The Convergence of Graphic Communication and Animation in Digital Media

Khurul 'Ain Binti Mahasan*, Liyana Binti Mohd Ramly, Noor Afzaliza Nazira Binti Ibrahim

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia

***Corresponding Author**

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100900513

Received: 23 September 2026; Accepted: 29 September 2026; Published: 15 October 2026

ABSTRACT

Digital media increasingly combines graphic communication and animation in motion graphics, animated typography, digital storytelling, social media content and online video. This conceptual paper examines how these domains converge in contemporary digital media and proposes the Graphic-Animation Convergence Framework (GACF). An integrative literature review was conducted using scholarly sources published mainly from 2020 to 2026, with an earlier methodological source retained for conceptual research guidance. Searches used combinations of terms related to graphic communication, visual communication design, motion graphics, animation, digital storytelling, digital production and artificial intelligence (AI). Sources were screened for relevance to visual communication, animation, creative production and design education. The synthesis identified six recurring components: graphic communication, visual storytelling, animation fundamentals, animation content, content production and dynamic digital content. Graphic communication establishes the visual foundation through typography, colour, composition, imagery and hierarchy. Visual storytelling connects these elements to messages and sequences, while animation introduces movement, timing, rhythm and transformation. Content production integrates these elements into outputs for contemporary digital platforms. Digital tools and emerging AI are positioned as an enabling layer across the framework rather than as a separate stage. The conceptual contribution of GACF lies in explicitly integrating these previously connected but commonly separated strands into one model and in clarifying the progression from foundational visual principles to dynamic digital outputs. The framework is bounded to digital communication contexts where visual design, storytelling and time-based media intersect and requires future empirical validation through expert evaluation, case studies and educational or professional applications across different digital contexts.

Keywords: graphic communication, animation, visual storytelling, motion graphics, digital media

INTRODUCTION

Digital media has expanded visual communication from predominantly static artefacts to dynamic, time-based and increasingly interactive content. Graphic communication remains grounded in typography, colour, composition, layout, imagery and visual hierarchy, but these elements are now routinely combined with movement in motion graphics, animated typography, digital storytelling, social media content and online video [1]–[6]. This convergence changes the communicative role of the visual element: a graphic is no longer necessarily a fixed composition but can also move, transform, appear sequentially and respond to a digital context.

The convergence is reinforced by integrated digital production workflows. Contemporary visual communication increasingly operates across multiple platforms, while motion design extends graphic principles into temporal behaviour [2]–[6]. Recent work in animation education also emphasises interactive narratives and multidimensional digital production, indicating that visual, narrative and technical competencies are becoming increasingly interconnected [8]. At the same time, AI-supported tools are entering graphic design and animation workflows through ideation, image generation, visual development and production assistance [9]–[14]. These

developments do not remove the need for design knowledge; rather, they increase the importance of judgement about communication purpose, visual quality, authorship and audience.

Despite this convergence in practice, the literature is commonly organised by disciplinary strands. Studies of graphic design focus on visual principles and digital design education [1], [2]; motion-design studies emphasise movement, timing and visual communication [3], [5], [6]; digital storytelling research foregrounds narrative and interaction [8]; and AI research examines technology-supported creative production [9]–[14]. The conceptual problem is therefore not the absence of knowledge about these individual areas, but the lack of a concise model showing how they relate to one another in contemporary digital content production.

Accordingly, this paper examines the convergence of graphic communication and animation in contemporary digital media and asks: How have graphic communication and animation converged in contemporary digital media? Following the model-building orientation of conceptual research [15], the paper synthesises the relevant strands and proposes the Graphic-Animation Convergence Framework (GACF). The framework is not presented as an established theory. Its contribution is instead to organise established concepts into an explicit cross-domain relationship, clarify the role of visual storytelling as a conceptual bridge, and position digital tools and emerging AI as an enabling layer across the process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Graphic Communication as a Visual Foundation

Graphic communication organises visual elements such as typography, colour, composition, imagery, layout and hierarchy to communicate meaning. Digital technology has expanded these principles across websites, social media, video and interactive media, requiring visual systems to operate consistently across different platforms [1], [2], [4]. This literature supports the first proposition of GACF: graphic communication provides the foundational visual structure from which more dynamic forms of communication can be developed.

Motion Design and Animation as Temporal Communication

Animation adds time and movement to visual communication. Motion design applies graphic principles to temporal behaviour through timing, rhythm, transition, transformation and sequencing [3], [5], [6]. Kinetic typography and motion-graphic studies further demonstrate how typography, imagery and layout can be transformed into moving elements without losing their communicative function [7], [17]. Thus, animation is treated in GACF not simply as an effect added after design, but as a temporal extension of visual communication.

Visual Storytelling as the Conceptual Bridge

Visual storytelling provides the bridge between visual structure and temporal communication because it organises individual elements into messages, sequences or narratives. In digital environments, storytelling may combine text, images, movement, sound and interaction [8]. This function explains why GACF places visual storytelling between graphic communication and animation fundamentals. The placement is conceptual rather than procedural: storytelling supplies communicative direction, while animation supplies temporal behaviour.

Digital Production and Emerging AI

Digital production integrates conceptual planning, storyboarding, asset development, animation, editing and post-production. Multi-platform design and motion-design research indicate that these activities increasingly overlap within digital workflows [3], [4]. AI adds another layer to this environment. Studies of graphic design education and creative production report applications in ideation, image generation, visual development and animation support [9]–[14]. However, the literature also stresses critical evaluation and human judgement when AI-generated material is used in design education and practice [10]–[12]. A recent review of AI in graphic design similarly identifies AI as both an automation mechanism and a support for creative processes [14]. GACF therefore treats digital tools and AI as enabling technologies that can support several components rather than as an additional stage that replaces human design decisions. Research mapping in graphic design education also indicates continuing intersections among design education, technology and emerging research themes [18].

Conceptual Gap and Theoretical Positioning

The theoretical positioning of GACF is deliberately modest. The framework does not introduce a new theory of graphic design or animation, nor does it claim that movement, storytelling or digital production are individually novel. Instead, it adopts a conceptual model-building approach in which existing constructs are synthesised to explain a relationship that is fragmented across disciplinary literature [15]. The novelty lies in the explicit architecture of the relationship: graphic communication is treated as the visual foundation; visual storytelling as the meaning-making bridge; animation fundamentals as temporal extension; animation content as the combined form; content production as integration; and dynamic digital content as the resulting output. Digital tools and emerging AI are placed across these components as an enabling layer. This positioning differentiates GACF from studies that examine only one component or one technology.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a conceptual research design using an integrative literature review. The design was selected because the research objective is to synthesise fragmented knowledge and develop a conceptual model rather than estimate an effect, test a hypothesis or collect primary data. Jaakkola [15] argues that conceptual articles require an explicit research design and a clear explanation of how literature is used to construct the conceptual contribution. Snyder [16] similarly identifies literature review as a methodology for building and integrating knowledge across a research domain.

The search covered literature published from January 2020 to September 2026, while the 2020 conceptual-methodology paper by Jaakkola was retained because it directly informs the design of the present conceptual study. Search strings combined terms from four clusters: (1) graphic communication and visual communication design; (2) motion graphics, animation and kinetic typography; (3) digital storytelling and digital production; and (4) AI, graphic design education and animation production. Examples included “graphic communication” AND animation, “visual communication design” AND “motion graphics”, “motion graphics” AND storytelling, “digital storytelling” AND animation education, “AI” AND graphic design education, and “AI” AND animation production.

The selected literature was analysed through thematic comparison. Recurring concepts were identified within individual sources and compared across the literature to determine common functions, relationships and areas of convergence. Six concepts were retained because they represented distinct but connected roles in explaining the convergence of graphic communication and animation: graphic communication, visual storytelling, animation fundamentals, animation content, content production and dynamic digital content. These relationships were then organised into the GACF. Digital tools and emerging AI were positioned as an enabling layer across the framework rather than as an additional sequential component.

Sources were included when they were scholarly publications addressing at least one of the following: graphic or visual communication, motion graphics, animation, visual storytelling, digital production, design education, or AI-assisted creative production. Sources were excluded when they were non-scholarly web materials, unrelated technical AI studies, or publications without a clear connection to visual communication, animation or creative production. The final conceptual corpus comprised 18 sources selected for their relevance to the research question and their usefulness in explaining the relationships represented in the GACF. The selected sources were treated as a conceptual evidence base rather than a statistical sample. Because the search process was iterative and intended to support conceptual model development, the study does not claim exhaustive retrieval and does not use PRISMA-style screening counts or a PRISMA flow diagram.

Stage	Procedure	Output
1. Scope definition	Defined the phenomenon as the convergence of graphic communication and animation in contemporary digital media; set the main publication window at 2020–2026.	Conceptual boundaries and research focus
2. Search	Combined terms covering graphic communication, motion graphics, animation, storytelling, digital production and AI.	Candidate scholarly literature

3. Relevance screening	Retained sources directly related to visual communication, animation, creative production or design education; excluded unrelated or non-scholarly material.	18-source conceptual corpus
4. Thematic synthesis	Coded recurring concepts and relationships across the selected literature.	Six recurring GACF components plus enabling layer
5. Model construction	Organised the components into a conceptual progression and compared the resulting structure with the literature.	Researcher-developed GACF
6. Boundary and validation analysis	Identified contexts in which the model is most applicable and specified empirical routes for future testing.	Scope conditions and validation pathway

Table 1. Literature Identification, Selection and Conceptual Synthesis Process Used to Develop the GACF. The table summarises the concept-driven stages used to identify relevant literature, screen sources for conceptual relevance, synthesise recurring concepts, construct the framework, and establish its boundary conditions and future validation pathway.

FINDINGS

The synthesis identified a coherent conceptual relationship between foundational visual communication and dynamic digital outputs. The relationship is not presented as a mandatory production workflow; rather, it shows how different forms of knowledge and activity can be connected when static visual principles are extended into time-based digital communication.

Graphic-Animation Convergence Framework

The GACF contains six connected components. First, Graphic Communication establishes the visual foundation through typography, colour, composition, imagery, layout and hierarchy [1], [2]. Second, Visual Storytelling organises these visual resources into messages, sequences or narratives [8]. Third, Animation Fundamentals introduce temporal behaviour through movement, timing, rhythm, transition and transformation [3], [5]–[7]. Fourth, Animation Content represents the combination of visual and temporal elements in forms such as motion graphics, animated typography, animated illustration and digital storytelling [3], [5], [7]. Fifth, Content Production integrates planning, asset development, animation, editing and post-production [3], [4]. Sixth, Dynamic Digital Content represents outputs distributed through social media, digital advertising, online video, digital campaigns and other interactive or platform-based contexts.

The conceptual progression is therefore: Graphic Communication → Visual Storytelling → Animation Fundamentals → Animation Content → Content Production → Dynamic Digital Content. The broader Digital Media Environment surrounds the progression. Digital tools and emerging AI form an enabling layer across the framework, supporting visual development, asset creation, animation and production [9]–[14]. This configuration resolves an important consistency issue in the earlier model: AI is not treated as a final stage because it can intervene at multiple points, while the six components represent distinct conceptual functions.

Literature strand	What existing literature explains	GACF contribution
Graphic/visual communication	Visual elements, hierarchy, composition, multi-platform communication and design education [1], [2], [4].	Defines the visual foundation of the model.
Motion design/kinetic typography	Movement, timing, rhythm, transition and the extension of graphic elements into time [3], [5]–[7].	Explains the temporal extension from static to moving communication.
Digital storytelling	Narrative, sequence, interaction and the organisation of visual elements around meaning [8].	Functions as the conceptual bridge between visual form and temporal communication.

AI-supported design/animation	Ideation, image generation, creative support, animation assistance and critical human evaluation [9]–[14].	Positions AI and digital tools as enabling technologies across the framework.
GACF	The individual strands are commonly examined separately.	Makes their relationships explicit in one cross-domain conceptual model.

Table 2. Literature Strands and Their Contribution to the GACF. The table summarises the major literature strands reviewed, the concepts they explain, and how each strand contributes to the proposed cross-domain framework.

The framework also has an educational implication. It suggests that foundational visual communication knowledge can support the development of animation and dynamic-content competencies because students must transfer principles of hierarchy, typography, composition and visual meaning into temporal contexts. This interpretation is consistent with recent work describing changes in graphic design education under digital technology and AI [1], [9], [10], [12]. Importantly, the framework does not imply that animation is merely an advanced form of graphic design; animation has its own principles and technical knowledge. The proposed relationship is complementary: graphic communication contributes visual structure, while animation contributes temporal behaviour and production logic.

GACF Component	Conceptual Function	Contribution to Convergence
Graphic Communication	Establishes visual foundations through typography, colour, composition, imagery, layout and hierarchy.	Provides the visual structure from which time-based communication can develop.
Visual Storytelling	Connects visual elements to message, sequence and narrative.	Provides the communicative bridge between static visual resources and temporal content.
Animation Fundamentals	Introduces movement, timing, rhythm, transition and transformation.	Extends visual communication across time.
Animation Content	Combines graphic and temporal elements in forms such as motion graphics, animated typography and animated illustration.	Transforms visual principles into moving communication forms.
Content Production	Integrates planning, asset development, animation, editing and post-production.	Brings visual, narrative and temporal elements together into producible digital content.
Dynamic Digital Content	Represents outputs distributed through social media, advertising, online video, digital campaigns and interactive media.	Connects the integrated visual-animation process to contemporary digital communication environments.

Table 3. Conceptual Components and Functions of the Graphic-Animation Convergence Framework (GACF). The table summarises the six interconnected components, their conceptual functions, and their contribution to the convergence of graphic communication and animation.

Literature Theme	GACF Component	Role in Convergence
Typography, colour, composition, imagery, layout and visual hierarchy [1], [2]	Graphic Communication	Establishes the visual foundation.
Message, narrative, sequence and digital storytelling [9]	Visual Storytelling	Connects visual resources to communicative meaning and sequence.
Movement, timing, rhythm, transition and kinetic behaviour [3], [5]–[7]	Animation Fundamentals	Introduces temporal behaviour into visual communication.

Motion graphics, kinetic typography and animated visual forms [3], [5], [7]	Animation Content	Represents the combination of visual and temporal elements.
Planning, asset development, animation, editing and digital production [3], [4]	Content Production	Integrates the conceptual components into production activities.
Social media, digital advertising, online video and interactive media	Dynamic Digital Content	Represents the digital outputs in which graphic-animation convergence is applied.
AI-supported ideation, image generation and animation production [10]–[14]	Enabling layer across GACF	Supports multiple stages without becoming a separate sequential component.

Table 4. Literature-Derived Conceptual Relationships Supporting the GACF Components. The table shows how recurring themes in the selected literature informed the six GACF components and the cross-framework enabling role of digital tools and emerging AI.

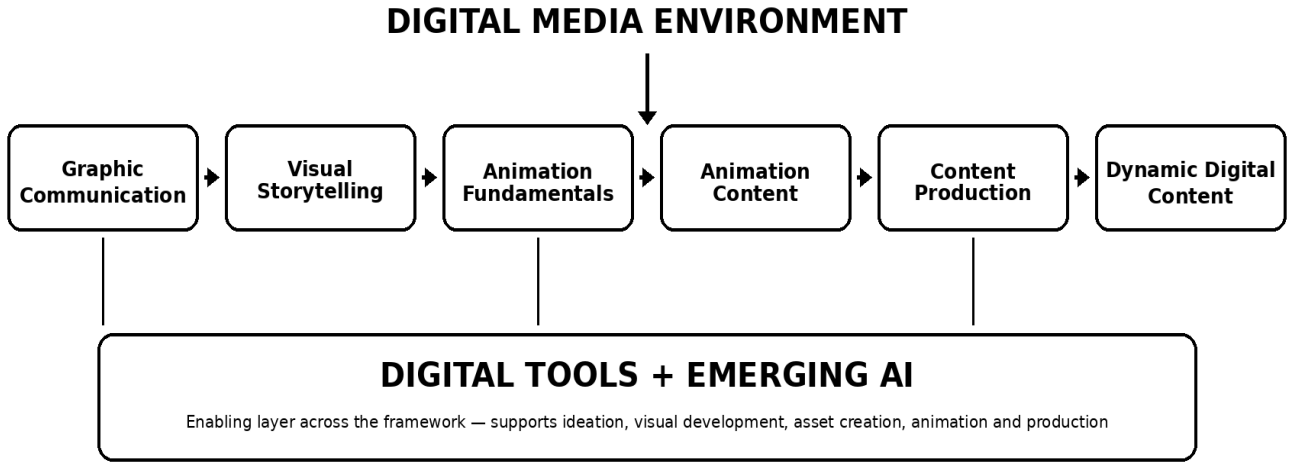


Figure 1. Graphic-Animation Convergence Framework (GACF).

Note: Arrows indicate conceptual progression rather than a rigid production workflow. Digital tools and emerging AI operate as an enabling layer across the framework.

DISCUSSION

The principal conceptual contribution of GACF is integration. Existing literature already establishes the importance of graphic communication, motion design, storytelling, digital production and AI-supported creative work [1]–[14]. The contribution of this paper is to specify how these established areas can be related within a single explanatory structure. In this sense, GACF is best understood as a conceptual synthesis rather than a new substantive theory. This distinction strengthens the novelty claim because it avoids suggesting that the individual components or principles were previously unknown.

The framework also clarifies the role of visual storytelling. In many discussions, graphic design and animation are linked directly through motion. GACF inserts storytelling as a meaning-oriented bridge. This means that movement is not treated only as an aesthetic enhancement; it is connected to sequence, message and audience interpretation [8]. The relationship helps explain why the same graphic asset can function differently when it is organised into a temporal sequence, animated for emphasis, or integrated into a larger digital narrative.

A second implication concerns production. The framework recognises that convergence is not achieved only at the level of visual form. It also occurs in production activities such as concept development, storyboarding, asset creation, animation, editing and post-production [3], [4]. This makes GACF relevant to contemporary digital content in which designers and animators increasingly share tools, assets and production stages. The model can therefore be used as a conceptual map for discussing cross-disciplinary workflows, curriculum relationships and the development of dynamic digital communication.

AI should remain an enabling layer rather than the centre of the framework. Current literature indicates that AI can support ideation, image generation, design development and animation production [9]–[14]. At the same time, critical evaluation and human judgement remain necessary, particularly for visual consistency, communication purpose, authorship and ethical use [10]–[12]. Positioning AI across the framework therefore reflects its cross-cutting nature and prevents the model from becoming dependent on one technology that may change rapidly.

The framework has boundary conditions. It is most directly applicable to digital communication contexts in which graphic design, visual storytelling and time-based media intersect. It is less directly suited to purely static communication, highly technical animation pipelines in which production engineering is the dominant concern, or interactive and immersive environments where user agency, spatial behaviour and real-time interaction become primary variables. These conditions do not invalidate GACF; they indicate where additional constructs or feedback relationships may be required. The model should therefore be treated as adaptable rather than universal.

The framework also requires empirical validation. A first pathway would be expert evaluation involving graphic designers, animators and educators who can assess construct clarity, relationships and completeness. A second would involve case studies comparing real production workflows against the six components. A third would map curricula to determine whether the proposed progression is observable in educational programmes. A fourth could examine practitioner or student outcomes before and after using the framework as a planning or learning structure. These studies could test whether the six components are sufficiently distinct, whether the proposed direction is useful, and whether additional feedback loops are needed. Such validation is important because conceptual coherence alone cannot establish empirical applicability [15].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined how graphic communication and animation converge in contemporary digital media and proposed the Graphic-Animation Convergence Framework (GACF) as a researcher-developed conceptual model. The framework connects graphic communication, visual storytelling, animation fundamentals, animation content, content production and dynamic digital content, while positioning digital tools and emerging AI as an enabling layer. Its originality lies in making the relationships among these established domains explicit within one cross-domain structure rather than claiming novelty for the individual concepts. The model is most applicable to digital communication contexts where visual design, storytelling and time-based media intersect. Future research should validate the framework through expert evaluation, production case studies, curriculum mapping and empirical studies in educational or professional settings. These studies can determine whether the proposed relationships are observable in practice and whether the framework requires additional components or feedback relationships.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study did not involve human participants, animals, personal data or primary data collection. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

This study does not involve a primary dataset. The conceptual framework was developed through synthesis and interpretation of published literature cited in this manuscript.

REFERENCES

1. Ramli, H., Ibrahim, N., Prasetyaningrum, P. T., & Saedon, M. A. M. (2024). Graphic design and education: A systematic review on the evolution, diverse aspects, innovations in teaching methods, and interconnected changes in design. Journal of ICT in Education, 11(2), 42–54.

https://doi.org/10.37134/jictie.vol11.2.4.2024
2. Sun, Q., & Zhu, Y. (2022). Teaching analysis for visual communication design with the perspective of digital technology. Computational and Mathematical Methods in Medicine, 2022, Article 2411811. https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/2411811
3. Maselli, V., & Panadisi, G. (2022). Motion design and visual communication in the era of "diffuse design" paradigm: Analysis and evaluation of a didactic experiment. Design Science, 8, e22. https://doi.org/10.1017/dsj.2022.15
4. Macdonald, I. (2023). Window on the weather: A case study in multi-platform visual communication design, with a relationship to Design Thinking. Visual Communication, 22(2), 365–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357220948547
5. Song, G. (2021). Application of motion graphics in visual communication design. Journal of Physics: Conference Series, 1744(4), 042165. https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1744/4/042165
6. Kurteş, C., & Mercin, L. (2022). Motion graphics with fundamental principles and techniques in new media. Journal of Medeniyet Art, 8(1), 45–66. https://doi.org/10.46641/medeniyetsanat.1124925
7. Boyraz, G. (2022). A syllabus suggestion for an undergraduate kinetic typography course. Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 18(3), 113–117. https://doi.org/10.9734/arjass/2022/v18i330347
8. Lin, W. (2026). Fostering creativity through interactive digital narratives: A multidimensional learning framework for animation education. Interactive Learning Environments. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2025.2611121
9. Hwang, Y., & Wu, Y. (2025). Graphic design education in the era of text-to-image generation: Transitioning to contents creator. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 44(1), 239–253. https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12558
10. Muji, S., Svensson, E., & Faraon, M. (2024). Engaging with artificial intelligence in graphic design education. In 2023 5th International Workshop on Artificial Intelligence and Education (pp. 31–37). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/WAIE60568.2023.00013
11. Fleischmann, K. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence in graphic design education: A student perspective. Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, 50(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.21432/cjlt28618
12. Tang, Y., Guo, J., Liu, P., Wang, Z., Hua, H., Zhong, J.-X., Xiao, Y., Huang, C., Song, L., Liang, S., Song, Y., He, L., Bi, J., Feng, M., Li, X., Zhang, Z., & Xu, C. (2025). Generative AI for cel-animation: A survey. Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV) Workshops, 3837–3850. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICCVW69036.2025.00400
13. Chen, Y., Wang, Y., Yu, T., & Pan, Y. (2024). The effect of AI on animation production efficiency: An empirical investigation through the network data envelopment analysis. Electronics, 13(24), 5001. https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics13245001
14. Li, H., Xue, T., Zhang, A., Luo, X., Kong, L., & Huang, G. (2024). The application and impact of artificial intelligence technology in graphic design: A critical interpretive synthesis. Heliyon, 10(21), e40037. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e40037
15. Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: Four approaches. AMS Review, 10, 18–26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0
16. Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. Journal of Business Research, 104, 333–339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039
17. Abdul Nasir, N. I. A., Mohd Lazim, N. A., Omar, M., Mohd Muslim Tan, E., & Ishak, S. N. (2024). A visual analysis study of motion graphic effect as visual communication for mental health empowerment. Idealogy Journal, 9(2), 49–54. https://doi.org/10.24191/idealogy.v9i2.496
18. Muhaemin, M. (2025). Pemetaan tren penelitian dalam pendidikan desain grafis: Analisis bibliografi tahun 2004–2024. Nuansa Journal of Arts and Design, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.26858/njad.v9i1.73661