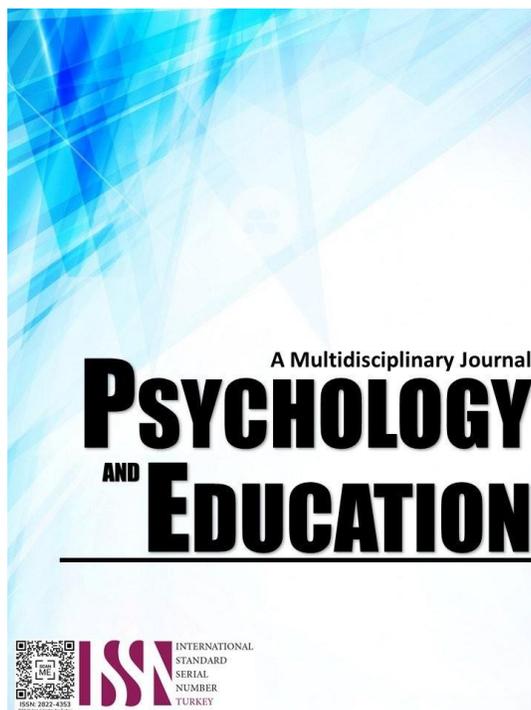


DIGITAL COMPETENCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF ARALING PANLIPUNAN TEACHERS IN TANTANGAN DISTRICT: INPUT FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT



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Digital Competence and Instructional Practices of Araling Panlipunan Teachers in Tantaran District: Input for Program Development

Mary Jean N. Miran,* Cris John Bryan C. Dela Cruz
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

Integrating technology into education is essential in today's digital world. This study examines the digital competence and instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers in the Tantaran District to inform program development. Using a descriptive and correlational research design, the study compares digital competence with instructional practices. The total sample consisted of seventy-nine elementary school teachers, sixteen school heads, and sixteen school ICT coordinators. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, Pearson-r, and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Findings indicate that teachers generally possess high digital proficiency but face challenges in creating original content and customizing instructional materials. Regression analysis showed that length of service had a significant negative relationship with digital competence, suggesting that teachers with longer service years tend to have lower digital skills. However, factors such as age, gender, and educational attainment did not significantly impact digital competence, implying that digital literacy training is accessible to all teachers regardless of background. A strong positive correlation was found between digital competence and instructional practices, meaning teachers with higher digital skills implement more effective teaching strategies. This underscores the importance of professional development programs to enhance digital literacy and pedagogical skills. To support teachers, capacity-building initiatives should be prioritized to improve instructional strategies, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Schools and policymakers must implement structured digital literacy programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills for 21st-century education. Strengthening digital competence will ultimately enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Araling Panlipunan and other subjects.

Keywords: *digital world, instructional practices, teachers, program development, aralin panlipunan*

Introduction

In an increasingly digital world, integrating technology into education has become paramount. Globally, educational systems recognize the importance of digital competence among teachers, as it directly influences instructional practices and student engagement.

UNESCO's report on digital literacy (2011), emphasizes that educators must be proficient in using technology and adept at integrating it into their teaching methodologies to create dynamic and interactive learning environments. This shift is not only about using technology but involves equipping teachers with the skills to critically and creatively apply digital tools to foster more engaging and meaningful learning experiences (OECD, 2019). In this context, developing digital competence is crucial in preparing teachers and students for a rapidly evolving global society. (Voogt & Roblin, 2012).

Given this reality, digital competence has recently gained prominence in education (Tejada & Pozos, 2017). Digital Competencies at all academic levels, including the university as one of its main strategic axes, aimed at promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The teacher is key in integrating technologies and plays a crucial role in adopting and implementing ICT in the classroom since the transformation and improvement of education can depend on, among other aspects. Digital competence plays a vital role in enhancing instructional practices. Also, the current national curriculum focuses on integrating digital skills into schools to support subject learning (Johannesen et al., 2014). They affirm that it is not merely a question of updating knowledge and mention the obligatory ethical responsibility embedded in professionals to preserve, improve, and update their level of digital competence to contribute to the understanding and good training of the learners (Mirete et al., 2020).

Moreover, the Philippines has been making strides towards integrating digital technology into its educational framework. The Department of Education (DepEd), in particular, has implemented various programs to enhance the digital literacy of both students and teachers, as outlined in the National Digital Education Program (DepEd, 2020). However, despite these initiatives, challenges such as limited access to technology, inadequate training, and varying levels of digital literacy among teachers persist, particularly in rural areas (Mateo, 2019). These disparities hinder the effective implementation of digital tools in teaching practices, affecting the quality of education delivered to students.

Research indicates that teachers' instructional practice is significantly impacted by digital competency. Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) reported that educators who possess confidence in digital skills are most likely to embrace technology to develop their teaching processes, increasing the chances of better student learning. In the case of Araling Panlipunan, which includes social studies and cultural education, digital instruments can offer many more resources besides interaction and fun while learning. Therefore, the basic aim of assessing the digital competence of these teachers in this subject is to identify areas requiring professional development to optimize teaching and learning processes.

Focusing on the local setting, Tantangan District is quite a study that can help us understand how digital competence in instructional practices should be of significant concern among teachers of Araling Panlipunan. In line with other rural areas of the Philippines, unique challenges abound about digital education here. In other words, notwithstanding the programs spearheaded by DepEd for increasing digital literacy on the part of teachers, in practice and the effectiveness thereof, still vary from region to region (Alonzo, 2020). These issues are, among others, limited access to technology, limited opportunities for training, and the absence of local resources that hinder teachers from fully incorporating digital tools into their teaching. This knowledge of the particular levels and needs of the digital competencies of the teachers of Araling Panlipunan in this district can help determine interventions to address the gaps created by these limitations and simultaneously help equalize opportunities in education.

This research on teachers' digital competence and instructional practices in Araling Panlipunan in the Tantangan District is timely and relevant. Hence, this study determined the digital competence and instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers in the Tantangan District to serve as the basis for programs that can upgrade their ability to integrate digital tools for teaching. By identifying gaps in digital skills and instructional strategies, the research can provide insight into the designing of professional development programs suited to the specific context of this district. It is thereby anticipated to further contribute toward the greater goal of reducing inequalities in education and promoting digital inclusion in rural communities. Specifically, study findings can be used as baseline information for program development that would capacitate Araling Panlipunan teachers of Tantangan District, Division of South Cotabato.

Research Questions

The study determined the digital competence and instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers of Tantangan District, Division of South Cotabato. It answered the following questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic factor of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. gender;
 - 1.3. educational attainment; and
 - 1.4. length of service?
2. What is the level of digital competence of teachers in terms of:
 - 2.1. understanding digital practices;
 - 2.2. finding information;
 - 2.3. using information; and
 - 2.4. creating information?
3. What is the level of instructional practices of teachers in terms of:
 - 3.1. professional engagement;
 - 3.2. digital resources;
 - 3.3. comprehension;
 - 3.4. communication and social connections; and,
 - 3.5. empowerment?
4. Is there a significant difference in teachers' digital competence levels when grouped according to socio-demographic factors?
5. Is there a significant difference in the level of instructional practices of teachers when grouped according to socio-demographic factors?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of digital competence and the level of the instructional practices of teachers?
7. What development program can be proposed based on the results?

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a quantitative non-experimental approach, specifically focusing on descriptive and correlational designs to determine the digital literacy and instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan, District, Division of South Cotabato.

It is descriptive because it shows how things are right now. It is also correlational because it is meant to find relationships between factors and make it possible to predict future events based on what we know now. Mertens (2018) says that the descriptive-correlational study method is best used to find out how much one variable (IV) affects or is affected by the other variable (DV).

In this study, its primary goal is to determine the relationship between Digital Competence (IV) and the Instructional Practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers (DV).

Non-experimental research involves observing natural phenomena without manipulating variables or controlling the environment (Radhakrishnan, 2013). Additionally, correlational research seeks to determine the connections between multiple variables from the

same or different populations (Curtis et al., 2016).

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), correlational research determines the relationship between two or more variables and their cause and effects. In addition, Creswell (2012) states that a correlation is a statistical test to determine the tendency or pattern for two (or more) variables or two sets of data to vary consistently. Quantitative research is the most appropriate design used in this study since, according to Matthews and Ross (2010), quantitative research methods fundamentally involve collecting data that was set up and that can be displayed numerically.

In addition, quantitative research involves collecting data so that information can be quantified and subjected to statistical treatment to support or refute alternative knowledge claims (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Williams, 2011). Furthermore, Williams (2011) remarks that quantitative research starts with a statement of a problem, generating a hypothesis or research question, reviewing related literature, and quantitative data analysis. Similarly, quantitative research employs inquiry strategies such as experiments and surveys and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003; Williams, 2011).

Respondents

This survey had three groups of respondents. The first group comprised the current sixteen (16) School Heads of public elementary schools for the SY 2024-2025. School Heads play a vital role as respondents in this study, as they are responsible for overseeing the implementation of ICT-related policies, providing administrative support, and promoting an environment conducive to integrating digital technologies in teaching.

On the other hand, the second group was sixteen (16) ICT Coordinators across public elementary schools in Tantaran District who served essential functions in supporting the digital competence and instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers. They provided technical support, conducted training sessions, and offered guidance on effectively integrating digital tools into teaching and learning processes.

The third group consisted of seventy-nine (79) elementary teachers teaching Araling Panlipunan subject. Teachers are the primary respondents of this study, since they are directly involved in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning activities that incorporate digital tools and resources to enhance teaching effectiveness. Incorporating teachers in the research process strengthens the validity and reliability of research findings, minimizing reliance on a single perspective. This approach, as advocated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), adds depth, credibility, and richness to educational research by reducing bias and enhancing the robustness of the study through diverse perspectives.

Teachers teaching the Araling Panlipunan subject from Grade I to Grade VI in elementary schools were chosen as respondents for the study due to the critical role these subjects play in shaping students' understanding of history, culture, and citizenship at a foundational level. Araling Panlipunan is designed to develop learners' awareness of their identity, community, and national heritage, making it essential for fostering informed and responsible future citizens. By focusing on elementary teachers, the study aims to explore how digital competence and instructional practices are integrated into the teaching of Araling Panlipunan, particularly as these educators are instrumental in introducing young learners to essential concepts of social studies and civic engagement.

Based on the data gathered from division offices, the population involved in this research has a total number of two hundred ten Araling Panlipunan teachers, sixteen School Heads, and sixteen ICT Coordinators. For the schools, the chosen public elementary schools within Tantaran District were identified as follows: Jose P. Lim Jr. Elementary School, Talambongan Elementary School, Magon Elementary School, New Cuyapo Elementary School, Tantaran Central Elementary School, Luayan Elementary School, Bukay Pait Elementary School, Maibo Elementary School, El Ulit Elementary School, New Iloilo Elementary School, Paglaum Elementary School, Mayada Elementary School, Tinongcop Elementary School, San Felipe Elementary School and Eleonor Belotindos D. Elementary School. The respondents were taken solely from these selected schools.

In this study, the researchers used two different sampling approaches. First, the purposive random sampling method was used to select the teacher respondents teaching Araling Panlipunan subject.

This technique allowed the researchers to deliberately choose participants who met certain criteria deemed essential for the study, which in this case related to the participants' digital competence and instructional practices. Also, the following criterion was utilized in the selection of teacher respondents.

The participants must be Elementary teachers currently teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects from Grade I to Grade VI in Tantaran. This criterion ensures that the research concentrates on Araling Panlipunan educators within the designated geographical area, which allows for a localized investigation of their digital competence and instructional practices (Creswell, 2014).

Secondly, the participants must use or integrate ICT in teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects. This criterion ensures that the study focuses on educators actively using ICT in their teaching methods, making them suitable subjects for evaluation in the context of digital competence and instructional practices (Creswell, 2014).

Thirdly, the teachers included in the study should have at least three years of teaching experience. This criterion helps ensure that participants have substantial experience in education, which may influence their digital competence and instructional practices in

teaching Araling Panlipunan subjects (Creswell, 2014).

The second was total enumeration, which was applied to the School Heads and ICT Coordinators. In the words of Creswell, J. W., and Creswell, J. D. (2018), total sampling is a method of data collection wherein the entire population is included as the sample, making the population itself the sample for the study. Moreover, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) emphasize that when the population size is small and accessible, total enumeration is often preferable as it eliminates sampling error, leading to more precise and representative findings.

To obtain a sampling frame for teachers, the sample size (n) was computed using Slovin's formula based on the population size (N) with a 5% margin of error (e). The formula is $n = N / (1 + e^2 N)$ (Appendix I).

Instrument

The researcher used the survey questionnaire, designed and patterned according to the study's objectives, as the key tool for collecting the desired data. Six experts in the field validated the questionnaire. These validators were selected based on their expertise.

Further, they must be licensed teachers and professionals. Two experts were professionals with Doctorate Degrees in Educational Management, three had Master's Degrees, and one of the validators was an Education Program Supervisor in Araling Panlipunan in the Division of South Cotabato.

The instrument has 3 parts. Part I describes the respondents' socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service.

Part II focused on the respondents' digital competence level. It utilized the modified and Standardized Assessment tool on Being Digital: A Digital Literacy Checklist to measure the participants' digital literacy (DigComEdu).

Part III also focused on the respondents' instructional practices. Participants were assessed through the Self-Assessment Tool of the European Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigComEdu, 2018). This tool is intended to help teachers progress toward digital age learning and reflect on their current use of digital technologies for innovative and effective learning.

To determine the digital competence of the Araling Panlipunan teachers, the succeeding mean interval and interpretation were used using the Likert scale, patterned and modified from Napire (2013)

To determine the instructional practices of the Araling Panlipunan teachers, the succeeding mean interval and interpretation were used using the Likert scale, patterned and modified from Napire (2013)

Procedure

Throughout the study, the key provisions of the Republic Act 100173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, were followed. This act generally promotes the "free flow of information to promote innovation and growth" (Chapter 1, Section 2) while protecting users' fundamental privacy rights.

Moreover, the following steps were taken to ensure success in implementing and conducting the study: Proper permission was obtained, and certification was obtained from the office of the Graduate School Dean. After this, letters were sent, and permits were obtained from the school representing the study locale.

After this, letters were sent, and permits were collected from the school representing the study's locale. The researcher first coordinated with the Schools Division Superintendent to secure the conduct of the study permit. Then, the researcher secured the permit from the Public Schools District Supervisor of Tantaran Municipality and the school heads in Tantaran District. The researcher then proceeded to secure permits before conducting the study.

The researcher prepared the survey instrument and validated it by four peace education and social studies experts. Additionally, the questionnaire underwent a reliability test. Then, the respondents completed consent and assent forms. The survey questionnaires were then distributed to the respondents. After this, the questionnaires were retrieved, and the respondents were debriefed to avoid psychosocial stress. The data gathered was tallied, tabulated, and treated statistically for analysis and interpretation to provide meaning to the study's objectives.

To test whether the data-gathering instrument could elicit the needed information, a (6) Panel of experts with adequate knowledge of digital competence and instructional practices and two (2) grammarians were requested to validate the instrument.

After the validation, the formulated questionnaires were shown to the panel committee members for their comments, suggestions, and approval. It was suggested that more items be formulated for each part of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were constructed, edited, and reformatted based on the validators' comments and suggestions. After incorporating the suggestions, they were shown to the research adviser for remarks. All the respondents were included in the instrumentation sampling and the final administration and assessment of the questionnaires.

Administration and Retrieval. The researchers asked permission from the Administrators of Elementary schools in Tantangan to conduct the study. They explained the purpose to the respondents by letting them read the questionnaire thoroughly right after they received it so that when questions were asked, the researchers could immediately answer them. The instruments were retrieved two weeks after the respondents had responded to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were utilized to describe the demographic factors of the respondents in terms of age, gender, Educational Attainment, and length of service. According to Creswell (2014), these descriptive statistics enable researchers to present their findings clearly and organize, making interpreting and communicating results easier. By combining frequency and percentage, researchers can offer a comprehensive view of the data, revealing the distribution of responses and their relative significance in the study population.

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to evaluate teachers' digital competence and instructional practice level through the different indicators of the survey questionnaires. Using mean and standard deviation in a research instrument is crucial for summarizing continuous or interval data. The mean provides the average value of a dataset, offering a central measure of the responses, while the standard deviation indicates the spread or variability around that mean. Together, they give a comprehensive view of the data's central tendency and dispersion, helping researchers understand typical values and the degree of variability within the dataset (Pallant, 2020).

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was utilized to determine if there is a significant relationship between the level of digital competence and instructional practices of social science teachers. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation is a statistical technique used to understand the relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables. It is widely applied in various fields to predict outcomes and explore associations (Montgomery et al., 2015).

Correlational Analysis is mostly utilized for prediction and examining relationships among variables. Gujarati (2004) states that correlation quantifies the dependency between dependent and independent variables, enabling researchers to forecast future observations and make inferences about causal relationships.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical values and standards were observed in the study, particularly in the management of the population and data, viz:

Voluntary Participation. It is the basis of ethical research, which protects participants' autonomy to decide if they want to participate in or not participate in a study without coercion or undue influence. Voluntary participation, as understood according to the Belmont Report (1979), is based on respect for people's principle that focuses on the autonomy of a person to make informed choices regarding their engagement in research.

Privacy and Confidentiality. This is another key ethical concern in research. Participants have to believe that their details will not be revealed without their consent. In maintaining confidentiality in research, researchers have to ensure that data should be anonymized or de-identified and that access to sensitive information is limited (Kimmel, 2017). Ethical protocols emphasize stringent methods to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, especially in studies concerning vulnerable populations or sensitive information (Gibson et al., 2020).

Informed Consent Process. Informed consent is generally accepted as one of the fundamental ethical standards in research. Informed consent, as noted by Beauchamp and Childress (2001), makes sure that participants are fully informed about the aim, procedures, risks, and benefits of the research prior to their voluntary participation. Informed consent should be acquired without force and should entail giving participants clear, understandable information in a manner that they can make an informed choice (Barker, 2018).

Risks. Sieber (2017) points to the significance of risk assessment before undertaking any study, especially when researching vulnerable populations or sensitive issues. For instance, physical risks may be encountered by participants in medical research, or participants in social science research may suffer from psychological or emotional damage. In such situations, there is a need for researchers to employ preventive interventions, including offering explicit information regarding risks, psychological support, and processes for dealing with negative consequences (Babbie, 2020).

Plagiarism. The presentation of another's work or ideas as one's own erodes the integrity of the research process. It is regarded as one of the most severe violations of academic ethics. According to Solomon (2001), plagiarism not only harms the credibility of academic work but also hurts the scientific community at large by distorting the originality and ownership of ideas.

Fabrication and Falsification. Fabrication refers to making up data or results and recording or reporting them as if they were real. Falsification, on the other hand, involves manipulating research data or processes to produce a desired outcome, often by altering or omitting data. Fabrication and falsification can lead to a loss of credibility for the researcher, the research institution, and the scientific field as a whole (Steneck, 2006).

Conflict of Interest (COI). COI literature often emphasizes the value of transparency and disclosure. As Resnik (2018) suggests, researchers have a responsibility to disclose any possible COIs to the institution and the public so that their work is not inappropriately affected by external interests.

Deceit. A conscious violation of ethical obligation with an intent to deceive, usually in the name of publication or obtaining funding. The effects of deceit in research are extensive, usually including damage to the reputation of the scientific community and potentially compromising public health and safety if the results are used inappropriately (Lazarsfeld, 2015).

Permission from the Organization/ Location. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) assert that seeking permission from the organization or site where research will take place is a means of ensuring that the study is done within the bounds of local law, cultural practices, and ethical principles. Lack of proper permissions can lead to legal repercussions and damage to the reputation of researchers.

Authorship. The contribution of the individual to the work and its reporting is an accurate indication of authorship. The researcher authored this study, and the adviser co-authored it. An author's criteria should be guided by contributions to research rather than institutional position or funding (ICMJE, 2019). McNutt et al. (2018) elucidate that authorship conflicts may occur when those who contributed to the research are left out of the list of authors, or vice versa, when those who did not significantly contribute are li

Results and Discussion

This section shows the research results, analyses, and interpretations in the order in which the problem statements were presented in the study. The data are presented in tables for systematic organization and analysis.

The study's respondents were seventy-nine (79) teachers teaching Araling Panlipunan Subjects from Grade I to Grade VI in the Elementary department, 16 School Heads, and 16 School ICT Coordinators in Tantaran District.

The respondents' profiles in terms of age, gender, educational qualifications, and length of service provide valuable insights into their teaching experience and digital competence. Age and years of service reflect their familiarity with traditional and modern teaching methods, while gender shows the diversity in the profession. Their educational qualifications indicate their academic background and readiness to integrate digital tools into teaching. Understanding these factors helps assess how they adapt to digital innovations in Araling Panlipunan instruction.

Table 1 illustrates the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents in terms of Age.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents in terms of Age.

<i>Age Bracket</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
25-30	19	17.12
31-35	17	15.32
36-40	21	18.92
41-45	15	13.51
46-50	15	13.51
51-55	12	10.81
56-60	9	8.11
61-65	3	2.70
Total	111	100.00

The age distribution of Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District reflects diverse teaching experiences. The majority of respondents fell within the 36-40 age bracket (18.92%), followed by those in the 25-30 (17.12%) and 31-35 (15.32%) age groups. The result indicates that a substantial portion of teachers are in their prime years of teaching, likely possessing a combination of academic qualifications, professional experience, and evolving digital competencies.

According to Duggan and Kittleson (2014), teachers in their 30s and 40s often have a balance of traditional pedagogical experience while adapting to the growing integration of digital tools in instruction. This age group can be a vital bridge in leveraging their understanding of traditional methods and emerging educational technologies.

However, the varying levels of age also suggest that there may be disparities in teachers' digital competence and instructional practices across age groups. Younger teachers (aged 25-30) are more likely to be digitally literate and familiar with modern teaching tools, while older teachers (aged 56-60 and 61-65) may face challenges in adopting technology due to generational differences in digital fluency (Johnson et al., 2016). The presence of younger and older teachers in the Araling Panlipunan department suggests the need for targeted professional development programs to bridge these gaps in digital competence and ensure all teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to enhance their instructional practices. Alzahrani (2019) states that tailored teacher training can significantly improve digital competence across varying age groups, fostering a more inclusive and effective educational environment.

The findings from the teacher respondents' age distribution in Tantaran District have significant implications for both the development of digital competence and instructional practices among Araling Panlipunan teachers. Given that most teachers fall within the 30 to 40 age range, it can be inferred that they are likely familiar with digital technologies but may still require targeted professional development to integrate these tools into their pedagogical practices fully. The result suggests the need for continuous, context-specific training programs that enhance digital skills and address how these tools can be applied effectively in the Araling Panlipunan subject area. Programs focusing on technical and pedagogical aspects of digital tools could better prepare teachers to foster engaging, technology-enhanced learning environments.

Moreover, the presence of teachers across a wide age spectrum highlights the importance of differentiated professional development that takes into account generational differences in technology use. Younger, more digitally fluent teachers may benefit from advanced training focusing on innovative digital teaching practices. In comparison, older teachers may need foundational support to strengthen their digital competence. The result could involve mentoring systems, peer collaboration, and individualized learning pathways to ensure that all teachers, regardless of age, are empowered to use technology to enhance their instructional practices. Such initiatives can bridge the digital divide and promote inclusive education by equipping all teachers with tools to create effective and engaging learning experiences for their students.

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents based on gender, highlighting the representation of male and female teachers in the study. This data provides insights into the gender composition of Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District, which may influence their digital competence and instructional practices. Understanding gender distribution helps assess potential differences in technology adoption and professional development needs.

Table 2. *Distribution of Respondents in terms of Gender.*

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Male	11	9.91
Female	100	90.09
Total	111	100.00

The gender distribution of Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District reveals a pronounced imbalance, with female teachers comprising 90.09% of the total sample and male teachers only 9.91%. This disproportion suggests that female educators predominantly shape instructional practices and digital competence in this context. According to Mishra and Koehler's (2006) TPACK framework, the integration of technology in teaching relies heavily on the educators' background, beliefs, and attitudes; therefore, the overwhelming representation of female teachers may influence the types of digital strategies adopted, potentially reflecting pedagogical approaches and classroom dynamics that are more prevalent among female practitioners. Additionally, research by Ertmer (2005) has demonstrated that teacher beliefs play a crucial role in technology integration, implying that the gendered composition might also impact on how digital tools are perceived and utilized in instructional settings.

Moreover, this skewed gender distribution could reflect broader societal and cultural trends where the teaching profession attracts more female educators, especially in subjects like Araling Panlipunan. Gender differences in the adoption and use of digital technologies have been documented in the literature, with some studies indicating that female teachers, when adequately supported, can excel in integrating technology into their pedagogy (Howard & Mozejko, 2015). However, this imbalance also raises questions about the representation of male educators and how their relatively limited presence might affect the diversity of instructional practices and approaches within the district. It is crucial for program development initiatives to acknowledge these gender dynamics to design professional development interventions that are sensitive to the predominant experiences of female teachers while also encouraging the engagement and recruitment of more male educators in the future.

The significant predominance of female teachers in the study implies that any program development aimed at enhancing digital competence and instructional practices in Araling Panlipunan should be tailored predominantly toward the needs, strengths, and challenges experienced by female educators. While this focus may optimize the effectiveness of training and support initiatives for the majority, it is also important to consider strategies to engage the smaller contingent of male teachers. Creating inclusive professional development programs that address diverse teaching styles and encourage cross-gender collaboration could lead to more comprehensive digital integration across the district. Such an approach would not only leverage the expertise of the majority but also work towards a more balanced gender representation in the long term, thereby enriching the overall quality of instructional practices.

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their educational qualifications, showing the varying levels of academic attainment among Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District. This data provides insights into the teachers' formal education background, which may influence their digital competence and instructional practices. Understanding their qualifications helps identify potential training needs and professional development opportunities.

Table 3. *Distribution of Respondents in terms of Educational Qualification.*

<i>Educational Degree</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Bachelor's Degree	28	25.23
Master's Degree	54	48.65
Masteral Unit	22	19.82
Doctoral Degree	4	3.60
Doctoral Units	3	2.70
Total	111	100.00

The distribution of educational qualifications among Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District reveals a noteworthy trend: nearly half of the respondents (48.65%) hold a Master's Degree, with an additional 19.82% classified under the Masteral Unit. The

result indicates that many teachers have pursued advanced studies beyond their initial bachelor's degrees (25.23%), suggesting a strong commitment to professional and academic growth. Higher educational attainment is often linked to enhanced pedagogical skills and a greater propensity for integrating innovative instructional strategies, including digital technologies (Shulman, 1986; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The advanced academic background may equip these teachers with a more reflective and research-informed approach to teaching. It can be advantageous when adopting and adapting digital tools in their instructional practices.

Furthermore, the data shows that only a small fraction of the respondents hold Doctoral Degrees (3.60%) or have completed Doctoral Units (2.70%), implying that while there is a robust foundation in master-level expertise, there is limited representation of the highest tier of academic achievement among these educators. This disparity suggests that although many teachers are well-educated, fewer leaders or specialists may serve as mentors or champions in digital integration within their schools.

Ertmer (2005) emphasizes that teacher beliefs and experiences with technology significantly influence digital competence; hence, having a critical mass of educators with advanced qualifications could promote a more systematic and supportive approach to technology integration if these individuals are empowered to share their expertise with colleagues.

The predominance of Master's Degree holders among Araling Panlipunan teachers implies that professional development programs to enhance digital competence should build upon this academic foundation by integrating advanced, research-based digital pedagogy strategies. Given the limited number of doctoral-level educators, initiatives might focus on peer mentoring, collaborative learning communities, and continuous professional development tailored to leveraging the strong master-level background. Such programs can help bridge any gaps between academic knowledge and practical digital application in the classroom, ultimately fostering an environment where all teachers are better equipped to integrate digital tools effectively into their instructional practices.

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents based on their teaching experience, highlighting the varying lengths of service among Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District. This data provides insights into the teachers' professional backgrounds, which may impact their instructional strategies and adaptability to digital tools. Understanding their teaching experience helps design targeted training programs to enhance digital competence and instructional effectiveness.

Table 4. *Distribution of Respondents in terms of Teaching Experience.*

<i>Educational Degree</i>	<i>Frequency (f)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
1-10	45	40.54
11-15	29	26.13
16-20	15	13.51
21-25	10	9.01
26-30	7	6.31
30-35	5	4.50
Total	111	100.00

The distribution of teaching experience among Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District reveals that a substantial portion (40.54%) of the respondents have 1–10 years of service. Given their recent exposure to contemporary teaching methodologies and technological tools, this group of relatively new educators will likely be more adaptable and receptive to digital innovations (Ertmer, 2005). In contrast, the next significant group, comprising 26.13% of teachers with 11–15 years of experience, may possess more established pedagogical practices that, while robust, might require targeted support to integrate new digital strategies effectively.

Mishra and Koehler's (2006) Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework underscores that effective technology integration depends not only on technical skills but also on the interplay between content and pedagogical expertise, a balance that could vary considerably between novice and more experienced educators. Moreover, the data indicates that 33.33% of the respondents have more than 15 years of teaching experience, highlighting the presence of veteran educators whose rich instructional expertise can be pivotal in mentoring roles and driving best practices in digital integration.

However, as Darling-Hammond (2000) points out, even experienced teachers face challenges in keeping pace with rapidly evolving digital tools, necessitating continuous professional development. This diverse range of teaching experience suggests that while younger teachers may drive innovation through their natural affinity with technology, there remains a critical need for differentiated support systems that assist veteran educators in adapting to digital trends without compromising their well-honed pedagogical skills.

The varied distribution of teaching experience implies that program development initiatives aimed at enhancing digital competence should be tailored to meet the distinct needs of novice and veteran teachers. For early-career educators, professional development could focus on advanced digital tools and innovative instructional strategies to build on their inherent adaptability. For more experienced educators, structured mentorship programs and ongoing training opportunities are essential to update their digital skills while leveraging their deep pedagogical expertise. By adopting a differentiated approach to professional development, the district can create a supportive environment that fosters effective digital integration across all experience levels, ultimately enhancing instructional practices and improving student outcomes.

The level of digital competence among Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District was assessed across four key areas:

understanding digital practices, finding information, using information, and creating information. These dimensions reflect the teachers' ability to navigate digital environments, search for and evaluate online content, utilize information responsibly, and generate digital resources effectively. Evaluating these competencies provides valuable insights into their readiness to integrate technology into instructional practices, highlighting strengths and areas that may require further development for enhanced digital literacy and teaching effectiveness.

Table 5 presents the level of digital competence in terms of understanding digital practices among Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District. It indicates a strong grasp of essential digital skills.

Table 5. Level of Digital Competence in terms of Understanding Digital Practices.

<i>Indicators</i>		<i>Mean Ratings</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>Adjectival Description</i>
1.	Know what categories of users I expect to find online.	4.07	0.79	Competent-
2.	Explain what happens to the information I put online as my digital footprint	4.04	0.81	Competent
3.	Choose the right tool to find, use, or create information.	4.05	0.81	Competent
4.	Find a person online, for example, an expert in my discipline, and establish their contact details	3.98	0.81	Competent
5.	Use online tools and websites to find and record information online	4.11	0.77	Competent
6.	Establish who owns the information and ideas I find online.	4.13	0.83	Competent
7.	Find, evaluate, and use digital information effectively.	4.11	0.79	Competent
8.	Use digital tools for teamwork and communication in professional or personal settings (e.g., Google Drive, Slack) to collaborate with others.	4.06	0.88	Competent
Mean		4.07	0.81	Competent

The findings reveal that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District demonstrate a competent level of digital competence in understanding digital practices, with an overall mean score of 4.07 (SD = 0.81). The result suggests that teachers are generally proficient in navigating digital environments, including identifying online users (M = 4.07, SD = 0.79) and recognizing the impact of their digital footprint (M = 4.04, SD = 0.81). According to Ferrari (2013), digital competence involves using digital technologies to evaluate digital content and protect personal and professional data. The ability of teachers to choose the right digital tools for accessing and creating information (M = 4.05, SD = 0.81) and to locate online experts (M = 3.98, SD = 0.81) further supports their readiness to integrate digital tools into their instructional practices, facilitating more interactive and resource-rich learning experiences.

Moreover, teachers exhibited competence in using online tools for information retrieval and organization (M = 4.11, SD = 0.77) and determining information ownership (M = 4.13, SD = 0.83), indicating a strong awareness of ethical considerations in digital spaces. The result aligns with the European Commission's Digital Competence Framework (Vuorikari et al., 2016), highlighting information literacy, collaboration, and communication as essential digital competencies for educators. Furthermore, their ability to find, evaluate, and use digital information effectively (M = 4.11, SD = 0.79) and to collaborate using digital tools (M = 4.06, SD = 0.88) suggests that they are equipped with the necessary skills to foster digital learning environments. However, while their competence level is commendable, continued professional development is essential to enhance their ability to integrate digital tools more innovatively and efficiently.

Findings suggest that while Araling Panlipunan teachers possess a competent understanding of digital practices, further training can refine their skills to maximize the impact of technology in the classroom. Since digital competence evolves alongside technological advancements, professional development programs should focus on deepening teachers' knowledge of emerging digital tools, ethical digital citizenship, and advanced information management strategies. Collaborative learning and mentorship opportunities can also help sustain and further enhance their digital competencies. By strengthening these skills, teachers can create more engaging, interactive, and effective learning experiences for their students, ensuring that digital tools are leveraged for basic functionality and transformative pedagogical approaches.

Table 6 illustrates the Digital competence in terms of finding information. It involves effectively searching, retrieving, and assessing the relevance and credibility of digital content. As individuals progress in their digital competence, they are expected to synthesize and critically evaluate information from multiple sources, managing it efficiently for specific needs.

The findings indicate that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District demonstrate a competent level of digital competence in finding information, with an overall mean score of 3.99 (SD = 0.85). Notably, they exhibit very competent skills in using search engines effectively (M = 4.26, SD = 0.87), which suggests that they are adept at retrieving relevant information through platforms like Google and ChatGPT.

The result aligns with the findings of Ng (2012), who emphasized that information literacy, particularly the ability to navigate search engines, is a fundamental aspect of digital competence in education. However, while they are generally competent in utilizing online libraries (M = 3.99, SD = 0.89) and employing advanced search strategies (M = 3.93, SD = 0.92), these areas could still benefit from targeted training to enhance efficiency and accuracy in information retrieval. Advanced search strategies are now essential for successfully surfing information on the internet, which is extremely vast, according to Helsper (2017).



Table 6. *Level of Digital Competence in terms of Finding Information*

Indicators	Mean Ratings	Sd	Adjectival Description
1. Use search engines effectively to locate information (e.g., google, chat GPT, etc.)	4.26	0.87	Competent
2. Know what information I can find in an online library.	3.99	0.89	Competent
3. Use advanced search options to limit and refine my search.	3.93	0.92	Competent
4. Use keywords commonly used in my discipline to search for information online.	4.09	0.85	Competent
5. Use social networks as a source of information.	4.18	0.75	Competent
6. Know when to change my search strategy or stop searching.	4.05	0.79	Competent
7. Filter large numbers of search results quickly.	3.90	0.87	Competent
8. Scan/skim a web page to quickly get the relevant information.	3.92	0.82	Competent
9. Keep updated with information from authoritative people or organizations by subscribing to it.	3.89	0.94	Competent
Mean	3.99	0.85	Competent

Additionally, teachers demonstrated competency in using discipline-specific keywords ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.85$) and leveraging social networks as sources of information ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.75$). The result reflects their ability to engage with digital resources beyond traditional search engines, essential in modern knowledge acquisition (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). However, their ability to filter large volumes of search results ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.87$) and skim webpages for key information ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.82$) suggests room for improvement in refining search strategies and critical evaluation skills. As Metzger and Flanagin (2013) highlight, digital users must not only retrieve but also assess the credibility and relevance of online information, which is crucial for effective instructional practices.

The findings suggest that while Araling Panlipunan teachers can find and manage digital information, further professional development programs should strengthen their skills in advanced search techniques, critical evaluation of online sources, and effectively filtering search results. Workshops or training sessions on digital literacy frameworks, such as those proposed by the European Commission (Vuorikari et al., 2016), could enhance their ability to navigate vast amounts of online data efficiently. By improving these competencies, teachers can better integrate credible and high-quality digital resources into their instructional practices, ultimately enriching the learning experience for students.

Table 7 presents digital competence in terms of information use. It involves the ability to process, interpret, and apply digital content to solve problems, create new knowledge, and use information creatively and responsibly, integrating it into diverse contexts while ensuring its ethical and effective use.

The findings indicate that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tuntungan District demonstrate a competent level of digital competence in using information, with an overall mean score of 3.99 ($SD = 0.87$). This suggests that teachers possess the necessary skills to effectively utilize various forms of digital media, such as podcasts and videos ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.86$), which can enhance the delivery of instructional content. According to Jenkins et al. (2009), digital literacy involves accessing and critically engaging with and applying information meaningfully. Additionally, teachers show competency in evaluating the credibility of online resources ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.85$), which aligns with Metzger and Flanagin's (2013) argument that educators must develop critical thinking skills to assess the reliability of digital content. This ability is crucial in ensuring that students are exposed to accurate and trustworthy sources of information.

Table 7. *Level of Digital Competence in terms of Using Information.*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Adjectival Description
1. Use information in different media, for example, podcasts or videos.	3.98	0.86	Competent
2. Assess whether an online resource (e.g., web page, blog, wiki, video, podcast, academic journal article) or person is credible and trustworthy.	3.90	0.85	Competent
3. Use other people's work (found online) without committing plagiarism.	3.89	0.97	Competent
4. Cite a reference to an online resource (e.g., in an assignment) using the correct format.	4.00	0.86	Competent
5. Keep a record of the relevant details of the information I find online	4.02	0.84	Competent
6. Use social bookmarking to organize and share information.	3.91	0.89	Competent
7. Share files legally with others.	4.02	0.89	Competent
8. Understand the importance of ethical considerations (e.g., plagiarism, intellectual property) when using information.	4.18	0.82	Competent
9. Know how to use proper citation and acknowledgment of sources when using information.	4.00	0.81	Competent
Overall Mean	3.99	0.87	Competent

Furthermore, the teachers' competence in handling ethical considerations when using online information is reflected in their awareness of plagiarism ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.97$) and ability to correctly cite references ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.86$). The European Commission



(Vuorikari et al., 2016) emphasizes that digital competence includes understanding intellectual property rights and properly attributing sources. Teachers also exhibit competency in keeping records of online information ($M = 4.02, SD = 0.84$) and legally sharing files with others ($M = 4.02, SD = 0.89$), which indicates their awareness of responsible digital citizenship. Moreover, their ability to use social bookmarking tools ($M = 3.91, SD = 0.89$) suggests an effective understanding of organizing and sharing digital resources, which benefits personal knowledge management and collaborative learning. Despite their competence in these areas, there is room for improvement in strengthening their ethical use of digital information, particularly in plagiarism prevention and intellectual property awareness ($M = 4.18, SD = 0.82$).

As Buckley and Cowap (2013) highlighted, academic integrity is a critical component of digital literacy, and continuous professional development in this aspect can further enhance teachers' ability to model responsible digital behavior for their students. Encouraging citation management tools and training on fair use policies can improve their ability to handle digital content ethically and effectively.

The findings suggest that while Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District are competent in using digital information, professional development programs should reinforce their ability to critically evaluate sources and apply ethical considerations in digital content usage. Workshops on citation management, intellectual property rights, and the responsible use of digital media can further enhance their skills in handling information ethically. Additionally, integrating collaborative tools for organizing and sharing information can improve their digital competence, making them more effective in utilizing digital resources for instructional purposes. Strengthening these skills will benefit teachers' professional growth and ensure students are exposed to credible, properly attributed, and ethically sourced digital content.

Table 8 portrays digital competence in creating information that generates new digital content using various tools and media. It involves skills such as designing, producing, and editing digital content in multiple formats and collaborating and sharing this content responsibly and creatively.

The findings reveal that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District demonstrate a competent level of digital competence in creating information, with an overall mean score of 3.83 ($SD = 0.96$). The result suggests that teachers produce digital content proficiently, including adding comments to online discussions while observing netiquette ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.95$) and writing for different audiences ($M = 3.79, SD = 1.00$). These skills align with the concept of participatory culture, as described by Jenkins et al. (2009), which emphasizes the ability of educators to engage in digital communication, share ideas, and contribute to online discourse effectively.

Additionally, their competency in writing across different media platforms ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.01$) highlights their ability to adapt to various digital formats, an essential skill in modern education. Moreover, teachers exhibit competency in collaborating online to create shared documents or presentations ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.02$) and using media-capture tools for recording and editing digital content ($M = 3.77, SD = 1.01$).

Table 8. *Level of Digital Competence in terms of Creating Information.*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
1. Add comments to blogs, forums, or web pages, observing netiquette and appropriate social conventions for online communications.	3.75	0.95	Competent
2. Write online for different audiences, e.g., a web page or blog entry for private use, for reading by my colleagues, or for reading by anyone worldwide.	3.79	1.00	Competent
3. Write in different media for people to read on-screen.	3.77	1.01	Competent
4. Communicate online (forums, blogs, social networking sites, audio, video, etc.)	3.91	0.90	Competent
5. Work with others online to create a shared document or presentation.	3.88	1.02	Competent
6. Use media-capture devices, e.g., recording and editing a podcast or video.	3.77	1.01	Competent
7. Effectively organize and structure information when creating reports, presentations, or other forms of content online or offline.	3.88	0.90	Competent
8. Verify the accuracy and credibility of the information before including it in my content/posts.	3.90	0.87	Competent
Mean	3.83	0.96	Competent

According to Redecker (2017), digital content creation is crucial to 21st-century skills, allowing educators to enhance student engagement through multimedia learning materials. Their ability to organize and structure information effectively in reports and presentations ($M = 3.88, SD = 0.90$) further supports their capability to produce instructional materials that are well-structured and meaningful. Additionally, the competency in verifying information before including it in content ($M = 3.90, SD = 0.87$) aligns with Metzger and Flanagin's (2013) assertion that credibility assessment is critical to digital literacy.

Despite their competence, the relatively moderate scores in writing for different audiences and using media-capture devices suggest areas for further development. While teachers can create digital content, they may need additional training on advanced digital storytelling, multimedia production, and audience engagement strategies to maximize digital tools in their instructional practices fully. As Ng (2012) highlights, digital competence is about accessing and evaluating information and producing high-quality, engaging, and

relevant content that caters to diverse learning needs.

The results imply that while Araling Panlipunan teachers are competent in digital content creation, targeted professional development programs can further enhance their skills, particularly in multimedia production and online collaboration. Providing training on video editing, interactive content creation, and digital storytelling can help teachers create more dynamic and engaging instructional materials. Additionally, workshops on audience-specific writing and ethical considerations in digital content sharing can ensure teachers effectively communicate with various stakeholders while maintaining academic integrity. Strengthening these competencies will improve instructional practices and foster a more interactive and digitally enriched learning environment for students.

Moreover, Table 9 examines the overall level of digital competence. It reflects an individual's ability to navigate digital environments confidently, from finding and using information to creating and communicating effectively. It spans a range of skills, from basic tasks like searching for information to more advanced abilities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and responsible digital citizenship. Each level emphasizes the ability to adapt to evolving digital tools and environments.

The overall findings indicate that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan District possess a competent level of digital competence, as evidenced by the overall mean score of 3.97 (SD = 0.88). The result suggests that teachers are proficient in understanding digital practices (M = 4.07, SD = 0.81), using information (M = 3.99, SD = 0.87), finding information (M = 3.99, SD = 0.87), and creating information (M = 3.83, SD = 0.96).

Table 9. Overall Level of Digital Competence

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
Understanding digital practices	4.07	0.81	Competent
Using information	3.99	0.87	Competent
Finding information	3.99	0.87	Competent
Creating information	3.83	0.96	Competent
Overall mean	3.97	0.88	Competent

According to Ferrari (2012), digital competence encompasses a broad range of skills, including effectively searching, evaluating, and creating digital content. These competencies are crucial for 21st-century educators, enabling teachers to integrate technology into their instructional practices and facilitating more engaging and interactive learning experiences. Despite their overall competence, the slightly lower mean score in creating information (M = 3.83, SD = 0.96) suggests that teachers may need further training in digital content production, such as multimedia creation and advanced collaborative tools.

Redecker (2017) emphasizes that educators should be consumers of digital information and creators of meaningful digital content that enhances student learning. Enhancing teachers' digital content creation skills through targeted professional development programs can further improve their ability to develop innovative teaching strategies and instructional materials tailored to the needs of 21st-century learners.

The findings imply the need for continuous capacity-building initiatives to strengthen teachers' digital competence, particularly in content creation. Providing training on multimedia production, interactive presentations, and the use of digital storytelling tools can help teachers design more engaging learning materials. Additionally, integrating digital competence frameworks, such as the DigCompEdu model (Redecker, 2017), into teacher training programs can ensure a more structured approach to developing their digital skills. Strengthening these competencies will enhance instructional effectiveness and prepare teachers to adapt to the evolving digital landscape in education.

Level of Instructional Practices

The instructional practices regarding professional engagement, digital resources, comprehension, communication, social connections, and empowerment focus on integrating technology to enhance teaching and learning. Professional engagement emphasizes continuous development and collaboration among educators to improve their skills and knowledge. Using digital resources supports diverse learning needs by providing students with varied content and tools. Comprehension involves teachers' ability to facilitate understanding and critical thinking using digital technologies. Communication and social connections highlight the role of digital platforms in fostering interaction among students, teachers, and the wider community. Empowerment emphasizes enabling students to take control of their learning through digital tools, encouraging independence, creativity, and informed decision-making.

Table 10 illustrates the Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Professional Engagement. It focuses on educators' continuous development and active participation in enhancing their teaching practices.

The findings indicate that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan District demonstrate competent professional engagement in their instructional practices, as reflected by the overall mean score of 3.54 (SD = 0.66). The result suggests that teachers systematically use digital channels to communicate with colleagues, students, and stakeholders (M = 3.46, SD = 0.76) and collaborate with peers inside and outside their institution (M = 3.53, SD = 0.69). According to Kivunja (2014), digital communication and collaboration are essential

components of 21st-century teaching, allowing educators to create professional learning networks that enhance instructional effectiveness. Additionally, teachers show competence in using social media platforms for professional growth ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.75$), indicating their awareness of digital tools for continuous learning and engagement.

Table 10. *Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Professional Engagement.*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
1. I systematically use different digital channels to enhance communication with my fellow teachers, students, parents, and colleagues: e.g., emails, blogs, the school's website, apps	3.46	0.76	Competent
2. I use digital technologies to work with colleagues inside and outside my educational organization.	3.53	0.69	Competent
3. I actively develop my digital skills by using social media platforms effectively.	3.45	0.75	Competent
4. I participate in online training opportunities, such as courses, webinars, etc., to equip myself with the current teaching trends.	3.49	0.69	Competent
5. I am aware of and practice appropriate and professional behavior in digital communications (e.g., emails, online meetings, forums)	3.57	0.63	Competent
6. I utilize the Learners Information System (LIS) to gather data about our learners and other stakeholders.	3.67	0.56	Competent
Mean	3.54	0.66	Competent

Further, the study highlights that teachers actively participate in online training opportunities ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.69$) and practice professional behavior in digital communication ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.63$). The result aligns with the assertion of Redecker (2017) that digital competence includes the ability to use technology and ethical and professional considerations in digital interactions. Notably, teachers scored highest in utilizing the Learners Information System (LIS) ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.56$), which reflects their ability to manage digital records efficiently.

This finding supports the idea that technology can streamline administrative tasks, allowing educators to focus more on teaching and learning (Kimmons, 2020). However, while teachers are competent in professional engagement, there is room for growth, particularly in enhancing their participation in digital training and maximizing digital platforms for collaboration.

The results underscore the need for sustained professional development initiatives to enhance teachers' digital engagement. Schools and educational institutions should provide structured training programs to maximize digital tools for communication, collaboration, and professional learning. Encouraging teachers to participate in online professional communities and digital training courses can help them stay updated with emerging educational technologies. Additionally, integrating digital literacy policies in schools can promote responsible and ethical digital communication, ensuring that teachers model appropriate online behaviors for students. Strengthening professional engagement through digital technologies can lead to more efficient instructional practices and a more connected and dynamic educational environment.

Table 11 presents the Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Digital Resources. It emphasizes curating and utilizing a wide range of digital resources, such as multimedia, educational apps, and interactive platforms, to support diverse learning needs and engage students.

The findings reveal that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantaran District exhibit competent instructional practice utilizing digital resources, with an overall mean of 3.51 ($SD = 0.65$). Teachers demonstrate proficiency in using internet sites and search strategies to find and select digital resources ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.67$), aligning with the study of Koehler and Mishra (2009), which emphasizes the importance of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) in selecting and integrating appropriate digital tools for instruction. Additionally, teachers are competent in protecting sensitive content, such as exams, grades, and personal data ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.56$), highlighting their awareness of digital security—a critical component of responsible digital resource management (Redecker, 2017).

The findings also show that educators effectively utilize learning portals provided by the Department of Education ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.64$) and online video resources like YouTube ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.58$) to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. However, the results indicate that teachers have only moderate competence in creating and modifying digital resources to suit their instructional needs ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.79$). The result suggests a gap in digital content creation skills, which may limit their ability to customize learning materials to suit diverse student needs better.

Table 11. *Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Digital Resources*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
1. I use various websites and search strategies to find and select a range of digital resources for teaching social studies.	3.51	0.67	Competent
2. I create my digital resources and modify existing ones to adapt them to my needs.	3.28	0.79	Moderately competent

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
3. I effectively protect sensitive content, such as exams, messages, grades, and personal data of my students and colleagues.	3.59	0.56	Competent
4. I use the learning portals from the Department of Education to gather information and instructional materials.	3.53	0.64	Competent
5. I download video clips via YouTube and other online sources for effective teaching and learning outcomes.	3.64	0.58	Competent
Mean	3.51	0.65	Competent

According to Martin et al. (2019), creating and adapting digital resources is essential for effective technology integration in the classroom. Teachers' limited competence in this area implies they can effectively use existing digital materials. However, they may require further training in developing and personalizing digital content to align with specific learning objectives and student engagement strategies.

The results suggest the need for professional development programs that enhance teachers' digital resource creation skills. Schools and educational institutions should offer training on designing interactive digital content, using multimedia tools, and adapting existing digital resources to meet specific teaching objectives. Policies should also be implemented to provide teachers with access to user-friendly digital creation tools and platforms that support content development. Strengthening teachers' ability to create and modify digital materials will enable them to deliver more engaging and student-centered learning experiences, ultimately improving instructional effectiveness in Araling Panlipunan.

Table 12 illustrates the Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Comprehension. It focuses on how effectively educators use digital tools to facilitate students' understanding of content. The result involves presenting information in diverse and engaging ways and employing strategies that help students process and retain knowledge, such as interactive learning activities or multimedia explanations.

This study emphasizes the importance of teachers' competence in using digital tools and technologies in their teaching practices. It aligns with the findings in your data, where teachers demonstrate a competent level of understanding and skill in integrating digital tools, such as connecting to the internet and operating basic computer functions, into their instructional practices (Begoña, G., & Vázquez, M. C. (2019).

The findings indicate that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan District demonstrate a competent level of comprehension in utilizing digital tools, with an overall mean of 3.69 (SD = 0.56). The result suggests that teachers possess the fundamental technical skills to integrate digital technologies into their instructional practices. Specifically, they are competent in connecting their devices to the internet or mobile data for lesson delivery (M = 3.69, SD = 0.57) and operating basic computer functions, such as opening and closing computers and tablets (M = 3.76, SD = 0.53). Connecting devices to the internet or mobile data to deliver lessons is an important skill that teachers must possess in a digital world. According to Borko et al. (2014), teachers should be adept at using digital technologies to enhance instructional practices. In this regard, the teacher connects his or her device to the internet and uses online platforms to supplement instruction.

These competencies align with the study by Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2013), which emphasizes that teachers must have foundational digital skills to incorporate technology into teaching and learning processes effectively. Furthermore, teachers demonstrate proficiency in using computer keyboards (M = 3.75, SD = 0.51) and navigating graphical user interfaces with a mouse (M = 3.71, SD = 0.56), which is essential for efficient digital interactions in modern classrooms. However, while teachers exhibit general competency, the results indicate that their comprehension of computers at both the hardware and software levels is slightly lower (M = 3.56, SD = 0.63) than other digital skills. Selwyn (2016) stresses that digital literacy within education goes beyond simple technology use; it comprises understanding device management, troubleshooting basic issues, and facilitating smooth learning.

Table 12. Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Comprehension.

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
1. I know how to connect my device via the internet or mobile data and use that connection to deliver my lesson.	3.69	0.57	Competent
2. I know how to open and close computers, tablets, and desktop computers before and after my class.	3.76	0.53	Competent
3. I know how to operate computer keyboards.	3.75	0.51	Competent
4. I understand how computers work at both the hardware and software levels.	3.56	0.63	Competent
5. I know how to use a mouse to navigate a graphical user interface effectively.	3.71	0.56	Competent
Mean	3.69	0.56	Competent

The result suggests that while they can operate digital tools for basic instructional tasks, their deeper understanding of computer systems may be limited. According to Tondeur et al. (2017), a comprehensive understanding of digital systems enhances teachers' confidence

and ability to troubleshoot technical issues, ensuring a smoother technology integration in the learning environment. The findings imply that teachers may benefit from further training to strengthen their knowledge of both software applications and hardware functions, which could enable them to optimize the use of digital tools in their instruction. Both hardware and software understanding are crucial for teachers to make the most out of digital tools in their pedagogy. Collins & Halverson (2009) believe that a strong understanding of how computers function, both at the hardware and software levels, enables teachers to fix problems, make good choices regarding the tools they employ, and plan lessons that integrate technology optimally.

The results suggest that while teachers are competent in essential digital operations, there is a need for capacity-building initiatives focused on deepening their understanding of computer systems. Professional development programs should include workshops on troubleshooting common technical issues, maximizing software functionalities, and integrating various digital platforms into lesson delivery.

Additionally, schools should provide continuous support and access to updated digital tools to enhance teachers' confidence in using technology effectively. Strengthening these competencies will enable educators to create more dynamic and interactive learning environments, ultimately improving student engagement and learning outcomes in Araling Panlipunan.

Table 13 presents the Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Communication and Social Connections. It emphasizes the creation of collaborative environments through platforms like discussion forums, social media, and video conferencing, which facilitate real-time communication, peer learning, and relationship-building.

The findings reveal that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan District demonstrate a competent level of digital competence in communication and social connections, as evidenced by an overall mean of 3.79 (SD = 0.48). The result suggests that teachers effectively utilize various digital platforms for communication and collaboration with colleagues and students. Specifically, they are competent in using social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, Google, and TikTok to connect with their professional networks (M = 3.78, SD = 0.49) and requesting or confirming online connections (M = 3.85, SD = 0.41).

According to Veletsianos and Kimmons (2016), social media fosters professional learning communities among educators by providing networking, resource-sharing, and peer support opportunities. Additionally, teachers demonstrate competency in composing and sending messages via messenger applications (M = 3.85, SD = 0.43), reflecting their ability to engage in digital communication effectively. Despite their competence, the findings indicate that teachers have slightly lower confidence in understanding the implications of their online postings (M = 3.69, SD = 0.57).

Table 13. *Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Communication and Social Connections*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
1. I have my Facebook/Instagram/Google/TikTok accounts to connect with my colleagues and students.	3.78	0.49	Competent
2. I know how to request and confirm friends and other individuals online.	3.85	0.41	Competent
3. I know how to write messages in my Messenger account.	3.85	0.43	Competent
4. I can explain what happens to the information I posted online.	3.69	0.57	Competent
5. I choose the right tool to find, use, or create information, such as PowerPoint presentations for teaching social studies.	3.76	0.51	Competent
Mean	3.79	0.48	Competent

The result suggests greater awareness of digital footprints and data privacy. Livingstone et al. (2019) emphasize that educators should be well-informed about the ethical considerations of online interactions. Furthermore, while teachers are competent in selecting appropriate digital tools for creating instructional materials, such as PowerPoint presentations (M = 3.76, SD = 0.51), continuous training on emerging digital tools may enhance their instructional effectiveness. Strengthening their digital communication skills and knowledge of responsible online behavior can help educators maximize the benefits of digital platforms while ensuring safe and ethical engagement.

The results also imply that while teachers are proficient in digital communication and social connections, further training in digital responsibility and online professionalism is necessary. Schools and educational institutions should implement workshops on digital literacy, emphasizing data privacy, ethical online engagement, and effective use of communication tools for educational purposes. Enhancing teachers' awareness of their digital footprint and equipping them with advanced digital communication strategies will strengthen professional collaboration and create a more secure and responsible digital learning environment for students.

Table 14 illustrates the Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Empowerment. It focuses on using digital tools to give students greater control over their learning, fostering independence and self-direction. It involves encouraging students to explore topics of interest, create digital content, and make decisions about how they engage with materials and assessments.

The findings from Table 14 highlight that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan District demonstrate competent empowerment in utilizing digital tools and resources for teaching and learning. With an overall mean of 3.67 (SD = 0.60), teachers exhibit proficiency

in various aspects of digital empowerment, such as downloading subject-related materials ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.53$) and effectively storing and sharing information through digital devices ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.57$).

Table 14. *Level of Instructional Practices in terms of Empowerment*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
1. I know how to download learning materials related to my subject matter.	3.76	0.53	Competent
2. I know how to store and save data and information such as contacts, pictures, and videos on my computer or mobile phone and share such information in the teaching and learning process.	3.74	0.57	Competent
3. I utilize digital learning tools like computers, televisions, and hand-held devices.	3.77	0.48	Competent
4. I can troubleshoot basic computer issues.	3.44	0.78	Competent
5. I know how to determine whether or not an online source of information is verifiable and trustworthy.	3.64	0.64	Competent
Mean	3.67	0.60	Competent

These results align with research by UNESCO (2013), which suggests that educators' empowerment through digital technologies enhances their ability to access, manage, and utilize resources effectively, ultimately improving the quality of instruction. Additionally, teachers utilize digital learning tools, including computers and hand-held devices, in their teaching practices ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.48$), underscoring their ability to integrate technology into their classrooms for a more dynamic learning experience. However, the data also reveal areas for improvement, particularly in troubleshooting basic computer issues ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.78$). It suggests that some teachers may lack confidence or skills in addressing technical difficulties during lessons.

This finding is consistent with the research of Tondeur et al. (2017), which indicates that despite the growing use of technology in education, many teachers face challenges in effectively troubleshooting and maintaining digital tools. Additionally, while teachers are generally competent in determining the trustworthiness of online sources ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.64$), there is still room for improvement in fostering critical thinking and media literacy skills. As digital tools and resources become integral to teaching, educators need to develop technical proficiency and critical evaluation skills to maximize the benefits of digital empowerment in the classroom.

The mean of 3.67 (Competent) indicates that teachers do feel empowered in their digital tools and practice use, but there is potential for improvement. Digital empowerment of teachers, as defined by Binkley et al. (2012), requires not only making technology available to teachers but also providing training and support that assists teachers in gaining the confidence and skills to utilize digital tools successfully. Coordinating proficiency in elementary digital practices and continuous professional development is central to improving the capacity of teachers to incorporate technology meaningfully into their instructional practices (Voogt et al., 2015).

The findings highlight that while teachers in Tantaran District are generally competent in using and sharing digital resources, there is a need for continuous professional development, particularly in troubleshooting and evaluating digital information. Providing teachers with targeted training on technical support, media literacy, and effective use of digital tools will help them overcome existing barriers and further enhance their instructional practices. School administrators and policymakers should prioritize these areas in future professional development programs to ensure teachers are well-equipped to navigate the digital landscape and foster a more technology-enhanced learning environment for students.

Table 15 presents the Overall Level of Instructional Practices, which involves a holistic approach to teaching that integrates various elements such as professional engagement, digital resources, comprehension strategies, communication, social connections, and student empowerment.

The results from Table 15 show that Araling Panlipunan teachers in the Tantaran District exhibit competent instructional practices, with an overall mean score of 3.64 ($SD = 0.59$). The result suggests that the teachers have developed effective strategies for engaging with their students, utilizing digital resources, and fostering communication in their teaching practices.

Specifically, their proficiency in Communication and Social Connection ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.48$) and Comprehension ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.56$) indicate that teachers are adept at using technology to engage students, foster social connections and create effective learning environments. These findings align with the research of Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010), which highlights the importance of teacher competence and technological integration in improving student outcomes.

Regarding Professional Engagement ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.66$) and Digital Resources ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.65$), the results indicate that while teachers are competent in using digital tools and resources, there may still be room for growth. The slightly lower scores in these dimensions suggest that teachers could benefit from additional training in effectively using digital tools for creating and sharing resources and engaging in professional collaborations.

These findings echo the conclusions of Almazan et al. (2017), who emphasize the need for ongoing professional development to improve educators' use of technology in various aspects of teaching.

Table 15. *Overall Level of Instructional Practices*



<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Adjectival description</i>
Professional engagement	3.54	0.66	Competent
Digital resources	3.51	0.65	Competent
Comprehension	3.69	0.56	Competent
Communication and social connection	3.79	0.48	Competent
Empowerment	3.67	0.60	Competent
Overall mean	3.64	0.59	Competent

The competent levels of digital competence and instructional practices among Araling Panlipunan teachers suggest that they leverage technology effectively to engage students and enhance teaching and learning experiences. However, the findings also point to areas for potential growth, particularly in fostering greater professional engagement and improving the use of digital resources. To address these gaps, it would be beneficial to introduce targeted professional development programs that enhance teachers' proficiency in integrating digital tools into lesson planning, content creation, and collaborative activities. Furthermore, additional training on using learning management systems and digital platforms for ongoing professional development could further support teachers in their instructional practices.

Another key implication is the importance of fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement among teachers in the district. Encouraging teachers to share the best practices, resources, and strategies for using technology in teaching could strengthen the overall digital competence of the entire faculty. Schools could also consider providing access to more advanced digital resources and tools that support collaborative teaching and learning, such as virtual classrooms, online simulations, and digital assessment platforms. By focusing on individual teacher growth and institutional support, educational leaders can further enhance teachers' digital competence, leading to more effective instruction and better student outcomes.

Table 16 presents the Regression Analysis between the Teachers' Socio-Demographic Factors and their Digital Competence. It helps identify how characteristics such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, education level, and technological familiarity influence their ability to use digital tools in education effectively. Understanding these relationships helps design targeted professional development programs that address specific needs and enhance digital competence across various teacher demographics.

The regression analysis in Table 16 investigates the relationship between teachers' socio-demographic factors (age, gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service) and their level of digital competence. The analysis reveals that no demographic variables, except for length of service, are statistically significant predictors of digital competence. Specifically, the coefficient for age ($\beta = 0.00$, $p = 0.9585$), gender ($\beta = -0.29$, $p = 0.2079$), and highest educational attainment ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.1791$) do not show significant relationships with teachers' digital competence. In contrast, length of service ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = 0.0256$) was found to have a statistically significant negative relationship with digital competence. The result suggests that teachers with more years of service tend to exhibit lower digital competence than their less experienced counterparts. This finding could reflect older teachers' challenges adapting to rapidly changing technology, a trend noted in previous studies (Baker et al., 2017).

Table 16. *Regression Analysis between the Teachers' Socio-Demographic Factors and their Digital Competence*

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	4.72	0.50	9.50	0.0000
Age	0.00	0.05	-0.05	0.9585
Gender	-0.29	0.23	-1.27	0.2079
Highest Educ	0.10	0.07	1.35	0.1791
Length of Service	-0.16	0.07	-2.26	0.0256

Notes: $R^2 = .1027$, $F(4, 106) = 3.034$, $p = .0206$

The regression analysis in Table 15 investigates the relationship between teachers' socio-demographic factors (age, gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service) and their level of digital competence. The analysis reveals that none of the demographic variables, except for length of service, are statistically significant predictors of digital competence. Specifically, the coefficient for age ($\beta = 0.00$, $p = 0.9585$), gender ($\beta = -0.29$, $p = 0.2079$), and highest educational attainment ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.1791$) do not show significant relationships with teachers' digital competence. In contrast, length of service ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = 0.0256$) was found to have a statistically significant negative relationship with digital competence. This suggests that teachers with more years of service tend to exhibit lower digital competence compared to their less experienced counterparts. This finding could reflect the challenges that older teachers may face in adapting to rapidly changing technology, a trend noted in previous studies (Baker et al., 2017).

The results align with the findings of the study by Korte and Hüsing (2019), which suggested that older teachers, due to years of teaching experience, may be less inclined to incorporate new digital tools and technologies into their practices. Furthermore, the lack of significant influence from other socio-demographic factors implies that digital competence among Araling Panlipunan teachers is

less about individual characteristics like age or educational level and more likely influenced by different factors, such as institutional support or personal interest in digital technologies. The regression model also indicates a relatively low R^2 value (0.1027), suggesting that socio-demographic factors only explain a small portion of the variance in digital competence, and other unmeasured factors may play a more substantial role in shaping digital proficiency in teaching.

The finding that the length of service is negatively correlated with digital competence suggests a need for targeted interventions for more experienced teachers who may be less familiar with or hesitant to adopt digital tools. Professional development programs that focus on bridge this gap by offering support tailored to the technological needs of veteran teachers could be highly beneficial. For instance, mentorship programs where more digitally competent teachers support their colleagues in integrating technology into their teaching practice could foster a more inclusive learning environment. Additionally, the finding that age, gender, and highest educational attainment are not significant predictors highlights that digital competence is not necessarily a matter of demographic characteristics but rather one of access, training, and motivation to engage with technology.

This study highlights the potential value of exploring other factors that may contribute to digital competence, such as institutional support, teaching discipline, and individual motivations for learning digital skills. Cultivating a culture of continuous digital learning among teachers could be beneficial, particularly through initiatives that engage teachers of all ages and service lengths with digital technologies. Additionally, given the apparent influence of length of service, it may be worthwhile to examine how digital competence develops over the course of a teaching career and how technological engagement can be maintained throughout a teacher's professional journey.

Moreover, Table 17 illustrates the Regression Analysis between the Teachers' Socio-Demographic Factors and their Instructional Practices. It uncovers how age, gender, education level, years of experience, and professional background affect their teaching strategies and classroom methods. Understanding these relationships can guide the development of tailored professional development programs to support teachers in adapting their instructional approaches based on their socio-demographic characteristics, ensuring a more personalized and effective teaching environment.

The regression analysis in Table 17 examines the relationship between teachers' socio-demographic factors—age, gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service—and their instructional practices. The analysis reveals that no factors, except age, show statistically significant associations with instructional practices. Specifically, the coefficients for gender ($\beta = -0.14$, $p = 0.32$), highest educational attainment ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.28$), and length of service ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = 0.16$) suggest that these socio-demographic variables have little to no influence on the instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers. However, age ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = 0.21$) did not reach a statistically significant threshold either. However, it indicates a potential negative relationship, suggesting that older teachers may not engage with contemporary instructional practices as effectively as younger teachers. This finding is consistent with previous research by Spires et al. (2019), who found that older educators often face challenges in adopting new pedagogical approaches and integrating modern technology into their teaching.

Additionally, the regression model reveals a relatively low R^2 value of 0.1153, indicating that the socio-demographic factors only explain a small portion of the variance in instructional practices. The result suggests that other unmeasured factors, such as access to professional development opportunities, institutional support, or intrinsic motivation, may significantly influence instructional practices. While demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and education level are often considered predictors of teaching behavior, the lack of significant findings in this analysis points to the importance of examining contextual factors—such as teachers' attitudes towards innovation, institutional culture, and support structures—that might have a greater influence on instructional practices (Inan & Lowther, 2010).

Table 17. *Regression Analysis between the Teachers' Socio-Demographic Factors and their Instructional Practices*

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	4.08	0.30	13.71	0.00
Age	-0.04	0.03	-1.27	0.21
Gender	-0.14	0.14	-1.01	0.32
Highest Educ	0.05	0.04	1.08	0.28
Length of Service	-0.06	0.04	-1.42	0.16

Notes: $R^2 = .1027$, $F(4, 106) = 3.034$, $p = .0206$

The findings indicate that socio-demographic factors have limited predictive power on instructional practices, suggesting that focusing on these aspects alone is insufficient for improving instructional outcomes. Instead, interventions should be designed to foster a culture of continuous professional development, particularly supporting teachers of all ages and experience levels in adopting innovative instructional practices. For instance, offering collaborative professional learning communities where teachers can share strategies and tools for effective teaching might help break down barriers to instructional innovation.

Additionally, the study highlights the need to explore non-demographic factors such as access to technology, teacher motivation, and

institutional support, which could be more influential in enhancing instructional practices. Targeted interventions can be developed to improve teachers' digital competence and pedagogical effectiveness by understanding the complex factors that shape teaching practices.

Table 18 presents the Correlational Analysis between teachers' Digital Competence and Instructional Practices. It examines the relationship between teachers' proficiency with digital tools and their effectiveness in incorporating them into their teaching methods.

The results of the correlational analysis in Table 20 reveal a significant positive relationship between teachers' digital competence and instructional practices. The highest correlation is observed between overall digital competence and overall instructional practices ($r = .747, p < .01$), indicating that teachers with higher levels of digital competence are more likely to demonstrate effective instructional practices. Among the dimensions of instructional practices, professional engagement ($r = .737, p < .01$) and digital resources ($r = .744, p < .01$) exhibit strong correlations with overall digital competence, suggesting that teachers who are more proficient in utilizing digital tools are better able to communicate with colleagues, access educational materials, and integrate digital resources into their teaching. These findings align with the study of Tondeur et al. (2017), which emphasized that teachers with higher digital competence are more adept at leveraging technology to enhance instruction, collaborate with peers, and engage students effectively.

Furthermore, the correlations between digital competence and other instructional practice dimensions, such as communication and social connections ($r = .548, p < .01$) and empowerment ($r = .551, p < .01$), are also statistically significant but relatively lower. The result suggests that while digital competence positively influences teachers' ability to connect and empower learners, other factors may contribute to these instructional aspects. The strong correlation between digital competence and instructional practices underscores the crucial role of digital literacy in modern teaching, reinforcing the notion that teachers must continuously develop their technological skills to meet the evolving demands of education (Redecker & Punie, 2017). The findings highlight that improving teachers' digital competence is beneficial and essential in ensuring effective and innovative instructional practices in Araling Panlipunan.

Table 18. *Correlational Analysis Between Digital Competence and Instructional Practices of Teachers*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Understanding Digital Practices</i>	<i>Finding Information</i>	<i>Using Information</i>	<i>Creating Information</i>	<i>Overall Digital Competence</i>
Professional Engagement	.692**	.692**	.717**	.711**	.737**
Digital Resources	.687**	.687**	.729**	.731**	.744**
Communication	.651**	.651**	.622**	.650**	.675**
Communication and Social Connections	.543**	.543**	.519**	.489**	.548**
Empowerment	.534**	.534**	.540**	.499**	.551**
Overall Instructional Practices	.712**	.712**	.719**	.709**	.747**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study's findings affirm that digital competence is a crucial determinant of instructional effectiveness. Tondeur et al. (2017) highlight that teachers with higher digital competence tend to be more innovative and adaptable in integrating technology into their pedagogical approaches. Similarly, Redecker and Punie (2017) emphasize the importance of digital skills in fostering a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. The results from this study support these assertions, demonstrating that digital competence is significantly correlated with all dimensions of instructional practices, particularly professional engagement and digital resource utilization. These findings suggest that teachers who are well-versed in digital tools and technologies are better equipped to navigate the challenges of 21st-century education.

The strong correlation between digital competence and instructional practices suggests that targeted interventions should be implemented to enhance teachers' digital skills. Professional development programs focusing on digital literacy, content creation, and online collaboration should be prioritized to equip teachers with the necessary skills for modern instructional delivery. Additionally, school administrators should provide continuous support through workshops, mentorship, and access to technological resources to foster an environment conducive to digital learning. Since professional engagement and digital resource utilization exhibit the strongest correlations with digital competence, training efforts should emphasize these areas to maximize their impact on teaching practices.

Moreover, while digital competence significantly influences instructional practices, other contextual factors such as institutional support, teachers' attitudes toward technology, and access to digital tools should also be considered. Schools should invest in digital infrastructure and policies promoting technology integration while ensuring teachers receive adequate guidance and motivation to leverage digital resources effectively. Strengthening teachers' digital competence will enhance instructional practices and improve student engagement and learning outcomes, ultimately leading to a more effective and innovative Araling Panlipunan curriculum.

Based on the study's findings, developing a targeted program that enhances the digital competence and instructional practices of Araling Panlipunan teachers is essential. The proposed Program Development Plan addresses key areas where improvement is needed, ensuring teachers are well-equipped with the digital skills and strategies to integrate technology into their teaching effectively. By strengthening their competencies in utilizing digital tools, managing online resources, and engaging in professional development opportunities, this

program seeks to support teachers in adapting to the evolving educational landscape and improving student learning outcomes.

Conclusions

The study reveals that Araling Panlipunan teachers in Tantangan District have a high level of digital competence, including understanding digital practices, using information, and creating digital content. However, they need improvement in creating original content and effectively utilizing digital resources.

In terms of instructional practices, teachers effectively use digital tools in their professional engagement, communication, and classroom activities. However, challenges persist in modifying, adapting, and ensuring data security. Targeted professional development programs are needed to enhance teachers' skills in curating, creating, and safeguarding digital content.

Teachers' socio-demographic characteristics don't significantly affect their digital competence, but experience affects adaptability. Professional development should focus on providing ongoing support, training, and access to updated digital tools for all teachers, regardless of their background or service.

Lastly, the strong correlation between digital competence and effective instructional practices emphasizes the need for continuous training and capacity-building to enhance teachers' digital skills, thereby improving learning outcomes and student engagement.

Regarding the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were generated: Conduct Specialized Training on Digital Content Creation by organizing hands-on workshops to enhance teachers' ability to create, edit, and organize digital instructional materials, such as interactive presentations, infographics, and multimedia resources. Develop a Mentoring Program for Digital Integration by pairing teachers with high digital competence with those needing improvement to foster collaborative learning and skill-sharing, particularly in digital resource creation and content development. Provide Access to User-Friendly Digital Tools and Platforms by equipping teachers with easy-to-use software for content creation, such as Canva, Microsoft Sway, and other digital storytelling applications, to enhance their confidence in developing instructional materials. Incorporate Digital Competence Training into In-Service Training (INSET) and School-Based Learning Action Cells (SLAC), and regularly include modules on digital content creation and online collaboration to ensure continuous professional growth. Enhance Institutional Support for Digital Resource Development, where schools should provide teachers with the necessary infrastructure, such as stable internet, multimedia devices, and software subscriptions, to encourage the effective creation and utilization of digital content. Integrate Project-Based Learning Using Digital Tools that encourage teachers to design classroom activities that require students to use and create digital content, reinforcing both teacher and student digital competence. Establish an Online Repository of Digital Teaching Materials to create a shared database where teachers can upload and access instructional materials, lesson plans, and best practices, promoting a collaborative teaching culture and continuous improvement. The Proposed Program Implementation must be conducted to develop professional learning communities where teachers can share best practices, exchange digital teaching materials, and discuss innovative instructional strategies. Future studies should be conducted to identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing digital instructional strategies, such as technological limitations, institutional constraints, and personal attitudes toward technology.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Mary Jean N. Miran

Libas Elementary School

Department of Education – Philippines

Cris John Bryan C. Dela Cruz, PhD

Sultan Kudarat State University – Philippines