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NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE: EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA

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ABSTRACT

Amidst the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, a recent study has emerged, explaining how entrepreneurs are efficiently coping with the challenges it poses to economies around the world. In particular, online platforms and logistics-oriented enterprises have experienced tremendous growth on a global scale (Hasanat et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Liguori and Winkler (2020) emphasize that the influence of entrepreneurs will continue to grow, driven by their increased adaptability during crises. Their ability to respond quickly and adapt to evolving markets requires entrepreneurs to position themselves as innovators and risk-takers, distinguishing them from their non-entrepreneurial counterparts (Ratten, 2020). Remarkably, the impact of the pandemic on entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWD) remains an understudied, often overlooked aspect. As a result, EWD also struggles with adverse economic effects. This group faces huge, magnified setbacks compared to the average entrepreneur. Paradoxically, self-employment appears as a promising path for EWD, yet the current support system lacks inclusiveness, mentoring programs, specialized networks and tailored educational opportunities. Even government agencies and disability employment models commonly ignore the viability of self-employment for clients with disabilities. To address this gap, a research was conducted to find out in depth the issues among EWD and formulate a strategy by adapting a research framework from the translated data using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology. A thematic analysis will be employed, an inclusive framework will be suggested, serving to unravel the nuanced experiences and challenges faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities. Research results will be translated into pragmatic recommendations and actionable strategies by stakeholders, to foster efforts to advance these marginalized communities. Ultimately, this research seeks to foster an environment where EWD entrepreneurs can thrive, ultimately giving them the opportunities they deserve.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs), Covid-19 pandemic, SMEs, Business Strategy, Underprivileged Community*

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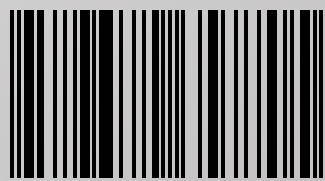
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