

## The Effect of Perception of Covid-19 and Satisfaction of Psychological Need on the Entrepreneurial Intention of Tourism Students with the Mediating Role of Proactiveness and Optimism

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of the perception of covid-19 on the entrepreneurial intention of tourism students with respect to the mediating role of the two factors of proactiveness and optimism. The statistical population of this study included all students and graduates of the master's degree in tourism management of Maziar Institute of Higher Education in Royan in two majors of planning and marketing. Due to the epidemic disease situation and lack of face-to-face access to the statistical population, an electronic questionnaire was used on social networks with convenience sampling. Thus, 200 questionnaires without defects were collected, and the structural equation method with PLS software was used to analyze the data. Findings indicated that perception of Covid-19 did not directly affect students' entrepreneurial intent, but the mediating role of optimism in this regard was confirmed. The results also showed that the satisfaction of students' psychological needs directly and significantly affects

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students' entrepreneurial intention indirectly through optimism. On the other hand, the results showed that optimism about the future situation is a key factor in strengthening the entrepreneurial intent of tourism students, which can reduce the negative effect of the perception of Covid-19.

### **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship is a determining factor for economic and social development. Covid-19 is a severe disease caused by a new type of coronavirus first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The virus spread rapidly around the world. In the field of entrepreneurship literature, the entrepreneurial intention is considered to be the essential prerequisite for creating a business. Many researchers point out that satisfying or not satisfying basic psychological needs depends on the environment in which one lives. Perceptions of the epidemic can affect people's entrepreneurial intent by mentally perceiving risk, limiting positive behaviors, and neutralizing the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Universities have also taken a step in this direction, and by adopting measures, they have tried to implement the indicators of an entrepreneurial university. They have tried to strengthen and lead students toward entrepreneurship by presenting various programs. Maziar Higher Education Institute, as the second center offering a master's degree in tourism in both planning and marketing in Mazandaran province, also pays serious attention to this issue and seeks to strengthen itself, students, and graduates towards entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, this study aims to identify the effects of the perception of COVID-19 and to satisfy the psychological needs of tourism students regarding their entrepreneurial intent with respect to the two mediating factors of proactiveness and optimism.

### **Materials and Methods**

The present research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive in terms of nature and method. The statistical population of this research includes all students and graduates of the master's degree program in tourism management of Maziar Institute of Higher Education in Royan in two directions of planning and marketing. Due to the researchers' access to the students of this university as the second center providing master's degree education in tourism management in Mazandaran province, this statistical population was considered for research. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of face-to-face access of researchers to the statistical community, the electronic questionnaire was used on WhatsApp social networks as a private message and Instagram (with at least 209 members). This way, the questionnaire link

was made available on social networks, and people were invited to answer the questionnaires. Thus, 200 questionnaires without defects were collected and used for analysis. The analysis method was based on structural equations with partial least squares using PLS software.

### **Discussion and Results**

In this research, eight hypotheses were developed. The hypotheses were tested on the data obtained from the master's degree students in the field of tourism management using related tests and the method of the structural equation using the partial least squares method. The results showed that the variables of psychological need satisfaction and optimism significantly affect students' entrepreneurial intention. However, according to the path coefficient and significant numbers obtained between the variable of perception of Covid-19 and proactiveness on entrepreneurial intention, perception of Covid-19 and proactiveness do not significantly affect students' entrepreneurial intention. The fifth hypothesis of the research is that the effect of perception of Covid-19 on entrepreneurial intention through the proactiveness mediator variable, therefore at the 95% confidence level, the effect of the proactiveness mediating variable on the relationship between perception of Covid-19 and entrepreneurial intention is not significant.

Regarding the sixth hypothesis of the research, i.e., the effect of perception of Covid-19 on entrepreneurial intention through the optimistic mediator variable, at the 95% confidence level, the mediating effect of optimism on the relationship between perception of Covid-19 and entrepreneurial intention is significant. Regarding the seventh research hypothesis, i.e., the effect of psychological need satisfaction on students' entrepreneurial intention through the proactiveness variable, at a 95% confidence level, the effect of the proactiveness mediator variable on the relationship between psychological need satisfaction and entrepreneurial intention is not significant. Regarding the eighth hypothesis of the research, i.e., the effect of psychological need satisfaction on students' entrepreneurial intention through the mediating variable of optimism, at a 95% confidence level, the mediating effect of optimism on the relationship between psychological need satisfaction and entrepreneurial intention is significant.

### **Conclusions**

Presently, students do not have a negative perception of Covid-19 and are somehow accustomed to it. According to the findings of the

descriptive section, they often seek to establish their businesses, especially in the field of online businesses. On the other hand, the mediating role of optimism has a positive effect on the entrepreneurial process and increases the chances of success of a new company. Slowly Thus, although the perception of Covid-19 does not affect students' entrepreneurial intentions, if accompanied by their optimism for the future, it can enhance students' entrepreneurial intent in an epidemic situation and reduce the negative effect of the perception of Covid-19. If students' psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and communication) are adequately met, it can act as an accelerator of entrepreneurial activity and ultimately increase their entrepreneurial intention. In other words, if these needs are met, people are more likely to be consistently involved in entrepreneurial behavior. In fact, having an optimistic outlook on the future is an essential factor, especially in conditions of uncertainty, and it helps a lot to become an entrepreneur in this environment. Given the state of the Covid-19 epidemic, where unemployment is high and job opportunities are limited, entrepreneurship is a solution that can generate higher returns than other alternative employment opportunities. In fact, in a crisis, optimistic entrepreneurs are more likely to believe in the success of their actions and, therefore, more likely to start a new business. As a result, almost two years after the epidemic, e-commerce has created new opportunities that students are aware of and looking to start their online businesses for entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Satisfaction of Psychological Need, Optimism, Proactiveness, Entrepreneurial Intention.