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The Role of Wattpad Applications in Increasing Reading Interest in the Library Students of The North Sumatera State Islamic University

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies on digital literacy highlight a shift in reading interest from print media to interactive digital platforms. However, there is a gap in understanding the impact of applications like Wattpad on the reading interest of students in library science programs. This study aims to determine the role of the Wattpad application in enhancing the reading interest of Library Science students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU), as well as to assess the level of reading interest before and after using Wattpad. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with a field study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that Wattpad significantly enhances students' reading interest by providing easy access, diverse genres, and interactive features such as comments and voting. Students reported a shift from academic-focused reading to more consistent and enjoyable reading habits. Wattpad serves as an effective digital literacy tool, fostering a sustainable reading culture and supporting the professional development of Library Science students in the digital era.

1. Introduction

The digital era is a period in life where various supporting activities can be facilitated by the presence of all-encompassing technology. One concrete example of this digital era's development is the smartphone. The internet, as one of the most important functions on smartphones, is also the most significant technological development. This makes it easier for us to find the information needed to increase our knowledge and insight. One positive impact of the development of information and communication technology is the emergence of digital libraries, which serve as a platform or place to access various reading collections online, without the constraints of space and time. Digital libraries not only provide scientific

collections but also accommodate popular reading interests as a form of recreational literacy. This is where digital reading platforms like Wattpad play a role (Poliakova, 2022; Faridina et al., 2024).

Wattpad is an app and digital platform that allows its users to read and write for free as well as read and write in various genres. This platform is very popular with young people or teenagers, because it is interactive, accessible, and provides an opportunity to explore imagination and creativity. In the midst of the challenge of declining conventional reading interest, Wattpad has emerged as an alternative media that is able to attract the attention of young people or adolescents in increasing reading interest (Zafar et al., 2024).

In the context of education, Wattpad can be used as a literacy media that adapts to the digital tastes and habits of the younger generation, not only acting as a literature consumer, but also as a literacy that is able to utilize technology to promote reading culture. The interesting phenomenon is in the field how the Wattpad application has become a reading habit for students, especially library science study program students, namely students tend to prefer stories from wattpad because of its easy access, free availability, and can be read through cellphones anytime and anywhere. In addition, reading activities on Wattpad often take place consistently, which shows the emotional attachment of students to the stories and characters they read.

Previous research Lestari & Hasanudin (2022) discussed the role of the Wattpad application in increasing reading and writing interest in students of the faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah IAIN Parepare resulting in students experiencing a significant increase in reading interest and active writing so that they share their work on Wattpad. A similar thing was found by Widiasmara (2023) discussing the influence of Wattpad media on the literacy interest, resulting the students showing an increase in interest in reading since regularly using the Wattpad application. Sinaga et al., (2024) discusses the use of Wattpad as a digital literacy media for students to produce effective Wattpad as a literacy media based on reading interests.

Previous research has revealed Wattpad's potential in improving reading and writing skills. However, most of the research focus is on general students. This research was conducted to find out how much the Wattpad application affects increasing the reading interest of library science students who read Wattpad. The purpose of this study is the role of the use of the wattpad application in increasing the reading interest of library science students of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU), as well as to determine the level of reading interest of library science students before and after using Wattpad.

As for the benefits or interesting aspects of Wattpad, namely, Wattpad is available for free and easily accessible on various devices (cellphones, tablets or laptops) and makes it easy for everyone to read anywhere, the chapter comment and voting features make readers feel emotionally involved in the story, encouraging more sustainable reading habits. Readers can choose their favorite genre or theme to make the reading experience more personal and fun, all people can also write their

own stories so that Wattpad serves as a space to express ideas and improve writing skills, as well as with millions of users from different countries.

Wattpad creates a literacy social network that encourages collaboration, discussion, increases interest in reading, and appreciation of written works (Azzahra et al., 2024). Wattpad is also one of the online reading applications that is in demand by library science students. From the initial results of the researcher's observations, there are several library science students who also use the Wattpad application as their digital reading platform. This study investigates the role of the Wattpad application in enhancing the reading interest of library science students at the North Sumatera State Islamic University, by analyzing how its features, accessibility, and content variety influence students' reading habits and preferences.

2. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the use of the Wattpad application by students of the Library Science Study Program, the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU), as well as its influence on their reading interests. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to directly explore the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of the individuals who are the subject of the research. This approach is interpersonal, which means that researchers engage directly with informants in the field, so that they are able to dig into data in more depth and contextual. The purpose of this descriptive approach is to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of the conditions studied, as well as to describe the relationship between the use of Wattpad and the increase in students' interest in reading.

This research was carried out in the Library Science Study Program of UINSU, with an implementation time of one month in an even semester. The research subjects consisted of UINSU Library Science students who actively used the Wattpad application, which were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The criteria for selecting informants include students who actively use Wattpad and have experience reading stories on the platform. The number of informants in this study ranged from five to ten people, according to the data needs and the depth of information desired.

The data collection techniques used in this study consisted of interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to directly explore students' experiences, perceptions, and motivations in using Wattpad as a reading medium (Creswell (2018)). Observations were carried out in the campus environment to observe student activities related to the use of Wattpad in daily life, especially in academic and non-academic contexts. Meanwhile, documentation is used as a complement, by collecting various forms of secondary data such as images, screenshots of Wattpad activities, videos, as well as relevant literature to support the research findings.

The data analysis process was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model, which included four main stages. The first stage is data collection, which is collecting data from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation that have been classified based on the focus of the research problem. The second stage is data reduction, which is simplifying, summarizing, and organizing the data that has been collected to focus on the main themes that are relevant. The third stage is data presentation, where the reduced information is systematically arranged in the form of narratives or visualizations that facilitate interpretation. Finally, the conclusion stage is carried out by interpreting the relationships between data categories, to find meaning and answer the formulation of the problem in this study.

3. Results and Discussion

The interview questions in the table (Table 1) are designed to explore various aspects of Wattpad usage among library science students at the North Sumatera State Islamic University, focusing on its role in increasing reading interest. The questions cover topics such as frequency of use, preferred features, reading motivations, and favorite genres to understand students' engagement with the platform. They also address the potential impact of Wattpad on reading habits and academic performance, as well as accessibility factors that may influence usage. Additionally, the table includes questions about challenges faced by students and their suggestions for improvement, providing comprehensive data to analyze how Wattpad contributes to fostering a reading culture in an academic setting.

Table 1. The Question Given in the Interview of Sample

No Aspect	Interview Question	Purpose of the Question
1 Wattpad Usage	How often do you use Wattpad in a week?	To find out the frequency of Wattpad use among students.
2 Wattpad Usage	Which Wattpad feature do you use most frequently?	To identify the most attractive features for students.
3 Reading Motivation	What is your main reason for choosing to read on Wattpad instead of other media?	To reveal the motivational factors behind students' choice of Wattpad.
4 Type of Reading	What genre or type of reading material do you most often read on Wattpad?	To find out students' preferred reading genres.
5 Impact on Reading Interest	Does using Wattpad affect your interest in reading? Please explain.	To assess the relationship between Wattpad use and reading interest.
6 Changes in Reading Habits	Have your reading habits changed since using Wattpad? How?	To identify changes in students' reading behavior.
7 Accessibility	How easy is it for you to access Wattpad (e.g., internet connection, device)?	To measure accessibility factors in Wattpad use.

No Aspect	Interview Question	Purpose of the Question
8 Academic Impact	Has Wattpad helped you in your studies or coursework? Please explain.	To explore Wattpad's potential as a learning support tool.
9 Usage Challenges	What challenges do you face when using Wattpad?	To identify obstacles affecting Wattpad use.
10 Suggestions for Improvement	What are your suggestions to make Wattpad more beneficial for students?	To collect input for improving Wattpad in an educational context.

Definition and Forms of the Wattpad Application Used by UINSU Library Science Students

The Wattpad application is a very popular online reading and writing application, especially among users who like to read and channel creativity in the form of writing stories from various genres, both fiction and non-fiction and the Wattpad application offers millions of stories, books, fan fiction, and poetry in more than 25 languages from authors around the world. Wattpad provides a wide space for beginner and professional writers to publish their work, as well as making it easier for readers to access thousands of stories through just one application, when users who want to log in to the Wattpad application will display several features including home, browse, library, story writing, notifications, votes and comment columns.

These features have their own uses, including: The home or homepage feature is a feature that can be used to view various recommended stories. The search feature is a feature that aims to make it easier for readers to find the story they want to read. The library feature is a feature used to store stories offline. The story writing feature is used to channel the creativity of wattpad users in creating a story. The notification feature is a feature used to notify readers of newly uploaded articles by the author. The vote and comment feature is a feature used to provide support, criticism, and suggestions to writers and be able to interact with each other (Sinaga et al., 2024), The forms of wattpad applications used by library science students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra are such as novels, short stories, poems and other fictional stories.

Wattpad is one of the largest digital literacy platforms in the world. Based on official data from Wattpad, this application has more than 90 million monthly active users worldwide. Since its founding in 2006 in Toronto, Canada, Wattpad has continued to experience rapid growth because it is able to answer the needs of the younger generation for fast, practical, and engaging access to reading. Wattpad's user base spans more than 200 countries, with content translated into multiple languages, including Indonesian. More than 565 million stories have been published by users worldwide. This shows that Wattpad is not only a means of reading, but also a creative platform for writing and sharing literary works. The majority of Wattpad users are teenagers and young adults, with an age range of between 13 and 30 years old. This age group is an important segment in efforts to increase digital literacy, because they actively use technology and social media in their daily lives.

From the perspective of researchers, the Wattpad application can be seen as an innovation in digital literacy that has a great influence on the way the younger generation reads and changes in library services in the modern era. Wattpad is more than just a platform with fictional stories, but it has also become an alternative platform that provides support for literacy (Chodiyah et al., 2024), independent learning, and creative cooperation between writers and readers. In libraries, Wattpad can be a form of non-formal digital library that offers open access to thousands of stories in various languages and genres, this allows conventional libraries to expand their role in the digital era, namely not only as a place to store and borrow physical books, but also as a driver of digital literacy access.

The Role of the Wattpad Application in Increasing the Reading Interest of UINSU Library Science Students

The Wattpad application is not only an entertainment medium, but also serves as an effective means of informal learning in increasing students' interest in reading, especially for those who study at the Library Science Study Program of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU). One of the main advantages of Wattpad is its ease of access. Students only need devices such as smartphones and an internet connection to be able to enjoy thousands of stories from various genres. The availability of free and accessible reading materials anytime and anywhere is a solution to the limitations of physical reading materials, especially in the academic environment (Muyassaroh et al., 2022). With a very diverse choice of genres, such as romantic fiction, thriller, horror, fantasy, and everyday life stories, students can choose reading that suits their interests, so that reading activities become more fun and less burdensome (Hastuti, 2021).

The role of the Wattpad application in increasing the reading interest of Library Science students of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) is a phenomenon that reflects dynamic changes in literacy patterns in the digital era. Wattpad as a digital reading platform not only functions as a source of reading materials, but has developed into an interactive ecosystem that is able to bridge the creative and educational needs of students. This study reveals in depth how the application affects students' reading behavior and reading interests, especially through the experiences of five main informants who came from library science students.

From the in-depth interviews conducted, it was found that Wattpad is not only a content provider platform, but also a medium that facilitates changes in reading patterns and motivation as well as the formation of digital literacy which is important for library science students, one of the fundamental aspects that stands out is the ease of access provided by Wattpad, in the context of digital literacy, accessibility is an important part that allows users to obtain reading materials at anytime and anywhere without the limitations of space and time. The first informant mentioned that with Wattpad, he can enjoy various types of fictional stories that suit his interests without the hassle of looking for physical books or relying on conventional libraries. This statement is in line with the findings of Damayanti et al., (2021), who emphasize that digital reading applications such as Wattpad can

answer the limitations of reading access by providing flexible and accessible content. This allows students to significantly increase their reading frequency.

In addition to the access aspect, the variety of fiction genres that abound on Wattpad is also a driver of students' intrinsic motivation. Genres that are close to their everyday experiences bring emotional and psychological satisfaction, so readers are encouraged to take the time to read. This is in accordance with the intrinsic motivation theory of Deci and Ryan (2000), and is supported by the research results of Chodiyah et al. (2024), who found that fictional stories in Wattpad are able to encourage students' interest in reading because of their emotional relevance and the proximity of the theme to the reader's life. The second informant, stated that the stories made him feel "connected" and made reading part of a fun routine.

Another important factor is the presence of interactive features on Wattpad. The commenting, voting, and direct communication features with authors and fellow readers create an active digital literacy community. The first informant said that his involvement in this community made him feel more motivated and emotionally attached to the stories he read. These findings are in line with the concept of digital social literacy by Lankshear (2011), and also strengthened by Pratiwi (2023), who state that interactions within the Wattpad platform form deep reader engagement, increase a sense of ownership of reading, and strengthen reading motivation.

In addition to its recreational and social benefits, wattpad also plays a role in the development of students' digital literacy. Digital literacy includes the ability to access, evaluate, and manage digital information, an essential skill in the modern library era. The third informant said that the experience of using wattpad helped him adapt to the digital reading culture and prepare himself to face the challenges of the librarian profession. This view is reinforced by Muyassaroh et al. (2022), who affirm the importance of digital literacy as part of student competencies in the Society 5.0 era. Wattpad, as an informal medium, provides a space for students to hone their digital skills through reflective and evaluative reading activities. Changes in reading patterns and motivation are also a significant impact of using Wattpad. Students who originally considered reading as a boring academic obligation have now turned into active and enthusiastic readers. Ainun admitted that he now spends 1-2 hours a day reading his favorite stories on Wattpad. These changes show the internalization of reading interest, which according to Singh and Kaur (2024), is the key to the formation of a sustainable reading culture among students.

The increased reading duration and intensity reported by the informants not only increased reading interest, but also formed consistent reading habits. This is in line with the findings of Chen et al. (2021), who emphasized that reading consistency in digital formats strengthens students' critical and analytical literacy, broadens insights, and deepens understanding of digital content. In this context, Wattpad has become an informal learning space that encourages broader literacy skills. The use of Wattpad also develops collaboration and communication skills in the digital space, which is an important aspect of modern digital literacy. Students are not only consumers of information, but also producers and active commentators in digital literacy. This is very relevant for future librarians who must be able to adapt to

technology-based information and communication systems (Handayani et al., 2025).

Overall, Wattpad can be seen as an effective digital literacy in supporting the development of literacy culture and strengthening the professional competence of UINSU Library Science students. By providing easy access, providing engaging and diverse content, facilitating social interaction, and increasing digital literacy, Wattpad has proven itself as an innovative reading media that is able to answer the literacy challenges of the younger generation. These findings support the view of Arimbi and Daulay (2024), as well as Nurdiana et al. (2023), that digital platforms such as Wattpad are able to significantly improve reading skills with a fun and emotionally integrated approach.

In student reading preferences, the most preferred genres are romance and college life dramas, followed by teen fiction, light mysteries, and slice of life (Nurdiana et al., 2023). Some of the popular titles mentioned by the informant include Mariposa, Geez & Ann, Dear Nathan, and Kata. In addition, works from famous writers on Wattpad such as Boy Candra and Reinda Aulia are also the main choices, the choice of this genre is driven by the suitability between the stories presented and the experiences or aspirations of the students themselves. These stories are considered light, entertaining, and easy to understand, making them more interesting than academic readings that tend to be formal and dense.

Additionally, Wattpad offers a reading experience that is both social and interactive. The comment and voting features allow students to engage directly with authors and fellow readers, thus creating two-way communication that enriches the reading process (Iii et al., 2025). This kind of interaction forms an active literacy community and increases students' emotional and intellectual engagement with their chosen readings. Furthermore, Wattpad also provides space for students to develop their writing creativity. Students can write and share their own work with the audience, which indirectly trains writing skills, systematic thinking, and compiling content in accordance with digital rules (Heriyanto & Anggitia, 2022). This activity is very relevant to competencies in the field of Library Science, which requires the ability to manage technology-based information.

In addition, the use of Wattpad also helps students understand the digital literacy ecosystem practically. They learn about how content is created, shared, and consumed in the digital space. This experience is an important capital when they later enter the world of work, especially in the management of digital libraries or technology-based information institutions. Thus, Wattpad not only contributes to increasing reading interest, but also plays a role in shaping the digital skills and professional readiness of UINSU Library Science students.

Exploring the Changing Reading Interest of UINSU Library Science Students through Experience Using the Wattpad Application

The change in reading interest among Library Science students of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) through the use of the Wattpad application

shows a striking transformation. Before getting to know Wattpad, most students had a tendency to read that was reactive and limited to academic needs. Reading activities are only done in the context of completing assignments, looking for citations for papers, or when facing exams. This is in line with the findings of Saputri (2019), who stated that students tend to consider reading as an academic burden, not as a habit or personal need.

However, after getting to know and using the Wattpad application, students' reading patterns have undergone a significant shift. College students are starting to make reading a fun part of their daily routine. Fictional stories that are light and relevant to everyday life, such as romance, friendship, or teen drama, become an effective entry point to reactivate previously passive reading interests. As informed by informants Ainun and Dea, they spend about 1 to 2 hours every day reading stories on Wattpad, especially before going to bed or during lecture breaks. These findings are in line with Amanda (2023) research which shows that students who actively use Wattpad experience an increase in the frequency of independent reading without external encouragement.

The reading experience provided by Wattpad is personal and emotional, which is the main differentiator compared to academic readings that tend to be rigid and formal. According to Ainun, he not only enjoys the stories he reads, but also feels involved in the plot and characters, which then encourages him to consistently read and even follow the work of certain authors. This indicates the formation of high reader attachment, where readers have an emotional attachment to reading, as explained by Pratiwi and Dewi (2023). This experience also reinforces the internalization of reading motivation that is based on interest, not obligation.

This change can be explained through the theory of intrinsic motivation from Deci and Ryan (2000), where a person is encouraged to do an activity if he feels he has control, connection, and competence in doing it. Wattpad provides a space for students to choose their own reading to their tastes, provides social interaction through comments and voting, and allows them to be part of a digital literacy community. These three aspects support the formation of intrinsic motivation in reading.

Research by Arimbi and Dauly (2024) also corroborates that students who use Wattpad tend to show increased reading motivation due to the light narrative form and relatable to their daily reality. In this context, Wattpad not only changed reading habits, but also expanded the scope of the genres that students read, from previously limited to academic texts to being open to different types of popular literary works.

Not only limited to increasing the frequency of reading, students also show a widespread response to other forms of reading. Some informants, such as Hulwa and Zalza, revealed that they began looking for print versions of popular stories read through Wattpad, such as *Mariposa*, *Geez & Ann*, and *DearNathan*. These findings reinforce the results of Amanda's (2023) research, which states that Wattpad can be a link between digital literacy and conventional literacy. This means

that the digital reading experience can be a stimulus to rekindle interest in physical books.

In addition, the exploration process carried out by students in reading on Wattpad also has an impact on increasing their cognitive capacity. Along with increasing reading consistency, students begin to develop critical thinking skills, especially when comparing various storylines, assessing the quality of writing, and providing comments or reviews. This is in line with the findings of Chen et al. (2021), who affirm that intensive engagement in digital literacy can improve students' critical and reflective literacy.

Thus, the exploration of the use of Wattpad by UINSU Library Science students has opened up a new space in forming a literacy culture that is oriented towards independence, creativity, and reflection. Their experience proves that reading interest is not a static thing, but can be formed and improved through media that suits the characteristics and needs of today's digital generation.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the Wattpad application plays a significant role in increasing the reading interest of students of the Library Science Study Program, the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU). Through a descriptive qualitative approach, it was found that the use of Wattpad not only encourages more routine and independent reading activities, but also forms a high emotional and social engagement between students and their reading. Before getting to know Wattpad, students' reading activities tended to be academic, limited to lecture assignments, and less sustainable. However, after actively using Wattpad, there is a change in reading behavior to be more consistent, fun, and in accordance with personal interests. Popular genres such as romance, college drama, and teen fiction are top choices due to their proximity to student life and aspirations.

Wattpad's accessibility via mobile devices, interactive features such as comments and voting, and flexibility of usage make the platform aligned with the multitasking and dynamic digital lifestyle of students. Not only as a reading medium, Wattpad also encourages students to write, share works, and build digital literacy and critical thinking skills. Wattpad can be positioned as a form of non-formal digital library that complements the role of conventional libraries, as well as being a bridge between digital literacy and print literacy. Thus, Wattpad not only plays a role in shaping a reading culture, but also supports the formation of students' professional competencies in the field of librarianship, especially in technology-based information management.

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