Identifying the Role of the Entrepreneurial Leader in Times of Crisis

Emma Fleck[1]

Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, United States

Karise Hutchinson

Ulster University, Northern Ireland, UK

Rachael Withers

Ulster University, Northern Ireland, UK

Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes and challenges to the entrepreneurial leaders of small businesses across the world. Notwithstanding the significant body of research in crisis leadership, there is little known about the behaviours of small firm entrepreneurial leaders. Adopting a role identity perspective, the empirical data from this international qualitative study offers a first-hand and real-time account of entrepreneurial leader role-related behaviours in crisis. Drawing upon the evidence from 30 small business entrepreneurs and 4 business support organisations, analysis of the data confirmed the centrality and breadth of responsibility held by the entrepreneurial leaders of small firms, and identified three multifaceted and interchangeable roles adopted by them in the crisis — the CEO leader, the Learner leader, and the Nurturer leader.

Keywords: entrepreneurial leadership; crisis leadership; entrepreneurial roles; entrepreneurial behaviours; COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Introduction

Defined by many as an existential crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic brought ramifications far beyond the 'normal' mini-crisis states for the entrepreneurial leaders of small businesses (Elkington and Breen, 2015). On one hand, it was a crisis that suddenly disturbed the structures, routines, and capabilities of the organisation (Williams et al., 2017), resulting in a widespread and damaging impact on the small business sector (Fairlie, 2020). But, on the other hand, it demonstrated the ability of entrepreneurial leaders to adapt their business model not only to survive, but to grow (Ritter and Pedersen, 2020). As such, an entrepreneurial approach is now recognised as a vital component for the leaders

───────────────

1. Corresponding author: Dr. Emma Fleck, Susquehanna University, 514 University Ave., Selinsgrove, PA 17870. Email: flecke@susqu.edu

of businesses of all sizes to cultivate and cope with the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (Guberina and Wang, 2021).

Although there is some existing literature on new venture creation crisis (e.g., Davidsson and Gordon, 2016; Simón-Moya et al., 2016) and 'disaster entrepreneurship' (Linnenluecke and McKnight, 2017), we know surprisingly little about how entrepreneurial leaders respond and adapt during times of crisis, and the roles they play in this process (Flamholtz and Randle, 2021). There is a large body of research in the domain of crisis leadership, but there is little insight into the practice of entrepreneurial leadership that reflects the centrality of the founder and the unique resource capabilities and liabilities of small firms compared to larger organisations. In view of the lack of knowledge, this study sets out to explore the following questions:

1. How do entrepreneurial leaders within the small businesses environment respond to a major crisis?

2. What roles do they play in this process?

The overall aim of this paper is to present a new empirical understanding of entrepreneurial leadership roles in the context of a global crisis. More specifically, we seek to identify the behaviours and actions of entrepreneurial leaders in navigating the crisis, and to understand the links between the multifaceted and interchangeable roles of entrepreneurial leaders as a result of a crisis.

Entrepreneurial leadership, an emerging and distinctive field of enquiry, takes into consideration the specificities of the leadership role in new and small (rather than large) organisation and the high-velocity environment of competition and change that they experience (Hmieleski and Ensley, 2007; Harrison et al., 2015; Leitch and Volery, 2017). It is also important to recognise that there has been an important shift in emphasis in the literature away from identifying the specific personality traits of the entrepreneurial leader towards understanding the roles and behaviours of entrepreneurial leaders interacting in a specific context (Leitch and Volery, 2017; Wu et al., 2021). There are numerous studies that have sought to advance understanding of what characterises entrepreneurial behaviour with a focus on new venture creation and growth (Gruber and MacMillan, 2017). Notwithstanding the corporate context of entrepreneurial leadership studied by Flamholtz and Randle (2021), no research has clearly defined the behaviours of small business entrepreneurial leaders in times of significant and global crisis, when change is externally forced upon the founder.

In this article, we propose an identity perspective, specifically the insights offered by role identity (see for instance other studies in the literature by Cardon et al., 2009; Alsos et al., 2016; Sieger et al., 2016; Gruber and MacMillan, 2017), as a relevant theoretical lens to help scholars in their quest to better understand entrepreneurial leadership behaviour. Given the aim of the paper, an empirical study was carried out during two critical stages of the pandemic (during the initial lockdown period in May 2020 and during the emerging phase in April/May 2021).

This article reports on the qualitative findings from rapid response research (Kuckertz et al., 2020), involving 30 entrepreneurial leaders of small businesses and 4 business support organisations.

The contribution of this paper brings new insight and understanding located at the interface of entrepreneurial leadership and crisis leadership presenting new insight into the key roles of the adaptive entrepreneurial leader who can successfully navigate crisis. The format of the paper is as follows: the first section provides a review of prior research in the wider crisis leadership literature pointing out the skills, characteristics, and behaviours critical to leading change and relevant to the small firm context. Next, we set out the unit of analysis of this study focused on entrepreneurial leaders, with a subsequent discussion on role identity theory as the theoretical frame for the research. Thereafter, the paper presents the context of the study, which is fundamental to understanding the nature of the pandemic crisis and its impact on entrepreneurial leaders. Then, we present the research design followed by the findings and discussion of the study. In the concluding section of the paper, we present implications, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Crisis Leadership Research – A Small Firm Perspective

The difference between leading business challenges and leading in a major crisis is made clear in the wider crisis leadership literature (Mazánek, 2015). In their review of the literature, Wu et al. (2021) point out three distinct characteristics of major crises relating to events perceived as unexpected, highly salient, and potentially disruptive. Characterised by ambiguity and uncertainty, major external crises are unexpected, occur infrequently, and bring unanticipated impacts to business organisations (James and Wooten, 2011; Wu et al., 2021). Moreover, different to an organisational crisis, the salience of the pandemic as a major crisis was evident in terms of the imposed substantial changes to the way companies operated and managed relationships with their stakeholders (Wu et al., 2021).

The impact of a major and sudden external crisis upon the cognitive, emotional, and behaviours of leaders is well documented (James and Wooten, 2011), which has led to a stream of research focused on leadership skills, characteristics, and behaviours in large complex organisations across different sectors and sectors. This has included studies of public health and safety crises (e.g., Hadley et al., 2011; Paquin et al., 2018), corporate and political scandals, financial crises (e.g., Pang et al., 2006; Yang, 2012), globalization (Markovi, 2018) and national terrorist attacks (Powley and Taylor, 2014).

Within these studies, the literature first points out the leadership skills critical to leading in a crisis, which include information assessment and gathering to inform decision making under pressure (e.g., Quarantelli, 1988; Halverson et al., 2004). In addition, research also points out communication skills as critical in conveying confidence to employees, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders (Kuckertz et al., 2020; McGuire et al., 2020; Sherman et al., 2020). Secondly, other studies of crisis leadership characteristics refer to the internal resources of the leader and identify constructs such as servant leadership, spiritual leadership, authentic leadership (Bennis and Thomas, 2002; Powley and Taylor, 2014), as well as charismatic and transformational leadership approaches displaying vision, empathy, calmness, and compassion (e.g., Dunne et al., 2016; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Sherman et al., 2020).

Thirdly, given the focus of this article on the behaviours of entrepreneurial leaders in a crisis, the adaptive capacity of the leader in deploying different strategies during significant crisis is recognised as a critical behaviour (Bennis and Thomas, 2002; Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019). Some researchers have found leaders can have varying degrees of context-related adaptive capacity, visible in their behaviours and mediated by interpretations of change, which don't necessarily translate into adaptive behaviour (Ayala and Manzano, 2014). Research more recently has found adaptive leaders possess an awareness of self and others in leading change, as well as displaying strong behaviours incorporating divergent thinking, learning goal orientation, and emotional and intellectual intelligence (Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019).

In a similar way, adaptive leadership is recognised in the small business literature as a critical behaviour in leading change (Smallbone et al., 2012; Conz et al., 2017), especially in terms of leadership resilience in a crisis (Ingirige et al., 2008; Korber and McNaughton, 2018; Hutchinson et al., 2021). However, the lack of specific research focused on small business leaders in the crisis leadership literature became most obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscored by the widespread and prolific impact on the small business sector (Fairlie, 2020). Research evidence from both academia and government sources underpins the importance of adaptive entrepreneurial behaviour. It explains that while large businesses may be able to survive for short periods without effective leadership in place, the opposite is true for small firms (Perry, 2001; Beaver, 2003; CMI, 2015; GOV, 2017; IoD, 2018). Given both the importance of this subject and the gap in knowledge, the following discussion will draw upon relevant entrepreneurial leadership research and role identity theory to provide a foundation from which to empirically explore this phenomenon.

Regardless of context or sector, there is agreement in the literature that surviving a crisis ultimately depends on leadership (Flamholtz and Randle, 2021). In the words of Tracy (2021), "the true test of leadership is how well you function in a crisis". Since context shapes leadership behaviours and actions during a crisis, which in turn impacts the organisation and its stakeholders (Wu et al.,

2021), it is argued the lack of knowledge about the entrepreneurial leader in a small firm context is one worthy of attention.

2.2. Entrepreneurial Leadership and Navigating Crisis

There is a significant body of research in the fields of entrepreneurship and leadership spanning decades (Harrison et al., 2016). The overlaps and parallels historically and conceptually (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004), has led to the emerging paradigm of entrepreneurial leadership (Harrison et al., 2016; Leitch and Volery, 2017). In recent years there has been growing momentum in the development of empirical and conceptual research in this area (Clark et al., 2019; Bagheri and Harrison, 2020) to better define and understand the function and form of entrepreneurial leadership (Flamholtz, 2011).

To this end, there are arguably three main perspectives on entrepreneurial leadership adopted by scholars in the literature – psychological, behavioural, and skill-based. Most of the research to date has focused on identifying the characteristics or traits of entrepreneurial leaders, with some study of behaviours and skills of entrepreneurial leadership (Wu et al., 2021). See for instance the recent work of Bagheri and Harrison (2020) and their development of a multidimensional construct which yields important insight into skills, qualities and behaviours across eight dimensions (framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, building commitment, defining gravity, opportunity identification and exploitation, learning orientation and creative collective self-efficacy). Notwithstanding, the lack of empirical justification for entrepreneurial leadership behaviours and skills in the literature is still problematic.

Unlike larger and more mature organisations, the centrality of the entrepreneurial leader in decision-making and directing change is an important point of distinction when researching the crisis context (Lubatkin et al., 2006; Friedman et al., 2016). The literature emphasises the ability of entrepreneurial leaders to overcome challenges and exploit opportunities for growth in highly complex, turbulent, and uncertain environments (e.g., Hmieleski and Ensley, 2007; Harrison et al., 2018). Despite the 'normal' or 'daily' mini crisis states experienced by entrepreneurial leaders in small business organisations (Elkington and Breen, 2015), there is strong empirical evidence of a positive correlation between entrepreneurial leadership and performance (Van Zyl and Mathur-Helm, 2007). Taking this unique leadership ability into account, there remains little knowledge about how entrepreneurs adapt their behaviours and adopt different leadership roles in response to extreme crisis (Hill et al., 2021). One of the very few relevant studies is the work of Flamholtz and Randle (2021), which presents a number of case studies of successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurial leadership responses to extreme crisis, but from the context of large established organisations.

As stated at the outset of this paper, this article reflects a shift in the literature away from leadership personality and traits towards understanding the roles and behaviours of entrepreneurial leaders interacting in a specific context (Leitch and Volery, 2017). Endeavours to define the entrepreneurial leader role, describes a leadership process whereby the entrepreneur influences the actions of followers towards the realisation of set goals (Musara and Nieuwenhuizen, 2020). Other studies define the process identifying opportunities and marshalling resources from various stakeholders in order to exploit opportunities and create value (Leitch and Volery, 2017). Given there is little evidence to draw upon, but a need to frame our understanding, the following discussion will provide a role identity perspective on entrepreneurial leadership.

2.3. A Role Identity Perspective on Entrepreneurial Leadership

Role identity theory takes on a sociological perspective on identity focusing on the role-related behaviours of individuals (Burke, 1980). As explained in the work of Bell et al. (2019), role identity theory emphasises the ability to categorise self as a role-occupier and to integrate the meanings and expectations within the self (Burke and Tully, 1977; Thoits, 1986) and across different situations and activities (Thoits and Virshup, 1997). As such, the consideration of entrepreneurship as an identity has become a popular concept in entrepreneurship research. Gruber and MacMillan (2017) argue that role identity theory, as one of the most prominent theories of the human self, has strong potential to advance scholarly understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Entrepreneurial role identity research into how entrepreneurs define and manage their identity roles (e.g., Hoang and Gimeno 2010; Mathias and Williams, 2018; Grimes 2018) has helped explain entrepreneurial behaviour (e.g., Fauchart and Gruber, 2011; York et al., 2016; Zuzul and Tripsas, 2020; Wagenschwanz, 2021). It acknowledges this concept as a salient identity that motivates individuals to take on entrepreneurial roles (Murnieks and Mosakowski, 2007), as well as explaining differences in the behaviours between roles. Studies to date have identified a comparative range of entrepreneurial roles such as founder, inventor, and developer (Cardon et al., 2009), or the entrepreneur as manager and investor (Mathias and Williams, 2018), or scientific and visionary roles (Grimes 2018), as well as revolutionary and discoverer founder roles (Zuzul and Tripsas, 2020). Other research has focused on the behaviours of individual roles such as 'caretaker' which brought new understanding to the common narrative of a wider responsibility beyond the legal requirement to manage finances and employees (Jones et al., 2008; Bell et al., 2019).

While these roles are defined and articulated differently, it is argued due to the multi-tasking nature of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs often, in reality, manage multiple 'micro-identities (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009). However,

therein lies a challenge.   Often engrained in their holistic self-identity, entrepreneurs can find it difficult to separate micro-identities formed between business and personal roles (Lobel, 1991; Shepherd and Haynie 2009; Shepherd and Patzelt, 2018).   To shed light on this phenomenon, Shepherd and Patzelt (2018) presented the concept of identity synergy.   While many leaders are able to compartmentalize the roles they adopt, identity synergy is a often a method to cope with multiple micro-identities seen within entrepreneurial leaders, where synergistic identities can be mergered (or converge) resulting in effeciency across all roles (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2018).

Considering the aim of this paper, we believe role identity theory can shed light on what drives the behaviour of entrepreneurial leaders not only in navigating the challenge of new firm creation (Cardon et al., 2009) but in challenging contexts such as crisis. Acknowledging how both individual agency and societal influences can determine how a person derives a definition of self (Watson 2009), this research adopts a self-reported approach to exploring entrepreneurial leader role identity focused on their 'individual thoughts, feelings, and beliefs' (Hoang and Gimeno 2010: 42).

2.4. The Pandemic Crisis in Context

Welter and Lasch (2008) argue that in developing the scholarly field of entrepreneurship, research must be grounded within a context as this provides a lens through which to view the discipline as well as providing data for comparison and convergence within the field of study. Given its truly exogenous, uncertain, and global features, the COVID-19 pandemic is deemed a unique crisis that demanded a unique response not only from policymakers, but from business leaders and civic society alike (Borio, 2020). While the literature notes crisis can bring opportunities for innovation and growth (Johnson, 2010), research also acknowledges the negative consequences for established businesses (Coombs, 2005), and especially small firms (Fairlie, 2020). Given the scale of impact across the world and sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how the leaders of businesses both large and small had no choice but to adapt or transform their business to survive (Ritter and Pedersen, 2020). This paper builds on the author's research on entrepreneurial resilience (Hutchinson et al., 2021) and brings new and specific empirical insight into the roles of the entrepreneurial leaders in small firms who successfully navigated the crisis that was COVID-19.

3. Methodology

3.1. Qualitative Rapid Research Approach

The aim of the research process was to understand iterative patterns in entrepreneurial leadership behaviours in such a way to identify key crisis leadership roles. A qualitative rapid response approach (Kuckertz et al., 2020) was adopted to capture self-reflective and descriptive data in real time (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Austin and Sutton, 2014). Qualitative research is deemed appropriate in the rapid response research context (Finlay et al., 2013), the study of crisis leadership (James and Wooten, 2005; Guptill et al., 2018; Moore, 2018; Wu et al., 2021) and in areas where existing knowledge is limited (Miller, 1992). As such, semi-structured interview techniques using a series of questions and prompts were conducted with each entrepreneur in the sample to ensure consistency of data.

Given the time-sensitive nature of the research study and the context of the crisis, which prevented the researchers from conducting the interviews in person with the subjects, digital research methods for data gathering were employed (Hill et al., 2021). A video conferencing platform (zoom) provided direct and quick interaction with interview partners, at their chosen time and place. The disadvantages of this research approach are acknowledged (Abidin and De Seta, 2020; Hill et al., 2021) but given the governmental lockdown requirements with the regions under investigation, online qualitative research (Salmons, 2015) offered a methodological fit with the research design, acceptable in entrepreneurship research (Nambisan, 2017). Indeed, no limitations were noted by the research team in adopting this format as they could see the participants and fully interact with them as if in the same room.

3.2. Entrepreneurial Leader Sample

The entrepreneurs, as the unit of analysis, were a convenience sample identified though the academic investigator's contacts (Jager et al., 2017) based on their availability to participate. Although convenience sampling has been critisised in the literature (Saunders et al., 2020), it is also the most popular method of non-probability sampling (Bornstein et al., 2013) and given the crisis, the researchers had to rely on this method to access appropriate entrepreneurial leaders. The sample was identified across three similar regions in Northern Ireland, Colorado and Pennsylvania (USA).   The regions were deemed similar in their rural characteristics, their cultural similarities, and their liberal economies (as noted by Content et al., 2019). An overview of the characteristics of the 30 businesses that participated in the study is presented in Table 1 and discussed in the results. In

summary, the businesses were predominantly in the service sector (90%) with a turnover of less than $500k (93%), less than 10 employees (80%) and operating for more than 6 years (76%).

Table 1: Small Business Sample Characteristics

Organisation Characteristics		Number of Businesses
Industry sector	Retail, Hospitality, and Events	6
	Architecture, Construction, Environment	5
	Art, Design, Music	6
	Health and Beauty, Sport	4
	Education & Childcare	1
	Accountancy, Consultancy	3
	Manufacturing	3
	Digital/Marketing	2
		N = 30
Ownership (Legal status)	Limited liability Company	12
	S-Corporation	10
	Sole trader	4
	Self-employed	2
	Non-profit	2
	Partnership	0
		N = 30
Turnover* (Dollars)	Less than $70,000	6
	$70,000-$100,000	2
	$100,000-$500,000	19
	$500,000-$1million	1
	$1million +	1
		N = 29*
Employees** (Full time or equivalent)	Less than 5	14
	5-9	10
	10-49	6
		N = 30
Years of operation	1 year or less	0
	2-5 years	7
	6-10 years	9
	11 + years	14
		N = 30

* One business leader did not disclose turnover
** EU commission definition of small firms = less than 50 employees; micro = less than 10 employees

The study also included interviews with the leaders of 4 business support organisations who have an important stakeholder role supporting small business leaders through the pandemic, not least providing information on government regulations and signposting to resources. As independent entities, they supported a wider range of entrepreneurial companies in their region and their interviews provided confirmation data of the self-analysis data gleaned from the entrepreneurial leaders. In a similar approach to the ecosystem perspective in other entrepreneurial crisis studies (Spigel and Harrison, 2018; Kuckertz et al., 2020), their insight also helped triangulate the data from the entrepreneurial leaders.

3.3. Data Collection

Data was collected in two phases with the same entrepreneurial leaders participating in both stages of the research. This two-stage approach was important to gain a process-orientated view of crisis leadership in small firms (Wu et al., 2021). Phase one was collected between April-May 2020 and stage two, approximately one year later (May-June 2021). The first phase provided insight into the entrepreneurial roles and behaviours at the beginning of the crisis, and the second phase of data collection allowed for a deeper understanding of these behaviours and the changes over the one-year period (Šlogar, 2021).
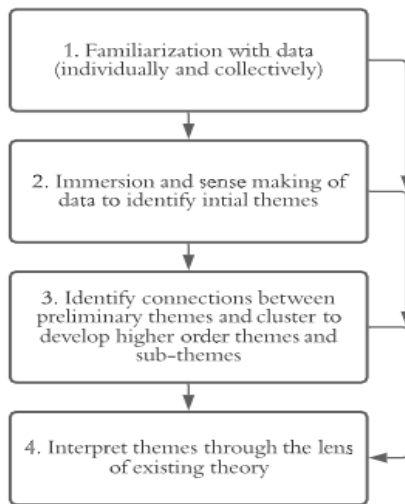
In phase one, a semi-structured interview protocol was informed by the review of the literature on crisis leadership and entrepreneurial leadership. To ensure consistency and clarity, the interview protocol was developed and reviewed by all members of the research team which was important given the international and cross-cultural context of the research. The open-ended questions provided a framework for discussion and allowed for flexibility within the interview process based upon the constraints and opportunities at the time (Patton, 2002; Dana and Dana, 2005), and notes were assembled directly after the interview (Kuckertz et al., 2020). In phase two, the interview protocol was guided by the results from phase one and the wider leadership crisis literature. During these interviews, the entrepreneurs were asked to reflect on their learning journey over the 12 months between the data collection phases using prompts such as:

- What has been your greatest learning from the last year?

- How has this impacted how you lead your business?

- Emerging from this crisis, what are your top three values (specific beliefs) as a leader of your business that will shape how you lead post pandemic?

3.4. Data Analysis

As per Hennekam and Shymko (2020), interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed using a four-stage process (Hutchinson et al., 2021) as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Data Analysis Process

```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│   1. Familiarization with data  │
│   (individually and collectively)│
└─────────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│  2. Immersion and sense making of│
│    data to identify intial themes│
└─────────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│   3. Identify connections between│
│   preliminary themes and cluster to│
│   develop higher order themes and│
│           sub-themes            │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│  4. Interpret themes through the lens│
│       of existing theory        │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
```

Source: Hutchinson et al. (2021).

The data was uploaded into NVivo software (Saunders et al., 2020) and analysis was undertaken both individually and collectively by all members of the research team who had read the transcripts multiple times to make sense of the data (familiarisation) and to gain an appreciation of the whole story (Senior et al., 2002). For confidentiality reasons, participating firms are identified with letters pertaining to their region (NI = Northern Ireland, PN = Pennsylvania, and CL = Colorado) and numbers (1, 2, etc.). To ensure cognitive and effective sense-making, and to account for any potential international and cultural differences in the regions, researchers then came together regularly to discuss the interview data (Hutchinson et al., 2021). It was found the similarities between the regions far outweighed any differences, especially in relation to the roles and behaviours identified in this research. Although a limited number of differences were noted in general e.g., trust in the government, these did not pertain to the focus on the paper, and therefore are not discussed.

The second stage of analysis (immersion and sense-making) required returning to the transcripts. Moving between inductive and deductive positions, initial ideas and understandings from the data were connected by identifying and classifying preliminary themes and clusters (Eatough et al., 2008). The

connection between higher order themes and sub-themes were then identified in the third stage of the process (see Figures 2, 3 and 4). As recommended by Musara and Nieuwenhuizen (2020), the Gioia framework was employed to provide a systematic methodology for inductive analysis of the qualitative data while demonstrating rigor and scientific advancement of qualitative research (Gioia et al., 2013).

First, the team developed 1st order codes, which foregrounded the views expressed from the data sources and included the actions of the entrepreneurs identified at both stage 1 and stage 2 of the data collection. The next stage identified 2nd order themes and aggregate dimensions classified as behaviours. Both concepts were guided by literature and the aggregate dimensions consolidated the 2nd order themes to show their linkages (Gioia et al., 2013) which supported the classification of the multiple roles the entrepreneurs adopted within the context (crisis). Caution was taken to ensure there was no disconnection between the participant's words and the researcher's interpretations, including any potential differences in cultural context. The final stage involved interpreting the themes using literature and theory as a lens to view the analysis and make sense of the data in an iterative way (Charlick et al., 2016) to define the entrepreneurial leader roles for navigating crisis.

4. Results and Discussion

From the two rounds of data gathering, it was evident that at the beginning of the pandemic entrepreneurs were using their instinct to predict their future behaviours in dealing with the onset of this crisis. Indeed, one year later, when the data was analysed and compared, confirmed their self-reported predicted actions and behaviours. Examples of this included, planned changes to their business model e.g., the entrepreneurs were planning to deliver services or expanding geographical reach using online mechanisms, and they did. Early in the pandemic, entrepreneurial leaders also acknowledging the need to connect with staff, customer and their family on a more personal level. In the second stage they confirmed that these deeper connections got them, and their business, through the crisis. The business support organisations provided further validity to the self-analysis undertaken by entrepreneurs from a perspective of working with a larger group of entrepreneurs in their regions and reported similar results to triangulate the observations and interview data recorded.

In examining the demographics of the sample, the business organisations represent a wide range of industry sectors. They all identified as small firms, registered as limited liability companies or S-corps, with many of them exceeding a turnover >$100,000. The majority of firms in this study (24/30) were 'micro' in size, employing up to 10 people and the remaining 6 were 'small' employing up to 50 people at the time of data collection, thereby fulfilling the EU Commission

definition of SME. Most of them were 'experienced' entrepreneurs and had been in business more than 6 years. Although a few entrepreneurs in the sample identified that they had been through a global crisis before (global market crash in the 1980's and 2007 and the global impact of 9/11), most had no experience of leading business change in such an exogenous crisis.

From the analysis of the data, and in consideration of the existing understanding of entrepreneurial leadership from the literature, first order codes describe the actions of the entrepreneurial leader, whereas the second order themes revealed the behaviours. These behaviours support the tactical and human aspects of change (Hadley at al., 2011; Rao, 2012; Chattoraj and Shabnam, 2015; Cucculelli and Peruzzi, 2020) that where were then categorised into core roles. The results confirmed the central role of the leader in navigating the crisis, indicating that there are three roles adopted by the entrepreneurial leader in times of crisis; the CEO leader, the Learner leader, and the Nurturer leader. Themes and evidence from the data analysis process and direct quotations from the interviews are outlined in Figures 2, 3 and 4 respectively discussed hereafter.

4.1. The CEO Leader

The behaviours associated with the role performed by entrepreneurial leaders included strategic decision maker, task-oriented manager, and change maker as presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Identifying the CEO Role Through Leadership Behaviours
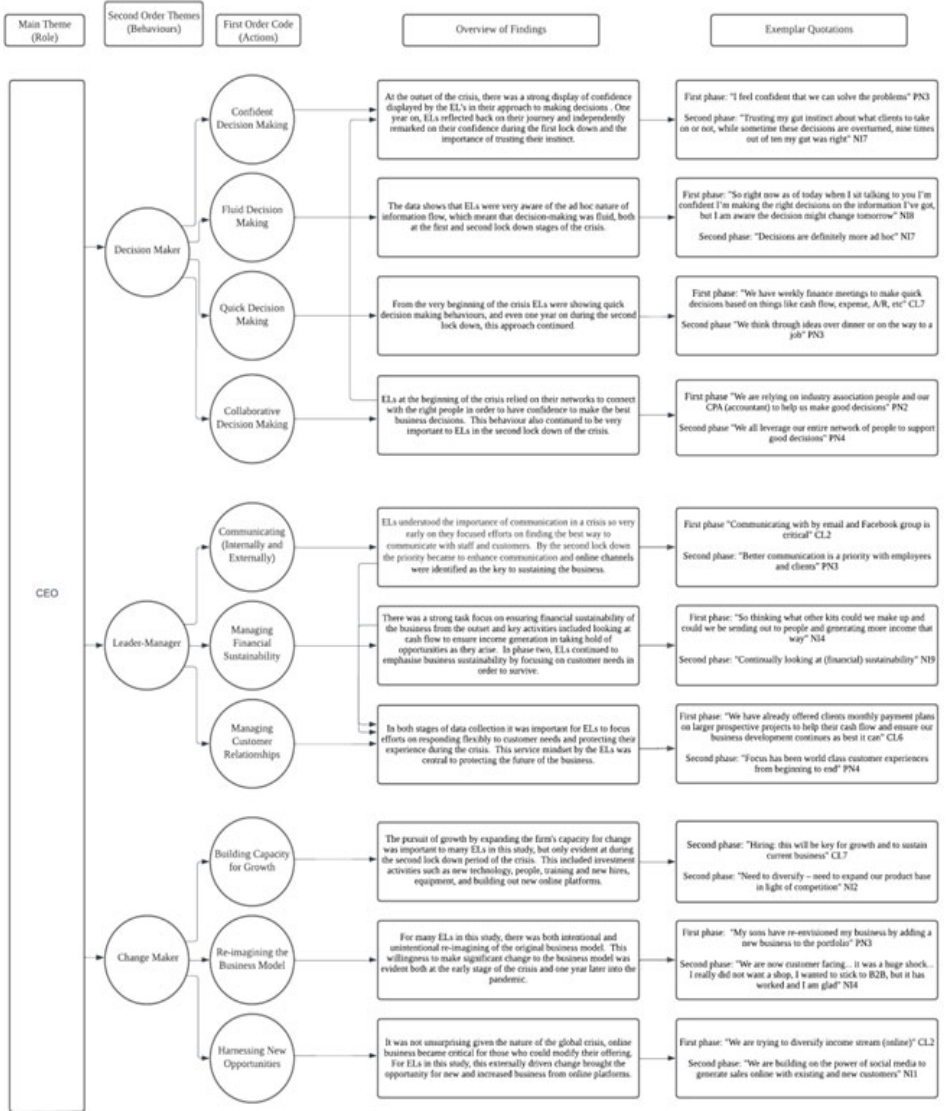
First, the strategic- decision maker was identified through actions such as fluid and quick decisions ("*As I sit talking to you, I'm confident I'm making the right decisions on the information I've got but I am happy that that decision might change tomorrow*" NI 18), as well as collaborative ("*We leverage our entire network of people to support good decisions*" PN4) and confident decision making. There is evidence that entrepreneurial leaders can make difficult decisions in times of crisis through information gathering and assessment under

pressure (e.g., Quarantelli, 1988; Halverson et al., 2004). In addition, they use divergent thinking strategies to solve problems in challenging situations (Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019). Specifically, the results illustrated how they leveraged their networks and sought validation from their industry associations to support this process in times of crisis. For example, PN2 stated, "*We are relying on industry association people and our CPA to help us make good decisions*". Given that our sample of entrepreneurial leaders may have lack of experiences in the CEO role, this strategy provides them with additional confidence to make decisions (as illustrated by linking arrow in figure 2).

The CEO entrepreneurial leader also adopts task orientated behaviours and actions. This is a role the CEO usually designates to their managers, but this was clearly demonstrated through their leader-management behaviours such as increased communication, ensuring financial sustainability of the business, and hands-on managing customer relationships. To illustrate, PN4 affirmed that "*...focus has been world class customer experiences from beginning to end*". In order to convey confidence in uncertain times, the entrepreneurs believed it is necessary to communicate more regularly in external communication to customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders (Kuckertz et al., 2020; McGuire et al., 2020) as well as prioritising internal communication with employees (McGuire et al., 2020; Sherman et al., 2020). This was illustrated by multiple entrepreneurs for example, "*better communication is a priority with employees and clients*" PN3. New platforms were engaged for this process and involved video conferencing for their internal communications (e.g., zoom meetings) and various social media platforms and email for their external stakeholders.

There was a strong focus on ensuring the financial health of the organisation by the task orientated CEO who managed cashflow and generating new income where possible. This was closely linked to managing the customer relationships where there was a focus on flexibility with their customer needs and protecting the customer experience through the crisis. For example, CL6 stated, "*We have already offered clients monthly payment plans on larger prospective projects to help their cash flow and ensure our business development continues as best it can*". While protecting their own financial health, the entrepreneurs still recognised the potential financial situations of their customers and offered mechanisms such as payments plans for their products and services.

Finally, the CEO leader role included the behaviours of change maker for the organisation. A natural role for the entrepreneur, it focuses on actions that the entrepreneur takes to identify and harness opportunities (Leitch and Volery, 2017) while reimagining the elements of the business model (Amit and Zott, 2012; Johnson, 2018) and building capacity for growth. While many businesses were cutting staff by 40% and reducing expenses (OECD, 2020), these leaders were investing in people, training, facilities and technology. In this capacity, they were visionaries (Grimes, 2018) who embraced change and uncertainty

(Hmieleski and Ensley, 2007; Harrison et al., 2018) for business growth in the long term.

4.2. Learner Leader

The learner leader demonstrates both task-based and self-aware learning behaviours as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Identifying the Learner Role Through Leadership Behaviours
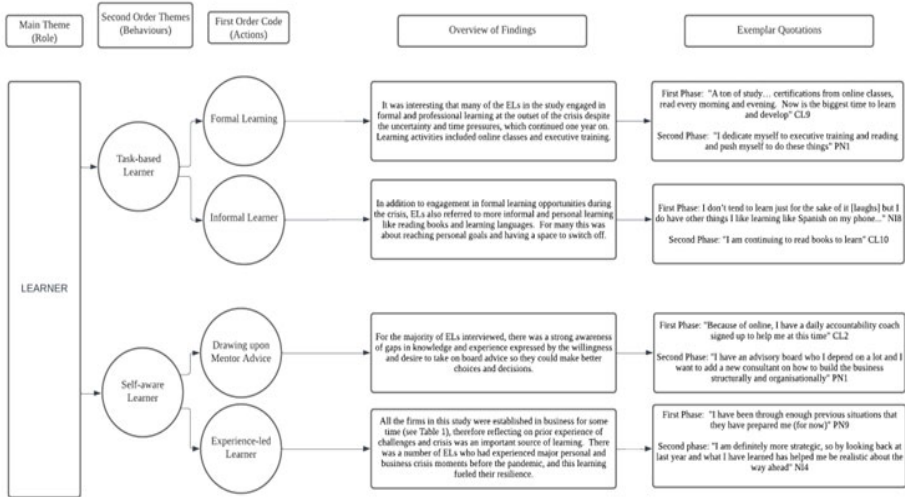
Task-based learning was noted to include both formal (classes, courses, executive training) and informal (books, webinars) motivated by the need to develop a new skill. One entrepreneur emphasised that they had undertaken "*a ton of study.... certifications from online classes... read morning and evening. Now is the (biggest) time to learn and develop*" CL9. These behaviours have been noted within the literature when describing the adaptive leader, especially in times of crisis as they tend to display a strong learning goal orientation (Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019). The self-aware learner reflects on their own past experiences as an importance source of learning. Many of the entrepreneurs had experienced some form of personal crisis and others had experiences of major business crisis (previous market crashes, bankruptcy etc). Examples of this include PN9 who stated that *"I have been through enough previous situations that have prepared me (for now)"*.

It was noted that no matter the size or impact of the crisis, they reflected on these experiences, and this fuelled their resilience to survive in the crisis. As a self-aware learner, many of the entrepreneurial leaders also sought to gather

insight from the experiences of others e.g. "*I have a daily accountability coach...
to help me at this time*" CL2. As such, they become the mentee, open to advice
and feedback from a mentor who provides accountability and consultation to
support their business. Awareness of the experiences of self and others in leading
change is an important adaptive behaviour in leading change (Ruane, 2010;
Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019).

4.3. Nurturer Leader

The nurturer has a focus on taking care of others but also recognises that they
must take care of themselves in order to survive a crisis (Wisittigars and
Siengthai, 2019). This demonstrates a high level of EQ as leaders and in this way
these entrepreneurial leaders can be described as 'radically human' (Burnison,
2021) because they put people at the heart of how they lead.

Figure 4: Identifying the Nurturer Role Through Leadership Behaviours
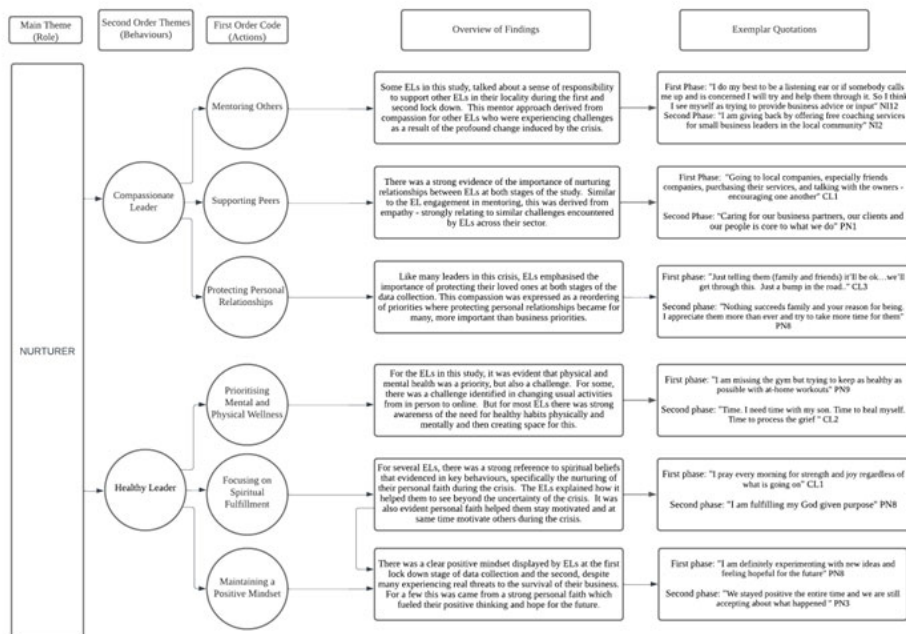
In caring for others, they showed that they were compassionate leaders. They
showed empathy in their ability to put themselves in others' shoes and 'feel' their
experiences. Further, they demonstrated compassion in their actions by
supporting their people and encouraging them to protect their personal
relationships. PN1 emphasised that "*Caring for our business partners, our*

clients and our people is core to what we do". This included realigning priorities to ensure extra time with friends and family. These entrepreneurs also became the mentor and cheerleader for their peers. Examples of this included purchasing products and services, sharing knowledge, and providing guidance as mentors to other small businesses in their community. CL1 shared that, "*Going to local companies, especially friend's companies, purchasing their services, and talking with the owners- encouraging one another*" was a core strategy for them.

An important characteristic of the nurturer learner behaviours was the priority of self-care, demonstrated by healthy leader behaviours. In the first phase, entrepreneurial leaders were aware of the importance of physical in navigating the crisis ahead. One year on, they reflected upon their mental wellness and resilience as a result of the crisis which included being thankful, grateful, and giving themselves time and space to process and heal from the experience. CL2 said that they were giving themself, "*Time.... time with my son. Time to heal myself. Time to process the grief*".

Focusing on spiritual fulfilment as a component of the healthy leader, was also noted as incredibly important to some of the entrepreneurial leaders in the study (5/30). Nurturing their faith helped them to deal with the uncertainty, rise above their circumstances, and be positive about the present and future. Leaders described the meaning of their personal faith in the crisis by words such as 'guidance', 'strength', and how "prayer" fuelled their strength. This mindset supported the people around them and gave them hope for the future.

4.4. What Hat to Wear, What Role to Play?

For many business leaders, until the pandemic hit, there was a clear separation between home and work life. They were expected to leave emotions at home and bring only their rational, stoic selves to work. However, when the morning commute changed to the walk from the bedroom to the kitchen table, the separation from home and work became non-existent. This shift in working patterns meant a split personality was not an option for leaders. In this way, this shift in role playing supports role identity theory, which contends that although roles are defined and articulated differently (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009), entrepreneurs manage multiple 'micro-identities' which emerge from the multiple roles they play both within the business and within their non-working identities. Indeed, identity synergy was detected in the sample (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2018) where the entrepreneurs were merging their identies to achieve effeciency across all the roles they had to play.

In considering the three identified roles of CEO, Learner and Nurturer, the evidence from the data shows that these entrepreneurial leader roles are highly interlinked as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The Three Roles Adopted by Entrepreneurial Leaders in Times of Crisis

The Three Roles Adopted by Entrepreneurial Leaders in Times of Crisis

Indeed, Shepherd and Haynie (2009) argue that the higher levels of convergence between identities can result in a higher likelihood that each identity will improve the success of the other. Consequently, the entrepreneurial leader in crisis must be able to move between each role fluidly, sometimes performing all roles at the same time, but switching when it is needed. We argue the combined and multifaceted nature of these roles are the cornerstone of the adaptive entrepreneurial leader as outlined in Figure 5. Furthermore, we argue this movement between roles can be defined as 'leadershifting' (Maxwell, 2019), a critical skill to adapt in highly volatile business conditions, where 'leaders cannot be the same, act the same, or think the same, in a world that does not stay the same'.

5. Conclusions

In view of the contribution to the wider crisis leadership and entrepreneurial leadership literature, this study brings new understanding of the multifaceted and interchangeable roles necessary for entrepreneurial leaders to adopt in a protracted crisis. First of all, the process-orientated view of crisis leadership, which focuses on two key stages of the "in-crisis" phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bundy et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2021), underscores the dynamic process

of entrepreneurial leadership. Specifically, we propose small business leaders adopt and interchange between three roles and related behaviours from the outset of the crisis through to the second lock down stage.

Secondly, this paper proposes the CEO leader (Hmieleski and Ensley, 2007; Harrison et al., 2018) is the decision-maker, the leader manager and change maker of the small business. There is much debate in the wider leadership literature about the role of the leader as single hero in the story of organisational success, and a similar argument is presented in the "leadership molecule hypothesis" (Flamholtz and Kannan-Narasimhan, 2013). But in the case of this study, it is clear the form of entrepreneurial leadership was primarily singular in directing the functions of the business during the crisis (i.e. vision, culture, operations, systems and change), but yet dependent upon a wider group of 'actors' in their life – from business, community and family spheres.

Thirdly, for the learner leader role, entrepreneurial leaders must leverage a strong learning goal orientation (Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019; Bagheri and Harrison, 2020) to develop new knowledge and skills from a wide variety of sources. This empirical insight makes an important contribution to the crisis leadership literature by understanding how small entrepreneurial leaders despite time pressures and weighted responsibility seek to learn in the crisis to help make sense of the uncertainty, risks and potential losses (Wu et al., 2021). In the domain of entrepreneurial leadership, the entrepreneurial mindset is defined as both an individual and collective phenomenon (Roomi and Harrison, 2011). In a similar way, this study brings new evidence of both individual (personal and professional endeavour) and collective learning (in community and via mentoring and coaching) in a global existential crisis to the entrepreneurial leadership literature.

Finally, the study confirms nurturer is a radically human leader role, one where the entrepreneurial leader is not afraid to prioritise their physical and mental health, show their authentic and spiritual selves, and demonstrate compassion for others in such a way that enables the business to not just survive, but thrive. A crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic takes a heavy emotional toll on business leaders. The insight from this study into how entrepreneurial leaders elicit positive emotions in others and protect their mental health brings new and important evidence into the crisis leadership domain as advocated by Wu et al. (2021) and others.

6. Implications

The empirical findings of this study support the conclusion that entrepreneurial leadership roles and behaviours are critical in supporting the successful navigation of a major crisis for small businesses. However, there are a number of important implications for future research as well as business and support organisations. First of all, the focus of this study has been the entrepreneurial

leader of the business. To fully understand the impact and influence of the entrepreneurial leadership roles in a crisis, it is recommended future research undertakes a dual perspective of both the leader and their followers (Harrison et al., 2016). Secondly, given the qualitative and rapid research approach to exploring this new phenomenon whereby research was undertaken during the crisis phase, we would also recommend future research considers the longer-term impact of crisis and the collection of data continues into the recovery phase in order to understand the impact of entrepreneurial leader roles on the success and performance of the business beyond the crisis period.

Thirdly, given entrepreneurial leadership is important in economic development (Harrison et al., 2016), we believe as countries navigate economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and deal with local economic and wider geo-political challenges, there are sustained challenges for the entrepreneurial leaders of small businesses. Building on extant recommendations for teaching entrepreneurial leaders to deal with adversity, failure and disappointment (e.g. Roomi and Harrison, 2011), we believe the evidence of this study provides a starting point for industry and government support organisations as they draw up plans for supporting the future resiliency of the small business sector. Indeed, by combining the entrepreneurial leadership roles with the multidimensional construct developed by Bagheri and Harrison (2020), there is arguably a shelf-ready template for a crisis leadership programme for the sector.

In closing, in advancing this area of research and practice it is important the limitations of this study are recognised and taken into account. The qualitative approach in this study has been useful in gathering an understanding of the complex psychological processes and behaviours of small business leaders at a time of major crisis, but this deeper understanding means the findings cannot be generalised. While there were substantial similarities across the three regions, we recommend some caution when generalising these findings across all small business sub-sectors given the different impacts of the pandemic in different sectors. Further, the propensity of policy-makers to give low credibility to qualitative research is acknowledged, therefore a future quantitative study with a larger sample would help improve the policy impact of such work. Finally, given the focus of this research on understanding the entrepreneurial leader's experience in the pandemic crisis, it is possible other imperative issues in the context of leading the business could have also impacted upon the roles adopted and a quantitative study which controls for various factors would help to provide clarity.

References:

Abidin, C. and De Seta, G. (2020), "Private Messages from the Field: Confessions on Digital Ethnography and its Discomforts", *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 2(1): p. 1-19.

Alsos, G.A., Clausen, T.H., Hytti, U. and Solvoll, S. (2016), "Entrepreneurs' Social Identity and the Preference of Causal and Effectual Behaviours in Start-up Processes", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 28(3-4): p. 234-258.

Amit, R. and Zott, C. (2012), "Creating Value Through Business Model Innovation", *MIT Management Review*, 53(3): p. 41-49.

Austin, Z. and Sutton, J. (2014), "Qualitative Research: Getting Started", *Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 67(6): p. 436-440.

Ayala, J.C. and Manzano, G. (2014), "The Resilience of the Entrepreneur. Influence on the Success of the Business. A Longitudinal Analysis", *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *42:* p. 126–135.

Bagheri, A. and Harrison, C. (2020), "Entrepreneurial Leadership Measurement: A Multi-Dimensional Construct", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 27(4): p. 659-679.

Beaver, G. (2003), "Small Business: Success and Failure", *Strategic Change*, 12(3): p. 115–122.

Bell, R., Liu, P., Zhan, H., Bozward, D., Fan, J., Watts, H. and Ma, X. (2019), "Exploring Entrepreneurial Roles and Identity in the United Kingdom and China", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 20(1): p. 39–49.

Bennis, W. and Thomas, R.J. (2002), "Crucibles of Leadership", *Harvard Business Review*, 80(9): p. 39-45.

Borio, C. (2020), "The Covid-19 Economic Crisis: Dangerously Unique", *Business Economics*, 55(4): p. 181–190.

Bornstein, M.H., Jager, J. and Putnick, D.L. (2013), "Sampling in Developmental Science: Situations, Shortcomings, Solutions, and Standards", *Developmental Review*, 33(4): p. 357–370.

Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M.D., Short, C.E. and Coombs, W.T. (2017), "Crises and Crisis Management: Integration, Interpretation, and Research Development", *Journal of Management*, 43(6), p. 1661–1692.

Burke, P.J. (1980), "The Self: Measurement Requirements from an Interactionist Perspective", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 43(1): p. 18–29.

Burke, P.J. and Tully, J.C. (1977), "The Measurement of Role Identity", *Social Forces*, 55(4): p. 881–897.

Burnison, G. (2021), *5 Steps to Becoming a More Radically Human Leader*. Available from: https://www.kornferry.com/insights/featured-topics/leadership/5-steps-to-becoming-a-more-radically-human-leader. Accessed 10th September, 2022.

Cardon, M.S., Wincent, J., Singh, J. and Drnovsek, M. (2009), "The Nature and Experience of Entrepreneurial Passion", *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3): p. 511–532.

Charlick, S. J., Pincombe, J., McKellar, L. and Fielder, A. (2016), "Making Sense of Participant Experiences: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Midwifery Research", *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 11: p. 205–216.

Chattoraj, A.K. and Shabnam, S. (2015), "Importance of Soft Skill in Business", *Anusandhanika*, 7(2): p. 105-110.

Clark, C.M., Harrison, C. and Gibb, S. (2019), "Developing a Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurial Leadership: A Systematic Literature Review and Thematic Analysis", *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 17(3), p. 347-384.

CMI. (2015), *Growing your Small Business: The Role of Business Schools and Professional Bodies*, September 2015, Chartered Management Institute, London.

Cogliser, C.C. and Brigham, K.H. (2004), "The Intersection of Leadership and Entrepreneurship: Mutual Lessons to be Learned", *Leadership Quarterly*, 15(6): p. 771–799.

Content, J., Frenken, K. and Jordaan, J. (2019), "Does Related Variety Foster Regional Entrepreneurship? Evidence from European Regions", *Regional Studies*, 53(11): p. 1531-1543.

Conz, E., Denicolai, S. and Zucchella, A. (2017), "The Resilience Strategies of SMEs in Mature Clusters", *Journal of Enterprising Communities*, 11(1): p. 186–210.

Coombs, W.T. (2005), *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cucculelli, M. and Peruzzi, V. (2020), "Post-crisis Firm Survival, Business Model Changes, and Learning: Evidence from the Italian Manufacturing Industry", *Small Business Economics*, 54(2): p. 459-474.

Dana, L.P. and Dana, T.E. (2005), "Expanding the Scope of Methodologies used in Entrepreneurship Research", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 2(1): p. 79–88.

Davidsson, P. and Gordon, S.R. (2016), "Much Ado about Nothing? The Surprising Persistence of Nascent Entrepreneurs through Macroeconomic Crisis", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 40(4): p. 915–941.

DiCicco-Bloom, B. and Crabtree, B. F. (2006), "The Qualitative Research Interview", *Medical Education*, 40(4): p. 314-321.

Dunne, T.C. Aaron, J.R., McDowell, W.C., Urban, D. J. and Geho, P. R. (2016), "The Impact of Leadership on Small Business Innovativeness", *Journal of Business Research*, 69: p. 4876-4881.

Eatough, V. Smith, J.A., and Shaw, R.L. (2008), "Women, Anger and Aggression: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis", *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(12): p. 1767–1799.

Elkington, R. and Breen, J. M. (2015), "How Senior Leaders Develop Resilience in Adversity: A Qualitative Study", *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethic*s, 12(4): p. 93–110.

Fairlie, R. (2020), "The Impact of COVID19 on Small Business Owners: Evidence from the First ThreeMonths After Widespread Socialdistancing Restrictions", *Journal of Economics and Management Strategy*, 29(4): p. 727-740.

Fauchart, E. and Gruber, M. (2011), "Darwinians, Communitarians, and Missionaries: The Role of Founder Identity in Entrepreneurship", *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5): p. 935–957.

Finlay, I., Sheridan, M., Coburn, A. and Soltysek, R. (2013), "Rapid Response Research: Using Creative Arts Methods to Research the Lives of Disengaged Young People", *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 18(1-2): p. 127–142.

Flamholtz, E.G. (2011), "The Leadership Molecule Hypothesis: Implications for Entrepreneurial Organizations", *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 9(3): p. 159-182.

Flamholtz, E. and Kannan-Narasimhan, R. (2013), "Examining the Leadership Molecule: An Empirical Study of Key Leadership Roles in Rapidly Growing Entrepreneurial Businesses", *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 11(2): p. 31-54.

Flamholtz, E. and Randle, Y. (2021), "How Entrepreneurial Leaders can Navigate a Crisis Successfully: Lessons and Hypotheses", *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 19(2), p. 225-272.

Friedman, Y., Carmeli, A. and Tishler, A. (2016), "How CEOs and TMTs Build Adaptive Capacity in Small Entrepreneurial Firms", *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(6): p. 996-1018.

Gioia, D.A, Corley K.G. and Hamilton A.L. (2013), "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology", *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1): p. 15–31.

GOV. (2017), *Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future.* Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf [Accessed 20 April 2020].

Grimes, M.G. (2018), "The Pivot: How Founders Respond to Feedback through Idea and Identity work", *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(5): p. 1692–1717.

Gruber, M. and MacMillan, I.C. (2017), "Entrepreneurial Behavior: A Reconceptualization and Extension Based on Identity Theory", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 11(3): p. 271-286.

Guberina, T. and Wang, A.M. (2021), "Entrepreneurial Leadership and Fear of COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Job Security and Psychological Well-being: A Conceptual Model", In: *7th International Conference on Information Management (ICIM)*, London, UK, 2021: p. 144-148. Published by IEEE.

Guptill, M., Reibling, E.T. and Clem, K. (2018), "Deciding to Lead: A Qualitative Study of Women Leaders in Emergency Medicine", *International Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 11(1): p. 1–10.

Hadley, C.N., Pittinsky, T.L., Sommer, A.S. and Zhu, W. (2011), "Measuring the Efficacy of Leaders to Assess Information and Make Decisions in a Crisis: The C-LEAD Scale", *Leadership Quarterly,* 22(4): p. 633-648.

Halverson, S.K., Murphy, S.E. and Riggio, R.E. (2004), "Charismatic Leadership in Crisis Situations: A Laboratory Investigation of Stress and Crisis", *Small Group Research*, 35(5): p. 495-514.

Harrison, C., Paul, S. and Burnard, K. (2016), "Entrepreneurial Leadership: A Systematic Literature Review", *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 14(2): p. 235-264.

Harrison, C., Burnard, K. and Paul, S. (2018), "Entrepreneurial Leadership in a Developing Economy: A Skill-Based Analysis", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 25(3): p. 521-548.

Harrison, R.T., Leitch, C.M. and McAdam, M. (2015), "Breaking Glass: Towards a Gendered Analysis of Entrepreneurial Leadership", *Journal of Small Business Management*, 53(3): p. 693–713.

Hennekam, S. and Shymko, Y. (2020), "Coping with the COVID-19 Crisis: Force Majeure and Gender Performativity", *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(5): p. 788-803.

Hill, I., Manning, L. and Frost, R. (2021), "Rural Arts Entrepreneurs' Placemaking — How 'Entrepreneurial Placemaking' Explains Rural Creative Hub Evolution during COVID-19 Lockdown", *Local Economy*, 36(7–8): p. 627–649.

Hmieleski, K.M. and Ensley, M.D. (2007), "A Contextual Examination of New Venture Performance: Entrepreneur Leadership Behavior, Top Management Team Heterogeneity, and Environmental Dynamism", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28(7): p. 865-889.

Hoang, H. and Gimeno, J. (2010), "Becoming a Founder: How Founder Role Identity Affects Entrepreneurial Transitions and Persistence in Founding", *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(1): p. 41–53.

Hutchinson, K., Fergie, R., Fleck, E**.,** Jouflas, G. and Perry, Z. (2021), "Flexing the Leadership Muscle in Times of Adversity: An International Study of Entrepreneurial Resilience in Rural Communities as a Result of the COVID 19 Pandemic", *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, 31(4): p. 100-112.

Ingirige, M.J.B, Jones, K. and Proverbs, D. (2008), "Investigating SME resilience and their adaptive capacities to extreme weather events: A literature review and synthesis", Paper presented at Building Resilience BEAR 2008 Conference, Kandalama, Sri Lanka.

IoD. (2018), *Lifting the Long Tail: The Productivity Challenge Through the Eyes of Small Business Leaders.* London: Institute of Directors.

Jager, J., Putnick, D.L. and Bornstein, M.H. (2017), "More than just Convenient: The Scientific Merits of Homogeneous Convenience Samples", *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 82(2): p. 13–30.

James, E.H. and Wooten, L.P. (2005), "Leadership as (Un)usual: How to Display Competence in Times of Crisis", *Organizational Dynamics*, 34(2): p. 141–152.

James, E.H. and Wooten, L.P. (2011), "Crisis Leadership and Why It Matters", *European Financial Review*, 61*:* p. 60-64.

Johnson, M.W. (2010), *Seizing the Whitespace: Business Model Innovation for Transformative Growth and Renewal*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Johnson, M.W. (2018), *Reinvent Your Business Model*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Jones, R., Latham, J. and Betta, M. (2008), "Narrative Construction of the Social Entrepreneurial Identity", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 14(5): p. 330–345.

Korber, S. and McNaughton, R.B. (2018), "Resilience and Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Literature Review", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 24(7): p. 1129–1154.

Kuckertz, A., Brändle, L., Gaudig, A., **et al.** (2020), "Start-ups in Times of Crisis – A Rapid Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 13: article e00169.

Leitch, C.M. and Volery, T. (2017), "Entrepreneurial Leadership: Insights and Directions", *International Small Business Journal*, 35(2): p. 147–156.

Linnenluecke, M.K. and McKnight, B. (2017), "Community Resilience to Natural Disasters: The Role of Disaster Entrepreneurship", *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 11(1): p. 166–185.

Lobel, S.A. (1991), "Allocation of Investment in Work and Family Roles: Alternative Theories and Implications for Research", *Academy of Management Review*, 16(3): p. 507–521.

Lubatkin, M.H., Simsek, Z., Ling, Y. and Veiga, J.F. (2006), "Ambidexterity and Performance in Small to Medium-Sized Firms: The Pivotal Role of Top Management Team Behavioral Integration", *Journal of Management*, 32(5): p. 646-672.

Mathias, B.D. and Williams, D.W. (2018), "Giving up the Hats? Entrepreneurs' Role Transitions and Venture Growth", *Journal of Business Venturing*, 33(3): p. 261–277.Markovi, M.R. (2018), "Resilience of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Terms of Globalization: An Evidence of Serbia", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 22(3): p. 1-7.

Maxwell, J.C. (2019), *Leadershift: The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace*, Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Leadership.

Mazánek, L. (2015), "Leadership During Crisis: Threat Identification and Solution Proposal", *Trends Economics and Management*, 9(24): p. 61-70.

McGuire, D., Germain, M-L. and Reynolds, K. (2020), "Reshaping HRD in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Ethics of Care Approach", *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 23(1): p. 26-40.

Miller, W.L. (1992), "Routine, Ceremony, or Drama: An Exploratory Field Study of the Primary Care Clinical Encounter", *Journal of Family Practice*, 34(3): p. 289–296.

Moore, M. (2018), *Leadership Under Fire: A Phenomenological Study of Senior Administrator's Perceived Leadership Identity and Crisis Response at Higher Education Institutions in the United States*, Doctoral dissertation, St. John Fisher University, Rochester, NY.

Murnieks, C.Y. and Mosakowski, E.M. (2007), "Who am I? Looking Inside the 'Entrepreneurial Identity' ", In: *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research 2007*, Babson College, Wellesley, MA.

Musara, M. and Nieuwenhuizen, C. (2020), "Informal Sector Entrepreneurship, Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation and the Emergence of Entrepreneurial Leadership", *Africa Journal of Management*, 6(3): p. 194–213.

Nambisan, S. (2017), "Digital Entrepreneurship: Toward a Digital Technology Perspective of Entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 41(6): p. 1029–1055.

OECD. (2020), *Coronavirus (COVID-19): SME Policy Responses*, Updated 15 July 2020. Available from https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=119_119680-di6h3qgi4x&title=Covid-19_SME_Policy_Responses [Accessed 10 September 2022].

Pang, A., Cropp, F. and Cameron, G.T. (2006), "Corporate Crisis Planning: Tensions, Issues, and Contradictions", *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(4): p. 371–389.

Paquin, H., Bank, I., Young, M., Nguyen, L.H.P. and Fisher, R. (2018), "Leadership in Crisis Situations: Merging the Interdisciplinary Silos", *Leadership in Health Services*, 31(1): p. 110–128.

Patton, M. (2002), *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Perry, S.C. (2001), "The Relationship Between Written Business Plans and the Failure of Small Businesses in the US", *Journal of Small Business Management*, 39(3): p. 201–208.

Powley, E.H. and Taylor, S.N. (2014), "Pedagogical Approaches to Develop Critical Thinking and Crisis Leadership", *Journal of Management Education*, 38(4): p. 560-585.

Quarantelli, E.L. (1988), "Disaster Crisis Management: A Summary of Research Findings", *Journal of Management Studies*, 25(4): p. 373-385.

Rao, M.S. (2012), "Myths and Truths about Soft Skills", *Alexandria*, 66(5): p. 48-51.

Ritter, T. and Pedersen, C.L. (2020), "Assessing Coronavirus's Impact on Your Business Model", *Harvard Business Review*, April 15, 2020. Available from: https://hbr.org/2020/04/assessing-coronaviruss-impact-on-your-business-model.

Roomi, M.A. and Harrison, P. (2011), "Entrepreneurial Leadership: What is it & How Should it be Taught?", *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 9(3): p. 183-226.

Ruane, M.C.M. (2010), "Nene and Her Business: Entrepreneurship by Necessity", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 14: p. 75-80.

Salmons, J.E. (2015), *Doing Qualitative Research Online*. London: Sage Publications.

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2020), *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th Ed.). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Senior, V., Smith, J.A., Michie, S. and Marteau, T.M. (2002), "Making Sense of Risk: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Vulnerability to Heart Disease", *Journal of Health Psychology*, 7(2): p. 157–168.

Shepherd, D. and Haynie, J.M. (2009), "Birds of a Feather Don't Always Flock Together: Identity Management in Entrepreneurship", *Journal of Business Venturing*, 24(4): p. 316–337.

Shepherd, D.A. and Patzelt, H. (2018), "Entrepreneurial Identity", In: Shepherd, D.A. and Patzelt, H. (2018), *Entrepreneurial Cognition: Exploring the Mindset of Entrepreneurs* (pp. 137-200). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sherman, R., Borden, C. and Nei, K. (2020), "Personality and Leading Through a Crisis", *Workforce: Human Capital Media*. Available online.

Sieger, P., Gruber, M., Fauchart, E. and Zellweger, T. (2016), "Measuring the Social Identity of Entrepreneurs: Scale Development and International Validation", *Journal of Business Venturing*, 31(5): p. 542–572.

Simón-Moya, V., Revuelto-Taboada, L. and Ribeiro-Soriano, D. (2016), "Influence of Economic Crisis on New SME Survival: Reality or Fiction?", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 28(1–2): p. 157–176.

Šlogar, H. (2021), "Longitudinal Research—Entrepreneurial Orientation Impact, Innovativeness, and Business Performance in Croatian Companies", *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 9(2): p 152–168.

Smallbone, D., Deakins, D., Battisti, M. and Kitching, J. (2012), "Small Business Responses to a Major Economic Downturn: Empirical Perspectives from New Zealand and the United Kingdom", *International Small Business Journal*, 30(7): p. 754–777.

Spigel, B. and Harrison, R. (2018), "Toward a Process Theory of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 12(1): p. 151–168.

Thoits, P.A. (1986), "Multiple Identities: Examining Gender and Marital Status Differences in Distress", *American Sociological Review*, 51(2): p. 259–272.

Thoits, P.A, and Virshup, L. (1997), "Me's and We's: Forms and Functions of Social Identities", In: Ashmore R.D. and Jussim, L. (Eds.), *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues* (pp. 106–133). New York: Oxford University Press.

Tracy, B. (2021), "20 Leadership Quotes For Great Leaders by Brian Tracy". [Blog post] Available from https://www.briantracy.com/blog/leadership-success/leadership-quotes-for-inspiration/ [Accessed 23 March 2022].

Van Zyl, H.J.C. and Mathur-Helm, B. (2007), "Exploring a Conceptual Model, Based on the Combined Effects of Entrepreneurial Leadership, Market Orientation and Relationship Marketing Orientation on South Africa's Small Tourism Business Performance", *South African Journal of Business Management*, 38(2): p. 17-24.

Wagenschwanz, A.M. (2021), "The Identity of Entrepreneurs: Providing Conceptual Clarity and Future Directions", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(1): p 64–84.

Watson, T.J. (2009), "Narrative, Life Story and Manager Identity: A Case Study in Autobiographical Identity Work", *Human Relations*, 62(3): p. 425–452.

Welter, F. and Lasch, F. (2008), "Entrepreneurship Research in Europe: Taking Stock and Looking Forward", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(2): p. 241–248.

Williams, T.A., Gruber, D.A., Sutcliffe, K.M., Shepherd, D.A. and Zhao, E.Y. (2017), "Organizational Response to Adversity: Fusing Crisis Management and Resilience Research Streams", *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(2): p. 733–769.

Wisittigars, B. and Siengthai, S. (2019), "Crisis Leadership Competencies: The Facility Management Sector in Thailand", *Facilities*, 37(13-14): p. 881-896.

Wu, Y.L., Shao, B., Newman, A. and Schwarz, G. (2021), "Crisis Leadership: A Review and Future Research Agenda", *Leadership Quarterly*, 32(6): article 101518.

Yang, N. (2012), "Small Business and International Entrepreneurship in the Economic Hard Time: A Global Strategic Perspective", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 16: p. 113-131.

York, J.G. O'Neil, I. and Sarasvathy, S.D. (2016), "Exploring Environmental Entrepreneurship: Identity Coupling, Venture Goals, and Stakeholder Incentives", *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(5): p. 695–737.

Zuzul, T. and Tripsas, M. (2020), "Start-up Inertia Versus Flexibility: The Role of Founder Identity in a Nascent Industry", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(2): p. 395–433.