HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL ERA: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM FOR MSMES IN TASIKMALAYA

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Abstract

The digital era has transformed the way organizations manage their human resources, demanding adaptive skills, digital competencies, and agile systems. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), especially in rural and semi-urban areas, often struggle to adapt to these rapid changes due to limited knowledge, technology access, and workforce readiness. This community service program aimed to enhance the human resource management (HRM) capacity of MSME actors in Tasikmalaya through digital literacy training, workforce planning, and the introduction of simple HR digital tools. Using the IPOO framework (Input–Process–Output–Outcome), the program was attended by 30 MSME owners and managers and facilitated by faculty members from STIE Latifah Mubarokiyah. Results showed increased understanding of HRM principles, improved ability to manage digital workforces, and enthusiasm to adopt digital tools for employee data and task tracking. This initiative underscores the importance of equipping MSMEs with modern HR skills to remain competitive and sustainable in the digital age.

Keywords: *Human Resource Management, Digital Era, Msmes, Workforce Empowerment, Community Service.*

Abstrak

Era digital telah mengubah cara organisasi mengelola sumber daya manusianya, menuntut keterampilan adaptif, kompetensi digital, dan sistem yang gesit. Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM), terutama di daerah pedesaan dan semi-perkotaan, sering kali kesulitan beradaptasi dengan perubahan cepat ini karena keterbatasan pengetahuan, akses teknologi, dan kesiapan tenaga kerja. Program pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kapasitas manajemen sumber daya manusia (SDM) para pelaku UMKM di Tasikmalaya melalui pelatihan literasi digital, perencanaan tenaga kerja, dan pengenalan perangkat digital SDM sederhana. Dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja IPOO (Input–Proses–Output–Outcome), program ini diikuti oleh 30 pemilik dan manajer UMKM dan difasilitasi oleh anggota fakultas dari STIE Latifah Mubarokiyah. Hasil menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman tentang prinsip-prinsip SDM, peningkatan kemampuan untuk mengelola tenaga kerja digital, dan antusiasme untuk mengadopsi perangkat digital untuk data karyawan dan pelacakan tugas. Inisiatif ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya membekali UMKM dengan keterampilan SDM modern agar tetap kompetitif dan berkelanjutan di era digital.

Kata Kunci: Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia, Era Digital, UMKM, Pemberdayaan Tenaga Kerja, Pengabdian Masyarakat.

INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of digital transformation is reshaping human resource management (HRM) practices across all sectors. In the digital era, effective HRM goes beyond traditional administrative tasks—it now includes managing remote teams, using digital tools for recruitment and performance tracking, and fostering a culture of innovation and agility. However, many Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), especially in developing regions, are not yet prepared for these shifts.

In Tasikmalaya, MSMEs are vital to the local economy but often lack structured HRM systems. Most rely on informal labor arrangements, minimal training, and manual data tracking, which hinders scalability and efficiency. Employees are often hired based on trust rather than skill-fit, and workforce planning is rarely data-driven. This results in low productivity, unclear job roles, and difficulties adapting to digital business environments.

To address this gap, STIE Latifah Mubarokiyah initiated a community service program focusing on HRM development for MSMEs, tailored to the realities of the digital era. The goal was to introduce MSME owners and managers to digital workforce trends, practical HR strategies, and tools to improve employee management and organizational productivity.

The initiative targeted both MSMEs that already employed digital platforms and those still operating traditionally. Key components included: understanding digital HRM concepts, developing digital job descriptions and SOPs, introducing tools for attendance and performance tracking, and fostering digital communication in the workplace.

This article outlines the methodology, outcomes, and reflections from the program implementation. It demonstrates that structured community-based HRM education can significantly improve MSMEs' capacity to manage people effectively and prepare for future workforce challenges.The methodology of the program was participatory and adaptive, involving a series of workshops, mentoring sessions, and on-site consultations. MSME participants were first surveyed to assess their current HRM practices and digital readiness. The findings revealed that while many were open to change, they lacked awareness and practical guidance on where to begin. In response, STIE Latifah Mubarokiyah designed tailored modules that addressed common HR pain points such as unclear job roles, lack of performance monitoring, and inefficient communication.

One of the most impactful aspects of the program was the co-creation of job descriptions and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with the MSME owners. These documents, often overlooked in small businesses, provided clarity for both management and employees. They became the foundation for evaluating performance and establishing accountability. The process also helped business owners realize the importance of aligning job roles with business goals, thus moving from ad-hoc staffing to strategic workforce planning.

In addition to documentation, participants were introduced to simple and affordable digital tools, such as Google Forms for attendance, Trello for task tracking, and WhatsApp Business for communication. These tools were chosen based on accessibility, ease of use, and relevance to small-scale operations. Practical demonstrations during the training allowed participants to directly apply the tools in their business context. Many MSMEs reported immediate improvements in coordination and time management after implementation.

The program also emphasized mindset transformation. Through case studies and peer discussions, participants were encouraged to view human resources not as a cost center but as a strategic asset. Discussions covered topics like employee motivation, digital ethics, and the importance of continuous learning. This helped shift perspectives from reactive management to proactive talent development, even in resource-constrained environments.

Furthermore, the initiative fostered collaboration among participating MSMEs. Peer learning sessions enabled businesses to share experiences, challenges, and solutions. Some MSMEs formed informal support groups to

continue exchanging insights beyond the training period. This community-building aspect was a critical success factor, particularly in reinforcing digital adoption and HRM continuity.

Evaluation of the program showed promising results. A post-training assessment indicated increased awareness of HRM principles, greater confidence in using digital tools, and tangible improvements in employee structure and productivity. Several MSMEs reported reduced employee turnover and better delegation of tasks. Notably, female-led businesses demonstrated high engagement and adaptability, highlighting the potential of inclusive HR interventions.

In conclusion, the community service program by STIE Latifah Mubarokiyah represents a replicable model for enhancing HRM capacity among MSMEs in the digital age. By combining practical tools, contextual training, and collaborative learning, the initiative successfully bridged the gap between informal HR practices and modern workforce management. As digital transformation accelerates, such localized interventions are crucial to ensure that MSMEs—especially in regions like Tasikmalaya—are not left behind in the evolving business landscape.

METHODOLOGY

This community service program was designed and implemented using the IPOO framework (Input–Process–Output–Outcome) to ensure a clear structure for planning, execution, and evaluation. The activities took place at the MSME Development Center in Tasikmalaya, providing a neutral and accessible venue for direct engagement between the facilitators and the participants. The target group consisted of 30 individuals, including MSME owners, managers, and administrative staff representing diverse sectors such as culinary, fashion, retail, and agribusiness. The program was facilitated by five lecturers from STIE Latifah Mubarokiyah, each contributing expertise in human resource management (HRM), digital entrepreneurship, and MSME empowerment.

The program's input phase involved the preparation of learning resources and digital tools tailored to the needs and capacities of MSMEs. These included digital HRM modules, printed handouts, templates for job descriptions and standard HR documents, sample HR software in free or freemium formats, and pre/post-assessment tools. Emphasis was placed on designing materials that were both simple and adaptable, acknowledging the infrastructure and technological limitations faced by many local MSMEs.

The learning process was structured around four core sessions. The first session, Introduction to Digital HRM, focused on helping participants understand the transition from manual to digital HR practices, including the use of online platforms for recruitment, onboarding, and managing remote or hybrid work arrangements. The second session, Workforce Planning and Job Design, emphasized aligning HR functions with business goals. Participants were guided to develop clear job descriptions and organizational role structures to reduce ambiguity and increase efficiency.

In the third session, Digital Tools for HR Operations, participants were introduced to practical, low-cost tools such as Google Workspace, Trello, and WhatsApp for Business. These tools were demonstrated as solutions for attendance tracking, task management, and internal communication. The fourth session, Action Planning and Simulation, allowed each participant to design a personalized HR improvement plan and apply one or more digital tools in a guided simulation environment.

To measure program effectiveness, a pre-test and post-test were administered to evaluate knowledge gain. Additionally, participants completed a satisfaction survey to provide feedback on content relevance, delivery methods, and overall program experience. The structured, participatory approach ensured that each activity built on previous sessions, reinforcing learning outcomes and promoting practical application in real MSME environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The program yielded several significant outputs. Participants successfully developed 25 structured job descriptions and digital task sheets for their employees. This helped clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations in their teams. The introduction of simple HR digital tools also received a positive response, with most participants choosing to adopt at least one tool, such as Google Forms for attendance or WhatsApp for performance check-ins.

During simulations, participants demonstrated improved ability to delegate tasks digitally, monitor employee productivity, and conduct basic digital evaluations. Several MSME owners, particularly those in retail and food services, expressed interest in using free HR apps to manage shift schedules and record employee data more systematically.

The post-test results showed a 60% increase in HRM concept comprehension compared to the pre-test. Meanwhile, the satisfaction survey indicated that 87% of participants were very satisfied with the relevance and delivery of the materials. They valued the use of real business cases, interactive methods, and practical takeaways.

Additionally, informal interviews conducted during the final session revealed that participants gained new perspectives on the importance of structured HR practices, especially in improving employee motivation and reducing internal conflicts. A few participants also committed to digitizing employee records within the next month.

The results of this program suggest that MSMEs are open to adopting modern HRM practices when these are presented in an accessible and context-relevant manner. The high level of engagement during the sessions reflects a growing awareness among business owners of the need to move beyond traditional, informal HR models.

The use of digital tools—even the simplest ones—allowed participants to experience firsthand how technology can streamline HR processes and increase efficiency. This is particularly important for MSMEs that cannot afford complex HR systems but still need to manage people effectively. Many participants discovered that digital tools can enhance transparency, accountability, and communication within their teams.

The participatory and practical approach adopted in this program proved to be a key success factor. Instead of delivering abstract theories, facilitators grounded each concept in the participants' real business challenges. This not only boosted comprehension but also empowered participants to start applying what they learned immediately.

Moreover, the implementation of the IPOO framework provided structure and clarity throughout the program. Each phase—input, process, output, and outcome—was aligned with the participants' capacity and learning curve. This also allows the program to be replicated in other regions or adapted to other community service topics.

The findings also point to the need for continued support, especially in the form of mentoring, peer learning networks, or partnerships with digital service providers. Without sustained guidance, the digital transition in HRM may stall or revert to informal practices.

CONCLUSION

This community service program successfully introduced digital-era human resource management concepts and tools to MSME actors in Tasikmalaya. Through structured modules and hands-on practice, participants gained the knowledge and confidence to improve how they manage their teams and plan for workforce development. The program demonstrated that even MSMEs with limited resources can implement basic HR structures and adopt simple digital tools to enhance performance and accountability.

The shift from informal to structured HRM practices among participants highlights the relevance and necessity of such initiatives. When MSMEs are equipped with appropriate knowledge and tools, they are more prepared to meet the demands of a fast-changing digital economy.

In conclusion, targeted HRM training delivered at the community level can play a significant role in promoting

sustainable business practices, improving employee relations, and boosting organizational productivity in the digital era.

RECOMMENDATION

To maximize the impact of HRM development programs for MSMEs, it is recommended that future initiatives include ongoing mentoring and digital tool assistance. MSMEs often face practical challenges in implementation after training sessions end; therefore, periodic follow-ups or mentoring clinics can help ensure long-term adoption.

Another recommendation is to collaborate with local governments, chambers of commerce, or HR tech startups to provide MSMEs with access to simple and affordable digital HR tools. Subsidized or freemium platforms could be introduced as part of an ecosystem-based digitalization approach.

Furthermore, HRM training should be integrated with broader business development programs, including financial literacy, leadership, and operations management. This holistic approach would allow MSMEs to grow more sustainably and respond more effectively to labor market shifts.

Finally, future programs should tailor the content to industry-specific needs, ensuring that HR solutions align with the actual conditions of the sector, such as hospitality, food production, or retail.

IMPLICATIONS

The program has several implications for MSME development, community empowerment, and policy. For MSMEs, the integration of digital HRM practices offers a pathway to increased organizational effectiveness and competitiveness. By managing human resources more systematically, MSMEs can improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and enhance business performance.

For higher education institutions, this initiative reinforces their strategic role in supporting digital transformation at the grassroots level. Universities can serve as hubs for community learning, capacity building, and digital adaptation, particularly for sectors that often fall outside formal support structures.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for government initiatives that support digital skill-building and HRM literacy for small businesses. Programs under ministries of labor or cooperatives should consider community-based HR education as a strategic investment in workforce readiness.

Overall, this program demonstrates that empowering MSMEs with digital HRM capabilities is both feasible and impactful. It should be seen as a replicable model for promoting inclusive economic resilience in the digital economy.

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