

# Approaches to Promote Health Equity and Address Health Disparities in Nursing Research

Viktoria Ebner\*

Department of Educational Sciences, Private University College of Teacher Education Augustinum, Austria

## Abstract

Promoting health equity and addressing health disparities are pivotal objectives in nursing research aimed at improving health outcomes for diverse populations. This article reviews various approaches that nursing researchers can employ to advance these goals. Key methodologies include Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), which fosters collaboration with communities to address their specific health needs; disparities-focused research, which identifies and targets health inequalities through data-driven analysis; implementation science, which bridges the gap between research and practice to ensure the effective adoption of evidence-based interventions; culturally competent care research, which tailors care to meet the cultural needs of patients; and intersectional research, which examines how multiple social identities intersect to impact health outcomes. Each approach offers unique benefits and addresses distinct aspects of health disparities. The article also discusses associated challenges, including ethical considerations, data collection issues, and resource constraints, and proposes future directions for enhancing research and practice in these areas. By leveraging these methodologies, nursing research can contribute significantly to reducing health disparities and promoting equity in healthcare.

**Keywords:** Health Equity; Health Disparities; Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR); Culturally Competent Care; Intersectional Analysis

## Introduction

Health equity is a fundamental principle in nursing research, emphasizing the need for fairness and justice in healthcare delivery and outcomes. Despite ongoing efforts, significant health disparities persist among different population groups, influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Addressing these disparities is essential for ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their highest possible level of health [1]. Nursing research plays a pivotal role in identifying the underlying causes of health disparities and developing strategies to promote equity in healthcare. This article explores various approaches that nursing researchers can utilize to advance health equity and mitigate health disparities. These approaches include Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), which engages communities in the research process to ensure that interventions are culturally relevant and effective; disparities-focused research, which aims to uncover and address the root causes of health inequalities through rigorous data analysis; and implementation science, which seeks to bridge the gap between research findings and practical application in healthcare settings [2]. Additionally, culturally competent care research and intersectional analysis are crucial for understanding and addressing the diverse needs of patient populations. Each of these methodologies offers unique insights and solutions for promoting health equity. However, they also present challenges, such as ensuring ethical practices, addressing data collection limitations, and securing adequate resources. By examining these approaches, the article aims to highlight effective strategies for reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes across diverse populations [3]. Ultimately, advancing health equity requires a concerted effort from researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to implement evidence-based interventions and foster inclusive, equitable healthcare systems. Health equity and the reduction of health disparities are fundamental goals in nursing research and practice. Despite advances in healthcare, significant disparities persist among different population groups, often influenced by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, and geographic location [4]. Nursing research plays

a crucial role in identifying and addressing these disparities, ensuring that all individuals have access to high-quality care and achieve optimal health outcomes. This article explores various approaches to promoting health equity and reducing health disparities through nursing research, emphasizing strategies, methodologies, and best practices.

## Understanding health equity and health disparities

**Health Equity:** Health equity refers to the principle of fairness in health, ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to attain their highest level of health. It involves addressing the social determinants of health that contribute to unequal health outcomes and working towards the elimination of barriers to accessing care [5].

**Health Disparities:** Health disparities are differences in health outcomes and access to care between different population groups. These disparities can be influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Addressing these disparities requires targeted research and interventions designed to understand and mitigate their causes.

## Approaches to promoting health equity in nursing research

### Community-based participatory research (CBPR)

**Definition:** CBPR is a collaborative research approach that involves community members as active participants in the research process. This methodology ensures that research is relevant and responsive to

**\*Corresponding author:** Viktoria Ebner, Department of Educational Sciences, Private University College of Teacher Education Augustinum, Austria, E-mail: viktoriaebner@gmail.com

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the needs of the community. In nursing research, CBPR can be used to develop and implement interventions that are culturally appropriate and address specific health needs identified by the community [6]. By involving community members in all stages of research, from design to dissemination, researchers can ensure that their findings are applicable and beneficial. CBPR fosters trust and collaboration between researchers and communities, leading to more effective and sustainable health interventions. It also empowers communities by involving them in the decision-making process and addressing their unique health challenges.

### Disparities-focused research

**Definition:** Disparities-focused research specifically aims to identify, understand, and address health disparities. This approach involves analyzing data to uncover patterns of inequality and developing targeted interventions to address these disparities. Nursing researchers can use disparities-focused research to examine differences in health outcomes among various population groups, such as differences in chronic disease management or access to preventive services [7]. This research can inform the development of policies and programs designed to reduce disparities.

**Benefits:** By focusing on health disparities, researchers can highlight areas where interventions are needed most and contribute to evidence-based solutions that address the root causes of inequality.

### Implementation Science

**Definition:** Implementation science studies the methods and strategies used to promote the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices into real-world settings. This field aims to bridge the gap between research and practice.

**Application:** In nursing research, implementation science can be used to evaluate and improve the uptake of interventions designed to promote health equity [8]. For example, researchers might study how best to implement a new screening tool for underserved populations or assess the effectiveness of training programs for healthcare providers on cultural competence. Implementation science helps ensure that research findings are translated into practical, actionable strategies that can be adopted by healthcare systems and providers, ultimately improving health outcomes and reducing disparities.

### Culturally competent care research

**Definition:** Culturally competent care research focuses on understanding and addressing the cultural factors that influence health behaviors and outcomes. This approach emphasizes the importance of providing care that respects and responds to the cultural beliefs and practices of patients [9]. Nursing researchers can investigate how cultural competence impacts patient-provider interactions, treatment adherence, and health outcomes. Studies might explore effective strategies for training healthcare providers in cultural competence or assess the impact of culturally tailored interventions. Culturally competent care research promotes more effective and respectful interactions between patients and providers, leading to improved patient satisfaction and health outcomes. It also helps to reduce barriers to care and address disparities rooted in cultural misunderstandings.

### Intersectionality in research

**Definition:** Intersectionality is a framework that examines how

various social identities, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability, intersect and impact individuals' experiences and health outcomes.

**Application:** Nursing research using an intersectional approach can explore how multiple factors contribute to health disparities and identify more nuanced and effective interventions. For instance, research might examine how race and socioeconomic status interact to affect access to mental health services [10]. Intersectional research provides a comprehensive understanding of how different factors combine to influence health outcomes. This approach allows for more targeted and effective interventions that address the complex realities of individuals' lives.

### Conclusion

Promoting health equity and addressing health disparities are critical goals in nursing research. By employing a range of approaches, including community-based participatory research, disparities-focused research, implementation science, culturally competent care research, and intersectionality, researchers can contribute to meaningful improvements in health outcomes. These methodologies help to identify and address the root causes of disparities, ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to achieve optimal health. Continued commitment to these approaches and addressing associated challenges will advance the field of nursing research and support the development of more equitable healthcare systems.

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### Conflict of Interest

None

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