

Wattpad as a Digital Literary Space for Generation Z

Syarifaturromadhonah

English Literature Department, Universitas Ngudi Waluyo

Email Correspondence: syarifatur05113@gmail.com

Abstract

Digital literacy now comes in many forms, this study discusses the role of Wattpad as a platform for literary literacy in the digital world, particularly in the fields of education, digital literacy skills, and lifelong learning for Generation Z. Through an in depth examination of various platform features such as reading, writing, and user interaction, this study explains how Wattpad helps improve digital literacy skills and supports continuous learning. Based on real life examples and a review of related literature, this study shows that Wattpad not only makes people more interested in reading and creating through writing, but also fosters a supportive creative community that encourages personal growth. Ultimately, the findings of this research confirm that Wattpad has significant potential as an educational tool tailored to the needs of young people in today's digital age.

Keywords: Digital Literary Literacy, Generation Z, Wattpad, Education, Lifelong Learning

Introduction

Born between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z grew up in the digital age, where information technology has become an integral part of everyday life. Digital literacy had the ability to access, assess and produce digital content is now an essential educational and lifelong learning skill (UNESCO, 2018). Against this backdrop, platforms such as Wattpad have emerged as interactive spaces for literary engagement in the virtual realm, where users can read, write and share stories online.

Since its establishment in 2006, Wattpad, an application accessible via mobile phones and the web, has become one of the most popular platforms for fiction, with over 90 million active users every month (Wattpad, 2023). It provides Generation Z with opportunities to engage in literary literacy through interactive reading, collaborative writing, and online communities. This study aims to examine how Wattpad contributes to digital literacy education and lifelong learning, with a particular focus on its influence on Generation Z.

Review Literature

Digital Literacy and Education

Digital literacy is defined as the ability to utilise information and communication technology (ICT) effectively, including reading, writing and communicating digitally (Gilster, 1997). In education, digital literacy encompasses more than just technical skills, it is also important for developing critical thinking and creativity (Jenkins et al., 2016). Although Generation Z has easy access to technology, they often lack critical literacy skills (Prensky, 2021). Platforms such as Wattpad can help to address this issue by providing easily accessible literary content.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning involves continuous learning throughout one's life. This concept is particularly important in an era of rapid change in knowledge (Delors, 2015). In a digital context, online platforms such as Wattpad encourage creative exploration and social interaction, facilitating informal learning (Siemens, 2025). Studies have shown that learning through social media can boost motivation and engagement, particularly among younger generations (Selwyn, 2022).

Wattpad as a Literary Literacy Platform

Wattpad has been studied as a tool for improving literacy among teenagers. Hill (2019) found that the platform encourages creative writing and fosters a community of young writers. Additionally, Wattpad promotes digital literacy by offering features such as real-time comments and collaborative storytelling, which help users to develop their communication and analytical skills (Alexander, 2018). For Generation Z, Wattpad is a source of entertainment and a space to explore identity and learn socially.

Methodology

This study uses content analysis methods to examine various features of Wattpad. This is supported by case studies on the implementation of the platform in education and related literature reviews. The analysis involves identifying elements such as interactive reading, collaborative writing and community exchanges, and evaluating their impact on digital literacy skills and lifelong learning processes. Examples of Wattpad's use in schools and online groups are examined in the case study to identify patterns and trends. The analysis findings are validated through triangulation of literature references and direct information from the Wattpad platform.

Discussion

Wattpad as a Space for Digital Literary Literacy

Wattpad offers free access to thousands of stories from various genres, including romance and fantasy. This encourages Generation Z to engage with digital reading. Features such as 'reading lists' and 'bookmarks' make it easy for users to find relevant content, thereby improving their online information-seeking skills. An analysis of these features suggests that interactive reading, such as commenting on and discussing the plot and characters, can improve critical reading skills. This is supported by Hill's (2019) research on creative writing on the platform.

Additionally, Wattpad facilitates creative writing with its 'write' and 'publish' features, enabling users to share their work. This contributes to the development of digital literacy by teaching aspects such as copyright, online ethics and marketing content. Many young writers on Wattpad learn through trial and error, which is a form of informal, lifelong learning, in line with the connectivism theory described by (Siemens, 2025).

Impact on Generation Z

For Generation Z, Wattpad is a supportive community where they can interact with writers and readers from all over the world. This helps to improve their social skills in the digital world, such as networking and collaboration. Analysis of case studies suggests that Wattpad users often gain insights into popular culture and literary trends through shared content, ultimately encouraging continuous learning. However, challenges such as the lack of strict content curation can hinder critical literacy skills. Therefore, as stated by Prensky (2021), formal education is needed as a supplement.

Integration with Education

Wattpad is a valuable resource for teaching literary literacy in the digital age and can be incorporated into school learning programmes. Educators can use the platform for collaborative writing activities that stimulate students' imagination and digital skills. Several case studies from schools in the United States demonstrate that using Wattpad can significantly increase students' enthusiasm for reading, as revealed by Karchmer-Klein and Shinas (2023).

Conclusion

As a platform for digital literary literacy, Wattpad plays a crucial role for Generation Z, supporting the development of digital literacy and lifelong learning through its interactive features and community. In addition to improving reading and writing skills, Wattpad helps to form social networks that stimulate creativity. Despite facing challenges such as insufficient content supervision, Wattpad remains a promising alternative educational tool. Therefore, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess its long-term impact on the literacy of Generation Z.

References

- Alexander, B. (2018). *The new digital storytelling: Creating narratives with new media*. Praeger.
- Delors, J. (2015). *Learning: The treasure within*. UNESCO.
- Gilster, P. (1997). *Digital literacy*. Wiley.
- Hill, C. (2019). Wattpad as a classroom: Fanfiction's role in writing education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 63(2), 123–131.
- Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushotma, R., Robison, A. J., & Weigel, M. (2016). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. MIT Press.
- Karchmer-Klein, R., & Shinas, V. H. (2023). A mash-up of professional development: Using fanfiction to teach 21st century skills. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(8), 639–647.

- Prensky, M. (2021). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1–6.
- Selwyn, N. (2022). Digital technologies and the automation of surveillance. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 37(1), 127–132.
- Siemens, G. (2025). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 2(1), 3–10.
- UNESCO. (2018). *Global education monitoring report 2019: Migration, displacement and education*.
- UNESCO.
- Wattpad. (2023). *Wattpad annual report 2023*. <https://www.wattpad.com/about>