

## Importance of Belongingness in Healthy Youth Development

Dr. Shagufta Afroz Ph.D<sup>1\*</sup>, Prof. P.S.N. Tiwari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Former UGC SRF, Department of Psychology, D.D.U. Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, UP, India

<sup>1</sup>Former HEAD & Professor, Department of Psychology, D.D.U. Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, UP, India

DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2021.v09i06.004](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2021.v09i06.004)

| Received: 26.04.2020 | Accepted: 05.06.2021 | Published: 11.06.2021

\*Corresponding author: Dr. Shagufta Afroz Ph.D

### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Youth development is the deliberate progression of providing all youth with the support, relationships, experiences, resources, and opportunities needed to become effective and proficient adults. The objective of this study was to understand the important role of belongingness in Subjective Well-being of adolescents. A sample of 197 adolescents from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, participated in this study. The extreme group strategy was used to identify subjects as high and low on the basis of the scores of Belongingness Motive Scale (Afroz S. & Tiwari PSN 2017). Subjective well-being scale (Roop Nagpal1982) was administered to get the data. The result of One Way Analysis of Variance showed that High and low groups of belongingness significantly differed on  $p < .01$  level for positive affect, Negative affect, Rootedness & belongingness, Structural and Cohesive aspect of Family and Subjective well-being score. The result was congruent with the previous results and also added the existing literature that a strong sense of belongingness contributes to individual and community well-being (Cherry K. 2019).

**Keywords:** Healthy youth, Sense of Belongingness, Subjective well-being.

**Copyright © 2021 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## INTRODUCTION

Youth development is the most critical and significant phase in entire cycle of human development. The positive sense of belongingness in youth plays very important role. Since the debate is often unchecked about the source causes of the latest mass school shooting, suicide, depression and a sense of non-dignity in our youth, discussions about the emotive health of our youth and our ability to promoting and supporting them are less frequent. In my opinion, these are signs of a growing trend in our society of disconnection or lack of belonging; it is showing a decline in what it means to be a community or even a family. While it is easy to think of technology and social networks as useful or even essential communication tools that connect us better, they actually seem to have the conflicting effect. The more our children and teenagers connect to their devices, the more they disconnect from their family and the world around them. There is an insulating effect that seems to accompany its excessive use and certainly an element of loneliness can be perceived, despite the amount of "friends" or "likes" that can accumulate. Parents and health professionals are equally responsible for the effects of social networks and the media on which they depend. What we have lost in this: time to build relationships, time to understand and listen to our children and time to teach our young people how to

recognize and face the daily struggles of life. This disconnection allows emotional struggles to attack our children's personal crises. The underlying melancholy and anxiety, often impaired by the use of alcohol and drugs, leave our children anxious and angry at the possibility of getting high and being heard in their own way. The interpersonal - psychological theory of suicidal behavior (Joiner, 2005) proposes that the need to belong is essential; once found, it can prevent suicide and when it is countered it can significantly increase the risk of suicide. According to Afroz S. (2017) "Motive to belong 'encompasses a person's striving to relate to and care for others, to feel that those others are relating authentically to one's self, and to feel a satisfying and coherent involvement with the social world more generally'. The need for belongingness is satisfied by interpersonal bond marked by "stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future." A sense of belongingness positively correlates with high level of self-esteem. Of course when a person notices that he is being adored and cared by the group which he values; helps his self-esteem enrichment. His level of confidence increases because of self-exposure and commitments by group members to him. This apparent sense of security helps a lot to increase self-esteemed and self-reliance often People with greater perceived social support enjoy greater self-esteem. A

sense of belongingness can boost academic achievement as found by Anderman, Freeman (2004). Wentzel, Caldwell (1997) and Hymel (1996) with many other psychologists, in their studies, concluded that the students who had more friends and who liked their school group; They attained their goals more efficiently than other students. A sense of belonging to the group in early adolescence is also connected with a low level of dropout. Group membership can increase the interest and enjoyment of the school, Pittman and Richmond (2007) found that university students, who conveyed a greater sense of belonging at the university level, were better academically and felt more competent at the school level as well as they had higher self-esteem and lower levels of outsourcing problems. However, it was revealed that students who had problems with relationships with friends, experienced more internalizing behaviors and felt less connected to the university.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is well-defined as 'an individual's cognitive and affective estimations of his or her life' (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2004). The cognitive component denotes to what one thinks of the satisfaction of life in overall terms (life as a whole) and in terms of domination (in specific areas of life such as work, relationships, etc.) The component Affective refers to sentiments, moods and feelings. However, affection is considered negative when sentiments, moods and feelings are unpleasant (for example, guilt, anger, shame, etc.). Subjective well-being (SWB) indicates to the system a person experience the eminence of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and rational judgments. Psychologists have distinct happiness as a blend of satisfaction with life and the relative occurrence of positive and negative affect. Anand K, Nagle Y. (2016) sought to explore perceived stress and psychological well-being among college students and their interrelation. 281 college students (male = 174, female = 107) contributed in the 18-24 age group. The perceived stress scale and Ryff's psychological well-being scale were directed. The results exposed that the perceived stress had a noteworthy negative relationship with the six dimensions of psychological well-being. The perceived stress signified a great variation in all dimensions of psychological well-being. Perceived stress was one of the main aspects that contributed to health and psychological well-being.

Though the review of literature, well documents that having a better sense of belongingness has positive impact on youth, yet it is to be studied in Indian context as most of the studies are done in foreign countries. So to validate the data in Indian context this study was designed to tap the role of belongingness in healthy youth development. The term 'youth' has been used for adolescents for the present study.

## OBJECTIVE

Against this backdrop, the general objective of the study was to tap the importance of sense of belongingness in healthy development of adolescents, more specifically the present investigation tries to understand the role of sense of belongingness in Subjective well-being of adolescents.

## HYPOTHESIS

The review of literature shows that having a sense of belongingness affects every part of human life expending from birth to late old age. There are much studies in western countries showing that belongingness is directly associated with self-esteem and well-being (Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. 2004, Wilkowski and colleagues 2009 and many more). On the basis of the literature available, it was hypothesized that in Indian context also, having a high sense of belongingness would have an effect on Subjective Well-being of Adolescents.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The study was primarily correlational in nature. The study follows One Way Analysis of variance with two groups of participant High & Low belongingness. The groups were assigned as high and low on the basis of the scores of belongingness Motive scale. The scores above Q3 were considered as high and below Q1 were considered as low belongingness group. The two groups of adolescents (High & low Belongingness) were considered as independent variable and Subjective well-being and its various dimensions as dependent variables.

### Sample

A heterogeneous sample of 197 adolescents (107 boys and 90 girls) belonging to Eastern Uttar Pradesh participated in this study. The age range of participants was from 14 to 19 with the mean of 16 years. To control the variable of socio- economic status and ecological settings equal number of participants was selected from rural and urban settings belonging to moderate socio- economic status.

### Tools- following tools were used to collect the data:

- **Belongingness Motive Scale** - (by Afroz S. & Tiwari P.S.N. 2017). This scale was developed to measure the belongingness motive in various domains of life for their research entitled 'Motive to Belong and its Behavioral Consequences 2017'. The scale consist six important domains of life as 1-Husband/Wife or Lover Belongingness 2-Child/Parent belongingness 3- Family Belongingness 4- Work /Educational place belongingness 5- Friends belongingness 6- Religious Group Belongingness. Each domain consists 27 items. The Cronbach's alpha of the scales was found to be .85. Gutman Split-Half

Coefficient was found to be .87. The scoring pattern is Likert's five points ranging from 5- Highly agree to 1- Highly disagree.

- **Subjective well-being Scale (SWB)** - (By Roop Nagpal 1982) The Hindi version of this scale is used. This scale consists 82 items. The manner of scoring is 4 to 1. This measurement assess eight psychological social component as Positive Affects, Negative Affects, Rootedness and Belongingness, Mental Mastery over Self and Environment, Structural and Cohesive aspects of Family, Density and Social Network, Security in Health and Socio-economic Crisis, Expectation – Achievement Harmony. The validity of the scale was found to be from .75 to .81.

### Procedure

Belongingness Motive Scale and Subjective well-being scale compiled with the 'personal data Sheet and Informed Consent Form' consisted of the demographic information about the participants followed by an informed consent were performed on a large number of participants. Participants were

explained the purpose of the study, eligibility criteria, the voluntary nature of participation, time commitment required for participation and the possible risks and benefits of contribution. Following the Extreme group strategy the participants were assigned in two groups on the basis of Belongingness Motive scale. The participant having scores above Q3 were assigned as having high sense of belongingness and the participants having the score below Q1 were assigned as having low sense of belongingness. Finally the data of 197 participants was subjected to analyses.

The psychometric tests were administered to participants individually. Instructions related to each scale were clearly explained to each participant and their queries (if any) were attended appropriately. Data collection took two months beginning from mid of July 2019 to mid of September 2019. The complete questionnaires were scored as per the standard scoring procedure of respective scale inventories and the data were analyzed by using appropriate statistics.

### RESULT

**Table-1: Means & SDs of SWB as a function of High& Low sense of Belongingness**

Variables	Level of Belongingness	M	S D	N
Positive Affect	High	35.80	4.80	94
	Low	31.05	4.90	103
Negative affect	High	26.29	5.18	94
	Low	35.74	5.74	103
Mastery over self & environment	High	23.24	3.37	94
	Low	22.69	3.07	103
Rootedness & Belongingness	High	22.97	2.21	94
	Low	19.80	3.58	103
Structural & Cohesive aspect of Family	High	20.48	3.16	94
	Low	13.43	3.04	103
Density& social Network	High	15.07	2.51	94
	Low	14.86	2.77	103
Security in Health & socio-economic status	High	10.63	2.82	94
	Low	9.88	2.87	103
Expectation Achievement harmony	High	14.53	2.43	94
	Low	14.23	2.73	103
Subjective well-being	High	162.53	17.06	94
	Low	142.62	10.30	103

**Table-2: Summary of One way ANOVA for SWB as a function of high & low sense of Belongingness**

Source of Variance		SS	Df	MS	F
Positive Affect	Between Groups	150.40	1	150.40	8.40*
	Within Groups	4585.92	195	23.518	
Negative affect	Between Groups	4389.55	1	4389.55	141.19**
	Within Groups	5855.17	195	30.03	
Mastery over self & environment	Between Groups	15.16	1	15.16	1.47
	Within Groups	2013.43	195	10.33	
Rootedness & Belongingness	Between Groups	494.49	1	494.49	49.74**
	Within Groups	1761.62	195	9.03	
Structural & Cohesive aspect of Family	Between Groups	120.13	1	120.13	23.03**
	Within Groups	1284.66	195	17.54	
Density & social Network	Between Groups	2.18	1	2.18	0.31
	Within Groups	1368.58	195	7.02	
Security in Health & socio-economic status	Between Groups	27.22	1	27.22	3.37
	Within Groups	1576.57	195	8.09	
Expectation Achievement harmony	Between Groups	4.39	1	4.39	0.65
	Within Groups	1309.81	195	6.72	
Subjective well-being	Between Groups	19483.44	1	19483.44	103.46**
	Within Groups	37887.64	195	194.30	

Note:  $p < .001^{**}$ ,  $p < .05^{*}$

Table 1 & 2 are presenting the results of the study. According to the results of ANOVA, the means of Positive Affect [ $F(1,195) = 8.40$ ,  $p < .05$ ], Negative Affects [ $F(1,195) = 141.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ], Rootedness & belongingness [ $F(1,195) = 49.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ] and Structural and Cohesive Aspects of family [ $F(1,195) = 23.03$ ,  $p < .01$ ] significantly differed for high and low belongingness groups of adolescents. The subjects belonging to high and low sense of belongingness differed significantly on SWB [ $F(1,195) = 103.46$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. It is also clear from table 1 which is showing the means of both the groups for SWB that High sense of belongingness group of adolescents scored more for Positive affects ( $M=35.80$ ), Rootedness & belongingness ( $M=22.97$ ) and Structural & Cohesive Aspect of Family ( $M=20.48$ ) in comparison to low belongingness group of adolescents whereas the low belongingness group scored more for Negative Affects ( $M=35.74$ ) in comparison to their counterpart. The high belongingness group ( $M=162.53$ ) showed higher SWB in comparison to low Belongingness group of Adolescents ( $M=142.62$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to tap the role of belongingness in healthy youth development of adolescents. As Subjective well-being is one of the most important aspects of health, it was hypothesized that the adolescents having higher sense of belongingness would score more on SWB in comparison to the adolescents having low sense of belongingness. The result clearly showed that the two groups in which they belonged to differed significantly in SWB and their four main dimensions, such as positive affect, negative affects, rootedness and

belongingness and the structural and cohesive aspect of the family. The group of high-belonged adolescents showed a higher score in positive affects and low in negative affects. The positive effects include specific aspects of life, stories such as health, education, standard of living, family and friends, as well as some aspects of the perception of well-being in general perspectives. Caring for those adolescents with a feeling of freedom belongs to achieved high scores in negative affects and low in positive affects. The negative effects of the complaints reported most frequently in psychological cases by some outpatient medical centers in India, with the aim of discovering the general unhappiness of the survey and its concerns or regrets about life problems in particular. Social support is a multifaceted construction recognized as a significant predictive factor of physical health. Many other studies have shown a sense of belonging if it is positively related to the sense of physical and emotional well-being (Walton 2007). Social elimination appeared to have an undesirable impact on all people, even when people are excluded by those who defame (Williams KD 2007). According to H. Ben-Zur (2003), the positive effects lessen the negative effects of widespread living events and works against the development of psychological and behavioral problems. Negative affective styles such as anxiety, depression and hostility have long been recognized as predictors of an increased risk of ailment and mortality.

In addition, the result showed that adolescents with a high sense of belonging achieved a higher score in Rootedness and Belongingness and, similarly, in the structural and cohesive aspect of the family. This indicates that the perception of sharing values, beliefs and qualities of inner life can also come from a special

dimension of well-being. This result is compatible with the Bowlby Theory Annex (2005) which states that having someone to rely on for help during crisis situations is always useful regardless of age; In this sense, attachment theory clarifies why people are motivated to belong. This theory refers mainly to the early phases of life, however, the sense of belonging in early childhood has a noteworthy impact on how an individual pursues to belong in the next life. Peterson (2010) suggests that people who develop secure attachments in their first year of life are more successful in romantic relationships, friendships and relationships than people who have not developed secure attachments during this period. Therefore, attachment theory has significant value in the understanding of the motivation of belonging. The educational place plays a central role in life. A teenager spends almost 6-8 hours a day at school or university. The sense of belonging to one also makes you more involved in that environment. It offers you the possibility of social networks and connections. The influence of social linkages and connections should not be taken too lightly when trying to measure the well-being of an individual, since they openly influence life satisfaction (Pandey S.2015). A sense of belongingness can boost academic achievement as found by Anderman & Freeman (2004). Wentzel, Caldwell (1997) and Hymel (1996) with many other psychologists, in their studies also concluded the same. Pittman and Richmond (2007) stated that university students, who informed a better sense of belonging at the university level, were better academically and felt more capable at the school level and also had greater self-esteem and lesser levels of outsourcing problems. However, it was discovered that students who had problems with relationships with friends experienced more adopting behaviors and felt less connected to the university.

It is known in the literature that a strong sense of belonging improves the quality of life in general by improving performance in the workplace, happiness and motivation to achieve other goals. While many motivation theorists recognize that belonging is an important psychological impulse, it is often also considered inappropriately as a secondary process (DeWall, Baumeister and Vohs, 2008).

Structural aspects of family like domestic functions in family may be related to each other and may have a substantial impact of well-being. Having a higher sense of belongingness directly increases the wellbeing of a person (Afroz S. & Tiwari PSN 2015, 2019). Teen age is an age of crisis. A teen ager is mostly fully dependent on their family for their needs and supports. Children who have a positive relationship with their parents tend to show fewer signs of depression, have higher self-esteem, feel more connected in school, and get into less trouble (Wainright, J. L., & Patterson, C. J. 2006).

### Implications and Significance

Belongingness is almost untouched field in human psychology in India, though it has been widely studied in foreign countries. Some efforts have been started to understand the importance of belongingness in every walk of life. The present study adds a step in this journey and also validates the findings of other countries in Indian context. The findings of this study is important because it emphasis on the importance of belongingness for healthy youth development as it leads to have a better SWB. It will help the policy makers and NGOs working in the field of healthy youth development.it will also advantage the School, colleges and families to improve the sense of belongingness among them still the argument remains regarding we cannot overlook about the most basic of questions; how do we better connect families, schools and communities to our young people in a way that enables them to get the support and assistance they need to feel emotionally healthy and cared about by the people around them.

### CONCLUSION

The sense of belongingness is an avoidable need for everyone, it also plays the significant role in healthy development of adolescents by increasing self-esteem, academic performance, sense of attachment, having better physical and mental and many more. The present study aimed to tap the role of belongingness in SWB of adolescents. The findings suggested that having a high sense of belongingness adds to have a better SWB in adolescents. The findings proved the hypothesis made and also added to the literature that a strong sense of belonging also contributes to individual and community well-being (Cherry K. 2019).

### REFERENCES

- Afroz S. and Tiwari P.S.N. (2015). Belongingness among different age groups Indian Journal of Positive Psychology,6(3) 260-265
- Afroz S. and Tiwari P.S.N. (2017). Development of A multidimensional scale of Belongingness Motive, Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. 5(8B):878-883 DOI: 10.21276/sjahss
- Afroz S. and Tiwari P.S.N. (2019). Role of Belongingness in Subjective Well-Being of male, female and third gender of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) International journal of Social Sciences Review,7(5)830-836
- Anand K.& Nagie Y K (2016) Perceived Stress as Predictor of Psychological Well-being among Indian Youth, The International Journal of Indian Psychology, 3 (4), No. 68
- Anderman, L. H., & Freeman, T. (2004). Students' sense of belonging in school. In M. L. Maehr & P. R. Pintrich (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement: 13. Motivating students, improving schools - The legacy of Carol Midgley* (pp. 27-63). Greenwich, CT: Elsevier

- Ben-Zur. (2003). Coping Styles and Affect, *International Journal of Stress Management* 16(2):87-101 · DOI: 10.1037/a0015731
- Bowlby J. (2005). *A secure base: clinical applications of attachment theory*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Cherry, K. (2019). How need to belong Influences Human Behavior and Motivation? *Psychology today*.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social Influence: Compliance and Conformity. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55(1), 591-621.
- Diener, Ed and Oishi S. (2004). 'Are Scandinavians happier than Asians? Issues in comparing nations on subjective well-being.' In: Frank Columbus (ed.) *Asian Economic and Political Issues*, Volume 10. Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science, 1- 25
- Hymel, S., Comfort, C, Schonert-Reichl, K, & McDougald, P. (1996). Academic failure and school dropout. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95, 148-162
- Pandey S., (2015). Quality of life in india india's performance on different developmental index, *Education*,2(1)
- Peterson, C. C. (2010). *Looking Forward Through the Lifespan: Developmental Psychology* (5th ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Australia.
- Pittman, L. D., & Richmond, A. (2007). Academic and psychological functioning in late adolescence: The importance of school belonging. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 75(4), 270-290.
- Wainright, J. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2006). Delinquency, victimization, and substance use among adolescents with female same-sex parents. *Journal of Family*.
- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality And Social Psychology*, 92(1), 82-91
- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality And Social Psychology*, 92(1), 82-91
- Wentzel, K. R., & Caldwell, K. (1997). Friendships, peer acceptance, and group membership. *Child Development*, 68, 1198-1209
- Williams KD. Ostracism. (2007). *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58:425–452. [PubMed] [Google Scholar]