

Positive Framing in Children's Pandemic Narratives: A Case Study of the *Cerita Ceritaku Ceritamu* Corona Edition Book

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ABSTRACT

The children's book *Cerita Ceritaku Ceritamu* Corona Edition (C3EC) is the first book in Indonesia to narrate the children's experiences in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The book was written by 23 Indonesian children from Banda Aceh to Papua, with each story visualised by some of the children's book illustrators. A difference is evident in perspective between the writers in the textual narrative and the illustrators in the visual narrative. The textual narrative in the story frequently depicted conflicts, with 56% focusing on challenges related to online learning and limited playtime. The majority climax phase of the textual narrative expresses the negative mood, characterised by struggle, sadness, and hopelessness. In contrast, the illustrators predominantly visualised the resolution phase, with 51% of characters portrayed as happy and 8% as sad. This study aims to uncover why illustrators chose favourable conditions during the pandemic and focused on the resolution phase when determining visual narrative scenes. This research used a mixed method. Data were collected through literature review, observation, interviews, and questionnaires. These findings describe the selection of the illustrator's favourable conditions, the selection of the resolution phase, and the creative process behind the C3EC book story. This study's impact shows that illustrators felt a responsibility to inspire resilience in readers, thereby transcending the author's perspectives.

Keywords: children's book, pandemic COVID-19, illustration, visual narratives, visual grammar

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, Indonesia imposed a lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This lockdown policy resulted in the closure of schools, and teachers and children conducted learning processes at home. Children experienced limited interactions with their social surroundings (Nafrin and Hudaidah 2021). Research indicated that children suffered significantly from these restrictions (Thorsteinsen et al. 2021). This condition is further supported by Rogers (2022), who stated that children's emotional health was affected by the lockdown, with the potential for long-term psychological consequences.

The pandemic brought about unprecedented changes to children's lives and interactions, as social relationships were suddenly restricted and reduced to digital interactions (Rogers 2022). Bao et al. (2020) also noted that limiting children's social interactions with their environment caused sudden psychological shock. Children experienced higher stress levels due to reduced physical activity, increased free time, and diminished social connections. Children became sad and bored because of restricted playtime with friends, limited contact with teachers, and the inability to engage in outdoor activities. School closures posed significant risks to children's physical and mental health, potentially fostering unhealthy behaviours. Additionally, school closures have been associated with decreased learning outcomes and reading skills, particularly among kindergarten children (Bao et al., 2020; Pombo et al., 2020). Schools and parents must pay attention to children's activities during the pandemic to minimise the negative impacts.

The Kumpul Dongeng Surabaya Community, established in 2015, serves as a platform for storytelling activists. Its members include writers, housemakers, and students dedicated to reviving storytelling traditions through regular sharing sessions. Kelas Ilustrasi Buku Anak Institut Teknologi Bandung (KIBA ITB), a children's book illustration course, offers a class on designing children's picture books as part of the Visual Communication Design programme within the Faculty of Art and Design at the Institut Teknologi Bandung. This curriculum of this class includes theoretical sessions, practice exercises, discussions with artists, and mentorship.

In 2020, the Kumpul Dongeng Surabaya Community collaborated with Klub Literasi Anak and KIBA ITB to develop a story-writing programme about the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate negative impacts. Twenty-three young writers aged 7–13 from various cities in Indonesia participated in the programme and wrote narrative stories about the pandemic. The programme aimed to provide children with meaningful activities during the pandemic and reduce the risk of physical and mental health problems, as well as unhealthy behaviours. A study by Lubis and Rahayu (2021) demonstrated that writing activities positively affect anxiety levels. Similarly, Kusumaningrum et al. (2022) highlighted that community initiatives could foster resilience and positive responses in Indonesian society in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme also involved 17 illustrators from KIBA ITB, all of whom had an educational background in children's book illustration.

The writing programme also aimed to capture children's perspectives during the pandemic, contributing to government policies and planning. The essence of this project lies in its collaborative effort to support children during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, using storytelling as a form of art therapy. This approach allowed children to express their emotions through writing while illustrators utilised their creative talents. A key benefit of the programme was the collaboration between young writers and illustrators. While the writers conveyed stories through text, illustrators brought these stories to life with visual representations.

Observations from the *Cerita Ceritaku Ceritamu Corona Edition (C3EC)* book revealed differing perspectives between the writers and illustrators. The story often expressed a negative mood, while the illustration conveyed a more positive one. Ramadinoto (2021) confirmed this contrast, noting that the writer's narratives were rooted in the harsh realities of the pandemic, whereas the illustrations focused on the resolution phase, depicting a resilient generation. Ramadinoto's study highlighted the motivational and positive impact of illustrators' interventions, raising the question of why the illustrators intentionally chose to depict the stories with a positive mood (happy and active). Although Ramadinoto's research did not explore the motivations behind the illustrator's approach, it is important to examine how they selected text parts to illustrate and determine which elements were suitable for visual representation. The assumption was that children's storybooks typically feature bright, beautiful, and cute illustrations that match a positive mood in the story. Illustrators might have found that the story's negative themes,

such as those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, did not align with their preferred visual style. Unlike Ramadinoto's study, this study expands in depth the motivations and process of visual intervention from the point of view of the illustrators.

This study investigated the reasons behind the illustrator's unique preference for positive conditions and the resolution phase in portraying pandemic narratives for children. This study also aimed to explain the motivation and illustrator intervention process in C3EC books, which can inspire as a reference for artistic development and provide recommendations for children's book illustrators. Specific stories may present challenges for visual representation. Therefore, it is desirable to examine how illustrators can address this visual challenge and create engaging illustrations that appeal to children even when the story has a negative mood. By analysing the intervention process of transforming the mood of a narrative text through a visual approach, this study aims to provide illustrators with guidance on presenting stories in a compelling and accessible manner without compromising the author's perspective. This study reveals valuable insights into the motivations and reasoning behind an illustrator's design choices. Children's book illustrators will gain a deeper understanding of the interventions in the design process, enabling them to employ effective visual communication strategies with their audience. Additionally, this approach could integrate the illustrator's motivations with the writer's perspectives, fostering a more cohesive and collaborative storytelling process.

METHODS

This study focused on a collaborative project between the Kumpul Dongeng Surabaya Community and KIBA ITB. This initiative resulted in the publication of a book titled *Cerita Ceritaku Ceritamu Corona Edition* (C3EC), aimed at child readers experiencing the challenges of the pandemic in Indonesia. The project aimed to reduce anxiety and sadness in children by utilising stories as a form of art therapy. Children, as the author wrote stories about their pandemic experiences, expressed both positive and negative emotions. Illustrators visually interpreted these stories, creating a single illustration to encapsulate each narrative.

The study examined how an illustrator's educational background influences their visual grammar in translating children's writing into illustrations. It also explored how the illustrators responded to the challenge of depicting children's emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on understanding the reasons, methods, and patterns employed by illustrators in visualisation themes and determining scenes to illustrate.

The research adopted a mixed method approach consisting of several stages: literature review, observation, questionnaires, and interviews. While the mixed method provided valuable insights, it could have been elaborated more comprehensively, particularly regarding how the data were collected and analysed. The researchers initially aimed to verify their assumptions using quantitative methods. Once the data supported these assumptions, they explored the underlying reasons behind the results in greater depth. The following sections outline the research stages in detail.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

The literature review served as a foundation for developing a conceptual framework to understand narrative text and illustration, as well as the application of visual narrative theory, visual rhetoric, and colour psychology. This stage involved collecting and analysing theoretical reference books and previous research articles from academic journals. These sources provided valuable insights into the research topic, the design process, and the implementation of design strategies.

Observation and Visual Analysis of the C3EC Book

The observation of the C3EC book involved reading and analysing the narrative text, illustrations, and design elements. The analysis methods employed were content analysis and visual analysis. The results revealed a gap between the perspectives of illustrators and children's writers, particularly in terms of the mood conveyed through text and illustration. The book is divided into 23 titles, each accompanied by one illustration. Elements such as characters, backgrounds, props, colours, and ornaments were examined using an observation table and analysed visually. The observation table and visual analysis were employed to gather data depicting joyous moods and positive characters.

Data Collection through Questionnaire and Interview

Questionnaire and interview were used to understand the reasons behind the selection of story scenes, perspectives, and design processes. The respondents were illustrators from various regions in Indonesia, aged between 20 and 33 years, with an educational background in Visual Communication Design or Fine Art. Most respondents were female, comprising 82.4% of the total 17 participants. The respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire with questions related to the story, visual elements, design processes, and interventions during the process. In-depth interviews were conducted when responses were unclear or required further exploration.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Triangulation

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using a triangulation method, combining data from interviews, questionnaires, and visual observation to strengthen the validity of the findings. An open coding process was applied to interview transcripts, where researchers identified recurring keywords, phrases, and narrative structures related to motivations, emotional considerations, and intervention strategies. These initial codes were then grouped into thematic categories, such as positive mood, negative mood, responsibility, moral value, design process, and intervention. Thematic analysis allowed for the extraction of deeper patterns and interpretations across cases. However, the study acknowledges limitations in sample size (17 illustrators) and demographic diversity, as most respondents were female and affiliated with a specific educational institution. Moreover, triangulation was limited by the absence of direct input from child readers, which could have provided a more comprehensive perspective on reader response.

Table 1 Examples of open codes and thematic categories

Interview transcript	Open code	Thematic category
I took some of the character activities in the script because they were interesting and inspiring	Scene selection	Design process
Using bright, attractive, and avoid black, dark, brown (sad colours), because the title of the story already displays the word "ghost" so something contrasting is made, that it is not scary for children	Positive mood	Intervention strategy
The living environment is illustrated as a flower blooming through the sky; conveying the message that the power of positive thinking can help us face life's challenges	Positive mood	Moral values
I felt "relatable" to the story, and also sympathised with the children who should be enjoying playing and studying at school with their friends, but are stuck at home	Personal connection with the text	Empathy
I illustrate positive characters and moods that give a positive impact or spirit during COVID. I feel responsible for providing illustrations that evoke joy	Positive mood	Responsibility

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The C3EC book is a children's storybook comprising 23 short stories divided into 23 chapters according to the story title. This book contains stories about the daily experiences of children aged 7–13 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some stories cover activities at home, limited socialisation outside the home, new hobbies, the dangers of the coronavirus, making friends during the pandemic, and the various complaints children face. This book represents not only the perspective of a single region in Indonesia but also encompasses diverse perspectives from Sabang to Merauke. Regional perspectives and elements of Indonesian culture are reflected in both the stories and illustrations. Thus, the book represents children's perspectives across various islands in Indonesia regarding the pandemic, highlighting what children think, feel, do, and even the solutions they devised.

Indonesia is an archipelago comprising numerous islands. The C3EC book, published domestically in Indonesia, allows child readers from one island to explore the stories of children from other islands. Children can read this book, and children's book illustrators in Indonesia can also read books and see illustrations (including perspective and culture) from various islands in Indonesia. Therefore, this book is beneficial for both child readers and illustrators. This book offers new perspectives on what to do when children experience the COVID-19 pandemic. The C3EC book also offers a dual narrative, presenting both textually and visually pandemic stories. This study contributes to understanding how Indonesian illustrators depict pandemic stories through children's perspectives and reveals the reasons behind the differences between the textual and visual representations.

Differences between Text Narration and Visual Narration of the C3EC Book

The C3EC book highlights the difference in perspective between writers and illustrators. According to Ramadinoto (2021), there was a contrast in mood between the text authored by the young writers and the illustrations designed by the illustrators. The textual narratives often conveyed a negative mood, while the illustrations generally conveyed a positive mood (Ramadinoto 2021). Most writers wrote stories reflecting negative emotions, particularly during the pandemic when they experienced unpleasant events. The writers expressed these emotions by narrating the main character's conflicts and negative feelings, while the illustrators depicted the main character with positive emotions. Ramadinoto (2021) revealed that 56% of the narrative texts focused on the children's challenges with online learning and limited playing time. The climax phase expressed about 25% of school-related problems and 28% sadness-related issues. The writers focused on the struggles, problems, and sadness children experienced. Meanwhile, illustrators preferred to portray positive imagery. The illustration in the C3EC book showed that 51% of the characters appeared happy and 8% appeared sad.

Gustav Freytag's narrative structure divides the textual story into five parts: exposition, rising action (or conflict), climax, falling action, and resolution. The exposition introduces the characters and setting, establishing the story's world. The rising action or conflict phase expresses the story's problems, conflicts, or obstacles. The climax is the turning point, where the conflict peaks and creates high tension. The falling action winds down the tension leading to the story's resolution. The final phase, resolution or denouement, concludes the story and any remaining conflicts are fully resolved (Kardari et al. 2023). Illustrators avoided depicting the struggle, emotions, or tension present in the exposition, conflict, or climax phases. Instead, they focused on the resolution phase, where the characters have successfully adapted. For example, the story "Ngan Cicing di Bumi (Stay at Home)" tells the story of a boy who becomes frustrated and bored during the third week of distance learning. During the month of Ramadan,

his unhappiness grows as he is unable to have an afternoon snack. Over time, he adapts to the pandemic situation, finds new activities, and becomes more grateful. In this story, the illustrator depicted the boy playing guitar at home with a smiling face, symbolising his emotional adaptation and the resolution of his earlier struggles.

The illustrator did not depict a bored and unhappy boy but drew a smiling male character enjoying music. Supporting visual elements, such as snacks, drinks, café lights, and windows with leaves, contributed to a positive mood and relaxed atmosphere. Based on colour theory (Eiseman 2017), the colours chosen have warm tones with dim lights around the character, which create a comfortable and safe atmosphere. According to Chen et al. (2022), warm colours have a positive effect on concentration and relaxation. However, in the real world, the COVID-19 pandemic is not safe and comfortable for children.

In another title, “Kisahku Selama Pandemi COVID-19,” the story follows a 13-year-old girl named Yuki who struggled to access online lessons due to financial constraints preventing her from purchasing internet data credit. She needed to visit her uncle and aunt’s house to access Wi-Fi. She also faced difficulties because the online system required her to study alone. One day, Yuki and her friend encountered a violent incident when returning from her uncle’s house. This incident limited her ability to go outside. The violence was resolved peacefully through the active role of the Women and Children’s Solidarity Organisation. Yuki and her friend sold ice to buy internet data credit, helped their family with household activities, and even sewed masks. At the end of the story, Yuki invited the reader to stay healthy and not leave the house to respect the doctors and nurses handling the pandemic virus.

Based on the story, the illustrator depicted a happy girl weaving “ikat” cloth. The woven fabric showcased scenes of Yuki engaged in various activities, such as smiling while walking and displaying optimistic expressions while selling ice. Despite her challenges, the illustrator depicted a cheerful character of Yuki’s life during the pandemic. The warm colours and playful illustrations show a hopeful tone, contrasting with the struggles Yuki faced in the story. While the illustrations might not directly depict Yuki’s challenges and difficulties, they show her resilience and creativity in overcoming COVID-19. The resilience and creativity can be seen in the activities carried out by Yuki. Yuki did not just stay at home and do the homework like most children, but she was productive in making ikat clothes. Yuki tried to solve her problems, facing the pandemic and the difficulty of not having Wi-Fi.

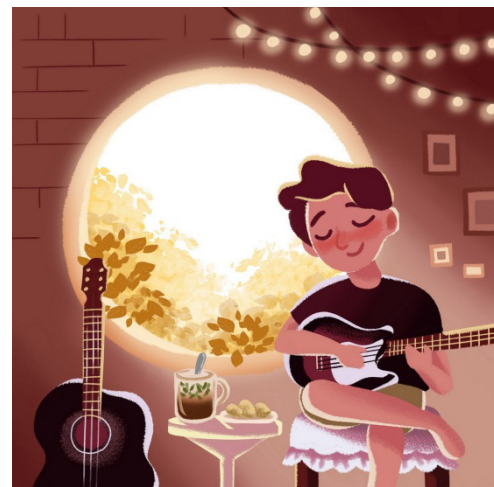


Figure 1 Illustration of “Ngan Cicing on Earth (Stay at Home)”

Source: Illustrated by Yosephine Chandra Melinda



Figure 2 Illustration of “Kisahku Selama Pandemi COVID-19”

Source: Illustrated by Samantha T. M. D. Sitompul

Nikiforidou and Doni (2022) discovered that children could understand various aspects of the pandemic in the stories, including the physical characteristics of the virus, human health and routines, and emotional states. In “Kisahku Selama Pandemi COVID-19,” however, the illustrator did not illustrate the incident or difficult experiences faced by the character during the pandemic, such as learning difficulties, lack of Wi-Fi access, and violence. Instead, the illustrator focused on depicting the character’s positive activities and happy expressions, which contradicts the textual narrative mood.

According to the interviews with the illustrators, the use of warm colours and Indonesian cultural elements in the illustrations created a positive impression on their readers. The readers said warm colours have energetic, attractive, and hopeful feelings, and the cultural elements create creativity, national identity, and spirituality. These elements enabled readers to feel close and connected to the scenes and characters in the illustrations, allowing them to use the book as a reference for developing resilience. Colours can manipulate the eyes and mind. The warm colours, such as red, orange, and yellow, grab attention and evoke optimism and joy (Wahidiyat, 2021). Cultural elements like batik ornament and ikat ornament also carry a value that can convey spirituality, hope, power, and adaptation (Tresnadi and Sachari 2015; Widagdo et al. 2021).

The illustrators of C3EC came from various regions in Indonesia. They were encouraged to incorporate elements of tradition and culture in their illustrations to highlight the values of nationality and ethnic identity from each region. Furthermore, the illustrations did not depict the virus, a crucial visual element of the pandemic’s rhetoric. This omission contributed to the contradiction between the story’s illustrations and title, as well as the depiction of human routines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Illustrator’s Tendency to Choose Positive Characters and the Resolution Phase

The illustrators tended to choose positive characters and resolution phases in their illustrations. This tendency can be attributed to various factors, including differences in creative freedom between writers and illustrators, the perceived role of illustrations in conveying stories or messages, the illustrator’s educational backgrounds and cultural values, and their responsibilities. Some of the reasons are as follows.

Creative Constraints and Freedom in Illustration

Illustrators were limited to depicting certain narrative elements or scenes. There was a difference in creative freedom between writers and illustrators, which caused differences in mood tendencies. The writer was free to write anything honestly; therefore, the textual story became a realistic narrative. Writers were given complete freedom of expression, whereas illustrators were limited in their freedom. The illustrator was limited to the author’s story and had to choose only one part for illustration. So, the illustration used sequential art or rhetorical art for the visual approach. Some narratives can be illustrated, while others cannot, and some are considered an illustrator’s priority. Illustrators were limited to depicting narrative elements or scenes. Some narrative elements were considered crucial for visual depiction (sexual harassment, sickness, or frustration), whereas others might be more flexible. Illustrators had to choose which parts of the textual narrative to illustrate, significantly shorter texts in which details might be less explicit (Batic and Haramija 2015). Fortunately, the illustrator had the freedom to choose the narrative to illustrate.

The Role of Illustration in Shaping Children's Emotions

At the complex level, illustrators were responsible for depicting positive visuals aligned with children's worlds. Several studies highlighted that illustrations affect children's moods (Al-Hinaai 2021). The book appealed to readers and considered their emotions while reading. This book aimed to motivate readers to stay optimistic, while the illustrator aimed to inspire children by depicting their joy. Irony in illustrations can create a semantic dissonance between text and image, leading to more intricate interpretations (Dueñas-Lorente 2022). This interpretation aligns with the practices of previous authors who enhanced their books with appealing pictures and illustrations to capture the reader's attention. A good illustration stimulates imagination, enhances perception, and develops children's potential. However, unrealistic illustrations can be harmful to children's minds. It is unsafe for children to imitate characters with negative attitudes and traits (Al-Hinaai 2021).

Illustrations as Tools for Moral and Cognitive Development

Illustrations play a crucial role in captivating readers and reshaping their perspectives. They significantly affect the conveyed message and can alter our understanding of the text by providing additional information about the characters, setting, time, mood, events, and the subjective reality that the text may not mention. Illustrations can also change a text's meaning, as Batic and Haramija (2015) noted. In published books, visuals should inspire readers, rather than bring them down. However, illustrators may encounter challenges when an author's manuscript does not have a happy ending, especially if it is intended for children. Children's moral development involves the cognitive-emotional process of internalising and harmonising external moral values and subjective value criteria to determine what is right or wrong. According to Hanesová (2021), the concepts of good and evil are fundamental pillars of children's morality, focusing heavily on moral behaviour and judgement. Childhood experiences can affect children's mental health and lay the foundation for their health in adulthood; they should have pleasant experiences (McMellon and MacLachlan 2021).

Influence of Educational Background and Visual Grammar

Illustrators' educational backgrounds, preferences, and experiences play a crucial role in their visual grammar when translating children's writing into illustrations. According to Batic and Haramija (2015), knowledge of the basics of art theory, such as visual art elements, art composition methods, art techniques, and their expressive potential, is essential for a comprehensive understanding of texts and illustrations. Furthermore, KIBA ITB's education approach influences the illustrator's visual styles. KIBA ITB provided a list of illustrators and illustration references from children's books on multiple occasions. As a result, illustrators unconsciously followed and duplicated the reference's visual style. KIBA ITB illustrators tended to illustrate positive characters and rarely depicted negative characters. This depiction aligns with the statement that illustrators with an art and design background tend to choose positive characters and the resolution phase (Kardari et al. 2023) in their illustrations because they understand design principles, colour theory, and composition and use them to create visually appealing illustrations that convey a positive message to the reader.

Reasoning to Choose Positive Characters and the Resolution Phase

The illustrators had a sense of responsibility as adults. Values and culture significantly impact a person's behaviour and actions. Discursive disagreements between text and illustrations, expressed from different points of view adopted by different codes, can cause mistrust in the

reader and affect plot development. The images function as various representations of events, requiring readers to infer the illustration's contribution to the story's overall meaning (Dueñas-Lorente 2022). As an older individual, the illustrator felt a sense of responsibility to provide motivation, encouragement, and solutions for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. They believed they must help the child readers to prevent and mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic. Therefore, the illustrator chose to highlight positive characters and emotions.

Based on the illustrator's interviews, the responsibility stemmed from the perspective of the Indonesian belief system, where disasters are not seen as black-and-white realities, unlike in the western worldview. Indonesians believe in positivity and harmony; even in sadness, there must be happiness. Indonesians also prefer decorative elements, ornaments, and dynamic balance (Tabrani 2011). The illustrators captured this belief system, drawing inspiration to transform reality into creativity. The illustrator needed to transform it because they recognised that the textual narrative or the manuscript of the C3EC book reflected the real-life experiences of the writers. The reality experiences were negative, sad, and passive, but the illustrators felt a responsibility to show the positive emotions and motivation. Therefore, the illustrator had to be creative in choosing part of the manuscript, the characters, and the mood colours of the illustration. Illustration-positive activities, such as weaving, winning competitions, making masks, cooking croquettes, and praying, exemplified the illustrator's values, culture, and responsibilities during the pandemic.

Most illustrators in C3EC prioritised positive gestures and expressions in the characters. While negative characters might have been used to create humorous impressions, positive characters were chosen to inspire and motivate children, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The characters were role models for children, promoting good behaviours and positive attitudes. The illustrator aimed to create illustrations that motivate children to engage in new activities despite the challenges of adjusting to new routines. Additionally, the illustrators depicted positive activities in the story as enjoyable. Many illustrators chose the resolution or ending phase, as these often offered a sense of hope, summarised the narrative, and were easier to visualise. The characters and illustrations in the resolution phase could inspire optimism in readers and encourage them to adopt similar problem-solving strategies.

The illustrator's preferences for positive characters and happy endings were rooted in their desire to inspire and motivate child readers to confront difficult situations positively. They believed that children's books should evoke happy feelings and endings that leave a strong impression on the reader's mind, allowing the story's main message to be understood. A happy ending also offers a sense of relief and satisfaction, which could help children cope with worry and anxiety and learn from the story. Ultimately, the illustrators of the C3EC book hoped that their illustrations would help readers empathise with the author, understand the story's message, appreciate the story's setting, and experience gratitude and happiness.

Creative Process of Intervention in The Story

Each illustrator had their own way of designing visual narratives or transforming texts into images. The illustrators needed to convert the negative reality presented in the manuscript into positive creativity in the illustrations. Therefore, they decided to intervene in the manuscript during the design process. Illustrators needed to understand where and when they could intervene in the manuscript. This study revealed that, within the design process, illustrators could intervene at three stages: early intervention, intervention point, and follow-up intervention. These stages correspond to the summary, scene selection, and sketch drawing stages. The following are the creative intervention processes that illustrators incorporated into their design process.

Reading and Understanding the Context

Illustrators first had to read the text to understand its context and gain visual inspiration. In this process, the illustrator acted not only as a visualiser but also as a reader. When reading the script, they needed to comprehend the plot and content of the story while exploring the character's world. They imagined the memorable moments the author experienced and sought to understand the emotions the author felt during the pandemic. Reading the C3EC manuscripts elicited various responses, including feelings, thoughts, and observations. The manuscripts were considered interesting due to their children's perspectives, and the illustrators enjoyed being told stories from a child's point of view. These stories also evoked nostalgia for life before the pandemic, reminding the illustrators of their childhood and the many activities they had engaged in.

Some illustrators visualised images as soon as they read the scripts, with a few even imagining potential storyboards. Many sympathised with the children's experiences, ranging from happiness and sadness to amazement and playfulness, all while being stuck at home. At this stage, illustrators could not make any interventions.

Script Summarisation (Early Intervention)

This stage helped illustrators determine the emotions and activities of the characters, along with their meanings. When summarising a script, illustrators often sought to associate the story with the experiences and emotions felt by people during the pandemic. This process aimed to connect the reader and the visual narrative. All the illustrator's thoughts and associations were recorded on paper, and metaphors were developed for each story paragraph. At this stage, illustrators could make early interventions. These interventions were still imaginary and rough, and whether they would be used was unclear. The interventions were primarily in the form of metaphors.

Scene Selection and Reference Gathering (Intervention Point)

The key consideration for illustrators was selecting which parts of a story to illustrate. Typically, they chose enjoyable and memorable sections, depicted positive activities, and effectively represented the entire story. However, some illustrators preferred to illustrate the story in its entirety, believing this approach allowed them to more fully convey the character's plot, circumstances, and emotions. When selecting specific parts of the script, the illustrators of the C3EC books had the opportunity to intervene in the narrative by emphasising a positive mood and focusing on the resolution phase. Additionally, illustrators could introduce engaging ironies by highlighting contradictions between the text and the illustrations. According to Nodelman in Batic and Haramija (2015), words and pictures should maintain a dynamic and complementary relationship. The illustrator could guide the reader's attention by altering their perspective and focus, an approach that could highlight events not explicitly mentioned in the text.

Collecting references was a crucial part of an illustrator's process. Illustrators sought references to explore their ideas further, as these could strengthen concepts and add details that might be overlooked. References could include photographs of the environment, storybooks, or illustrations depicting pandemic conditions. Illustrators required references for themes, settings, characters, and cultural elements. Theme references inspired illustrators to incorporate details of events, such as activities, feelings, and moods, experienced during the pandemic. The illustrator aimed to create an impression of events as if unfolding before the main character's eyes.

Setting references, including landscapes of places and atmospheric details, helped illustrators craft a visually authentic narrative for the reader. Character references often came from photographs of the author's face, body proportions, gestures, and expressions, all of which were adjusted to match the age of the story's characters. Cultural elements were particularly significant for Indonesian illustrators, who considered these details integral to their work. These elements added visual authenticity and accuracy, making the settings easily relatable and understood by readers. Traditional elements such as cultural backgrounds, traditional carvings, and batik were referenced in their illustrations.

In the "My Story During the COVID-19 Pandemic" manuscript, the illustrators chose the resolution phase, which concludes the story's ending, for several reasons. They avoided depicting the violence experienced during the pandemic, as it could evoke fear in child readers. Instead, the illustrators sought other parts of the story script that could provide engaging and comforting illustrations for children, aiming to motivate and inspire them during the pandemic.

Developing Alternative Sketches and Visual Narratives (Follow-up Intervention)

Draw the alternative sketches (follow-up intervention). The illustrator created several alternative sketches on paper and explored a visual grammar or narrative based on the story. Some illustrators drew inspiration from Ruang Waktu Datar Theory, preferring to depict multiple activities within a single illustration. The C3EC illustrators could utilise rhetorical illustrations and contrasting text and image elements. Visual grammar refers to the symbolic systems and visual structures that illustrators use to convey meaning, such as colour choices, composition, character expressions, and cultural symbols.

Meanwhile, rhetorical illustration refers to illustrations that do not literally represent text, but instead use visual metaphors or contrasts to reinforce the emotional message or main idea of the story. This was a trial-and-error phase, during which the best sketch was selected as the benchmark for the final illustration. Illustrators needed to intervene creatively in negative stories to transform them into positive narratives, particularly when addressing themes such as pandemics, death, or illness. Although the themes were inherently negative, the illustrators aimed to provide relief and a sense of a happy ending for readers. One method for achieving this shift in tone was to intervene in the text by presenting a visual narrative imbued with a positive mood. This intervention process often occurs when selecting parts of the story to illustrate.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the reasons behind the differences between textual and visual narratives in the children's book *Cerita Ceritaku Ceritamu Corona Edition (C3CE)*, which documents children's experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The methods employed in this study helped reveal and explain contradictions within the visual narrative, considering both the illustration as an artwork and the illustrator as the creator. These methods address a research gap, as many existing design studies focus solely on the visual aspects of the illustration, using visual analysis, semiotics, rhetoric, or sequential image analysis. Few studies discuss the creator's or illustrator's perspective, especially the illustrator's intervention process. As illustrated in Figure 3, this study revealed that a combination of personal preferences, cultural perspectives, and a desire to inspire resilience contributed to the prevalence of positive imagery and resolution-focused narratives by investigating the factors influencing the illustrator's choices. These findings underscore the complex relationship between text and image in children's literature and highlight the potential impact of illustrations on young readers' emotional responses and interpretations of stories.

The selection of positive characters and resolution phases in C3EC books was influenced by various factors, including the illustrator's preference, experience, and desire to create a positive impact. The academic background of illustrators also affected their visual interpretations of the children's narratives. The selection of positive characters and resolution phases is necessary to ensure a happy ending, aligning with Indonesian cultural perspectives on adversity and aimed at inspiring and motivating young readers. The "rainbow after the storm" concept is embedded in Indonesian culture, suggesting the possibility of overcoming challenges and finding hope.

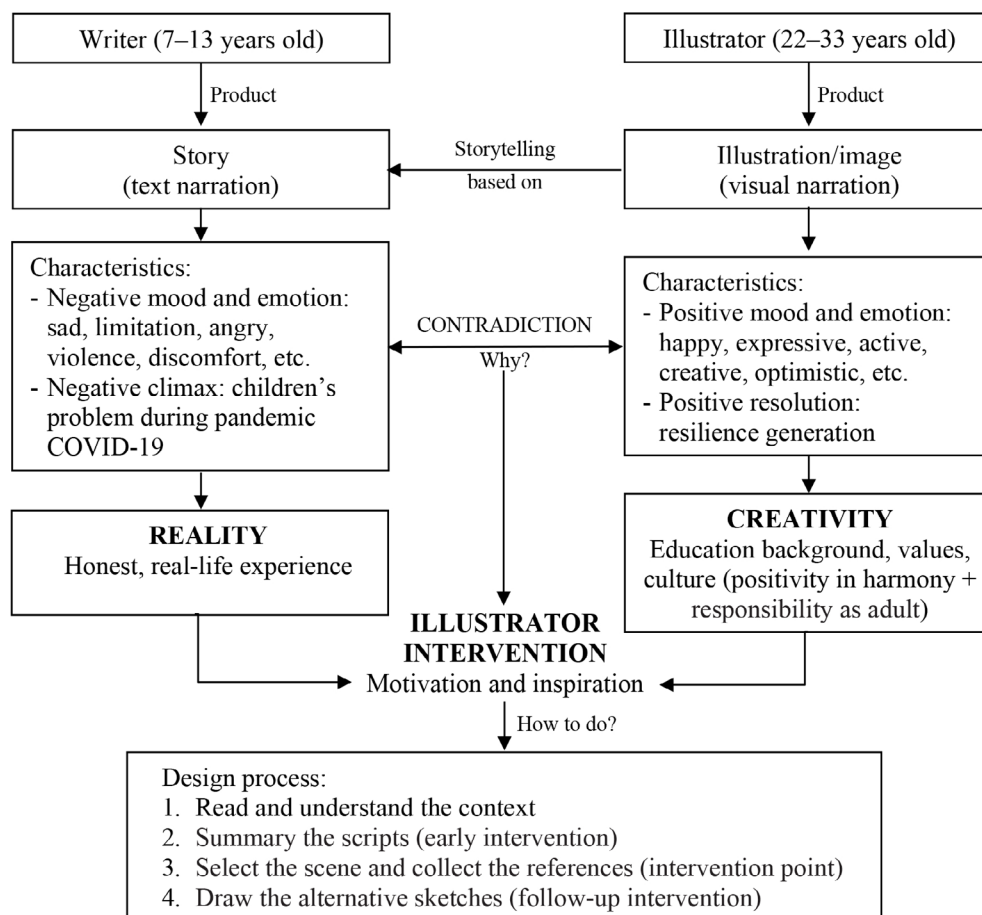


Figure 3 Illustrator positive intervention diagram

The illustrator can intervene in the design process to motivate children to build resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Illustrators can intervene at three stages: early intervention, intervention points, and follow-up intervention. These interventions offer an alternative approach to depicting complex themes such as pandemics, death, and disease. This technique can captivate young readers and enhance their understanding of complex issues. Illustrators can creatively use contrasting visuals to evoke emotions and foster a more profound comprehension of challenging topics. This approach has the potential to positively impact children's emotional well-being and cultivate a lifelong love of reading. This research has opened up discourse from the illustrator's point of view rather than the reader's, suggesting that further research is needed to describe the reader's perspective.

The data obtained from this study indicate that the intervention process by illustrators can add value to visual works, particularly in creating more cohesive and meaningful narratives. These findings can guide designers to pay attention to the collaborative process in visual production. The result of this study can also help identify common challenges faced by illustrators, providing

opportunities to develop more effective training or methods. By understanding how illustrators make decisions during the design process, this study can improve the design education curricula, aligning them more closely with industry needs.

The main contribution of this study is to highlight the creative perspective and process of illustrators as important actors in children's books. The study highlights how illustrators not only translate texts but also add layers of meaning through visual interventions that are therapeutic and cultural. For future research, it is recommended to explore the reader's responses to the differences in mood between text and illustration, as well as cross-cultural comparisons to see how illustrators from other countries respond to crisis themes such as the pandemic or disease.

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