

The Driving Mechanism of Rural Youth Self-Employment: Innovation or Imitation?

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Supported by the Zhejiang Province Soft Science Research Project (2020C35028); 2021 Student scientific research project of Wenzhou business school: Research on the influence of College Students' entrepreneurial motivation on Entrepreneurial Performance (XSKY20210029); Research on the structure of College Students' entrepreneurial ability and the optimization path of entrepreneurial education(XSKY20210032).

Received 27 September 2021; accepted 23 November 2021

Published online 26 December 2021

Abstract

“Whether to start a business” and “Which industry to choose” in the entrepreneurial behavior of rural youth will show interesting characteristics of “path dependence”. At the same time, the rural natural environment, financial environment, social environment, policy environment, cultural environment and more other external environment also have an important influence on the entrepreneurial behavior of rural youth. Under the background of the current of times and rural revitalization strategy of “mass entrepreneurship and innovation” to further promote the entrepreneurship of rural youth and improve the level of independent entrepreneurship that depends on revealing the growth mechanism of rural youth independent entrepreneurship. Is there “entrepreneurial imitation” in rural youth entrepreneurship? Entrepreneurial imitation through what kind of transmission path to affect independent entrepreneurial decision-making? Do individual heterogeneity and entrepreneurial environment play a moderating effect in imitative entrepreneurship?

Key words: Entrepreneurship; Motivation mechanism; Entrepreneurial imitation; Entrepreneurial behavior

Zhang, X. Q., Zhang, L. L., Tu, G. H., & Yuan, W. (2021). The Driving Mechanism of Rural Youth Self-Employment: Innovation

or Imitation?. *Canadian Social Science*, 17(6), 51-55. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/12347>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12347>

1. INTRODUCTION

According to “the Monitoring and Survey Report of 2018 National Migrant Workers”, the total number of migrant workers kept increasing in 2018, but the growth rate continued to decrease (Huang, 2020). Migrant workers are mainly young and middle-aged. Among them, the proportion of 16-30 years old (that is the post-86s) accounted for 34.7%, and the 31-40 years old (that is the post-76s) accounted for 22.8%. Obviously, the new generation of “post-80s” migrant workers has become an absolute main group (Sun, 2020). Due to the obvious differences between the “post-80s” migrant workers and the older generation of migrant workers in their personality, educational level, value orientation, and lifestyle, so they are called the new generation of migrant workers, and were formally proposed in the 2010 Central Document No. 1. The new generation of migrant workers grew up in the Internet era, their access to knowledge and information has been fundamentally different from the previous generation of migrant workers, and their entrepreneurial willingness and behavior are significantly different from the previous generation of migrant workers (Chen, 2020). Regrettably that although the existing research on farmer entrepreneurship attaches great importance to the value of social capital or social relationship network in the identification and development of entrepreneurial opportunities, it often ignores the influence of the Internet. So it is need to analyze the theory mechanism of the new generation of migrant workers using social capital to identify entrepreneurial opportunities in the Internet era, construct a research framework model, and obtain first-hand data through questionnaire surveys for empirical analysis, so as to improve the identification of

opportunities of logical mechanism that social capital affecting the new generation of migrant workers in the Internet era and enrich the empirical evidence.

2. RESEARCH STATUS AT HOME AND ABROAD

In order to systematically sort out the related literatures about entrepreneurship imitation at home and abroad, seize on the current research hotspot tendency, and refine the research problems that need to be further resolved, the foreign literatures published between 2000 and 2018 are indexed by Elsevier Science, Emerald, Springer-Link, Proquest, EBSCO, etc. A total of 27 documents in English that meet the requirements were selected. In the same way, using keywords such as “imitation entrepreneurship”, “entrepreneurship imitation”, “entrepreneurship + imitation” to search in the Chinese CNKI database, a total of 19 Chinese documents that met the requirements were collected. After sorting out the 46 Chinese and English documents retrieved above, it is found that the research on imitation entrepreneurship mainly focuses on several aspects of the concept and connotation of imitative entrepreneurship, the motivation of imitative entrepreneurship, the way of imitative entrepreneurship, the characteristics of imitative entrepreneurship, the influencing factors of imitative entrepreneurship, and the results of imitative entrepreneurship etc.

From the perspective of research topics, foreign scholars pay more attention to macro-level issues, while domestic scholars pay more attention to the micro-issues of the analysis within enterprises. Generally speaking, foreign research on imitative entrepreneurship is in a leading position. When discussing the process of entrepreneurship from the beginning, the concept of imitative entrepreneurship was mentioned, and then some scholars studied how entrepreneurial companies choose to imitate entrepreneurial activities from the perspective of strategic choice, some scholars have studied the impact of imitative entrepreneurship on economic growth, and why imitative entrepreneurial activities are carried out, what types of enterprises are imitated, what kind of performance it leads to. Until the past two years, scholars have begun to study the importance of imitative entrepreneurship from a macro perspective such as the industry level and the national level (Liang, Sun, & Hu, 2020). However, domestic research on imitative entrepreneurship started late. At the beginning, scholars studied the impact of imitative entrepreneurship costs on the results of imitative entrepreneurship, and then began to discuss the decision-making of imitative entrepreneurship, and its influencing factors, and the transformation path from imitative entrepreneurship to innovative entrepreneurship. Recently, some scholars have begun to discuss the impact of imitative entrepreneurship on entrepreneurial performance, and imitative

entrepreneurial activities in clusters, and related policies and their impact on imitative entrepreneurship (Ma, 2020).

Few scholars take Zhejiang Province that highly developed marketization degree and rural entrepreneurship as a research sample to discuss entrepreneurial imitation, entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial performance. Whether the phenomena of highly developed entrepreneurial clusters in rural areas in Zhejiang can also get more convincing explanation based on the above logics? It is planned to take the self-employment behavior of rural youth in Zhejiang Province as the specific research object, take the rural self-employed youth as the specific observation sample, based on social network, resource acquisition theory and organizational learning theory, focus on self-employment, introduce entrepreneurial imitation and entrepreneurial environment interactivity, build a theoretical analysis framework of “entrepreneur imitation + entrepreneurial environment/individual heterogeneity → entrepreneurial decision-making/entrepreneurial performance”, construct an entrepreneurial micro-database, use historical measurement and structural equation models to systematically explore the internal logics of generation and development to open up the “black box” of rural youth self-employment behavior, so as to build an appropriate policy system and provide an integrated analysis framework for promoting self-employment of rural youth.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Data Sources

According to 4 discriminating conditions to randomly select representative new generation of migrant workers and entrepreneurs as the survey objects: with rural household registration; under the age of 35, with a certain years of work experience; the entrepreneurship field is an expansion and extension on the basis of traditional agriculture, and reach the large-scale operation of traditional agriculture; the start-up time is within 1 year of the survey time point to ensure that the entrepreneurial opportunity is in the early stage of entrepreneurial activities. The research group conducted a face-to-face questionnaire survey of the new generation of migrant workers from all over the country in Zhejiang Province. A total of 146 questionnaires were distributed on the spot, and 118 were returned on the spot, with a recovery rate of 80.8%. Excluding incomplete or logical errors, 107 valid questionnaires were obtained; the effective rate is 90.7%.

3.2 Variable Design

Dependent variable: Whether the entrepreneurial opportunity can be identified and whether the identified entrepreneurial opportunity is imitation or innovation. Entrepreneurship opportunity is identified as a 0-1 variable, it cannot be 0, it can be 1, 48.3% of the survey samples identified entrepreneurial opportunities; whether

imitation or innovative of entrepreneurship opportunities are 0-1 variables, imitation is 0, innovation is 1, and the 30 % of samples identifies innovative opportunities.

Independent variables: strong joint and weak joint social capital. The former mainly refers to the closeness of connections based on “kinship, geography, and blood relationship”; the latter mainly refers to the connection closeness degree of between acquaintances. They measure the number and frequency that contact with relatives, friends/acquaintances respectively.

Regulated variable: Internet use and Geographical differences of entrepreneurship. The former measures the average number of hours that the new generation of migrant workers use each day. The latter chooses entrepreneurs to start businesses in developed areas or return to their hometowns. The former takes a value of 1, and the latter takes 0.

Control variables: The entrepreneur’s gender, age, education, marital status, working years, whether his parents start a business and other demographic characteristics will affect the identification of social capital and entrepreneurial opportunities, as a control variable.

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

First of all, a descriptive statistical analysis is conducted. A total of 107 people answered this questionnaire. According to the data analysis in the figure, it can be seen that most of the subjects who filled out this questionnaire were born before 2000 after 1980, and the main subjects were 20-40 years old. Among them, the proportion of men and women is balanced, the marital status is the first marriage, the current residence is Zhejiang Province, the household registration is agricultural household registration, and mainly are the non-country cadres, with talents of all academic qualifications, which provides a basis for the different academic qualifications investigation of rural youth self-employment behavior. Most people have experience of working outside, mainly in the sales industry. At the same time, most people are starting their own businesses and have experience related to the current entrepreneurial industry, which reflect that most entrepreneurs choose their entrepreneurial direction to be related to the industry they experience or engage in. In terms of policy understanding, most entrepreneurs

Table 1
The Analysis of Regression Results

Summary of regression analysis results

Variables	Dependent variable: whether identify entrepreneurial opportunities				Dependent variable: Innovation or imitation			
	Powerful joint		Weak joint		Powerful joint		Start a business away from home weak joint	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
Number of Contacts	0.546*** (0.201)	0.572*** (0.517)	0.360*** (0.153)	1.040** (0.446)	-0.307*** (0.105)	-0.431*** (0.114)	0.732*** (0.305)	0.490** (0.246)
Contact Frequency	0.049 (0.202)		0.248** (0.229)	1.531*** (0.507)	-0.234** (0.124)	0.049 (0.211)	0.531** (0.125)	0.041* (0.230)

To be continued

are only in a state of understanding of the policy and are not familiar with it, indicating that the promotion of the policy have not been done enough.

4.2 The Verification of Impact Effect

4.2.1 Social Capital and the Ability to Identify Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The social capital model of powerful joint. “The number of contacts with relatives and friends is at the 1% significance level that passed the significance test, indicating that there are normally a lot of the number of contacts with relatives and friends, which can increase the rate of the new generation of migrant workers identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, and the development of entrepreneurial activities objectively also needs to expand powerful joint relationship, which in line with expectations.”The rate of contacting relatives and friends” failed of the testing, probably because the emotional needs implied in the frequency of contacting relatives and friends and entrepreneurial needs are mixed together. The difference of above two groups whether the new generation of migrant workers start a business is not significantly.

Weak joint social capital model. The two dimensions of “number of contact acquaintances” and “frequency of contact acquaintances” are at the significance level of 1% and 5% respectively that shows pass the significance test, and the coefficient is positive, indicating that there are more contacts and frequent contacts every month , which can increase the probability of the new generation of migrant workers to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, and improve the ability of the new generation of migrant workers to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, in line with expectations. From the T test of the coefficient value, the former is significantly larger than the latter, indicating that the scale of weak joint has a greater impact on the new generation of migrant workers in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities than the frequency of contacts.

4.2.2 The Impact of Social Capital on Identifying Imitation or Innovation Opportunities

Powerful joint social capital model. The scale and frequency of Powerful joint social capital have a significant negative impact on the identification of innovative opportunities, and the contact scale has a greater impact on the attributes of entrepreneurial opportunities than the contact frequency. This indicates that the powerful joint network of the new generation of migrant workers contribute to identification of imitative entrepreneurial opportunities.

Continued

Variables	Dependent variable: whether identify entrepreneurial opportunities				Dependent variable: Innovation or imitation			
	Powerful joint		Weak joint		Powerful joint		Start a business away from home weak joint	
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
The use of Internet		1.340** (0.434)		0.829** (0.217)				
Number of Contacts* the use of Internet		0.341*** (0.152)		0.408*** (0.141)				
Contact Frequency* the use of Internet				0.463*** (0.154)				
Entrepreneurial location						0.228** (0.102)		0.121** (0.074)
Number of Contacts* Entrepreneurial region						0.301*** (0.051)		0.271* (0.152)
Contact Frequency* Entrepreneurial region								0.151* (0.143)
Age	0.741** (0.320)	0.646* (0.344)	0.510 (0.351)	0.462 (0.325)	-0.545*** (0.138)	-0.868*** (0.204)	-0.461*** (0.122)	-0.851*** (0.222)
Gender	0.661** (0.243)	0.715** (0.309)	0.637* (0.335)	0.457 (0.301)	-0.524*** (0.160)	-0.615*** (0.219)	-0.508*** (0.335)	-0.657*** (0.245)
Academic qualifications	1.078*** (0.178)	0.958*** (0.225)	0.991*** (0.186)	0.874*** (0.201)	-0.675*** (0.124)	-0.692*** (0.124)	-0.671*** (0.0142)	-0.640*** (0.122)
Marital Status	-0.141 (0.364)	-0.224 (0.367)	-0.114 (0.372)	-0.104 (0.391)	0.457** (0.210)	0.381* (0.229)	0.572*** (0.261)	0.424** (0.242)
Years of working experience	0.514*** (0.183)	0.571*** (0.192)	0.491*** (0.184)	0.457** (0.193)	0.032 (0.117)	0.045 (0.114)	0.097 (0.741)	-0.028 (0.124)
Whether parents started a business	-0.216 (0.367)	-0.266 (0.381)	-0.162 (0.351)	-0.131 (0.355)	0.172 (0.175)	0.251 (0.221)	0.164 (0.443)	0.314 (0.232)
Intercept	-7.717*** (1.321)	-3.141 (1.923)	-6.445*** (1.275)	-5.941*** (1.187)	3.124*** (0.641)	3.243*** (0.741)	2.945*** (0.346)	3.16*** (0.814)
Chi2	312.603***	311.310***	343.204***	306.506***	168.201**	139.035**	142.616**	140.307**

Weak joint social capital model. The scale and frequency of weak joint social capital have a significant positive impact on the identification of innovative opportunities, and the contact scale has a greater impact on the attributes of entrepreneurial opportunities than the contact frequency, indicating that the weak joint network of the new generation of migrant workers is helpful for the identification of innovative entrepreneurial opportunities.

4.2.3 The Impact of Returning To Hometown to Start A Business or Starting A Business Away From Home

The impact of choosing to start a business away from home on the relationship between weak joint social capital and innovative entrepreneurial opportunities. The interaction term between the entrepreneurial location and the number of contacts per month, and the interaction term between the entrepreneurial location and the frequency of contacts are significantly positive, indicating that the entrepreneurial location has a significant moderating effect on the weak joint relationship and identification of innovative entrepreneurial opportunities, and its adjustable direction is positive. That is, as the new generation of migrant workers choose to start businesses away from home (urban or developed areas), the social capital they can rely on is mainly social capital with weak joint relationship, and the role of powerful joint social capital has almost disappeared. At the same time, compared with the rural or underdeveloped places that the new generation of migrant workers are familiar with in their childhood, weak joint social capital provides a lot of

novel, unfamiliar and even surprising information, which has given birth to identifying innovative entrepreneurial opportunities.

The impact of choosing to return hometown to start a business on powerful joint social capital and imitative entrepreneurial opportunities. The interaction term between entrepreneurial location and the number of contacts with relatives and friends per month is significantly positive, which shows that choosing to return hometown to start a business has a significant positive moderating effect on the identification of powerful joint and imitative entrepreneurial opportunities. That is, as the new generation of migrant workers choose to return to their hometowns to start businesses, the network of relatives and friends that has been affecting them will continue to surround entrepreneurs. Their time and energy will be immersed in the homogeneous information of the powerful joint network, and even their thinking mode will be assimilated by relatives and friends at hometown to a certain extent, so it enlarges the possibility of identifying imitation opportunities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The social capital of the new generation of migrant workers helps to identify entrepreneurial opportunities. Powerful joint social capital helps to identify imitative entrepreneurial opportunities, and weak joint social capital helps to identify innovative entrepreneurial opportunities. The use of the Internet has magnified the value of the new generation of migrant workers' social capital to the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities, which has a significant positive regulatory effect. At the same time,

when the new generation of migrant workers choose between starting a business away from home or returning to their hometown, as a stranger in developed areas with weak joint network and as a people in hometown in underdeveloped area with powerful joint network that affect their identification of entrepreneurial opportunities. The former is conducive to identifying innovative opportunities, and the latter is conducive to imitative opportunities. This means that the new generation of migrant workers chooses to return to their hometown to start a business or to start a business away from home, they choose to imitate or innovate to a certain extent.

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