

Character Design for Educational Illustration Books in Knowing Visual Communication Design

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the design of character designs in illustration books getting to know DKV for SMA/MA/SMK teenagers. Teenagers need knowledge and information in making plans for the future, one of which starts with preparing to choose the right major in college. This aims to minimize cases of students feeling like they have entered the wrong major. Apart from that, the existence of the DKV sector is still underestimated by some people due to a lack of knowledge about DKV. The method used in this design is a quantitative descriptive and qualitative descriptive data analysis method through interview data, FGD (Focus Group Discussion), observation, questionnaires, and literature study which culminated in the keyword "Deep understanding DKV with the present" and obtained results in the form of 3 design characters representing 2 DKV students and 1 SMA/MA/SMK teenager. Each character is designed with a contemporary design approach in a contemporary form using a flat design drawing style.

Keywords: DKV, teenager, character design, illustration book, education

INTRODUCTION

In making plans for the future, teenagers need knowledge and information, one of which is choosing the right professional field that suits their interests and talents. Starting from choosing the right major in college. Choosing a major without

preparation can cause students to feel like they have entered the wrong major after taking several semesters of study. Irene Guntur, an Educational Psychologist from Integrity Development Flexibility (IDF) stated that as many as 87% of students in Indonesia feel they have the wrong major (Amalia and Erawan, 2017). If this is forced for a long time, it can affect the mental and physical health of teenagers. Apart from that, it also affects their GPA or the coursework they do will not be optimal. It can even lead to dropping out of college so it would be a shame if teenagers choose the wrong major. The true potential that teenagers have will not be well honed if they study in the wrong major because teenagers will start to adapt to the major they are taking. On the other hand, if someone does activities according to their interests and talents, they will do these activities with feelings of joy, and happiness, without being burdened because they already have skills that suit that field.

Therefore, making plans for the future from adolescence is very important. The period of adolescence referred to is the SMA/MA/SMK education level. Based on aspects of insight development and career readiness in the SMA/MA/SMK Student Independence Competency Standards (SKKPD) which have been prepared by ABKIN (Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association), teenagers must have a goal in learning their abilities in various types of work, education and career development. More focused, realizing values in considering choosing career alternatives, then developing these alternatives in career planning by considering career opportunities and diversity (Cahyawulan and Ratih, 2019).

In the questionnaire distributed by the author, there were 55.6% of the 102 teenagers who filled out the questionnaire (high school/MA/SMK, still unemployed, working) and still did not know their interests and talents. This is in complete contrast to Super's opinion, at the age of 15-24 years, teenagers enter the exploration stage where teenagers' choices begin to narrow but are not yet at their peak. What is meant is that teenagers have started to think about their desires or interests but these thoughts are still swaying, possibly due to external factors (friends, parents, environment) or themselves. This is marked by a tentative phase, namely the phase where children begin to realize that they have different interests

and talents from each other, then children will tend to do work or activities according to their interests and abilities and in the end, teenagers will start to think about/plan a career them according to their interests and talents (Nuari, 2018). In this phase, teenagers should be provided with sufficient information to be able to determine the choice they want under their talents to minimize the occurrence of wrong majors and choosing the wrong job.

Visual Communication Design (DKV) is a science that studies the concept of communication in creative expressions, by utilizing various visual elements to convey messages with a specific purpose. DKV has the role of communicating messages or information to readers with various visual strengths, such as typography, illustrations, colors, lines, layouts, and so on with the help of technology (Pasha and Ruslan, 2020). According to Harsanto, the profession of Visual Communication Designer is needed in almost all sectors, such as consumption, entertainment, media, infrastructure, property, finance, education, etc (Cahyani, 2023). On the website of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Republic of Indonesia Tourism and Creative Economy Agency, DKV is one of the Parekraf fields that is most effective in recruiting workers. In 2020 there were 29,651 workers in the DKV subsector and it is predicted that this will increase to 30,914 workers after the pandemic. What is meant by this subsector is the creative economy subsector which includes, among others, game developers, crafts, interior design, music, fine arts, product design, fashion, culinary, film, animation, video, photography, advertising, publishing, performing arts, graphic design, etc (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf RI, 2023). This will open up great opportunities for teenagers who have an interest and ability in this field. For this reason, there is a need for educational knowledge or information about the world of DKV.

The field of DKV is little known by some people, especially teenagers. This can be proven by the results of the questionnaire distributed by the author. Of the 102 teenagers, 34.3% of teenagers answered that they did not know about DKV and 30.4% of teenagers answered that they had only heard of it but did not know for sure about this field. In total, there are 64.7% of teenagers who do not understand the field of DKV. Teenagers' views about DKV also included 22.5% who answered

that the DKV major was a department that only had pictures and 38.2% who answered that they did not know. Some of them also still incorrectly state the profession of graduates in the DKV field. There are 24-26 children who still think that journalists, broadcasters/broadcasters, and gamers are professionals who graduate from the DKV field. On the other hand, the percentage of teenagers who have an interest in entering the DKV major is 26.5%. This can prove that teenagers who are interested in or choose to enter the DKV Study Program are just entering without understanding what the DKV Study Program is. It is feared that cases like this will result in dropping out of college in the middle of the semester for the reason of choosing the wrong major.

Other evidence was obtained from the author's interviews with several students who were already involved in the DKV field. According to their experience, the DKV field is still underestimated by some parents of teenagers because it is considered to have unpromising job prospects. Some of them think that graduates of the DKV field only work as street artists/painters, in print shops, or as clothing designers, all of which are considered to have unstable incomes. The presence of design applications such as Canva, Logo Maker, Piscart, Capcut, etc. seems to support this statement because the presence of these applications is considered to be able to fulfill internal design needs so the designer profession does not seem to be needed.

This perspective or view can occur due to a lack of education or a broader understanding of the DKV field. Expanding this information can be channeled through designing illustrated book media. In this illustrated book, there is a need for accompanying figures or characters who can help convey information.

This design focuses on creating character designs for illustration books getting to know DKV. The character creation process includes a visual creation process that refers to the character's personality, appearance, and characteristics. According to Elaine Marie, characters in a book can become friends for readers when the characters presented are similar or familiar to the reader's environment (Yurangga and Islam, 2023). Illustrative images are images that explain a written story or script (Aeniy and Ramli, 2021). According to Alwi, illustrations can explain or visualize a description, whether in the form of news, stories, essays, or a

manuscript which will help clarify the contents of the book or essay (Trisha Syifana, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method in this design uses a qualitative approach. In this data collection technique, the author uses two data collection techniques, namely primary data collection techniques and secondary data. Primary data collection took the form of interviews, FGD (Focus Group Discussion), observations, and questionnaires, while secondary data was taken from literature such as books, journals, and the internet.

The interview method was carried out in 3 interview stages. The first stage was carried out by the Head of the DKV UPN "Veteran" East Java Study Program, namely Mrs. Masnuna, ST., M.Sn. to obtain data about the experiences and views of Mrs. Masnuna, ST, M.Sn as an alumni of DKV students and at the same time find out the differences between DKV in the past when she studied and DKV at this time, information about DKV curriculum, data on DKV student interest, potential in the DKV field in the future, and important information that must be known prospective DKV students in preparation for entering this major. The second stage was carried out with Mr. Arco Pradipta an illustrator and graphic designer to find out what kind of illustration characters were suitable for the author's design, a deeper understanding of illustration, and also experience as a DKV alumnus who was successful in the world of work by his field, and the third stage was carried out with Mrs. Fitriana Maghfiroh as a lecturer in Psychology at Surabaya State University (UNESA) to look for data about the stages of adolescent development according to age, find out problems and solutions for facing teenagers who are searching for identity or interests and talents, discuss students who feel they have entered the wrong major.

The FGD was carried out in 2 stages, namely the first with 13 male and female DKV students to obtain data about their experiences as DKV students, important and interesting information about DKV that follows their views and experiences, tips

and suggestions for prospective DKV students and the second stage conducted with 6 male and female SMA/MA/SMK teenagers to look for data about teenagers' views about DKV, teenagers' knowledge about DKV, teenagers' interests and talents, and teenagers' readiness in making plans and teenagers' opinions about designing DKV illustration books.

In the observation method, the author observes the physical form of the reference object. Observations were made by the author, by visiting several bookstores and conducting online searches to see suitable illustrated book designs to be used as a reference for the author's designs. Observations were also made in looking for character styles in the design.

Another primary data collection is a questionnaire distributed by the author. The target respondents for the questionnaire are teenagers who want to go to college-aged 15-23 years (high school/MA/SMK, still unemployed, and working). The questionnaire was conducted to obtain broader data regarding teenagers' perspectives or views about DKV, teenagers' considerations when choosing a major, teenagers' interest in DKV majors, teenagers' knowledge about DKV, and teenagers' opinions about author design. Secondary data is obtained from literature studies with reliable sources obtained from books, journals, and also the internet which supports the author's design.

The data analysis technique in this design uses qualitative descriptive analysis techniques to analyze interview, FGD, observation, and questionnaire data. From the results of this analysis, conclusions will then be made to determine the concept in design.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Interview result

After carrying out the analysis, several conclusions were obtained according to the data taken. In an interview with Mrs. Masnuna, ST., M.Sn as Head of the UPN DKV Study Program "East Java Veterans, it was concluded that basic drawing skills are also very important for DKV students to have, even though these abilities are not

very advanced. With basic drawing skills, students will not have too much difficulty in studying. In 2004 digital images were still rare or almost non-existent. Drawing also still uses the mouse. DKV courses in the past and now there are differences in specialization or elective courses. Basic courses still have the same activities, just different names.

The results of an interview with Mr. Arco Pradipta an illustrator concluded that the illustrations that teenagers like are illustrations in a contemporary style. What is meant by contemporary style is very diverse, starting from simple images, color combinations that don't seem tacky, whether shading is firm or not, thick or thin outlines, proportions of shapes or tools, and the media used. This style refers to the flat design drawing style which is different from the style for children. In illustrations, children tend to use media such as crayon colors or watercolors with drawing styles that seem funny, cute, and adorable. This is different from illustrations for teenagers who are usually more imaginative or seem simple. Illustrations for education are not recommended to use styles that are too complicated and detailed, such as realistic drawings or 3D drawings. This aims to make the book look easier to read because the simple illustrations prevent readers from getting tired when looking at a book that is too busy. Apart from that, the information in this education can be conveyed well to readers. To be able to get a suitable job in the DKV field, you must remain consistent in building your branding while you are still a student so that your brand as a designer is not doubted by other people, whether later when you work for a company or become a freelancer. Currently, DKV has very wide open job and career opportunities, because in the 4.0 era (the period of transformation towards improvement) and even almost 5.0 (the period where society interacts with new technology), there is a lot of need for creative workers like DKV students. Preparations for teenagers before entering the DKV major include preparing knowledge or information about DKV activities. As often as possible, look for references or literature about DKV and its coverage. Mental preparation so that you are not surprised when lectures start and have complete confidence that DKV is truly a major that suits your interests or aspirations.

The results of the interview with Mrs. Fitriana Maghfiroh M.Psi as UNESA Psychology Lecturer are that teenagers are divided into three based on their age. Early adolescents (12-14 years) do not yet think about searching for identity. These teenagers still enjoy their relationships with peers. Teenagers still feel like they want to be free. At this age, abstract thinking begins but does not yet lead to a search for self-identity. Middle adolescents (15-17 years) begin to think about searching for their own identity. These middle teenagers are already able to develop their abstract thinking abilities. Late teenagers (18-21 years) have begun to express their identity in terms of interests and talents. Teenagers at this stage are also more selective in making friends. The group of friends is smaller, so teenagers are more considerate when choosing friends. The ability to think abstractly in my late teens is starting to think well. In dealing with students who feel they have entered the wrong major. The first thing to do is to identify first. This identification is carried out to find out whether students really have the wrong major or just feel tired. If it turns out that the student is in the wrong major, they will be advised to change majors that are more suitable for them. However, if not, usually you just need to be given the advice to stay in your major with the thought that if you are forced to move at any time this incident will happen again and students will ask/think the same thing. On several campuses, the DKV department accepts children with disabilities such as the deaf, speech impaired, quadriplegic, color blind, etc. such as UNESA, IT Telkom Purwokerto, Ciputra University Surabaya, etc.

Results of FGD (Focus Group Discussion)

The results of the author's FGD with DKV students concluded that the DKV Department is a department that is intended for someone who has talents in the field of art and design such as drawing, editing, making videos or photos, and so on. Although the talent possessed is not professional enough, but at least already has the basic abilities of the talent so that later it will not be overwhelmed when it is faced with its duties. From several student opinions, the majority of students said that there were still many younger siblings, cousins, friends, neighbors, and even their families who still did not know more about the DKV major. In fact, from the experience of students when entering the DKV major, some of their parents

underestimated this major and some of the students even did not get family support when choosing this major because they were considered not to have good job prospects in the future. Some of the fun things about this major are that you don't always need to wear formal outfits during lectures. As a DKV student, you have creativity in everything, even the outfits you wear. In terms of clothing, DKV students are not too strict in their dress code, the point is they just have to be polite. For the course, there is no arithmetic and there will be a lot of practice in the field rather than theory. In the world of DKV, friendship will be very fun and exciting because there are often events or exhibitions that make people gather more often, and because the task involves a lot of group and personal practice, the work is often done together.

The results of the author's FGD with teenagers concluded that teenagers' knowledge about DKV is still minimal and not extensive and the majority of them still do not have preparation in preparing plans. They think that this can still be done later. Teenagers prefer visual designs that are simple, not monotonous, have an attractive appearance, and also look contemporary.

Observation Results

The results of the author's observations concluded that from all the bookstores visited by the author, there were no books that had the same topic as the one the author designed, whereas, on the online platform, the author found one book entitled "What major do you study? Faculty of Art and Design". This book has the same topic as the illustrated book *Getting to Know DKV*. For visual studies in looking for references for designing illustrated books, we found several examples of books that served as inspiration, such as the use of layout, illustrative depiction, use of color, and also typography.

Questionnaire Results

The results of the questionnaire distributed by the author concluded that teenagers still don't understand DKV or their job prospects in-depth, the majority of teenagers who are not interested in entering the DKV major are because they don't know much about the major, teenagers prefer to read picture books rather than

books that are only written. Teenagers choose illustrated books with a contemporary appearance and are equipped with several comic strips to convey information about the DKV major.

DISCUSSION

Concept Formulation (Keywords)

Keywords are essential elements that serve as references to the core message of a design or plan. To identify relevant keywords, a mind-mapping process can be employed to collect and organize ideas, ultimately generating keywords that represent the design's central theme.

In this design, the keyword "Exploring DKV in a Contemporary Way" signifies an endeavor to delve deeper into the realm of Design Communication Visual (DKV) through the lens of contemporary media. The term "contemporary" in this context refers to something current, modern, and relevant to the present time.

To cater to the preferences of the target audience—SMA/MA/SMK teenagers—the design incorporates a visually simple illustrated book format. Additionally, to leverage the power of modern technology, QR codes are integrated into the design to provide access to supplementary videos related to DKV activities that cannot be fully captured within the book format.

Design Concept

Based on the findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with teenagers, a preference for simple, dynamic, and contemporary design styles emerged. This aligns with the flat design aesthetic. Character references were drawn from Lee Kyu Young's book, "The Time We Walk Together," to inspire the visual language of the design.



Figure 1. Reference Illustrations
source: Pinterest 2024

The color choices used in this design are derivatives of blue, yellow, and orange. In the author's design, the aim is to introduce the DKV department. DKV is one of the sciences of education or learning in the creative field. According to research by The University of British Columbia, the color blue is best at increasing attention to detail and the ability to think creatively in the learning environment. The color blue also means the breadth of knowledge. Meanwhile, yellow and orange symbolize creativity (Springer, 2022).

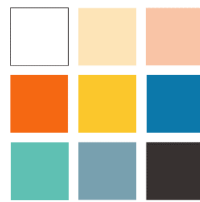


Figure 2. Color Palette
source: author's documentation 2023

Making a character design starts with character exploration and then taking character references for the character. In this design, there are 3 characters, namely 2 DKV students (male and female) and 1 SMA/MA/SMK teenager.

The conclusion obtained for the character of a DKV student is a DKV student aged around 19-23 years who has creative thinking through his talents and has a stylish appearance. The figures chosen to represent male and female DKV students in this design are Rico Dwi Cahyono and Shaquilah Syifa. They are DKV students who actively create DKV content on the TikTok application. They also have a stylish outfit appearance.

1. Diky's character

Character description: Diky is a DKV student who tends to have a perfectionist nature in doing things, including assignments. Diky is good at dressing or being stylish. Apart from that, Diky is also a humble person to everyone.

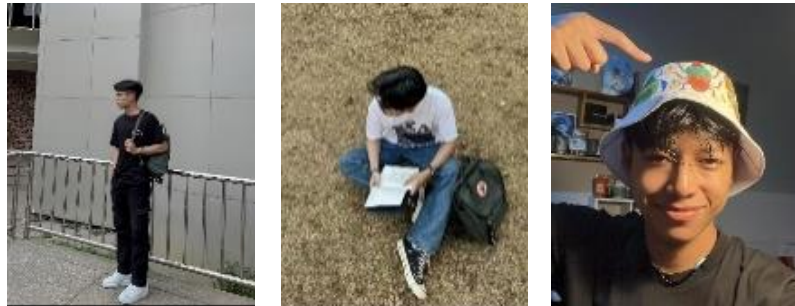


Figure 3. Rico Dwi Cahyono
source: Instagram @ricodwichyy 2024

The choice of the name Diky was taken from the prefix letter DKV, namely D, combined with the character's reference stage name, namely Wichy. This description of Diky's character is taken from a teenage character who tends to be freely represented in a character appearance that is informal and seems free.



Figure 4. Alternative Diky Character
source: author's documentation 2024

Of the 78 teenage respondents, 46.2% of the votes chose character C as Diky's character.

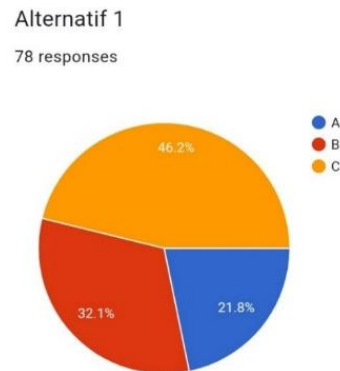


Figure 5. Diky's Character Questionnaire Diagram
source: Google Form 2024

2. Kila Character

Character description: Kila is a DKV student who has a cheerful nature and also loves to talk. Apart from that, Kila is also good at public speaking.



Figure 6. Shaquilah Syifa
source: Instagram @shaaquila 2024

The choice of the name Kila was taken from the second letter of DKV, namely K, combined with the reference character's name, namely Shaquilah. This description of Kila's character is adapted to the criteria for teenagers who must be confident in preparing mentally before entering DKV. The character Kila represents DKV students who are cheerful and active in carrying out activities.



Figure 7. Alternative Kila characters
source: author's documentation 2024

Of the 78 teenage respondents, 50% of the votes chose character C as Kila's character.

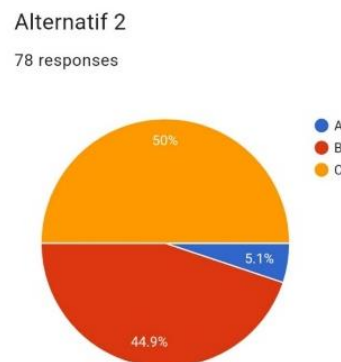


Figure 8. Kila Character Questionnaire Diagram
source: Google Form 2024

In exploring the character of SMA/MA/SMK teenagers, it was concluded that a SMA/MA/SMK teenager aged 15-18 years was interested in the DKV field or had talent and interest in this field where knowledge of DKV was still minimal and had not yet been established wide. The character taken in this design is one of the speakers in the author's FGD, namely Salvia Kendra Rasia. This teenager has talent in the field of DKV but knowledge about DKV is still minimal and not yet extensive.



Figure 9. Salvia Kendra Rasia
source: author's documentation 2024

3. Via Character

Character description: Via is a vocational school teenager whose hobby is drawing. Via has a calm nature but has more curiosity about things which makes Via a person who likes to ask questions.

The choice of the name Via was taken from the third letter of DKV, namely V, combined with the reference name of the character, namely Salvia. Via's character description represents the criteria for teenagers who have a high interest and curiosity about DKV.

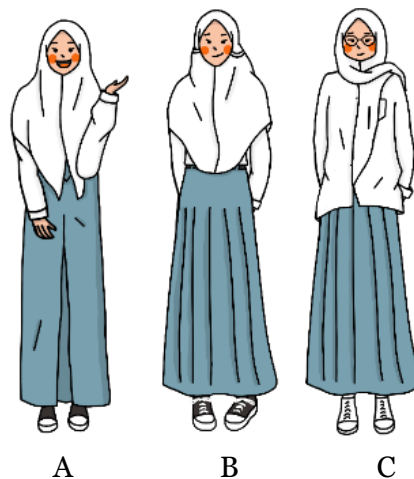


Figure 10. Alternative Character Via
source: author's documentation 2024

Of the 78 teenage respondents, 42.3% of the votes chose character B as Via's character.

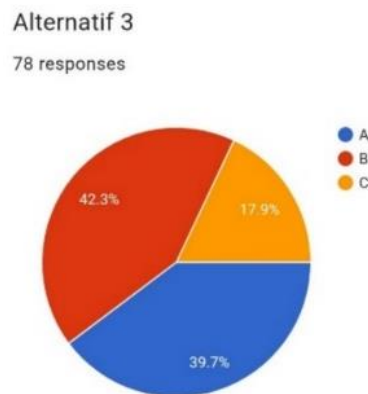


Figure 11. Via Character Questionnaire Diagram
source: Google Form 2024

Furthermore, these 3 characters will later be applied to educational illustration books about DKV for SMA/MA/SMK teenagers. These three characters will function as companions for the reader in conveying the information in the book. The information contained herein contains about the importance of interests and talents, the definition of the DKV Study Program, what activities or tasks are carried out by DKV students, an introduction to the DKV course and how it is processed, an introduction to professions in the field of DKV, tips for preparing teenagers to be ready to enter the world of DKV and other things-interesting and unique things about DKV.

CONCLUSION

In supporting teenagers' knowledge to understand the field of DKV majors and minimizing the occurrence of wrong majors, it is important to create supporting information media. One of them is making an educational illustration book about DKV with a target audience of SMA/MA/SMK teenagers. In making this illustrated book, a character design will be created to be a companion in conveying information to the reader. The visual character design was conceptualized according to keywords and also through a process of analysis, interviews, FGD, observations, questionnaires, and literature studies.

It is hoped that this character design can be developed and applied in all media, for example in the form of animation, campaigns, etc. Apart from that, we also increase the latest information about DKV and develop visual designs that suit the target audience and keep up with current developments. After the conclusion, describe the implications of the research (scientific impact), the limitations or shortcomings of this research, and provide concrete and specific suggestions for further research based on the limitations/lack of this research. The conclusion section should include all of the above points (objectives, results, implications, limitations, and suggestions).

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