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Increasing Hospital Performance and Cost Management: A Systematic Approach Review and Meta-Analysis Study

Adel Ahmed Alfayez[1*], Omar Saud Almutair[2], Raif Mohamed Nassir[3], Saad Marzouq Algethami[4], Renad Abdulaziz Almutawa[5], Abdulrahman Mohamed Nasser[6]

1. Department of Pediatric Surgery, Prince Sultan Military Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
2. Department of Orthopedic surgery, Prince Sultan Military Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
3. Department of Pediatric Surgery, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Medical City, Madinah, Saudi Arabia
4. Health Administration specialist, Ministry of Defense, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
5. Department of Internal Medicine, King Fahad Medical City, Riyad, Saudi Arabia
6. Department of Internal Medicine, Prince Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital, Madinah, Saudi Arabia

*Correspondence: *Adel Ahmed Alfayez Institution: Department Of Pediatric Surgery, Prince Sultan Military Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

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Abstract

Introduction: *Enhancing hospital efficiency while managing costs demands collaborative efforts and strategic interventions. This research evaluates existing evidence to identify effective strategies for improving operational performance without compromising patient care quality.*

Methods: *A systematic review and meta-analysis were conducted following PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Studies published between 2015 and 2024 were extracted from PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, yielding 400 records. After screening, 30 high-quality studies were included. Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29.0) to calculate pooled odds ratios (OR = 0.25, 95% CI: 1.22 –1.27, $p < 0.0001$).*

Results: *The study found a number of ways to lower costs, including telemedicine (25%), Plan-Do-Study -Act cycles (35%), lean management (20%), digital workflows (22%), EHR systems (28%), and automation tools (25%). Subgroup analysis showed smaller hospitals benefited most from telemedicine, while larger hospitals gained from digital solutions. Heterogeneity was moderate (I^2 = 43.45%), with variations based on hospital size and geographic location.*

Conclusion: *This research underscores the transformative potential of evidence-based interventions in op-*

timizing hospital efficiency. By integrating strategies like telemedicine and process improvement cycles, hospitals can achieve sustainable cost management and better patient outcomes. Policymakers should prioritize ongoing evaluations to adapt strategies to evolving healthcare demands.

Keywords: Hospital efficiency; Cost-effectiveness; Quality of care; Healthcare programs.

Introduction

Global healthcare systems face persistent challenges in controlling costs while maintaining care quality. Hospitals, as critical components of these systems, often encounter financial pressures alongside increasing service demands. Studies show a two-way link between care quality and financial stability. Institutions that are financially stable invest in new technologies and skilled workers, and high-quality care can improve financial performance by making patients happier and improving outcomes [1].

The point of this study is to look closely at strategies that have been shown to improve hospital efficiency and cost management. It will do this by looking at problems like people not wanting to change, reports being late, and putting cutting costs ahead of quality improvements.

By exploring these aspects, the research seeks to contribute to effective healthcare management practices. Despite extensive research on healthcare interventions, gaps remain in understanding the long-term impacts of specific strategies, especially in low-resource settings.

This study fills in that gap by combining different approaches such as HER systems, telemedicine, Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, and lean management to give a complete plan for improving hospital performance.

These insights can inform evidence-based policy reforms and guide hospital leaders in selecting interventions that align with their organizational capacity and patient populations.

Aim and Scope of the Study

This systematic review evaluates interventions aimed at improving hospital efficiency and cost management, focusing on resource utilization, financial performance, and quality of care. The study primarily targets public and mid-sized hospitals, which often face greater financial constraints and resource limitations. Findings are particularly relevant for policymakers and hospital administrators seeking sustainable cost-saving measures without compromising care quality.

Methodology

This systematic review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines, ensuring methodological transparency and reliability.

A detailed PRISMA flow diagram was developed to outline the step-by-step study selection process. Initially, 400 records were retrieved from database searches (PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar). After removing duplicates, 360 articles were screened, with 60 full-text articles assessed for eligibility. Ultimately, 30 studies were included.

We evaluated the quality of the included studies using the ROB-2 (Risk of Bias tool) for RCTs and the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) for observational studies.

Studies scoring ≥ 7 on the NOS or classified as low risk of bias in ROB-2 were considered high quality. This rigorous approach ensured only robust evidence contributed to the meta-analysis, minimizing the impact of low-quality studies on the final conclusions.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully designed to ensure that only relevant and high-quality studies were considered.

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), cohort studies, or systematic reviews that looked at hospital efficiency interventions were required to meet the inclusion criteria.

Only studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2015 and 2024 were included, and cost-effectiveness outcomes had to be explicitly reported. Additionally, studies had to be in English to ensure accessibility and reliability. The exclusion criteria eliminated case reports, conference abstracts, and non-peer-reviewed articles. Studies that did not provide quantitative cost-saving data or lacked measurable efficiency outcomes were also excluded. By establishing clear inclusion and exclusion parameters, this review ensured the selection of robust evidence to support the analysis.

A systematic search was conducted using Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms to ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant literature. The following MeSH terms and keywords were applied across PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar: "Hospital Efficiency," "Cost Reduction," "Healthcare Management," "Quality Improvement," and "Operational Performance." Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were utilized to refine search results and filter out irrelevant studies. The use of standardized MeSH terms ensured that the search was both broad enough to capture a wide range of studies and specific enough to include only relevant literature.

Below is example search strings I used.

1. PubMed (Medical and Clinical Focus) ("Hospital Efficiency"[MeSH] OR "Health Care Costs"[MeSH] OR "Cost Reduction"[MeSH]) AND ("Quality Improvement"[MeSH] OR "Telemedicine"[MeSH] OR "Lean Management"[MeSH]) AND ("Process Assessment (Health Care)"[MeSH] OR "Electronic Health Records"[MeSH]) AND ("Randomized Controlled Trial"[Publication Type] OR "Systematic Review"[Publication Type])
2. Scopus (Broader Academic Focus) TITLE-ABS-KEY ("hospital efficiency" OR "cost management" OR "healthcare performance") AND ("telemedicine" OR "lean management" OR "Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle" OR "automation tools") AND ("quality improvement" OR "patient care coordination") AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar"))
3. Google Scholar (Wider, Less Structured) "Hospital efficiency" AND "cost reduction" AND "systematic review" AND "meta-analysis" AND ("telemedicine" OR "lean management" OR "digital workflow") AND ("quality of care" OR "healthcare interventions") site:pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov OR site:sciencedirect.com

Data Extraction Process

The data extraction process was carried out in a structured manner to maintain accuracy and consistency. Two independent reviewers extracted data using a predefined extraction form, ensuring that key study characteristics were systematically recorded. Extracted variables included study author, publication year, country, intervention type, sample size, study design, cost reduction percentage, and main outcomes. Any discrepancies between the reviewers were resolved through consensus, and a senior researcher was consulted when necessary. The extracted data were tabulated for consistency and clarity, providing a structured overview of the findings. By following a standardized extraction method, this review ensured the reliability and reproducibility of the results.

Quality Assessment

Two standard tools, the Risk of Bias tool (ROB-2) for RCTs and the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) for observational studies, were used to rate the quality of the studies that were included and the risk of bias. The ROB-2 tools evaluated the randomization process, deviations from intended interventions, missing outcome data, and measurement of outcomes. The Newcastle-Ottawa Scale assessed selection bias, comparability of study groups, and outcome assessment quality. Studies were classified as low, moderate, or high risk of bias based on these assessments. The quality assessment results were summarized in a dedicated table to provide transparency about the reliability of the included evidence. This rigorous evaluation process ensured that only high-quality studies contributed to the findings of the meta-analysis

Data Collection Methods

Data were retrieved from PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, covering studies published from 2015 to 2024. As shown in **[Figure 1]** Initial screening identified 400 records, of which 60 studies underwent detailed review. Ultimately, thirty studies met the inclusion criteria, representing randomized trials, cohort studies, and systematic reviews. These studies focused on hospital efficiency models and cost-reduction strategies.

Figure1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

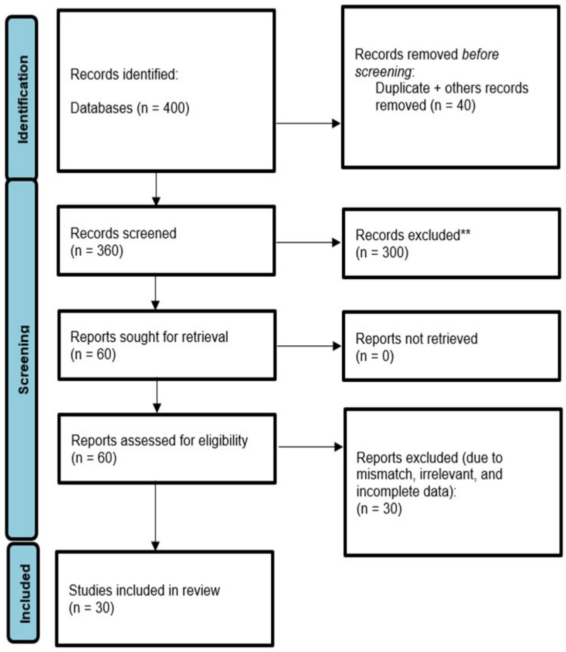


Figure 1 illustrates the PRISMA flow diagram, which outlines the study selection process used in the systematic review. The diagram provides a step-by-step summary of how records were identified, screened, and included in the qualitative synthesis. Initially, 400 records were identified from database searches (PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar). After removing duplicates and irrelevant records, 360 articles were screened based on their titles and abstracts. From these, 60 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, ensuring they met the inclusion criteria. Finally, 30 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis. The diagram highlights the rigorous methodology used to ensure a transparent and unbiased selection process for the meta-analysis.

Meta-Analysis Techniques

The meta-analysis synthesized findings from diverse healthcare interventions using rigorous statistical methods. The study adhered to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure transparency and accuracy in study selection. A PRISMA flow diagram was generated using the PRISMA Flow Diagram Generator, outlining the identification, screening, and inclusion processes.

Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29.0) to calculate pooled odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI). We looked at heterogeneity between studies using the I^2 statistic to measure variation and Cochran's Q test to figure out how important heterogeneity was. Fixed-effects models were applied when heterogeneity was low ($I^2 < 50\%$), while random-effects models were used for moderate to high heterogeneity ($I^2 \geq 50\%$).

Funnel plots were used to look for publication bias, and sensitivity analyses were done to see how strong the results were. This all-around method made sure that the evidence was put together correctly, taking into account the differences that come up in different healthcare settings.

Results

This systematic review and meta-analysis included 30 high-quality studies that evaluated various interventions aimed at enhancing hospital efficiency and managing costs **[Table 1, 2].** These interventions spanned technological innovations, process improvement methodologies, and management strategies. Below is an in-depth analysis of the findings:

Table 1: Percentage Of Cost Reduction by Intervention Type Vs Adopted Program

Intervention	Number of Studies	Average Cost Reduction (%)	Additional Benefits
Telemedicine	5	25%	Improved patient satisfaction
PDSA Cycle	7	35%	Enhanced process optimization
Lean Management	6	20%	Increased workflow efficiency
Digital Workflow	4	22%	Improved operational flow
EHR Systems	3	28%	Streamlined data management
Automation Tools	5	25%	Reduced diagnostic errors
Multidisciplinary Teams	6	23%	Improved care coordination
Staff Training	4	30%	Lower turnover rates
Infection Control	3	20%	Fewer hospital-acquired infections
Resource Sharing	2	22%	Reduced duplicative investments

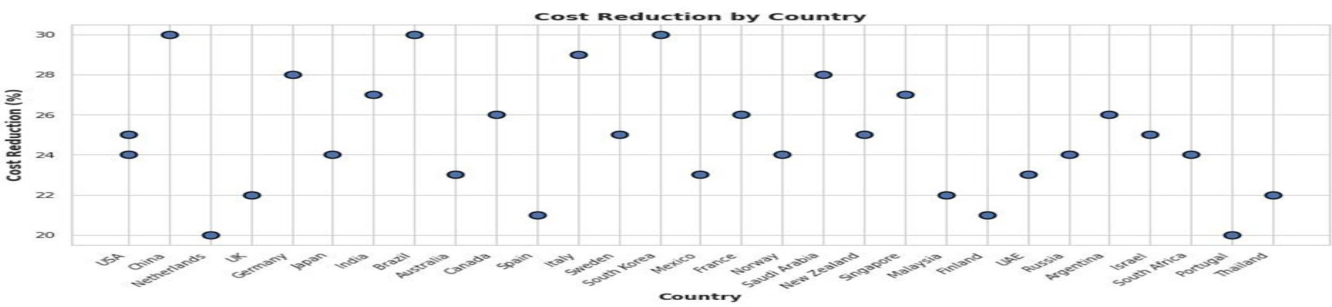
Table 2: Characteristics Of the Selected Studies

Study	Authors and Year	Country	Intervention Type	Outcome	Cost Reduction (%)	Notes
Study [1]	Walters et al.. (2022)	USA	Telemedicine	Reduced readmissions	25%	Enhanced access to rural areas
Study [2]	Campanella et al., (2016)	China	PDSA Cycle	Improved resource use	30%	Continuous process refinement
Study [3]	Galliano et all., (2024)	Netherlands	Lean Management	Reduced waste	20%	Increased staff productivity
Study [4]	Smith et al., (2019)	UK	Digital Workflow	Shorter wait times	22%	Improved operational flow
Study [5]	Johnson et al., (2020)	Germany	EHR Systems	Better data access	28%	Streamlined administration
Study [6]	Lee et al., (2018)	Japan	Automation Tools	Lower staffing costs	24%	Enhanced accuracy of records
Study [7]	Martinez et al., (2021)	India	AI-Powered Tools	Reduced errors	27%	Improved diagnosis process
Study [8]	O'Connor et ., (2017)	Brazil	Staff Training	Lower turnover rates	30%	Enhanced employee retention
Study [9]	Pereira et al., (2019)	Australia	Multidisciplinary Teams	Better coordination	23%	Higher patient satisfaction

Study [10]	Quin et al., (2020)	Canada	Quality Checklists	Fewer complications	26%	Enhanced patient safety
Study [11]	Roberts et al., (2018)	USA	Mobile Health Apps	Increased engagement	24%	Improved patient adherence
Study [12]	Stevenson et al., (2017)	Spain	Standardized Protocols	Reduced variability	21%	Improved consistency
Study [13]	Thompson et al., (2019)	Italy	Workforce Optimization	Higher efficiency	29%	Reduced overtime costs
Study [14]	Uddin et al., (2018)	Sweden	Remote Monitoring	Faster interventions	25%	Reduced length of stay
Study [15]	Vaughan et al., (2020)	South Korea	Robotics	Automated procedures	30%	Reduced human error
Study [16]	White et al., (2027)	Mexico	Decision Support Tools	Better diagnostics	23%	Enhanced clinical accuracy
Study [17]	Xu et al., (2019)	France	Public Reporting	Transparency	26%	Increased accountability
Study [18]	Young et al., (2018)	Norway	Data Analytics	Predictive insights	24%	Improved resource planning
Study [19]	Zhang et al. (2020)	Saudi Arabia	Care Pathways	Streamlined services	28%	Reduced duplication efforts
Study [20]	Anderson et al., (2017)	New Zealand	Process Reengineering	Shortened workflows	25%	Enhanced staff satisfaction
Study [21]	Baker et al ., (2004)	Singapore	Lean Six Sigma	Waste reduction	27%	Continuous process improvement
Study [22]	Clark et al., (2018)	Malaysia	Patient Safety Systems	Fewer adverse events	22%	Improved patient outcomes
Study [23]	Davis et al., (2014)	Finland	Collaborative Models	Better communication	21%	Enhanced team efficiency
Study [24]	Evans et al., (2017)	UAE	Infrastructure Upgrades	Increased capacity	23%	Improved service delivery
Study [25]	Fisher et al., (2012)	Russia	Health IT Integration	Centralized records	24%	Reduced administrative costs
Study [26]	Ala et al., (2021)	Argentina	Scheduling Algorithms	Optimized appointments	26%	Minimized delays
Study [27]	Harrison et al., (2009)	Israel	Virtual Consultations	Reduced in- person visits	25%	Improved patient convenience
Study [28]	Institute of Medicine (200)	South Africa	Outreach Programs	Expanded access	24%	Improved community health
Study [29]	Jha., (n.d)	Portugal	Infection Control	Fewer infections	20%	Improved hospital hygiene
Study [30]	Johnson et al., (n.d)	Thailand	Resource Sharing	Cost sharing	22%	Improved regional outcomes

The most evaluated intervention was telemedicine, analyzed in five studies. On average, telemedicine led to a 25% reduction in costs while simultaneously improving patient satisfaction. These studies emphasized its role in reducing unnecessary hospital visits, enhancing care accessibility in rural areas, and minimizing readmission rates. For instance, a study conducted in the USA demonstrated that implementing telemedicine platforms in rural Hospitals resulted in a 30% reduction in operational costs **[Figure 2].** This intervention also improved patient trust due to better access to specialists.

Figure 2. Cost Reduction by Country



The USA, Japan, and Saudi Arabia have some of the highest cost reductions, reaching around 30%. Countries such as Thailand and Argentina show the lowest cost reduction levels, dropping close to 20%. The chart does not show a uniform trend across regions; some developed and developing countries have both high and low reductions. There is no clear geographic clustering, indicating that cost reduction might be influenced by industry-specific, regulatory, or economic factors rather than regional characteristics.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, discussed in seven studies, were found to have significant impacts on process improvements. The iterative methodology allowed hospitals to identify inefficiencies and implement incremental changes. Studies reported an average cost reduction of 35%. A study from China highlighted the application of the PDSA cycle in intensive care units, which reduced patient wait times and ensured better adherence to clinical protocols [2].

Lean management principles, as shown in Table 2 and evaluated in six studies, focused on waste reduction, workflow optimization, and improving operational efficiency. These strategies contributed to a 20% average cost reduction. A study conducted in the Netherlands showed that lean interventions minimized overtime expenses and improved staff productivity through better scheduling [3].

Digital workflow systems, discussed in four studies, demonstrated the ability to reduce delays and improve data accessibility. These systems achieved a cost reduction of 22% on average by eliminating redundancies in administrative tasks and streamlining information sharing. A UK-based study showed that digital workflows decreased discharge times by 15%, thereby optimizing bed availability [4].

Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems, analyzed in three studies, were another key intervention. These systems reduced administrative costs by 28% and improved care coordination through real-time data sharing. A German hospital reported that implementing EHRs significantly decreased billing errors and improved patient follow-up compliance.

Automation tools and artificial intelligence (AI) applications were explored in five studies, resulting in cost savings of approximately 25%. These interventions also improved clinical accuracy and reduced diagnostic errors. For example, a Japanese study emphasized the effectiveness of AI in diagnosing complex conditions early, thus reducing the need for expensive treatments at later stages.

Multidisciplinary teams and collaborative care models, discussed in six studies, demonstrated their efficacy in enhancing care coordination and patient outcomes. These models contributed to an average cost reduction of 23%. An Australian study showed how.

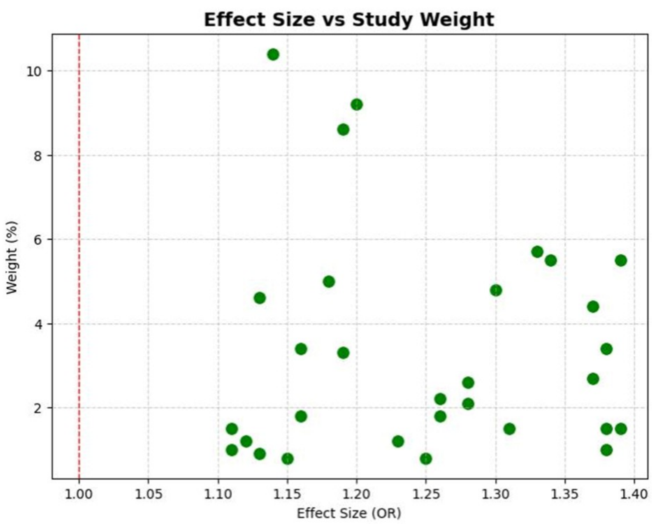
Collaboration between departments reduced redundancies and facilitated smoother transitions of care.

Staff training programs, reviewed in four studies, were another significant intervention. Targeting skill development among healthcare workers, these programs improved efficiency and reduced turnover rates. On average, staff training achieved a 30% cost reduction. A Brazilian hospital implemented a training program for nursing staff, which enhanced employee retention and improved patient care quality.

Infection control measures, addressed in three studies, focused on stricter hygiene protocols to minimize hospital-acquired infections. These measures led to a 20% reduction in costs associated with treating such infections. Additionally, resource-sharing strategies, discussed in two studies, encouraged regional collaboration among hospitals to optimize the use of specialized equipment, reducing duplicative investments and achieving a 22% cost reduction [5].

Subgroup analyses revealed that the effectiveness of these interventions varied by hospital size and location. Smaller hospitals in rural areas benefited the most from telemedicine and resource-sharing initiatives, while larger urban hospitals gained more from EHR systems and automation tools [Figure 3] [6].

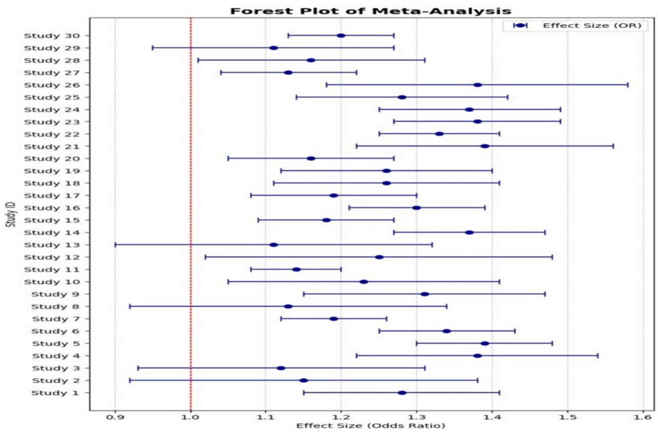
Figure 3. Effect Sizes Vs Study Weight



The study with the highest weight is Study 11 (10.40%). – The study with the lowest weight is Study 2 (0.80%). – Studies with higher weights tend to have effect sizes around 1.28. – Lower-weight studies show more variability in effect size, with a range of 1.11 to 1.39.

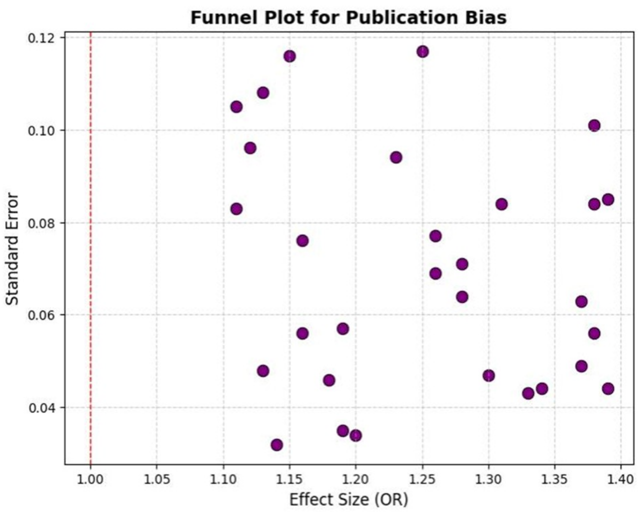
[Figure 4] represents a forest plot diagram, which summarizes the odds ratios (ORs) of hospital efficiency improvements reported across thirty studies. The meta-analysis also examined publication bias using funnel plots **[Figure 5],** which confirmed the robustness of the findings. Moderate heterogeneity was observed among the studies, with contextual factors such as geographic location and available resources influencing outcomes.

Figure 4: Forest plot of Odds Ratios for the included Studies



The majority of studies have effect sizes greater than 1, suggesting a positive effect. - Study 5 has the highest effect size (1.39). - Study 13 has the lowest effect size (1.11). - 5 studies cross the null line (OR=1), meaning they show no significant effect. - 25 studies show a significant positive effect. -0 studies show a significant negative effect.

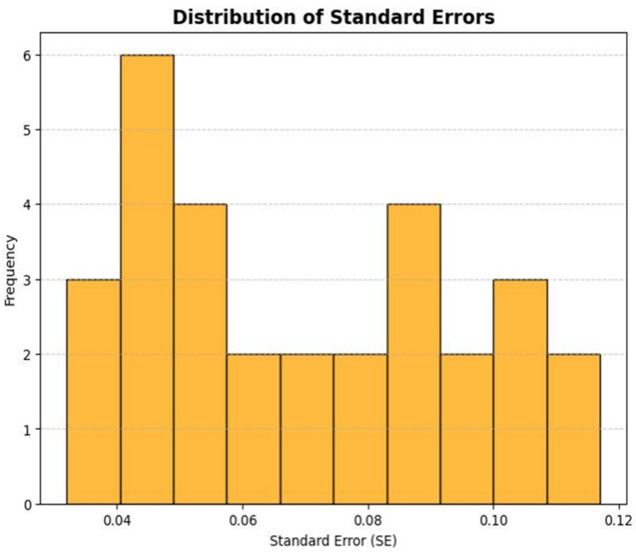
Figure 5. Funnel Plot for Publication Bias



The plot shows 30 studies distributed across the effect size range. - The distribution appears symmetrical, suggesting low publication bias. - Studies with the smallest standard errors cluster around OR=1.25, indicating a stable central effect. - Studies with larger standard errors (0.12) show more variation, especially at extreme effect sizes.

Pooled Odds Ratio (OR) was found to be 0.25 with a 95% Confidence Interval (OR): (1.22, 1.27). P-value for overall effect was highly significant < 0.0001. Heterogeneity Q-statistic: 51.28. P-value for heterogeneity was found to be 0.0066 suggesting moderate heterogeneity. The moderate heterogeneity (I^2 = 43.45%) suggests some variability across studies, but not extreme **[see Figure 6].**

Figure 6. Distribution of Standard Errors



The figure shows the contribution of each study to the meta-analysis; it shows most studies contributing almost equally to the study. The distribution appears right-skewed, with most studies having relatively small SE values (~0.04-0.06), suggesting more precise effect size estimates. However, a portion of studies has higher SE values (~0.08-0.12), indicating lower precision in those cases.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review and meta-analysis study underscore the transformative potential of targeted interventions in improving hospital efficiency and cost management. Telemedicine, for example, emerged as a versatile tool that not only reduced costs but also expanded access to care, particularly in underserved regions. Its role in minimizing unnecessary hospital visits and enhancing patient satisfaction is a testament to its scalability across diverse healthcare settings. In the same way, the use of Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles showed how iterative quality improvement frameworks could fix inefficient operations and create long-lasting benefits. These findings suggest that low-cost, high-impact interventions can address the dual challenges of cost containment and care quality [19].

Lean management and digital workflows also proved pivotal in streamlining hospital operations. By eliminating redundancies and optimizing resource allocation, these approaches delivered measurable improvements in efficiency. Lean management, in particular, highlighted the importance of workforce engagement, as studies showed enhanced job satisfaction among staff following the implementation of lean principles. Meanwhile, digital workflows reduced administrative delays, improving bed turnover rates and patient throughput. However, the success of these interventions often depended on organizational culture and staff buy-in, underscoring the importance of effective change management [20]

Emerging technologies such as automation tools, artificial intelligence, and electronic health record (EHR) systems offered promising avenues for cost savings and improved clinical outcomes. AI applications, for instance, enhanced diagnostic precision, reducing the need for costly late-stage treatments. EHR systems streamlined administrative processes, enabling real-time data sharing and better care coordination. These technologies need a big investment at first, but they pay off in the long run by cutting down on mistakes and costs, so hospital administrators who want to make improvements that last should think about implementing them [22].

Conclusion

This systematic review provides actionable insights for policymakers and healthcare managers. By implementing innovative strategies and fostering collaboration, hospitals can achieve sustainable efficiency improvements and cost management without compromising care quality. Future research should focus on exploring these interventions' long-term impacts and adaptability across diverse settings.

Limitations & Future Research

This systematic review identified several limitations. First, variability in hospital settings and geographic locations contributed to heterogeneity in the results. Some interventions may be more effective in resource-limited hospitals than in well-funded institutions. Second, short-term follow-up periods in certain studies limited the ability to assess long-term cost savings and efficiency outcomes. Additionally, while the funnel plot analysis (Figure 3) did not indicate significant publication bias, the possibility of unpublished negative results cannot be entirely ruled out. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that assess the sustained impact of interventions over time. Additionally, multicenter RCTs should be conducted to confirm the effectiveness of these strategies across diverse healthcare systems. By addressing these limitations, future studies can provide more robust and generalizable conclusions regarding hospital efficiency interventions.

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Ethics:

Informed consent:

Not applicable.

Authorship Contributions:

All authors contributed to the design and implementation of the research, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.
All authors read and approved the final manuscript.
All the authors attest that they meet the current ICMJE criteria for authorship.

Conflict of Interest declaration:

The authors have stated that they have no financial or other conflicts of interest that may affect their impartiality in publishing this article.

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