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"Aku Siap Bekerja" Toolkit: Enhancing Choice-Making Skills to Prepare Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities for the Transition from School to Work

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Abstract

Choice-making skills are crucial for students with mild intellectual disabilities as they prepare for the transition from school to the workforce. This study focuses on developing these skills using the "Aku Siap Bekerja" (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit, which serves as a concrete, visual, and structured learning medium. The study aims to: (1) identify the choice-making skill needs of students with mild intellectual disabilities regarding the school-to-work transition; (2) design the "Aku Siap Bekerja" Toolkit to meet these students' needs; (3) determine the toolkit's feasibility based on expert assessment; (4) assess the practicality of using the toolkit in instruction; and (5) evaluate the toolkit's effectiveness in improving the choice-making skills of students with mild intellectual disabilities. This is a Research and Development (R&D) study utilizing the 4D model, comprising the define, design, develop, and disseminate stages. The resulting product is the "Aku Siap Bekerja" Toolkit, which includes an instruction manual, an illustrated comic scenario book, choice cards, simulation cards, an assessment rubric, and a storage box. The content covers selecting suitable jobs, choosing work attire, selecting transportation to the workplace, choosing appropriate work tools, and selecting internship or work-practice locations. The research subjects consisted of high school (SMA) and special high school (SMALB) students with mild intellectual disabilities. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, expert validation questionnaires, practicality questionnaires, and pre-test/post-test assessments. Data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods, while effectiveness was tested using a paired-sample t-test. The research results indicate that: (1) students with mild intellectual

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disabilities require concrete, visual, and structured learning media to develop choice-making skills as part of their transition readiness from school to work; (2) the "Aku Siap Bekerja" (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit was successfully developed to meet the needs of both students and teachers; (3) validation results showed the toolkit achieved an average score of 3.5 from subject matter experts and 3.6 from media experts, falling into the "Very Good" category; (4) practicality test results demonstrated that the toolkit is user-friendly and can be effectively implemented in the learning process; and (5) effectiveness test results showed a significant improvement in choice-making skills, with a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 (< 0.05) and a calculated t-value of 4.59 (> t-table 1.73). The average pre-test score rose from 2.39 to 3.33 in the post-test, representing an increase of 39.33%. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the "Aku Siap Bekerja" toolkit is valid, practical, and effective for enhancing choice-making skills to support the school-to-work transition for students with mild intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: choice-making skills; toolkit; mild intellectual disability; school-to-work transition; work readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Students with mild intellectual disabilities experience limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior that affect their ability to understand themselves, recognize their interests and potential, and fulfill various social and vocational roles (Shogren, et al., 2021). These conditions make it difficult for students to grasp the consequences of their choices, make decisions, and prepare for the demands of life and work (Fusińska-Korpik & Gacek, 2024). Consequently, these students require support to develop independence, recognize their own capabilities, and make choices that will equip them for the transition to adulthood (Shogren, et al., 2021).

The transition from school to work is a process that prepares students for adult life through the development of work skills, career planning, and meaningful learning experiences (Papay & Bambara, 2020; Test, et al., 2009). Transition services focus not only on work readiness but also on developing the ability to plan for the future, make choices, and make decisions independently (Kohler, 1996; Nota, et al., 2020). However, students with intellectual disabilities continue to face limitations in exploring career options and developing the decision-making skills required after leaving school (Papay & Bambara, 2020; Wehmeyer, 2020). Successful transition is heavily influenced by the ability to identify alternatives, consider consequences, and make choices aligned

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with individual interests and capabilities (Vicente, et al., 2021; Wehmeyer, 2020).

Education for students with intellectual disabilities must be tailored to their specific needs and characteristics, enabling them to live independently and participate in society, as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. In the context of special education, this goal is realized through the development of adaptive and choice-making skills as part of transition readiness for adult life and the workforce (Papay & Bambara, 2020; Test, et al., 2009). Consistent with this, the Taxonomy for Transition Programming identifies student development as a crucial component in fostering personal, social, and vocational competencies to support successful student transitions (Kohler, 1996).

Choice-making skills refer to an individual's ability to make selections based on preferences, consider consequences, and control decisions that impact their lives (Wehmeyer, 2020). These skills are a vital aspect of self-determination, as they facilitate the ability to identify alternatives, compare options, and make decisions independently (Shogren, et al., 2021). In the context of the school-to-work transition, choice-making skills support decision-making regarding further education, employment, and adult life (Nota, et al., 2020). However, students with intellectual disabilities still require systematic instructional support to develop these skills (Vicente, et al., 2021).

Preliminary study results indicate that students still struggle to compare job alternatives, understand the consequences of their choices, provide rationales for their decisions, and consistently maintain their choices. Interviews with five special education teachers and three special support teachers in inclusive schools also reveal that instruction in choice-making skills has not been systematically integrated into transition programs. Teachers continue to dominate decisions regarding activities, job options, and skills to be learned, thereby limiting students' opportunities to explore interests, express preferences, and make independent decisions. These findings highlight a gap between the competencies developed in schools and those required for the transition to the workforce (Papay & Bambara, 2020; Test, et al., 2009).

o address this need, this study developed the *"Aku Siap Bekerja*" (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit-a concrete, visual, and structured learning resource designed to enhance choice-making skills within the context of the school-to-work transition. The toolkit comprises illustrated comics, choice cards, a teacher's guide, and simulation activities designed to assist students in making work-related decisions. The development of this resource is supported by research demonstrating that systematic choice-making practice can improve the independence and transition readiness of learners with intellectual disabilities (Sparks, et al., 2016; Wehmeyer, 2020).

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Previous research has generally focused on developing choice-making skills within the contexts of adaptive behavior, activities of daily living, and the enhancement of independence (Sparks, et al., 2016; Vicente, et al., 2021). Research specifically dedicated to developing instructional media to improve choice-making skills as preparation for the transition from school to employment remains limited. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution through the development of the "I Am Ready to Work" *(Aku Siap Bekerja)* Toolkit, designed to enhance choice-making skills as part of transition readiness for students with mild intellectual disabilities entering the workforce. This study aims to produce a toolkit that is valid, practical, and effective in supporting the development of choice-making skills—a crucial competency for transition readiness regarding entry into the workforce.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs the Research and Development (R&D) method to develop and evaluate the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit (Borg & Gall, 2003; Sugiyono, 2019). Development follows the 4D model, comprising the stages of define, design, develop, and disseminate (Thiagarajan, et al., 1974). The define stage involved literature reviews, observations, and interviews to identify the learning needs regarding choice-making skills for students with mild intellectual disabilities. The analysis results served as the basis for designing the toolkit during the design stage. The develop stage encompassed product development, validation by subject matter and media experts, revisions, and tests for practicality and effectiveness. Subsequently, the disseminate stage was conducted on a limited scale through the implementation of the toolkit with teachers at the research sites. The study was conducted at three special schools and one inclusive school across East Java Province and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). analysis involved seven teachers and eighteen students (aged 16–19) with mild intellectual disabilities, while the effectiveness test involved eighteen students. The developed product is the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* Toolkit, consisting of a guidebook, illustrated comics, choice cards, simulation cards, an assessment rubric, and a storage box, covering five topics related to the school-to-work transition. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, expert validation questionnaires, practicality questionnaires, and pre- and post-tests. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and via a paired-sample t-test (at a significance level of 0.05) to evaluate the toolkit's effectiveness, while qualitative data were analyzed using an interactive model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, et al, 2014).

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Define

The "Define" stage aims to identify the development needs for the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit, intended as a learning medium to teach choice-making skills to students with mild intellectual disabilities. A needs analysis was conducted through observations and interviews with teachers and students at several special needs schools (SLB) and inclusive schools in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and East Java. The analysis results indicate an alignment of perceptions between teachers and students regarding the need for instruction in choice-making skills.

From the teachers' perspective, five key themes emerged: students' ability and opportunities to make choices, their understanding of the decision-making process, factors influencing those choices, the instructional strategies employed, and obstacles related to choice-making skills. Teachers noted that while some students were capable of selecting simple work activities, this ability was inconsistent, meaning some still required guidance. They also observed that information presented concretely-through images, demonstrations, and hands-on experience was easier to grasp than abstract explanations. Student choices were influenced by personal interests, past experiences, the difficulty level of the activities, and peer influence. Although opportunities for making choices were provided during vocational instruction, there was a lack of instructional media designed to systematically train students in the stages of choice-making. Major obstacles included difficulty in identifying personal interests and abilities, low self confidence, confusion when faced with multiple alternatives, and limited availability of instructional media.

These findings are reinforced by the results of student interviews. While most students had made choices independently, others still relied on teacher guidance. Their reasons for choosing were generally based on simple considerations, such as ease or personal preference. Furthermore, nearly all students stated that the use of visual aids helped them understand the available alternatives before making a decision. These findings indicate that teaching decision-making skills requires concrete, visual, and structured materials, which served as the basis for developing the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit.

Design

The design phase translates the needs analysis findings into an initial draft of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit, taking into account the learning characteristics of students

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with mild intellectual disabilities, teacher needs, and the context of the transition from school to the workforce. The content focuses on five key situations: (1) choosing a job, (2) selecting work attire, (3) choosing transportation to the workplace, (4) selecting work equipment, and (5) choosing an internship site. This material is developed into illustrated comics that present real-life situations relatable to the students' experiences, facilitating understanding before choices are made. The toolkit also includes choice cards, simulation cards, an assessment rubric, a guidebook, and a storage box, forming a comprehensive learning package. The comics are formatted in A4 landscape with color illustrations, concise dialogue, and simple storylines. The choice cards present options alongside distractors to train the ability to differentiate between choices, while the simulation cards are used to practice choice-making in scenarios that mirror real-world conditions. The assessment rubric helps teachers monitor the development of choice-making skills, whereas the guidebook outlines learning objectives, toolkit usage steps, prompting strategies, and evaluation procedures. The outcome of the design phase is a prototype of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* Toolkit, comprising six components: a guidebook, illustrated comics, choice cards, simulation cards, an assessment rubric, and a storage box. All components are designed as an integrated system to support the learning of choice-making skills in preparation for the students' transition to the workforce.

Develop

The development phase aimed to transform the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit design into a ready-to-use product through a process of development, expert validation, and revision. The initial design consisted of scenario cards, choice image cards, and a teacher's guidebook. However, observations revealed that the scenario cards tended to foster a teacher-centered learning environment because the situations had to be read aloud, thereby limiting student engagement in understanding the context of the choices. Consequently, the scenario cards were revised into illustrated comics that presented situations in a more concrete, sequential, and easily understandable manner. The final product comprises six components: (1) a user guidebook, (2) illustrated comics, (3) choice and distractor image cards, (4) simulation cards, (5) an assessment rubric, and (6) a storage box. The comics were developed based on five topics regarding the transition to the workforce: choosing a job, work attire, transportation, work tools, and internship sites. Illustrations were created using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology and edited to suit the characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities. The guidebook includes learning objectives, instructions for using the toolkit, prompting strategies, sample

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lessons, and the assessment rubric. Subsequently, the product was validated by two subject matter experts and two media experts. Subject matter expert validation yielded an average score of 3.5 (very good), while media expert validation resulted in average scores of 3.6 and 3.4 (good to very good). Validator feedback included suggestions to incorporate workplace safety aspects and family involvement in the decision-making process, refine illustrations, enlarge image sizes, and add a wider variety of job options. All feedback served as the basis for revisions prior to field testing.

Disseminate

The dissemination phase was conducted after the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit was validated and revised based on validator feedback. Dissemination was carried out on a limited scale involving special education teachers and special support teachers at four schools: SLBN 1 Yogyakarta, SLBN Gedangan Sidoarjo, SLB C Pembina Tingkat Nasional Malang, and Sekolah Cikal Surabaya. This activity aimed to introduce and implement the toolkit within instruction focused on choice-making skills, serving as preparation for the transition from school to the workforce. Teachers received an orientation covering the development objectives, product components, usage steps, and assessment procedures. The implemented toolkit comprised an instruction manual, illustrated comics, choice and distractor image cards, simulation cards, an assessment rubric, and a storage box, all used in an integrated manner during instruction. Implementation covered five topics: choosing a job, work attire, transportation to the workplace, work tools, and internship sites. Students observed the illustrated comics, discussed situations with the teacher, made choices using the image cards, and then engaged in simulations relevant to the work context. Implementation results indicated that teachers could systematically utilize all toolkit components according to the guidelines, while students demonstrated more active engagement compared to the use of conventional media. The illustrated comics helped students understand the context of choices more independently, while the image cards facilitated the comparison of alternatives before making a decision. These findings demonstrate that the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* toolkit is highly applicable as a learning medium for teaching choice-making skills in both special education schools and inclusive schools.

Effectiveness of the Toolkit on Selection Skills

The effectiveness of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit was evaluated using a one-group pretest-posttest design involving 18 students with mild intellectual disabilities

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from SLBN Gedangan Sidoarjo, SLB C Pembina Tingkat Nasional Malang, SLBN 1 Yogyakarta, and Sekolah Cikal Surabaya. Assessments were conducted before and after instruction across five choice-making skill topics: selecting a job, work attire, transportation to the workplace, work tools, and internship sites. The results demonstrated an improvement in choice-making skills among the majority of the students. The average score rose from 2.39 (47.80%) in the pretest to 3.33 (66.70%) in the posttest, representing an average increase of 39.33%. The highest improvement was achieved by student MF (60%), while three students showed no change in scores, either because they had already reached maximum proficiency or because they required more intensive intervention. The Shapiro–Wilk normality test indicated a normal distribution of data (Sig. = 0.09 > 0.05); consequently, the analysis proceeded using a paired-sample t-test. The test results yielded a t-value of 4.59 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. Thus, the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* toolkit is deemed effective in enhancing the choice-making skills of students with mild intellectual disabilities as part of their school-to-work transition preparation.

DISCUSSION

Define

A needs analysis reveals that instruction regarding choice-making skills in schools currently focuses on merely providing opportunities to choose, rather than systematically developing the ability to make choices. Although teachers present students with alternatives, this practice lacks the support of instructional media that guide students to identify various options, weigh consequences, and make decisions independently. This situation highlights a gap between current instructional practices and the competencies required for the transition to the workforce. These findings align with Kohler (1996) who identifies the development of choice-making skills as a crucial component of transition programs. Test, et al. (2009) further emphasize that choice-making skills are a significant predictor of post-school success. Additionally, Wehmeyer (2020) explains that choice-making skills are an element of self-determination that requires explicit instruction, enabling individuals to make choices that align with their interests, abilities, and life goals. For students with mild intellectual disabilities, instruction must be delivered in a concrete and incremental manner that accommodates their specific learning characteristics (Hallahan, et al., 2019). Consequently, the development of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit is highly relevant, serving as an instructional tool that facilitates students in identifying alternatives, comparing options, and making decisions with greater independence.

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Design

Illustrated comics were selected as the primary medium because they align with the learning characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities, who find it easier to grasp concrete, visual, and contextual information than abstract concepts (Hallahan, et al., 2019). The illustrated storylines help students understand the relationships between situations, alternative choices, actions, and consequences before making a decision. Picture cards and simulation cards complement the learning process by offering students opportunities to practice comparing alternatives and actively making choices. According to Wehmeyer (2020) repeated practice in making choices is a crucial strategy for developing choice-making skills as part of self-determination. Consequently, the combination of illustrated comics, choice cards, and simulations creates a more meaningful learning experience; students not only understand the concept of making choices but also practice it in contexts that mirror real-life situations. This approach aligns with recommendations by Papay & Bambara (2020) that effective transition programs must provide authentic learning experiences to prepare students for adult life and the workforce. Beyond supporting the students' learning process, the toolkit is designed for easy implementation by teachers; it includes a guidebook and assessment rubric that facilitate both instruction and the systematic assessment of choice-making skills. Thus, the design of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit goes beyond merely producing learning media; it provides a comprehensive set of tools that support the structured implementation of transition programs aimed at enhancing the work readiness of students with mild intellectual disabilities.

Develop

Development results indicate that product revisions not only improved the media's visual quality but also enhanced the students' learning experience. Transitioning from scenario cards to illustrated comics addressed user needs, enabling students to grasp situations more independently through concrete and contextual presentations; consequently, the teacher's role shifted from information provider to learning facilitator. Presenting material via illustrated comics aligns with the characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities, who require concrete, structured, and easily understandable instruction to optimally develop functional skills (Hallahan, et al., 2019). Furthermore, Browder & Spooner (2014) emphasize that using concrete, systematic instructional media can boost the participation and comprehension of learners with intellectual disabilities during the learning process. The development of choice cards and distractor cards reinforced choice-making skills training by engaging students in recognizing, comparing,

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evaluating, and determining alternatives before making a decision. According to Wehmeyer (2020), choice-making skills are a crucial component of self-determination that must be cultivated through structured practice, enabling individuals to make independent decisions across various life aspects, including preparation for the workforce. Thus, the integration of illustrated comics, choice cards, simulation cards, and a guidebook creates a learning experience that allows students not only to understand the concept of making choices but also to practice it in situations mirroring real-world conditions.

Validation results, ranging from "good" to "very good," demonstrate that the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit meets standards regarding content suitability, presentation, and alignment with user characteristics. Revisions based on validator feedback reflect an iterative development process involving continuous product evaluation and refinement, consistent with the development phase of the Four-D model (Thiagarajan, et al., 1974). Consequently, the development phase yielded a valid, viable product with the potential to support choice-making skill acquisition part of the transition preparation for students with mild intellectual disabilities entering the workforce through the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* Toolkit.

Disseminate

Limited dissemination indicates that the success of the developed product depends not only on the quality of the media but also on the ease of its implementation in the learning process. Implementation results show that the components of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit complement one another, providing teachers with a clear guide for systematically conducting instruction on choice-making skills. These findings align with the Four-D development model proposed by Thiagarajan, et al. (1974) which defines the dissemination stage as the process of introducing and implementing the product with users in real-world contexts. At this stage, the focus shifts from design refinement to product applicability; consequently, teacher involvement becomes a crucial factor in ensuring that implementation aligns with the development objectives.

The use of illustrated comics, picture cards, and simulations provides a contextual learning experience, enabling students to learn choice-making skills through situations that mirror daily life and the workplace. According to Wehmeyer (2020), choice-making skills develop optimally when learners have opportunities to practice making independent decisions in various meaningful situations. This approach also supports the goals of transition programs, which emphasize the importance of real-world, experience-based learning to enhance students' readiness for adult life and the workforce (Papay & Bambara, 2020). Furthermore, presenting instruction in a concrete

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and structured manner tailored to the characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities makes it easier for them to understand available choices and apply them in relevant situations (Hallahan, et al., 2019).

The active engagement of students during implementation demonstrates that *the "Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit is not only user-friendly for teachers but also effectively encourages student participation in the learning process. These findings support the view held by Test, et al. (2009) that transition-focused instruction which provides learners with opportunities to practice decision making directly contributes to improved post-school transition readiness. However, as the dissemination of this research was limited to the pilot schools, the results cannot yet be generalized. Therefore, further research is required to evaluate the implementation of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* Toolkit across a wider range of schools, with more diverse student populations, and over an extended period, in order to more comprehensively demonstrate its effectiveness and applicability.

Effectiveness of the Toolkit on Selection Skills

The improvement in choice-making skills following the use of the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit demonstrates that instruction integrating illustrated comics, choice cards, simulations, and a guidebook effectively helps students understand the choice-making process systematically. Students do not merely make a choice; they also learn to identify situations, compare alternatives, consider underlying reasons, and understand the consequences of each decision, thereby gaining a more meaningful learning experience. These findings support Wehmeyer (2020), concept of choice-making skills, which posits that the ability to make choices must be taught explicitly through learning experiences that allow individuals to make decisions based on their own preferences, abilities, and goals. The improvement in learners' scores indicates that the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* Toolkit successfully facilitates this process through structured and contextual learning experiences. The toolkit's effectiveness is also enhanced by the use of illustrated comics that depict real-life situations, making it easier for students to grasp various alternatives before deciding. Presenting material in a concrete, visual, and step-by-step manner aligns with the learning characteristics of students with mild intellectual disabilities, who better comprehend information through direct experience and contextual examples (Hallahan, et al., 2019). Furthermore, the use of choice cards and distractor cards enables students to recognize, compare, and evaluate different options before making a decision. This strategy addresses needs identified during the "define" phase, which revealed that students struggled when faced with

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abstract choices; thus, presenting alternatives visually and concretely serves as an effective strategy to help students progressively develop their choice-making skills.

Learning success is also supported by simulation activities that provide authentic experiences in situations resembling the workplace. Contextual learning enables students to transfer choice-making skills to their daily lives, thereby strengthening their readiness for the transition to the workforce. These results align with Sparks et al. (2016 who demonstrated that repeated practice in making choices can enhance the decision-making abilities of learners with intellectual disabilities. These findings are further supported by Peltier, et al. (2022); Vicente, et al. (2021) who confirm that providing systematic opportunities to make choices can boost learner autonomy and independence, while Lee, S., et al. (2022) explain that instructional practices supporting autonomy contribute to the development of self-determination. Furthermore, Papay & Bambara (2020) state that authentic learning experiences are a crucial component in preparing learners with intellectual disabilities for entry into the workforce.

Overall, the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) toolkit not only meets eligibility criteria based on expert validation but also proves effective in enhancing choice-making skills a crucial competency for supporting the successful transition of students with mild intellectual disabilities from school to the workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study developed the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* (I Am Ready to Work) Toolkit using the 4D model (Define, Design, Develop, and Disseminate) to enhance choice-making skills essential for the school-to-work transition among students with mild intellectual disabilities. Development was grounded in a needs analysis indicating a requirement for learning media that are concrete, visual, structured, and contextual. The resulting product comprises a teacher's guide, illustrated comics, choice cards, simulation cards, an assessment rubric, and a storage box, covering five school-to-work transition topics: selecting a job, work attire, transportation, work tools, and work practice sites. Research findings demonstrate that the toolkit possesses good validity, practicality, and effectiveness. Expert validation indicated excellent quality regarding both content (M = 3.5) and media (M = 3.6). Implementation results showed the toolkit to be practical and effective in improving choice-making skills, as evidenced by a significant paired-sample t-test result (Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05). Students' average scores rose from 2.39 to 3.33 following the intervention. Thus, the *"Aku Siap Bekerja"* Toolkit is an effective transition learning medium for enhancing the choice-making skills of students with mild intellectual disabilities specifically in recognizing alternatives,

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weighing options, and making decisions related to the world of work.

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