

## **Exploring the Roles of Wattpad in Creative Writing Process**

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### **Abstract**

In this new era, writing is no longer limited to traditional writing methods such as writing on books, newspapers and blogs. Writings can now be easily accessible and free throughout the world. This article has discovered an application that meets easy-to-use writing functions, which is Wattpad. It is a tool for recording authors' writing skills and facilitate the search for writing skills by publishers. This article explores Wattpad's roles, especially in the creative writing process. This was attainable by interviewing a publisher from Lejen Press Sdn Bhd (Muhammad Aisamuddin bin Md Asri) and an independent creative writer (Muhammad Fatrim). Both were interviewed and the data were transcribed to understand Wattpad's role in the creative writing process from the point of view of a publisher and author. It was found that for a publisher, Wattpad contributes to finding talent, promotion and creation of fans-base. For a writer, Wattpad introduces themselves to the writing community, disseminates

ideas and allows learning, practices and experiments to develop writing skills. Such findings affirm the active and positive roles of Wattpad, as discussed in the literature.

**Keywords:** Wattpad, Writing Community, Roles, Creative Writing, Writing Process

### **Introduction**

Wattpad is a writing platform that connects writers and readers from around the world (Rochester, 2012). There are many different genres to be read in this application. In this application, freelance writers can explore a variety of genres that fit their writing style. Wattpad can also be utilized as a learning platform to help new writers to discover their talents and sharpen their writing skills (Nel, 2016; Birch, 2016). According to Kardiansyah (2019), Wattpad is a platform that does not follow traditional publishing methods, in which authors sought suitable publishers to publish their works, etc. Following this statement, this study aims to explore:

- What are Wattpad's roles in the creative writing process from the perspective of a publisher?
- What are Wattpad's roles in the creative writing process from the perspective of a writer?

### **Literature Review**

Rokha (2019) explains how Wattpad can help authors write, especially for those who write in English. Rokha introduced three Wattpad cycles, in which the first cycle includes those that do not use Wattpad and the second cycle deals with the introduction to Wattpad. On the other hand, the third cycle examines individuals after using Wattpad after a period of time. It shows that the frequent engagement of students with Wattpad gives good improvement, as they were more motivated to write, and there was a significant increase in numbers. Rahman, Sarudin, Shamsudin and Yunus (2018) studied the Wattpad application and observed whether it affects the students' writing skills in the ESL classroom. They focus on writing in English, where ESL students who are the subject of this study have been instructed to write in the Wattpad application.

This study revealed grammatical errors in most of the student's work, but found that students helped to give advice and correct each other's errors. The research was conducted in two ways: quantitative and qualitative methods with surveys and interviews. Their students find that the use of Wattpad is fun and easy to use for them based on interview data. Some of the students began developing an interest in writing after using the application. Therefore, their study has found that the Wattpad application certainly had a role or impact on students in improving their writing skills and helping them to feel more confident in writing in English. This study shows that writing in a relaxed environment can help the writing process to begin and encourage the progress of writing.

Collins (2014) had written an article about student participation in creative writing on Wattpad. According to Collins, Wattpad provides students with the opportunity to write with and offers students the opportunity to engage with the global writing industry. Collins also instructed the students to send a poem on Wattpad. In two weeks, Collins had seen the number of views, comments, and votes of popularity from each of his students' work. Some of the students continue to use Wattpad to write and gather followers after completing the

assignment. Collins later confirms that the Wattpad application can be used globally. Allen Lau even received a letter from Africa thanking him for creating the application because, in the place where the mailer lives, they cannot use any other gadgets besides mobile phones. This application allows both reading and writing to be done without limits.

Tai (2016) wrote an article in *The Star* on Wattpad being a platform where writers and readers correspond. Umami Syalshabella, an author in Wattpad was interviewed and encourages new writers to continue to write and not despair if the number of views for their works is not great, as it is a process of introducing new writers into the world of writing. She also urges them to frequently upload their work into the portal to build their fan base. She also said that the Wattpad platform is a great place to practice writing. Authors can improve their writing style by interacting and observing other well written works. Her readers are also one of the reasons why Umami continues to write. There are also Malaysian publications that regularly used Wattpad, such as *Buku Fixi Sdn Bhd (Buku Fixi)*. Amir Muhammad began putting the works of several *Buku Fixi* books in Wattpad. Authors will receive their payments based on the readers' view of their work. Thus, Wattpad plays a key role in particular for the new writers. New writers use this app to venture into writing, practice writing, and perfect their writing, and gather fans of their writing.

Kardiansyah (2019) studied Wattpad to find out if it is a literature-producing platform. It was found that Wattpad allows professional writers and amateurs to write free of charge. Although Wattpad is not a publishing application, authors can use this platform to practice writing and generate new ideas. The study also claims that Wattpad is a social space where writers can experiment on all existing writing genres.

The uniqueness of this application is due to a new form of writing unlike the traditional way of writing where writers will have to follow certain steps to get published. In Wattpad, writers are free to write from their own perspective. Most good works will be approached by publishing companies who feel that the writing of writers coincides with what their company is looking for. Wattpad is also a platform for collecting a fan base for writers. Today's publishing houses prefer authors who already have their fan base to help sell the published works of the authors. In countries such as Indonesia, famous authors sell their creative writings to local publications using this application.

Kardiansyah (2019) states that Wattpad plays several roles in the creative writing process. This application allows professional and amateur writers to communicate with each other and with their readers and also write, find ideas, practice writing, garnering fans in the hope that it can make it easier for them to choose a publishing house of their interest to publish their works, as well as allow them to experiment with writing in different genres.

Bal (2018) conducted a writing study among low-income students in Turkey. These students were assigned to write on Wattpad. It turns out the students didn't write well at school compared to when they are writing on Wattpad. One of the reasons for this poor comparison is that writing at school is too restrictive compared to Wattpad. In Wattpad, they are free to work according to their preferences. Writing their creative stories without the watching eyes of their teachers gave them more confidence and encouraged them to write more. They also claim that they are not able to write so quickly at school compared to when they are writing

on Wattpad, which has opened opportunities for students to participate in creative writing in this application. From all the above literature, it was found that Wattpad played an essential role in the creative writing process. It offers an opportunity for an aspiring writer to try their hands in writing, to engage with readers, allows them to try and experiment with different genres and different types of writing within Wattpad, to gather fans to facilitate the writing and production of works published in real life and finally to find publication companies that fit the author's work.

### **Method**

This study adopted a qualitative research design. According to Crossman (2020), this method is best for collecting non-numerical data, and helps if the researcher wants more detailed data. In addition to analyzing past literature, this study conducted face-to-face interviews with 2 informants, namely the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Lejen Press Sdn Bhd, Muhammad Aisamuddin bin Md Asri (Informant 1) and Muhammad Fatrim, an independent creative writer (Informant 2). Interviews are better than questionnaires because they show that researchers are prepared and meticulous and can obtain more answers to the research questions (Green, 2017). The data were then transcribed verbatim, and findings were transformed into a framework of findings.

### **Results**

Informant 1 revealed that his publishing house had two of their authors using Wattpad, i.e. Maria Isabella and Jeffrey Zain. The company began in 2011 and is still active today. Informant 1 recognizes that this Wattpad writing platform has helped to publish publications from the standpoint of promotion and finding potential works that can be brought to publication. But with the current deterioration of the economy, the drop in book sales has been worrisome. In addition, e-books are not as popular as they have been abroad. Thus, Lejen Press Sdn Bhd turned to writing articles online. But sales books are still being made and creative works are being published. The number of printed works is not what it was; at one time it used to be 5000 printed books at a time, and now it's only 1500 or less.

As mentioned in the Tai (2016) article, Buku Fixi used the Wattpad app to promote their novels. It is another alternative that helps the writer to keep producing even without the publication of a physical novel. Informant 1 also said having a big fan base is a bonus. Writers with a fan base can sell their work. If a writer had a large fan base, the volume of a new production would not be restricted.

Siti Rosmizah, which has a huge fan-base and her novels are always pre-ordered in advance, where she can reach up to thousands of orders. According to Informant 1, authors should get in touch with the fans of their work, as this is one of the factors that will help publishers to choose them. Although times have changed and our current economy is affected, authors must continue to write for the future of publishing. This study found that platforms like Wattpad are very useful for writers to write. This platform can create opportunities and the work of a writer can be published if the writer has a great fan-base.

Informant 2 is commonly known as a regularly published author with Buku Fixi Sdn Bhd. He admits to using Wattpad often to write. It is said that the platform gives him an idea of the reality of the world of writing as readers can comment on the author's work, giving their

opinions and suggestions on how to improve a story. The platform may also give the author an idea or inspiration to write and create new creative works. With a wide range of works around the world, the platform allows authors to discover and enjoy valuable works from other countries. Most publishers today have their own official Wattpad account.

Informant 2 said, other publishing companies have started using these applications for promotional purposes, find new talents and so on. Some companies have organized a writing contest and will only publish one creative writing work, but once the contest is over, the publisher might discover that there is more than one potential author on the market, so they can choose more than one winner. Most publishers are looking for Wattpad writers because Wattpad writers already have their fans. However, according to Informant 2, even if publishers offer contracts to writers, don't be so quick to sign with them. This is because most writers are not aware of the actual economic situation in the writing industry. Authors should prefer publications with established names such as Karyaseni, Fajar Pakeer and Buku Fixi Sdn Bhd.

Some writers are afraid to publish their work in the mainstream market, preferring indie, small self-publishing publication instead. As a self-published author, Informant 2 feels that Wattpad is a great platform to promote his work, attract fans, and find talents that match his image. He confirms that this application is the best platform for a writer to practice his writing. Informant 2 frequently used this platform for spontaneous writing. He uploads his written work on a daily basis. Shortly thereafter, a publication requested his work, hence making a novel called *Revenge*, a published work now.

When it comes to putting an author's work on social media, there will always be questions on plagiarism. According to Informant 2, authors should be smarter and use the Wattpad application as much as possible, but carefully. He uploads a chapter and once he reaches his target reader number, he quickly retracts the chapter on the online platform for the sake of doing a preliminary survey of the potential of creative work. This has also been done to prevent plagiarism. Wattpad also teaches Informant 2 the importance of the use of official languages. Although Bahasa Malaysia has a variety of slang and dialects, this does not mean that the general public will be able to understand these dialects and slang. Thus, Informant 2 always tries to write in a standardized Bahasa Malaysia. Informant 2 looks forward to translating his work into other languages. For him, such a move will open up more opportunities for his work to be marketed worldwide. Wattpad can contribute to the writing industry, especially in terms of promotion and marketing. If an author wants to promote his work to international readers, Wattpad is one possible way. They do not have to go through the various steps involved in getting an agent to sell their book to a foreign publication company.

Wattpad has also setup competitions, such as the The Watty Awards. Informant 2 encourages new writers or those who want to firmly establish themselves to participate in this type of competition. Competitions like this is an opportunity to meet and gather fans of their work. As a result, this study revealed that Wattpad played few roles in the creative writing process, besides those mentioned by Informant 1, which included writing exercises, searching for ideas and inspiration, participating in global writing contests, and providing real feedback,

and helping authors to understand standard or marketable writing. Both interviews concluded that there were Wattpad's roles in the creative writing process.

The roles of Wattpad in creative writing process can be seen in Figure 1 below.

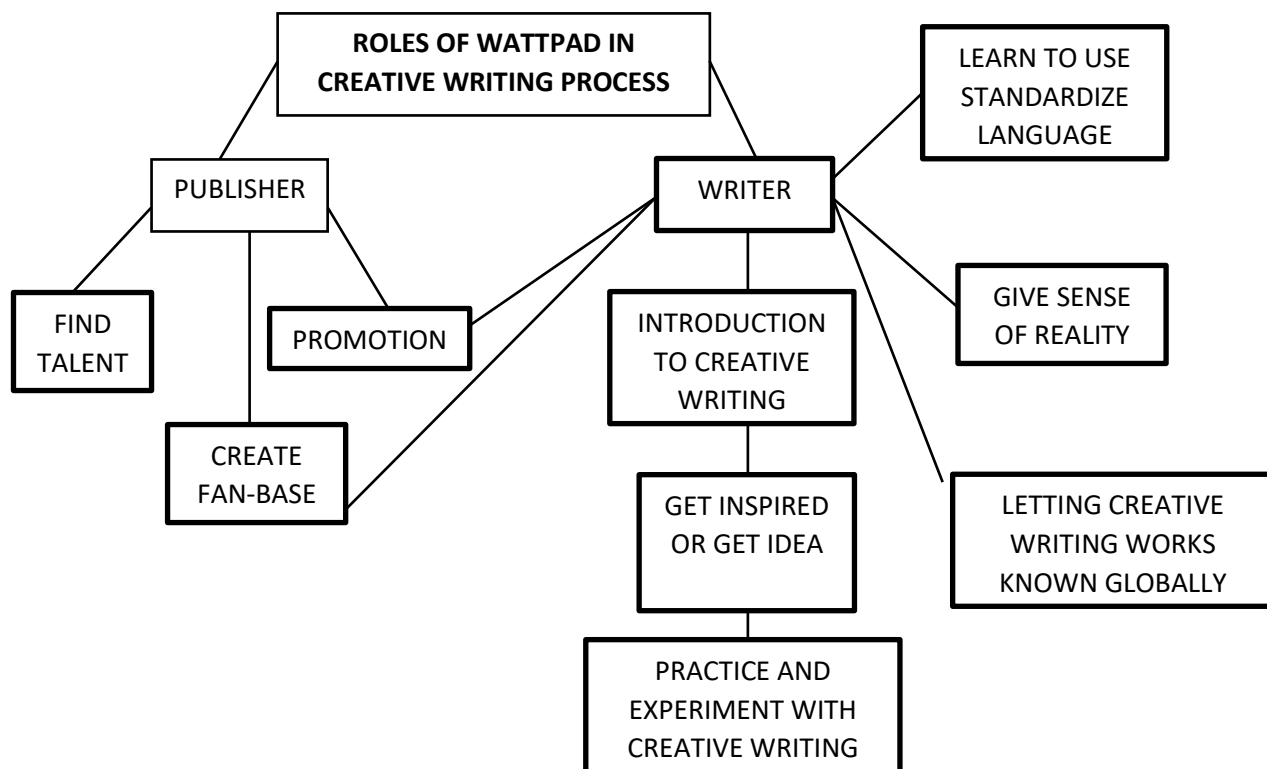


Figure 1: The Roles of Wattpad in Creative Writing Process

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Wattpad plays a significant role in the creative writing process. Wattpad has opened the way to writing so that writers experience, inspire one another, practice writing diligently and eventually venture into the world of creative writing. Wattpad proved to be very useful in finding talent, promoting an author's work and introducing various publishing brands and attracting fans. Each of these aspects may contribute to the creation of a published creative work.

With the changes in time and fast-paced technology, writers should seize this opportunity to further develop their talents and introduce themselves as writers. The same goes for publishing houses. In conclusion, Wattpad has a similar role to that of other countries. Its main role is to enable free writing and reading activities and connect the writing community. Wattpad is an easy-to-use platform that gives an author a clear vision of how to write and then develop a creative writing process.

Although the economy of the writing industry is no longer as stable as it used to be, it is necessary to continue to write so that the talent of creative writing is not wasted. It is hoped that this article will be able to assist new writers and the writing industry as well as pave the way for future studies. In conclusion, this study has demonstrated what Wattpad offers to its users - a community and a market. This study suggests to all inspiring writers to serialize



their stories, uploading one or two chapters at a time, and invite comments and discussions on each chapter. Thus, as a platform, Wattpad's goal, similar to that of Facebook, YouTube and others, is to facilitate the creation of content so that those content can generate interactions between users and thus build a community (Davies, 2017).

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