

Research Article

A Study on Rural Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Strategies of College Students in the Context of Shared Prosperity

Lijuan Zhu* 

Youth League Committee, Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, Hangzhou, China

Abstract

Rural entrepreneurship serves as a concrete manifestation of college students' active engagement in youth-building actions. Vigorously fostering a group of ambitious, dedicated, adaptable, and sustainable rural talents is not only a crucial initiative for advancing "mass entrepreneurship and innovation" but also an effective pathway for promoting the growth and success of university students, enabling them to realize their life values. Additionally, it provides substantial support for the achievement of shared prosperity. Therefore, while meeting the developmental needs of college students, attracting young individuals to actively participate in rural practices and transitioning from being "attracted" to "settling down" is an essential strategy for alleviating employment pressures and addressing the weaknesses in rural development. This study analyzes the challenges and influencing factors in the rural entrepreneurial journey of college students, delving into the behavioral logic and implementation pathways that lead to their engagement. It also proposes corresponding strategies for enhancing the "coupling degree" between college students and rural development, providing recommendations for the latter part of the discourse on college students' rural entrepreneurship. Rural areas should enhance their service capabilities, collaboratively empower and consolidate resources, and strive to provide efficient and high-quality service support for college students engaged in rural innovation and entrepreneurship. A comprehensive support system for college student rural entrepreneurship, consisting of a tripartite collaboration among the government, universities, and rural communities, and encompassing educational guidance, policy support, financial assistance, and service guarantees, should be constructed. This multi-faceted approach will foster a positive atmosphere encouraging college students to actively participate in rural innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Keywords

Rural Entrepreneurship, Realistic Challenges, Influencing Factors, Countermeasure Suggestions

1. Introduction

In September 2014, the Summer Davos Forum first mentioned "mass innovation and entrepreneurship", and this has been a hot topic ever since. In 2015, a notice is issued on the implementation of the "Initiative for College Graduates to Start Businesses in Hometowns", specifying the annual targeted support for no fewer than 10,000 college graduates to

return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship. Guiding college graduates to venture into rural areas has become a trend. In October 2017, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposed the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council suc-

*Corresponding author: zlj@zufe.edu.cn (Lijuan Zhu)

Received: 8 April 2024; **Accepted:** 6 May 2024; **Published:** 10 May 2024



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2024. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

cessively released Document No. 1, providing a comprehensive deployment for prioritizing the development of agriculture and rural areas in the new development stage, and promoting rural revitalization in all aspects.

In 2019, "Opinions on Deepening the Youth Action for Rural Revitalization" is issued, explicitly stating the need to "guide, support, and provide services for college graduates and young migrant workers returning to their hometowns for employment and entrepreneurship, cultivating new driving forces for the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas." According to data released by the Ministry of Education, the number of graduates from Chinese universities reached a historic high of 11.58 million in 2023. Consequently, phenomena such as "slow employment," "gradual employment," and "structural unemployment" began to quietly rise among university graduates. It is estimated that in 2024, the number of graduates from Chinese universities will reach a record-breaking 11.87 million, indicating the objective existence of employment pressure for university graduates. The prospect of rural areas as an employment "reservoir" seems promising.

However, currently, the group of college students engaging in rural entrepreneurship remains a minority, with slow progress. Existing research mainly focuses on returning to one's hometown for entrepreneurship, and there is insufficient in-depth research on how to attract college students to engage in entrepreneurship in rural areas on a broad and adaptable scale.

2. The Coupling of College Students' Rural Entrepreneurship and the Process of Shared Prosperity

In engineering, "coupling" refers to the close coordination and mutual influence between the inputs and outputs of two or more circuit components or electrical networks. In this study, the term "coupling" is utilized to describe the interdependence and mutual impact between the entrepreneurial behavior of college students and the process of shared prosperity in rural areas. The emphasis on achieving shared prosperity lies in rural areas, and the challenges are also concentrated in these regions. With the annual expansion of university admissions, the number of recent graduates urgently seeking employment has been increasing year by year. Influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous companies have reduced recruitment positions, intensifying the pressure for high-quality employment, and presenting a severe challenge to the supply of job opportunities [1].

In recent years, both national and local governments have allocated resources, expanded positions, and formulated a series of development decisions to promote entrepreneurship and employment. They continuously broaden the channels for grassroots entrepreneurship and employment among college students. Here, "grassroots" mainly

refers to rural areas and industries related to rural development. Therefore, while meeting the developmental needs of college students, actively attracting young individuals to engage in rural entrepreneurship is an essential strategy for alleviating employment pressure, addressing weaknesses in rural development, and providing robust support for shared prosperity.

2.1. Alleviating the 'Employment Difficulty' for College Students Is a Crucial Foundation

In recent years, in pursuit of the goal of comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society and achieving shared prosperity, the country has strategically deployed the revitalization of rural areas. As a result, significant changes have occurred in the working and living environments of the majority of rural areas compared to the past. Concurrently, various local governments, aligned with the rural revitalization strategy, have created grassroots job opportunities and introduced a series of preferential policies for college graduates seeking employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas. This has further addressed the current issue of the 'difficulty in employment' for college students.

Moreover, college graduates often face the dilemma of choosing between immediate employment and selecting a suitable job, and challenges such as mismatched job positions with their majors. Opting for rural entrepreneurship offers better professional adaptability and a broader range of choices. For example, leveraging the integration of the internet, new media, and traditional agriculture, diversified and emerging industrial development models such as 'agriculture + tourism,' 'agriculture + services,' and 'agriculture + processing' have emerged. These models provide more opportunities for promoting rural revitalization, laying a solid foundation for effectively advancing shared prosperity."

2.2. Continuously Optimizing the Structure of Rural Talents Is a Crucial Guarantee for Achieving Shared Prosperity

In the process of achieving common prosperity, rural areas are gradually developing, and new rural entities continue to emerge, leading to an increased demand for higher-level talents. To realize common prosperity in rural areas, it is necessary to emphasize the role of talents, address talent shortages, strengthen talent support, and establish an ecosystem where talent revitalization and rural prosperity mutually reinforce and interact. Given the high cultural and technological levels of college students, their involvement in rural innovation and entrepreneurship not only alleviates the scarcity of talent in rural areas but also contributes to the upgrading of rural industries. By advancing the rural revitalization strategy, optimizing the structure of talents, and enhancing the alloca-

tion of human resources, college students can drive more talent towards rural areas. This, in turn, creates new employment opportunities for the surplus rural labor force, accelerating the process of achieving common prosperity.

3. The Real Challenges of College Students' Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

3.1. College Students Face Challenges in Employment, But Their Willingness to Engage in Rural Entrepreneurship Is Weak

In recent years, the number of graduates from universities nationwide has continued to rise, increasing from 8.74 million in 2020 to over 11.58 million in 2023. Graduates face challenges such as a growing number of job seekers, a limited number of job opportunities, leading to difficulties in employment and an increase in job-seeking challenges. This has even given rise to phenomena like 'slow employment' and 'gradual employment.' However, through surveys conducted among college students, it is found that the priority intentions after graduation include pursuing postgraduate studies, taking civil service examinations, and seeking employment in urban areas. The willingness to engage in flexible employment, such as entrepreneurship, is not strong, and the proportion of students willing to venture into rural entrepreneurship is even lower.

On one hand, urban-origin students lack understanding of rural development, lack a social circle and experience of rural life, and are concerned about their inability to adapt to rural living, making them reluctant to actively go to rural areas. On the other hand, some students find it challenging to adapt to the relatively weak infrastructure and the lack of entertainment facilities in the rural living environment, leading to a lack of a positive attitude towards in-depth rural development. Rural-origin students are also unwilling to return to their hometowns, believing that big cities and first-tier cities offer more development opportunities. They are not willing to 'leave the rural gate only to return to it.' Instead, they prefer to establish themselves in urban areas through work, change their identity, and plan for the accumulation of educational and medical resources for the next generation [2].

3.2. College Students Are Full of Vitality But Lack Sufficient Entrepreneurial Experience

The group of university students in higher education institutions is dynamic and creative, exhibiting strong entrepreneurial passion. However, a significant portion of university graduates lack practical platforms, experience in resource integration and management, which greatly reduces the success rate of entrepreneurship. Coupled with information

asymmetry both inside and outside the campus, as well as an incomplete understanding of agricultural development, there is a lack of awareness regarding the layout of rural industry development. Exploration of rural entrepreneurial projects lacks in-depth research and market analysis, resulting in the inability to form a comprehensive business model and technological barriers in a short period. Most projects remain in the "low to middle-end" of agriculture, leading to homogenization and low-level phenomena in rural entrepreneurship among college students, lacking sustained competitiveness. Moreover, many college students choose to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship, and the replicability and scalability of their experience are weak. Currently, common rural entrepreneurial areas for college students are concentrated in the primary and tertiary industries. The predominant mode of entrepreneurship is through online channels, mainly focusing on Internet + agricultural products, Internet + cultural tourism, etc., resulting in a relatively monotonous entrepreneurial form. According to surveys, enterprises established by returning college students in rural areas are mostly small-scale, characterized by "few people and little capital", with a scale of fewer than 20 people and an investment amount of less than 100,000 yuan. In terms of the time when returning college students establish their enterprises, 70.03% of them initiate businesses within one year, with only 26.06% starting their businesses within 1-3 years. It can be observed that returning college students engaged in rural entrepreneurship are mostly in the initial stage, which is also a high-risk period for entrepreneurial failure [3].

3.3. High Entrepreneurial Costs, Coupled with Limited Resources, Pose a Challenge for University Students

In the entrepreneurial process, university students need to deal with various aspects such as financial management, human resource management, and marketing. If students choose to start their businesses in non-native areas, they also have to adapt to different regional cultures, languages, customs, and other factors. These elements can significantly impact both the operational effectiveness of the enterprise and the enthusiasm of university students for entrepreneurship.

On one hand, recent graduates face limited funds for entrepreneurship. Interviews reveal that the primary hindrance to entrepreneurial endeavors among university students is insufficient funding. Initial capital investments for venue rental, equipment decoration, employee salaries, and business expansion are substantial. However, avenues for obtaining funding are limited for university students, mainly relying on family support, government assistance, and financing through loans. Despite the gradual introduction of entrepreneurial subsidy policies in various regions, challenges such as difficulty in application, insufficient financial support, and lengthy implementation periods persist, offering little relief to the financial constraints faced by university students seeking to

start businesses. It is noted that most regions provide entrepreneurship subsidies for university students (excluding innovative entrepreneurial teams with technology, projects, and funding). Generally, these subsidies range from 10,000 to 50,000 yuan, with a duration of 1 to 3 years, correlating positively with the time when university students establish their businesses.

On the other hand, university students lack extensive social networks. With limited social experience, they are unfamiliar with business channels and market access. Additionally, they lack knowledge about local governments, industry organizations, and social groups. When encountering difficulties in the entrepreneurial process, opportunities to garner social support are relatively scarce, increasing the risk of entrepreneurial failure. Furthermore, the proportion of university students choosing rural entrepreneurship is low, and there is no well-established demonstration effect or long-term mechanism. If their first entrepreneurial attempt fails or yields inconspicuous short-term results, it may easily undermine the confidence of university students in entrepreneurship and their determination to stay in rural areas for long-term development.

4. The Behavioral Logic and Principal Influencing Factors of Rural Entrepreneurship

The choice of rural entrepreneurship and employment among university graduates has significant practical implications for the implementation of rural revitalization strategies and the realization of common prosperity, as shown in Figure 1. However, the occurrence and decision-making of university students actively engaging in rural entrepreneurship are typically influenced by various factors. Based on existing literature research, this paper conducts a summary analysis at three levels: macro, meso, and micro. It covers aspects such as government policy support, employment and entrepreneurship situation, rural entrepreneurial environment, entrepreneurship education in universities, family background, professional qualities, career perspectives, and individual entrepreneurial experiences.

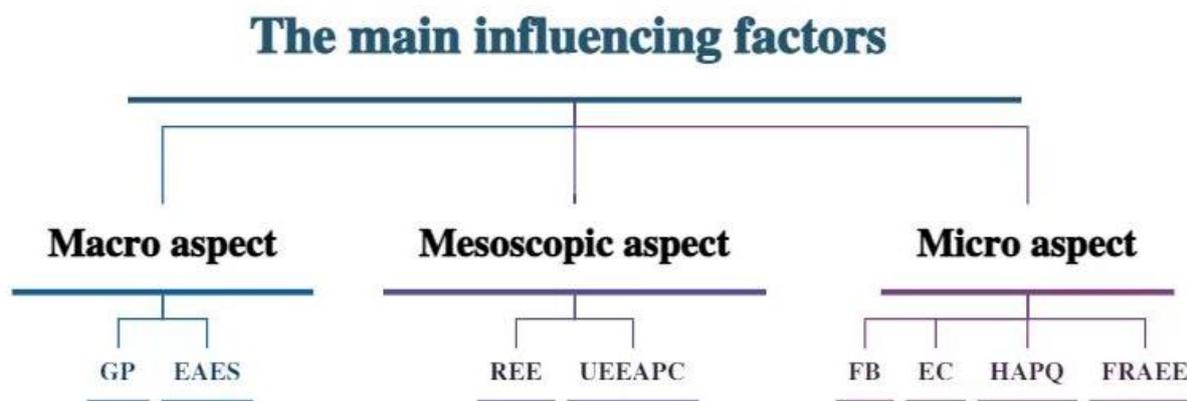


Figure 1. Main influence factors.

4.1. The Macro Level

4.1.1. Support from Government Policy

The government serves as both the primary entity responsible for promoting post-graduate employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas, and the executor of relevant incentive policies. In recent years, China has successively launched initiatives such as the Western Development Plan, the "Three Supports and One Subsidy" Plan, and the Village Official Program for college graduates. It has also issued policies such as entrepreneurial subsidies, tax exemptions, and loan preferences, effectively providing policy support for promoting the employment and entrepreneurship of college graduates in rural areas. However, the management compe-

tence and promotional efforts of local governments may have certain direct or indirect impacts on the implementation of these plans and policies.

Some local governments inadequately express the content of relevant incentive policies already introduced, provide insufficient clarity in promotional explanations, and lack detailed implementation regulations. This has resulted in relevant departments being unable to standardize the implementation of various entrepreneurial policies. Alternatively, college graduates may lack a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the rural revitalization strategy and the policies introduced by local governments. Consequently, they ultimately choose the option of entrepreneurship in rural areas or employment in relatively well-developed first and second-tier cities.

4.1.2. The Employment and Entrepreneurship Landscape

According to statistics, the number of university graduates has been steadily rising in recent years, reaching historical highs both in terms of scale and quantity. The individual issue of difficulty in finding employment has evolved into a collective problem for college students. Consequently, research on related issues has shifted from the individual level to the societal level. To address the employment challenges faced by this crucial demographic group of university graduates, various local governments have actively created favorable conditions for their employment and entrepreneurship endeavors. This has been achieved through continuous optimization of resource allocation, improvement of the business environment, and enhancement of supporting policies such as entrepreneurial funds, venture capital funds, and guarantee funds. Therefore, based on an overall assessment, the employment and entrepreneurship situation for college students is temporarily challenging, but it is expected to improve over time under the guidance of relevant policies.

4.2. The Meso Level

4.2.1. Rural Entrepreneurship Environment

The introduction of the rural revitalization strategy has provided new opportunities for rural entrepreneurship among college graduates, but challenges and shortcomings persist. Even when some college graduates initially possess a strong willingness to start businesses in rural areas, factors such as the rural living environment, transportation infrastructure, social security, development opportunities, and policy benefits may potentially deter them from pursuing rural entrepreneurship.

Wu, J conducted research on the influencing factors of rural entrepreneurship among college graduates [3]. He selected recent graduates from five universities in Fujian as the research subjects, including those from 985 and 211 universities, regular universities, and private undergraduate institutions. The study covered disciplines in science and engineering, economics and management, and agriculture and forestry. The results indicated that over two-thirds of the surveyed individuals believed there were abundant entrepreneurial opportunities in rural areas, far surpassing those who perceived more opportunities in urban settings. However, in the survey of entrepreneurial intentions, only 122 respondents expressed a desire to start businesses in rural areas, while the remaining 467 respondents with entrepreneurial intentions leaned toward urban entrepreneurship, accounting for 79.29%.

Further investigation into the 467 respondents inclined toward urban entrepreneurship revealed that 137 individuals perceived the rural entrepreneurial environment as unfavorable, constituting 29.34% and representing the highest proportion. The next most common reasons were the lack of rural

entrepreneurial resources and unfamiliarity with rural environments, accounting for 17.56% and 16.27%, respectively [4].

4.2.2. Conditions for Entrepreneurship Education and Practice in Higher Education

The research indicates that, except for comprehensive university students who prioritize "social contribution", students from all other types of institutions primarily choose "economic pursuit" as their entrepreneurial motivation. Nearly all types of university students consider "self-fulfillment" to be the least important choice. This phenomenon suggests that the majority of college students are driven in their entrepreneurial motivations by the pursuit of higher economic returns. Additionally, it highlights that the differing entrepreneurial education philosophies of various types of universities can subtly influence the entrepreneurial perspectives of students. Wu, J. employed a combined survey and interview approach, discovering that in the aspect of "the impact of entrepreneurial education and related activities on returning to hometown entrepreneurship", only 21.50% of students found it very helpful, 31.43% considered it somewhat helpful, and 30.29% believed it was not helpful [5]. Therefore, while entrepreneurial education in universities significantly influences rural entrepreneurship for college students through the imparting of relevant knowledge and practical guidance, there are still areas that require improvement.

4.3. The Micro Level

4.3.1. Family Background

The nature of household registration, the educational level of parents, family annual income, and parents' attitudes toward their children returning to the countryside for entrepreneurship can significantly influence the willingness of individuals to engage in rural entrepreneurship. For instance, Wu, X. found in a study on the willingness of college students to return to rural areas for entrepreneurship in the context of rural revitalization that, compared to urban registered college students, those with rural household registration exhibit a stronger inclination to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship [6]. Additionally, many parents hold traditional views that harbor strong biases against the rural entrepreneurial environment and its benefits. They may lack understanding or even oppose their children's desire to work or start businesses in rural areas, leading to challenges in the implementation of rural employment and entrepreneurship plans for some college students. In a study using a binary logistic model, Yu, J. explored the influence of parents' occupational backgrounds on the willingness of college students to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship [7]. The analysis revealed a ranking of parental support for their children's return to rural entrepreneurship as follows: gov-

ernment officials > agricultural workers in the village > corporate employees > self-employed individuals > migrant workers.

4.3.2. The Concept of Employment

Firstly, there are individual cognitive factors. The partial understanding of employment and career choices among students negatively impacts the enthusiasm for rural entrepreneurship. Many college students, uncertain about their career paths upon graduation, lack sufficient awareness of rural development strategies. Influenced by misconceptions such as "rural backwardness" and "lack of prospects in rural areas", coupled with concerns about entrepreneurial risks, students tend to significantly reduce their willingness to return to rural areas for entrepreneurship. Instead, they opt for urban employment or entrepreneurship to seek more development opportunities.

Secondly, there are self-values and beliefs. Whether in terms of infrastructure development, economic progress, or employment policies, there is a considerable gap between rural and urban areas. The prolonged imbalance in rural and urban development leads many college students and even parents to believe that major cities are more conducive to realizing personal values. They perceive urban opportunities to far outweigh those in rural areas. As a result, a significant portion of college students lacks strong intentions to return to their hometowns for employment or entrepreneurship, and the attachment to rural ties gradually diminishes.

4.3.3. Hobbies and Professional Qualities

Entrepreneurship not only requires support from various levels of government in terms of policies, funding, and technology but also demands entrepreneurs to possess comprehensive and high-level entrepreneurial qualities. For recently graduated college students, their exposure to entrepreneurship-related courses is limited, and the entrepreneurial projects they have attempted are relatively simple. They often face challenges such as incomplete market awareness and insufficient capabilities to cope with the rapidly changing market environment. In a study conducted by Cao, Z. and Wang, L., it was found that the entrepreneurial direction of college students aligns to a certain extent with their academic majors, indicating the significant influence of their chosen fields of study on entrepreneurial industry preferences [8]. However, when it comes to entrepreneurship, theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient, and college student entrepreneurs generally lack comprehensive practical skills. In higher education institutions, many instructors teaching entrepreneurship courses have not engaged in entrepreneurial activities themselves, making it challenging to provide practical guidance to students based solely on theoretical foundations.

4.3.4. Economic Returns and Entrepreneurial Experiences

Economic pursuit stands as the primary motivation for entrepreneurship among college students. In the research on distinctive characteristics of entrepreneurship behaviors among college students in different types of institutions, Ning, D. found that the majority of college students are primarily driven by the prospect of higher economic returns in their entrepreneurial endeavors [9]. When facing challenges such as financial constraints or unfavorable entrepreneurial environments, college students are prone to abandoning or temporarily suspending their entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, recent graduates and those on the verge of graduation encounter various uncertainties. Simultaneously considering alternative career options while engaging in entrepreneurship, they may lack stability and experience, thereby affecting both personal and business development to varying extents. Furthermore, insufficient entrepreneurial planning may lead some initially enthusiastic college students to lose interest rapidly in the entrepreneurial process, abandoning their ventures at the slightest setback or failure.

5. Strategies and Recommendations for Promoting Rural Entrepreneurship Among College Students

"We need to introduce a group of talents, guide college graduates to the countryside in an orderly manner, encourage capable individuals to return to rural areas, facilitate the return of migrant workers to their hometowns, and encourage entrepreneurs to settle in rural areas, helping them resolve their concerns and enabling them to stay and start businesses." Talents are a crucial force in revitalizing rural areas. Simply attracting talents to rural areas is far from sufficient; only by retaining more talents in rural areas and engaging them in the development of rural undertakings can the "two-way coupling" of rural development and youth growth be achieved. To successfully promote entrepreneurship in rural areas among university students, a comprehensive approach is needed at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The government, universities, and students, as the three main entities, must resonate with each other, stimulating the willingness of students to enter rural areas, enhancing their entrepreneurial abilities, and providing support and guarantees for the implementation of entrepreneurial practices. Establishing a comprehensive and systematic pathway and mechanism for rural entrepreneurship, covering the entire process and all aspects, is necessary to encourage more students to actively and voluntarily participate in rural construction. This will contribute to the contemporary youth's role in advancing the strategy of rural revitalization and achieving the goal of common prosperity.

5.1. Igniting the Entrepreneurial Aspirations of University Students and Cultivating a Fresh Perspective on Rural Life and Employment

Rural areas need the youth, and the rural environment fosters the development of the youth. The integration of rural areas and youth mutually promotes and develops each other. Since the reform and opening-up policy, China has achieved tremendous economic progress, with some people successfully lifting themselves out of poverty. Since the 18th Party Congress, we have comprehensively won the battle against poverty and achieved the goal of building a moderately prosperous society on schedule. Now, we are moving towards the second centenary goal.

Firstly, it is necessary to view rural areas in a "three-dimensional" rather than a "two-dimensional" manner, guiding students to fully understand the development prospects of modern rural areas. China is a developing agricultural country, and in recent years, the Party and the country have deepened their understanding of rural work, issuing various supportive policies for agriculture and rural areas. This has provided basic conditions and material guarantees for rural life and offered valuable opportunities and a broad stage for college students to showcase their talents. Taking Zhejiang Province as an example, since the implementation of the "Thousand Villages Demonstration, Ten Thousand Villages Renovation" project in 2003, a series of reform measures have effectively improved the appearance and economic vitality of rural areas in the entire province. In April 2018, the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee and Provincial Government issued the "Comprehensive Implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, High-level Promotion of Agricultural and Rural Modernization Action Plan (2018-2022)." In response, various villages in the province adapted to local conditions, comprehensively deepened rural reforms, and constructed beautiful rural areas in the new era.

Data shows that in 2021, the income ratio between urban and rural residents in Zhejiang was 1.94:1, making it one of the provinces with the smallest income gap nationwide. The per capita disposable income of rural residents has ranked first among all provinces (regions) in the country for 37 consecutive years. By 2022, the income ratio between urban and rural residents further decreased to 1.90:1. On the path to building common prosperity, rural areas are unleashing inherent advantages in ecological activation, cultural stimulation, material revitalization, and industrial development, laying the foundation for more opportunities to "expand the pie and distribute it well".

The second aspect is to take a long-term, rather than a

short-term, perspective on entrepreneurship, cultivating and reshaping college students' employment concepts. Entrepreneurship should not be a momentary thought under employment pressure but rather a crucial avenue to assess students' comprehensive abilities, enhance their humanistic sentiments, and increase competitiveness in the job market. College students need to develop clear career plans based on their own qualities and engage in targeted learning of cultural and professional knowledge around these plans. They should delve into understanding regional characteristics, market situations, and national strategies, overcoming utilitarian tendencies in career choices and dispelling negative attitudes such as "lying flat" or under-performance. Instead, they should embrace "rooting at the grassroots and striving in adversity" as their life values, establishing a correct perspective on employment.

College students should make full use of various resources provided by schools and society, actively participate in innovation competitions and entrepreneurial practices, continuously enhance their entrepreneurial awareness and capabilities, stay informed about national and local rural revitalization policies, immerse themselves in rural front line experiences, grasp relevant entrepreneurial environments and development prospects, broaden their perspectives, accumulate knowledge, and gain experience. This approach will strengthen their confidence and resilience in entrepreneurship, allowing them to continually improve their professional skills and proficiency.

5.2. Leveraging Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education Institutions

Although entrepreneurship education for college students has gained popularity in recent years, it has not been fully integrated into educational and disciplinary construction. The concept of innovation and entrepreneurship education lags behind, and its integration with professional education is not tight. Guidance and support are inadequate, leading to a phenomenon of a "dual identity" within the existing education system. For example, universities generally lack dedicated institutions responsible for coordinating entrepreneurship education across the entire campus, with most efforts scattered among student affairs, student organizations, and entrepreneurship colleges. This has hindered the realization of the subject's leading role in entrepreneurship education, resulting in entrepreneurship education mostly remaining at the level of student activities or serving as a supplementary component to career guidance.

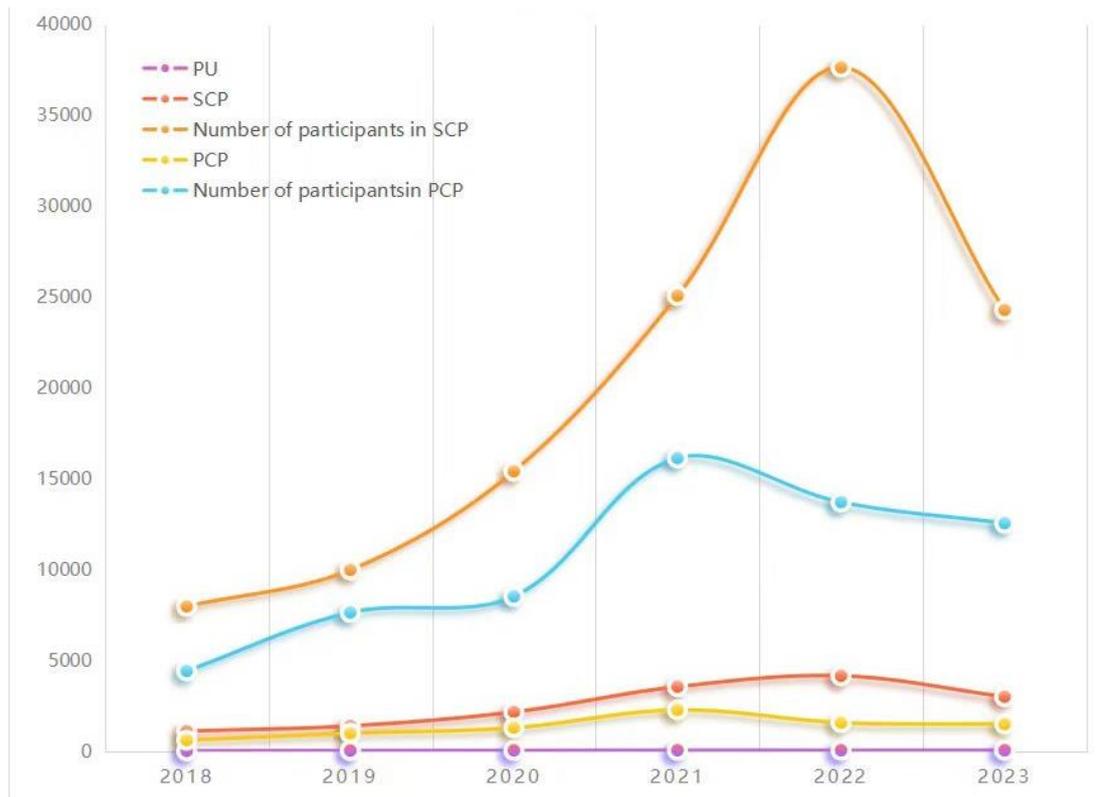


Figure 2. Number of participants of Zhejiang College Students' Rural Revitalization Creative Contest.

Firstly, it is essential to enhance the curriculum system for innovation and entrepreneurship education. Currently, entrepreneurship education courses in various universities in Hangzhou include "Guidance for College Students' Employment and Entrepreneurship," "KAB Entrepreneurship Foundation," "SYB Entrepreneurship Training," "Simulated Company Entrepreneurial Practice," and entrepreneurship-related content in management courses. Although some schools have established credits for entrepreneurship education, a systematic approach is lacking. The development of entrepreneurship courses is relatively slow, failing to evolve into a discipline with a lack of integration with China's political, economic, and cultural context, resulting in limited practical effectiveness. Since the issuance of the "Implementation Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education" by the State Council in 2015 and the "Implementation Opinions on Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education" by the Zhejiang Provincial People's Government Office in 2016, universities are urged to establish a comprehensive system for innovation and entrepreneurship education that integrates classroom teaching, self-directed learning, practical experience, guidance and support, and cultural guidance. Universities can promote the organic integration of professional course education and entrepreneurship education according to talent cultivation objectives, providing students with a platform for practice and resources and incorporating innovation and entrepreneurship skills into the entire process

of talent cultivation.

Secondly, it is crucial to create a strong rural entrepreneurial atmosphere. Successful rural entrepreneurship requires not only the capabilities of college students to adapt to development but also the establishment of a vibrant entrepreneurial atmosphere. On one hand, this can be achieved through strengthening platform construction, fostering a rural entrepreneurial atmosphere through initiatives such as "villages proposing challenges, village-school pairing, and tangible outcomes." Leveraging local cultural advantages and peer effects can guide students to engage with, understand, fall in love with, and serve rural areas. On the other hand, a "competition-driven" approach can serve rural revitalization. By relying on existing innovation and entrepreneurship competitions such as the "Challenge Cup," "Internet+," and "Rural Revitalization Competition," schools can increase entrepreneurship practices in collaboration with rural areas. Emphasis should be placed on assessing and evaluating students' knowledge application, practical abilities, and innovation and entrepreneurship qualities. Encouraging students to explore entrepreneurship through various forms and paths, and providing ongoing guidance for student entrepreneurship projects is essential. Educational efforts should guide students to seize policy opportunities promptly, fostering students into highly educated "new farmers" who understand agricultural affairs, are knowledgeable about agriculture, and are skilled in agricultural activities [10].

5.3. Establishing a Comprehensive Incentive Mechanism Throughout the Entire Process

"Through the study of the current situation of rural entrepreneurship among college students, it is found that coordinated social support policies and measures are crucial in attracting college students to engage in entrepreneurial activities in rural areas. Despite the continuous release of relevant dividends at the national level, supporting policies encouraging rural youth to return to their hometowns for employment and entrepreneurship, such as initiatives like the "College Student Village Officials" selection, "Talent Recruitment" programs, "Three Supports and One Assistance," and voluntary projects under the "Two Plans," have further stimulated the effective return of talent to contribute to the construction of new rural areas. Simultaneously, providing financial subsidies, tax exemptions, and other preferential policies to returning youth has strengthened their sense of identity and determination to contribute to hometown development [11]. However, most policy support focuses on the initial stages of college graduates returning to rural areas for employment, lacking a comprehensive support system and mechanisms throughout the entire process.

Firstly, it is necessary to establish an "all-in-one" support policy system for college student rural entrepreneurship. The government should increase educational guidance, training, financial support, and incubation services for college students engaging in rural entrepreneurship. This includes policy interpretation, financial input, facility provision, legal consultation, etc., aiming to streamline the approval procedures and service processes for college students returning to start businesses. Utilizing government resources to assist in project promotion and publicity, developing flexible mechanisms for project introduction and exit. Local governments should conduct regular research based on the actual needs of college students' entrepreneurship, strengthen targeted support policies, and implement differentiated evaluations and assistance based on the principles of tailored policies for each area and village. For promising and replicable entrepreneurial projects and teams, timely integration of resources should provide precise and detailed services.

Secondly, it is crucial to improve the "whole-process" integration mechanism for college student rural entrepreneurship. Continuous optimization of rural infrastructure, such as transportation, communication, water, electricity, gas networks, and supporting public services like education, healthcare, and pension insurance, to some extent, alleviate concerns about the daily life, work, and retirement of college students. Rural areas should particularly focus on the growth process of entrepreneurial college students, especially those not originally from the local area. Addressing implicit difficulties and issues related to socializing, relationships, family, and career development that arise during entrepreneurship. Leveraging peer support, creating a development environment that is conducive to both hardware and software aspects,

actively exploring new markets for college student rural entrepreneurship, and developing industrial clusters for innovation in agriculture at the grassroots level, ensuring that college student talents can truly be attracted, utilized effectively, and retained in rural areas."

6. Conclusions

The countryside represents a new "blue ocean" for innovation and entrepreneurship, with college students serving as the driving force for rural development. Local governments should play a leading and coordinating role, continuously intensifying support for rural entrepreneurship, increasing investment in rural infrastructure, and enhancing public service construction in rural areas. Universities need to align talent development with demand, refine entrepreneurial education systems, gain in-depth understanding of rural innovation and entrepreneurship policies, industry layouts, and economic development plans in different regions. This will help stimulate students' awareness and enthusiasm for rural entrepreneurship, integrating these aspects into ideological and political education curricula.

Rural areas should enhance their service capabilities, collaboratively empower and consolidate resources, and strive to provide efficient and high-quality service support for college students engaged in rural innovation and entrepreneurship. A comprehensive support system for college student rural entrepreneurship, consisting of a tripartite collaboration among the government, universities, and rural communities, and encompassing educational guidance, policy support, financial assistance, and service guarantees, should be constructed. This multi-faceted approach will foster a positive atmosphere encouraging college students to actively participate in rural innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Abbreviations

- GP: Government Policy
- EAES: Employment and Entrepreneurship Situation
- REE: Rural Entrepreneurial Environment
- UEEAPC: University Entrepreneurship Education and Practice Conditions
- FB: Family Background
- EC: Employment Concept
- HAPQ: Hobbies and Professional Qualities
- FRAEE: Financial Rewards and Entrepreneurial Experience
- PU: Participating University
- SCP: School Competition Project
- PCP: Provincial Competition Project

Author Contributions

Lijuan Zhu is the sole author. The author read and ap-

proved the final manuscript.

Funding

This work is supported by the research project of youth and youth work of Zhejiang province (ZQ2024045).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Li, Y., Wang, X., Xie, H. Research on College Students' Rural Entrepreneurship and Employment Strategies in the Perspective of 511 Rural Revitalization. In *Educational Theory and Practice*, 2023, 21, 3-6. <https://doi.org/10.13615/j.cnki.1004-3985.2019.15.013>
- [2] Xin, D. Study on the Path of College Students Returning to Their Hometowns for Entrepreneurship under the Strategy of Rural Revitalization. In *Agricultural Economy*, 2023, 10, 127-129. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1674-4993.2023.05.032>
- [3] Wu, J. Construction of social support system for college students returning to their hometowns to start their own businesses in the context of rural revitalization strategy. In *Education and Careers*, 2019, 15, 128-130. <https://doi.org/10.19903/j.cnki.cn23-1074/g.2021.04.002>
- [4] Lin, H. Exploring the influencing factors of college students' rural entrepreneurship in the context of rural revitalization. In *Logistics Engineering and Management*, 2023, 5, 128-130. <https://doi.org/10.27229/d.cnki.gmnu.2021.000965>
- [5] Wu, J. Structural model and cultivation strategy of college students' entrepreneurial competence in rural revitalization strategy. *Heilongjiang Higher Education Research*, 2021, 4, 11-12. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-6917.2020.05.029>
- [6] Wu, X. Study on college students' willingness to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship in the context of rural 521 revitalization. *Agricultural Economy*, 2021, 5, 112-114. <https://doi.org/10.19345/j.cnki.1674-7909.2021.14.013>
- [7] Yu, J. A Study on the influencing factors of college students' willingness to start a rural business, Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, Inner Mongolia, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.13971/j.cnki.cn23-1435/c.2022.02.037>
- [8] Cao, Z., Wang, L. Analysis of entrepreneurship of college students returning to their hometowns and their business environment - a survey on the current situation based on the perspective of rural revitalization. *Business and Economic Research*, 2019, 12, 190-192. <https://doi.org/10.13573/j.cnki.sjzxyxb.2023.02.012>
- [9] Ning, D. Study on the differential characteristics of entrepreneurial behavior of college students in different types of colleges 528 and universities and their influencing factors—an empirical examination based on a large sample of one hundred universities. *Guangxi Social Sciences*, 2020, 5, 178-184. <https://doi.org/10.19311/j.cnki.1672-3198.2024.08.019>
- [10] Li, Y. Research on the realization mechanism of college students' innovation and entrepreneurship to promote rural revitalization. *Agrarian Economy*, 2020, 8, 101-103. <https://doi.org/10.20028/j.zhnydk.2024.03.013>
- [11] Wang, X., Zhou, Y. Exploring the motivation, action logic and path choice of youth returning to their hometowns. *Journal of Chuzhou College*, 2022, 4, 37-41. <https://doi.org/10.15948/j.cnki.37-1500/s.2024.01.007>
- [12] Wu, S., Liu, Y. Research on college students' intention to return to their hometowns to start businesses in the context of rural revitalization - based on the modified TPB model. *Journal of Hebei Normal University (Education Science Edition)*, 2023, 25, 05, 95-103. <https://doi.org/10.13763/j.cnki.jhebnu.es.2023.05.012>
- [13] Peng, P., Hou, J. Countermeasures research on promoting rural employment and entrepreneurship of college graduates in the context of rural revitalization. *Economy*, 2021, 12, 123-128. <https://doi.org/10.16528/j.cnki.22-1054/f.202112123>
- [14] Huang, J. Realistic Consideration and Path of Role Formation of College Students Returning to Their Hometowns for Entrepreneurship under the Perspective of Subjectivity. *Heilongjiang Higher Education Research*, 2020, 38(09), 111-116. <https://doi.org/10.19903/j.cnki.cn23-1074/g.2020.09.019>
- [15] Qian, J., Wang, T. Research on rural entrepreneurship of college students under the vision of rural revitalization strategy. *Education and Vocational*, 2019, 01, 67-71. <https://doi.org/10.13615/j.cnki.1004-3985.2019.01.012>
- [16] Teng, Z. Research on the integration and development of college students' innovation and entrepreneurship and beautiful countryside construction. *Education and Vocational*, 2017, 21, 86-91. <https://doi.org/10.13615/j.cnki.1004-3985.2017.21.015>
- [17] Liang, Z., Zhang, X. A study on the innovation and entrepreneurship pathways of college students under the strategy of rural revitalization in China. *Advances in Social Behavior Research*, 2024, 5, 41-45. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7102/5/2024039>