



SPECIAL TRACK

Growing Resilient Italian SMEs

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This special track, sponsored by the SIMA Thematic Groups on "Strategy and Governance" and "Small and Family Business" and by the EURAM (European Academy of Management) Strategic Interest Group on "Family Business Research" (SIG FABR 04), aims to direct scholars' attention to organizational resilience. The significance of the resilience concept for organizations/firms has been underscored noticeably during the Covid and post-Covid periods (Huang & Farboudi Jahromi, 2021). This circumstance has provided an opportunity to reassess the crucial necessity for firms, particularly family businesses and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to cultivate the ability to adapt, cope with, and navigate external disruptions and situations of change (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005), ensuring their survival and sustained growth in uncertain competitive environments (Conz et al., 2020; Iborra et al., 2020; Casprini et al., 2022). In particular, the rising frequency and impact of disruptive events on industry, society, and the economy are increasingly leading scholars and practitioners to view turbulence and instability as "the norm" rather than isolated occurrences (Ramazani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020). As a result, the resilience and antifragility (Derbyshire & Wright, 2014; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2014) capabilities of firms become crucial for not only surviving but also thriving in unpredictable competitive environments. No latter, extant research has explored the role of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, in creating resilience and antifragility (e.g. Li et al., 2022; Corvello et al. 2023; Dey et al., 2023).

Resilience is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and it manifests across multiple layers. Fostering resilience at each level contribute to the overall ability of an organization to navigate uncertainties, learn from challenges, and thrive in an ever-changing environment. Nevertheless, while scholars consistently emphasize the critical role of managing and leveraging resources for sustaining competitive advantage (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003), there remains a noticeable gap in our understanding of how individual-level resources contribute to building resilience at the firm level. In response to this limitation, Raetze et al. (2021) issue a compelling call for a more holistic perspective on resilience, advocating for the integration of both organizational and individual level of analysis.

This call prompts us to broaden our lens and explore the interconnectedness of organizational structures and processes with the emotions and individual resources within the small and family business. By incorporating emotional intelligence, adaptability, and coping mechanisms at the individual level, we aspire to create a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of organisational resilience. This holistic approach encourages a departure from a singular organizational-centric view and embraces the multilevel nature of resilience, capturing the essence of its dynamic and adaptive nature (Conz & Magnani, 2020).

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Special Track Objectives:

This interdisciplinary special track invites academic scholars and practitioners to contribute to the understanding of organisational resilience from a multilevel perspective. We seek to foster discussions and exchange insights on how resilience manifests at various levels within an organisation, including but not limited to:

- Analyse the drivers of organizational resilience in family and non-family SMEs;
- Understand the role of technology(ies) for organizational resilience;
- Explore what organizational resilience mean in family SMEs and how they reach it, unveiling the interplay between the family and the business;
- Investigate the paths that family firms and/or SMEs follow in pursuing qualitative and quantitative growth goals;

The special track invites conceptual and empirical research on how family firms and SMEs navigate recurring and unforeseen external threats to business survival and growth, specifically focusing on the multilevel nature of resilience.

The inclusion of resilience as one of the pillars of the PNRR – the instrument through which each EU member state must establish the procedures for accessing funds from the Next Generation EU (NGEU) – further reinforces the crucial and central role of the resilience and antifragility for Italian SMEs and family businesses.

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