

## *Editorial*

### **A Psychological Perspective on Entrepreneurship: Insights from Micro-, Meso- and Multilevel Analyses**

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Entrepreneurship is a vital force in the economic development of societies, with small and medium-sized enterprises providing the majority of employment in many countries. For this reason, research in management and economics is interested in analyzing entrepreneurship from a macro-level perspective. However, enterprises are created and managed by people, which is why micro- and meso-level perspectives, specific to psychological research, offer valuable insights into entrepreneurship as well. We explain these three levels of analysis to demonstrate how psychology can shed light on entrepreneurship at each of them and extend these insights through multilevel investigations. We also introduce the collection of papers included in this special issue, which provides new findings from quantitative and qualitative studies representing different levels of analysis and presents new advancements in psychological measurement of entrepreneurship-related constructs.

*Key words:* entrepreneurship, psychology of entrepreneurship, micro-level analysis, meso-level analysis, multilevel analysis

Entrepreneurship is a vital force in the economic development of societies (Van Praag & Versloot, 2008), with small and medium-sized enterprises providing the majority of employment in many countries (Muller et al., 2021). This is why it attracts research interest in the fields of management and economics. However, apart from large-scale economic processes and social phenomena, entrepreneurship involves individual actions of people. As Shane and Venkataraman (2000) stated in their definition, which gave new impetus to research, entrepreneurship is “the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate, and exploit them” (p. 18). Therefore, while analyzing entrepreneurship

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from an economic point of view is important, it is not sufficient to fully understand this phenomenon. Psychological research greatly enriches the picture (Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Gielnik et al., 2020). To better explain different possible approaches to entrepreneurship, three levels of analysis were proposed: the macro-, meso- and micro-levels (Kim et al., 2016). We discuss these three levels below, showing where psychological research can contribute its insights.

Research on entrepreneurship using a *macro-level* perspective focuses on broader societal and economic forces (Davidsson & Wiklund, 2007) and on the societal effects of entrepreneurial activity. Decades ago, in his analysis of the causes of economic growth, Schumpeter (1934) observed that the actions of entrepreneurs were one of the factors behind societal development, and these early observations gave rise to interest in research on entrepreneurship. Consequently, research in management and economics is (usually) interested in analyzing entrepreneurship at the country or region level. Such macro-level analyses may, for example, investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship and regional development or compare entrepreneurial activity between countries. They provide insights into how country-level conditions impact the extent to which societies encourage or impede the formation of new organizations (Kim et al., 2016). This approach is typical of economic and management studies rather than psychological investigations.

At the opposite pole is the *micro-level* approach, focused on individuals involved in entrepreneurial activities (Davidsson & Wiklund, 2007; Kim et al., 2016). It covers the analysis of specific personal dispositions that help entrepreneurs identify opportunities, start new businesses, and run them successfully. A micro-level perspective offers valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms that encourage individuals to pursue entrepreneurship and may also concern the personal consequences of entrepreneurs' specific characteristics or actions. As most studies on entrepreneurship, and especially psychological ones, focus on the individual level (Shepherd, 2011), the existing evidence from such analyses is vast. There already are reviews and meta-analyses (e.g., Howard & Boudreaux, 2024; Rauch & Frese, 2007; Stephan et al., 2022; Zhao & Seibert, 2006) as well as handbooks (e.g., Baum et al., 2006; Gielnik et al., 2020; Lukes & Laguna, 2010) summarizing these findings. However, there is still room for new insights, and psychology provides a profound scientific basis to explain entrepreneurship from the micro-level perspective, bringing new theories and findings.

Between the macro- and micro-levels, there is a place for *meso-level* analyses (Kim et al., 2016). They were not always recognized in entrepreneurship research (e.g., Davidsson & Wiklund, 2007), but they allow for a more nuanced and comprehensive view. Meso-level analyses focus on social structures such as social groups (e.g., founding teams) or organizations (e.g., employees within a firm). At this level, a psychological analysis of interpersonal and social processes within a firm or a team can provide insights into mechanisms responsible for their innovativeness and success (Laguna et al., 2021). As social relationships indeed matter for entrepreneurial actions, meso-level investigations extend the knowledge gained from individual (micro-level) and country (macro-level) perspectives.

In fact, psychological explanations of social relationships in a team can go beyond a single level and combine meso-level (e.g., a team) and micro-level (e.g., an employee working within this team) perspectives, heading towards a *multilevel* approach. Such multilevel investigations may also include a macro-level, incorporating country or region characteristics when explaining relationships between meso- and micro-level constructs (Purc et al., 2025). Thanks to this, psy-

chological research on entrepreneurship can integrate different levels of analysis that are often considered separately.

As explained above, the psychological perspective on entrepreneurship makes it possible to explain micro- and meso-level mechanisms behind the functioning of entrepreneurs and their businesses. It also extends these insights by studying entrepreneurial mechanisms within a multilevel context, combining different levels and offering a more complex picture. A multi-level approach allows for the integration and analysis of interplays between variables from the country, social group, and individual levels (Kim et al., 2016), such as cross-level moderation and multilevel mediation. Multilevel research on entrepreneurship is still not very common, however, and most psychological studies focus on the micro-level, bringing valuable insights into the functioning of individuals.

Another important area in entrepreneurship research that takes a psychological perspective is measurement. By applying rigorous psychometric procedures rooted in current knowledge on psychological assessment, scales constructed and validated to measure various constructs used in entrepreneurship research can contribute to the field at different levels of analysis.

### Overview of Papers Included in This Special Issue

In this special issue, we provide new findings from micro-level research and multilevel investigations, applying quantitative and qualitative methodology. We also present new advancements in the psychological measurement of entrepreneurship-related constructs. This special issue comprises a collection of papers which demonstrate that psychology can contribute to the multi-disciplinary entrepreneurship literature, extending macro-level investigations in economics and management. The studies they report were conducted in various countries: Türkiye, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain.

The study conducted by Uygur (2026) represents the micro-level approach to entrepreneurship research. The author investigated young Turkish entrepreneurs' perceptions and utilization of social media platforms. Using Q methodology, the study demonstrates that young entrepreneurs perceive social media as a double-edged sword in their entrepreneurial activity. On the one hand, social media platforms offer them creative opportunities, encourage idea generation, give access to connections and networks, and provide positive feedback and motivation. On the other hand, young entrepreneurs face various challenges connected to social media usage – they feel pressure to be popular, experience a highly competitive environment, encounter risks of misinformation, and face problems with trust in online connections. Given the growing popularity of social media, especially among young people, and its increasing use in business, this study provides a valuable contribution to entrepreneurship research and offers important insights into the equivocal role of social media in the entrepreneurial journey of young individuals. By taking an individual, micro-level perspective and by adopting a mixed-method design, it enables a new insight into this topic. Future research in the field may draw on this knowledge and supplement the research models with additional meso-level variables (e.g., employees' perception of social media) or macro-level ones (e.g., country/cultural effects).

Laguna, Purc, and Fraccaroli (2026)<sup>1</sup> develop an entrepreneurship continuation model

<sup>1</sup> As the two editors of this special issue are also coauthors of this paper, the managing editor for this article was the editor-in-chief of the journal.

through a micro-level qualitative study on Polish entrepreneurs who still operate their businesses after reaching retirement age. The model includes different categories of motivation to continue entrepreneurial activity, which can be classified on a continuum from more autonomous (e.g., mission, passion) to more controlled types of motivation (e.g., money). The entrepreneur's decision to continue running a business despite the opportunity to retire seems to be prompted by a positive balance between life stage resources and life stage demands. When the entrepreneur perceives their resources as sufficient and prevailing over the demands experienced, it can create engagement and motivate them to continue. The qualitative focus used in this research allows for an in-depth understanding of older entrepreneurs' motivation and the circumstances of their decision to continue their businesses. It thereby advances the state of micro-level knowledge on late entrepreneurship and can lay the groundwork for research into predicting such decisions before reaching retirement age. As the model assumes that all processes are embedded in the broader socioeconomic context, future research can adopt and verify it, taking into account not only entrepreneur-level variables but also macro-level ones (e.g., social norms, economic factors, etc.).

The focus of the paper by Kruse (2026) is a micro-level analysis, including the assessment of meso-level factors. Using an experimental design, he investigates the psychological consequences of social entrepreneurship mission drifts, a meso-level characteristic, from an employee (micro-level) perspective. The results reveal that various types of mission drifts in social enterprises affect employees' work-related attitudes, work engagement, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions, showing that social mission is an important work motivation driver for social enterprise employees. As one of the first studies to experimentally examine mission drifts from the micro-level perspective of employees, Kruse's work is a step forward in understanding its consequences in social enterprises.

The next paper, by Mielniczuk (2026), presents a multilevel investigation of the psychological mechanisms responsible for work engagement in small firms. In her study of entrepreneurs and their employees from three European countries, she demonstrates that entrepreneurs' negative affect is negatively related to their own work engagement but does not directly translate into their employees' work engagement. However, such a relationship is mediated by entrepreneurs' work engagement, showing the cross-level mechanism of role modelling. Moreover, the study shows the affective contagion mechanism, as entrepreneurs' negative affect is related to their employees' negative affect, which in turn is associated with employees' work engagement. As organizations are inherently multilevel systems (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), it is especially important in this field of research to take a multilevel perspective. By applying such a perspective, Mielniczuk's paper makes an important step forward in the understanding of the complex cross-level psychological mechanisms by which entrepreneurs affect their employees in small firms.

Dijkhuizen, Pak, and van der Heijden (2026) contribute to the special issue by introducing a new measurement tool – the Entrepreneurial Work Ability Scale (EWAS). In two studies on Dutch entrepreneurs, they develop and validate a measure of work ability, suited directly to entrepreneurs. Because existing measures have been used mostly in the context of employee work ability, it is especially valuable to have a reliable and valid scale that has been proven to properly capture entrepreneurs' work ability and takes into account the peculiarities of entrepreneurial functioning. The authors demonstrate the good internal consistency and validity of

the EWAS. The scale may therefore be a helpful tool in micro-level research on entrepreneurial work ability, being also useful for practitioners such as business coaches and trainers who work with entrepreneurs.

The special issue closes with the paper authored by Ramos, Latorre, and Laguía (2026), who present a validation of the Testing the Obstacles to Women's Entrepreneurship Scale (TOWES). This multidimensional tool captures perceived barriers that can prevent women from becoming entrepreneurs. Adapted from the TOP WOMAN scale, which was originally developed to measure the obstacles women face when accessing management positions, TOWES has been specifically fitted to the entrepreneurship context. Through their work, the authors provide a reliable tool and demonstrate its validity. Thus, the measure advances the methodological base in the psychology of entrepreneurship, allowing for a micro-level investigation of these barriers. Moreover, it can be especially useful in practice by diagnosing women's obstacles to entrepreneurial work and creating interventions and social programs promoting entrepreneurship among women.

To sum up, the content of the special issue revolves around one central theme – the psychological perspective on entrepreneurship, although the papers differ in some important characteristics. Firstly, they adopt different levels of analysis – from micro-level to multilevel. Secondly, they represent various methodologies – from qualitative, through mixed methods, to quantitative. Thirdly, they apply different research techniques – from interviews, through Q methodology and experimental study, to self-report questionnaires. Two of the papers offer valuable advancements in measurement, providing new tools to assess entrepreneurship-related constructs. Thanks to this diversity of approaches and to the interesting and valid research questions that the studies answer, this collection of papers meaningfully contributes to the psychology of entrepreneurship literature. We do hope that they will expand the research horizon and inspire researchers in the field to further explore the psychological mechanisms operating at different levels and across levels and to use the psychological perspective in their research on entrepreneurship.

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