

UNDERSTANDING THE STATUS QUO OF CONSULTANT SELECTION IN SRI LANKAN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Consultant selection is a critical aspect of public construction procurement, as consultants significantly influence project performance in terms of cost, time, quality and risk management. In Sri Lanka, consultant selection methods for public construction projects are governed by national procurement guidelines. However, concerns remain regarding their practice application. This study examines the status quo of consultant selection practices in Sri Lankan public construction projects, with a focus on decision making approaches and commonly used consultant selection methods. A mixed methods approach was adopted, comprising a structured questionnaire survey administered to 52 construction professionals including quantity surveyors, engineers and architects who were directly involved in consultant selection decisions in public and institutionally funded projects. Quantitative data were analysed using mean ranking to identify dominant consultant selection methods, while content analysis was applied to qualitative responses to identify key challenges and suggested improvements. The findings reveal that consultant selection decisions are largely experience-based and guideline driven, with limited use of systematic decision-making models. The results indicate that Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) is the most widely used method in both government-funded and institutionally funded projects. Key challenges include the absence of structured decision-making frameworks, overemphasis on cost, lack of standardised evaluation criteria, and subjectivity in selection. Respondents recommended formal decision support models, standardised criteria, and performance-based monitoring to improve effectiveness, highlighting the need for more systematic consultant selection practice in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Consultant Procurement; Decision Making Models; Public Projects; Sri Lanka.

1. INTRODUCTION

The construction industry plays a pivotal role in national economic growth, infrastructure development and social wellbeing (Ofori, 2015). In developing countries such as Sri Lanka, public construction projects are particularly significant as they deliver essential

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infrastructure that supports national development objectives and economic stability (Thiruchelvam & Uduwage, 2025). Since these projects are financed through public funds they demand high levels of transparency, accountability and value for money to ensure effective utilisation of national resources (Abu et al., 2024).

Within public construction projects, consultants hold critical position by providing technical expertise necessary to transform policy and client requirements into feasible and sustainable project outcomes (Abu et al., 2024). Consultants including architect, engineers and quantity surveyors deliver professional services across the project lifecycle, significantly influencing cost, time, quality and risk management (Assaf et al., 2017). Given their strategic influence, proper consultant selection in the public sector is essential to ensure technical competence and balanced consideration of quality and cost (Daemei et al., 2025). Ineffective selection practices have been associated with design deficiencies, cost overruns, delays and disputes in construction projects (Ha et al., 2015).

In Sri Lanka, consultant selection for public construction projects is governed by national procurement guideline and manuals that outline a range of approved consultant selection methods (Jayasinha et al., 2021). These include various quality and cost-based approaches intended to promote fairness and consistency in selection decisions (World Bank, 2011). Consultant selection methods play a pivotal role in determining the suitability and competence of the appointed consultant (Ha et al., 2015). Identifying the most appropriate selection method for a given project is therefore critically important to achieving desired project outcomes (Hummadi et al., 2022). However, despite the availability of such guidelines, evidence from expert opinion and industry observations suggests that the practical application of these methods is often influenced by excessive emphasis on cost, limited methodological flexibility, and capacity constraints within procuring entities (Hasan, 2018; National Procurement Agency of Sri Lanka, 2007). Consequently, the potential benefits of applying the most suitable consultant selection method for a specific project may not be fully realised (Moos, 2017). Understanding the existing practice and status quo of consultant selection is therefore essential (Jayasinha et al., 2021).

The term “status quo” refers to the current situation, existing choice, or practice held by an agent at the time of deciding (Asamoah et al., 2019). In this study, the status quo encompasses the prevailing consultant selection methods, evaluation criteria, decision making processes, and institutional practices currently adopted in Sri Lankan public construction projects. Examining this status quo provides a foundation for identifying gaps between policy intentions embedded in national procurement guidelines and the actual implementation of consultant selection methods in practice, as well as areas requiring systematic improvement (Naidoo & Magakwe, 2024). Without a comprehensive understanding of these existing practices, efforts to reform consultant selection methods or introduce new decision-making models aimed at improving transparency, enhancing quality considerations and optimising selection methods may fail to address the underlying structural and operational challenges within procuring entities (Navarro & Tanghal, 2017).

A notable characteristic of the Sri Lankan public construction sector is the significant volume of projects funded through international institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB). These institutionally funded projects operate under procurement frameworks established by the respective funding agencies, which may

differ from national guidelines in their approach to consultant selection (World Bank, 2011). Understanding how consultant selection practices differ between government funded and institutionally funded projects is therefore important for a complete picture of the status quo, and for identifying opportunities for improvement across both procurement environments. This distinction forms part of the research scope of the current study.

Despite the availability of nationally prescribed consultant selection methods, there is limited empirical evidence on how these methods are applied in practice within Sri Lankan public construction projects (Jayasinha et al., 2021). Existing literature provides insufficient insight into the decision-making approaches adopted by procuring entities when determining the most appropriate consultant selection method, creating uncertainty regarding the basis of such choices (Rodgers et al., 2022). Moreover, there is a lack of systematic understanding of which consultant selection methods are predominantly implemented in practice, as opposed to those merely recommended within policy frameworks (Asamoah et al., 2019). Additionally, practitioner perspectives on how consultant selection methods can be improved to enhance transparency and overall effectiveness in the public sector remain underexplored (Rodgers et al., 2022). These gaps highlight the need to examine prevailing decision-making approaches, identify the dominant methods applied, and explore opportunities for methodological improvement.

Accordingly, the following objectives were formulated for this study.

1. To examine current decision-making approaches adopted in determining the consultant selection methods in Sri Lankan public construction projects.
2. To identify the dominant consultant selection methods adopted in public construction projects in Sri Lanka.
3. To explore perceived improvements required to enhance the effectiveness of consultant selection methods in the public construction projects in Sri Lanka.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 PROCUREMENT IN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Public procurement refers to the process by which government institutions acquire goods, works, and services using public funds, with the objectives of achieving value for money, transparency, fairness, and accountability (Islam, 2013). In the construction sector, public procurement plays a vital role due to the significant financial investment involved and the long-term socio-economic impact of infrastructure development (Procurement Manual, 2024). As public construction projects are funded by taxpayers, procurement decisions are subjected to strict regulatory frameworks to ensure efficient utilisation of resources and public trust (Jebur & Rashid, 2024).

Procurement of public construction projects differed from other sectors due to the complexity, uncertainty, and multidisciplinary nature of projects (Abu et al., 2024). Decisions made during early procurement stages, particularly those related to consultant selection, have a lasting influence on project performance (Daemei et al., 2025). Effective procurement systems are therefore essential to ensure that competent professionals are engaged to manage project risks, technical requirements, and contractual obligations (Bolomope et al., 2022).

2.2 ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTANT IN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Consultants play a central role in the planning, design, and execution of construction projects (Sarda & Dewalkar, 2016). Their responsibilities typically include feasibility studies, design development, cost planning, contract documentation, tender evaluation, and contract administration (Abu et al., 2024; Choudhry, 2016; Botwe et al., 2015). In public construction projects, consultants act as professional advisors to the client, supporting informed decision making throughout the project lifecycle (Abu et al., 2024).

In the context of public projects, the selection of appropriate consultants is widely recognised as a key success factor in achieving project objectives (Masengesho et al., 2021). According to National Procurement Agency of Sri Lanka (2007), the importance of consultant in public construction projects can be understood in relation to the following key aspects.

1. The need to ensure high quality and professional standards of services.
2. Maximising economy, timeliness and efficiency in project delivery.
3. Adhering to prescribed standards, rules, regulations and principles of good governance.
4. Maintaining confidentiality of information provided during consultancy services.
5. Strengthening anti-corruption measures and adherence to professional ethics.

2.3 CONSULTANT SELECTION METHODS IN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Consultant selection differs fundamentally from contractor selection because it involves procurement of intellectual and professional services rather than physical outputs (FIDIC, 2019). As a result, selection methods must prioritize quality, expertise, and experience rather than cost alone (Alkaabi & Mahjoob, 2022). Internationally, several consultant selection methods are commonly adopted in public construction projects which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Consultant procurement method and characteristic

Selection Method	Key Characteristics
Quality Based Selection (QBS)	Selection based primarily on technical competence and experience. Financial negotiations are conducted after identifying the most qualified consultant.
Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS)	Selection based on a combined evaluation of technical quality and financial proposals using predefined weightings.
Least Cost Selection (LCS)	Selection of the consultant offering the lowest price among technically acceptable proposals.
Fixed Budget Selection (FBS)	Selection of consultants whose technical proposals meet requirements within a predefined budget limit.
Single Source Selection (SSS)	Selection of a single consultant without competition, typically justified by continuity of services, specialised expertise, or emergency situations.

Selection Method	Key Characteristics
Consultant's Qualifications Selection (CQS)	Selection based on the consultant's qualifications and experience relevant to the assignment, without requesting detailed technical or financial proposals.

Source: (National Procurement Agency of Sri Lanka, 2007)

As shown in Table 1, six consultant selection methods are applied in public construction projects, each possessing distinct strengths and limitations. QBS emphasises technical excellence, whereas QCBS seeks to balance quality and cost through weighted evaluation criteria. LCS prioritise affordability among technically compliant proposals, while FBS ensures that services are delivered within a predetermined financial ceiling. SSS is typically adopted under exceptional circumstances such as continuity requirement or emergencies and CQS focuses on relevant experience for relatively small or specialised assignments. Consequently, the appropriateness of each consultant selection methods depends on project complexity, risk exposure, budget constraints and client priorities.

2.4 CRITERIA INFLUENCING CONSULTANT SELECTION METHODS

Within the public construction projects, selection criteria are applied differently depending on the consultant selection method adopted. These methods utilise selection criteria to compare competing firm during the procurement (Bolomope et al., 2022). Commonly adopted criteria across these methods include quality level, cost certainty, project complexity, speed, scope of project, risk allocation, flexibility and client experience (Ariftama et al., 2024; National Procurement Agency of Sri Lanka, 2007; Zhao et al., 2022). In public procurement, these criteria are often assigned different weightings depending on the selection method to balance technical quality and cost considerations.

However, determining appropriate criteria and corresponding weightings within each consultant selection methods remain a challenge (Ha et al., 2015). Excessive reliance on cost-oriented methods may result in the appointment of less competent consultants, whereas strong emphasis on subjective technical assessment within quality focused methods may raise concerns regarding transparency (Ha et al., 2015). Furthermore, inconsistent application of criteria across consultant selection methods and the absence of standardised assessment frameworks can undermine the effectiveness of method implementation in public sector projects processes (National Procurement Agency of Sri Lanka, 2007).

2.5 CONSULTANT SELECTION IN SRI LANKAN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

In Sri Lanka, consultant selection methods for public construction projects are governed by national procurement guidelines and manuals issues by the government (Jayasinha et al., 2021). These documents outline approved consultant selection methods, evaluation procedures, and institutional responsibilities and procuring entities are required to follow structured processes involving technical evaluation committees, financial evaluations, and multi-level approvals to ensure transparency and accountability (National Procurement Agency of Sri Lanka, 2007).

Despite the existence of formal guidelines, several challenges have been reported in the Sri Lankan public procurement system. Studies indicate that application of consultant

selection methods is often characterised by procedural rigidity, lengthy approval timelines, and limited flexibility in method selection (Jayasinha et al., 2021). In some cases, certain consultant selection methods may overly prioritise cost considerations, potentially at the expense of consultant quality and suitability. Capacity constraints within procuring entities and evaluation committees further complicate effective implementation of prescribed consultant selection methods (World Bank, 2011).

2.6 CHALLENGES IN CURRENT CONSULTANT SELECTION PRACTICES

Globally and locally, consultant selection methods in public construction projects face several challenges and these include inadequate terms of reference, limited availability of experienced evaluators, administrative delays and external influences on decision making (Abu et al., 2024). In developing countries, economic pressures and institutional limitations often intensify these challenges (Barajei et al., 2024). In Sri Lankan context, delays in consultant appointment, lack of alignment between project complexity and consultant selection methods, and insufficient emphasis on past performance have been identified as key concerns (Weerasingha et al., 2025). Such challenges may reduce the effectiveness of consultant services and adversely affect overall project performance, highlighting the need for a clearer understanding of current practices (Abu et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have examined public procurement system and contractor selection in construction projects, comparatively limited attention has been given to consultant selection practices, particularly in Sri Lankan public sector (Jayasinha et al., 2021). Existing local studies tend to focus on procurement methods, regulatory compliance, or contractor performance, with minimal emphasis on how consultant selection guidelines are applied in practice (Hummadi et al., 2022). According to Jayasinha et al. (2021) study, providing a comprehensive review of regulatory frameworks in Sri Lanka, focused on the adequacy of legal and institutional structures rather than on the empirical examination of how consultant selection methods are implemented at the project level by industry professionals. Furthermore, there is a lack of recent empirical research that systematically investigates current consultant selection approaches, criteria, and challenges from the perspective of industry professionals. This evidence gap creates uncertainty regarding whether existing consultant selection practices effectively support project success (Rodgers et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a clear need to examine the status quo of consultant selection in Sri Lankan public construction projects, which this study seeks to address.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts mixed research approach to examine the current practices associated with consultant selection methods in Sri Lankan public construction projects. Figure 1 illustrates the research design.

As shown in Figure 1, the research design commenced with an extensive literature review to identify consultant selection methods applicable to Sri Lanka, with reference to public procurement guidelines and previous empirical studies. This was followed by the determination of the target population, sample frame and sample size.

The target population comprised construction professionals directly involved in consultant selection method decisions in public construction projects in Sri Lanka, namely quantity surveyors, engineers and architects. These professions were selected as

they constitute the principal members of technical evaluation committees in Sri Lankan public procurement.

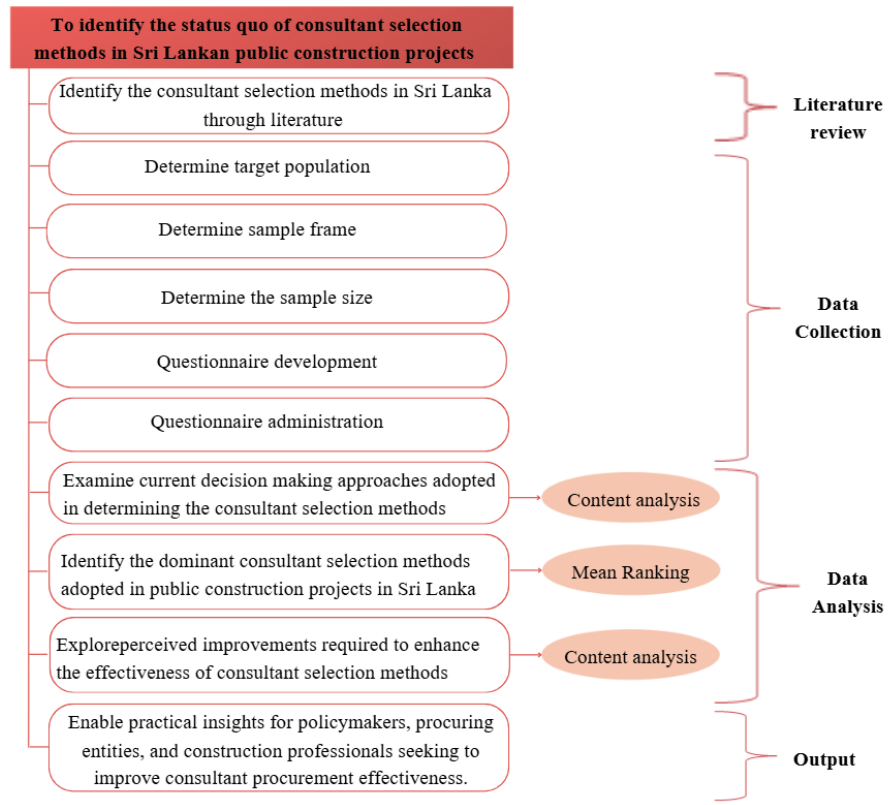


Figure 1: Research design

The target population characteristics were defined with reference to the professional membership criteria maintained by the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA), the Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka (IESL) and the Institute of Quantity Surveyors Sri Lanka (IQSSL), specifically, membership of a recognised professional body, more than five years of experience in public sector projects, and direct involvement in consultant selection decisions. While formal membership lists were not directly accessible for sampling purposes, the target population was defined by these characteristics, which represents a recognised approach in construction management research where centrally maintained sampling frames are not publicly available. This limitation is acknowledged in the study.

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select respondents with relevant expertise and practical knowledge. Accordingly, 75 questionnaires were distributed electronically via email, WhatsApp and professional networking platforms to enhance accessibility. The sample selection criterion required respondents to possess more than five years of experience in public sector projects, ensuring adequate exposure to consultant selection method applications.

The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on the literature review relating to consultant selection methods. The questionnaire consisted of closed ended questions using yes/no responses and five-point Likert scales to evaluate the applicability and dominance of consultant selection methods, together with open ended questions to capture perceived improvements for enhancing their effectiveness.

The data analysis was aligned with the study objectives. To examine current decision-making approaches and to explore perceived improvements, qualitative responses were analysed using content analysis. This involved systematically reviewing open-ended responses, coding recurring words and phrases, and grouping them into meaningful themes related to perceived challenges and suggested improvements in consultant selection practice (Anastasiei & Georgescu, 2020). To identify the dominant consultant selection methods, quantitative data were analysed using mean ranking based on five-point Likert scale responses. This approach enabled the prioritisation of consultant selection methods according to their relative significance in practice.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 RESPONDENT'S DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The questionnaire was distributed to 75 professionals. Out of these, 52 completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 69.33%.

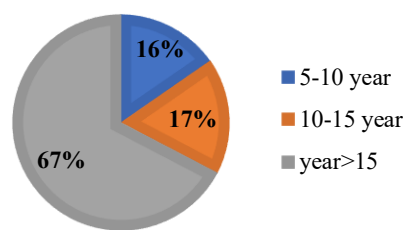


Figure 3: Respondent's experience

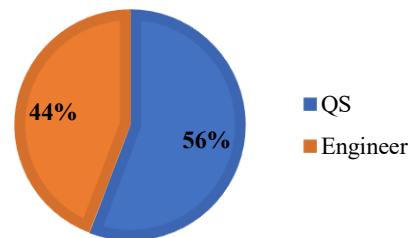


Figure 2: Respondent's profession

The questionnaire survey was distributed among three professional categories, namely quantity surveyors, engineers and architects. Figure 2 represent the majority of 56% respondents were quantity surveyors, followed by 44% respondents were engineers. Figure 3 illustrate the professional experience of the respondents. A substantial proportion of participants demonstrated extensive industry familiarity with approximately 67% reporting more than 15 years of experience, 17% having 10 -15 years, 16% having 5 -10 years. All respondents satisfied the minimum criterion of five years of experience. In terms of educational background, most respondents held postgraduate qualifications, primarily master's degrees, followed by bachelor's degrees and institutional corporate memberships. It is acknowledged that the low representation of architects is a limitation of this study, as their perspectives on consultant selection may differ from those of engineers and quantity surveyors. Future studies should endeavour to ensure more balanced representation across professional categories. Notwithstanding this limitation, the diversity in professional roles, educational background, and level of experience confirms that participants possess adequate knowledge to comprehend the survey questions and sufficient practical experience to provide informed responses.

4.2 CURRENT USE OF DECISION-MAKING APPROACHES IN DETERMINING THE CONSULTANT SELECTION METHOD IN PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN SRI LANKA

To examine the decision-making approaches adopted in determining consultant selection methods, respondents were asked "Are systematic decision-making models currently applied in selecting consultant procurement methods for Sri Lankan public construction

projects? If Yes, please specify the model(s) and indicate their effectiveness and If No, please specify the approach currently used" Qualitative responses were subsequently analysed using content analysis.

The findings indicate that systematic decision-making approaches are not widely adopted in selection of consultant selection methods in Sri Lankan public construction projects. Only 31% of respondents confirmed the use of formal decision-making models, such as structured evaluation frameworks aligned with National Procurement Agency (NPA) guidelines and established prequalification criteria, when determining the appropriate consultant selection methods. In contrast, 69% of respondents relied on traditional or experience-based approaches in the selection of consultant selection methods, primarily through the routine application of QCBS, committee deliberation and professional judgement informed by prior project experience.

This demonstrates that structured decision-making approaches are not yet well established within the public sector for the selection of consultant selection methods, as decisions regarding consultant selection methods mainly rely on traditional and professional judgement rather than structured analytical decision-making approaches. Such reliance might increase the potential for subjectivity and inconsistency in selection of consultant selection methods. The absence of formalized frameworks for the selection of consultant selection methods might limit transparency and consistency, thereby, reinforcing the need for structured decision-making tools such as Multi Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) models to improve objectivity and ensure alignment with project specific requirement in public sector procurement (Anelli et al., 2025).

4.3 CONSULTANT SELECTION METHODS USED IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED PROJECTS IN SRI LANKA

To identify the most used consultant selection method in government funded projects, an assessment was carried out using mean ranking to determine the dominant consultant selection method. The results based on mean ranking are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Ranking of consultant selection methods for government funded projects in Sri Lanka

Consultant selection method		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Quality and Cost Based Selection	QCBS	52	4.27	0.910	1
Least Cost Selection	LCS	52	3.35	1.235	2
Consultant's Qualifications Selection	CQS	52	3.25	0.926	3
Quality Based Selection	QBS	52	2.96	1.028	4
Fixed Budget Selection	FBS	52	2.75	1.082	5
Single Source Selection	SSS	52	2.02	0.939	6

Note: Scale (1 = Not widely used, 2 = Rarely used, 3 = Moderately used, 4 = Frequently used, 5 = Most widely used)

As shown in Table 2, based on the mean ranking results, QCBS has the highest mean value 4.27, ranking it as the most used consultant selection method in government funded projects in Sri Lanka. This is followed by LCS and CQS. Other methods, such as FBS and SSS were reported to be used less frequently. SSS recorded the lowest mean value of

2.02, indicating it is the least preferred method. This indicates that preference has consistently been given to QCBS in the selection of consultant selection methods for government funded projects in Sri Lanka.

The dominance of QCBS reflects the consultant selection methods that places balanced importance on both technical quality and cost efficiency. From a public sector perspective this might particularly be important as government funded projects are required to achieve value for money while ensuring adequate quality. QCBS allows evaluators to systematically assess consultant's technical proposal alongside financial considerations, thereby reducing the risk of selecting consultants based solely on the lowest price, which could compromise project outcomes (World Bank, 2011). This preference aligns with Sri Lankan public procurement guideline which emphasise transparency, accountability and fairness in consultant selection. The relatively high ranking of LCS suggests continued cost sensitivity (Fath et al., 2024), while the lower preference for SSS might reflect efforts to maintain transparency and competitive fairness.

4.4 CONSULTANT SELECTION METHOD USED IN INSTITUTIONALLY FUNDED PROJECTS IN SRI LANKA

Institutionally funded projects in Sri Lanka refer to those financed through international institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. These projects operate under specific procurement frameworks that may impose requirements distinct from national NPA guidelines, particularly with respect to technical quality and transparency in consultant selection. As noted in the Introduction, examining this category separately provides important comparative insights into how funding source influences consultant selection practice. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Ranking of consultant selection method for institutionally funded projects

Consultant selection method		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Quality and Cost-Based Selection	QCBS	52	4.35	0.883	1
Quality-Based Selection	QBS	52	3.60	0.975	2
Consultant's Qualifications Selection	CQS	52	3.25	1.027	3
Least-Cost Selection	LCS	52	2.46	1.038	4
Fixed-Budget Selection	FBS	52	2.42	0.997	5
Single-Source Selection	SSS	52	1.94	0.938	6

Note: Scale (1 = Not widely used, 2 = Rarely used, 3 = Moderately used, 4 = Frequently used, 5 = Most widely used)

As shown in Table 3, based on the mean ranking results, QCBS achieved the highest mean value 4.35, ranking it as the most used consultant selection method in institutionally funded projects. This is followed by QBS and CQS. Other methods, such as FBS and SSS were reported to be used less frequently. SSS recorded the lowest mean value of 1.94, indicating it is the least preferred method. This indicates that preference has consistently been given to QCBS in the selection of consultant selection methods for institutionally funded projects.

According to the findings both government and institutional funded projects widely use QCBS. The institutionally funded projects have a stronger preference toward quality based procurement methods (Poudel, 2025). The higher ranking of QBS might highlight the donor agencies emphasis on technical competence and long term project performance and reduced reliance on LCS might suggests greater flexibility in budgeting and focus on expected project outcome.

4.5 CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Of the 52 valid respondents, 48 provided qualitative responses relating to challenges in consultant selection practice, and 46 provided suggested improvements. These open-ended responses were analysed using content analysis, involving systematic coding of recurring words and phrases and their grouping into dominant themes. The frequency of each theme was recorded based on the number of respondents who raised it. Table 4 presents the key challenges and corresponding improvements identified from this analysis.

Table 4: Key challenges and suggested improvements

Frequency (n)	Identified challenges	Frequency (n)	Suggest improvement
38	Excessive emphasis on lowest cost over quality	41	Increase technical weighting and prioritise quality based selection
35	Lack of structured decision-making framework	39	Introduce formal and structured decision-making models
31	Absence of standardised evaluation criteria	34	Develop uniform and transparent evaluation criteria
28	Subjectivity and political influence in selection	32	Strengthen transparency, fairness and regulatory oversight
22	Weak monitoring of evaluation process	26	Implement performance-based consultant evaluation system

Note: n = number of respondents (out of 48 for challenges and 46 for improvements) who raised each challenge and improvement

As shown in Table 4, respondents consistently highlighted the absence of systematic, transparent and quality orientated methods as a major challenge in public sector consultant selection. The most frequently cited challenge was the excessive emphasis on lowest cost over quality (n=38), which aligns with the quantitative finding that QCBS is a cost inclusive method that dominates both funding categories. The second most common challenge was the lack of structured decision-making frameworks (n=35), consistent with the finding that 69% of respondents rely on experience-based approaches rather than formal models. These findings suggest that the consistent reliance on QCBS may partly stem from the absence of decision support frameworks that would help procuring entities identify the most project appropriate method. The misapplication of QCBS to projects where QBS or CQS may be more appropriate could lead to the selection of unsuitable consultants, quality deficiencies, and time delays. Respondents strongly recommended the introduction of formal decision support models (n=39), standardised evaluation criteria (n=34), and performance-based monitoring systems (n=26) as priority

improvements to enhance the effectiveness, transparency, and project specific suitability of consultant selection methods.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Effective consultant selection methods are critical in public construction projects, as they determine how technical quality, cost, and risk considerations are systematically evaluated and balanced. In the public sector, where accountability, transparency and value for money are essential, the use of appropriate and well-structured consultant selection methods directly influences the fairness, consistency, and effectiveness of procurement decisions. This study examined the status quo of consultant selection methods in Sri Lankan public construction projects, with a focus on decision-making approaches, dominant methods and areas requiring improvement. Using a questionnaire survey administered to 52 construction professionals, and applying mean ranking and content analysis techniques, the study provides empirical insights into how consultant selection methods are currently applied in practice. The findings reveal that decision-making approaches adopted for the selection of consultant selection methods are largely experienced-based and guideline-driven, with limited use of structured analytical frameworks. This indicates a gap between the intended objectives of procurement guidelines and their practical implementation in selecting the most suitable consultant selection method for specific project characteristics. Mean ranking analysis highlights that QCBS is the dominant consultant selection method in both government-funded and institutionally funded projects, though institutionally funded projects demonstrate a relatively strong preference for quality-based approaches (QBS ranking second). The overall consistent reliance on QCBS suggests limited systematic evaluation when determining the most appropriate consultant selection method, which may increase the risk of selecting an unsuitable method, potentially leading to quality deficiencies, time delays and reduced project performance. Key challenges identified include the absence of structured decision-making frameworks, lack of standardised evaluation criteria, excessive cost consideration, and susceptibility to subjectivity and political influence. Respondents strongly recommended the introduction of formal decision-support models, standardized evaluation criteria, and performance-based monitoring systems to enhance objectivity, consistency and project-specific suitability. Overall, the findings underscore the need to strengthen consultant selection methods in Sri Lankan public construction projects by moving beyond procedural compliance towards more systematic and criteria-based decision-making approaches.

The study has certain limitations including the relatively low representation of architects in the sample and the absence of a formal sampling frame. Future research may address these limitations by extending the sample to ensure broader professional representation and by developing and validating MCDM based decision making models tailored to Sri Lanka's public construction context. Comparative studies examining the effectiveness of different consultant selection methods across project types and funding categories would further enrich the evidence base for procurement reform in Sri Lanka.

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