

Impact of Women Entrepreneurs on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Strategies for Economic Resilience: A Case Study of Welimada, Sri Lanka

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This study explores the experiences and perspectives of women entrepreneurs in Welimada, Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on the impact of economic crises on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and survival strategies. It delves into the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, their journey to entrepreneurship, and their recommendations for empowerment and resilience. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews with women entrepreneurs affiliated with the Small and Enterprise Development (SED) division in Welimada, the study unveils valuable insights. These insights emphasize the critical role of early exposure, education, and support programs in shaping women's entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, they shed light on the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs during economic crises and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. The study's recommendations encompass a spectrum of interventions, including crisis preparedness workshops, access to financial resources, collaborative networks, diversification, access to market information, and government support programs. Drawing from existing literature and best practices, these recommendations aim to empower women entrepreneurs, enhance their financial literacy, and fortify their businesses against economic uncertainties. Ultimately, this research underscores the pivotal role of women entrepreneurs in SME growth and economic resilience within Welimada region. It advocates for gender-inclusive entrepreneurship to drive economic development, improve income distribution, and advance gender equality. The study's findings and recommendations serve as a roadmap for stakeholders, policymakers, and support organizations to empower women entrepreneurs and foster economic growth in Welimada, Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Economic Crises, Resilience, SMEs, Women Entrepreneurs*

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