
Improving Scientific Article Writing Skills among Civil Engineering Students through a Journal Writing Workshop

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ABSTRACT

The lack of understanding of students in writing journal articles, the use of repetitive sentences and inappropriate terms in the field, as well as the high plagiarism rate results in poor quality articles. Through community service activities, namely journal article writing workshops, it is hoped that academic skills in journal writing, understanding the use of reference manager applications and plagiarism can be improved. The practice by learning method is used in this activity, thus that students are able to directly apply the material presented. The results of this activity, students are able to write scientific journal articles following writing rules/templates, organize and group relevant citations, create citation maps, connect the Researchrabbt application to Zotero and Mendeley, and the plagiarism score using Turnitin is a maximum of 20%. The combination of providing workshop and mentorship in journal writing to students has been proven to enhance students' understanding and ability in scientific journal writing.

Keywords: article, civil engineering, writing, workshop

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INTRODUCTION

A scientific journal is a written work based on research or literature review, structured according to established standards, using formal language, and supported by data and references. For students, writing journals trains analytical skills, clarity of arguments, and understanding of publication standards in the academic world (Pribadi & Gafur, 2025). Scientific writing refers to the final product of a research project; its expression in an appropriate form that is accepted by various international scientific circles (Gaber & Ali, 2022). A well-crafted scientific article not only showcases the depth of research conducted, but also serves as a conduit for sharing valuable insights and discoveries with the wider scientific community (Pettoello-Mantovani et al., 2024). This presents a challenge for students to convert their research findings from dissertations into high-quality journal manuscripts.

Less than 50% of final-year students understand journal writing, it is important to provide students with a workshop on how to improve journal quality. This program is not only beneficial for students but also for study programs and institutions. Improving journal quality can enhance students' soft skills and ensure that thesis/dissertation research results are documented to good scientific standards while sharpening critical thinking skills and the ability to construct scientific arguments in a structured way. This will indirectly increase the number of globally indexed publications under the institution's name, attract prospective students and international research collaboration partners. In addition, benefits for the study program include reducing late graduations caused by final project writing problems, improving the program's image as a productive center of innovation and research, and adding accreditation points for the program through an increase in student publications.

The lack of understanding and experience in compiling journals, insufficient knowledge regarding the variety of written works, the use of effective sentences (Suryani & Apriani, 2021), journal structure, selection of state-of-the-art research, the use of applications for citations and bibliographies, and plagiarism are all forms of errors in creating a journal. Some misunderstandings in writing the journal (Arianda et al., 2025), where in the Abstract section, students begin by stating the research objectives without first providing the research background, the research method is not mentioned, and the abstract content does not reflect the content of the article and mentions results that are not included in the Results and Discussion section. In the Introduction section, the content is too wordy, there is no background of the research, the selection of previous research that is not relevant to the research being reviewed, and there is no research gap. The Results and Discussion section is only displayed in the form of tables and figures/graphs, but is not accompanied by a discussion, there is no strengthening (pros and cons) of the discussion from the results of previous research.

Unusual Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion (IMRaD) formats are often found in student journal manuscripts, including broken logical flows, mixed interpretations of results, or opaque methods that make the article difficult to understand. In the Methods section, the description of procedures is not detailed, making the research non-reproducible, or errors in the research design selection. Furthermore, inconsistent use of reference citation types (Putra et al., 2026), and citations contained in the manuscript are not included in the bibliography/references section.

Furthermore, there is a requirement to publish scientific works as stipulated in the circular letter of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education No. B/323/B.B1/SE/2019, both at the undergraduate and doctoral levels, which must comply with the circular. Students who will graduate are required to produce scientific works in the form of journal articles and publish them in national journals, both accredited and

published, or uploaded to the campus repository (Indrawati et al., 2022). With this regulation, it can be said that writing is a mandatory requirement for students who will graduate from college and as a form of implementing the tridharma of higher education (Khamo et al., 2024; Syahrial et al., 2023).

Based on the above background, it is crucial to provide training and understanding for students on how to write high-quality journals. The purpose of this research is to improve students' understanding of journal writing methods, the variety of scientific papers, the use of ResearchRabbit, Zotero, Mendeley, and plagiarism.

Here are some ways to improve the quality of article writing for students: mini lesson method (Dorji, 2021), contextual teaching and learning approach (Jubhari et al., 2023), using chat GPT (Song & Song, 2023; Taufikin et al., 2025), blended learning (Chen, 2023), project based learning (Kilanava, 2024), self-regulated learning strategies (Abate et al., 2025), artificial intelligence (Mahapatra, 2024; Valdez et al., 2025; Vieriu & Petrea, 2025), and practice based learning (Wulandari et al., 2025).

METHODS

Location, Timing of Implementation, and Target Audience

This activity was implemented via zoom for 4 days, in January 2026, which was attended by 128 final semester students of the Department of Civil Engineering, Universitas Kristen Indonesia Paulus. There were 7 lecturers who provided the material. The requirements for students participating in this training are to use their own devices/laptops and to have prepared a journal draft. Figure 1 shows participants in the journal article writing workshop and Table 1 shows workshop schedule.

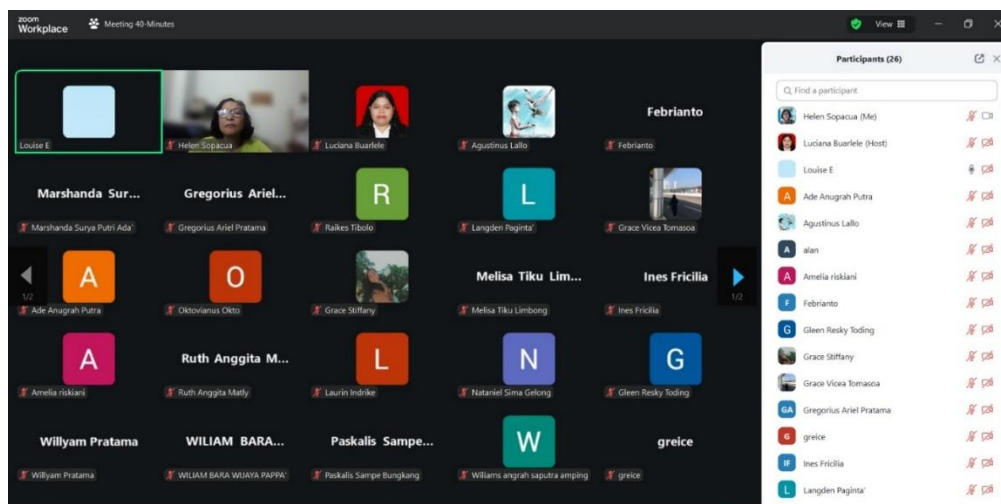


Figure 1. Participants in the journal article writing workshop

Table 1. Workshop schedule

Day	Subject
January 19 th , 2026	Scientific journal writing
January 19 th , 2026	Language Variety and Types of Scientific Works
January 21 st , 2026	Zotero
January 23 rd , 2026	Mendeley
January 24 th , 2026	Reserachrabbit
January 24 th , 2026	Turnitin
January 2026 – March 2026	Mentorship

Initial Situation Observation

In this activity, observations were conducted on final-semester students (128 students) regarding their understanding of journal writing. All students lacked an understanding of journal writing, language variations and scientific papers, the use of citation applications (reference manager), and plagiarism.

Preparation of Materials

A total of five topics were delivered to the students using PowerPoint and the relevant applications directly. The workshop ran for four days, with different subject matter each day, starting with training on how to prepare a journal article (including an introduction to journal article templates), styles of language and academic writing, the use of Researchrabbit, Zotero, Mendeley, and plagiarism, as well as reviewing similarity results for manuscripts using the Turnitin application. The practice-based learning method was chosen by the instructors to enhance students' motivation, learning independence, and deeper understanding of the material through direct experience.

Instrument

The instruments of this activity are to measure the extent to which participants absorb the material, the application of journal writing material, Language Variety and Types of Scientific Works, the use of reference management applications, creating citation maps, and reducing the plagiarism rate of journals. It is expected that after participating in the workshop, at least 80% of students will be able to compose scientific journals according to the IMRaD method, language variation create a citation map of at least 15 sources from accredited journals published within the last 5 years, then import the results into Zotero/Mendeley for the article, and a maximum plagiarism score of 20%.

Evaluation Instrument

The pre-test instrument (results of examination of student articles before attending the workshop) was given to determine how well students understood the preparation of abstracts in journals, the IMRaD method, the state of the art, the use of citation applications, the types of references in citations, and how to interpret the results of scientific manuscript similarity checks. In this pre-test, all participants did not understand the topics of the questions posed in the form of a discussion. The post-test was conducted through an assessment of the implementation of the material in students' scientific articles/journals.

During the process of implementing technology/education (mentorship) for 3 months, lecturers as facilitators provided assistance to students, including if there were any difficulties in using the technology (applications). Monitoring and evaluation will also be carried out to see whether the application of technology and education can improve students' understanding in the preparation of scientific articles in the form of quality journals.

Analyze Technique

The students' understanding of scientific journal writing before and after participating in the training will be assessed to determine if the program is effective in improving the quality of student articles. The comparison used a paired t-test statistical test using Jamovi software and a 95% confidence level. This test aimed to determine whether there was a significant effect on students' understanding and article writing outcomes before and after the workshop. The 95% confidence level allowed for a 5% margin of error (alpha) or chance factor.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Scientific Journal Writing

Materials related to the introduction to parts of a journal and templates are presented in this section. After attempting to implement these materials, all participants have drafted abstracts not exceeding 200 words. The abstracts were prepared following the guidance provided by the presenter, namely starting with the research background, the research objectives, the methods used, the discussion results, and keywords of at least 3 words and at most 3 words, which the students have arranged alphabetically.

The Introduction section begins with what motivated the students to choose the topic as their thesis or research title. The research objectives and the research gap are then stated by the students in this section. The selection of related studies that help strengthen the research background is also presented by the students by choosing similar research that has been published in nationally accredited journals or internationally reputable journals within the last five years.

In the Methodology section, students describe clearly and in detail the location and time of the research, supplemented with photos of the location, the number and method of sampling, and the data analysis techniques.

In the Results and Discussion section, students write in detail in accordance with the research objectives presented in the Introduction and follow the procedures of the data analysis techniques. The data processing results are presented in the form of tables and figures/graphs to facilitate readers in reading and understanding data trends. In this section, students have also been able to compare and corroborate their findings with previous similar studies.

In the Conclusion section, students have been able to draw conclusions from the research results that scientifically address the research objectives and provide recommendations for the continuation of the research.

Scientific journal writing workshops can improve participants' understanding of how to write quality articles, enhance their academic skills, reading interest, and save time. This is reinforced by previous research that shows that scientific writing training for students also strengthens academic networks (Maulana et al., 2025). Figure 2 presents the Scientific Journal Writing material within the body of knowledge. Figure 3 shows presentation material for results and discussion in the journal.

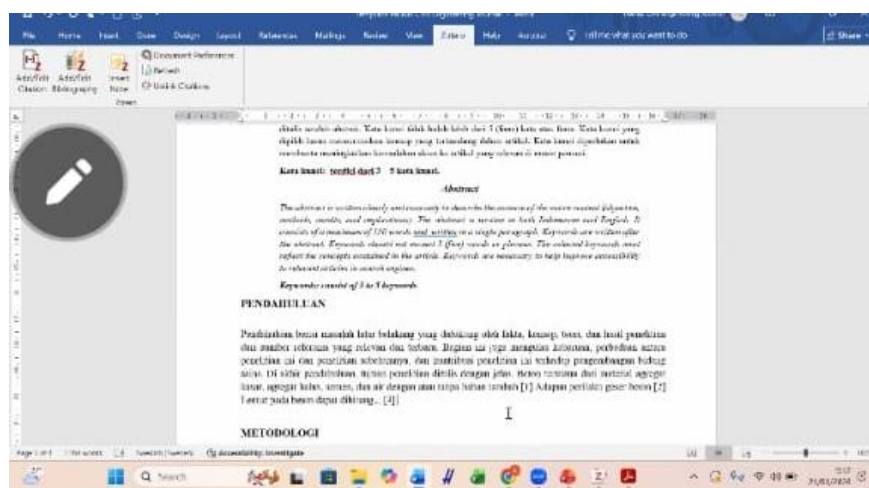


Figure 2. Introduction to the parts of a journal

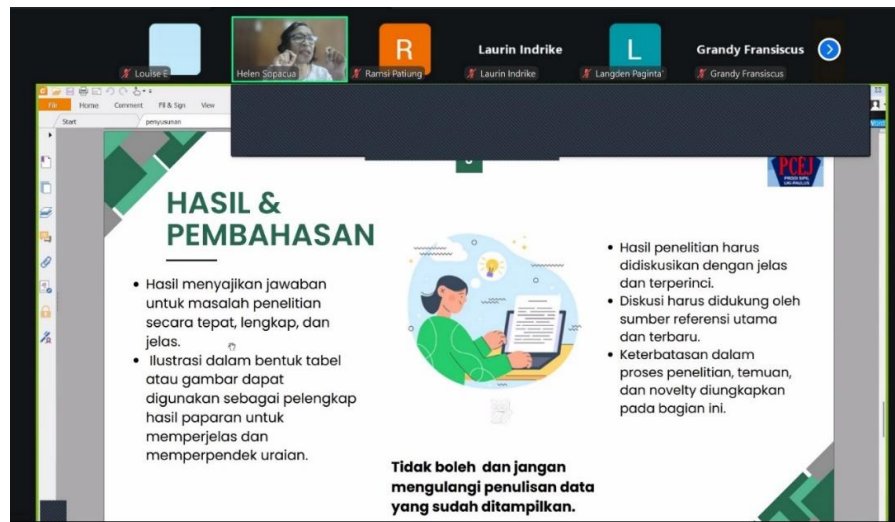


Figure 3. Presentation material for results and discussion in the journal

Language Variety and Types of Scientific Works

In this section, students are given an understanding of academic language, the objective language used in scientific papers. The characteristics of the language variety in scientific papers are that the language used must be precise so that the information is conveyed effectively. The information conveyed is clear of ambiguity and based on the main idea. Students are also given an understanding of the units of journal writing, from paragraphs to articles.

The results of this training enabled students to convey the main ideas of their research without any complications, facilitating conceptual understanding in the field of Civil Engineering. Furthermore, they were able to adhere to standard grammatical rules and avoid wasting words. These findings are reinforced by previous research that demonstrates that language diversity reduces word wasting and the placement of descriptive elements in scientific paper (Pratama, 2023). Figure 4 shows the delivery of material in various languages and types of scientific work.

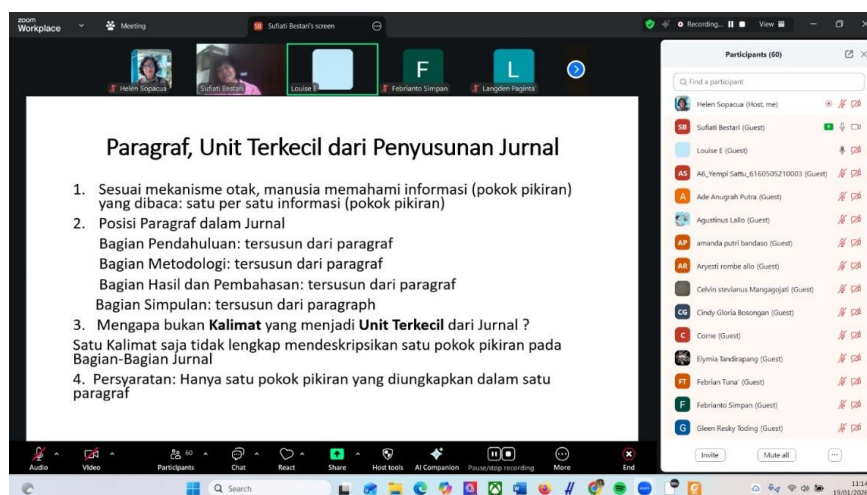


Figure 4. Material on variety of language and types of scientific work

Zotero and Mendeley

This material explains the definition of reference management in citations and the types of references. The elements required to create a reference/bibliography include the author's name, article title, journal name, volume, edition, page number, year of publication, and digital object identification number.

Students are guided directly to use Zotero and Mendeley, starting from how to install the application, parts of the application, creating a library folder, selecting the type of scientific work, manually entering and using DOI files into the library folder.

As a result of this workshop, students are able to manage references in an organized manner, increase time efficiency, reduce the risk of manual errors, and optimize academic writing. This is reinforced by previous research that Zotero training has helped students manage the information they have obtained, both in journal articles, books, theses, and dissertations. By mastering the application, student writing activities become more efficient in terms of time and energy efficiency (Baroroh et al., 2023). Zotero's potential to streamline the writing process and improve academic outcomes, offering valuable insights for integrating technology into higher education curricula (Rafi'i et al., 2025), and education on citation management for students can increase their understanding of using Mendeley by more than 90% (Nurwijaya et al., 2023). Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the Zotero and Mendeley materials presented at the workshop. Figure 7 shows comparison of citation compilation before and after attending the workshop.



Figure 5. Material on Zotero

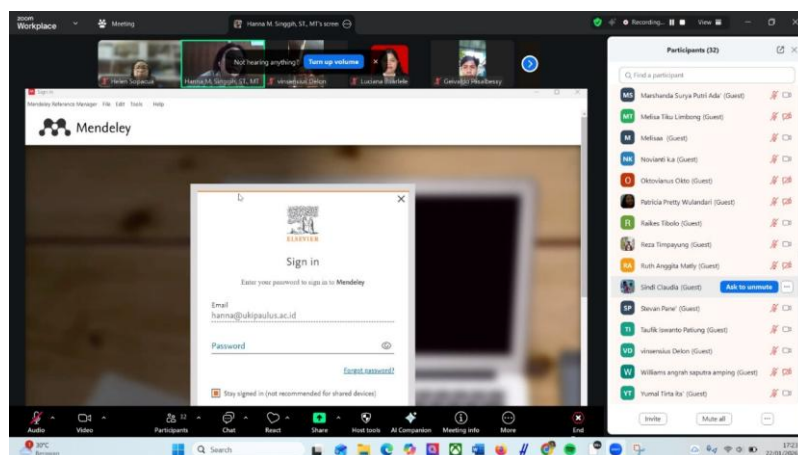


Figure 6. Material on Mendeley

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Figure 7. Comparison of Citation Compilation Before and After Attending the Workshop

Researchrabbit

Selection of citations and scientific papers related to research through the use of the Researchrabbit application. This application helps researchers in exploring topics thoroughly with excellent features that allow searching for articles with similar themes while providing a network diagram connecting various articles. In this material, students are taught how to use the application, input keywords, DOIs, and titles of articles to be searched, then group the selected files into one folder. Participants are also taught how to use citation maps and the relationships between articles or articles that are less relevant. The results of this application usage workshop are that students are able to find relevant articles in a time-efficient manner. These results are supported by previous research, namely Research Rabbit is a new literature mapping tool that helps with doing all this complex literature review in a seamless way and provide quick visualizations to help in exploring the literature (Sharma et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the challenges students encounter when using Researchrabbit are that this tool focuses more on citation network visualization and paper discovery. Students experience confusion in identifying research gaps using this application, some citations do not have a digital object identification number and incomplete information thus they cannot be saved to the folder. Figure 8 shows the material for using the Researchrabbit application. Figure 9 presents a screenshot of the citation map results obtained by students using this application.

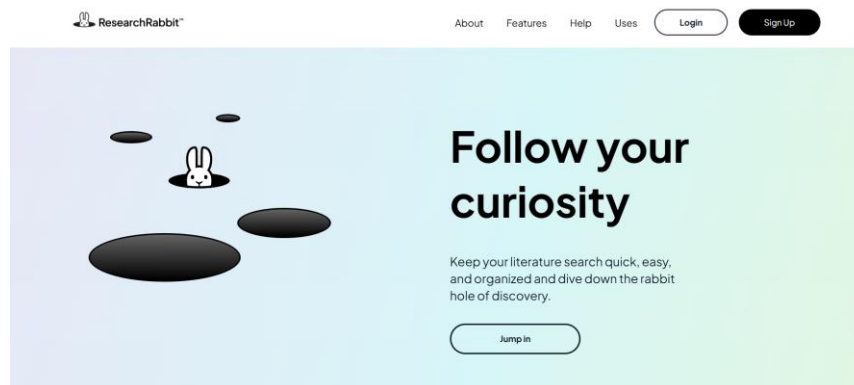


Figure 8. The material for using the Researchrabbit application

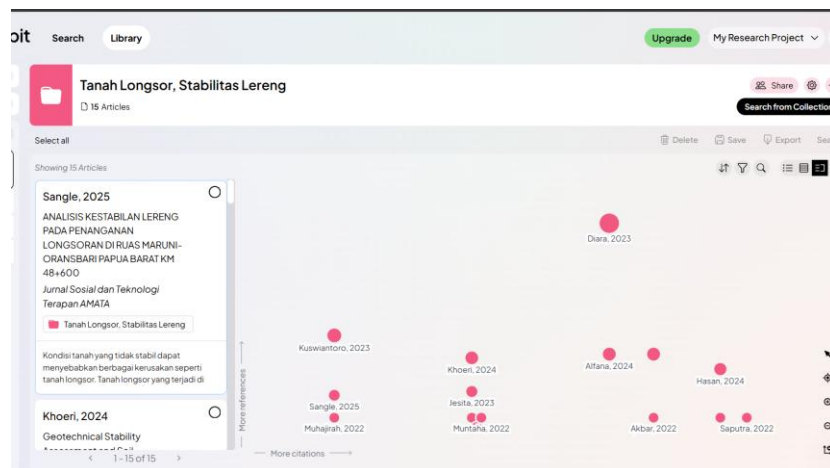


Figure 9. Screenshot of the citation map results obtained by student

Turnitin

Material related to plagiarism and its checking application is included in the Turnitin material section. Students are given an understanding of the types of plagiarism, the importance of avoiding plagiarism in scientific papers, and leading web-based applications for checking the level of similarity (plagiarism) in written works by comparing documents against global databases, journals, and websites. In addition, the Turnitin material presented to students covers Turnitin's function in preventing plagiarism, how it works by entering documents to be checked, and reading similarity reports. The Turnitin originality report's total similarity score is located to the left of the document on the last page of the Turnitin results. Words or sentences highlighted with varying colors indicate the proportion and source of text similarity. The meanings of these colors are as follows: blue (0%): no matching text; green (1%–24%): low similarity, generally safe and acceptable for scholarly work; yellow (25%–49%): moderate similarity, needs to be reviewed; orange (50%–74%): high similarity, must be revised; red (75%–100%): very high similarity to other sources, requires serious analysis and overhaul. The Match Overview displays the sources that contribute most to the similarity. These sources include Internet sources, scholarly publications, and student papers. Each block of matching text is color-coded and numbered, directly linked to the list of sources on the right. The results of the workshop showed that student articles had a Turnitin score of 20%. Previous research using the Turnitin application in scientific writing workshops includes: training on the usage and interpretation of similarity reports that are generated by the software as well as making the university's policy on plagiarism more visible or otherwise lose the capital and efforts invested in producing graduates who can contribute to knowledge and scholarship ethically (Alua et al., 2023). Figure 10 shows the Turnitin material at the workshop.

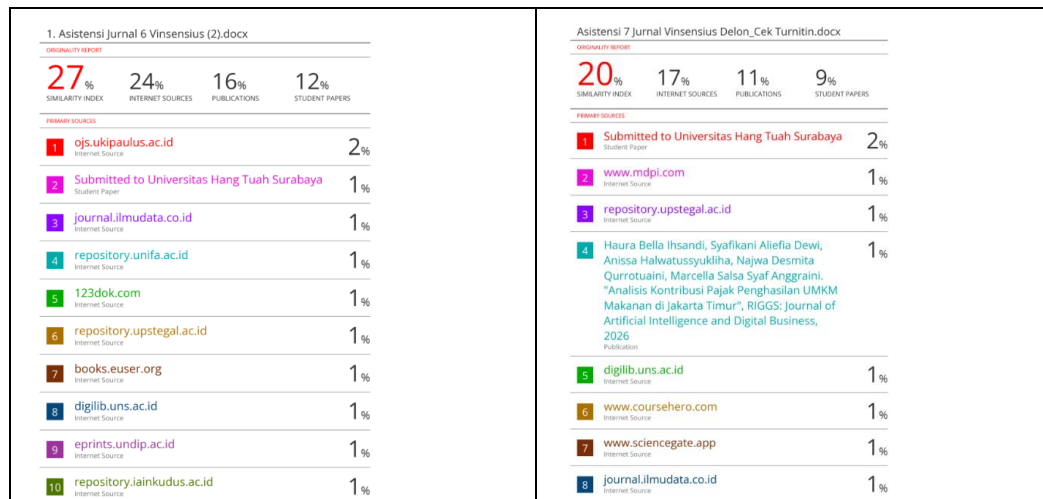


Figure 10. Student's turnitin score (before and after) in participating workshop

After participating in the online workshop and hybrid mentorship, 128 articles have implemented the workshop material. Turnitin material is much better understood by students, with an average of 90%. This is because the display of sentences/words that have similarities and the score in the application's results are easier to read, which greatly helps students to improve these sentences by adding data interpretation or discussion. Meanwhile, Researchrabbit material became a challenge for students because some citations that appeared in the application did not have a digital object identification number, some citations did not have complete data so they could not be saved to a folder, and the results of the citations displayed were not diverse enough. After participating in the workshop, there was an increase in understanding of the workshop material with an average score of 75.83%. This was also supported by the results of a paired t-test, which showed a significant difference in student understanding before and after attending the workshop. The highest increase was in the understanding of Turnitin material, while Researchrabbit material proved to be the most challenging for students, with an understanding score of only 50%. The success factor of this activity was practice-based learning and continuous mentorship after the workshop until the articles were truly ready for submission. Table 2 presents a comparison of students' understanding of workshop materials and paired samples t-test.

Table 2. Comparison of Student's Understanding of Workshop Materials

Material	Before	After	Target
Scientific journal writing	7%	80%	80%
Language Variety and Types of Scientific Works	10%	75%	80%
Zotero	22%	80%	80%
Mendeley	20%	80%	80%
Researchrabbit	1%	50%	80%
Turnitin	7%	90%	80%
Average	11.167%	75.83%	80%

Paired Samples T-Test

Paired Samples T-Test

								95% Confidence Interval	
			statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference	Lower	Upper
After	Before	Student's t	13.2	5.00	< .001	64.7	4.89	52.1	77.2

Note. H₀: $\mu_{\text{Measure 1}} - \mu_{\text{Measure 2}} = 0$

CONCLUSION

The combination of providing workshop and mentorship in journal writing to students has been proven to enhance students' understanding and ability in scientific journal writing. Limitation of this activity was that the material was delivered online, thus interaction with students was restricted by space and time and fewer than 1% of students were proactive during interaction sessions (zoom). In addition, because it was held online, students were not well prepared for proposal drafts, and the learning-by-doing process did not take place properly. For future activities, it is expected that workshop be conducted offline and that students will come prepared with proposal drafts thus the participants can better understand how to write scientific articles from the start of the workshop.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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