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Measuring Sense of Belonging of Binghamton University Students

By: Leah Cingranelli, Nusrat Islam, and Jamie Vong

Introduction: Binghamton University and institutions alike have put forth certain rules and efforts to ensure that students of the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, and students who are religiously affiliated feel safe. The reality is that many of these students feel unwelcome and different due to their social identities (Blakmon et al., 2020). The aim of this non-experimental study is to investigate if there is a significant difference in sense of belonging among minority groups of undergraduate students who attend Binghamton University, as well as those who are not part of minority groups. We hypothesized that sense of belonging amongst minority groups will be lower when compared to the student population that does not self-identify within a minority group.

Discussion:

- Within the LGBTQ group, the insignificance of the data shows that participants who identified to be LGBTQ does not experience lower levels of social, academic, and institutional belonging.
- Within the racial minority group, the insignificance of the data shows that participants who identified with a minority race does not experience lower levels of social, academic, and institutional belonging.
- Within the religious group, the insignificance of the data shows that participants who identified to be associated with a religion does not experience lower levels of social, academic, and institutional belonging.
- The small sample size of the study alludes to the lack of significance and correlation within these groups.

Table 1

Sense of Belonging Subscales in Different Minority Groups

Scales	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Social Belonging LGBTQ	2.3986		
Social Belonging Racial Minority	2.3864	.9131	.912
Social Belonging Religious Affiliation	2.0981		
Academic Belonging LGBTQ	2.1132		
Academic Belonging Racial Minority	1.9974	.80390	.713
Academic Belonging Religious Affiliation	2.0329		
Institutional Support LGBTQ	2.7949		
Institutional Support Racial Minority	2.7070	1.07643	.802
Institutional Support Religious Affiliation	2.5203		

T-Tests

LGBTQ T-Test:

The social belonging was not lower than the people who are not LGBTQ ($t(93) = 1.175$ $p=.243$ ($p>.05$))

The academic belonging mean was not lower than the people who are not LGBTQ ($t(93) = .736$ $p=.464$ ($p>.05$))

The perceived institutional support mean was not lower than the people who are not LGBTQ. ($t(93) = 1.358$ $p=.178$ ($p>.05$))

Racial Minority:

The social belonging mean was not lower than the people who are not a racial minority. ($t(90) = -.984$ $p=.328$ ($p>.05$))

The academic belonging mean was not lower than the people who are not a racial minority. ($t(90) = .398$ $p=.692$ ($p>.05$))

The perceived institutional support mean was not lower than the people who are not a racial minority. ($t(90) = -.473$ $p=.638$ ($p>.05$))

Religiously Affiliated:

The social belonging mean was not lower than the people who are not religiously affiliated. ($t(93) = -1.463$ $p=.147$ ($p>.05$))

The academic belonging mean was not lower than the people who are not religiously affiliated. ($t(93) = -.073$ $p=.942$ ($p>.05$))

The perceived institutional support mean was not lower than the people who are not religiously affiliated. ($t(93) = -.705$ $p=.482$ ($p>.05$))

Methods:

Participant Information:

- Binghamton University Students in all years of school took the survey.
- Demographic information asked for gender, sexuality, race, and religious affiliation.
- Students who said they did not attend Binghamton University were automatically redirected to the end of the survey.

Survey Information:

- Qualtrics was used to create and distribute the survey.
- Original survey was "College Students' Sense of belonging: Dimensions and Correlates" created by Dabney Ingram at Stanford University.
- The scale used had one through five. One meaning strongly agree and five meaning strongly disagree.
- Subscales in the survey: Social belonging, Academic belonging, and Perceived Institutional Support.

Analysis:

- IBM SPSS was used to organize the data.
- The mean and standard deviation of different minority groups and non minority groups were calculated.
- T-Tests were used to compare the means of the minority groups to the population that did not identify with that specific minority group.
- Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the subscales, with one question under academic belonging being deleted.

Future Research:

- Increasing the sample size of the study will show a correlation among these different groups and provide a mean closer to the population mean.
- Narrowing the inclusive criteria to only freshman in college will evaluate the change of transition to college and sense of belonging in new institution.

References:

- Ingram, D. (2012). *College Students' Sense of Belonging: Dimensions and Correlates* (dissertation).
- Blakmon, Zachary R., et al. "Microaggressions, Sense of Belonging, and Sexual Identity in the Residential Environment." *Journal of College and University Student Housing*, vol. 46, no. 3, Jan. 2020, pp. 46-59. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1250899&site=ehost-live.