

# Study on Influencing Factors of College Students' Willingness to Return to Their Hometowns for Entrepreneurship under the Background of Rural Revitalization —— Take the College Students in Shandong Universities in Yantai as an Example

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**Abstract:** As a pivotal national strategy proposed at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Rural Revitalization Strategy carries the mission of comprehensively advancing coordinated development across rural areas in economic, social, cultural, and ecological domains. However, accelerated urbanization has exacerbated the urban-rural divide, leaving rural regions grappling with talent drain and economic stagnation. To address this challenge, the government actively encourages college students to return home for entrepreneurship, aiming to harness their innovative thinking and fresh energy to drive rural economic transformation and achieve the grand vision of rural revitalization. This study examines factors influencing college students' willingness to return for entrepreneurship in Shandong Province, focusing on universities near Yan City. Key findings reveal that policy support, family dynamics, personal capabilities, entrepreneurial education, and rural environment collectively shape these decisions. The research proposes targeted recommendations to assist governments, universities, and stakeholders in promoting student entrepreneurship and supporting rural revitalization efforts.

**Keywords:** Rural Revitalization; College Students Returning to Their Hometowns to Start Businesses; Influencing Factors; Policy Support; Entrepreneurship Education

**Published:** Sept 13, 2025

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.62177/apemr.v2i5.633>

**Introduction:** Despite sustained policy support for college students returning to their hometowns to start businesses—featuring financial assistance, tax incentives, and entrepreneurial guidance—these measures have yielded limited results, with overall low willingness among graduates to return and start ventures. Given this reality, conducting in-depth research on factors influencing students' entrepreneurial intentions has become both urgent and crucial. This study focuses on university students from Shandong Province based in Yantai, aiming to systematically analyze their return entrepreneurship aspirations and underlying drivers. The findings provide actionable recommendations for governments, universities, and society at large, encouraging more graduates to embrace rural revitalization through home-based ventures.

## 1.Necessity of research

### 1.1 Reality Paradox: Breaking the conversion block of “high intention, low action”

The current wave of college students returning to their hometowns to start businesses exhibits a pronounced “willingness bubble” phenomenon: the disconnect between enthusiastic rhetoric and concrete actions exposes deep-seated issues including insufficient policy incentives, poor environmental adaptability, and fragmented educational systems. Information asymmetry in rural markets leads to homogenized business models, intergenerational clashes in family values undermine entrepreneurial stability, while mismatched academic curricula hinder technology transfer capabilities. Systematically analyzing the interactive mechanisms among these constraints is crucial for bridging the gap between intentions and action, carrying urgent practical significance for boosting the actual success rate of returnee entrepreneurship.

### **1.2 Policy lag: fill the structural blind spot and build a long-term support mechanism**

Current policy designs overemphasize short-term economic incentives while neglecting long-term ecological development. Urban-centric incubation platforms have created a dual challenge in rural industrial parks: spatial underutilization and service deficiencies. Talent evaluation systems dominated by urban standards create institutional barriers for returning entrepreneurs, including professional title evaluations and social security challenges. This study reveals the compatibility patterns between policy instruments and rural contexts, proposing a three-dimensional optimization framework of “basic guarantees + ecological cultivation + value recognition”. The solution systematically addresses the issues of policy disconnection and fragmentation through comprehensive measures.

### **1.3 Education gap: reconstruct the dual-track training system and improve the adaptability of talents**

For decades, entrepreneurship education in Chinese universities has been trapped in an urban-centric mindset. The curriculum system focuses on generic skills like business model design and investment management, while lacking targeted training for rural industries’ characteristics such as long cycles, high risks, and heavy resource dependence<sup>[1]</sup>. This has led to phenomena like “technological mismatch” and “difficulty integrating into industrial chains” among students returning to their hometowns. By analyzing the coupling mechanism between educational systems and rural needs, this study proposes a dual-track reform path of “urban general skills + rural specialized skills”, providing a practical model for universities to cultivate versatile entrepreneurial talents who “understand rural areas, love rural communities, and contribute to rural development”.

### **1.4 Regional particularity: Responding to the challenges of differentiation in the eastern coast**

Compared to central and western regions, rural entrepreneurship in eastern coastal areas faces unique challenges such as higher land costs, fiercer talent competition, and more complex property rights. While the reform of collective business-use construction land market entry enhances resource utilization efficiency, it also increases compliance risks for entrepreneurial projects. Under the backdrop of free flow of urban-rural elements, rural entrepreneurs must simultaneously address dual pressures from urban capital encroachment and local resource protection. This study focuses on regional particularities by comparing and analyzing differences in rural entrepreneurial ecosystems across economic zones, providing theoretical support for developed regions to formulate “targeted and differentiated” talent policies, thereby facilitating the stepwise advancement of rural revitalization strategies.

## **2. Analysis of influencing factors**

### **2.1 Policy support factors**

Policy support plays a crucial role in shaping college students’ willingness to return home for entrepreneurship. Government initiatives such as start-up guarantee loans, tax incentives, and training subsidies have significantly influenced this decision<sup>[2]</sup>. However, current policies still face challenges in terms of communication effectiveness, implementation efficiency, and coverage scope. These shortcomings result in many students not fully understanding the policies, thereby failing to maximize their potential benefits.

### **2.2 Family factors**

The influence of family factors on college students’ willingness to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship cannot be overlooked. Factors such as family financial status, parents’ educational perspectives, and occupational backgrounds all impact students’ entrepreneurial decisions. For instance, students from well-off families are more likely to receive financial support from their parents, making them more inclined to attempt returning home for entrepreneurship. Students

whose parents work as farmers or self-employed business owners may also prefer starting businesses in rural areas due to familiarity with the local environment. However, some families remain cautious about returning to their hometowns for entrepreneurship, fearing excessive risks that might deter students from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

### **2.3 Individual Competency Factors**

Individual capabilities are a key factor influencing college students' willingness to return home for entrepreneurship. Starting a business requires multifaceted skills such as market insight, organizational coordination, and risk tolerance. However, current shortcomings in innovation and entrepreneurship education at universities have left many students lacking essential entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Moreover, some students lack confidence in their own entrepreneurial abilities, fearing failure, which leads them to choose safer career paths rather than taking risks.

### **2.4 Entrepreneurship education factors**

Entrepreneurship education significantly influences college students' willingness to return home and start businesses. Universities can stimulate students' entrepreneurial enthusiasm and enhance their awareness and capabilities through initiatives like offering innovation courses, hosting entrepreneurship seminars, and organizing startup competitions. However, some institutions still face challenges in entrepreneurship education, including incomplete curriculum design, insufficient faculty resources, and limited practical opportunities, which ultimately lead to suboptimal educational outcomes.

### **2.5 Rural environmental factors**

As a pivotal factor influencing college students' willingness to return to rural areas for entrepreneurship, the rural environment is undergoing complex transformations with societal development. Under the vigorous implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, villages have been revitalized with wide roads, stable internet connectivity, and emerging industries sprouting up like mushrooms after rain—creating fertile ground for entrepreneurship. However, it's crucial to recognize that compared to urban areas' comprehensive conveniences and advanced infrastructure, rural regions face limitations: limited public service resources, scarce quality educational opportunities, monotonous cultural activities failing to meet young people's diverse needs, and inadequate medical security systems with insufficient capacity to handle sudden health emergencies<sup>[3]</sup>. These shortcomings have, to some extent, diminished rural areas' appeal to college graduates and hindered their entrepreneurial endeavors in returning to their hometowns.

## **3. Policy recommendations**

### **3.1 Strengthening policy support**

The government should further strengthen policy support for college students returning to their hometowns to start businesses, with particular focus on university students from Shandong Province in Yantai. Specifically, efforts should include: expanding entrepreneurship guarantee loans, establishing special funds to lower loan thresholds for startups and individual entrepreneurs, simplifying approval processes and shortening disbursement times while offering flexible repayment options to ease initial financial pressures; providing tax incentives and fiscal subsidies through corporate income tax reductions, value-added tax exemptions, startup capital allocations, and differentiated operational subsidies to gradually reduce entrepreneurial costs; enhancing entrepreneurship training services by collaborating with universities, enterprises, and training institutions to develop systematic courses such as market analysis and business model design, while establishing dedicated entrepreneurship guidance centers for one-on-one consultations to effectively address practical challenges. Additionally, policies should be widely promoted through multiple channels including university websites, social media, and offline promotional events. Policy interpretation sessions targeting Yantai-based universities should be organized, with department heads providing detailed explanations to ensure precise policy dissemination and effective implementation.

### **3.2 Optimizing the family support environment**

In the process of college students returning to their hometowns to start businesses, family support serves as an indispensable pillar. For students from Shandong Province's universities in Yantai, optimizing family support environments is particularly crucial<sup>[4]</sup>. Regarding mindset guidance, communities and schools should collaborate through community outreach campaigns and family education seminars. By leveraging real-life cases and detailed data, parents can gain a deep understanding of the opportunities and policy benefits of returning entrepreneurship. This helps them recognize that starting a business back

home not only supports rural revitalization strategies but also aligns with their children's interests and career plans, thereby encouraging them to courageously pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Economically, when family finances permit, parents should proactively provide startup funds to alleviate initial financial pressures. They should actively assist in applying for government-backed startup loans and subsidies, jointly research policies, prepare materials, and share entrepreneurial risks to build a solid financial foundation. Emotional support is equally vital. Parents need to maintain close communication with their children, patiently listen to their entrepreneurial needs and challenges, offer full understanding and encouragement. When children face setbacks, they should comfort them with warm words and steadfast support to help them regain confidence and keep moving forward. Additionally, parents can provide resources like business premises and equipment based on family circumstances, or leverage their networks to expand cooperation channels and market opportunities, ultimately helping their children realize their entrepreneurial dreams.

### **3.3 Improve personal entrepreneurship ability**

As a crucial platform for cultivating innovative talents, universities should comprehensively strengthen entrepreneurship education to genuinely enhance students' entrepreneurial awareness and capabilities. In curriculum development, it is essential to refine the innovation and entrepreneurship course system by breaking free from traditional theoretical teaching constraints. Emphasis should be placed on integrating theoretical knowledge with real-world business cases and market trends through diversified teaching methods like case analysis and simulated entrepreneurship, enabling students to learn by doing and master the essence of entrepreneurship through hands-on experience. Faculty development remains pivotal. Universities should intensify talent recruitment efforts by actively recruiting entrepreneurs and industry experts with rich practical experience as adjunct faculty, while enhancing existing teachers' entrepreneurial guidance skills through training programs and corporate internships. To help students accumulate practical experience, universities should establish practice platforms such as startup incubation bases providing comprehensive support including venues, equipment, and funding to lower entry barriers. Regular entrepreneurship competitions should be organized to ignite students' passion while honing their teamwork and market analysis skills. Additionally, universities must strengthen entrepreneurial guidance services by setting up dedicated counseling centers with professional mentors who offer personalized consultations based on students' project characteristics and individual traits, addressing challenges and supporting students in realizing their entrepreneurial dreams.

### **3.4 Improve rural entrepreneurship environment**

The government and all sectors of society must form a powerful synergy to jointly improve the rural entrepreneurial environment, injecting continuous vitality into rural entrepreneurship. In terms of infrastructure, efforts should focus on strengthening rural infrastructure construction, particularly enhancing transportation accessibility to establish closer and more convenient connections with the outside world. Optimizing communication networks ensures timely and accurate information transmission, building efficient information bridges for entrepreneurs. Improving energy supply systems guarantees stable operation of entrepreneurial projects. Regarding public services, it is essential to further refine rural public service systems, elevate educational quality to alleviate concerns for entrepreneurs and their families, strengthen medical security to ensure entrepreneurs can focus on their endeavors, and enrich cultural and recreational activities to foster a positive rural atmosphere. In terms of policy environment, the government should continuously optimize the rural entrepreneurial policy framework by introducing tax incentives to reduce financial burdens, providing fiscal subsidies to help entrepreneurs overcome funding challenges, and lowering entry barriers. Meanwhile, all sectors of society should jointly enhance rural entrepreneurial culture through events like entrepreneurship seminars and sharing sessions. These initiatives disseminate entrepreneurial concepts, create an atmosphere that encourages innovation and tolerates failure, enabling entrepreneurs to dare to explore and realize their dreams in the vast rural landscape, thereby driving vigorous development of the rural economy.

### **3.5 Strengthen school-local cooperation and exchange**

As the cradle of talent cultivation, universities should actively deepen cooperation and exchanges with local governments to jointly advance college students' return entrepreneurship initiatives to new heights. Both parties need to establish a close and long-term university-local cooperation mechanism. Through regular joint meetings and setting up specialized task forces, they should collaboratively develop entrepreneurship support policies tailored to local realities and student

needs, providing robust guarantees in terms of funding, venues, tax incentives, and other aspects<sup>[5]</sup>. In project matchmaking for entrepreneurial ventures, universities and local governments should leverage their respective strengths to integrate resources and build efficient matching platforms. Local governments should promptly release rural entrepreneurship demand information, while universities should precisely screen and match suitable student projects, offering diverse entrepreneurial opportunities and resource support. Simultaneously, various forms of entrepreneurial practice activities should be actively organized. Universities can arrange field trips for students to experience rural development potential and entrepreneurial opportunities firsthand, or involve them in rural entrepreneurship projects to accumulate practical experience and enhance capabilities. Additionally, to ignite students' entrepreneurial passion, universities and local governments should jointly strengthen experience-sharing through regular lectures and seminars featuring successful alumni entrepreneurs and rural entrepreneurship leaders. By sharing lessons learned from their entrepreneurial journeys, students can be inspired to firmly commit to returning entrepreneurship and actively participate in the rural entrepreneurship wave.

## 4. Conclusion

Research findings indicate that policy support, family factors, personal capabilities, entrepreneurship education, and rural environment are key determinants influencing college students' willingness to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurial ventures. Based on these insights, this paper proposes targeted countermeasures including: strengthening policy support to establish solid institutional safeguards for student entrepreneurship; optimizing family environments to maximize familial involvement in the entrepreneurial process; enhancing personal entrepreneurial competencies through education and training programs; improving rural business ecosystems to create conducive conditions; and fostering university-local collaboration to integrate resources for joint entrepreneurship initiatives. Future research can be expanded across multiple dimensions. First, broadening research scope by conducting comparative studies between different regions and university types could yield more universal conclusions. Second, advancing methodologies through sophisticated models and analytical approaches would enhance scientific rigor and precision in identifying factors affecting entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, practical application research should focus on translating findings into real-world policy-making and entrepreneurship guidance to improve policy effectiveness. Concurrently, attention should be paid to sustainable development post-return, such as growth mechanisms for startups and psychological adjustment strategies for entrepreneurs, thereby providing comprehensive support for college students' rural entrepreneurship endeavors.

## Funding

no

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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