

Local Culture, Global Feeds: Student and Lecturer Perspectives on Cultural Representation in Indonesian Visual Communication Design Education

Yelly Andriani Barlian¹, I Wayan Adnyana², Nyoman Dewi Pebriani³, Ira Wirasari⁴, Novian Denny Nugraha⁵

¹(Faculty of Creative Industries, Telkom University, Indonesia)

²(Postgraduate Program in Arts, Institut Seni Indonesia Bali, Indonesia)

³(Postgraduate Program in Arts, Institut Seni Indonesia Bali, Indonesia)

⁴(Postgraduate Program in Design, Telkom University, Indonesia)

⁵(Faculty of Creative Industries, Telkom University, Indonesia)

ABSTRACT: *This exploratory study examines how local cultural identity is positioned within the visual preferences and everyday design practices of one Indonesian Visual Communication Design program. Two questionnaires were used: 42 student responses and 7 lecturer responses. Closed questions were summarized descriptively, while open responses were condensed thematically. The results show that hybrid visual preference is dominant among students, with 35.7% favouring a mix of local and global styles, while only 9.5% primarily favour explicitly traditional Indonesian visual styles. Local culture is not absent from student work, but it is usually partial rather than dominant. At the same time, 97.6% of students rely mainly on Pinterest, Behance, and international social media for inspiration, and lecturers largely confirm that global visual styles still shape student output. The article argues that the central issue is not a lack of appreciation for local culture, but an imbalanced reference ecology: local culture is valued rhetorically, yet under-supported materially, visually, and pedagogically. This finding matters for design education because it shifts the debate from symbolic inclusion toward research-based cultural translation, curriculum support, and stronger visual archives of Nusantara culture.*

KEYWORDS - cultural identity, design education, Indonesia, local representation, visual culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital image platforms now shape how design students look, collect references, and evaluate what appears contemporary. For Visual Communication Design (VCD) programs in Indonesia, this condition creates an important tension. Students operate within a globally circulating visual environment, but they are also expected to design from within a culturally dense national context. In Stuart Hall's terms, representation is never a neutral mirror of reality. It is a process through which meaning is produced and exchanged [1]. For design education, this means that the issue is not simply whether local culture appears in student work, but how it is selected, visualized, and made legible through contemporary design practice.

Recent scholarship reinforces the relevance of this problem. Aesthetics in design education is closely tied to creativity, visual communication, and forms of reflective learning [2]. At the same time, Indonesian design education is being reshaped by digitalisation, interdisciplinarity, project-based learning, and sustainability [3].

Other studies also show that design education now faces the pressures of hyper-globalisation, where students must negotiate fast-moving visual trends, technological acceleration, and local cultural specificity at once [4]. In this context, cultural knowledge is not an optional ornament but part of the designer's communicative competence [5].

Indonesian literature has repeatedly shown that visual communication design can function as a cultural preservation medium [6], while cultural representation in media and advertising remains a site where national identity is constructed, simplified, or contested [7]. At the same time, globalization continues to intensify cultural displacement and symbolic competition [8]. Studies on local-global hybridity suggest that local identity does not simply disappear, it is often reworked through hybrid forms and negotiated presence [9]. Design education research from outside Indonesia similarly argues for a plurality of design narratives rather than a single dominant canon [10], and survey-based work on student perceptions has shown that cultural elements can be valued differently depending on disciplinary formation and exposure [11].

What is still underexplored is the everyday gap between valuing local culture and actually using it as a strong design resource within higher education. This article addresses that gap by bringing student and lecturer surveys into dialogue. Rather than treating local culture as a moral slogan, the article asks how it is positioned within routine visual preference, reference-seeking behaviour, and pedagogical judgement. The paper focuses on one VCD program in Indonesia and asks three questions, 1) What visual preference patterns and modes of local cultural inclusion do students report? 2) How do lecturers evaluate the current strength and originality of local cultural representation in student work? 3) What shared barriers and pedagogical implications emerge when the two datasets are read together?

The main argument of this article is that the core problem is not student hostility toward local culture. Instead, the questionnaires point to an imbalanced reference ecology. Local culture is widely considered important, but the visual, pedagogical, and archival infrastructures needed to work with it are substantially weaker than the infrastructures that support global image circulation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural representation, hybridity, and local design identity

For this article, local culture is treated as a representational resource rather than a decorative residue. Hall's framework is useful because it locates culture in systems of signification rather than in isolated visual objects [1]. This matters for VCD because motifs, symbols, stories, layouts, and visual atmospheres all acquire meaning through social circulation. Indonesian research on visual communication design has similarly stressed that design can mediate cultural preservation and public cultural literacy [6]. Meanwhile, studies of contemporary Indonesian media show that cultural identity is often articulated through negotiated, selective, and strategic representation rather than through direct reproduction [7].

The global-local relation is therefore better understood as a negotiated condition than as a simple opposition. Research on *Gogirl!* magazine, for example, demonstrates that hybridity can work as a mode of local presence under conditions of global visual dominance [9]. Alvelos and Barreto extend this point in design education by arguing for plural design narratives that address tensions between dominant global discourse and situated local knowledge [10]. These perspectives are helpful for interpreting student design practice, because student work often occupies an in-between position: visually contemporary, globally referenced, but also expected to speak from local culture.

2.2 Design education and the pedagogical problem of cultural resources

Design education research has increasingly highlighted the importance of context, criticality, and cultural relevance. Catya et al. emphasize that aesthetics in design education should not be reduced to formal beauty; it also develops communication, judgement, and creativity [2]. Sunarto similarly argues that higher education in art and design must respond to digital conditions, interdisciplinary demands, and broader social complexity [3]. In applied educational settings, culturally grounded multimedia has been shown to improve engagement and contextual understanding [12].

Yet design education in Indonesia is still challenged by what Darmastuti and Santosa describe as hyper-globalisation: students are exposed to rapidly shifting visual references, but institutional frameworks often lag behind the speed and density of those transformations [4]. If students mostly learn through globally circulating platforms while local cultural archives remain fragmented or difficult to access, then local culture is likely to be treated as a secondary surface instead of a primary design logic. This literature gap frames the present study: local culture may be respected discursively, but respect alone does not guarantee use, depth, or originality in everyday design work.

III. METHOD

This article reports an exploratory descriptive study based on two questionnaires distributed within one Indonesian VCD program. The design is intentionally modest: it does not attempt statistical generalization, but aims to map tendencies, tensions, and recurring themes visible at the level of one program. Such a design is appropriate when the goal is to understand a bounded educational context in depth while still using more than one respondent position [13; 14].

The first questionnaire targeted students and produced 42 valid responses collected between July and October 2025 [15]. The second targeted lecturers and produced 7 valid responses collected in July and October 2025 [16]. Both instruments combined closed questions and open responses. The student instrument covered visual preference, frequency of local cultural insertion in recent work, perceived adequacy of cultural knowledge, main sources of inspiration, and reasons for using or avoiding cultural elements. The lecturer instrument asked about dominant student reference sources, the extent of global style adoption, the prominence of local elements in student work, perceived weaknesses in originality, pedagogical barriers, and possible support mechanisms.

Analysis proceeded in two steps. First, the closed questions were summarized descriptively through frequencies and percentages. Second, the open responses were condensed thematically to identify recurring patterns rather than individual anecdotes. Because the questionnaires contained optional identifying fields, all interpretation in this article is based only on anonymized and aggregated responses. The method is therefore best understood as a dual-perspective survey: not a large-scale measurement study, but a structured way of comparing how students and lecturers narrate the same educational problem from different institutional positions.

Table 1. Participant profile and analytical use of the two questionnaires

Questionnaire	Respondents	Collection period	Main analytical contribution
Student questionnaire	42 students	23 July-1 October 2025	Maps visual preferences, cultural inclusion in recent work, reference sources, and self-reported barriers
Lecturer questionnaire	7 lecturers	23-30 July- 1 October 2025	Maps pedagogical judgement, perceived barriers, and forms of institutional support

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Student responses: hybrid preference, partial localization, and platform dependence

The student survey shows that explicitly local visual orientation is not the dominant preference. The most common answer was a mixed local-global style (15 of 42; 35.7%), followed by pop culture references from Korea, Japan, and the United States (11; 26.2%) and minimalist modern European/Scandinavian references (10; 23.8%). Only 4 students (9.5%) primarily chose explicitly traditional Indonesian visual styles [15]. The distribution suggests

that students inhabit a hybrid visual environment in which local culture is present, but rarely as an exclusive design orientation.

This hybridity does not mean that local culture is absent from design practice. When asked about their three most recent works, 23 students (54.8%) said that they included some local cultural elements, 9 (21.4%) reported only limited inclusion, and just 6 (14.3%) described local culture as strongly dominant. The overall pattern is therefore one of partial localization: local culture appears, but usually as one layer among several rather than as the structuring basis of the work [15].

The most striking student result concerns reference sourcing. Almost all respondents (41 of 42; 97.6%) rely primarily on Pinterest, Behance, or international social media for inspiration, while only one respondent cited Indonesian cultural history books as the main source [15]. This result helps explain why local culture often remains partial. Students are not designing in a vacuum; they are designing from within a visual feed dominated by global image platforms. Their own barrier responses reinforce this point: the most frequent reason for rarely using local culture was greater comfort with global references (34 mentions), followed by unfamiliarity with local culture (10), fear that local imagery may appear old-fashioned or irrelevant (8), and the sense that such work is not always explicitly required in assignments (5) [15].

The open responses add nuance. Students repeatedly described local culture as important because it helps preserve heritage (17 responses), strengthens design identity (5), and can improve public awareness or cultural literacy (11) [15]. Yet these positive values coexist with practical obstacles: students mentioned the difficulty of finding credible sources, distinguishing between visually similar cultural regions, and translating research into forms that still feel contemporary. The survey therefore reveals a clear tension between symbolic appreciation and operational readiness.

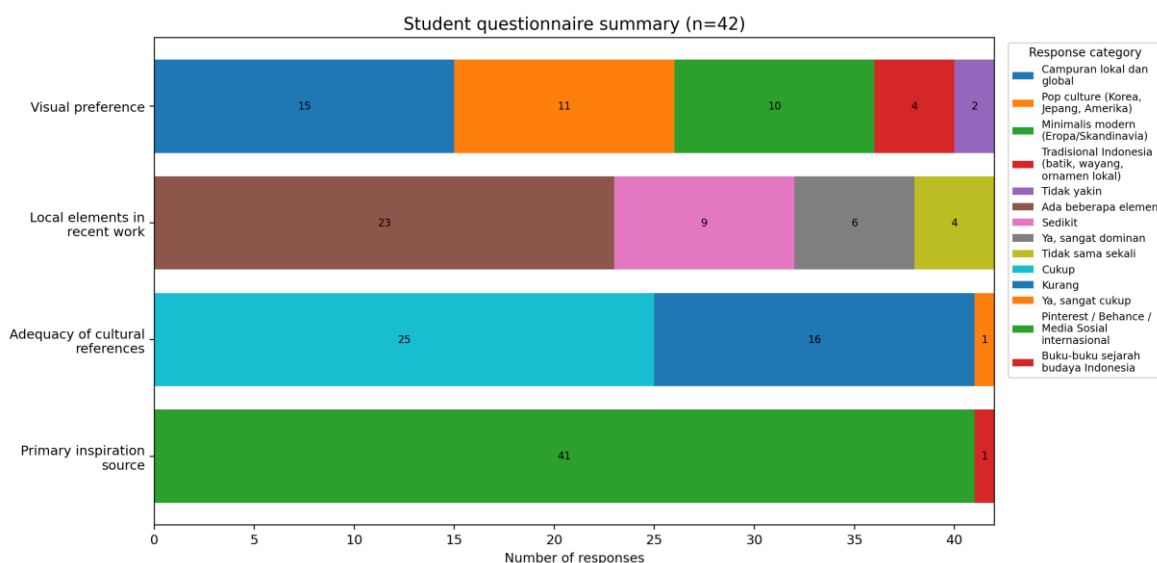


Fig. 1. Student survey summary showing dominant visual preference, degree of local cultural inclusion, adequacy of cultural references, and primary inspiration source (n=42).

4.2 Lecturer responses: the problem of originality is also pedagogical

Lecturer responses support the student-side finding that global visual influence remains strong. Five of seven lecturers (71.4%) stated directly that students tend to adopt global visual styles, while the remaining two were unsure [16]. Lecturers, however, did not describe student references as purely foreign. Three described student references as mainly mixed, three as primarily local, and one as mainly global [16]. This distribution suggests that the issue is not a simple replacement of local culture by global culture; rather, it is the unstable and uneven way the two are combined.

Lecturers were also cautious about the current strength of local cultural representation in student work. On the item asking how prominent local cultural elements are in student projects, responses clustered between the lower and middle points of the scale, with no respondent selecting the highest level [16]. Their open comments clarify why. One lecturer noted that pop-cultural influence from Korean and Japanese media strongly shapes student preference. Another observed that when students do use local identity, they often repeat the same familiar icons, such as kujang or mega mendung for West Java, which weakens originality. In other words, the problem is not only omission, but also reduction: local culture can become visually repetitive and conceptually shallow when the available reference pool is narrow [16].

The barrier item makes this especially clear. The most frequent lecturer concern was the lack of Nusantara visual references (5 mentions), followed by the perception that students sometimes find local culture less relevant or less attractive (4 mentions), and difficulty in visualizing cultural elements effectively (2 mentions) [16]. These lecturer concerns mirror the student-side responses almost exactly. The agreement across datasets is analytically important because it suggests a structural issue rather than an isolated student attitude problem.

Lecturer responses about support were also notably consistent. They repeatedly called for stronger curricular integration, richer visual archives, collaboration with artists or cultural practitioners, workshops, exhibitions, competitions, and project-based opportunities linked to local themes [16]. These responses indicate that lecturers do not see the issue as solvable through motivational discourse alone; they are asking for pedagogical infrastructure.

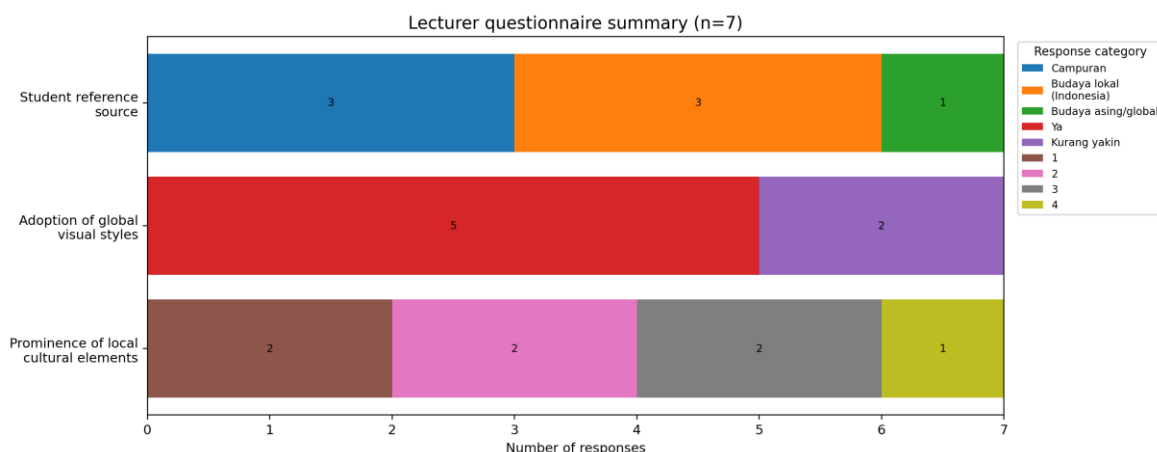


Fig. 2. Lecturer survey summary showing perceived student reference sources, global style adoption, and the prominence of local cultural elements in student design work (n=7).

4.3 Cross-survey synthesis: from cultural appreciation to reference ecology

When the two surveys are read together, four cross-cutting findings emerge. First, local culture is valued by both groups, but that value does not automatically lead to deep visual integration. Second, global platforms function as the dominant reference ecology for students, shaping what appears usable, contemporary, and visually credible. Third, the main bottleneck is not merely ideological preference but infrastructure: the scarcity of accessible, specific, and varied local visual references. Fourth, both groups converge on the need for curriculum-level and studio-level support mechanisms that move local culture from a decorative add-on to a researchable and designable resource.

Table 2. Converging findings across the student and lecturer questionnaires

Dimension	Student-side evidence	Lecturer-side evidence	Interpretive implication
-----------	-----------------------	------------------------	--------------------------

Visual orientation	Hybrid and global references dominate; explicitly traditional preference is minor	Most lecturers observe ongoing adoption of global styles	Student output is shaped by hybrid visual aspiration rather than by local culture alone
Use of local culture	Local elements are often present, but usually only partial	Local elements are seen as moderate or weak in prominence	The issue is partial localization, not total absence
Main barrier	Comfort with global references and weak familiarity with local culture	Lack of Nusantara visual references and difficulties in visualization	The core bottleneck is an imbalanced reference ecology
Needed support	Students ask for exposure, field access, workshops, and collaboration	Lecturers ask for curriculum intervention, archives, and practitioner links	Pedagogical infrastructure is needed to make local culture designable and not only admirable

V. DISCUSSION

The findings sharpen a distinction that is often blurred in debates on culture and design education. Students do not reject local culture in principle. In fact, their open responses frequently frame it as a source of preservation, identity, and public meaning. What the questionnaires show instead is a mismatch between cultural value and cultural usability. Local culture is appreciated symbolically, but the visual systems students rely on every day are overwhelmingly global. This is why the phrase reference ecology is useful here: the issue is not simply what students think, but what image environments, archives, exemplars, and design routines are readily available to them.

This helps explain why local culture often enters student work as a limited set of recognisable motifs rather than as a deeper representational system. Once global image platforms dominate the search process, local culture competes under unequal conditions. Students may want to preserve identity, yet still feel more visually fluent in hybrid, pop-cultural, or minimalist idioms. The lecturer comments about repeated icons and limited originality show that symbolic inclusion without stronger research support can easily flatten cultural specificity. In Hall's sense, the problem is not only what is represented, but how the representational system is organized and circulated [1].

Seen through the lens of hybridity, these results should not be read as failure alone. The prominence of mixed local-global preference suggests that students are already operating in a hybrid visual field, which is not unusual in contemporary design culture [9; 10]. The pedagogical challenge is therefore not to eliminate global influence, but to strengthen students' capacity to translate local culture with more depth, specificity, and confidence. The surveys imply that design education should move from a discourse of insertion (adding local symbols) toward a discourse of translation (researching, selecting, reframing, and visualizing local culture in ways that remain contemporary without becoming generic).

This argument is consistent with broader research on design education. Aesthetics becomes more meaningful when it is tied to judgement, communication, and reflective practice rather than to surface style alone [2]. Likewise, contemporary higher education in art and design requires stronger contextual and interdisciplinary framing [3]. In practical terms, the two questionnaires suggest four priority interventions: richer and more searchable visual archives of Nusantara culture; studio briefs that require specific cultural research rather than symbolic citation; collaborations with cultural practitioners, communities, and archives; and curated examples that show students how local culture can operate as structure, system, or narrative (not only as ornament).

This study also has limitations. It is based on a single program, a relatively small sample, and self-reported perception rather than direct artefact analysis. For that reason, its claims are exploratory rather than generalisable. Even so, the dual-perspective design is a strength: students and lecturers independently identify the same bottlenecks. Future research could connect this survey layer to direct visual analysis of student artefacts or to multi-campus comparisons in order to test whether the same reference-ecology gap appears elsewhere.

VI. CONCLUSION

This article has shown that the challenge of strengthening local cultural representation in Indonesian VCD education cannot be reduced to whether students are patriotic enough or whether local motifs simply need to appear more often. The questionnaires reveal a more precise problem. Students value local culture, but they design within a global reference ecology that supplies faster, denser, and more visually ready resources than local cultural archives. As a result, local culture is frequently present but only partially integrated.

The advantage of the study lies in its dual-perspective mapping of the problem: students and lecturers identify similar barriers and similar support needs. Its limitations lie in scale, scope, and reliance on self-report. Even so, the study suggests clear applications for curriculum design and studio pedagogy. If local culture is to become a meaningful design resource, higher education must provide not only encouragement but also visual archives, field exposure, practitioner collaboration, and research-oriented briefs that help students move from symbolic borrowing toward culturally grounded visual translation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks the respondents who completed the questionnaires and acknowledges the use of aggregated, anonymized survey data for academic writing purposes.

References

- [1] S. Hall, J. Evan, and S. Nixon, *Representation Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 2nd ed. The Open University, 2013.
- [2] K. Catya, M. Marsudi, T. C. Kusumandyoko, and F. Ratyningrum, "The Importance of Aesthetics in Design Education," in *Proceedings of the International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities 2023 (IJCAH 2023)*, Atlantis Press, Dec. 2023, pp. 535–541. doi: 10.2991/978-2-38476-152-4_50.
- [3] B. Sunarto, "Paradigma Pendidikan Seni dan Desain di Pendidikan Tinggi," in *Seminar Nasional Desain dan Media*, Jakarta: Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, 2023, pp. 1–16. Accessed: Jul. 01, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://proceeding.unindra.ac.id/index.php/semnasdesainmedia/article/view/7082>
- [4] K. Kawuryan Darmastuti, I. Santosa, F. Seni Rupa dan Desain, and I. Teknologi Bandung, "Model Kerangka Konseptual untuk Mengukur Relevansi Pendidikan Desain Indonesia pada Era Hiperglobalisasi (Studi Kasus: Program Studi Desain, Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain, Institut Teknologi Bandung)," *JURNAL VISUAL IDEAS*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2023.
- [5] S. H. Yudhanto, F. Risdianto, and A. T. Artanto, "Cultural and Communication Approaches in the Design of Visual Communication Design Works," *International Journal of Linguistics, Culture and Communication*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 79–90, 2023, [Online]. Available: <https://ijolcc.org/index.php/ijolcc/index>
- [6] V. E. Afdhal, M. Sayuti, and G. Artikel, "Analisis Desain Komunikasi Visual sebagai Subjek Pelestarian Seni Budaya dan Kearifan Lokal Minangkabau Analysis of Visual Communication Design as a Subject in Preserving Minangkabau Cultural Art and Local Wisdom," *Sasak: Desain Komunikasi dan Visual*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 113–122, Nov. 2023, [Online]. Available:

- <https://journal.universitاسbumigora.ac.id/index.php/sasak/workflow/index/868/5> □ 113JournalSasak:<http://journal.universitاسbumigora.ac.id/index.php/sasak/index>
- [7] R. D. Habibi and D. Hariyanto, “Menguak Representasi Budaya Indonesia dalam Iklan Bodrex 2022,” *Indonesian Culture and Religion Issues*, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 15, Jun. 2024, doi: 10.47134/diksima.v1i2.35.
- [8] I. T. Jadidah, M. R. Alfarizi, L. L. Liza, W. Sapitri, and N. Khairunnisa, “Analisis Pengaruh Arus Globalisasi Terhadap Budaya Lokal (Indonesia),” *Academy of Social Science and Global Citizenship Journal*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 40–47, Dec. 2023, doi: 10.47200/aossagej.v3i2.2136.
- [9] M. Utami and M. Endah Sokowati, “Konstruksi Identitas Global dan Lokal dalam Majalah Gogirl!: Sebuah Hibriditas (Analisis Semiotik Majalah Gogirl! Edisi 101 Bulan Juni Tahun 2013),” *Jurnal Komunikasi*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 91–108, Apr. 2021, doi: 10.20885/komunikasi.vol15.iss2.art2.
- [10] H. Alvelos and S. Barreto, “Contributions Towards a Plurality in Design Narratives: Addressing Dynamics between Global and Local Discourses,” *Design Journal*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp. 934–954, 2022, doi: 10.1080/14606925.2022.2125731.
- [11] H. Y. Yen and C. I. Hsu, “College Student Perceptions about The Incorporation of Cultural Elements in Fashion Design,” *Fashion and Textiles*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 1–16, Dec. 2017, doi: 10.1186/s40691-017-0105-1.
- [12] I. G. J. Mahendra and K. A. H. Pujawan, “Development of Interactive Multimedia Based on Balinese Culture Contextual in Graphic Design Learning at Class X Multimedia in SMK Negeri 1 Sawan,” *Graphic Design Journal of Education Research and Evaluation*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 126–132, Aug. 2018, [Online]. Available: <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JERE>
- [13] J. W. . Creswell and C. N. . Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research Design*, 3rd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018.
- [14] N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, Eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th ed. California: Sage Publication, 2018.
- [15] Y. A. Barlian, “Estetika Didaktik dan Visualisasi Budaya Desain Grafis Mahasiswa (Responses),” Bandung, Oct. 2025.
- [16] Y. A. Barlian, “Eksplorasi Pandangan Dosen DKV terhadap Representasi Identitas Budaya Nusantara dalam Karya Mahasiswa (Responses),” Bandung, Oct. 2025.