these regional contexts with nuanced examination of the discipline’s ongoing resilience, evolving pedagogical practices, and cultural relevance beyond mere statistics. Moreover, many reports focus heavily on sensationalist enrolment declines or institutional responses without fully exploring the lived experiences of students and faculty, the impact of curricular innovations, or the broader socio-political dynamics influencing the future of English literature studies.

**1.3 Delimitations of the Study**

This study focuses on the recent crisis narratives surrounding English literature degrees as portrayed in major journalistic and academic sources from the United Kingdom, the United States, and India. It delimits itself to the analysis of eight selected articles and editorials published between 2023 and 2025 in leading media outlets such as *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *The New Yorker*, *Times of India*, *Financial Express*, and *Wonkhe*. While the issue is global in nature, this study concentrates on English-speaking democracies with established higher education systems and long-standing literary traditions. The analysis excludes quantitative datasets such as national enrolment surveys and long-term employment outcome statistics, and focuses instead on qualitative interpretation and thematic review of discourse. Besides, this study does not survey student or faculty responses directly but relies on reported testimony and expert commentary included in the selected articles.

**1.4 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study lies in critically evaluating the ongoing debate about the decline, reinvention, and future viability of English literature programmes in higher education. It examines the structural, cultural, and ideological factors contributing to departmental closures, curriculum reforms, and declining student interest. The study aims to offer a nuanced perspective by balancing crisis rhetoric with evidence of resilience, innovation, and continued relevance in English studies. It includes comparative insights from India to broaden the discourse beyond Western academia and reflect the global implications of language and literature in a postcolonial, digital, and economically driven world. The study also considers interdisciplinary trends, student motivations, policy shifts, and socio-economic pressures that are influencing how English literature is perceived and taught today. Ultimately, this work contributes to the growing body of scholarship and advocates for a renewed vision of the humanities in the 21st-century university.

**2 Method**

This study employs qualitative content analysis to synthesise findings and arguments across eight journalistic and academic sources. These texts include empirical data from institutional reports, opinion pieces, first-hand academic testimonies, and policy critiques published between 2023 and 2025 in prominent newspapers, education platforms, and academic blogs. These include: Nathan Heller’s essay in *The New Yorker*, Claire Allfree’s column in *The Telegraph*, Sarah Cowan’s blog post for *WONKHE*, Lauren Kidson’s report in *The Telegraph*, Vikaram Chaudhary’s report in *Financial Express*, Asha Praksh’s opinion article in *Times of India*, and Editorial from the *Guardian*, with rejoinders to the editorial by Professor Linden West and Diana Hirst. Each source is analysed for its rhetorical framing, use of data, implicit assumptions, and contributions to public and academic discourse on English studies. The triangulation of journalistic, academic, and institutional voices helps to trace both *dominant and divergent narratives* within the debate. Moreover, the selection represents a balance of UK-based perspectives and two critical contributions from Indian academia and ensures both a domestic and international lens on the issue.

**2.1 Research Questions**

This study seeks to address key questions that explore the causes, implications, and future prospects of the declining interest in English literature degrees both globally and within Indian academia.

1. What are the factors contributing to the closure or restructuring of English literature programmes in universities, especially in the UK and India?
2. How have educators, students, and public intellectuals responded to the so-called ‘crisis’ in English Studies?
3. What evidence supports the claim that English Studies continue to remain relevant and resilient despite enrolment declines?
4. What possible directions and recommendations can be proposed to reimagine the role and sustainability of English Studies in higher education?

**2.2 Contribution of the Present Article**

This article, “Beyond the Headlines: Resilience and Renewal of English Studies,” aims to fill this gap by providing a balanced and in-depth exploration of the complexities surrounding English literature degrees in the UK and India. It moves beyond sensational headlines and enrolment numbers to highlight examples of resilience, innovation, and scholarly excellence. By combining quantitative data, institutional case studies, and qualitative insights, it investigates how English literature departments are adapting to contemporary challenges through curricular reforms, pedagogical creativity, and engagement with socio-cultural issues. The article also offers policy recommendations and practical suggestions aimed at sustaining and revitalizing English literature education in diverse academic and cultural landscapes.

**3 Results**

This study examined eight recent reports, editorials, and commentaries from the UK, US, and India to understand the status, decline, resilience, and reinvention of English literature programmes in higher education. The key findings are:

1. Data from sources such as *The Guardian* (2024), *The New Yorker* (Heller, 2023), and *WONKHE* (Cowan, 2023) consistently show a decline in the number of students opting for English literature degrees. At Arizona State University that has been repeatedly ranked as the ‘most innovative university,’ enrolments halved between 2012 and the pandemic, and UK A-level takers fell from 83,000 in 2013 to 54,000 in 2023.
2. Students reported choosing STEM or vocational degrees over English due to fear of unemployment, high tuition costs, and pressure to select “practical” fields. This was corroborated by testimonies from students in the US (Heller, 2023) and England (Allfree, 2024).
3. Canterbury Christ Church University (UK) announced the termination of its English literature degree due to low demand. Similar restructures occurred at Cumbria, Sheffield Hallam, and other UK universities. Institutions cited financial unviability and low enrolment as reasons.
4. Academics like Professor Linden West and Dr. Diana Hirst (*The Guardian*, 2024) argue that the closures represent a form of *cultural impoverishment* and called for a revaluation of English Studies’ civic and emotional benefits.
5. Contrary to the Western trend, reports by Prakash (2025) and Chaudhary (2025) suggest a mixed yet hopeful outlook for English studies in India. While students express anxiety over job prospects, institutions and agencies like the British Council emphasize English’s growing relevance in global and multilingual contexts.
6. According to Cowan (2023), English departments in the UK continue to perform strongly in research (REF21), and postgraduate enrolments have increased, signalling continued academic strength and societal relevance.
7. Reports highlight a broader cultural shift with fewer young people reading for pleasure (National Literacy Trust statistics quoted in *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*), which may be impacting the pipeline into English studies.

**4 Analysis**

The data reveal a complex and paradoxical landscape for English studies globally. While declining undergraduate enrolments dominate headlines, this study finds that the situation is neither uniform nor terminal. The primary forces driving the decline include economic rationalism, neoliberal education policies, and cultural devaluation of the humanities.

1. In both the US and UK, students face rising tuition fees and debt burdens that steer them toward degrees perceived as economically “safer.” As shown in Heller’s (2023) report, even students with strong literary passions often opt for STEM or business degrees. This shift reflects a deeper instrumentalist mindset, where education is viewed as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself.
2. However, the public discourse fails to capture the continued vitality and reinvention within English Studies. Cowan (2023) and the REF21 findings indicate that English departments are adapting, producing world-leading research and fostering interdisciplinary approaches. Moreover, the postgraduate uptick suggests that students who abandon English at the undergraduate level may return later, drawn by its intellectual depth and relevance.
3. The editorial by *The Guardian* and responses by West and Hirst frame the crisis as a cultural one, where the erosion of literary education signals a loss of societal empathy, imagination, and moral reflection. This aligns with Nussbaum’s (2010) theory that humanities nurture democratic citizenship. Their arguments challenge the prevailing assumption that literature lacks “real-world” value and offer instead a defence of its civic, psychological, and ethical importance.
4. In contrast, the situation in India is more nuanced. *The Times of India* and *Financial Express* articles show that English remains desirable for aspirational and multilingual students, especially as a gateway to global citizenship. However, Indian students also face confusion about the utility of a literature degree in *a hyper-competitive, skill-based economy*. This contradiction underscores the need for curricular reinvention and career-oriented framing of English programmes in Indian academia.
5. Finally, the study reveals a deeper problem: the disconnection between reading culture and education. As reading for pleasure declines, as noted in UK-based reports, the very foundation of English studies is weakened. Yet this decline may also be reversible through education reforms, digital innovation, and community engagement projects such as the Kent Maps Online and the Shakespeare North initiative.

**5. Discussion**

The discussion section critically examines the multifaceted factors influencing the crisis in English literature studies and drawing on international and Indian perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

**5.1.1 A Real or Manufactured Crisis?**

Articles such as those by Allfree (2024) and Kidson (2024) paint a bleak picture: plummeting A-level enrolments, redundancies in departments, and universities deeming English literature “no longer viable.” Financial precarity following Brexit, tuition fee structures, and the over-prioritisation of STEM subjects have worsened the outlook. Yet, Sarah Cowan’s (2023) piece in *WONKHE* presents a corrective: declines are not uniform, with Scotland reporting growth, and postgraduate interest rising. Research excellence remains high, as shown in REF21 results, and English studies continues to demonstrate social, cultural, and economic impact.

**5.1.2 Role of Ideology and Curriculum**

A contentious issue in Allfree’s article is the alleged “self-immolation” of English departments due to identity politics, ‘wokeism,’ and an overemphasis on decolonisation. Some academics reportedly avoid teaching canonical texts out of fear of controversy. Yet, Fulford (in Allfree, 2024) counters that English has always been ideological—FR Leavis, for example, fought to legitimise Austen and Eliot. The question is not whether ideology belongs in literature but which ideologies dominate and who defines literary value.

**5.1.3 Indian Perspectives on the Humanities Crisis**

The inclusion of two Indian academic critiques provides vital transnational context. One article from *The Hindu* critiques the commodification of higher education in India, noting that the NEP (National Education Policy) further marginalises humanities in favour of “skill-based” learning and employability (*The Hindu*, 2020). In “English studies in India: Its past and its future” (2023), Sambudha Sen offers a historically grounded and critically reflective account of how English studies evolved in India from colonial times to the present, highlighting the discipline’s entanglement with nationalism, elitism, and shifting institutional priorities. The article thoughtfully questions whether the future of English studies in India can be reimagined beyond inherited colonial and Eurocentric frameworks. These views challenge the narrative that English literature is in crisis due solely to cultural irrelevance. Instead, they point to systemic underfunding, policy neglect, and market-driven reforms that devalue critical thinking globally.

**5.1.4 Pedagogy, Literacy, and the Reading Crisis**

Another thread linking the UK and Indian contexts is the crisis in literacy and literary pedagogy. Allfree (2024) cites a National Literacy Trust report indicating that reading for pleasure among UK youth is at its lowest point. Teachers note that students can no longer detect tone, irony, or humour. In India, scholars have pointed out how English is still taught primarily for functional or aspirational reasons, with *little emphasis on interpretive reading or critical engagement*. Both contexts reflect a disconnection between literary education and broader literacy cultures.

**5.1.5 Structural Inequalities and Demographic Shifts**

Allfree (2024) also highlights demographic issues, including the disproportionate decline in English enrolments among working-class white British boys. In contrast, Black Caribbean students reportedly show higher engagement due to parental support. In India, the *EPW* article notes that gender, caste, and language politics shape who accesses English and how it is taught. These demographic variables underscore the need to rethink not just what is taught but to whom and how.

**5.1.6 Challenges Facing English Studies in India**

Praksh (2025) presents a sobering account of the crisis enveloping BA English programmes in India and highlights a significant decline in student enrolment and growing questions about the relevance of traditional English literature degrees. The article captures the anxieties of students, educators, and institutions grappling with the shifting academic and socio-economic landscape. Praksh draws attention to systemic issues such as outdated curricula, lack of career-oriented focus, and the diminishing prestige of humanities courses in a market-driven educational context. This critique aligns with global concerns about the perceived “decline” of English literature but grounds the problem in India’s unique context of economic pressures and evolving educational priorities. However, while Praksh effectively diagnoses the problems, the article tends to emphasize deficits without equally highlighting innovative responses or potential for curricular reform that could reinvigorate English studies in India.

**5.1.7 Optimism and Opportunities**

In contrast, Chaudhary (2025) offers a more optimistic outlook on the future of English in India and emphasizes the language’s growing economic and cultural value in an increasingly globalized world. The article cites the British Council’s research to underline expanding opportunities for English graduates, particularly in sectors like education, media, business, and international relations. Chaudhary points to India’s large English-speaking population and rising demand for English proficiency as key drivers of sustained interest and growth in English Studies. This perspective broadens the conversation beyond literary studies to include applied English and communication skills and suggests a strategic reorientation of English programmes to meet contemporary market needs. While this hopeful narrative is encouraging, it risks underplaying the challenges of unequal access, regional disparities, and the need for reforms in pedagogy and institutional support highlighted by Prakash.

**5.1.8 A Call to Reassess the Value of English Studies**

The *Guardian* editorial raises urgent concerns about the perceived decline of English studies in universities and attributes this trend to shifting student interests and institutional priorities. It underscores a crisis narrative centred on enrolment drops and course closures and warns of a potential loss to cultural and intellectual life if English literature is marginalized. While the editorial effectively highlights the scale of the problem and the need for immediate attention, it risks framing the issue too narrowly as a crisis of demand without sufficiently addressing the underlying structural challenges—such as curriculum relevance, inclusivity, and adaptability to contemporary socio-economic contexts. The editorial’s tone may inadvertently reinforce a defensive stance within the discipline rather than opening space for constructive dialogue and innovation.

**5.1.9 Expanding the Discourse on English Studies’ Role**

Linden West and Diana Hirst offer critical rejoinders that enrich the conversation by probing deeper into the causes and potential responses to English Studies’ struggles. West advocates for reimagining English education as a dynamic, socially engaged field that goes beyond canonical literature to embrace *diverse voices and contemporary issues*, thus restoring its relevance to students and society. On the other hand, Hirst emphasizes the importance of pedagogy and academic leadership in *cultivating critical thinking and creativity* and urges universities to balance market pressures with the broader educational mission. Both responses challenge the editorial’s crisis framing by highlighting resilience, adaptability, and the transformative potential of English studies when reoriented toward inclusivity and interdisciplinarity. Together, they call for a paradigm shift that integrates tradition with innovation, resisting reductive narratives of decline.

**5.2 Responses to Research Questions**

Below is a discussion of how the four research questions raised in the study titled “Beyond the Headlines: Resilience and Relevance of English Studies in Contemporary Academia” are answered in the course of the article. Each answer draws from the evidence and arguments developed in the discussion, literature review, and analysis of media reports:

**5.2.1 RQ 1**

The study identifies several interrelated factors that have led to the restructuring or closure of English programmes. In the UK, reports such as Kidson (2024) and Cowan (2023) point to declining undergraduate enrolments, pressures to align university offerings with market and employability demands, and governmental emphasis on STEM subjects. The decision by Canterbury Christ Church University to scrap its English literature degree is directly attributed to “viability” in terms of low student demand, though critics argue this overlooks the broader cultural and historical relevance of the subject. Similarly, in the Indian context, Prakash (2025) reveals a growing public perception of English as being *elitist or disconnected from job markets* while Chaudhary (2025) offers a counterview that English still holds promise due to its utility in global employment contexts. The study underscores how both structural factors like funding and policy and perceptual shifts like value and utility of humanities play significant roles in shaping these decisions.

**5.2.2 RQ 2**

Responses from various stakeholders are well-documented and form a core part of the study’s discussion. Students like Freya Hodge (Kidson, 2024) have launched petitions to reverse closures, invoking the cultural heritage and civic identity associated with English literature in places like Canterbury. Academics and commentators, including Sarah Cowan (2023), Linden West, and Diana Hirst, have published thoughtful rejoinders pushing back against the “crisis” narrative. They emphasize the intellectual, civic, and cultural value of English studies, call for curricular reform, and highlight the enduring impact of humanities education on leadership, empathy, and critical thinking. These voices collectively challenge reductive economic logics and advocate for reinvestment in humanities.

**5.2.3 RQ 3**

The study marshals empirical and anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the field’s ongoing relevance. Cowan (2023) cites British Academy data showing increased postgraduate enrolments and rising research excellence ratings (with 48% of English Language and Literature research rated world-leading in REF21). Initiatives like the Shakespeare North Playhouse serve as case studies for the tangible societal and economic impacts of humanities research. In India, Chaudhary’s (2025) interview with the British Council reiterates English’s relevance for both domestic employability and international academic mobility. These examples counterbalance enrolment decline narratives by showcasing vitality at other academic levels and reaffirming the discipline’s social, cultural, and professional contributions.

**5.2.4 RQ**

The study concludes with several strategic recommendations. These include reframing English studies curricula to include interdisciplinary approaches (environmental, digital, postcolonial), promoting public-facing humanities projects, and strengthening links between English education and civic life. The study also calls for greater advocacy from within the discipline—highlighting employability, analytical skill sets, and leadership outcomes of English graduates. Further, institutions are encouraged to support faculty innovation, protect academic freedom, and resist short-term market logics. Drawing on West and Hirst’s rejoinders, the study also stresses the *ethical and imaginative dimensions* of English Studies and advocates for its role in nurturing reflective citizens in a fragmented, post-truth world.

**5.3 Key Findings of the Study**

This study, through qualitative content analysis of eight major reports and policy discourses from the UK and India, reveals several significant insights into the current state and future direction of English studies.

1. Widespread narratives about the ‘crisis’ in English studies are often exaggerated or misrepresented in mainstream media and focuses disproportionately on declining enrolments and course closures without acknowledging departmental successes or reforms.
2. The situation in India and the UK differs substantially—while the UK faces market-driven contraction and policy shifts, Indian English departments show growth and diversification, albeit with different institutional challenges such as underfunding and curricular inertia.
3. Despite institutional pressures, many English departments have demonstrated adaptability through interdisciplinary offerings, curriculum redesign, and community engagement, resisting the alleged decline.
4. The study identifies a broader ideological shift in higher education, where humanities disciplines, including English, are increasingly evaluated based on market utility rather than intellectual or civic contributions.
5. The inclusion of Indian academic voices provides a necessary counter-narrative that reframes English studies as a space for cultural negotiation, linguistic plurality, and postcolonial engagement, challenging Eurocentric models.
6. The findings underscore the need to reimagine English studies not as obsolete but as a dynamic field that can evolve in response to global educational and social transformations, retaining its critical, ethical, and imaginative capacities.

**5.4 Suggestions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, this section proposes strategic recommendations aimed at revitalizing English literature education to ensure its relevance and sustainability in contemporary higher education contexts.

1. English Studies curricula should be reframed include new Humanities that are basically interdisciplinary and sometimes, transdisciplinary in nature.
2. Universities should foreground the civic, ethical, and interpretive capacities English fosters, not just its professional pathways.
3. Both UK and Indian governments should fund humanities research and pedagogy explicitly, resisting narrow ROI models.
4. Pedagogy should move away from rote memorisation and reintroduce pleasure, interpretation, and debate into school English syllabi.
5. English departments across nations should collaborate to produce research and curricula that are inclusive, critical, and globally relevant.
6. Academics must more actively communicate *the public value of literature* through media, podcasts, and community engagement.
7. Above all, curricula should also focus on employability, analytical skill sets, and leadership outcomes.

**8 Scope for Further Studies**

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted nature of the crisis and reinvention of English literature studies in global and Indian contexts. However, several areas remain underexplored and offer rich scope for further academic enquiry:

1. While the present study highlights trends in the UK, US, and India, a comparative policy analysis across countries with varying higher education funding models—such as Germany, the Netherlands, and South Korea—can yield deeper insights into how structural factors influence the sustainability of humanities disciplines.
2. A systematic tracking of the long-term employability, job satisfaction, and career diversity of English literature graduates, especially in emerging economies like India, could challenge prevailing assumptions about the degree’s practicality.
3. Further qualitative studies are needed to explore how students decide on English literature as a major. Research can examine how social class, gender, urban-rural backgrounds, and parental influence affect perceptions of the subject’s value.
4. As universities start to embrace digital platforms and interdisciplinary pedagogies, more research is needed on how digital humanities tools, AI-enhanced learning environments, and open-access publishing can revitalize student interest and programme design in English studies.
5. The reported decline in reading for pleasure suggests an urgent need for empirical studies on how digital media, school curricula, and family environments shape literary habits in different socio-economic contexts.
6. A valuable future research trajectory lies in case studies of universities that have successfully rebranded or restructured their English programmes to increase enrolment, interdisciplinarity, or community engagement.
7. The gendered nature of enrolment in English literature, as noted in both the UK and Indian contexts, invites further enquiry into how masculinities, educational norms, and cultural capital influence participation in literary studies.
8. In postcolonial contexts like India, English is *not only a literary but also a socio-political and aspirational language*. Future studies could examine how English literature is positioned vis-à-vis regional literatures and what role it plays in identity construction in multilingual settings.
9. Further interdisciplinary research combining education policy, economics, and cultural theory could help generate a more robust advocacy framework for humanities in public discourse and government funding structures.
10. With increasing postgraduate enrolments and high-impact research outputs in English studies, future work could examine the shifting nature of literary scholarship, doctoral training, and academic publishing in a globalised, neoliberal university system.

**9 Conclusions**

Despite the mounting challenges facing English literature programmes—be they economic, institutional, or cultural—the evidence reveals a more nuanced and hopeful picture than crisis headlines suggest. Far from withering, English studies is undergoing a quiet but determined reinvention. Across universities in the UK and India, departments are reimagining their roles, diversifying their curricula, and responding to shifting social imperatives with intellectual vitality and creative resilience. Media simplifications often obscure this evolving reality and frame the discipline within reductive binaries. Yet, within classrooms, libraries, and community forums, English remains a vital space for critical thinking, ethical reflection, and civic engagement. The moment calls not for resignation, but for renewed advocacy. The future of English studies will be shaped not by passive decline but by the courage to adapt, the ability to communicate its value compellingly, and the will to connect meaningfully with the world it interprets.

**Disclaimer**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript..

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