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**Pattern of Students' (*Akhlak*) Character Building through Student Organization Activity: A Study of Nature Lover Student (MAPALA) in Islamic University**

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**Abstract**

This research aims to reveal good practices in (*akhlak*) character building pattern through the activities of the Student Organization for Nature Lover (MAPALA) at an Islamic University in Palembang, South Sumatra. This research uses a qualitative case study type method. Research data was obtained through interviews, observation and documentation. There were 14 informants involved in this research. They are Vice Chancellor 3 for student affairs, Deputy Dean 3 (MAPALA coordinator), Chair of MAPALA, Deputy Chair of MAPALA, alumni (seniors) of MAPALA, 6 student members of MAPALA, and 3 lecturers. Research data was analyzed using an interactive model of three techniques, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The data were tested for validity through triangulation of source and technique. The results of this research show that the development of student character through the first extracurricular activities of the Student Activity Unit (UKM) for Nature Lovers Student (MAPALA), cognitive development activities, which include public discussions, up-reading, seminars, wildlife crime investigation training, and get-to-know interviews. Medan. Second, affective coaching activities, which include Capital Care Fundraising, Mosque Cleaning, Tiger Day Commemoration, and recital. Third, psychomotor development activities, which include Camping, Mountain Expeditions, Adventure with MAPALA, Young Member Adventures, Exercise and Rock Climbing. These activities have a positive impact on developing student character. Through these activities, students are taught to be religious, honest, communicative, environmentally conscious, socially caring and love nature.

**Keywords:** Character building, Islamic University, Pattern, Student organization

**Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap praktik baik pola pembinaan akhlak (karakter) melalui kegiatan organisasi kemahasiswaan (ormawa) Mahasiswa Pecinta Alam (MAPALA) di sebuah perguruan tinggi Islam di Palembang, Sumatera Selatan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif jenis studi kasus (case study). Data penelitian diperoleh melalui, wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Ada 14 informan yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini. Mereka adalah Wakil Rektor 3 bidang kemahasiswaan, Wakil Dekan 3 (coordinator MAPALA), Ketua MAPALA, Wakil ketua MAPALA, alumni (senior) MAPALA, 6 orang mahasiswa anggota MAPALA, dan 3 orang dosen. Data penelitian dianalisis dengan model interaktif dari tiga teknik yakni reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Data diuji keabsahannya melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembinaan karakter mahasiswa melalui kegiatan*

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*ekstrakurikuler Unit Kegiatan Mahasiswa (UKM) Mahasiswa Pecinta Alam (MAPALA) pertama, kegiatan pembinaan kognitif, yang meliputi diskusi public, up greading, seminar, pelatihan investigasi kejahatan pada satwa liar, dan temu wicara kenal medan. Kedua, kegiatan pembinaan afektif, yang meliputi Penggalangan Dana Peduli Ibu Kota, Bersih Masjid, Peringatan Hari Harimau, dan pengajian. Ketiga, kegiatan pembinaan psikomotorik, yang meliputi Camping, Ekspedisi Gunung, Adventure with MAPALA, Pengembaraan Anggota Muda, Latihan dan Rock Climbing. Kegiatan-kegiatan ini berdampak positif bagi pembinaan karakter mahasiswa. Melalui kegiatan-kegiatan tersebut mahasiswa dibiasakan untuk bersikap religius, jujur, komunikatif, peduli lingkungan, peduli sosial, dan cinta alam.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Organisasi Kemahasiswaan, Pembentukan Karakter, Perguruan Tinggi Islam, Pola*

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious universities are one of the levels of formal education in Indonesia. In contrast to the aims of education at the primary and secondary education levels, which are only limited to increasing students' intelligence, knowledge, personality and skills, students at the higher education level are required to have more complex abilities. Graduates from tertiary institutions are expected to become members of society who are faithful and devout, and have noble character, have character that is in accordance with Pancasila values, have knowledge, skills, independence, and attitudes to discover, develop, and apply science and art that are beneficial to humanity (Government, 2022). To achieve this goal, universities must have a character development strategy that can be included in the curriculum (curricular) or included in extracurricular activities (Pristiwanti et al., 2022; Sihombing, 2020).

As one of the Islamic religious universities in South Sumatra, Indonesia, Raden Fatah State Islamic University Palembang has several intracampus extracurricular activities. One of them is the extracurricular activity for Nature Lovers Student (MAPALA). In Indonesia, nature lover groups began to emerge around the 50s. The aim of establishing this group is to increase love for the universe among the community (Anuraga, 2018; Wijaya & Insan, 2018).

MAPALA student organizations (Ormawa) are more unique than other student organizations in universities in Indonesia. This student organization combines outdoor activities with an adventure dimension with activities with environmental awareness, nature conservation and even humanitarian dimensions (Rantaprasaja, 2022). MAPALA activists are also known to have above average courage, are independent, tough, selfless and have a high sense of humanity. That is why MAPALA is often involved in SAR operations led by BASARNAS (Ilmupedia, 2022).

On the other hand, MAPALA is also often associated with cases of violence that occur against students. Previous research shows that there is a significant relationship between the self-control of students who are active in MAPALA and their aggressive behavior (Riska Tantri Maharani, 2015). Other research also

reveals that there is a relationship between the violence that occurred at MAPALA and senior power in the organization. This negative stigma is a challenge for Raden Fatah State Islamic University (UIN) as a religious university to develop the MAPALA student organization.

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang created a character building program for MAPALA to anticipate negative behavior from students who are active at MAPALA. The results of the initial interview with the Vice Chancellor 3 for student affairs showed that this coaching program aims to ensure that students have good character through MAPALA extracurricular activities. Through deputy dean 3 who was assigned as coordinator of MAPALA activities, activities in this organization received quite intensive direction and coaching. The coaching materials in MAPALA activities remain characterized by a love of nature, but are reinforced with practical religious (Islamic) material, such as how to pray when in the forest or mountains, so that students develop a religious and responsible character. Apart from that, the semi-military method of coaching MAPALA members has also proven effective in developing students' character into strong and independent individuals.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with an explanatory case study method which aims to explain the phenomenon in depth (Capraro, 2016). This research was conducted to describe facts regarding the pattern of character education through intra-campus student extracurricular activities at Raden Fatah State Islamic University, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. To test the validity of the data, researchers conducted repeated interviews, carried out intensive observations in the field, and confirmed data from interviews, observation data, and research documents (data triangulation).

Researchers directly select representative informants who are considered to know a lot about the research problem. This is intended to obtain accurate and informative data. Fourteen people became informants. They are Deputy Chancellor 3 of UIN Raden Fatah for student affairs (Information 1), Deputy Dean 3

(MAPALA coordinator), Chair of MAPALA (Information 3), Deputy Chair of MAPALA (Information 4), supervisor/alumni of MAPALA (Information 5), 6 students MAPALA members (informants ,6,7,8,9,10, 11), 3 lecturers.

**Table 1.**  
**Information and data obtained**

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Data obtained</b>
Vice chancellor for student affairs	Religious college policy regarding character education patterns on campus.
Deputy dean 3 FITK/ UKMK supervisor	MAPALA UKMK development process
Chairman/manager of the MAPALA organization	MAPALA organization work program
Deputy chairman/manager of the MAPALA organization	MAPALA organization work program
Trustees/alumni of the MAPALA organization	Character education through activities at MAPALA
Six students are active members of the MAPALA student organization	Student responses regarding character education in the MAPALA organization
Three lecturers	Responses about the character of MAPALA student activists

In the first step, the researcher carried out qualitative document analysis, namely conducting a study of work program documents (proker) and coaching materials in the organization (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This document can also be viewed as a source or research informant who will answer research questions (Nilamsari, 2014). Then researchers conducted in-depth interviews with informants to clarify documents (Goodell et al., 2016). Next, researchers observed students' activities in the MAPALA organization, for example when they met, took breaks, and when providing guidance to members of the organization. Observations are carried out naturally. The researcher acts as an observer as well as a participant (Fadli, 2021).

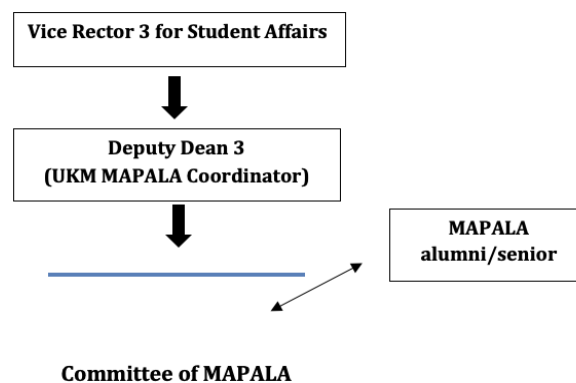
The data obtained was then analyzed using data triangulation techniques by combining result data, interviews, observations and documentation (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher recorded, summarized, classified, analyzed and interpreted the data in depth, then reviewed the data obtained in narrative form, and concluded each research data related to student character development patterns through intracampus extracurricular activities, MAPALA at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research results revealed that there are three patterns of student character education in MAPALA extracurricular activities; Character education through cognitive development, affective development and psychomotor development activities by the campus internally through Vice Chancellor 3 and Deputy Dean 3 with coaching materials for MAPALA activists. These three approach patterns can be categorized into character building patterns for students through intracampus extracurricular activities, especially UKMK MAPALA.

### Character development program

The character development program at UKMK MAPALA UIN Raden Fatah is under the supervision of the Vice Chancellor 3 for student affairs who oversees several fields as seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.**  
Organizational structure of MAPALA

Internal guidance by Vice Chancellor 3 and Deputy Dean 3 who were appointed to develop the MAPALA Student Activities Unit, everything went well. According to the Deputy Chancellor for Student Affairs, these cognitive, affective and psychomotor development activities run in tandem and are considered to have a positive impact on the development and character education of students through UKMK MAPALA extracurricular activities.

“We always monitor the activities carried out by the MAPALA organization. There are 3 Deputy Deans from faculties appointed to coordinate several UKMK, including MAPALA. "Students' character must be developed, not only through

the lecture process, but also through campus extracurricular activities, such as UKMK MAPALA." Informant 1).

As an intracampus extracurricular activity, UKMK MAPALA must always consult on its activities with Vice Chancellor 3, including coaching materials for members. The MAPALA UKMK development materials are shown in table 2.

**Table 2.**  
Materials of UKMK MAPALA

<b>Program</b>	<b>Coaching activities/materials</b>	<b>Information</b>
Physique	Gymnastics, push ups, marathons, long marches	The physical program is a routine coaching activity at UKMK MAPALA. In this activity, MAPALA members are physically developed using the training method and go directly into the field (practice).
Motivation	Love of nature Islam Archipelago insight Equalization of vision	Material about nature, Islam, insight into the archipelago and equalizing the perceptions of MAPALA members is provided in order to motivate members to love nature.
Islam	Tawheed Practical worship Morals MAPALA in an Islamic perspective	Religious (Islamic) material is a characteristic in the development of MAPALA members at UIN. This material specifically develops the religious character of students so that they become good individuals
MAPALA-ness	Definition of MAPALA/nature lover MAPALA's current and future activities MAPALA's role in environmental sustainability Build yourself MAPALA	This material contains an explanation of MAPALA's activities which are oriented towards love of nature and environmental conservation.
Organizational	Understanding organization Organizational functions Organization goals Organizational system Organizational structure Organization management	This material provides provisions for students to understand organizational structure and management functions.

Leadership	<p>Understanding leadership Leadership duties and functions Types of leadership Leadership management Characteristics of a leader Leadership psychology Leadership from an Islamic perspective</p>	<p>This material aims to provide students with an understanding of how to lead properly by introducing types of leadership and Islamic perspectives on leadership. The aim is for students to be able to apply Islamic leadership in the future.</p>
Code of Ethics for Nature Lovers (KEPA)	<p>Definition of KEPA KEPA historical background The essence and principles of KEPA Meaning of KEPA The relevance of KEPA to national and religious ideology</p>	<p>This material aims to ensure that students understand the code of ethics for nature lovers, so that responsible characters are developed.</p>
Survival	<p>Definition of survival Survival activities Survival language Instructions for training yourself in survival Survival object</p>	<p>This material is material that is characteristic of MAPALA. In this material, students are provided with the knowledge and skills to survive in nature.</p>
Navigation	<p>Understanding navigation Various types of navigation Regarding navigation Techniques for using navigation tools Weather forecast analysis Terrain orientation</p>	<p>Navigation material is also provided to students at MAPALA to train students to survive in nature.</p>
Rock climbing	<p>Definition of rock climbing History of rock climbing rock climbing equipment Rigging Climbing theory and practice Cleaning theory The difference between climbing, rolling, refling, and rope slings</p>	<p>This material is more oriented towards physical skills. Students are given an explanation of the theory of rock climbing and then trained to become skilled at climbing cliffs. The goal is for students to be trained to live in nature and be able to adapt quickly to harsh environments.</p>
Caving (cave exploration)	<p>Definition of caving Knowledge about caves History of cave exploration Cave habitat Caving management Caving equipment Ethics and obligations of cave exploration</p>	<p>The caving material also equips students to understand about caves, which are one of the natural features that must be preserved.</p>



	Danger of caves Overcoming the dangers of caving Cave mapping	
Rapid Current Sports (ORAD)	Understanding ORAD History of ORAD ORAD equipment Dangers of ORAD ORAD Countermeasures ORAD technique Knowledge about rivers	Material about fast current sports was also given to students at MAPALA. This material aims to ensure that students have a correct understanding of fast currents and are able to overcome dangers that may occur when in water.

Source: MAPALA Development Material Document at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang

## Program implementation

### Cognitive coaching activities

Cognitive development activities for UIN Raden Fatah Palembang students are carried out through programs such as public discussions, up-gradings, seminars, wildlife crime investigation training, and field get-to-know interviews. As stated by informant 2:

"These activities aim to broaden the insight of students who are active in UKMK MAPALA UIN Raden Fatah, especially regarding the topic of love of nature. Apart from that, even physical MAPALA activities, such as expeditions, navigation, climbing, caving, are actually also useful in the cognitive (intellectual) development process of its members. "Because, in their implementation, these activities also require precise and accurate calculations" (informant 2).

Public discussion activities are usually carried out incidentally in accordance with hot issues that are currently developing, such as increases in fuel oil (BBM). Up Grading activities are carried out every Sunday by MAPALA members to discuss previous coaching materials. Seminar activities are usually held to commemorate historic days. For example, the anniversary of the city of Palembang. In this activity, competitions were also held involving students and the general public, such as icon photo competitions, cross-country competitions and rock climbing. The Get to Know Medan Talk Meeting (TWKM) activity is held once a year. The activity is a gathering place for MAPALA members throughout Indonesia to discuss efforts to preserve nature and love the environment. Regarding

the form of training for investigating crimes in wildlife, the informant said "The form of training for investigating crimes in wildlife is the provision of theory and field practice directly by the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) and the Zoology Society of London." (Informant 3).

MAPALA UKM management also always involves their seniors or alumni in the process of coaching members internally. To carry out an activity, the management usually consults with alumni, asking for advice on what steps should be taken so that the activity can run smoothly. MAPALA administrators who are still active have a high emotional attachment to MAPALA alumni or seniors. This was also expressed by Deputy Dean 3 of UKMK MAPALA supervisors "Sometimes the influence of seniors is very strong in student organizations like MAPALA. They always consult with their seniors. We must always monitor so that seniors can have a positive influence on their juniors so that student character development becomes good." (Informant 2).

This was also acknowledged by one of the MAPALA alumni, "We as seniors (alumni) at MAPALA still frequently communicate with the management who are still active. They also often consult with us if they want to organize an event or activity. As alumni, we provide suggestions so that the event can be held successfully." (Informant 5). Thus, in the coaching process at MAPALA, there is involvement of seniors (alumni). However, this coaching is always monitored by the campus so that student character development can develop positively.

### **Affective coaching activities**

Some of UKM MAPALA's activities aimed at fostering the affective aspects of students are Capital Care Fundraising, Mosque Cleaning, Tiger Day Commemoration, and recital. Fundraising activities are usually carried out at red light intersections. This activity is incidental to help victims of natural disasters, such as victims of fires and floods. The funds collected will be directly distributed to victims of natural disasters. Mosque Cleaning activities are carried out by MAPALA members in mosques around the UIN Raden Fatah campus. This activity is usually carried out every week on Friday. Tiger Day commemoration activities

are held every July 9. This activity has a theme of love for the environment which aims to encourage people to protect tigers, which are endangered animals. This activity is usually accompanied by various competitions which are participated in by elementary school, middle school and university students. Meanwhile, recitation activities are carried out from house to house of MAPALA members.

“This recitation activity is useful in increasing the Islamic insight of the members. Apart from that, through activities like this, the relationship between members can become closer. Especially if it is carried out from house to house. This activity can at least reduce the family's suspicions about MAPALA's activities, most of which are in the field. "By having family members get to know other MAPALA UIN members better, it will be easier to obtain permission from the family (parents) for the members during field activities" (Informant 3).

Habituation activities and fostering mental discipline of students in MAPALA organizational activities are also carried out through cadre formation since recruiting prospective members. That "To become a member of MAPALA you must take Basic Education (DIKSAR) which is trained by the military and take part in at least three expedition activities. "The aim is to familiarize and mentally train MAPALA members to be disciplined in their work and life." (Informant 8). Apart from that, to develop the character of responsibility towards religious teachings, MAPALA also provides guidance material to students regarding practical worship.

"One of the coaching materials in MAPALA is Islamic material which discusses practical worship. In this material, MAPALA members are taught how to worship, especially praying in emergency situations, such as praying when in the forest or mountains. "This material is very useful so that students can continue to carry out their obligations as religious people even though they are in an emergency situation" (Informant 9).

This attitude of responsibility can also be seen from the researcher's observations of the behavior of MAPALA members who remain active in completing their studies at university even while completing their duties as administrators in the organization. Some of the lecturers' responses regarding the responsible attitude of MAPALA members are as follows:

"One of my students is a MAPALA activist, busy with activities such as mountain climbing and rock climbing, but he is still doing his coursework. If there is

activity, you will be sure to provide news. Just be responsible with your three things as a student." (Informant 12).

"In my class, the student who is a MAPALA activist, looks a bit sloppy, but really cares about the environment. He likes to invite friends in his class to clean the classroom after lectures." (Informant 13).

"Students who are active in the MAPALA organization are usually agile, skilled, like to help lecturers and their friends, their appearance is also simple." (Informant 14).

Meanwhile, a sense of responsibility is also reflected in the following student's response when narrating about the MAPALA secret room, which is a place for them to gather and do activities, "I feel that the MAPALA secret room is like my home, which I always miss, so I enjoy cleaning it." (Informant 6). Another student also stated "I am most diligent in coming to the MAPALA secret room, and when we have gathered, without being asked we usually clean the secret room together." (Informant 11)

### **Psychomotor development activities**

MAPALA Student Activity Unit (UKM) is an intracampus student organization based on love of nature. As a campus extracurricular activity that has a vision of loving and preserving the environment, this organization has many activities oriented towards the psychomotor development of its members. Some of these activities include Camping, Mountain Expeditions, Adventure with MAPALA, Young Member Adventures, Training and Rock Climbing. These activities aim to train students to be close to and love nature.

When in the field (nature), MAPALA members have a unique special nickname, namely "Jabal", "Gaung". According to one of the activists, this means "When we are climbing mountains or exploring the forest, we are called by names that are different from our real names. The goal is for member security." (Informant 7). Another MAPALA member also said the same thing, "Yes, when we are in the forest or on the mountains, we use field names, for our safety while exploring nature" (Informant 10)

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## Program Evaluation

UKMK MAPALA UIN Raden Fatah also carries out evaluations for its members. In everyday life, evaluations at MAPALA are carried out simultaneously when activities are carried out. For physical activities, such as rock climbing, evaluation is usually carried out immediately after the activity is completed. The coach brother directly observes the physical training process carried out by his coach brothers. When mistakes are found in climbing techniques, after the physical training, the younger students immediately receive guidance for further improvements. Apart from that, there is also a written evaluation. For example, in activities to deepen material about ideology.

"There is another form of evaluation that is usually carried out by MAPALA UIN members when they are in the field, for example in the forest or on mountain climbing activities. The form is self-evaluation in sacred devotional activities. "Similar to the sacred devotional activities usually carried out by Scout members, MAPALA members make a campfire and sit in a circle before carrying out sacred devotions." (Informant 4)

The evaluation carried out by UKMK MAPALA UIN Raden Fatah on members is informal. Evaluation is carried out directly and indirectly. Apart from that, MAPALA also carries out self-evaluations for its members (*muhasabah*). Reflection on oneself is carried out in activities in the field which are useful for training one's awareness of one's existence in nature.

Higher education is an educational unit that must be obliged to take part in the formation of national character (Mentari et al., 2021). Higher education is a formal forum for students to carry out the education process and play a role in continuing the character cultivation process (Nurpratiwi, 2021). It is not enough for character development to only be carried out through academic activities, but educational institutions must also carry out character development through non-academic activities (Amilda et al., 2023). In this way, character development in higher education can be carried out comprehensively. In fact, character development which is part of character education must be carried out completely and comprehensively. This perspective is in accordance with the goals of national

education which not only aim to develop students' academic abilities, but also develop skills and affective aspects (character) (Susanti, 2013).

Facts show that extracurricular activities in higher education have a positive impact on developing student character. This means that the activities of intracampus student organizations such as UKM MAPALA are quite effective in developing student character. A study proves that extracurricular activities in higher education have a positive effect on academic performance, self-concept and student behavior. (Rafiullah et al., 2017). This fact also shows that the strength of the concept greatly determines the success of student character development programs in higher education. This fact strengthens the argument that universities have an important role in developing the character of students so that they become young people with good and noble character (Abdi, 2016; Nurpratiwi, 2021; Ratnasari, 2019).

Referring to the results of previous research, character development in higher education through extracurricular activities is quite effective in developing student character (Belhiyad, 2022; Marini, 2017; Rahayu & Dong, 2023). Although most of the students who are active in extracurricular activities at MAPALA UIN Raden Fatah Palembang are male, and have an untidy appearance, most of them have good character. The visible evidence is that students behave politely and respectfully, smile, are friendly, and greet lecturers and friends when they meet. They also continue to pray five times a day even though they are active in the field (forests, mountains), maintain cleanliness and environmental sustainability as a form of love for nature, and are responsible for the duties and mandates given by the campus (lecturers) and extracurricular activities. The natural environment is a positive object for character building (Bujuri, et al., 2023). The success of this program is greatly influenced by the role of the vice chancellor and deputy dean for student affairs as well as MAPALA seniors (alumni). Thus, leadership is another factor that supports the success of developing student character (Anugrah et al., 2022; Dacholfany, 2015).

The success of developing student character cannot be separated from the integration of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development activities in

campus extracurricular activities as well as the synergy of development carried out by the campus and alumni. Good leadership patterns are also needed in this activity (Herlina et al., 2022). This is in accordance with the mandate of Law Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, that education for students, including character formation, is carried out in an integrated manner in intracurricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning. Therefore, developing student character through intracurricular and extracurricular programs in higher education is very necessary (Hemafitria et al., 2014; Prianto, 2015; Rahmat & Tanszil, 2017; Sihombing, 2020; Adjie Kusworo, 2022).

Apart from that, universities must also have high concern for developing student character. Because character education in higher education must be carried out as a continuation of the previous educational institution (secondary school) (Rif 'Ah et al., 2020). One way of character education in higher education can be done by integrating academic programs on campus with student extracurricular activities which are non-academic programs. This is based on findings in the field that universities are quite serious in shaping student character through extracurricular activities. Finally, through cognitive, affective and psychomotor development activities in extracurricular activities in higher education, it is possible to develop good student character. Routine coaching for students who take part in extracurricular activities on campus with meaningful coaching materials is an excellent asset in building student character. The success of developing student character is of course also influenced by campus support through the 3 vice chancellors for student affairs and 3 deputy deans in each faculty.

## CONCLUSION

This research proves that the pattern of developing student character through extracurricular activities has a positive impact on developing student character as it happens in the nature lover student organization (MAPALA) at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Through cognitive, affective and psychomotor development activities, with good training materials, students are trained to be disciplined, honest, religious, communicative, care for and love the environment,

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and be responsible consistently and continuously. This research shows that the success of the student character development program through MAPALA activities can be seen from several things, such as meaningful coaching substance factors, leadership factors, system factors, and alumni support factors. This research has limitations in describing other factors that influence student character development. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out further research on the factors that influence the development of student character in higher education.



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