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*SUBJECTIVITY AND ROLES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:
PARNANGUARA STORIES¹*

**SUBJETIVIDADE E PAPÉIS DAS MULHERES EMPREENDEDORAS:
HISTÓRIAS PARNANGUARAS**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores female entrepreneurship, focusing on the analysis of women's subjectivity in their entrepreneurial journeys. This type of entrepreneurship has gained global prominence, challenging traditional norms and creating new opportunities. In this context, female subjectivity encompasses both the pursuit of financial success and the construction of an identity that challenges gender stereotypes. The research investigates how individual and collective experiences shape the identities and strategies of women entrepreneurs, highlighting issues such as work-life balance, access to support networks, future perspectives, and overcoming challenges. Through a qualitative approach, the case study seeks to understand the key subjective factors affecting these women, how their personal experiences influence their approaches to entrepreneurship, and the impact of subjectivity on the performance and growth of their businesses. The study underscores the importance of recognizing the specificities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, as well as the aspiration to inspire other women through the construction of a legacy for future generations.

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Keywords: female entrepreneurship, subjectivity, work-family balance, narrative analysis.

RESUMO

Este trabalho explora o empreendedorismo feminino, focando na análise da subjetividade das mulheres em suas trajetórias empreendedoras. Este tipo de empreendedorismo tem ganhado destaque global, desafiando normas tradicionais e criando novas oportunidades. Nesse contexto, a subjetividade feminina abrange tanto a busca pelo sucesso financeiro quanto a construção de uma identidade que desafia estereótipos de gênero. A pesquisa investiga como as experiências individuais e coletivas moldam as identidades e estratégias das mulheres empreendedoras, destacando questões como o equilíbrio entre vida profissional e pessoal, o acesso a redes de apoio, suas perspectivas de futuro e a superação dos desafios encontrados. Através de uma abordagem qualitativa, o estudo de caso busca entender os principais fatores subjetivos que afetam essas mulheres, como suas experiências pessoais influenciam suas abordagens ao empreendedorismo e o impacto da subjetividade no desempenho e crescimento de seus negócios. O estudo destaca a importância de reconhecer as particularidades e os desafios enfrentados por mulheres empreendedoras, além do desejo de inspirar outras mulheres através da construção de um legado para as próximas gerações.

Palavras-chave: empreendedorismo feminino, subjetividade, equilíbrio trabalho-família, análise narrativa.



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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has gained prominence on the global stage, being widely discussed as one of the main driving forces of contemporary economic and social development. Its significant growth challenges traditional norms and has expanded the space for women to develop their entrepreneurial journeys.

The entrepreneur can be understood as the individual who drives entrepreneurship, that is, the person who makes things happen, anticipates events, and has a strategic vision for the future of the organization (Dornelas, 2008). This profile allows the entrepreneur to be prepared to face the challenges of a globalized and constantly changing market.

In Brazil, entrepreneurship began to consolidate in the 1990s, and, more recently, female entrepreneurship has gained prominence, being defined by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) as "an entrepreneurial activity led by women" (SEBRAE, 2023). This movement is reflected in the actions of women who not only found their own businesses but also take on leadership in the management and development of their companies.

Although the number of female ventures is proportionally lower than that of men (GEM, 2023), women entrepreneurs stand out for their higher level of education and characteristics such as greater maturity and, in most cases, being married (Silva; Mainardes; Lasso, 2016). Even so, there are still certain barriers faced along the way, some of which include prejudice regarding gender and less partnership received compared to men (SEBRAE, 2024).

Female entrepreneurship has been the subject of several studies, that is, this theme has seen significant growth in research, mainly to serve as a model for those who wish to undertake (Vale; Serafim; Teodósio; 2011). This field of study is linked to the subjectivity of women entrepreneurs, which is formed by subjective meanings associated with their trajectories, the current context, and the culture within which the activity is developed (Ferreira; Nogueira, 2013). In



this view, subjectivity does not only involve the pursuit of financial success but also the construction of an identity that challenges gender stereotypes and promotes equality through their journeys.

Based on these aspects, this study investigates female entrepreneurship in Paranaguá, Paraná, focusing on the roles and construction of the subjectivity of local women entrepreneurs. The choice of the city is justified by its economic and cultural significance on the Paraná coast, as well as the challenges and opportunities that shape these women's paths. With a population of 145,829 inhabitants and a territorial area of 822.838 km², Paranaguá offers a favorable environment for business development (IBGE, 2023).

In this context, factors such as work-life balance, access to support networks, financial resources, and overcoming prejudice are essential to understanding the reality of female entrepreneurship in the region. Thus, this study seeks to analyze how life experiences influence the construction of subjectivity among these women in the entrepreneurial landscape of the Paraná coast.

To structure this research, the following sections present the theoretical framework, where the theme of female entrepreneurship is discussed, as well as two spheres related to this theme: the construction of women's subjectivity in the entrepreneurial context and the family context in female entrepreneurship. Subsequently, the methodology presents the data collection procedures. Then, the analysis and discussion are addressed. Finally, the last sections cover the final considerations and references.



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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Female entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship can be defined as a dynamic process of value creation, whether through income generation or market opportunity exploitation, with significant impacts on the economy and society. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Brazil (GEM), it is "any attempt to create a new business or enterprise, such as a self-employment activity, a new company, or the expansion of an existing business" (GEM, 2008, p. 134).

In addition to creating new businesses, entrepreneurship encompasses innovations in products, services, and processes in already established organizations. To succeed in this scenario, it is crucial that entrepreneurs know where they want to go, define the purpose of their journey, and focus on how to positively impact the business (Dornelas, 2021).

This concept goes beyond starting new businesses, also encompassing innovation in products, services, and processes within established organizations. In a broad perspective, Schumpeter (1997) highlights the entrepreneur as a central figure in his economic system, as it is the entrepreneur who drives the innovation process. In this context, female entrepreneurship emerges as a relevant and transformative phenomenon, motivated by the desire for financial independence, autonomy, and personal fulfillment.

Women who decide to undertake face specific challenges, often associated with historical and cultural barriers. These challenges include conflicts of responsibilities, social pressure linked to traditional roles, and a lack of experience in leading their own businesses (Alperstedt; Ferreira; Serafim, 2014). Even so, these entrepreneurs demonstrate great resilience, using their experiences to transform their lives and the environment around them.



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The motivations for entrepreneurship go beyond the simple need to supplement family income, being driven by factors that range from the pursuit of autonomy and personal satisfaction to the discovery of promising market niches (Jonathan, 2011).

Bolson, Oliveira, and Vale (2018, p. 89) state that: “To undertake is much more than investing in the job market, it is much more than spending money, it is much more than obtaining personal satisfaction in your own business.”

For women, entrepreneurship means equality, financial autonomy, personal fulfillment, and professional growth, whether as owners of micro and small businesses or as managers or presidents.

According to the study by Bandeira, Amorim, and Oliveira (2020), Brazilian women entrepreneurs tend to get involved in entrepreneurship out of necessity, such as coping with unemployment, rather than market opportunities, which is a more common reality among men. The study also revealed that entrepreneurship is an alternative for reconciling family and professional demands, especially for women with young children.

However, the result of such determination and willpower that entrepreneurs must conquer a role in society is directly linked to specific causes that shape their professional paths. These causes result from their unique subjectivities and the strong balance they must maintain between work and family responsibilities. Therefore, understanding and delving into these causes is necessary to comprehend how they overcome obstacles to achieve personal and professional fulfillment with the responsibilities that surround them.

The construction of women's subjectivity in the entrepreneurial context

Female entrepreneurship goes beyond economic issues, functioning as an engine of social transformation. In many cases, it arises as a response to urgent needs, such as coping with unemployment, but becomes a means of



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personal and professional emancipation. Bandeira, Amorim, and Oliveira (2020) highlight that, for many women, entrepreneurship is an alternative for reconciling family and professional demands, especially when there are young children.

According to Rey (2005), subjectivity is a dynamic process, built from unique meanings that go beyond direct external influences. In other words, it is shaped by personal experiences that accumulate and transform over time. In the case of women entrepreneurs, these subjective meanings reflect how they deal with challenges, balance multiple roles, and innovate in the market.

Ferreira and Nogueira (2013) emphasize that gender identity plays an important role in this construction, as the way women perceive their entrepreneurial journey is directly influenced by social expectations regarding the female role. In Brazil, these influences are intensified by the sexist context present in the business environment, imposing even deeper challenges for women seeking success as business owners.

Female subjectivity in entrepreneurship is also reflected in women's capacity for innovation and leadership, who often introduce new perspectives into the labor market, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive business environment. The way these women reconcile their professional and personal responsibilities, focusing on work-life balance, is one of the main features that most contributes to strengthening their entrepreneurial paths (Ferreira; Nogueira, 2013).

More than financial gain, the success of women entrepreneurs is related to personal fulfillment and the ability to overcome challenges. By building unique journeys, these women show that entrepreneurship is not limited to starting businesses but is a tool for transforming realities both in the personal and social spheres.

Thus, it is possible to note that each woman's subjectivity in female entrepreneurship is revealed through her personal experiences, values, and



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perceptions. However, the journey of the female entrepreneur is not limited to her achievements and challenges. In many cases, women are challenged to balance their professional and personal lives, also facing elements in the work-family dimension.

Understanding the subjectivity of women in entrepreneurship is fundamental to understanding how they attribute meaning to their experiences in the business world. According to Rey (2005), subjectivity is a dynamic process built from unique meanings that go beyond direct external influences. That is, it is shaped by personal experiences that accumulate and transform over time. For women entrepreneurs, these subjective meanings reflect how they deal with challenges, balance multiple roles, and innovate in the market.

Family context in female entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship is part of a complex dynamic, where women entrepreneurs face the challenge of balancing family and professional responsibilities. This reality is shaped by social expectations and gender roles that influence their paths, often requiring them to reconcile multiple roles, such as mother, wife, and manager. In this sense, Jonathan (2005, p. 374) notes that the “multiplicity of roles tends to be considered a characteristic of the female universe, leading to the recognition of a talent among women for doing and thinking about several things simultaneously,” so the female entrepreneur often faces conflict in the work-family sphere.

Male and female entrepreneurs experience the relationship between work and family differently, largely due to social expectations and the gender roles assigned to them. Women often bear most of the family responsibilities, which intensifies the conflicts between their professional and personal obligations (Jonathan, 2005; Vilela, 2018). Men, usually seen as the main providers, face fewer demands in this area. This inequality is also reflected in access to support



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networks, which often favor men and leave women at a disadvantage when seeking resources to boost their careers (Bandeira, Amorim, and Oliveira, 2020).

As for the support that entrepreneurs receive and perceive within the family circle, Silva, Mainardes, and Lasso (2016) affirm that most of the women interviewed identify their husbands as the main supporters for them to remain active in business. Friends, on the other hand, were identified as a minority in the support given. Receiving this support is extremely important for women entrepreneurs to achieve good results in their ventures (Silva; Mainardes; Lasso, 2016).

Balancing personal and professional responsibilities is a constant in conflicts related to work and family. However, authors such as Hall (1972) and Shelton (2006) propose actions that women can take to solve these conflicts at certain times, thus alleviating the tensions arising from these struggles.

Considering the theme of female entrepreneurship and the spheres arising from it, it is important to understand the relationship between the woman entrepreneur, the roles she assumes simultaneously or not, in the management of the enterprise, and the conflict arising from this interaction. A deep understanding of female entrepreneurship can only be achieved by considering the complexity of women's identity and experiences, as well as the specific challenges in balancing professional and family demands.

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative in nature, specifically a case study, as it allows an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon investigated (Creswell, 2014). This approach is valued for its ability to comprehensively explore social phenomena, considering their complexity and the real context in which they occur (Yin, 2015).



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Bauer and Gaskell (2002) describe qualitative research as social research, highlighting that, during data collection, it is essential to avoid bias in respondents' answers, ensuring that the information obtained is truly representative of the study's objective.

Moreover, in qualitative research, the researcher assumes an active role, participating in the process and striving to deeply understand the phenomena (Michel, 2015). This participation allows the researcher to deconstruct common sense and enrich scientific analysis, interpreting the data to extract relevant meanings.

For this study, three entrepreneurs were interviewed, each with at least four years of activity in Paranaguá, a coastal city in Paraná. The choice of participants was due to the proximity of the researchers to the entrepreneurs, the fact that they had already used the services and products of these companies, and the publicity the entrepreneurs themselves do on social media, showcasing the journey of their businesses. Individual interviews were chosen due to each participant's availability. The interviews were recorded with the entrepreneurs' consent and conducted in person at their respective workplaces.

To protect the identity of the entrepreneurs, pseudonyms were used for them and their companies, as suggested by Michel (2015): Vitória with her aesthetic clinic, Geovana, owner of the Floratta shop and studio, and Luísa, main manager of the women's clothing store Maya Modas.

Regarding the interviews, the narrative interview was chosen, which differs from the formal interview based on questions and answers. According to Bauer and Gaskell (2002), in this model, the interviewer follows a script to guide the conversation, without interruptions or questions that might influence the respondent's communication and behavior. The aim is to allow the individual to share their experience spontaneously, in their own words. The narrative interview follows a structure containing a beginning, middle, and end, as suggested by



Bauer and Gaskell (2002). As the authors point out, the interview scripts were guided by questions that fit on only one page, since the aim was to ask questions specific to the object studied. In this case, the questions addressed life stories that guided the participants' professional construction.

After data collection, the interviews were transcribed verbatim; however, repeated words or speech fillers were disregarded, as they did not bring significant information. In sentences of low comprehensibility, they were rewritten based on the interviewees' speech context to make the narrative cohesive.

After transcription, narrative analysis was conducted to understand the life stories of the entrepreneurs. According to Gibbs (2009), this approach seeks to interpret individuals' experiences, considering the social and cultural context, and how they assign meaning to important events in their lives, and how events are organized.

Boje (2001) points out that narratives are tools that not only recount past experiences but also shape the present and future, influencing decisions and actions. Riessman (2008) adds that narrative analysis allows for the exploration of meanings and values individuals assign to their stories, revealing deep layers of human experience.

In this research, the analysis was structured around predefined categories, based on key aspects of the entrepreneurs' journeys. The categories were constructed to facilitate the identification of patterns and the organization of data, enabling a deeper and richer interpretation of the narratives.

By adopting both narrative analysis and categories, the research was able to integrate the subjectivity of the stories with the identification of trends and common elements in the entrepreneurs' experiences. The dimensions structured in Chart 1 were identified during the analysis as recurring patterns in the interviews, revealing common aspects in the participants' statements.



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Among these patterns, motherhood naturally emerged as a common experience detected in the trajectory of some of the interviewed entrepreneurs. However, as it was not a recurrent point in all interviews, motherhood is not included in the table of other identified dimensions.

CHART 1. Analysis Categories

DIMENSIONS	CONCEPT
Entrepreneurial Motivation	Entrepreneurial motivation reflects the desire to undertake and the courage to take the first step, evident in the initiatives and determination to create and develop one's own business. Jonathan (2011) discusses the various motivations that lead entrepreneurs to start businesses, the main ones being related to personal fulfillment and the desire for autonomy.
Support Network	The support network includes relationships that provide emotional, financial, and practical assistance to entrepreneurs. Silva, Mainardes, and Lasso (2016) highlight that many husbands are seen as key supporters, essential for the continuity of businesses.
Work-Life Balance	Balancing personal and professional responsibilities is a constant source of conflict between work and family life. However, authors such as Hall (1972) and Shelton (2006) propose actions that women can take to resolve these conflicts at certain times, thus alleviating the tensions resulting from these challenges.
Future Perspective	The future perspective involves the entrepreneur's ability to anticipate trends and develop a strategic vision for their organization. Dornelas (2008) emphasizes that this vision is fundamental to facing the challenges of a globalized and constantly changing market.

SOURCE: The authors (2024)

HISTORY OF ENTREPRENEURS FROM PARANAGUÁ

Vitória

Vitória, a 25-year-old, discovered her true calling in entrepreneurship. From an early age, she showed interest in the commercial field, starting to sell sweets while still in high school. Upon entering college, she began a Law degree but soon realized it was not the right path, deciding to switch to Aesthetics and Cosmetics. To pay for her studies, she worked in a perfume and cosmetics shop, where she had her first professional experience in the beauty sector.



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The desire to have her own business came early, but resources were limited. When she was fired, she used her unemployment insurance to open her first aesthetics clinic, a small space of only nine square meters. On the first day, there was no money in the till, since all the investment went into materials and equipment. From the beginning, Vitória followed a principle learned from her father: “The money isn’t mine – it belongs to the company.” This mindset helped her reinvest every cent to expand her clinic.

With growing demand, the initial space soon became too small, leading her to move to larger locations in a short time. With every move, she reinvested everything the clinic earned to improve the facilities and offer new services. But not everything was easy. Just two weeks after opening, the Covid-19 pandemic forced a temporary closure of the business. Determined not to give up, Vitória developed a line of home care products, enabling her clients to maintain their beauty routines at home. This strategy ensured continued sales and helped her overcome one of the most difficult moments of her journey.

Besides financial and structural challenges, Vitória also faced resistance from her family. Her parents initially did not support her decision to become an entrepreneur, since she had passed a public exam and they saw entrepreneurship as an uncertain path. Over time, however, as they saw her effort and dedication, they came to recognize and value her achievements. “At first, they thought it was just a little rented space, but now they see I built something solid,” she says.

Currently, her clinic has a team of 15 women, and her boyfriend became a business partner. Vitória views her journey as something greater than just the growth of her clinic; she aims to inspire other women: “I need to be an example, not just for myself, but for those with me,” she states.

Balancing personal and professional life remains a challenge. In the beginning, she worked intensely, often until dawn, but over time learned to



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delegate tasks. “Before, I closed the clinic at midnight and by six in the morning I had to be there again. Nowadays, before I arrive, the clinic is already open by someone else, but I still need to improve that separation,” she reflects.

Vitória also realized the importance of networking and exchanging experiences with other entrepreneurs. She actively participates in entrepreneurship groups, sharing her difficulties and learning from the mistakes and successes of other professionals. Her aim is to help those starting out, offering opportunities for interns and inexperienced professionals to grow within her clinic.

At the end of the interview, Vitória reflected on the challenges of entrepreneurship and the illusions created by social media. “Not everything is posted. What matters is looking at your own growth and not comparing yourself to others.” With determination and resilience, Vitória not only built a successful business but also a space that reflects her values. Her journey continues, driven by the desire to evolve, inspire other women, and keep providing services that make a difference in her clients’ lives.

Geovana

At 30, Geovana is a single mother of two and owner of the Floratta store, which operates both in physical retail and online. From a young age, she showed an entrepreneurial spirit, selling accessories, cosmetics, and working in various fields. Her background in social work did not stop her from following her business calling, which consolidated during the pandemic and her second pregnancy.

The store began unpretentiously: after buying dresses for herself and realizing they didn’t fit, she decided to resell them. The success of those first sales motivated her to expand, and within a few months, she set up a website. Business growth brought administrative challenges, like formalization and financial management, and the need for a larger space to store products. “When you start



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something amateur, you don't worry about much. At most, you pay a MEI and the DAS. But as it grows, you realize everything is much more complex."

Without family or friends' support, Geovana faced entrepreneurial challenges alone, balancing motherhood and work. Initially, she relied on a nanny to help with her children so she could dedicate herself more to the store. Her approach was always based on the belief that investing in structure and staff would bring future returns. "If I hire someone to work half a shift just to hold her, at least then I can work. And what I work, pays that person."

Business expansion brought new difficulties, like problems with suppliers, stock seasonality, and an accident that temporarily prevented her from working. Faced with the lack of pieces that matched the store's romantic identity, she decided to learn to sew and develop her own collection. Thus, Floratta also became an atelier, reinforcing the brand's exclusivity.

As the company grew, Geovana invested in strategic partnerships with influencers and in professional photography for her pieces. However, the attempt to expand to a larger space, with a photo studio and coffee shop attached, proved to be a mistake, increasing costs and her workload. Recognizing the overload, she opted to return to a leaner model, similar to the original.

The years 2022 and 2023 were marked by intense crises. The overload from motherhood, store management, and challenges with seamstresses led Geovana to burnout. "I didn't sleep, didn't eat – just kept trying to solve, resolve these stock issues." Difficulties intensified in 2024, when she faced her mother's illness, her child's autism diagnosis, and the end of her marriage. "When we moved here [current store location], everything happened this year: my mother got sick, I got divorced."

Her daily life is dynamic and challenging. On unusual days, she must take her children to the store, which affects her productivity. Often, she works late at night to meet atelier demands. Still, she believes entrepreneurship gives her the



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freedom to be more present in her children's lives, something she deeply values. "Entrepreneurship matches motherhood because you have the freedom to earn your own money and make your own schedule."

Despite the challenges, Geovana sees entrepreneurship as a continuous learning process. With no manual to follow, she learned by doing, adjusting her path as challenges arose. "Entrepreneurship isn't a ready-made guide; you learn by doing." Her goal is to consolidate Floratta and, in the future, to teach patternmaking and sewing, passing her knowledge to other women.

She advocates that every woman should try entrepreneurship, even with small businesses, to guarantee financial and emotional independence. Although she wishes to expand, she recognizes that the moment calls for stability. For now, she remains focused on her store and atelier, promoting her creations and adapting to market needs.

Luísa

At twenty-nine, Luísa built her entrepreneurial journey with courage and determination. In 2018, she founded her online clothing store, "Maya Modas," a name that reflects her identity since "Maya" is her middle name. Inspired since childhood by her mother and grandmother, both saleswomen, her first entrepreneurial experience was selling brigadeiros at school.

Before dedicating herself to business, she worked as a human resources assistant but felt it wasn't her path. In 2012, she enrolled in tourism college, believing in its professional opportunities. "I chose tourism thinking of the many possibilities the profession could offer," she explains. However, she realized the career did not meet her expectations: "It didn't provide the path I hoped for."

At the start of the online store, she faced challenges such as defining her target audience. "The biggest challenge was thinking: who am I going to sell to? Who's going to buy my clothes?" recalls Luísa. Motherhood brought new



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obstacles, like balancing childcare and sales. “I’d put the clothes in the car, post on social media, and deliver the pieces while my son waited in the baby carrier,” she shares.

With support from her husband, who encouraged her to expand, she opened her first physical store in 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic forced a temporary closure soon after opening. “Sometimes I couldn’t even sell a belt for 20 reais. I almost cried,” she confesses. Nevertheless, she overcame the difficulties and expanded to a bigger space. Today, the store operates on the ground floor of her house, which simplifies her routine but also imposes challenges. “An entrepreneur wakes up working and goes to bed working,” she states.

The success of Maya Modas led her husband to leave his job and dedicate himself completely to the business. “He’s my support and is always with me; we’re partners in marriage and work.” Luísa never sought out entrepreneur networks, preferring to learn from her own experience. “I’ve always tried to walk on my own feet.”

Today, her store stands out in Paranaguá for the accessible quality of its clothes and its unique customer service. “As far as I can remember, I’ve never seen a store here in downtown have lines,” she proudly says. The business allowed her to meet people and improve her quality of life: “The income I have as a store owner, I certainly wouldn’t have working for a company.”

By sharing responsibilities with her husband, she’s able to balance professional and personal life. “My husband helps me with everything, and we support each other.” Despite her achievements, she recognizes the sacrifices. “My son’s first steps, his first word, I often didn’t witness.” But today, she invests in training her employees to ensure more time with her family.

Her mother’s influence was essential to her journey. “Unfortunately, I lost my mother, but I had the chance to thank her. Seeing her always selling things



ignited in me the desire to follow this path.” Currently, she relies on her husband, son, and mother-in-law to maintain the balance between work and family.

Seeking sustainable growth, Luísa focuses on innovation and product quality. “I never coveted my own business to the point of overspending on personal things. The mentality is to grow sustainably and without debt.” For her, entrepreneurship transformed her financial life and her self-perception, making her stronger and more resilient.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis revealed common connections in the stories of Vitória, Geovana, and Luísa, who reported challenges and achievements throughout their professional journeys. Through their narratives, it was possible to understand how their businesses were shaped by the circumstances that influenced their paths. Though each has her own particularities, both Geovana and Luísa started their businesses out of necessity, motivated by the uncertain situations they faced in their lives.

Geovana began her business at home during her pregnancy, after stopping work as a social worker due to the pandemic, with the goal of generating income and exploring a scarce niche in her city. Luísa, dissatisfied with male leadership in her last jobs under the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), decided to take a risk in entrepreneurship, traveling to São Paulo to buy clothes and start her business. Vitória, on the other hand, was the only one to start out of opportunity, taking advantage of her unemployment insurance to open a beauty clinic, even though her parents were against the idea.

These motivations, which drove Vitória, Geovana, and Luísa to become entrepreneurs, corroborate the motivations found in Jonathan’s (2011) study, some of which were identified in the entrepreneurs: Vitória sought independence to make her own decisions, Geovana identified a scarce niche in her region, and



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Luísa wanted to overcome dissatisfaction with male leadership. What proved relevant in the present moment is that their motivations have changed, making entrepreneurship a source of personal fulfillment and pleasure, aligning with Rey's (2009) idea that the individual transforms their own subjectivity. This shift in perspective is reflected in business management, with Luísa and Vitória choosing not to follow local models, seeking to live their own experiences without the influence of others.

Additionally, a common feature among them is that all started their entrepreneurial journeys while young, after accumulating previous experience in formal jobs, but feeling the urge to start their own businesses. Driven by this ambition, they began entrepreneurship simply and amateurishly, selling from home, without a structured physical space.

Luísa mentioned in her interview that, at the time, she put clothes in the car and posted on social media, often delivering the pieces and waiting for clients to try them on. Similarly, Vitória also started her business by serving clients at home; she dreamed of opening a large aesthetics clinic but faced challenges that made her adjust her expectations. Geovana began selling dresses online, noting that at the start of an amateur venture, there usually aren't many concerns. This modest beginning reveals that the motivation to be an entrepreneur goes beyond income, focusing on autonomy, personal satisfaction, and identifying promising niches (Jonathan, 2011).

However, despite these difficulties, the entrepreneurs also felt a lack of support during the initial stages of their journeys. Vitória says she didn't have her parents' approval to become an entrepreneur, but she recognizes that her father gave her practical help in building the clinic. As her business grew, her parents came to recognize its ongoing success and began to offer emotional support. Currently, she also has support from her boyfriend, who is now a partner in the business. In addition to family support, Vitória is part of an entrepreneurship



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group in her municipality, participating in meetings to exchange new perspectives and generate insights for her clinic.

Geovana felt the absence of those closest to her, such as friends and family. Luísa, meanwhile, only had help from her husband and mother-in-law and did not receive support from entrepreneur networks. These accounts contrast with research by Silva, Mainardes, Lasso (2016), which mentions that entrepreneurs perceive support from their family circle, with the husband being the most frequent, followed by children, parents, and friends.

The lack of a support network also extends to the issue of motherhood, with Luísa and Geovana facing difficulties in balancing childcare and professional commitments, often having to bring their children to the stores, where they supervise them while working, though this is not productive for them. This overload reflects what Jonathan (2005) and Vilela (2018) describe about the social role of women as primary caregivers, increasing the conflict between family and professional responsibilities.

Luísa shared that, at the time, she sold clothes directly from the car with her son waiting in the baby carrier. Even while pregnant, she made trips to São Paulo and, after her son was born, sacrificed important moments to invest in her store. Geovana, now a single mother, faces similar challenges, lacking support to balance raising her children with business management. With an autistic child and a sick mother, she divides her time between family care and work, sacrificing profits and quality time with her family to keep the business going. According to Alperstedt, Ferreira, and Serafim (2014), these difficulties reflect dilemmas such as conflicts of responsibility, feelings of guilt, and social pressures on the role of women as mothers and caregivers.

The intersection between motherhood and work highlights the conflicts faced by women entrepreneurs, where work affects family life and vice versa, resulting in low productivity and irregular presence in their home environment, as



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pointed out by studies by Vilela (2018), Strobino and Teixeira (2014), Barbosa et al. (2021), and Greenhaus and Beutell (1985).

In this regard, Geovana faced personal and professional challenges, such as divorce and caring for her mother in treatment, which affected her business and routine, including eating and resting. Similarly, Luísa faced personal conflicts by delegating part of her baby's care to her own mother so she could dedicate herself to starting Maya Modas, causing her to miss important moments of her son's early life. With the loss of her mother, her main support network, the challenge of balancing work and family life intensified. This overload directly impacted on the lives of these two entrepreneurial mothers, who face the challenge of balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

To make it possible for women to manage these roles, studies by Hall (1972) and Shelton (2006) highlight actions that help alleviate such conflicts. Among these actions, Luísa found support in her husband after her mother's death; they share housework and childcare, and she receives help from her mother-in-law when store events happen, and she needs to travel for restocking. She also relies on a team of store employees, which allows her more time with her family and reduces the conflict between work and personal life.

Vitória, although she does not have children, recognizes that she still dedicates more time to work than to family or herself but plans to reduce the clinic's hours to improve her quality of life. This perception reflects actions suggested by Hall (1972) and Shelton (2006) to reduce conflicts, focusing on eliminating, minimizing, or sharing their causes.

At the same time, balancing family and professional responsibilities was a constant theme in the interviews, revealing the complexity of juggling multiple roles (Jonathan, 2005). This dynamic persists after the stores close; Geovana and Luísa keep working, Luísa planning strategies and content, Geovana



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focusing on sewing, both demonstrating the female ability to handle several tasks at once.

Despite adversity, Geovana and Luísa highlight freedom as the main advantage of entrepreneurship. Geovana values the possibility to balance motherhood and work, while Luísa appreciates the autonomy of not depending on a hierarchical superior or CLT restrictions, reflecting the motivations identified by Bandeira et al. (2020).

This ability to balance personal and professional spheres reflects the entrepreneurs' commitment to building successful and lasting businesses, with the vision to pass their stories on to future generations. Vitória and Luísa emphasize the importance of solid financial management, stating that profits are invested exclusively, avoiding debt and driving business growth. This approach reflects the idea that to succeed in entrepreneurship, it is essential to know your goals, define your purpose, and focus on how to positively impact the business (Dornelas, 2008; 2021).

The idea of continuity is present in the entrepreneurs' aspirations. Geovana and Luísa want their children to continue the businesses they built. Luísa has expressed the desire to see her son follow in her entrepreneurial footsteps and eventually take over Maya Modas. Vitória, meanwhile, considers her mission to teach and support other women, remeaning the lack of support she had at the beginning of her journey. She now seeks to be a mentor and example, showing her commitment to the future of women's entrepreneurship by promoting a more collaborative and inspiring environment.

The entrepreneurs aim, in the future, to turn their businesses into examples of resilience and innovation. According to Alperstedt, Ferreira, and Serafim (2014), female entrepreneurship is marked by obstacles that go beyond those faced by men, since women often accumulate multiple roles, balancing family and professional demands.



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Based on the stories of these entrepreneurs, it is clear that the subjectivity of entrepreneurial women is shaped by their journeys, cultural contexts, and life experiences, influencing how they face challenges and give meaning to their journeys, as highlighted by Ferreira and Nogueira (2013). Finally, in Chart 2, four dimensions identified in the participants' narratives are presented, contrasted with the definitions of the authors shown in Framework 1.

These narratives demonstrated how personal and social experiences shaped their professional journeys. Each interviewee shared both initial difficulties and the strategies adopted to balance personal and professional life, revealing the complexity of women's role in entrepreneurship.


CHART 2. Analysis Categories from the Entrepreneurs' Narratives

DIMENSION	FRAGMENTOS DAS NARRATIVAS DAS EMPREENDEDORAS	
Entrepreneurial Motivation	Vitória	"[...] After receiving unemployment benefits, I thought I could open a large beauty clinic, but that didn't work out, so I started with a nine-square-meter clinic."
	Geovana	"I stopped working as a social worker due to the pandemic and pregnancy. After seeing great sales results from the dresses I bought that didn't fit, I created a logo, a website, and an inventory. Thus, Floratta was born."
	Luísa	"I said, 'Oh, I don't want to stay here [my last job], I don't want this for myself,' and so I left. At the time, I was working six hours a day and earning R\$3,000, but it wasn't worth it, and that's when I gave up [...] I saw no way out, I said, 'No, I have to do something for myself,' and that's when I started going to São Paulo to buy clothes and start facing things, out of nowhere."
Support Network	Vitória	"My father helped me manually; they never helped me financially, but always with this idea of 'I'll do something for you' [...] Now I realize I have more support not only from my family, but also from other people."
	Geovana	"I've never had support from anyone, not even family or friends, especially since I'm not a person with many friends."
	Luísa	"I have a very good husband. He helps me with everything, and we support each other, both at work and at home. We share our tasks, and that helps me a lot; support is essential [...]."
Work-Life Balance	Vitória	"So sometimes I leave around 9:30 p.m., but by 8 p.m., my workday is over. By the end of the year, I want to cut it down to 6 p.m., because when I get home, my head is still working. I still want to adjust everything in my schedule and really block it out, set limits for myself."
	Geovana	"In 2022/2023, I experienced burnout. I didn't sleep, I didn't eat, I was just trying to solve problems, resolve inventory issues. [...] When we came here [current location, Floratta], everything happened this year: my mother got sick, I got separated [...]."
	Luísa	"Hoje em dia posso me dar o luxo de ter duas colaboradoras na minha loja e posso ter um pouquinho de tempo de qualidade para meu filho. [...] E ao mesmo tempo eu me dei o luxo de viajar na sexta-feira, de ficar sexta e sábado fora da loja".
Future Perspective	Vitória	"I see it more as a mission to teach others."
	Geovana	"I can't think about closing down. This place [Floratta] is an extension of who I am. I want to pass that on to my children [...]."
	Luísa	"When my son grows up, I plan to leave my business to him. I love entrepreneurship and want him to follow in my footsteps. My husband and I want to leave a legacy for him, showing him that being a CLT (Workers' Union) isn't the only option."

Source: The authors (2024).



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research investigated the subjectivity of women entrepreneurs, focusing on their personal and collective experiences, seeking to enrich the applied social sciences and reflect on the impact of individual trajectories in the formation of subjectivities. Although the topic is widely discussed internationally, there is a lack of studies on feminine subjectivity in Brazilian literature, which motivated this study.

The goal was to identify and describe the dimensions of entrepreneurs' subjectivity, highlighting the importance of emotional support and financial management, which often requires personal sacrifices for sustainable business growth. The procedures adopted revealed how family emotional support is important for the success of entrepreneurs, as illustrated in the examples of Geovana, Vitória, and Luísa.

The research demonstrated that, with or without external support, entrepreneurs seek internal motivation to move forward, and that external support strengthens resilience. Furthermore, they showed flexibility in overcoming challenges and adapted their businesses with innovation and creativity. Reconciling personal and professional life proved to be a major challenge, but these women adjusted to minimize conflicts, showing discipline and the ability to set priorities. The research does not aim to generalize, but to present how each entrepreneur's identity is shaped by their experiences.

Understanding feminine subjectivity goes beyond financial success, involving the construction of an identity that challenges gender barriers and inspires other women. The results can guide public policies, support programs, and practices of financial institutions, as well as strengthen gender inclusion in the market.

For future research, it is suggested to investigate the subjectivity of entrepreneurial mothers, exploring how motherhood influences their identities. It



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is also recommended to expand research to other regions and conduct comparative analyses across different social contexts, including the impact of support networks and the pandemic.



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