Response to reviewers

The reviewers’ comments were very helpful and we paid attention to answer carefully to them. We have adapted our manuscript accordingly. Details of the modifications are presented below and are inserted in the revised version of the manuscript.

Answers to reviewer 1

Introduction:

Rev 1: in the introduction when previous research on small enterprises is discussed, the distinction between findings on employees vs. self-employed is not clearly made. ==> Despite several authors having identified certain work specificities in very small and medium-sized enterprises [25] in terms of autonomy, number of hours worked, [26], work pressures, and the corresponding link with health [25], smaller organisations clearly constitute a reality that needs to be better understood and documented. Those particular working conditions are common to employers and their employees.

Background:

Rev 1: please be more specific about the type of psychosocial risks

==> Psychosocial risks (stress, imbalance between efforts and rewards, job dissatisfaction, poor career opportunities…), work-home interference, workloads, and a leeway in the organisation of tasks appear to be the main factors that have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of employees [8,10,11,14].

Rev 1: a comparison is made between the smallest and somewhat larger businesses, was this based on a priori hypothesis? ==> (Very) Small-sized organisations generate an important number of jobs and are essential pillars of economic activity. Businesses with fewer than 10 employees represent 82% of all employers in Belgium, and jobs in Brussels are in companies employing fewer than 50 people [30], accordingly inviting the questions on the differences or similarities of the risks to health and well-being in small enterprises, knowing those in large-sized ones?

Methods:

Rev 1: Information on the sampling and procedure of data collection

==> Since there is no existing list of entrepreneurs in Brussels, a convenience sample was constructed via the contact list of Impulse Brussels. All volunteer respondents with a completed form were included in the study.

Rev 1: data collection on working conditions: have any standardized instruments been used to assess psychosocial risk factors?

==> As mentioned in the text, Kelloway’s questionnaire was utilised to measure work-home interference, Chronic fatigue was evaluated through four questions proposed by Albert et al.’s chronic fatigue, Mow’s question on the centrality of work measured the importance of work in the worker’s life. Other psychosocial risks as impossibility to take enough days out of work, probability to have to stop their activity were asked for the purpose of
the study, but are not part of any standardised measures.

Results:

Rev 1: For work-home interference and chronic fatigue, the 75th percentile was used to dichotomize. Please critically reflect on this approach. >>> Based on these questions, two scores were composed, dichotomised with the 75th percentile as threshold, accordingly delineating the “high interference” category, in order to have a comparison point with previous studies [39, 40].

Rev 1: It would also be relevant to include more tables showing main results of the paper. >>> For population and business description, a table is now inserted (table 1).

Rev 1: Several findings are now described that do not seem directly related to the specific research aims, for instance the part on motivation and centrality of work. >>> Mow’s question on the centrality of work was utilised in order to ascertain the importance of work, [35]. This question is particularly relevant in a population of entrepreneurs, knowing the importance and the place taken by work in the life of self-employed.

Rev 1: if percentages are compared with other survey findings, a formal statistical testing should be added (is the difference statistically significant?) >>> In this semi-quantitative design and due to the limited size of the samples, few statistical significance levels were reached, however when it was the case, it is stated in the text. As the 2 samples are convenient ones, no statistical inference could be applied. The comparison between the study of small retailers and self-employed entrepreneurs are merely presented for a descriptive purpose.

Answers to reviewer 2:

Title:

Rev 2: This study regarding the quality of work life of self-employed (maybe this terminology could be included in the title?), touches upon a less studied domain of occupational health and well-being research. >>> Title changed = Company size, work-home interference, and well-being of self-employed entrepreneurs.

Abstract:

Rev 2: More information (N, location, …) of the second study in shop keepers is needed in the abstract. >>> Changes are made in the abstract.

Rev 2: maybe the analyses can be made more "explanatory" by looking for latent concepts of work life risk factors or typologies of self-employed?; >>> This study is among the very few ones that could reach a population of self-employed workers, working in very small enterprises. The lack of registered data, the variety of their activities, their specific working conditions and tight schedules make such studies difficult to conduct. The results have to be understood in the framework of a descriptive and exploratory methodology.

Methodology:

Rev 2: General descriptive information is lacking when the scales and other variables are introduced. Maybe this can be resolved by referring to the tables in the results section. In these tables an N for each indicator can be added. >>> Changes have been made (see tables in manuscript).

Rev 2: There is some inconsistency throughout the manuscript of the exact N of both samples (140 or 135?; 100 or 99?). Also provide some information on missing values. >>> The total sample size for the entrepreneurs study is 140, the total number of small shop workers is 104 (the question of missing values is explained just below).

Rev 2: Revise/rephrase paragraph between lines 43 and 53. >>> (Very) Small-sized organisations generate an important number of jobs and are essential pillars of economic activity. Businesses with fewer than 10 employees represent 82% of all employers in Belgium, and jobs in Brussels are in companies employing fewer than 50 people [30], accordingly inviting the questions on the differences or similarities of the risks to health and well-being in small enterprises knowing those in large-sized ones?

Rev 2: Results Under the paragraph regarding motivation, suddenly the authors speak of 459; 99; 82 and 68 responses. >>> Of the total responses provided by the 140 entrepreneurs (N = 459), the most common motivators concern autonomy (99 responses), creative opportunities (82 responses), and the development of personal skills (68 responses).

Rev 2: It is unclear how these relate to the sample size of the study mentioned earlier. >>> Total sample is made of 140 respondents. However, for questions with missing data, the total number