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Article

Advancing project management excellence: A comprehensive framework integrating Value Engineering, Lean Six Sigma, and proven best practices

Attia Hussien Gomaa

Mechanical Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering—Shubra, Benha University, Cairo 13511, Egypt; attia.goma@feng.bu.edu.eg

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Abstract: In today's fast-paced and competitive project environment, achieving excellence in project management is vital for delivering sustained value and securing long-term strategic advantage. This study investigates the integration of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE) within project management practices. LSS applies data-driven methods to eliminate waste, reduce variability, and optimize efficiency, while VE uses functional analysis to identify cost-effective alternatives that enhance value without compromising quality. By combining these complementary methodologies, the study proposes a unified framework grounded in the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) cycle to drive continuous improvement, reduce variability, and sustain superior performance throughout the project lifecycle. The framework defines clear guiding principles, establishes measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with strategic goals, and emphasizes proactive management of critical failure factors to ensure resilient and effective project delivery. Beyond operational gains, this approach cultivates a culture of innovation, continuous learning, and data-driven decision-making, empowering organizations to anticipate risks and maintain competitive leadership. While currently conceptual, future research will validate and refine the framework through case studies, pilot projects, and simulations to comprehensively evaluate its effectiveness, scalability, and practical application.

Keywords: project management; excellence; Value Engineering; Lean Six Sigma; TQM; DMAIC; continuous improvement

1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, organizations must enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and consistently deliver high-quality projects. Tight deadlines, rising customer expectations, and complex global markets make operational excellence essential to maintaining a competitive edge. Project managers are increasingly challenged to deliver projects on time, within budget, and beyond stakeholder expectations. To meet these demands, many organizations integrate Value Engineering (VE), Lean Six Sigma (LSS), and established project management practices into a cohesive framework that drives superior performance, innovation, and measurable outcomes [1–3].

Value Engineering (VE) is a systematic approach that maximizes project value by analyzing functions and identifying cost-effective alternatives that maintain or enhance quality. Its primary goal is to achieve project objectives at minimal cost by eliminating unnecessary expenditures and optimizing resource use. VE encourages innovative, value-driven solutions early in the design phase to ensure maximum return on investment [4,5].

Lean Six Sigma (LSS) combines Lean's focus on waste elimination with Six Sigma's rigor in process optimization and quality control. By removing inefficiencies and reducing variability, LSS improves project performance through streamlined workflows and consistent, high-quality outcomes. Lean enhances flow and minimizes delays, while Six Sigma ensures precision and defect reduction, collectively boosting productivity [6,7].

Project management best practices, as outlined by frameworks such as PMI's PMBOK, provide a structured approach to managing projects across all phases. These practices ensure clear project definition, optimal resource allocation, risk mitigation, and alignment with stakeholder expectations, enabling consistent and successful delivery [8].

Table 1 compares three core methodologies: traditional project management (PM), VE, and LSS. Traditional PM emphasizes delivering projects within defined scope, schedule, and budget, using structured methods like Waterfall or Gantt charts—ideal for stable, well-defined projects. VE focuses on optimizing project value via functional analysis, promoting flexibility and collaboration. LSS integrates Lean's waste reduction and Six Sigma's quality enhancement, using iterative, data-driven cycles like DMAIC to reduce defects and optimize processes. When combined, these methodologies create a comprehensive framework that drives value creation, efficiency, and superior outcomes in complex, dynamic projects [9–12].

Table 2 contrasts traditional PM, VE, LSS, and their integration. While traditional PM excels in stable environments, it lacks agility in fast-changing contexts. VE effectively optimizes value and cost but requires specialized expertise and may not fully address timing or stakeholder complexities. LSS enhances efficiency and quality but demands extensive data and resources. Integrating these approaches harnesses their strengths to offer a robust, adaptive method for modern project challenges, though success relies on effective cross-functional collaboration.

Table 3 highlights essential VE tools that balance cost reduction with functional improvement, including Function Analysis, Cost/Function Analysis, the VE Job Plan, Brainstorming, Fast Diagramming, Function Cost Mapping, Alternatives Development, Risk Analysis, Life Cycle Costing, and Pareto Analysis. These tools help teams identify cost drivers, generate innovative solutions, and assess risks and long-term impacts.

Table 4 presents key LSS tools for boosting efficiency, quality, and waste elimination, such as Voice of the Customer, Kano Model, Value Stream Mapping, Kaizen, 5S, 8 Wastes of Lean, Root Cause Analysis (RCA), Failure Mode Effect Analysis (FMEA), Standardized Work, Just-In-Time (JIT), Andon Systems, and Control Charts. These enable continuous improvement, streamlined processes, and superior project delivery.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of project management methodologies.

#	Aspect	Traditional PM	Value Engineering (VE)	Lean Six Sigma (LSS)
1	Objective	Deliver within scope, time, and budget	Maximize value through optimization	Reduce waste, defects, and variability
2	Philosophy	Control, predictability	Value optimization and functionality	Efficiency, precision, and continuous improvement
3	Change Management	Minimize changes	Adapt to optimize value	Iterative, continuous improvements
4	Approach	Structured (e.g., Waterfall)	Function analysis and improvement	Iterative (DMAIC) process improvement
5	Customer Involvement	Feedback at milestones	Ongoing collaboration for alignment	Continuous feedback for alignment
6	Team Structure	Hierarchical	Cross-functional collaboration	Cross-functional, collaborative teams
7	Documentation	Extensive, formal	Function analysis, cost models	Process maps, SPC, control charts
8	Key Tools	WBS, Gantt, Network Diagrams	FAST, Cost Models, Value Analysis	DMAIC, SPC, Minitab, Process Mapping
9	Best Fit	Stable, well-defined projects	Cost reduction and value improvement	Continuous process improvement
10	Risk Management	Proactive, planned	Managed through value optimization	Real-time, data-driven management
11	Timeline	Fixed milestones	Flexible based on value optimization	Adaptive, iterative cycles
12	Communication	Formal, structured	Collaborative, value-driven	Transparent, data-driven feedback
13	Collaboration	Siloed	High collaboration for innovation	Strong, cross-functional teamwork
14	Scalability	Small to medium projects	Scalable for value-focused projects	Highly scalable, adaptable across industries
15	Resource Utilization	Fixed allocation	Flexible based on project needs	Dynamic, based on process needs

Table 2. Comparative analysis of project management approaches.

#	Approach	Strengths	Challenges	Ideal Use Cases	Key Success Factors
1	Traditional PM	Structured, predictable outcomes	Inflexible, slow to adapt	Stable, well-defined projects	Rigorous planning, strong leadership
2	Value Engineering	Maximizes value, reduces costs	Resource-intensive, specialized expertise needed	Cost-sensitive projects	Cross-functional collaboration, stakeholder engagement
3	Lean Six Sigma	Improves efficiency, quality, and waste reduction	Data-heavy, resource-demanding	Process optimization in manufacturing/services	Data-driven decisions, disciplined DMAIC application
4	Integrated Approach	Combines the strengths of PM, VE, and LSS	Complex coordination required	Complex, multi-objective projects	Collaborative leadership, clear communication

Table 3. Key-Value Engineering (VE) tools in project management.

#	VE Tool	Category	Description	Objective
1	Function Analysis	Value Optimization	Analyzes project functions to find cost-effective solutions.	Maximize value by focusing on core functions.
2	Cost/Function Analysis	Cost Control	Compares cost to value to identify areas for savings.	Identify cost-effective solutions without compromising functionality.
3	VE Job Plan	Process Optimization	Structured plan for value optimization stages.	Ensure systematic value optimization.
4	Brainstorming	Idea Generation	Collaborative tool for creative, cost-reducing solutions.	Generate innovative solutions to enhance value.
5	Fast Diagramming	Visualization	Visual tool mapping function relationships and costs.	Identify improvement opportunities quickly.
6	Function Cost Mapping	Cost Analysis	Links functions to costs, highlighting reduction areas.	Identify cost-saving opportunities while maintaining function.
7	Alternatives Development	Creative Solutions	Develops cost-effective alternatives to meet project goals.	Implement lower-cost alternatives.
8	Risk Analysis	Risk Management	Assesses risks of VE alternatives to avoid negative impacts.	Minimize risks of cost-saving measures.
9	Life Cycle Costing (LCC)	Long-Term Optimization	Analyzes total project life cycle costs.	Minimize long-term costs and optimize value.
10	Pareto Analysis	Problem Prioritization	Focuses on major cost drivers or inefficiencies.	Prioritize cost reductions for maximum impact.

Table 4. Key Lean Six Sigma (LSS) tools in project management.

#	LSS Tool	Category	Description	Objective
1	Project Charter	Project Management	Formal document outlining project scope and objectives.	Align project goals with organizational strategy.
2	Voice of the Customer (VoC)	Customer Focus	Collects customer feedback to identify project requirements.	Ensure the project meets customer expectations.
3	Kano Model	Customer Focus	Categorizes customer needs into basic, performance, and excitement factors.	Focus on customer satisfaction drivers.
4	Gemba Walk	Lean Leadership	Observes work processes to identify inefficiencies.	Provide insights for real-time process optimization.
5	5S Methodology	Workplace Organization	Organizes the workplace to improve efficiency and safety.	Optimize workspaces to reduce waste and enhance safety.
6	Standardized Work	Process Management	Establishes standardized work procedures.	Ensure consistent results and reduce variability.
7	8 Wastes of Lean	Waste Reduction	Identifies and eliminates common wastes (e.g., overproduction, waiting).	Maximize value by minimizing inefficiencies.
8	Kaizen	Continuous Improvement	Promotes incremental improvements in performance.	Instill a culture of continuous optimization.
9	Value Stream Mapping	Process Optimization	Visualizes process steps to identify inefficiencies.	Streamline processes and eliminate waste.
10	Just-In-Time (JIT)	Inventory Management	Produces goods only when needed to minimize inventory.	Reduce waste and improve responsiveness.
11	Kanban	Workflow Management	Visual system for managing tasks and inventory levels.	Improve task flow visibility and prioritization.
12	Poka-Yoke	Error Proofing	Implements fail-safes to reduce defects.	Prevent errors before they occur.

Table 4. (*Continued*).

#	LSS Tool	Category	Description	Objective
13	Root Cause Analysis (RCA)	Problem-Solving	Identifies the root cause of problems.	Provide sustainable solutions to prevent recurrence.
14	Fishbone Diagram	Root Cause Analysis	Visualizes potential causes of a problem.	Supports structured problem-solving.
15	Bottleneck Analysis	Process Flow	Identifies bottlenecks that limit process throughput.	Improve process flow and capacity utilization.
16	Takt Time	Production Efficiency	Balances production rate with customer demand.	Optimize flow and responsiveness, preventing overproduction.
17	Andon System	Visual Management	Provides real-time alerts for operational issues.	Enable immediate corrective action.
18	TPM (Total Productive Maintenance)	Asset Reliability	Proactive maintenance to maximize equipment uptime.	Reduce downtime through preventive maintenance.
19	Hoshin Kanri	Strategy Deployment	Aligns organizational goals with daily operations.	Ensure effective execution of strategic objectives.
20	Heijunka	Production Stability	Levels production schedules to reduce workflow fluctuations.	Maintain balanced workloads and optimize flow.
21	QA/QC	Quality Management	Ensures products meet standards through rigorous monitoring.	Ensure high product quality.
22	SPC (Statistical Process Control)	Data Analysis	Uses statistical methods to monitor and control processes.	Stabilize processes by identifying and correcting variations.
23	FMEA	Risk Management	Identifies and prioritizes potential process failures.	Increase process reliability by addressing potential failures.
24	Control Charts	Process Monitoring	Tracks process performance to identify deviations.	Enable early detection and response to process changes.
25	Pareto Analysis	Problem Prioritization	Applies the 80/20 rule to focus on major causes or problems.	Maximize impact by addressing critical issues first.
26	SIPOC	Process Mapping	High-level map outlining suppliers, inputs, processes, outputs, and customers.	Clarify process boundaries and stakeholder interactions.
27	Process Capability Analysis	Performance Assessment	Evaluate the process's ability to meet requirements.	Ensure processes meet specifications and customer needs.
28	Design of Experiments (DOE)	Experimental Design	Tests multiple variables to optimize process performance.	Identify optimal conditions for improvement.
29	Taguchi Methods	Robust Design	Minimizes variation to improve process stability.	Enhance process and product quality under variability.

While each methodology delivers proven benefits individually, their integration amplifies advantages. Combining VE, LSS, and project management best practices establishes a unified framework addressing both strategic and operational project dimensions. This integrated approach enhances value, reduces costs, improves quality, and ensures timely delivery, equipping organizations to navigate the complexity and uncertainty of today's projects. Given increasing project complexity and volatility, traditional methods alone are insufficient; integration enables greater responsiveness, risk mitigation, and sustainable success.

This paper introduces an integrated framework that synergizes VE, LSS, and project management best practices to elevate project outcomes. Emphasizing scalability, adaptability, and resilience, the framework leverages advanced analytics and emerging technologies while applying LSS and VE principles via the DMAIC process. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) measure efficiency, quality, and strategic alignment, enabling data-driven decision-making. This approach fosters continuous improvement and proactive risk management and drives both immediate project success and long-term organizational growth.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature; Section 3 identifies research gaps; Section 4 details the methodology; and Section 5 discusses strategic insights, industry recommendations, and future research directions.

2. Literature review

This section provides a comprehensive review of two pivotal methodologies—Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE)—which are critical to achieving operational excellence in project management. Both methodologies are extensively applied across industries to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve overall project outcomes. The review examines their fundamental principles, practical applications, and significant impact on project management practices.

1) Lean Six Sigma (LSS) in project management: This subsection explores how LSS integrates Lean's focus on eliminating waste with Six Sigma's emphasis on reducing process variation to boost project performance. By optimizing processes and ensuring quality, LSS drives efficiency, cost savings, and improved project execution.
2) Value Engineering (VE) in project management: This subsection details VE as a systematic method for maximizing project value while minimizing costs through functional analysis. VE enhances resource optimization, decision-making, and alignment with stakeholder expectations, ensuring timely delivery within budget without sacrificing quality.

Together, these analyses form a foundation for integrating LSS and VE, offering a robust framework to promote continuous improvement, innovation, and superior project delivery.

2.1. A comprehensive review of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) in project management

As shown in **Table 5**, Lean Six Sigma (LSS) combines Lean, which focuses on waste reduction, and Six Sigma, which emphasizes defect minimization. Initially applied in manufacturing, LSS has expanded to diverse healthcare, services, and IT sectors. This structured, data-driven methodology integrates Lean's focus on waste elimination with Six Sigma's aim to optimize processes and improve quality, resulting in greater efficiency, reduced resource consumption, and enhanced performance.

Table 5. Overview of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) approach in project management.

#	Aspect	Description
1	Origin and Evolution	LSS originated from the integration of Lean (focused on waste elimination) and Six Sigma (focused on defect reduction), initially in manufacturing and now applied across healthcare, IT, services, and construction.
2	Definition	A structured, data-driven methodology aimed at enhancing process performance by eliminating waste, reducing variation, and improving quality.
3	Core Principle	Continuous process improvement through efficiency gains, variability reduction, and optimal resource utilization to maximize customer value.
4	Beyond Cost-Cutting	Unlike traditional cost-reduction methods, LSS enhances long-term value through systematic process improvement and quality enhancement.
5	Root Causes of Poor Quality	Stemming from process inefficiencies, high variability, poor resource allocation, lack of standardization, and limited workforce engagement.
6	Implementation Framework	Uses the DMAIC cycle—Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control—as a disciplined, iterative framework to identify and solve performance issues.
7	DMAIC Phases	Each phase builds logically: defining project goals, measuring current performance, analyzing root causes, implementing solutions, and sustaining improvements.
8	Cross-Sector Applications	Widely applied beyond manufacturing to sectors like healthcare, education, sustainability, and IT, driving efficiency and effectiveness.
9	Key Benefits	Enhances operational efficiency, reduces defects, optimizes resource use, increases customer satisfaction, and improves cost-effectiveness.
10	Empirical Validation	Supported by robust evidence from Sunder [13], Sreedharan and Sunder [14], Antony et al. [15,16], Lizarelli et al. [17], Amjad et al. [18], Kumar et al. [19], Elsayed et al. [20], and Al-Salmawi and Al-Eqabi [21].

The core principle of LSS is continuous process improvement by eliminating waste, reducing variability, and optimizing resource use. This approach boosts efficiency and quality, improves customer value, and ensures long-term sustainability. Unlike traditional cost-cutting methods that focus on expense reduction, LSS enhances value by refining processes and ensuring ongoing effectiveness.

LSS follows the DMAIC framework (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control), a systematic approach that addresses inefficiencies and ensures sustainable improvements across the project lifecycle. By clearly defining goals, measuring performance, analyzing issues, implementing solutions, and controlling processes, LSS supports continuous optimization [22,23].

While LSS originated in manufacturing, its applications have extended to industries such as healthcare, education, construction, and IT, where it improves operational efficiency, reduces defects, and optimizes resource allocation. LSS offers substantial benefits, including increased customer satisfaction, more effective resource management, and improved cost-effectiveness. Research consistently confirms LSS's success in project management, with studies from Sunder [13], Sreedharan and Sunder [14], Antony et al. [15], and others validating its effectiveness in driving performance improvements.

Over the last decade, LSS has evolved from a rigid, efficiency-centric methodology to a more flexible and expansive approach. This evolution can be grouped into three phases: framework enhancement (2016–2020), sector expansion (2022–2023), and Industry 4.0 integration (2024–2025). Research from 2016 to 2025 highlights key advancements, challenges, and trends in each phase.

From 2016 to 2020, research focused on refining LSS methodologies to improve stakeholder engagement and overcome implementation barriers. Sunder [13] introduced stakeholder-driven models, and Sreedharan and Sunder [14] developed SDMMAICS, a flexible alternative to DMAIC. Despite these improvements, LSS remained largely confined to the manufacturing and banking sectors.

Between 2022 and 2023, LSS expanded to sectors like education, construction, and sustainability. Antony et al. [15] demonstrated the effectiveness of Lean Thinking in education, while Swarnakar et al. [24] introduced the sustainable LSS (SLSS) model, aligning LSS with sustainability goals. Challenges such as gaps in risk management and inadequate scheduling models were noted by Zanezi et al. [10].

From 2024 to 2025, LSS integrated deeper into Industry 4.0, evolving into an AI-driven framework for predictive decision-making. Amjad et al. [18] demonstrated AI-enhanced LSS applications in engineering, leading to significant efficiency improvements. Gomaa [6,25] introduced Lean 4.0 and LSS 4.0, incorporating AI, IoT, blockchain, and digital twins to shift processes from reactive to predictive. Despite successes in IT, scalability remains a challenge.

Despite these advancements, scaling Lean 4.0 and LSS 4.0 is still difficult. Organizations must address AI-human collaboration gaps, cybersecurity risks, and digital transformation barriers. As LSS aligns with Industry 5.0 principles, the focus will shift toward human-centric automation, ethical AI, and resilience engineering.

The future of LSS in project management will be shaped by AI-driven, self-optimizing ecosystems. Lean 4.0 and LSS 4.0 will require advancements in quantum computing, AI-powered heuristics, and robust cybersecurity frameworks to support IoT-driven applications. Redefining human-AI collaboration will be key to enhancing efficiency, predictive analytics, and sustainable innovation, helping organizations achieve exceptional process optimization and maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving digital world.

2.2. A comprehensive review of Value Engineering (VE) in project management

As shown in **Table 6**, Value Engineering (VE) is a structured methodology developed by General Electric in 1947 to optimize value by achieving necessary functionality at the lowest cost, without compromising quality, reliability, or performance. Unlike traditional cost-reduction methods, VE focuses on functional optimization rather than simply cutting expenses. The VE process is organized into six phases: information, function analysis, creativity, evaluation, development, and presentation. It has been widely applied in industries such as construction, manufacturing, and supply chain management, offering benefits like enhanced efficiency, resource optimization, and cost savings. VE addresses inefficiencies caused by poor design, stakeholder limitations, and insufficient information by optimizing key project elements like cost, durability, and performance, thereby enhancing value while maintaining core functionality.

Table 6. Overview of Value Engineering (VE) approach.

#	Aspect	Details
1	Origin & Development	Initiated by General Electric in 1947 and formalized in 1958 through the American Society of Value Engineers [5].
2	Definition	A structured, function-oriented methodology aimed at achieving required performance at the lowest cost without compromising quality or reliability.
3	Core Principle	Value = Function ÷ Cost. Value is improved by enhancing function or reducing cost while maintaining essential performance.
4	Difference from Cost Reduction	VE focuses on functional optimization rather than indiscriminate cost cutting, ensuring quality and performance are preserved [26,27].
5	Causes of Poor Value	Result from poor design, outdated practices, stakeholder constraints, insufficient data, and resistance to innovation.
6	Job Plan	A systematic process to analyze functions and propose more cost-effective, functionally equivalent alternatives.
7	Process Phases	(1) Information, (2) Function Analysis, (3) Creativity, (4) Evaluation, (5) Development, (6) Presentation [4,5].
8	Applications	Widely used in construction, manufacturing, services, and supply chains to improve value, reduce waste, and enhance performance.
9	Key Benefits	Improves project value, enhances efficiency, reduces unnecessary costs, and aligns outcomes with stakeholder needs.
10	Supporting Research	Supported by findings from Abdelghany et al. [28], Mehta et al. [27], Othman et al. [29], Elsayed et al. [20], Al-Salmawi et al. [21], among others.

Initially developed after World War II and formalized in 1958, VE gained significant momentum with the formation of the American Society of Value Engineers in 1959, which fostered collaboration across public and private sectors. Unlike traditional cost-cutting approaches, VE focuses on identifying and optimizing essential project functions, ensuring value is improved without sacrificing quality [26,27]. It aims to eliminate unnecessary costs stemming from design inefficiencies, limited resources, or organizational barriers, leading to better project outcomes.

VE’s structured approach, with its six phases, provides a systematic framework for evaluating and improving project functions. Extensive research, including studies by Abdelghany et al. [28], Abd-Karim [30], and others, has demonstrated VE’s effectiveness in driving project optimization and value enhancement across various sectors.

The future of Value Engineering (VE) in project management will emphasize its integration with modern methodologies like Lean, agile, and Six Sigma, enhancing its capacity to deliver cost-effective, high-quality outcomes. With advancements in technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, and Building Information Modeling (BIM), VE will benefit from real-time data, predictive analytics, and improved resource optimization. As sustainability becomes a higher priority, VE will also adapt to provide greener, more efficient solutions. Additionally, cloud-based platforms will enable greater global collaboration, expanding VE’s applicability. Overall, VE will continue to evolve, driving efficiency, quality, and sustainability in an increasingly complex, technology-driven landscape.

3. Research gap analysis for LSS and VE in project management excellence

Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE) have proven to be powerful methodologies for optimizing project management, particularly in terms of improving cost efficiency, enhancing quality, and streamlining processes. However, despite their widespread use, the integration of these two methodologies remains an under-explored area within academic literature. While each methodology has demonstrated effectiveness when applied independently, the combined potential to holistically optimize project performance in dynamic and complex environments has not been fully realized. As the field of project management evolves, with emerging trends such as digital transformation, agile methodologies, and evolving industry-specific challenges, a deeper investigation into how LSS and VE can adapt to these changes is essential. **Table 7** highlights the key research gaps in current literature and provides potential directions for future studies. The identified research gaps are as follows:

1) Integration of LSS and VE methodologies: A significant gap in current research lies in the integration of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE). While both methodologies are applied widely to optimize project performance, they are often used separately, which limits the potential synergies between them. LSS focuses on process improvement and waste reduction, while VE is geared towards maximizing value through cost-effective solutions. However, little research has been done on how these two methodologies can be integrated to enhance project outcomes comprehensively. Future research should aim to develop a unified framework that combines the strengths of both LSS and VE, addressing project challenges in a more holistic way. This could lead to improvements in cost management, quality, and overall project performance.
2) Application in agile and hybrid project models: The increasing adoption of agile and hybrid project models has created a gap in the application of LSS and VE. Agile methodologies emphasize flexibility, rapid iteration, and adaptability, which can sometimes conflict with the structured, linear processes inherent in LSS and VE. Despite the rise in agile project management, there is a lack of research on how LSS and VE can be tailored to fit within these frameworks. Future studies should focus on adapting LSS and VE principles to agile and hybrid models, ensuring that the methodologies support flexibility while maintaining the core principles of waste reduction, process optimization, and continuous improvement in fast-paced, dynamic environments.
3) Leveraging digital transformation and emerging technologies: The role of emerging technologies—such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and Big Data—has been largely unexplored in the context of LSS and VE. These technologies offer immense potential to enhance LSS and VE by providing real-time data, predictive insights, and automation. However, there is a gap in the research on how digital transformation can be integrated into these methodologies to improve decision-making, automate processes, and optimize project performance. Future research should focus on how digital tools and technologies can be leveraged to modernize LSS and VE, making them more relevant and effective in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape.
4) Sustainability and long-term organizational impact: While LSS and VE have been effective in achieving short-term project goals, their long-term impact on organizational sustainability, growth, and adaptability remains under-explored. Research on how these methodologies can contribute to long-term value creation,

organizational resilience, and alignment with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals is needed. Future studies should examine how LSS and VE can be leveraged to drive sustainable innovation, promote long-term competitiveness, and align project goals with broader sustainability objectives, ultimately helping organizations thrive in a rapidly changing business environment.

5) Industry-specific customization and application: LSS and VE have been predominantly applied in manufacturing and construction industries, with limited research into their application in other sectors such as healthcare, IT, and services. Each industry faces unique challenges that may require customized approaches. For instance, the healthcare sector is highly regulated, while the IT sector requires fast-paced innovation. Future research should explore how LSS and VE can be adapted for different industries, addressing specific sector challenges, regulatory constraints, and operational needs. This will allow these methodologies to be applied more effectively across a wider range of industries, broadening their impact and utility.
6) Cross-cultural and global project management perspectives: Another gap is the application of LSS and VE across diverse cultural and regional contexts. Most existing studies are based on Western-centric frameworks, with limited exploration into how these methodologies can be applied in global and culturally diverse settings. Project management practices and challenges vary greatly across cultures, and adapting LSS and VE to different governance structures, regional norms, and market dynamics is crucial. Future research should focus on understanding the cross-cultural adaptability of LSS and VE, providing insights into how they can be customized for international environments and making them more globally scalable and effective.
7) Organizational change management in LSS and VE adoption: The successful implementation of LSS and VE often faces organizational resistance to change, making effective change management essential. However, there is a lack of research on how change management strategies specifically tailored to LSS and VE adoption can be developed. Future research should explore strategies that help organizations overcome resistance and successfully adopt these methodologies. This could involve examining leadership engagement, employee involvement, and aligning organizational culture with LSS and VE principles. By developing effective change management strategies, organizations will be better positioned to implement these methodologies sustainably, leading to long-term success.

In conclusion, addressing these research gaps will not only deepen the understanding of LSS and VE methodologies but also expand their applicability across various industries, project models, and cultural contexts. Investigating these areas will help develop more adaptable, effective, and sustainable frameworks, enabling organizations to achieve both immediate project success and long-term competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving business environment.

Table 7. Research gap analysis.

#	Research Gap Area	Identified Gaps	Future Research Directions
1	Integration of LSS and VE Methodologies	Lack of an integrated framework combining LSS and VE.	Develop a unified framework to leverage both methodologies for project optimization.
2	Application in Agile and Hybrid Models	Insufficient research on applying LSS and VE in Agile and hybrid models.	Investigate how to adapt LSS and VE for Agile and hybrid project environments.
3	Digital Transformation and Emerging Technologies	Limited exploration of AI, IoT, and Big Data in LSS and VE.	Examine how emerging technologies can enhance LSS and VE for real-time decision-making.
4	Long-Term Organizational Impact	Lack of understanding of LSS and VE's long-term impact on sustainability.	Study how LSS and VE contribute to long-term innovation and alignment with ESG goals.
5	Industry-Specific Customization	LSS and VE are mainly applied in manufacturing and construction sectors.	Adapt LSS and VE for healthcare, IT, and other sectors with unique challenges.
6	Cross-Cultural and Global Application	Limited research on cultural and regional variations in LSS and VE implementation.	Explore the adaptability of LSS and VE in global and culturally diverse contexts.
7	Change Management in LSS and VE Adoption	Insufficient strategies for overcoming resistance during LSS and VE adoption.	Develop effective change management strategies to ensure successful LSS and VE adoption.

4. Research methodology for LSS and VE in project management excellence

Achieving project management excellence through Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE) requires a structured, data-driven methodology that integrates emerging technologies, advanced analytics, and industry best practices. This approach extends beyond process optimization, ensuring scalability, adaptability, and resilience in complex project environments. Integrating LSS principles with project management best practices enhances efficiency, improves quality, and aligns projects with organizational objectives. The methodology follows a phased framework, utilizing advanced tools and insights to optimize project execution, mitigate risks, and address challenges. Key components include:

1) Core principles of LSS and VE in project management: Defining the key principles of LSS and VE, which focus on waste reduction, value optimization, and continuous improvement to drive superior project outcomes.
2) DMAIC framework for LSS and VE in project management: Implementing the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) framework to promote project improvements, reduce variability, and sustain long-term performance.
3) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for LSS and VE in project management: Establishing clear and measurable KPIs to assess efficiency, quality, and overall project success, ensuring alignment with organizational goals.
4) Critical failure factors in LSS project management: Identifying and addressing key obstacles to successful LSS implementation, ensuring effective and sustainable outcomes.

By embedding LSS and VE into project management practices, this methodology fosters a culture of continuous improvement, supports data-driven decision-making, and ensures both immediate project success and long-term organizational growth.

4.1. Core principles of LSS and VE in project management excellence

To achieve project management excellence, Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value

Engineering (VE) must be deeply integrated into project execution. Their core principles focus on maximizing value, minimizing waste, and ensuring continuous improvement, all while aligning with organizational strategies and long-term goals. By combining LSS's emphasis on process optimization with VE's value-focused approach, organizations can ensure that projects are executed efficiently, on time, and within budget, while continuously enhancing quality and customer satisfaction. As shown in **Table 8**, the key principles driving this integration include:

1) Waste reduction and operational efficiency: LSS focuses on identifying and eliminating waste across all project processes, enhancing efficiency. VE complements this by optimizing functions to deliver maximum value with minimal cost. Together, these principles streamline processes, ensuring that resources are utilized effectively and non-value-added activities are minimized.
2) Value optimization and cost-effectiveness: VE's core principle is optimizing value for every dollar spent, ensuring that each project function is cost-effective and contributes to overall project success. LSS supports this by reducing variability and ensuring consistency in processes, ensuring that projects are both value-driven and cost-efficient.
3) Continuous improvement and innovation: LSS uses the DMAIC framework (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) to drive process refinement, while VE fosters continuous innovation by constantly reassessing and improving project functions. This combined focus on continuous improvement enables ongoing project optimization, driving both efficiency and innovation throughout the project lifecycle.
4) Data-driven decision-making: Both LSS and VE emphasize the importance of data in decision-making. LSS relies on statistical tools to measure performance and identify improvement opportunities, while VE uses data to evaluate project functions and find the most cost-effective solutions. This ensures that decisions are informed by accurate, real-time data, enhancing the overall quality of project management.
5) Customer-centric focus: LSS and VE both prioritize customer satisfaction. LSS improves product quality by reducing defects, while VE ensures that each project function aligns with the customer's needs and delivers maximum value. This customer-centric approach guarantees that projects meet or exceed stakeholder expectations, driving long-term value and satisfaction.
6) Cross-functional collaboration: Successful project management requires collaboration across teams. LSS promotes cross-functional collaboration to identify inefficiencies, while VE encourages teams to work together to optimize value. This collaborative approach ensures diverse perspectives are incorporated, improving problem-solving and project outcomes.
7) Sustainability and long-term value: LSS focuses on achieving short-term process improvements, while VE ensures that these improvements contribute to long-term value. Together, they support sustainability by optimizing resources and ensuring that projects align with long-term organizational goals, fostering resilience and growth over time.
8) Risk management and mitigation: Both LSS and VE emphasize proactive risk management. LSS reduces process variability to ensure predictability, while VE

evaluates alternatives to identify cost-effective, risk-averse solutions. This combination of approaches enables effective risk mitigation, ensuring smoother project execution and fewer disruptions.

9) Scalability and flexibility: LSS and VE are scalable methodologies that can be applied to projects of any size or complexity. Whether handling large-scale projects or smaller, agile ones, these methodologies ensure adaptability to changing conditions, promoting success across diverse project types.
10) Strategic alignment with organizational goals: LSS and VE ensure that project objectives align with broader organizational strategies. By focusing on value creation, cost efficiency, and quality, these methodologies help ensure that projects not only meet immediate goals but also contribute to long-term organizational growth and competitive advantage.

These principles provide a comprehensive framework for integrating Lean Six Sigma and Value Engineering into project management practices. By focusing on waste reduction, value optimization, continuous improvement, and data-driven decision-making, organizations can enhance project outcomes and achieve sustainable success.

Table 8. Core principles of LSS and VE in project management excellence.

#	Principle	Description	Focus Areas
1	Efficiency & Waste Reduction	LSS cuts waste; VE enhances value with minimal resources.	Efficiency, waste elimination, lean processes
2	Value & Cost Optimization	VE maximizes value per cost; LSS ensures consistent quality.	Cost reduction, value creation, quality control
3	Continuous Improvement	LSS applies DMAIC; VE encourages functional innovation.	Process improvement, innovation, agility
4	Data-Driven Decisions	Both use data to guide performance and outcomes.	Analytics, KPIs, informed decisions
5	Customer Focus	LSS improves quality; VE aligns with customer value.	Satisfaction, value delivery, quality
6	Collaboration	Cross-functional teamwork enhances results.	Teamwork, integration, shared goals
7	Sustainability	LSS drives efficiency; VE supports long-term impact.	Sustainable value, strategic alignment
8	Risk Mitigation	LSS reduces variation; VE manages functional risks.	Risk control, cost-effective solutions
9	Scalability & Flexibility	Both adapt to various project scopes and sectors.	Adaptability, scalability, versatility
10	Strategic Alignment	Aligns outcomes with organizational goals.	Strategic fit, competitive advantage

4.2. DMAIC framework for LSS and VE in project management excellence

The DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) framework is a proven methodology within Lean Six Sigma (LSS) that, when integrated with Value Engineering (VE), provides a data-driven approach to achieving project excellence. By combining LSS's focus on waste reduction and process optimization with VE's emphasis on value maximization, organizations can enhance project performance and stakeholder value. **Table 9** outlines the phases of the DMAIC framework within the context of project management, integrating LSS and VE principles.

1) The Define phase sets the project's direction by establishing its scope, objectives, and success criteria. In project management (PM), the focus is on clearly defining goals, performance targets, and KPIs that align with stakeholder expectations and

organizational strategy. In Lean Six Sigma (LSS), it's about setting measurable goals that target waste reduction and improved efficiency. For Value Engineering (VE), the focus is on identifying key functions and value propositions that align with customer needs and expectations. Key activities include setting project scope, defining objectives, and ensuring that goals align with the overall strategic vision while clearly identifying customer-driven value drivers.

2) The Measure phase involves gathering baseline data to evaluate current project performance. In PM, this means measuring key metrics like cost, time, and quality to understand the project's starting point. The LSS focus is on collecting data to identify inefficiencies, waste, and performance gaps. VE aims to evaluate how effectively the project delivers value and whether it is cost-effective. Key activities include data collection on performance metrics, benchmarking, and identifying areas of improvement or potential for value optimization.
3) During the Analyze phase, the focus is on identifying the root causes of inefficiencies and performance gaps. PM involves analyzing project data to uncover bottlenecks and inefficiencies. The LSS approach uses root cause analysis techniques (e.g., 5 Whys, Fishbone diagram) to identify sources of waste and inefficiencies. VE assesses how well project functions contribute to the overall value and identifies areas where value can be enhanced. Key activities involve conducting root cause analysis, identifying inefficiencies, and assessing the value impact of different project functions.
4) The Improve phase focuses on implementing solutions to optimize project performance. In PM, the goal is to eliminate waste, streamline processes, and better allocate resources. In LSS, process improvements are tested and implemented to reduce variability and enhance project execution. VE focuses on improving key project functions to maximize value. Key activities include developing and applying process improvements, using Lean tools (e.g., value stream mapping) to eliminate waste, and optimizing resource allocation to ensure efficient project delivery.
5) The Control phase ensures that improvements are sustained over the long term. In PM, control mechanisms are established to monitor ongoing project performance. The LSS focus is on tracking key metrics to ensure that improvements are maintained. In VE, the focus is on continuously monitoring cost-to-value ratios to ensure the project remains cost-effective and delivers consistent value. Key activities include implementing performance tracking systems, maintaining SOPs to ensure continuous improvements, and adjusting processes as necessary to sustain project success.

Integrating the DMAIC framework with Lean Six Sigma and Value Engineering in project management offers a structured, systematic approach to enhancing efficiency, reducing waste, and maximizing value. This framework enables organizations to implement data-driven improvements while ensuring sustained project success and alignment with strategic goals. By continuously monitoring and refining processes, DMAIC fosters long-term organizational excellence and competitiveness.

Table 9. DMAIC framework for LSS and VE in project management excellence.

Phase	Objective	PM Focus	LSS Focus	VE Focus	Key Activities
Define	Establish scope and goals	Set project goals, KPIs	Define waste reduction targets	Identify key functions	Align scope and value drivers
Measure	Gather baseline data	Track cost, time, and quality	Detect inefficiencies	Assess cost-effectiveness	Collect data, benchmark
Analyze	Diagnose root causes	Identify bottlenecks	Root cause analysis	Evaluate the function value	Analyze causes, assess value
Improve	Apply improvements	Streamline processes	Reduce variability	Enhance functional value	Develop solutions, optimize flow
Control	Maintain improvements	Monitor results	Track performance metrics	Ensure cost-value balance	Implement controls, update SOPs

4.3. KPIs of LSS and VE in project management excellence

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) serve as essential benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE) in project management. These KPIs offer measurable insights into efficiency, cost-effectiveness, quality, and stakeholder value. By utilizing these metrics, organizations can foster continuous improvement, optimize resource utilization, and enhance overall project outcomes. **Table 10** highlights Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that support Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE) in achieving project management excellence. These KPIs are grouped into three categories: project management (PM) KPIs, Lean Six Sigma (LSS) KPIs, and Value Engineering (VE) KPIs, each targeting specific areas of project execution and performance optimization.

1) For project management (PM) KPIs, the Schedule Performance Index (SPI) measures how well the project is adhering to its planned schedule, ensuring that deadlines and milestones are met. The Cost Performance Index (CPI) evaluates the cost efficiency by comparing the earned value of work to actual project costs, helping to keep the project within budget. The Resource Utilization Rate tracks how effectively project resources such as personnel, materials, and equipment are being utilized, ensuring maximum efficiency. Risk Management Effectiveness assesses the project's ability to identify, manage, and mitigate potential risks, ensuring resilience to unforeseen issues. The Stakeholder Engagement Index measures the degree of stakeholder involvement and satisfaction, ensuring that the project aligns with stakeholder expectations and requirements.
2) In the Lean Six Sigma (LSS) KPIs category, the Defect Rate (DPMO) tracks the number of defects per million opportunities, aiming to reduce defects and improve the quality of the project's outputs. Process Cycle Time measures the total time taken to complete a process, with the goal of minimizing delays and optimizing workflow efficiency. The First Pass Yield (FPY) indicates the percentage of work completed without requiring rework, reflecting the project's overall quality and efficiency. The Cost of Poor Quality (COPQ) quantifies the financial impact of defects, rework, and inefficiencies within the project, helping to reduce wasteful costs. Lastly, the On-Time Delivery Rate tracks adherence to project schedules, ensuring timely delivery and completion.
3) In the Value Engineering (VE) KPIs category, the Value Index (Function

Cost/Total Cost) assesses the cost-effectiveness of project functions, ensuring optimal value for money spent. Cost Savings Achieved tracks the total reductions in project costs through VE initiatives while maintaining or enhancing value. The Function Performance Improvement measures improvements in the performance of key project functions, contributing to greater project effectiveness. The ROI of VE initiatives evaluates the return on investment generated by VE efforts, emphasizing the financial benefits of applying VE strategies. Finally, the Material Optimization (%) measures the efficiency of material use, identifying cost savings from optimized material and resource utilization.

In conclusion, integrating Lean Six Sigma (LSS) and Value Engineering (VE) KPIs provides a data-driven framework for achieving project management excellence. These KPIs focus on key areas such as scheduling, cost control, resource allocation, quality, and value creation, helping project managers ensure efficient execution, timely delivery, and optimal stakeholder value. LSS KPIs drive efficiency and quality, while VE KPIs enhance cost-effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction, fostering continuous improvement and delivering exceptional value in every project.

Table 10. KPIs of LSS and VE in project management excellence.

Category	#	Main Objectives	Main KPIs	Description
Project Management (PM) KPIs	1	Optimize project scheduling and execution	Schedule Performance Index (SPI)	Measures the ability to meet project deadlines and milestones.
	2	Enhance cost management and control	Cost Performance Index (CPI)	Evaluates cost efficiency by comparing earned value to actual project costs.
	3	Maximize resource utilization	Resource Utilization Rate	Tracks the percentage of resources effectively utilized throughout the project.
	4	Mitigate project risks	Risk Management Effectiveness	Assesses the effectiveness of risk identification, mitigation, and response strategies.
	5	Improve stakeholder engagement	Stakeholder Engagement Index	Measures the extent of stakeholder communication and involvement in the project.
Lean Six Sigma (LSS) KPIs	1	Minimize defects and improve quality	Defect Rate (DPMO)	Quantifies defects per million opportunities, aiming for defect reduction.
	2	Optimize process efficiency and reduce cycle time	Process Cycle Time	Measures the time taken to complete a process from start to finish.
	3	Improve first-time quality	First Pass Yield (FPY)	Calculates the percentage of work completed without rework.
	4	Minimize the financial impact of inefficiencies	Cost of Poor Quality (COPQ)	Assesses the costs of defects, rework, and inefficiencies within the project.
	5	Ensure timely project delivery	On-Time Delivery Rate	Measures adherence to project schedules and deadlines.
Value Engineering (VE) KPIs	1	Maximize cost-effectiveness of project functions	Value Index (Function Cost/Total Cost)	Assesses the cost-effectiveness of project functions to optimize value.
	2	Achieve cost savings while maintaining value	Cost Savings Achieved	Tracks reductions in total project costs while maintaining project value.
	3	Improve functional performance	Function Performance Improvement	Measures improvements in the performance of critical project functions.
	4	Maximize return on investment (ROI) from VE efforts	ROI of VE Initiatives	Calculates the financial return on investment for VE initiatives.
	5	Optimize use of materials and resources	Material Optimization (%)	Tracks savings from using alternative materials or optimizing resource use.

4.4. Critical failure factors in Lean Six Sigma (LSS) project management

Lean Six Sigma (LSS) is widely recognized for its capacity to drive process efficiency, enhance quality, and support data-driven decision-making in project management. However, despite its advantages, the successful implementation of LSS frequently faces significant obstacles. Key failure factors include resistance to change, lack of sustained leadership commitment, inadequate training and skill development, and insufficient resource allocation. These challenges have been consistently documented in the literature as critical barriers to effective LSS deployment and long-term success [31–40]. Addressing these failure factors proactively, particularly during the initiation and planning phases, is crucial to ensuring successful LSS implementation. **Table 11** highlights the critical failure factors in Lean Six Sigma (LSS) project management, organized into six key perspectives: customer, leadership, resources and supply chain, workforce, IT infrastructure, and financial management. Each perspective is linked to strategic objectives and aligned with organizational priorities, revealing the potential barriers to successful LSS implementation.

1) From the customer/client perspective, misalignment with customer expectations is a primary failure factor. Issues such as unclear or evolving requirements, lack of satisfaction measurement, insufficient customer involvement, and unrealistic expectations often undermine project success. Ensuring a customer-centric approach—incorporating the Voice of the Customer (VOC) and stable requirements—is vital to enhancing satisfaction and engagement.
2) The leadership perspective emphasizes the importance of strong governance and strategic direction. Failure is often driven by weak leadership, unclear strategy, inadequate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), lack of standardized processes, poor project management, and resistance to change. A clear, committed leadership presence is essential for driving continuous improvement and aligning organizational efforts with LSS goals.
3) From the resources and supply chain perspective, inadequate resource allocation, inefficient equipment use, supply chain delays, and weak supplier relationships can severely impede LSS initiatives. Strategic alignment in this area focuses on optimizing resource utilization and fostering effective collaboration with suppliers to minimize waste and improve operational resilience.
4) The workforce perspective highlights the need for skilled, motivated employees to support Lean initiatives. Failure factors such as skill gaps, low employee motivation, insufficient training, high turnover, and resistance to Lean culture can derail LSS efforts. A focus on talent development and fostering readiness for change is key to overcoming these challenges.
5) In the IT infrastructure area, the failure to integrate digital technologies can limit the effectiveness of LSS. Outdated systems and weak digital capabilities hinder automation, data analytics, and process visibility. Alignment with digital transformation goals—such as automation and smart manufacturing—is critical to enhancing operational efficiency and decision-making.
6) Finally, the financial perspective addresses the economic challenges of LSS implementation. Budget limitations and high operational costs are common barriers to success. Strategic alignment with financial goals—focused on cost

control and ROI optimization—ensures that LSS projects are both financially sustainable and performance-driven.

In conclusion, successful LSS project management requires a unified approach that emphasizes leadership commitment, resource efficiency, workforce development, IT integration, and financial sustainability. By proactively addressing key failure factors, organizations can drive continuous improvement, reduce costs, and foster a culture of operational excellence, ultimately gaining a sustainable competitive advantage.

Table 11. Critical failure factors, objectives, and strategic alignment in LSS project management.

#	Perspective	Objective	Strategic Alignment	Critical Failure Factors
1	Customer/Client	Align LSS with customer expectations to enhance satisfaction and engagement.	Customer-Centric Approach: Integrates VOC, stable requirements, and satisfaction metrics.	1) Misaligned objectives. 2) Unclear or changing requirements. 3) Lack of satisfaction measurement. 4) Limited customer involvement. 5) Unrealistic expectations.
2	Management/Leadership	Establish leadership-driven continuous improvement and accountability.	Leadership & Governance: Ensures executive support, strategic vision, and structured decision-making.	6) Weak leadership commitment. 7) Lack of clear strategy. 8) No benchmarking. 9) Poor KPIs and monitoring. 10) No standardized processes. 11) Inadequate project management. 12) Limited LSS training. 13) Weak planning and risk control. 14) Undefined roles. 15) Poor communication. 16) Resistance to change.
3	Resources & Supply Chain	Optimize resources and supplier collaboration for LSS success.	Operational Efficiency & Resilience: Focuses on resource planning, supplier engagement, and waste reduction.	17) Insufficient resources. 18) Equipment issues. 19) Inefficient utilization. 20) Supply chain delays. 21) Weak supplier relationships. 22) Over-reliance on subcontractors. 23) Supplier resistance to Lean.
4	Workforce	Develop a skilled and motivated workforce.	Talent Development & Change Readiness: Emphasizes training, engagement, and Lean adoption.	24) Skills shortage. 25) Low motivation. 26) Inadequate training. 27) Resistance to change. 28) High turnover.
5	IT Infrastructure	Leverage digital transformation for LSS efficiency.	Technology & Smart Manufacturing: Supports automation, analytics, and process optimization.	29) Limited IT systems and analytics. 30) Weak digital integration.
6	Financial	Ensure cost-effective and sustainable LSS implementation.	Financial Viability & ROI Optimization: Aligns cost control with performance tracking.	31) Budget constraints. 32) High operational costs.

5. Conclusion and future work

This study introduces a comprehensive framework to enhance project operational excellence by integrating Value Engineering (VE), Lean Six Sigma (LSS), and proven project management practices. By combining VE's focus on functional optimization and cost-effectiveness with LSS's emphasis on waste elimination and process efficiency, supported by structured project management methodologies, this framework drives significant improvements in cost, quality, and delivery timelines. The synergy of Lean's efficiency mindset and Six Sigma's precision in reducing process variation, anchored in the DMAIC cycle and KPI-driven performance tracking, promotes a data-driven culture of continuous improvement. Ultimately, this approach empowers organizations to surpass project goals, foster innovation, and secure sustainable competitive advantage.

While currently conceptual, the framework will be validated and refined through case studies, pilot projects, and simulations to rigorously assess its effectiveness, scalability, and practical application. Future research will prioritize:

- Empirical validation: Testing the framework's impact on cost, schedule, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction in real-world projects.
- Framework scalability: Adapting the framework to diverse industries such as construction, IT, and healthcare by addressing sector-specific challenges to enhance flexibility and effectiveness.
- AI-enhanced Lean Six Sigma: Applying AI to optimize LSS by identifying inefficiencies, predicting risks, and automating process improvements.
- Advanced technologies: Leveraging AI, IoT, robotics, and blockchain to automate workflows, enable predictive analytics, and enhance decision-making.

This research will ensure the framework evolves with emerging technologies and organizational needs, positioning it as a vital tool for achieving sustainable operational excellence in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

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