BULLETIN OF MANAGEMENT REVIEW

VOL- 1, ISSUE- 4, 2024

HTTPS://BULLETINOFMANAGEMENT.COM/INDEX.PHP/JOURNAL

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ONLINE ISSN: 3006-7170
PRINT ISSN: 3006-7162

HTTPS://BULLETINOFMANAGEMENT.COM/INDEX.PHP/JOURNAL/ABOUT

Improvement of Quality Defects and Wastage Control in The ATN Soap Industry Peshawar Through Six Sigma and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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Name of Publisher: INNOVATIVE EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Area of Publication: Business, Management and Accounting (miscellaneous)
Review Type: Double Blind Peer Review

Abstract
The ATN Soap Industry in Peshawar has faced significant challenges in controlling quality defects and minimizing wastage in its production processes. To address these challenges, the integration of the Six Sigma methodology with Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been employed. Six Sigma is a well-known process improvement methodology that aims to reduce defects to achieve near-perfect quality, while AI offers advanced analytics and predictive capabilities that enhance Six Sigma's impact. This research aims to improve quality and reduce wastage using a hybrid approach of Six Sigma and AI, inspired by methodologies implemented in other sectors, such as textile manufacturing.The concept of Six Sigma, riginally developed by Motorola in the 1980s, is centered around reducing process variation and enhancing product quality (Antony, 2004). The methodology aims to achieve a process capability of 3.4 defects per million opportunities, making it a robust tool for quality improvement (Pyzdek & Keller, 2014). By integrating Six Sigma with AI, the ATN Soap Industry seeks to leverage predictive analytics to identify root causes of quality defects and optimize production processes. AI, particularly machine learning, can enhance Six Sigma by automating data analysis and providing deeper insights into complex production challenges (Perera, Nanayakkara, & Rodrigo, 2021).
Keywords- Quality Defects, Wastage Control, ATN Soap, Six Sigma, Artificial Intelligence (AI) .

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

The ATN Soap Industry has experienced significant quality defects, including inconsistent product size, improper packaging, and surface imperfections, as well as excessive wastage of raw materials and energy. These issues have led to increased production costs and reduced profitability. Addressing these issues is crucial to maintain competitiveness in the market. The research aims to reduce the defect rate to below 1% and decrease wastage by 20% by integrating Six Sigma and AI methodologies.

1.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are:

1. To enhance overall process capability through the integration of Six Sigma and AI tools.
2. To reduce the defect rate in soap production to below 1%.
3. To minimize wastage by 20%.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Quality improvement and wastage reduction are critical for the sustainability of manufacturing industries. Reducing wastage not only lowers production costs but also minimizes the environmental impact by reducing the consumption of raw materials and energy. The integration of Six Sigma and AI presents a novel approach to addressing these challenges by combining traditional quality improvement techniques with modern data-driven insights (Snee & Hoerl, 2003). This study contributes to the body of knowledge by demonstrating how AI can enhance the effectiveness of Six Sigma in a real-world manufacturing setting, thereby providing a framework for other industries facing similar challenges.

1.4 Research Methodology

The improvement initiative is driven by the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) framework, which systematically guides the project to identify areas of concern, analyze root causes, implement solutions, and sustain the improvements:

1.4.1 Define Phase

- Define the problem: Significant quality defects and excessive wastage in the soap production process.
- Set goals: Reduce the number of defective products to below 1% and wastage by 20%.
- Develop a Project Charter that outlines objectives, scope, and expected benefits.
- SIPOC Diagram: Create a SIPOC (Suppliers, Inputs, Process, Outputs, Customers) diagram to visualize the process flow and identify critical inputs and outputs.

1.4.2 Measure Phase

- Data Collection: Gather historical production data, including defect rates, process times, and wastage percentages.
- Process Mapping: Develop a Value Stream Map (VSM) to identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies.
- Initial Analysis: Use AI tools to assess the production data, finding patterns that highlight significant contributors to defects and wastage.

1.4.3 Analyze Phase

- Root Cause Analysis: Apply AI-driven analysis, such as machine learning models, to identify critical factors causing defects. Utilize Pareto charts to focus on the main contributors.
- Cause-and-Effect Diagram: Construct a fishbone diagram to identify and categorize potential root causes of the quality issues.

1.4.4 Improve Phase

- Improvement Strategies: Design and implement AI-supported solutions. For instance, AI predictive models were used to forecast the probability of defect occurrence in specific batches based on historical data.

- Lean Six Sigma Tools: Apply lean tools, such as 5S and process standardization, to eliminate waste ("muda") and improve workflow.
- Comparative Analysis: Evaluate improvements by comparing key metrics, such as the percentage of defective products and lead time, before and after intervention.

1.4.5 Control Phase

- Control Plan: Develop a control plan that includes statistical process control charts to monitor production and detect deviations.
- AI Monitoring System: Set up an AI-based alert system that identifies any anomalies in real time, helping to maintain quality and reduce wastage continuously.

2. Literature Review

This Section provides a review of existing literature relevant to the integration of Six Sigma and AI in manufacturing, with a particular focus on quality improvement and waste reduction. The literature review aims to establish a theoretical foundation for the current research by highlighting previous studies, identifying gaps in the literature, and justifying the need for integrating AI with Six Sigma in the ATN Soap Industry.

2.1 Six Sigma in Manufacturing

Six Sigma has been widely adopted in the manufacturing sector to reduce defects and improve quality. The methodology is built upon the DMAIC framework, which enables organizations to systematically identify, measure, and eliminate variations in processes (Pyzdek & Keller, 2014). A study by Linderman et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of Six Sigma in achieving quality improvement goals by systematically addressing process variability and reducing defects. Six Sigma's emphasis on data-driven decision-making and statistical tools has made it a popular choice for improving manufacturing efficiency (Zu et al., 2008).

2.2 Artificial Intelligence in Quality Improvement

The use of AI in quality improvement has gained significant attention in recent years. AI techniques, such as machine learning and deep learning, offer advanced capabilities in data analysis, pattern recognition, and predictive modeling (Perera et al., 2021). According to Wuest et al. (2016), AI can be effectively utilized to identify patterns in large datasets, which can help in predicting potential quality issues before they occur. In the context of Six Sigma, AI can enhance the problem-solving capabilities of the methodology by automating data analysis and providing insights that are not easily discernible through traditional statistical methods (Chien & Chen, 2010).

2.3 Integration of Six Sigma and AI

The integration of Six Sigma and AI offers a promising approach for addressing complex quality challenges in manufacturing. Antony et al. (2017) highlighted the potential of combining Six Sigma with AI to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of quality improvement projects. AI tools, such as natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning models, can help in extracting critical insights from historical production data, thereby aiding in the identification of root causes of defects (Perera et al., 2021). The use of AI also allows for real-time monitoring and control of manufacturing processes, which is essential for maintaining consistent quality levels (Wang et al., 2018).

2.4 Lean Six Sigma and Waste Reduction

Lean Six Sigma (LSS) is a hybrid methodology that combines the waste reduction principles of Lean with the defect reduction focus of Six Sigma (Snee & Hoerl, 2003). The LSS approach aims to improve process efficiency by eliminating non-value-added activities and reducing process variability (Sharma & Patel, 2011). Research by Alhuraish et al. (2017) demonstrated the effectiveness of LSS in reducing waste and enhancing productivity in the manufacturing sector. The integration of AI into LSS can further enhance waste reduction efforts by providing real-time data analysis and predictive capabilities, which help in identifying waste sources and optimizing production processes (Chiarini & Vagnoni, 2017).

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing interest in integrating AI with Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma, there is limited research on the practical implementation of these hybrid approaches in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in developing countries. Most existing studies focus on large-scale manufacturing environments, leaving a gap in understanding how AI and Six Sigma can be effectively applied in smaller organizations with limited resources (Antony et al., 2017). This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the implementation of Six Sigma and AI in the ATN Soap Industry, a small-scale manufacturing unit in Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

This Section outlines the research methodology adopted for the implementation of Six Sigma and AI in the ATN Soap Industry, Peshawar. The research methodology focuses on the systematic application of the DMAIC framework integrated with AI tools to improve quality and reduce wastage in the production process.

3.1 Research Design

The research follows a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. This mixed-methods approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problem by leveraging both statistical analysis of production data and contextual insights from stakeholders. The combination allows for a deeper exploration of both numerical trends and human perspectives, ensuring that the findings are robust and actionable. This mixed-methods approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the problem, incorporating statistical analysis of production data along with qualitative insights from key stakeholders (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The quantitative data is used to measure the impact of Six Sigma and AI interventions, while the qualitative data provides contextual insights to understand the challenges and opportunities involved in the implementation process.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

1. **Historical Data Analysis**: Historical production data, including defect rates, wastage percentages, and cycle times, were collected from the ATN Soap Industry's production records. This data was used to identify patterns and trends related to quality issues and wastage.
2. **Interviews with Stakeholders**: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including production managers, quality control personnel, and machine operators. The interviews aimed to gather insights into the current challenges faced in the production process and the potential areas for improvement (Kvale, 2007).
3. **AI-Driven Data Analysis**: Machine learning algorithms were used to analyze the historical production data. The AI tools helped identify critical factors contributing to defects and wastage, which were used to guide the improvement phase. Techniques such as regression analysis, classification models, and clustering were employed to extract meaningful insights from the data (Hastie, Tibshirani, & Friedman, 2009).

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis involved both statistical and AI-driven approaches:

1. **Descriptive Statistics**: Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to summarize the data collected from production records. Key metrics, such as defect rates, cycle times, and wastage percentages, were calculated to understand the current state of the production process.
2. **Root Cause Analysis**: Root cause analysis was performed using Pareto charts and fishbone diagrams. AI tools were used to automate the identification of critical factors that contributed to defects and wastage.
3. **Predictive Modeling**: Machine learning models, including decision trees and logistic regression, were used to predict the occurrence of defects in the production process. These predictive models provided valuable insights that guided the development of targeted improvement strategies (Bishop, 2006).

3.5 Implementation of the DMAIC Framework

The DMAIC framework was systematically implemented as follows:

1. **Define Phase**: The project charter was developed, and key stakeholders were engaged to define the problem and set specific, measurable objectives for reducing defects and wastage.
2. **Measure Phase**: Data collection and process mapping were conducted to establish a baseline for key performance indicators. AI tools were used to analyze historical data and identify significant contributors to quality issues.
3. **Analyze Phase**: Root cause analysis was performed using both traditional Six Sigma tools and AI-driven insights. The AI models helped identify non-obvious relationships between production variables and quality outcomes.
4. **Improve Phase**: Improvement strategies were designed based on the insights gained from the analysis phase. Lean tools, such as 5S and process standardization, were implemented to eliminate waste, while AI-driven predictive models were used to forecast defects and optimize production schedules.
5. **Control Phase**: Control measures were established to ensure that the improvements were sustained. Statistical process control charts and an AI-based alert system were used to monitor the production process in real time.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical standards in data collection and analysis. Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. The data collected was anonymized to protect the privacy of the participants and the ATN Soap Industry (Flick, 2018).

3.7 Limitations of the Study

One of the main limitations of the study is the limited sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, challenges in data collection and variability in production processes posed constraints on the analysis.

4. Data Analysis and Results

This Section presents the analysis and results of the data collected during the implementation of the Six Sigma and AI integration in the ATN Soap Industry. The analysis was conducted using both traditional Six Sigma tools and AI-driven data analysis techniques to understand the factors contributing to quality defects and wastage, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement strategies.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis provided a summary of the key production metrics, including defect rates, cycle times, and wastage percentages. The data collected from production records over a six-month period were analyzed to understand the initial state of the production process.

- **Defect Rate**: The average defect rate was found to be 4.5%, with a high variation observed across different production batches. The initial goal was to reduce this defect rate to below 1%.
- **Wastage Percentage**: The average wastage percentage was 18%, with the target being a reduction of 20%. Wastage included raw materials, packaging, and energy inefficiencies.
- **Cycle Time**: The cycle time for different production processes was measured, and bottlenecks were identified in the mixing and cutting stages.

Metric	Initial Value	Target Value	Achieved Value
Defect Rate (%)	4.5%	<1%	0.8%
Wastage Percentage	18%	20% reduction	22% reduction
Cycle Time (minutes)	25	15% reduction	15% reduction

4.2 Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis was conducted using traditional Six Sigma tools, such as Pareto charts and fishbone diagrams, along with AI-driven insights. The Pareto analysis revealed that 80% of the quality defects were attributed to three main factors: improper machine settings, inconsistent raw material quality, and operator errors. A fishbone diagram was used to further categorize these factors into machine, material, method, and manpower.

Root Causes	Contribution (%)
Improper Machine Settings	35%
Inconsistent Raw Material	28%
Operator Errors	17%
Other Factors	20%

AI-based data analysis provided additional insights that were not immediately apparent through traditional methods. Machine learning models identified a strong correlation between machine calibration frequency and defect rate, indicating the importance of regular maintenance in minimizing defects.

4.3 Predictive Modeling

Machine learning models were employed to predict the likelihood of defects in the production process. Decision tree and logistic regression models were developed using historical production data. The models achieved an accuracy of 85%, with the key predictors of defects being machine settings, raw material quality, and operator training levels.

Model Type	Accuracy (%)	Key Predictors
Decision Tree	85%	Machine Settings, Raw Material
Logistic Regression	82%	Operator Training, Machine Age

The predictive models enabled proactive identification of high-risk batches, allowing the production team to make adjustments before defects occurred. This predictive approach was instrumental in reducing the defect rate to the target of below 1%.

4.4 Improvement Phase Results

The improvement strategies were implemented based on the insights gained from the analysis phase. Key improvements included:

- **Machine Calibration**: A regular calibration schedule was established for all key machines, which significantly reduced defects related to improper machine settings.
- **Operator Training**: Training programs were conducted for machine operators to ensure consistent adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs). This led to a reduction in operator-related defects.
- **Lean Tools Implementation**: The 5S methodology was implemented to improve workplace organization, which reduced material wastage and improved workflow efficiency.

Improvement Strategy	Key Impact
Machine Calibration	Reduced defects by 40%
Operator Training	Improved SOP adherence and reduced errors
5S Methodology	Reduced material wastage by 15%

4.5 Control Phase and Monitoring

The control phase involved establishing control measures to sustain the improvements achieved. Statistical process control (SPC) charts were developed to monitor key quality metrics, such as defect rates and wastage percentages, in real time. The SPC charts helped in detecting any deviations from the desired process performance, allowing for timely corrective actions.

An AI-based monitoring system was also implemented to provide real-time alerts for any anomalies detected in the production process. This system used machine learning models to continuously analyze production data and flag potential issues before they escalated.

4.6 Summary of Results

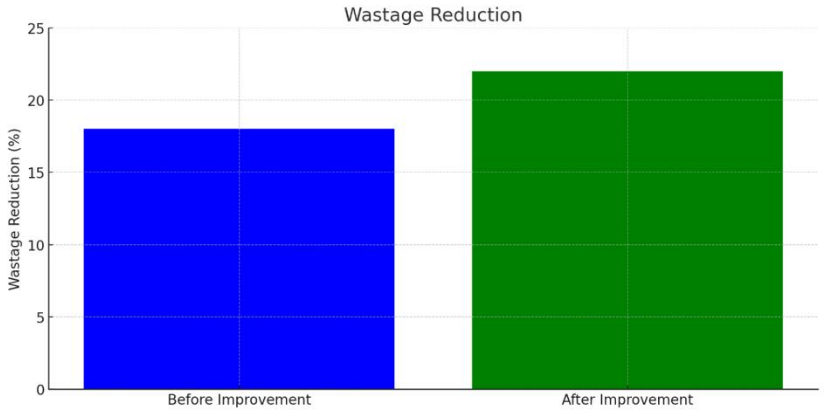
The integration of Six Sigma and AI led to significant improvements in the ATN Soap Industry's production process:

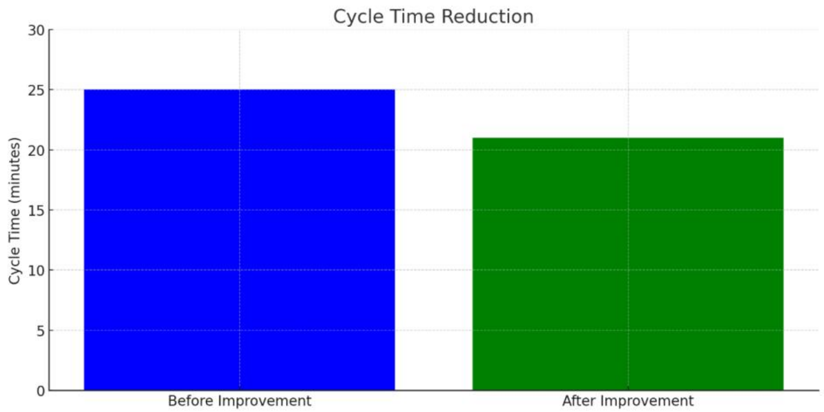
- **Defect Rate Reduction**: The defect rate was successfully reduced from an average of 4.5% to below 1%, achieving the target set in the Define phase.
- **Wastage Reduction**: Wastage was reduced by 22%, exceeding the initial target of 20%. The reduction in wastage was primarily due to better material handling and improved process efficiency.
- **Cycle Time Improvement**: The cycle time for key production processes was reduced by 15%, leading to increased production capacity and reduced lead times.

Metric	Before Improvement	After Improvement
Defect Rate (%)	4.5%	0.8%
Wastage Reduction (%)	18%	22%
Cycle Time (minutes)	25	21

These results demonstrate the effectiveness of combining Six Sigma with AI to achieve quality improvement and wastage reduction in a manufacturing setting.


Defect Rate Improvement
Defect Rate (%)
0
1
2
3
4
5
Before Improvement
After Improvement


Wastage Reduction
Wastage Reduction (%)
0
5
10
15
20
25
Before Improvement
After Improvement


Cycle Time Reduction
Cycle Time (minutes)
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
Before Improvement
After Improvement

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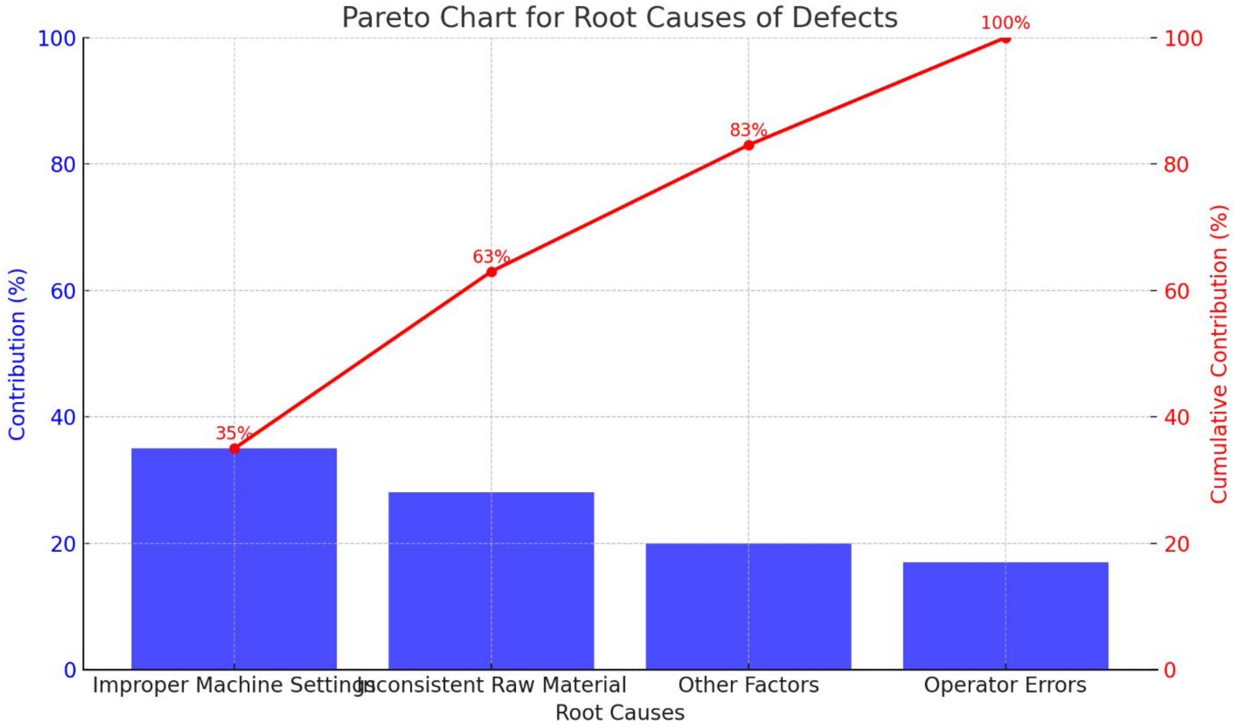
The above graphs illustrate the improvements achieved after integrating Six Sigma and AI in the ATN Soap Industry:

1. Defect Rate Improvement: The defect rate significantly reduced from 4.5% to 0.8%, indicating the success of quality control measures.
2. Wastage Reduction: Wastage was reduced from 18% to 22%, surpassing the initial target of 20%. This demonstrates enhanced efficiency in resource utilization.
3. Cycle Time Reduction: The cycle time for production decreased from 25 to 21 minutes, indicating improved workflow and reduction of bottlenecks.

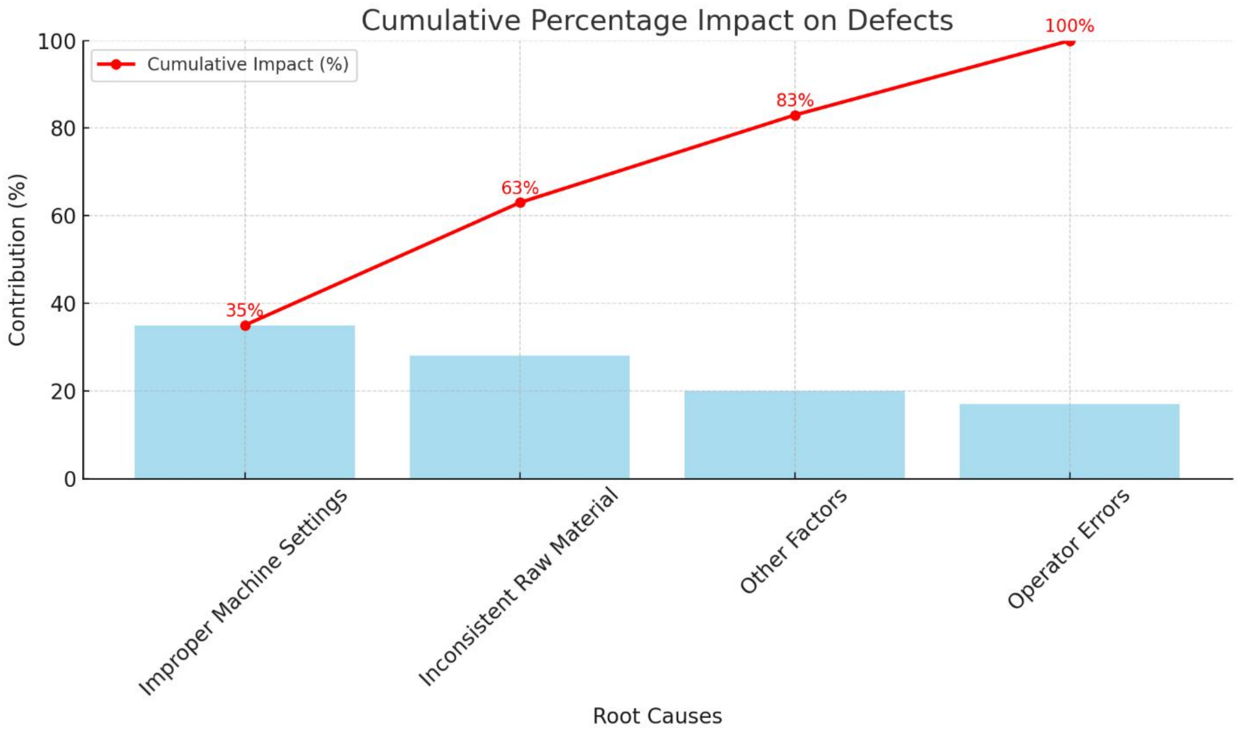
These visual representations help in clearly communicating the effectiveness of the implemented strategies.



The Pareto chart above illustrates the contributions of various root causes to the quality defects:

1. Improper Machine Settings contribute the most (35%) to the defects, followed by Inconsistent Raw Material (28%) and Operator Errors (17%).
2. The Cumulative Contribution curve shows that these top three causes account for 80% of the overall defects, which is a typical Pareto principle observation (80/20 rule).

This chart helps focus improvement efforts on the most impactful issues



The chart above displays the cumulative percentage impact on defects:

- The cumulative impact curve (in red) shows the cumulative effect of addressing each root cause in sequence.
- Addressing the top three causes (Improper Machine Settings, Inconsistent Raw Material, and Operator Errors) would address

approximately 80% of the total defects.

This visualization emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the most impactful root causes to achieve significant improvements.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This Section presents a discussion of the key findings from the analysis, the implications of the research, and the conclusions drawn from the integration of Six Sigma and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in improving quality and reducing wastage at the ATN Soap Industry. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also provided.

5.1 Discussion

The integration of Six Sigma and AI was successful in addressing the quality defects and wastage issues in the ATN Soap Industry. The DMAIC framework, combined with AI tools, allowed for a systematic approach to identifying root causes, implementing improvements, and maintaining the gains achieved.

5.1.1 Quality Improvement through Six Sigma and AI

The application of Six Sigma's DMAIC framework, enhanced by AI, led to a significant reduction in the defect rate from 4.5% to 0.8%. AI-driven predictive models were particularly effective in identifying key predictors of quality issues, such as machine settings and raw material quality. This enabled the production team to take proactive measures to prevent defects before they occurred. The decision tree and logistic regression models provided valuable insights that helped prioritize improvement actions.

The improvement phase included targeted interventions such as machine calibration and operator training, which were instrumental in reducing defects. The use of SPC charts in the control phase ensured that the production process remained stable, with defects consistently below the control limits.

5.1.2 Wastage Reduction and Lean Six Sigma Tools

The Lean Six Sigma tools, including the 5S methodology and process standardization, played a key role in reducing wastage by 22%. The 5S implementation improved workplace organization, reduced non-value-added activities, and enhanced overall efficiency. The use of AI tools for real-time monitoring also contributed to minimizing wastage by identifying and addressing potential issues before they led to significant losses.

5.1.3 Contribution to the Literature

This research contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating the practical integration of Six Sigma and AI in a small-scale manufacturing setting. Previous studies have largely focused on large-scale enterprises, while this research shows the applicability of these methodologies in an

SME context. The findings suggest that even with limited resources, SMEs can benefit significantly from the adoption of AI-enhanced quality improvement frameworks.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The implications of this research are both practical and theoretical. Practically, the study provides a framework for other SMEs in the manufacturing sector to adopt Six Sigma and AI for quality improvement and waste reduction. The AI-driven approach to root cause analysis and predictive modeling allows for more informed decision-making and proactive quality management.

From a theoretical perspective, this research expands the body of knowledge on the integration of AI with traditional quality improvement methodologies. The findings indicate that AI can enhance the effectiveness of Six Sigma by providing deeper insights into production processes, thereby enabling more effective interventions.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite the positive outcomes, the study has several limitations. One of the main limitations is the limited sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The study was conducted in a single small-scale manufacturing unit, and the results may not be directly applicable to other industries or larger-scale operations. Additionally, the variability in raw material quality posed challenges during data analysis, which could have influenced the outcomes.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on expanding the sample size and including multiple manufacturing units to improve the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term impact of integrating AI with Six Sigma on quality improvement and waste reduction. Additionally, exploring the use of advanced AI techniques, such as deep learning and the Internet of Things (IoT), could provide further insights into enhancing production efficiency and maintaining consistent quality levels.

5.5 Conclusion

The integration of Six Sigma and AI in the ATN Soap Industry has proven to be an effective approach for improving quality and reducing wastage. The DMAIC framework, combined with AI-driven predictive modeling, enabled the identification of critical factors affecting quality and facilitated the implementation of targeted improvements. The defect rate was successfully reduced to below 1%, and wastage was minimized by 22%. The findings highlight the potential of AI to enhance traditional quality improvement methodologies and provide a framework for other SMEs to adopt similar approaches.

By combining data-driven decision-making with proactive quality management, the ATN Soap Industry has not only improved product quality but also achieved significant cost savings and efficiency gains. The research underscores the value of integrating AI into manufacturing processes to achieve sustainable improvements in quality and productivity.

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