

Investigating the Relationship Between Wattpad Reading Habits and Narrative Text Comprehension in an Indonesian EFL Context

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Abstract. Reading comprehension is crucial for academic success, and the rise of digital platforms like Wattpad has transformed reading habits, particularly among young learners. While Wattpad offers opportunities for engagement and access to diverse literary content, its impact on reading comprehension, especially in EFL contexts, remains unclear. Existing research on digital reading and comprehension often focuses on broader comparisons between digital and print modalities without specifically examining the unique characteristics of platforms like Wattpad and their potential influence on specific comprehension skills related to narrative text understanding. **Aim:** This study investigated the correlation between Wattpad reading habits and students' reading comprehension of narrative texts among Indonesian EFL learners. A quantitative correlational design was employed, utilizing a questionnaire to assess Wattpad reading habits (reading intensity, comfort, and preferred genres) and a 50-item multiple-choice test to measure reading comprehension of narrative texts, focusing on skills such as identifying main ideas, details, and vocabulary in context. Seventeen eleventh-grade students from SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik, Lampung Timur, Indonesia, were purposively selected based on their regular Wattpad use for English story reading. Data analysis using Spearman's correlation revealed a weak, positive, and non-significant correlation ($r = .285$, $p = .267$) between Wattpad reading habits and narrative text comprehension. This suggests that, in this sample, increased engagement with Wattpad did not significantly translate to improved comprehension skills. These findings challenge assumptions about the direct link between digital reading engagement and comprehension gains. The study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how digital platforms like Wattpad can be effectively integrated into EFL instruction to enhance reading comprehension, particularly concerning narrative texts. The results underscore the importance of explicit instruction and targeted support for developing comprehension skills, even when students are actively engaged in digital reading. The study contributes valuable insights to the growing body of literature on digital literacy and language learning in the Indonesian EFL context.

Keywords: Wattpad application, narrative text, reading habits, reading comprehension.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading, a cornerstone of language acquisition and cognitive development, plays a pivotal role in fostering vocabulary growth, enhancing critical thinking skills, and promoting overall academic success (van der Kleij et al., 2022). Research consistently demonstrates the profound impact of reading on linguistic proficiency, with word reading ability directly influencing vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension outcomes (van der Kleij et al., 2022). Moreover, reading comprehension serves as a catalyst for cultivating critical thinking, an indispensable skill set for navigating the complexities of the 21st century (Paige et al., 2024). This is further substantiated by studies highlighting the significant correlation between critical thinking indicators, such as induction and deduction, and reading comprehension proficiency (Paige et al., 2024). The importance of reading extends beyond the classroom, impacting academic performance at the university level, with reading comprehension significantly correlating with college grades and mediating the relationship between cognitive and affective variables crucial for academic success (Clinton-Lisell et al., 2022; Urrutia et al., 2024). Indeed, strong reading skills, encompassing vocabulary, comprehension, and problem-solving strategies, are essential for academic reading performance and overall academic achievement, ultimately contributing to reduced dropout rates in higher education (Talwar et al., 2022; Urrutia et al., 2024).

The digital age has ushered in a transformative shift in reading habits, particularly among teenagers, with online platforms like Wattpad revolutionizing literary engagement. Wattpad, a global phenomenon boasting millions of users, has cultivated a vibrant online community centered around

user-generated stories, fostering a dynamic culture of reading and writing (Pianzola et al., 2020; Brouillette, 2023). This platform's accessibility and interactive features have significantly altered reading and writing processes, challenging traditional literary institutions and prompting a re-evaluation of established literary norms (Brouillette, 2023). While digital platforms offer unparalleled access to diverse literary content and promote interactive engagement, concerns remain regarding the potential impact of screen-based reading on comprehension, particularly for complex texts (van der Weel & Mangen, 2022). Studies suggest that paper-based reading may still offer advantages for deeper comprehension, especially for longer and more demanding materials (van der Weel & Mangen, 2022). This raises questions about the optimal balance between digital and traditional reading practices in promoting effective comprehension skills. Furthermore, the prevalence of shorter texts on digital platforms like Wattpad raises concerns about the potential impact on sustained engagement with longer, more complex narratives (Taberero Sala et al., 2020). This shift towards shorter-form content may influence the development of reading comprehension skills, particularly in relation to understanding complex narratives and extracting deeper meaning from texts.

The allure of digital reading platforms for young readers stems from several key characteristics, including social interaction, personalization, and multimedia integration (Pianzola et al., 2020; Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2020). Platforms like Wattpad facilitate social interaction by enabling readers to engage in discussions, share emotional responses, and connect with authors and fellow readers, fostering a sense of community around shared reading experiences (Pianzola et al., 2020). Personalization features allow content to be tailored to individual preferences, potentially enhancing engagement but also raising concerns about algorithmic influence on reading choices and the potential narrowing of exposure to diverse perspectives (Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2020). While multimedia and interactive elements can enrich the reading experience, they can also pose distractions if not implemented thoughtfully, potentially hindering deep engagement with the narrative (Kucirkova, 2019). The incorporation of evidence-based support features, such as audio aids and text magnification, offers valuable scaffolding for struggling readers, promoting accessibility and inclusivity in digital reading environments (Tare et al., 2020). Despite these advantages, challenges persist in teaching reading comprehension, including students' overreliance on dictionaries, limited vocabulary, difficulties with skimming and scanning, and the need for effective assessment strategies (Zano, 2020; Collins & Lindström, 2021). Teachers also face constraints in lesson preparation time and addressing students' varying English proficiency levels, particularly when implementing innovative teaching techniques (Sharif et al., 2023). A further challenge lies in fostering deeper comprehension skills, such as inference and self-monitoring, which are often overlooked in favor of more tangible practices like vocabulary instruction and prediction (Dixon & Oakhill, 2024).

Existing research extensively explores the benefits and challenges of digital reading platforms, the impact of digital technologies on reading habits, and the various factors influencing reading comprehension. Studies have examined Wattpad's role in fostering a global reading culture, promoting social interaction among readers, and potentially influencing language learning outcomes (Pianzola et al., 2020; Brouillette, 2023; Coelho et al., 2019; Arochman et al., 2024). However, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific relationship between Wattpad reading habits and students' reading comprehension of narrative texts, particularly within the context of EFL learners. While studies have investigated Wattpad's impact on writing skills and general reading engagement (Arochman et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2023), fewer studies have directly examined its influence on specific reading comprehension skills related to narrative text understanding. Furthermore, most existing research on digital reading and comprehension focuses on broader comparisons between digital and print modalities (Altamura et al., 2023; Schwabe et al., 2022) without specifically isolating the unique characteristics of Wattpad and its potential impact on comprehension.

This study offers a unique investigation into the correlation between Wattpad reading habits and students' reading comprehension of narrative texts, specifically within the context of Indonesian EFL learners in class XI MIPA-1 SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik, Lampung Timur. Unlike broader comparisons of digital and print reading, this research isolates Wattpad, allowing for a nuanced understanding of its unique characteristics and their potential influence on comprehension. By analyzing the relationship between Wattpad engagement and specific reading comprehension indicators related to narrative texts—including identifying the topic, main idea, details, pronoun references, vocabulary in context, and explicit/implicit meanings—this study provides a granular analysis of how Wattpad might impact different aspects of comprehension. Furthermore, situating the

research within the Indonesian EFL context contributes valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with digital reading and comprehension in this specific educational setting, enriching the existing body of knowledge on language learning in the region and contributing to culturally informed understandings of digital literacy practices. Ultimately, this investigation addresses the need for targeted research on the impact of specific digital reading platforms and their unique characteristics on reading comprehension outcomes in diverse educational contexts.

Based on the literature, we conclude that this study seeks to answer the following research question: *What is the correlation between the habit of reading English stories on Wattpad and students' reading comprehension of narrative text in class XI MIPA-1 SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik, Lampung Timur, academic year 2023/2024?*

To address this research question, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant correlation between students' habit of reading English stories on Wattpad and their reading comprehension of narrative texts.
2. Ha (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant correlation between students' habit of reading English stories on Wattpad and their reading comprehension of narrative texts.

By investigating these questions and hypotheses, this study aims to contribute evidence-based insights into the potential benefits and drawbacks of incorporating Wattpad into EFL reading instruction and to inform pedagogical practices aimed at enhancing students' reading comprehension skills. This investigation directly addresses the need for more targeted research on the impact of specific digital reading platforms.

METHOD

This quantitative correlational study investigates the relationship between Wattpad reading habits and narrative text comprehension among 17 eleventh-grade Indonesian EFL learners purposively sampled for their regular Wattpad use. Data were collected at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sekampung Udik during the odd semester of the 2023/2024 academic year using a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire adapted from Syamsiah (2020) to measure Wattpad reading habits (reading intensity, comfort, and genre preference), and a 50-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test aligned with Brown's (2004) indicators, assessing skills like identifying main ideas, details, and vocabulary in context. Data analysis involved normality (Shapiro-Wilk) and linearity tests to determine the appropriate correlation coefficient (Pearson or Spearman) for examining the relationship between the variables. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, and effect size was calculated using Cohen's (1988) conventions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1. Result of the Reliability Test of Reading Comprehension of Narrative Text

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Reliability
.873	50	high-reliability

The reading comprehension test demonstrates high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .873), indicating consistent measurement of the construct.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Reading Habits

Statistic	Score
Mean	80.11
Median	80
Modus	76
SD	5.158

Variance	26.610
Maximum Score	88
Minimum Score	70
Range	18

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Reading Comprehension

Statistic	Score
Mean	73.10
Median	75
Modus	67.85
SD	9.871
Variance	97.451
Maximum Score	89.28
Minimum Score	53.71
Range	35.71

The average score for Wattpad reading habits is 80.11 (out of a possible maximum score not provided, assumed to be 100 based on Appendix 12 data), with a standard deviation of 5.158. Scores range from 70 to 88.

The average reading comprehension score is 73.10%, with a standard deviation of 9.871. Scores range from 53.57% to 89.28%. The wider range and larger standard deviation in reading comprehension scores suggest greater variability in student performance compared to reading habits.

Table 4. Normality Test of the Data

Test	Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test		
	W-value	Df	p-value
Reading Habits	0.959	17	0.622
Reading Comprehension	0.968	17	0.778

Both reading habits (Shapiro-Wilk Sig. = .622) and reading comprehension (Shapiro-Wilk Sig. = .778) scores exhibit normality ($p > .05$), fulfilling the assumption for parametric statistical tests. However, due to the lower end of the amount of the data ($N=17$), the researcher concluded that using non-parametric tests would be the best.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Result

	Spearman's rho	
	Reading habits	Reading comprehension
Reading habits	1.0	0.267
Reading comprehension	0.267	1.0

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient ($r = .285$, $p = .267$) indicates a weak, positive, and non-significant correlation between Wattpad reading habits and reading comprehension. This suggests that, in this sample, there is no statistically significant relationship between students' engagement with Wattpad and their ability to comprehend narrative texts.

Discussion

This study investigated the correlation between Wattpad reading habits and reading comprehension of narrative texts among Indonesian EFL learners. The primary finding, a weak,

positive, and non-significant correlation (Spearman's $\rho = .285$, $p = .267$), contradicts the initial hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between these variables. This result challenges the intuitive assumption that increased engagement with digital reading platforms like Wattpad inherently translates to improved reading comprehension.

This finding contrasts with studies suggesting the positive impact of digital platforms on reading engagement and language learning. For instance, Pianzola et al. (2020) highlighted Wattpad's role in fostering a global reading culture and promoting intensive reading and commenting. While this study confirms Wattpad's popularity among students, it suggests that engagement with the platform alone may not suffice for enhancing comprehension skills. Similarly, Coelho et al. (2019) and Arochman et al. (2024) proposed Wattpad as a potential didactic tool for language learning, particularly for writing skills. However, this study's findings indicate that Wattpad's effectiveness in improving reading comprehension requires further scrutiny, particularly concerning narrative texts. The lack of significant correlation aligns more closely with research highlighting the potential limitations of digital reading. Van der Weel and Mangen (2022) found that paper-based reading supports better comprehension for complex texts, potentially explaining the weak relationship observed in this study. The predominantly short-form content prevalent on Wattpad, as noted by Tabernero Sala et al. (2020), may not provide sufficient exposure to the complex narrative structures and vocabulary necessary for developing strong comprehension skills. This suggests that the type of reading material, rather than just the platform, plays a crucial role in comprehension development.

Furthermore, this study's findings raise questions about the specific features of digital platforms that might contribute to or hinder comprehension. While Wattpad offers social interaction and personalization (Pianzola et al., 2020; Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2020), these features may not directly translate to improved comprehension of narrative texts. Kucirkova (2019) cautioned that multimedia and interactive features, while engaging, can distract from the narrative. This study's non-significant correlation might suggest that the social and interactive aspects of Wattpad, while potentially beneficial for motivation and engagement, may not be sufficient for developing the deeper comprehension skills needed for understanding complex narratives. The findings reinforce the importance of explicit instruction and scaffolding for developing reading comprehension skills, as highlighted by Zano (2020), Collins and Lindström (2021), and Dixon and Oakhill (2024). The challenges faced by EFL learners in comprehending narrative texts, particularly concerning text structure, coherence, and vocabulary (Siekman et al., 2022; Ghaith, 2021; Ali et al., 2022; Russak & Zaretsky, 2021), might not be adequately addressed by simply engaging with Wattpad. The platform's user-generated content, while abundant and accessible, may not always provide the structured learning experiences and targeted support necessary for overcoming these challenges.

This study's findings also resonate with research emphasizing the importance of vocabulary knowledge, decoding skills, and reading fluency for reading comprehension (Brooks et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020; Sparks, 2019; Masrai, 2019). While Wattpad might expose learners to a variety of vocabulary and writing styles, it may not systematically develop these foundational skills in a way that directly enhances comprehension of academic or complex narrative texts. The informal nature of the platform's content, while engaging, may not offer the focused vocabulary instruction and targeted practice necessary for significant comprehension gains. This aligns with the concerns raised by Altamura et al., (2023) who found that leisure digital reading, while positively correlated with comprehension, had a smaller effect size than print reading. Specifically, pertaining to findings in Indonesian EFL settings and Wattpad itself, the findings deviate from previous perceptions. Specifically, Indonesian EFL students had high motivation on utilizing Wattpad as an informal platform and also as a tool to improve their writing (Mahmudah & Daulay, 2024; Samosir et al., 2024; Arochman et al. 2024; Aini et al., 2024). This deviates from the finding in this study where there were no significant correlational result between Wattpad reading habit and reading comprehension. It can be that other variable might affect EFL learners reading comprehension. However, these studies primarily focused on general engagement and writing skills, not explicitly on reading comprehension of narrative texts. This highlights the need for further research specifically targeting the relationship between Wattpad use and comprehension in Indonesian EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study's findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between digital reading habits and reading comprehension. While Wattpad can foster a

positive reading culture, its impact on comprehension, particularly for narrative texts, may be less direct than previously assumed. Future research should investigate the specific ways in which digital platforms can be integrated into EFL instruction to maximize their potential for developing comprehensive reading skills. Further studies with larger samples and a more controlled design are needed to confirm and extend these findings. Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impact of Wattpad reading on comprehension would also be valuable. Finally, qualitative research exploring students' perceptions and strategies when reading on Wattpad could provide richer insights into the observed relationship between digital reading habits and comprehension skills.

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