

## First-Generation College Students and Persistence: A Phenomenological Study of Students' Experiences in Indonesian Higher Education

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**Abstract :** The tuition reform for public colleges that the Indonesian government initiated and has implemented since 2013 resulted in the growing number of college students from low-income families, many of whose parents did not attend college. This study sought to examine the experiences of persistence for Indonesian first-generation college students in public universities utilizing social capital as a framework. It is a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach primarily to capture the essence of how Indonesian first-generation college students interpret, process, and experience their persistence during college years. Fifteen Indonesian young college graduates were involved as well as questionnaire and interview were employed for data collection in this study. It revealed certain themes from the experiences that first-generation college students attributed to their persistence: (a) family encouragement, (b) support from friends, (c) guidance from faculty and staff, (d) fund of knowledge they bring with them, (e) financial aid availability, and (f) self-motivation. By examining first-generation college students' voices, Indonesian public universities can better support, engage, and retain this group of students who were historically struggled to persist in college and complete their degree.

**Keywords :** first-generation student, Indonesian higher education, persistence, public universities

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