

# Research on the Influencing Factors of Rural Entrepreneurial Behavior of Graduates from Private Colleges in China

-- A Case Study of Henan Province

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**Abstract:** Against the backdrop of rural economic development, effectively cultivating high-quality innovative and entrepreneurial talents has become a focal point for Chinese higher education institutions. As an important part of higher education, private universities play an indispensable role in promoting rural and regional economic development. Taking Henan Province as an example, this paper studies the influencing factors of entrepreneurial behavior among graduates of private universities, aiming to reveal the key factors affecting graduates' entrepreneurial behavior and to propose corresponding policy recommendations. Through a literature review, the theoretical basis is analyzed, and research questions and models are proposed. The paper employs a questionnaire survey method, collecting relevant data from graduates of several private universities in Henan Province, and uses statistical analysis tools to process and analyze the data. The research results show that factors such as family background, entrepreneurial education, social resources, and policy support have influenced the entrepreneurial behavior of graduates from private universities to some extent. In addition, this paper also explores the moderating role of entrepreneurial awareness, entrepreneurial skills, and risk tolerance in entrepreneurial intentions. Based on the research findings, this paper proposes several suggestions: first, strengthen entrepreneurial education to enhance graduates' entrepreneurial skills; second, optimize policy support to provide a favorable external environment for graduates' entrepreneurship; third, make full use of social resources, strengthen school-enterprise cooperation, and provide graduates with more entrepreneurial opportunities and guidance. The research in this paper is not only significant for promoting entrepreneurship among graduates of private universities but also provides a scientific basis for local governments and universities to formulate relevant policies.

**Keywords:** Private higher education institutions, Graduates, Entrepreneurial behavior, Henan Province.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the proposal and implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, China's rural areas have undergone tremendous changes. The pace of economic development has significantly accelerated, the social structure has continued to be optimized, and the living environment of the people has significantly improved, showing unprecedented vitality and dynamism (Chen Xiwen, 2022). By 2022, the proportion of rural villages with access to hard roads reached 99.6%, the penetration rate of rural tap water reached 87%, and the proportion of full-time teachers in rural compulsory education schools with bachelor's degrees or above reached 76.01%. These achievements have significantly improved the living conditions of rural residents. College student entrepreneurship has been endowed with special missions and meanings. As a knowledge-intensive group, college students possess innovative thinking and professional skills. Their entrepreneurial activities can inject new vitality and momentum into rural development. Henan Province, as a major agricultural and populous province in China, has typical and representative rural development nationwide. According to statistics, the per capita disposable income of rural residents in Henan Province reached 17,533 yuan in 2022, with growth rates exceeding those of urban residents for 10 consecutive years. The urbanization process in rural areas continues to accelerate, infrastructure is constantly

improved, and the level of public services is gradually enhanced. A thorough study of the entrepreneurial behavior and influencing factors of graduates from private colleges in Henan Province, and exploring how to enhance their entrepreneurial attitudes, stimulate entrepreneurial passion, and strengthen their sense of identification with the value of entrepreneurship, is of significant practical and theoretical value for promoting the diversified and sustainable development of the rural economy in Henan Province and advancing the in-depth implementation of the rural revitalization strategy. This not only helps to address local issues such as a single industrial structure and brain drain but also provides suggestions for the rural revitalization of other regions.

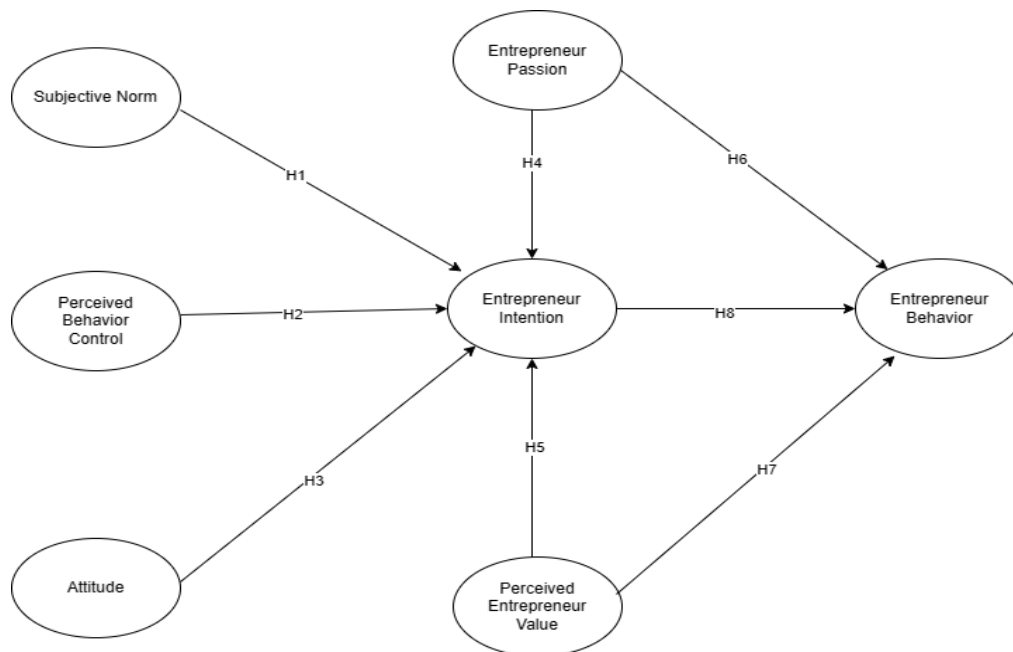
## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior, TPB

Social support and identity also play an important role in perceived value. As a central province, Henan province may have a certain gap in its economic development level and entrepreneurial environment compared with other developed regions. Therefore, the social attitude and atmosphere for entrepreneurship are particularly important. When graduates feel the support from their families, schools and society, their confidence and intention to start a business will increase accordingly (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). On the contrary, if the

society is generally skeptical or negative towards entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial behavior of graduates may be inhibited. Krueger et al. (2000) found through a survey of American college students that all three dimensions of TPB significantly affect entrepreneurial behavior, with perceived behavioral control having the most significant impact. This finding emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurs' sense of control over their own abilities and the external environment in entrepreneurial decision-making. Domestic scholars have also conducted extensive research on entrepreneurial behavior using TPB. Fan Wei and Wang Zhongming (2004) indicated that in the Chinese cultural context, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all positively influence entrepreneurial behavior, with perceived behavioral control having the greatest impact. The theory of perceived value emphasizes that individuals, when evaluating a behavior or product, will consider both the gains and losses comprehensively and form an overall value judgment of the behavior or product (Zeithaml, 1988). In the field of entrepreneurship, perceived value can be understood as the balance that entrepreneurs make between the potential benefits (such as personal growth, wealth accumulation, social recognition, etc.) and possible risks and costs (such as time investment, financial expenditure, psychological pressure, etc.) of entrepreneurial activities (Wood & McKay, 2006). Entrepreneurs typically possess a series of key characteristics and abilities, including keen market insight, decision-making ability, innovation ability, resource integration ability, leadership, and resilience (Krueger et al., 2000). Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's subjective assessment of their ability, resources, and opportunities to perform a certain behavior in a specific situation. This concept is involved in multiple theoretical frameworks, especially in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), where it holds a central position. Perceived behavioral control not only reflects an individual's confidence in performing a specific behavior but also involves the assessment of the external environment and internal resources (such as skills, knowledge, experience, etc.). Perceived value refers to an individual's overall value judgment of a behavior or product after considering both the gains (benefits) and losses (sacrifices) (Zeithaml, 1988). In the field of entrepreneurship, perceived value reflects the balance that entrepreneurs make between the potential benefits and risks of entrepreneurial activities (Wood & McKay, 2006). Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's inclination or willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the future (Bird, 1988). Entrepreneurial attitude refers to an individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of entrepreneurial activities (Ajzen, 1991). It is one of the important factors influencing entrepreneurial intention and behavior. Entrepreneurial attitude reflects graduates' views,

beliefs, and preferences towards entrepreneurial activities and is the internal driving force for forming entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors (Krueger et al.) Social support and identity also play an important role in perceived value. As a central province, Henan province may have a certain gap in its economic development level and entrepreneurial environment compared with other developed regions. Therefore, the social attitude and atmosphere for entrepreneurship are particularly important. When graduates feel the support from their families, schools and society, their confidence and intention to start a business will increase accordingly (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's inclination or willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the future (Bird, 1988). In the study of entrepreneurship among graduates of private colleges in Henan Province, entrepreneurial intention is an important indicator of whether graduates are willing and planning to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurial intention not only reflects graduates' cognition, emotions, and attitudes towards entrepreneurial activities but also indicates the entrepreneurial behaviors they might undertake in the future (Krueger et al., 2000). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that subjective norms refer to the perceived expectations or pressures from significant others (such as family members, friends, mentors, etc.) that an individual experiences when deciding whether to engage in a particular behavior. (overlap) These external factors can influence an individual's behavioral intentions. In the study of entrepreneurial behavior, research has already shown that support and expectations from friends and family can significantly enhance an individual's entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger et al., 2000). For instance, Zhao & Seibert (2006) found that support from family and friends plays a positive role in the formation of entrepreneurial intentions among college students. Therefore, we infer that subjective norms also have a significant positive impact on the formation of entrepreneurial intentions among graduates of private higher education institutions in Henan Province. Entrepreneurial passion is an important driver that motivates entrepreneurs to continuously engage in entrepreneurial activities. It not only stimulates the entrepreneurial desire of individuals but also strengthens the persistence and commitment to entrepreneurial behavior (Cardon et al., 2012). Strong entrepreneurial passion can enhance the entrepreneurial intentions of graduates, making them more interested and enthusiastic about entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, we hypothesize that entrepreneurial passion has a significant positive impact on the entrepreneurial intentions of graduates from private universities in Henan Province. On the contrary, if the society is generally skeptical or negative towards entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial behavior of graduates may be inhibited. (2000).



**Figure 2-1.** hypothesis study model Fig.

H1: Subjective norms have a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

H2: Perceived behavioral control has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

H3: Entrepreneurial attitude has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial behavior.

H4: Entrepreneurial passion has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention.

H5: Perceived entrepreneurial value has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.

H6: Entrepreneurial passion has a significant effect on entrepreneurial behavior.

H7: Perceived entrepreneurial value has a significant effect on entrepreneurial behavior.

H8: Entrepreneurial intention has a significant effect on entrepreneurial behavior.

## 2.2. Literature Research Method

This study, based on the background of rural revitalization, employs quantitative research methods to deeply explore the entrepreneurial behavior and its influencing factors of graduates from private colleges in Henan Province. By reviewing relevant literature, the theoretical basis and research achievements of rural revitalization, entrepreneurial behavior, and its influencing factors are sorted out. Computer statistical analysis methods are used to process and analyze the collected data, verify hypotheses, and derive research results.

## 2.3. Population and Sample Size

The subjects of this study are graduates who have started their own businesses, selected from several representative private higher education institutions in Henan Province. The selected universities include Zhengzhou University of Science and Technology, Huanghe Science and Technology College, Zhengzhou University of Industrial Technology, Henan Normal University Xinlian College, and Shangqiu Institute of Technology. The students from these five universities who meet the criteria (mainly aged between 20 to 24 years old, with the specific range adjustable according to the actual age of the graduates) are targeted as the study group. The total number of items in the study scale is 45, therefore,

the sample size is determined to be 450 as the optimal choice.

## 3. The Results

### 3.1. Basic Information

This study uses a Likert 5-point scale for all questions, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 the highest. The critical value is set at 3 points, and the higher the average score, the greater the degree of influence of entrepreneurial behavior. If the analysis results show that the average scores are all above the critical value of 3, it indicates that the overall perceived classroom environment is above average. The average scores of the five dimensions, from highest to lowest, are subjective norms ( $M=3.974$ ), perceived behavioral control ( $M=3.956$ ), entrepreneurial attitude ( $M=3.989$ ), entrepreneurial passion ( $M=3.958$ ), and entrepreneurial behavior ( $M=3.974$ ). See Table 3-1 for details.

**Table 3-1.** Overall Status of Rural Entrepreneurship Behavior among Graduates from Private Higher Education Institutions in China (N=410)

Dimension	Number of questions	M	SD	reorder
Subjective Norms	4	3.974	0.780	
Perceived Behavioral Control	5	3.956	0.821	2
Entrepreneurial attitude	8	3.989	0.822	1
Entrepreneurial passion	5	3.958	0.785	3
Entrepreneurial behavior	5	3.974	0.780	

**Table 3-2.** KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO Number of sampling suitability quantities		0.986
Bartlett sphericity test	Approximate chi square	10240.394
	free degree	990
	significance	0

The coefficient result of the KMO examination was 0.986. According to the significance of the spherical test, we can also

see that the significance of this test is infinitely close to 0. The null hypothesis was rejected, so the validity of the questionnaire was very good.

The result of this analysis is that the Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient is between 0.907 and 0.925, indicating that the questionnaire has a very high level of reliability.

**Table 3-3.** Questionnaire reliability analysis

Dimension	Question	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Subjective norms	A1 A2 A3 A4	0.925
Perceived behavioral control	B1 B2 B3 B4 B5	0.907
Entrepreneurship attitude	C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 C7 C8	0.918
Entrepreneurship passion	D1 D2 D3 D4 D5	0.921

**Table 3-4.** Pearson Correlation analysis

variable	Subjective norms	Perceived behavioral control	Entrepreneurship attitude	Entrepreneurship passion
Subjective norms	0.815***	0.847***	0.809***	0.893***
Perceived behavioral control	0.777***	0.829***	0.791***	0.867***
Entrepreneurship attitude	0.773***	0.828***	0.737***	0.847***
Entrepreneurship passion	0.844***	0.892***	0.837***	0.930***

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

As indicated by the data in Table 3-4, there is a positive correlation throughout, which reaches a significant level (r=0.930, p<0.001).

**Table 3-5.** Regression analysis

Variable	Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3	Pattern 4
Impact factors of entrepreneurship	0.012	0.014	0.010	0.010
	0.930***	0.929***		0.599***
cons			0.913***	0.355***
	0.867	0.866	0.835	0.882
N	0.860	0.858	0.827	0.017
R <sup>2</sup> -a	3235.449***	3191.293***	2498.842***	70.886***

\* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

This data represents the t-value for parameter estimates, and based on the magnitude of this value, we can assess whether the estimation of the parameter is significant. The results of the regression analysis indicate that significance is presented at the P<0.05 level, showing significant differences among various models. This implies that there is an impact relationship, and in a sense, the influencing factors have played a role in promoting the development of entrepreneurial behavior, with the effect being positive.

**Table 3-6.** hypothesis testing

Hypothetical content	Result
H1: Subjective norms have a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.	Accept
H2: Perceived behavioral control has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.	Accept
H3: Entrepreneurial attitude has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial behavior.	Accept
H4: Entrepreneurial passion has a significant effect on entrepreneurial intention.	Accept
H5: Perceived entrepreneurial value has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial intention.	Accept
H6: Entrepreneurial passion has a significant effect on entrepreneurial behavior.	Accept
H7: Perceived entrepreneurial value has a significant effect on entrepreneurial behavior.	Accept
H8: Entrepreneurial intention has a significant effect on entrepreneurial behavior.	Accept

## 4. Conclusion and Discussion

### 4.1. Discussion of Information Disclosure

#### 4.1.1. Significant correlation between dimensions and impact on the entrepreneurial process.

Through correlation analysis, it is evident that subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, entrepreneurial attitude, and entrepreneurial passion exhibit a significant positive correlation overall (r = 0.930, p < 0.001). This suggests that these factors influence and promote each other, creating a virtuous cycle. For instance, a positive entrepreneurial attitude may enhance graduates' confidence in their abilities (perceived behavioral control), leading them to actively seek social support (subjective norms), while also igniting greater entrepreneurial passion, further driving the development of entrepreneurial behavior. Regression analysis results further confirm the important role of these factors in the development of entrepreneurial behavior, as they collectively impact graduates' entrepreneurial decisions and the advancement of entrepreneurial projects.

#### 4.1.2. Optimizing the Entrepreneurial Environment and Resource Support System

Utilize various media platforms, such as official websites, social media, campus radio, etc., to widely promote entrepreneurship policies under the rural revitalization strategy, ensuring that graduates can access policy information in a timely and comprehensive manner. Establish dedicated online and offline policy consultation points to

provide one-on-one policy interpretation and guidance services for graduates. Arrange for professionals to answer graduates' questions about entrepreneurship policies, helping them understand the details of the policies and assess their implications. Strengthen the construction of the entrepreneurial mentor team by selecting and recruiting entrepreneurs, experts, and scholars with rich entrepreneurial experience and familiarity with rural industry development to serve as mentors. Establish a mentor training and assessment mechanism, regularly organize mentor training activities to enhance mentors' guidance capabilities and service levels. Enhance market regulation in rural areas and increase the proportion of practical teaching in the entrepreneurship education curriculum system, ensuring that practical teaching complements theoretical teaching. Establish a comprehensive practical teaching base, strengthen in-depth cooperation with enterprises, and provide students with a real entrepreneurial practice environment. Adopt a variety of teaching methods to stimulate students' interest and initiative in learning. Integrate internal resources of universities to form an entrepreneurial education ecosystem consisting of entrepreneurship course teaching, entrepreneurial practice activities, entrepreneurship competitions, and entrepreneurship associations. Encourage graduates to cultivate innovative thinking and dare to break free from traditional concepts and models. Universities can offer courses on innovative thinking training, guiding students to focus on rural market demands and development trends, and uncover new opportunities and models for rural entrepreneurship. Through team-building activities, group projects, etc., cultivate graduates' awareness and ability to collaborate in teams. Explore personalized entrepreneurship education models. With the continuous development of educational technology, future research can explore how to use big data, artificial intelligence, and other technologies to provide personalized entrepreneurship education for graduates. By analyzing students' learning styles, interests, professional backgrounds, entrepreneurial intentions, and other multi-dimensional data, tailor-made entrepreneurship education courses and training programs can be created for them.

Evaluate the long-term effects of entrepreneurship education and training. Currently, the assessment of the effects of entrepreneurship education and training focuses mainly on short-term knowledge acquisition, skill enhancement, and changes in entrepreneurial intentions.

Future research needs to further study its long-term effects. Long-term effects include the survival rate, growth speed, innovation capability, social impact, and career development trajectory of entrepreneurial enterprises. By establishing a long-term tracking and evaluation mechanism and collecting comprehensive data on graduates' entrepreneurship after graduation, the long-term impact of entrepreneurship education and training on graduates' rural entrepreneurial behavior can be comprehensively assessed. This not only helps to determine the actual value of different entrepreneurship education models and training programs but also provides empirical evidence for optimizing the entrepreneurship education system, making it better serve the training of entrepreneurial talents under the rural revitalization strategy.

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