

# INVESTIGATING THE MOTIVATION FOR IMPLEMENTING UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS IN THE SRI LANKAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

T.M.P.N. Thennakoon<sup>1</sup>, H.S. Jayasena<sup>2</sup> and U.S. Weerapperuma<sup>3</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*Infrastructure development can be identified as a key driver of economic growth. Most developing countries have prioritised implementing new procurement arrangements to execute public infrastructure projects throughout their life cycle efficiently. Private Public Partnership (PPP) procurement arrangement is one of the popular procurement arrangements, which can be classified as solicited proposals (SPs) and unsolicited proposals (USPs). Most countries have adopted USP for infrastructure projects among those two arrangements. Nevertheless, USPs have several drawbacks than SPs, such as corruption, low social and economic benefits, low value for money, and lack of transparency. However, governments are still developing their infrastructure projects as USPs due to the government's motivational aspects towards them. Therefore, it is controversial how those motivations have a huge impact than drawbacks in implementing USPs. Thus, this study aims to investigate the motivation for implementing USPs specific to the Sri Lankan context. Accordingly, a qualitatively based extensive literature synthesis has been conducted concerning the practices of USPs. Following the qualitative approach, data were collected through twelve (12) semi-structured interviews with industry professionals familiar with USPs implementation. The findings revealed that governments often choose USPs due to limitations in their capacity to identify and evaluate large-scale projects. These limitations can be financial and technical, including a lack of expertise. While speculation exists about corrupt practices associated with unsolicited PPPs, it is difficult to validate such claims. However, it is acknowledged that unsolicited PPPs, in their current state, offer higher opportunities for corruption. Nonetheless, accessing private financing quickly and efficiently for PPPs is also a positive motivation for choosing the unsolicited approach.*

**Keywords:** *Governments' Motivation; Procurement; Private Public Partnership (PPP); Unsolicited Proposals (USP).*

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<sup>1</sup> Undergraduate, Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, [piyuminisansala517@gmail.com](mailto:piyuminisansala517@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer, Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, [suranga@uom.lk](mailto:suranga@uom.lk)

<sup>3</sup> Temporary Lecturer, Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, [umeshas@uom.lk](mailto:umeshas@uom.lk)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Construction is a vast, complex, and unique industry, which is a critical economic regulator of a country (Behm, 2008). It significantly contributes to the national output (Finkenzeller et al., 2010). Further, the construction sector strongly cooperates with other key economic regulators (Rameezdeen, 2002). Infrastructure development is vital to economic well-being and long-term economic growth (Naoum & Egbu, 2015). Therefore, the success of the construction sector depends on the deliverable quality and efficiency of the construction projects. The success of a construction project is derived through fundamental attributes; scope, time, cost, and quality (Ali & Kamaruzzaman, 2010). With this, selecting a suitable procurement system is a significant step to achieving project success (Tookey et al., 2001). Naoum and Egbu (2015) stated that the procurement system is a mechanism for linking and coordinating building team members throughout the building process in a unique systematic structure, both functionally and contractually. There are different types of procurement routes, such as separated, integrated, management-oriented, and collaborative, which can be selected according to their requirements, and each procurement route has its unique characteristics (Tookey et al., 2001).

Therefore, most publicly available projects are initiated through various public procurement mechanisms. Public procurement is implemented under the authority of the government of a country or any other public sector to focus on stakeholders' satisfaction with the national development plan (Gunawardana et al., 2021). Further, Capacity Development Group Bureau (2010) argued that in the global context, public procurement had been estimated as a 15% contribution to the GDP while it becomes a 70% contribution to GDP in some developing countries such as Peru, Colombia, India, and the Philippines. Therefore, enhancing and improving the public procurement process for the nation to raise the community's standard of living and economic development is beneficial.

Torvinen and Ulkuniemi (2016) argued that publicly available projects possessed traditional procurement processes in the last few decades. However, the traditional process has been confronted with intense pressure to alter it due to significant changes in the public procurement environment. Shortage of funds, limited resources, technical improvements, and the development of new services can be considered notable drivers behind new public procurement methods (Jamali, 2007; Krtalić & Kelebuda, 2010; Pekkarinen et al., 2011). Therefore, procurement practitioners have introduced various market-based public procurement tools such as public-private partnerships, public finance initiatives, and pre-commercial procurement options (Raymond, 2008; Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, 2016; Uyerra & Flanagan, 2009). The key idea behind this closer collaboration of public procurement methods is that no single party has all the knowledge, information, resources, or ability to address emerging complex issues (Lawther & Martin, 2005). Then market-based public procurement approaches create chances for both innovative mobilisation and better achievement of public policy objectives while delivering services to taxpayers (Liu & Wilkinson, 2011).

Among these innovative public procurement approaches, the most popular model for purchasing extensive public infrastructure is the public-private partnership (PPP) (Ng et al., 2013). Instead of relying on one party as in the traditional procurement process, suppliers and procurers contribute their best skills and knowledge to the project while involved with planning, financing, maintenance, and assistance services for the procured

project (Krtalić & Kelebuda, 2010). Two methods for implementing PPP are Solicited Proposals (SPs) and Unsolicited Proposals (USPs). The public sector development of the SPs and the project is required to be implemented as planned by the government with private sector involvement (Casady & Baxter, 2020; Lenferink et al., 2012; Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, 2016). When a project is implemented as an unsolicited proposal, a private entity develops it and proposes it to a relevant authority (Yun et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016). Nyagormey et al. (2020) pointed out that when considering PPP investment in developing countries, a significant proportion of the investments are acquired by unsolicited proposals (USPs).

However, there are several barriers that unsolicited PPP projects are faced when compared with a solicited proposal (Aziz & Nabavi, 2014). USPs are often associated with some negativities such as corruption, low social and economic benefits, low value for money, lack of transparency, risk misallocation, lack of competitive tendering process, nepotism, and lack of fairness (Hodges & Dellacha, 2007; Osei-kyei et al., 2018; PPIAF, 2017; World Bank Group, 2015). Further, USPs initiatives generate unfavourable public opinions due to their perceived favouritism and lack of competition (Aziz & Nabavi, 2014; Zawawi et al., 2016). Even though USPs have the above major drawbacks, there is a global tendency and motivation for procuring PPP projects as USPs in developing countries (Nyagormey et al., 2020; PPIAF, 2017; World Bank Group, 2015). Regarding the Sri Lankan context, according to the World Bank Group (2020), many public sector projects are procured through USPs. With this, USPs play a vital role in infrastructure development in Sri Lanka (Verite, 2021). Then it can be argued that there is a motivation for the Sri Lankan government also to fulfil the infrastructure implementation through USPs. Given the paradoxical nature of this motivation, while there are many perceived drawbacks, this paper aims to identify the motivation factors for developing infrastructure projects as USPs in the Sri Lankan construction industry. Accordingly, the literature synthesis has been developed, including PPP practices with USPs, USP drawbacks, motivation for USPs, and USP practice in the Sri Lankan construction industry.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach can be defined as plans and procedures for conducting research that covers the progression from general hypotheses to specific techniques for data collecting, analysis, and interpretation. The qualitative research approach has been used for this study because it can thoroughly analyse ideas, models, and frameworks with a theoretical foundation (Creswell, 2014). This paper addressed the research problem:

**RQ:** *"What are the motivations for implementing PPP projects through USPs?"*

Exhaustive literature research was conducted by reviewing conference papers, journal articles, e-books, and other publications to access knowledge on USPs. This literature survey provided limited findings about the unsolicited proposals in Private Public Partnership (PPP) projects, including major drawbacks and motivation to adopt USPs. Thus, there is a knowledge gap in comprehensively identifying the motivation factors for the Sri Lankan context. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to collect qualitative data on practitioners' lived experiences, observations, and opinions on the contexts of USPs. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify the motivation factors of unsolicited proposals (USPs) in the PPPs of the Sri Lankan construction industry while accounting for the motivation factors which are identified in the literature review.

There are no closely defined rules when selecting a sample size for qualitative research (Baum, 2000; Patton, 2002). However, according to Huberman and Miles (1994), qualitative research generally relies on small numbers to study in-depth and detailed detail. Hence, for this study, non-probability snowball sampling was used considering the limited number of practitioners exposed to USPs and related contexts. Twelve (12) experts with sound knowledge and experience in USP PPP of the Sri Lankan construction industry were interviewed. Accordingly, as mentioned above, the initial sample was limited to interviews of twelve respondents who were saturated after the ninth interview. Table 1 summarises the profile of the interviewees.

*Table 1: Profiles of interviewees*

<b>Interviewee code</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Years of experiences</b>
R1	PPP Specialist	Chief operating officer	15 years
R2	Quantity Surveying/ Research Scholar	Senior Quantity Surveyor/Ph.D. Candidate	8 years
R3	PPP Specialist	Chairman	30 years
R4	Procurement Specialist	Resident Engineer	20 years
R5	PPP Specialist	Deputy Director	12 years
R6	PPP Specialist	Deputy Director	6 years
R7	Procurement Specialist	Director	15 years
R8	Resident Engineer	Director	15 years
R9	Engineer	Deputy Director	14 years
R10	Engineer	Project Engineer	13 years
R11	Procurement Specialist	Director	9 years
R12	Engineer	Senior Engineer	10 years

### **3. PRACTICES OF PPP IN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Because of the recent rapid economic growth, there has been a significant increase in the demand for infrastructure facilities in developing countries. Then, developing public-private partnerships (PPPs) is a strategy for enhancing infrastructure facilities in such countries. As Verma (2010) described in terms of fiscal stabilisation, cash flows, and efficiency gains, PPPs offer developing countries several benefits and prospects.

Therefore, PPP can be defined as "A method of procurement that brings together the public and the private sectors in a long-term partnership for mutual benefit. The crucial feature of a PPP is that it is designed to achieve both social and commercial goals" (Eisenberg, 2009). The combination of private funding, private project execution, and the provision of public services and facilities is the essence of public-private cooperation (Liu & Wilkinson, 2011). There are several PPP project procurement processes across the globe, including the most common methods such as build-transfer-operate (BTO), build-transfer-lease (BTL), build-operate-transfer (BOT), building-own-operate (BOO), design-build-finance-operate (DBFO), design-build-operate-maintain (DBOM) and many others (Yun et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016).

Further, in addition to the above common procurement methods, there are two different approaches named solicited and unsolicited proposals, globally recognised as PPP projects initiated methods (Zheng & Tiong, 2010). Depending on the decision of who develops the proposal and implements the project, solicited approach, and unsolicited approach can be differentiated (Castelblanco & Guevara, 2020b). The public sector does

the development of the solicited proposal, and the project is required to be implemented following an infrastructure development plan of the government but due to the financial constraints of the government, private sector involvement is vital in this approach (Casady & Baxter, 2020; Lenferink et al., 2012; Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, 2016). In an unsolicited approach, a private entity examines and initiates a profitable project as a seeking business opportunity (Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, 2016). When a project is implemented as an unsolicited proposal, private entity is involved in developing the proposal, initiating an implementation plan, and proposing it to a relevant authority (Yun et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016).

#### **4. OVERVIEW OF USP IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

In the USPs, a private firm approaches a public agency with a proposal for an infrastructure or service project without receiving a direct request or invitation from the government (Aziz & Nabavi, 2014; PPIAF, 2007; Zawawi et al., 2016). Therefore, a USP is an exception to the rule in which public sector organisations launch infrastructure projects. According to PPIAF (2007), the private sector proponent's financial capability is a vital factor. Then a demonstration of having strong financial strength to undertake the proposed project is an essential thing that the private proponent should be done when undertaking the project (PPIAF, 2007). Chew (2015) argued that unsolicited proposals are considered controversial. This means there are several drawbacks that unsolicited PPP projects have when compared with a solicited proposal such as corruption, low social and economic benefits, low value for money, lack of transparency, risk misallocation, lack of competitive tendering process, nepotism, and lack of fairness (Aziz & Nabavi, 2014). Then it is crucial to identify the motivation of USPs although there are several drawbacks.

##### **4.1 REVIEW OF THE MOTIVATION OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR IMPLEMENTING PPPs AS USPs**

The growing use of USPs demonstrates that many countries consider implementing PPP projects using USPs is advantageous and can make an exceptional contribution to the development of public infrastructure (PPIAF, 2014). When considering the other key motivation of a government to implement a project as a USP is the lack of financial and technical capabilities of public sectors to procure, prioritise and identify the projects (PPIAF, 2017; World Bank Group, 2007). In addition, when implementing a PPP project, a comprehensive preliminary study should be carried out to ensure the social and economic viability of the project (Ng et al., 2013). To carry out a proper and accurate preliminary study, an experienced technical team and considerable financial resource allocation are needed (Li et al., 2007). Nevertheless, in many public departments of developing countries, there is a lack of financial resources and expert knowledge in such studies. Therefore many governments have the motivation to rely on individual private developers' efforts and initiatives to procure PPP projects (PPIAF, 2014).

Another motivation for a government to select a USP for PPP is that USPs are the quickest approach to implementing PPP projects compared with a solicited approach (Hodges & Dellacha, 2007; PPIAF, 2017). Because SPs have to undergo a formal planning procedure, requested PPP projects, in some solicited projects, excessive competition is initiated, and considerable time is taken for the procurement process (PPIAF, 2017). Then many public departments move to direct negotiation instead of a lengthy tendering process. In USPs, there is only one project proponent, negotiation can be done quickly,

and the cost incurred for the competitive tendering process is reduced (Osei-kyei et al., 2018). Moreover, the recurring expenses associated with competitive bidding are decreased {Formatting Citation}.

PPIAF (2014) emphasised obtaining the private sector's innovative and creative ideas and using those effectively as another motivating factor in USPs. In essence, unsolicited proposals allow private investors to develop creative approaches and long-term plans for infrastructure problems that many public departments are unable to provide (World Bank Group, 2017). Another well-known reason governments use USPs is the lack of an appropriate and comprehensive policy framework for PPPs (Hodges & Dellacha, 2007; PPIAF, 2014). Even though the PPP concept has existed for decades, many nations, especially those in developing nations, have not yet developed comprehensive policy guidelines for PPP project execution (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017). USPs are frequently used to carry out PPP projects because there is no detailed regulatory framework (PPIAF, 2012).

Another motivation factor is the government's interest in accessing private entity finance facilities more quickly than solicited approach. Emphatically, the unsolicited method helps public institutions tap rapidly into the private sector's money for infrastructure projects (PPIAF, 2012). Although governments could obtain private financing through the requested ways, this method occasionally requires more time. Nevertheless, with the unsolicited approach, the private sector proposes the project with its resources and capital readily accessible for development (PPIAF, 2009). However, David-Barret and Fazekas (2020) stated that the government's motivation in most developing countries to implement a project through USP is the possibility of engaging with some corrupt practices, and the absence of competitive bidding in USPs leads to government officials engaging with some fraudulent practices.

Accordingly, Table 2 presents the motivation for implementing USPs for construction projects, which were collected through past studies.

*Table 2: Motivations of implementing USPs.*

<b>Motivation</b>	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]
Lack of financial and technical capabilities of public sectors to procure, prioritise and identify the projects	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓
Lack of financial resources and expert knowledge in the public sector to carry out a proper and accurate preliminary study and governments tend to rely on individual private developers' efforts and initiatives to procure PPP projects through USPs.	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	✓
Project procured unsolicited is considered the quickest approach to implementing PPP projects compared with a solicited approach	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obtaining the private sector's innovative and creative ideas from unsolicited proposals than solicited proposals	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x

Motivation	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]
Government's interest to access private entity finance facilities more quickly than solicited approach	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Absence of a proper regulatory framework to manage the USPs	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Corrupt practices and the absence of competitive bidding in USPs	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Sources: [1] PPIAF, 2014; [2] PPIAF, 2009; [3] Castelblanco & Guevara, 2022; [4] Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017; [7] Osei-kyei et al., 2018; [8] Verma, 2010; [9] Hodges & Dellacha, 2007; [10] World Bank Group, 2007.

## 4.2 USP PRACTICES IN THE SRI LANKAN CONTEXT

According to the World Bank Group (2020), many public sector projects are procured through unsolicited proposals in the Sri Lankan context. Between 2010 and 2016, the government spent 6%-7% of the GDP on public investment (Department of national planning, 2010). Besides, due to the critical economic situation in the country, finding finances through foreign funding sources has become popular (World Bank Group, 2020). Then unsolicited proposal plays a vital role in infrastructure development in the Sri Lankan construction industry (Verite, 2021). Verite (2022) stated that one of the apparent motivations for implementing PPPs through USPs is the lack of necessary finance to fund infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka. With this, it is important to identify the other motivation factors prevailing in the Sri Lankan context to implement USPs as a suitable PPP method.

## 5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Data collected were the opinions of the experts on the generic factors which were identified related to USPs. The collected data were analysed through manual content analysis. Consequently, findings through the conducted expert interviews have been discussed as follows.

### 5.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT PPP PROJECTS AS USPs

All the motivation factors identified in the literature review were checked with the respondents' opinions. All the respondents were asked whether that identified motivation factor in the literature review is valid for the Sri Lankan context. The respondents were asked to give additional motivation factors they have experienced or known. Consequently, two additional motivation factors were identified by the respondents. Further, their experiences with each motivation factor were analysed. Table 3 illustrates the findings through expert interviews.

*Table 3: Motivation factors for USPs*

Motivation Factors	Experts											
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12
Lack of financial and technical capabilities of public sectors to procure, prioritise and identify the projects	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of financial resources and expert knowledge in the public sector to carry out a proper and accurate preliminary study	✓	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	×	×	✓	✓	✓
Project procured unsolicited is considered the quickest approach to implementing PPP projects compared with a solicited approach	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Obtaining the private sector's innovative and creative ideas from unsolicited proposals than solicited proposals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Government's interest to access private entity finance facilities more quickly than solicited approach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corrupt practices and the absence of a competitive bidding process in USPs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Absence of a proper and comprehensive regulatory framework to manage PPPs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of developers' interest in developing a project in remote areas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×	×

R1, R2, R4, R10, R11, and R12 elaborated that the lack of financial capabilities is obvious in a country like Sri Lanka. They highlighted that most of the time public sector still uses traditional methods compared to the private sector. However, R1, R7, and R8 expressed that even though lack of financial capability is one of the motivation factors to allow USPs for PPPs, lack of technical capability is not a motivation because experts who have technical capabilities are available within the country and by having proper national policy output of the national policy can be enhanced. Accordingly, all the respondents have highlighted that financial incapability within the country is a motivation to allow USPs. However, regarding technical incapability, more than half of the respondents disagreed with technical incapability and mentioned policy directives that are needed for technical capabilities.

When considering the public sector's lack of financial resources and expert knowledge to carry out a proper and accurate preliminary study, R2 stated that the ability to take a risk regarding preliminary investigation, market survey, or feasibility study is inadequate in the public sector. Nevertheless, the private sector takes the risk and takes the proposal.



R1, R6, R10, R11, and R12 elaborated on the same idea. However, R8 expressed that when it comes to expert knowledge, the government has enough expert knowledge to carry out the proper preliminary study. R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, and R9 expressed similar opinions. Therefore, even though all the respondents agreed with the lack of financial resources to conduct the preliminary study, the lack of expert knowledge is not agreed.

Project procuring as USP is the quickest approach to implementing PPP projects compared with a SP. R1 expressed that a lengthy procedure is not there and no need to conduct a feasibility study, pre-feasibility study, and market survey by the public sector because the project proponent has done it on their own and brought it with the proposal. R2 expressed that a tendering procedure should be conducted in solicited proposals where the employer's requirements need to be finalised. However, for USPs, all these are shortened. Hence, there is a motivation to start the project within a shorter period. However, R5 stated that in the SL context, a solicited proposal is selected after a proper competitive process, and obtaining approval for the project becomes easier than USPs.

All the respondents agreed with the motivation factor that USPs can obtain creative and innovative ideas from the private sector. R7 expressed that flexibility is higher than solicited proposals because there is no need of follows donors' framework. Therefore, all the respondents have highlighted through USPs can be assessed the creative and innovative ideas of the private sector.

Motivation factor which is the government's interest to access private entity finance facilities more quickly than solicited approach is agreed by most of the respondents. R1 expressed that if an emergency infrastructure requirement occurs, such as power-generated infrastructures, the quickest and most straightforward approach to financially facilitate such type of project is implementing the project as a USP. Most respondents elaborated on the same idea. However, R6 had different opinions. R6 highlighted that if a proper competitive bidding process is implemented and can be assessed to the government finance facility quickly at a lower cost, it will not motivate a government to allow USPs.

All the respondents highly agreed with the motivation factor of potentially corrupt practices and the absence of a competitive bidding process in USPs. R7 expressed that most developing countries like Sri Lanka use these USPs as a corrupt practice because of less competitive bidding. R2 stated that after 2010 most of the development projects taken as USPs led to serious concerns of corrupt practices and government assets could have been used very corruptly. R2 continued to explain that USPs are now limited due to fear of such corruption. All other respondents elaborated on the same idea. According to them, without assessing the true value of USPs, government decision-makers may rely on this motivation factor.

When considering the absence of a proper and comprehensive regulatory framework to manage PPPs as a motivation factor, all the respondents agreed with that motivation factor. Moreover, R8 explained that although the PPP concept existed within Sri Lanka in the last few decades, the Sri Lankan government has not had proper and matured policy guidelines for PPP projects with proper paths and timelines. Further, R6 explained that as a country, there is an absence of a strategic approach, policy, vision, or proper process to use our resources under the PPP modality; the government becomes market-given and responds to the proposals not initiated by the government side. All other respondents

highlighted the same idea. Therefore, this motivation factor usually prevails in a developing country like Sri Lanka.

Besides the findings in the literature review, R8 identified the motivation as an additional motivational factor: the lack of developers' interest in developing a project in remote areas. All the interviewees interviewed after R8 was asked about this motivation factor. R8 stated that if a project in a remote area is implemented as a solicited proposal and there is a lack of interest among the competitors, it is better to implement it as an unsolicited proposal for such type of project. R9 and R12 highlighted the same idea.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

As discussed, several motivation factors are affected by the decision of the government to implement USPs for PPP projects. The government believes implementing PPP projects as USPs provides benefits and uniquely contributes to public sector infrastructure development (PPIAF, 2012). Therefore, these governments' motivation encourages and allow the PPP projects as USPs to solve the infrastructure concerns within the country quickly and address the gaps of the publicly initiated projects. These institutional motivations are formally acknowledged by governments or included in USP frameworks. When a government is required to manage USPs, it is important to identify the motivation factors related to their own country (World Bank Group, 2017).

One of the significant motivation factors identified in the literature review and the respondents' opinions is the capacity constraints of the public sector. Nevertheless, some respondents disagreed with such motivation. USPs are not always a practical way to get around capacity issues. Government institutions should look at the condition of implementing a project as a USP. It is equally challenging or more challenging than developing the project as a publicly initiated project through a competitive process. According to Kim et al. (2011), due to information gaps between the public agency and the USP proponent regarding the project's specifics, such as scope, design, construction, and operation, after implementing the project public sector finds it more difficult to shape the project actively. In addition, it becomes more challenging for the public entity to structure the contract and implement the project with the required value for money. Therefore, when relying on the capacity constraints motivation factor, it is necessary to identify whether it is more challenging or equally challenging than the publicly initiated projects.

Another significant motivation factor that most respondents agreed with is the fast project implementation through USPs. Nevertheless, some experts rejected the idea that a USP can speed up project execution, for sole-sourcing or direct negotiation. Due to USPs bypassing the public-procurement regulations may lead to public controversies and cause further delays in the projects, then although the project is going faster at an early stage, at a later stage, it takes a longer time (Brocklebank, 2014). Further, due to direct negotiation of the USPs, time delays occurred later. When a government relies on this motivation factor, it is necessary to identify the delays that can occur later and evaluate if it gains more benefits than publicly initiated projects. Otherwise, this is not a motivation factor to be relied on by the government.

Opportunities for corrupt practices are often attributed to USPs (Hodges & Dellacha, 2007). The study showed such perception among the participants. While this does not confirm the existence, this highlights the significance of potential corruption when public

projects are implemented with USPs. Consequently, corrupt practices become a likely candidate for motivation to use USPs given the background context of the country.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

While USPs have various drawbacks, motivational factors stimulate the industry to adopt PPP projects as USPs. This tendency to implement PPP projects as USPs can also be seen in the Sri Lankan construction industry, as a significant number of USPs have been implemented in the country during the last few decades. Simultaneously, controversial problems such as low social and economic benefits, low value for money, high transaction costs, and corruption are thought to have been created through these projects. Nevertheless, still, USPs are in practice. With the curiosity on why such motivation could exist, this study examined the motivation for adopting USPs for PPP projects in Sri Lanka. The finding revealed the underlying motivation behind governments' tendency to implement unsolicited PPPs, notwithstanding their potential contentiousness. One key motivation to opt for unsolicited mode is the capacity limitations in the public sector to identify and evaluate large-scale projects. Capacity limitations can be financial and technical, including limited government expertise. In case these limitations are not true, a lack of government policies and/or strategies to mobilize the capacity could at least be absent. Speculations were evident that USPs are preferred due to their opening for corrupt practices and absence of competition. Sensitive and controversial assertions like this are difficult to be validated. Notwithstanding the question of whether corruption occurs, it is understood that USPs in their current state provide relatively higher corruption opportunities. However, it is observed that corrupt practices need not be the only motivation if they exist; there are also positive motivations, such as accessing private entity finance facilities more quickly for PPP than the solicited approach.

The main limitation of this study is that it merely examined and considered broad justifications for using unsolicited PPP proposals rather than thoroughly examining and considering the inherent characteristics of justifications (i.e., push and pull theories). Now that the generic motivations are identified through this study, these findings help to embark on the next level of the study. Future research should be focused on the "pull and push" factors that influence the adoption of unsolicited PPPs in a particular nation or region. Moreover, future studies will also investigate the drivers behind the private sector's interest in USP agreements.

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