

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11042574

ANALYZING IDEOLOGY AND GENDER IN NOVELS OF FORUM LINGKAR PENA

Lukman Fahmi^{1*}, Amiatun Nuryana², Mohammad Rofiq³, Darto⁴, Rina Rachmawati⁵

¹*Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60237, Indonesia, Email:*
lukman.fahmi@uinsa.ac.id

²*IKIP Widya Darma Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60243, Indonesia, Email:* *amiatunnuryana1973@gmail.com*

³*Universitas Kiai Abdullah Faqih Gresik, Gresik, Jawa Timur 61151, Indonesia, Email:*
berhasilrofiq1@gmail.com

⁴*SMP Negeri 12 Surabaya, Surabaya, Jawa Timur 60245, Indonesia, Email:* *24010976019@mhs.unesa.ac.id*

⁵*State Polytechnic of Malang, Malang, Jawa Timur 65141, Indonesia, Email:*
rina.rachmawati@polinema.ac.id

Received: 11/11/2025

Accepted: 18/11/2025

Corresponding Author: Lukman Fahmi
(*lukman.fahmi@uinsa.ac.id*)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the rise of sastra dakwah (preaching literature) by Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) as an ideological response to the liberal-themed "Sastra Wangi" in post-reform Indonesia. The research aims to analyze the expression of da'wah and gender ideology, focusing on power relations between men and women in FLP novels. Using a transdisciplinary narratological approach, this study analyzes seven popular novels by combining narrative, communication, and ideology theories. The findings reveal that FLP novels strategically employ narrative structures to embed Islamic values and frame Islam as the dominant discourse, effectively countering secular narratives. However, a significant ambiguity emerges in gender representation. Although female characters are often portrayed as strong and pious, they frequently remain subordinate within a patriarchal framework, rendering their empowerment more symbolic than structural. The study concludes that FLP novels operate as instruments of soft power for cultural Islamism, presenting a counter-hegemony to secularism while simultaneously reproducing traditional patriarchal values.

KEYWORDS: Islamic literature, Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP), Gender Ideology, Patriarchy, Cultural Islamism.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the New Order regime, Indonesian literature underwent a shift in discourse with the emergence of "Sastra Wangi" (fragrant literature), a term used by the mass media to refer to the works of urban female writers such as Ayu Utami, Djenar Maesa Ayu, and Dewi Lestari. These works often address themes of female freedom, the body, and sexuality, and are set in urban communities. Although some have been praised for their originality, "Sastra Wangi" has also been criticized for being too vulgar and contrary to societal moral values.

In response to the dominance of liberal values in "Sastra Wangi", religious-themed literature emerged, which became known as sastra dakwah. This literature serves as a medium for conveying Islamic teachings through fictional narratives. Dakwah novels are not only a form of spiritual expression but also a form of cultural resistance against the popular literary trend deemed incompatible with religious values. The rise of dakwah novels marks a shift in the direction of Indonesian literature toward a more normative and moralistic discourse of cultural Islamism.

Founded by Helvy Tiana Rosa in 1997, Forum Lingkar Pena is a da'wah-based writers' organization that now reaches more than 150 cities in Indonesia and abroad, with members spread across 23 provinces (Sutopo & Khalawi, 2017). This movement has received widespread support, particularly from young Muslim writers (Arnez, 2009), as a form of antithesis to the dominance of "sweet-smelling" literature, which is perceived as failing to adequately represent Islamic moral values.

Literary works, including those written by Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) writers, are a form of message that operates within a complex communication process. Like any message, literary works undergo several stages: beginning with the production of the message by the writer (communicator), through the encoding and publishing process as a channel, until it is received by the reader (communicant), who performs the decoding process to capture the meaning. These stages, as explained by Harold Laswell (Morissan & Wardhani, 2009), encompass key elements in the communication process: who says what, in what channel, to whom, and with what effect. Through this framework, it can be understood that da'wah literature is a form of narrative-based mass communication, where literary works become a medium for conveying values and ideologies embedded in the text structure.

However, it is important to note that FLP works

do not exist in a neutral ideological space. Their presence can be read as part of an ideological struggle against the dominant post-reform popular culture, which tends to be secular and liberal. In this landscape, the media plays a crucial role as a battlefield for ideological distribution. However, because the media is also subject to market logic, writers with religious content often face difficulties in penetrating a publishing and distribution system that prioritizes commercial value. Therefore, FLP's success in building an alternative distribution network and a loyal reader community is an important achievement in building the soft power of cultural Islamism.

From a sociocultural perspective, this phenomenon has significant implications. First, da'wah novels reflect a shift in societal values, where spirituality is beginning to occupy an important place in public life. Second, this genre provides a new space for Muslim writers, particularly women, to express their religious values within the literary aesthetic framework. Third, the Islamic messages embedded in these texts demonstrate how dakwah can take place symbolically and culturally, making literary works an effective vehicle for ideological expression.

Therefore, it is important to view dakwah novels not merely as a form of narrative aesthetics, but also as an ideological discourse operating within the framework of mass communication. Dakwah novels have the power to shape opinions, strengthen identities, and internalize religious values in the daily lives of readers. An interdisciplinary approach that combines literary studies, communication, and ideological studies is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the strategic role of dakwah literature in the social, cultural, and political context of post-reform society.

This study aims to explore the expressions of dakwah and gender ideology in the works of Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP), particularly in terms of representation and power relations between men and women. Using a narrative approach, this study views FLP's works as ideological discourse constructed through story structure, language choices, and characterization, reflecting the Islamic worldview on gender.

Within the framework of Islamic ideology, the relationship between men and women has historically been placed within a hierarchical structure, where women are often associated with lower social and spiritual positions. This perspective is not only found in pre-Islamic traditions but also other cultural constructions such as ancient Greece

(Manshur, 2012). Although Islam came with a spirit of liberation, the position of women remained regulated within a specific framework that formed a patriarchal system and was affiliated with sexist ideology.

FLP, as a community of writers with a mission of da'wah, consciously adopts Islamic ideology in the themes, language, and aesthetics of its works. The language in FLP's works not only functions as a means of expression but also as a medium for spreading sub-ideologies, including those related to interpreting gender roles and positions.

Previous studies have shown that the works of Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) are not free from patriarchal ideology. Ya (2015) states that literary works can serve as an evaluative reflection of the author's perspective on social problems, as well as a reflection of the universe and ideology the author embraces. Therefore, a study of FLP texts is important to prove how ideology, including gender issues, is represented in their narratives.

Azwar and Sarwono (2012) examines the shift in ideological content in FLP, which initially emerged as a form of opposition to the dominant discourse but later succumbed to the media industry's mechanisms. Using Adorno's critical theory on commodification, standardization, and massification, Azwar highlights how FLP's works transformed due to market pressures. Meanwhile, Karimi (2024) emphasizes three aspects in Sufi literature: spiritual harmony, Sufi values to achieve the highest maqam, and coastal cultural expressions in social piety. This research provides insight into the complexity of spiritual content in Islamic literary works.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive-qualitative transdisciplinary study using an objective hermeneutic approach, which focuses on the interaction between text and reality (Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, this method also provides a set of tools for analyzing text. This aligns with the primary focus of this study, where the main medium in the Forum Lingkar Pena novels is narrative storytelling; hence, the narrative approach is employed. As such, this research falls under the category of textual and literary analysis. Furthermore, textual analysis is combined with contextual analysis within the framework of communication and sociology, making the integration of both analyses a hallmark of transdisciplinary research.

The narrative approach in this study refers to the structural narrative theory developed by Greimas,

which emphasizes the analysis of story sequences as units of meaning that form ideological structures (Azar et al., 2014). Meanwhile, ideological analysis is based on the theoretical framework of Althusser, Eagleton, and Storey, who understand ideology as a system of representation that operates through the state's ideological apparatus, including literature. The combination of these two approaches enables researchers not only to identify narrative structures in texts but also to reveal how these structures function as a medium for reproducing dominant ideologies.

The research design also integrates a da'wah communication approach that understands literary works as a medium for conveying religious and moral messages (Aini & Don, 2022). This integration is important because the research object is dakwah novels that explicitly have a mission to spread Islamic values through the narrative medium. Thus, this research uses a transdisciplinary narratological approach that combines narrative, ideology, and communication theories to produce a comprehensive analysis of the operation of ideology in dakwah literature.

The objects of this study are seven dakwah novels by authors from the Forum Lingkar Pena, namely Ayat-Ayat Cinta by Habiburrahman El-Shirazy, published by Basmala and Republika in 2004; Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi by Helyv Tiana Rosa, published by Republika in 2012; Assalamualaikum Beijing and Surga Yang Tak Dirindukan by Asma Nadia, published by Asma Nadia Publishing in 2014, Para Pencari Keadilan by Pipiet Senja, published by Emir (Erlangga Publishing) in 2015, Nun: Pada Sebuah Cermin by Afifah Afra, published by Republika in 2015, and Ranah 3 Warna by A. Fuadi, published by Gramedia.

In addition to these primary data sources, this study also utilizes secondary data sources, including books, literature, journals, and articles related to the theme and approach employed. This secondary data is used to support the interpretation of the text, strengthen analytical arguments, and broaden the reading space for the context of the production and reception of da'wah literary works.

The analytical technique used in this study is a combination of the objective hermeneutic method and Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg's narrative theory. This approach was chosen because it enables the text to be read not only at the internal level but also at the external level, specifically in terms of the connection between the text and its social context. Objective hermeneutics emphasizes two stages of analysis: chain analysis and detailed analysis

(Titscher et al., 2000). Chain analysis aims to break down the text into small units or sequences that represent narrative elements such as characters, setting, and plot. Meanwhile, detailed analysis explores the relationships between these units in both structural and ideological contexts, both within the text and in the social context of its readers.

Narrative structural analysis involves identifying and analyzing the fundamental narrative elements in each novel. Plot analysis involves examining the dramatic structure, patterns of conflict development, and resolutions offered in the narrative (Ramos & Morán, 2025). Special focus is given to how the plot is constructed to support the message of preaching and how the narrative structure reflects a particular ideology. Character analysis involves examining the construction of central and supporting characters, the relationships between characters, and how gender representation is portrayed through characterization. Special attention is given to hierarchical patterns in the relationships between characters that reflect patriarchal structures.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Narrative As a Medium of Da'wah

1. Narrative Sequence Structure That Inserts Moral and Spiritual Messages

The research findings reveal that the narrative sequence structure in Forum Lingkar Pena's da'wah novels is consistently employed to convey complex moral and spiritual messages. In Asma Nadia's *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, a mixed-flow structure with flashback technique is used to introduce the values of determination, forgiveness, and spiritual transformation through an interfaith love story that culminates in the guidance and conversion of the male protagonist. This technique fosters emotional intensity while also creating space for dialogue between cultures and religions.

Meanwhile, in *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan*, the overlapping narrative structure between the characters Arini and Mei Rose displays ideological and emotional opposition in the face of polygamy. The non-linear flow is utilized to depict inner complexities and Islamic values such as sacrifice and acceptance of fate. In contrast, *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi* uses a two-part narrative structure to mirror the spiritual journey of the main character Gita. Symbolic figures such as Kyai Ghufron emphasize the importance of role modeling in the personal da'wah process.

In A. Fuadi's *Ranah 3 Warna*, a linear plot structure divided geographically and emotionally

accompanies the transformation of the character Alif. Values such as patience, tawakal, and hard work are conveyed implicitly but powerfully in a spiritual and educational life journey. Meanwhile, Habiburrahman El Shirazy's *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* divides the narrative into two significant parts, highlighting Fahri's spiritual trials and triumphs as an ideal Muslim figure. The presence of non-Muslim characters, such as Maria, enriches the message of the universality of Islamic values.

2. Representation of Islamic Values (Faith, Hijrah, Patience, Gratitude, Hijab)

An analysis of seven popular novels by Forum Lingkar Pena authors reveals that Islamic values, such as faith, hijrah, patience, gratitude, and hijab, are represented through narrative structures that frame the characters' journeys, inner conflicts, and spiritual resolutions. The value of faith is prominently featured in characters like Asmara, Gagah, and Fahri, who consistently uphold religious principles despite facing emotional and social challenges. In the context of hijrah, the transformation of the character Nun from a marginalized life to a religious existence in *Nun Pada Sebuah Cermin*, as well as the changes in the Rumondang family in *The Seekers of Justice*, depict hijrah as a profound inner transformation.

The value of patience is frequently present in narratives of family conflicts and educational struggles. The characters Arini and Gita demonstrate patience in facing polygamy and changes in relationships, while the character Alif exhibits active patience in confronting the limitations of life and education. Gratitude is also represented as a reflective and spiritual attitude, seen in Fahri's attitude of remaining grateful despite experiencing slander and imprisonment, as well as Alif's gratitude for every small progress.

The hijab and women's religiosity are important symbols in the narrative. The characters Gita, Rumondang, and Aisha are portrayed as Muslim women who are not only outwardly devout but also resilient, intelligent, and morally upright. The hijab, in this context, is not merely a visual symbol but an expression of spiritual values, an agent of da'wah, and a marker of gender ideology in Islamic literary narratives.

3.2. Islamic Ideology and Power Relations

1. Islamic Ideology as the Dominant Discourse in Replacing the Discourse of "Sastrawangi".

The results of the analysis show that the novels written by Forum Lingkar Pena authors consistently frame Islam as the center of meaning and dominant ideology in their narrative structures. In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, the spiritual healing process of the main character through interaction with non-Muslim characters who eventually convert to Islam affirms the superiority of Islam as a way out of the identity crisis. Non-linear plot techniques and flashbacks reinforce emotional intensity, directing the narrative resolution toward a religious theme.

A similar narrative is seen in *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan*, where the issue of polygamy is not criticized directly but framed within the sharia framework, which reinforces Islam's role in regulating domestic conflicts. The opposition of female characters serves as a means of articulating Islamic values as an ethical solution, differing from the approach of "Sastrawangi", which tends to prioritize emancipation and free emotional expression.

The transformation of the character Gagah in *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi* becomes a symbol of the strengthening of religious masculinity, replacing the secular male figure. Gita's spiritual journey and the emergence of Yudhistira as the successor of da'wah illustrate the ideological continuity of Islam in the narrative. Meanwhile, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* presents Fahri as the representation of the ideal Muslim, where conflicts with female characters are resolved through Islamic moral principles, rather than through resistance or the exploration of free identity, in the style of romantic literature.

2. Depiction Of Gender Relations: Contradictions Between Strong Female Characters and Patriarchal Symbolism

The results of the analysis show ideological tensions in the representation of women in da'wah novels. Although female characters are often portrayed as intelligent, independent, and religious, their roles often remain in the shadow of male authority. Strong female figures in the works of Asma Nadia, Helvy Tiana Rosa, and Habiburrahman El Shirazy are often positioned as moral agents. However, the resolution of their conflicts is still directed through male intervention or the institution of marriage.

In *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, the character Asmara appears independent, but her spiritual perfection is achieved through marriage to Zhongwen, who has converted to Islam. A similar situation occurs in *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan*, where Arini accepts polygamy as a form of religious submission, and Mei

Rose, as the second wife, is "saved" by her husband. In *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*, Gita's transformation is mediated by two male figures: Gagah and Yudhistira, reinforcing male spiritual dominance in shaping female piety.

3. Novels As Tools for Reproducing Patriarchal Values Through the Representation of Religious and Subordinate Women

A similar conflict arises in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, where female characters, such as Aisha and Maria, despite being strong, remain controlled by Fahri's decisions as the center of the narrative. *Nun Pada Sebuah Cermin* features a poor, critical female character. However, her struggle is interpreted within the moral framework of Islam as a field for proselytizing, not as a space for emancipation. Even in narratives with few male characters, patriarchal symbolism remains present through the way the story frames the meaning of the female characters' lives.

These findings show that dakwah novels tend to reproduce patriarchal values through the construction of subordinate religious women. Although women are portrayed as active subjects in spiritual transformation, the final decision and moral authority remain in the masculine realm or male-dominated institutions.

4. Dakwah Communication from A Sociological Perspective

The results of the study indicate that dakwah communication in post-reform dakwah novels not only functions as a means of conveying religious messages but also as a social representation strategy that reproduces norms, identities, and power relations within Indonesian Muslim society. From a sociological perspective, dakwah in works such as *Assalamualaikum Beijing*, *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*, and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* does not stand alone as an individual-spiritual activity, but rather as a social practice organized within a symbolic system, narrative, and relationships between the center and the periphery.

In *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*, the character Gagah transforms from a secular youth into an icon of dakwah after studying under Kyai Ghulfron, a character who is physically absent but has a significant narrative influence. Gagah's spiritual transformation makes him a social agent who inspires the transformation of others, particularly his younger sister, Gita. Dawah communication is not limited to sermons or verbal lectures, but is manifested in behavior, social interactions, and even symbols such as changes in musical tastes and dress

styles.

In *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, dawah is packaged in a global narrative. The character Fahri, an Indonesian student in Egypt, represents the ideal of a global Muslim—highly educated, tolerant, and wise. The communication of da'wah in this novel transcends ethnic and sectarian boundaries, as evident in his interactions with Maria (a Coptic Christian) and Aisha (an Egyptian Muslim). Fahri's da'wah is dialogical and does not contain symbolic aggression, yet it still positions Islam as the center of moral authority.

3.3. Writers As Communicators of Da'wah

1. Literature As an Effective Channel for Da'wah Through Popular Media

The results of the study show that da'wah novels written by authors from the Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) strategically use popular literary media to convey Islamic messages to a broad audience. In this case, literature does not only serve as an aesthetic expression but also as a planned and effective medium for da'wah. The success of da'wah messages in reaching a wider audience is closely tied to their ability to adapt to popular narrative forms familiar to readers, such as love stories, family conflicts, and personal struggles.

Some of the novels analyzed in this study, such as *Assalamualaikum Beijing* and *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan*, have even been adapted into films, marking a double success—both as literary products and as visual da'wah media that the public can consume on a massive scale. This process of adaptation expands the reach of Islamic messages, while also demonstrating that da'wah narratives packaged in popular stories can transcend the boundaries of religious book readers alone.

The effectiveness of da'wah in popular literature cannot be separated from writing strategies that combine narrative aesthetics and ideological substance. The author not only explicitly inserts Islamic teachings but also embeds them in dialogue, plot, characterization, and familiar cultural symbols. This allows da'wah to be present subtly yet powerfully, shaping readers' cultural awareness without making them feel lectured.

2. Readers As Communicants and The Potential for Religious Value Transformation

The results of the analysis show that readers of da'wah novels are not only positioned as story consumers but also as communicants in the persuasive and transformational process of da'wah

communication. The novels studied construct narratives in such a way that readers experience a gradual internalization of religious values through emotional attachment to the characters, conflicts relevant to real life, and resolutions that offer spiritual enlightenment.

The main characters in dakwah novels, such as Asmara (*Assalamualaikum Beijing*), Gita (*Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*), and Fahri (*Ayat-Ayat Cinta*), are portrayed as figures facing identity crises, life challenges, and moral dilemmas. Their process of facing and resolving these issues uses a strong Islamic approach. Readers, through emotional involvement in the storyline, are slowly guided to absorb values such as patience, sincerity, sacrifice, and submission to God's will.

Narrative techniques such as flashbacks, the use of first-person perspective, and in-depth depictions of inner conflict are the author's strategies for building psychological closeness with readers. Readers are invited not only to understand the characters but also to feel and emulate their spiritual journey. In other words, readers are actively encouraged to become part of the da'wah process as potential communicators undergoing value transformation.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the da'wah novels produced by the Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP) community are an ideological response to the dominance of wangi literature in the early years of reform. The emergence of da'wah literature is not merely an aesthetic variation but a systematic effort to shift the center of Indonesian literary discourse from a liberal-feminist orientation toward the hegemony of Islamic religious values.

This phenomenon confirms Eagleton's (1991) view that literature is never value-free; every text is an arena for ideological representation that serves to maintain or challenge a particular hegemony. Fragrant literature, with its exploration of the body, sexuality, and women's experiences, created a post-reform hegemonic discourse that opened up space for the expression of things that conservative social values had previously silenced. However, this hegemony gave rise to a counter-hegemony through dakwah literature, which emphasized faith, purity, and the role of women within a religious framework.

The dialectic between these two poles shows that literary texts are a battleground for meaning. As explained in the narratosociological framework of this study, text and context work dialectically—narratives not only reflect social values but also

shape readers' perceptions and moral orientations. FLP's dakwah literature actively represents Muslim women as agents of change who remain submissive to Islamic values, in contrast to the secular emancipatory subjects in "Sastra Wangi".

FLP presents itself as a counter-hegemonic force that challenges the dominance of secular-liberal values in Indonesian literature. This community has successfully created alternative narratives that adopt popular structures—such as love stories, family dramas, and social conflicts—but fill them with Islamic preaching and moral values. This strategy makes preaching literature an effective form of cultural hybrid that infiltrates ideological values into readers' consciousness without appearing preachy.

However, a deeper analysis reveals a paradox in the FLP's position. Despite its efforts to resist liberal hegemony, the community is trapped in the reproduction of patriarchal ideology that is deeply rooted in Muslim society. The representation of female characters in FLP novels is still often associated with domestic piety, sacrifice in domestic relationships, and obedience to male authority. This shows that the counter-hegemony built by FLP is selective, rejecting secular liberalism while reinforcing traditional patriarchal structures.

This phenomenon aligns with Gramsci's concept of hegemony operating through consensus, rather than coercion. FLP has succeeded in building consensus among urban Muslim readers by offering a religious identity that appears progressive but remains safe for patriarchal power structures. Thus, FLP's dakwah literature becomes an instrument that is both counter-hegemonic and hegemonic.

The findings of this study confirm that FLP dakwah novels operate as instruments of soft power in spreading Islamic ideology to post-reform urban society. Unlike conventional dakwah, which relies on lectures or sermons, dakwah in these novels operates through symbolic language, emotional narratives, and the representation of ideal characters that subtly and non-confrontationally permeate the readers' consciousness.

Within the framework of Nye's (2004) theory of soft power, FLP's dakwah novels successfully portray Islam not as a rigid doctrine, but as an alternative lifestyle that is morally and spiritually superior. Characters such as Fahri in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* or Gagah in *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi* are constructed as ideal figures who represent progressive Islamic values: intellectual, tolerant, romantic, and fair. This representation reinforces the image of Islam as a way of life relevant to the demands of modernity, especially for the urban

middle class who are hungry for religious identity but remain connected to the global world.

Sociologically, these novels also shape public piety in symbolic forms, such as the use of the hijab, choosing a life partner according to Sharia law, and a life orientation based on Islamic values. This aligns with the phenomenon Haenni (2005) refers to as "pious middle-class culture," the emergence of a Muslim middle class that uses religion as a social identity, a status symbol, and a source of life orientation in the fluid urban world.

This study found significant ambiguity in the representation of women's empowerment in FLP's da'wah novels. On the one hand, these narratives feature female characters who are strong-willed, highly educated, and have agency in choosing their life's path. On the other hand, the construction of female strength is always directed and limited by the framework of conservative Islamic values that symbolically still place men as the primary moral authority.

The representation of characters such as Asmara (*Assalamualaikum Beijing*), Gita (*Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*), and Arini (*Surga yang Tak Dirindukan*) shows complex identity dynamics. They are no longer passive figures who unthinkingly follow the patriarchal norm, but instead appear as individuals who consciously choose their roles in society. However, these choices still operate within narrative boundaries that emphasize obedience, sacrifice, and acceptance of patriarchal structures.

This phenomenon can be interpreted as a form of ideological compromise, where modern Islamic narratives attempt to reconcile ideas of empowerment with traditional religious moral boundaries. As Mahmood (2005) points out, women's agency in Islam should not be viewed through a secular-liberal lens but can emerge through forms of piety, submission, and participation in religious norms. However, in the context of FLP's dakwah novels, this agency is often not directed at dismantling unequal power relations but rather at reinforcing existing structures by imbuing them with spiritual meaning. This ambiguity suggests that the empowerment of women in FLP's dakwah novels is symbolic, rather than structural; personal, rather than political. In the context of a patriarchal society, this model risks reproducing inequality in a form that is obscured by narratives of faith and spirituality.

This research contributes theoretically through the development of a narratosociological approach that combines narrative aesthetics and sociology in the analysis of cultural products. This approach

demonstrates that literary works not only contain aesthetic value but are also laden with ideological content that subtly shapes readers' consciousness. In this context, narrative functions as an ideological state apparatus that reproduces Islamic ideology while, indirectly, reinforcing patriarchal values deeply rooted in urban Muslim society.

These findings emphasize the importance of a transdisciplinary approach in understanding the dynamics of the relationship between text and its social context. For the study of literature, communication, and gender, the narratosociological approach offers an analytical model capable of unraveling ideological representations in popular narratives, while also opening up space for critical reflection on the workings of da'wah messages embedded in literary media.

The results of this study provide a basis for re-examining the ideological narratives produced, particularly in terms of their representation of women. The da'wah community must recognize that the narratives they create are not merely symbolic but must also support structural equality. Critical awareness is needed not only to reject liberal-secular hegemony but also to avoid being trapped in the reproduction of unequal patriarchal structures.

Writers and the dakwah community can learn from the ambiguities found in this research to develop more progressive and inclusive narratives that can critically and transformatively unite religious values with principles of gender justice.

In the realm of literacy education policy, this research emphasizes the importance of integrating da'wah narratives that are not only religious but also constructive toward fair and equal gender awareness. Literacy education must enable readers to develop critical abilities for deconstructing ideological representations in texts, including da'wah narratives that appear progressive but may still perpetuate gender inequality.

Literacy policy needs to guide learning so that it does not merely become a tool for reproducing ideology, but also a transformative medium that encourages critical reflection on various forms of narrative, including those labeled as religious. This is important for creating readers who are not only textually literate but also ideologically critical.

REFERENCES

Aini, Z., & Don, A. G. (2022). The Implementation of Communication Skills in Da'wah. *Hamdard Islamicus*, 45(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.57144/hi.v45i1.276>

Ali, S. A. (2013). *Ideologi Gerakan Pasca-Reformasi: Gerakan-Gerakan Sosial-Politik dalam Tinjauan Ideologis*. LP3ES.

Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that novels written by Forum Lingkar Pena feature narrative and ideological expressions that convey a preaching tone. The narrative aesthetics employed by FLP writers form a cohesive narrative whole, blending elements such as plot, characters, characterization, perspective, and varied storytelling techniques—including linear plots, flashbacks, and autobiographical narratives. Through these techniques, da'wah messages are conveyed subtly yet effectively to readers, making literary works a persuasive medium of da'wah communication that is widely accepted by urban Muslim communities.

However, behind this narrative structure, this study also found the reproduction of gender power relations wrapped in religious symbols. The modernist Islamic ideology promoted by FLP, despite its progressive missionary spirit, still contains patriarchal elements that construct women's position in a hierarchical relationship with men. This representation shows that the FLP community, indirectly, functions as an ideological state apparatus that perpetuates patriarchal values already embedded in Indonesian Muslim culture.

With its narrative achievements and widespread dissemination, Forum Lingkar Pena has successfully established an Islamic literary genre that not only has ideological characteristics but also has gained a place in the realm of popular Indonesian literature. However, this success still requires critical reflection, especially regarding the ideological content embedded in the narrative, so that the expression of da'wah (proselytizing) aligns with the values of social justice and gender equality in a broader context.

The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which is still restricted to novel texts without further exploration of the audience and adaptations to other media such as film or social media. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore how readers respond to ideology in da'wah narratives, as well as how these messages transform when transferred to other popular cultural media. Further research could also examine the dynamics of resistance or acceptance among readers toward the gender and religious discourse offered by dakwah literature.

Arnez, M. (2009). Dakwah by the Pen: Reading Helyv Tiana Rosa's Bukavu. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 37(107), 45–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639810902743040>

Arnez, M. (2010). Empowering Women Through Islam: Fatayat NU Between Tradition and Change. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 21(1), 59–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etp025>

Azar, E., Abbasi, A., & Azad, V. (2014). The Study of the Narrative Function of Two Stories from Ilahi-nameh of Attar based on Grema's Pattern and Gerard Genette. *Language Related Research*, 5(4), 17–43.

Azwar, A. A., & Sarwono, B. (2012). *Fikisimorfosis Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP): Dari Ideologi ke Industri* [Universitas Indonesia]. <https://lib.ui.ac.id>

Budiman, K. (1994). *Wacana Sastra dan Ideologi*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Chaer, A., & Agustina, I. (1995). *Sosiolinguistik Perkenalan Awal*. Rineke Cipta.

Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Fifth Edition). Sage Publications, Inc.

Danesi, M. (2004). *Messages, Signs, And Meanings*. Canadian Scholars Pr.

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An introduction*. Thetford Press.

Eaton, M. M. (1989). *Aesthetics and the Good Life*. Associated University Presse.

Effendy, O. U. (2000). *Dinamika Komunikasi*. Remaja Rosdakarya.

Gerasimov, S. V. (2021). Events and narration in socio-cultural practices. *Saint Petersburg State University of Economics*, 12(2), 29–44. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2225-5346-2021-2-2>

Haenni, P. (2005). *L'Islam de Marché: L'autre Révolution Conservatrice*. Seuill.

Hawkes, T. (2003). *Structuralism and semiotics*. Routledge.

Hefni, H. (2014). *Komunikasi Islam*. IAIN Pontianak Press.

Istadiyantha. (2014). *Transmisi ideologis gerakan Islampolitik timur tengah terhadap gerakan Islampolitik di Yogyakarta dan Surakarta*. Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Karimi, P. (2024). Exploring Humanistic Values in Persian Sufi Mysticism and Literature. *Journal of Dharma*, 49(01), Article 01. <https://dvkjournals.in/index.php/jd/article/view/4393>

Khechib, D. (2016). The Effect of Reform Movement of the Contemporary Political Islamic thought on the Performance of Political Islamic Movements. (The philosophy of state in the thought of Tariq Ramadan and Rached Ghannouchi as a study case). *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.15640/jisc.v4n2a5>

Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (REV-Revised). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvct00cf>

Manshur, A. Q. (2012). *Buku Pintar Fikih Perempuan*. Zaman.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. University of Chicago Press.

Morissan, & Wardhani, A. C. (2009). *Teori Komunikasi: Tentang Komunikator, Pesan, Percakapan, dan Hubungan*. Ghalia Indonesia.

Mufid, M. (2009). *Etika dan Filsafat Komunikasi*. Kencana.

Najib, A. (2016). Contextual Qur'an Interpretation: The Study on the Concept of "Hierarchy of Values" Abdulla Saeed. *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.15640/jisc.v4n2a9>

Noronha, J. C. B., & Gomes, A. (2023). Conflict as a Narrative Tool in Postcolonial Writing – The case of Margaret Mascarenhas' novel 'Skin.' *Biblos*, 9, Article 9. https://doi.org/10.14195/0870-4112_3-9_9

Nurhadi. (2015). Analisi Hegemoni pada Iblis Tidak Pernah Mati Karya Seno Gumira Ajidarma. *Litera*, 3(2). <http://journal.uny.ac.id/index.php/litera/article/view/6768>

Nye, J. S., JR. (2004). Soft Power and American Foreign Policy. *Political Science Quarterly*, 119(2), 255–270. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20202345>

Rahmah, Y. (2015). Sanmai no Ofuda dalam Perspektif Greimas. *IZUMI*, 4(1), 28–36. <https://doi.org/10.14710/izumi.4.1.28-36>

Ramos, R., & Morán, E. P. (2025). ¡Sí, chef! Análisis de la estructura narrativa de la primera temporada de The Bear (fx, 2022). *Anuario Electrónico de Estudios En Comunicación Social "Disertaciones,"* 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/disertaciones/a.14305>

Rossa, H. T. (2007). Forum Lingkar Pena: Sejarah, Konsep dan Gerakan. *Himpunan Sarjana Kesustasteraan Indonesia*. Konferensi Internasional HISKI, Depok.

Salleh, M. S. (2013). *Strategizing Islamic Education*. 1(6).

Serajzadeh, S. H. (2001). Islam and Crime: The Moral Community of Muslims. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 4(2), 111–131. <https://doi.org/10.5617/jais.4568>

Storey, J. (2009). *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. Pearson Longman.

Sutopo, B., & Khalawi, H. (2017). *SASTRA ISLAMI KONTEMPORER INDONESIA*. PENERBIT OASE PUSTAKA. <https://repository.stkippacitan.ac.id/id/eprint/1249/>

Suwarna. (2002). *Strategi Penguasaan Berbahasa*. Adicita Karya Nusa.

Thompson, J. B. (1991). *Ideology and Modern Culture* | Stanford University Press. Stanford University Press. <https://www.sup.org/books/sociology/ideology-and-modern-culture>

Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak, R., & Vetter, E. (2000). *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857024480>

William, R. (1961). *The long revolution*. The University of Virginia.

Ya, C. A. C. (2015). Bayangan Wacana Politik dalam Karya Sastera: Analisis Novel Kawin-Kawin. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 31(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.17576/jkmjc-2015-3102-26>