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An investigation into the factors causing international development project failure in developing countries: Focus on Afghanistan

Nasir Ahmad Shafiei[a*] and K. Puttanna[b]

[a]*Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri, Mangalore, India*
[b]*Professor, Department of Business Administration, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri, Mangalore, India*

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to evaluate the perception of major stakeholders on factors causing International Development Project (IDP) failure in the context of Afghanistan. The study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. Thirty significant IDP failure factors included in the questionnaire were identified and shortlisted through literature reviews and validated by experts and IDP management practitioners. The survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire to investigate the most significant IDP failure factors, and various statistical tools were employed to evaluate the perception of the survey respondents. RII was used to examine the relative importance index of each failure factor. The failure factors were then grouped into five categories: Financial constraints, Ineffective recruitment, External forces, Project leadership, and Project management practices using EFA. The findings of the study will help the international development community and their IDP implementing partners, INGOs and project management practitioners manage IDPs proactively and mitigate the risks of project failure. It will also contribute to the IDP management body of knowledge. The research is the first of its kind to examine the critical factors causing IDP failure in Afghanistan.

1. Introduction

International development projects (IDPs) are sponsored and implemented with the sole purpose of poverty alleviation, improving people's living conditions, and fostering economic growth in developing nations. They have become an effective means by which development aid is used to facilitate and achieve national growth. The lack of socio-economic development in developing countries, especially those that have experienced decades of civil war, armed conflicts, and political instability, calls for focused and deliberate aid from the international community. The deteriorating living conditions and the existence of a considerable gap in the managerial, technological, and political environments of developing countries compared to those of developed countries have convinced most of the world's governments and multilateral institutions to place a high priority on development initiatives and interventions in these nations. Thus, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations and agencies, and the United Nations Organization allocate a significant number of resources to support development activities in developing countries. With the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the formation of the new government in 2001, Afghanistan gained the attention of the international community in providing development aids. Since then, hundreds of billions of dollars have been poured into development activities, and a significant number of IDPs have been undertaken all over the country. While the total number of all IDPs implemented in the country is unknown, more than 14,000 construction and development projects were already underway in 2007 alone. It is estimated that the vast majority of the provided development aids (approximately 82 percent) was spent off the budget (Bizhan, 2018), mostly through IDPs, which were managed

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +91 7619179929

E-mail address: shafieinasir@gmail.com (N. A. Shafiei)

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and implemented by the donors themselves. Five major bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, namely World Bank, Asian Development Bank, USAID, DFID, and GIZ alone, have funded and implemented 971 medium and large projects in sectors, viz., Agriculture, Education and Health, Energy and Infrastructure, Water and Sanitation, Democracy and Governance, Economic Growth, Trade and Industry, and other multi-sectoral measures between the years 2002 to 2019. As a result of these interventions, some improvements, particularly in GDP growth, poverty reduction, education, life expectancy, child and maternal health, and infrastructure, have been made; however, these improvements are relatively modest as compared to the sums of dollars spent in the country (Samim, 2016).

Over two decades have passed since the international community declared that it was providing aid to Afghanistan, but it still seems that things have not improved significantly. The recent Transparency International report ranks Afghanistan as the seventh most corrupt nation in the world (Corruption Perceptions Index, 2019). The literacy rate in Afghanistan is reported to be 43 percent in 2018, a drastic increase from 31.7 percent in 2000 (World Bank, 2019). However, still, the quality of education does not meet world standards (Samim, 2016). Health indicators remain below the average for low-income countries with the lowest life expectancy rate and the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the world.

Moreover, the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan reports that almost 90 percent of the total population lives below the poverty line (Omid, 2020). While less than 67 percent of the population has access to clean drinking water, approximately 43 percent of the people are provided access to safely managed and basic service sanitation (WHS/UNICEF JMP, 2019). About 70 percent of the population has no access to electricity, most of whom live in rural regions (Amin & Bernell, 2018). These reveal that hundreds of billions of development aids for Afghanistan have failed to keep poverty levels from increasing, provide adequate civilian employment, create major licit exports, and develop sufficient levels of economic growth and reforms (Cordesman, 2019).

The statistics indicate that thousands of projects have been implemented across different sectors all over the country, but they were unable to deliver the desired change throughout the years. Some studies and reports reveal that most of these projects could not achieve their goals and could not produce the required outcomes. A recent report by SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction) to the US Congress reveals that reconstruction projects funded by the US in Afghanistan are failing and costing millions of dollars (SIGAR, 2015). Another SIGAR report suggests that a significant amount of $104 billion in Afghanistan's relief works is spent on dubious projects (Pager, 2015). Moreover, a review of all SIGAR inspection reports on USAID reconstruction projects in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2017 indicates that projects have not always been completed according to the requirements and technical specifications (Laber, 2018). Similarly, a study on 53 development projects administered by the World Bank in Afghanistan reports huge cost and schedule variations (Shafiei & Puttanna, 2018). The above statistics divulge that most of the IDPs implemented in Afghanistan were unable to produce the intended outcomes and positively change people's lives. Therefore, it's worthwhile to investigate the potential factors that might influence the failure of these projects in Afghanistan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 International Development Projects (IDPs)

Projects that are principally designed for socio-economic development, typically financed by external donors, and implemented in all sectors of developing countries are referred to as IDPs (Youker, 2003; Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010). Tekinel (20013) defines IDPs like standard projects as

"*a temporary endeavor with a definite beginning and end to produce a unique product, service, or result which receive their funding through multilateral international development agencies, non-governmental organizations, and or government agencies in developing countries".*

IDPs, unlike corporate or IT projects, are undertaken without profit motives. They are executed in developing countries for development purposes. The main aim behind funding and implementing IDPs is to bring the desired change in the target population and communities' lives. To better understand the nature of IDPs and distinguish them from other corporate projects, it is worthy to look into these projects' characteristics and peculiarities. Youker (2003) describes the characteristics of IDPs in terms of their definition, aims, funding, lifecycle, different stakeholders involved, the role of sponsors, and the environment of the host country. IDPs typically include a wide range of interested parties known as stakeholders. These stakeholders can directly or indirectly affect the process of project management to greater extents. Therefore, the involvement of a vast array of stakeholders is considered as an essential characteristic of IDPs (Saad, Cicmil & Greenwood, 2002; Youker, 1999; Diallo & Thuillier, 2005; Steinfort, 2010). Moreover, IDPs are characterized by a complex and risky environment (Youker, 1999; Diallo & Thuillier, 2004; Khang & Moe, 2008). IDPs' environment is far more complex and riskier than domestic projects in industrialized countries (Kwak, 2002). IDPs are also characterized by the shortage of supplies and scarcity of resources (Youker 1999; Quartey Jnr 1996; Muriithi & Crawford 2003). Developing countries are known for resource scarcity, and there is often a shortage of resources, particularly human resources, and a lack of infrastructure (Youker, 1999). Besides, cultural differences in IDPs is another essential characteristic. The cultural differences make it challenging to adopt proper

project management techniques in managing and implementing these projects (Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Crawford & Bryce, 2003). Culture mostly determines how people and organizations operate on a day-to-day basis. The different problems that companies face are often due to conflicts that arise from other cultures (Lima & Patah, 2016). Finally, IDPs are characterized by the intangibility of project outputs and the difficulty in defining and measuring them (Khang & Moe, 2008; Steinfort, 2010; Ahsan & Gunawan, 2010).

2.2 Project Failure Defined

Generally, the term "project failure" refers to projects that are terminated before completion (Pinto & Mantel, 1990). The traditional definition, which is centered on the baseline given by Atkinson (1999), famously known as the 'Iron Triangle,' does not consider the success or failure of projects beyond the budget, duration, and scope. Supporting this definition, many authors (Kappelman et al., 2006; El Emama & Koru, 2008) concluded that projects' success and or failure should be solely judged on the fulfillment of costs, schedule, and quality requirements. However, opposing the conventional definition of project success and recent developments in IDP management practices, more emphasis is now given to the post-delivery and impact phases. This trend has been due to scholars' and practitioners' recognition of various stakeholders involved in IDPs. According to Daniel and Ibrahim (2019), a project, regardless of its budget and schedule fitting, is considered a failed project if it does not fulfill its intent. Moreover, a project's success means more than just meeting deadlines, budget allocations, and performance requirements (Baker et al., 2008). Hence, IDPs' success/failure should not only be assessed on the basis of cost, schedule, and scope but also on the post-delivery stage. IDPs are undertaken with the sole purpose of bringing about the desired change in the concerned community. Therefore, the success and or failure of these projects should go beyond the 'triple constraints' and should be evaluated based on their outcome and impact, the tangible change they bring about to the target communities, and most importantly, their sustainability. The increasing rate of project failure, predominantly in developing economies, has attracted the attention of researchers (Damoah & Kumi, 2018). Studies indicate that the rate of aid project failure is so high, even in organizations with years of experience in the implementation and evaluation of development projects. Bulman, Kolkma, and Kraay (2015) assessed 3821 World Bank administered projects and 1324 projects implemented by Asian Development Bank and concluded that almost half of these projects have been unable to produce the desired project outcomes. Similarly, an Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) independent rating of World Bank development projects reports 39 percent project failure (Chauvet et al., 2010).

2.3 Causes of IDP failure

The extant literature reveals numerous factors causing IDP failure. Some of these factors that can adversely affect the success of IDPs may be economic, political, geographical, socio-cultural, historical, demographic, and environmental (Collier, 2007; Gow & Morss, 1988; Kwak, 2002; Moyo, 2009). Other significant IDP failure factors are; inappropriate project design and ineffective project planning (Rotner, 1970; Rondinelli, 1979; Sahibzada et al., 1992; Agheneza, 2009; Hekala, 2012; Arifuddin, 2016; Eja & Ramegowda, 2019), and inadequate project implementation procedures (Rondinelli, 1979). Besides, low capacity and the lack of skilled human resources are a human related factor contributing to IDPs' failure (Rondinelli, 1979; Hekala, 2012; Palmer, 1986; Arifuddin, 2016). Political decisions and political interference (Rotner, 1970; Shahibzada et al., 1992; Eja & Ramegowda, 2019; Damoah & Kumi, 2018), and low administrative capacity and inadequate monitoring and supervision (Rondinelli, 1970; Damoah & Kumi, 2018) are also considered as critical project failure factors.

Ika (2012) writes about three problem areas and four traps that influence the failure of IDPs in developing countries. According to him, the three problem areas are; structural/contextual, institutional/sustainability, and managerial/organizational. On the other hand, a one-size-fits-all trap, accountability-for-results trap, lack-of-project management-capacity trap, and cultural traps are the four traps leading IDPs to fail (Ika, 2012). Corruption, poor project planning, partisan politics, political interference, incompetent leadership and lack of supervision, and frequent project scope changes are reported to be important factors causing government and development project failure in Africa (Eja & Ramegowda, 2019; Damoah & Kumi, 2018).

Generally, IDPs encounter several inevitable and severe problems because of their complex nature and the broader context they are operating in. The extant literature exploring and examining factors causing IDP failure in developing countries vary in their scope and purpose. They are, in nature, monotonous and conflicting. And it is not easy to come up with an agreement on a specific set of factors as the only factors responsible for IDPs' failure. Therefore, this study aims to explore, identify, and evaluate the causes/factors leading to IDPs' failure in the context of Afghanistan. A country characterized by the prevalence of armed conflicts and insurgency, slow economic growth, unstable political systems, and rigid social and cultural settings.

3. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to identify, evaluate and rank the potential factors that cause IDP failure in the context of Afghanistan. The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate the relative importance of each failure factor as perceived and ranked by sample respondents,
2. To examine the extent of agreement among the three categories of respondents on the ranking of IDP failure factors, and
3. To perform an Exploratory Factor Analysis to find out the key IDP failure factors

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study aims to examine the perception of major stakeholders on the IDP failure factors in the context of Afghanistan. The study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to study a phenomenon at a given point in time. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to collect data from the respondents. A questionnaire is a popular instrument for collecting data where the respondents can quickly answer the questions (Saunders et al., 2016). It also facilitates collecting information on the participants' perceptions including, their beliefs, attitudes, and opinions (Yamin & Sim, 2016).

4.2 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire included questions on respondents' demographic characteristics, and the second part comprised thirty variables, each describing a potential factor causing IDP failure in developing countries. The factors/causes included in the questionnaire were identified through the review of literature, mainly studies conducted in similar contexts in developing countries. To further enrich its content and to include the real failure factors, unstructured interviews were also conducted with project management practitioners in the field. A five-point Likert scale measured each item – "1" Strongly Disagree to "5" Strongly Agree.

4.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity addresses the issue of whether a research tool, such as a questionnaire, actually measures what ought to be measured or whether its scores are relevant to the respondent (Saunders et al., 2016). Saunders et al. (2012) points out that one way to provide excellent coverage of questions and enhance the validity of the research instrument is to undertake a literature review. In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire and, consequently, the results of the study, the researchers used the literature review as a guide. The research instrument for this study was adapted from earlier studies with certain modifications to satisfy the requirements of the present study. Also, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in the field whose valuable recommendations were also incorporated.

The reliability of a research instrument, on the other hand, refers to its consistency over time. In other words, the reliability of the instrument refers to the degree to which it provides reliable results when it has not changed the characteristics being measured. We used Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of the research tool. Prior to the complete administration of the questionnaire, it was pilot tested and the result showed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.924, suggesting high reliability. As the general rule, a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is a fair and sound indication of constructs reliability. (Nunnally, 1978).

4.4 Target Population and Sample

We designed the questionnaire as such to include different categories of project stakeholders in the study. The target population for the study was IDP teams (PMs/team leaders/coordinators and team members) working for five major bilateral and multilateral funding agencies (World Bank, ADB, USAID, DFID, and EC) and the civil servants (government employees associated with IDPs). The sample included IDPs senior management, IDPs team members, and the general public (government employees and university faculties who possessed a sound knowledge of the subject matter under investigation) working and residing in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Based on purposive together with convenience non-probability sampling method, a total of 500 hundred questionnaires (online and printed) were distributed to the three groups of respondents, and a usable sample of 217; 38 from senior managers, 55 from the team members, and 124 from the general public were considered for the analysis.

5. Analysis and Results

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 shows the personal profile of the respondents. It is observed that the vast majority of participants fall into the age group of 25 to 40 years. More than 78.3 percent of respondents are men, while only 21.7 are women. Table 1 further indicates that most respondents have a tertiary education (99 Bachelors, 107 Masters, and 11 PhDs). It is also seen that 47.1 percent of the surveyed sample are those working in public organizations, and about 52.9 percent are IDP teams. Finally, Table 1 reveals that the majority (57.6 percent) of the respondents have more than six years of experience. The respondents are qualified and experienced enough to provide reliable information on the subject matter under investigation.

5.2 RII Analysis

The RII technique was conducted to assess the perceived importance of IDP failure factors in terms of their criticality as ranked by the different groups of respondents. RII is used to determine the relative importance and ranking of various factors

as perceived by the different categories of respondents (Odeh & Battaineh 2002; Gunduz et al., 2013; Damoah & Kumi, 2018). Therefore, to determine the ranking of failure factors from the viewpoint of senior management, team members, and the general public, the RII method was considered appropriate. RII is calculated using the following equation:

$$RII = (\sum w)/(A \times N)$$

Where,
W = the weight ranging from 1 to 5 (in this study Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) given to each factor
A = the highest weight (i.e., "5" in this case), and
N = the total number of respondents in each category of respondents (38 for senior management, 55 for team members, and 124 for the general public).

Table 1
Personal Profile of Respondents

Profile	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age group (in years)	Up - 25	22	10.1
	26 - 30	69	31.8
	31 - 40	105	48.4
	41 - 50	18	8.3
	50 and above	3	1.4
	Total	**217**	**100**
Gender	Male	170	78.3
	Female	47	21.7
	Total	**217**	**100**
Educational Qualification	Bachelor	99	45.6
	Masters	107	49.3
	PhD	11	5.1
	Total	**217**	**100**
Occupation/Employment	Senior management	38	17.5
	Team members	55	25.3
	Government employees	102	47.1
	Others	22	10.1
	Total	**217**	**100**
Work Experience (in years)	1 - 3	48	22.1
	3 - 6	44	20.3
	6 - 10	71	32.7
	10 years and above	54	24.9
	Total	**217**	**100**

Source: Survey data

RII was calculated for all thirty factors. They were subsequently ranked based on the calculated RII (see Table 3). Top five overall-ranked factors causing IDP failure were considered for discussion. These five factors with the highest RII (RII > 0.75) are; Insecurity, Corruption, Political Interference, Ineffective Monitoring, and Inappropriate Selection of PM. Table 2 illustrates the top five overall-ranked failure factors and their given ranks by each group of respondents.

Table 2
Five Top Overall-ranked IDP Failure Factors

Factors causing IDP failure	Senior Management		Team Members		General Public		Overall
	Rank	RII	Rank	RII	Rank	RII	Rank
Security issues and conflicts	2	0.876	1	0.878	3	0.872	1
Corruption	3	0.848	2	0.871	1	0.910	2
Political interference	1	0.881	9	0.812	2	0.879	3
Ineffective monitoring	5	0.837	3	0.869	4	0.856	4
Inappropriate selection of PM	11	0.798	4	0.860	5	0.828	5

Source: Survey data

5.3 Correlation Analysis

Three different groups of respondents gave the rankings on failure factors. Therefore, it is significant to establish that the rankings reflect the real factors and causes of IDP failure in Afghanistan. It is also significant to see that they were not given by chance and are free from bias. To do so, Spearman's Rank-order correlation is used.

The correlation analysis result revealed a significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.862, 0.779, and 0.732 for senior management and team members, senior management and the general public, and team members and the general public. All

three coefficients are strong and positive, indicating a high degree of agreement among the groups of participants on the ranking of factors.

Table 3
Relative Importance Index and Rankings of Failure Factors

Factors causing ID project failure	Seniors		Teams				Overall
	RII	Rank	RII	Rank	RII	Rank	Rank
Inadequate project planning	0.82	8	0.82	8	0.77	10	8
Ineffective and poor monitoring	0.83	5	0.86	3	0.85	4	4
Frequent changes in leadership	0.70	24	0.70	22	0.74	19	23
Inappropriate selection of PM	0.79	11	0.86	3	0.82	5	5
Poor project team formation	0.82	7	0.83	6	0.81	6	6
Improper task definition	0.76	13	0.74	18	0.74	17	17
Lack of active stakeholders involvement	0.78	12	0.77	15	0.71	24	15
Inappropriate project management technique	0.73	18	0.68	25	0.75	12	20
Lack of commitment to project	0.75	16	0.80	12	0.75	15	13
Poor recruitment	0.84	4	0.77	16	0.79	8	9
Scope change amidst project implementation	0.75	17	0.68	27	0.73	21	22
Procurement processes	0.73	18	0.78	14	0.75	14	16
Weak feasibility studies	0.82	8	0.85	5	0.77	11	7
Delayed release of funds	0.69	25	0.67	29	0.75	15	25
Inadequate project funding	0.63	28	0.68	25	0.65	29	29
labor (skilled and availability)	0.73	21	0.71	21	0.68	27	26
Lack of good communication	0.76	13	0.79	13	0.72	23	14
Management practices	0.72	23	0.69	24	0.75	13	21
Weak supervision	0.76	15	0.80	10	0.81	7	12
Bureaucracy	0.79	10	0.80	11	0.78	9	11
Lack of continuity	0.73	21	0.72	20	0.73	20	19
Political interference	0.88	1	0.81	9	0.87	2	3
Corruption	0.84	3	0.87	2	0.91	1	2
Regulations	0.69	25	0.73	19	0.69	25	24
Pressure groups	0.73	18	0.75	17	0.74	18	18
Natural disaster	0.61	30	0.59	30	0.56	30	30
Culture and belief systems	0.63	28	0.67	28	0.67	28	28
Low capacity	0.83	5	0.82	7	0.73	21	10
Delays in payments	0.69	27	0.70	22	0.68	26	27
Insecurity	0.88	2	0.87	1	0.87	3	1

Source: Survey data

Table 4
Spearman's Rank Correlation on the ranking of Failure Factors

Spearman's rho		Senior Management	Team Members	General Public
Senior Management	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	30		
Team Members	Correlation Coefficient	.862**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
	N	30	30	
General Public	Correlation Coefficient	.779**	.732**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	30	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

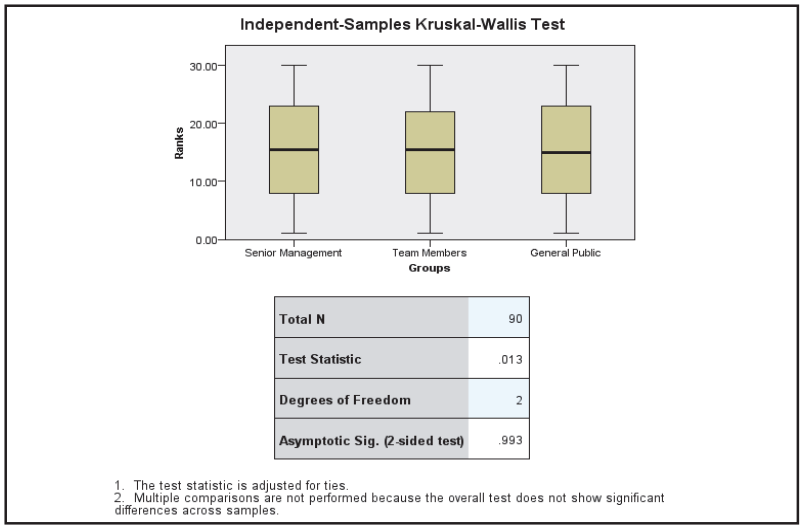
Source: Survey data

5.4 Kruskal Wallis H test

It is also important to assess, by a single coefficient, whether the magnitude of the agreement/disagreement between the three groups of respondents is statistically significant or otherwise. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was considered appropriate to do so. The hypothesis is set out as follows:

H_0 = There is consensus amongst the three groups of respondents on the IDP failure factor ranking in Afghanistan

H_1 = There is no consensus amongst them



The Kruskal Wallis H test result did not show any substantial differences in the rankings given by three groups of respondents ($p > 0.05$) for the failure factors of IDPs. We may therefore conclude that the rankings across three groups of stakeholders are the same and that there is no substantial evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

5.5 EFA Analysis

The data were further analyzed using exploratory factor analysis with IBM Statistics SPSS v.25 to identify the potential key factors causing ID project failure in Afghanistan. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was selected as the factor extraction method. The appropriateness of using factor analysis was confirmed by several tests, including Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, Bartlett's test of Sphericity, and the presence of mild correlation among variables. The correlation matrix inspection showed that all variables had at least one correlation coefficient higher than the specified threshold of 0.3.

Table 5
KMO and Bartlett's tests for Failure Factors

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.745
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1185.439
	df	231
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey data

Table 5 demonstrates that the overall KMO measure is .745, which falls into the 'middling' classification of sampling adequacy as outlined by Kaiser (1974). Subsequently, Bartlett's test of Sphericity is statistically significant ($p <.000$), indicating that the data fulfills the underlying assumptions of sampling adequacy and linearity. Hence it is appropriate to employ EFA.

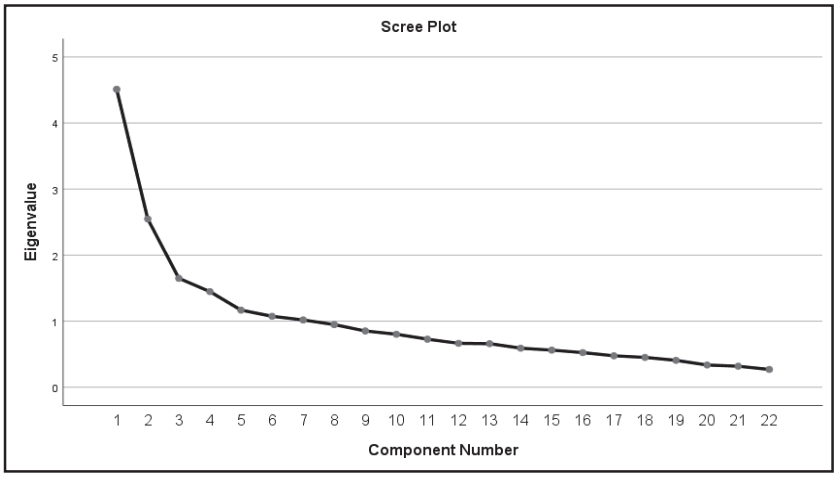


Fig. 1. Scree Plot for Failure Factors

Five factors were extracted using orthogonal varimax rotation method. The factors were retained considering the eigenvalue and the proportion of variance explained criteria (Kaiser,1960), factor meaningfulness criteria (Pituch& Stevens, 2016), and the scree plot method (Cattell,1966). The retained factors have eigenvalues of greater than 1 and the proportion of variance explained by each individual factor is higher than 5% of the total variance. Subsequently, the visual observation of the scree plot reveals that five factors precede the inflection point on factor number six (see Table 6 and Figure1). Thus the retention of factors is meaningful and based on accepted widely used criteria.

The five-component solution explained as much as 51.5% of the total variance. This amount of extracted total variance was considered sufficient because it gives a more meaningful number of constructs. There are applications in an EFA, where the actual amount of variance accounted for by meaningful factors, maybe 50% or even lower (Pituch & Stevens, 2016).

Table 6
Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis for Failure Factors (N = 217)

Factors	Items	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Financial Constraints	Delays in payments	.698				
	Delayed release of funds	.694				
	Inadequate Project funding	.661				
	Culture and belief systems	.637				
Ineffective	Low Capacity		.704			
Recruitment	Poor Recruitment		.674			
	Inappropriate selection of PMs		.612			
	Poor project team formation		.585			
	Weak Feasibility studies		.579			
External Forces	Insecurity			.531		
	Corruption			.765		
	Political interference			.633		
	Pressure groups			.565		
Project	Changes in project leadership				.646	
Leadership	Improper Task definition				.620	
	Regulations				.578	
	Scope change amidst project implementation				.518	
Project	Ineffective monitoring procedures					.617
Management Practices	Lack of commitment to project					.593
	Weak Supervision					.517
	Management practices					.492
% of Variance Explained		20.502	11.579	7.494	6.579	5.306
Eigen value		4.51	2.547	1.649	1.447	1.167
Cronbach's Alpha		.728	.730	.710	.702	.700

KMO = .745, Bartlett's $\chi^2 = 1185.439$, $p < .000$, Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Source: Survey data

6. Discussion

6.1 Top Five overall-ranked Failure Factors

6.1.1 Insecurity

Insecurity and the prevalence of armed conflicts were found to be the top overall-ranked factor influencing the failure of IDPs in the country. Insecurity was ranked by senior management, team members, and the general public as numbers 2, 1, and 3 with RI index of 0.88, 0.87, and 0.86. Security issues and armed conflicts negatively impacted the implementation of IDPs in most parts of the country. Throughout the years, hundreds of aid workers have been killed and wounded by insurgents, making Afghanistan one of the most dangerous countries for international aid (Hammink, 2018). The Afghan government had control only over 53.8 percent of districts, while 12.3 percent of the districts were controlled or influenced by insurgents, and about 33.9 percent of districts were contested (SIGAR, 2019; Williams, 2013). Therefore, this factor is perceived to be the most critical factor impacting the success of IDPs in Afghanistan.

6.1.2 Corruption

According to Sopko (2019) "*Corruption is a more serious threat to Afghanistan than the insurgency"*. Corruption was ranked as the second most significant factor for IDPs' failure in Afghanistan. It was ranked as number 3, 2, and 1 by senior management, team members, and the general public with RI index of 0.84, 0.87, and 0.91 respectively. Corruption in Afghanistan has been the most debated topic in recent years. Transparency International reports that widespread corruption levels are disrupting the Afghan state-building projects, and it has become a driver of conflicts in the country (Bak, 2019). A survey by the Asia Foundation in 2017 reveals that 83.7 percent of respondents believed that corruption is a significant problem in Afghanistan.

Moreover, as per a national survey, 72 percent of survey participants believed that corruption had become a considerable problem in Afghanistan in recent years (Integrity Watch, 2018). Corruption in Afghanistan is prevalent, and it happens at all levels. It is so dominant that it has infiltrated almost all parts of the Afghan state, adversely affecting Afghanistan's ability to maintain security for its people and provide essential public services (McDevitt, 2019). The majority of aid agencies acknowledged that corruption had been a challenge underpinning humanitarian aid delivery in Afghanistan (SAFE, 2016). The result, therefore, confirms the phenomenon that corruption is another crucial factor adversely affecting the success of IDPs.

6.1.3 Political interference

Political interference as the cause of IDP failure was ranked as number 1, 9, and 2 by senior managers, team members, and the general public with RI index of 0.88, 0.81, and 0.87 respectively. Senior management and the general public perceive political interference in the management of IDPs in Afghanistan as a substantial factor affecting these projects' success. Hence, they ranked it as number 1 and 2; however, it is unknown why the team members ranked it number 9. Political interference in IDPs occurs when political decisions influence these projects' management and administration, including planning, organizing, staffing, and fund allocation. Studies reveal that politics plays a crucial role in constructing roads, schools, and hospitals in most developing countries (Dixit & Pindyck, as cited in Mfuru et al., 2018, p. 21). It is evident that most development project leaders and most of the so-called technocrats managing and implementing these projects are political appointees. So political interference can be observed in different phases of IDP cycles, particularly in the recruitment of project leadership.

Moreover, NGOs and companies implementing development projects are set up and owned by political leaders and their allies. As a result, executives in charge of managing development projects may not have the expertise, skills and experience needed to effectively carry out project activities. This confirms that projects awarded and the recruitment and appointments made due to political meddling will often adversely affect the success of projects.

6.1.4 Ineffective monitoring procedures

Ineffective monitoring procedures is overall-ranked as the fourth influential factor causing project failure in Afghanistan. Senior management, team members, and the general public ranked ineffective and inadequate monitoring as 5, 3, and 4 with RI index of 0.83, 0.86, and 0.85. While most international donors insist on strict monitoring of development projects, there are still development activities with little or no oversight and control. According to a recent SIGAR report, "*millions of dollars in emergency food assistance are at risk of waste, fraud, and abuse because USAID cannot monitor the distribution of food directly*." The report also stated that USAID is not sure whether their funding projects are producing the desired outcomes. Ineffective monitoring and poor supervision procedures can adversely affect the success of IDPs (Rondinelli, 1970; Damoah & Kumi, 2018).

6.1.5 Inappropriate selection of PM

Senior management, team members, and the general public ranked 'Improper selection of PMs' as number 11, 4, and 5 with RI index of 0.79, 0.86, and 0.82, respectively. It is overall ranked as the fifth potential factor causing IDP failure. Since he/she is responsible for the overall implementation of the project, utmost care should be taken when recruiting a PM. Lack of qualified project managers and low administrative capacity is considered a human factor related causes of IDP failure (Palmer 1986, Rondinelli 1970; Discenza & Forman, 2007). Most of the IDPs in Afghanistan have been managed by expatriates. The studies reveal that project leadership across the border can also contribute to the failure of IDPs (Freedman & Katz, 2007). The international project manager, besides adaptation problems, has to deal with distinctive legal and political settings, security constraints, language barriers, and cross-cultural gaps as well (Freedman & Katz, 2007). Therefore, considering the critical role of IDPs leadership, it is significant to follow appropriate and strict measures to select Project Managers.

6.2 Results of EFA

6.2.1 Financial Constraints

Factor 1 included four items; Delays in payments, Delayed release of funds, Inadequate project funding, and Cultural and belief systems with factor loadings of 0.63 to 0.69, the total variance of 20.502, and Cronbach's alpha of 0.728. Delays in payment is defined as the failure of a paymaster to pay within the period of honoring of certificates as provided in the contract (Harris & McCaffer, 2003). Delays in payment to contractors and suppliers can adversely affect the project cost and completion time. It is observed that delays in the payment of construction contractors had negatively impacted contractors' performance and the project completion schedule (Akinsiku & Ajayi, 2016). Failure to pay contractors for their works and services can also result in the contractors being insolvent (Akinsiku & Ajayi, 2016). Bureaucratic procedures and prolonged administrative processes that usually require hefty paper works in the Afghan public departments contributed to delays in bill payments. On the other hand, on-time disbursement of funds contributes to the success of development projects, and on the contrary, any delays in the release of funds will have a negative impact on projects. Recent studies have cited many reasons why development aid has not effectively alleviated poverty and promoted economic growth in most developing countries and Africa in particular (Ayoki, 2008). Among several factors responsible for this trend are delays in the release of funds and slow disbursements (Ayoki, 2008). Payments that are delayed or split into multiple tranches tend to negatively affect organizations

that do not have sufficient funds at their disposal to cover the expenditures, thereby resulting in implementation delays (IASC,2016). In Afghanistan, the average disbursement to commitment ratio for ten major bilateral and multilateral funding agencies between 2008 – 2016 is 66.95% only (Shafiei & Puttanna, 2018).

Insufficient project funding happens when the project fails to receive the required project budget to complete the planned activities. Although international donors are committed to allocating sufficient funds for the management and implementation of development projects in developing countries, some projects are still downsized in scope and budget due to cost escalation or unavailability of adequate funds. Therefore, the delayed release of funds and inadequate project funding are perceived to be a crucial cause of IDP failure in Afghanistan.

6.2.2 Ineffective Recruitment

Factor 2 included five items. They are - Low capacity, Poor recruitment, Inappropriate selection of PMs, Poor project team formation, and Weak feasibility studies with factor loadings of 0.57 to 0.7 accounting for 11.56% of total variance with Cronbach's alpha of 0.730 (see Table 6). Organizations need a sufficient number of qualified people in the right place to achieve their goals and objectives at the right time. Lack of capacity and or low capacity may directly impact an organization's ability to deliver programs and services and successfully perform specific tasks. In Afghanistan, local and domestic organizations suffer from a lack of capacity, causing development projects to face management issues and schedule delays. However, local contractors benefit from the international donor's emphasis on hiring Afghan domestic contractors to implement development projects. Still, in many cases, they are unable to deliver as per the contract requirements due to their inability and incapacity to find skilled workers and managers (Hosaini & Singla, 2019). Adequate capacity to effectively implement policy plans and programs is the key to the success of nations (El-Taliawi & Van Der Wal, 2019).

Moreover, hiring the right people for the right jobs will ensure the quality of delivery and success of organizations. But in developing countries, especially in international development projects where the salaries and benefits are much higher as compared to local government pay-scales, most of the recruitments are done on a nepotism basis. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, most vacancies are filled with friends, colleagues, relatives, and or persons belonging to the same ethnic groups as employers, regardless of their knowledge, skills, and experiences. In some cases, even high-paid positions, including managerial positions, are filled against receiving a hefty amount of money.

Proper project team formation is also crucial to project success. Team building is the process of putting together people with diverse interests, experiences, and skills and transforming them through various methods into an integrated, effective work unit (Wilemon & Thamhain, 1983). Due to their complex nature, development projects require a diverse mix of individuals who must be integrated into effective project teams. Project teams comprised of educated, skilled, and experienced members can effectively carry out all project activities and lead the projects to success. Therefore, effective and proper recruitment is critical for the success of IDPs.

6.2.3 External Forces

Factor 3 in the construct included four items: Insecurity, Corruption, Pressure groups, and Political interference and shares 7.5% of total variance with factor loadings of 0.56 to 0.76, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.710. Insecurity, Corruption, and Political interference as critical factors influencing the failure of IDPs in Afghanistan are discussed earlier in subsection 6.1. Pressure groups such as religious groups, tribal leaders, ethnically based groups, and the Taliban often influence the management and implementation of development projects in Afghanistan. Interests or pressure groups are forms of organizations created for attaining specific purposes (Balyer & Tabancali, 2019). They are formally organized for some mutual concerns to try to influence public policy in their favor (Givarian, 2016).

6.2.4 Project Leadership

Factor 4, Project Leadership, includes four items: Frequent changes in project leadership, Improper task definition, Regulations, and Scope changes amidst project implementation with a share of 6.56% variance, factor loadings of 0.51 to 0.64, and 0.702 Cronbach's alpha score. The role of leadership in project management is growing in importance and relevance in the modern business world (Westland, 2016). This is because projects and IDPs, in particular, are being delivered in riskier, complex, and more challenging environments. Many factors contribute to the success of a project, and among them, the most significant is the effectiveness of the project leader (Krahn & Hartment, 2006). Afghanistan has been suffering from political instability in the last two decades. There have been numerous changes in the leadership of sectoral ministries and public departments in the Afghan government, and most of the ministries were managed and controlled by acting heads. This frequent change of leadership can undermine the success of development projects. Moreover, proper task description is crucial in the process of project execution and control. Tasks or activities are essential parts of projects; therefore, clearly defining each task and work is necessary to plan and estimate the project and understand its completion time. One of the most significant challenges in projects is the need to comply with rules and regulations both internally and externally and to the donors and implementing organizations (Rincon, 2010). Most of the time, the inability to comply with such rules and regulations or, in most cases, ignoring them will lead to project failure. Frequent changes in the scope of IDP midway implementation will also act as a cause of project failure. Poorly managed and uncontrolled scope changes may harm the project, leading to missed deadlines, budget overruns, and even project failure. Change in projects is common, but the lack of proper change control is

one of the biggest challenges to project success (Millhollan, 2008; Wysocki, 2000). Managing scope change is a challenging task for even the most experienced and skillful project managers.

6.2.5 Project Management Practices

The last factor in the construct is Project Management Practices, which comprises four variables: Ineffective and inadequate monitoring procedures, Lack of commitment to the project, Weak supervision, and Management practices with a share of 5.3% of the total variance, factor loadings of 0.49 to 0.61, and Cronbach's alpha of 0.700.

In developing countries, several IDPs fail to complete due to many reasons, and among them is a lack of understanding of the need for proper monitoring and evaluation. Project monitoring and evaluation are crucial elements in improving project performance (Callistus & Clinton, 2016). In the absence of an effective monitoring procedure, a 9 $million contract work was at stake in Afghanistan when the contractors defrauded the US Department of Defense by use of fake photographs to misrepresent the progress of warehouse construction and supplied the materials against the contractual agreement (Glass Jr, 2019).

Moreover, to ensure the success of any project, commitment from the team is crucial. When the team holds the project in high regard and gives the project adequate time and effort, they are committed to the success of the project. However, the success of projects not only depends on the project team's commitment but also other stakeholders' commitment to the project, mainly in IDPs where a large number of stakeholders is involved. On the other hand, weak supervision in development project gives way to disputes, lower performance rates, stress, and bad working relationships.

Finally, effective project management practices, including the tools, techniques, and methodologies adopted in the management and implementation of IDPs, will contribute to their success, particularly in developing countries. IDP administering agencies, including implementing partners, utilize different project management practices due to their demonstrated effectiveness in project implementation and flexibility in achieving the projects' goals and objectives. Most international development communities use project cycle management and its core tool, Logical Framework, to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate IDPs. Therefore, applying effective project management practices will lead to the success of projects.

7. Conclusion and Implications

The study explored and evaluated the factors/causes that influence the failure of IDPs in the context of Afghanistan, as perceived by the three groups of respondents. The deteriorating security situations, increasing levels of corruption, political interference in the management of IDPs, and inappropriate selection of project management leaders are the top five overall-ranked crucial factors leading to IDPs' failure. The other factors also impact IDPs' failure in Afghanistan; however, these five factors are perceived to have the highest impact. Moreover, the result of EFA revealed five key IDP failure factors, namely: Financial constraints, Ineffective Recruitment, External forces, Project Leadership, and Project management practices. The finding of the study will help the international community, donors and their implementing partners, and project management practitioners to engage in better management of IDPs proactively and to prevent or mitigate the risk of potential project failure in developing countries. The finding will also contribute to the IDP management body of knowledge. The implication of the study offers recommendations for international donors, IDP management practitioners, implementing partners, and the host government.

The Afghan security forces and their allies should provide reliable and consistent security for INGOs, NGOs, implementing partners, and other public organizations executing development projects throughout the country. Besides, the host government and the international development community are required to adopt appropriate and strict measures to counter corruption and nepotism in IDP management. Moreover, political interference in managing these projects, mainly in the designing and implementation, and monitoring phases, should be reduced and minimized. The technocrats and project management professionals are to be allowed to perform their tasks independently. Finally, proper and effective measures are to be followed in the recruitment processes, especially while selecting PMs. Appropriate monitoring procedures are to be adopted to control the implementation of IDPs.

8. Limitation

The study principally focused on identifying and evaluating factors that cause IDP failure in the same one country context - Afghanistan. The findings of this study, therefore, might be applicable to IDPs within other developing countries. In addition, the primary data for this research was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. Therefore, there was no control over completing the questionnaire, as the survey was conducted mostly online. However, efforts were made to ensure that the questionnaire was to be sent to the right respondents. This can result in biased responses that would, in turn, lead to bias in the findings; however, such minimal bias does not affect the overall research findings of the study. Furthermore, the sample size considered for the study was minimal due to some obvious reasons (the unwillingness of IDP teams to participate in the survey, resource constraints, and low response rate). Therefore, the data collected for the study was minimum.

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9. Scope for future research

The researchers believe that this study is merely a starting point for undertaking future researches on IDPs in the context of Afghanistan. Despite the fact that the country has been hosting thousands of IDPs in the past nearly two decades. The review of literature revealed that there have been no related previous studies reported on IDPs in Afghanistan so far. Therefore, this research has contributed to the literature on project management by exploring and evaluating failure factors for IDPs in a developing country and addressed many gaps.

Future studies might, however, possibly concentrate on extending this study by investigating the IDP failure factors in a specific sector and or particular bilateral and multilateral funding agencies. Besides, this study is principally relying on quantitative data collected through the survey method. However, future studies can explore and examine the failure factors through qualitative approaches. This study used the RII method, Spearman's correlation, Kruskal Wallis, and EFA as the statistical tools, though for future studies with different scopes, the researchers might wish to conduct data analysis using other statistical tools and techniques such as CFA, Regression and SEM.

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