PATIENT SAFETY CULTURE AND HOSPITAL PERFORMANCE: PATIENT SAFETY OUTCOMES AND PATIENT RIGHTS IN PUBLIC TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE HOSPITALS IN SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSC	Balanced-Scored Card
HP	Hospital Performance
HRO	High-Reliability Organization
PSC	Patient Safety Culture
PSO	Patient Safety Outcomes
PR	Patient Rights
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
TCM	Traditional Chinese Medicine
RBV	Resource-Based View

LIST OF APPENDICES

BUDAYA KESELAMATAN PESAKIT DAN PRESTASI HOSPITAL: HASIL KESELAMATAN PESAKIT DAN HAK PESAKIT DI HOSPITAL PERUBATAN TRADISIONAL CINA AWAM DI WILAYAH SICHUAN, CHINA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji pengaruh budaya keselamatan pesakit terhadap prestasi hospital di hospital perubatan tradisional Cina awam di Sichuan, China. Kajian ini turut mempertimbangkan peranan hak pesakit dan hasil keselamatan pesakit. Kajian ini bermula dengan menegaskan kepentingan prestasi hospital, menonjolkan karakteristik berbilang dimensinya yang merangkumi kewangan, pelanggan, proses perniagaan dalaman dan aspek prestasi pembelajaran dan pertumbuhan. Ia menekankan kepentingan menerima pakai pendekatan yang komprehensif seperti Balanced Scorecard untuk penilaian prestasi dalam tetapan penjagaan kesihatan, khususnya hospital perubatan tradisional Cina awam di Sichuan. Kajian itu menekankan peranan budaya keselamatan pesakit sebagai faktor utama yang mempengaruhi prestasi hospital. Kajian ini turut memberikan pemahaman terperinci tentang budaya keselamatan pesakit yang digambarkan melalui nilai, kepercayaan dan norma yang dikongsi bersama dalam organisasi penjagaan kesihatan serta mempengaruhi tingkah laku individu dan kolektif berkaitan dengan keselamatan pesakit. Kajian literatur mendokumenkan hubungan positif yang kukuh antara budaya keselamatan pesakit dan prestasi hospital. Selain itu, kajian ini memperkenalkan konsep hak pesakit sebagai pembolehubah moderator berpotensi dalam hubungan

antara budaya keselamatan pesakit dan hasil keselamatan pesakit dan pembolehubah hasil keselamatan pesakit sebagai pembolehubah pengantara dalam hubungan antara budaya keselamatan pesakit dan prestasi hospital. Aspek in penting dalam penyediaan penjagaan kesihatan dalam konteks negara China dengan potensi implikasi positif untuk hasil penjagaan kesihatan dan prestasi hospital. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan empirikal dengan menggunakan soal selidik untuk mengumpul data dari hospital-hospital perubatan tradisional Cina awam di Sichuan. Hasil kajian ini mampu memberikan pandangan berharga yang boleh menyumbang kepada strategi-strategi yang boleh meningkatkan prestasi hospital dengan memupuk budaya keselamatan pesakit yang positif dan meningkatkan peranan yang dimainkan oleh hasil keselamatan pesakit dan hak pesakit.

PATIENT SAFETY CULTURE AND HOSPITAL PERFORMANCE: PATIENT SAFETY OUTCOMES AND PATIENT RIGHTS IN PUBLIC TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE HOSPITALS IN SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of patient safety culture on hospital performance within public traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) hospitals in Sichuan, China, by specifically considering the role of patient rights and patient safety outcomes. The study begins by establishing the importance of hospital performance, emphasising its multi-dimensional nature, which includes financial performance, customer satisfaction, internal business processes, and aspects of learning and growth. The study emphasises the significance of adopting a comprehensive approach, such as a balanced scorecard, for performance evaluation in healthcare settings, particularly public TCM hospitals in Sichuan. The study highlights the role of patient safety culture as a critical factor impacting hospital performance. The study provides a detailed understanding of patient safety culture, which is described as the shared values, beliefs, and norms within a healthcare organisation that influence individual and collective behaviours related to patient safety. The literature review documents the positive association between a robust patient safety culture and hospital performance. Moreover, the study introduces the concept of patient rights as a potential moderating variable in the relationship between patient safety culture and patient safety outcomes and patient safety outcomes as a mediating variable in the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance. Patient Rights is a significant aspect of healthcare

provision in the Chinese context, with potential implications for healthcare outcomes and hospital performance. The study employed an empirical approach by using a questionnaire to gather data from selected TCM hospitals in Sichuan. The study's findings are expected to provide valuable insights that can contribute to strategies aimed at improving hospital performance by fostering a positive patient safety culture and enhancing the role of patient safety outcomes and patient rights.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Improving hospital performance is a crucial endeavour in the global healthcare industry. In this context, the safety culture within hospitals, especially those practising traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), plays a significant role. In the landscape of TCM hospitals, patient safety culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and norms in an organisation that defines what is important and the expected and appropriate attitudes and behaviours related to patient safety.

In recent years, researchers and healthcare providers have focused on how patient safety culture can impact hospital performance. Extensive studies revealed that a positive patient safety culture improves patient safety outcomes and overall hospital performance (Weaver et al., 2013; Zwetsloot et al., 2017; Rajabi et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020; Mellott, 2021). Moreover, the concept of patient rights has been increasingly recognised and protected by the law in China (Jing et al., 2013; Law of the People's Republic of China, 2019), emphasising the importance of involving patients in their healthcare decision-making processes.

This study argues that Patient Safety Outcomes (PSO) function as the mediator because they reveal how investments in safety culture yield concrete improvements in both clinical quality and operational performance. At the same time, Patient Rights (PR) serve as a moderator: when rights such as informed-consent procedures,

accessible complaint mechanisms, and unfettered access to medical records are strongly upheld, they amplify the impact of safety culture on safety outcomes by empowering patients to engage directly in safety processes. Including both PSO and PR reflects High-Reliability Organization theory, which highlights the necessity of developing internal capabilities (the mediator) while also enlisting stakeholder involvement across organizational boundaries (the moderator). This study aims to offer a holistic understanding of the performance of TCM hospitals by considering not only operational and financial metrics but also patient-centric outcomes. A comprehensive understanding of these relationships is expected to provide valuable insights and suggest potential strategies for healthcare practitioners, hospital managers, and policymakers.

1.2 Background of the Research

The importance of patient safety culture in healthcare has gained global attention in recent years, partially due to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) landmark report in 1999 from the United States, which estimated that up to 400,000 preventable deaths occurred annually in the United States (David et al., 2024). The latest research by the World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics from 2023 stated that one in ten patients are harmed in health care, and over three million patients die worldwide annually from unsafe care. As many as four in 100 patients from low-to-middle-income countries die from unsafe care (WHO, 2023). Thus, countries and hospitals globally can improve their performance, reduce patient readmission rates, and decrease healthcare costs by improving the patient safety culture. Nevertheless, hospital

executives face mounting pressure from governmental regulatory bodies and consumer organisations within the market economy to establish an organisational safety culture that ensures patient protection by preventing medical errors (Ha et al., 2023). Therefore, patient safety culture is vital for hospital development and performance (World Health Organisation, 2021).

Additionally, WHO (2000) also emphasised the significance of patient safety culture for hospital performance. Research was conducted to examine the occurrence and avoidance ability of adverse events in 26 countries categorised as low-income and middle-income. The findings revealed that the rate of adverse events was approximately 8%, with 83% of these incidents potentially preventable (World Health Organisation, 2018). China has been reforming its healthcare system to align with international directives. At the National Health and Health Conference, Chairman Xi Jinping of China in 2016 stressed that the country must strive to ensure people's health in all aspects and throughout the cycle, focusing on improving the quality of medical care and promoting high-quality hospital development (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

On 4th June 2021, the General Office of the State Council issued opinions on the high-quality development of public hospitals (General Office of the State Council, 2021). This document highlights the importance of guiding hospitals to return to functional positioning, improve efficiency, and save costs as part of their high-quality development. This research aims to align with the high-quality development standards

set by the WHO and China by examining the impact of patient safety culture on hospital performance.

Data from 2015 to 2021 (China Health Statistics Yearbook, 2023) indicate that Chinese patients increasingly seek medical care at TCM hospitals. Over the past few years, the number of TCM hospitals and patients receiving TCM services has been steadily increasing. Despite the pandemic's impact on medical services provided by TCM hospitals, especially in the increase of TCM hospital constructions. The data suggests that the trust and preference of Chinese patients towards TCM hospitals are growing. The rising trend of TCM hospital numbers reflects the increasing status and influence of TCM hospitals in China. The figures below illustrate the trends in TCM hospitals. Figure 1. 1 exhibits the trend in the number of patients receiving medical services in TCM hospitals (100 million) from 2015-2022. Figure 1. 2 illustrates the increasing number of TCM hospitals from 2015-2021. Subsequently,

Figure 1. 3 demonstrates the increasing trend in the number of discharged patients in TCM hospitals.

Figure 1. 1

The Number of Patients Receiving Medical Services in TCM hospitals (100 million) from 2015-2022

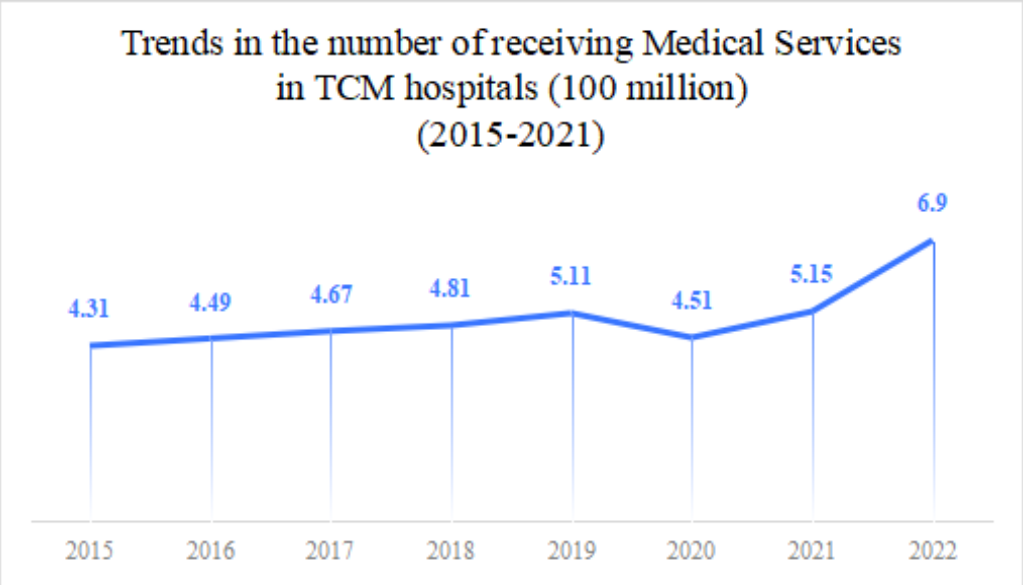


Figure 1. 2

The Number of TCM Hospitals from 2015-2021

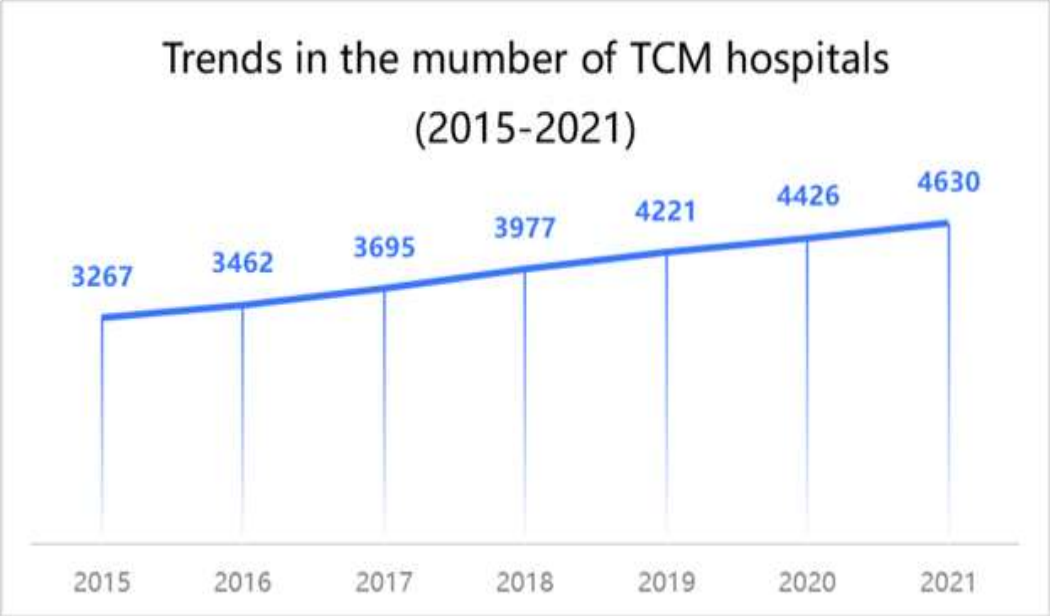
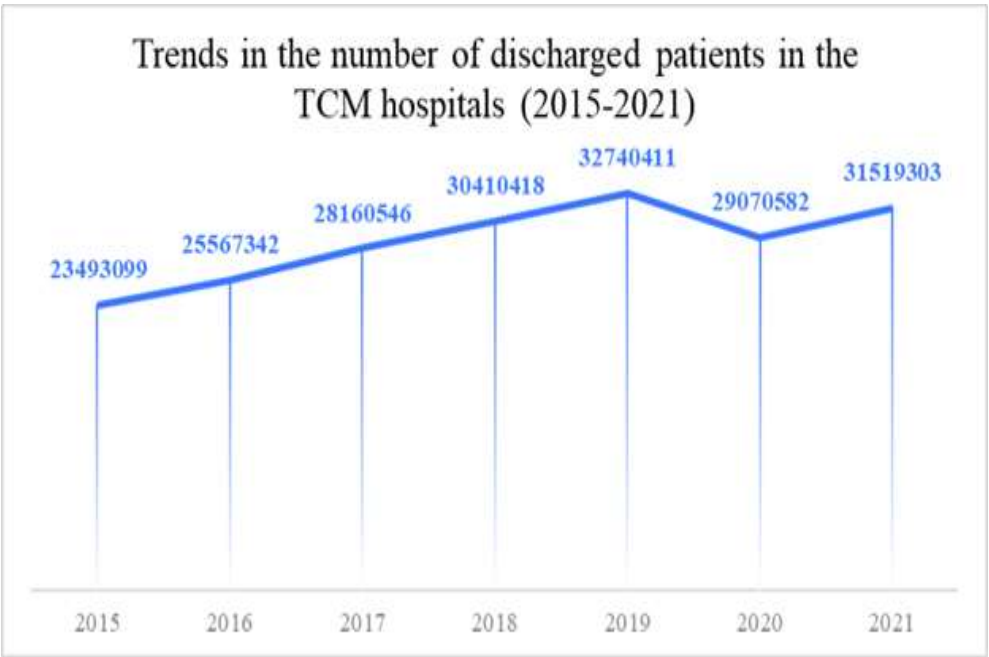


Figure 1. 3

The Number of Discharged Patients in TCM Hospitals



On the other hand, the Chinese government started ranking public TCM hospitals in 2020. The results of the performance ranking directly affect the hospital's

development (Dong et al., 2021). Therefore, hospital managers in China and the primary individuals in charge of the local health management department often attach great importance to the performance ranking of public hospitals.

1.2.1 Realistic Perspective

As previously mentioned, patient safety is a crucial attribute of healthcare quality, as indicated by WHO (Groene et al., 2008). Global standards for patient safety in hospitals have been derived from medical practices in the United States (Aiken et al., 2012; Azyabi et al., 2022), Europe (Aiken et al., 2012; Sharp et al., 2019), Australia (Alshyyab et al., 2023), and China (CNNIC, 2019; Wang & Wu, 2019; Wang et al., 2023). Both researchers and healthcare practitioners have established that patient safety is a critical concern in hospitals, as it directly affects hospital performance (Carayon et al., 2006). Approximately 400,000 preventable deaths occur annually due to medical errors and adverse medical events, which are associated with high hospital costs, complications, and unnecessary readmission (David et al.,2024). The latest research by the World Health Organization (2023) statistics from 2023 stated that 1 in 10 patients are harmed in health care and over 3 million die annually from unsafe car. As many as 4 in 100 low to middle- income countries die from unsafe care (WHO, 2023). Therefore, improving patient safety culture is currently regarded as a global priority in hospitals striving to provide high-quality medical care and hospital performance.

In this context, several countries have prioritised strengthening patient safety culture to improve healthcare quality and safety. Building a patient safety culture is an

effective way to enhance or foster hospital performance. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has highlighted the objective of reducing severe, preventable medication-related injuries by 50% by 2024. In 2016, China's General Secretary Xi Jinping highlighted the importance of medical quality and safety performance, emphasising the need to ensure people's health in all aspects and throughout the cycle (Zhang et al., 2022). Public hospitals in China have historically lacked efficiency and motivation due to its planned economic system (Chen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, there has been a significant emphasis on healthcare reform since 2009, which has brought increasing attention to China's public hospitals. The goal is to enhance public hospitals' quality and efficiency. The integration of safety culture into hospital performance can help improve safety performance, better serve patients, and alleviate doctor-patient crises, further prioritising the patient-centred approach.

1.2.2 Theoretical Perspective

Previous research has primarily focused on examining the relationship between leadership (Sarto & Veronesi, 2016), teamwork (Vifladt et al., 2023), health information techniques (Alolayyan et al., 2020a), specific diseases such as Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI) (Upadhyay et al., 2019), falls (Bernet et al., 2022), and innovation culture (Gao & Gurd, 2020) on hospital performance (Braithwaite et al., 2017). Recently, in response to the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) report, numerous literature reviews on patient safety and medical quality have been published in response to the report (Sorra & Dyer, 2010; Clay-Williams et al., 2020; Kakemam et al., 2021). Nevertheless, these reviews have primarily focused on the measures and dimensions of the concept of safety culture rather than on the relationship between

safety culture and hospital performance or the potential moderating and mediating impacts.

Original studies on high-reliability organisations (HROs) were based on three industries: nuclear power generation stations, air traffic controls, and aircraft carriers. Healthcare is much more reliable and safer than airline travel, nuclear power, aircraft carriers, and other complex environments. The Joint Commission has formulated strategies to promote high reliability within the healthcare sector, emphasising the need for leadership dedication, fostering a safety culture within organisations, and empowering responsive staff (Chassin & Loeb, 2013).

An exception is a recent study that employed the resource-based view (RBV) to investigate the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance by including the moderating role of electronic health record implementation (EHR) (Menachemi et al., 2018). This study found that patient safety culture is a competitive resource for improving hospital performance, while basic EHR enhances the perception of patient safety culture to improve performance.

Academics have previously utilised conceptual frameworks such as the RBV, Porter's competitive advantage, the balanced scorecard (BSC), and stakeholder theory to study hospital performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2006). Although the BSC has been particularly prominent, it has not been used with other theories. As per the researcher's knowledge, this research is the first to explore the relationship between hospital surveys on patient safety culture and hospital performance by combining the HRO,

RBV, and BSC frameworks, providing important implications for hospitals that prioritise patient safety culture. This study also examines the relevance of patient rights and the implementation of patient safety outcomes as an intangible capability that augments the influence of patient safety culture perceptions on hospital performance across various dimensions (Mannion & Davies, 2018).

Moreover, this research aims to balance the relationship between maintaining public welfare and operating efficiency (Provan & Kenis, 2007). Notably, this study is the first in the context of public TCM hospitals to examine the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance (Jin et al., 2020). In conclusion, this research is anticipated to contribute to the ongoing policy debate and academic discourse surrounding patient safety culture and hospital performance. By integrating policy directives and multiple theoretical perspectives, the study will provide valuable insights for both practitioners and scholars interested in improving the quality and efficiency of healthcare in public TCM hospitals in China.

1.3 Healthcare Industry in Sichuan

In order to appreciate the importance of this study, it is crucial to understand the landscape of the Chinese healthcare system first. In China, public Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) hospitals differ from general hospitals in governance, service mix, and regulation: while both may provide Western medical treatments, TCM hospitals integrate modalities such as herbal formulations and acupuncture into core care. As of 2022, the National Health Commission reported 2,347 public TCM

hospitals versus 7,128 general public hospitals, with more than 600 million patient visits to TCM facilities annually (National Health Commission, 2022). These differences affect standard performance metrics — e.g. average length of stay, readmission rates — because treatment protocols and patient expectations vary markedly between hospital types.

The decision to focus on public TCM hospitals in this study was made for several reasons. Large, comprehensive healthcare facilities provide sophisticated, advanced care, including specialised surgeries. They also often serve as medical research centres and provide teaching and education programmes for medical professionals. Given their central role in healthcare delivery, public hospitals are often the settings where safety culture and performance metrics can be most effectively studied and improved.

Moreover, public TCM represents a unique and valuable area of the healthcare system. Understanding its safety culture and its impact on hospital performance can provide crucial insights that may be overlooked when focusing solely on general hospitals.

The distribution of public TCM hospitals in Sichuan province spans across province, city, and county levels, adding to the diverse sample for this study. Additionally, it is evident that this study includes a representative selection of public TCM hospitals across the province at various administrative levels.

In Sichuan Province, public TCM hospitals are widely distributed in urban areas, which further emphasises the potential impact on research findings. The abundance of TCM hospitals across provinces underscores the importance of improving safety culture and hospital performance in these institutions, which, in turn, could have significant implications for the overall healthcare system. Thus, this study focuses on TCM hospitals in Sichuan.

1.4 Research Problem

Despite the growing importance of patient safety culture in healthcare organisations, several challenges and gaps persist in the literature and practical application. This study primarily aims to address these challenges, particularly in the context of public TCM hospitals in Sichuan, by examining the effects of patient safety culture on hospital performance, the moderating role of patient rights, and the mediating role of patient safety outcomes. Specifically, this study focuses on poor performance areas such as high rates of medical errors, adverse patient outcomes, and inefficiencies in hospital operations. These performance issues highlight the need for better integration of patient safety outcomes into hospital performance measurements and strategies to improve patient safety outcomes and hospital performance.

1.4.1 Practical Operation Level

Table 1.1 shows current global performance ranking of public hospitals, such as Best Hospital Rankings, Science and Technology Evaluation Metrics (STEM), Hospital Competitiveness Rankings, and Best Clinical Disciplines Rankings, primarily

focus on different aspects of medical quality indicators (Refer to table 1.1 Overview of China's Hospital Ranking Systems). These aspects include social reputation, medical services, academic impact, resource management, hospital operations, and various measures for each ranking system.

Nevertheless, these rankings rarely consider patient safety culture, which may mislead hospital administrators and policymakers (Mohammed et al., 2021). For example, medical errors and adverse events cause significant losses to hospitals, with approximately 400,000 deaths per year attributed to medical errors (Makary & Daniel, 2016), emphasising the importance of patient safety in healthcare organisations (Agnew et al., 2013). In China, TCM hospitals face unique medical-error risks because multi-ingredient herbal prescriptions and manual procedures (e.g. acupuncture) introduce additional failure points. Moreover, manual therapies carried out by less-experienced practitioners accounted for a portion of near-miss incidents, underscoring the need to spotlight TCM-specific safety challenges. The need for effectively integrating patient safety culture into hospital performance measurements should be highlighted to ensure better patient outcomes, especially in TCM hospitals.

Moreover, currently, patient safety culture is not systematically embedded in the core value frameworks of most hospitals. This absence presents a significant challenge to sustained safety improvement. Without formally recognizing safety culture as a foundational organizational value, hospitals may struggle to align strategic objectives with staff practices and patient expectations. Integrating patient safety

culture into the value systems of hospitals could enhance leadership accountability and promote a stronger institutional commitment to safety.

Table 1. 1

Overview of China's Hospital Ranking Systems

Characteristic	Best Hospitals Ranking	STEM	Hospital Competitiveness Ranking	Best Clinical Disciplines Ranking
Primary objectives	To provide guidelines for patients seeking treatments	To measure a hospital's value in scientific research	To identify the top hospitals with the best competitiveness	To provide a tool to help patients find skilled speciality care
Domains of measure	Social reputation The ability of sustainable development (scientific research outcomes)	Scientific research inputs, outputs, and impacts	Medical service Academic impact Resource management Hospital operation	Unclear
Indicators	Social reputation scores SCI papers National awards	Key laboratories and projects Researchers Clinical trials SCI papers Medical standards Medical association leaders National awards	Inpatients and outpatients Beds Health workers Medical facilities Personnel Medical fee Length of stay Academic leaders Key laboratories and projects National awards	Perioperative mortalities Readmissions Postoperative complications Timely care Finance
Data sources	National surveys	SCI data and official documents	Reporting data voluntarily	Medical records

Publication-frequency	Annually	Annually	Annually	Only in 2015
Transparency of methodology	Provided	Provided	Provided	Not Provided

Source: Dong et al. (2021)

Since China's medical system reform in 2009, public hospitals have shifted from comprehensive government subsidies to partial subsidies, leading to an economically oriented performance appraisal of hospitals that often neglect the impact of patient safety culture on hospital performance. The pursuit of economic development by hospitals could improve patient safety. For instance, in 2023, the National Medical Device Adverse Event Monitoring Information System in China recorded 650,695 adverse event reports related to medical devices, reflecting a 21.39% increase compared to the prior year (Cisema,2024). This statistic highlights the urgent need for policies that prioritise patient safety culture in Hospital performance evaluation.

Hospital performance may also be impacted by patient safety outcomes, leading to potential losses in performance metrics (Waters et al., 2022). The importance of patient safety outcomes in relation to their healthcare should be emphasised, as this can influence hospital performance by affecting patient satisfaction, operational processes, finances, and medical quality.

Moreover, considering the patient's rights, measuring the impact of patient safety culture on patient safety outcomes might highlight how effective communication and patient engagement (integral parts of patient rights) can directly affect patient safety outcomes. This significance could further substantiate the research and offer concrete evidence of the value of patients' rights in improving patient safety culture.

1.4.2 Research Aspects

Previous research on hospital performance has primarily focused on patient safety, medical technology, or doctors' workload. Nevertheless, there are several gaps in the literature.

First, there is limited research on the impact of patient safety culture on hospital performance. Subsequently, only limited studies have examined the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance. As illustrated in Figure 1.4 and Figure 1.5 the number of publications has gradually increased each year, indicating that hospital performance research has gradually received attention. Nevertheless, existing research is still insufficient. Lastly, most research has been conducted in the context of Western hospitals.

Next, this study investigates the key issues surrounding hospital performance in China, with a particular focus on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) hospitals. By analysing the Table 1.2, the study identifies critical themes and evolving research priorities in the field. Supporting visualizations show a growing trend in publications on hospital performance over the years(Figure 1.4) and highlight the global distribution of related research (Figure 1.5), with China emerging as a significant contributor. Despite this, performance evaluation in TCM hospitals remains underexplored, prompting this study to address the unique challenges and contextual factors influencing hospital performance in these institutions.

Moreover, Searching the CNKI database with the theme of hospital performance and using CiteSpace for analysis found that research has mainly concentrated on economic indicators of hospital performance, such as medical insurance requirements, payment methods, and measurement. This focus should be expanded to include the impact of patient safety culture on hospital performance. Patient safety outcomes, such as adverse medical events and patient safety rates, are also related to high costs, complications, and unnecessary readmissions, which have not impacted hospitals' reputations and finances.

Table 1. 2

Top 25 Emerging Keywords in Hospital Performance Research in China from 1990-2020 Organised by Emergence Value

NO	Keyword	Present Value	Start Year	End Year
1	Resource-Based Relative Value Scale (RBRVS)	30.4203	2017	2019
2	New Medical Reform	29.9963	2017	2019
3	A Diagnosis-Related Group (DRG)	26.1115	2017	2019
4	Medical	13.6213	1995	2012
5	Application	21.0553	2015	2019
6	Refined Management	21.0416	2016	2019
7	Medical Reform	20.9371	2015	2019
8	Military Hospital	19.1348	2007	2011
9	Balanced Scored Card	19.0266	2006	2009
10	Nursing Staff	18.7331	2009	2014
11	Graded Diagnosis and Treatment	18.4798	2016	2019

12	Hierarchical Diagnosis and Treatment System Reform	16.9485	2001	2007
13	Department	24.4019	2000	2012
14	Performance Evaluation	16.4023	2009	2014
15	Head Nurse	16.0403	2010	2013
16	Economic Reform	15.1895	2001	2007
17	Clinical Departments	14.687	2006	2011
18	Performance Pay Reform	14.0615	2010	2012
19	Bonus Distribution	8.9143	2002	2012
20	Status Quo	13.4173	2015	2016
21	Financial Management	12.9331	2016	2019
23	Dean	12.4097	2004	2008
24	Hospital Performance	10.5315	2001	2010

Source: Researcher (2022)

Figure 1. 4

Distribution of Research on Hospital Performance by Country

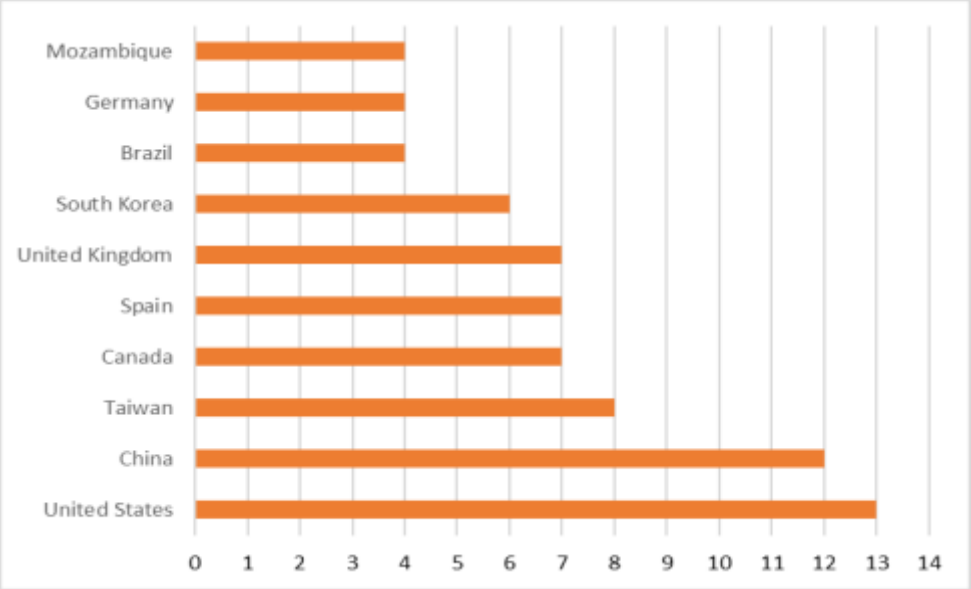
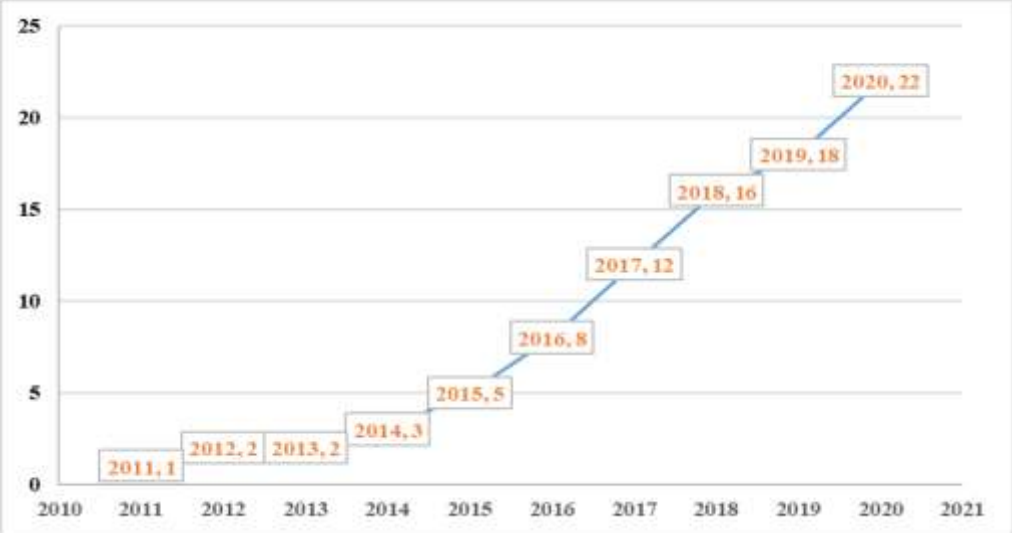


Figure 1. 5

Trend of Publications on Hospital Performance by Year



Therefore, this research explores the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance. This research also examines how patient safety outcomes may mediate this relationship and investigates how patient rights may moderate it.

Specifically, it aims to fill these gaps by focusing on the impact of patient safety culture on hospital performance and the effect of adopting patient rights and patient safety outcomes on these two variables. Moreover, this research will be conducted in the context of public TCM hospitals, further diversifying the body of knowledge on this topic.

By addressing these challenges and gaps, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effects of patient safety culture on hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan. This research has the potential to inform the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at improving healthcare quality and patient safety outcomes, both nationally and internationally. This novel approach to examining hospital performance through the lens of patient safety culture, patient safety outcomes, and patient rights is expected to contribute significantly to the literature and provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing hospital performance in the unique context of TCM hospitals in Sichuan.

1.5 Research Objective

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the effects of patient safety culture on hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan, focusing on the moderating role of patient rights and the mediating role of patient safety outcomes. In order to achieve this primary objective, the following specific objectives were identified:

RO1: To examine the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province.

RO2: To examine the relationship between patient safety culture and patient safety outcomes in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province.

RO3: To examine the relationship between patient safety outcomes and hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province.

RO4: To examine the mediating role of patient safety outcomes in the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province.

RO5: To examine the moderating role of patient rights in strengthening the relationship between patient safety culture and patient safety outcomes in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province.

When patient rights are upheld to a higher degree, patient safety culture has a stronger impact on hospital performance in public TCM hospitals. These research objectives will guide the subsequent stages of the study, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, to ensure that the research findings are relevant, meaningful, and capable of informing policy and practice in the context of public TCM hospitals.

1.6 Research Questions

In order to address the identified research gaps and contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the area of patient safety culture, hospital performance, patient rights, as well as patient safety outcomes in public TCM hospitals, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province?

RQ2: What is the relationship between patient safety culture and patient safety outcomes in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province?

RQ3: What is the relationship between patient safety outcomes and hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province?

RQ4: Do patient safety outcomes mediate the relationship between patient safety culture and hospital performance in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province?

RQ5: Do patient rights strengthen the relationship between patient safety culture and patient safety outcomes in public TCM hospitals in Sichuan Province?