

ABSTRACT  
STUDENT VOICE: PERCEPTIONS OF SENSE OF BELONGING AND INVOLVEMENT  
AMONG MINORITIZED PRELICENSURE  
NURSING STUDENTS

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Holistic review is working to increase the diversity of nursing programs. Despite these efforts, underrepresented student groups face higher attrition rates compared to their White, middle-class peers. Limited research explores sense of belonging and likelihood of involvement from the perceptions of students with underrepresented social identities once enrolled within historically predominantly White institutions that implement holistic review admissions processes. This study aimed to explore sense of belonging and likelihood of involvement among ethnically and culturally underrepresented nursing students enrolled in historically White institutions.

An exploratory sequential mixed methods design was used. A survey assessed levels of sense of belonging and likelihood of involvement within the college environment, followed by ten semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences. Quantitative findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between sense of belonging and likelihood of involvement, suggesting that higher levels of belonging were associated with greater engagement outside of required coursework. A weak positive correlation was found between sense of belonging and household income, while no significant relationships were observed with other variables like age or self-reported GPA. Qualitative findings offered deeper insights into students' lived experiences, revealing that internal self-perceptions and external college environment influences, such as inclusivity, representation, and faculty support, were critical in shaping sense of belonging. Themes like "Participant as Environment" and "Expectations and Interpretations of the College Environment" illustrated how these factors affected students' experiences. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data emphasized that personal narratives provided crucial context, particularly regarding factors like age and ethnicity, which were not statistically significant in quantitative analysis but had nuanced impacts on sense of belonging and likelihood of involvement in qualitative findings.

This study underscores the critical role of inclusivity, representation, and intentional outreach in encouraging a sense of belonging and likelihood of involvement among underrepresented nursing students at historically White institutions. While more research is needed, findings suggest that promoting these constructs benefits all students and supports student engagement, retention, and academic success. Future research is needed to explore the long-term effects of such support, the impact of faculty development programs, and the broader implications for nursing education.