



ERJ Special Issue Call for Paper

“The Health and Well-Being of Entrepreneurs, Family Business CEOs, and Stakeholders in Times of Crises”

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Background and Special Issue Purpose:

Entrepreneurial well-being and mental health are critical for the sustained success and growth of businesses, as they significantly influence decision-making, innovation, and leadership effectiveness. Research has shown that entrepreneurs often face high levels of stress due to the responsibilities and uncertainties associated with starting and managing a business (Czakov et al., 2024). When a business fails, this stress can be compounded by financial loss, perceived loss of status, and fear of future uncertainty (Castellanza and Woywode, 2024; Neneh, 2024; Stephan, 2018; Turnalar-Çetinkaya and İslamoğlu, 2024). Poor mental health among entrepreneurs can lead to diminished productivity, creativity, and can adversely impact their company's overall performance and longevity (Hessels et al., 2017). Therefore, prioritizing mental health and well-being is not only essential for the individual's quality of life but also for fostering a resilient and thriving business environment. In addition, mental health can be defined as a state of well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to achieve fulfilment, to work well and to contribute to their communities (Pan American Health Organization, 2023). For instance, in a survey carried out in April 2021, Santé Publique France noted a high prevalence of anxiety, depression, sleep problems and suicidal thoughts - particularly among young people and people in precarious situations (Michel et al., 2022). This finding is particularly worrying, given that the public health crisis has given way to an economic and social crisis, marked by a significant rise in inflation (INSEE, 2022).

Entrepreneurs faced significant disruptions such as supply chain breakdowns, financial instability, and shifting market demands, which intensified the psychological strain and compromised their mental health (Ratten, 2020). For instance, the COVID-19 crisis has had a profound impact on the mental health and well-being of entrepreneurs, exacerbating stress, anxiety, and burnout due to unprecedented challenges and uncertainties in the business environment. According to Lee et al., (2024), COVID-19 led to restrictions on movement and mobility due to the heightened risk of disease transmission, causing significant societal disconnection between individuals and locations. Indeed, the isolation resulting from remote work and the lack of social interaction further exacerbated mental health concerns (Prah and Sibiri, 2021). The latter has also been weakened (Caliendo et al., 2023; St-Jean et al., 2022), with a marked increase in stress (Ahmed et al., 2022; Block et al., 2022). Stress can be defined as a state of chronic tension resulting from a perceived discrepancy between the objectives to be achieved and the means available to the individual (Mesler et al., 2022). This pandemic has had a significant impact on entrepreneurs and their businesses across the globe as well (Lee et al., 2024; Manolova et al., 2020; Ratten, 2020; Ratten, 2021). The impact of Covid-19 on entrepreneurs can be observed in various aspects, including financial implications, operational changes, market dynamics, and mental health challenges (Handoko and Tjaturpriono, 2023; Lee et al., 2024). The pressure of keeping businesses afloat amidst economic turmoil, making difficult decisions regarding layoffs or furloughs, and managing personal well-being took a toll on many entrepreneurs. Stress has also been accompanied by anxiety. Anxiety is an emotional state of nervousness, unease and tension resulting from threatening circumstances (Zhang et al., 2023). An anxious state can lead to sleep disorders (Guiliani and Torrès, 2018; St-Jean et al., 2022), depression (Caliendo et al., 2023), burnout (Torrès et al., 2022) and even suicide (Cubbon et al., 2021). While this deterioration in mental health is linked to excessive workloads,

it is also explained by the financial consequences of the pandemic (Patel and Rietveld, 2020). According to the OECD (2021a), the pandemic and associated restrictions have led to the deepest global recession for almost a century: GDP in OECD-area countries, for example, fell by 1.8% in the first quarter of 2020, then by 10.6% in the second. This unprecedented recession has also been characterized by a significant fall in sales. Indeed, among the SMEs that remained open from May to December 2020, between 55% and 70% recorded a fall in their sales (OECD, 2021b). While the academic discourse predominantly centers on the implications of COVID-19, it is imperative to consider a broader spectrum of crises to obtain a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of their impacts on entrepreneurial dynamics (Lee et al., 2024). This approach enables the identification of a wide array of challenges and opportunities encountered by entrepreneurs, thereby enhancing the academic discourse on crisis management and its implications for health and well-being.

Social and environmental crises can also have significant impacts on the mental health of entrepreneurs and FF managers. Social crises can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially during periods of social distancing or lockdowns, which can exacerbate mental health issues. These conditions disrupt routine social interactions and communal engagements, which are essential for psychological well-being. The resulting isolation can significantly exacerbate preexisting mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, by removing critical support networks and increasing individuals' vulnerability to stress and emotional distress (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Furthermore, prolonged periods of isolation can lead to a decline in mental health due to the lack of social stimulation and support, further highlighting the need for effective mental health interventions during such crises (Banerjee and Rai, 2020). Moreover, natural disasters and environmental hazards can severely disrupt business operations, leading to significant stress over restoring normalcy and rebuilding. The compounded stress of managing these disruptions, coordinating recovery efforts, and implementing rebuilding initiatives can place considerable psychological strain on business owners and managers. Research has shown that the imperative to restore normalcy under such challenging conditions can exacerbate stress levels and adversely affect mental health, leading to heightened anxiety, burnout, and other stress-related issues (Corey and Deitch, 2011).

Addressing and maintaining the mental health of entrepreneurs and FF CEOs presents a critical societal challenge (Stephan et al., 2023). A 'less happy' entrepreneur tends to be less innovative and productive, which in turn diminishes job creation. This issue is particularly significant considering that SMEs comprise 99% of businesses in the European Union, accounting for approximately 95 million jobs (European Commission, 2023; European Union, 2018). This aligns with the Ottawa Charter (1986), which highlights good health as a crucial resource for social, economic, and individual progress, and underscores the well-being of entrepreneurs as fundamentally a human concern. Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affirms everyone's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The impact of various crises on mental health significantly differs based on entrepreneurs' age, socioeconomic status, and resource access. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has profoundly affected entrepreneurs' mental health globally. This special issue aims to explore the factors that worsen mental health for entrepreneurs and managers during crises, focusing on SMEs, family firms, and social enterprises. Additionally, it will examine individual

resilience, highlighting that mentally healthy entrepreneurs demonstrate greater perseverance, opportunity identification, and success (Stephan, 2018; Turnalar-Çetinkaya and İslamoğlu, 2024).

A longitudinal study of entrepreneurial stress (Monsen and Wayne Boss, 2009) would be valuable for understanding the origins and impacts—both positive and negative—of stress on business operations. Such research could help develop targeted support systems to manage emotions that disrupt entrepreneurial functioning (Williamson et al., 2021). Scholars might also explore the role of ruminations in entrepreneurial well-being (Battisti and Hatak, 2022) and map their emergence across different phases (Heichelbech and Paraschiv, 2022). Research samples could include start-ups, FF, takeovers, and various demographic categories (e.g., women, men, young people, farmers). Encouraging international comparisons would enhance understanding of how institutional mechanisms influence entrepreneurial emotions. This special issue welcomes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies, particularly those incorporating longitudinal approaches and innovative sources or methodologies.

Examples of research questions that may be addressed (without being exhaustive):

- How have the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the related restrictions influenced the mental health and psychological well-being of entrepreneurs, FF CEOs, and their stakeholders?
- How have remote work and pandemic-related restrictions specifically impacted the mental health and psychological well-being of entrepreneurs, FF CEOs, and their stakeholders?
- How do the mental health experiences of entrepreneurs and FF CEOs in developed countries differ during economic, social, and environmental crises when compared to those of their counterparts in other regions of the world?
- How have policies and institutional mechanisms facilitated or impeded the management of stress and anxiety among entrepreneurs, FF CEOs, and stakeholders during various economic, social, and environmental crises?
- What resilience strategies have entrepreneurs, FF CEOs, and stakeholders implemented to address the mental and economic challenges brought about by various crises?
- In what ways has stress stemming from crises impacted the innovation capacity and productivity of entrepreneurs, FF CEOs, and stakeholders?
- Are there significant differences in the impact of various crises on mental health among different types of entrepreneurs, such as young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, agri-entrepreneurs, FF CEOs, or other stakeholders?

This non-exhaustive list can be enriched with contributions addressing the topic through other disciplines.

Deadlines, Submission and Review Process:

Dates to remember	Expectations
<i>February 2025</i>	Launch of the call via social networks, newsletters, and scholarly platforms like FNEGE, AEI, EURAM.
<i>April 15, 2025</i>	The special issue will be presented at the first edition of the Family Business Day, held at Excelia Business School in La Rochelle.
<i>June 25-27, 2025</i>	The special issue will be presented at AEI 2025.
<i>July 7, 2025</i>	A webinar to discuss the intentions and support the authors in the papers' development
<i>October 30, 2025</i>	Deadline for submitting full papers.
<i>November 30, 2025</i>	Decisions of reject or proceed to the review process
<i>January 15, 2025</i>	Decision of reject or first round of review
<i>February 28, 2025</i>	Decision of reject or second round
<i>March 30, 2025</i>	Third round / acceptance
<i>April 30, 2025</i>	Final decisions
<i>January 2026</i>	Special Issue publication

Contributors should follow the directions contained in the ERJ manuscript submission guidelines: file:///C:/Users/omriw/Downloads/ERJ_Author%20Guidelines.pdf

Further Information:

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