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**Paper: “Impact of Fraud on Financial Assistance Programs and Its Prevention: A Case Study of Merankabandi, Burundi”**

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Daniel Kon Ater  
University of Juba, Republic of South Sudan

Reviewer 2: Anthony Muriungi  
Meru University of Science and Technology, Kenya

Reviewer 3: Blinded

### **ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026**

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

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Reviewer Name: <b>Dr. Daniel Kon Ater, Ph.D.</b>	
University/Country: University of Juba, Republic of South Sudan	
Date Manuscript Received:	Date Review Report Submitted:
Manuscript Title: <b>“Impact of Fraud in Financial Assistance Programs and Its Prevention. Case Study of Merankabandi, Burundi.</b>	
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#### **Evaluation Criteria:**

**Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.**

<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Rating Result</i></b> [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>5</b>
The title accurately reflects the main focus and geographic scope of the paper, providing clarity for the reader.	
<b>2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.</b>	<b>5</b>
The abstract succinctly summarizes the objectives, methodology, and principal findings, making it easy to understand the scope of the study.	
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>
The language is generally clear and professional, with minor grammatical and stylistic errors. Proofreading is advised to ensure further clarity.	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>5</b>

The paper offers a thorough description of the mixed-methods approach, including participant selection and data collection techniques.	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	
Results are well presented, with supporting tables and figures. However, the discussion could further address possible biases in self-reported responses.	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>5</b>
The conclusions logically follow from the data and discussion, providing relevant recommendations and acknowledging the study's limitations.	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>5</b>
The reference list is extensive and covers both foundational and recent sources relevant to the research topic.	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	<b>X</b>
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

**Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

This manuscript provides a unique and valuable contribution to the literature on fraud and its prevention in financial assistance programs, particularly in the context of fragile states like Burundi. The integration of both beneficiary and administrator perspectives is a notable strength, offering a balanced view of vulnerabilities and potential solutions. The identification of digital illiteracy and lack of guidance as key barriers is especially relevant for practitioners and policymakers.

I recommend the following minor revisions:

- Consider further clarifying how issues such as underreporting or denialism of fraud (as observed in survey responses) might be influenced by cultural or contextual factors. A brief discussion of alternative data collection strategies for future research would strengthen this section.
- Address, even briefly, the feasibility and scalability of recommended interventions like digital ID systems and regular audits in resource-limited settings.
- Please review the manuscript for minor grammatical and stylistic errors to enhance clarity and readability.

Overall, I believe this paper meets the criteria for publication following minor revision.