Critical Success Factors for International Development Projects in Afghanistan: An Exploratory Factor Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and evaluate the critical success factors (CSFs) for international development projects (IDPs) from the perspective of key IDP stakeholders in Afghanistan. The study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. Thirty-one success factors were identified and shortlisted through literature reviews and validated by experts and IDP management practitioners. The study's target population is the IPD senior management, IDP team members, and the general public. Amongst 500 questionnaires distributed, a total of 217 were returned and considered for analysis. The result of EFA revealed five key CSFs, namely: project cycle management, effective recruitment, continuous learning and adapting, project management method, and clear project goals and objectives. Besides, one-way ANOVA results revealed no statistically significant differences in the ranking of CSFs by the three groups of respondents. However, the post hoc test result indicated that the CSF 'continuous learning and adapting' was relatively rated lower by the general public. The findings of the study would assist the international community, their implementing partners, and IDP management practitioners in better management and successful implementation of IDPs in developing countries. It will also contribute to the CSFs theories and IDPM body of knowledge. The research is the first of its kind to examine the CSFs for IDPs in Afghanistan.

Keywords: *Critical success factors (CSFs) project success, international development projects management (IDPM)), Exploratory Factor Analysis, developing countries.*

Introduction

International Development Projects (IDPs) are funded and implemented for the purpose of alleviating poverty, improving people's living standards, and fostering economic growth in developing countries. They have become an important means by which development aidis utilized to stimulate and achieve national growth. The lack of socio-economic development in developing countries, particularly those that have experienced years of civil war, armed conflict, and political turmoil, calls for a focused and deliberate assistance 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 prioritize development initiatives in developing countries. Thus, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations and agencies, and the United Nations Organization allocate a significant amount of resources to support development activities in these nations.

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Afghanistan has been hosting a tremendous number of IDPs financed and executed by the international community since 2001. According to Shafiei and Puttanna (2021), five major bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, namely World Bank, Asian Development Bank, USAID, DFID, and GIZ among others, 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 in Afghanistan. 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).Whether the donor-funded projects implemented in the country accomplish their intended goals and are successfully completed is doubtful, as no systematic research on the rate of success and success factors of IDPs in Afghanistan has been reported so far.

The rate of aid project failure is so high, even in organizations with years of experience in implementing and evaluating development projects. Bulman et al. (2015) assessed 3821 World Bank administered projects and 1324 projects implemented by the Asian Development Bank and concluded that almost half of these projects have been unable to produce the desired project outcomes. Another independent rating of World Bank development projects reports 39 percent project failure (Chauvet et al., 2010).Similarly, more than 40 percent of development projects administered by the World Bank in Afghanistan between 2010 to 2019 are evaluated as unsatisfactory and highly unsatisfactory. Besides, a recent report by SIGAR to the U.S. Congress reveals that reconstruction projects funded by the U.S. in Afghanistan are failing and costing millions of dollars (Sopko, 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 rehabilitation projects in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2017 indicates that development projects have not always been completed according to the project requirements and technical specifications (Laber, 2018). The increasing rate of development project failure has attracted the attention of researchers to explore the causes of IDP failure in developing countries (Yamin& Sim, 2016).Some of the significant project failure factors cited in the literature 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), inadequate project implementation procedures (Rondinelli, 1979), low capacity and the lack of skilled human resources (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). It is evident that, in addition to the factors mentioned above, the culture, politics, economy, and environment of the host country can also influence the success and or failure of IDPs in developing countries. Even though considerable studies in the field of general project management have been carried out, comparatively little consideration has been devoted to international development projects (Khang& Moe, 2008: Ika et al., 2010). Besides, researchers have yet to agree on a specific set of success/failure factors for IDPs. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gaps in the IDPM literature by identifying and examining the key CSFs from the perspective of major IDP stakeholders in the context of Afghanistan.

Review of literature

What are 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 (2013) defines IDPs like standard projects as;

"A temporary effort, with a specific start and end, to create a unique product, service or outcome 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 carried out without profit considerations. They are undertaken for development purposes in developing countries. The main aim of funding and implementing IDPs is to bring the desired change in the target population and communities' lives.

Characteristics of IDPs

Youker (2003) describes the characteristics of IDPs in terms of their definition, aims, funding, lifecycle, different stakeholders involved, sponsors' role, and the host country's environment. A key feature of IDPs is the involvement of a wide range of stakeholdersin these projects (Saad, Cicmil& Greenwood, 2002; Youker, 1999; Diallo &Thuillier, 2005; Steinfort, 2010). In addition, IDPs are also characterized by a complex and risky environment (Youker, 1999; Diallo &Thuillier, 2004; Khang& Moe, 2008), shortage of supplies and scarcity of resources (Youker 1999; Quartey Jnr 1996; Muriithi& Crawford 2003), and the cultural differences (Ahsan &Gunawan, 2010; Muriithi& Crawford, 2003; Crawford & Bryce, 2003) that make it challenging to adopt proper project management techniques. 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 project outputs' intangibility and the difficulty in defining and measuring them (Khang& Moe, 2008; Steinfort, 2010; Ahsan &Gunawan, 2010).

Project success defined

Defining success is not easy as it is defined in different ways by different people. Freeman and Beale (1992)give an interesting example of people's differing views on success. According to him, an architect would assess success in terms of artistic appearance, an engineer in terms of technical efficiency, an accountant in monetary terms, CEOs in terms of stock market success, and a human resources manager in terms of employees' satisfaction. Thus, project success is a lot more complicated than merely meeting cost, schedule, and performance criteria (Pinto &Slevin, 1988). Although, historically, project success has been defined as a project that achieves its goals within budget and schedule (Siles, 2018). This definition merely advocates the conventionally well-known 'Iron Triangle' measure of project success. Many organizations still consider the triple constraints (cost, time, and quality) while defining project success. However, in development projects, success goes beyond meeting the schedule and budget goals; it includes delivering the benefits and meeting the expectations of beneficiaries, stakeholders, donors, or funding agencies (Siles, 2018). Earlier definitions of project success included the cost, time, and quality dimensions while ignoring the other aspects. A successful project, according to Kerzner (1998), is one that is completed on schedule, within budget, at the expected level of performance within the original scope, without undermining the corporate culture, and within the requirements of a well-documented post-audit review.

Project success is associated with project management success. Some definitions of project success have been varying in scope and dimensions. Project success is a combination of project success and project management success (Baccarini, 1999). This assertion is backed by Shojaie et al. (2016) where they opine that a project is regarded a success if the project management is a success and the project product is a success. Project success is said to be made up of two components: project management success, which refers to the efficiency with which a project is delivered, and project product success, which relates to the efficacy of the project deliverables. (Baccarini, 1999; Shojaie et al., 2016). That can be illustrated as follows:

Project Success = Project Management Success + Project Product Success

Moreover, project success is regarded as a matter of perception (Baker et al., 2008). A project is perceived to be successful if it meets the technical specifications, produces high level of satisfaction for top management of the parent and client organizations, key individuals in the project teams, and key end users (Baker et al., 2008).

Critical Success Factors for IDPs

Critical success factors refer to those activities that have to be completed to a high standard of quality to achieve a project's objectives. On the other hand, success criteria refer to measurable terms of the project's outcome, which can be acceptable to all stakeholders. Although the project's success criteria set out measures to judge the success of the projects, the CSFs are the situations, circumstances, events, or inputs to the project management that contribute to the success of projects (Cook-Davis, 2002; Ika, 2009).

The CSFs for corporate or general projects have been extensively studied. However, there are few studies on CSFs for IDPs (Ika et al., 2012). As stated earlier, an essential feature of IDPs relates to the presence and involvement of numerous stakeholders in these projects. Success/failure of a project mostly depends on how these stakeholders support the project to achieve its intent. A multi-stakeholder' commitment and support to the project is considered as an essential CSF for projects (Kerzner, 1998; Anderson et al., 2006; Ika& Donnelly, 2017). Ill-defined project goals and objectives can adversely affect IDPs' success as (Goetz, 2010) argues that poorly defined goals and objectives drive a project into overruns, personality clashes, missed milestones, and unhappy stakeholders. Therefore, clearly defined project goals and objectives is an important CSF for IDPs (Pinto & Prescott,1998; Clarke, 1999; White & Fortune, 2002).Furthermore, competent project designers, managers, and teams (Pinto & Prescott, 1998; Bayiley&Teklu, 2016), top management support (Pinto & Prescott, 1998; White & Fortune, 2002), availability of adequate resources (Pinto & Prescott, 1998; White & Fortune, 2002), and the existence of proper communication channels and feedback mechanism (Pinto & Prescott, 1998; Clarke, 1999; Anderson et al., 2006) are other crucial factors contributing to the success of IDPs. In addition to the critical success/failure factors discussed above, there are other potential factorsthat, in one way or the other, may impact the success/failure of IDPs in developing countries. These factors may be economic, political, geographical, socio-cultural, historical, demographic, and environmental (Collier, 2007; Gow&Morss, 1988; Kwak, 2002; Moyo, 2009).

Research methodology

Research design

The research adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design as it aimed to study a phenomenon at a given time and in a particular context. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered for data collection. The questionnaire is a popular data collection tool, as respondents can easily respond to questions (Saunders et al., 2016). It can also facilitate collecting information on the participants' perceptions, including their beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. (Yamin& Sim, 2016). The CSFs included in the questionnaire were identified through a literature review, mainly studies carried out in developing countries. Besides, unstructured interviews with project management practitioners in the field were also conducted to improve the content of the questionnaire further and include the real CSFs for IDPs. A five-point Likert scale measured each item – "1" Strongly Disagree to "5" Strongly Agree.

Validity and Reliability

A literature review is one way to provide excellent coverage of the questions and improve the validity of the research instrument(Saunders et al., 2012); therefore, to ensure the validity of the questionnaire and, consequently, the results of the study, the researchers used the literature review as a guide. The survey instrument questions were adapted from earlier studies with certain modifications to fulfill the requirements of the present study. Also, the

questionnaire was reviewed by experts in the field, whose useful recommendations were also incorporated. Furthermore, we used Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of the research instrument by conducting a pilot study and the result revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.924, indicating high reliability. As a general rule, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is a fair and sound indication of construct reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

Target Population and Sample

The target population for the survey is IDP teams (PMs/Team Leaders/Coordinators and Team Members) working for five major bilateral and multilateral funding agencies (World Bank, ADB, USAID, DFID, and E.C.) and the general public(government employees and university faculties associated with IDPs 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 methods, 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 collected and considered for the analysis.

Tools for Data Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis

EFA is used to consider a relatively lesser amount of merging factors and is used to show the interrelation between a group of many correlated variables (Mathur, as cited in Malek&Gundaliya, 2021).We performed the EFA to examine the grouping of factors identified and ranked by the survey respondents. The result of KMO test of sampling adequacy reveals a coefficient of .796, and the result of Bartlett's test of Sphericity is found to be statistically significant (p<.000). Hence it is appropriate to conduct EFA.

ANOVA

We further conducted a One-way ANOVA test to compare the mean importance rating among three categories of respondents on the CSFs. The hypothesis tested is set out as follows:

H_0: there is no significant difference in the perception of respondents on the ranking of CSFs for IDPs in Afghanistan.
H_1: there is a significant difference in the perception of respondents on the ranking of CSFs for IDPs in Afghanistan.

Results

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 indicates 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 reveals 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 for public organizations, and about 52.9 percent are IDP teams. Finally, it is foundthat the majority (57.6 percent) of the respondents have more than six years of experience. The results indicate that the respondents are qualified and experienced enough and possess a sound knowledge of IDPs to provide reliable information on the subject matter under investigation.

Table 1

Personal Profile of Respondents

Critical Success Factors	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank

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

Although the study's analysis is primarily based on EFA, descriptive statistics are used to assess the relative importance of each CSF. We use EFA, on the other hand, to group the success factors into manageable categories and to arrive at key CSFs for IDPs. Table 2 demonstrates how the survey respondents ranked the success factors in order of significance. It is observed that almost all the success factors are perceived to be important success factors($\bar{x} > .3.5$); however, SF1, SF9, SF8, SF2, and SF10 are found as highly rated CSFs.

Table 2

SF1	Clearly defined project goals and objectives	4.53	0.776	1
SF9	Discipline regarding time, cost, and quality	4.41	0.695	2
SF8	Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of project staff	4.36	0.752	3
SF2	Clearly defined Goals and objectives for a particular work in the project	4.34	0.857	4
SF10	Proper assignment of tasks to appropriate people	4.31	0.852	5
SF23	Effective monitoring procedures to control the progress of the project	4.29	0.806	6
SF16	Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of project staff	4.28	0.786	7
SF6	Effective and timely progress reporting	4.27	0.888	8
SF31	Contingency plan to handle unexpected crises and deviations	4.25	0.773	9
SF22	Proper Project Life Cycle Management	4.20	0.753	10
SF12	Lessons learned from the project should be applied in implementation	4.17	0.701	11
SF5	Effective recruitment of project teams	4.14	0.759	12
SF7	Proper and timely communication across the project teams	4.13	0.736	13
SF24	Understanding and applying the project life cycle by project teams	4.10	0.802	14
SF11	Success should be determined and built into the learning process	4.09	0.694	15
SF13	Learning and continuous improvement should be part of projects	4.08	0.725	16
SF14	Failures should be determined and built into the learning process	4.06	0.761	17
SF29	Availability of technology and expertise to control projects	4.06	0.802	18
SF27	The project process must be clearly visualized and described	4.05	0.762	19
SF15	Effective communication sessions to give and obtain feedback	4.04	0.732	20
SF17	Appreciation, rewards and recognition should be agreed when goals are set	4.01	0.810	21
SF26	The project process should be focused on result and delivering outcomes	3.95	0.792	22
SF21	Using formal procedures to better manage projects	3.95	0.741	23
SF4	In projects, specified project objectives should be met	3.94	0.677	24
SF25	The WBS should be used to select people for the project team	3.93	0.770	25
SF3	Project goals and objectives have to be socialized in an organization	3.83	0.910	26
SF28	A detailed specification of individual actions for project implementation	3.80	0.704	27
SF20	Wide PM methods will have a positive effect on an organization	3.76	0.744	28
SF30	Integration sessions add value to the overall process	3.75	0.789	29
SF18	Project ideas/information to be freely shared by all	3.57	0.975	30
SF19	Organizing social gatherings and festivities associated with projects	3.41	0.884	31

Critical Success Factors for IDPs

Source: Survey data

Exploratory Factor Analysis

We perform the EFA to examine the grouping of factors identified and ranked by the survey respondents.The data were found to have met the requirements of the assumptions for undertaking EFA, as the visual inspection of the correlation matrix suggested a correlation greater than the specified threshold of 0.3($r \geq 0.3$)(Laerd Statistics, 2015). The result of the KMO was found to be.796, falling within the 'middling' classification of sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974). And Bartlett's test of Sphericity revealed a statistically significant result (p<.000). Thus it is appropriate to run EFA.

Table 3

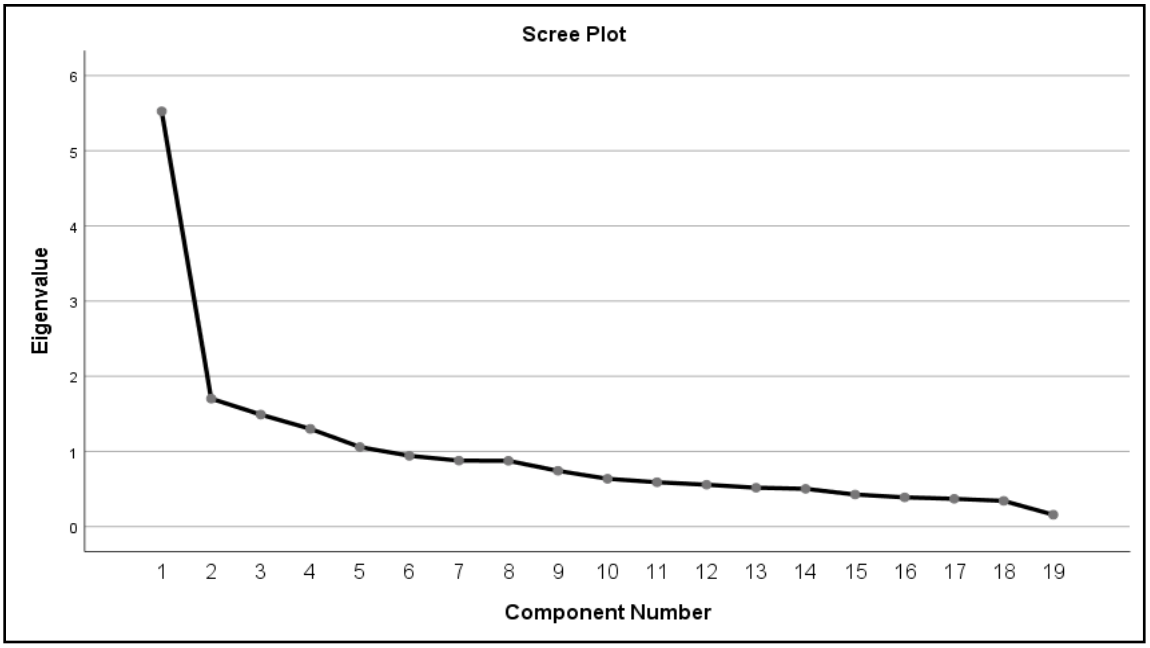
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests for CSFs

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.796
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1306.786
	df	171
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey data

Figure 1

Scree Plot (CSFs)



Source**:** Survey data

The result of EFA revealed a meaningful and straightforward five-factor solution.Kaiser (1960) recommends retaining any factor with an eigenvalue of greater than 1 and keeping any factor if the proportion of variance explained by that factor is greater or equal to 5 percent of the total variance explained. Moreover, the graphical method 'Scree Plot' propounded by (Cattell,1966) suggests retaining any number of factors preceding the inflection point. However, factor meaningfulness is an important consideration while deciding the number of components to include (Pituch& Stevens, 2016). The five-factor retained is kept based on the above widely used criteria.

Furthermore, the five-component solution explained 58.3 percent of the total variance, offering a reasonable amount of cumulative variance and giving a more significant number of constructs (Pituch& Stevens, 2016).Besides, each item's factor loading is greater or equal to 0.5, indicating that the factor variable is contributing significantly to the component (see Table 3).

Table 4

Results of EFA and ANOVA for CSFs (N = 217)

Source: Survey data

Factor Name	Factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F	Sig
Project Cycle	SF22	0.739					1.773	.172
Management	SF24	0.734						
	SF23	0.593						
	SF26	0.582						
	SF31	0.547						
	SF25	0.528						
Effective Recruitment	SF6		0.748				3.253	.041
	SF5		0.686					
	SF8		0.646					
	SF10		0.513					
Continuous Learning	SF12			0.683			4.031	.019
and Adapting	SF11			0.665				
	SF13			0.625				
	SF14			0.599				
Project Management	SF19				0.806		1.585	.207
Method	SF18				0.792			
	SF20				0.658			
Clear Project Goals and	SF2					0.803	1.122	.328
Objectives	SF1					0.780		
% of Variance Explained		29.083	8.959	7.841	6.843	5.573		
Eigen value		5.526	1.702	1.490	1.300	1.059		
Cronbach's Alpha		.760	.732	.770	.703	.891		

KMO = .796, Bartlett's χ^2 = 1306.786,p< .000, Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

ANOVA

We performed a one-way ANOVA to examine the differences between the perception of IDP senior management, IDP team members, and the general public on the ranking of CSFs. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the ranking of factors between the three groups of respondents on 'Project Cycle Management'F(2,213) = 1.773, p = .172, 'Project Management Method'F(2,213) = 1.585, p = .207, and Clear Goals and Objectives F(2,213) = 1.122, p = .328.The survey respondents, however, contradict on the rating of 'Effective Recruitment' and 'Continuous Learning and Adjustment' factors as the results of the tests are found to be statistically significant F(2,213)=4.031, p=.041 and F(2,213)=3.253 p=.019. A Tukey post hoc test for the Factor 'Ineffective Recruitment' showed statistically insignificant results. The result revealed that the general public attributed less significance to the 'Continuous Learning and Adapting' factor and ranked it lower than two other categories of respondents.

Discussion

Project Cycle Management

Factor 1, ***Project Cycle Management*** accounts for 29.08% of the total variance and is explained by SF22, SF24, SF23, SF26, SF31, and SF25 with factor loadings of 0.528 to 0.739 and Cronbach's alphas of 0.760. The project life cycle includes steps that are required to manage projects right from start to finish successfully. It is a series of activities necessary to be carried out to fulfill the project goals and objectives. The phases in a project life cycle may be referred to as different names by different development organizations depending upon the methodology adopted. Still, they tend to be similar in nature. The project cycle origin dates back to 1970, and it was Baum who outlined six phases of project life and organized them into a cycle (Baum, 1978). The majority of international development agencies like E.C., CIDA, AusAID, World Bank, ADB, among others, adopt a project life cycle similar to Baum consisting of five or six phases. These steps are undertaken to provide a well-defined structure and direction to a project's activities and focus on the development of activities (Landoni&Corti, 2011). Therefore, adopting a project cycle approach and effectively managing each phase is crucial to IDPs' success.

Proper Recruitment

Factor 2, ***Effective Recruitment,*** encompasses SF6, SF5, SF8, and SF10 with loadings of 0.513 to 0.748 and Cronbach's alpha of 0.732, accounting for 8.96% of the total variance. People are considered as the most valuable resources in developing countries. But,the lack of optimal use of human skills as a result of unemployment and underemployment, continues to cause IDP failurein most of these nations (Palmer, 1986).The selection of team members in a project is a process that has a specific systematic methodology in which the project manager recognizes the differences between individuals, defines needs and expectations, sets standards, evaluates them, and decides on the selection method(Heneman as cited in Markaki et al., 2011). Adopting a formal methodology for selecting individuals for a particular task based on the skills, experience, and knowledge, and according to the requirement of the task, will help produce the outputs required for achieving the expected outcomes and overall objectives of the project.

In addition, the lack of clarity regarding the tasks, responsibilities, and expectations of different individuals in a team is a crucial factor that can impact the performance of the project team. Hence, the project manager is expected to define the roles and responsibilities of each team member clearly. Once roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, team members look beyond their positions and try to recognize, appreciate, and value the significant contribution of one another. They realize that the overall success of the team is a function of mutual responsibility and ownership. Therefore, proper recruitment, adopting formal selection processes for project teams, defining the roles and responsibilities of project staff, and assigning tasks to appropriate people are critical to the success of IDPs. On the other hand, useful and timely reporting of the project's progress will also contribute to project success.

Continuous Learning and Adapting

Factor 3, ***Continuous Learning and Adapting,*** contributes 7.84% of the total variance and includes SF12, SF11, SF13, and SF14 with the factor loadings of 0.599 to 0.683 and 0.770 Cronbach's alpha score.

"Lessons learned are the lessons gained through the process of execution of a project" (PMI, 2004). The purpose of studying lessons learned or identified from past or current projects is for better implementation of future projects (Ahsan &Gunwan, 2008). Capturing lessons learned should be a progressive effort during the project life cycle. Project management can learn from both project failure and project success. The lessons learned can be used to implement the current project better and improve project management processes (Rowe, 2006). Lessons learned are documented information that represents both the project's favorable and unfavorable experiences (Rowe, 2006). To

lead the projects to success, the project management is ought to make use of the positive experiences gained and avoid the mistakes committed during the project implementation in the subsequent projects. Important factors that were captured in the lessons learned during the execution of World Bank projects in Afghanistan are reported asthe lack of ownership of the projects, intricate project designs, lack of coordination between donors, long procurement processes, difficulty in recruiting consultants, late supervision, and unrealistic project objectives (Shafiei&Puttanna, 2018). Also,a low level of project ownership and the frequent changes in the leadership of sectoral ministries were recently experienced in Afghanistan. Moreover, issues in procurement, recruitment of consultants who were not familiar with the cultural contexts, delays in the supervision of activities, and setting unrealistic objectives wherein most of the time lead to disappointments are also captured in the lessons learned during the implementation of IDPs in Afghanistan. Therefore, for successful implementation of IDPs, the success and failure should be determined and built into the learning processes, and continuous learning and adapting should be part of IDPs.

Project Management Method

Factor 4, ***Project Management Method*** shares 6.84% variance with three items SF19, SF18, and SF20 with Cronbach's alpha of 0.703 and loadings between 0.658 and 0.806. The type of project management approach adopted in the management of any project can influence the success/failure of that project to a greater extent. It has been previously proposed that organizations executing multiple projects should follow a standard approach to project management, irrespective of the nature of the project, the complexity of the project, or the resources utilized. (Turner, 1996). This is because adopting a common approach will result in; a consistent reporting mechanism across all project and resource requirements calculations, movement of project staff between projects, and using small projects as a training platform for future managers.

However, for IDPs to succeed, affiliative leadership style might be more appropriate. This style seems to be more concerned with fostering meaningful relationships and team building, focusing on addressing others' individual needs and discussing opportunities for positive feedback (Margules, 2011). The project ideas and information should be shared, and social gatherings associated with projects to be held in the organization so that the feeling of bonding and belonging to the organization is created. This will bring a commitment to the project and will enhance team performance as well.

Clear Project Goals and Objectives

Finally, Factor 5 ***Clear Goals and Objectives*** comprises of SF2 and SF1 with loadings of 0.780 and 0.803, Cronbach's alpha of 0.891, and a contribution of 5.57% variance (see Table 3).Clear goals and objectives in a project allow each team member to monitor their own progress and correct their efforts as and when necessary. The significance of setting clear objectives and scope in project management is often ignored (Neal & Reiss, as cited in Clarke, 1999). In the absence of well-defined project scope, including goals and objectives, people in the project may start losing sight of what they are trying to achieve (Clarke, 1999). Having clear goals and objectives is the most important critical success factor in project management. White and Fortune (2002) observed that the most frequently mentioned CSF in their research was clear project goals and objectives.

Conclusion

It is not easy to overstate the role of CSFs in the successful implementation of development projects funded and executed by the international community. The CSFs are responsible for ensuring the successful delivery of development aid to the target communities in a developing country. However, considering the unique nature of IDPs and the complexity of their environments, achieving IDPs' goals and objectives has always been a challenge for both the international community and the host government. While several CSFs for IDPs have been reported in the literature, they are considered country-specific, and there is no agreement amongst researchers on a set of CSFs that

will ensure IDPs' success. Therefore, this research was carried out to identify and evaluate the key CSFs for IDPs in Afghanistan, thereby filling many gaps in the IDPM literature.

The study explored and evaluated the CSFs for IDPs in a developing country context. Thirty-one success factors included in the research instrument were perceived to be significant factors leading to IDPs' success. However, the study found that factors; clearly defined project goals and objectives, discipline regarding time, cost, and quality, clearly defined roles and responsibilities of project staff, clearly defined goals and objectives for a particular work in the project, and proper assignment of tasks to appropriate people were highly rated CSFs by senior management, team members and the general public. Moreover, the result of EFA revealed five key CSFs for IDPs, namely: Project Cycle Management, Effective Recruitment, Continuous Learning and Adapting, Project Management Method, and Clear Project Goals and Objectives.

The findings 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 to consider the above five CSFs while undertaking development initiatives in Afghanistan.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

In relation to this research study, its authorship, and/or publication, the authors declare no potential conflicts of interest.

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