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## Abstract

LGBT individuals experience significantly higher rates of suicidality, particularly among transgender populations. While past research mainly highlights discrimination and minority stress, less is known about the internal experience of thwarted belongingness: a profound sense of social isolation. This systematic review critically examines seven recent studies (2019–2024) to identify inconsistencies in defining and measuring belongingness. Findings reveal notable variability in measurement methods and conceptual definitions. The review highlights the urgent need for standardized definitions of belongingness and underscores its critical role in suicide prevention interventions at family, community, and policy levels.

## Introduction

**Problem:** LGBT individuals, especially transgender youth, face disproportionately high suicide risk.

**Previous Research:** Mostly focused on external factors (discrimination, victimization, minority stress).

**Research Gap:** Limited focus on internal experiences, specifically **thwarted belongingness**: a deep sense of social isolation.

**This Study:** Critically analyzes seven recent studies (2019-2024) to identify: Inconsistencies in how **belongingness** is defined and measured.

•**Key gaps:** *lack of standardized definitions and insufficient attention to conditions influencing belongingness.*

## Methods

**Approach:** Systematic review using EBSCOhost's Academic Search Complete.

**Search Terms:** "LGBT\*", "suicid\*", and "belonging\*".

**Time Frame:** Peer-reviewed studies published between **2019-2024**.

**Study Selection:** **Initial Yield:** 20 articles **Final Selection:** 7 studies met inclusion criteria

**Analysis Focus:** Definitions and measurements of belongingness

- Framing of belongingness in suicide risk models
- Key statistical relationships

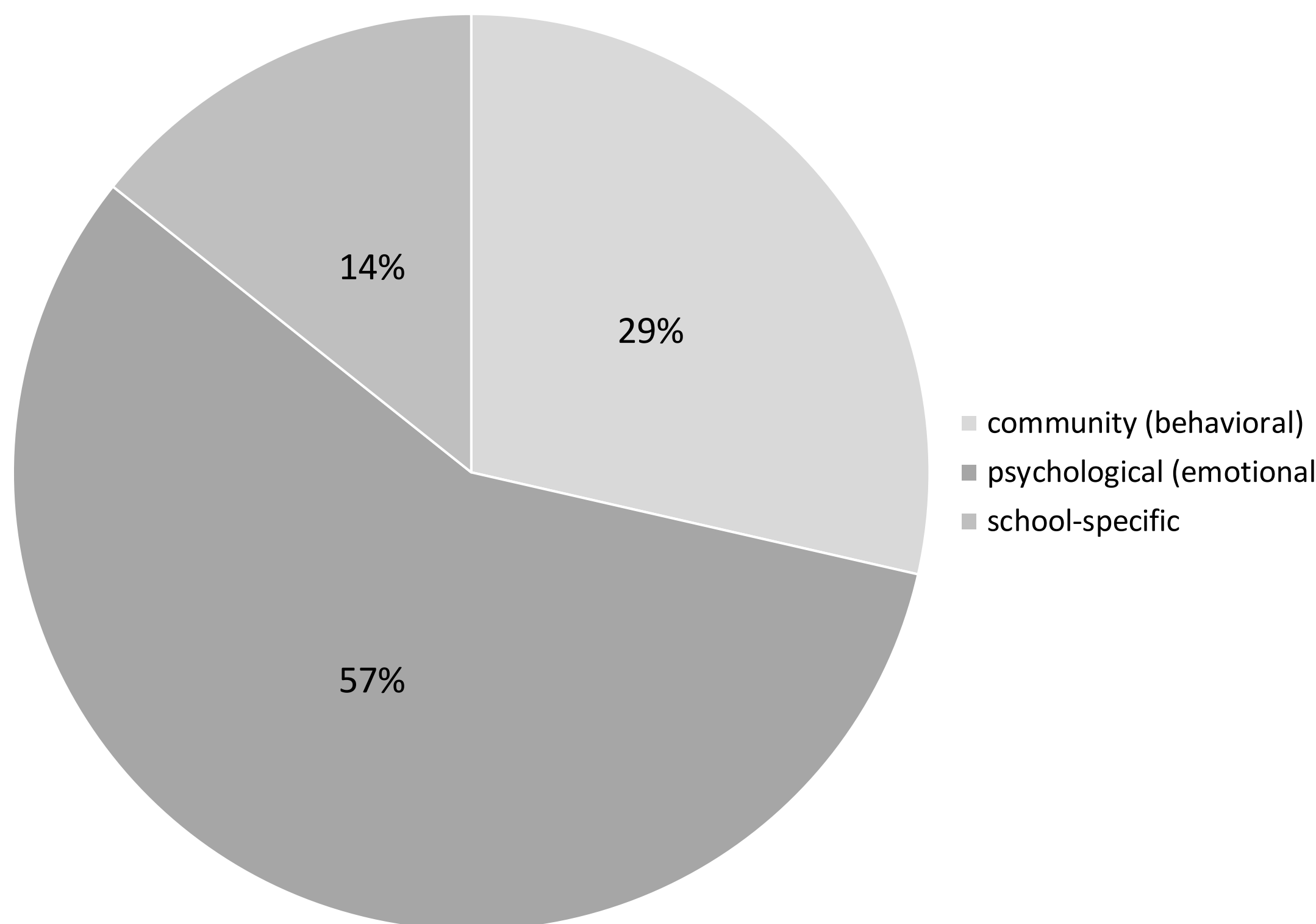
## Discussion

This review highlights the critical role of psychological and emotional belongingness in protecting against LGBT suicidality, distinguishing it from mere behavioral participation. Findings indicate that deep social connection, feeling genuinely accepted and valued, is essential in reducing suicide risk. Given current socio-political pressures, fostering genuine belonging through inclusive environments at schools, workplaces, and communities is crucial.

Future interventions should adopt tailored approaches, emphasizing psychological belongingness rather than superficial participation. Additionally, applying Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide through an LGBT-specific lens and considering intersectionality can further enhance intervention effectiveness. Limitations include variability in how belongingness was measured, limited sample diversity, and grouping of LGBT subpopulations. Future studies should examine distinct subgroup experiences and develop standardized measures of psychological belongingness to better guide suicide prevention strategies.

## Results

How Studies Measured Belonging



Belongingness Conceptualized in Three Ways:

- Community (Behavioral) (2 studies): participation in LGBT events/groups.
- Psychological (Emotional) (4 studies): feeling deeply accepted, valued.
- School-specific (1 study): feeling included, respected at school.

Key Findings:

- Psychological/emotional belonging consistently showed strong, significant protective effects against suicidality.
- Behavioral/community connectedness showed weak or nonsignificant associations with suicidality.
- School-specific belonging strongly and significantly protected against suicidality among youth.

Overall Insight:

- Meaningful protection from suicidality comes from deeper emotional connection, not just community participation.

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