

Researchers' advice to stress-prone entrepreneurs: learn to manage your insomnia, and sleep!



When entrepreneurs start a new venture, they enter a [demanding](#), changing and [emotional](#) process. To navigate through this process, they need to have their batteries fully charged, with positive feelings and emotions, as this will help ensure good health. Conversely, it seems plausible to think that, as chronic insomnia increases stress levels and negative emotions, this will have an adverse effect on health. Although prior works have shed light on such topics as the [relationship](#) between sleep and thinking capabilities, the impact of entrepreneurs' insomnia on their stress, feelings and emotions, and thus their health, has received little research attention. So, an important question is: *How does insomnia affect entrepreneurs' health?*

Our [research](#) proposes that entrepreneurs' insomnia is positively related to their 1) stress levels, 2) negative feelings, and 3) poor health. Given that entrepreneurs work long and [stress-intensive hours](#), making them [more prone](#) to these problems, we contend that insomnia is a driver with a powerful impact on their health. Our argument is in line with [a study](#) from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine highlighting that insomnia costs \$63.2 billion per year to the American workforce in lost productivity.

For this study, we predicted positive relationships between entrepreneurs' insomnia, stress, negative feelings, and poor health. In particular, we expected to find that insomnia would lead entrepreneurs to manage multiple and diverse environmental demands [poorly](#) and to experience more [tension and stress](#). Moreover, [echoing](#) prior [research](#), we further assumed that stress would lead them to have negative emotions. Last, in line with [previous works](#), we predicted that their negative feelings would lead to poor health. In other words, our research conveys the message that entrepreneurs' insomnia has deleterious effects on their levels of stress, feelings, and health.

We used a final sample of 152 Iranian entrepreneurs and control variables (for example, entrepreneurs' age, marital status, education, and religiosity) and found that entrepreneurs' insomnia was positively correlated with their 1) stress, 2) negative feelings and, in turn, 3) poor health. Thus, we found support for our argument that when entrepreneurs suffer from insomnia, they are more likely to subsequently 1) experience more stress, 2) have negative feelings and emotions, and 3) be in poor health.

Echoing [prior research](#), we invite entrepreneurs to follow well-known strategies to prevent sleep problems and enhance sleep quality. For instance, they should avoid watching television (and other blue-light screens), drinking alcohol or caffeine, or smoking before going to bed. Moreover, it might be helpful to engage in physical activity several hours before bedtime. They can also try to take short (20 minutes) naps, for instance, between 3:00 and 5:00 PM, as this can be a powerful way to recharge batteries during the day.

To effectively manage and counterbalance stress and negative emotions, we agree with the [literature](#) and advise them to primarily focus on the root causes of stress. Once these causes are identified, a battle plan can be put into action to combat them. Consultants, coaches and others can also help identify sources of stress and provide strategies to deal with them. Last, entrepreneurs can try to “ignore” stress as much as possible.

Conclusion

Overall, we hope to have offered some advice to help entrepreneurs manage sleep, stress, and feelings and emotions, as doing so effectively can preserve or improve their health. Although this information is also important for consultants, coaches and others, one key idea here is that entrepreneurs themselves can learn to manage the “bad” situations when they are not sleeping well and are experiencing higher stress levels and negative emotions. As we have explained above, this focus is important because, with proper management techniques, entrepreneurs can avoid some of the negative effects on their health.

We hope that researchers will consider insomnia in their future works. For instance, they could focus on the relationship between age and insomnia. Indeed, recent research highlighted that sleep quality [declines with age](#). Thus, we ask: When compared to younger counterparts, do older entrepreneurs sleep worse? How does their sleep relate to stress, feelings, and health? Why? Researchers could also compare these dynamics with samples of other populations such as employees, CEOs, and managers. We thus invite researchers to investigate these potentially fruitful future directions more fully.



- *This blog post is based on the author's paper [Insomnia: An Important Antecedent Impacting Entrepreneurs' Health](#), with Jintong Tang and Masoud Karami, *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, March 2019*
- *The post gives the views of its author(s), not the position of LSE Business Review or the London School of Economics.*
- *Featured [image](#) by [twinsfisch](#), under an [Unsplash](#) licence*
- *When you leave a comment, you're agreeing to our [Comment Policy](#)*



Ludvig Levasseur serves as a junior research fellow at the Institute for Development Strategies of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs of Indiana University. In 2018, he served as a post-doctoral researcher in entrepreneurship at the School of Entrepreneurship of the Spears School of Business of Oklahoma State University. His research interests notably include entrepreneurial cognition and affect, time perspective, family business, and venture capital. In 2016, he received his doctoral degree in management from Paris Sciences et Lettres-Université Paris-Dauphine. email: ludvig.levasseur@hotmail.fr Telephone: 0033660070825.