

Students' Attitude towards Wattpad as an Online Reading Platform: Is It Favorable or Not?

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ABSTRACT

Wattpad is a free application for reading and writing short stories. Users are able to leave comments directly within the paragraphs of the short story. This study aims to examine the students' attitudes on Wattpad as an online story reading platform and the varieties of genres on Wattpad as an online story reading platform, as well as. As a case study, qualitative research was utilized in this study. Thirty seven undergraduate students from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya who use Wattpad for online story reading participated in this study. The instruments were adapted from Ganie et al. The result indicates both favorable and unfavorable opinions towards Wattpad as an online reading platform. Moreover, the results show that participants favor to read romance story and many participants unfavor to read mystery and science fiction story. Implication and recommendations are suggested.

Keywords: favor, genre, online, reading, Wattpad

INTRODUCTION

Recently, with the development of increasingly sophisticated technology and many online reading applications that have sprung up offering the up to date features, it can be assumed that people's interest in reading has increased from printed books to online books. Stein (1982) stated that stories are one of the oldest forms of communication known to mankind, and they have helped to preserve the history and heritage of many societies. Moreover, Grellet (1981) stated that reading is a continuous process of guessing, and what one carries to the text is frequently more essential than what one people find in it. Gough & Tunmer (1986) also define that reading is fundamentally different from listening in that it requires an entirely different set of skills than listening. Then Kiili (2012) stated that new literacies evolve in tandem with the technologies that define them; Furthermore, new literacies are multidimensional, benefiting from multiple perspectives as social media allows new ways of communicating, and new literacies are critical to full integration with the global community. It can be inferred that reading activities with any type of text, including stories, will experience changes as the digital world develops. Reading stories online can be defined as one of the literacy activities carried out digitally and focused on the story itself.

Several definitions of attitudes have been proposed time by time. Pickens (2005) stated that attitude is a mindset or a proclivity to act in a certain way as a result of one's experience and temperament. In addition, Ajzen (2005) stated that a disposition to reply favorably or unfavorably toward an object, individual, institution, or event is referred to as an attitude. Albarracin, Zanna, & Johnson (2005) stated that attitudes are used to describe

evaluative tendencies that can be inferred from and influence beliefs, affect, and behavior. Crano & Prislun (2008) stated Attitudes are thought to be representational. That is, attitudes are “things” that exist in memory in some way. Ganie, Miranda, & Yusuf (2021) also stated that attitudes are made up of three parts: affective (feelings), behavioral (the impact of the mindset on behavior), and cognitive (belief and knowledge). It can be inferred that the notion of attitude cannot be separated from the mindset and tendencies of human behavior related to the behavior itself and beliefs. The definition of attitudes above has not undergone a significant change, in which the notion of attitude is still related to human behavior, which in turn (see Ganie, Miranda, & Yusuf 2021) is the most precise and easy to understand definition produced so far.

Wattpad is one of the most popular online reading applications by millennial students that offers a myriad of advantages that can compete with other online reading applications. Grellet (1981) stated that there are many text types for reading: novels, short stories, newspapers, magazines, articles, essays, poems, handbooks, textbooks, guidebooks, etc. A finding by Anggitasari, Tarwana, Febriani, & Syafryadin, (2020) stated that Wattpad is a well-liked and effective application for reading short tales. There has been quite a lot of research in the area of using Wattpad as a medium for online reading. Anggitasari, Tarwana, Febriani, & Syafryadin, (2020) stated that Wattpad is easier to read short stories, learn about new vocabulary, and improve students' literacy skills. Başoğul (2021) Wattpad allows young people to spend long periods on their phones, feel liberated, and the app encourages reading and writing habits. Furotun, Mustofa, Efendi, & Jamilah (2021) also stated that there are several advantages to using Wattpad for teaching and learning English; for example, Wattpad can increase enthusiasm for learning English. These previous studies show that Wattpad can be used as a medium for the teaching and learning process. However, few studies discuss about the students' attitudes toward Wattpad and students' preferences about reading genre in Wattpad. Most research discusses the effect of Wattpad for learning the language. Therefore, this present research aims to investigate the types of favorable text genres in Wattpad as online story reading and students' attitude towards Wattpad as online story reading.

METHOD

This research used qualitative research as a case study. According to Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen (2010), a case study is a form of ethnographic research that relies on a single unit, such as an individual, group, organization, or program. Using a case study made the researcher know in depth and as a whole a phenomenon totally. Ary et al., (2010) also stated that a case study refers to a single unit to generate a comprehensive, in-depth overview. This research was conducted to investigate the types of genres and students' attitude towards Wattpad as online story reading.

The participants in this research were thirty seven undergraduate students of Tarbiyah Faculty at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya who use Wattpad as online story reading. Data were collected through open questionnaires and interview guidelines. Telephone interviews were conducted, with the interviewer using the WhatsApp platform. However, there was one participant who had a connection problem then the researcher used a message through WhatsApp. The interview questions and the questionnaires were derived from the study by Ganie et al., (2021) and the thesis by Rojak (2018). The researcher merged the two sources to generate ten questions used to interview participants. The researcher conducted semistructured interview, record the interview, and transcribe it to explore the genres and

students' attitude towards Wattpad as online story reading. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide to collect more detailed data. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and further reported by translating into English. The researcher transcribed the audio recording, created summaries, developed codes and topics by coloring in each category, generated categories, and composed analytical notes. Moreover, the researcher described and analyzed the results of the interview. Finally, conclusion was drawn. In this activity, the researcher-analyst assesses the significance of the data by recognizing patterns and explanations.

Furthermore, the researcher used 3 components of attitudes to categorize it. Millar & Tesser (1986) stated that it is essential to see attitudes as dynamic relations of cognition, affect, as well as general evaluations. Jain (2014) stated attitude denotes the favorable/ negative mental as well as neural readiness towards an individual, location, item, or event. It contains three components: 1) Affective component (feeling/emotion), 2) Behavioral component (response/action), and 3) Cognitive component (belief/evaluation). A remark or argument that was not annotated with a positively or negatively evaluative term was considered to be neutral or mixed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines students' attitude towards Wattpad as an online reading platform and the student's preferences toward the reading genre on the application. Thirty participants were interviewed and given responses to the open questionnaire. The result showed that the 78.6% favor to the use of Wattpad and 21.4% not favor to the use of Wattpad as it is reflected on the following figure

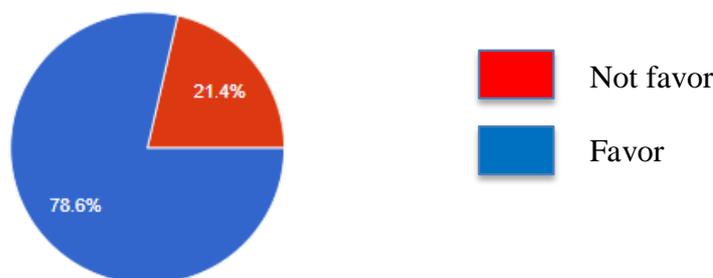


FIGURE 1. Students' Attitude towards Wattpad as an Online Reading Platform

Figure 1 shows that most of the participants are in favor to the use of Wattpad as an online reading platform. Preferring to read online stories through Wattpad compared to others, participants reported that they preferred to read stories from Wattpad because they were easier and more practical as it is reflected on the following excerpt

Excerpt 1

"I like it, I really like reading through Wattpad because it can be carried anywhere, it's easier because it's through a cell phone, especially if I find a story that I want."
(S1)

Excerpt 1 shows that Wattpad as an online platform can be carried everywhere because they can access it on their cellular phone. They also easy to choose any story that they like. It can be inferred that Wattpad provides many stories so that they have many chances to accommodate their reading interest. Furthermore, participants also admitted that reading stories through Wattpad was comfortable as it is reflected on the following excerpt.

Excerpt 2

“Yes, especially when the reading mode has a dark background. So when I read it, it's comfortable, it's not too bright” (S4)

Excerpt 2 shows that Wattpad as an online platform is comfortable because they can manage the view on their cellular phone. Reading on the dark or bright background may influence the conformity of the reader. It can be inferred that Wattpad provides many adjustment for the screen view so that they have many chances to adjust their own screen. Furthermore, participants also admitted that reading stories through Wattpad made them happy and excited it is reflected on the following excerpt

Excerpt 3

“I feel happy, even if I imagine as if it was real, sometimes I also feel sad, it depends on the background of the story, and that makes me more excited and happy.” (S7)

Excerpt 3 shows that Wattpad as an online platform is exciting because they can go into the stories. Reading on Wattpad can invite the imagination of the reader to feel the emotion. It can be inferred that Wattpad provides good story which invite readers' imagination and the emotion. Another reasons why participants like to use Wattpad is because of the features of Wattpad. Wattpad also can facilitate beginner author to write their story for free as it is reflected on the following excerpt

Excerpt 4

“In my opinion, the Wattpad application is very useful for accommodating the talent of someone who is interested in writing. Wattpad itself is in electronic form which can be read anytime and anywhere as long as there is a connected internet network. This makes it very easy for us to read stories easily. In addition, the Wattpad platform is also free, so you don't have to think about paying for content when reading”. (S15)

Excerpt 4 shows that Wattpad as an online platform is favorable because people can read many stories for free. Reading on Wattpad can be done without spending money and they just use their internet credit or Wi-Fi at home or at the university. It can be inferred that Wattpad is favorable due to the affordability.

However, there are also some pitfalls of the application. Wattpad contains many advertisements that disturb the reading process as it is reflected on the following excerpt:

Excerpt 5

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“Wattpad still adds ads (except for VIP members) if you want to read, and only a few stories are available offline. Also, stories that have been published cannot be read in full, only fragments of stories from books”. (S20)

Excerpt 5 shows that Wattpad as an online platform is unfavorable because reader should read the advertisement for many times within the reading process. Reading on Wattpad cannot be done if the stories were published officially. Therefore, readers may only read a small part of the whole text. Limited stories are available offline. Another limitation is about the word choices as it is reflected on the following excerpt.

Excerpt 6

“Actually, I used to like Wattpad and now I'm looking for AO3, because I think AO3 is more advanced than other platforms. Senior in the English sense. In Wattpad, the grammar is not good. I used to like reading Wattpad because the grammar is easy to understand, and it's always fun, but over time, I realized that whoever wrote the Wattpad story, they use vocab that basically is the same.”

Excerpt 6 shows that Wattpad as an online platform is unfavorable because reader read the same vocabulary in several reading text. The word choice might be similar since everyone can contribute their writing. Further limitation is about the adultery content as it is reflected on the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7

“It too many fanfictions and content that in a negative context can be accessed by all ages and affect the personality of the readers” (S19)

Excerpt 7 shows that Wattpad as an online platform is unfavorable because some text use adultery content and there is no filter feature for children. The content might not be properly read by children. Therefore, reader should be wise to choose the text.

In terms of the genre, romance become the most favorable genre as it is reflected on the following figure:

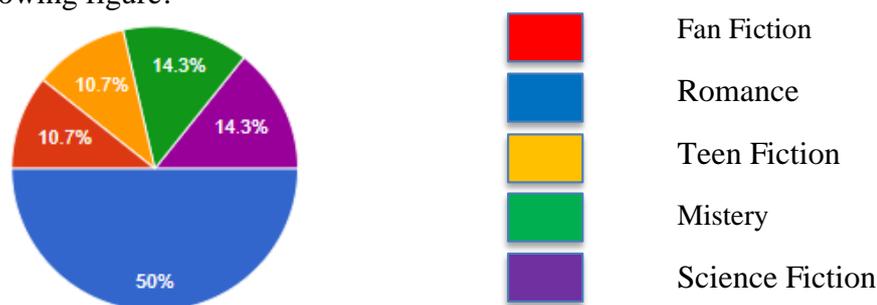


FIGURE 2. Students' Preference towards Wattpad Reading Text

Figure 2 shows that most of the participants favor to read Romance in Wattpad platform. Preferring to read romance stories through Wattpad compared to others, participants reported that they preferred to read romance stories from Wattpad because they were memorable as it is reflected on the following excerpt

Excerpt 8

“but mostly because I used to read Wattpad when I was in high school, so I read things that were relatable to high school romance.” (S7)

Excerpt 8 shows that romance is the favorable genre because it brings their memory to the romance of their high school moment. It reflects their personal opinion therefore they like to read romance. Furthermore, another genre is also preferable as it is reflected on the following excerpt

Excerpt 9

“Romance is the most common, but I prefer fiction, even though fiction is complicated, so I read romance, but if there is good fiction, I'll definitely read it. Because I like Harry Potter, it's a fairy tale and not really fact, I think fiction is like telling another work, we learn about their world and there's a story line that makes it fun. If it's an ordinary story like our everyday world, then it's definitely normal.” (S26)

Excerpt 9 shows that fiction is the favorable genre because it brings their imagination like a normal life but there are some story lines that make it fun.

From the results of the findings section, it can be shown that the romance genre has the most interest by readers, which is then followed by fantasy and teen fiction. Furthermore, students' attitudes towards Wattpad as an online story-reading platform showed a positive attitude. Ajzen (2005) stated that participants who gave a positive attitude assess the favored statement to be logical and the frequency of their agreement to be widespread or common. Almost all participants gave positive responses related to student attitudes. The positive response related to the second research question indicates that the positive response given is a favorable response or gives a good response to Wattpad as a platform for reading online stories.

In this study, the romance genre was at the top of the most popular choices by participants on the genres of reading story through Wattpad. However, the results differ from the study by Rahayu (2019) which showed that genre fiction was read more often by participants and popular. This difference may occur because the level of participants in this study used college who had grown up to adulthood, while Rahayu's study used high school students who were adolescents. Izharuddin (2021) stated that the romance genre usually refers to a specific audience namely young people, women, and their needs.

Furthermore, prefer reading online stories on Wattpad over other applications indicated positive attitude in the affective component. The result of the interview expressed feeling happy and comfortable when reading the story. Because of the storyline and also features that were provided on Wattpad, it could have affected the reader's feeling. In addition, this finding was consistent with Ganie et al. (2021). Ganie's study revealed that curiosity about the plot of the story made the reader interested in reading so that a sense of pleasure arises. This study's finding is also supported by Bal (2018); Anggitasari et al. (2020).

Not only positive attitude, but also negative attitude shows in the affective component, with a significant number of responses that are unfavorable but not dominant. Negative attitude shows that participants do not agree with the provided questions. This statement is supported by Ajzen (2005), a negative attitude assumes things don't make sense and approval as impossible. Participants indicated that Wattpad was uninteresting since the

narratives given were repetitive, particularly those by Indonesian authors. In addition, dislikes are typically the result of individual perceptions, such as excessive screen time or simple language. These arguments are contrary to study by Başoğul (2021) youth like spending extended periods of time on Wattpad through their mobile devices and experiencing a sense of independence.

The behavioral component demonstrates that participants will read Wattpad to occupy their free time and will like reading Wattpad stories. This assertion is backed by (Başoğul, 2021; Ganie et al., 2021) The results of the interview in the Ganies's study stated that participants agreed that reading Wattpad was done in their spare time which was to fill the void of activities and it made them comfortable. Sari et al. (2020) stated that the meaning of reading as interpreted by Wattpad users is reading as a habit, or reading as a habit in the user's life. The manner in which individuals spend their free time reading becomes ingrained in their life.

On the cognitive component, the responses given are in line with the previous studies (Anggitasari et al., 2020; Bal, 2018) The benefits that can be taken from reading stories through Wattpad include: Wattpad is more accessible since users may read stories anywhere, Wattpad helps students in writing and reading practice, share thoughts and feeling. In this study, participants' attitudes on the use of Wattpad were found to be favorable or positive attitude. Although negative responses were also shown by some participants, it cannot be denied that positive responses contributed more. Other stories (Bal, 2018; Ganie et al., 2021; (Anggitasari et al., 2020) also support the results of this study.

This research is limited by the process of creating the questions that are used as an interview guideline. The questions posed have a greater emphasis on the affective component. This does not complement the other elements sought by the researcher. In order to strengthen students' attitudes, it is also required to add more instruments or report them numerically, so that they are more tangible and quantifiable. Future research should be cognizant of this issue, employ other tools, and ask balanced questions about what to look for.

Based on the data acquired from the interviews, it is evident that the favored genre will evolve and alter as new types of stories arise. Future research should focus on identifying the reasons for liking genres on Wattpad as well as the types of growing genres. In addition, it would be interesting to expand attitude-related questions with the outcomes of unique or uncommon components. As the implication, teacher should accommodate students with different reading genre. The use of Wattpad is beneficial however, there must be a guideline to choose proper content for the students. Technology will help teacher to have free and accessible reading exposure to enhance the students reading interest

CONCLUSION

The aims of this study are to explore the types of genres and students' attitude towards Wattpad as online story reading. Based on those purposes, many genres that are mentioned by participants but the order of the most popular genres are romance, fiction, and fantasy. In addition, the participants showed a positive attitude towards Wattpad as an online reading platform. Their predominant positive evaluations of wattpad for reading a story reveal their favorable disposition. Further research could discuss the engagement level of the reader in using Wattpad or the writing project in Wattpad.

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