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Government Project Initiation and its Influencing Factors - An Empirical Research

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Abstract

Infrastructure is the underlying material structure of an economy to boost the socio-economic activity in general. It is the fundamental requirement for the socio-economic development of a society. The welfare of the society can be augmented only through the presence of adequate infrastructure facilities. These include the transport, communication, water supply, irrigation, warehousing and other basic systems. Roads, Bridges, Dams, Canals, Pipelines, Railways, Airports and Harbours are the integral part of infrastructure. It is the responsibility of the Government to create and maintain the infrastructure facilities for promoting the growth of the economy. Government is usually evaluated through the success of the projects since they are formulated and implemented. The responsible governments try to find out the urgent and burning needs of the people in various walks of life. They have to give much attention in the sectors of education, healthcare, social security, law and order and other fields of socio-economic development. This study is mainly focused to identify and analyse the factors that influence the Government Project initiation. The sample unit is the Users of Government Projects and the sample size is 420.

Keywords: Government Project, Project Management, Infrastructure facilities, Project Initiation, Users of Projects

Introduction

Projects are strategic and long term action plan envisaged as a growth engine of organisations. But the purpose of Projects is to undertake the challenges posed by the changes of the environment inside as well as outside of the organisation. This is cent per cent true in the case of successful business establishments. Organisations are annually undertaken projects for expansion and modernisation in order to achieve their organisational objectives. Their moto is to give a new impetus of life to the organisation whether it is business or non-business. The growth of the organisation could be ensured only through undertaking projects of diversification in approach, process and products. Thus Projects are considered as indicators of future progress as well as value creation. The same is applicable in the case of Public

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organisations and ventures. The relevance of the Government organisation could be felt only through undertaking socially beneficial projects. The duty of forms of Governments, now a days, either at the Federal or State level or at the Local level is to promote the socio-economic development of the community and thus rise the standard of living. Projects are generally considered as tasks which are undertaken with the commitment of resources to achieve specific outcome. It is a non-routine and non-repetitive endeavour with a specific time span and approved budget. The resources required for completing a project are money, material, men and time. The framework of the project is made with a view to control the cost and enhances the utility of output. The quality of both the process and outcome of the project should be considered with utmost importance at the time of its formulation. So much care is needed at the time of project planning.

1. Statement of the Problem

It is the duty of the Government to provide adequate infrastructure facilities for the overall development of the economy. The infrastructure development is undertaken in the form of creation of new assets as well as modernisation of the existing ones. In both cases, it is undertaken through various Government agencies and projects. The performance of the Governments is usually evaluated through the success of the projects since they are formulated and implemented. The responsible governments try to find out the urgent and burning needs of the people in various walks of life. They have to give much attention in the sectors of education, healthcare, social security, law and order and other fields of socio-economic development. Usually the major thrust given by the Government agencies is to develop the infrastructure. Transportation, Communication, Warehousing, Banking, Insurance, Marketing and Trade are the major infrastructure sectors. The study is focused to examine the effectiveness of the Kerala Government infrastructure projects.

The effectiveness of the projects is assessed through the project management practices followed by these agencies. The opinion of the users and general public on the effectiveness of these projects is of much importance. The officials are also bound to do self appraisal to establish the effectiveness of the Government projects. Another stakeholder bound to assess the effectiveness of Project Management Process is the Government Contractors who are the executors of the Projects. In this context, it is imperative to conduct a scientific study to assess the effectiveness of the Government project management practices through the perceptions of these stakeholders on Project Initiation, Project Management Process and Effectiveness of Project Outcome.

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2. Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the present study.

 To identify various Factors Influencing Project Management Initiation in the Government Projects.

2. To assess the Perception of Users on the Factors Influencing Project Management Initiation in the Government Projects.

3. Research Methodology

The present research work is descriptive cum analytical in nature. Both secondary and primary data are used for the study. Secondary data are gathered from various Journals, Text Books, Articles, Dissertations, Government record and other reports and documents using both online and offline sources. Primary data are collected through conducting a field survey among the stakeholders of Government projects by using a structured interview schedule. Population of the study is general public of the state and Government Officials of the Department Concerned. The unit of study includes the users of Government Infrastructure Projects and Officials of the Government Department concerned. Sample size is determined by using a formula proposed by Yamene (1967) where the study has taken 450 User respondents of Government projects. Simple random sampling technique is exercised for gathering data by using a well structured questionnaire.

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Factors Influencing the Government Project Initiation

The first main variable considered for the analysis is 'Factors Influencing initiation of Government Projects'. These are the factors responsible for giving birth to Government Projects. The sub-variables identified for the study are Project Benefits, Development Benefits, Openness of Projects, Mitigation of Corruption and Intervention of Pressure Groups. The Items of influence under each sub-variable have been Identified to provide more substance and meaning to the analysis which are given below.

a) Project Benefits

- i. Economic benefits to the society
- ii. Social development benefits
- iii. Local development benefits
- iv. Benefits on the timely completion of the projects
- v. Benefits on the society's confidence building

b) Development Benefits

i. Creating of employment opportunities

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- ii. Coming up of business units and new institutions
- iii. Additional income opportunities to the people
- iv. Providing new products and services
- v. Improvement in the standard of living

c) Openness of Projects

- i. Transparency in the project implementation
- ii. Public scrutiny of the process and functioning of the project
- iii. Project completion with optimum cost
- iv. Ensuring quality of implementation and operation
- v. Public disclosure of accounts and information

d) Mitigation of Corruption

- i. Openness in utilisation of fund
- ii. Conformity with the requirement of materials, manpower and resources
- iii. Blocking of bureaucratic involvement leading corruption
- iv. Blocking the involvement of political corruption
- v. Operationality of the projects ensuring the social objectives

e) Intervention of Pressure Groups

- i. Demand from the local public
- ii. Political involvement pressures
- iii. Awareness level of the general public on project
- iv. Democratic spirit of the public and NGOs
- v. Approach of the Government on project

The above main variable 'Factors Influencing Project Initiation' is analysed with the perceptions of the stakeholders of Users and Officials who are directly related to the issue. The Government Contractors are the stakeholder who have no direct involvement in the initiation of Government Projects due to the fact that they come in the picture only in the implementation or execution stage of the Project.

4.2 Assessment of the Perception of Users on Factors Influencing Project Initiation

There are five sub-variables which constitute the Factors Influencing Project Initiation on the Government Projects. They are Project Benefits, Development Benefits, Openness of Projects, Mitigation of Corruption and Interventions of Pressure Groups. These sub-variables are analysed using the tools of descriptive statistics and the result is given below.

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a. Project Benefits

Project benefits are common benefits of the society perceived by the local people. They are economic benefits, social development benefits, locality development, benefits on timely completion and benefits on the social confidence building. The perceptions on these items gathered from the Users of Government Projects have been analysed and the result is shown in table 1.

Table 1 Project Benefits

| Sl. No | Items | Z Strongly | % | Z Agree | % | Z Neutral | % | Z Disagree | % | Z Strongly Dis | % Agree | Z Total | % | Mean | SD |
|-----------|--|------------|------|---------|------|-----------|------|------------|------|----------------|---------|---------|-----|------|-------|
| 1 | Economic benefits to the society | 159 | 35.3 | 175 | 38.9 | 45 | 10.0 | 25 | 5.6 | 46 | 10.2 | 450 | 100 | 3.84 | 1.254 |
| 2 | Social development benefits | 162 | 36.0 | 177 | 39.3 | 47 | 10.4 | 32 | 7.1 | 32 | 7.1 | 450 | 100 | 3.90 | 1.176 |
| 3 | Local development benefits | 160 | 35.6 | 156 | 34.7 | 73 | 16.2 | 28 | 6.2 | 33 | 7.3 | 450 | 100 | 3.85 | 1.186 |
| 4 | Benefits on the timely completion of the projects | 142 | 31.6 | 162 | 36.0 | 58 | 12.9 | 54 | 12.0 | 34 | 7.6 | 450 | 100 | 3.72 | 1.237 |
| 5 | Benefits on the society's confidence building | 165 | 36.7 | 144 | 32.0 | 84 | 18.7 | 26 | 5.8 | 31 | 6.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.86 | 1.178 |
| | Project Benefit | ts | | | | | | | | | | | | 3.83 | .9250 |

Source: Primary Data

The result reveals that all the five items mentioned above have got mean value in between 3.90 to social development benefits and 3.72 to Timely completion of the project. About 75 per cent of the respondent Users have rated the 'Project Benefits' favoured with score of strongly agree or agree. Again the overall mean score ratings of the sub-variables Project Benefits have been obtained with the mean score of 3.83 which is considered as above average level rating of the Project Benefits by the Users. Thus it can be come to a conclusion that the Government project benefits are rated by the Users at an above average level.

b. Development Benefits

Development benefits are perceived mostly as the economic benefits derived by the users and local community from the Government Projects. They are creating employment opportunities,

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establishing new business units and institutions, enhancement of income of the people, providing new product and services and improvement in the standard of living of the community. The perception of the Users of the Government Projects gathered from the sample respondents have been analysed on the items mentioned above and their result is shown in table 2

Table 2: Development Benefits

| Sl. No | Items | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | Strongly Dis Agree |) | Total | | Mean | SD |
|-----------|--|----------------|-------|-------|------|---------|------|----------|-----|-----------------------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1 | Creating of employment opportunities | 157 | 34.9 | 147 | 32.7 | 83 | 18.4 | 23 | 5.1 | 40 | 8.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.90 | 2.664 |
| 2 | Coming up of business units and new institutions | 156 | 34.7 | 145 | 32.2 | 81 | 18.0 | 36 | 8.0 | 32 | 7.1 | 450 | 100 | 3.79 | 1.203 |
| 3 | Additional income opportunities to the people | 156 | 34.7 | 141 | 31.3 | 81 | 18.0 | 25 | 5.6 | 47 | 10.4 | 450 | 100 | 3.74 | 1.275 |
| 4 | Providing new products and services | 151 | 33.6 | 143 | 31.8 | 82 | 18.2 | 26 | 5.8 | 48 | 10.7 | 450 | 100 | 3.72 | 1.278 |
| 5 | Improvement in the standard of living | 145 | 32.2 | 145 | 32.2 | 81 | 18.0 | 38 | 8.4 | 41 | 9.1 | 450 | 100 | 3.70 | 1.254 |
| | Developme | nt Ben | efits | | | | | | | | | | | 3.77 | 1.169 |

Source: Primary Data

About 65 per cent of the respondents have positively responded to all the items in the form of strong agreement or agreement. As far as the ratings obtained on the items 'creation of employment opportunities' with a highest mean score of 3.90 whereas 'improvement in the standard of living' with a mean value of 3.70 which are far above the threshold statistical mean of 3. The overall mean score rating for the sub-variable Development Benefits is 3.77. Thus it can be concluded that the perception of Users on Development benefits of Government Projects are at an above average level.

c. Virtues of Openness

The third sub-variable put for analysis is the Virtues of Openness. It means that the Government Projects should be exposed to the social audit from the inception stage to its commission. The items used to explain the virtues of openness are Transparency, Public Scrutiny, Project

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Completion with Optimum Cost, Quality of Execution of Work and Public Disclosure of Accounts and Information.

Table 3: Virtues of Openness

| Sl. No | Items | | | Agree | Laz | Neutral | 0/ | Disagree | | | Agree | Total | 0/ | Mean | SD |
|-----------|---|------|------|-------|------|---------|------|----------|-----|----|-------|-------|-----|------|-------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1 | Transparency in the project implementation | 126 | 28.0 | 145 | 32.2 | 125 | 27.8 | 33 | 7.3 | 21 | 4.7 | 450 | 100 | 3.15 | .975 |
| 2 | Public scrutiny of the process and functioning of the project | 138 | 30.7 | 127 | 28.2 | 128 | 28.4 | 31 | 6.9 | 26 | 5.8 | 450 | 100 | 3.15 | .946 |
| 3 | Project completion with optimum cost | 107 | 23.8 | 184 | 40.9 | 107 | 23.8 | 39 | 8.7 | 13 | 2.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.13 | .936 |
| 4 | Ensuring quality of implementation and operation | 162 | 36.0 | 129 | 28.7 | 107 | 23.8 | 39 | 8.7 | 13 | 2.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.12 | .936 |
| 5 | Public disclosure of accounts and information | 134 | 29.8 | 158 | 35.1 | 106 | 23.6 | 39 | 8.7 | 13 | 2.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.12 | .901 |
| | Virtues of Open | ness | | | | | | | | | | | | 3.14 | .9140 |

Source: Primary Data

Around 50 per cent of the respondent Users have agreed or strongly agreed in favour of the items as well as the mean score rating. As regards the mean score ratings the items 'transparency' and 'public scrutiny' have got mean value of 3.15 each whereas the least score of 3.12 have been shared by the item 'quality of implementation' and 'public disclosure of information'. The overall mean score of the sub-variable Virtues of Openness of Government Projects is 3.14 which is above the threshold mean value of 3. It can be concluded that the perception of Users on Virtues of Openness related to Government Projects in Kerala is at a moderate level.

d. Mitigation of Corruption

The next sub-variable of Factors influencing Project Initiation is Mitigation of Corruption in Government Projects. Like the above sub-variable mentioned, five items are identified for analysing the factor mitigation of corruption. Mitigation of corruption means the steps are taken

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to reduce the menace of corruption at its minimum while implementing the project. The items identified for gathering the perception of stakeholders in this respect are openness in utilisation of fund, conformity with the requirement, blocking of bureaucratic involvement, blocking of undue political involvement and ensuring operationalities with declared objectives. The result of the analysis is shown in table 4

Table 4 Mitigation of corruption

| Sl. No | Items | Strongly A oree | | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | | Agree | Total | | Mean | SD |
|-----------|--|--------------------|------|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|----|-------|-------|-----|------|-------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1 | Openness in utilisation of fund | 128 | 28.4 | 139 | 30.9 | 124 | 27.6 | 46 | 10.2 | 13 | 2.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.04 | .895 |
| 2 | Conformity with the requirement of materials, manpower and resources | 135 | 30.0 | 139 | 30.9 | 112 | 24.9 | 48 | 10.7 | 16 | 3.6 | 450 | 100 | 3.12 | .865 |
| 3 | Blocking of bureaucratic involvement leading corruption | 126 | 28.0 | 141 | 31.3 | 124 | 27.6 | 46 | 10.2 | 13 | 2.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.12 | .866 |
| 4 | Blocking the involvement of political corruption | 134 | 29.8 | 141 | 31.3 | 119 | 26.4 | 43 | 9.6 | 13 | 2.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.06 | .878 |
| 5 | Operationality of the projects ensuring the social objectives | 128 | 28.4 | 141 | 31.3 | 118 | 26.2 | 43 | 9.6 | 20 | 4.4 | 450 | 100 | 3.14 | 1.005 |
| | Mitigation of Corrup | tion | | | | | | | | | | | | 3.10 | .8708 |

Source: Primary Data

The result reveals that about 60 per cent of the User stakeholders have agreed or strongly agreed positively with the statement related to the items. The highest mean score of 3.14 is assigned to the item 'ensuring operationalities with the social objectives' and the least mean score of 3.04 has been assigned to the item 'openness in the utilisation of fund'. The overall mean score obtained for the sub-variable Mitigation of Corruption is 3.10 which is just above the threshold mean value of 3. Thus it can be seen that the perception of Users of the sub-variable steps for mitigation of corruption on Government projects is at an average level.

e. Intervention of Pressure Groups

Intervention of Pressure Groups is the public action taken by the people to highlight their demand for projects to the attention of the Government authority. It is the most important method for materialising the demand of the local development projects. The intervention of pressure group is defined for the purpose of data gathering in the five items. They are demand

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from the local public, political pressures, awareness level of the general public, democratic spirit of public and NGOs and the approach of the Government. The result of the analysis is shown in the table 5.

Table 5: Intervention of Pressure groups

| Sl. No | Items | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | • | Agree | Total | | Mean | SD |
|-----------|--|----------------|------|-------|------|---------|------|----------|-----|----|-------|-------|-----|------|-------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | | |
| 1 | Demand from the local public | 147 | 32.7 | 145 | 32.2 | 100 | 22.2 | 38 | 8.4 | 20 | 4.4 | 450 | 100 | 3.97 | 1.079 |
| 2 | Political involvement pressures | 142 | 31.6 | 141 | 31.3 | 108 | 24.0 | 41 | 9.1 | 18 | 4.0 | 450 | 100 | 4.00 | 1.095 |
| 3 | Awareness level of the general public on project | 152 | 33.8 | 137 | 30.4 | 103 | 22.9 | 40 | 8.9 | 18 | 4.0 | 450 | 100 | 4.03 | 1.024 |
| 4 | Democratic spirit of the public and NGOs | 166 | 36.9 | 143 | 31.8 | 81 | 18.0 | 38 | 8.4 | 22 | 4.9 | 450 | 100 | 3.89 | 1.006 |
| 5 | Approach of the Government on project | 118 | 26.2 | 187 | 41.6 | 96 | 21.3 | 38 | 8.4 | 11 | 2.4 | 450 | 100 | 3.74 | .926 |
| | Intervention of Pressure Groups | 1 | · | · | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 3.93 | .9663 |

Source: Primary Data

The result reveals that about 65 per cent of the respondent Users of Government Projects have strongly agreed or agreed positively on sharing their perception related to all items of the subvariable 'intervention of pressure groups'. Again the result of the descriptive statistical analysis shows that the highest mean score of 4.03 has been assigned to the 'Awareness level of General Public' and the least mean score of 3.74 has been obtained by the item 'Approach of Government on Projects'. The overall mean score for the sub-variable is 3.93 which is far above the statistical mean of 3. It is seen that the perception of Users on the intervention of pressure groups on Government Projects for getting it initiated is at an above average level.

It is necessary to examine the consolidated score of the perception of the Users on the main variable 'Factors Influencing Project Initiation' on Government Projects. The result of the analysis is depicted in table 6

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Table 6: Mean Score Analysis of Factors influencing Project Initiation based on the perception of Users

| Sl.No. | Sub-variable | Mean Score | SD |
|--------|--------------------------|------------|-------|
| 1 | Project Benefits | 3.83 | .9250 |
| 2 | Development Benefits | 3.77 | 1.169 |
| 3 | Virtues of Openness | 3.14 | .9140 |
| 4 | Mitigation of Corruption | 3.10 | .8708 |
| 5 | Intervention of Pressure | 3.93 | .9663 |
| | Groups | | |
| | Total | 3.55 | 0.969 |

Source: Primary Data

The consolidated result of the sub-variables relating to the main variable Factors Influencing Project Initiation is reiterated in table 6.19. The table shows that the sub-variable 'Intervention of Pressure Groups' has got the highest mean score with 3.93 whereas the sub-variable Mitigation of Corruption with the least mean score of 3.10. The sub-variable Project Benefits and Development Benefits are rated with 3.83 and 3.77 respectively while the sub-variable Virtues of Openness has got the mean score at just an average level of 3.14. The overall mean score for the main variable Factors Influencing Project Initiation is 3.55 which is fairly above the threshold mean value of 3. Thus it can be seen that the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation are relevant and at an above average level.

Testing of hypothesis

H0: The perception of Users on the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects in Kerala is significantly low

Ha: The perception of Users on the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects in Kerala is significantly not low.

Table 7: One Sample t test for analysing the Perception of Users on the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects.

| Variable | Mean Value | SD | t Value | P Value |
|-----------------|------------|--------|---------|---------|
| Factors | 3.55 | 0.9690 | 17.28 | 0.000* |
| influencing the | | | | |
| Project | | | | |
| Initiation | | | | |

^{*}Significant at 1% level

Table 7 shows the One Sample t test for analysing perception of Users on the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects. It is seen from the table that the mean value obtained is 3. 55 which is above the threshold mean value of 3 which states that the perception of User Respondents regarding the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects is at an average level. Since the P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1 per cent level of significance. Hence the Null Hypothesis H0 1 that

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"The perception of Users on the Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects in Kerala is significantly low" stands rejected. Therefore it can be concluded that the perception of Factors Influencing the Project Initiation of Government Projects are relevant and at a moderate level.

5. Findings

- 1. The perception of Project Benefits rated by the stakeholders with a mean value of 3.83. The study reveals that the perception of the rating on Project Benefits by the User stakeholder at a moderate level.
- 2. The perception of the Project Users on the sub-variable Development Benefits is rated with a mean score of 3.77. It can be concluded that the perception of Project Users on Development Benefits on the Government Projects are at a moderate level.
- 3. The third sub-variable analysed under the main variable Factors Influencing Project Initiation is virtues of Openness. It is seen that the perception of User stakeholders have rated this sub-variable with a mean score of 3.14. Therefore it could be inferred that the perception of Users on Virtues of Openness related to the Government Projects in Kerala is just at the average level.
- 4. The perception on the sub-variable Mitigation of corruption is rated by the Users with a mean value of 3.10. Thus the study reveals that the perception of User stakeholders on the Mitigation of Corruption related to the government Projects is just at the average level.
- 5. The result of the study reveals that the perception on the sub-variable rated by the Users of Government Projects with mean score of 3.93. The finding on the variable Intervention of Pressure Groups for the Initiation of Government Projects is perceived by the Users at an above average level.
- 6. It is again found that among the five sub-variables constituting Factors Influencing Project Initiation by the Users has given the highest ratings to the sub-variable intervention of pressure group and the least rating assigned to the sub-variable mitigation of corruption.

6. Suggestions

1. The ultimate objective of establishment of Government Project is to provide maximum benefits to the public for their socio-economic progress. Thus it seems that a mechanism should be evolved to balance the mutual rights and interests among the three stakeholders for the effective accomplishment of Project objectives. Thus it is

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suggested that a Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) for Government Project should be formulated to intervene and supervise in the process of implementation with the representatives of User Public, Government Officials and Government Contractors of the Project concerned.

- 2. The result of the study reveals that the User Public of the Government Projects have assigned least rating score to the factor of Mitigation of Corruption as a part of the Project Initiation Process. It could be inferred that corruptions still exist in a bigger way in the implementation of Government Projects. This is a social menace for eroding the quality of public works and projects. Thus it is suggested that the current legal mechanism and administrative procedures for eliminating the corruptive practices should be reviewed and adequate amendment should be made thereto for strengthening them.
- 3. The study also reveals that the virtues of openness lack in the Government Projects. It is suggested that the procedures and details of cost and quality of material and other elements and schedule of time should be clearly exhibited in the project site before the commencement of the construction activity related to the project. It will provide more accept and openness to the general public to imbibe the pertinent factors related to the Project in the process of implementation.

7. Conclusion

The performance of the Governments is usually evaluated through the success of the projects who are formulated and implemented. The responsible governments try to find out the urgent and burning needs of the people in various walks of life. They have to give much attention in the sectors of education, healthcare, social security, law and order and other fields of socioeconomic development. Usually the major thrust given by the Government agencies is to develop the infrastructure requirements through implementation of various projects. Transportation, Communication, Warehousing, Banking, Insurance, Marketing and Trade could be prospered only through proper development of infrastructure facilities. The business and industry which are the growth engines of the economy, would be advanced only with the adequate provision of infrastructure facilities. It is the moral and economic obligation of the present day Governments to develop infrastructure facilities for the overall development of the economy. This study identified the major factors that influence the Government Project initiation. Also analysed the perceptions of users have been taken for assessing the variables with the fact that they have direct involvement and influence in the process of initiation of the Project. These factor or sub-variables are Project Benefits, Development Benefits, Virtues of

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Openness, Mitigation of Corruption and Intervention of pressure groups. These factors are moderately influencing the Government Project initiation as per the user perception.

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