OPEN ACCESS

Saudi Journal of Oral and Dental Research

Abbreviated Key Title: Saudi J Oral Dent Res
ISSN 2518-1300 (Print) | ISSN 2518-1297 (Online)
Scholars Middle East Publishers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Journal homepage: https://saudijournals.com

Original Research Article **Dentistry**

The Role of AI in Modern Aesthetic Dentistry

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.36348/sjodr.2025.v10i09.002 | **Received:** 06.07.2025 | **Accepted:** 08.09.2025 | **Published:** 11.09.2025

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping aesthetic dentistry by improving diagnostic precision, treatment planning, outcome predictability, and overall patient satisfaction. This review aims to systematically analyze the role of AI in aesthetic dentistry, highlighting its applications, advantages, limitations, and future directions. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering studies published between 2018 and 2024. Search terms included "AI in dentistry," "aesthetic dentistry," "machine learning," "prosthodontics," and "orthodontics." The review includes 28 peer-reviewed articles encompassing systematic reviews, clinical studies, narrative analyses, and expert consensus papers. Evidence shows that AI technologies such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs), generative adversarial networks (GANs), support vector machines (SVMs), and fuzzy logic systems have enhanced dental imaging, tooth segmentation, digital smile design, implant planning, prosthetic design, and personalized treatment simulations. AI facilitates real-time visualization, streamlines CAD/CAM workflows, and improves efficiency in clinical and administrative tasks. Moreover, AI enables predictive modeling of treatment outcomes and fosters patient-centered care through individualized approaches. However, significant challenges remain, including the need for high-quality datasets, ethical concerns about privacy and bias, lack of interpretability in AI decision-making, and high costs of implementation. The findings suggest broad consensus on AI's transformative potential, but controversies persist regarding transparency, reliability, and accessibility. Future directions include explainable AI, integration with robotics, advanced biomaterials, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Overall, AI is revolutionizing modern aesthetic dentistry, paving the way for more predictable, minimally invasive, and patient-centered treatments that align with global digital healthcare trends.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, aesthetic dentistry, machine learning, prosthodontics, orthodontics, digital smile design, CAD/CAM.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Aesthetic dentistry, also referred to as cosmetic dentistry, encompasses a range of restorative and corrective procedures designed to improve the appearance, symmetry, and harmony of the dentition and facial structures [1]. It integrates restorative dentistry, prosthodontics, orthodontics, and even maxillofacial surgery to enhance both functional and visual outcomes. Historically, treatments such as crowns, veneers, implants, and orthodontic aligners relied heavily on the clinician's subjective judgment, manual dexterity, and artistic interpretation [2]. While many practitioners achieved remarkable results, variability in clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and reproducibility remained significant challenges [3].

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced a paradigm shift in healthcare, including dentistry. AI broadly refers to computational techniques capable of simulating human intelligence, encompassing machine learning (ML), deep learning (DL), computer vision, and natural language processing [4]. In dentistry, AI applications span from diagnostic imaging to treatment planning, outcome prediction, and even patient communication [5].

In aesthetic dentistry specifically, AI enables automation of diagnostic procedures, improved segmentation of teeth and soft tissue, and enhanced image resolution. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) are widely used for tooth and gum segmentation, ensuring more accurate modeling of prosthetics and

orthodontic interventions [6]. Generative adversarial networks (GANs) enhance the quality of dental images, enabling more precise digital smile design and treatment simulations [7]. Machine learning algorithms such as support vector machines (SVMs) and random forests support predictive analytics, allowing clinicians to forecast long-term treatment outcomes based on large datasets [8].

Moreover, AI facilitates biomimetic dentistry where restorations mimic natural tooth anatomy and optical properties through improved shade selection algorithms and fuzzy logic systems that replicate natural color variations [9]. AI-based digital smile design (DSD) platforms allow clinicians to create, modify, and present treatment options interactively, engaging patients in the process and aligning results with patient expectations [10]. By integrating clinical data, radiographs, facial scans, and patient preferences, AI systems provide a comprehensive approach to aesthetic dental care that is more precise, personalized, and reproducible than traditional methods.

Thus, the background establishes that AI is not merely an adjunct but a transformative driver in modern aesthetic dentistry, bridging the gap between clinical expertise and digital precision [11].

1.2 Importance and Relevance

The relevance of AI in aesthetic dentistry arises from its capacity to address key challenges faced by practitioners and patients. First, aesthetic judgments are inherently subjective. While symmetry, proportion, and harmony are critical in dental aesthetics, perception varies across cultures, individuals, and even among clinicians [12]. AI introduces standardized, evidence-driven tools that reduce bias and inter-operator variability, providing consistent and reproducible outcomes [13].

Second, the demand for aesthetic dental procedures has surged globally, driven by heightened social awareness, technological accessibility, and the influence of social media [14]. Patients increasingly expect not only functional restorations but also naturally appealing results that integrate seamlessly with their facial features. AI-based simulations and smile design tools allow patients to preview results, participate in decision-making, and gain confidence in proposed treatments [15].

Third, AI improves clinical efficiency. Automated cephalometric analysis reduces the time required for orthodontic diagnostics, while AI-enhanced CAD/CAM systems streamline the fabrication of crowns, veneers, and prosthetics with superior precision [16]. Such tools reduce chairside time, improve workflow efficiency, and ultimately lower treatment costs, making aesthetic dentistry more accessible [17].

From a broader perspective, AI adoption aligns with global trends in digital healthcare. International organizations such as the World Health Organization advocate for digital transformation to enhance accessibility, affordability, and quality of care [18]. In this context, integrating AI into aesthetic dentistry contributes to larger healthcare objectives while directly benefiting both clinicians and patients.

Thus, the relevance of this subject is not confined to clinical outcomes; it encompasses patient empowerment, healthcare efficiency, and alignment with global digital health strategies [19].

1.3 Scope and Objectives of the Review

This review article aims to comprehensively analyze the role of AI in modern aesthetic dentistry, covering its applications, strengths, limitations, and future directions. The scope extends across various subspecialties, including:

- **Diagnostic imaging**: AI-driven radiographic interpretation, segmentation, and anomaly detection.
- **Prosthodontics**: AI-assisted implant planning, CAD/CAM restorations, and biomimetic material selection.
- **Orthodontics**: Automated cephalometric analysis, aligner customization, and long-term treatment prediction.
- **Digital Smile Design (DSD)**: Real-time simulation of outcomes and enhanced patient–clinician collaboration.
- **Operational efficiency**: AI-driven workflow automation, patient communication, and administrative tasks.

The objectives of this review are fourfold:

1. To evaluate the extent and quality of evidence supporting AI's integration in aesthetic dentistry.
2. To summarize findings across multiple studies, comparing methodologies and outcomes.
3. To identify strengths, limitations, and ethical considerations of AI adoption.
4. To highlight gaps in current literature and propose future research directions for clinical and policy development.

By addressing these objectives, the review aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis that will benefit clinicians, researchers, educators, and policymakers in understanding AI's potential and limitations in aesthetic dentistry [20].

1.4 Literature Selection

To ensure methodological rigor, a structured literature search was conducted across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The search spanned January 2018 to December 2024, reflecting the rapid advancements in AI technology within dentistry.

The following keywords and Boolean combinations were used: *"artificial intelligence" AND "aesthetic dentistry"*, *"machine learning" AND "prosthodontics"*, *"digital smile design"*, *"orthodontics"*, *"implant planning"*.

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed original research, reviews, and expert consensus papers.
- English-language publications.
- Studies focusing on AI applications in aesthetic, cosmetic, or restorative dental procedures.

Exclusion criteria:

- Studies unrelated to dentistry.
- Purely technical AI papers without clinical application.
- Non-English studies and publications prior to 2018.

From an initial pool of 143 articles, 62 met eligibility criteria for full-text review. After detailed screening, 28 studies were included, covering systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials (RCTs), retrospective analyses, clinical case studies, and narrative reviews. These studies addressed a wide spectrum of topics, from diagnostic imaging and orthodontics to prosthodontics, digital smile design, and biomimetic restorations.

The included literature was evaluated for methodological quality, clarity of AI application, sample size, and clinical relevance. While some high-quality RCTs exist, the majority of studies are narrative or exploratory in nature, reflecting the emergent stage of AI integration in aesthetic dentistry [21]. This diversity underscores the importance of employing a hybrid systematic–narrative review design, which allows for both structured synthesis and thematic exploration.

2. TYPE OF REVIEW

The present article adopts a hybrid systematic–narrative review format to provide a balanced, comprehensive, and thematically structured understanding of artificial intelligence (AI) in modern aesthetic dentistry. While a purely systematic review would ensure methodological rigor and transparency, the novelty and multidisciplinary nature of AI in dentistry demand a flexible narrative synthesis that can accommodate diverse forms of evidence, emerging technologies, and expert consensus opinions.

2.1 Rationale for Review Design

Systematic reviews are widely regarded as the gold standard for evidence synthesis, as they employ explicit search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and structured appraisal of study quality [1]. This approach minimizes bias and enables replication, which is especially important in healthcare decision-making. However, the field of AI in aesthetic dentistry is still in its developmental stage, and much of the evidence comes from narrative reviews, proof-of-concept studies, pilot trials, and technical reports that do not always conform to strict clinical trial protocols [2]. Excluding these sources would risk overlooking important technological insights and early evidence that shape clinical innovation.

By contrast, narrative reviews allow for a broader, interpretive synthesis that integrates conceptual, technical, and clinical perspectives [3]. Such flexibility is vital in aesthetic dentistry, where subjective aesthetic considerations, interdisciplinary overlap, and rapid technological advancements complicate rigid evidence hierarchies. Therefore, the hybrid approach ensures methodological rigor while maintaining the capacity to address qualitative and conceptual aspects of AI's role in dentistry.

2.2 Systematic Component

The systematic component of this review followed structured database searches across PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Search strings combined terms such as *"artificial intelligence"*, *"aesthetic dentistry"*, *"machine learning"*, *"digital smile design"*, *"prosthodontics"*, and *"orthodontics."* Literature was limited to the years 2018–2024 to capture the most recent and clinically relevant developments. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were designed to ensure relevance and rigor (see Section 1.4).

This process yielded 28 eligible studies, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs), cohort studies, retrospective analyses, systematic reviews, narrative reviews, and expert consensus papers. Articles were assessed based on their clinical focus, AI methodology, study design, and relevance to aesthetic outcomes. The systematic process ensured that only credible, peer-reviewed sources were included, minimizing publication bias and increasing transparency.

2.3 Narrative Component

The narrative component provided interpretive depth by organizing evidence thematically rather than strictly hierarchically. While systematic reviews often privilege RCTs and large-scale studies, narrative synthesis acknowledges that in emerging fields like AI, technical feasibility studies, pilot trials, and expert opinions often precede large clinical investigations [4]. This component allowed inclusion of early-stage studies describing novel AI algorithms (e.g., convolutional neural networks for tooth segmentation, generative adversarial networks for image enhancement), as well as expert perspectives on ethical, economic, and clinical implications.

The narrative synthesis also provided flexibility in exploring qualitative dimensions of aesthetic dentistry

that are not easily captured in quantitative designs. These include patient perceptions of smile aesthetics, the cultural variability of beauty standards, and clinician–patient communication during treatment planning [5]. Thus, while the systematic approach established an evidence-based foundation, the narrative approach enabled exploration of conceptual frameworks and future research trajectories.

2.4 Strengths of the Hybrid Approach

The hybrid systematic–narrative review offers several strengths:

1. **Comprehensiveness**: Captures both high-quality empirical studies and emerging conceptual insights.
2. **Transparency**: Systematic search criteria ensure reproducibility and minimize bias.
3. **Flexibility**: Narrative synthesis accommodates heterogeneity in study designs and clinical applications.
4. **Clinical relevance**: Aligns evidence synthesis with real-world complexities of aesthetic dentistry, where both objective outcomes and subjective patient satisfaction are critical.

2.5 Limitations of the Approach

Despite its advantages, this approach has limitations. The inclusion of narrative evidence introduces the possibility of interpretive bias. Moreover, the heterogeneity of AI applications ranging from imaging algorithms to administrative automation makes it challenging to establish direct comparisons across studies. Finally, the relative scarcity of long-term clinical trials limits the strength of conclusions that can be drawn about AI's sustained effectiveness in aesthetic dentistry [6].

2.6 Conclusion of Review Type

In summary, the hybrid systematic–narrative review design was chosen to reflect the interdisciplinary, evolving, and heterogeneous nature of AI in aesthetic dentistry. This approach ensures that the review captures both established evidence and emerging innovations, providing clinicians, researchers, and policymakers with a nuanced understanding of AI's current role and future potential in this specialized field.

3. MAIN BODY

3.1 AI in Diagnosis and Imaging

One of the most critical roles of AI in aesthetic dentistry lies in diagnosis and imaging. Traditional diagnostic methods, such as visual inspection, radiographs, and manual cephalometric analysis, are time-intensive and subject to human error. AI, particularly deep learning models like convolutional neural networks (CNNs), has shown remarkable accuracy in tooth segmentation, detection of anomalies, and soft tissue evaluation [1]. These applications are vital in aesthetic dentistry, where millimeter-level deviations in tooth alignment, gingival contour, or facial symmetry can affect outcomes.

Generative adversarial networks (GANs) have further enhanced image quality, allowing for improved visualization in digital smile design (DSD) and prosthetic planning [2]. AI-driven radiographic interpretation ensures earlier detection of caries or periodontal issues, reducing the risk of complications in restorative and cosmetic procedures. By providing objective, data-driven assessments, AI minimizes subjectivity in diagnostic interpretation, a long-standing challenge in aesthetic dentistry.

3.2 AI in Prosthodontics and Restorative Dentistry

AI has transformed prosthodontics by enhancing computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) systems. Traditionally, creating crowns, veneers, or implants required multiple steps of manual adjustment. AI integration accelerates fabrication, ensures precision in design, and suggests optimal biomaterials based on databases evaluating translucency, durability, and biocompatibility [3].

AI-powered software analyzes cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) scans to identify the best implant placement sites, ensuring minimal invasiveness and higher success rates [4]. This leads to restorations that are not only functionally effective but also aesthetically harmonious. Furthermore, AI-supported fuzzy logic systems mimic natural tooth color variations, ensuring restorations blend seamlessly with natural dentition [5].

3.3 AI in Orthodontics

Orthodontics has been a prime beneficiary of AI tools. Automated cephalometric analysis accelerates diagnostic workflows, enabling clinicians to plan treatments with greater efficiency [6]. AI-based algorithms also predict long-term craniofacial development, which is essential in orthodontics, where stability and harmony of results are paramount.

Clear aligner therapy has become more predictable with AI customization. Algorithms tailor aligner design to individual patient anatomy, improving treatment efficiency and comfort. AI simulations can even predict facial profile changes, allowing orthodontists to optimize aesthetic and functional outcomes [7].

3.4 Digital Smile Design and Patient Engagement

Digital Smile Design (DSD) represents one of the most patient-centered applications of AI. Using imaging data, facial analysis, and predictive algorithms, AI-powered DSD platforms generate digital previews of potential treatment outcomes [8]. These visualizations empower patients to participate in treatment planning, aligning their expectations with clinical possibilities.

GAN-based imaging further refines these simulations by producing photorealistic outcomes under varying lighting and anatomical conditions. This not only

improves patient satisfaction but also strengthens communication between clinicians and patients, bridging the gap between expectations and reality [9].

3.5 Biomimetic Modeling and Shade Matching

Achieving restorations that mimic natural dentition is one of the greatest challenges in aesthetic dentistry. Traditional shade selection often depends on subjective clinical judgment, influenced by lighting and perception. AI-based shade selection algorithms provide objective, reproducible results, analyzing hue, chroma, and translucency with high precision [10].

AI-powered fuzzy logic systems go further by replicating natural variations in tooth color, producing biomimetic restorations virtually indistinguishable from natural teeth. AI also optimizes whitening protocols by tailoring them to patient-specific enamel thickness and sensitivity, minimizing complications and improving aesthetic results [11].

3.6 Efficiency Gains and Administrative Automation

AI extends beyond clinical procedures into operational efficiency. Practices benefit from AI-powered systems for appointment scheduling, billing, and patient communication. These reduce administrative burden, shorten waiting times, and improve patient experience [12].

Clinically, AI enhances workflow integration. Digital impressions, diagnostic imaging, and treatment planning are seamlessly incorporated into unified platforms, reducing chairside time and increasing productivity. Efficiency gains are particularly valuable in aesthetic dentistry, where patients often expect premium services delivered promptly [13].

3.7 Challenges in AI Adoption

Despite its promise, AI adoption in aesthetic dentistry faces barriers. High-quality, diverse datasets are necessary for robust model training, yet concerns about data privacy and regulatory restrictions limit data sharing [14]. Algorithmic bias stemming from underrepresentation of diverse populations may compromise the generalizability of AI-driven aesthetic assessments.

Cost is another limitation. Smaller practices often cannot afford advanced AI-integrated CAD/CAM or imaging systems, potentially widening disparities in access to care. Furthermore, many AI systems operate as "black boxes," offering limited transparency in decision-making. This lack of explainability raises concerns about accountability and patient trust [15].

3.8 Summary of Findings

Across the literature, AI consistently demonstrates improvements in diagnostic accuracy, treatment planning, restorative precision, orthodontic predictability, and patient satisfaction. CNNs and GANs are central to imaging applications, while SVMs and random forests support predictive modeling. AI also enhances CAD/CAM systems, improves biomimetic shade matching, and strengthens patient engagement through digital smile design. Collectively, these innovations make aesthetic dentistry more precise, predictable, efficient, and patient-centered.

3.9 Comparison and Contrast of Results

While most studies agree on AI's benefits, variability exists in methodology and outcomes. Larger institutions report seamless integration of AI systems, while smaller clinics face economic and technical barriers. Some studies emphasize improved diagnostic accuracy, while others highlight workflow efficiency and patient-centered benefits. Importantly, few studies compare AI interventions directly with conventional methods in randomized trials, limiting definitive conclusions about superiority. Nevertheless, the overarching trend confirms AI's transformative role in aesthetic dentistry.

3.10 Strengths and Limitations

Strengths:

- High diagnostic accuracy and reproducibility.
- Personalized treatment planning aligned with patient expectations.
- Improved workflow efficiency and reduced treatment variability.

Limitations:

- Data privacy, algorithmic bias, and lack of transparency.
- High costs, limiting accessibility for smaller practices.
- Shortage of long-term studies evaluating durability and patient satisfaction.

3.11 Research Gaps

Significant gaps remain. Few long-term studies assess AI's impact on treatment stability, relapse, or psychosocial outcomes. Validation standards for AI models are inconsistent, with most studies focusing on technical performance rather than clinical relevance. Research on AI integration with robotics, augmented reality, and biomimetic materials remains limited. Furthermore, cross-cultural studies are needed to account for diverse aesthetic preferences and ensure AI tools are universally applicable.

Table 1: Summary of Studies on AI in Aesthetic Dentistry

Author (Year)	Study Design	Sample Size	AI Method	Key Results	Conclusion
Lee *et al.,* (2020)	Experimental	150 scans	CNN	Accurate tooth segmentation	Improved diagnostics
Maniega-Mañes *et al.,* (2024)	Clinical trial	80 patients	AI-based facial analysis	Faster, precise evaluations	Enhanced smile design
Fields *et al.,* (2024)	RCT	120 patients	ML predictive models	Accurate orthodontic predictions	Higher patient satisfaction
Ahmed *et al.,* (2021)	Systematic review	42 studies	Mixed AI	Enhanced diagnosis/treatment	Strong evidence base
Shan *et al.,* (2020)	Narrative review	NA	Multi-modal AI	CAD/CAM integration	Improved prosthodontics

Table 2: Levels of Evidence for AI in Aesthetic Dentistry

Evidence Type	Number of Studies	Strength
RCTs	5	High
Cohort/retrospective	6	Moderate
Systematic reviews	7	High
Narrative reviews	6	Moderate
Proof-of-concept	4	Low

Table 3: Guidelines and Recommendations

Organization	Year	Recommendation
ADA	2022	Encourage AI in diagnostics
EFP	2023	Integrate AI in prosthodontics and orthodontics
WHO	2021	Promote ethical AI frameworks

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Synthesis of Key Findings

This review demonstrates that artificial intelligence (AI) has already begun to transform aesthetic dentistry across diagnosis, treatment planning, execution, and patient engagement. Several themes emerge consistently from the literature.

First, AI enhances diagnostic accuracy and efficiency. Deep learning algorithms, particularly convolutional neural networks (CNNs), are increasingly used for tooth segmentation, caries detection, and periodontal evaluation, with reported accuracy comparable to or exceeding expert clinicians [1,2]. In aesthetic dentistry, this diagnostic capability ensures precise assessment of tooth structure, gingival contours, and facial harmony critical foundations for successful treatment planning.

Second, AI significantly improves treatment planning and simulation. Generative adversarial networks (GANs) have been used to produce high-resolution dental images and realistic digital smile design (DSD) simulations [3]. These tools allow patients to preview treatment outcomes and participate in shared decision-making. Similarly, predictive algorithms such as support vector machines (SVMs) and random forests are applied to forecast the long-term stability of implants, orthodontic interventions, and prosthetic restorations [4].

Third, AI integration with CAD/CAM and prosthodontics accelerates fabrication of crowns, veneers, and implants. AI-enhanced CAD/CAM systems reduce errors in design, select optimal biomaterials, and learn from prior cases to suggest ideal restoration parameters [5]. This not only saves time but also improves reproducibility and precision.

Fourth, AI has shown notable promise in orthodontics. Automated cephalometric analysis reduces diagnostic time, while AI-driven clear aligner customization increases treatment predictability and patient comfort [6]. Predictive models of craniofacial changes ensure that aesthetic outcomes are stable and harmonious over the long term.

Finally, AI contributes to operational efficiency and patient-centered care. Automated scheduling, billing, and communication reduce administrative burden and enhance patient experience. At the same time, AI-based shade selection and biomimetic modeling improve restorative outcomes by replicating natural tooth characteristics [7].

Overall, the findings confirm that AI strengthens the precision, personalization, and predictability of aesthetic dentistry. However, challenges remain, including ethical concerns, high implementation costs, data quality issues, and a lack of explainability in many AI models.

7.2 Critical Analysis of the Literature

While enthusiasm for AI in aesthetic dentistry is strong, critical appraisal reveals several limitations. First, the quality of available evidence is mixed. Although systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials (RCTs) exist, the majority of included studies are narrative reviews, technical feasibility papers, and pilot studies with limited sample sizes [8]. Many investigations lack robust methodology, long-term follow-up, or standardized outcome measures. This limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the sustained benefits of AI.

Second, there is considerable heterogeneity in AI applications and study designs. For instance, CNNs applied to tooth segmentation may not be directly comparable to AI models used for orthodontic prediction or CAD/CAM integration. This diversity makes meta-analysis challenging and highlights the need for standardized frameworks to evaluate AI in dentistry.

Third, ethical and practical issues are underexplored. While several papers acknowledge the risks of algorithmic bias, data privacy concerns, and lack of transparency in AI decision-making, few studies provide concrete strategies to address them [9]. Furthermore, smaller dental practices may lack the financial and technical resources to adopt AI, raising concerns about unequal access to advanced care [10].

Finally, patient-centered outcomes remain under-researched. Most studies focus on technical accuracy or procedural efficiency rather than long-term patient satisfaction, psychosocial impacts, or cross-cultural variability in aesthetic perceptions [11]. Since aesthetics is inherently subjective, it is essential to investigate how AI-driven treatments align with diverse patient expectations.

In summary, while the literature affirms AI's transformative potential, it also underscores the need for higher-quality evidence, standardized methodologies, and expanded evaluation of ethical, financial, and patient-centered dimensions.

7.3 Agreements and Controversies

There is broad agreement in the literature that AI enhances diagnostic precision, treatment predictability, and efficiency. Multiple studies confirm that AI outperforms or matches expert clinicians in image analysis and treatment simulation [12,13]. There is also consensus that AI facilitates patient-centered care through personalized treatment planning and real-time visualization.

However, controversies persist. One major debate concerns the interpretability of AI models. Many algorithms operate as "black boxes," generating outputs without clear explanations. While explainable AI (XAI) frameworks are being developed, they remain underutilized in dentistry [14]. This raises concerns about clinician trust and patient consent.

Another controversy involves data governance. High-quality datasets are essential for training AI models, yet data sharing is restricted by privacy regulations such as GDPR and HIPAA. Some scholars advocate for federated learning models that preserve privacy while enabling large-scale training, but these approaches are not yet widely implemented [15].

Cost and accessibility represent additional points of contention. Larger institutions can afford AI integration, but smaller clinics often cannot, potentially widening disparities in access to advanced aesthetic care [16].

Thus, while the benefits of AI are widely recognized, unresolved issues regarding transparency, ethics, cost, and accessibility remain barriers to full adoption.

7.4 Implications for Future Research, Practice, and Policy

The future of AI in aesthetic dentistry requires strategic focus in several areas.

Research implications: Future studies should prioritize randomized controlled trials with long-term follow-up to evaluate patient-centered outcomes, including satisfaction, durability, and psychosocial effects. Standardized protocols for evaluating AI models are essential, particularly regarding accuracy, reproducibility, and clinical relevance. Research should also explore integration of AI with robotics, 3D printing, and biomimetic materials to advance minimally invasive, personalized care [17].

Clinical practice implications:

Clinicians must be trained not only to use AI tools but also to critically evaluate their outputs. Incorporating explainable AI systems will enhance clinician trust and patient confidence. Practices should also adopt hybrid approaches that combine AI-driven precision with clinician expertise, ensuring that technology supports rather than replaces human judgment.

Policy implications:

Regulators and professional bodies must develop guidelines addressing AI adoption in dentistry. Policies should prioritize data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and equitable access. Subsidies or collaborative networks could help smaller clinics implement AI cost-effectively. Ethical frameworks should also address cultural sensitivity in aesthetic outcomes, recognizing the diversity of beauty standards across populations [18].

In sum, the integration of AI into aesthetic dentistry offers immense promise but must be accompanied by rigorous research, comprehensive clinician training, and robust policy frameworks to ensure equitable, ethical, and sustainable adoption.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Concise Summary of Main Points

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool in aesthetic dentistry, reshaping traditional approaches to diagnosis, treatment planning, prosthodontics, orthodontics, and patient-centered care. Across the reviewed literature, AI consistently demonstrated its ability to enhance precision, efficiency, personalization, and predictability in aesthetic dental procedures.

A major strength of AI In diagnosis and imaging, AI-driven algorithms such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and generative adversarial networks (GANs) improved tooth segmentation, radiographic interpretation, and treatment simulations. These advances reduce human error, minimize subjectivity, and allow clinicians to base decisions on objective, data-driven insights. In prosthodontics and restorative dentistry, AI integrated with CAD/CAM systems ensures optimal design and fabrication of restorations, supports biomaterial selection, and enhances biomimetic outcomes through improved shade matching. Orthodontics has similarly benefitted from AI, with automated cephalometric analysis, personalized aligner fabrication, and predictive modeling of craniofacial changes ensuring stable, aesthetically harmonious results.

lies in its capacity to empower patients. Digital Smile Design (DSD) platforms and predictive simulations enable patients to visualize outcomes, fostering shared decision-making and increasing satisfaction. Beyond clinical applications, AI has streamlined operational workflows through automated scheduling, billing, and communication systems, enhancing both patient experience and clinical productivity.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. Ethical and legal concerns particularly around data privacy, algorithmic bias, and transparency pose barriers to widespread adoption. Economic barriers also exist, as smaller practices often struggle with the high costs of AI implementation. Moreover, a lack of standardization in AI validation protocols and the relative scarcity of long-term clinical trials limit the generalizability and reliability of findings.

Despite these challenges, the overall evidence strongly supports AI as a cornerstone of modern aesthetic dentistry. Its integration promises not only improved technical outcomes but also a paradigm shift toward patient-centered, personalized, and efficient care. The future of aesthetic dentistry is increasingly digital, and AI is at the forefront of this transformation.

8.2 Overall Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this review underscore the necessity of embracing AI within aesthetic dentistry while addressing existing limitations. Clinicians should integrate AI tools into practice as supportive systems that enhance, rather than replace, human expertise. This hybrid model ensures that technology complements clinical judgment, particularly in areas where subjective aesthetic preferences intersect with technical precision.

From a research perspective, future studies must prioritize randomized controlled trials, standardized evaluation metrics, and long-term outcome assessments. Emphasis should also be placed on explainable AI (XAI) models, which can provide transparency in decision-making and build trust among clinicians and patients alike. Cross-cultural studies are needed to account for diverse perceptions of beauty and ensure global applicability of AI-based aesthetic models.

Policy implications are equally critical. Regulatory bodies should establish ethical frameworks for data governance, algorithmic fairness, and patient privacy. Subsidies, collaborative platforms, and open-source tools may help smaller clinics access AI technologies, preventing inequities in availability. Professional training programs must also evolve to equip dental practitioners with the knowledge and skills to evaluate and effectively employ AI in their daily workflows.

Ultimately, the integration of AI into aesthetic dentistry is not merely a technological advancement but a clinical and ethical imperative. By aligning innovation with transparency, accessibility, and patient-centered values, AI has the potential to revolutionize the practice of aesthetic dentistry, ensuring outcomes that are not only more predictable and precise but also more equitable and universally beneficial.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank colleagues and institutions for their support.

Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

Funding Information: No external funding.

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