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| Journal Name: | [**Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies**](https://journalajess.com/index.php/AJESS) |
| Manuscript Number: | **Ms\_AJESS\_137410** |
| Title of the Manuscript:  | **Retention Challenges Encountered by Students of Apayao State College: A Basis of an Institutional Intervention** |
| Type of the Article | **Research Article** |

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| PART 1: Comments |
|  | Reviewer’s comment**Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated or assisted review comments are strictly prohibited during peer review.** | **Author’s Feedback** (It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here) |
| **Please write a few sentences regarding the importance of this manuscript for the scientific community. A minimum of 3-4 sentences may be required for this part.** | * The study addresses **student retention**, a globally recognized challenge in higher education, making the findings contextually valuable, especially for **rural and underrepresented communities**.
* By employing a **qualitative Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA)**, it offers **rich, in-depth insights** into the lived experiences of students—a perspective often underrepresented in empirical education research.
* The manuscript provides a **basis for institutional intervention**, making it **practically applicable** for policymakers and administrators in higher education institutions, especially within the Philippine or similar contexts.
* Its **focus on indigenous and economically disadvantaged students** is highly relevant for equity-driven educational reforms.
* The study is **limited in scale** (only 6 respondents), which **restricts generalizability**. While IPA justifies a small sample, this limitation should be more explicitly acknowledged in the discussion.
* The importance could be emphasized further by **linking the findings to broader policy frameworks** like CHED guidelines or SDG 4 (Quality Education).
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| **Is the title of the article suitable?****(If not please suggest an alternative title)** | * The title clearly reflects the core focus: student retention challenges and institutional interventions.
* It is informative and includes both the population (students of Apayao State College) and the purpose.
* Consider a slight refinement for clarity and flow:

**“Understanding Retention Challenges at Apayao State College: Toward Institutional Interventions”*** This version maintains the original intent but flows more smoothly in scholarly discourse.
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| Is the abstract of the article comprehensive? Do you suggest the addition (or deletion) of some points in this section? Please write your suggestions here. | * The abstract presents the **research background, methodology (IPA), population, and key themes** clearly.
* It **identifies specific motivations, challenges, and factors** leading to shifting/transferring.
* Include the **number of participants** earlier in the abstract.
* Clarify the **contribution to institutional intervention**—state what kind of intervention or what areas need reform.
* Consider tightening sentences for **better academic tone and conciseness**, e.g., “A interview guide…” → “An interview guide…”.
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| Is the manuscript scientifically, correct? Please write here. | * The manuscript presents a **clear research design**, with appropriate use of IPA for exploring lived experiences.
* The study effectively **links findings to theoretical and empirical literature**, including references to Super, Savickas, and Tinto.
* There is **some redundancy in the methodology section**, particularly under “Research Instrumentation” and “Data Gathering Procedure.”
* The study could benefit from a **more explicit discussion of limitations and reflexivity**, which are essential in qualitative research.
* Findings are comprehensive, but **direct participant quotes could be more systematically integrated** to enhance analytical depth.
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| **Are the references sufficient and recent? If you have suggestions of additional references, please mention them in the review form.** | * References are **diverse and well-integrated**, with sources ranging from classic theories (Tinto, Super) to **recent studies** (2020–2022).
* Contextual relevance is strong, especially with **local (Philippine) sources and regional comparisons** (e.g., ASEAN, CHED).
* Add more **recent empirical studies (post-2022)** on student retention, especially those that apply IPA or similar qualitative methods.
* Ensure all references are **consistently formatted** and **accessible**, particularly for international readership.
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| Is the language/English quality of the article suitable for scholarly communications? | * Overall, the manuscript demonstrates **competent academic English**, especially in theoretical discussion and findings interpretation.
* The **abstract and introduction are clear**, with logical flow.
* Proofreading is needed for minor grammatical and typographical errors:
	+ “A interview guide” → “An interview guide”
	+ “may enrolled” → “may have enrolled”
	+ Occasional use of **informal phrases or awkward constructions** should be improved.
* Inconsistent capitalization in section headers (e.g., “3. methodology”) should be corrected to follow **academic formatting standards**.
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| Optional/General comments |  Consider expanding the **conclusion** to include:* Specific **institutional interventions recommended**, based on the findings.
* A brief mention of the **study’s limitations** and **suggestions for future research**.
* The inclusion of **verbatim quotes** from respondents is a strength. These could be made **more consistent and analytical** by explicitly tying them back to emergent themes.
* A table summarizing **themes and supporting quotes** could enhance readability and presentation.
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| **PART 2:**  |
|  | **Reviewer’s comment** | **Author’s comment** *(if agreed with reviewer, correct the manuscript and highlight that part in the manuscript. It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here)* |
| **Are there ethical issues in this manuscript?**  | *(If yes, Kindly please write down the ethical issues here in details)* |  |

**Reviewer details:**

**Elymar A. Pascual, Talangan Integrated National High School, Philippines**