

**MANAGEMENT OF DISPUTES DUE TO COVID-19 IN
THE SRI LANKAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY:
CONTRACTORS' PERSPECTIVE**

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Dispute Resolution

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a Degree or Diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text.

Further, I acknowledge the intellectual contribution of my research supervisor Ch. QS. Prof. (Mrs.) B.A.K.S. Perera for the successful completion of this research dissertation. I affirm that I will not make any publication from this research without the name of my research supervisor as contributing author unless otherwise I have obtained written consent from my research supervisor.

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Name of Supervisor:

Signature of the Supervisor:

Date:

DEDICATION

*I dedicate this research
to my family
for their endless support
and encouragement.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Ch. QS Prof. (Mrs.) B.A.K.S. Perera, for her valuable guidance, constant encouragement, and unwavering enthusiasm throughout the research process. Her support not only enriched the quality of this study but also contributed greatly to my intellectual and personal growth. I am truly privileged to have worked under her guidance.

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Management of disputes due to COVID-19 in the Sri Lankan construction industry: Contractors' perspective

ABSTRACT

The rapid socio-economic transformations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the construction industry, leading to a notable increase in disputes as unprecedented circumstances created conditions conducive to conflict. The industry, however, lacked adequate preparedness to respond, given the absence of comparable experiences in recent decades, and existing research on managing disputes in construction projects during pandemic situations remained limited. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how disputes triggered by COVID-19 can be effectively managed within the Sri Lankan construction industry from the contractors' perspective. A qualitative approach was adopted, involving two rounds of semi-structured expert interviews conducted using the Delphi technique, and the findings were analysed through manual content analysis. The study identified six (6) notable positive impacts and twelve (12) notable negative impacts of COVID-19 on the construction industry and further revealed twelve (12) important causes of disputes including escalation of project cost, delays in completing the contract and temporary suspension of work that emerged during the pandemic. Thirteen (13) preventive measures were categorised under each important cause. From the contractors' perspective, the need for regulatory bodies such as CIDA to take the lead in issuing updated guidelines and revising contractual provisions, the importance of recruiting competent contract administration teams within contracting organisations, and the value of maintaining strong relationships with project stakeholders facing similar challenges were identified as suitable preventive measures for managing disputes during a pandemic. Accordingly, the study recommends strengthening contractual and regulatory frameworks, enhancing stakeholder communication, developing competent contract administration teams, investing in research and technology, and improving industry preparedness to support effective dispute management during future pandemics. As future pandemics and global disruptions become increasingly likely, this research provides essential practical and theoretical guidance to help industry stakeholders strengthen preparedness and mitigate dispute-related risks. Its insights extend beyond the COVID-19 context, contributing to enhancing the construction industry's capacity to respond effectively to similar crises in the future.

Key Words: *COVID-19 pandemic, Construction disputes, Preparedness, Preventive Measures, Sri Lankan construction industry*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
3D	Three-Dimensional
BIM	Building Information Modelling
CIDA	Construction Industry Development Authority
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FIDIC	Fédération Internationale Des Ingénieurs-Conseils (International Federation of Consulting Engineers)

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