

Article

The Effectiveness of Using Wattpad to Improve Students' Writing Skills and Critical Thinking Skills: A Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract: Wattpad has become a popular application both for reading and writing stories. Since most Wattpad users are people in the age school, it can be used as an alternative medium to help the student to improve not only their writing skills but also stimulate their critical thinking. Based on the interview was conducted with 23 Wattpad active users by using qualitative descriptive research based on a phenomenological approach. The interview result shows that almost all of the participants agree that using Wattpad can improve not only their writing skills. They also realize that by reading a lot of stories, they can improve their critical thinking skills. Besides, they can get information and new knowledge related to writing by sharing their experience with the other user. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to find out the effectiveness of using Wattpad to improve students' writing skills and critical thinking skills based on the phenomenological approach.

Keywords: wattpad, application, feedback

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1. Introduction

In this digital era, social media has being a part of a lifestyle. This is a social phenomenon where the existence of social media has influenced how we live, how we work, and now more than ever, how we learn. Almost everyone has a social media account and uses it in their daily lives. Whether they only send a message, share photos, or even share their daily activities. Today, the function of social media is even more diverse. As Jones (2015: 93) states that social media technologies are no longer only used for leisure. For some reason, since social media has familiar among students, it has become a widely researched subject, especially in the field of education, to find out if there is any effect of using social media on students' learning process. Some students might have a problem with their subject, and they need some kind of help which they can get anytime and anywhere they need. In this case, social media can be an alternative to solve their problem because, through social media, the students can interact with the teacher even when they are in a different place.

Many types of social media have been created with certain functions and objectives. One of them is Wattpad. Wattpad is an eBook that provides a thousand works that can be read by people who love reading. However, it also provides features that allow users to write and publish their work themselves. By using Wattpad, the user can write as their wish. More interestingly, Wattpad users can share comments and information, where fellow users can give their criticism and suggestions for the works they read.

If seen that most Wattpad users are school-age teens, it does not seem impossible for the teacher to take advantage of this phenomenon that is utilized Wattpad as a medium to improve students' learning process. Some of the students might need the motivation to

start to write, and Wattpad, which provides a thousand books might give them what they need. Besides, on Wattpad they can interact with fellow users where they can share their experience in writing. Students may get the motivation to write after they use Wattpad. However, several things should be considered when using Wattpad as a medium to help the student in the learning process, i.e., the amount of content that might not be appropriate for students. Therefore, the role of teachers, parents, and the students themselves to avoid inappropriate content is required. Critical thinking enables people to perceive and reflect on information and facts critically when they face challenges (Huitt: 1998). It means that the students are expected to be able to think critically in order they are not trapped in inappropriate content and the goal of learning will be achieved. Since Wattpad is a phenomenon in society, especially among young people in the age school, therefore this article will discuss the extent of the effectiveness of using Wattpad to improve students' writing skills.

2. Materials and Methods

This article adopted a phenomenologically-based qualitative research methodology. Investigating social phenomena and human problems through methodologies-based study is known as qualitative research. This method involves the researcher creating a complex image, analyzing words, compiling in-depth reports from the respondents' viewpoints, and conducting investigations in real-world settings (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). A phenomenological approach, according to Moleong (2007: 13–14), is a perspective that prioritizes the subjective experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is, in other words, the study of an observable event. Phenomenological research seeks to comprehend the fundamental nature of social phenomena from the viewpoint of those who experienced them (Creswell: 1998). Participants in this study were students who had used Wattpad for 2-3 years. They are active users and have written on the application. They were given the questions and then answered based on their experience as long as they used Wattpad. To collect data, the authors conducted a question and answered on participants through the WhatsApp group and the Wattpad application itself..

3. Results

To gather information in line with the study's concept, the author provided four key questions:

- 1) What effect does utilize Wattpad have on you?
- 2). Does using Wattpad affect how well you write?
- 3). Does Wattpad influence how you think?
- 4). How does Wattpad help you hone your writing and analytical abilities?

The participants highlight the positive and negative impacts of using Wattpad while responding to question number 1. Positive effects of using Wattpad include users' increased interest in reading (23 participants), improved writing skills (21 participants), ability to think critically (19 participants), increased knowledge from reading (14 participants), increased vocabulary (23 participants), and addition of friends (23 participants). The participants also mentioned that reading on Wattpad can make people addicted and sometimes neglect other things (16 participants), make them vulnerable to bullying (14 participants), and lessen their interest in traditional books (14 participants).

In response to question number 2, 21 individuals indicated that using Wattpad positively impacted their writing abilities, while just two indicated that Wattpad had no such impact. All participants responded positively when the writer asked how using Wattpad had affected their thinking. It was true whether or not they were aware of this effect.

The final query concerns how Wattpad has helped the participants develop their writing and analytical skills. Most of them claimed to have used the works of other users as references. To be more precise, they take several actions to improve their writing and critical thinking abilities. They began reading. They then vote for the articles they have

read and post comments to gain feedback. They then make an effort to become friends with other users. It will be simpler for them to exchange knowledge and experiences and offer criticism and advice to one another, so their abilities will advance if they already have friends who share their interests.

The results indicate that using Wattpad has both positive and harmful effects on its users. Interest in reading is growing as a result of the excellent effect. After reading specific stories, most participants are inspired to create their own stories. Additionally, they can pick up some good writing skills. Reading has a mental impact, whether people know it or not.

The more they read, the more information they can learn; as we learn more, our thinking changes. As our mentality matures, we will begin to think more critically, preventing us from accepting something at face value without verifying it. They can distinguish between quality writing and poor writing by exercising critical thinking. Students who write critically can benefit from critical thinking. It implies that they will not only write but also take many factors into account to produce quality writing.

Another unfavorable effect of Wattpad is the decline in interest in real books. The participants claimed that reading on Wattpad is more adaptable. They do not need to take books with them; they can read whenever and wherever they choose. Additionally, Wattpad provides a wide variety of novels. As a result, individuals can read a variety of genres with just one hand. Currently, they only purchase physical books if they enjoy them and if they will add to a collection.

Writing and analytical abilities may suffer as a result of Wattpad. Most participants said using Wattpad had enhanced their writing skills. On Wattpad, writing activities can be done. More writing will be done, sharpening the ability to produce better writing in the long term. It is impossible to dismiss Wattpad's psychological effects. The participants claim that their perspective was influenced by the author's storytelling or information delivery style. Their reasoning will become more critical and incisive, helping them react appropriately to new facts and knowledge.

5. Conclusions

It is possible to draw some conclusions from the article as mentioned above, some of which include the following:

1. Wattpad is a social media platform that offers writing and reading capabilities.
2. Wattpad has gained popularity as a writing and reading platform because most of its users are teenagers in school.
3. Since its existence transformed people's reading and writing habits, Wattpad has become an intriguing phenomenon.
4. Wattpad is an alternative platform for students to hone their writing abilities.
5. Wattpad provides the tools for people to remark and criticize a work directly.
6. Wattpad also provides students with the chance to self-publish their writings.
7. Reading various stories from diverse genres on Wattpad allows the learner to gather references.
8. Reading can encourage kids to think critically and motivate them to start writing.
9. The users can create a network of friends with whom they can exchange writing-related tips and experiences for encouraging other users to become better writers.
10. Using Wattpad to help kids develop their writing and critical thinking abilities will be successful if we utilize it judiciously because much of the stuff on Wattpad may not be acceptable for pupils. Another example of critical thinking is the capability of students to select pertinent content.

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