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Understanding School Belonging: Its Role in Enhancing Student Well-Being and Motivation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: School belonging, characterized as students' emotional attachment and acceptability within educational environments, is crucial for their subjective well-being and motivation. This idea profoundly impacts life satisfaction, positive and negative affect, and general mental health. Despite growing acknowledgment of its significance, a comprehensive examination of the relationship among school belonging, subjective well-being, and motivation is still few.

Methods and Materials: This analysis synthesizes information from longitudinal studies, surveys, and cross-sectional analyses across multiple educational environments to elucidate the complex interactions among these dimensions.

Findings: The findings demonstrate that a strong sense of belonging markedly improves students' subjective well-being, motivation, life satisfaction, and better mental health. A supportive school atmosphere cultivates a sense of acceptability and worth, hence enhancing students' intrinsic motivation and participation in academic endeavors. Programs designed to augment emotional support and inclusivity significantly enhance subjective well-being and academic achievement. Fostering a robust sense of belonging is essential for enhancing students' educational experiences.

Conclusion: These insights underscore the necessity for educational institutions to establish comprehensive programs that foster a sense of belonging, thereby improving students' subjective well-being and motivation. Addressing these factors is essential for cultivating a supportive educational climate that allows all students to excel intellectually and psychologically.

Keywords: School Belonging, Motivation, Well-being, Mental Health, Good Health and Well-being

1. Introduction

1.1. What is School Belonging?

School belonging is the emotional connection and affiliation a student feels towards their educational institution. It involves sentiments of acceptance, support, respect, and inclusion, impacting relationships with peers and educators, participation in activities, and the sensation of being valued (Claridge, 2020). Defined via ecological and sociological lenses, school belonging strengthens an individual's connection with the school environment (Strayhorn, 2018), highlighting the necessity of successful connections, attachment to collective goals, and engagement in social activities (McNally et al., 2008). This perspective considers the school as part of a broader society, needing analysis within a social context (Green, 2018; Osterman, 2000).

Although terms such as bonding, attachment, engagement, and connectedness are frequently used synonymously with school belonging (Allen, Kern, et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2018), school belonging is consistently defined as the extent to which students perceive themselves as accepted, valued, and included. A lack of belonging is associated to emotions of alienation, disengagement, and social isolation, which significantly effect academic performance, emotional well-being, and social interactions (Asanjarani & Kumar, 2024; Zheng, 2022). Meeting social and emotional needs via a sense of belonging in school influences academic engagement, motivation, and general well-being (Allen, Kern, et al., 2021; Allen, Slaten, et al., 2024; Covarrubias, 2024).

The notion is shaped by interactions among peers, instructors, and the wider school community (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022), with elements like peer relationships, institutional practices, and diversity inclusion playing crucial roles (Allen, Slaten, et al., 2024; Allen, Slaten, et al., 2021). School belonging is particularly critical for children suffering medical issues or emotional-based school avoidance (Hamilton, 2024; Tomberli & Ciucci, 2021), and requires a complete plan in higher education (Goldschneider, 2023). Principal themes encompass interconnectedness, security, a sense of worth, and the celebration of diversity (Allen, Slaten, et al., 2024).

Critically, the interchangeable use of terminology can generate uncertainty, yet the underlying concept of feeling welcomed and appreciated stays consistent. The absence of school belonging leads to alienation and disaffection

(Korpershoek et al., 2020). School belonging improves academic engagement, motivation, and overall well-being (Allen, Slaten, et al., 2024; Covarrubias, 2024), and educational environment encompasses feelings of connectedness, safety, and acceptance (Allen, Slaten, et al., 2024). Shaped by interactions within ecological systems (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022), it is developed through relationships, institutional practices, and diverse inclusion (Allen, Slaten, et al., 2024; Allen, Slaten, et al., 2021).

Overall, while school belonging is an essential part of school life, different contexts might utilize distinct definitions and standards for measuring it. This variation necessitates the implementation of intricate and highly focused solutions, especially when attempting to assist the students from low-income homes. Positive relationships between professors and students, as well as inclusive learning environments, have been found to be crucial for promoting students' subjective well-being and sense of belonging. (Allen, Kern, et al., 2024; Brooms, 2021) Creating inclusive environments that celebrate diversity is vital for establishing a strong feeling of belonging, eventually increasing student experiences and contributing to their long-term success and well-being.

1.2. School Connectedness

School connectedness is intricately associated with the notion of school belonging, defined by both discernible social networks and affective conditions (Kim et al., 2023). This intricate phenomenon is frequently characterized by concepts such as school bonding, engagement, school atmosphere, and attachment (da Fonseca et al., 2024; Spilt & Koomen, 2022). The documented advantages of school connectedness highlight the experiences of loneliness and social isolation in its absence, underscoring the emotional essence of a student's sense of belonging in the educational setting (Ahn & Davis, 2020a; Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020).

School connectedness, a key dimension of school belonging, encompasses both affective and behavioral aspects, emphasizing students' active engagement with peers, extracurricular activities, and broader school communities (Wong et al., 2024). Research consistently shows that strong school connectedness enhances students' well-being by fostering a sense of safety, inclusion, and purpose (Carrington et al., 2021). This, in turn, contributes to greater academic motivation and engagement. Furthermore, personal traits such as grit—defined as persistence and resilience in overcoming challenges—arises as a vital

element in promoting student well-being (Han, 2021). From an environmental perspective, integrating biophilic elements into school settings can also support connectedness by encouraging interaction with nature and peers, thereby enhancing students' sense of community and reducing stress (Alves et al., 2022; Wray et al., 2020). Lengieza and Swim (2021) highlight how students' connection to their surroundings is shaped by personal and contextual factors. while El Zaatari and Maalouf (2022), drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory, emphasize the dynamic interaction between individuals and their educational environments in cultivating a strong sense of belonging. Therefore, a supportive, inclusive school climate fostering interpersonal relationships is critical for promoting well-being and motivation across educational stages.

In conclusion, fostering school connectivity is vital for personal and intellectual development. By building an inclusive climate that promotes connectedness, schools may greatly enhance student experiences and promote overall well-being.

1.3. School Bonding

Charteris and Page (2021) examine the notion of school bonding, which signifies a unique affiliation with the educational environment, especially within the framework of distant learning. This connection involves a profound bond with peers, dedication to scholarly success, engagement in extracurricular activities, and compliance with institutional regulations. School bonding is significant because it is closely related to adolescent development, including academic achievement, social adjustment, and mental health. As a fundamental element of school belonging, it establishes the emotional basis that encourages students to stay involved and connected to school life. Furthermore, studies indicate that adolescents with robust parental attachments are likely to cultivate healthier peer relationships and a heightened sense of belonging in school, hence enhancing their socio-emotional development (Zhang & Deng, 2022). This highlights the interdependence of home and academic interpersonal structures in influencing their academic experiences. (Zhang & Deng, 2022). This highlights the interdependence of home and academic interpersonal structures in influencing their academic experiences.

Creating supportive educational environments is essential for cultivating a strong sense of belonging (El Zaatari &

Maalouf, 2022). Supportive peer interactions substantially enhance student well-being, with identity development and social-emotional competencies being essential elements (Mitic et al., 2021). Interventions offering emotional peer support can significantly improve social interactions and self-esteem, especially for kids with specific educational difficulties (Van Der Meulen et al., 2021). Viner et al. (2022) underscore the detrimental effects of school closures on children's mental health and well-being, asserting that schools fulfill functions beyond basic education. This highlights the significance of school bonding and belonging, as articulated by Charteris and Page (2021), in promoting favorable developmental outcomes, particularly during challenging periods. The lack of school connection during the pandemic intensified adverse mental health effects, highlighting the necessity to foster a sense of belonging in educational environments.

Examining school bonding is crucial for various reasons. First, understanding how school bonding interacts with attachment and engagement can inform ways to establish supportive environments that increase student well-being. Secondly, as Ramsdal and Wynn (2022) observe, cultivating trustworthy relationships between students and educators is essential for diminishing dropout rates; such connections promote a helpful and engaging academic environment. Institutions that emphasize robust relationships and supportive networks are more adept at fostering student development, enhancing well-being, and improving educational achievements.

Moreover, promoting school bonding needs coordination among educators, parents, and the community, ensuring that students receive the essential support for academic and social success. By emphasizing school bonding and its related advantages, educational institutions can foster resilient and accomplished students, hence creating a more positive and productive learning atmosphere. This study is not merely an academic endeavor; it is an essential measure for comprehending and enhancing the educational experience for all students.

1.4. School Attachment

School attachment denotes a student's emotional bond with their educational institution, including interactions with classmates, general well-being, and a sense of belonging (Kořir et al., 2023). This idea is intricately associated with school belonging and offers substantial insights into students' educational experiences (Van Caudenberg et al.,

2020). Attachment theory provides significant insights into educational achievements, teacher-student interactions, and psychological reactions to problems like the COVID-19 pandemic. Secure attachments facilitate school re-enrollment, offer emotional stability, and foster exploration, hence improving peer connections and social adaptation (Delgado et al., 2022; Ramsdal & Wynn, 2022; Spilt & Koomen, 2022).

Caregiver sensitivity plays a vital role in promoting safe attachment in preschoolers, so laying the groundwork for future relational success (O'Neill et al., 2021; Rolfe, 2020). Adult interventions can bolster attachment stability, resulting in enhanced psychological functioning and elevated prosocial behavior (Mikulincer & R. Shaver, 2020). Attachment theory is pertinent in multiple domains, such as research supervision (Andriopoulou & Prowse, 2020), comprehension of autism spectrum disorder (Giannotti & de Falco, 2021), and fostering resilience amid the COVID-19 epidemic (Rajkumar, 2020).

Prioritizing safe bonds in educational settings cultivates a supportive environment that promotes student growth and well-being. This attachment-oriented methodology empowers educators and caregivers to cultivate supportive environments that foster robust relationships, bolster emotional security, and facilitate academic and social success. Understanding the importance of emotional connections enables stakeholders to enhance student development, promoting success both academically and personally.

Examining school attachment is crucial for various reasons. Initially, it elucidates the influence of emotional connections on educational outcomes and student engagement. Comprehending the mechanics of attachment helps guide the development of initiatives to cultivate supportive relationships between children and educators, essential for promoting a pleasant school environment. Furthermore, considering the obstacles presented by events such as the COVID-19 epidemic, comprehending attachment is increasingly essential for fostering resilience and emotional well-being in students.

Ultimately, the emphasis on school attachment underscores the necessity for a comprehensive approach to education that stresses emotional ties. By cultivating stable attachments, educational institutions can improve student experiences, enhance well-being, and facilitate long-term academic achievement.

1.5. School Engagement

School engagement is a multifaceted notion that includes emotive, cognitive, and behavioral elements (O'Donnell & Reschly, 2020). It encompasses the endorsement of educational values (affective), sustained focus on learning (cognitive), and proactive engagement in school activities (behavioral). Allen, Jamshidi, et al. (2022) define engagement as active participation rather than simple passive attendance. They emphasize that behavioral engagement and a robust sense of identity are essential for fostering a sense of belonging. This active participation cultivates a dedication to the school community, augmenting the individual's sense of belonging and inclusion.

Stout (2023), observes that pupils devoid of interest in their study frequently encounter feelings of alienation and detachment, which appear as boredom and disengagement. This highlights the essential connection between active participation and favorable emotional ties to the educational setting. The results underscore the necessity for treatments that cultivate a feeling of belonging and purpose while tackling the underlying reasons for disengagement.

Multiple factors affect school engagement, such as parental involvement (Yang et al., 2022), teacher-student relationships (Montero-Sieburth & Turcatti, 2022), and psychological well-being (Baker et al., 2021). Pedler et al. (2020) underscore the crucial role of educators in fostering student participation. Effective pedagogical methods and supportive classroom atmospheres are crucial for cultivating a sense of belonging and enhancing active participation. Educational institutions can augment student participation via online monitoring tools (Saracostti et al., 2022) and proactive strategies that incorporate educators and families (Montero-Sieburth & Turcatti, 2022). In higher education, particularly in business and economics, there is an increasing focus on active learning practices to improve engagement (Rajkumar, 2020).

Comprehending and addressing the elements of school engagement enables stakeholders to cultivate environments that improve academic performance and foster the comprehensive development of students. This methodology guarantees that all pupils, irrespective of their background, possess opportunity to thrive in their academic endeavors.

1.6. School Community

The concept of the school community transcends a mere physical space; it embodies a dynamic network of relationships involving students, educators, families, and the

wider community (Kim & Gentle-Genitty, 2020). This connection cultivates a collective sense of belonging and communal accountability for students' academic achievement and welfare. The school community fosters a supportive learning environment, functioning as a collaborative network that extends beyond its physical confines.

Walls et al. (2021) emphasize that school belonging is an essential component of community, positing that a robust sense of belonging is vital for a community's success (Ahn & Davis, 2020b; Zanbar, 2020). The sentiment of connection, frequently articulated as "I belong," is especially crucial in communities that exemplify traditional social structures and community solidarity. Active engagement of community members enriches communal spirit and cultivates a collective identity and purpose, vital for participation in community activities (Allen, Boyle, et al., 2022).

Research highlights the significance of cooperation, involvement, and inclusion in establishing strong school communities. The Community Collaboration Model exhibits beneficial effects on school atmosphere and service accessibility, hence improving the entire educational experience (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022). Carrington et al. (2023) demonstrate that comprehensive solutions for improving school connectedness substantially strengthen community cohesion. Their findings underscore the necessity of evaluating all facets of the school environment—from classroom interactions to overarching school activities—to cultivate a unified community in which all members experience a feeling of belonging and collective purpose.

The school's involvement in cultivating this community is essential. A supportive school community not only strengthens social connections but also alleviates issues such as mistrust and power disparities that may obstruct community involvement (Levin et al., 2021). Patoulioti and Nilholm (2023) observe that talks surrounding "school community" frequently romanticize social cohesion, neglecting the intricacies of diverse school contexts. Comprehending this idealization is essential for analyzing data and executing ways to foster an authentic feeling of community.

In various educational settings, including Thailand, programs that prioritize inclusivity and learner potential significantly contribute to fostering friendship and empathy, thereby establishing a safe atmosphere (Kerdtip &

Angkulwattanakit, 2023; León-Jiménez et al., 2020). By emphasizing community building, schools can markedly improve students' emotional and social development, cultivating a healthy and supportive educational environment. This focus on community enhances the educational experience and provides students with essential social skills for success beyond the classroom.

2. Methods and Materials

This review utilized a systematic methodology to discover pertinent literature. A thorough search conducted from February to March 2025 across four esteemed databases—Web of Science (WOS), ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Google Scholar—employed a combination of keywords ("school belonging," "motivation," "subjective well-being") and their permutations to guarantee extensive coverage. Only publications that directly addressed the fundamental scientific topics behind this review were included:

- **RQ1:** What is the role of school belonging on students' subjective well-being?
- **RQ2:** What is the role of school belonging on students' motivation?

Publications outside this restriction, including those not in English or without a defined emphasis on the stated constructions, were excluded. The selected papers were submitted to a rigorous thematic analysis. This required comprehensive critical reading to discover recurring themes and sub-themes within the selected literature, providing a nuanced knowledge of the linkages among the essential variables being explored. This qualitative approach facilitated the synthesis of diverse outcomes and the identification of key issues for further exploration.

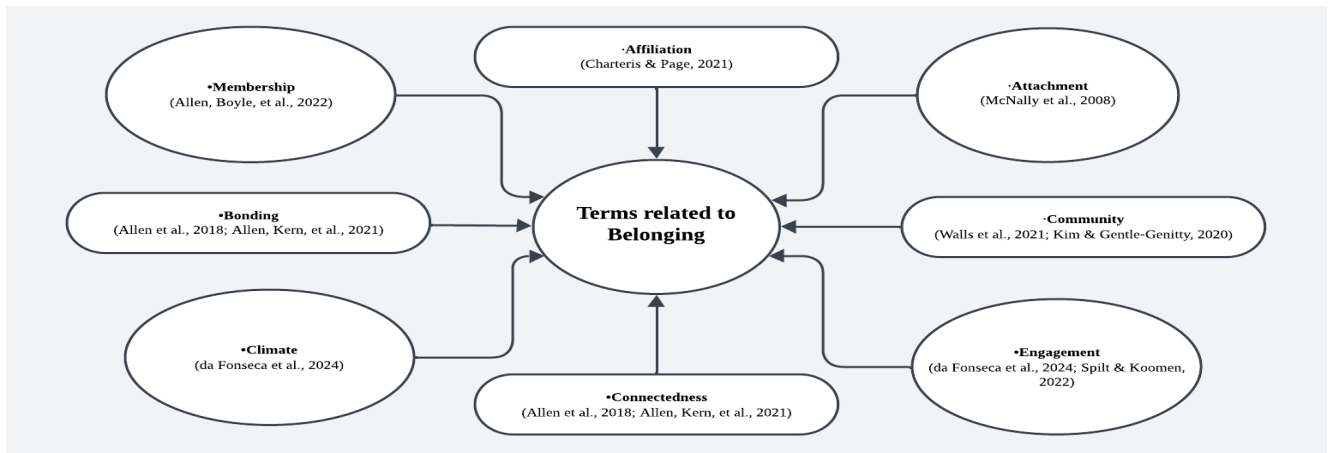
3. Discussions

3.1. School Belonging

A prevalent theme in numerous definitions of belonging is the necessity for interpersonal connections. Belonging indicates an individual's perception of their engagement within a social system or environment. Extensive research indicates that a general sense of belonging is essential for both psychological and physical health over extended periods. Over the years, researchers have proposed multiple definitions of belonging, often using different terms to convey the same overarching concept (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

Terms related to belonging

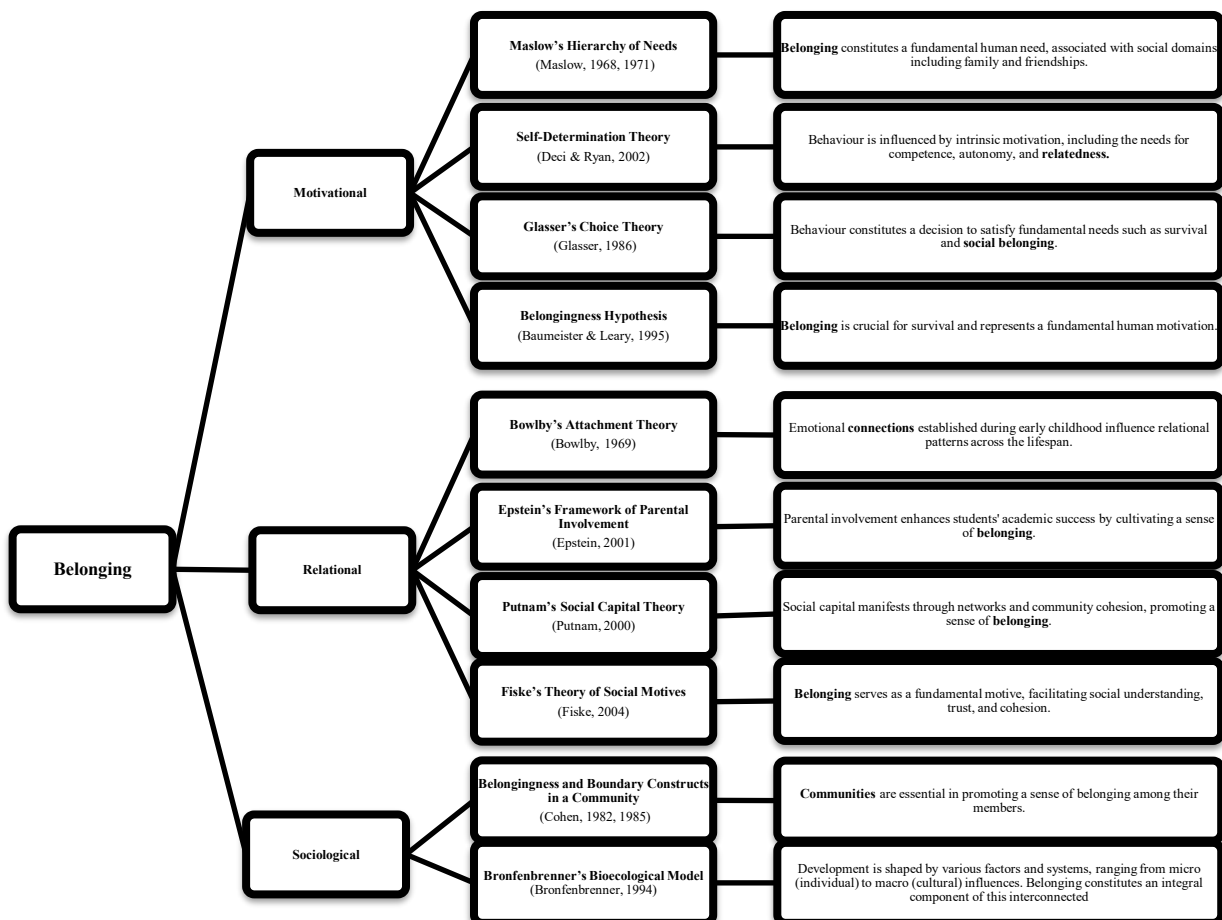


Numerous theories incorporate the notion of belonging. Figure 2 summarizes several theories, highlighting the essence of each theory and its principal components. Many

theories addressing belonging focus on the individual and their quest to satisfy the need for connection.

Figure 2

Belonging's theories and their dimensions



In recent years, school belonging has emerged as a critical predictor of student well-being, academic engagement, and motivation. However, while existing literature has explored its links to classroom climate, peer relationships, and teacher support, less attention has been paid to how psychological traits and motivation interact with school belonging in diverse cultural and educational contexts.

This research examines school belonging via the perspective of two interrelated theoretical frameworks. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a paradigm for comprehending the motivational foundations of school belonging. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) classifies motivation into three categories: autonomous (intrinsic motivation), controlled (extrinsic motivation), and amotivated (absence of motivation) (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The degree of autonomy within the school setting is posited to significantly affect students' sense of belonging and their general involvement in school activities. The notion of subjective well-being (SWB) is utilized to analyze the emotional and cognitive dimensions of school belonging. Subjective well-being (SWB) includes individuals' comprehensive assessments of their lives, comprising cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction, happiness, and emotional experiences (Diener et al., 2002). In this context, school belonging is seen as a crucial factor in students' overall subjective well-being, indicating their evaluations of good experiences and sense of connection within the educational environment. The research examines the impact of varying motivation levels, as delineated by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), on the subjective perception of school belonging, assessed by Subjective Well-Being (SWB) metrics.

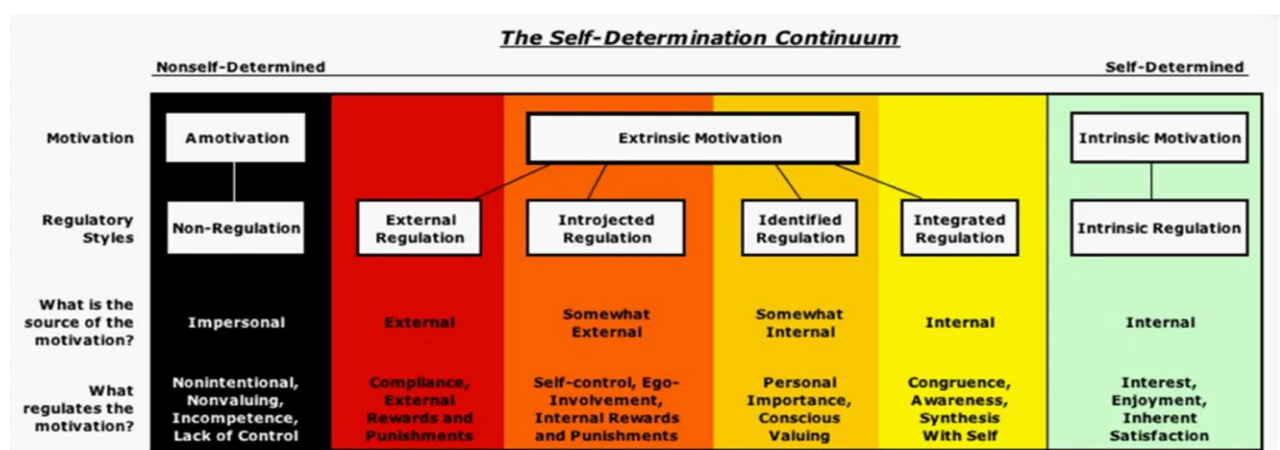
3.2. Self-determination theory (SDT)

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a fundamental psychological paradigm commonly used to understand the role of motivation in human behavior (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). SDT delineates motivation into three categories: autonomous, controlled, and amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002) (see Figure 3). Autonomous motivation is derived from intrinsic drives, in which individuals are driven by personal interest and pleasure, trying to attain individually valued goals while enjoying psychological freedom and volition. Controlled motivation, on the other hand, is frequently motivated by external or internal demands, such as avoiding punishment or societal pressures, resulting in regulation by subjective reasons such as avoiding guilt and shame. Individuals with amotivation lack clear reasons or purposes for their activities and do not comprehend why they participate in specific behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

SDT proposes that a self-determined motivational profile with high autonomous motivation, low controlled motivation, and low amotivation is adaptive. According to SDT, people with a more self-determined motivational profile are more likely to have favorable emotional, cognitive, and behavioral results (Vallerand et al., 1992; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006), positively correlated with physical activity (PA) engagement. As a result, it was predicted that autonomous motivation would correlate positively with higher levels of physical activity (PA) engagement, whereas less self-determined types of motivation, such as regulated and amotivation, would be related with lower levels of PA engagement.

Figure 3

Self-determination theory adopted from Ryan & Deci (2000)



Self-determination theory (SDT) has been widely utilized in educational settings, encompassing physical education and digital learning environments. Studies indicate that autonomous motivation and the fulfilment of fundamental psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) result in favorable educational results (Guay, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vasconcellos et al., 2020). Practices that encourage autonomy by educators and parents enhance need fulfilment and foster autonomous motivation (Guay, 2022). SDT has been employed to forecast academic achievement, motivation for ongoing digital education (Salikhova et al., 2020), physical education and student involvement (White et al., 2021), moral education and well-being (Krettenauer & Curren, 2020). Cross-classified route analysis corroborates the SDT model at the situational, individual, and classroom levels within higher education (Yu & Levesque-Bristol, 2020). This study applied Self-Determination Theory to examine the correlation between school belonging and student motivation, broadening its applicability to the realm of school connection. We propose that promoting students' autonomy and connectedness within the educational setting will nurture autonomous motivation and improve their sense of belonging.

3.3. Subjective well-being

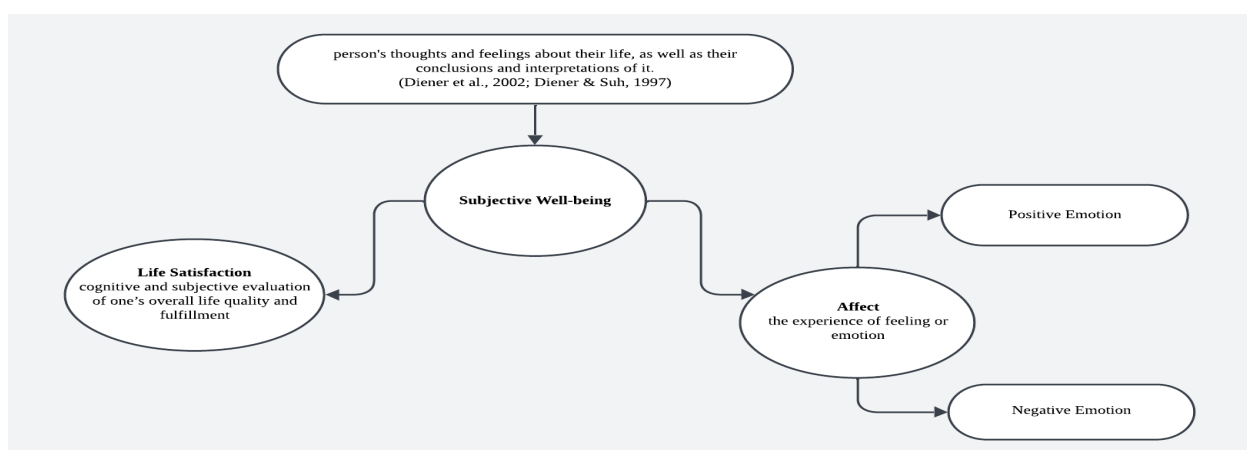
Subjective well-being relates to a person's thoughts and feelings about their life, as well as their conclusions and interpretations of it (Diener et al., 2002; Diener & Suh, 1997). Subjective well-being (SWB), as defined by Diener (1984), includes both affective (positive and negative emotions) and cognitive (life satisfaction) elements (see

Figure 4). Individuals' subjective well-being is hence a manifestation of their emotional experiences and their comprehensive assessment of their circumstances. SWB explicitly denotes individuals' comparative cognitive appraisals of their lives, quantified by global and domain-specific evaluations of life satisfaction or quality of life (Diener, 1984, 1996). These evaluations are based on personally chosen criteria. Although quality of life is frequently used interchangeably with the idea of well-being, it provides only a limited viewpoint and appears to be a facet of well-being rather than an all-encompassing description (Dodge et al., 2022).

Other emotional indicators of SWB include affective evaluations of happiness, or the presence of pleasant affect and the relative absence of unpleasant affect caused by reactions to life events in people's daily lives (Diener, 1996; Diener & Suh, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff et al., 2021). Affect refers to pleasant and unpleasant feelings and emotions, and positive and negative affect should be considered different dimensions rather than opposing ends of the same continuum (Diener & Suh, 1997). These characteristics suggest that SWB is a mix of cognition and affect (positive and negative affect); nevertheless, a major premise of this theory is that these two dimensions may not be equivalent, since high life satisfaction and low pleasant emotions can coexist (Diener & Suh, 1997; Falzarano et al., 2022). Researchers argue that SWB is synonymous with a person's internal experiences, and that the individual is the best judge of whether they are truly feeling well and satisfied, based on their values, goals, and life circumstances (Diener & Suh, 1997; Proctor, 2024).

Figure 4

The Concept of Life Satisfaction in a Subjective Well-Being Framework (Source: Diener, 1984).



Nonetheless, theories of subjective well-being, which emphasize human attitudes towards life events, struggle to quantify levels of well-being and may inadequately represent the intricacies of well-being experiences, including sadness or diminished wants (Van der Deijl & Brouwer, 2021). Cultural and historical contexts shape our comprehension of psychological well-being, suggesting that no theory or assessment of well-being can be entirely culturally neutral (Christopher, 1999). Moreover, objective theories of well-being assert that personal well-being is determined not just by subjective psychological states but also by the individual's overall circumstances, hence challenging the validity of the subjective perspective (Ferkany, 2012). Furthermore, research on subjective well-being has faced criticism for its inadequate theoretical basis and ethical simplicity, leading to calls for a more robust theory that integrates philosophical, psychological, and economic perspectives for policy implementation (Fabian, 2022). Additionally, conventional well-being theories, including hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, are reflected in philosophical and spiritual traditions, the latter highlighting the need to align with one's authentic self (Pallavi, 2018). Ultimately, psychological well-being is characterized as a combination of emotional wellness and effective functioning, acknowledging that the regulation of negative emotions is essential for sustained well-being (Saini, 2014). This study used subjective well-being (SWB) to assess the emotional and cognitive aspects of school belonging, drawing on known SWB models that include life satisfaction, positive affect, and the lack of negative affect. We investigate the impact of students' feeling of belonging on their total subjective well-being, which encompasses their cognitive and emotional assessments of their educational experience.

3.4. *What is the role of school belonging on students' subjective well-being?*

A strong sense of school belonging significantly contributes to the enhancement of students' subjective well-being, including life satisfaction, good emotions, and general mental health. Research repeatedly indicates that adolescents who perceive acceptance, inclusion, and value within the school environment report enhanced well-being and life satisfaction, alongside a reduction in emotional and behavioral issues. School belonging is increasingly seen as a crucial element of students' subjective well-being (SWB), which includes their self-reported happiness, life satisfaction, and emotional health. The notion of subjective

well-being (SWB) is fundamentally subjective, depending on human assessments of feelings and living situations rather than objective measures (Das et al., 2020; Villanueva et al., 2022). This subjective assessment is vital in education, since students who perceive a sense of belonging in their school environment are more inclined to report elevated levels of contentment and satisfaction. This connection is important, as well-being has traditionally been associated with the health of both communities and people (Marques et al., 2021).

The connection between school membership and subjective well-being is complex and shaped by numerous socio-psychological factors. Positive teacher-student connections and strong family support are essential in influencing students' emotional development (Bjorklund Jr et al., 2021; Hoferichter et al., 2021). School belonging serves as a mediator that enhances the beneficial impacts of familial support, aiding kids in managing the difficulties of adolescence (Arslan et al., 2022).

This association is supported by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which identifies relatedness—the need to feel connected to others—as a key driver of well-being. School belonging fulfills this need by fostering emotional bonds within the school environment, enhancing students' subjective well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Studies have shown that satisfying relatedness needs promotes positive affect, life satisfaction, and resilience in academic contexts (Guay, 2022; Niemiec et al., 2009). Thus, school belonging is a social-emotional and psychological foundation for student well-being.

Furthermore, the effect of school belonging transcends emotional well-being, affecting essential academic results. Research repeatedly indicates that students possessing a robust sense of belonging exhibit greater engagement in school activities, which corresponds positively with academic success (Putwain et al., 2020). School belonging mediates the association between experiences like bullying and subjective well-being, suggesting that cultivating a feeling of community helps alleviate adverse experiences (Xu & Fang, 2021). This underscores the pressing necessity for educational institutions to adopt inclusive practices that foster a welcoming environment for all students, especially those from underprivileged communities.

Nonetheless, although the positive association between school belonging and subjective well-being is well-established, it is crucial to critically analyze the systemic variables that may impede the cultivation of this sense of belonging. Factors such as school atmosphere, educator

biases, and social inequities might establish obstacles that hinder students from feeling assimilated into their educational settings. Students subjected to prejudice or exclusion based on race, gender, or socioeconomic position may find it challenging to cultivate a feeling of belonging, thus affecting their overall well-being. This necessitates a more sophisticated comprehension of belonging that transcends personal experiences and takes into account the wider institutional and cultural frameworks.

In conclusion, the significance of school belonging in augmenting students' subjective well-being is substantial and complex. It functions as both a mediator between supportive connections and emotional well-being, as well as a predictor of academic achievement and social adaptation. To maximize the advantages of school belonging, educational institutions must implement holistic programs that emphasize diversity, emotional support, and community engagement. By doing so, teachers can cultivate enriched environments that enhance students' subjective well-being and equip them for successful futures. Addressing the intricacies of belonging necessitates a commitment to systemic change in educational frameworks, guaranteeing that all students can prosper emotionally, socially, and academically.

3.5. *What is the role of school belonging on students' motivation?*

School belonging is a crucial element that markedly increases students' motivation by cultivating sentiments of acceptance, inclusion, and value within the educational setting. Motivation is defined as the psychological impetus that drives individuals to attain desired objectives (Motevalli et al., 2020; Reeve, 2024). This inherent motivation is essential for students as it affects their readiness to participate in learning and their perseverance in their endeavors. Rapiudin (2019) asserts that motivation is a crucial component of the learning process, serving as the catalyst for action. Meta-analytic and longitudinal studies consistently demonstrate that a robust sense of belonging correlates positively with several motivational outcomes, including mastery goal orientation, academic self-confidence, appreciation for schooling, and general engagement in learning activities (Korpershoek et al., 2020; Pedler et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2024).

The theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is crucial for comprehending the impact of school belonging on student motivation. Self-Determination Theory asserts that the satisfaction of fundamental

psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—augments intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students that perceive a sense of belonging are more inclined to have their needs fulfilled, thereby enhancing self-motivation and involvement in academic endeavors (Guay, 2022). Besides, Chiu (2022) emphasizes that when students view themselves as competent, autonomous, and engaged with their peers and educators, their motivation escalates. This is especially pertinent in educational environments because supportive pedagogical methods foster a nurturing culture that promotes autonomy. The use of Self-Determination Theory in diverse settings, such as hospital schools and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores its extensive applicability in bolstering student motivation, especially for those encountering distinct problems (Chiu, 2022; Mombaers & Donche, 2020).

Furthermore, research emphasizes the essential connection among school belonging, teacher support, and academic drive. Research demonstrates that kids with a robust affiliation to their school and sufficient support from educators exhibit heightened motivation to participate in their studies and attain academic achievement (Bureau et al., 2022; Korpershoek et al., 2020). This association underscores the need of fostering a friendly and inclusive educational atmosphere. Bureau et al. (2022) and Ma (2021) assert that augmenting teacher autonomy is crucial for addressing students' psychological needs, hence promoting self-determined motivation and resilience. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory offers an extensive framework for comprehending how belonging is influenced by interactions within the educational milieu, encompassing familial, peer, and institutional elements (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). The caliber of teacher-student connections and proficient communication methods substantially enhance student motivation and involvement in the classroom (Meng, 2021; Xue et al., 2022; Zheng, 2021).

In conclusion, school membership significantly influences students' motivation through a complex interaction of psychological requirements, support networks, and environmental factors. It augments students' intrinsic motivation by cultivating a sense of community, acceptance, and support within the educational environment. As educational institutions endeavor to enhance student results, it is essential to prioritize the development of belonging and supporting relationships. The relationship between school belonging and motivation underscores the necessity for systemic reforms that foster inclusive and supportive

environments, enabling all children to excel academically and personally.

4. Conclusion

This article examined the crucial functions of school belonging in improving students' subjective well-being (RQ1) and motivation (RQ2). The results indicate that a robust sense of belonging markedly enhances students' well-being, resulting in increased life satisfaction and better mental health. Furthermore, a sense of belonging in school acts as a vital motivator, cultivating an atmosphere in which students feel welcomed and esteemed, so augmenting their intrinsic drive and involvement in academic pursuits. The relationship among emotional support, self-efficacy, and academic success highlights the necessity for educational institutions to emphasize inclusive behaviors that foster a sense of belonging. By concentrating on these factors, educational institutions can significantly improve students' psychological well-being and motivation, leading to enhanced academic performance and personal growth. This research offers significant insights for formulating comprehensive strategies to cultivate supportive educational settings that enhance holistic student development.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

Not applicable.

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