

HOW DO WRITERS USE READER RESPONSE AS A STRATEGY IN WRITING DIGITAL NOVELS?

Trie Utari Dewi¹, Ade Hikmat², Sukardi³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA, Indonesia, Graduate School. Jakarta, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4808-9847>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2563-4942>
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9060-3499>

Corresponding author: Trie Utari Dewi,
¹trie.utari.dewi@uhamka.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate how reader responses are used as a strategy in the process of writing digital novels. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research conducted in-depth interviews to outline the steps authors take when integrating reader feedback into their work. The results show that reader feedback is not only used to develop story ideas and refine plots, but also to correct narrative errors and provide fresh ideas for subsequent chapters. The authors' creative process, which is divided into 11 stages, is significantly influenced by this interaction with readers. According to the authors, this strategy is crucial because reader responses contribute significantly to the refinement of the story, making it more polished and detailed. Thus, the collaboration between author and reader becomes a central element in the construction of digital novel writing strategies.

Keywords: *writing strategies, reader responses, digital novels, creative process, writing process.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in recent decades has brought about significant transformations in various aspects of life, including literature (Da, 2019; Wang, 2020). Digital literature, which utilizes online platforms for publication and direct interaction between authors and readers, is increasingly popular worldwide (Murphy, 2017; Skains, 2010; Zafar et al., 2024). One of the most influential platforms in the phenomenon of digital literature is Wattpad. Wattpad provides a space for authors to publish their works freely while also interacting with readers through comment sections (Malle & Velez, 2023; Sharma, 2021). The reader-author interaction in digital literature has created a new dynamic in literary creation, where the author no longer stands alone in the creative process but collaborates with readers to guide the direction of the story (Rettberg, 2018; Yanti et al., 2022).

Reader responses, including criticism, praise, or even suggestions, serve as important indicators of the quality of a novel (Hall, 1980; Jauss, 1983). These responses reflect how well a work is received by readers (Davis & Womack, 2018; Pianzola et al., 2020). In digital novels, the number of positive responses from readers can influence an author's popularity and provide opportunities to advance their literary career (Bold, 2018; Ishmah, 2023). However, despite the potential for author-reader interaction to improve the quality of a work, authors still face creative challenges in crafting engaging stories (Bleecker, 2022; Piirto, 2018; Smith, 2020). Authors of digital novels must continue to develop strong characters and maintain narrative quality while responding to the diverse feedback from readers, which may come in the form of comments or even constructive criticism (Chaiken, 2019; Spjeldnæs & Karlsen, 2024). Therefore, adaptive and responsive strategies to reader feedback are necessary for authors to produce high-quality works.

In the digital age, the connection between authors and readers has become more intense, leading to greater involvement in the creative process. Platforms like Wattpad facilitate readers in providing direct feedback through comment sections, which can influence story direction, character development, and even the creative decisions made by the author (Pramatanti, 2018). This interaction leads to a more dynamic model of writing, where readers and authors engage in a continuous creative dialogue throughout the writing process (Anggraini et al., 2023; Coleman, 2019; Davies, 2017).

To further understand how authors conceptualize writing strategies in response to reader feedback, Wallas's (2014) theory of the creative process is used as a foundation to examine how authors incorporate reader responses into the development of story ideas. Additionally, Morley's (2001) theory of creative writing strategies provides an additional perspective on how authors adapt their creativity to meet the expectations and interactions of readers. This study aims to explore how digital novel authors formulate and adapt their writing strategies, with a focus on the use of reader responses to improve the quality of their work.

The quality of digital novels with high exposure on Wattpad has shifted to new works in the form of adaptations (Davies, 2017; Parnell, 2021). This shift is particularly evident in specific cases where novels initially available only in digital form through these platforms are later published in print and even adapted into films or series (Puspita & Sutami, 2020; Vatner, 2019; Yoesoef, 2020). However, unlike the general trend that requires authors to lock or remove their works after publication or adaptation, some authors choose to keep their novels available on Wattpad. Examples include "BarraKilla" by Nova Adhita, "Paradise Garden" by Khojina, and "Abi Ghea" by Chelsea Karina, which, despite being printed and adapted into films, remain accessible to readers through Wattpad. This decision allows the authors to continue interacting with readers and utilize feedback to further develop the story. This uniqueness makes these three novels highly relevant for study, as they represent how authors manage and respond to reader interactions.

Although there are numerous studies that examine the creative process in literature, few have discussed the interaction between readers and authors, particularly in digital literature. Moreover, the interactive and responsive aspects of digital literature have not been extensively explored. Some studies, such as those by Perminova (2021), analyze students' responses to the translation of novels; Brottrager et al. (2022) developed a quantitative method to predict literary reception based on text features; Khoshsaligheh et al. (2020) examined readers' expectations in Iran regarding the translation of fiction; Schwartz (2020) analyzed the change in reader reception in Italy towards Ferrante's novels after their international success; and Yanti et al. (2022) and Rajakannan & Rukmini (2021) studied the reception of digital novels, focusing on readers' acceptance.

Among these studies, only the research by Yanti et al. (2022) and Rajakannan & Rukmini (2021) specifically addresses reader reception in the context of digital literature, focusing on reader interactions with works published on Wattpad. This study differs from theirs in that it emphasizes how digital novel authors use reader responses as part of their writing strategy. This research also aims to explore how authors manage and respond to feedback to guide the development of the narrative and characters, as well as to build a dynamic creative relationship between authors and readers throughout the writing process. Therefore, this study is significant as the phenomenon of digital literature continues to grow rapidly, especially on platforms like Wattpad. These

platforms have become interactive spaces between authors and readers, and while there is research on reader interaction in traditional literature, understanding how authors manage reader responses in writing digital novels remains limited. This is an important area to explore further, as readers not only provide evaluations but also influence the direction of the story, characters, and creative ideas.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative to analyze how digital novel authors utilize reader responses as a writing strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is employed to examine how the researcher explores the dynamics of the creative process through its interaction with readers on digital literature platforms, particularly on Wattpad. The informants in this study are three digital novel authors whose works have been published on Wattpad: Chelsea Karina with the novel "Abi Ghea", Nova Adhita with the novel "BarraKilla", and Khojina with the novel "Paradisee Garden". The selection of informants is based on their works, which have received significant responses from readers and have achieved holistic recognition in the form of print novels and transformation into feature films for the Indonesian market.

The data for this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with the authors and observations of reader comments. The interviews were semi-structured to explore how the authors respond to readers' criticism and suggestions, as well as how feedback influences the direction of the story and character development (Kallio et al., 2016). Observations were made of the comment sections to examine how readers influence the narrative (Mulhall, 2003). The interview data and comments were then analyzed using content analysis to identify key themes in these interactions, such as changes in the narrative or characters (Krippendorff, 2004).

The analysis process involved thematic coding and data triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings, including cross-checking between interviews and reader comments (Eldh et al., 2020; Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Peer debriefing was also conducted to discuss the findings with colleagues as a means of obtaining feedback and ensuring that data interpretations were objective (McMahon & Winch, 2018). In analyzing the data, this study refers to Wallas's (2014) theory of the creative process and Morley's (2001) creative writing strategies to understand the influence of readers in the creation of digital literary works.

RESULTS

This research describes the responses of readers that subsequently construct strategies for writing digital novels. Based on the results of interviews conducted with novelists, reader responses were found to be one of the strategies used by authors in writing novels. The stages of novel writing based on reader responses are constructed using Wallas's theory (Wallas, 2014) related to the creative process and Morley's theory (Morley, 2001) related to creative writing strategies, resulting in 11 stages in writing a digital novel: the preparation of ideas, incubation of ideas, illumination, verification, preparation for writing, planning, incubation, initiation, flow, silence for idea generation, as well as innovation and completion.

Reader Responses in The Idea Preparation Stage

The initial stage for authors to gather ideas is by collecting information from their surroundings. This information can be obtained from reading reader comments on the author's previous works as well as on other writings.

TABLE 1. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Idea Preparation Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Chelsea	<i>"There are some. But they mainly ask for a romance that is not as sad as the previous story, even though in the end, it turns out to be just as sad as the previous story. "</i>	Chelsea adjusts the story according to reader requests for a lighter romance, even though it still contains sad elements.
Nova	<i>"Sometimes yes and sometimes no; I take comments if they fit. The story 'BarraKilla' has a bit of a story about Barra's parents in the previous story, titled 'The Fault'; there were comments saying 'waiting for Barra to grow up.'"</i>	Nova responds to reader requests by writing a continuation of Barra's story in adulthood.

The initial stage of writing a digital novel begins with gathering information from various sources, one of which is reader comments on previous works. The information obtained from these comments is often used as a basis for forming ideas for the next story theme. In this case, Chelsea and Nova, demonstrate how they utilize reader feedback in their writing process.

Chelsea states that she often reads reader comments from her previous stories to understand their wishes. The readers want a lighter romance theme but still with strong emotional elements. In response to this, Chelsea writes a story that focuses on the love stories of teenagers while still retaining some elements of sadness that were present in her previous novel. This reader response provides direction for the author in choosing a story theme that is more in line with readers' expectations, while still maintaining the unique nuances that distinguish each of her works.

Meanwhile, Nova also reads comments from readers on her previous work, "The Fault," which tells the story of the main character's parents, Barra. In the comments, readers asked for the story of Barra to be continued. In response to this request, Nova then wrote "BarraKilla," which tells the story of Barra when he is an adult. This demonstrates how reader comments can affect character development and plot progression in subsequent works.

In this aspect, Chelsea and Nova use reader comments as a means to obtain new ideas and guide story development. This response creates a more dynamic relationship between the authors and readers.

Reader Responses in The Idea Incubation Stage

After gathering information from various sources, including reader comments, authors proceed to the idea incubation stage. This stage involves the author reflecting on and processing the gathered information to produce more mature story ideas. At this point, authors do not simply accept reader responses at face value but reconsider and process that feedback to apply it in a more solid story concept.

TABLE 2. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Idea Incubation Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Nova	<i>"We think about reader comments again to conceptualize the ideas."</i>	Nova shifts the focus of the story from Barra to Killa.
Chelsea	<i>"Usually, reader comments influence the creation of the chapters to be uploaded."</i>	Chelsea uses reader comments to influence the direction of the story, particularly in the development of upcoming chapters.

In this idea incubation stage, as explained by the authors, the process of developing ideas involves interaction with reader comments. Nova creates a change in the story's focus by considering the input from readers who desire Barra's story, but she decides to give more attention to Killa as the main character. This decision indicates that the author does not merely accept the readers' ideas but also processes and filters them to produce more refined ideas that align with the narrative she wants to convey.

Additionally, Chelsea states that reader comments influence the direction of the story, especially in determining the themes and development of the chapters to be uploaded. The results of these interviews indicate that authors can continually adapt to reader feedback, making it an essential element in digital writing. Thus, during this idea incubation stage, reader feedback becomes an important source for maturing story ideas and guiding authors in their creative journey.

Reader Responses in The Illumination Stage

In the illumination stage, authors begin to articulate the ideas they have obtained to formulate the story's premise and prevent those ideas from being lost. Authors then develop these ideas based on the information received—including reader comments—to enrich the story and make it more relevant and engaging.

TABLE 3. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Illumination Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Chelsea	<i>"After getting the idea, I immediately write it down by outlining the story ideas using mind mapping."</i>	Chelsea quickly records her ideas using mind mapping to ensure they are not lost, demonstrating an efficient working method.
Nova	<i>"Sometimes I just write down the main idea first in my phone notes."</i>	Nova notes the main idea in her phone as a reminder for further development.
Khojina	<i>"I write a short draft of the story right away."</i>	Khojina starts with a short draft to ensure the idea is not forgotten.
Chelsea	<i>"Reader comments like 'try making the antagonist suffer' and 'the antagonist feels regret' can be applied in the next chapter but I will develop it further."</i>	Chelsea develops the antagonist character according to reader comments to enrich the story.
Nova	<i>"Sometimes there are reader comments that are very detailed.' There were readers who supported</i>	Nova uses reader comments to enrich the dynamics between characters.

	<i>Killa and others who supported Barra. Those kinds of comments I take."</i>	
Khojina	<i>"Sometimes from their comments, I receive guesses. Even though we've prepared the story for the next chapter, if I see the comments, oh yeah, this could be better."</i>	Khojina adjusts the story based on reader comments to improve the plot.

The illumination stage occurs when authors quickly realize the ideas they have thought of. Authors express these ideas in the form of mind mapping, brief notes, or story drafts. This process is crucial to ensure that the ideas gathered do not get lost and can be further developed.

In addition, reader comments at this stage also contribute significantly to story development. For instance, Chelsea uses reader comments regarding the antagonist character who "suffers" and "feels regret" to deepen the conflict in her story. Nova, on the other hand, develops the story by considering comments that divide support between the two main characters, Killa and Barra, to create a more dramatic tension.

Lastly, Khojina also benefits from reader comments in clarifying aspects of the story that were previously unclear, such as the identity of the child's corpse that becomes a puzzle in the novel. After reading comments that theorized who the child was. She confirmed the reader's speculations about the content of the story in the subsequent chapters, providing satisfaction to readers who felt involved in the process of creating the story.

This relationship between authors and readers during the illumination stage illustrates a close connection in shaping the plot. Authors not only use reader comments to refine story ideas but also to perfect characters and other elements of the narrative.

Reader Responses in The Verification Stage

In the verification stage, authors ensure that the story ideas they have developed are indeed appealing to the audience. In this case, authors position themselves as both writers and readers. This approach is taken to ensure that the ideas can be accepted and of interest to the readers.

TABLE 4. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Verification Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Khojina	<i>"Before uploading, it is certainly considered first. The consideration might include reader comments as well. Sometimes we also read other people's stories; sometimes, if something is trending on Wattpad, we think, oh, let's try making a story like this or we create a different one?"</i>	Khojina follows trends on Wattpad and considers reader comments to ensure the story is engaging and relevant.
Khojina	<i>"I look at the number of readers and the comments from them. For example, we post one or two chapters. Sometimes it feels forced (like with another story), and the readership is</i>	Khojina tests the story by observing reader responses to determine whether it is worth continuing.

	<i>very low. But when 'Paradise Garden' was published, it immediately attracted a lot of attention. Oh, it means this story is interesting if it's extended."</i>	
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At the verification stage, authors utilize reader responses as a tool to test the appeal of the story ideas that have been developed. Khojina actively considers reader comments and popular story trends on Wattpad to ensure that the stories created have the potential to attract readers.

Additionally, Khojina tests story ideas by uploading the first few chapters for readers to gauge initial reactions. If the story garners positive attention and comments, as was the case with "Paradise Garden," the author feels confident that the story is interesting and can be further developed. Conversely, if a story does not receive adequate attention, Khojina takes this into account when considering whether to halt its development.

The results of this interview indicate that the verification stage is not only about internally ensuring the story idea is solid but also involves engaging the audience in the testing process. Authors leverage reader comments and the responses of the readership to assess whether the story being developed will succeed in the market.

Reader Responses in The Preparation Stage

In the writing preparation stage, authors establish their writing goals and make preparations by determining the genre, plot structure, and limitations regarding the characters and events to be included in the writing. At this stage, reader comments play a role in assisting authors to prepare a more mature and engaging story structure.

TABLE 5. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Writing Preparation Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Chelsea	<i>"Usually, readers have a greater influence on the plot because the main characters have already been developed before the story is published. However, the side characters or extras that appear in one or two chapters are also considered, because I'm afraid there might be a plot hole."</i>	Chelsea uses reader comments to maintain plot consistency, especially in introducing supporting characters to avoid plot holes.
Nova	<i>"Yes, some of it. In the novel version, there's a character named Dito. That's because readers asked what would happen if Killa met another guy. So, I introduced Dito; if I'm not mistaken, I forgot his name."</i>	Nova adds the character Dito based on reader requests.
Khojina	<i>"Sometimes the plot is also influenced by reader comments. Some readers suggested, 'why not have someone</i>	Khojina introduces the character Naka based on reader comments to improve the plot and make it

	<i>help with the installation of the CCTV at home?' So, the character Naka, Kalandra's friend, came to mind. Initially, I hadn't thought of it, but then I realized, 'why not consider it?' That's when Naka appeared."</i>	more logical.
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In the writing preparation stage, reader comments serve to enrich the plot and characters that the author has prepared beforehand. Chelsea notes that although the main characters have been planned, reader feedback influences decisions regarding supporting characters or extras that will appear in specific chapters. This is done to maintain consistency in the story and avoid potential plot holes, where readers may become confused by the appearance of characters that were not previously explained.

Nova also acknowledges that reader comments impact the establishment of characters and the plot. At this stage, Nova explains that the idea of the character Dito emerging in the story came from reader requests, leading her to decide to add this character.

On the other hand, Khojina received input from readers commenting on the plot involving the installation of CCTV at home in the story. After receiving this comment, she realized that the story might feel more logical if there were an additional character to assist, and she then decided to introduce Naka as Kalandra's friend with expertise in cameras. This comment provided the author with an idea that made the plot stronger and addressed previously unnoticed gaps.

Reader comments in the creative writing process for digital novels significantly influence the establishment of goals and limitations within the plot and characters. Although authors have prepared a story plan, they remain open to suggestions and inputs from readers, particularly to enhance plot logic and avoid inconsistencies within the narrative.

Reader Responses in The Planning Stage

In the planning stage, each author has ideas or story drafts they wish to realize. One crucial aspect of story planning is introducing elements of surprise or plot twists that can capture the reader's attention.

TABLE 6. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Planning Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Chelsea	<i>"Yes, the readers' excited responses to plot twists make me eager to include more surprises in the story. For example, when Rio suddenly likes Ghea."</i>	Chelsea uses readers' enthusiasm for plot twists to add surprises, such as sudden changes in character relationships.
Khojina	<i>"Yes. Sometimes readers guess, oh yeah, just slip in a scene like this. So that the surprises are more logical and engaging. Even though we had planned the surprises, when we got comments, oh yeah, something like this would be more interesting."</i>	Khojina refines the surprises in her story based on reader comments, making them more engaging and logical.

Nova	<i>"No. The readers agreed that Barra and Killa should not be together. The readers hoped it would be just like this (Barra and Killa separated). But I made it so they didn't meet for 5 years. Then one day, they accidentally meet. I think that's a surprise."</i>	Nova introduces a surprise by making the couple Barra and Killa meet after 5 years, despite readers wanting them to stay apart.
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Reader comments can serve as helpful tools for planning surprises within the story. Chelsea pays attention to reader responses to existing plot twists. When readers respond enthusiastically to surprises—such as changes in character relationships—Chelsea feels motivated to incorporate more similar surprises throughout the narrative. This approach adds dynamism to the story, maintaining the readers' interest.

Khojina makes extensive use of reader comments to enhance the surprises she has already planned. Readers often provide guesses or comments related to the plot, prompting Khojina to feel that her existing surprises could be made more engaging and logical.

Meanwhile, Nova adopts a slightly different approach. Nova chooses to create surprises that contradict what readers desire. Readers want characters Barra and Killa to remain apart, but Nova introduces an unexpected meeting that surprises readers and adds a new dimension to the character relationships.

Reader comments significantly influence the planning stage of writing, particularly in presenting story surprises. Authors can use reader feedback to enrich plot twists, add more intriguing surprise elements, or even create surprises that contrast with readers' hopes to generate increased tension.

Reader Responses in The Incubation Stage

In the incubation stage, authors often experience writer's block or lose ideas, which can hinder the continuation of the story. In such conditions, authors need to find ways to develop existing ideas for the story to progress. One method is to utilize reader comments that can provide inspiration to revive lost ideas.

TABLE 7. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Incubation Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Khojina	<i>"Yes, when I have no idea what to do with the story, I go back and read earlier parts. Oh, it's like this, and the response was like that. Or if I forget how the story goes, I read it again, and oh yeah, there are comments like this. We make it like that, so we know how the plot goes."</i>	Khojina uses reader comments to recall and continue the story when experiencing writer's block.
Chelsea	<i>"Usually, from one or two reader comments, I develop and incorporate them into the story. For example, 'Ugh, I'm exhausted, it's so sad all the time,' so sometimes in the next chapter, I let things calm down before</i>	Chelsea adjusts the story's rhythm based on reader comments, managing emotional intensity to maintain balance.

	<i>ramping up the intensity again."</i>	
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Reader comments significantly influence the incubation stage of the story. When authors encounter difficulties or blocks in developing ideas, reader comments often become a source of inspiration. Khojina leverages reader comments to revisit the story's plot and adjust it for clearer direction. When feeling confused about the story's progression, she re-reads the narrative and reviews reader comments to remember key elements she may have overlooked. Thus, Khojina reconstructs her ideas to enable better development.

Chelsea also has a similar approach, developing story ideas based on reader comments. When reader feedback indicates that the narrative feels too sad or emotional, Chelsea takes this into account and modifies the storyline for better balance. She adjusts the emotional intensity by including calmer chapters before reintroducing heightened tension. At this stage, Chelsea demonstrates that reader comments helping her maintain the story's balance to avoid monotony.

Reader comments function as a valuable resource for authors facing writer's block. Feedback from readers provides authors with new perspectives that can help enhance and develop the story more effectively. These comments also assist authors in recalling the narrative flow and offer direction for adjusting the pacing to keep the story engaging.

Reader Responses in The Beginning Stage

In the beginning stage, authors start outlining the story, including characters, plot, and setting. Reader comments can assist authors in designing and developing the basic structure of the story. During this stage, authors often incorporate feedback from readers to enrich the plot and characters they are creating. Some authors use critiques and ideas presented by readers to address gaps or shortcomings in their stories.

TABLE 8. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Beginning Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Khojina	<i>"There are various comments from readers make us rethink our story's outline. So, sometimes we reconsider reader comments to integrate their ideas and to develop the characterization."</i>	Reader comments provide new perspectives for adjusting the story outline and character development.
Nova	<i>"I take the good comments from readers and discard the bad ones. Like wanting to be patient like Killa. The bad comments make the author rethink."</i>	Nova filters reader comments to improve story quality, keeping constructive feedback and discarding less useful input.

At the beginning stage of writing, reader comments become a valuable tool for authors to rethink their story outlines, whether regarding characters, plots, or other elements. For example, Khojina acknowledges that various reader comments help reconsider the plot, particularly in refining elements that were initially illogical. During this stage, reader comments can provide fresh ideas to enhance the storyline or strengthen character development.

Nova also shows that reader comments serve not only to enrich the story but also to help authors establish the direction of the narrative. Nova selects comments that are relevant to the story idea she wants to create, while less constructive comments are used as evaluative material to improve story quality.

In the beginning stage, reader comments help authors plan their stories. By leveraging this feedback, authors can create a more relevant, mature, and consistent story outline, resulting in a narrative that is more engaging for readers.

Reader Responses in The Flow Stage

In the flow stage, authors can enjoy the writing process without major obstacles; however, they sometimes face blocks in the storyline. In these situations, reader comments serve as a source of inspiration and motivation to continue the story.

TABLE 9. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Flow Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Chelsea	<i>"It makes things easier because with their enthusiastic comments, I become more excited about writing. For example, when I'm stuck, I see a comment that I can add to the plot."</i>	Reader comments provide ideas that help authors continue and develop the plot when they encounter writer's block.
Nova	<i>"It makes writing easier if the comments are good; if they're bad, they can sometimes be disheartening. When we receive positive comments and praise, it makes us feel happy and motivates us."</i>	Positive comments boost motivation, while negative ones provide reflection and evaluation for story development.
Khojina	<i>"It depends on the content of the comments. Yes, comments that are encouraging and show that they miss the characters mean there's someone who is nostalgic about this story."</i>	Motivating and in-depth comments help authors maintain their drive and provide additional ideas to perfect scenes.
Chelsea	<i>"In the past, before 'Abi Ghea,' I would say in the early chapters, 'let's try, if we get a hundred votes in the comments, I'll make the next update.' I did this in 'Abi Ghea,' too, but only in a few chapters, not until the end."</i>	Chelsea uses a voting system and comments to increase reader engagement and provide motivation to write.
Nova	<i>"Setting comment targets can also serve as motivation—if someone is asking for an update, we have a reason for not updating until there are a hundred comments. This way, the author doesn't feel guilty about not updating."</i>	Nova uses comment targets to motivate himself and provide a valid reason to delay updates.

At this stage, reader comments act as a source of encouragement and ideas for authors. When authors encounter blocks in developing the plot or story ideas, reader comments can provide inspiration and solutions that facilitate the writing process. For example,

Chelsea utilizes comments to develop scenes that had previously confused her. She draws ideas from reader feedback to simplify the storyline and maintain the plot's continuity.

Additionally, enthusiastic reader comments can give emotional boosts to authors, as expressed by Khojina, who notes that comments indicating readers feel "nostalgic" about certain stories or characters can motivate authors to keep creating. Nova also finds encouragement in developing characters and storylines according to reader expectations. Praise and positive comments can enhance an author's motivation, while negative feedback provides opportunities for authors to evaluate and improve their narratives.

Another method employed by these authors is using comment targets as a motivational tool. For instance, both Chelsea and Nova link the continuation of their stories to the number of comments or votes received. This method creates a kind of social contract between authors and readers, where authors feel compelled to continue their stories to meet reader expectations. Thus, reader comments during the flow stage not only serve as feedback but also as motivators and sources of ideas for authors. Comments can enrich the storyline, provide authors with fresh perspectives, and motivate them to continue writing until completion.

Reader Responses in The Silence for Idea Generation Stage

In the silence for idea generation stage, authors encounter stagnation in the writing process. They experience a situation where ideas and concepts for continuing the story have not yet emerged. To overcome this block, some authors choose to take a break from their writing and allow ideas to resurface naturally. In the context of writing digital novels, reader comments can be a valuable source of inspiration. These comments provide feedback on the story and generate new ideas that help authors bridge the narrative.

TABLE 10. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Silence for Idea Generation Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Khojina	<i>"It makes things easier because with their enthusiastic comments, I become more excited about writing. For example, when I'm stuck, I see a comment that I can add to the plot. Like in the accident scene, I was confused about what to do next. Then a reader commented, and I developed it based on that feedback. So, it influenced the storyline."</i>	Reader comments provide ideas that help authors continue and develop the plot when they encounter writer's block.

Authors like Khojina utilize reader comments when they struggle to connect two separate parts of the story. This process illustrates the crucial role of interaction with readers in writing digital stories. Engaged readers often provide feedback that inspires authors to reconsider and develop parts of the story that may be incomplete. When authors feel stuck or uncertain about how to advance the narrative, reading reader

comments can pave the way for continuing and refining the plot.

Reader comments during the silence stage can serve as triggers for ideas that help authors overcome hurdles in the writing process. Additionally, interaction with readers strengthens the relationship between the author and the audience. In this aspect, readers provide authors with more perspectives that can enrich their stories.

Reader Responses in The Innovation and Completion Stage

In the innovation and completion stage, authors finalize their writings in accordance with the established goals and designs. However, in the writing of digital novels, the crafted narrative can develop further thanks to reader comments. These comments can influence plot development, revisions of the text, and even ideas for future works.

TABLE 11. Results of Interviews on Reader Responses during the Innovation and Completion Stage

Author	Excerpt from Interview	Analysis
Chelsea	<i>"In the early parts, it tends to follow the initial plan; the middle sections are usually influenced by reader responses, but for the final execution, I will consider and always use the original plan. I planned around 30 chapters, but it ended up growing to around 50 chapters on Wattpad."</i>	Chelsea starts with a well-thought-out story but flexibly alters the storyline in the middle based on reader feedback.
Nova	<i>"Yes, it aligns with my expectations. The essence of the scenes is fifteen chapters, so it expands from there."</i>	Nova increases the number of chapters based on reader influence while maintaining the core story.
Khojina	<i>"The initial story and the ending are as planned. It's just that many additional scenes were added based on reader comments. So, it went from initially planning about 40 or 48 chapters to over 60 or 62."</i>	Khojina extends the story by adding scenes based on reader feedback, enhancing reader engagement.
Chelsea	<i>"Yes. Usually, attentive readers will help correct mistakes, making me more cautious when typing and revising the next chapters."</i>	Reader comments help Chelsea correct technical writing errors and revise subsequent chapters.
Nova	<i>"Yes, from reader comments. Punctuation and repetition of words or meanings are what prompted me to revise."</i>	Nova receives technical feedback regarding writing mistakes, improving the quality of the text.
Khojina	<i>"Yes, especially regarding typos or inconsistent plot."</i>	Khojina uses reader feedback to correct typos and plot inconsistencies.
Chelsea	<i>"Definitely. Usually, they request a continuation (sequel) or leave ideas for the next story. At the end of the story, there are often requests like 'Can you make a sequel to Abi Ghea 2'"</i>	Chelsea receives requests for sequels from readers but opts for a new theme that remains relevant to reader interests.

	<i>or 'please write about interfaith relationships.' But I chose to explore a new story, a family romance titled 'Coward.' It's about a high school family."</i>	
Khojina	<i>"In the early parts, it tends to follow the initial plan; the middle sections are usually influenced by reader responses, but for the final execution, I will consider and always use the original plan. I planned around 30 chapters, but it ended up growing to around 50 chapters on Wattpad."</i>	Chelsea starts with a well-thought-out story but flexibly alters the storyline in the middle based on reader feedback.

Reader comments influence authors to extend and develop their stories. For instance, Chelsea initially planned for around 30 chapters but expanded to about 50 chapters thanks to reader feedback. Similarly, Khojina started with 40 chapters but ended up with over 60. Reader comments provide ideas for adding scenes or characters, as well as elongating stories to make them more engaging and appealing.

In addition to influencing plot development, reader comments also serve as tools for technical improvements in writing. Chelsea and Nova, for example, feel more careful when writing after receiving feedback about typing and punctuation errors. Such comments help authors correct small details that can affect the quality of the story. Reader comments also inspire authors in developing subsequent stories. Chelsea receives requests from readers to create sequels, but she decides to explore new narratives closely related to the themes that interest her audience. Khojina, while also receiving ideas for sequels, opts to develop the background of the antagonist character and introduce a prequel. Nevertheless, although reader comments can serve as a source of inspiration, authors retain creative control over the direction of their narratives.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights that the interaction between authors and readers plays a significant role in shaping the creative writing process (Iser, 2022). Reader response functions as a strategic influence at every stage of writing, from the development of the initial idea to the finalization of the story (Rosenblatt, 2018). Reader response primarily serves as a valuable source of ideas. The comments provided by readers on previous works or ongoing stories often generate new story ideas for the author. These ideas emerge from discussions that take place in the comment sections (Darlis et al., 2023).

On platforms like Wattpad, readers offer feedback on specific elements of the story, such as characters, plot, and setting, which they hope to see further developed. Such interactions encourage authors to experiment with new themes and styles in advancing the story. These developments might not have been considered without the feedback from readers (Pianzola et al., 2020). Reader comments often push authors to explore bolder ideas, enhancing the quality of the story (Wolfgang & Bhandari, 2020).

Furthermore, reader response acts as a guide in the story development process (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Reader comments can contribute to identifying aspects of the story that are underdeveloped or need improvement, such as weak

characters, slow pacing, or confusing plots (Dankoff & Shkirando, 2015). This process makes the author's work more aligned with reader expectations and enriches their reading experience.

Reader response also serves as a tool for validating ideas in digital novel writing (Darlis et al., 2023; Dwyer & Larson, n.d.). In an increasingly interconnected world through online platforms, authors have the opportunity to test readers' reactions to story ideas by posting serialized chapters. The number of readers, level of interaction, and comments received on these chapters can provide the author with a clear indication of the story's appeal (D'Hoker, 2013; Lindblom, 2017). In this way, reader response becomes an indicator that helps authors decide whether to alter the story's direction according to audience interests or return to the author's original intent. A key advantage of digital novel platforms like Wattpad is that authors can receive immediate feedback, often in real time. This technological advancement allows authors to adjust their stories based on live feedback (Qin & Wang, 2024).

In certain situations, when an author faces a creative block, reader response can provide a way out. When an author struggles to develop the story, constructive comments from readers can offer inspiration and open up new perspectives that had not been considered before (Fong et al., 2023). In this creative block stage, readers—though not directly involved in the creative process—can guide the author to innovative solutions that had previously been overlooked (Mohammed & Mohammed, 2023; H. Xu et al., 2023).

Additionally, author motivation is influenced by positive comments from readers (Winter & Krämer, 2016). Positive comments motivate authors to continue writing and developing their stories. Reader responses that show appreciation for the work and build an emotional connection can strengthen the author's resolve to finish the story (Ito et al., 2018; J. Xu & Vinluan, 2023). On the other hand, critique and suggestions from readers act as valuable tools for improving the quality of the work. Authors who are open to constructive criticism are more likely to produce works that are mature and compelling for readers (Barry, 2009; Merhavy et al., 2024).

Reader response can encourage authors to create story continuity in the form of sequels, prequels, or even new stories based on reader requests (Yandell, 2020; Zaluchu, 2020). In digital novels, readers often suggest continuations of an ongoing story, including characters they would like to see again, unfinished plots, or new story ideas they find intriguing. These reader requests encourage authors to plan future works while considering the input they have received (Choi et al., 2017; Darlis et al., 2023). This phenomenon fosters a reciprocal relationship that strengthens reader engagement with the author's work, leading to the concept of "co-creation," where readers indirectly help shape the direction of the story through their feedback (Cook-Sather et al., 2024; Lanier & Jensen Schau, 2007).

In this study, it was found that reader response on digital novel writing—especially on the Wattpad platform—is more than just feedback received at the end of the writing process. Reader response is an integral part of the creative process, influencing the development of ideas, character development, plot progression, and even the completion of the work. Authors who are responsive to reader input have a greater chance of producing engaging, relevant, and attractive works, thus creating a collaboration between the author and readers in producing more dynamic literary works.

CONCLUSION

Reader response currently plays a crucial role in the creative writing process of digital novels on platforms like Wattpad. Feedback from readers helps authors develop story ideas, refine the plot, strengthen characters, and improve other elements. Reader response provides new inspiration, prompting authors to adjust the story to better align with audience expectations. Additionally, reader comments are often used by authors to overcome writer's block.

Criticism from readers can improve the technical quality of writing, while positive comments provide emotional support, strengthening the author's motivation. Such interactions create a positive, reciprocal relationship between authors and readers. The feedback facilities provided by platforms like Wattpad encourage readers to contribute to story development, even creating opportunities for sequels or new works that align with their interests. This process fosters a creative ecosystem that benefits both parties, resulting in more engaging and appealing literary works.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My also goes to the Indonesian Language Education doctoral program, UHAMKA's graduate school, which has given me the opportunity to develop and deepen my knowledge in the field of language and literature. The authors would like to acknowledge the use of AI tools, specifically Gemini Pro and Typeset IO Plus, to assist with data processing, literature searches, and manuscript language refinement.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The availability of analytical data for this research can be accessed through the following link: <https://bit.ly/AuthorInterviewTranscript>. This data includes the results of interviews with informants used as research data. This data can be accessed according to the policies contained in this journal.

HUMAN ETHICS STATEMENT

This study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of The Secretary of The Postgraduates School, University of Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA, Jakarta, Indonesia, with approval number 1437/SPs/KM/2025, issued on July 30th 2025. All procedures involving human participants adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. The ethical approval letter can be accessed at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gp7tKPVrXBMiHhpjYa7EeSThIux5-UV/view?pli=1>

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Trie Utari Dewi contributed to designing the research topic, developing the methodology, and developing data collection and analysis. She collected data directly from informants, filtered the data, and analyzed it.

Ade Hikmat contributed to strengthening the research concept, validating the data, and reducing the data. He ensured the quality of the data used in the research and oversaw its progress to ensure it met standards.

Sukardi contributed to validating the research data and supervising the research. He also played a role in stimulating the writing process to produce a quality article.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF FUNDING

In the research and publication of this article, the author did not receive any financial assistance from anywhere.