

An Investigation of Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Intention among Educated Women in Ilam City

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is recognized as a fundamental strategy for sustainable development and increasing societal competitiveness, requiring the maximum utilization of all human capacities. The role of women, as half of the human capital, is therefore of high importance in advancing entrepreneurial goals. With their significant potential for innovation and economic value creation, women have garnered the attention of policymakers and international organizations in recent decades. However, the entrepreneurial potential of educated, but not yet active, women—who can be considered the «hidden gold» of society—is often overlooked. Despite their high capabilities, these women frequently face invisible structural, social, and cultural barriers, such as the «glass ceiling,» that prevents the full realization of their potential. Consequently, creating a suitable environment to identify, empower, and facilitate the participation of these women in entrepreneurship is essential for achieving sustainable development.

To this end, this study examined 384 educated women over the age of 25 in Ilam using a survey method and a multi-stage cluster sampling technique. Data were collected via a questionnaire and analyzed with SPSS. The findings indicate that Ilam women's inclination toward entrepreneurship primarily stems from internal factors, such as personality traits and strong motivations. In contrast, business barriers—especially structural and economic issues (lack of capital, legal complexities, economic instability, and weak infrastructure) and external factors (an unfavorable economic climate and support for large businesses)—severely reduce this inclination. To foster women's entrepreneurship in Ilam, it is crucial to remove economic and structural barriers, facilitate access to financial resources, and provide skill-building and specialized empowerment, which will help local businesses and development flourish.

Keyword: Women's entrepreneurship, barriers to women's entrepreneurship, Ilam city, development of women's entrepreneurship, local development, sustainable development.

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