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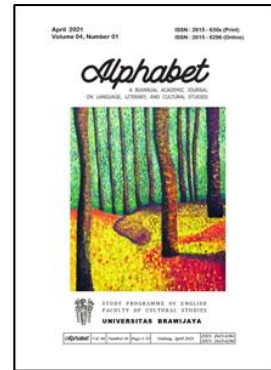
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The Motivation Behind Writing Fanfictions for Digital Authors on Wattpad and Twitter

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Abstract

Fandom culture has emerged a new culture called fanfictions where fans create a fictional story based on the popular culture they like. An example of the most common cultures being made into fanfictions is K-pop. Nowadays, K-pop fanfictions can be seen almost everywhere, especially in digital platforms, like Wattpad and Twitter. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the motivations of the digital authors in writing fanfictions on Wattpad and Twitter through structuralist approach. After interviewing the authors and analyzing those interviews, the finding shows that the biggest motivation came from the love of K-pop culture itself, specifically idol culture as through writing fanfictions, they feel to have a special relation with the idols. Meanwhile, digital platforms here also have an important role in giving feedbacks to the author which also give them a boost of motivation.

Keywords: fanfictions, digital authors, Wattpad, Twitter, motivation

The immense popularity of a culture has a deep impact into today's society. Its fame has attracted a group of people who claimed to have a deep attachment to the culture. That group of people with a positive, personal, and a relatively deep personal connection to a mediated element in the popular culture is recognized as a fandom in terms of the group or a fan in terms on individual (Duffett, 2013). Through that deep attachment, fandoms have created their own subcultures, such as fanfiction. Fanfictions (or fanfics) are the works of fiction created by fans based on the plots or characters from pre-existing works they adored, where they take it into a new direction (Thomas, 2011). Often, the plots or character in a fanfic is based on a popular culture.

One of the popular cultures which is often made into fanfics is K-pop or Korean Pop culture. Since the 1990s, the Korean Wave (Hallyu) has begun into spreading the K-pop culture throughout the world (Giddens, 1991). Today, K-pop can be seen everywhere in the world from their music, drama series, and movies which are loved by many people. Those K-pop fans express their passion of K-pop into various ways and writing fanfics is one of them. Writing fan fictions could make the writers feel closer to the K-pop culture even though they live far from where the culture originated (@kangnanas, Interview, April 18, 2020). For sharing their works, fanfic authors often choose digital platforms, like Wattpad and Twitter, as using digital platforms is much easier than working with a major publishing house. In digital platforms, the

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authors can share their writing without getting through usual processes authors usually face in a publishing house. They can freely share whatever they write for all to enjoy.

To give us a further understanding on the topic, we have done a research on several related previous studies. One of the studies we found is titled *"Perilaku Menulis Fanfiction oleh Penggemar K-pop di Wattpad"* or *"Fanfiction Writing Behaviors of K-pop Fans on Wattpad"* by Nadya Syaharani and Adi Bayu Mahadian (2017). In this study, they analyzed the behaviors restricted only for K-pop fans on Wattpad. There are ten informants involved in gathering the data for the research. From those informants, the researchers conducted an observation on the step-by-step progress on how the authors of the fanfiction wrote their works, starting from their writing motivation, the source of the ideas for the story, to the execution of the actual writing until it was published on Wattpad. The researchers concluded that motivation for writing a fanfiction could come from the internal and external factors. The internal factors are to express their imagination and to experiment on their writings, while the external factors are suggestions from friends and exposure of fanfictions. Aside from that, they also come up with three steps the authors used in writing fanfictions. The first step is the creative process, that concerns with the brainstorming of ideas for the story. The second step is the writing process, or the execution of the ideas gathered from the previous step. Lastly, there is the editing and posting process, where the authors revised the typos and misspellings so that it could be posted neatly on the Wattpad website or application (Syaharani & Mahadian, 2017).

Upon reviewing the previous studies, more ideas have come up for this research in the topic of fanfiction writing for digital authors on Wattpad and Twitter. The previous study focused its research on the behaviors on Wattpad writers. This research intends to also analyze the behaviors of the authors, but it will be specified into observing their motivation to write fanfics on digital platforms. Writing for digital platforms is different from writing for a publishing house. It would be interesting to know what drives the authors into those digital platforms for writing fanfics. In addition, this research sees digital platforms as an expansive field to be studied, therefore, in addition to Wattpad, Twitter-based fanfic authors will also be included to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Thus, the aim of this research is to conduct an analysis to figure out the motivation behind writing fanfictions for digital authors on Wattpad and Twitter.

METHOD

To answer the research question, a structural approach will be applied as structuralism has the fundamental belief that all activities done by humans does not happen naturally, but they are constructed (Mambrol, 2016). In addition, we also intend to find the motivation of the authors in writing fanfictions by finding the interrelationship from the activities. For this, structuralism is also proved to be the appropriate approach due to the belief that underlying structures constructed a meaningful system generated by the human minds (Mambrol, 2016).

With structuralist approach, some steps will also be applied in this research. Creswell (2012) has come up with several steps in conducting this kind of research, those steps are; (1) Identifying informants who will be selected to be interviewed. In this case, the informants are selected using the purposeful sampling and homogenous sampling method. Both methods are chosen because by selecting individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics, the researcher will be able to describe certain subgroup in depth (Creswell, 2012). (2) Gaining access to informants that is done by getting permission in the form of willingness to be interviewed and to provide information to answer research questions. (3) Considering the best type of information that will answer the research question, which in this case is information about the motivation behind writing fanfictions for digital authors on Wattpad and

Twitter. (4) Designing protocols or instruments to collect and record information, including: researchers (as interviewers), informants (as speakers), question guide that will be addressed to the informants, preferred platform for interview that will be used to document the results of interviews with informants, and relevant written documents and/or audio visuals that will provide additional information. (5) Managing data collection by employing the principles of field research (related to interviews with informants) and library research (related to written data, photographs and audio visuals). The implementation of data analysis is as follows: (1) processing the results of interviews obtained from informants; (2) reducing the data, (3) grouping the data, (4) interpreting the data, and (5) concluding the data (Setiawan & Pujiyanti, 2019).

RESULT

From conducting a purposeful and homogenous sampling, a total of seven participants, in which four of them are Wattpad writers and another three are Twitter writers. The writers from Wattpad are: Rany (username: @RanEsta13), Zahara (username: @Hananaraa03), Qia (username: @strawsberriess), and Nanas (Wattpad Author @kangnannass). Meanwhile, for the Twitter writers, we have: Rie (username: @ukijowish), AS (username: @scnflowerbae), and OL (username: @janvierejungs). The writers have approved of their names and usernames to be mentioned in this research. However, they have requested that their names to be displayed in forms of acronyms, nicknames, and aliases, and the researchers have agreed to do so.

For the informants, writing is a tool to express their imagination to the world. To publish their writings, they chose digital platforms because it is easy and simple to publish their works there. As mentioned before, some of the digital platforms used for publishing fanfictions are Wattpad and Twitter. Every writer has their own preferences when it comes to the digital platforms and it can be influenced by a variety of factors from unique to each platform.

In publishing their works on Twitter, the authors usually publish it as a tweet post in their accounts. However, there is a limit on the number of characters in one tweet post, which is 280 characters (Larson, 2017). This limit might sound restricting, but it is actually the appeal for most Twitter readers as they do not have to read that long of a paragraph. Moreover, some writers also find it more comfortable writing stories that are shorter. Twitter writer, Rie (@ukijowish) mentioned that "*I prefer twitter, as it is quicker to read, and I like to keep things short. Even if it has character limitations, I usually continue the story in third-party applications, like Privatter, an application to share long tweets to followers only*" (Interview, April 17, 2020). Aside from that, Twitter readers can also easily request what kind of story they would like to read to the writers as Twitter was originally designed to be a social media where people can easily interact with each other socially. One of the Twitter writers, AS (@scnflowerbae), said that "*I use Twitter mainly because most of my writing requests came from there... Since I mostly write by request, I believe the feedback is important too. That way, I know what I should improve and I can write something that people want better.*" (Interview, April 17, 2020). Rie (@ukijowish) even also added that the feedbacks or comment by her followers/readers makes her happy and motivated to the point that she believes in reaching a wider audience in the future.

Different from Twitter that was designed as a social media, Wattpad is a specific digital platform well-known for publishing literary works, including fanfictions. In 2019, Wattpad announced that it has reached a total of eighty million monthly users. This huge number of users is one of the reasons why digital authors prefer to use Wattpad. Rany (@RanEsta13), one of the Wattpad writers said that "*I only use Wattpad as my platform for writing fanfiction because it is a famous platform for worldwide authors. Before I started writing, I also often read some BTS (a Korean boy group) fanfictions on Wattpad*" (Interview,

April 18, 2020). This popularity played a crucial role in gaining the readers for the authors to interact with. Qia (@strawsberriess) who already has a good number of Wattpad readers even managed to make a special forum for her and her readers to discuss on what to improve in her works. One of the reasons for Wattpad's popularity is its easy-to-use design. Writers like it because they can simply publish their works without much hassle. Zahara (@Hananaraa03), addressed that "*I actually wanted to try writing on various platforms like Cacabaca, Novelme, etc, but I do not really understand how to use them. Wattpad is much simpler to use for me, so I use Wattpad instea*d" (Interview, April 18, 2020).

Whether it is for Twitter or Wattpad, all of them involve the same thing, writing fanfictions. Writing is not an easy task for everyone, most of the time, writing requires several factors to keep the writers motivated in continuing their works of fanfictions. Writing a literary work, such as fanfictions could be a way of relieving stress so that they start to dream of becoming a professional writer. For Wattpad authors like Qia (@strawsberriess) and Nanas (@kangnannass), writing fanfictions is a highly effective way of reducing stress, especially for Qia since she often spent long and stressful times in her high school. Moreover, some authors realize that writing fanfiction is more than a stress relief, but a long-life dream. Wattpad author, Rany (@RanEsta13), stated that "*I used to want to be a writer when I was young before I get married. I remember my old dream so now I want to give a try to be an author of fanfiction in my spare time*" (Interview, April 18, 2020). Another Wattpad author also stated that she only wrote for fun at first but then, she began to take writing more seriously and even considered publishing a collaborative novel. "*Now I am focusing on doing a collaboration with my friend,*" said Qia (@strawsberriess) (Interview, April 18, 2020).

Imaginations and ideas are something that every author needs to make a literary work. Fanfiction is closely related to a well-known popular culture to be fictionalized by the fans. In K-pop, idol groups are mostly used as the source of fanfictions. These imaginations and ideas are also part of the factors that motivates fanfiction writings. Whenever the writers have an idea of a certain idol group, they write it into fanfiction. Zahara (@hananaraa03) stated that "*My purpose of writing fanfiction is sharing my idea and my imagination.*" (Interview, April 18, 2020). While Rie (@ukijowish) and AS (@scnflowerbae) stated in the interview on April 17, 2020, that fanfiction is a place where they can project and express their ideas. They chose fanfictions to express their ideas, imaginations, and interests on idol groups because it is as easy as writing and imagining about your favorite idols. Wattpad writer, Qia (@strawsberriess), said, "*I like writing fanfictions. As a Kpop fan, it is easier to write fanfiction because I could imagine the visual of my favorite groups, such as NCT Dream when I write fanfiction*" (Interview, April 18, 2020). For the writers, writing fanfiction is even much easier than writing any other types of literature because they could visualize their favorite idol groups while writing. "*I prefer (writing) fanfictions (compared to other types of literature) because I love to choose my idols and other Kpop groups as my visual of characters,*" said Zahara (@hananaraa03) in the interview when she was asked about why she likes fanfiction more than other literary works in the interview (April 17, 2020).

It seems like for fanfiction writers, most of their ideas and inspiration for fanfiction came from their love and affection to K-pop idol groups. However, to write about their favorite idol groups, they need more than just imagining their faces, they need more spark for their ideas to grow. For Wattpad writers, Rany (@RanEsta13) and Nanas (@kangnannass), they said in the interview that they usually watch variety shows to observe the characteristics of the idol groups to be written into fanfiction. Watching idols' personalities on variety shows also gives them more ideas for the storyline of their works, just like the statement of OL (@janvierejungs) "*I like to keep the real personality intact, as it makes the story more interesting*" (Interview, April 18, 2020).

The purpose of showing their love and interest in writing fiction becomes the union of

their motivations. They love certain idols or actors and they want to make fiction about the idols or fictional characters using their visuals and characteristics. For Rany (@RanEsta13), she uses Min Yoongi as her fanfiction's visual because she loves BTS. Zahara (@Hananaraa03), Qia (@strawsberriess), and Nanas (@kangnannass) as ntczens (fans of the idol group, NCT), they use NCT127 and NCT DREAM as their fanfictions' main visuals. Rie (@ukijowish) usually writes about Mingyu (from the idol group, Seventeen) and Yabuki Nako (from the idol group IZ*ONE). Sometimes, she also writes fanfictions based on Japanese popular culture, such as Takahashi Kyohei, Michieda Shunsuke (idol group Naniwa Danshi), Takahashi Yuto, Igari Soya (HiHi JETS) and various characters from 'Kamen Rider' series. For OL (@janvierejung), she likes to reimagine her idols into her another characters, for example, boy group GOT7 as university students studying Communications. Those choices of visuals come from their feeling of interest based on what they want to write. They did not want to write about random people or a completely new character because for them fanfiction is about being closer to someone they love. *"I am just really in love with my own story that contains the visual of my idols, it makes me feel closer to them. I can even feel fluttered really often when writing fanfictions about my idols,"* said Nanas (@kangnannass) in the interview on April 18, 2020.

DISCUSSION

It might seem that the authors have various things that motivate them into writing fanfictions on digital platforms. However, structuralism suggests that the "units" or the surface look that might seem separate and different can be in an interrelationship with each other, which are binded by the "rules," or ways those units can be put together (Mambrol, 2016). From the writers' reasons on the preference of digital platforms, it can be seen that there is an underlying similarity among them, which is the use of the platform as a place to interact with more people, especially readers. The

writers prefer Twitter because they can interact directly with their readers. On the other hand, Wattpad is preferred because it is a popular medium to share literary works which means that the chance of the writers being noticed to a wider audience or more people. This more interaction to the people who eventually became their readers also played a role in motivating them to write. The readers could give the feedbacks and comments that helps them to improve their writing while alsa making them feel happy to be recognized for their hard work.

Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the literary critic Roland Barthes, two of the essential figures of structuralism, suggest that "things cannot be understood in isolation, they have to be seen in the context of larger structures they are part of" (Mambrol, 2016). The reasons of what motivates the authors to write might vary, but if the largest context is seen, certain connections can be found. The authors based their fanfictions on different K-pop idols; however, they are still based on the same Korean pop culture whether the idol groups are more or less well-known than one another. To get some inspiration for the fanfictions, there are many ways that the authors could do. Some could get inspired enough by imagining or visualizing their idols' faces. Others need to watch something related to the idols, like the variety shows. Both of those activities are actually interrelated to one another according to the principle of structuralism. They are all related to the K-pop idols. Imagining idols could come from various memories of the idol and that includes moments when the idols were in variety shows.

The interrelationship between units through the rules plays an important part in the structuralist theory used in this research. From that, we managed to observe deeper on the information given by the informants in the interview. The digital authors' motivation mostly came from their ideas to express love to their idols. On the other hand their preferences on digital platforms also influenced their motivation because the number of reader through those platforms.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research conducted by researchers in writer's motivation on writing, specifically digital writers on Wattpad and Twitter, the researchers are able to conclude key points related to digital writers' motivation on writing. By using structuralist approach and informants' experiences into consideration, the researchers can objectively draw conclusions regarding writing motivation as found from Wattpad and Twitter writers. In conclusion, infatuation, or adoration for idols (in this case, Korean Pop idols) that the fanfiction writer writes greatly based their motivation on writing. While how each person express it in different ways, whether it is by maintaining the idols' personality even in fanfiction or watching variety shows related to the idols in order to study them better, it can be said that their underlying motivation is very similar, which is to express their adoration for their idols. Furthermore, their different preferences in digital writing platforms also influenced their motivation. Both platforms provide them with a good amount of readers and those readers often gave them some support through feedback and comment that could keep the readers motivated in writing fanfictions.

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