Training on the Utilization of Mail Merge for Efficient Creation of RT Cover Letters in the Pasar Lama Urban Village Environment

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Abstract

Purpose: This research paper aims to explore the use of mail merge to improve administrative correspondence for the Heads of RT (Neighborhood Associations) and their staff in the Pasar Lama sub-district of Banjarmasin. It identifies challenges with current handwritten methods, such as inefficiency and disorganization, highlighting the importance of this study for enhancing community administrative services.

Method: The study employs a qualitative approach through training sessions developed by the PKM team from Uniska. Data collection includes pre- and post-training assessments and participant feedback, focusing on the impact of mail merge on the efficiency and accuracy of letter creation.

Practical Applications: The findings suggest that implementing mail merge can significantly reduce the time spent on correspondence, ensure consistent formatting, and improve record-keeping. These enhancements can serve as a model for other regions looking to modernize administrative processes and increase efficiency.

Conclusion: In conclusion, this research demonstrates the benefits of mail merge for administrative correspondence, leading to greater efficiency and organization. The results underscore the necessity of modernizing communication methods to address current challenges in local governance.

Introduction

Mail merge is a feature that allows for the creation of letters or other documents in

large quantities using the same template (Saputra et al., 2022; Irawan, 2015). The Neighborhood Association (Rukun Tetangga, RT) is a community organization formed through discussions among local residents for the purpose of government and community service, established by the village administration and supervised by the government (Dibert et al., 2021). In the population data collection in the Pasar Lama village, North Banjarmasin, a simple mechanism is still being used.

Correspondence services are an important aspect of the administrative completion process in the community (Kamila & Subastian, 2020). Until now, administrative services and correspondence have been conducted using a conventional system, which involves physically visiting the location (Sari & Kholil, 2022). Residents must meet with the RT chairperson to request approval for a letter, and then go to the village office to submit the application for the required letter (Prihantara & Aziz, 2018). This method is ineffective and inefficient as it requires a lengthy process to create the letters. So far, the RT chairperson has only used a handwritten template to create cover letters, which has many shortcomings, including the absence of letter documentation, non-static letter results or formats that constantly change, and a lack of organization in the creation of cover letters (Setyawati et al., 2021). Therefore, by providing training to the RT chairpersons, it is hoped that they will understand how to create correspondence easily, quickly, effectively, and efficiently, with all letters properly documented.

Method

To achieve the desired goals, the implementation of this service system uses three methods:

1. Preparation

This method begins with planning that includes conducting a survey at the implementation site, interviewing partners, observing to determine participants' qualifications regarding their understanding of the material to be provided during the training, checking the facilities and infrastructure to support the practical implementation of the material so that it runs smoothly, and analyzing the material to ensure it is tailored to the participants' abilities (Irawan, 2015; Khafid & Wahyudin, 2019).
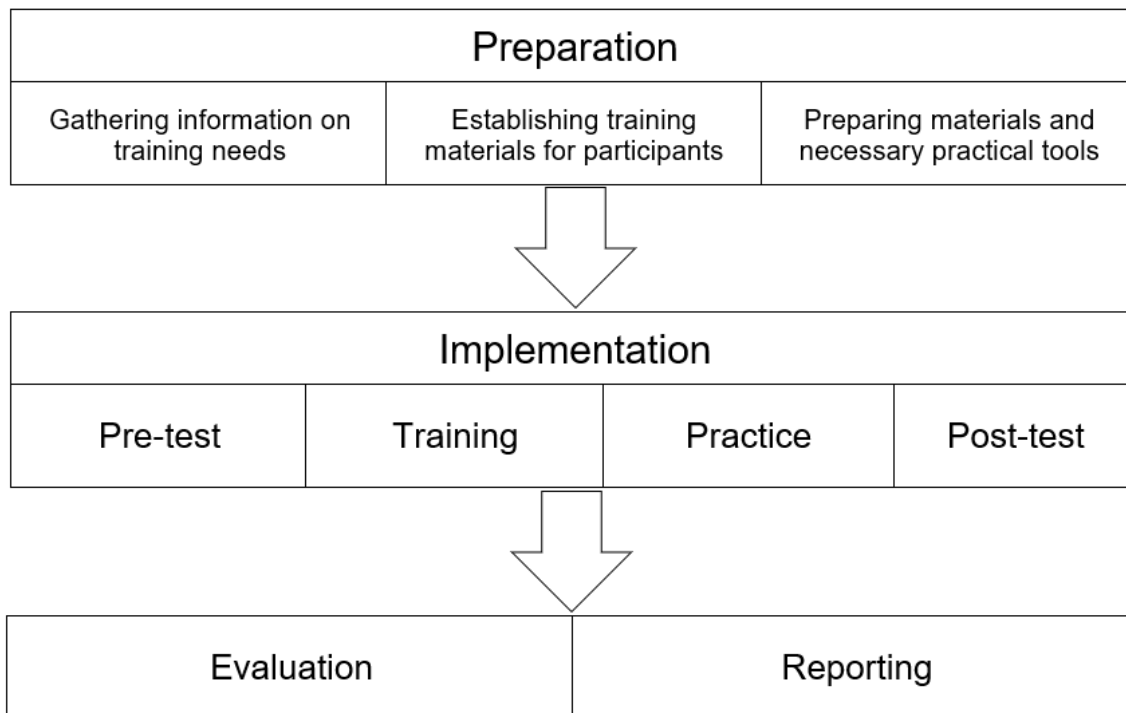
2. Implementation

This method represents the actual implementation of activities, starting with the distribution of a pre-test, forming groups, delivering the material, conducting practical exercises, and concluding with the distribution of a post-test for final evaluation (Nurdiana et al., 2020).

3. Evaluation and Reporting

This method is carried out after completing the implementation. The responses from the participants' post-test will be analyzed using statistical calculations to draw conclusions regarding the results achieved after conducting the training (Fery & Dasril, 2020; MT et al., 2020).

Figure 1. Implementation Method

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Preparation		
Gathering information on training needs	Establishing training materials for participants	Preparing materials and necessary practical tools

Implementation			
Pre-test	Training	Practice	Post-test

Evaluation	Reporting

Result

The Community Service (PKM) activities were conducted from February to April 2019, following several stages: Planning, Interviews, Observation, Analysis, Implementation, and Evaluation. From the results of the PKM stages that have been conducted:

1. Planning

On March 3, 2022, a field survey was conducted with the village administration to coordinate and ensure the participants who would attend the training, confirm the training schedule, and provide the training module materials to be practiced.

2. Interviews

The interview was conducted directly with the village head and the admin, focusing on the fact that many were not familiar with computer technology, or the application materials related to correspondence that would be provided. The team distributed a questionnaire instrument to participants, including the village head, admin staff, and RT chairpersons, sampling a total of 20 individuals to validate the need for activities with this material.

3. Observation

On March 9, 2022, observations were made to assess the condition of the implementation site and its completeness to prepare the necessary equipment and adjust the implementation of the community service activities. At the same time, without prior planning, a special request from the village head was made to conduct a short training session with three participants from the village administration and one RT chairperson, lasting two sessions of 1.5 hours each.

4. Analysis

After the planning, interviews, and observations were conducted, the community service team performed an analysis in preparation for the activity and analyzed the material to be provided to align it with participants' knowledge.

5. Implementation

On March 24, 2022, a special training session was conducted for the RT chairpersons, attended by participants, with the following mechanisms:

a. Distribution of a pre-test questionnaire to assess participants' understanding of

the material.
   b. Participants were divided into five groups, each with about four participants and one facilitator.
   c. The material consisted of 30% theory and 70% practice, delivered simultaneously.
   d. Topics covered included basic understanding of correspondence, mailing labels, envelopes, directories, restrictions, how to send files via WhatsApp, and printing letters.
   e. Practical exercises included tasks related to the material, such as creating letters, making requests for letters, sharing files via WhatsApp, and printing letters.
   f. A post-test questionnaire was distributed to evaluate the practical results based on the provided material.
6. Evaluation

Thirteen out of 20 participants took both the pre-test and post-test on topics such as mailing/mail merge, correspondence, envelopes, directories, restrictions, and how to send files via WhatsApp, as well as printing letters. The scores obtained by the training participants, analyzed using SPSS, are as follows:

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
pretes	13	20	60	36.92	11.094
postest	13	40	80	55.38	10.500
Valid N (listwise)	13				

From Table 1, it can be seen that the lowest pre-test score was 20 and the highest was 60, with an average score of 37. In the post-test, the lowest score was 40 and the highest was 80, with an average score of 55. This indicates an overall improvement in participants' knowledge from the pre-test.

Table 2. Paired Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Participants

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 postest - pretest	18.462	11.435	3.172	11.551	25.372	5.821	12	.000

In Table 2, the average score increased by 18.5 from the pre-test to the post-test, with a standard deviation of 11.4. The test statistic for testing the above hypothesis is 12.00, with a significance value of 0.00, indicating that the average post-test score is higher than the pre-test score. Therefore, the training conducted by the PKM team from Uniska has effectively improved knowledge in letter creation using mail merge among the RT chairpersons and staff in the Pasar Lama Village, Banjarmasin.

Discussion

The object of community service is the RT chairpersons in the Pasar Lama Village. The service location is on S. Parman Street, directly behind the Islamic Hospital of

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Banjarmasin, in the Pasar Lama Village Hall, which is used for the training sessions. The material provided includes a basic understanding of correspondence, mailing labels, envelopes, directories, restrictions, how to send files via WhatsApp, and printing letters. This training aims to provide knowledge and references about information technology in terms of official correspondence, which initially used handwritten forms for creating cover letters for residents. With the material on mail merge provided, it is hoped to assist in the automatic creation of cover letters using computers or smartphones.

Conclusion

The results achieved from this PKM activity include an increase in participants' knowledge about automated correspondence using mail merge and understanding how to share files via WhatsApp. After the training, most participants were able to evaluate the material using Microsoft Word. However, for the material on the process of sharing files via WhatsApp, only a small number of participants succeeded due to internet connectivity issues and inadequate equipment for conducting the training.

Acknowledgements

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