

# Gender Equity In Healthcare: Integrating Emotional Intelligence To Achieve The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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## Abstract

Globally, there is still a challenge in addressing gender discrepancies and ensuring that all genders have equal access to high-quality healthcare. To attain gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN), especially SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), this article addresses the significance of incorporating emotional intelligence (EI) into healthcare procedures. EI helps create an inclusive healthcare environment, improve communication, and break down barriers based on gender. Integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) training into organisational policy and healthcare education, as well as equipping healthcare personnel to regulate emotions effectively, lessen bias, and enhance interpersonal relationships, are important areas of attention. By promoting better patient outcomes and chances for professional development, Emotional Intelligence (EI) enhances well-being across genders.

To achieve the UN SDGs, this article promotes a methodical approach to integrating EI into healthcare programmes. Empathy, communication, and inclusive behaviours are some of the ways that Emotional Intelligence (EI) may help with the particular health demands and difficulties that differing genders encounter. Healthcare workers' education and training, organisational and policies, continuous research and assessment, and community involvement are examples of practical approaches for incorporating EI. In addition to enhancing individual health outcomes, this holistic approach advances the more general objectives of global health fairness and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Gender Equity, Healthcare, Nursing, Emotional Intelligence, EI; United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG, SDG3, SDG5

## Introduction

Globally, achieving gender parity in healthcare is still a major problem that calls for a multipronged strategy to remove structural inequities and guarantee that both genders have fair access to high-quality medical treatment. A worldwide framework for accomplishing these goals is provided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, especially SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) [9]. Including emotional intelligence (EI) in medical procedures is a promising way to improve patient outcomes, promote gender parity, and create a more welcoming hospital environment [8].

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN and guaranteeing equitable access to healthcare services for all people depend on gender equity in the healthcare system. Disparities in healthcare outcomes and access have been brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic, which mostly affects marginalised groups including women, racial/ethnic minorities, and sexual and gender minorities [25]. These differences highlight the necessity of incorporating gender equity into healthcare systems to meet the requirements of various population groups [14].

According to research, advancing gender equality in healthcare entails giving men and women equal access to opportunities and resources and customising healthcare services to each person's unique requirements in order to guarantee justice in health outcomes [20]. Beyond workforce planning and development, gender equality in healthcare systems entails fostering inclusive work cultures that encourage women in leadership positions and address salary disparities in the healthcare industry [21]. Evidence-based approaches are still required to direct healthcare organisations on successful gender equity practices, although considerable advances [21]. To advance equality, balance power dynamics, and offer healthcare workers equitable chances, gender-transformative techniques are crucial [30]. Gender equity in health systems must be advanced by addressing the challenges transgender people have in accessing healthcare [30]. Furthermore, fostering equality in healthcare requires acknowledging the interconnectedness of gender with other socioeconomic determinants of health, such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation [13]. To guarantee that there is a sufficient representation of women in positions of decision-making within

healthcare organisations, efforts to improve gender parity in healthcare leadership are necessary [29].

Healthcare systems may foster more varied and inclusive cultures that facilitate women's development in the profession by tackling the obstacles that stand in the way of gender parity for female healthcare academics and researchers [19]. More gender parity in parenting and family health outcomes can also be achieved by encouraging active fatherhood and shared parenting duties [5]. To achieve gender equity, these systemic problems must be addressed by education, regulatory modifications, and the encouragement of inclusive behaviours in healthcare facilities. This attempt heavily relies on emotional intelligence, which is the capacity to identify, comprehend, and regulate both our own and other people's emotions.

### **The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Healthcare**

Healthcare practitioners' general well-being, relationships at work, and patient care are all impacted by emotional intelligence [8]. Healthcare professionals who operate in complex and emotionally charged environments need to be able to recognise, understand, and control their emotions [4]. Better understanding of patients' needs and views by healthcare personnel can result in better management practices and better patient outcomes [4,8]. Research has demonstrated a robust association between emotional intelligence and lower rates of burnout in the medical field [24]. Healthcare workers may better manage stress at work, control their emotions, and have improved job satisfaction levels by developing their emotional intelligence [15].

To equip aspiring medical professionals to handle the emotional intricacies of patient care, emotional intelligence training must be incorporated into healthcare curricula [2]. Academic establishments have the capacity to provide learners with the proficiencies requisite for emotion regulation, compassionate communication with patients, and proficient cooperation with interdisciplinary groups (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021). Establishing a supportive and emotionally intelligent work environment requires cultivating a culture that promotes candid conversations about emotions [16].

In addition to helping healthcare professionals individually, emotional intelligence also greatly improves organisational results and patient care quality [17]. Studies have indicated a correlation between elevated levels of emotional intelligence and heightened levels of occupational engagement and satisfaction [6]. Collaboration, communication, and general well-being may be given priority in a more cohesive and encouraging work environment that can be achieved by fostering emotional intelligence among healthcare teams (de Silva, 2022).

Emotional intelligence is a crucial quality for leaders in the healthcare industry as it aids in efficient decision-making, handling of conflicts, and team leadership [11]. According to Fuentes et al. (2018), leaders possessing strong emotional intelligence can inspire and encourage their colleagues, cultivate a healthy work culture, and propel

organisational success. Healthcare leaders who prioritise the development of their emotional intelligence abilities foster a culture of leadership that prioritises understanding, empathy, and effective communication [7].

### **Patient-centered care and empathy**

A key component of healthcare is empathy, especially when it comes to promoting patient-centered treatment, which considers each patient's unique requirements, preferences, and beliefs [28]. Healthcare professionals may provide individualised treatment by incorporating empathy into clinical practice. This allows them to better comprehend the unique health issues and social circumstances of patients from a variety of gender backgrounds [28]. Empathy is crucial when tackling gender differences in healthcare, especially for female patients who could feel ignored or devalued by medical professionals, according to research [22]. Healthcare practitioners may improve the quality of care that female patients get by fostering empathy in clinical encounters and creating a supportive, understanding atmosphere that respects the experiences and concerns of female patients [12].

Culturally competent healthcare services are difficult for transgender and gender varied people to receive, which highlights the need of empathy and understanding while caring for a diverse patient group [10]. Healthcare professionals may close gaps in treatment and advance equitable health outcomes for all patients—regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation—by cultivating an atmosphere that prioritises inclusion, acceptance, and cultural competency [23,32].

### **Building Trust and Facilitating Communication**

Effective communication is essential in the healthcare industry to build trust between patients and providers, especially when it comes to addressing the historical and current mistrust that some gender groups, like women and transgender people, have towards the healthcare system [4]. In order to bridge these gaps and motivate patients to seek and follow medical advice and treatment, emotional intelligence (EI) is necessary for promoting polite, respectful, and empathic communication [1,15,24].

By addressing the unique requirements of transgender patients and lowering emotions of prejudice and alienation, EI training for healthcare professionals can improve their capacity to interact with transgender patients in a courteous and knowledgeable manner [6].

Research has demonstrated a favourable association between emotional intelligence and proficient communication abilities among healthcare personnel, resulting in enhanced patient-provider relationships and superior health consequences. Healthcare professionals may negotiate challenging patient interactions, show empathy, and establish trustworthy relationships—all essential for providing patient-centred care—by honing their emotional intelligence abilities. Developing a culture of empathy, comprehension, and effective communication among healthcare

professionals can improve patient satisfaction and the general standard of treatment [6]. This can be achieved by providing them with emotional intelligence training.

### **Integrating Emotional Intelligence to Achieve the SDGs**

The integration of emotional intelligence into healthcare practices aligns with several SDGs, particularly SDG 3 and SDG 5. Here is how: Integrating emotional intelligence (EI) into healthcare practices aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The incorporation of EI can have a significant impact on achieving these goals:

#### **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being**

1. Improving Patient Outcomes: EI contributes to better patient-provider relationships, leading to higher patient satisfaction and improved adherence to treatment plans. When patients feel understood and valued, they are more likely to follow medical advice, resulting in better health outcomes [18].

2. Reducing Health Disparities: EI helps address the specific health needs of different genders, reducing disparities in healthcare access and outcomes. By fostering empathy and understanding, healthcare providers can tailor care to meet the unique needs of diverse patient populations, contributing to the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all [3].

#### **SDG 5: Gender Equality**

1. Promoting Gender-Sensitive Care: EI training raises awareness among healthcare providers about gender biases and stereotypes that may affect patient care. By fostering gender-sensitive practices and policies, EI can help reduce discrimination and promote equality within healthcare institutions [26].

2. Empowering Women and Gender Minorities: Through the cultivation of an inclusive and respectful healthcare environment, EI empowers women and gender minorities to actively participate in their healthcare decisions. By enhancing autonomy and well-being, EI aligns with the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls [31].

By integrating emotional intelligence into healthcare practices, healthcare systems can create a more empathetic, inclusive, and patient-centred environment that supports the well-being of individuals from diverse gender backgrounds. This approach not only enhances patient outcomes and reduces disparities but also contributes to the broader goals of promoting gender equality and ensuring good health and well-being for all individuals.

### **Practical Strategies for Integrating Emotional Intelligence**

The following references can be utilised to support the strategies for integrating emotional intelligence into healthcare and advancing gender equity:

- Başoğul & Özgür (2016) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies among

nurses, providing insights into how emotional intelligence can influence workplace dynamics and interactions.

- Năstasă & Fărcăș (2015) delved into the impact of emotional intelligence on burnout among healthcare professionals, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence training in mitigating burnout and enhancing well-being.

- Cao et al. (2022) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, job burnout, and workplace violence among healthcare workers, offering valuable insights into the role of emotional intelligence in promoting well-being and reducing burnout.

- Al-Hamdan et al. (2021) focused on the connection between emotional intelligence and nurse-nurse collaboration, emphasising the significance of emotional intelligence in fostering effective teamwork and communication within healthcare settings.

- Carragher & Gormley (2016) discussed the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership within nursing and midwifery, providing insights into how emotional intelligence can enhance leadership effectiveness and promote positive organizational cultures.

- [27] Reis da Silva and Mitchell (2024) focused on the use of service-users in simulation and how this could be effective in the increase of empathy, communication, and teamwork for the student nurses.

These studies provide valuable insights into the role of emotional intelligence in healthcare settings, emphasizing its impact on various aspects such as conflict management, burnout, collaboration, and leadership. By incorporating findings from these studies, healthcare organizations can develop effective strategies for integrating emotional intelligence to promote gender equity and enhance patient care outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Emotional intelligence is a crucial aspect of healthcare practice that influences patient care, provider well-being, and organisational effectiveness. It plays a crucial role in addressing gender disparities, promoting inclusivity, and enhancing healthcare experiences for diverse patient populations. By prioritizing empathy in clinical practice and fostering a culture of understanding and respect within healthcare settings, providers can create a more compassionate and equitable healthcare environment. Emotional intelligence training and fostering empathetic communication skills among healthcare providers can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that promotes trust, understanding, and positive health outcomes for all patients. This holistic approach not only contributes to individual well-being but also supports the broader goals of sustainable development and global health equity. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into healthcare practices is essential for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and promoting gender equity in healthcare.

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