



University of Tehran press

Demographic features and preferences of Iranian translated fanfiction readers for selecting fanfiction



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ABSTRACT

The last two decades have witnessed a shift of attention from translation and translator to the study of readers in the field of Translation Studies. Technological advancement and the emergence of the new generation of Web have empowered online translation users to take the role of translators and create user-generated translations. The present study aims to investigate the demographic characteristics and preferences of the readers in selecting fanfictions translated into Persian and shared on social networks. To this end, using the online qualitative survey method, a questionnaire with 16 open items was prepared to collect the required data. It was sent to 150 translated fanfiction readers in the form of a Google form. Data analysis was done with the help of deductive thematic analysis. The results showed the readers of translated fanfictions in Iran are mostly high school girls and teenagers who read these stories on Telegram and Wattpad channels. Readers have years of familiarity with stories, mostly through friends or by reading other content on social media platforms. Most of them choose the stories by paying attention to the translated as well as the original title, fanfiction covers, and most importantly, to the genre, and they ignore the age filter of the stories. Moreover, readers do not pay much attention to the fact that the stories are authored or translated. However, most of them can name a few fanfiction authors or translators, since almost half of them choose the stories by the author's or translator's name. The results can be used to improve the translation quality and to familiarize the transition trainees with new scope of research in TS

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: 09 April 2024
Received in revised form
04 July 2024
Accepted: 05 July 2024
Available online:
Summer 2024

Keywords:

demographic features, nonprofessional translation, user-generated translation, fanfiction, user-centered translation, fanfiction readers.

Fakharzadeh, M., & Manuchehri, S. (2024). Iranian translated fanfiction readers: Demographic features and preferences for selection on focus. *Journal of Foreign Language Research*, 14 (2), 269-285. <http://doi.org/10.22059/jflr.2024.359894.1040>

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Publisher: The University of Tehran Press.



DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jflr.2024.359894.1040>

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1. Introduction

Public access to the internet and technological advances, especially in the last decade, have led to remarkable developments in content production, access, and the use of content on social media. Today, social media users not only consume content online but also produce their own content (Naabe & Sehl, 2017). Many internet users are engaged in creating content such as fan fiction (fanfic, henceforth), mash-ups, and fake-fiction. Fanfic is a type of writing where "authors create engaging narratives inspired by well-known characters from previously published works, often developing romantic relationships between these characters" (Black, 2009, p. 39).

On the other hand, many readers of online fanfics on social media translate and share these stories with different motivations. These translations are referred to as user-generated translations (UGT, henceforth) (O'Hagan, 2009). The significant growth of fanfic and the interest in translating it have led to genre diversity in these stories, including action, romance, fantasy, and comedy. The translators of this content are often amateur, commonly referred to as non-professional translators (Antonini, Cirillo, Rossato & Torresi, 2017).

Translations are produced for readers and the target audience to read and appreciate. This is precisely why Tuominen (2012) believes the main motivation for many studies in TS is understanding readers and their perceptions. Studying audiences is not a recent trend in TS. More than two decades ago, Nord (2000) explained the importance of textual features and extratextual factors such

as the author, and especially the significant role of the audience, stating that if a text is to be accepted by a specific group of people, it must be compatible with their expectations and needs. This suggests that a translation cannot be accepted by all readers. Different communities, even within the same social context, have varying tastes. Research results also show that readers' preferences for choosing books and genres are related to personality (Hall, 2009), demographic characteristics (Campbell, 2015), and socio-economic factors (Knualst & Van den Broek, 2003). For example, the behavioral patterns of men and women in choosing stories and genres and using platforms as sources of stories differ (Hall, 2009). Furthermore, how books are accessed and read is an essential part of the interaction with book audiences, as all cultural products, including books, are shaped and interpreted within specific contexts with particular audiences in mind.

Despite the importance of readers and their opinions in translators' approaches to translation, work selection, and other aspects of their job, few studies in TS have aimed to examine readers and their expectations. Previous research has often investigated the perceptions and opinions of professional and potential readers regarding translation and translators. Additionally, for methodological reasons, most readers have been selected from educated and academic groups (e.g., Bijani, Khoshsaligheh & Hashemi, 2014), and their opinions have been analyzed concerning professional translators. Therefore, there seems to be a research gap, especially concerning the actual readers of UGT on social platforms. Considering the

developments in content production, distribution, and access, and realizing that knowing audiences and their opinions significantly impacts the success or failure of translations, this study aims to answer two questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of readers of translated fanfics in Iran?
2. What are the preferences of Iranian readers of translated fanfics in choosing these stories?

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Amateur Authors and Translators

The production of UGC gained momentum with the advent of the Web2 and Web3. Since then, users have been able to create online content such as music, movies, books, and videos and share them on YouTube, podcasts, blogs, and other platforms (Lastowka, 2008). As such, the boundary between content creators and consumers disappears, leading to the emergence of prosumers (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). In this context, like-minded groups, referred to as fans, find opportunities to interact in specific areas regardless of their geographical locations (Reijnders, Waysdorf, Zwaan & Duits, 2017). According to Reinhard (2018), fans are individuals who engage in their area of interest repeatedly, satisfying their cognitive and emotional needs. This makes them distinct from ordinary readers or viewers. Shared interests among group members develop through continuous discourse, where each influences others' preferences and is influenced in

return, leading to a shared identity and interdependence.

One such group comprises fans of fanfic. These individuals create stories about famous characters from past works, such as storybooks, movies, TV shows, video games, or comic books. However, it should be noted that fanfic is not a new phenomenon. According to Jamison (2013), it emerged in the past century when fan groups for Sherlock Holmes books started. At that time, fans wrote fanfics while the original story was still in print, influencing readers' reception of the books. Later, authors quickly wrote their stories based on existing media texts, such as Supernatural show. As they published them episode by episode, readers could participate in how the subsequent parts develop.

Today, these authors actively bring together young and enthusiastic audiences in a convergent space through various means, including semiotic and writing resources, who follow their stories, react to them, edit them, and sometimes critique the creative works of fan fiction authors (Curwood, 2013).

The impact of technology expansion in the translation field is also evident. Perhaps the most significant is the opportunity for non-professional translators, especially in audio-visual translation (Orrego-Carmona, 2019), who make their translations available to numerous audiences quickly via the internet and various platforms. It should be noted that the activity of non-professional translators is not new. Throughout history, some individuals have translated literary texts out of interest and familiarity with another

language (Zhu, 2019). However, what distinguishes non-professional translators and authors in the 21st century from their predecessors is the use of media and tools that amateur authors and translators, especially on social media platforms, employ. Without media and platforms, UGC would not have been as visible or influential. Today, internet accessibility and ease of information exchange encourage everyone to engage in writing or translation. Therefore, the translation landscape aligns closely with what Jenkins (2006) calls "convergent culture." Convergent culture represents the shift in internet users' roles from consumers to producers and, as Jiménez-Crespo (2017) puts it, prosumers.

2.2. User-Centered Approach in Translation Studies

Studies on translation audiences initially focused on the translator as the first reader or viewer of the work (Campbell, 2015). In Iran, several studies have been conducted on novice and expert translators (e.g., Sari, Khoshsaligheh & Hashemi, 2011). Over the past two decades, Translation Studies (TS, henceforth) has increasingly shifted focus from the translator to the audience. With the advent of the socio-cultural turn in TS, scholars recognized the importance of agents other than the translator in shaping translations. Consequently, audiences of translation have become more central to studies.

Attention to translation audiences gained momentum with the user-centered approach to translation proposed by Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen in 2012. This approach extended the concept of product

usability, common in technical and computer fields, to translation. In this approach, the translation recipient is present at all stages of the creation process. Therefore, user-centered translation should be as user-friendly and usable as possible. The message for translators is to deeply understand their readers and translate the work to meet their expectations and needs. Moreover, readers and users of translations can be professional or ordinary (Guillory, 2000). Ordinary readers read solely for enjoyment, while professional readers critically engage with the text, review it, and publish their opinions. It should be noted that in the context of UGC/UGT, the boundary between ordinary and professional readers blurs, as UGC/UGT readers should be categorized as ordinary readers in terms of reading purpose and professional readers in terms of reading behavior, as they comment and interact with the text online (Giovanni & Gambier, 2018).

Based on what was mentioned about non-professional authors and translators, UGC can be considered the result of the interaction of the author/translator with the reader. Writers and translators always create works by considering the preferences and expectations of their audience and based on their knowledge. Non-professional authors and translators who are engaged in producing fanfics and translating them act by knowing the audience of each genre and basically by having instant access to the opinions and feedback of the audience, although in this space, the demarcation between the author and the reader in like-minded groups, i.e. fans, is not very possible (Busse, 2017).

2.3. Literature Review on Translation Readers

In the past decade, researchers have increasingly focused on the readers of translated texts, their perceptions, and their expectancy norms. Researchers have employed qualitative methods, including surveys (e.g., Kafi, 2020), and quantitative methods, such as eye-tracking software (e.g., Kruger, 2013) and quantitative surveys (e.g., Khoshsaligheh, Kafi, and Ameri, 2020), to study translation readers and their preferences.

Aiming to know the readers of translated stories, Chan (2010) studied the responses of readers to translated texts, particularly the paratextual elements like footnotes, introductions, and epilogues of books translated from English to Chinese. Noting the transformation in the translation world and the accessibility to readers' opinions, and referring to non-professional translators of Harry Potter, Chan concludes that these translators form a community of inexperienced individuals motivated solely by enjoyment and encouraged by other enthusiasts to undertake the translation. However, some readers of these texts evaluated the quality of translations by these non-professional translators as significantly lower than those done by professional translators. Chan categorized the readers of translated stories into two groups: general readers and professional readers (literary critics), finding that in China, general readers are less visible compared to literary critics.

Campbell (2015), in his doctoral dissertation, examined the opinions and preferences of non-professional book readers

in the UK. Using a descriptive approach to TS and employing survey and interview methods, she found that readers have limited knowledge about translation and the translation process. Despite their sensitivity to linguistic and cultural issues, they are primarily concerned with the experience and enjoyment of reading and immersing themselves in the story's events. Furthermore, Campbell's findings indicated that when choosing a book, whether translated or original, readers place significant emphasis on the genre and cultural context of the story. Moreover, many readers could not recall whether the books they had read were original works or translations. Regarding the demographic characteristics of readers in the UK, Campbell found that most readers were older than the national average age, highly educated, and female.

Pitkäsalo (2018) examined the reading experience of comic concepts and found that cultural background and familiarity with comic concepts significantly enhance readers' understanding of comic visual content. Wang and Humble (2019) studied readers' perceptions of translated Chinese novels by analyzing their reviews shared on Amazon. The researchers found that translator interventions, such as adding footnotes or writing introductions, help readers better understand the text.

Khoshsaligheh, Kafi, and Ameri (2020) studied the expectancy norms of readers of translated fiction in Iran. Using a quantitative approach, the researchers designed and validated a questionnaire, which served as the primary data collection tool for the study.

Regarding demographic characteristics, results indicated that 80% of readers of translated books are women. Additionally, findings revealed that Iranian readers highly value the translator's fidelity to the author's writing style and the inclusion of footnotes for proverbs and unfamiliar cultural elements. The most important expectation of readers is that the translated text immerses them in the story, enhancing their enjoyment.

The abovementioned studies are among the few that have focused on the audiences of translated stories and their expectations, revealing a predominant focus on readers of works by professional translators. Overall, the literature review suggests that readers of both translated and original stories are mostly women who do not necessarily distinguish between original and translated works. Their primary criterion for selecting a story is the pleasure and immersion they experience in the story.

Despite the significant role of the audience in sustaining the practice of non-professional translators, there have been few studies on the expectations and preferences of the target audience. Therefore, the present researchers aimed to investigate the demographic characteristics and preferences of translated fanfic readers in Iran. It is crucial to note that acknowledging the challenge of distinguishing the audience from the translator in the digital media age, the researchers aimed to identify the characteristics and selection criteria of readers of fanfics on social platforms.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design of this study is an online survey incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Online surveys are particularly used where it is impractical or financially impossible to access certain communities, there are difficulties in studying specific behaviors, and the costs associated with conducting in-person observations or distributing questionnaires are high (Andrews, Nonnecke, Preece, 2003). This web-based survey method ensures that responses are automatically stored in a database in any format. The data related to the research questions were collected through open-ended items and short answers in the questionnaire to be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.2. Sampling Method and Participants

Multiple sampling methods were employed in this study. Initially, due to the authors' unfamiliarity with the Telegram channels and groups where translations are shared, reputational case sampling was used (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011). To this end, informal interviews were conducted with three informants who had been reading translated fanfics for at least three years, identifying ten Telegram channels that share translated fanfics. These channels allow members to interact with the admin or translator. The ten identified Telegram channels were: Bangtan Boys, BTS7, Bangtan Family, Bony Fiction, Pandora, Teakook, Fic Smut, V-Kook Land, Ares Fiction, and Kookie.

Subsequently, typical purposive sampling was used to select the Telegram channels with the most members from among the ten identified channels. Ultimately, seven

channels were chosen, and the questionnaire link was sent to the admins to share in the channels and invite members to participate. Out of the seven admins, only four agreed to collaborate with the researchers.

Overall, 150 participants completed the questionnaire. The age range of respondents was between 14 to 28 years, with an average age of 18.29. Their educational levels varied from high school to master's degree. Most participants were female, with only ten male respondents.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

For data collection, a researcher-made questionnaire titled "Readers of Translated Fan Fiction" was developed, focusing on understanding the demographic characteristics of the audience of translated fanfic and their preferences. The questionnaire was constructed using the framework by De Vellis and Thorpe (2021). The first draft was developed by reviewing the relevant literature on the expectancy norms of readers of professional and non-professional translations and studying two popular fanfics, "BloodInk" and "Gangster X Secret Agent." The purpose of reading these stories was to get familiar with their context and the translation approaches used for different elements in the stories.

Initially, the questionnaire comprised 25 questions, but after consultation with two professors in the field of TS, nine questions were removed due to overlap with other questions. The professors were asked to assess the relevance of each questionnaire item to the research topic, focusing on clarity and brevity. Following this, in a pilot study, the revised 16-item questionnaire was sent

via email to a sample of 8 individuals. After changing the wording of two questions, the final questionnaire with 16 questions in Persian was formatted using Google Forms and shared via a link in Telegram channels.

Of the 16 questions, eight addressed the demographic characteristics of participants, and the remaining questions focused on their preferences in selecting and reading translated fanfics (see Appendix). The format of the questions included short answers or yes-no responses, but there were no restrictions on answering, allowing participants to add further comments in the provided space. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha > 0.71$).

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The finalized questionnaire, formatted in Google Forms, was sent to the admin or translator of the four selected Telegram channels with the most members, who then shared it in their channels. The data collection process took 80 days, starting from November 2021 to January 2022. Only 150 readers of translated fanfic participated in this study.

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data were stored in Excel spreadsheets. To better manage the information, codes were assigned to the data related to age and education level. The age range of participants, spanning from 14 to 28 years, was divided into three groups: 14-18 years (coded as 1), 19-23 years (coded as 2), and 24-28 years (coded as 3). Education level was categorized into university (coded as 1) and high school (coded as 2). The data were analyzed using deductive thematic analysis

proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involves categorizing data based on predefined themes rather than detailed descriptions and analysis. Finally, the frequency of the categorized data was calculated.

4. Results

4.1. Readers of Translated Fanfics

The results from the first eight questions of the questionnaire addressed the first research question: "*What are the demographic characteristics of the readers of translated fan fiction stories in Iran?*" (Table 1). As shown in the table, over 90% of the respondents are young women, indicating

that boys seem to have little interest in reading fanfics. The results showed that in terms of age distribution, the readers are predominantly teenagers aged 14 to 18, followed by young adults aged 19 to 23. It is worth noting that while young adults over twenty are less interested in reading translated fanfics than younger readers, they still show a significant level of interest. The number of readers with a high school diploma or high school students is twice as much as the number of readers with a university education, including students or holders of associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Iranian Translated Fanfic readers

Gender	Female: 140 (93.3%) Male: 10 (6.7%)
	Total: 150
Age	14-18: 67 (44.7%) 19-23: 53 (35.3%) 24-28: 30 (20%)
	Total: 150
Education	High school: 110 (73.3%) University: 40 (26.7%)
	Total: 150
English knowledge	Basic: 10 (6.66%) Intermediate: 95 (63.33%) Upper-intermediate: 30 (20%) Advanced: 15 (10%)
	Total: 150
Non-English foreign language knowledge	Just English: 25 (17.85%) Korean: 35 (25%) Other languages: 80 (57.14%)
	Total: 140 Note: The totals listed do not add up to 150 due to missing data.
How do you get into reading fanfics?	Friends' recommendation: 50 (33.3%) Accidentally: 20 (13.3%) Following reading fiction on other platforms: 50 (33.3%) BTS fandom: 30 (19.9%)

	Total: 150
How long have you been reading fanfiction?	Over 5 years: 25 (16.6%) 2 to 5 years: 100 (66.6%) Less than 2 years: 25 (16.6%)
	Total: 150
Where do you find the fanfics?	Telegram and Wattpad: 129 (86%) Google, Blogs, Sites: 13 (8.6%) Instagram: 3 (2%) Twitter: 5 (3.3%)
	Total: 150

The findings highlight that the primary audience for translated fanfics in Iran consists of young women, mostly teenagers, with a significant proportion still in high school or having just graduated. These insights provide a detailed demographic profile of the readers, which is essential for understanding the market and tailoring content to meet their preferences and interests.

As to how readers become acquainted with fanfics, the results revealed four ways. More than one-third of the readers learned about fanfics through their friends. An equal number stumbled upon fan fiction stories after reading a particular story in Telegram channels. For instance, respondent 78 explained: *"After reading Harry Potter books in a Telegram channel, I saw a fanfic about it, and that's how it started."* Some readers, identifying themselves as ARMY, were introduced to fanfics through their fandom of the Korean group BTS. It should be noted that many fanfics are written about the seven members of BTS, which is why fans of this group are particularly interested in reading fanfics.

Readers' familiarity with fanfics varied from 8 months to 9 years. As shown in Table

1, two-thirds of the readers had been familiar with translated fanfics for at least two years. For the remaining one-third, the familiarity duration was either less than two years or more than five years.

Another question asked participants on which channels or platforms they read fanfics. Respondents mentioned various social media, websites, and apps. The most frequently mentioned platforms were Telegram and Wattpad (86%). Some of the specific Telegram channels mentioned by participants included: Fic Smut, VkookL Bangtan Family, V Underline Kookie, Teakook, BTS I Arson, Pandora, and Ares Fiction. The next most frequent platforms were Google, blogs, and various websites (8.66%). Respondents named websites such as BTS7 Dot Ir, Ao3, and the Iranian Virtual Library. The least mentioned platforms were Twitter (3.33%) and Instagram (2%).

4.2. Preferences of Readers in Selecting Translated Fanfics

The results from the remaining eight items aimed to answer the question: *"What are the preferences of Iranian readers in selecting translated fanfics?"* The findings indicated that most readers sought out specific genres (Table 2), and some preferred more than one

genre. For instance, participant 38 stated, "*I like romance, fantasy, and supernatural more than others.*" Other readers had different criteria for their choices. For example, participant 9 remarked, "*No, the genre*

doesn't matter at all, it just has to be good and engaging," while participant 17 wrote, "*Only the author and their writing style matter to me.*"

Table 2: Preferences of Readers in Selecting Fanfics

Issue	Category/frequency/percentage
Following specific genres	Yes: 125 (83.33%) Romance: (31), Smut (15), Gangster (3), Action (13), Drama (8), Street (4), Comedy (5), fluff (11). Angst (12), Fantasy (12), Omegaverse (4) No: 25 (16.6%)
	Total: 150
Foreign Authors or Iranian Authors	Only Iranian Authors: 124 (82.6%) Only foreign authors: 8 (5.33%) Iranian and foreign authors: 6 (4%) Irrelevant: 12 (8%)
	Total: 150
Reading Translated or authored original fanfics	Persian translation: 115 (78.2%) Original fanfic: 16 (10.8%) Sometimes translated: 16 (10.8%)
	Total: 147 Note: The totals listed do not add up to 150 due to missing data
Paying attention to the age filter	No: 137 (91.3%) Yes: 13 (8.6%)
	Total: 150
Paying attention to the original or translated title	Original and translated title: 80 (53.3%) Only Persian translated title: 22 (14.6%) Only original title: 30 (20%) Not paying attention to titles: 18 (12%)
	Total: 150
Paying attention to the cover	Yes, always: 122 (81.3%) Never: 19 (12.6%) Sometimes: 9 (6%)
	Total: 150

Paying attention to authors' names	Never: 72 (48%) Yes, always: 68 (45.3%) Sometime: 10 (6.6%)
	Total: 150
Paying attention to translators' names	Never: 75 (50%) Yes, always: 70 (46.6%) Sometimes: 5 (3.3%)
	Total: 150

Readers' preference regarding the nationality of fanfic writers was asked in another question. Although it was a yes/no question, like other cases, some participants added explanations. Responses were categorized into four themes (Table 2). Most responses to this question were positive (82.66%), indicating that most individuals preferred stories by Iranian authors. Disregarding writers' nationality and focusing on other factors such as quality and writing style constituted the second highest frequency. For instance, participant 58 added: *"What does it matter where they are from? It's the writer's style that matters to me."* Interestingly, despite membership in Telegram channels where fanfics are predominantly shared, only 5% of readers expressed choosing stories by foreign authors. To the question of whether they read fanfics translated into Persian, most participants responded positively. Only about 10% of participants read fanfics in their original language, while others only occasionally read in the original language. For example, respondent 12 added: *"If I can't find a translation for a story I choose, I have to read it in English."* In another question posed to participants, they were asked if they pay attention to age group filters at the beginning of each story. Just over 8% of

readers pay attention to the age group classification of stories. Respondent 89 stated: *"I'm 18 now but I didn't pay attention to this before."* Another question involved whether participants chose fanfics based on their translated title in Persian or the original title; responses were categorized into four themes. More than half of respondents pay attention to both English and Persian titles. For example, participant 32 added: *"Titles are very important to me and I get upset when I see a mistake in translation."* One-fifth of readers only focus on foreign titles. Participant 24 added: *"I pay attention to English because English Titles give us a better understanding of fiction anyway."* Only about 15% of respondents solely focus on translated titles and slightly fewer do not focus on them at all. Participant 58 wrote: *"I don't pay attention to titles at all."*

Attention to the covers of fanfics was the subject of the next question. It should be added that the fanfic covers contain an image related to the content or characters, and the title of the story, and the author's name are specified on them. The responses indicated that the cover is another important factor that motivates readers to choose them. Participant 120 added: *"Always because it motivates you to read a story."* Participant 5 added: *"Covers show us the writer's creativity because visual*

content is as important as the story itself." Some participants in this category mentioned that the cover helps them imagine the story's atmosphere before reading it and even makes them acquainted with the characters in advance. A few gave a negative response to this question. Participant 64 wrote: *"No, never, because they don't have any special design or are of low quality."* A few others stated that they sometimes pay attention to the cover, only if it is attractive.

Paying attention to the fanfics' author was discussed in another question, which received three groups of responses. In this question, readers were asked to name one or more authors they remember and whose works they have read before. The most frequent response to this question was negative. Participant 41 wrote: *"No, it's not important, I don't know any specific author."* Less than half of the respondents gave a positive response. For example, participant 6 added: *"Yes, Eva on Wattpad and Shine on Telegram are important to me, I follow their works."* Six percent of readers sometimes pay attention to the author's name. Participant 55 wrote: *"It's not always important, I read them randomly, if I liked their work, I continue reading."* Importantly, except for respondents who didn't care about the author's name, the rest named at least one author. The authors' names mentioned the most were: Iva, Shine, Ella, Sevil, Parvaz, Sadixen, BestWizard, Mia, Miss x, Destiny, and Mahshid. It is also necessary to mention that authors are known by their pseudonyms on all platforms. Mentioning the authors' names by the participants is probably related to the fact that these individuals are members

and regular readers of fanfiction stories on social networks, especially Telegram.

In a similar question, participants were asked whether they paid attention to the translator's name when selecting a story. They were also asked to name one or more translators they knew. As seen in Table 2, less than half of the readers responded positively to this question. Participant 142 added: *"Definitely yes because if the translator cannot translate the story well, it is not understandable at all."* However, similar to the previous question, the most frequent response to this question was negative. Participant 25 wrote: *"No, it's not important, I only read some parts. If I like the translation, I continue; otherwise, I stop reading."* Interestingly, most respondents named at least one or more translators, even those whose response to this question was negative. The most frequently mentioned translators were: Sun Bride, Setared, Pixie, Nelin, Army Aryia, Sweetie, Darsea, Oranus Group, Mang, and Dr. Reader. Similar to authors, translators are known by their pseudonyms across all platforms.

5. Discussion

The present study intended to examine the demographic characteristics and preferences of readers of translated fanfics in selecting these stories. Regarding the first question, i.e., the demographic characteristics of fanfic readers, the results showed that the readers of these stories are mostly young and teenage girls, confirming Hellekson and Busse's (2014) claim that fanfic is a genre specifically for women. This part of the results aligns with the findings of Khoshsaligheh, Kafi, and Ameri (2020), who aimed to identify the

expectancy norms of readers of translated stories in Iran. In their study, the disproportionate distribution of the sample was quite significant and supported the findings of previous research regarding the principle that story reading is a female behavior and a norm. This may be justified by the fact that fanfics are essentially written by women for women without financial expectations. Since men are less likely to engage in unpaid work, it is not surprising that the audiences and producers of these stories are women. Another reason could be the nature and content of fanfics, which are fundamentally romantic and have a feminine perspective. Additionally, since the presence of readers in online communities and like-minded groups is possible anonymously, it is conceivable that at least some of these readers, for various reasons, including unconventional sexual orientations, have identified themselves as female.

Results indicated that nearly 80% of readers are between 14 and 22 years old, which contradicts the findings of Campbell (2015). It could be argued that the popularity of fanfics, whether translated or authored, among young adolescents and teenagers is due to their access to and dependency on smartphones, which allows them to read stories at any time. The importance of access to online spaces via smartphones and tablets is so significant in this generation that some commentators, including Pianzola (2021), have likened these tools to prosthetics inseparable from the bodies of adolescents and young people. Alongside this, the romantic content of such stories may also be a reason for attracting this age group. The

findings regarding the educational level and familiarity of readers with fanfics can also be associated with the age of readers since most respondents were adolescents.

Another part of the research identified the familiarity of readers of fanfics with the English language in Iran. More than 90% of respondents reported their English proficiency as intermediate or upper-intermediate. Furthermore, more than three-quarters of them are familiar with languages other than English, with Korean being more commonly known among this group. In justifying the linguistic knowledge of readers of translated fanfics in Iran, it can be said that since most readers of these stories belong to Generation Z or Millennials, who predominantly use technology for entertainment purposes and have grown up with the internet and digital technology since childhood, they are termed as 'digital natives' (Turner, 2015, p. 104). Moreover, this generation emphasizes learning a second language, understands cultural and linguistic diversity, and is curious about it. Therefore, it is not surprising that most readers consider themselves to have acceptable English proficiency. Importantly, according to Pianzola (2021), Korean popular culture today is prevalent not only in Asian societies but also in Western countries. The reason for this is the immense popularity among readers of South Korean pop culture, especially among this generation.

The multi-year familiarity of readers with fanfics is justifiable through their continued use of modern social media platforms. However, a significant number of readers also become aware of the existence of such

stories through their friends, underscoring the important role of readers and their responses to literature, which has always played a role in motivating and selecting works, and its importance is multiplied several times over by immediate and extensive access to authors and other readers and by reading reviews on available platforms (Pianzola, 2021).

Moreover, it was revealed that a big share of readers read these stories on platforms such as Telegram and Wattpad. While previously the readers read them in their original language on FanFiction.net (FFN), content sharing through online communities such as Telegram, Instagram, etc., has become a norm. Additionally, uploading long stories on Telegram and Wattpad, as the primary sources of fanfics, is much easier than doing so on other platforms.

Regarding the second research question aimed at exploring the preferences of this group of readers in selecting works, the findings indicated that despite the relative familiarity of readers with the English language, more than two-thirds of readers either read these stories in translated form or read authored Persian fanfic. In other words, translated fanfics hold a secondary position and popularity compared to authored fanfics. However, it can be argued that many fanfic readers, like readers of literary novels, do not pay much attention to whether a work is translated or authored (Kafi, 2022). According to Khoshsaligheh, Kafi, and Ameri (2020), this may be related to the fact that in Iran, story audiences rarely engage in public discourse about the translation process and profession, suggesting that translators and translation in the field of fanfics in Iran

may not receive much visibility. According to Giovanni and Gambier (2018), it cannot be confidently claimed that readers consciously distinguish between translated and authored stories. Despite all this, it should be noted that in this study, most readers mentioned at least one translator or author. This may be due to the possibility of interaction between readers, authors, translators, and other readers. It is worth mentioning that many admins of Telegram channels sharing fanfics can simultaneously be their authors or translators, so it is not surprising that members of these channels recognize translators or authors. Furthermore, readers discuss the work and its creator on platforms and frequently remember common names. Overall, translators in the virtual space of these platforms experience more agency, and their strategies that enhance visibility are more flexible because there are no strict boundaries between author, translator, and reader in the online environment. Only a small number of readers pay attention to the age group of the story. Firstly, digital technology, to the extent that it relates to fanfic resources, allows unlimited access for readers; secondly, this generation does not limit its interactions to friends and acquaintances and operates anonymously or under a false identity in this space. Most importantly, the continuous use of smartphones and unrestricted content access have changed their definitions of appropriate and inappropriate content. In other words, among this generation of online content users, there are almost no topics so private and inexpressible that they cannot be shared and discussed (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). The attractive Persian and English

titles and covers of fanfics are among the factors influencing the selection of stories. According to respondents, an attractive cover reflects the creativity of the author. In addition, covers are visual summaries of the entire story, providing shortcuts to understanding the genre, characters, and other story elements, thus influencing readers' decisions in choosing a story.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the preferences of readers of translated fanfics and demographic features. Through online survey methods and qualitative and quantitative analysis, it became evident that young girls with a moderate familiarity with a foreign language tend to choose works based on paratextual elements such as Persian and English titles and covers, as well as considering the story genre, author's name, and to some extent, the translator's name, regardless of the story's age group. It appears that widespread internet access and interactive technologies have facilitated both translation practices and reading on digital platforms, granting translators greater visibility and flexibility in aligning their work more quickly with the expectations of their audience. The findings of this study could contribute to improving the quality of translations by helping translators understand the cultures and preferences of their target groups. Furthermore, this research can extend the scope of TS into digital spaces and UGC, particularly by emphasizing innovative areas in translation such as UGT and translator training.

It is important to note that due to the lack of similar research on audiences of UGTs, the

results of this study cannot be compared comprehensively with previous findings. Additionally, researchers faced limitations in conducting this study, including inaccessibility to interviewees to have face-to-face or focus group interviews. Moreover, only a small number of readers were willing to participate in direct interviews with researchers.

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Appendix

- Age:
Gender:
Educational level:
1. How proficient are you in English?
 2. Besides English, what other languages are you familiar with?
 3. How did you become familiar with fanfiction stories?
 4. How long have you been reading fanfiction stories?
 5. How do you follow fanfiction stories and in which channels?
 6. Do you read fanfiction stories of a specific genre? For example: Romance, action, drama, and smut.
 7. Do you read fanfiction stories by Iranian authors?
 8. Do you read fanfiction stories translated by Iranian translators or do you read them in their original (foreign) language?
 9. Do you consider the age group when choosing fanfiction stories?
 10. Do you pay attention to the Persian translated title or the original foreign title when choosing fanfiction stories?
 11. Do you pay attention to the cover of fanfiction stories?

12. Is the author important when choosing fanfiction stories? Which authors do you know? Please mention their names.

13. Is the translator important when choosing fanfiction stories? Which translators do you know? Please mention their names.