

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER IN THE ADOPTION OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A STUDY AMONG HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA STUDENTS IN COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

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Abstract: The adoption of digital platforms has become a critical driver of entrepreneurial success, in rapidly evolving digital landscape especially among younger generations. This study explores gender-specific dynamics in the adoption of digital platforms for entrepreneurship among Higher National Diploma (HND) students in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as the theoretical framework, the study examines the role of Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), Perceived Risk (PR), and Digital Literacy (DL) in influencing students' intentions to adopt digital platforms. A cross-sectional survey of 70 students selected via convenient sampling, comprising 42 males and 28 females, revealed significant correlations between key constructs and adoption intentions. While no statistically significant gender differences were observed in PU, PEOU, PR, or DL, males demonstrated a stronger overall intention to adopt digital platforms, reflecting higher confidence in their utility and ease of use. The study identifies digital literacy as a crucial enabler, with a strong positive correlation to adoption intentions ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$). Conversely, perceived risks such as concerns about data security and financial loss negatively influenced adoption intentions ($r = -0.40$, $p < 0.01$). These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address gender-specific concerns, particularly for female students who perceive higher risks. Further, the study findings aim to foster equitable digital engagement and entrepreneurial success, contributing to Sri Lanka's digital economy growth.

Keywords: Digital Platforms, Entrepreneurship, Higher National Diploma (HND) Students, Sri Lanka, Gender, Technology Adoption.