
Guest editorial: Health and well-being in entrepreneurship: advancing the field through research and practice

1. Introduction

Research on work and employee health has a long tradition (e.g. [Spector et al., 2002](#)). This line of research has adopted a variety of viewpoints to include how employees with health concerns or disabilities interact with their work environment ([Schinoff et al., n.d.](#)) and how the work environment affects employee health and well-being ([Fritz and Sonnentag, 2006](#)) and related theoretical integrations and measurement approaches (e.g. [Grant et al., 2007](#)). This interface of health, well-being and the workplace has largely emphasized wage work in organizational entities that have established systems, predictable hierarchies or resources to create healthy workplaces. However, not all organizations have such established practices or resources. In particular, entrepreneurial action and the new venture environment are one important yet still poorly understood context for the interface of well-being and work ([Stephan, 2018](#)) and the focus of this special issue.

We believe that the unique and challenging context of entrepreneurship can have enhancing and/or inhibiting effects on an individual's health and well-being (e.g. [Cardon and Arwine, 2023](#); [Wiklund et al., 2019](#)). This can include the wide and broadly applicable means by which entrepreneurs motivate themselves in the business startup process ([Hahn et al., 2012](#)) to how they cope with stresses and strains associated with entrepreneurial activities ([Nikolaev et al., 2023](#)). An individual's own physical and mental health characteristics or disabilities are part of what is "brought to the table" as they engage in the uncertainty of entrepreneurial efforts and the extreme competition and risk-taking necessary to succeed influence these individuals in notable ways.

Thus, the purpose of this special issue is to offer researchers, regardless of discipline, the opportunity to examine theoretical and empirical questions related to entrepreneurship, health and well-being. This opportunity is informed by previous reviews of this literature stream ([Lerman et al., 2021](#); [Stephan et al., 2023](#); [Williamson et al., 2021](#)) and seeks to clarify or expand ongoing conversations related to this topic area. Overall, we hope that the papers presented here offer new ways for researchers and authors to expand their understanding and promote further interest in the entrepreneurship and well-being research and practice interface.

Based on our editorial panel and the involvement of noteworthy reviewers of IJEER, we present 10 papers that reflect several themes related to our special issue topic area. These 10 papers were chosen for their contributions to our special issue focus and have been organized into four general themes. Our first theme centers on theoretical frameworks and systematic reviews that capture the interface of entrepreneurship and health and well-being. These papers include efforts to integrate unexamined theories within the entrepreneurship domain on health and well-being. Our second theme focuses on the entrepreneur themselves and their own characteristics. This theme examines how individual entrepreneurs' characteristics relate to their health and well-being outcomes. Our third theme extends our understanding by examining health and well-being across the entrepreneurial process, including interventions. Finally, we present several papers that are focused on measurement and practice at the intersection of health, well-being and entrepreneurship.

Below, we provide summaries of the main themes we identified in our accepted papers. Following these summaries, we discuss our insights and potential future avenues to explore at the interface of health, well-being and entrepreneurship.



2. ENT health and well-being integrated reviews and frameworks

A key theme from our special issue studies is the broader insights that integrate different theoretical frameworks or provide a review of prior studies, offering new direction for research within the health and well-being literature and entrepreneurship. A short review of these papers and some of their insights is provided below.

To begin, a systematic review by [Yang et al. \(2026\)](#) integrates research on family support (FS), work-life balance (WLB), work-family interface (WFI) and entrepreneurial well-being (EWB) using the PRISMA protocol, the SPIDER framework and 47 peer-reviewed empirical studies (1987–2024). Their aim is to bring together these four relatively disconnected literature into a unified conceptual framework, as earlier work consistently shows that family and social roles (conflict as well as enrichment) affect well-being among both employees and entrepreneurs.

Their review focuses on three questions: How does FS influence EWB? How does WLB/WFI mediate the FS–EWB relationship? What factors moderate the FS–WLB/WFI–EWB relationship? In other words, the question shifts from whether FS matters to how, when and for whom it influences EWB. Their final unifying framework is a must-read for students of how WLB/WFI mediates between its antecedents (FS) and its outcomes (EWB). This simple but significant framework paves the way for future research avenues such as replication studies, a more dynamic role of FS, identifying entrepreneurial identity and leadership dynamics and investigating the psychological mechanisms underlying the framework and the role of modern ways of working (remotely and digitalized) ([Yang et al., 2026](#)).

Taken together, the dual role of family and social support in entrepreneurial well-being, acting as both an enrichment resource and a source of conflict, moderated by many (potential) factors, is clearly brought to the fore while integrating diverse theoretical perspectives. Finally, special attention is devoted to the roles of gender and non-Western studies, thereby broadening our understanding of these important constructs beyond Western-oriented studies.

Other studies in this issue directly attempt to integrate different theoretical frameworks to create new opportunities to understand and practically impact entrepreneurs and their well-being. One such paper by [Jones Christensen and Embry \(2026\)](#) provides a trauma-informed perspective that demonstrates how trauma exposure may alter the foundational human resource of the new venture – namely, the entrepreneur. This perspective challenges existing operationalizations of what this human capital resource is about. Existing approaches often emphasize characteristics such as education, skills or entrepreneurial experience as means to understand entrepreneurial human capital, but what is missing is the role that prior trauma exposure can play in an entrepreneur’s well-being and ultimate success as a new venture founder.

To what extent is trauma exposure relevant to entrepreneurial health and well-being? [Jones Christensen and Embry \(2026\)](#) provide compelling evidence that trauma exposure is both widespread and underrecognized and can have powerful consequences to health and well-being for people. Research demonstrates that trauma exposure can have long-lasting effects (e.g. [Benjet et al., 2016](#)), and existing research in entrepreneurship can be found in entrepreneurial ecosystems that often have disproportionate exposure to trauma, including refugees and veterans ([Shepherd and Williams, 2020](#); [Nafari and Ruebottom, 2025](#)). Thus, their paper moves trauma-related conditions beyond just niche populations to a relevant explanatory factor that can shape entrepreneurial action.

In particular, [Jones Christensen and Embry \(2026\)](#) framework emphasizes Herman’s trauma theory (Herman, 1992). This theory is roughly composed of three specific patterns of influence related to past trauma exposure. These include (1) hyperarousal, which is the activation of hypervigilance states that can impair concentration and cognitive processing; (2) intrusion, which is the possible episodic “flashbacks” that impair functioning and can affect memory recall, and (3) constriction, which reflects the dissociation or potential reduced emotional engagement that affects motivation or mood. These patterns of influence can occur and have significant influence on important entrepreneurial processes to include

stakeholder engagement, decision-making and ultimately entrepreneurial well-being (Jones Christensen and Embry, 2026).

The implications of the trauma-informed insights of Jones Christensen and Embry (2026) are both significant and provide insights into the role of trauma for the entrepreneur and the stakeholders that influence their success. These include identifying and mitigating trauma through interventional strategies and recognizing that entrepreneurial ecosystems, which often focus on training and skill-building, should also consider implementing trauma-informed care as part of their entrepreneurial development and growth approaches.

Finally, a paper focused on theoretical integration is by Sonbol *et al.* (2026). In their paper, they provide a fascinating theoretical conversation and integration of insights from research on suicide and the perceptions that the psychology of entrepreneurship is generally about self-fulfillment, autonomy and well-being (Stephan, 2018). Rather, their paper challenges some prevailing assumptions by highlighting how the entrepreneurial process can be highly influenced by failure, burnout, isolation and other negative well-being characteristics to the degree to which they could lead to suicidal ideation (Sonbol *et al.*, 2026).

To accomplish this integration, Sonbol *et al.* (2026) leverage several theoretical frameworks that touch on the ways in which entrepreneurial stress and extreme contexts can lead to suicidal ideation. These include the interpersonal theory of suicide (Joiner, 2005), the integrated motivational-volitional model (O’Conner, 2011), the three-step theory (Klonsky and May, 2015) and fluid vulnerability theory (Rudd, 2006). These frameworks are reviewed and collectively demonstrate an overall point – that suicidal risk is a cumulative and escalating psychological experience, and suicidal ideation by entrepreneurs can be described by these experiences.

Sonbol *et al.* (2026) provide several important insights into this risk. These insights include the importance of cognitive skill development, the need for destigmatization with respect to entrepreneurial mental health and the risks of suicide and the need for specific mental and social support systems within entrepreneurial ecosystems specifically designed to aid this challenge. Overall, their work is an inspiring attempt to draw attention to the unfortunate reality that there are too many instances where suicide risk is both a prevalent reality for entrepreneurs and yet simultaneously considered an unspoken possibility.

The development of theoretical frameworks and insights from integrative reviews can also lead to specific studies that examine how entrepreneurs’ individual characteristics affect, or lead to, different health and well-being outcomes. Several of our studies provide added insights into this theme.

3. Entrepreneurs’ individual perceptions and health/well-being outcomes

A key study we present is on the role of fairness in entrepreneurial settings (Eib and Bernhard-Oettel, 2026). In the larger literature, investigating fairness at work has a long tradition. Most studies focus on intra-organizational relationships. The study of solo entrepreneurs (owning their businesses and having no employees) is ideally suited to extra-organizational relationships, since they lack intra-organizational relationships and are solely responsible for their extra-organizational ones. In their article, Eib and Bernhard-Oettel (2026) aim to investigate how solo entrepreneurs feel treated by governmental agencies, clients, banks and unions. For this purpose, 453 Swedish solo entrepreneurs were interviewed in 2022. Career satisfaction, self-rated health and self-rated job performance are used to establish the effects of the four dimensions of external fairness. Social exchange theory is used to better understand the results. Taken together, the study aims to enrich the literature on entrepreneurial well-being and fairness. In other words, the study offers a first look at fairness perceptions of entrepreneurs toward different stakeholders and thus extends efforts to study psychological aspects for predicting the well-being of entrepreneurs (Frese and Gielnik, 2023; Stephan, 2018; Torrès and Thurik, 2019; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). A remarkable finding is that perceptions of fairness from governmental agencies and banks are particularly relevant to well-being.

As part of our special issue, we also recognize that the path entrepreneurs choose as they transition from wage work to entrepreneurship has implications for their well-being. This transition context, noted as hybrid entrepreneurship (e.g. Folta *et al.*, 2010), is particularly relevant to entrepreneurial success and well-being (Chouchane *et al.*, 2026).

Not all entrepreneurs “leap in” to the entrepreneurship process. In fact, most move from wage-related work in a transitional way towards entrepreneurship. This transition is defined in our field as hybrid entrepreneurship, which is noted for the dual roles (and potential conflicts) that entrepreneurs must manage as they move from one domain to another (e.g. Carr *et al.*, 2023). Not surprisingly, there are considerable cognitive demands associated with this hybrid experience and Chouchane *et al.* (2026) provide a compelling study on cognition and hybrid entrepreneurs’ well-being.

Using job demands-resources theory (JDR) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), Chouchane *et al.* (2026) propose and test a model examining the cognitive demands experienced by hybrid entrepreneurs with a sample of 228 hybrid entrepreneurs in Quebec, Canada. Their primary research motivation is quite important – How does cognitive multitasking create psychological demands on hybrid entrepreneurs, and to what degree does this have attitudinal and behavioral implications for them as they move through the hybrid entrepreneurship process?

Their paper recognizes an interesting paradox: hybrids face both resource advantages from their potential dual income streams and considerable cognitive demands as they manage both roles. Cognitive multitasking can, in fact, lead to cognitive processing overload, and thus, there are potential negative implications for hybrid entrepreneurs (Chouchane *et al.*, 2026). Using measures of self-rated health, perceived stress and sleep quality as their outcomes, their study finds that cognitive multitasking can significantly contribute to psychological distress and that the “switching costs” related to their cognitive multitasking can be important predictors for entrepreneurial ill-being.

These individual studies highlight how individual entrepreneurs’ own characteristics can influence their well-being and venture success. Extending this line of inquiry, we include studies in this special issue that explore broader entrepreneurial processes and their implications for well-being. These studies are provided below.

4. Well-being processes and recovery insights for entrepreneurs

Well-being and entrepreneurial effort are often related to processes connected to context and engagement. Papers in this section study processes and activities that entrepreneurs engage in to enhance well-being including energetic, motivational and recovery process, serious and diversionary play and identity and purpose construction.

The paper by Drnovšek *et al.* (2026), entitled “Unpacking the joint roles of energetic, motivational, and recovery mechanisms in entrepreneurs’ health and performance” draws on the JDR model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017) to test predictions about how strain and motivational pathways may intersect to shape entrepreneurs’ ill-being and work performance. Recovery (objectively measured sleep quality and quantity) is positioned as a boundary condition for both pathways. The study investigates day-to-day within-person fluctuations in strain and motivational processes through a 14-day experience sampling study analyzing 591 daily observations from 60 entrepreneurs. Innovatively, the study combines daily self-reports with Oura ring biometric data to objectively measure sleep quality.

The authors find support for both pathways. Specifically, the motivational pathway consists of the personal resource of self-efficacy driving entrepreneurs’ work performance, an effect that is mediated by greater persistence. There is also support for the strain pathway, which links entrepreneurs’ experience of emotional conflict (a stressor) to their experience of work stress and, in turn, ill-being. Recovery (sleep quality and quantity) moderated the strain pathway, such that entrepreneurs experienced less stress from emotional conflicts on days with good sleep the previous night. Self-efficacy, in addition to its motivational properties of enhancing

persistence and work performance, also mitigated entrepreneurs' experience of work stress, resulting in reduced ill-being.

The study's contribution lies in taking seriously the notion that entrepreneurs work in demanding, fluid and dynamic situations that require entrepreneurs to deploy self-regulation. The diary study design uniquely allows the authors to reveal the fluidity of these dynamics and the combinations of "gains and strains" from one day to the next. In doing so, this study complements and expands our understanding of the micro-level daily dynamics and self-regulatory process (Uy *et al.*, 2017; Wach *et al.*, 2021) through which entrepreneurs navigate their work to perform and thrive. It also corroborates the relevance of the JDR's strain and motivational pathways for entrepreneurs, while simultaneously highlighting daily resource dynamics and self-regulation through the within-person study approach.

Finally, the study also extends the emerging work on the importance of recovery processes for entrepreneurs. The study offers new insight into recovery as an important boundary condition and a psychological resource that can buffer the strain caused by stressors entrepreneurs encounter in their work. This responds to calls to extend our understanding of the role of recovery for entrepreneurs (Williamson *et al.*, 2021) and complements past research that investigates direct effects of recovery on entrepreneurs' well-being, resilience and innovation (Weinberger *et al.*, 2018; Gish *et al.*, 2019; Battisti *et al.*, 2025; Le Moal *et al.*, 2025). The innovative use of daily biometric data to objectively assess sleep as a recovery activity is a particular strength of the study.

Another process-related or intervention study we include investigates the role of entrepreneurial play as psychological and behavioral phenomenon in supporting the well-being of entrepreneurs in small businesses (Mukerjee *et al.*, 2026). This study differentiates between two forms of play: diversionary play (non-work-related pleasurable activities) (Mainemelis and Ronson, 2006; Mukerjee and Metiu, 2022) and serious play (creative and playful approaches to problem-solving within the business context) (Schrage, 2013).

Drawing on the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1988), the study conceptualizes these play behaviors as valuable work-embedded personal resources that potentially enhance entrepreneurs' psychosocial well-being and job satisfaction. The empirical analysis is based on survey data from 260 small business owners in France, utilizing newly developed scales designed to capture entrepreneurial play.

Using COR theory, which asserts that building and preserving personal, material and social resources is critical to managing stress (Hobfoll, 1988, 2001), is important to their insights. Mukerjee *et al.* (2026) adapt this framework for entrepreneurship, a context characterized by intense personal investment and blurred boundaries between work and personal life for business owners, creating unique stressors (Stephan *et al.*, 2023). Serious play is identified as an intrinsic resource directly tied to work activities, helping transform effort into enjoyment and prevent work stress, while diversionary play provides only temporary respite and job satisfaction.

Linear regression analyses are used to assess how the two types of play (serious and diversionary) relate to well-being (eudaimonic and hedonic) and ill-being (stress and burnout) among entrepreneurs. Results by Mukerjee *et al.* (2026) indicate that serious play positively influences psychological well-being, boosts job satisfaction and reduces ill-being, whereas diversionary play mainly increases job satisfaction.

This paper demonstrates the importance of introducing workplace play in entrepreneurship research. Entrepreneurial play may serve as a strategic resource for resilience and future entrepreneurial success. It also contributes empirically by validating two novel measurement scales and highlighting the strong, beneficial impact of serious play on entrepreneurs' mental health. The study underscores the value of integrating playful and creative activities into daily entrepreneurial routines. Overall, their study paves the way for future research in diverse cultural and business contexts. Multi-country comparative studies could help clarify how cultural norms shape the role and impact of play in entrepreneurial well-being.

A similar examination of entrepreneurial well-being recovery processes is provided by [Yousfzai et al. \(2026\)](#). Specifically, they use a qualitative approach to understand how entrepreneurs “negotiate” the tensions they face as they are confronted by stressful contexts and their own individual disabilities. Using 31 in-depth and detailed interviews of disabled entrepreneurs and following a grounded theory approach, they build a 4-stage entrepreneurial process model to describe how entrepreneurs work through their well-being challenges. This model follows an ongoing, nonlinear approach that highlights how, throughout their entrepreneurial path, they change and grow both their ventures, themselves and their entrepreneurial ecosystem community in a constructive fashion ([Yousfzai et al., 2026](#)).

A fundamental point that they make is that well-being is not just something an entrepreneur has (or does not have) but rather a result of efforts that they construct and reconstruct that involve their purpose, their identity and related contextual factors over time. This constitutive process is especially relevant for those entrepreneurs who face physical and mental well-being challenges. As these entrepreneurs move through their initial entrepreneurial journey, this constitutive process evolves and changes along several processual arcs ([Yousfzai et al., 2026](#)). Briefly, these processual arcs begin with the challenges that disabled entrepreneurs face in difficult economic and social contexts. Faced with institutional and other constraints, these entrepreneurs must overcome pushback to both survive and maintain their ventures. As they move through this arc, their understanding of their well-being evolves and allows them to build their competencies around their venture and also see themselves as entrepreneurs who can succeed. Ultimately, as these disabled entrepreneurs move forward, their continuing success allows them to move from individual survival and recovery to serve as mentors and advocates within their own entrepreneurial ecosystems ([Yousfzai et al., 2026](#)). Throughout these processual arcs, their personal well-being becomes a mechanism for fostering collective empowerment among other entrepreneurs with disabilities. The creation and evolution of processual arcs is a key insight gained through [Yousfzai et al.’s \(2026\)](#) study. Their process-focused approach gives a much deeper understanding of the role that well-being can play for disabled entrepreneurs who move from survival to entrepreneurial ecosystem supporters and champions.

5. Measurement and testing in entrepreneurship health and well-being research

Our final theme focuses on measurement and testing, which addresses an additional critical need in this literature. As future studies seek to develop and test well-being theoretical frameworks, the importance of measurement cannot be overstated. We provide two such measurement-related studies in this special issue as examples of these efforts.

[Freeman et al. \(2026\)](#) develop a mental well-being screener questionnaire for entrepreneurs called the “entrepreneur well-being check”. The point of departure is that a short self-report screener questionnaire specifically validated for entrepreneurs is an important first step upon which interventions to support entrepreneurs’ well-being can build. While screening tools exist for the general population, for specific mental disorders and for employees as part of occupational health screening, no such tool is currently available for entrepreneurs.

Based on a large literature review paired with clinical experience, [Freeman et al. \(2026\)](#) develop the entrepreneur well-being check in three steps. First, they establish content and face validity with a sample of 22 USA entrepreneurs. Second, they sample 314, mostly North American, entrepreneurs to establish the screener’s dimensionality, reliability, as well as convergent and criterion relationships with a battery of well-established mental health scales and entrepreneur reports of their business’ growth, IP, stability, and size and challenges. Third, they probe the 6-month retest reliability of the entrepreneur well-being check in a subsample of the 314 entrepreneurs. The study was preregistered.

The entrepreneur well-being check consists of seven items that represent summary statements and which cluster in three key domains: mental health (burnout, negative emotionality and sleep impairment), well-being (thriving and life satisfaction) and functioning

(social and occupational). In terms of dimensionality, a series of factor analyses revealed that the three key domains were strongly interrelated and were best represented by a common factor reflecting the spectrum from well-being to ill-being. This was unexpected, and the authors discuss how this aligns with the entrepreneur mental well-being literature (Stephan, 2018). As part of the development process statements related to substance abuse, anger/hostility and intention to quit were removed from the check due to cross-loadings, etc.

In terms of validity, the entrepreneur well-being check correlated in expected ways with the battery of validated mental health scales at both item and scale levels. It showed expected relationships with all major mental health challenges (e.g. depression, anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, sleep problems and somatic symptoms) but not with mania and substance abuse. Relationships with business performance were small but mostly in the expected direction. Retest reliability was $r = 0.66$ over six months.

Freeman *et al.* (2026) highlight how the entrepreneur well-being check offers a brief instrument suitable for screening entrepreneurs for general mental health concerns that offers, therefore, an important pathway to diagnosing and supporting entrepreneurs' mental health. The brevity of the screener is a key advantage considering the time pressure and constraints that entrepreneurs face. It can help sensitize entrepreneurs to engage with their mental health. The entrepreneur well-being check can also help entrepreneur supporters, from policymakers to incubators, accelerators and educators, gauge the state of entrepreneur mental well-being and provide support if mental well-being is low.

Finally, we offer an interesting article focused on the examination of a common outcome variable with respect to well-being and entrepreneurship – entrepreneurial life satisfaction (Weldert *et al.*, 2026). In their article, they question a central assumption in the literature, namely that entrepreneurs are more satisfied with their lives than non-entrepreneurs, an idea that is often supported exclusively by self-reports. The authors test a rarely discussed explanation, impression management, which appears particularly plausible in entrepreneurial contexts where individuals must present themselves as resilient and successful to attract investors, customers and other stakeholders (Stephan, 2018). The study, therefore, evaluates the robustness of standard life satisfaction measures by integrating alternative methods in order to provide a more valid view of entrepreneurial well-being (Stephan, 2022).

The study relies on a comparative design including 235 entrepreneurs measured at two points in time and 257 non-entrepreneurs. In the first wave, entrepreneurs are exposed to a stimulated investor meeting in the form of an investor interview scenario intended to increase evaluative pressure. Life satisfaction is assessed using Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener *et al.*, 1985), complemented by a one-item measure, and critically compared with two external sources, namely peer ratings and objective quality-of-life indicators, including health status, leisure time, frequent time with family, frequent time with friends and income satisfaction. Impression management is operationalized using a scale derived from organizational psychology research (Bolino and Turnley, 1999).

The results first confirm the established pattern that entrepreneurs report significantly higher life satisfaction than non-entrepreneurs. However, the analysis shows that objective quality-of-life indicators predict self-reported life satisfaction much more accurately among non-entrepreneurs than among entrepreneurs, suggesting that common indicators such as health, income satisfaction and social relationships account less well for entrepreneurs' global life satisfaction judgments. In addition, impression management emerges as an important predictor of self-reported life satisfaction, but this effect is not specific to entrepreneurs, as it also applies to non-entrepreneurs, calling for caution when interpreting self-reported well-being. Finally, the investor interview scenario does not produce the expected increase in reported life satisfaction, which suggests that impression management may operate more subtly in the background, beyond explicitly evaluative situations (Weldert *et al.*, 2026).

From a theoretical perspective, the article contributes by challenging the exclusive reliance on self-reports in research on entrepreneurial well-being. It calls for multi-method approaches, combining objective quality-of-life indicators and peer ratings, to more accurately capture the

mechanisms underlying entrepreneurs' self-reported life satisfaction (Stephan, 2022). From a practical perspective, the study warns against overly simplistic conclusions, suggesting that entrepreneur well-being support programs should not mechanically transfer interventions built on general population evidence but rather align with the dimensions that may truly matter for entrepreneurs (Weldert *et al.*, 2026).

6. Research recommendations from contributions

The summaries provided above capture the valuable insights that the contributing authors provide to our special issue. These authors also offer additional direction for future research in this literature area. Many of these recommendations focus on expanded methodological approaches to allow for more precision and to expand our understanding of important theoretical perspectives associated with their work.

Several author teams recommend a more detailed focus on research design. For example, Drnovšek *et al.* (2026) call for future research to use extended multi-wave, lagged, within-person designs to capture potential reciprocal effects and threshold (nonlinear) dynamics. They also suggest testing the effectiveness of different recovery strategies (e.g. mindfulness and social support) and how stress and recovery processes of the entrepreneur may spill over to team members or in households to partners and children.

Likewise, Mukerjee *et al.* (2026) also recommend future research that captures longitudinal data, which could reveal how play resources affect entrepreneurs at different stages of their career or business lifecycle. This future research approach could shed light on the mechanisms through which different forms of play (serious and diversionary) influence psychological outcomes and how individual differences or business characteristics moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial play and well-being. This could in turn explore broader outcome variables of entrepreneurial play, i.e. if and how entrepreneurial play affects team-level dynamics, organizational climate, employee well-being, organizational creativity and resilience.

Other researchers focus on future approaches that provide more generalizability or different sampling approaches. For example, Freeman *et al.* (2026) suggest that future research should validate the entrepreneur well-being check they propose in independent studies and samples. A valuable next step would be to validate and establish population-level scores for the entrepreneur well-being check, which could serve as benchmarks. Likewise, future research should determine clinical cut-points that indicate severity of risk and thereby indicate the urgency with which support and treatment should be provided.

Overall, the authors agree that future studies could advance the generalizability of their results by sampling entrepreneurs in different countries, using population-representative samples and using a multi-method approach to validate the check against objective criteria such as clinical diagnosis of mental health challenges and account data for business performance. In turn, scholars should prioritize mechanism-based designs that target both individual self-regulation capacities (e.g. sleep, cognitive load management, emotion regulation and coping) and structural ecosystem support (e.g. incubators, financial institutions and policy reforms).

Finally, future work should also advance multi-level intervention models that integrate individual, venture, household and ecosystem processes and translate findings into scalable institutional practices that position entrepreneurial well-being as a collective ecosystem responsibility rather than the burden of a single individual. Overall, these authors see great benefits associated with a more comprehensive approach that seeks to capture causality across contexts and entrepreneurial processes, with more emphasis on measurement and research design.

7. Future research considerations

The special issue contributions offer valuable insights into how entrepreneurship drives well-being and ill-being, outline new stressors and well-being resources, unpack the processes

through which these drivers shape well-being and ill-being, map boundary conditions and seek to enhance the measurement of entrepreneur well-being. A topic that was noticeable for its absence and that presents important opportunities for future research is understanding the consequences of entrepreneurs' well-being. Research outside of entrepreneurship has generally linked well-being to higher performance (Lyubomirsky *et al.*, 2005), though the findings in the workplace can be less clear cut than we may expect (Warr and Nielsen, 2018). Well-being may have even more profound consequences for performance in entrepreneurship and research on this is surprisingly sparse (Stephan, 2018). In fact, given fewer organizational constraints and resources but higher agency, the extreme context of entrepreneurship (Cardon and Arwine, 2023) is likely a "laboratory" where all researchers interested in well-being might see its consequences more clearly.

If we, as entrepreneurship researchers and a field, advocate for protecting and enhancing entrepreneurs' well-being, we should also have a nuanced understanding of why, how and when entrepreneurs' well-being and ill-being can be a resource or liability for entrepreneurial action and performance. For instance, there may be optimal levels of well-being beyond which risks are no longer recognized with negative impacts on performance (Baron *et al.*, 2011). Links of well-being with (un)ethical outcomes and with social outcomes such as the well-being of entrepreneurs' employees, families and communities are likewise missing. There are also opportunities for future research to leverage new theoretical approaches beyond COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001) and broaden and build (Fredrickson, 2001), which are the main theories used in the scarce existing research on the consequences of entrepreneurs' well-being (Stephan, 2018). Building an evidence base about the consequences of entrepreneurs' well-being is important for practice; it can help convince investors, entrepreneur supporters and policymakers that entrepreneurs' well-being matters and is worth protecting.

In addition, there is a need for research that explicitly links well-being to entrepreneurial performance and growth outcomes in different cultural, social and economic contexts while carefully modeling potential non-linearities and threshold effects. Future work on inclusive entrepreneurship should, in particular, examine how these dynamics unfold for underrepresented and structurally disadvantaged entrepreneur groups (e.g. disabled entrepreneurs, refugees, veterans, gender and ethnic minorities) and within marginalized ecosystems, building on trauma-informed and processual perspectives that highlight unequal exposure to risks and resources (Jones Christensen and Embry, 2026). For example, future studies could explore how combinations of stress, positive affect and formal and informal support conditions generate "healthy" versus "precarious" high-performance profiles among these entrepreneurs and whether such profiles are more prevalent in specific ecosystems (e.g. emerging economies, necessity-driven self-employment and social or impact-oriented ventures).

Such work would advance the field by clarifying when and for whom well-being is a driver, by-product or trade-off in entrepreneurial success (Weldert *et al.*, 2026) and crucially, which institutional, familial and community supports (Yang *et al.*, 2026) are required to make high performance compatible with sustainable well-being for a broader, more diverse population of entrepreneurs, thereby informing tailored policies and interventions (Freeman *et al.*, 2026) for truly inclusive entrepreneurship.

Other considerations, which affect not just this literature stream but social sciences in general, include the replication challenges associated with empirical testing of our theorizing regarding health and entrepreneurial effort. It is well established that studies based on a single dataset may yield fragile or even misleading conclusions. Methodological scholarship therefore increasingly emphasizes the value of internal replication (the use of multiple datasets within a single study) and external replication (the explicit replication and extension of prior studies) as more robust research strategies (Van Witteloostuijn *et al.*, 2021; Dau *et al.*, 2022; Block *et al.*, 2023). Notably, none of the contributions to the present special issue are motivated by an external replication effort. This absence represents a missed opportunity.

Consider a study that introduces a genuinely novel theoretical idea, supported by high-quality data and sound statistical analysis, leaving no immediate grounds for rejection. For entrepreneurs themselves, as well as for those who seek to support or influence them – policymakers, financiers, advisors and family members alike – it is crucial to know whether such findings are generalizable or instead reflect a context-specific or even false-positive result. Evidence from large-scale, systematic replication initiatives in medicine and psychology has been sobering, revealing that a substantial share of influential findings fail to reproduce (Ioannidis, 2005; Open Science Collaboration, 2015). There is little reason to assume that entrepreneurship research would be immune to similar vulnerabilities.

Despite these advantages, journals in management, organization and entrepreneurship research often appear disproportionately focused on theoretical novelty. Theory development is, of course, a cornerstone of scientific progress and is reflected in several of our studies presented here. Yet, an excessive emphasis on new theory may come at the expense of systematically testing whether existing theories hold across diverse contexts or whether theoretical refinement might emerge from careful replication efforts. Scholars themselves rarely challenge this imbalance, perhaps because academic incentives continue to reward originality and uniqueness more visibly than robustness and reproducibility.

Replication thus remains, to some extent, a *verbum non gratum* for both authors and journals – although encouraging signs of change are emerging. A recent and notable development is the introduction by *Small Business Economics: An Entrepreneurship Journal* of a dedicated submission format entitled “Replications as registered reports,” which explicitly recognizes replication as a valuable scholarly contribution. Likewise, *entrepreneurship theory and practice* have created a dedicated submission pathway for replications and preregistered studies.

Against this backdrop, we express the hope that future research will more frequently employ multiple datasets that the preoccupation with novelty will be tempered by greater attention to robustness and that concerns about replication will be met with less resistance and anxiety. While many scholars would likely endorse these principles in the abstract, the pressures of academic production and the insulation of specialized intellectual communities can make it easy to overlook what, in retrospect, appears self-evident.

A final note encapsulates our own judgment on the larger implications of studying health and well-being in entrepreneurial contexts. As mentioned above, recent methodological advances have undeniably strengthened the study of the links between entrepreneurship and health. Longitudinal designs, multi-source measures, and increasing attention to objective indicators represent substantial progress. However, despite this growing methodological sophistication, findings remain at times ambivalent, even divergent and difficult to integrate into a unified framework. This situation suggests that consolidating the field cannot rely solely on further refinement of empirical designs. It also appears to call for deeper theoretical development capable of providing overarching coherence to the accumulated findings.

Empirical findings indeed converge toward the idea that the relationship entrepreneurs maintain with their work – and even more so with their firm – has a distinctive intensity, one that may affect health in both its pathogenic and its salutogenic dimensions. The individual–value creation dialogic proposed by [Bruyat and Julien \(2001\)](#) already emphasizes that venture creation follows a dual logic: that of building an organization and that of pursuing a personal project concerning the individual’s place within and through that organization. The firm may thus be embedded in a life project and contribute to the transformation of the individual who carries it. The German notion of Existenzgründer (venture creator) encapsulates this idea of founding (Gründung) one’s existence (Existenz). Without essentializing the entrepreneurial figure, it is possible to consider that certain key moments – venture creation, succession and business failure – possess strong existential significance insofar as they simultaneously engage economic activity and the actor’s identity.

Several empirical works can be revisited from this perspective. The suicide risk observed in certain cases of business failure ([Cubbon et al., 2021](#)) cannot be reduced to economic loss

alone; it may also be interpreted as the destabilization of a structuring project in the entrepreneur's identity construction. The significant increase in burnout risk among business owners facing lockdown constraints during the COVID-19 crisis highlighted an *impediment exhaustion syndrome* linked to a form of existential constraint (Torrès *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, business transfer may be analyzed in light of research drawing on grief theory to understand the loss of a family firm (Shepherd, 2009), revealing the depth of the bond between the entrepreneur and the project. Conversely, phases of venture creation may be understood as moments of identity transformation. Oluuwafemi and Duff (2024) describe "entrepreneurship" as a process of self-reconfiguration, in which the act of creating constitutes both an economic activity and a personal redefinition.

The contributions of the German existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers (2003), particularly his notion of "boundary situations," offer a relevant conceptual framework for understanding these moments of venture creation, transfer or liquidation. Such situations are not merely professional; they may affect the entrepreneur's identity structure and, consequently, their health. Similarly, when Jean-Paul Sartre (1966) asserts that "existence precedes essence" and that human beings are "nothing other than their project," he invites us to understand individuals through their acts rather than through a predefined nature. This shift resonates with the turn initiated by Gartner (1988), who proposed analyzing what the entrepreneur does rather than what the entrepreneur is. Without claiming a direct equivalence, this proximity suggests that an existential reading of entrepreneurial activity may enrich dominant analytical frameworks.

From this perspective, entrepreneurial health cannot be reduced to a simple juxtaposition of stress or satisfaction indicators. It may instead be understood as inseparable from the place that entrepreneurial activity occupies in the construction of meaning, identity, and individual freedom. Whether driven by a quest for autonomy or by response to constraint, entrepreneurial engagement involves a form of responsibility and appropriation of one's professional destiny that gives this activity particular existential significance. This intensity may constitute a resource – a source of energy, fulfillment and coherence – and also a source of vulnerability when the project is weakened or obstructed.

Several research avenues follow from this reading. Future studies could seek to operationalize empirically the existential centrality of the entrepreneurial project to examine longitudinally the health effects of boundary situations and to articulate more closely identity-based, organizational and physiological dimensions. Comparisons with other occupational statuses may also help clarify what is specific to entrepreneurial engagement. Finally, such a perspective invites the design of support mechanisms attentive not only to economic performance but also to the existential sustainability of entrepreneurial commitment.

Approaching the entrepreneur through the lens of health ultimately means considering them in their human condition, without reducing analysis to a strictly instrumental or organizational perspective. Such an orientation may contribute to renewing entrepreneurship research by embedding it within a more integrative framework attentive to performance, meaning and the durability of engagement.

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