

# Promoting Belongingness: An Inclusive Approach for Students with Disabilities



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## Abstract

- The sense of belonging is crucial to individuals as it creates emotional support, security and validation. For students with disabilities, a lack of sense of belongingness can make students feel isolated or excluded. This study investigates the factors which affect the sense of belongingness which affect students with disabilities.
- In order to identify these gaps, students first compiled a conceptual list of factors that could affect sense of belongingness among students with disabilities.
- Next, Studies related to the sense of belongingness among this population are identified and analyzed. After the completion of this process, existing research is compartmented to the conceptual list of factors
- By identifying the certain factors which are considered to affect belongingness, further research questions will be formulated as a means to study this topic more.

## Introduction/Background section

- Understanding the sense of belonging among impaired students at in college requires acknowledging existing literature on the subject. Research has highlighted the challenges faced by impaired students in higher education and emphasized the importance of fostering a welcoming and inclusive campus community (Crouch and McMahon, 2014, p.20). Belongingness has been linked to various positive outcomes such as academic performance and mental well-being, prompting interest in strategies to enhance it. (King-Sears & Strogilos, 2020, p. 162).
- While studies in inclusive education have identified some effective strategies, the context of college necessitates customized approaches. Existing knowledge has limitations, including gaps in representing college campus community and insufficient research on intersections of identities and disabilities.
- This study aims to address these gaps by investigating belongingness among impaired students in college. By identifying specific gaps and tailoring interventions, we aim to support college's efforts in creating a more inclusive environment. Our hypothesis posits that enhancing belongingness will lead to improved academic outcomes and student well-being.
- Drawing from existing literature, we have identified inclusive practices and measurement techniques. By adapting these insights to college's context, we aim to provide a tailored strategy to support impaired students. Ultimately, our goal is to inform the development of programs and policies that foster a secure and supportive environment for all impaired students that attend college.

## Methods

- Keywords Used: belongingness, acceptance, happiness , etc... These keywords allowed team members to identify relevant articles.
- Established a clear criterion for selecting articles for review. Included studies were required to focus on factors affecting the sense of belongingness among students with disabilities in educational settings.
- Team members independently conducted a thorough review of literature within their assigned subtopic. This involved a critical analysis of the purpose, factors, keywords, sample, and results of each article. Studies which were relevant were highlighted in green and irrelevant studies were crossed out.

## Results

The initial phase of our scoping review involved a systematic search and selection process to identify relevant literature concerning the factors affecting the sense of belongingness among students with disabilities in educational settings. Utilizing keywords such as belongingness, acceptance, and happiness, we ensured a comprehensive exploration of existing research.

Following the established criteria for article selection, our team members independently reviewed literature within their assigned subtopics. Each member conducted a thorough analysis of the purpose, factors, keywords, sample, and results of the identified articles. Through this process, studies deemed irrelevant were systematically crossed out, while those deemed pertinent were highlighted in green.

Upon completion of the individual review process, the team engaged in collaborative discussions to synthesize findings and identify common themes. This collaborative effort allowed us to discern key factors influencing the sense of belongingness among students with disabilities in educational contexts.

Future and further research questions emerged from these discussions, reflecting the need to delve deeper into specific areas of inquiry. Some of these questions include:

- How does the type and severity of a student's disability influence their sense of belongingness? For example, would sense of belongingness vary among students with mild intellectual disabilities and students with severe physical disabilities?
- Are there sex differences in barriers to belongingness for students with disabilities? If so, what are they and how do they affect female/male students with disabilities?
- To what degree does academic stress impact sense of belongingness in students with disabilities? Does academic stress affect belongingness differently depending on students' age/grade level?
- How does parenting style influence feelings of belongingness among students with disabilities (e.g., strict versus lenient)?
- How does familial support moderate the relationship between the type and severity of a student's disability and their sense of belongingness in college?

These research questions provide a roadmap for further exploration and understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding belongingness among students with disabilities in college. They underscore the importance of considering diverse perspectives and experiences in the development of inclusive practices and policies within educational institutions.

As we continue our scoping review, these research questions will guide our efforts in identifying gaps in the existing literature and informing the development of tailored strategies to support impaired students in achieving a greater sense of belongingness in college

## Conclusion

In summary, our scoping review diligently explored the factors influencing the sense of belongingness among college students with disabilities. Through meticulous searches and thoughtful article selection, we assembled a comprehensive collection of relevant literature shedding light on this intricate phenomenon.

Collaborative discussions further distilled key themes and factors affecting belongingness, from the diverse impact of disabilities to the pivotal role of campus support services.

Additionally, the formulation of future research questions provides a roadmap for continued exploration and understanding, aiming to address critical gaps in the literature and inform inclusive practices within educational settings.

As our scoping review progresses, these insights will guide our endeavors to enhance belongingness among students with disabilities, ultimately striving towards the creation of inclusive educational environments where all students feel valued and supported.

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