

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF LITERARY WORKS BY THE FORUM LINGKAR PENA (FLP) IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL FICTION

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Abstract. In the era of information technology, people have many choices of media to distribute their work. Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) is the largest writing organization in Indonesia. Since its inception in 1997 until now, FLP has had thousands of members who continue to write in various media. FLP's works are mostly Islamic in ideology and are published through major publishers and partner publishers. Several works by FLP authors have also been adapted for the big screen for consumption by even more people. Since the 2020 Covid pandemic, digital reading platforms have been widely chosen by people to read fiction because they are easy to access during social distancing. Fiction writers have begun to use these platforms to produce and distribute their work, including FLP authors. This article discusses the strategies of FLP authors in facing the era of digital fiction by continuing to produce and distribute their work. FLP authors, who have produced works in conventional publishers since their inception, must adapt to the development of this information technology. They continue to write using a lot of digital media, including digital reading platforms such as Wattpad, Kwikku, Karyakarsa, KBM App and so on. FLP writers also produce works on blogs, websites, web-based digital magazines managed by FLP administrators, and submit works to other digital media..

Keywords: distribution, Forum Lingkar Pena, digital fiction, production.

INTRODUCTION

In this era of information technology, the presence of digital reading and writing platforms in Indonesia is very rapid. Especially since the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 which restricted people's movements from going out and gathering often, causing many to choose to stay at home and do activities with their gadgets. One activity that can be done is reading stories or works of fiction on digital reading and writing platforms. This is one of the factors in the development of digital reading platform users for both reading and writing.

Digital reading platforms are growing rapidly along with the increase in internet users in Indonesia. People are increasingly attached to smartphones or other mobile devices that are connected to the internet. They can use applications and share information at any time. Reading and writing activities on digital platforms are then widely favored by the public. Readers can determine their reading choices according to their tastes and writers can also upload their works on certain digital platforms. Yoesoef (2020) stated that Generation Z, who are very familiar with social media, digital applications, and platforms (also known as digital natives), use Wattpad for their writing creativity. In cyber literary works, there are aspects of creativity and potential shown by Gen Z that underlie the potential for character formation, literary creativity, and innovation of this generation. In relation to literary production, Kardiansyah (2019) stated that Wattpad is a social media platform that supports cyber literary production. Wattpad is a source of social and cultural capital that can be utilized by popular writers to gain economic capital.

Ismah (2023) stated that one of the prominent platforms in the field of literature and creative writing is Wattpad, founded by Allen Lau and Ivan Yuen in 2006, after 13 years of development, Wattpad has become the largest reading and writing platform in the world, with a social community consisting

of more than 70 million users per month and more than 565 million original stories uploaded (data as of December 2023). This system has changed the traditional selection of quality works by publishers, as both professional and amateur writers can easily publish their works to a global audience without going through the traditional publishing process. In addition, this platform also features asynchronous communication between writers and readers, creating a unique interaction that exists on other social media platforms.

Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) is a writing community that was founded in 1997 and promotes polite and civilized literature. As the largest writing organization in Indonesia (Arnez, 2009), FLP sees the development of digital literary works and seizes the opportunity for the increasing number of distribution media for their works. Many FLP writers then also produce and distribute their works on digital platforms. This article will discuss how FLP's strategy, which previously published works conventionally, has shifted to this digital technology era.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

2.1. Production and Distribution Strategy of the Forum Lingkar Pena's Works

2.1.1. History and Development of FLP

Forum Lingkar Pena is a writing organization founded by Helvy Tiana Rosa, Asma Nadia, and Muthmainnah on February 22, 1997. Starting from a discussion at the UI mosque about the interest in reading and writing among Indonesian teenagers, it ended with the conclusion that society needs quality reading material. They also saw that many young people wanted to be active in the field of writing, but did not receive coaching to improve the quality of their writing. In fact, the role of writing is very important for transforming ideas to others.

Initially, membership was no more than 30 people, continuing to grow through Annida magazine as a 'seedling' medium for FLP writers at that time. Helvy Tiana Rosa as the head of FLP continued to develop FLP to several regions in Indonesia and even abroad. One of the reasons that makes people join FLP is because they have the same vision and mission. As an organization, FLP in its AD/ART states its vision that FLP as a writing forum plays a role in enlightening society through literacy. Meanwhile, FLP's mission is (1) to improve the quality and productivity of members' work as a meaningful contribution to society, (2) to build a network of writers who produce quality and intelligent works, (3) to improve the culture of reading and writing among the community, and (4) to fight for a better life for writers.

The interest of the Indonesian people in FLP has continued to grow until the 14th year or 2011, based on the book of the Central FLP Research and Development Division (2019), it is estimated that FLP members at home and abroad have reached 5,000 members because each region/province already has its management and often holds member recruitment events through writing seminars or FLP book reviews. This is a fantastic number for a writing organization in Indonesia, no writing organization has succeeded in attracting so many people.

Regarding this development, Helvy Tiana Rosa (2007) said that compared to other Southeast Asian countries, the number of writers in Indonesia as well as the population growth is very large. In the last decade, Indonesia has been enlivened by the emergence of young writers under the age of 30 and the rapid growth of literary pockets in Jakarta and other big cities. The strength of the network is what makes FLP continue to grow, live and develop in Indonesia.

The presence of FLP in Indonesia has attracted the attention of the media, literary figures, and researchers. Tempo newspaper wrote that FLP is "a story writing factory" and poet Taufiq Ismail said "FLP is very phenomenal, FLP is God's gift to Indonesia." Meanwhile, a lecturer at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Indonesia who is also the author of the book *Kitab Kritik Sastra*, Maman S. Mahayana commented that FLP has given a golden note in the history of Indonesian

literature. Republika wrote that the rapid development of FLP is a new phenomenon in contemporary religious literary writing in Indonesia.

FLP has received the Danamon Award and the Communication Award from the Ministry of Communication and Information. The Danamon Award was received in 2008 as an award to those who have significantly empowered the surrounding community. In this case, FLP is considered to have provided skills for thousands of people to hone themselves to become authors or writers. In the eyes of the Danamon Award jury, FLP is an organization that not only touches intellectuals but also a place for housewives, laborers, street children, and even domestic helpers to practice writing so that they can increase their income and popularize the culture of reading and writing. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Communication Award in the Social Communication Network category was received by FLP in 2015 from the Ministry of Communication and Information. The 2015 AKI Award is a form of appreciation from the Indonesian government to individuals and communities who have communicated ethically in public spaces, and have contributed to providing information that educates, enlightens, and empowers the community in order to strengthen the unity of Indonesia.

FLP is currently still developing and has a management structure in dozens of provinces and hundreds of districts/cities in Indonesia. Information on the management structure, works, and activities is available on the website www.flp.or.id.

2.1.2. FLP Writer Cadre Development

As a writer's organization, FLP carries out various writing activities. Recruitment is carried out in each region, branch, and sub-branch. Then those who have been recruited as members follow various coaching, both in writing, organizational, and Islamic coaching.

Since 1997 until now, FLP has contributed to Indonesia through the works of its members that have had a wide impact. The novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, for example, was written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, an alumnus of Al Azhar University in Egypt who is also the former chairman of FLP Egypt. Asma Nadia, a productive FLP writer whose novels have been widely adapted for the big screen. Helvy Tiana Rosa, the initiator of FLP who is also a literature lecturer at Jakarta State University, is productive in writing novels, dramas, scenarios and is now even a film producer. M. Irfan Hidayatullah, a lecturer in Indonesian literature at Padjajaran University, is also an FLP writer who continues to write productively until now and fills literary seminars. His poems have even been made into musicals because he is also a member of the Mupla nasyid group which already has several albums. Sinta Yudisia, who served as the chair of FLP 2013-2017, has been productive in writing until now, even one of her novels, *Nona Jepun*, was included in the novels that were glanced at by the jury at the 2021 DKJ Novel Writing Competition. This is a breakthrough because so far, FLP's works have never penetrated the DKJ and are still considered as popular literature that is not very good. However, it turns out that Sinta can prove that FLP's works can experience an increase in quality. Another FLP writer who continues to work is Maimon Herawati, the founder of FLP who is also a lecturer in communication science at Padjajaran University. Her work entitled *Pinkan*, tells the story of a Muslim woman living in England with all her problems, has been reprinted dozens of times. Maimon continues to write to voice the injustice experienced by Muslim brothers and sisters wherever they are. There is also Afifah Afra who was the chair of FLP 2017-2021, has the Indiva Media Kreasi publishing house which is a partner of FLP writers to publish her works. He continues to actively write fiction and non-fiction to this day and manages www.fiksiislami.com as a medium for publishing enlightening works. There is also Sabir or pen name S.Gegge Mappangewa, a teacher from Sulawesi and a regular winner of the story writing competition of the Language Agency of the Ministry of Education and Culture. There are many more FLP writers who continue to create works.

The large number of FLP members shows that the cadre program is running with its activities including writing schools throughout Indonesia, writing seminars that are held, book reviews and discussions, and other literacy events. Consistent national conferences show healthy cadre formation because they continue to change personnel, not just figures in a few people.

The FLP coaching program is carried out to direct members to the vision and mission of the organization. The vision of FLP which wants to become an "organization that provides enlightenment through literacy" cannot be separated from the form of da'wah through writing (dakwah bil qalam). FLP writers understand that this is a difficult task, namely how to explain and describe Islamic values to the world community with an easy approach, but still based on Islamic values. In this context, FLP authors realize that changing times require authors to participate in spreading universal values of goodness that originate from Islamic teachings.

The authors and members of FLP agree that preaching through pen or writing is a noble work, an effective strategy to spread the light of Islam to many people. With such an understanding, FLP continues to develop its members from the initial 30 people in 1997, now recorded at 5000 spread throughout Indonesia and several overseas regions. Some of the main activities carried out are member recruitment and writing training as a means of coaching.

Member recruitment is related to cadre formation. Cadre formation is the spirit of whether or not an organization is running. FLP realizes the importance of cadre formation and emphasizes the birth of new writers in various regions. According to FLP's AD/ART, the FLP cadre formation system is understood as "a system that directs members to become quality writers who have FLP's vision and mission and/or are professional in their work. FLP bases its cadre formation on three principles. First, togetherness. Each member tries to explore potential together, giving, receiving, and supporting each other without leaving healthy competition in their work. Second, continuity. Each member has continuity in their work and is involved in the coaching process. Third, competence. Each member maintains and improves the quality of their work with sincerity, strength, determination, and takes clarity of direction and purpose in enlightening the people.

Member recruitment is carried out by FLP Branches by holding certain literacy events. Prospective members register, bring examples of their work, and attend coaching classes in three aspects; writing, organization, and Islam. FLP members will receive an NRA (Member Registration Number).

After being registered, FLP members can attend writing trainings held by FLP Branches, FLP Regions, and FLP Center. Writing training can be called a mandatory FLP activity. FLP Regions and Branches are authorized to create writing training with the characteristics of each region. The speakers in this writing training are internal—FLP writers who have worked—and external, namely those who have expertise in the specified material. This cycle is maintained so that FLP writers who already have work can motivate and set an example for new members, wrapped in a sense of family as the big FLP family.

2.1.3. FLP Publication of Works

Publishing books is one of the mandatory activities at FLP. Currently, it is starting to develop not only books but also writers in the media, researchers, film arts, and other writers. However, books are still the hallmark of writers so that FLP members are continuously encouraged to be able to produce books that are useful for readers according to their respective interests.

Initially, FLP published many fiction books such as short story collections and novels. However, now FLP's works are more varied. Thousands of FLP books have been published in collaboration with publishers in Indonesia including; Syamil, Era Intermedia, Mizan, Zikrul Hakim, FBA Press, GIP, Indiva Media Kreasi, and Lingkar Pena Publishing House. The themes raised are very varied, even depending on a particular moment when needed. FLP once published a collection of short stories *When Grief Smiles* (FBA, 2002) whose entire sales were dedicated to the writer Pipiet Senja, a writer who suffers from a blood disorder and needs medical expenses. It also published the book *Merah di Jenin* (FBA, 2002) whose royalties were donated to children in Palestine. During the 2004 Aceh tsunami, FLP collaborated with five publishers to initiate a 'donation with short stories', which is a fundraising for the victims of the Aceh earthquake and tsunami. The publication of such books is part of the ongoing 'literature for humanity' campaign program.

FLP books that are circulating have also been brought to the screen such as *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, *Cinta Suci Zahrana* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, *Assalamu'alaikum Beijing*, *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*, *Catatan Hati Sebuah Istri*, *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* by Asma Nadia, *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi* by Helvy Tiana Rosa.

FLP's publishing currently does not only focus on books but also expands into the digital realm. Many FLP writers work through websites, digital portals, and writing platforms. FLP has a page www.flp.or.id which can be used as a medium for work and the FLP digital magazine. FLP writers also publish their works in Kompas, Republika, and other digital newspapers. Through the website, FLP writers also work on fictionislami.com, ruangsastra.com, kompasiana.com and so on. While on the writing platform, FLP writers also enter Wattpad, Karyakarsa, Webnovel, Kwikku, KBM App and several other platforms.

2.1.4. Education and Consistency of FLP Ideology

Education is the development of FLP members or writers, while consistency is continuing to bring the values and vision of FLP's mission in the writings produced. The form of education can be done in various formats according to the work program of the cadre division. One of the functions of the cadre division in the FLP organizational apparatus, both at the central level and at the branch level, is to develop its members so that they remain consistent with the vision and mission of FLP in the writings produced.

One of the member development programs is the literacy ngaji activity, which is a supplement for permanent members to write with Islamic values filled by competent ustaz. This material emphasizes the importance of da'wah with the pen/writing, the reward obtained as a jariyah charity, every word and sentence written will be accounted for before Allah.

In big FLP events, the spirit of da'wah with the pen is always presented through short sermons from the FLP Advisory Council. The writer and ustaz alumni of Al Azhar Egypt, Habiburrahman El Shirazy, often gives advice to FLP members to continue working in goodness. Likewise, at regional or branch events of FLP, administrators often ask FLP seniors in their regions to convey and remind them about preaching with this pen.

FLP has 3 important concepts or pillars in the cadre process, namely Islam, writing and organization. FLP is indeed inclusive and open to any religion, but in the AD/ART, Islam is the main foundation. So, anything that is contrary to Islamic values will always be a resistance for FLP members. There is a clear line that separates creativity from Islamic values, which is a benchmark for FLP members in being creative, as well as to enjoy the results of creativity from other parties. FLP believes that this boundary line does not limit the process of creativity and appreciation of work, but instead provides space for FLP to create healthily in accordance with the Islamic concept that is believed.

The form of consistency of FLP writers with the values and vision of FLP's mission can be read in their works in conventional publications as well as on digital reading and writing platforms. FLP does not turn a blind eye to the proliferation of writings of various genres on reading and writing platforms that are developing in Indonesia. Many FLP writers then entered the platform and continued to write while still holding onto the values they believed in. This means that FLP writers still carry their literary aesthetics even though they are in a new medium.

2.1.5. FLP's Work in the Digital Realm

Entering the era of digital fiction, FLP continues to work and take opportunities from various existing media. FLP no longer focuses on conventional publishing, but also educates its members to continue to adapt to digital developments. Some of FLP's works in the digital realm include the following.

2.1.5.1. FLP digital magazine

FLP realizes that there is no capital strength to create an independent reading and writing platform, so FLP then maximizes the reading and writing potential of its members by utilizing existing digital spaces. Some of the digital spaces used are still website-based such as the FLP digital magazine, websites created by FLP member groups, websites and personal blogs of FLP members.

The FLP digital magazine is one of FLP's media which is routinely published and is a distribution medium for FLP's works through digital media. During the 2021-2025 FLP management period, the digital magazine has been published several times with different topics.



Fig. 1

In the digital magazine, many columns are provided for FLP members to submit their works such as short stories, poetry, literary criticism, opinions, Islamic articles, and literacy activity reports. The digital magazine also introduces FLP figures with diverse literacy competencies and from many regions. This shows that FLP cadre formation is going well because it is not only the figuration of its founding figures such as Asma Nadia and Helvy Tiana Rosa, but there are also many other FLP writers who are productive in their works. The digital magazine introduces them through the characterization column in it.

2.1.5.2. Writers' blogs and websites

In addition to digital magazines, several FLP groups in the regions or areas have built writing websites as a medium for creating and disseminating works. In Solo, there is a website www.fiksiislami.com which was built by Afifah Afra (FLP chair 2017-2021) with FLP friends who live in Solo. The website has been active since September 2022 and continues to grow until now.

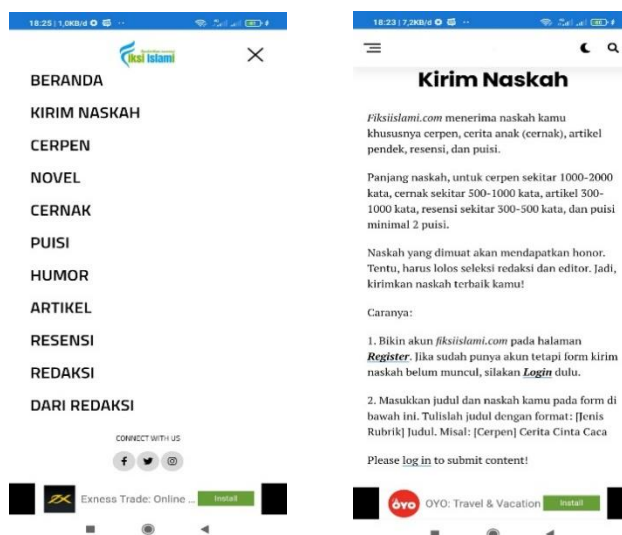


Fig. 2

In Payakumbuh, West Sumatra, there is a website www.pustaka22.com initiated by Lindawati, the administrator of FLP West Sumatra. The website is a space for FLP members to express themselves and work, especially the Paliko Branch in West Sumatra. The existing columns include articles,

news, children's stories, short stories, galleries, book info, and competition info. Although it was only established in November 2023, the number of page visits has reached more than 1400.

In addition to the websites of FLP member groups, websites and blogs are also owned by personal FLP writers as a medium for publishing works and ideas. Almost all FLP writers have personal websites and blogs. Here are some of them. Helvy Tiana Rosa as the founder of FLP has a website <https://sastrahelvy.com/> to write her works and record her literacy journey. Helvy also uses the website to express her ideas or opinions on several events that she considers important.

Afifah Afra has a website <https://www.afifahafra.com/> to document her work and introduce it to readers. On the website, in addition to promoting her books, Afifah Afra also writes writing tips, literacy activities, light daily articles, and her views on social phenomena that occur. Sinta Yudisia (chairwoman of FLP for the 2013-2017 period) has a blog at <https://sintayudisia.wordpress.com/author/sintayudisia/> which contains her works, articles about writing, parenting, marriage and inspirational stories. Sinta has written around 70 books that she has produced in the form of novels, short story collections, children's stories, non-fiction, and anthologies. She has also achieved quite a lot in the field of writing.

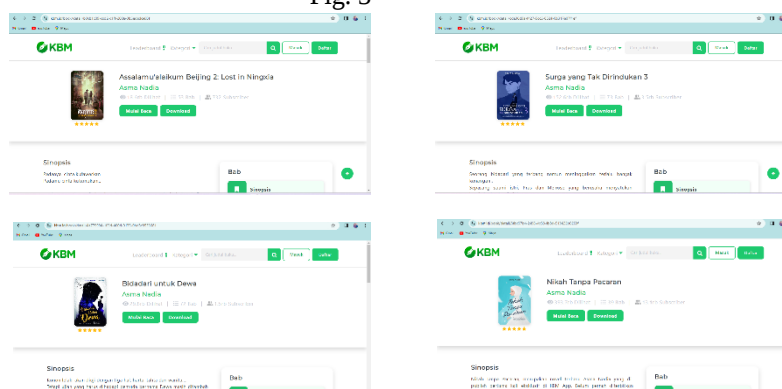
The website and blog managed by FLP are used to publish works and write certain articles. In addition, if there are phenomenal and social issues that need to be responded to regarding literacy, FLP writers use the media to convey their opinions. In organizational movements, sometimes the issues written by FLP writers have the same topics and ideas. The ideas and concepts brought by FLP authors are also disseminated through personal social media accounts such as Instagram, Twitter or X, Facebook, TikTok and so on.

2.1.5.3. Digital reading platform

Currently, there are many digital reading platforms in Indonesia. Their potential to generate material benefits has made digital reading platforms grow and develop, such as Wattpad, Inovel, Kwikkku, Karyakarsa, Joylada, Cabaca, Webnovel, Fizzo, and so on. One of the founders of FLP, Asma Nadia, saw this growth as interesting and then founded the Komunitas Bisa Menulis App for the production and distribution of FLP works. The KBM App started from the Komunitas Bisa Menulis on Facebook and was quite popular with writers and readers, then moved to an application or platform so that writers get their rights properly, works are not pirated, and become an alternative platform for FLP writers. Although not an App owned by the FLP organization, at least the KBM App is a place for FLP writers to work and interact with each other.

Asma Nadia's work, *Assalamualaikum Beijing 2: Lost in Ningxia* is a continuation of *Assalamualaikum, Beijing!* (2013), launched online via the KBM App in 2021. According to Asma, the online platform provides convenience, comfort, and a new experience for readers, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. (<https://www.liputan6.com/lifestyle/read/4676590/tips-menulis-novel-di-aplikasi-digital-dari-asma-nadia?page=4>). Asma's novels that have been published online on the KBM App include *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan 3*, *Pertama Bilang Cinta*, *Bidadari untuk Dewa*, *Nikah Tanpa Pacaran*, and *Karena Corona*.

Fig. 3



Through the KBM App, Asma Nadia's readers are monitored by tens to hundreds of thousands. If examined further into the parts of her story, there are no vulgar and erotic writings that appear. The story of *Bidadari untuk Dewa*, for example, tells the story of a husband and wife who struggled in the early stages of their difficult and testing marriage, but they were finally able to get through it. In her writing, *Nikah Tanpa Pacaran*, there are even many Islamic advice contents about interactions with the opposite sex and how good relationships between men and women should be before marriage.

In addition to the KBM App, there are also FLP writers who use the Kwikku and Karyakarsa platforms. Here are some of Sinta Yudisia's works on the Kwikku and Karyakarsa platforms;

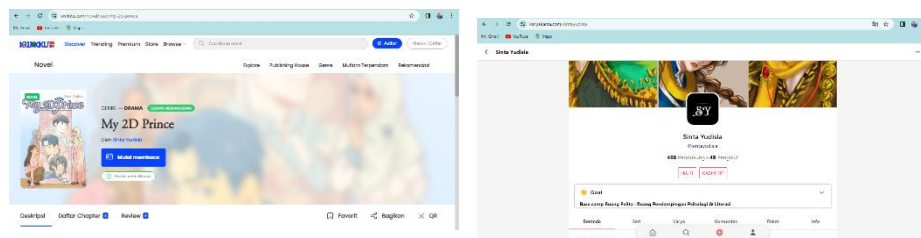
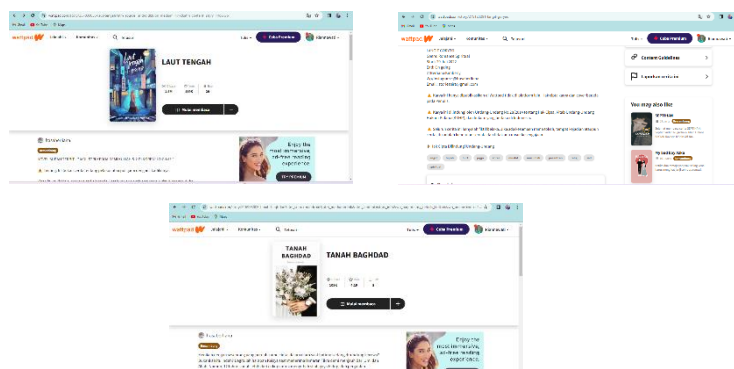


Fig. 4

Although her readers are not many, at least Sinta as an FLP writer tries to enter the digital platform realm and continues to create works. Sinta is still consistent in writing conventionally through book publishers and participating in competitions. Her work entitled *Nona Jepun* was selected as a manuscript that attracted the attention of the jury (apart from the 3 winners) in the 2021 Jakarta Arts Council novel writing competition. *Nona Jepun* was written by Sinta without using vulgar sentences in describing *jugun ianfu* during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. In fact, *jugun ianfu* or comfort women could have been narrated erotically because they were related to male and female sexuality, but Sinta used metaphorical diction in describing them. She did this because Sinta understood the ideology and vision and mission of FLP in her writing. Meanwhile, on the Wattpad platform, the FLP writer who uses it is Berliana Kimberly, a member of FLP Yogyakarta, an associate lawyer, and a research assistant in Islamic law who has completed her Masters in Law at Gadjah Mada University. In addition to writing on the Wattpad platform, Berliana has published scientific articles in national journals, international conferences and the mass media. She has visited 11 countries in Asia and Australia through student visits, international youth meetings, student competitions, and conferences. Some of the awards she has received include Best Project Diplomacy at the Korea Foundation Public Diplomacy Camp, South Korea 2019, and Best Social Media Influencer at the Korea International Culture and Education, Seoul 2018.

In addition to writing, Berliana is also active as a speaker or moderator in various youth, Muslim, and Islamic civil law events. From the Wattpad account *fraseberliana* she started her fiction writing career in 2021. After writing a short story in the anthology *Pemuda Pejuang Palestina*, the novel *Laut Tengah* is her work on Wattpad which was then published by the Akad publisher in 2022, and has been filmed by the Star Vision production house in October 2024. The next novel is *Langit Goryeo* and *Tanah Baghdad* which also appeared on Wattpad.

Fig. 5



CONCLUSION

The development of information technology also touches the production and distribution of literary works. Literature is not only enjoyed through conventional publishing but also digitally. FLP as the largest writing organization in Indonesia sees this as an opportunity to produce and distribute their works. Some of the things that are done are creating a digital FLP magazine to inform the organization's activities and distribute the works of members. FLP members also continue to write on their personal blogs and websites. In addition, FLP writers have expanded into digital reading platform media, including creating the KBM App, and writing their works on Wattpad, Kwikku, Karyakarsa and other platforms. In the works they produce, FLP members continue to uphold Islamic values which are indeed the foundation of their organization.

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