

## ABSTRACT

Despite the plethora of research, the question, ‘what determines the intention to start a business?’ is still a highly researched field in entrepreneurship literature. Studies have used several theoretical models to understand determinants of entrepreneurial intention. However, recent literature suggests incorporating personal input variables and contextual support factors to better explain entrepreneurial career intentions. The propensity to act determinant in Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM), conceptualised as locus of control has been less explored with respect to Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). In addition, studies have suggested to explore broader context aspects such as institutional support to explain career intentions. Thus, the current study aims to test an integrative model on entrepreneurial intention, incorporating locus of control as well as contextual support aspects such as university and institutional support for entrepreneurship. The study adopts a cross-sectional survey method. A sample of 357 Agriculture graduands was drawn from seven Sri Lankan state universities using stratified random sampling technique. Data collected through self-administered questionnaires were analysed using structural equation modelling.

Findings of the study showed that both contextual support aspects; perceived university support and perceived institutional support revealed a positive influence on entrepreneurial intention through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and also through outcome expectation. Further, the study revealed a partial mediation effect where internal locus of control displayed a positive influence on entrepreneurial intention through self-efficacy, while its’ direct effect was negative. However, external locus of control showed no direct or indirect effect on entrepreneurial intention. The study contributes to existing entrepreneurial intention literature by providing an alternative, comprehensive theoretical framework to understand entrepreneurial intention incorporating locus of control as well as external support aspects. Further, the study empirically validates the use of SCCT to explore entrepreneurial career intention. The study recommends that policymakers and other stakeholders in higher education sector should take necessary steps to enhance university and institutional support towards entrepreneurship as well as practice customised educational and capacity building programmes to foster entrepreneurship in university students. The study brings about a more comprehensive model to explain entrepreneurial career intention formation by incorporating locus of control and contextual support aspects along with self-efficacy and outcome expectations.