CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Technology's impact on education is rapidly evolving. Technology in education can serve as a learning tool for students. Teachers can use several programs to effectively deliver materials and improve students' reading skills. Bal (2018) lists other writing apps, including Wattpad, Blogger, Pinterest, WordPress, Tumblr, Fizzo Novel, and webtoon. Wattpad is chosen as the media for this research due to its popularity among enthusiasts, particularly students. Wattpad, an eBook website, provides access to thousands of publications for avid readers (Suhaeni, 2023). Wattpad can be a good place for novices to start reading and develop an interest in literacy. Wattpad also allows you to communicate ideas on your points of view based on what you read. Wattpad is intended for kids and adults, and it is fairly uncommon for individuals to prefer reading on their phones than books.

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This is evidenced by the language used in the forums and comment sections, as well as the number of readers registered for each story uploaded on the app (yoesoef, 2019). Even though there are numerous programs that can assist with learning, particularly reading, the present student literacy level remains fairly low. Meanwhile, according to a PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) assessment, Indonesia's ranking has risen by five points since 2018. The acquired score indicates a deterioration, and Indonesia remains ranked 11th lowest out of 81 countries.

Reading is one of the fundamental skills in English language learning and serves as a gateway to knowledge, imagination, and academic success. In the context of junior high school, particularly for 8th-grade students, reading is a vital component of the curriculum as it supports not only language development but also critical thinking and comprehension abilities. An English teacher at SMPN 6 Pariaman was interviewed initially, and it was discovered that students are still having trouble understanding what they read. The teacher said that a lot of students weren't very interested in reading English texts, especially when they used standard materials like textbooks. Most students usually felt bored and not interested when doing reading activities in class.

Moreover, the teacher said that the students' reading scores were still not very high. The students' average score in reading comprehension was lower than the minimum required standard, which was 75. Many students got scores between 60 and 70, which shows they didn't fully understand the text. Students usually found it hard to figure out the main points, understand new words, and guess what the text means based on the information given. The teacher also said that not having interesting and interactive learning materials was one of the reasons students were performing poorly in reading. Using digital tools like Wattpad is likely to boost students' interest in reading and make their reading abilities better.

This lack of engagement leads to poor reading comprehension and low academic performance. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), reading

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involves decoding written symbols, understanding meaning, and interpreting information, which requires active engagement and mental effort. Without motivation or interest, students tend to disengage, which further hinders their development in reading skill. In response to these challenges, the emergence of digital technology has provided new opportunities to enhance students' interest in reading. One of the most popular platforms among teenagers today fosters students' intrinsic motivation to read because the stories are written in a relatable and is Wattpad, a free online reading and writing application that offers a vast collection of user-generated stories. This accessibility makes reading more flexible and appealing, especially for digital-native learners who are accustomed to consuming content through their devices. Hidayati and Utami (2020) argue that Wattpad modern style, often reflecting real-life situations or fantasies that resonate with young readers. Moreover, Wattpad's interactive features such as likes, votes, comments, and author -reader interaction create a sense of community and social connection, which can further motivate students to engage with the text.

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From a theoretical perspective, the use of Wattpad aligns with the constructivist approach to learning, particularly Vygotskys theory that emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. When students interact with peers and authors through comments or discussions, they are not only constructing meaning from the text but also learning from each other. Furthermore, this environment supports collaborative learning and promotes reading as a social practice rather than a

solitary task. In addition, the texts on Wattpad are often categorized by reading level or theme, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction based on students needs and preferences. Despite the potential benefits, the use of Wattpad in Indonesian classrooms remains limited. Many teachers still rely on traditional reading materials, such as textbooks or classic literature, which may not align with students' interests or linguistic levels.

Meanwhile, national and international assessments show that Indonesian students lag behind in reading proficiency. The PISA 2018 results indicate that Indonesian students performed below the global average in reading, highlighting the urgent need for innovative strategies to promote literacy. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasize that students who are intrinsically motivated to read tend to show better reading comprehension and academic achievement. Therefore, integrating platforms like Wattpad into the classroom could address students' lack of motivation by offering authentic, engaging, and accessible reading materials. In addition, Wattpad can help develop various sub skill in reading, such as predicting, inferring, skimming, and scanning. Students often try to guess what will happen next or interpret the emotions and motivations of characters, which enhances their inferential and analytical thinking. Studies by Muthmainnah et al. (2021) show that students who used Wattpad regularly demonstrated improved narrative understanding and vocabulary recognition. The app also supports the development of 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, creativity, and communication, which are crucial in today's globalized and technology-driven

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world. Moreover, the platform can be used as a starting point for other language activities, such as summarizing chapters, analyzing plot structures, or even writing alternative endings integrating reading and writing in a meaningful way.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the research, several problems have been identified:

1. Students have difficulties in comprehending English reading texts.
2. Students have difficulties in identifying the main idea, specific information, vocabulary, reference, and inference in reading texts.
3. The reading materials used in the classroom are less interesting and less varied.
4. Teachers have not maximized the use of digital media in teaching reading.
5. The effectiveness of using the Wattpad application on students' reading skill at the eighth grade of SMPN 6 Pariaman needs to be investigated.

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C. Limitation of the Problem

To maintain the focus and feasibility of the study, this research has several limitations. This research is limited to the use of one fable ("The Elephant and His Friends") and one fairy tale ("The Ugly Duckling"), so the findings cannot be generalized to other narrative genres. Wattpad was chosen as the technology used in this research because it is an easily accessible digital platform that allows students to read stories through their smartphones. The stories selected from Wattpad are also age-appropriate, free from sensitive

content, and aligned with the students' reading level. Environmental and individual factors, such as access to devices, internet availability at home, and parental involvement, are beyond the scope of this research. These boundaries are set to ensure that the study remains focused on its core objective and delivers reliable and relevant findings within its defined parameters.

D. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background of the research, the formulation of the problem is : "To what extent does the use of the Wattpad application affect the reading skill of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Pariaman?"

E. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which the use of the Wattpad application affects the reading skill of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Pariaman.

F. Significance of the Research

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This research is expected to provide benefits for teachers, students, and future researchers. For teachers, this research is expected to provide an alternative digital learning medium, namely the Wattpad application, to improve students' reading skill and create a more engaging learning environment. For students, this research is expected to increase their interest and motivation in reading English texts while improving their reading skill. Furthermore, this research is expected to enrich knowledge in the field of English language teaching, especially regarding the use of digital media in teaching reading. It is also expected to serve as a useful reference for future

researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies on the use of Wattpad or other digital learning media in improving students' reading skill.

G. Definition of Key Terms

To provide clarity and consistency throughout this research, the following key terms are operationally defined as used in this study:

1. Effect

The term effect is an important concept in this research because it refers to the influence of one variable on another. According to Creswell (2012), effect is the influence or impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable that can be measured through quantitative analysis. In this research, the term "effect" refers to the influence of using the Wattpad application on students' reading skill at the eighth grade of SMPN 6 Pariaman. The effect is determined by comparing the students' reading skill before and after the treatment, as well as comparing the post-test results of the experimental class and the control class to identify whether the use of the Wattpad application gives a significant effect on students' reading skill.

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2. Wattpad Application

Wattpad is an online reading and writing application founded by Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen in 2006. According to Suhaeni (2023), Wattpad provides access to thousands of user-generated digital stories across various genres. In this research, Wattpad is used as a digital learning medium for teaching reading through selected narrative texts. Students use

Wattpad to read the selected stories and practice understanding the main idea, specific information, vocabulary, reference, and inference.

3. Reading Skill

Reading Skill refer to the ability to decode written symbols, understand meaning, and interpret information from a text, which requires active engagement and mental effort (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). In this study, reading skills are measured through pre-tests and post-tests focusing on students' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

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