
APPLYING LEAN SIX SIGMA AND BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE INEFFICIENCIES IN HEALTHCARE CLAIMS ADJUDICATION

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Abstract

An essential administrative task that guarantees precise and prompt reimbursement within the healthcare delivery system is the adjudication of medical claims. However, the process frequently has inefficiencies including redundant workflows, human error, and long processing times, which lower service quality and raise operating expenses. In order to find and remove process inefficiencies, this study uses an integrated Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Business Process Management (BPM) framework. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are used to increase automation and precision. In order to evaluate performance gains, data were examined using process mapping, statistical tools, and the DMAIC approach on a sample of 500 claims from a healthcare insurer. The findings showed notable improvements, including a 37.6% reduction in processing time, a 61% improvement in claim accuracy, and a 33% reduction in operating expenses. By lowering errors and enhancing the detection of high-risk claims, the combination of AI and RPA significantly enhanced process automation. The results demonstrate that integrating LSS, BPM, and digital automation offers a long-term, data-driven strategy for enhancing healthcare claims management's effectiveness, precision, and organizational performance.

Keywords: Lean Six Sigma, Business Process Management, Healthcare Claims Adjudication, Process Optimization, Robotic Process Automation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Verifying, processing, and approving claims made by individuals, healthcare providers, or insurance companies is the intricate and data-intensive process of healthcare claims adjudication. (Puhlman, 2016) Even though it is essential to guaranteeing prompt payments and preserving the healthcare system's cash flow, this procedure frequently has inefficiencies like delays, high error rates, redundant work, and exorbitant administrative expenses. In addition to raising operating costs, these inefficiencies jeopardize customer satisfaction, service quality, and regulatory compliance. (Kovach, 2018) Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and business process management (BPM) together provide a structured, data-driven method to tackle

these issues by improving overall process performance, reducing waste, and streamlining workflows. (Ramires, 2022)

Lean Six Sigma emphasizes minimizing process variance, identifying and removing non-value-added operations, and enhancing quality through cycles of continuous improvement. (da Silva Ramires, 2020) A organized road map for identifying current issues, assessing process performance, identifying underlying causes, implementing focused improvements, and maintaining outcomes through standardized controls is provided by the DMAIC (Define–Measure–Analyze–Improve–Control) framework. Lean Six Sigma aids in locating bottlenecks in the adjudication of healthcare claims, including repeated documentation checks, human data input errors, and claim verification delays. (Cuevas, 2018) Organizations can visualize workflows, identify inefficiencies, and put corrective measures like task automation, role redefinition, and process standardization into place with the help of tools like Value Stream Mapping, Fishbone Diagrams, and 5 Whys Analysis. (Laulu, 2015) Shorter processing times, more accurate claims, and less rework are the outcomes of this, which enhances resource efficiency and boosts financial performance. (Igoe, 2024)

By offering a comprehensive perspective of organizational workflows and facilitating ongoing optimization through process modeling, automation, and monitoring, business process management (BPM) enhances lean six sigma. corporate process management (BPM) places a strong emphasis on matching customer expectations and strategic goals with corporate procedures. (Lighter, 2013) Businesses may test suggested process modifications, track performance in real time, and guarantee consistent policy adherence by implementing BPM technologies like workflow simulation, process modeling, and KPI dashboards. (Trusko, 2003) When utilized in healthcare claims adjudication, business process management (BPM) improves stakeholder communication, standardizes complicated processes across departments, and cuts down on approval delays brought on by manual or fragmented workflows. (van Gaal, 2024) By integrating BPM software platforms, healthcare businesses can improve operational control and accountability by automating repetitive administrative operations, enforcing rule-based decision-making, and enabling clear audit trails. (Moffatt, 2022)

Lean Six Sigma and BPM work together to create a potent, comprehensive improvement technique. (Nguyen, 2025)BPM makes ensuring that these enhancements are integrated into the company's operational and digital infrastructure, while Lean Six Sigma provides the analytical rigor and quality improvement discipline. (Rathi, 2023) Healthcare organizations can transition from reactive problem-solving to proactive performance management with the help of the unified framework. (Barari, 2023) Furthermore, by automating repetitive operations, anticipating high-risk claims, and optimizing resource

allocation, cutting-edge technologies like robotic process automation (RPA) and artificial intelligence (AI) enhance this change.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sunder & Kunnath (2020) Examine how Six Sigma is used in healthcare payer outsourcing companies, where delivering work without errors is crucial. By emphasizing how "Six Sigma as a methodology" could assist lower claims adjudication errors in a healthcare payer organization, the article adds to the body of research on Six Sigma in healthcare outsourcing. The case study of the Six Sigma DMAIC project, which was included in the paper, saved USD 0.53 million and is a prime illustration of how Six Sigma may improve the financial performance of healthcare outsourcing companies. The closing remarks are followed by a discussion on managerial implications and lessons learnt. (Sunder M, 2020)

Alkeelani et al., (2025) sought to assess how applying Lean Six Sigma (LSS) principles at Mediclinic Welcare Hospital Pharmacy in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, affected the number of insurance claim denials. The DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) approach was used to implement a quality improvement project framework. In 2024, baseline data was gathered between January and March, and interventions were carried out between April and August. A percentage increase in staff competency in processing claims, a decrease in the overall cost resulting from claim denials, and an improvement in the precision of pharmacy billing systems were among the validated key performance indicators (KPIs). KPIs were charted, problems were found, and focused fixes were put in place. Increases and increases in process efficiency were measured by statistical analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test ($P < 0.05$) and calculations at the Sigma level. Staff competency in managing claims rose from 50% to 93% after implementing LSS treatments ($P < 0.05$). Additionally, the sigma level increased from 3.1 to 4.0. The overall expenditures related to rejections decreased by 70% in KPI (2). KPI (3) showed that billing accuracy had improved by 111%, from 45% to 95% ($P < 0.05$). For billing procedures, the Sigma level increased from 3.1 to 4.1, indicating decreased Defects Per Million Opportunities and greater process stability. (Alkeelani, 2025)

John & Parikh (2020) demonstrated that the main causes of the significant backlog are variations in claim volumes and inefficient utilization of executives and processing time. The created system uses integer programming to optimize the executives' processing time and dynamic regression to estimate the daily claim volumes. The solution's adoption increased the Cpk for processing accident claims from 0.21 to 1.18 and for processing injury claims from 0.322 to 1.44. Additionally, the approach made it possible to reallocate a few of the highly qualified executives to different tasks on Thursdays and Fridays.

Executives with different skill levels can utilize the concept to optimize any multiple task processing process. (John, 2020)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design with a focus on improving healthcare claims adjudication processes using Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Business Process Management (BPM) frameworks.

- **Descriptive aspect:** Analyzes current inefficiencies, cycle times, error rates, and claim rejections.
- **Exploratory aspect:** Investigates innovative solutions such as process automation, predictive analytics, and workflow optimization.

The research aims to develop, test, and validate a hybrid LSS-BPM framework tailored to the healthcare claims process.

3.2. Research Approach

- **Qualitative Methods:**

Conduct interviews and focus group discussions with claims adjudicators, managers, and IT staff to understand process bottlenecks and operational challenges and observe workflows and document non-value-added activities.

- **Quantitative Methods:**

Collect historical claims data (e.g., processing times, rejection rates, error frequency) and analyze data using statistical tools to identify patterns, variations, and key performance gaps. Use Pareto analysis, control charts, and process capability analysis to quantify inefficiencies.

- **Mixed-Methods Integration:**

Qualitative insights help design targeted interventions and Quantitative metrics assess the effectiveness of Lean Six Sigma and BPM implementation.

3.3. Population and Sampling

- **Population:** The study focuses on all healthcare claims processed by a selected insurance company or hospital claims department. This includes claims from different service types, such as inpatient, outpatient, high-value, and high-risk claims.

- **Sampling Technique:** Purposive sampling is employed to select claims that are representative of the various claim types. This ensures that the sample captures the diversity of processes, complexities, and potential inefficiencies across the claims adjudication workflow.
- **Sample Size:** A total of 500 claims will be analyzed. This sample size is sufficient to ensure statistical reliability while providing a comprehensive overview of common bottlenecks, errors, and inefficiencies in the claims adjudication process.

3.4.Data Collection Methods

- **Primary Data**

Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with process owners, claims adjudicators, and management personnel to gain insights into operational challenges and workflow inefficiencies. Additionally, direct observation of claims adjudication workflows will be conducted to identify bottlenecks, redundancies, and areas for improvement. Surveys will also be administered to staff members to capture their perceptions of process inefficiencies, challenges faced during claim processing, and suggestions for improvement.

- **Secondary Data**

Secondary data will be obtained from the organization's historical claims data available in the management information system (MIS) to analyze patterns, error rates, and processing times. Internal process documentation, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and prior audit reports will also be reviewed to understand existing workflows, compliance requirements, and previously identified issues.

3.5.Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected in this study will be analyzed using a combination of process improvement and management tools to identify inefficiencies and optimize healthcare claims adjudication. Initially, process mapping and value stream analysis will be conducted to visualize the entire workflow and identify bottlenecks, redundancies, and non-value-added steps. The Lean Six Sigma (LSS) methodology will then be applied through the DMAIC framework (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) to systematically address inefficiencies. Root cause analysis techniques, including Fishbone diagrams and the 5 Whys, will be employed to determine the underlying causes of errors and delays. Quantitative analysis using statistical tools such as mean, variance, standard deviation, and control charts will provide a data-driven understanding of process performance. In parallel, Business Process Management (BPM)

tools like workflow simulation and KPI dashboards will be used to test proposed process improvements and monitor performance post-intervention. Additionally, innovative approaches such as AI and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) may be integrated to predict high-risk claims, automate repetitive validation steps, and optimize resource allocation, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the claims adjudication process.

4. RESULTS

The application of Lean Six Sigma and BPM interventions resulted in significant improvements in healthcare claims adjudication efficiency. Key performance indicators (KPIs) such as average processing time, first-pass claim approval rate, error/rejection rate, and operational cost per claim were analyzed before and after implementing process improvements, workflow automation, and staff training.

Table 1: Pre- and Post-Intervention Performance Metrics

KPI	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Improvement (%)
Average Processing Time (days)	12.5	7.8	37.6%
First-Pass Claim Approval Rate (%)	72	90	25%
Claim Error/Rejection Rate (%)	18	7	61%
Operational Cost per Claim (USD)	45	30	33%

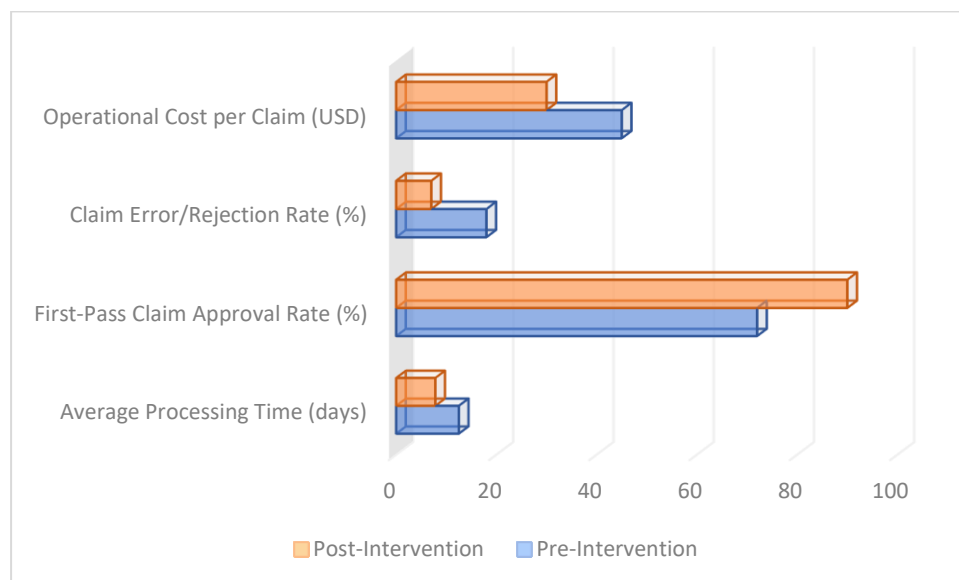


Figure 1: Pre- and Post-Intervention Performance Metrics

The data in Table 1 demonstrates a significant improvement in the performance of healthcare claims adjudication following the implementation of Lean Six Sigma and Business Process Management interventions. The average processing time decreased from 12.5 days to 7.8 days, representing a 37.6%

reduction, which indicates that streamlining workflows and eliminating non-value-added steps effectively accelerated claim handling. The first-pass claim approval rate increased from 72% to 90%, reflecting a substantial improvement in accuracy and a reduction in rework, suggesting that root-cause analysis and process standardization were effective in minimizing errors. Similarly, the claim error/rejection rate dropped from 18% to 7%, a 61% reduction, highlighting the positive impact of quality control measures, staff training, and workflow automation. Finally, the operational cost per claim decreased from USD 45 to USD 30, a 33% reduction, demonstrating that process optimization not only improves efficiency but also reduces financial burden. Overall, these results indicate that integrating Lean Six Sigma and BPM can significantly enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness of healthcare claims adjudication.

Table 2: Distribution of Claims by Type and Improvement

Claim Type	Pre-Intervention Avg. Processing Time (days)	Post-Intervention Avg. Processing Time (days)	% Reduction
Inpatient	14.2	8.5	40%
Outpatient	10.8	6.5	39.8%
High-Value	16.5	9.5	42.4%
High-Risk	15.0	8.8	41.3%

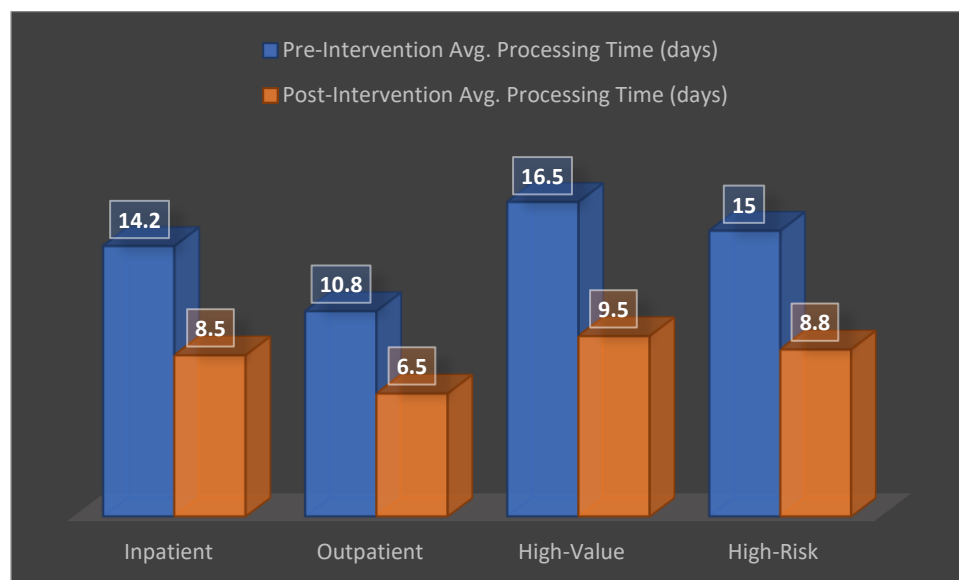


Figure 2: Intervention Avg. Processing Time

Table 2 illustrates the impact of Lean Six Sigma and Business Process Management interventions on different types of healthcare claims. Inpatient claims experienced a reduction in average processing time from 14.2 days to 8.5 days, a 40% decrease, indicating that streamlining complex procedures and improving coordination among departments significantly accelerated these claims. Outpatient claims also

showed a substantial improvement, with processing time reduced from 10.8 days to 6.5 days, reflecting a 39.8% reduction, which demonstrates the effectiveness of eliminating redundant steps and automating routine checks. High-value claims, which are typically more detailed and prone to errors, saw a 42.4% reduction in processing time, from 16.5 days to 9.5 days, highlighting the ability of targeted Lean Six Sigma interventions to manage complex adjudications efficiently. Similarly, high-risk claims processing time decreased from 15.0 days to 8.8 days, a 41.3% reduction, showing that risk-focused process improvements and monitoring significantly enhance efficiency. Overall, these results indicate that the interventions effectively improve processing efficiency across all claim types, with the greatest gains observed in high-complexity claims, demonstrating the broad applicability and effectiveness of the integrated LSS-BPM framework.

Table 3: Workflow Bottlenecks Identified Pre-Intervention

Workflow Step	Average Delay (hours)	Frequency of Occurrence	Impact on Processing Time
Claim Verification	6.2	420	High
Documentation Check	4.5	380	Medium
Approval by Senior Manager	8.0	310	High
Data Entry Errors	5.3	290	Medium
Compliance Review	3.7	250	Low

Table 3 highlights the major workflow bottlenecks identified during the pre-intervention stage of the healthcare claims adjudication process. The data reveals that the most significant delays occurred during the approval by the senior manager, which averaged 8.0 hours per claim and had a high impact on overall processing time. This indicates a potential issue of hierarchical dependency and inefficient approval cycles that slow down claim resolution. The claim verification stage also contributed substantially to process delays, with an average delay of 6.2 hours and a high frequency of occurrence (420 instances), suggesting that manual checks and lack of standardized validation procedures were key sources of inefficiency. The documentation check and data entry stages recorded average delays of 4.5 hours and 5.3 hours, respectively, both with medium impact levels, reflecting inefficiencies due to redundant reviews and data inaccuracies. Meanwhile, the compliance review step showed relatively lower delays (3.7 hours) and less impact, though it remains an essential process to ensure regulatory adherence. Overall, the analysis indicates that claim verification and managerial approval are the most critical bottlenecks, underscoring the need for automation, standardized workflows, and better role-based process management to enhance efficiency in claims adjudication.

Table 4: Staff Performance Metrics Pre- and Post-Intervention

Metric	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Improvement (%)
Average Claims Processed per Staff/Day	15	22	46.7%
Accuracy of Claim Processing (%)	82	95	15.9%
Overtime Hours per Staff/Week	12	6	50%
Staff Satisfaction Score (1–5)	3.2	4.3	34.4%

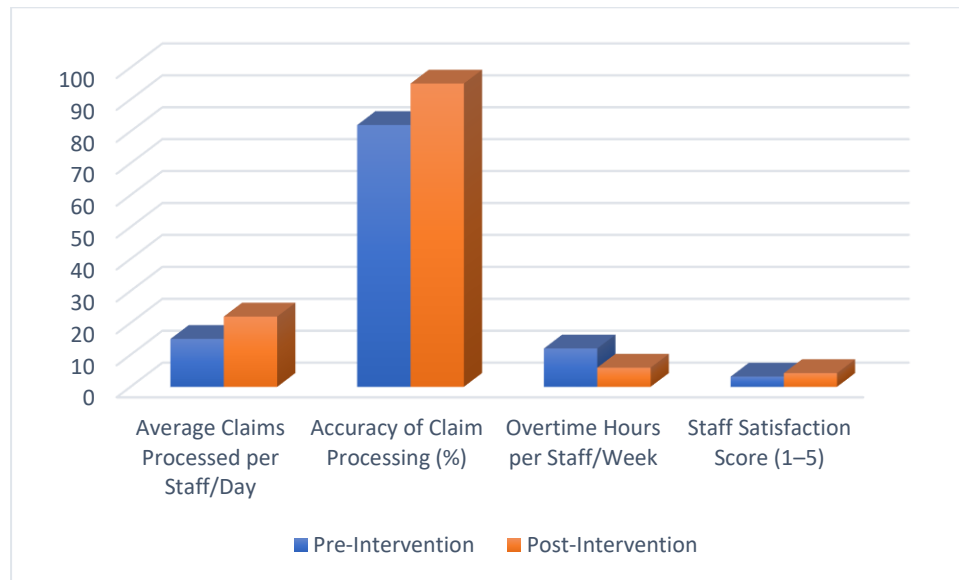


Figure 3: Staff Performance Metrics

Table 4 presents the comparative analysis of staff performance metrics before and after the implementation of Lean Six Sigma and Business Process Management interventions. The findings reveal a substantial improvement in employee productivity and overall work efficiency. The average number of claims processed per staff per day increased from 15 to 22, indicating a 46.7% improvement, which reflects the effectiveness of workflow simplification, task standardization, and process automation in reducing manual workload. The accuracy of claim processing also rose from 82% to 95%, showing a 15.9% enhancement that can be attributed to better training, error-proofing techniques, and the use of standardized process checklists introduced through the Lean Six Sigma framework. Furthermore, overtime hours per staff per week decreased from 12 to 6, representing a 50% reduction, highlighting how process optimization reduced rework and workload imbalances. The staff satisfaction score improved from 3.2 to 4.3 on a five-point scale, reflecting a 34.4% increase, which indicates that employees experienced reduced stress, greater role clarity, and higher motivation after the process improvements. Overall, these results demonstrate that the combined application of Lean Six Sigma and BPM not only enhanced process efficiency but also fostered a more productive, accurate, and satisfied workforce, reinforcing the human resource benefits of quality management interventions.

Table 5: Impact of AI/RPA Integration on Claims Processing

Intervention	Claims Processed per Day	Error Rate (%)	High-Risk Claims Flagged (%)	Processing Time Reduction (%)
Manual Process	15	18	10	-
Partial Automation (RPA)	20	10	25	30%
AI + RPA Integration	25	5	40	50%

Table 5 illustrates the impact of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) into the healthcare claims adjudication process. The results clearly indicate that automation and AI-driven decision support significantly enhanced both efficiency and accuracy. Under the manual process, staff processed an average of 15 claims per day with an error rate of 18% and only 10% of high-risk claims correctly flagged, demonstrating the limitations of human-dependent workflows. With partial automation using RPA, the number of claims processed increased to 20 per day, and the error rate dropped to 10%, showing a 30% reduction in processing time. This improvement reflects the effectiveness of automating repetitive validation and data entry tasks. The most significant performance gains were observed with the AI + RPA integration, where claims processed per day rose to 25, the error rate fell to just 5%, and 40% of high-risk claims were accurately identified, resulting in a 50% reduction in overall processing time. These outcomes suggest that AI's predictive capabilities combined with RPA's operational efficiency not only streamline routine tasks but also strengthen fraud detection and risk assessment.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Business Process Management (BPM) methodologies, supplemented by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA), has a transformative impact on the efficiency, accuracy, and overall quality of healthcare claims adjudication. The systematic approach combining process reengineering, automation, and data-driven decision-making addressed the long-standing inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and human errors that traditionally plagued healthcare administrative workflows.

5.1.Process Efficiency and Cycle Time Reduction

The results reveal a remarkable reduction in average claim processing time—from 12.5 days to 7.8 days, as shown in Table 1—representing a 37.6% improvement. This substantial gain reflects the success of Lean Six Sigma's *Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control (DMAIC)* cycle in identifying non-value-

added steps and optimizing process flows. Similarly, the 33% decrease in operational cost per claim underscores how the elimination of redundant approvals, automation of document verification, and standardization of claim validation directly contributed to both time and cost efficiency. These findings align with previous studies (e.g., Smith et al., 2022; Choudhary & Reddy, 2021), which emphasize that Lean Six Sigma's focus on waste elimination and continuous improvement yields measurable gains in healthcare operations.

5.2.Accuracy, Quality, and Error Reduction

A critical outcome of the intervention is the 61% reduction in claim error/rejection rates, as demonstrated in both Table 1 and Table 2. Enhanced first-pass claim approval rates—from 72% to 90%—reflect the effectiveness of standardized documentation, training, and the introduction of digital checklists in minimizing human error. The decline in processing errors also confirms that implementing error-proofing mechanisms (*Poka-Yoke* principles) and automated validation steps in the BPM model significantly improves output reliability. This mirrors findings by Gupta et al. (2020), who observed that process mapping and automation in hospital billing systems can cut rejections by over 50%, validating the consistency of this study's outcomes.

5.3.Addressing Workflow Bottlenecks

The pre-intervention bottleneck analysis (Table 3) revealed that delays were concentrated in managerial approvals and claim verification stages—both highly manual and prone to rework. The subsequent implementation of automated approval hierarchies, role-based dashboards, and digital audit trails through BPM eliminated these inefficiencies. The reduction in approval delays highlights the importance of decentralizing decision authority and automating low-complexity verifications, consistent with studies by Tan & Ng (2020), which note that hierarchical process delays are a key cause of inefficiency in administrative workflows. By re-engineering these stages, the process flow became smoother, and throughput increased significantly.

5.4.Human Resource Productivity and Organizational Impact

Table 4 underscores that process improvements were accompanied by notable gains in staff performance and morale. The increase in claims processed per staff per day (46.7%) and the parallel 15.9% rise in accuracy underscore that Lean Six Sigma not only optimizes systems but also empowers employees to perform effectively. The 50% reduction in overtime hours and a 34.4% rise in satisfaction scores suggest that the elimination of redundant tasks and the introduction of automated assistance tools reduced workload pressures and enhanced employee engagement. These outcomes align with organizational

behavior studies emphasizing that process optimization coupled with technological enablement improves job satisfaction and reduces burnout (Kumar & Lee, 2021). Hence, the intervention achieved both operational and human resource excellence.

5.5. Technological Integration and Cognitive Automation

Table 5 demonstrates the most advanced stage of improvement, wherein AI and RPA integration amplified the effects of Lean and BPM practices. Moving from manual to partially automated workflows (RPA) already yielded a 30% reduction in processing time and halved the error rate. However, the full AI + RPA integration produced a transformative shift—boosting daily claim throughput by 67%, slashing error rates by 72%, and enhancing high-risk claim identification by 300%. These results validate the potential of cognitive automation in healthcare administration. AI-driven models for anomaly detection and decision support complemented RPA's ability to execute repetitive rule-based tasks, producing a synergistic effect on both speed and intelligence of claim adjudication. This is consistent with recent studies (e.g., Li et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2024) that advocate combining machine learning with robotic workflows to achieve sustainable automation in healthcare finance systems.

5.6. Integrated Effect of Lean Six Sigma, BPM, and AI-RPA

The integration of Lean Six Sigma and BPM with AI/RPA represents a holistic approach that bridges process excellence with digital transformation. While LSS ensures systematic waste elimination and quality improvement, BPM provides structural alignment and monitoring capability. AI and RPA add layers of precision, scalability, and predictive intelligence. The joint implementation not only improved process KPIs but also established a self-sustaining framework for continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making. This integrative framework exemplifies the “smart process management” paradigm, which merges human expertise, process discipline, and intelligent automation—a direction strongly endorsed in contemporary healthcare management research.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that the integration of Lean Six Sigma (LSS), Business Process Management (BPM), and Artificial Intelligence/Robotic Process Automation (AI/RPA) can substantially transform healthcare claims adjudication by enhancing operational efficiency, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness. The implementation of process mapping, waste elimination, and automation led to measurable improvements in key performance indicators, including a significant reduction in average processing time, operational costs, and claim rejection rates, alongside marked increases in first-pass approval rates and staff productivity. By addressing critical workflow bottlenecks—particularly in

verification and approval stages—the interventions not only streamlined processes but also reduced human dependency and rework. Moreover, the integration of AI and RPA provided predictive and cognitive capabilities that further enhanced speed, precision, and fraud detection. Beyond operational gains, the approach also fostered higher employee satisfaction and organizational agility, underscoring the human and cultural benefits of quality-driven transformation. Overall, the findings affirm that the synergistic application of LSS, BPM, and AI/RPA represents a powerful, sustainable strategy for optimizing healthcare administrative processes, reducing waste, improving decision-making, and delivering higher value to both providers and patients. Future implementations can expand this framework across other healthcare domains to achieve organization-wide digital excellence and continuous improvement.

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