

Character Design of the Web Comic “Anti Gagal Ginjal”

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ABSTRAK

Komik web menjadi media yang efektif untuk menyampaikan pesan edukatif kepada generasi muda, khususnya terkait isu kesehatan seperti gagal ginjal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merancang desain karakter dalam komik web “Anti Gagal Ginjal” sebagai upaya edukasi mengenai gaya hidup sehat. Metode yang digunakan adalah Design Thinking dengan lima tahapan utama: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, dan test. Data diperoleh dari observasi, wawancara, dan kuesioner yang menyasar target usia 18–25 tahun. Karakter-karakter yang dirancang memiliki latar belakang dan sifat yang merefleksikan kebiasaan hidup anak muda masa kini. Proses validasi dilakukan melalui voting audiens dan pakar desain. Hasil akhir menunjukkan bahwa desain karakter yang menarik dan relevan dapat menjadi media komunikasi visual yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kesadaran akan pentingnya menjaga kesehatan ginjal.

Kata kunci: *desain karakter, komik web, edukasi kesehatan, gagal ginjal, Design Thinking*

ABSTRACT

Web comics are an effective medium for delivering educational messages to young audiences, especially on health issues such as kidney failure. This study aims to design characters for the web comic *Anti Gagal Ginjal* (which literally means “Against Kidney Failure”) as an effort to educate young people about healthy lifestyle practices. The method used is Design Thinking, which consists of five main stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires targeting individuals aged 18–25 years. The designed characters have backgrounds and personalities that reflect the lifestyle habits of today’s youth. The validation process was carried out through audience voting and expert evaluation. The results show that attractive and relevant character designs can function as an effective visual communication medium in increasing awareness of the importance of maintaining kidney health and preventing kidney disease.

Keywords: *character design, web comic, health education, kidney failure, Design Thinking*

INTRODUCTION

The era has evolved, and information is now widely and rapidly disseminated, allowing it to be accessed directly by the public, one of which is the trend of healthy living. However, as reported by Liputan6.com and jdih.dpr.go.id, a phenomenon that is currently widely discussed is the trend of hemodialysis among young people, also known as Generation Z, in Indonesia. This statement is supported by the latest data from the Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) in 2023, which indicates that there are still residents aged 15–34 years who require hemodialysis therapy, totaling 141 patients. Of these, 16.2% are in the 15–24 age group, while another 31.4% are in the 25–34 age group.

Kidney disease is caused by several factors, including smoking habits or exposure to cigarette smoke, unhealthy dietary patterns, lack of physical activity, consumption of alcoholic beverages, and family history (Wahdi Doni et al., 2022). This occurs because many people of productive age overlook various forms of prevention that could reduce the risk of disease in the future (Lolowang et al., 2021). In addition, young people tend to choose ready-

to-eat foods and beverages that require shorter processing times, as they are more practical and available in various flavors. During the transition from adolescence to adulthood (ages 18–25), significant changes in identity begin to occur. James Marcia's theory of identity development posits that during this period, individuals begin to explore various aspects of life and become more confident in making commitments (Santrock, 2019). Based on this statement, young people aged 18–25 should already be able to understand and choose their lifestyle patterns and daily consumption habits, whether they are healthy or not. However, when associated with the increasing number of kidney failure patients aged 18–25, it can be seen that young people are less concerned about maintaining their health. One contributing factor is high mobility, which causes them to pay less attention to healthy lifestyles and instead prefer instant and practical food and beverages.

With the emergence of these problems, education for the community, especially young people, regarding the prevention of kidney failure by maintaining kidney health becomes important. In the modern era, many media can be used as tools to deliver education, one of which is web comics. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), comics are defined as illustrated stories found in magazines, newspapers, or in book form, with humorous and easy-to-understand storylines. Meanwhile, web comics are comics published through the internet. Comic readers are dominated by young people aged 15–25 years (Ayuswantana & Rizkiantono, 2014). Therefore, the web comic "Anti Gagal Ginjal" is presented to help convey education about the importance of preventing kidney failure for individuals aged 18–25. However, in designing the comic "Anti Gagal Ginjal," there are elements and process stages that need to be considered further. Scott McCloud (2001) explains that several elements must be considered in making a comic, namely panels, speech balloons, text, icons, and visual effects. The stages of comic production include story, character design, inking, coloring, cover, and logo. Each of these stages has an important role, one of which is character design, because concepts regarding personality and background can be visually conveyed through the created character designs (Honestianto, 2019).

Based on the previous discussion, this study aims to design character designs in the web comic "Anti Gagal Ginjal" with visual appearances that can attract the interest of young people. It is expected that the results of this design can serve as a reference in developing character designs that are communicative, relevant, and aligned with the visual preferences of the younger generation.

This study uses the Design Thinking method as an approach to designing web comic characters. Design Thinking is an effective method for identifying problems, exploring ideas, and testing solutions with active participation from users (Fajrina & Fatimah, 2023). Design Thinking is divided into five stages: 1) empathize, 2) define, 3) ideate, 4) prototype, and 5) test (Lazuardi & Sukoco, 2019). In this study, the Design Thinking method is adapted and adjusted to the specific needs of character design, as explained by (Yuningsih et al., 2024), who state that this method can be developed according to the context and object of the design process. First, the empathize stage was conducted by collecting data through observation and questionnaires targeting young people aged 18–25 as the target audience. This process resulted in several keywords used as references in designing the lifestyles of comic characters that are close to the daily realities of the target audience. In the define stage, the main problem was formulated based on the results of the previous stage, namely the low awareness of young people regarding the implementation of healthy lifestyles, thus requiring communicative and relevant character visuals. The ideate stage was carried out through brainstorming to develop character design ideas covering background, personality, habits, and visual style to represent young people's lives and convey kidney failure prevention messages in an engaging way. The ideas obtained were realized in the prototype stage to

produce several alternative character designs to be tested in determining the most appropriate and attractive design. Finally, the test stage was conducted by distributing questionnaires via Google Forms, which were responded to by 104 participants to assess the most attractive and effective character designs in conveying kidney failure prevention education, serving as the basis for further development. In addition to questionnaires, the test stage also involved online expert validation by Kurnia Bintang, an author and illustrator of the comic “Pisang Raja” on the Webtoon platform, to assess visual quality, characterization, and character visual design as a communication medium, which was then used to refine the design before being finalized.

DISCUSSION

Design Concept Formulation

In determining the characteristics of each character in the story, a brainstorming process was carried out based on the collected data. These data were obtained through observation, interviews, and the distribution of questionnaires to the target audience, namely young people aged 18–25 years.

Based on the results of the previous problem identification, it is known that many young people pay little attention to their lifestyle patterns, ranging from frequently consuming instant food to drinking packaged beverages carelessly. To address this issue, an educational medium in the form of a web comic relevant to young people’s lives was created. Therefore, the web comic “Anti Gagal Ginjal” becomes an effective means of conveying education narratively while being accompanied by attractive visuals.

The data obtained were then further processed through a data synthesis stage. This process produced information regarding genres favored by the target segment, as well as visual preferences preferred by young people. The results of this data synthesis were not only used to determine the direction of the story but also contributed to character design to make it more relevant.



Figure 1. Comic Logo

This story is about Ilham, a student who begins living a healthy life after being threatened with kidney failure. Together with Dimas, Siti, and Indah, who experience similar situations, they form the “Anti Gagal Ginjal” movement and create educational content to invite young people to maintain kidney health.

Character Identification

In designing the character concepts, the results of data synthesis show that each character is depicted as a university student with different characteristics, as described below.

Table 1. Character Backgrounds

ILHAM
Background: Ilham used to stay up late, rarely drink water, and often consumed instant food due to his busy academic life. His turning point came when he saw news about young people suffering from kidney failure. Since then, he began to question his own lifestyle and decided to change. His main motivation is the desire to live longer and be productive, and not to burden others. Age: 20 years Personality: responsible, supportive, and creative Physical Characteristics: - Height 170 cm - Wavy hair - Black hair color - Dark brown eyes Relationships: - College best friend: Dimas - High school friend: Indah - Friend: Siti
DIMAS
Background: Dimas has been Ilham's best friend since the beginning of college. Behind his relaxed and cheerful demeanor, he has a bad habit: consuming alcohol, especially when stressed or wanting to unwind after campus activities. He does not feel that this habit is dangerous because he considers himself young and healthy. However, during a health check with Ilham, he received a serious warning that his kidney condition was beginning to be threatened. The results shocked him and became a turning point that opened his eyes to the real consequences of the lifestyle he had considered normal. Age: 21 years Personality: relaxed, humorous, indifferent Physical Characteristics: - Height: 169 cm - Straight hair - Orange-brown hair color - Black eyes Relationships: - Best friend: Ilham - Friend: Siti - Friend: Indah
SITI
Background: Siti often consumes sweet drinks and high-sugar foods to stay "on fire" when facing assignment deadlines and organizational meetings. She once ignored the signs of her body being exhausted. After accidentally meeting Ilham at a pharmacy and learning about her pre-diabetic condition, Siti began to realize the importance of maintaining a balance between ambition and health. Age: 20 years

Personality: active, ambitious, and stubborn

Physical Characteristics:

- Height: 162 cm
- Straight hair
- Black-brown hair color
- Black eyes

Relationships:

- Friend: Ilham
 - Friend: Dimas
 - Friend: Indah
-

INDAH

Background:

As a food vlogger, Indah often reviews food without paying attention to its nutritional content. Popularity makes it difficult for her to refuse sponsorship offers, even unhealthy ones. However, after seeing the conditions of Dimas and Siti, she began to realize her responsibility as an influencer to set a good example and started educating her audience about healthy food through her content.

Age: 20 years

Personality: cheerful, confident, adaptive, and collaborative

Physical Characteristics:

- Height: 160 cm
- Straight hair
- Black hair color
- Black eyes

Relationships:

- Ilham's high school best friend
 - Friend: Dimas
 - Friend: Siti
-

DOCTOR ARIF

Background:

dr. Arif is a general practitioner at the campus clinic who handles routine health check-ups for students. He examined Ilham and Dimas and explained their health check results. Through his explanation, Dimas learned that his kidneys were almost damaged, which made him begin to realize his unhealthy lifestyle. Although he does not appear often, his role is important as a trigger for change for the main characters.

Age: 40 years

Personality: wise, educational, kind, and helpful

Physical Characteristics:

- Height: 169 cm
- Straight hair
- Orange-brown hair color
- Black eyes

Relationships:

-

Development of Visual References (Moodboard)

Moodboards or visual references were compiled as the basis for developing character designs in the next stage. Visual references were collected based on observations of the previously determined target segment.

1. Ilham

Figure 2. Ilham Moodboard

2. Dimas

Figure 3. Dimas Moodboard

3. Siti

Figure 4. Siti Moodboard

4. Indah

Figure 5. Indah Moodboard

5. Doctor Arif



Figure 6. Doctor Arif Moodboard

Design and Finalization Stages

The design process began by creating several alternative designs for the main characters, based on visual references and predetermined keywords. The results were then digitally developed, starting from rough sketches to full color. To determine the final design, audience voting was conducted via Google Forms, along with expert validation. The design stages are as follows:

1. Ilham

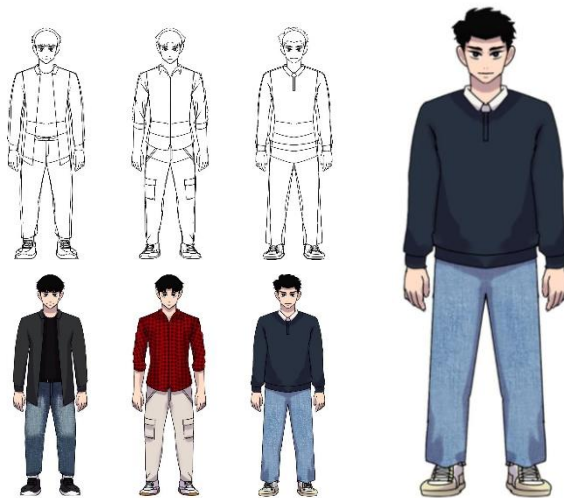


Figure 7. Sketches, comprehensive alternatives, and selected designs of Ilham

2. Dimas

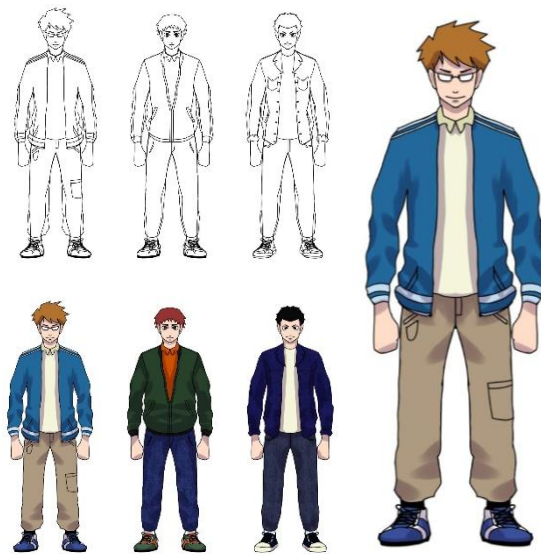


Figure 8. Sketches, comprehensive alternatives, and selected designs of Dimas

3. Siti

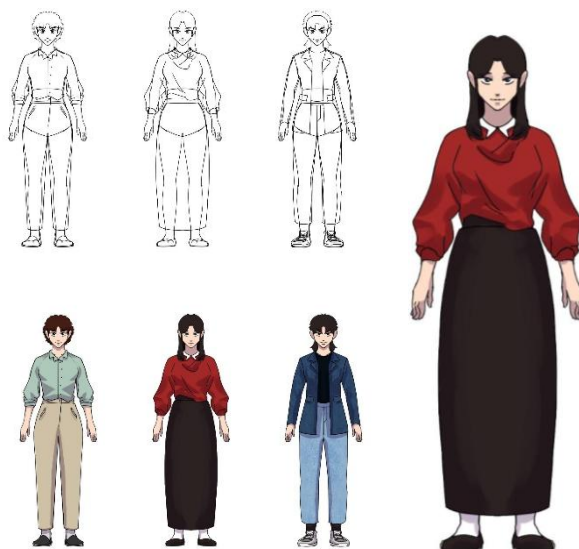


Figure 9. Sketches, comprehensive alternatives, and selected designs of Siti

4. Indah

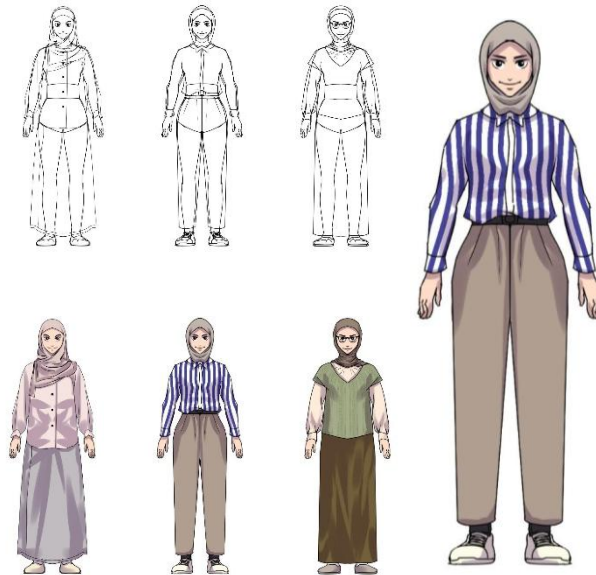


Figure 10. Sketches, comprehensive alternatives, and selected designs of Indah

6. Doctor Arif

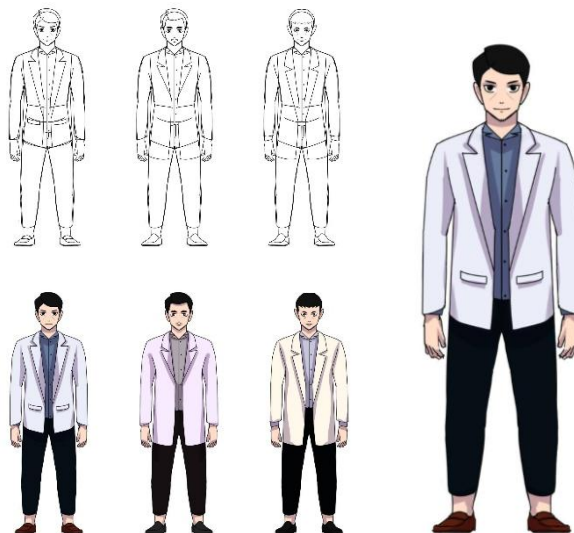


Figure 11. Sketches, comprehensive alternatives, and selected designs of Doctor Arif

CONCLUSION

The design of characters in the web comic “Anti Gagal Ginjal” was carried out to provide education to the younger generation, especially those aged 18–25 years, regarding the importance of maintaining kidney health as an effort to prevent kidney failure. Using the Design Thinking approach, the design process was conducted through five stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test.

This process involved data collection through observation, interviews, questionnaires, audience voting, and expert validation. The final result is a set of character designs that are communicative, visually attractive, and aligned with the visual preferences of young people. The characters in the story are structured to represent various lifestyles and health challenges commonly faced, so that readers can more easily connect emotionally and effectively receive the educational messages.

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