

FACTORS AFFECTING THE EMERGENCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG NOMADIC CATTLE FARMERS IN MANNAR DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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This study investigated the factors influencing entrepreneurial intention among nomadic cattle farmers in *Mannar* district, Sri Lanka. By employing an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that behavioral intention is influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, the study included demographic factors, external environmental influences, and psychological well-being to provide a comprehensive analysis. A research problem highlighting the challenges faced by this community was included to clarify the aim of the study. Using a stratified random sampling method, survey data were collected from 162 nomadic cattle farmers. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed using SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 26.0 to validate the proposed model, yielding acceptable model fit indices ($CMIN/DF=1.885$, $RMSEA=0.074$, $CFI=0.918$), which support the robustness of the model. Hypothesis testing revealed that external environmental factors and demographic factors significantly contributed to entrepreneurial intention ($p=0.004$), while psychological well-being emerged as a critical mediating influence ($p=0.004$), emphasizing the role of resilience in shaping entrepreneurial intention. The findings emphasized that TPB constructs, such as attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, do not significantly influence entrepreneurial intention among nomadic cattle farmers in the *Mannar* district. Instead, entrepreneurial intention is largely shaped by external environmental factors, demographic characteristics, and psychological well-being. By expanding the TPB framework, this research advances the academic understanding of rural entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the study offers actionable insights for policymakers aiming to foster economic resilience and entrepreneurial capacity among nomadic cattle farmers in conflict-affected regions. Although the study's geographic focus on *Mannar* district presents limitations for broad generalizations, it provides critical evidence to support the development of strategies for entrepreneurial growth and resilience among these communities.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, Structural equation modeling, Theory of planned behavior