

# Managerial Implications for Project Mismanagement and Corruption in a River Road Tunnel Project in Bangladesh

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## **Abstract**

This is a research paper focused on assessing the level of corruption and its impacts on a new tunnelling construction project in Bangladesh. An interpretive perspective was utilised as this provided more effective engagement in the messy reality of managing project spaces. The scope for this research was the off-site management team. The population for this study was made up of a number of individuals (13) managers/engineers located at one main office-site.

The outcomes consisted of six (6) main themes, namely: Administration, Compliance, Obstruction Measures, Financial, Management Standards, and International Governance.

The paper addresses some of the implications for continuing project construction site developments in Bangladesh and the paper also suggests that projects of this kind may benefit from a greater use of targeted processes to alleviate corruption possibilities in the late design stage/construction phase of a tunnelling project.

Very little research has been conducted in this area and the paper exposes the debilitating aspects of weak oversight by an International JV - both in-country and externally by corporate managers - and continuing project management in Bangladesh relating to unexplored corruption practices in a tunnel project construction environment.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Tunnel Project, Construction, Management, International JV, Bangladesh.

## Introduction

Corruption is often defined as the misuse of project financial processes for personal influence or gain (OECD, 2007) and is sanctioned to influence another to their viewpoint or to support them (James, 2015). The specific impacts of corruption in large infrastructure projects has been made more transparent recently (Kenny, 2006; Brookes and Locatelli, 2015). However, corruption is feared and a real threat (James, 2014) in an environment where individuals, as well as companies, have little or no experience of the sector requirements (in this case tunnelling) (Locatelli, et al., 2017). Also, where project processes and technologies are ill-matched with previous expertise, then these characteristics have been observed to contribute to undermining the proper governance of infrastructure projects (Locatelli, Mancini and Romano, 2014) through masked intentions (Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002) resulting from toxic leadership (Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007). Corruption is therefore one of the main risks associated with managing large infrastructure projects (Al-Sabah, Menassa and Hanna, 2014).

This paper starts with a discussion of corruption issues in construction projects, and then examines the specific and continuing research context of the early part of a road tunnel under a river project during which the JV Lead was under examination and banned from World Bank funded projects for corruption practices but continues to operate unhindered.

### *Corruption Risks in Construction Projects in Bangladesh*

Corruption is considered an endemic problem in Bangladesh (The Economist, 2017; TI, 2016) where much is placed on being able to control finances and the consequent need to “help” smooth the way forward for other “new” projects and is therefore considered a major impediment to the efficient and effective management of on-going projects (Loosemore and Lim, 2015; The World Bank, 2011). Further, the potential for corruption is high in construction projects (Rodriguez, Waite and Wolfe, 2005; ey.com, 2015) and is considered rife in Bangladesh (Wells, 2015) notwithstanding the signing of a UNCAC agreement in 2007 (UNCAC, 2015). Large projects in Bangladesh are consistently delayed, over-priced and as money is skimmed-off by embedded corruption practices and combined with poor economic performances this points to under-resourced outcomes resulting in cost overruns (Flyvbjerg, Holm and Buhl, 2010) leading to higher than necessary risks associated with the project’s on-going financial issues. This also leaves infrastructure projects routinely under-scoped (Kenny, 2010; Hillson, Grimaldi and Rafele, 2006) that negatively affect continuing project scope management where the quality of project performance is poor (Olken, 2007). Whilst public procurement rules have been tightened and monitored more closely (UNCAC, 2008) it does not prevent project finance manipulation at source, arising from masked or hidden corruption practices (Aguilar, Gill and Pino, 2000), nor does it help to prevent other inconsistent corruption practices deemed to be factually concealed within project management operating dynamics (OECD, UNODC and The World Bank, 2013). There would also appear to be little reporting of corruption in construction projects in Bangladesh (Ramady, 2014) and creates an added risk issue (Stansbury, 2005) to the application of proper project governance (PMBOK® Guide, 2013).

This is the first tunnelling project in Bangladesh, where the oversight of the EPC project by the “Assistant Engineer” is managed by an International JV Lead Partner (JV Lead). No national nor employer/client managing entity has any experience in tunnelling management or experience in tunnelling under rivers. The context for the project is deliberated as country-level institutionalised corruption (Jensen and Smith, 2000; Müller, Pemsel and Shao, 2015) and because of the exhibited lack of experience by the JV Lead it is questionable as to why the JV won the contract.

This creates the context for the research question, *What is the managerial impact of the various corruption practices in a road tunnelling construction projects in Bangladesh?*

### **Methodology**

Due to the intrinsic methodological issues relating to exploring corruption in infrastructure projects in general, and specifically in a tunnelling project in Bangladesh, a qualitative inquiry appeared to stimulate more effective explanation of the issues underpinning project related corruption. Consequently, to examine more unambiguously the issues generated within a construction context, a deeper orientation was considered necessary using an interpretive approach (Hill, Thompson and Williams, 1997; Walsh, White and Young, 2008). This consideration of project corruption issues, targets national and international personal evaluations raised out of individual experiences to generate this type of data. This research is an attempt to understand the perceptions of managers and engineer’s experiences of wide-ranging, complex-working environments located at an independent location. Consequently, these managers/engineers were considered specialist knowledge agents and actors (Benn et al., 2008) as their experiences influenced their perception of operational project practices.

The research used a semi-structured interview conducted with experienced personnel whom provide an appropriate element of context and flexibility (Cassell and Symon, 2004) and this was further aided by applying an inductive/theory building approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) through document examination. Given the level of sensitivity, its nature and lack of appropriately focused research in this area, this methodology is seen as suitable for creating contextual data for the purpose of forming richer theory development (Cayla and Eckhardt, 2007). A pilot study was carried out with three (3) respondents from the population (these were not used in main interview/data collection process - Maxwell, 2013) that allowed changes to language and questions that had more meaning for respondents (following Kim, 2011) and created a basis a more effective and streamlined question routine (James and James, 2011).

The population frame of thirteen (13) for this study was made up of a range of managers/engineers formally distributed at different levels who had direct project experience and were situate within the identified project setting and characterised as an existing frame (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003); and where all respondents were included (Fink, 2000). No respondent was considered out of scope relative to the research orientation and requirements (Koerber and McMichael, 2008) and were located within clear boundaries (Coyne, 1997). Consequently, the respondents were chosen through applying the approach of a targeted

population of interest (Carman, 1990) reflecting the criteria of theoretical purpose, relevance and appropriateness (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and were considered empirically adequate (Spanos, 1990) but which had no bearing on the research logic and reasoning (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). This meets the saturation requirements of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) and thus takes the sample frame beyond an empirically expected level (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Each interview was conducted in English and took approximately one hour. All interviews were recorded digitally after gaining explicit permission (following Duranti, 2007) and were later transcribed verbatim using NVivo 11 (Bailey, 2008). Each individual was asked the same set of questions (based on Gray and Wilcox (1995) and James (2014) - amongst modified supplementary questioning (Balshem, 1991; Punch, 2014; Meurer, et al., 2007). To increase the confidence of the data (Curry, Nembhard and Bradley, 2009), the actual transcription was returned to each respondent (Harris and Brown, 2010) - via e-mail - for comment, correction, addition or deletion and return, which followed the process of validated referral (Reeves and Harper, 1981). Whole-process validity was achieved through direct linkage of the research question to the specified arena of interest (Stenbacka, 2001), as the respondents were considered widely knowledgeable of the possibilities associated with the context and content of the research orientation (Tull and Hawkins, 1990).

For the analysis process, each interview was initially manually interrogated and coded according to sub-themes that 'surfaced' from the interview dialogue. This treatment was also reinforced and extended through the use of thematic analysis conducted using NVivo 11 (Walsh, White and Young, 2008). Each interview was treated and coded independently. In this way, no portion of any interview dialogue was left uncoded and the overall outcome represented the shared respondent's views and perspectives through a progressive coding-sequence (Buston, 1999).

Themes were recognised when using of the various interrogation attempts. These multiple forms of interrogation was an attempt to increase the acceptable validity for the optimal choice (based on the available data) of both key themes and sub-themes through triangulation processes (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). Sub-theme analysis was conducted using NVivo 11 by pulling together relevant sub-themes from all interviews (Harwood and Garry, 2003). Consequently, each respondent's views were captured across multiple transcripts (Riessman, 1993) and located together for further reflection and examination (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

The research methodology used was considered a quasi-mixed methodology approach (James and James, 2011), which helped derive the most suitable narrative of the examined situation. This research methodology firmly shaped construct validity (Healy and Perry, 2000) - based upon the realism paradigm and preferring to use the terms of credibility (Johnson, 1997) and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in place of reliability (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

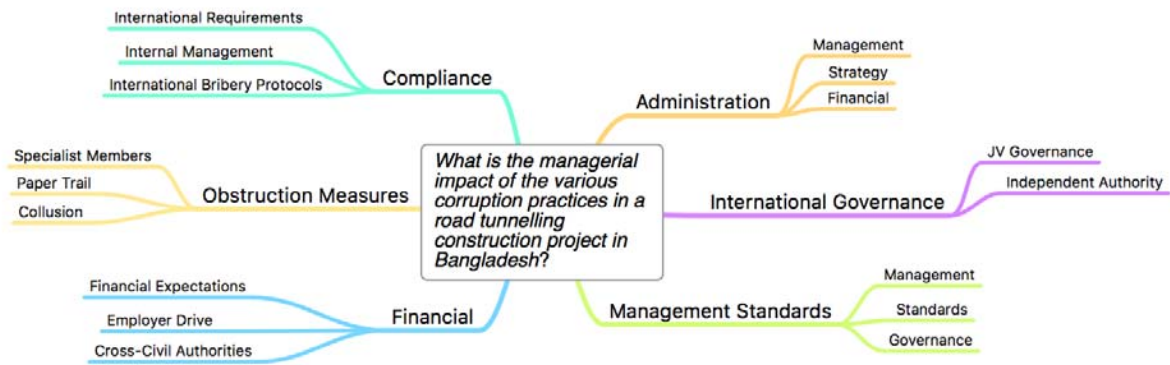


Figure 1. Research Outcomes

### Illustration of Research Outcomes

The outline of the research outcomes for this study is shown in Figure 1 above. The framework supported by appropriate literature, illustrated below in Table 1, consists of six (6) main themes - Administration, Compliance, Obstruction Measures, Financial, Management Standards, International Governance, seventeen (17) sub-themes and 339 discussion targets. The outcomes are stated below where the discussion focuses on the sub-theme elements within each key theme. The discussion format used in this paper reflects the respondent’s voice through a streamlined and articulated approach for reporting that is greatly influenced by Gonzalez, (2008) and Daniels et al. (2007).

Table 1. Research question, themes and discussion targets

Research Question		
<i>What is the managerial impact of the various corruption practices in a road tunnelling construction project in Bangladesh?</i>		
Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Discussion Targets
Administration	Management	23
	Strategy	19
	Financial	26
Compliance	International Requirements	14
	Internal Management	17
	International Bribery Protocols	15
Obstruction Measures	“Specialist” Members	19
	Paper Trail	22
	Collusion	27
Financial	Financial Expectations	16
	Employer Drive	19
	Cross-Ministry Authorities	12
Management Standards	Management	27
	Standards	21
	Governance	13
International Governance	JV Governance	23
	Independent Authority	26

Table 1 above indicates the minimum responses for each identified sub-theme.

Table 2. Major themes and respondents

Major Themes	Cited Respondent Number
Administration	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12
Compliance	2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13
Obstruction Measures	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10
Financial	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12
Management Standards	2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11
International Governance	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13

Table 2 above indicates the major themes and respondents

## Results

The results are presented below, using supportive empirical evidence through indicated extractions as in Gonzalez, (2008). Consequently, considering the research question - *What is the managerial impact of the various corruption practices in a road tunnelling construction project in Bangladesh?* The results are stated here as six (6) main themes, and seventeen (17)

sub-themes as indicated in Table 1 and 2 above, where each sub-theme theme is placed and discussed with each corresponding main theme.

### **Main Theme – Administration**

In terms of Management, one respondent (2) suggested that, *...Management support the way we do things. It may not be totally legal, but this is the way its done here. No one cares...* Another respondent (6) denoted that, *...We have problems internationally, but here nothing. However, if we adopt the same international standards, we cannot hope to continue, as it's the way to do business...* Another respondent (10) indicated that, *...We have too many managers to let this deal fall through, no matter what the client asks for...*

In terms of Strategy, this is typified by one respondent (9) who suggested that, *...It is simple. Do what we're told. Standards have nothing to do with it. Just follow what we're asked - no matter what the request, we have to find a way...* Another respondent (12) signified that, *...We do what we must to ensure that the contract is still operational. It doesn't mean we have to do what our International colleagues would expect...* Another respondent (5) stated that, *...Our main aim is to fund management and other projects that are not so rich. We have a duty to our staff and that means ensuring we do what the client wants, no matter how strange or difficult the request...*

In terms of Financial, this is typified by one respondent (3) who suggested that, *...We desperately need the money, but the contract has not been fully utilised as yet. The client keeps changing his mind, but one thing is for sure, the amount we signed up for at the beginning we won't get because they [sic - client] are greedy...* Another respondent (7) signified that, *...We have to follow what the client expects. If we don't, we can't get their future business. We have the biggest contract in the company at the moment and we don't want to lose it. So we will do what the client demands...*

### **Main Theme – Compliance**

In terms of International Requirements, this is typified by one respondent (11) who indicated that, *...We can't do that. That's for them. They don't understand us, and we don't really care...* Another respondent (2) denoted that, *...It is something we could do better, but it is not in our interests, because we would be the only ones doing it...* Another respondent (5) expressed that, *...Of course it would be great to do, but our client makes decisions that make us work in this way...*

In terms of Internal Management, this is typified by one respondent (4) who denoted that, *...When variation orders are made, no one oversees whether it relates to the contract or is legal, and even when it is, it is clear that a follow-up audit is years away and therefore it can be ignored...* Another respondent (9) signified that, *...There is a conscious attempt to make things look formal, but this is a disguise, as only one person manages it and that is the PM...* Another respondent (13) stated that, *...Sadly, many things don't look right - like funding a personal Contracts Manager for the Client out of our contract monies. Consequently, there is less transparency and an increase in risk because of this. Some day, it will be seen.*

In terms of International Bribery Protocols, this is typified by one respondent (5) who indicated that, *...The PM is stated as the writer, the checker and the authoriser of a lot of documentation - such as variation orders and the Project Inception Report. He doesn't seem to follow any protocol required by the international operations...* Another respondent (11) expressed that, *...Bribery protocols are prescriptions. But the PM ignores them, because he could not do what he and the JV partners want to do if he followed them...* Another respondent (8) articulated that, *...We get training and then our expectancy is shattered. The country management collude to make sure no one can force anyone in management to abide by these rules...*

### **Main Theme – Obstruction Measures**

In terms of “Specialist” Members, this is typified by one respondent (3) who indicated that, *...There is a special team to ensure that things were not detected or if they were to disparage any individuals who may have seen this...* Another respondent (1) denoted that, *...Oh yes, they had people who would make sure that when something was done, no one could back out. If someone saw something or commented on something that was perceived as risky, they were immediately targeted and threatened both physically and administratively by managers...* Another respondent (4) signified that, *...I have seen people thrown out and made to look as if they were the criminal ones. They do it because of special orders. To protect the powerful members of the in-country management. Especially the PM...*

In terms of Paper Trail, this is typified by one respondent (8) who specified that, *...The PM says, if we make it visible but not easy to trail, it won't be found out...* Another respondent (5) expressed that, *...As long as we don't sign for things, we won't be found out...* Another respondent (7) signified that, *...We are told often that in 4 or 5 years no one will be able to see what happens now. No one...*

In terms of Collusion, this is typified by one respondent (10) who suggested that, *...Yes, it would be normal practice for managers to plan and ensure “extraordinary” payments...* Another respondent (4) denoted that, *...We have to stick together. Otherwise we will get caught...* Another respondent (7) showed that, *...It is often done and to make sure, they make up things about people. They pay people to say things that are not true or write things that are not true about a person they don't want on the project because or because they fear he may tell someone what is going on. It happens a lot...*

### **Main Theme – Financial**

In terms of Financial Expectations, this is typified by one respondent (5) who indicated that, *...You know, one thing about this project is that it is a very large project and many people come to it expecting money. Expecting to gain as much money as they can...* Another respondent (3) voiced that, *...Many people don't earn money in the normal sense. They turn up, work on other things, go to meetings elsewhere and draw a salary both for the themselves and for the JV partners...* Another respondent (12) denoted that, *...This project is not unlike those before it, staff are on multiple projects, the management knows this, but does it anyway, because then they make more money - administratively. But no real work is done...*



In terms of Employer Drive, this is typified by one respondent (1) who specified that, ...*They are there to make money for themselves. No question about that...* Another respondent (9) signified that, ...*It is obvious to everyone, that these things happen [corruption] and there is no getting away from it. The employer is central to this...* Another respondent (4) indicated that, ...*Of course, it would be difficult without them [client], but since they do it openly, then we have it easier - as long as they [client] get their money too...*

In terms of Cross-Ministry Authorities, this is typified by one respondent (6) who indicated that, ...*When the project started partial works, the Aviation Authority sent a message - not in writing - explaining that the works was in violation of aviation rules - without stating what those violations were - and demanded monies as a fee for allowing its operation...* Another respondent (9) signified that, ...*An individual from a major local civil entity came to site without notification, to discuss what legal rules had been broken and to explain who needed to be "consulted" before approvals were given...*

### **Main Theme – Management Standards**

In terms of Management, this is typified by one respondent (2) who indicated that, ...*Oh, the problem with him [senior member of project JV Lead] is that he has standards, and we can't have that. It will hurt us...* Another respondent (8) indicated that, ...*It is significant that we have to hide and have meetings without him, because otherwise he would tell everyone what we're doing...* Another respondent (11) specified that, ...*It is what we do. We can't do it any other way...*

In terms of Standards, this is typified by one respondent (4) who signified that, ...*Oh, we couldn't have any management standard operating here. We wouldn't understand it anyway...* Another respondent (7) specified that, ...*Internationally, we don't care about them. We couldn't survive, if we did it their way. It wouldn't work here...*

In terms of Governance, this is typified by one respondent (9) who denoted that, ...*It goes on, I know that. But we can't say anything, can we?...* Another respondent (3) expressed that, ...*We see it in almost every meeting. People collude openly. It's what is normal here...*

### **Main Theme – International Governance**

In terms of JV Governance, this is typified by one respondent (10) who indicated that, ...*We reported corruption or the possibility of corruption to the overseas lead JV partner. So they know about this issue, but they didn't do anything. Just silence. So much for the World Bank statement...* Another respondent (4) signified that, ...*It is obvious that management here blocks any form of "outside" interference in their corrupt practices...* Another respondent (6) denoted that, ...*While the World Bank was considering and negotiating with the JV leader, they continued to engage in corrupt practices. This says a lot about some international companies...*

In terms of Independent Authority, this is typified by one respondent (13) who indicated that, ...*We still have no reason to change. The World Bank decision about blocking us, has had no effect on what is done here. None...* Another respondent (8) suggested that, ...*No one*

*cares what is done here. So nothing will change. It is hard-work - and dangerous to oppose them...Another respondent (3) signified that, ...It is certain that outside, independent authorities know, but they do nothing...*

**Research Consideration and Implications**

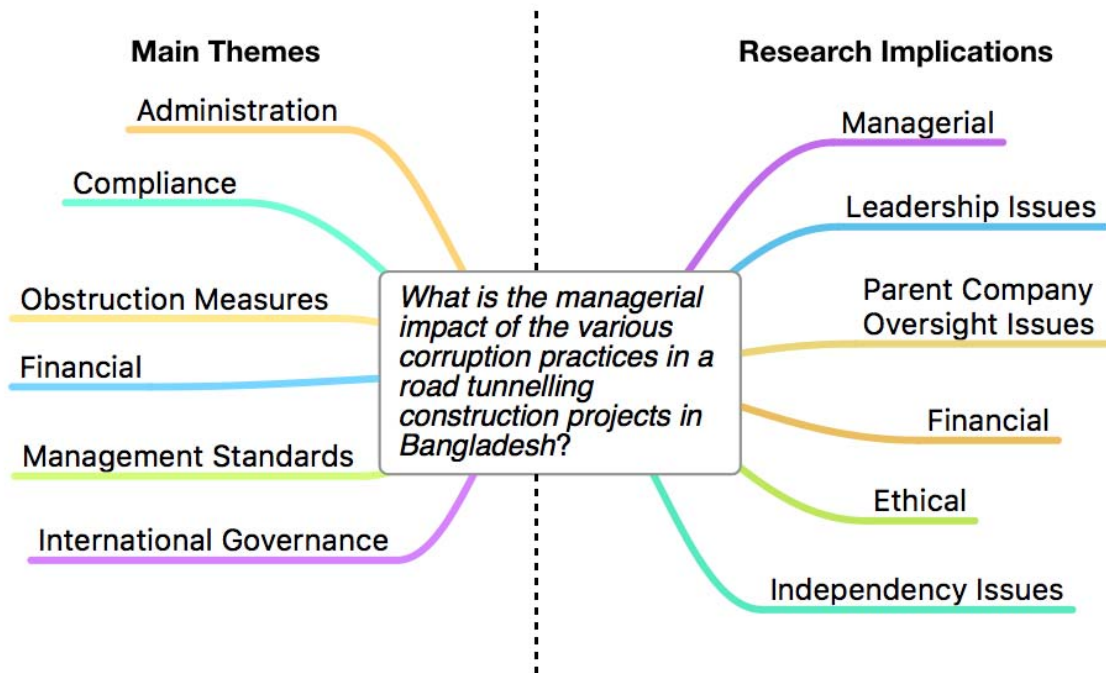


Figure 2. Research Consideration

The outline of the Research implications for this study is shown in Figure 2 above, and are considered further below:

Managerial

One of the largest contributing factors to the aggressively pursued corruption was the reduction in staff of the JV Lead (Stansbury, 2005) - through consistent and open acts of derision and harassment. The data indicated that a significant minority of staff were “forced out” because they raised issues of corruption and made their voice known. They were subsequently ostracised and hounded out of their jobs as in other projects (Kohn, 2017; Sohail and Cavill, 2008), which violated their human rights through organisational deviance (Green and Ward, 2004) because of little or no protection (OECD, 2016) - especially from the overseas corporate management. Consequently, management appear to tolerate and encourage corrupt behaviour for the benefit of the JV Lead (Colombatto, 2003) and deceive others who were attempting to behave in a professional and ethical manner (Flyvbjerg, 2005). Thus, the reduced integral standards exhibited by the management of the JV lead materially affects the ability of international managers employed to monitor and report corruption in the project (Vee and Skitmore, 2003) as the linkage to good governance is being duplicitously

reduced (Tabish and Jha, 2012) due primarily to active procedural non-compliance - internally and externally. This leads to the notion that the social and institutional prevalence and support of corruption behaviour comes from the organisational management and not just created by individuals (Hauser and Hogenacker, 2014) and is therefore culturally-based (Abjorensen, 2014). Thus, the organisational and culture context overshadows individual perspectives of corruption behaviour, which may explain why such practices are so endemic in Bangladesh.

There was evidence of mass-collusion by local authority and senior project figures (Patterson and Chaudhuri, 2007) who appeared to be “expectant of rewards” to allow the works to proceed, suggesting the open application of “extortion” processes (Davis, 2004). The data indicted clearly that local power departments and airport government personnel appeared to want “their” share by orchestrating meetings with the JV lead PM. It would appear that The World Bank NRA with the JV Lead (The World Bank, 2017) has had no effect on the unethical management behaviour of the project personnel or the in-country JV Lead management and thus continues to manifestly fail to comply with The World Bank Integrity Compliance Guidelines (2010).

#### Leadership Issues

The data indicates that toxic leadership created by the JV Lead PM appeared to result from the need to mask associated corruption (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999), and whom demonstrated inadequate oversight and administrative failings (Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1990), a lack of project management understanding and capability, inadequate people skills and abuse of power (Kaiser and Hogan, 2007). This, coupled with limited proper corporate governance capability (Hambrick and Abrahamson, 1995) did little to provide for the application of appropriate technical standards with the consequent unprofessional attitude allowing destructive management acts (O'Connor et al., 1995) thus increasing the effects of fraudulent behaviour. Since the JV Lead PM's behaviour had been reported previously in other projects, there is the speculation that this behaviour had been noticed but had subsequently been ignored by both in-country JV Lead management and its corporate oversight headquarters in Singapore.

#### Parent Company Oversight Issues

The quality of internal business execution appears from the evidence to be suspect (relating to consistently reported procedural non-compliance issues). This perhaps leads to a presumed state of inadequacies associated with its capability to deal with staff who do not comply with the expected internal protocols regarding corruption prevention or their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), risking reputational threats (Stansbury, 2005) as in the specific and targeted World Bank blacklisting decision (The Work Bank, 2017).

Dealing internally with reports of corruption is seen by most respondents as inadequate, fraught with risk and perhaps divisive in terms of management accountability (Clark, Fox and Treacle, 2003). Evidence espoused by respondents intimate distinctly that there is wide-spread criticism of the leadership capability of the JV Lead entity that oversees and participates

because no corruption-prevention measures were employed (Heffernan and Kleinig, 2004). In this respect, little has changed in the managerial practices associated with managing infrastructure project practices in Bangladesh, which are considered weak and pervasive (Sohail and Cavill, 2008). It also affects company credibility (Alcañiz, Cáceres and Pérez, 2010) and suppresses building appropriate levels of organisational trust (Schoorman, Mayer and Davis, 2007).

Further, from the advocated data, after a number of staff members exhibited and practiced behaviours associated with corruption, that were ignored out by management of the JV Lead, which included elements of collusion and undermining those who may report such events (see ADB, 2011, p(iv), 16). Thus, the whole JV lead - in-country and out of country do not appear to observe their own internal processes in order to deal with corruption or the report of corruption as defined, for example, by the ADB (2010). The contribution of individuals willing to risk everything because of reporting “openly” observed corruption needs to be recognised and applauded, not denigrated or vilified, or subjected to retaliation through coercion or job loss (Johnson, 2003; ADB, 2011; ADB, 2010, p8, item 13). Further, although internal training and protocols obligate and mandate that all staff must report instances of corruption, no such process has been utilised to date by the JV Lead organisation - in-country - which raises serious questions regarding the intention of JV Lead’s to ignore its mandated obligation to vigorously deal with reported corruption and protect those reporting such instances [links to this cannot be divulged in order to safeguard the privacy of the respondents].

### Financial

It was reported that from the onset of the project, that financial “management” was the JV Lead PM’s key aim - as project documents were signed openly by the JV Lead PM -ubiquitously as the author, checker and authoriser of the document submission (with no oversight from anyone else). This subverts proper internal project document change controls (PMBOK® Guide, 2013) with attempts to hide the efficacy of the arrangements for preventing fraud (Aguilar, Gill and Pino, 2000) and increase costs (NewAge, 2017). The lack of governance by the JV Lead International entity also spoke loudly about the inadequacy of the oversight engagement of the JV Lead local management - even though prescriptively corporate governance was a major requirement of the international managing entity. Further, it would appear that the costs of the project had been underestimated (Flyvbjerg, 2007) as the spend prior to commencement was US\$20Mn and the JV Lead cost US\$3Mn. Consequently, there is a clear and continuing failure of international governance which has led to widespread financial manipulation and corruption in a project that was considered the largest financial project provider for the JV Lead International entity (US\$48Mn).

### Ethical

The need to strengthen the “Engineer” as indicated by The World Bank (2011) does not appear to have been considered by the JV Lead PM - especially when deliberating on the level of assessed corruption in Bangladesh in large construction projects. This illustrates the lack of accountability, wide-spread indiscipline and ill-focused measurement in the

management of the project (Cavill and Sohail, 2005; Sobhan, 2004; The World Bank Integrity Compliance Guidelines, 2010; Integrity Vice Presidency, 2011). Further, it is reported that The World Bank has announced a Negotiated Resolution Agreement (NRA) with the JV Lead for the project (not funded by The World Bank) regarding previous episodes of corruption - but this does not appear to prevent this from continuing.

### Independency Issues

The data indicates that the lack of basic and independent financial controls associated with the manipulation of Variation Orders in the Contract has subsequently heightened the risk of fraud and financial misrepresentation (ADB, 2011; The World Bank Integrity Compliance Guidelines, (2010). For example two Contract Managers (CM) were specifically financed by the project - one used as the personal CM for the Client Chief Engineer, but no independent project financial manager (shared across different projects). For the Client CM, the JV lead would pay, but would have no influence over what the Client CM would be doing and whom for. Consequently, this highlights the inadequacy of the relationship between the JV Lead and its governance and oversight by the overseas managing entity which is not considered robust enough to prevent such open corruption and that ultimately the JV Lead PM has not been held to account for such actions through the application of appropriate internal mechanisms. Further, the boundary between the JV Lead acting to “assist” in the management of project activities and the Client is clearly blurred, which provides substantial evidence of material collusion between the parties and where the JV Lead is not considered impartial (James, 2017). Of further concern was the ownership of one of two in-country companies supporting the JV Lead was difficult to comprehend. Consequently, because of these issues, the independency of the JV lead could be characterised as very high risk of affecting the integrity of the independent supervision process (The World Bank, 2011; Wells, 2013).

Further, great concern is raised in relation to the JV Lead overseas corporate management which do not appear to provide “visible enforcement” measures to the project JV Lead staff from the abuse exposed by the JV Lead PM (Howell and Avolio, 1992) when applying proper policies, protocols and procedures (Rose-Ackerman, 1996), resulting in excessively weak oversight and little accountability by the appropriate overseas board members (Sohail and Cavill, 2008). Consequently, the JV Lead overseas management could be seen as just as culpable as the in-country management. Further, the JV Lead is part of a large group of companies, who are centred in a country that prides itself on showing high moral attitudes and lack of corruption (Singapore). Trust in this enterprise is therefore perhaps misplaced and the International Lead JV’s reputation is perhaps just as weak.

Given the situation and the lack of leadership shown by the JV Lead PM who is responsible for determining the strategic direction of the project whilst helping to shape the operating unit of the project, the evidence presented clearly indicates a lack of competent resolve and robust integrity (Kenny, 2007) in preventing corruption on the project – and may even support it through unlikely mechanisms such as inappropriate cost variations (Ling, et al, 2014). Consequently, the JV Lead PM is materially obviscating monies for the client (Zarkada-Fraser and Skitmore, 2000).

Further, anti-bribery training does not appear to be a major focus for the JV Lead PM or other in-country managerial staff and that the operating culture is unrestrained (Estache and Trujillo, 2009) and uncontrolled (Kenny, 2006) and is therefore considered an institutional weakness (Kenny, 2009; Lambsdorff, 2005), and so gives clear signals that corruption will be tolerated.

## **Conclusions**

The research outcome highlights the cavalier and perhaps hypocritical approach of the JV Lead as it makes all staff serving in Bangladesh undergo anti-corruption training – especially how to report corruption – and then does nothing to help those who report such behaviour (LaPalombara, 1994) or engender trust (La Porta et al., 1997). Further, since The World Bank has ruled that the JV Lead was culpable in Bangladesh for corruption, then the continuing issue of an endemic “culture of deception and corruption” cannot be ruled out.

The project success ordinarily means that project objectives remain practicable, cohesive, and credible (PMBOK®Guide, 2013), but to the corrupt managers, it means that the project objectives are to make as much money for powerful stakeholders as possible and to remain unaccountable for the added cost, delay and deviation from designed parameters.

A paradigm shift is necessary in the project management to counter weak in-country corporate oversight for infrastructure projects that are going to provide the outcomes of quality, safety and cost as planned. The project is managed in direct interference with the administration of social justice, where the management culture is consistently hostile and sees those individuals who report corruption as disloyal, where significantly the in-country management of the JV Lead lacks the will to engage transparent and independent external oversight (Kenny, 2007; Stansbury, 2005) in order to guarantee transparent and accountable management in the project operations (Glasbergen, Biermann and Mol, 2007). This also confirms a lack of coherent project due diligence that embraces integrity checks (OECD, 2015b).

Because the infrastructure project provides a high-risk platform for corruption practices that could be employed, focus should be spent on enhanced education and training (Akbar and Vujić, 2014) and governance for the supervisory entity (Locatelli et al., 2017). Management of the JV Lead should undergo proper change management in terms of anti-corruption practices, how to positively deal with staff members reporting such practices and the JV Lead corporate management need to oversee a proper and focused assessment of the corruption practices through appropriate anti-fraud, bribery and corruption assessments (Myint, 2000) and to deal with managers and other individuals according to Bangladesh law and international company legal operational requirements protocols and best-practices.

This paper concludes with a quote from a respondent relating to the management culture – *“...it is insipid, narcissist and power driven, where the fear of violence for voicing concern over obvious corruption acts detracts from the engineering scope and project dream...”*

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