

## Unraveling Millennial Fever on Wattpad Stories

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### Abstract

The present study was undertaken to unravel the principal reasons why Millennials were hooked on reading Wattpad stories. This employed the quantitative-qualitative research design. The respondents of the survey were the Millennial Wattpad readers. The method used was frequency count to determine the commonalities of emerging themes for the quantitative part. For the qualitative part, an individual interview was employed, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis to arrive at theme identification. The findings of the study revealed that Millennials were hooked in reading Wattpad stories because of the following: Male Protagonist as the Miniature of an Ideal Man, Attraction Towards Opposite Personalities, Fiction Tends to Wrap the Reader's Sense of Reality, Bad Boy as Women's Preference of Mr. Right, Reader's Possessions of an Imaginary Wealth and Millennials as Romance-filled Being. Based on these results, it may conclude that Millennial Wattpad readers had the same preference in choosing the three most-read Wattpad stories because most of them stated that these three were among their favorites. The readers quickly hooked into Wattpad stories, which feed them information that was beyond reality. The main reason why they kept on reading a Wattpad story was because of the characters: their looks and their personalities, which defined as their ideal man. They also loved to read Wattpad's story including characters with different personalities, which gave them thrills and triggered the readers to read up to the end of the story.

**Keywords:** *Fever, Millennial, Unravel, Wattpad, Stories, Qualitative Study*

### Background of the Study

The rapid growth of the internet became a man's door toward discoveries in people and society. Millennials who were defined as young people who belong to the new generation have a lifestyle that was exaggeratedly connected to the internet. This attitude of the millennials proved that they were far from the previous generation that saw the act of attaching oneself to the internet on daily basis as not a necessary concept to live with. Nonetheless, millennials still saw what technology gave the opportunity for all. The exposure of millennials to online culture induced a global mindset which triggered them to have more friends in other countries. They spend time reading, writing on blogs as they continue the majority of the audience of the social media sites.

Through technology, millennials established own businesses flourished them and gained impact to the public lives. The millennials already established a pop culture to be called and that culture delivered youth power, literacy, and competence. One of the examples of the platforms that took the time of staying at the mobile phones of these millennials was the Wattpad. It was the online platform that sufficed the reading pleasure and needs of the young generation. With 45 million users who visited the site monthly, Wattpad seemed to be the venue for millennials from different countries where they shared their written stories and read by their fellow. Wattpad users were mainly millennials which reportedly comprised 90% (wattpad.com/about/2017).

Due to the millennial dominance in Wattpad, the researchers were prompted to conduct a study to extract the reasons why millennials were hooked on reading Wattpad stories. They examined the content of the top-grossing Wattpad stories and unraveled its dominance on millennials' lives.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

This study aimed to analyze the content of 3 top-grossing Wattpad stories to identify the main reasons why millennials were hooked on reading these stories.

Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the 3 most read Wattpad stories?
2. What are the prevalent reasons why teenage millennials are hooked on reading these Wattpad stories?

### **Theoretical Framework**

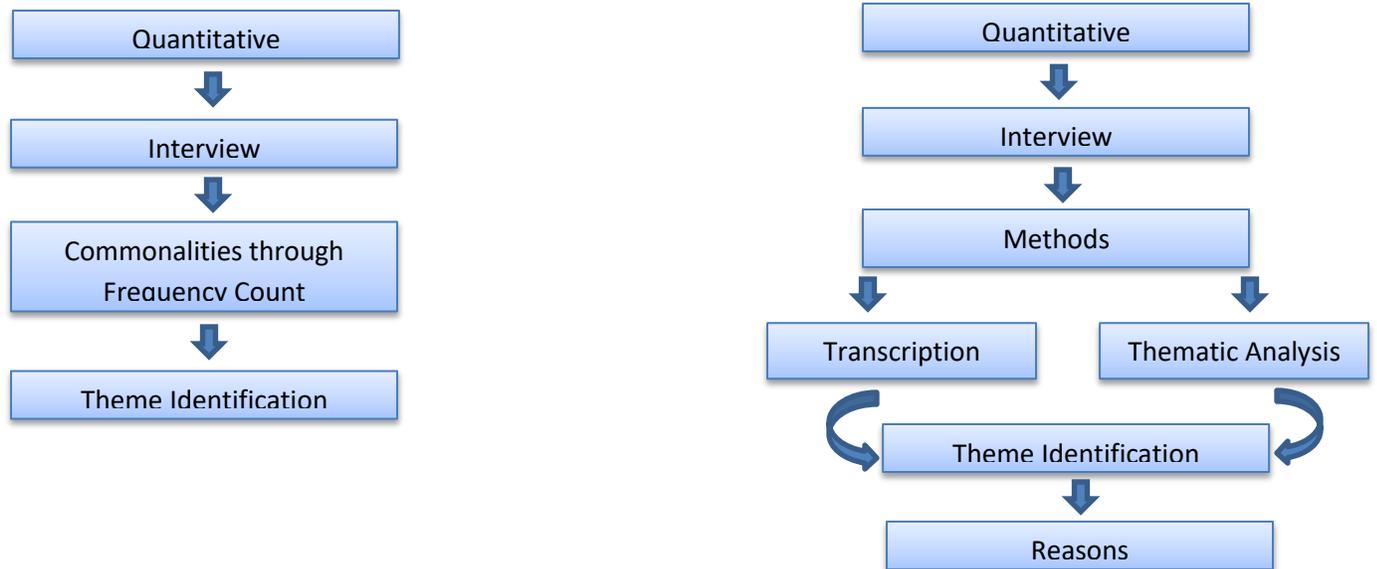
This study is anchored on the theory entitled, "Hypodermic Needle Theory" or also known as "Magic Bullet Theory" promulgated by Harold Laswell (1920). This theory was a linear model of communication and talked about media's power on an audience. The message, in this theory, was said to be like a magic bullet that entered the minds of the audience and injected a particular message. The theory explained how media controlled what the audience viewed and listened to and the effects, which can be immediate or later.

This theory was related to the present study because it also denotes the influence of Wattpad on millennials. Since Wattpad was an electronic platform provided by the internet, it also encompassed a wide range of influence on its readers, specifically in their culture and beliefs.

### **Research Method**

This study used the quantitative and qualitative methods of research. A quantitative method emphasizes objective measurements, and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. It focuses on gathering numerical data

and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2010). While the qualitative method of research referred to the holistic approach that involved discovery. It included purposeful use of describing, explaining, and interpreting collected data (Williams, 2007).



The researchers interviewed Wattpad readers who belong to the group of Millennials. This was used to identify the top 3 most read Wattpad stories in the pre-survey. After identifying the top 3 stories another interview was conducted to identify the prevailing reasons why respondents are hooked on reading Wattpad stories. The recorded interview was subject to transcription and thematic analysis. After which, the unlocking of commonalities was done through frequency count. After identifying the commonalities of emerging themes, the researchers arrived at theme identification. Theme identification became the basis for the reasons why millennials were hooked on reading Wattpad stories.

## Results

The results of the study underwent into three methods transcription, frequency count, and theme identification.

The findings of the study showed the result of the three most-read Wattpad stories read by the millennial. In identifying the top 3 most read Wattpad stories, Pre-survey was conducted. When the top three most-read Wattpad stories have been identified, an interview with the readers was administered. After the pre-survey and interview, a frequency count on the commonalities of the theme had been applied to find out the reasons why millennials were hooked on reading these stories. The following tables and themes support the findings of the study.

Table 1

*Pre-survey of the 3 Most Read Wattpad Stories*

Wattpad Story	Frequency	Rank
He's Into Her	7	1
My Husband Is A Mafia Boss	6	2
Four Bad Boys And Me	5	3
Hell University	4	
Montello High	4	
Destined To A Bad Boy	3	
Never Fall In Love To A Gangster	3	
Ice Prince	3	
Break the Cassanova's Heart Operation	2	
A Night with My Boss	2	
Campus Royalties	2	
Peculiar Scale	2	
Married to the CEO	1	
Broken Melody	1	

Table 1 shows the result of the pre-survey of the three most-read Wattpad stories by the respondents. Out of the 15 millennial readers, 7 of them which was equivalent to 47% said that one of their favorite Wattpad stories was He's Into Her, 6 which was equivalent to 40% said that they like My Husband Is A Mafia Boss; and 5 which was equivalent to 33% voted for Four Bad Boys and Me. The remaining number of students voted for some other Wattpad stories. As a result, the three most Wattpad stories read by the millennials were He's Into Her, My Husband Is a Mafia Boss, and Four Bad Boys and Me.

The result was connected to the article of Hannon (2017) in the official website of Wattpad which shows that these 3 stories were included in the Top 10 most read Wattpad Stories as of July 2017. It can be seen from her article that the story Four Bad Boys and Me ranked as number 1 with total views of 182 million. The Wattpad story My Husband is a Mafia Boss ranked as number 4 with 102 million views, and He's Into Her ranked as number 10 with 68.2 million views.

Table 2

*Frequency Result of the Emerging Themes of the 3 Most Read Wattpad Stories*

Emerging Theme of the 3 Wattpad Stories	Frequency
Male Protagonist as a Miniature of an Ideal Man	111
Attraction Towards Opposite Personalities	111
Fiction Tends to Wrap the Reader's Sense of Reality	111
Bad Boy as Women's Preference of Mr. Right	111
Readers Possession of an Imaginary Wealth	111
Millennials as Romance-filled Being	111

<b>Impact of the Author's Expertise</b>	1
<b>Ponderable Lessons in the End</b>	1

Table 2 shows the result of the emerging themes in the 3 most read Wattpad stories. Out of the three Wattpad stories which were He's Into Her, The Four Bad Boys and Me, and My Husband is a Mafia Boss, the respondents stated that the themes which were Male Protagonist as a Miniature of an Ideal Man, Youth were Attraction Towards Opposite Personalities, Fiction Tends to Wrap the Reader's Sense of Reality, Bad Boy as Women's Preference of Mr. Right, Readers Possession of an Imaginary Wealth, and Millennials as Romance-filled Beings occurred in the 3 stories. While the themes which were Impact of the Author's Expertise, and Ponderable Lessons in the End had been perceived by the respondents only in the one-story which was My Husband is a Mafia Boss. As a result, the researchers come up with 5 themes that appeared in the 3 most read Wattpad stories. These themes were considered as the reasons why millennials were hooked on reading Wattpad.

The result was related to the study of Contreras, Gonzaga, Trovela, and Kagaoan (2015) where the researchers found out that Wattpad has become part of the participant-readers' lives. Wattpad appears to be playing a big role not just as a medium for reading but also as a medium that gratifies the participants' emotional and cognitive needs and wants. Despite Wattpad is an online library of millions of fiction stories, the things that it imparts to the readers prove to be significant and can be applied in reality.

As the qualitative results, the researchers found out 6 themes which were "Male Protagonist as the Miniature of an Ideal Man", "Fiction Tends to Wrap the Reader's Sense of Reality", "Attraction Towards Opposite Personalities", "Bad Boy as Women's Preference for Mr. Right", "Millennials as Romance-filled Being", and "Readers Possession of an Imaginary Wealth" which appeared to the 3 most read Wattpad stories. These themes were the prevailing reasons why Millennials hooked in reading Wattpad stories.

#### **"Male Protagonist as the Miniature of an Ideal Man"**

The survey resulted that female Wattpad readers use the male characters as a standard of a man they would fall in love with. Respondent 2 expressed it by saying "...si Zeke bay tana authoritative tana Pero perti tan aka seryoso but pagdating kay Aemie tiklop bala tana kara aw nga daw under tana ni Aemie". She meant she liked the male protagonist—Zeke (My Husband is a Mafia Boss) because of his qualities like authoritative and serious but changes when it comes to Aemie (the female protagonist in My Husband is a Mafia Boss), that he became very submissive and understanding. Moreover, Respondents 1 and 4 also mentioned "...ang almost perfect personality kang mga bida nga laki". They implied that the male characters in Wattpad stories are having the most perfect personality. These respondents showed how they truly admire

these fictional characters possessing the qualities they were looking for. Some of our interviewees mentioned how affected they are because of these characters. Respondent 3 said, “...*daw hopeful ka man nga makakita ka someday kang pareho kananda*”. She meant that she was very hopeful to find a man like them while Respondent 6 quoted “...*kis-a ginapanumdom ko kung may makilala man ako nga laki pareho nanda ka perfect*”. She conveyed that sometimes, she was wondering if she can ever meet a man this perfect. They treated these characters as the man of their dreams.

One of the articles in Psychology Today written by Maryanne Fisher Ph. D (2010) entitled “How Much Do Romance Novels Reflect Women’s Desire?” tackled the reasons why women love to read romantic novels. She mentioned that a story can make the reader live vicariously through the heroine and fall in love with a hero because this is written in a way that the reader can visualize the man in her mind and mostly, they go what women want in a certain type of a man. Besides, she also revealed that the descriptions surely fit in women’s mate preferences. She concluded that women are engaged in living in the fantasy world through reading because there is always a recreated man there who fits in their ideals.

#### “Attraction Towards Opposite Personalities”

In the survey result, the concept “opposite attracts” was mentioned multiple times. Respondent 4 briefly narrated “...*knowing nga na kang kinakatakutang mafia boss then suddenly gonna fall in love with but a weird woman*.” She stated that a well-known terror mafia boss suddenly fall in love with an ordinary and weird woman. She was shocked at how the story goes. Another respondent expressed “...*kahit papano may naga exist pa gali nga bad boy nga nagaka inlove sa is aka nerd*”. She meant that she never expected a bad boy that will love a nerdy girl. Most of our respondents have the same perception as these two respondents mentioned. It looks that they all considered these concepts amusing to read.

An article entitled “Why Opposite Attract in Fiction But Not Reality” written by Sam McNergy (2017) pointed out that the key ingredient of any story was the conflict that made intrigue and gave a mental catalog of strategies deployed to solved potential conundrums. Perhaps opposites attract so much in fiction because the conflict it generates helped us navigate reality. He also revealed that contradiction wasn’t just a literary technique because every belief system in the world juxtaposes well against evil. Moreover, he added that the people’s propensity to dichotomize the world probably contributed to the widespread theme of opposite romantic partners in fiction and feeds the reader’s craving for resolution in fiction. He supported this agreement by quoting Steve Pinker’s words which says that the cliché that life imitates art is true because the function of some kinds of art is for life to imitate it.

The presented survey result and related article have proven that Wattpad readers do favor contradiction concepts for they believed that it gave them thrill. It seems like this youth was

trapped with the idea that despite complete diversity, these issues can be resolved and have a happy ending as well like what fiction feeds them. These statements only confirm that millennials were finding the possibility of this impossibility through reading Wattpad stories.

### **“Bad Boy as Women’s Preference of Mr. Right”**

The interview done showed how women nowadays preferred men with a not too kind look or bad boy aura. Respondent 5 mentioned, “... ang mga laki name lang kay astig, cool kag hambog”. She conveyed that she likes reading Wattpad stories because the male characters were cool and boastful. Respondent 7 also said, “...and name sya kay kis-a lang kakita kang laki nga tam-an ka possessive kag bully”. She expressed how she liked a male character because it was rare to find them too possessive and bully. These unusual qualities seem to turn these female readers on. Also, Respondent 1 expressed “...hambal ko gusto ko man maging Mafia Boss... Gusto ko man mangin isa sa kananda or... maski friend lang ko bala kara kang Mafia Boss”. She implied how she finds herself dreaming to be a mafia boss or even a friend of those persons like the male character she had read. These statements proved how the female Wattpad readers were more attracted to the non-chivalry-like men.

The Live Science Staff (2012) released an article entitled “Why Women Choose Bad Boys”, and it explained why women nowadays prefer cads. It imparted that women delude themselves into thinking that the sexy bad boys will become devoted partners and better dads. Besides, the researchers believed that women when looking at the sexy cad through ovulation goggles, Mr. Wrong looked exactly like Mr. Right. It also stated that girls seem to eliminate the shortcomings of this kind of man and focus only on how this man could be a great father to their kids.

The respondents and the article testified that female teenagers nowadays have this hobby of checking the physical qualities of the guy first. These statements were all justified with the reality that they would specifically pick sexier men (bad boys) over more dependable men. Therefore, millennials were hooked on reading Wattpad stories for they can freely love or even marry the bad boys they find very attractive in the fiction they were reading.

### **“Millennials as Romance-filled Being”**

Based on the interview, teenagers nowadays were very engaged in romance. Some of the interviewees stated how they love to read these kinds of stories like respondent 7 who said “...Ahm hopeless romantic man bay ako... ti kung kis-a makarelata man ako.” She stated that she can relate to the romantic genres since she was hopeless romantic. Respondent 3 expressed “...;basta hindi gid ako maka get over kaya no, syempre pirme ko madumduman ang happy ending nanda.” She explained how she can’t get over in a Wattpad story she has read for she can always remember its happy ending. These interviewees are the living evidences and representation of the Wattpad readers who have seen themselves being steered by love.

This concept was supported by an article written by Stoyan R. Stoyanov (2016) entitled “Young Love: Romantic Concern and Associated Mental Health Issues among Adolescent Help-Seekers”, where he revealed that adolescence was associated with many psychosocial and developmental challenges including the processing of intense emotions and “first loves”. He also discussed that it was natural for adolescents to undergo growth in their romantic relationships and intimacy needs.

The survey and the related article presented above only explained the millennial wanted to find fulfillment in their love life through reading. This defined that teenagers were hooked in reading Wattpad stories for they believed that it was a remedy to feel or indirectly experienced what was lacking them in terms of their intimate relationships.

### **“Reader’s Possession of an Imaginary Wealth”**

Surveys have found that millennials do wish to taste the feeling of being rich. One of the respondents stated “...kanami lang syempre mag-imagine nga daw manggaranun ka man samtang gabasa”. She meant that she was engaged in reading a particular Wattpad story for she can imagine an ample life throughout. She attested how satisfied she was in experiencing abundance even once by just reading. Respondent 6 also commented “...kakaiba gid para kanakon nga may ga exist nga mafia boss kag underground society nga never ko na-imagine.” She uttered that she finds the thought that rich mafias and underground society’s existence unusual and interesting. She got influenced with the idea that these kinds of nobilities through illegal were real and she got curious on how they work.

A specific article entitled “Young Desire Wealth But Don’t Want to Earn it” written by Emma Wall (2013) testified that psychologists have found that young people have a “fantasy gap” between their desire for wealth and their willingness to work hard to achieve it. She only proved that youngsters preferred fantasizing about wealth than standing up and started doing it. She also quoted a research result that explains that compared to previous generations; recent high school graduates were more likely to want lots.

### **Conclusion**

With the findings of the study, the researchers derived to the conclusions that Millennial Wattpad readers had the same preference in choosing the 3 most read Wattpad stories because most of them stated that these 3 are among their favorites. The researchers also concluded that the readers were easily hooked into Wattpad stories which feed them information that was beyond reality. The main reason why they keep on reading a Wattpad story was because of the characters, their looks, and their personalities which define them as their ideal man. The researchers also concluded that readers loved to read Wattpad stories in the romantic genre. They also loved to read Wattpad's story including characters with different personalities which gave them thrills and triggered the readers up to the end of the story.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the researchers came up with the recommendations that millennials should not live in what fiction offers but must face what reality gives. Millennials must minimize their time in reading Wattpad stories and must focus on their academic performance. They also recommend that writers must create characters that suit the reader’s preference most especially in personality or character traits and physical attributes as well as writers must write stories that can make readers believe that everything included in their stories exist as well as make them get out of the box. It is also recommended that English classes should come up with writing activities following the Wattpad pattern. Parents should be responsible for tracking the reading habits of their children with regards to Wattpad and check the

information the story might feed their child. Future researchers must explore other aspects of Wattpad stories that can also be the reason why millennials were hooked on reading them.

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