

Major Factors Causing Delay of Construction Projects during COVID-19 in Sri Lanka

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The building sector has been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic situation and is being threatened by several challenges in terms of contractual commitments, shortage of services, deliverables, health and safety policies and project delays or halts. During the pandemic, the construction industry encountered the problem of the inability to complete projects on time. The main purpose of this study is to identify the significant delay factors affecting the construction projects in Sri Lanka during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The data were collected through a designed questionnaire by examining thirty one factors from four main categories: contractor, owner, consultant and external factors. The relative importance index (RII) formula was used to rank the respondent's opinion on categories of delay factors. The main finding of the study is the financial factor, which is the most influential factor in causing construction project delays in Sri Lanka during the pandemic period. Coordination issues have been identified as the second major cause of construction project delays. Further, the study shows that the contractor's side and owners' side, financial problems were the major factor in delaying construction projects during this pandemic time. From the side of the consultant, the identified cause of delays in construction projects is the lack of supervision. Finally, the most important external factor causing delays in construction projects is the lack of materials. Based on the findings and discussions of the study, it is recommended that financial support and appropriate coordination are highly important and essential for construction industry. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted new challenges that are affecting the management at all levels. Thus, programs should be re-designed so that there will be less labour on site at any given time to allow social distancing. Further, a greater use of pre-cast materials, as well as enhanced welfare facilities on site for employees, should be considered so that their safety will be ensured at work.

Keywords: Covid-19, Construction projects, Construction industry, Project management, Sri Lanka