



# UNVEILING THE EXPERIENCES OF INDIGENOUS COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to unveil the experiences of Indigenous College Students in the Province of Tarlac. The paper includes their demographic profile, life experiences, identified existing programs of state universities and local and national government, measures to solve prevailing problems and the implication of the study for public administration. Through this study, the researcher sought to address and discern the IP college students at Tarlac State University (TSU) and Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU) sentiments from their life experiences. In addition, the researcher used qualitative case study and random sampling method. A total of thirty (30) respondents took part in this study from different cultural communities in the Province of Tarlac. Findings revealed that the respondents are part of Ayta Abellen/Abelling and Ayta Mag-Antsi and serve as IP Youth in their respective cultural communities, and they are the only hope of their family to finish tertiary education. All the respondents' parents did not pursue tertiary education claiming that they inherit it from their ancestors. In addition, financial problems are the main reason why IP students can not pursue tertiary education. The researcher found out that (1) financial constraint, (2) proximity of school and (3) degree related to the needs of their community are the major factors affecting their choice of degree. Despite the long-time clamor of discrimination, the students still experience hurtful bullying and disrespect from the society. There are six (6) identified hindrances in pursuit to tertiary education of the IP Students, specifically, (1) weak signal connectivity, (2) bullying and discrimination, (3) language barriers, (4) financial constraints, (5) social injustices: terrorist groups and (6) Covid-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, an action plan was proposed and created by the researcher and respondents to address the problems encountered by the IP Students. In summary, the study reveals the plight and the stories of the IP Students in the Province of Tarlac. They cry for the collaborative involvement of all stakeholders in an all-encompassing and culturally aware strategy to protect the provision of essential services, especially in the areas of education and government service delivery. Based on the life experiences and most pressing problems of the Indigenous students, the government can use this paper as basis of policy formulation to bring the services closer to the cultural communities to uplift and to produce a more inclusive, responsive, and responsible members of the indigenous peoples in pursuit to nation building.

## I. Introduction

Indigenous peoples in the Philippines have endured numerous hardships and injustices throughout history. Indigenous communities were uprooted during the colonization, forced labor was used, and foreign cultures and religions were imposed. Indigenous peoples in the Philippines continued to experience problems like land dispossession, marginalization, discrimination, and restricted access to essential services even after the country attained independence. For the empowerment of indigenous peoples and the preservation of their cultures, access to high-quality education is essential. However, indigenous communities often face challenges in terms of access to schools, culturally relevant curricula, and qualified teachers who understand their specific needs.

Efforts are being made to promote indigenous education and empower indigenous youth to become advocates for their communities.

Indigenous Peoples tend to have less access to and poorer quality of education than other sector groups. Hearing from the life experiences of the College Indigenous Students, from accessibility to hardships and to assistance they have received, joint collaboration and commitment from national agency to the tribal leaders within their area of responsibility to continuously support in alleviating the plight of the indigenous peoples until no one has been left behind for them until they can actively participate in nation-building. Despite the challenges, indigenous peoples in the Philippines continue to demonstrate resilience, cultural pride, and a strong connection to their ancestral lands. There are ongoing efforts by indigenous organizations, civil society groups, and government agencies to address the issues faced by indigenous communities, promote their rights, and empower them to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Incorporating indigenous perspectives into research and knowledge production is a critical step toward decolonizing academia and promoting epistemic justice. Researchers can ensure that indigenous peoples' voices, narratives, and knowledge are valued and integrated into academic discourse by researching their life experiences. The study of indigenous peoples' life experiences not only enriches our understanding of human diversity and resilience, but it also contributes to the pursuit of social justice, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. It is a critical step toward creating a more inclusive and equitable society. The students are more than their race, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, class, or family structure. Their layered experiences have a direct bearing on their academic and personal success. Understanding diverse backgrounds, policymakers are focused on identifying the IP Students' life experiences, problems encountered and how they surpass the hardships. This will take into account to create educational policies that consider and address their diversities (Mason, 2021).

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study unveiled the experiences and the most pressing problems of indigenous students in the Province of Tarlac:  
Specifically, it addressed the following objectives:

1. To determine the demographic Profile of the IP Students:
  - 1.1 Age
  - 1.2 Sex
  - 1.3 Degree Enrolled
  - 1.4 Ethnic Group
  - 1.5 Ancestral Domain
  - 1.6 Family Status
  - 1.7 Role in the Community
2. To narrate the life experiences of the IP students in the Province of Tarlac.
3. To identify the existing programs of the universities and government agencies to address the needs and aspirations of the IP Students.
4. To recommend measures to solve the exiting problems faced by the IP Students.
5. To identify the implications of the study to Public Administration.

## II. Scope and delimitation of the study

THE STUDY NARRATED THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF THE IP STUDENTS IN THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC. THE STUDY AIMED TO STORY TELL THE DETAILED EXPERIENCES AS WELL AS THE STRUGGLES OF THE INDIGENOUS STUDENTS TOWARDS ACCESS TO THEIR RIGHT TO TERTIARY EDUCATION AS BEING CATERED THIS ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023. THE STUDY ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE STUDENTS. IN ADDITION, THE PAPER EVALUATED THE RELATED PROGRAMS AND ASSISTANCE BEING CATERED TO THE STUDENTS IN PURSUIT OF FREE EDUCATION. THE LOCALE OF THE STUDY IS IN THE MIDDLE OF CENTRAL LUZON. THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC, PHILIPPINES IS LOCATED 124 KILOMETERS NORTH OF MANILA. IT WAS SURROUNDED BY THE PROVINCES OF PANGASINAN ON THE NORTH, PAMPANGA ON THE SOUTH, NUEVA ECIJA ON THE EAST AND ZAMBALES ON THE WEST. THE STUDY WAS DELIMITED ONLY TO TWO (2) UNIVERSITIES IN THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC PARTICULARLY, TARLAC STATE UNIVERSITY AND TARLAC AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY WITH 30 RESPONDENTS FROM DISTRICT 1-3 IN THE PROVINCE OF TARLAC. THE RESPONDENTS ARE CHOSEN RANDOMLY, BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITIES AND WERE

VALIDATED BASED ON THE DATABASE OF NCIP AND THE AFOREMENTIONED STATE UNIVERSITIES. BOTH UNIVERSITIES OFFER FREE TUITION UNDER RA 10931 OR THE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION ACT. ACCORDING TO THE NCIP DATABASE, THE MUNICIPALITIES OF SAN JOSE, MAYANTOC, CAPAS, AND BAMBAN HAVE A LARGE DEMOGRAPHIC OF AYTA AND ABELLEN ICCS/IPs. MIGRANT ICCS/IPs ARE ALSO BEING RESETTLED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CLEMENTE AS A RESULT OF THE ERUPTION OF MT. PINATUBO. THERE ARE ALSO TWO RECOGNIZED ICCS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CAMILING AND CITY OF TARLAC.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was conducted to systematically narrate and unveil the life experience of IP Students among selected state universities in the Province of Tarlac. The demographic profile was gathered, existing programs of the universities and government agencies were cited specifically to analyze and probe further the life experience of IP students in pursuing higher education. Lastly the output is to recommend measures to solve existing problems faced by the college IP students and to identify the implications of the study to Public Administration. The study used Qualitative Case Study. It statically provides analysis in probing facts through qualitative data. This involves data collection to determine and describe the nature of the phenomenon, the situation or a problem. Main purpose of this research design is that it engages the people and it shed light on the research problem.

### Local of the Study

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) originated from four (4) municipalities in the province of Tarlac specifically, Bamban, Capas, Mayantoc and San Jose. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Tarlac is catering ten (10) Ancestral Domains and two (2) identified cultural communities, these are Sitio Dayangdang, Brgy. Papac, Mun. of Camiling and So. Paquillao, Brgy. Care, City of Tarlac. Moreover, affected Ayta Mag-Antsi by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo were resettled in So. Dueg, Brgy. Maasin, Municipality of San Clemente and are identified as migrant IPs.

### Research Instrument

In terms of data collection method, the researchers utilized two (2) instruments: (1) documentary analysis and (2) interview. Documentary Analysis. The researcher requested necessary documents to the offices of the Municipal and City Mayors of Bamban, Capas, Mayantoc, San Jose, San Clemente and Tarlac City regarding the implemented educational projects that have already been carried out as well as any upcoming plans or programs that might be of use to IP students in their area that could benefit the IP students in their locality, if there are any. In addition, the researcher tapped the assistance to National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Tarlac and Dapdap Service Center particularly to probe on existing programs addressing the current problems of the IP Students within their area of responsibility. Lastly, for the State Universities specifically Tarlac State University and Tarlac Agricultural University, the researcher inquires on how they address the plight of College IP Students, services they are currently offering, and programs to elevate the number of IP Students enrolled in their institution. Interview. This is a qualitative research technique that depends on extracting information through questions. The interview questions were categorized into four (4) parts. First is the respondent's demographics such as age, sex, ethnic group, ancestral domain, family status and role in the community. Next is to narrate the life experience of college IP Students among selected state universities in the province of Tarlac. To probe further, the problems and obstacles prior to pursuing higher education were identified as part of the third section in the interview guide. Lastly, the measures to solve the problems and obstacles faced by IP college students were determined.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The National Commission of Indigenous Peoples-Region III Office was consulted first for permission by the researchers through Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP). Prior to conducting data collection, the researcher asked the municipal and city mayors of Bamban, Capas, Mayantoc, San Jose, San Clemente, and Tarlac City for their permission. The researcher then wrote and delivered a letter to the mayors of Bamban, Capas, Mayantoc, San Jose, San Clemente, and Tarlac City for list of projects and programs that have been created especially for college IP students as well as a beneficiary list, if any. Additionally, the researcher asked Tarlac State University and Tarlac College of Agriculture for permission to use their list of enrolled IP students as the basis for the database gathered by NCIP Tarlac, as well as permission from the

chieftains and IP leaders of the identified indigenous cultural communities and ancestral domain claims in the Province of Tarlac. Upon securing permits and consent to appropriate level of stakeholders who are intended to take part in the research, the researcher started conducting interviews to the members of Ayta and Abellen ICCs/IPs in the Province of Tarlac. Prior to the interview process, the researcher first seeks permission to the College IP students if they agree to take part in the study. As soon as the respondents were given their permission, the researcher briefed them on the goals of the study and the interviewing procedure. The researcher took precautions to ensure that the participants remain anonymous throughout the entire process of data collection in order for them to be able to provide objective and honest feedback. The interview process lasts only for 15-20 minutes. Various research approaches can be used to collect qualitative information. Also, one of the most effective approaches to avoid content inaccuracy is to record and transcribe interviews which comes with eliminating content errors (Jacobs, 2019). In order to ensure that the data collected from the participants is used properly for the study, the information that the researchers gather was analyzed. To present their findings in a compelling and effective manner, the researchers categorized each question's data and conduct an analysis. The following, therefore, be utilized by the researchers: Content Analysis. Is a kind of research tool used to determine the presence of words and concepts within a given qualitative data. The researcher can make inferences from the participants' responses and be transcribed in a matter that the general public can comprehend. Presentation of findings. Categorical and purposive presentation of data in a way that it is consistent with each of the goals of the study. Frequency. Categorical data was analyzed, and frequencies was used to describe the parameters. Frequency statistics simply count the number of times that each variable occurs, such as age, sex, ethnic group, ancestral domain, family status and role in the community. Ranking. The percentage was used to determine the quantitative relation to the whole response. The process of gathering the percentage was dividing the frequency (sum of responses) by the total number of responses (XenPH, 2013). Percentage is the ratio of the numbers given as a percentage of 100. The indexed list of order statistics, which includes the original dataset with the data reorganized into ascending order, and ranks are related to each other (Merriam, 2010).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher must safeguard accurate and in-depth discussion of and insights into the study's objectives in order to maintain ethical consideration. The respondents will remain its anonymity nor reveal names and/or personal information. The consent form will be given to the respondents prior to the interview once they have agreed to fully participate and may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or judgment. In addition, the researcher should assure the respondents their security once the interview was conducted. The information and testimonies will be used only for academic purposes and will be handled with the utmost secrecy and confidentiality. As stated in Section 8 of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which highlights the necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of personal information that always comes into its custody and knowledge, it is essential to take deliberate measures to secure one's information.

The researcher should have the protection of research participants as their top priority. Researcher must always take into account what is best for the participants who make the research possible when implementing the concepts of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity in the study.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter covers the obtained data, the statistical analysis results, and the interpretation of the findings. The presentation was done by tabulation, which displayed the frequency distribution, calculated mean, and percentage.

### **1.1 Age of the IP Students**

Young generations have an important role in indigenous cultural groups because they may construct their own lives in light of their community's specific self-governance, including their political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions. Based on the records of Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), there are 18.6 percent of Filipino youth that were not attending school in 2022. Out of 30 respondents, majority of respondents 22 or 73.33% belonged to group age from 17-20 years old, 7 or 23.33% are 21-24 years old and 1 or 3.33% are 25-28 years old. The mean age is 19.7 or 20 years old. The study of Regaspi (2023) is consistent with the findings of Erickson as cited by Cherry (2020), that the mean age of 20 years old indicated that they are in their early adulthood and this age group extends from 15-20 years old. This phase encompasses the early adulthood, when individuals are examining their own connections. According to Munsey (2021), this stage as an emerging adult as the period from the transition from adolescence to young adulthood obligations of a stable work, marriage, and parenthood. In addition, from the present study of Escalante et al (2019) and

Eblacas et al (2020). Majority of the student-respondents were at the age bracket of 16-20 years old. According to Cebu (2023), majority of the respondents were coming from 18-20 years old, and the self-efficacy level of the college students is high. However, there is no statistically significant relationship in the age of the college students with respect to the self-efficacy level.

## 1.2 Sex of the IP Students

The right to education has nothing to do with gender. However, one of the common impediments of the indigenous communities are the distinct roles of male and females in the society. In a household, females are obliged to conduct domestic chores while males are responsible to provide for their living. However, in this evolving generation, gender-specific roles are not being practiced specifically in education. Indigenous Cultural Communities are now open to learning and opportunities to improve their lives. The female respondents outnumbered the male respondents with 21 frequencies having a percentage of 70% while the male only have 9 frequencies with only 30%. In the research of Napil & Jose (2020) with 74 participants, 70% of which belongs to female and the remaining 30% were of males. As cited by Napil & Jose (2020), men used to control education in schools, according to Camaya & Tamayo (2018), but this started to change when women were given the opportunity to vote in politics due to their fervor. Gabriel et al. (2020) also mentioned that indigenous communities realized that women needed to receive an education because they were the custodians of their culture and environment. This incorporates that women were allowed to flourish among indigenous people (IP), who by nature were patriarchal, for the good of the community as well as for themselves.

## 1.3 Degree Enrolled

Selection of courses caters a big impact in the society as it molds you in your field of expertise. The selection of a degree or field of study is an important decision for anyone, including indigenous peoples. This choice can have a significant impact on an individual's personal and professional development, as well as their ability to contribute to their community and society at large. Based on the interview in both universities, they find it hard to gather data from the students because they are reluctant to admit that they are part of the indigenous peoples. In TAU, there only 9 identified Indigenous Peoples with ethnolinguistic group. 5 of them are from Abelling, and 1 each from Ayta, Igorot, Tinguian, and Kankanaey. The remaining 34 are still unidentified but claiming to be part of the indigenous peoples. On the other hand, all the 152 IP students are identified as Abelling. When it comes to indigenous peoples, there are several factors that highlights the importance of making a thoughtful and culturally sensitive choice in selecting a degree to enroll in. It comes first in preserving cultural heritage that allows the indigenous individuals to study and preserve their cultural heritage that can help ensure the continuity of their traditions, languages, and practices. It also aligns to the community's needs that can empower individuals to make meaningful contributions and positive changes. Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in many fields. Education is an avenue to outnumber discrimination. By enrolling in degrees, it provides opportunities for leadership and representation. Education gained the highest percentage with 40.00% with 12 counts, followed by Forestry with 9 counts or 30%. Next is Animal Science with 10% having 3 counts and Criminology with 6.67% with 2 counts. Lastly, Agriculture, Civil Engineering, Marketing, and Tourism Management gained 3.33% considering that all the four courses with only one count. There are several aspects to consider while deciding which degree to pursue and which state university to attend. And it all narrows down the proximity of their cultural communities, availability of desired degree, and financial accessibility. It's critical to stress that choosing a degree should be a personal decision based on a person's objectives, interests, and abilities. Like everyone else, indigenous people ought to be allowed to follow their dreams and ambitions. It's important to take into account the wider effects of one's educational decisions on the indigenous community as well as on the individual. In the end, it all comes down to giving indigenous people the ability to make decisions that suit their goals and the requirements of their communities, while still being informed and culturally sensitive. Education is both a universal human right and a fundamental means to achieve other human rights. Enjoyment of the right to education is essential to achieving equitable development and respect for cultural diversity. It is an investment for the future and a means to reduce poverty and counter discrimination.

#### 1.4 Ethnic Group

Ayta are one of original settlers in the Philippines. Spaniards refer to them as Negrito or “little black one”. Etymological research suggests that “Ayta” may come from the word it, which can be extended into itim or itom meaning “black”. The eight (8) Ayta Mag-Antsi respondents are from Capas, Tarlac. Six of them are being resettled in San Clemente. On the other hand, the 22 Ayta Abellen/Abelling are being distributed from different municipalities in Tarlac. Three (3) of them are from Mayantoc, four (4) are from Capas, one (1) from Tarlac City and the remaining fourteen (14) are from San Jose. The data shows that there are no students enrolled from Bamban due to its proximity. Based on the interview to Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) of Marcos Village, Mabalacat, Pampanga, students from Bamban ought to enroll in Mabalacat City College, a LGU Funded College. Due to its proximity and access to transportation. The college students from Bamban prefer to enroll in the said college. Students from Municipality of San Jose gained the highest number of college students enrolled. Accessibility roads and mode of transportation in the said municipality is way much better than other IP Communities from different municipalities. The Ayta Mag-Antsi are located in the Municipalities of Bamban and Capas. However, due to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991, some of them are resettled in the Municipality of San Clemente. They are called Mag-Antsi as sub-group of Ayta due to its ethnicity in language. As observed verbally, their language is rich in “tsi” and as practice on their right to “self-ascription”. Despite their language differences, they are linked to Ayta in terms of geography, political structure, kinship, physical resources, traditional occupation, laws, spirituality, and ways and perspectives on how to care for natural resources. Furthermore, because of what we refer to as “intermarriages” over time, there is no question about the connection of their ancestry. On the other hand, the Ayta Abellen/Abelling which was previously called Aburlin in early times, but it slowly faded away as time went by. Abellen and Abelling is just the same ethnolinguistic grouping whereby it only differs in spelling according to interviews with the Ayta Abellen/Abelling elders and leaders and that they accept being called by people interchangeably who called them whether they are Abellen or Abelling. They are proven to be hunters and food gatherers in which they use their rivers, forests and mountains to gather forest products and plant seasonal crops. The Ayta Abellen/Abelling is found mostly in the Municipalities of San Jose, Mayantoc, Camiling and parts of Capas.

#### 1.5 Ancestral Domains

National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Tarlac is catering ten (10) Ancestral Domains and two (2) identified cultural communities. NCIP Tarlac Provincial Office caters six (6) Ancestral Domains from the Municipalities of Mayantoc and San Jose while NCIP Dapdap Service Center’s area of responsibility includes four (4) Ancestral Domains particularly those located in Bamban and Capas. Aside from the ancestral domains, there are Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) from Sitio Dayangdang, Brgy. Papac, Mun. of Camiling and So. Paquillao, Brgy. Care, City of Tarlac. Moreover, affected Ayta Mag-Antsi by the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo were resettled in So. Dueg, Brgy. Maasin, Municipality of San Clemente and are identified as migrant IPs. Based on the respondents being interviewed, Dueg Resettlement ICC gained the highest number with 8 counts having a percentage of 26.67. Followed by Maamot AD with 23.33% with 7 counts. SaManiBaag and Pagmimiha AD both have 4 counts with 13.33%. Next is Labney AD with 10% having 3 counts followed by Labayku AD with 2 counts having 6.67%. Lastly, both Agus-Tala AD and Pacquillao ICC have 1 count with 3.33%. Despite the high percentage of Maamot AD, it consists of 4 Sitios, namely So. Dirita, Tangan-Tangan, Tudek and Maamot Proper. The first 3 Sitios identified are GIDA Areas and the interviewed respondent from So. Dirita are the only college student in their community. Based on the records of Maamot AD, only Maamot Proper have high number of IPs who graduated and currently enrolled in college. In addition, So. Tangan-Tangan and Tudek has no recorded students that reached tertiary education. For the rest of the Ancestral Domains and Cultural Communities, almost 70% of the IP children have attended primary education and 50% of which have continued their secondary education and only 30% proceeded to tertiary education. Only 5% are able to finish college. The records show that the communities have been struggling in pursuing education and still striving for them to enjoy right to education especially the new generations. It's interesting to note that parents and children collaborate to choose a child's career path. Perez et al. (2020) reported that indigenous people desire their children to complete their education in order to improve their economic circumstances. However, Alanguí (2017) noted that government data revealed comparatively low survival rates of indigenous students completing their courses, despite the positive implications on indigenous people's education.

## 1.6 Family Status

As part of the indigenous peoples, the Aytas have a unique way of expressing familism in their community. One of the profound traditions of the Aytas are of their high respect to the elders in the community. They are the major decision-makers that play a vital role in maintaining and managing the community in nation-building. 20 out of 30 respondents have married parents with 66.67%, 8 are widowed with 26.67% and 2 are separated with 6.67%. The concept of marriage in Ayta both Mag-Antsi and Abellen/Abelling are equally complicated and discursive. On rare occasions, the husband has given the right to have additional wives, called polygamy. Beforehand, the husband will ask permission to the first wife because the new wife will be staying with them. This tradition has rooted long before, and it depends on the motivation and needs of the husband or of the whole clan. One of the most common reasons in practicing polygamy is by strengthening their clan, will of having a male child, or the first wife cannot bear a child. (NCIP Dapdap Service Center, IPS-CADT025-A). The hopes and dreams of the IP students are rooted in their family called "kamainan". The old culture in support to education in the indigenous communities are into shaping the youth to participate in early marriage and labor. The Ayta Abellen/Abelling have this inter-marriage culture where the parents are responsible in choosing the partners of their children. Even at young age, once both the parents have a compact, marriage will take place immediately. In Ayta Mag-Antsi, the man will provide a brideprice called "bandi" to the parents of the bride. Once the bandi is enough, the parents of the bride will provide their permission to proceed in wedding ceremony. This culture has been in practice during the time of the parents of the respondents resulting to all of them did not finish tertiary education. The price of early marriage and labor made the parents utter "Do not follow our steps. You have to study hard and finish your college education. Do not fast track your life and priority to work for you to provide for us. There are numerous of opportunities that will open if you are strive hard in your studies."

## 1.7 Role in the Community

The role of indigenous youth in their community is diverse and dynamic. Their active involvement is essential for the holistic development and sustainability of indigenous cultures and communities. Recognizing and supporting the agency of indigenous youth is vital for ensuring a vibrant and resilient future for indigenous peoples.

The research shows that all of the respondents are IP Youth in their community. And its core function is to observe in all decision-making process withheld by the clan leaders and elders in preparation as new generation leaders. As a member of the Indigenous Cultural Communities, the youth engage in educational initiatives; raising awareness about the challenges faced within their locality and be model of change.

## 2. Life Experiences of the IP Students

Based on data analysis, the following were examined and considered as major categories namely, (1) the hindrances and (2) the path to success. Specifically, this includes lived experiences in their homes, at school, and how they are treated in the community and addressed in society. The hindrances or the most pressing problems of the IPs are financial problems, proximity to school, lack of signal connectivity, bullying and discrimination, language barrier, social injustices: terrorist groups and covid 19-pandemic. And their coping mechanisms to the hindrances are their connection and relationship to their respective communities, stepping outside their comfort zone and their dreams to chase.

## 3. Existing programs of the Universities and Government Agencies to address the needs and aspirations of the IP Students

Universities and government agencies play crucial roles in supporting and advancing the well-being, rights, and aspirations of indigenous peoples. Their involvement is essential in addressing historical injustices, promoting cultural preservation, and fostering sustainable development. The following are the existing programs being enjoyed by the indigenous students in the province of Tarlac: (1) Special Admission prior to RA 10931, (2) formulation of unit under Student Services and Development focused on IPs, (3) Career Fair, (4) Priority in financial assistance, (5) Love Bus Project, (6) Renting of temporary shelters, (7) Celebration of IP Month, (8) Information, Education, and Consultation to cultural communities, (9) Funding of Local School Boards (LSBs) and Construction of additional schools to GIDA and remote areas, and (10) Establishments of Tech4Ed Centers.

#### **4. Measures to solve the existing problems faced by the IP Students**

Mainly, the problems encountered by the IP Students all rooted to financial constraints and bubbled to different subject matter. Particularly, the following are the measures such as: (1) Comprehensive Profiling and Program Development, (2) Establishments of Additional Schools and IP Centers, (3) Information, Education and Consultation, (4) Hiring of IP Teachers, (5) Capacity Building and Leadership Training and (Strengthening the NTF-ELCAC. Addressing the challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples (IP) students requires a multifaceted approach that considers their unique cultural, social, and educational needs. The government should spearhead in the taking action on how to alleviate the plight of the IP Students particularly the Ayta Mag-Antsi and Ayta Abellen-Abelling in the Province of Tarlac. Long-term solutions are viable in coordination with different agencies as the discussed problems and aspirations are burning issues years ago. Collective effort is essential to address the problems since there is no single solution being implemented in the communities.

#### **5. Implications to Public Administration**

This study is an avenue to verify if the current programs and services are effective and evaluated. If not, there is a need to revisit the core responsibilities of concerned stakeholder prior to public administration. By understanding the strength, needs and aspirations, and challenges encountered by the IP students, this serves a primary data in impact assessment and analysis of policies. Understanding the students' plight, public administrators can develop strategies on how to uplift and alleviate the lives of IP students by filling the gaps where they are weak particularly in the unending plight of financial constraints. Stakeholders should look into account a sustainable and long-term project to ensure the delivery of services be useful to culturally sensitive customs and traditions of the IPs. The study had shed light on how the IP Students survive from bullying and discrimination, language barriers in pursuit to culture preservation, financial constraints, social injustices and covid-19 pandemic. It also shows the flexibility of Ayta Mag-Antsi and Ayta Abellen/Abelling as a step forward towards success such as strong connections and relationships to the community, how they step outside their comfort zones and in what manner they are willing to cope in order to chase their dreams. Recognizing their rights on their ancestral lands, protecting and preserving their cultures, traditions, systems, customs, and essential services like education are all essential to the fundamental development of indigenous peoples. It is crucial to acknowledge and uphold these rights to ensure fair and equitable governance.

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