

Success Factors of Students Passing Funding and Presentation Stages in the Student Creativity Program (PKM)

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Abstract

Student participation in competitive innovation programmes requires more than creative ideas, as students must integrate academic writing, teamwork, mentoring, and responsiveness to changing evaluation requirements. This study examines how students progress through the funding and PIMNAS presentation stages of the Student Creativity Program (PKM). A qualitative descriptive approach was adopted involving 16 participants, comprising 10 students, three PKM supervisors, and three faculty leaders at the Faculty of Economics and Business of a state university in Surabaya, Indonesia. Data were collected through document analysis, semi structured interviews, and a focus group discussion and analysed through thematic analysis and cross source comparison. The findings reveal six interrelated dimensions underpinning successful progression: proposal quality, teamwork and role distribution, supervisory guidance and academic support, understanding of evaluation criteria, execution and compliance discipline, and motivation and persistence. Rather than operating independently, these dimensions become relevant as students respond to the progressively different demands of each competitive stage. The study contributes the concept of sequential capability alignment, positioning PKM success as a process of coordinating and adapting capabilities across successive stages. The findings highlight the need for continuous, stage specific institutional support that integrates proposal mentoring, substantive review, structured feedback, implementation support, and presentation preparation.

Keywords: Student Creativity Program, Student Success, Academic Mentoring, Sequential Capability Alignment

Introduction

Universities increasingly rely on student innovation programmes to develop capabilities that extend beyond conventional classroom learning. Such programmes provide students with opportunities to identify real-world problems, formulate evidence-based solutions, work collaboratively, and communicate innovative ideas through competitive academic outputs. In Indonesia, the Student Creativity Program (Program Kreativitas Mahasiswa, PKM) represents an important institutional mechanism for achieving these objectives. PKM requires students to transform ideas into proposals that demonstrate problem relevance, scientific reasoning, methodological coherence, feasibility, and innovation (Apandi, 2020; Siregar, 2022). The programme therefore provides a distinctive context in which students' academic and creative capabilities are evaluated under competitive conditions. More importantly, PKM involves successive selection stages, whereby proposals must first satisfy institutional and programme requirements to obtain funding and funded teams must subsequently demonstrate the quality of their work to progress to the presentation stage at the National Student Scientific Week (PIMNAS).

The importance of PKM extends beyond competition outcomes. The programme is embedded within the broader mission of higher education to develop students' capacity to apply, develop, and disseminate knowledge and innovation in response to societal needs (Siregar, 2022; Taryudi et al., 2024). Through its institutional implementation, PKM also contributes to the development of scientific and innovation-oriented cultures within universities (Setiawan et al., 2023). From a pedagogical perspective, participation in research and innovation activities can foster higher-order thinking, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving capabilities (Karlsson and Nikolaidou, 2016; Mulder, 2017). Recent research on creativity in higher education similarly highlights the importance of pedagogical practices, learning environments, and student characteristics, while also pointing to the need for greater attention to the mechanisms through which creativity develops in higher education contexts (Setiamurti and Kurniawati, 2024). Consequently, successful PKM participation requires more than an attractive idea. Students need to integrate problem identification, theoretical and empirical justification, methodological rigour, novelty, feasibility, teamwork, and persuasive scientific communication into a coherent proposal and subsequent project output.

Despite these potential benefits, previous studies have primarily examined students' readiness, capabilities, participation, or developmental outcomes rather than explaining how students successfully progress through the successive stages of a competitive innovation programme. For example, Taryudi et al. (2024) identified motivation, self-concept, critical thinking, personal readiness, mentor experience, learning environment, and training as factors associated with students' readiness to participate in PKM. Research on innovation competitions has also highlighted the importance of team processes, leadership, and mentoring in supporting student development and performance (Bendickson et al., 2020; Tseng et al., 2024). However, these studies provide limited explanation of how individual capabilities, team processes, mentoring, and institutional support operate together as students move from one competitive stage to another.

This limitation is particularly relevant because student innovation competitions are often structured as multi-stage processes rather than single events. Tseng et al. (2024), for example,

examined team diversity, emergent leadership, and shared leadership in a multi-stage innovation and creativity competition and highlighted the need for further understanding of student team performance in such competitive settings. Similarly, Konaka et al. (2025) identified the need for greater understanding of how innovation competitions and programmes contribute to student learning and innovation development. These studies indicate that competition-based learning involves changing tasks and demands across stages. Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to how students navigate the transition from proposal development and evaluation to funding and subsequent final presentation within an integrated programme context.

Three related gaps therefore emerge from the literature. First, a process gap exists because student innovation programme success has commonly been examined through participation, readiness, individual development, or competition outcomes rather than as a staged progression from proposal development to funding and subsequent presentation. Second, a multilevel gap remains because individual capabilities, team collaboration, mentoring, and institutional support have generally been examined separately rather than as interconnected factors within the same student innovation programme. Third, a methodological gap is evident. Much of the existing literature relies on quantitative surveys and outcome-based measures; systematic reviews of higher education creativity research indicate that surveys remain a dominant methodological approach and call for more diverse methods and deeper investigation of the mechanisms underlying student creativity development (Setiamurti and Kurniawati, 2024). Qualitative research on undergraduate research experiences, however, shows that students' perspectives can reveal important dimensions such as achievement, ownership, challenges, real-world relevance, collaboration, and mentoring that may not be fully captured by conventional outcome measures (Zou et al., 2023).

Addressing these gaps is important because successful progression through PKM may require different capabilities at different stages. A proposal that satisfies the requirements for funding must demonstrate relevance, novelty, scientific reasoning, methodological soundness, and feasibility. However, funded teams subsequently face additional demands related to project implementation, team coordination, evidence of achievement, refinement of outputs, and scientific presentation. Thus, factors that support success at the funding stage may not necessarily be sufficient for progression to PIMNAS. Understanding these differences can extend current research beyond the question of whether students participate or succeed and instead address how successful teams navigate changing requirements across the programme process.

The need for such an investigation is reinforced by the empirical context of the Faculty of Economics and Business at a state university in Surabaya. Despite substantial student participation in PKM, the proportion of proposals progressing to externally funded projects and subsequently to PIMNAS remains very limited. In 2023, 243 proposals passed the university's internal selection process and were submitted through SIMBELMAWA, but only seven received funding and none progressed to PIMNAS. A similar pattern occurred in 2024. Of 332 proposals, 75 passed the internal selection process and were submitted through SIMBELMAWA; however, only one proposal received funding and none reached PIMNAS. This persistent gap between participation, internal selection, funding, and PIMNAS progression provides an important empirical motivation for the present study. Rather than viewing low

progression simply as a problem of student participation or idea generation, the pattern indicates the need to understand the capabilities, practices, and forms of support that enable teams to move successfully through increasingly demanding stages of PKM.

Accordingly, this study aims to:

- Identify the factors that contribute to students' successful progression from PKM proposal submission to funding;
- Examine the factors that enable funded student teams to progress to the PIMNAS presentation stage;
- Explore how proposal development, team collaboration, mentoring, preparation, evaluation, and institutional support operate throughout the PKM process; and
- Develop a contextually grounded understanding of how successful students navigate the successive stages of a competitive student innovation programme.

The study is significant for both research and higher education practice. From a research perspective, it extends the literature on student innovation by conceptualising programme success as a staged progression rather than a single competitive outcome. This perspective responds to the limited attention given to the processes through which students navigate multi-stage innovation competitions and complements existing research on creativity, mentoring, team processes, and competition-based learning (Bendickson et al., 2020; Tseng et al., 2024; Konaka et al., 2025). From a practical perspective, the study provides empirically grounded insights into the individual, team, mentoring, and institutional factors perceived by successful students as enabling progression. These insights can assist universities in designing more targeted mentoring, proposal development, coaching, feedback, and institutional support mechanisms to strengthen the effectiveness and competitiveness of student innovation programmes.

By examining the experiences of students who have successfully progressed through both the funding and PIMNAS presentation stages, this study therefore shifts the focus from participation and isolated competition outcomes to the processes and enabling conditions underlying successful progression. Such an approach provides a more nuanced understanding of student innovation programme success and offers contextually grounded evidence for improving the design and implementation of competitive student creativity programmes in higher education.

Literature Review

Student Creativity Program and Student Success

The Student Creativity Program (Program Kreativitas Mahasiswa, PKM) provides an institutional context in which higher education students develop and demonstrate creativity, problem solving, research capability, and academic communication (Siregar, 2022). Unlike conventional classroom activities, PKM requires students to transform identified problems into structured proposals that integrate evidence, methodological reasoning, feasibility, and innovation. It therefore functions not only as an academic competition but also as an authentic learning environment in which students apply knowledge to complex problems and communicate solutions under competitive evaluation.

Research on research based and innovation oriented learning indicates that participation in authentic academic activities can strengthen higher order thinking, critical thinking, creativity, and academic communication (Karlsson and Nikolaidou, 2016; Taryudi et al., 2024). Within PKM, however, these capabilities must be integrated into a coherent proposal and subsequently demonstrated through project implementation and presentation. Consequently, successful participation is unlikely to depend on creativity alone. Proposal quality, teamwork, mentoring, and institutional support may jointly influence students' ability to transform ideas into competitive academic outputs (Hidayat and Pratiwi, 2023; Taryudi et al., 2024). PKM can therefore be understood as a multidimensional student development process in which individual capabilities interact with collaborative and institutional conditions.

Academic Writing and Proposal Quality

Academic writing is central to PKM because proposals provide the primary means through which students establish problem relevance, construct evidence based arguments, justify methodological choices, and articulate the novelty and potential contribution of their ideas. Effective academic writing involves more than linguistic competence; it requires students to analyse information, evaluate evidence, synthesise knowledge, and construct logically coherent arguments (Heidrich and Schubert, 2019). These capabilities are closely associated with higher order thinking and critical reasoning, which are important for developing academically credible proposals (Apandi, 2020; Wibowo, 2021).

Proposal quality consequently reflects the integration of academic literacy, critical thinking, information use, and methodological reasoning. An attractive idea may remain unsuccessful when its problem formulation is unclear, its evidence is insufficient, or its methodology does not convincingly address the identified problem. Conversely, strong academic reasoning can enhance the credibility and competitiveness of a proposal. Nevertheless, proposal quality alone may not explain successful progression because students must also coordinate tasks, respond to feedback, implement their projects, and prepare for subsequent evaluation stages.

Individual, Team, and Institutional Conditions

Student success in competitive academic programmes is multidimensional, involving individual, team, and institutional conditions (Nore, 2015). At the individual level, motivation, confidence, persistence, and problem solving capability can influence students' engagement with demanding academic tasks (Reuer et al., 2016). At the team level, communication, role clarity, leadership, and collaboration determine how effectively individual capabilities are combined to produce collective outputs (Schrijver and Leijten, 2019). Institutional conditions, including mentoring, training, supervisory support, resources, and an environment conducive to research and innovation, provide an additional mechanism through which student capabilities can be translated into performance (Weinstein et al., 2023).

These perspectives suggest that competitive academic success is unlikely to result from a single determinant. Rather, it may emerge from the alignment of academic preparedness, proposal development, teamwork, mentoring, and institutional support. However, existing studies tend to examine these dimensions separately or focus on participation, readiness, or

general academic performance. Less is known about how these factors interact within the successive stages of a competitive student innovation programme.

Student Success Across Competitive Stages

The distinction between participation and progression is particularly important in understanding PKM outcomes. Students may be motivated to participate and develop promising proposals but fail to obtain funding because of weaknesses in substantive quality, methodological coherence, novelty, feasibility, or formal compliance. Likewise, obtaining funding does not guarantee progression to PIMNAS, where teams must demonstrate effective project implementation and communicate their outcomes convincingly. PKM success can therefore be viewed as a process of progression rather than a single outcome.

Although previous research identifies individual, team, and institutional factors associated with student performance, limited attention has been given to how these factors are experienced and combined as students progress through successive competitive stages. Formal assessment scores and selection criteria can indicate whether predetermined standards have been met, but provide limited insight into how students interpret expectations, use mentoring and feedback, coordinate teamwork, and adapt their preparation across stages. A process oriented perspective is therefore needed to understand how these factors collectively support progression from proposal development to funding and subsequently to the PIMNAS presentation stage.

This study addresses this underexplored dimension by examining PKM success as successful progression through sequential competitive stages. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, it explores the factors experienced by successful students in progressing through the funding and PIMNAS presentation stages, with particular attention to proposal preparation, teamwork, mentoring, feedback, and institutional support. By bringing these dimensions together within a process oriented perspective, the study extends understanding of student innovation programme success and provides contextually grounded insights for strengthening university mentoring and support systems.

Methods

Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) of a state university in Surabaya, Indonesia. FEB was selected as the research setting because it provides an institutional context in which students develop, submit, and refine Student Creativity Program (Program Kreativitas Mahasiswa, PKM) proposals through faculty level mentoring, internal selection, administrative validation, and substantive improvement. The setting also provided access to students, supervisors, and faculty leaders directly involved in PKM development and governance.

Data were collected between 14 November and 2 December 2025. Participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement and experience in PKM development and progression. The primary participants comprised 10 students representing PKM teams that had successfully obtained PKM funding and/or progressed to the PIMNAS presentation stage. Three PKM supervisors directly involved in proposal development and revision were also interviewed. In addition, three faculty leaders participated in a focus group discussion

(FGD) to provide institutional perspectives on PKM policies, mentoring arrangements, and programme governance. Thus, 16 participants contributed to the study.

The inclusion of participants with different roles enabled the phenomenon to be examined from complementary perspectives. Students provided first hand accounts of proposal development, teamwork, mentoring, preparation, and progression; supervisors contributed perspectives on proposal development and feedback; and faculty leaders provided institutional perspectives on policies and support mechanisms. Participants were selected for their information rich experience rather than statistical representativeness, consistent with the qualitative purpose of the study. Before data collection, participants were informed about the study objectives, procedures, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and identifying information was excluded from the reporting of findings.

Data Sources and Collection

Three complementary sources of evidence were used: documentary materials, semi structured interviews, and an FGD. Documentary analysis examined PKM proposals that had successfully obtained funding and/or progressed to the PIMNAS stage, focusing on proposal structure, problem formulation, methodological design, novelty, and other substantive features associated with successful proposals.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with the 10 students and three supervisors. The interviews explored experiences of developing and refining proposals, allocating team responsibilities, receiving and applying supervisory feedback, preparing for evaluation, and navigating the funding and PIMNAS stages. The semi structured format provided consistency across interviews while allowing participants to elaborate on issues emerging from their experiences.

The FGD with three faculty leaders examined institutional dimensions of PKM success, particularly faculty policies, mentoring arrangements, selection mechanisms, coaching practices, and institutional support. The three sources were treated as complementary evidence and compared across participant groups to identify recurring and divergent perspectives, thereby supporting data triangulation.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using a qualitative descriptive approach. Analysis proceeded iteratively across documentary materials, interview data, and FGD data. First, the researchers reviewed the materials and identified data segments relevant to the research objective. Relevant information was condensed and organised into initial categories representing recurring aspects of PKM success. These categories were then compared across participants and data sources to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and relationships.

Related categories were subsequently consolidated into broader themes concerning the conditions and practices associated with successful progression through PKM. Particular attention was given to proposal development and quality, teamwork, mentoring and feedback, preparation, and institutional support. Emerging interpretations were repeatedly compared with the underlying data to ensure that themes remained grounded in participants'

accounts. Researcher discussions were used to critically examine interpretations and reduce individual interpretive bias, while comparison across participant groups and documentary evidence strengthened the credibility of recurring findings. The final analysis integrated the themes into a descriptive account of how students experienced and navigated the funding and PIMNAS presentation stages.

Results

Participant Profile

The study involved 16 participants comprising 10 students, three PKM supervisors, and three faculty leaders. The student participants represented PKM teams that had obtained funding and/or progressed to the PIMNAS presentation stage, while supervisors and faculty leaders provided complementary academic and institutional perspectives. Nine participants were women and seven were men. Ten participants were below 20 years of age, three were aged 21 to 30, and three were above 30. Regarding writing activity, 13 participants reported frequent engagement in writing activities, while three reported infrequent engagement. The participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Category	Number (n)
Gender	Female	9
	Male	7
Age	< 20 years	10
	21–30 years	3
	> 30 years	3
Status	Student	10
	Lecturer	6
Frequency of writing knowledge/activity	Rare	3
	Frequent	13

Proposal Characteristics

Document analysis identified several recurring characteristics across proposals that had obtained funding and/or progressed to the PIMNAS presentation stage. The most consistently observed feature was the clarity of the problem statement and objectives. Successful proposals generally presented a clearly defined problem, a focused background, and objectives that were logically connected to the proposed solution. Relevance to current issues and the feasibility of the proposed method and implementation plan were also prominent characteristics.

Innovation and novelty appeared more selectively, particularly in proposals regarded as stronger or more competitive. Similarly, the use of supporting data and relevant references varied across proposals and was more evident in proposals demonstrating stronger analytical development. Compliance with the required proposal structure and completeness of required components appeared consistently across the documents. These patterns are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Characteristics Identified in Successful PKM Proposals

Category of Success Factors	Brief Description	Frequency of Occurrence	Occurrence Pattern
Clarity of Problem Statement and Objectives	Clear background, specific problem formulation, and measurable objectives	Very high	Almost all proposals
Relevance of the Idea to Current Issues	Alignment of the topic with community needs, policies, or current issues	High	Most proposals
Innovation and Novelty of the Idea	Novel elements in the idea, approach, method, or implementation context	Moderate	Top/featured proposals
Feasibility of the Method and Implementation Plan	Appropriateness of the method, activity stages, and feasibility in terms of time and resources	High	Most proposals
Strength of Analysis and Argumentation	Logical reasoning, coherence between sections, and consistency of the flow of ideas	Moderate–high	Good-quality proposals
Writing Structure and Completeness	Compliance with guidelines, writing structure, and completeness of required components	High	Almost all proposals
Data and Reference Support	Use of supporting data, relevant literature, and credible references	Moderate	Proposals with in-depth analysis

Factors Associated with Student Progression

The interview, FGD, and documentary evidence converged around six interrelated themes associated with students' successful progression through the PKM process: proposal quality, teamwork and role distribution, supervisor guidance and academic support, understanding of evaluation criteria, execution and compliance discipline, and student motivation and persistence.

- *Proposal Quality*

Proposal quality emerged consistently across the data as a central feature of successful PKM participation. Students and supervisors described successful proposals as those that established a clear problem, connected the problem to its empirical context, and presented a logically developed solution. Documentary evidence similarly showed that successful proposals tended to maintain coherence between the background, problem formulation, objectives, proposed methods, and expected outputs.

Participants also emphasised the importance of aligning the proposal with the applicable PKM guidelines. Compliance with required structure and format was viewed as necessary for presenting the substantive content effectively. However, participants distinguished formal completeness from substantive quality, emphasising that adherence to the required format needed to be accompanied by a convincing problem rationale, appropriate methodology, and clearly articulated contribution.

- *Teamwork and Role Distribution*

Team processes emerged as another recurring factor. Successful teams described clear allocation of responsibilities according to members' competencies, supported by coordination from the team leader. Participants reported that defined responsibilities helped maintain progress and reduce duplication of work during proposal preparation.

Communication within the team was also repeatedly emphasised. Regular discussion enabled members to review ideas, identify weaknesses, coordinate revisions, and resolve problems during proposal development. The findings indicate that teamwork contributed not only to task completion but also to maintaining consistency across different sections of the proposal.

- *Supervisor Guidance and Academic Support*

Supervisor involvement was consistently described as an important source of academic and technical support. Students reported that supervisors helped identify weaknesses in problem formulation, strengthen arguments, improve methodological clarity, and refine the overall proposal. The value of supervision was particularly evident through repeated feedback and revision rather than through a single consultation.

Supervisors also described their role as extending beyond correcting written content. Guidance involved helping students interpret requirements, evaluate the feasibility of proposed activities, and align the proposal with PKM expectations. Thus, supervision functioned as an iterative process through which students progressively refined their proposals.

- *Understanding of PKM Evaluation Criteria*

Participants identified familiarity with PKM evaluation criteria as an important aspect of proposal preparation. Successful students reported paying particular attention to the aspects used to evaluate proposals, including relevance, novelty, usefulness, feasibility, and methodological coherence. This understanding enabled teams to review their proposals against expected evaluation standards before submission.

Participants also described the ability to respond to feedback as part of this process. Rather than treating revision as a purely technical exercise, students used feedback to identify weaknesses and make targeted changes to the proposal. This process was particularly relevant when preparing proposals for competitive evaluation.

- *Execution and Compliance Discipline*

The findings also revealed the importance of disciplined execution of both substantive and administrative requirements. Students described systematically reviewing PKM guidelines, checking administrative completeness, and ensuring consistency between the problem, method, activities, and expected outputs.

Several practices were reported as part of internal quality control, including reviewing the proposed budget, conducting similarity checks, cross proofreading the proposal, and simulating the submission or upload process. These practices reduced the risk of avoidable administrative and technical errors and helped teams maintain alignment with programme requirements.

- *Student Motivation and Persistence*

Motivation and persistence emerged as an additional factor supporting progression through the PKM process. Students described the preparation process as involving repeated revisions, time constraints, coordination challenges, and responses to feedback. Continued engagement despite these demands enabled teams to revise their proposals and maintain progress toward submission and subsequent stages.

Participants also described PKM participation as a learning process that strengthened their confidence and willingness to continue developing academic and professional capabilities. Persistence was therefore reflected not only in the willingness to complete the proposal but also in sustained engagement with mentoring, revision, evaluation, and preparation for subsequent stages.

Discussion

The findings indicate that student success in PKM emerges from the alignment of proposal quality, teamwork, supervisory support, evaluation awareness, execution discipline, and persistence rather than from a single factor. This extends previous research highlighting motivation, critical thinking, academic readiness, and mentoring as important dimensions of student participation and performance (Taryudi et al., 2024). More specifically, the findings show that these capabilities become consequential when they are integrated across successive stages of the PKM process.

Proposal quality emerged as a foundational condition. Successful teams connected clearly defined problems with relevant evidence, appropriate methods, feasible implementation, and expected outcomes. This reinforces the relationship between academic writing, critical thinking, and evidence based argumentation (Apandi, 2020; Wibowo, 2021), while extending it by showing that writing quality is valuable when it integrates substantive and methodological reasoning rather than merely satisfying formal requirements. The findings also distinguish procedural compliance from substantive competitiveness. Administrative completeness and adherence to programme requirements function as threshold conditions, whereas relevance, novelty, methodological coherence, and analytical strength contribute to the competitiveness of proposals that meet those basic requirements.

The findings further demonstrate that PKM success is a collective rather than purely individual achievement. Clear role allocation, communication, coordination, and leadership enabled teams to combine complementary capabilities, while supervisory feedback helped students identify and address weaknesses. This complements research emphasising collaborative and institutional conditions in student performance (Schrijver and Leijten, 2019; Weinstein et al., 2023). Importantly, mentoring appeared most valuable when it developed students' ability to evaluate and improve their own work rather than simply providing corrections.

Understanding evaluation criteria and responding to feedback also emerged as important aspects of successful progression. Students used assessment requirements as reference points for reviewing their proposals and making targeted revisions. This indicates that competitive success involves not only academic capability but also the ability to anticipate evaluation expectations and adapt accordingly. Persistence further supports this process

because proposal development requires sustained engagement with revision, mentoring, coordination, and preparation under time and performance pressures.

Taken together, these findings support a process-oriented conceptualisation of PKM success as sequential capability alignment. Students must first align ideas and proposals with formal and substantive requirements and subsequently align team capabilities, supervisory input, implementation, and presentation preparation with changing stage-specific expectations. Thus, success depends not simply on possessing relevant capabilities but on coordinating and adapting them as the competitive process progresses. This represents the study's principal conceptual contribution.

Implications

The findings suggest that university support for PKM should be organised as a staged mentoring system rather than as general or one-off training. Before submission, support should prioritise problem formulation, methodological coherence, novelty, evidence, and administrative compliance. After funding, mentoring should increasingly focus on implementation quality, output development, presentation preparation, and communication of project outcomes. Internal assessment simulations and structured feedback cycles can help teams identify weaknesses before formal evaluation.

For supervisors, the findings highlight the importance of developmental feedback that strengthens students' evaluative capability. At the institutional level, faculties can integrate administrative screening, substantive review, mentoring, and post-funding coaching into a continuous support mechanism. Such differentiation recognises that obtaining funding and progressing to PIMNAS involve related but distinct performance requirements.

Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted within a single Faculty of Economics and Business at a state university in Surabaya and focused on participants with direct experience of PKM success. The findings therefore provide contextual insights rather than statistically generalisable conclusions. Future research could examine the transferability of these findings across universities, disciplines, and PKM schemes and compare successful and unsuccessful teams to identify factors distinguishing progression from non-progression. Quantitative or mixed-method research could subsequently examine the relationships among the identified factors and further test the proposed concept of sequential capability alignment.

Conclusion

This study shows that students' progression through the funding and PIMNAS presentation stages of the Student Creativity Program (PKM) depends on the alignment of proposal quality, teamwork, supervisory support, evaluation awareness, execution discipline, and persistence. The study contributes the concept of sequential capability alignment, positioning PKM success as a progressive process in which students coordinate different capabilities as competitive requirements evolve. Proposal quality establishes the initial foundation, while teamwork, feedback utilisation, implementation discipline, and presentation readiness become increasingly important after funding. Thus, PKM success is better understood as capability alignment across successive stages rather than as a single final outcome.

The findings suggest that universities should provide continuous, stage-specific PKM support through proposal mentoring, substantive review, structured feedback, and post-funding preparation. The study is limited to one institutional setting and participants with direct experience of PKM success. Future research should examine the applicability of sequential capability alignment across institutions, disciplines, and PKM schemes, particularly by comparing successful and unsuccessful teams and using quantitative or mixed-method designs to examine how the identified capabilities operate across stages.

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