

The influence mechanism of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on college students' entrepreneurial behaviour

Huaguo Liang^{1,2}

¹School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Pingdingshan University HeNan, PingDingShan, 467000;

²Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar 14241, Mongolia

ABSTRACT

Innovation and entrepreneurship have become the primary strategies to optimise the talent structure and drive economic development, and the entrepreneurial potential of college students in the higher education system is regarded as the key kinetic energy to promote social innovation. However, the occurrence of entrepreneurial behaviour is not only affected by external policy support and resource supply but also closely related to the internal psychological mechanism of the individual, in which the belief system of entrepreneurs on their ability is closely linked. Therefore, this paper discusses the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on college students' entrepreneurial behaviour in order to provide theoretical support for deepening the practice of entrepreneurship education and policy optimisation.

KEYWORDS

self-efficacy; college students' entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial behavior

In the era of higher education popularisation, college students' entrepreneurship has risen from individual career choice to the main direction of regional innovation ecology construction. Although policy incentives and social resources have reduced the entry threshold of entrepreneurship, the incidence and success rate of entrepreneurial behaviour are still significantly differentiated. The improvement of external conditions alone makes it difficult to explain the differences in entrepreneurial practice fully, and it is urgent to explore the psychological motivation of college students. Based on this, this paper will sort out the specific influence path of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial behaviour in order to provide a reference for educators to design more effective guidance methods.

1 The theoretical basis of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

1.1 The definition of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a person's subjective judgment on whether he or she can complete the tasks related to entrepreneurship. This judgment is not generated out of thin air but based on the individual's assessment of their ability and the understanding of the entrepreneurial environment. Unlike general self-confidence, which covers all aspects of life, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is specific to this area. For example, a person is confident in interpersonal relationships, but when it comes to developing a product, finding investors, or managing a team, they may doubt themselves due to a lack of experience. This belief has far-reaching effects and directly determines whether they are willing to attempt entrepreneurship and whether they choose to persevere or give up when faced with difficulties. For example, two college students see a need for shared study rooms, but if one believes he can pool resources, find a location, and design a business model, while the other feels he cannot, their decision-making will be very different. However, this self-judgment is not fixed. It is enhanced by successful experiences (such as winning a competition) and weakened by external shocks (such as a business plan being rejected). Its essence is the result of long-term interaction between individuals and entrepreneurial contexts.

1.2 The cognitive path of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

The formation of entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a psychological process of gradual accumulation. At first, individuals have a preliminary understanding of entrepreneurial ability through direct or indirect experience. Direct experience is most powerful, as when students set up shop selling handicrafts on campus and, if they sell well, realise that "They can run a small business"; Indirect experience is equally important. Some people think, "If I study this model, I will be successful", when they see their classmates bring goods to market through live streaming, and this perception is reinforced by external affirmation or group atmosphere. However, the process is not always easy. If the first attempt encounters losses, individuals may fall into the doubt of "Am I not suitable for entrepreneurship?". At this point, if they receive effective guidance, such as analysing the reasons for failure and adjusting strategies, their cognitive path will shift

towards a more rational self-assessment. For example, a student who lost money on his first venture because of mispricing found that the core competency was product design, not marketing and that he could figure out how to make up for it. The key to this cognitive path is that individuals can extract effective information from the experience of success and failure, and gradually construct a stable judgment of their entrepreneurial ability, rather than relying solely on the conclusion of a single success or failure ^[1].

1.3 The structural dimensions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is not a single-dimensional psychological state but is supported by multiple interrelated dimensions. The first is the belief in the execution of tasks—the belief that you can accomplish the specifics of a start-up, such as writing a business plan, calculating costs and profits, and building a team. This is the most basic part, if even the basic operation of fear, entrepreneurial behaviour is difficult to start. Then, there is the judgment of environmental adaptation, including whether it can cope with uncertainties such as market competition and policy changes. For example, in the face of new industry regulations, some people will quickly study compliance solutions, and others will back down for fear of "Not keeping up". Finally, the prediction of growth potential, that is, whether they believe in the process of entrepreneurship can continue to learn and improve. For example, an entrepreneur with little management experience who believes in hiring people to lead a team can learn by doing and will take a step toward expansion. These three dimensions do not exist in isolation: the accumulation of confidence in task performance enhances adaptability to the environment, and the expectation of growth alleviates the stress of short-term setbacks. This structure reveals that entrepreneurial self-efficacy not only requires the support of specific abilities but also relies on the promotion of overall psychological resilience, ultimately forming an individual's comprehensive psychological capital when facing entrepreneurial challenges ^[2].

2 The connotation and performance characteristics of college students' entrepreneurial behaviour

2.1 The definition and classification of college students' entrepreneurial behaviour

College students' entrepreneurial behaviour refers to the process in which college students actively organise resources and carry out commercial or non-commercial practices with the goal of creating economic or social value. The most significant difference with traditional employment is "From scratch" pioneering; students need to break through the limitations of the campus environment, integrate knowledge, technology or social resources, and turn their ideas into concrete action. According to the differences in behavioural attributes, they can be divided into entity entrepreneurship and intention entrepreneurship. Entity entrepreneurship refers to the establishment of enterprises, studios and other actual business entities, such as the development of small program teams based on campus needs. Intentional entrepreneurship is mainly manifested in participation in entrepreneurial plan competitions, simulation training and other early exploration activities. The core difference between these two types of behaviours lies in the degree of risk-taking. Entity entrepreneurship needs to be verified by the market, while intentional entrepreneurship is more like a "Sand table exercise", allowing students to try and make mistakes at a low cost. However, in either case, there are common elements: Initiative (student initiative), innovation (new approaches to problem-solving), and social connection (building relationships with upstream and downstream partners). For example, a design student developing an original creative product and selling it through an online channel, which combines creative transformation, resource integration, and sales execution, is a typical entity entrepreneurial behaviour.

2.2 The formation mechanism of college students' entrepreneurial behaviour

The emergence of college students' entrepreneurial behaviour is the result of the interaction of intrinsic motivation and the external environment. At the individual level, the motivation trigger is the starting point: some students are motivated by interest, demand, or the pursuit of a sense of achievement; Others are influenced by role models (such as alum entrepreneurship stories) or by opportunities (such as subsidies). Then comes the resource integration phase: Students turn their ideas into preliminary solutions, relying on on-campus resources (such as lab equipment and mentoring) or social networks (such as family support and corporate partnerships). If the necessary support can not be found at this time, even if there is a strong incentive, it will end up "On paper". Finally, the decision-making process: Students need to weigh the risks (such as academic pressure and funding gaps) and benefits (experience accumulation, potential returns) to decide whether to really engage in the practice. For example, teams of engineering students who discover the need for repairs to electrical appliances in their dorms may respond to a ban on commercial activities by volunteering for the public good, both to meet the need and to avoid risks. This chain is not a one-way street. Frustration in execution weakens motivation in reverse, and extrinsic motivation reactivates action ^[3].

2.3 The stages and development path of college students' entrepreneurial behaviour

College students' entrepreneurial behaviour usually presents the characteristics of gradual development, which can be divided into three progressive stages: consciousness germination period, action exploration period and mode establishment period. The budding stage starts with inspiration in the classroom or through community activities, such as case discussions in marketing classes, where students discover the inefficiencies of second-hand transactions on campus. At this time, action is focused on research and writing proposals. After the exploration phase, students begin to test ideas on a small scale, such as setting up a shop on campus to test the feasibility of a product or receiving feedback from experts in a start-up competition. The key to this phase is to expose and correct problems (such as pricing deviation and supply chain disruption) through practice. If it can break through the bottleneck, it will enter the mode establishment period and gradually form a stable operation mechanism, such as shifting from temporary stalls to signing fixed site contracts and building an online ordering system. However, not all behaviours move in a straight line. Many people will stagnate or even fall back into the embryonic stage after the frustration of the exploratory period. A few people leap forward across stages due to technological breakthroughs (such as patent research and development). For example, the student team initially tried to replace the express delivery service, ran into trouble due to high labour costs, and then transformed to develop an intelligent locker system, which instead opened up new markets.

3 The influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on college students' entrepreneurial behaviour

3.1 The stimulating effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial motivation

The key to entrepreneurial self-efficacy is its ability to turn potential entrepreneurial ideas into motivation to act. When a person is confident that he or she can solve the key problems in entrepreneurship, this confidence can lead directly to an "I want to do" desire, such as when a college student is confident that they can find a market demand through data analysis, and devise a viable business model, they shift from a wait-and-see mindset to a start-up mindset^[4]. However, if students have doubts about their ability, even if they find a gap in the market, they are held back by fear of being unable to cope with financial pressures or mismanagement. This internal drive is not constant, but like a flame, the stronger the self-efficacy, the stronger the flame, pushing individuals to actively search for resources and learn skills to fill the gap. For example, after winning an innovation competition, an engineering student's vague idea of starting a business is strengthened by the belief that "I can do a good job at technology development," and he or she starts working on a prototype. However, it is not naive optimism. High self-efficacy does not ignore risk. It is believing that you have the flexibility to solve problems. This kind of grounded confidence turns entrepreneurial motivation from a pipe dream into an actionable goal.

3.2 The impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on decision-making propensity and behavioural persistence

In the face of uncertainty in the process of entrepreneurship, individual decision-making and persistence are often deeply bound with self-efficacy. People with high self-efficacy tend to adopt proactive strategies, such as quickly adjusting products or seeking partnerships when the market changes, rather than waiting passively. In the face of failure, they attribute the problem to inadequate methods rather than a lack of capacity. They choose to optimise solutions rather than abandon projects. For example, two students who tried a campus food delivery service also experienced a decline in orders. Those with high self-efficacy took the initiative to research user needs and launch a customised menu, while those with low self-efficacy suspended operations. This difference stems from individuals' confidence in their problem-solving abilities. Those with strong self-efficacy are like travellers with a navigation system; even when they encounter detours, they can plan a new route. In contrast, those with weak self-efficacy are more likely to lose their way. In addition, behavioural persistence is about expectations of outcome: when a person believes that long-term commitment will yield results, he or she is more willing to tolerate initial difficulties, for example, students of educational apps who believe that "Continuous iteration improves the user experience" will continue to update features even if initial downloads are slow, their persistence is essentially delayed gratification supported by a sense of efficacy.

3.3 The mediating and moderating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in entrepreneurial behaviour

The particularity of entrepreneurial self-efficacy is that it can not only act as a "Middle bridge" to connect the influence of resources and environment on behaviour but also act as a "Regulating valve" to change the utility intensity of external factors^[5]. External resources, such as policy support or mentoring, can only be translated into action through the individual's perception that "I can make good use of these resources". If students lack self-efficacy, even if they receive entrepreneurial funding, they may leave the funds idle due to their fear of taking risks and failing, resulting in a

disconnect between resources and actions. At the same time, when faced with the same level of stress (such as the conflict between academic and entrepreneurial time), high self-efficacy people will adopt "Priority management" coping, while low self-efficacy people are prone to anxiety avoidance; this suggests a moderating effect on the relationship between stress and behaviour. The typical scenario is that when the technology research and development is blocked, the team with strong self-efficacy will choose to dismantle the problem and solve it in stages, while the team with weak self-efficacy will directly stagnate, resulting in entirely different behaviour paths in the same situation.

4 Conclusion

This paper clarifies the role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in college students' entrepreneurial behaviour, reveals its direct driving effect on the stimulation of entrepreneurial motivation and the strengthening of decision-making persistence, and analyses the mediating and moderating paths, explains how to transform external resources into action and change the risk response model. Therefore, universities and entrepreneurship support institutions should jump out of the framework of single-skill training and build a cultivation system covering belief shaping, situation simulation and positive feedback so as to enhance students' sense of control through immersive entrepreneurship sand table, promote the transformation of entrepreneurship education from "Experience transfer" to "Psychological empowerment", and provide more accurate support for the sustainable and healthy development of college students' entrepreneurial behaviour.

About the Author

Huaguo Liang, master, lecturer, research interests: Software Engineering, entrepreneurship education for college students.

References

- [1] Jiexi Shen, Yuanzheng Wu, Jie Ni. Research on the relationship between self-efficacy, entrepreneurial role models and entrepreneurial intention of college students with financial difficulties[J]. Heilongjiang Science, 2025,16(01): 38-44.
- [2] Ye Zhang, Chengye Wang, he Yunjie He, et al. . College students' creativity and entrepreneurial intention: the moderating effect of self-efficacy and entrepreneurship education [J]. Journal of Science and Education, 2023, (16):1-6.
- [3] Huihui Li, Shasha Huang, Junhua Sun, etc. . Social support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial well-being [J]. Foreign Economics and Management, 2022,44(08):42-56.
- [4] Xiu'e Zhang, Chao Wang, Shuai Li. Institutional Environment, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention [J]. Research management, 2022,43(05):59-66.
- [5] Zhonghui Jiang, Xiaoyang Wang, Junmei Luo. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and Innovation Opportunity Identification: A moderated mediation model[J]. Science and technology management research, 2022,42(08):156-162.