Striving for Balance: Women Entrepreneurs in Brazil, their multiple gendered roles and Covid-19

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Striving for Balance: Women Entrepreneurs in Brazil, their multiple gendered roles and Covid-19

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the overlap between home and work life. For women entrepreneurs with caregiving responsibilities, this overlap is expected to have significant impacts on their businesses and well-being.

There are concerns that the pandemic will negatively impact women’s entrepreneurship as women have more household responsibilities (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020; AEI, 2020; Copley et al., 2020; IMF, 2020; OECD, 2020). Even before the pandemic, women entrepreneurs were having to balance family and work responsibilities (Gimenez et al., 2017) and spend up to ten times more on childcare and household chores than their male counterparts (ITC, 2020; SME Finance Forum, 2020). Data shows that women-led businesses are amongst the hardest hit, with over 93% reporting struggling to manage their businesses alongside family commitments (Cherie Blair Foundation, 2020). Covid-19 is causing a widening of the gender gap, and the impacts of economic burdens and household responsibilities on women are higher than that on men (UN Women, 2020; IFC, 2020).

Our study explores the social relationships women entrepreneurs engage with, within their families and externally, to understand how these relationships influence their experiences in the pandemic context where the physical distance between business and the family domains is blurred. Role conflicts create significant challenges for women entrepreneurs (Rehman and Roomi, 2012) but women entrepreneurs also derive strong motivations from their family commitments (Duberly and Carrigan, 2013). To navigate their multiple roles, women entrepreneurs mobilise social relationships within the family (Hsu et al., 2016) and outside (Wang et al., 2020) to fulfil their entrepreneurial activities and goals. We consider the two domains to be interwoven (Welsh et al., 2018) due to the pandemic where the separation of activities is difficult to achieve.

With this paper, we contribute to the literature on Business- Family Interface (BFI) by highlighting how social relationships influence women entrepreneurs in a pandemic. This discussion in the pandemic context is limited as it is recent, so we rely on past and emerging studies to inform our research questions and contextualise the problem. Studies, including OECD (2020) and IMF (2020) allude to the need for more research on women entrepreneurs and the business- family interface.

We explore the context of Brazil, using data from women entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Brazil, entrepreneurial activities empower women by reducing gender discrimination in the job market (Krakauer et al., 2018, p.363). Brazil is an appropriate empirical site because it is a patriarchal society where women’s roles are rooted in social norms (Xheneti et al., 2019). Women’s entrepreneurship generates 9% of Brazilian GDP (UN News, 2020) and pre-pandemic, women’s representation in entrepreneurship was at nearly 80% within solo entrepreneurship (Unidos, 2020). However, the gendered behaviours, reflecting a patriarchal worldview, puts limits on women entrepreneurs’ abilities to grow and succeed in their businesses (OECD, 2020).

We argue that the strategies for coping with multiple role commitments emerge from the social relationships women have within their families and externally. We contend that these relationships are more important now in the pandemic but will continue to help women entrepreneurs achieve some semblance of balance between home and business. Our study
contributes to an increased understanding of women entrepreneurs' specific needs in this pandemic and influence policy decisions. Our research questions, in the pandemic context, are:

RQ1. How are women entrepreneurs experiencing the various outcomes due to the overlap between the family and business spheres?

RQ2. How do social relationships, within the family and externally, influence women entrepreneurs’ strategies to manage their business-family commitments?

The following sections will outline the background, research context and methodology, theoretical perspective and subsequent findings and analysis. Finally, conclusions, policy recommendations and future research pathways are presented.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the overlap between home and work life. For women entrepreneurs with caregiving responsibilities, this overlap is expected to cause negative consequences on their business activities and wellbeing.

In this pandemic, women-led businesses are amongst the hardest hit with over 93% reporting struggling to manage their businesses alongside family commitments (Cherie Blair Foundation, 2020; UNWomen, 2020). There are concerns that the pandemic will negatively impact women’s entrepreneurship as women bear the brunt of increased household responsibilities (AEI, 2020; Cukier, 2020; IMF, 2020; OECD, 2020; TEN, 2020). Even before the pandemic, women entrepreneurs were having to balance family and work responsibilities (Gimenez et al., 2017; Lewis, 2006; Minniti and Naudé, 2010; Overbeke et al., 2013; Piacentini, 2013; Ramadani et al., 2015) and spending up to ten times more in childcare and household chores than their male counterparts (ITC, 2020; SME Finance Forum, 2020). This is expected to be more challenging in countries like Brazil where, typically, caregiving responsibilities largely lie with women (Freund and Hamel, 2020; ReliefWeb, 2020).

Women’s entrepreneurship generates 9% of Brazilian GDP (UN News, 2020). Pre-pandemic, in Brazil, women’s representation in entrepreneurship was at nearly 80% within solo entrepreneurship (Unidos, 2020). In Brazil, entrepreneurial activities empower women by reducing gender discrimination in the job market (Krakauer et al., 2018, p.363). But the studies on women’s entrepreneurship only date back to the early 2000s (Gomes et al., 2014; Krakauer et al., 2018, p.362; Miranda et al., 2017). These studies from Brazil include, fear of entrepreneurial failure (Camargo et al., 2018; Koellinger et al., 2013; Noguera et al., 2013; Wagner; 2007), gender perspectives in entrepreneurship (Arroyo et al., 2016), identity of women entrepreneurs (Ferreira and Noguiera, 2013), and others focusing on Brazilian social, political and economic contexts (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015; Cardon, et al., 2012). Very few studies have looked at strategies employed to challenge gender constraints (Bruni et al., 2004; Feldman, 2001; Friedmann-Sanchez, 2006) with limited or no evidence on how women cope with these challenges in developing countries (Bianco et al., 2017).

The discussion on women’s entrepreneurship in the context of the pandemic is limited as it is recent so we rely on past studies to inform our research questions and contextualise the problem. But emerging studies including those from the OECD (2020) and IMF (2020) allude to the need for more research on women entrepreneurs’ and the home-work interface. Also, UN Women (2020); IFC (2020) allude to the fact that Covid-19 is causing an widening of the gender gap and the impacts on women, both health and economic burdens, are far higher than that on men.
We ask the question:

How are women entrepreneurs, during Covid-19, navigating the home-business interface? What support, if any, are they receiving from the social relationships within family and externally?

This study is expected to contribute to an increased understanding of the specific needs of women entrepreneurs in this pandemic and influence policy interventions.

The following sections will outline the theoretical background, the research context and methodology and subsequently, the findings and their analysis. Finally, conclusions, policy recommendations and future research pathways are presented.

Women’s entrepreneurship within gendered roles

Theoretical Background

Women’s entrepreneurship within gendered roles

This section will discuss women’s entrepreneurship from a gender perspective to highlight the challenges women entrepreneurs face.

Past research has shown that women’s entrepreneurship can increase empowerment, equality change opportunities (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; Hughes et al., 2012; Lock and Lawton Smith, 2016). However, role conflicts affect women’s entrepreneurship (Bianco et al., 2017) and the challenges of balancing business and family differentiate women’s experiences from those of men (De Bruin et al., 2006). Gender roles also affect the perceptions of male and female capabilities (Diekman et al., 2005), motivations and intentions to run businesses (Ebbers and Piper, 2017; Guo and Werner, 2016; Perez-Quintana et al., 2017). In conflict with the perceived masculinity of the entrepreneurial role, the family role ascribed to women contributes to women’s negative entrepreneurial experiences (Ahl, 2006; Munkejord, 2017).

Of the many challenges facing entrepreneurs, fear of failure (Cacciotti and Hayton, 2015) or starting a business permeates entrepreneurial activities and is exacerbated by political and economic uncertainties (Camargo et al., 2018). Fear is complex because of the emotions within it and can arise out of the obstacles women entrepreneurs face (Gimenez et al., 2017) and may be invisible to others (Camargo et al., 2018).

On the other side of challenges, women’s motivations to start their businesses are rooted in wanting to achieve greater autonomy and control over work and family (Duberly and Carrigan, 2013), financial gains and flexibility (Williams, 2004) and avoiding unemployment (Dawson and Henley, 2012). Starting a business relates to their desire to having a more balanced life
(Rehman and Roomi, 2012; McGowan et al., 2011), and this balance is of greater concern to women than to men (Rothbard, 2001).

In patriarchal societies, women are defined primarily through family roles (Brush et al., 2009; Leung, 2011; Roomi et al., 2018). Household responsibilities are primarily within women’s responsibilities (Balachandra et al., 2018). In patriarchal societies like Brazil, women’s roles as carers or mothers have significant implications in business (Xheneti et al., 2019), leaving them to seek out strategies to negotiate the challenges of traditional social positions (De Vita et al., 2014).

Women entrepreneurs experience challenges in balancing work and family similar to that of employed women (Hopkins and O’Neil, 2007). But research has shown that greater autonomy and control over work and family are amongst the strongest motivators for women to start their own businesses (Agarwal and Lenka, 2015; Daniel, 2004; Duberly and Carrigan, 2013; McDougald, 2007). Starting a business relates to their desire to have a more balanced life (Rehman and Roomi, 2012; Baughn et al., 2006; Maes et al., 2014; McGowan et al., 2011). For some, achieving this balance is an important outcome in defining entrepreneurial success (Danes et al., 2009) and is of greater concern to women than to men (Burke, 2002; Rothbard, 2001).

Women’s entrepreneurship can lead to increased empowerment and gender equality (Ahl, 2006; Lock and Lawton Smith, 2016; Marlow, 2014), and create opportunities for change (De Vita et al., 2014; Hanson, 2009; Hughes et al., 2012; Marlow, 2014). However, gender roles can impose challenges on the growth of women’s enterprises (Bianco et al., 2017; Leung, 2011). These challenges, including balancing work and family, differentiate women’s entrepreneurial experiences from those of their male counterparts (De Bruin et al., 2006; McDougald, 2007; Miller et al., 2003, 2011).

In the entrepreneurship framework, ‘motherhood’ is used as the catch-all term for all family and household context (Brush et al., 2009). Existing social norms suggest that household responsibilities are still seen, largely, within women’s set of responsibilities (Balachandra et al., 2018; Baughn et al., 2006; Rubio Bañón and Esteban Lloret 2016). In patriarchal societies, women are defined primarily through roles related within family (Bastian et al., 2018). Brush et al. (2009) acknowledge, in their “SM” model, that social norms constrain women’s entrepreneurship. They argue for the inclusion of “motherhood” and “macro/meso environments” to the other factors of “markets”, “money” and “management” (Brush et al., 2009, p.9). In a recent study by Wu et al. (2019), motherhood and household responsibilities are found to be amongst the key determinants of women’s entrepreneurship.

Increase in women’s entrepreneurship has given rise to increasing scholarly interest in how women negotiate their work and family roles (Ozbilgin et al., 2011). Typically, women manage domestic and care responsibilities whilst men provide the income (Johnson, 2007). Gender roles also affect the perceptions of male and female characteristics, capabilities (Diekman et al., 2005), motivations and intentions to run businesses (Ebbers and Piper, 2017; Franck, 2012; Guo and Werner, 2016; Modarresi et al., 2016; Perez Quintana et al., 2017). The family role ascribed to women (Ahl, 2006; D’Enbeau et al., 2015; Munkejord, 2017) is in conflict with the assumed masculinity of the entrepreneur role and contributes to women’s negative entrepreneurial experiences (Eddleston and Powell, 2012).
Gendered behaviours reflect a patriarchal worldview (Brush et al., 2009; Leung, 2011; Roomi et al., 2018). Prioritising family responsibilities over businesses, women feel that entrepreneurship affects their family life negatively (Mari et al., 2016) and believe that family causes problems for woman entrepreneurs (Loscoceo and Bird, 2012). This is particularly relevant in the context of Brazil because of cultural, social norms and the limits these norms create (OECD, 2020).

Socio-cultural factors influencing individual experiences and their outcomes are given limited consideration in extant literature (Xheneti et al., 2019, p.259; Piszczek and Berg, 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Clark, 2000) and studies examining country specific contexts are still not as prolific (Mari et al., 2016). Country-specific factors account for differences in women entrepreneurship outcomes (Daniele and Geys, 2016; Gupta and Levenburg, 2010; Pathak et al., 2013; Welsh et al., 2018).

Institutional environments (Estrin et al., 2013; Simon-Moya et al., 2014) and sociocultural differences, in developing countries, provide a unique set of challenges to women entrepreneurs (Minniti and Naude, 2010) when negotiating the business-family interface (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; D’Enbeau et al., 2015). In patriarchal societies, like Brazil, the roles of women as carers or mothers has implications for women in business (Xheneti et al., 2019), leading them to negotiate the challenges of traditional social positions (De Vita et al., 2014) and their business aspirations (Xheneti et al., 2019).

Work-Family and Business-Family Interfaces

The literature on Work-Family Interface (WFI) is of particular value in the context of Covid-19 as individuals have had to move their work home, where the professional and family spheres entwine. Even prior to the pandemic, women’s entrepreneurship was characterised by the intertwined nature of their work and home responsibilities (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Las Heras and Hall, 2003). In the above sections, we have highlighted challenges women face from a gender role perspective. Other studies, focusing on the separation between the roles within the family and entrepreneurship domain, argue that individuals prioritise either work or family or both simultaneously (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). Strategies are developed based on individual evaluations of priorities to achieve a sense of balance between the two (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). Although household responsibilities are not limited to motherhood, but in the entrepreneurship framework, it is a metaphor for all family and household context (Brush et al., 2009). Literature suggests that some women entrepreneurs delay having children or have a smaller family (Shelton, 2006) while others demarcate clear boundaries between family and work commitments (Gherardi, 2015). Some also adopt strategies including flexible work (Gherardi, 2015), task delegation and role-sharing (Shelton, 2006). Women scale back business growth to focus on family demands to the detriment of the business (Noguera et al., 2013; Ufuk and Ozgen, 2001) whilst men are more likely to prioritise business growth.
The literature on Work-Family Interface (WFI) is of particular value in the context of Covid-19 as individuals have had to move their work home, where the professional and family spheres entwine. However, women’s entrepreneurship is always characterised by the intertwined nature of their work and home responsibilities (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003). The Business-Family Interface (BFI), rooted in the Work-Family Interface (WFI) theory (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011), explains how the two dimensions interact—whether family impacts business negatively or positively (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). It is imperative to note that the relationship between these domains is bi-directional (Hsu et al., 2016), with enhancement and interference outcomes in these relationships. Family support in the form of instrumental resources, e.g. money, skills, and affective, e.g. moral support, enhances entrepreneurial engagement (Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Rothbard, 2001) and reduces intentions of exiting the business in a crisis (Hsu et al., 2016).

Gender roles within the traditional household context lead to conflict and stress (Rothbard, 2001). While women work within the interlinked spheres by deploying strategies, e.g. bringing work back home (Gherardi, 2015), increased overlap leads to increased stress levels. The inability to comply with different role expectations can result in heightened stress (Thomas and Ganster, 1995), dissatisfaction with roles (McManus et al., 2002), and role performance (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Both directions of interference are detrimental to business success (Wu et al., 2010) and cause a reduction in entrepreneurial well-being (Shelton, 2006).

To conclude, the discussion above has highlighted the intertwined nature of business and family. Based on this, our study explores, how and if, in the pandemic, are women entrepreneurs mobilising their social relationships to navigate the increased overlap of business and family spheres.

Business-Family Interface (BFI), recognised in entrepreneurship research (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003) and rooted in the four constructs of the Work-Family Interface (WFI) theory (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011) seeks to explain job attitudes and behaviours: business-to-family enrichment; family-to-business enrichment; business-to-family interference; and family-to-business interference. All four constructs are bi-directional (Hsu et al., 2016) with the former two capturing the enrichment processes, and the latter two, the interference processes.

In the enrichment domain, the transfer of positive affect and/or resources from one to another improves role performance (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). These can be physical resources (money, skills etc.) directly transferred from one role to the other, or affective enrichment, where positive emotions create an environment of “improved cognitive functioning, interpersonal relationship, physical energy and persistence of efforts…” (Hsu et al., 2006, p.616). These experiences from an enhancement perspective (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; Rothbard, 2001), can increase entrepreneurial engagement (Jennings and McDougald, 2007) and reinforce business commitment (De Tienne, 2010). This can also reduce entrepreneurs’ intentions of exiting the business in a crisis (Hsu et al., 2016) such as the one posed by the pandemic.

The interference perspective posits that demands of family and work can be a source of conflict and stress (Rothbard, 2001). Household responsibilities can impact upon and be impeded by the entrepreneurial role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). The multiple roles competing for time or the inability to comply with different role expectations can result in heightened stress (Thomas and Ganster, 1995), dissatisfaction with roles (McManus et al., 2002); and role performance (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Both directions of interference are detrimental to
business success (Wu et al., 2010) and cause reduction in entrepreneurial well-being (Shelton, 2006).

Women experience more conflict than men, perhaps because they spend more time on work and family commitments than men (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999). Entrepreneurs often adopt three strategies to mitigate the business-family interference, namely, segmentation, compensation and accommodation (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). Women seem more inclined to use the accommodation strategy by prioritizing their family domain and not use the segmentation strategy much because they have lower separation between work and family domains (Jennings and McDougald, 2007; p.753). Men are more likely to prioritize business growth, adopting strategies that allow them to do so whilst women scale back business growth to focus on family demands. Therefore, business-family interference is more detrimental to women entrepreneurs (Baughn et al., 2006; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Loscocono and Bird, 2012; Mari et al., 2016; Noguera et al., 2015; Sullivan and Meek, 2012; Tlaiss, 2014; Ufuk and Ozgen, 2001).

The components of WFI allow understanding of the relationship between BFI and entrepreneurship (Welsh et al., 2018). Similar to many studies which suggest that the BFI experiences reflect a combination of the enrichment and interference perspectives (Hsu et al., 2016; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Welsh et al., 2018), our study explores the two BFI processes simultaneously to explain the entrepreneurial performance during Covid-19 in Brazil.

**Theoretical Perspective**

Whilst there is a robust body of evidence on women’s challenges in entrepreneurship, from the perspective of business-family conflict, relatively little research has captured how women employ the social relationships within the family and externally to manage this conflict. In developing countries, knowledge of how women negotiate business and family roles is limited (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; Xheneti et al., 2019).

Family relationships mitigate some of the tensions between business and family domains for women entrepreneurs and enhance their entrepreneurial experiences, especially in a crisis (Althalathini et al., 2020). Women entrepreneurs derive more robust benefits, including better firm performance (Welsh et al., 2018), mental well-being (Eddleston and Powell, 2012), when there is support from the family (Rehman and Roomi, 2012; Powell and Eddleston, 2013). In Brazil, the family holds a privileged place and women entrepreneurs attribute their successes to the support they receive from friends and family (Smith-Hunter and Leone, 2010).

External informal relationships are also powerful determinants in women’s entrepreneurial experiences (Revenge and Dooley, 2020). These relationships can create access to resources and provide emotional support. Women receive benefits and support through informal networks, unlike men who support more formal networking (Cooper et al., 2009). Also, women tend to seek social relationships via informal networks, building relationships based on
friendship (Bogren et al., 2013; Surangi, 2018). This creation of social relationships generates social capital that provides access to resources, e.g. finance, and reduces information gaps (Anderson and Jack, 2002; Wang et al., 2020). Underpinned by personal and emotional peer-based support, women entrepreneurs’ external informal networks provide encouragement, learning and well-being (Brooks et al., 2018). Where physical networking is not possible, social media helps women entrepreneurs develop these crucial informal networks (Fischer and Reuber, 2011).

It is essential to adopt the lenses of social relationships to view women entrepreneurs’ business-family challenges in the pandemic because it considers both the visible and invisible work activities that women undertake within family and work spheres. The subjective experiences of women entrepreneurs will help reveal the importance of these social relationships. Although studies in this field have used WFI, BFI will provide deeper access to all the emerging strategies that women entrepreneurs mobilise in the pandemic context.

Similar to many studies which suggest that the BFI experiences reflect a combination of the enhancement and interference perspectives (Hsu et al., 2016; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Welsh et al., 2018), our study explores the two BFI processes simultaneously to explain the entrepreneurs’ strategies during Covid-19 in Brazil.

Figure 1 illustrates the dynamic process of social relationships for women entrepreneurs pre-pandemic and in the current pandemic. This theoretical model represents how the domains interact in the pandemic context, where there is a total overlap between the home and business spheres. The model explores entrepreneurship as a social change process where women entrepreneurs challenge the socio-cultural contexts they inhabit in patriarchal societies in during a crisis.

[Insert Figure I here]

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative methodology, interpretivist approach to explore the experiences of women entrepreneurs and the Business-Family Interface (BFI) in the context of Covid-19. In addition to being revelatory (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), qualitative research was more suitable for understanding the issues (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) as this was one of the few first studies to emerge out of Brazil in this context.

We are concerned with the pandemic context in which the individual experiences of women entrepreneurs can only be understood from their perceptions. Hence we adopted an interpretivist approach that allows us to clearly see the invisible and visible social structures to discover how they navigate the challenges within the social relationships they possess and cultivate.

We used a women-only sample similar to other studies focusing on women’s own experiences rather than in comparison with men (McGowan et al., 2011; Xheneti et al., 2019). Qualitative research was more suitable for understanding the issues (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) as this was one of the first studies to emerge out of Brazil in this context.
The Rio de Janeiro Context

With the seventh largest proportion of female-led start-ups in the world (GEM, 2018), 46% of Brazilian women entrepreneurs encounter barriers rooted in gender and race inequalities (ANDE, 2020).

Despite being more educated, Brazilian women entrepreneurs earn 22% less than their male counterparts and receive only 2-3% of business investments available (SEBRAE, 2019). Over 44% of women start their own businesses out of necessity (SEBRAE, 2019) to support their households, but dedicate 18% less time to their enterprises compared to men due to domestic responsibilities.

In our study, whilst the sample is determined from the city of Rio de Janeiro, the disadvantaged backgrounds of the participants, and their experiences of being Afro-Brazilian women in a society of racial and gender inequalities makes them representative of the wider conditions surrounding women entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Sampling and participants:

We used a women-only sample similar to other studies focusing on women’s experiences rather than in comparison with men (McGowan et al., 2011; Xheneti et al., 2019).

The sample was identified purposively (Cope, 2011) from Rio De Janeiro through an enterprise support programme, led by non-profit organisation SocialStarters, specifically targeting Afro-Brazilian female entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds, the majority of participants living in or running enterprises based in favelas or low-income areas of the city. In Rio de Janeiro, approximately 2 million people live in favelas or informal low-income housing settlements. In 2019, Rio experienced an unprecedented peak of violence which had a direct impact on many of the female entrepreneurs that participated in our study, with disruption to their business operations, and an increase in danger and stress.

Although the sample is from the city of Rio de Janeiro, the disadvantaged backgrounds of the participants in the ‘favelas’, their experiences of racial and gender inequalities, lack of access to finance and high levels of domestic responsibilities (ANDE, 2020; SEBRAE, 2019) makes them representative of women entrepreneurs in Brazil.

The sampling criteria included owning a 2-year-old (minimum) business. This allowed us to get data from entrepreneurs who have experienced running a business before and during the pandemic.

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In our study, whilst the sample is determined from the city of Rio de Janeiro, the disadvantaged backgrounds of the participants, and their experiences of being Afro-Brazilian women in a society of racial and gender inequalities makes them representative of the wider conditions surrounding women entrepreneurs in Brazil. The sample size was determined post-eri by data saturation principles when no new information emerged (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Twelve interviews are recommended as a guide for data saturation point (Ando et al., 2014). Our study had a narrower scope, so a smaller sample size was appropriate (Malterud et al., 2016; Sim et al., 2018).

Table I presents the cohort characteristics. All identities are anonymised. Participants have degree-level qualifications and age range is between 23-60 years, and all but two have children. The business sectors include fintech, legal services, online education, events, and fashion. The cohort characteristics reflect recent studies on Brazilian women entrepreneurs, including Krakauer et al. (2018).

**Data Collection:**

The primary data was collected from 13 women entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2020 via semi-structured interviews using Skype video calls. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown around many countries, Skype video calls were the most appropriate and removed the geographical limitations (Iacono et al., 2016), and considerations of time and money needed to coordinate the interviews (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013). Video calls could have impeded the development of rapport between the researcher and the participant (Cater, 2011; King and Horrocks, 2010), but most of the participants use online platforms extensively, so this was not experienced.

The semi-structured interview guide was created by a participatory process including authors and staff from _SocialStarters_. Interviews, lasting between 60-80 mins, were conducted in Portuguese for all participants by the second co-author and recorded using audio recorders with prior permission. Informed consent of participants was obtained, and where desired, anonymity assured. To establish acquaintance, participants were approached prior to before the interview via phone and email to establish acquaintance. In the interviews, open-ended questions were asked to facilitate allow flexibility and allowed rich emerging narratives (Dunn, 2010). To achieve accurate, credible, and reliable findings, the interviews, transcriptions and early data analysis were conducted in the same language, _Brazilian Portuguese_, to achieve accurate, credible, and reliable findings. Theo allow us to use the quotations, the data was translated into English (Van Nes et al., 2010) by the co-author, who is a native English and Portuguese speaker, to allow us to use the quotations.

**Sampling and participants:**

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1 https://www.socialstarters.org/impact-organisations/
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Sample size was determined posteriori by data saturation principles when no new information emerged (Fusch and Ness, 2015; O’Reilly and Parker, 2013). From a thematic analysis perspective, 12 interviews are recommended as a guide for data saturation point (Ando et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006). Our study also had a narrower scope so a smaller sample size was appropriate (Malterud et al., 2016; Morse, 2000; Sim et al., 2018).

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[Insert Table I here]

Data Analysis

The data analysis, in this study, providing deep and rich theoretical descriptions of context, was based on the three-step process by Gioia et al. (2013, pp.16-17) guided by a systematic inductive approach to concept development. In qualitative studies, interviewing and analyses tend to follow together through emerging categories and themes (Langley, 1999; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Leake and Golden-Hardle, 1997). The systematic inductive approach to concept development added increased qualitative rigour to the exploratory design whilst maintaining its potential for being revelatory. This is rooted in the basic assumptions that our realities are socially constructed and that people know their thoughts and can explain their “thoughts, intentions and actions” (Gioia et al., 2012, p.17). The latter assumption’s impact was that, as researchers, we did not impose prior assumptions in explaining the participants’ experiences. This gave more credence to the participants’ words by removing our presuppositions and allowed newer concepts to emerge.

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim to allow for full qualitative analysis. Manual preliminary coding was generated (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and this inductive approach preserved the subjective and interpretive nature of the data analysis process (Graebner et al., 2012; Leitch et al., 2010).

In the first step, we applied open coding to generate first-order concepts whilst adhering to participant terms and not distilling categories, resulting in a large number of categories (Gioia et al., 2013). Here, the authors consulted and agreed on the codes and first-order concepts. As an example, from the raw data “…entrepreneurs who are my main clients…may not be able to afford to hire me” and “…new sales when our customers are also broken”, we generated first order codes for the raw data and subsequent second-order code as “supply chain issues affecting
In this step, the main objective was to search for similarities and differences amongst emerging categories, and the labels assigned to each theme were reflective of the interviewees’ original words and terms used.

In the 2nd-order analysis, we identified whether the emerging themes suggested concepts that explained our observations within the theoretical domain. When we had a set of themes and concepts leading us to theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), we distilled them into ‘aggregate dimensions’. With a complete set of 1st and 2nd-order themes and aggregate dimensions, we built a data structure (Gioia et al., 2013). Tables II and III provide an overview of the data structure of our analysis. This visual representation of how we generated themes from raw data demonstrated the rigour of our research (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010). Throughout the data analysis, we compared our observations with the existing women in entrepreneurship and BFI literature to refine and identify themes, patterns and relationships.

Findings

Using four overarching themes, we present our findings to the question: how are women navigating the home-business responsibilities in the pandemic? The study found that the pandemic created increased burdens on women entrepreneurs’ burdens in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as they balanced their multiple roles more so than before. However, it also showed that the pandemic created opportunities for businesses which were poised to cope with the changing demands; and those who were in a supportive home environment. The role of external, informal peer support networks was highlighted, reinforcing that support from external sources, such as informal network external social relationships (Revenga and Dooley, 2020) is a very important aspect in women’s entrepreneurship. Our findings lend credence to the view that family support is necessary for a positive entrepreneurial experience for women (Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Powell and Eddleston, 2013; Xheneti et al., 2019) as opposed to the viewpoint on negative effects of the interactions between home and business for women entrepreneurs (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; Essers et al., 2013; Rehman and Roomi, 2012).

The data allowed us to probe deeper into how Covid-19 had exacerbated the existing challenges of navigating the Business-Family Interface (BFI) for our sample of female entrepreneurs in a developing-country context, and what coping mechanisms were being deployed. We include verbatim quotes to contextualise our findings in line with Pratt’s (2009) suggestion and following other studies, including Xheneti et al. (2019); Althalathini et al. (2020). In Table II, an excerpt of raw data linked to the generation of the first-order concepts is shown (Pratt, 2009) to provide evidence of our data interpretations.
Fears Due to the Pandemic

We found that the main challenges and fears facing female entrepreneurs in the pandemic stemmed from the uncertainty surrounding it and the increased overlap between home and business. In most cases, women were reluctant to ignore their home responsibilities, but the loss of income and the rapid decline of business activities created fear and stress. The financial loss occurred at an unprecedented rate, due to with loss of clients, and paused business activities, having to cease immediately, creating economic vulnerability for entrepreneurs and their families:

“… 80% reduction in income…” (BS); “just invested money in business space .. lockdown commenced...we had to shut down... much money lost” (IF);

“90% activities are in-person... now what do we do? (APS)”; “… entire business relies on making sales via human direct contact…” (ALS).

Increased levels of overlap of home and business created a sense of foreboding and anxiety were reported due to numerous factors, including needing to use basic home IT infrastructures for business work. The needs for rapid digitisation, and the human and financial resources needed to achieve that, were strong factors in the deepening of fears around the pandemic:

“... the pandemic has brought forward at least 3 years of digitisation ... need to adapt fast in order to not fail…” (LH);
“migration to a digital platform so rapidly is very difficult .....” (RP).
“...trying to adapt to this new digital reality but the costs of infrastructure and skills ...” (APS).

Feelings of exhaustion and despair caused by Covid-19 led to and concerns around business survival and had a huge impacts on mental health:

“...shocking...not just the end of business ... potential end to our own lives” (LH).

However, finding the time to de-stress was not available for many respondents, as the changing needs of the businesses required an immediate response,

“... very tired and worried...mental health has suffered .... lack of any perspective on the future…” (BS).

Social isolation and detachment from their pre-Covid life routines also caused concern;

“...worried ... lack of fulfilment... the feelings that this can generate... anxiety, anguish ... depression” (RP).

Reflecting on the need to care for their own mental health, DG says:

“we have to take care of our mental health as women, as mothers in social isolation”.
Those with caregiving responsibilities at home, including childcare and elderly care, felt at a greater disadvantage due to time limitations:

"...biggest challenge was planning time... content creation... up by 40%... trying very hard... to keep on top of the changing regulations and the changing needs of my business ..." (LH).

"Women need to overcome many demands at home, at work, .... Our businesses are (now) in the living rooms ... of our own homes" (LH).

"Not having an office ... I work from home but it's not great because ... my children and family are there... I cannot focus" (TB).

The difficulties of juggling increased domestic responsibilities, home-schooling, and family care, in the context of Brazil, where the caregiving responsibilities largely lie with women, deepened a sense of fear around business failure fears during the pandemic. We also found that participants’ focus on family commitments was given equal, if not more, priority to that of their business expectations.

"-when I became a mother I re-evaluated my priorities ... whilst the pandemic has created a business panic, my role as a mother comes first ..." (IF).

**Motivations due to the Pandemic**

One of the more unexpected findings, demonstrating women entrepreneurs’ resilience in the face of adversity, was that of seeing the pandemic as a reason to pivot their business and reprioritise their lives. Many respondents discussed how they viewed the pandemic as a source of positive action for to their businesses through digitisation, making those business changes that they had been putting off for a long timelimiting. Recognising the changing customer prioritiesincluding an increased focus on health, (IF) noted that:

"...our clientele has increased as well as the diversity of producers.... I notice we have an audience now who are more ... conscious of the quality of what they consume and ... are valuing small business more” (IF).

There was also a sense that the pandemic had brought about increased trust in the relationships within the business:

"Crisis has made me notice some... management gaps and how I could prepare for them better in the future" (BS).

"...to-reinvent ourselves ..., modifying internal processes... better for the medium and long term...to have ... a new market to operate in ....it will be better for everyone...” (ALS).

"...time to change... reconfigure work strategies" (GA).

Some changes to the work environment were viewed positively due to reductions in associated costs, and time e.g., spending less on business premises. The pandemic seemed to strengthen the resolve to further the businesses, creating opportunities, to rebuild albeit with a holistic perspective and--making a fresh start. The crisis had also
allowed time for reflection on individual leadership styles, with increased recognition of the need for personal development:

“…empathetic leadership ... with emotional intelligence” (AM).

“…Moments in social isolation brings the opportunity to redefine our lives, our feelings and our businesses” (RP).

“…home office made savings... and I didn’t have a lot of headache about finances” (GA).

“We have space for the 'new’... fully adopting home office will be part of this”(GA).

“Covid-19 was an accelerator to our business dynamics”(AM).

“Enjoyed the moment of immersing and developing strategies ...” (GA).

Supporting Roles of Social Relationships Within Family

We found that women entrepreneurs derived strength and resources within the family environment to mitigate the potential detrimental impacts of the overlap between their business commitments and family responsibilities in this pandemic. Almost all, within our sample, inhabit multiple roles within the family whilst running their businesses. Whilst fulfilling these multiple roles this created challenges, participants thrived when support from within the family was forthcoming.

“Without family support it is going to be very challenging for anyone” (DG).

“I have not had any time to .... so I need (family)…” (TB).

The support that was sought and often received came from partners and spouses accepting, assuming childcare and household responsibilities where women entrepreneurs proactively asked for support. This implied that the tendency to view women as caregivers was dominant but was easily reformulated within the family set-up where partners and extended family were willing to lend support. For many, motivation for business growth often came from the personal roles they inhabited family.

“...have my own house...nephew has autism...being nearby is important” (FD).

“...future aspirations... balance my work and family ...” (GA).

“Women have many dreams...important to speak about them.” (FD).

“sharing of responsibilities (is a) must... how would you run a business by yourself?” (ALS).

“... IT skills are poor... partner helps whenever he can...”(APS).

“family will step in when needed... gives me confidence...”(RP).

Supporting Roles of Social Relationships Externally

One of the first impacts of the Covid-19 lockdown has led to pandemic and subsequent lockdown was social isolation. The lack of social interactions and peer relationships has had a significant impact on the participating women entrepreneurs.

We found that participants coped with extended periods of social isolation and the need to rapidly change their businesses by seeking the support of the within the ‘sisterhood’-business
mentors and informal networks - where they could share their anxieties, lean on and learn from each other and feel supported. The role of such external networks was seen as equally important to that of their own families:

“strengthening support networks, supporting your peers, female entrepreneurs for each other’s work and projects…now more than ever we need to exercise sisterhood, empathy, self-care and the construction and strengthening of support networks… reciprocity is the best trigger for engaging and helping people, they are the connections that transform life” (RP).

Within a family, women often put a brave face forward for their loved ones, but in the security that peer support and external networks provided, they felt confident in shedding the façade and allowing their vulnerabilities to show. Sharing vulnerabilities in a non-family environment generated solutions to challenges, including how to navigate the changing regulations around the pandemic as well as offering a non-judgemental outlet for stress.

These informal virtual networks increased knowledge and provided support in business-critical issues, including digital marketing, seeking external emergency finance, learning about emerging business models and developing rapid business solutions. High significance was ascribed to the roles that external support systems provided for women’s entrepreneurial survival in the pandemic. The focus on collaborative action for sustainable economic development was also a key consideration:

“... fundamental ...to optimise our activities...our understanding of the importance of collaborative economy in line with this new economy” (LH).

“increased empathy is needed... business mentors can make a difference...’(RP).

“...having a friendly conversation... leads to good things... we need that now more than before” (EL).

“Emotional support is critical... high levels of stress and anxiety... talking to others outside home helps.”(DG).

Discussion

The study aimed to explore how women entrepreneurs in Brazil are negotiating the business-family interface in the context of Covid-19. Our overall findings indicate that entrepreneurship for women comes with an expectation of fulfilling their gendered roles (Ahl, 2006; D’Enbeau et al., 2015) but is enhanced by social relationships within family (Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Powell and Eddleston, 2013; Xheneti et al., 2019) and externally (Brooks et al., 2018; Field et al., 2016; Leskinen, 2010).

As a starting point, we explore how women are reacting to the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic. Fear of business failure is dominant (Camargo et al., 2018; Koellinger et al., 2013; Wagner, 2007) but unsurprising in a pandemic.

However, the pandemic’s positive perceptions, seen to be being viewed positively allowing realignment of business and life priorities, is surprising. Despite the falling income and doubts around business survival, women entrepreneurs are able to adopt a viewpoint of pivoting for their business aspirations. It has also led to identifying newer market opportunities. Where gender inequality has been a strong motivation for women setting
The experience of the crisis has strengthened the motivations to remain in entrepreneurship as opportunities elsewhere are diminished (Amit and Muller, 1995; Dawson and Henley, 2012). It has led to identifying newer market opportunities (Reynolds et al., 2002) through rapid changes to services and business models.

The role of the family is not seen as dichotomous to business objectives and aspirations. Noting the challenges of managing family and caring responsibilities whilst trying to keep the business alive (Hsu et al., 2016; Shelton, 2006), women entrepreneurs are deeply motivated in their business goals, not in spite of, but because of family, especially in the context of crisis (Althalathini et al., 2020).

In Brazilian society, family holds a privileged place (Biasoli-Alves, 2000; Romanelli, 1997). Our study adopts the viewpoint, based on findings, that the role of family is that of a crucial support system in the context of the pandemic for the women entrepreneurs. This is very much in line with studies including Xheneti et al. (2019), Powell and Eddleston, (2013), and Eddleston and Powell, (2012) that family enhances the experiences of women entrepreneurs through the affective and emotional support they offer. Ascribing enrichment to the family environment (Hsu et al., 2016; Prasad et al., 2013), we find that women entrepreneurs are motivated by their desires to achieve financial independence and to gain balance between their work and family life (DeMartino et al., 2006; Maes et al., 2014; McGowan et al., 2011; Walker and Webster, 2004; Williams, 2004).

The role that of family social relationships plays in supporting women’s entrepreneurship such as, for example-sharing of household responsibilities, is seen as critical to the ability to do the work satisfactorily for the fulfillment of entrepreneurial activities. In the absence of robust support coming from formal institutions, such as access to finance in developing countries like Brazil, family support becomes even more important (Bardasi et al., 2011; De Bruin et al., 2006). Women are able to take advantage of the family-based relationships to focus on their businesses using a number of strategies, including delegating domestic and care responsibilities to wider family members who are able to take advantage of the family-based relationships to focus on their businesses (Xheneti et al., 2019).

The role of external support in the form of social interactions enhances women entrepreneurs’ experiences. Social interactions reduce information asymmetries (Wang et al., 2020) and enhance women entrepreneurs’ willingness to seek more external support and useful resources for business survival and growth (Leskinen, 2010). These external social-relationships characterise the very nature of entrepreneurial networking for women (Aldrich et al., 1997; Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; Starr and Yudkin, 1996) and can lead to innovative ideas and entrepreneurial solutions.

Social relationships, within including family and externally, are important sources of emotional support (Buttner, 1993) and reducing information gaps (Birley, 1986; Smith-Hunter & Leone, 2010; Surangi, 2018). As a strategy, networking and social interactions are supporting the survival of women’s entrepreneurship in the face of adverse conditions. (Kalafatoglu and Mendoza, 2017). The power of these social interactions
outside the home, particularly in all-female groups, creates a non-judgmental environment where women can build their confidence levels (Cooper et al., 2009).

Our study supports the wider, broader pre-pandemic understanding that women entrepreneurs rely on social relationships to build their social capital and access resources (Fischer and Reuber, 2011). Women entrepreneurs demonstrate resilience in using the various mechanisms of support from within family and externally, these relationships, seeking out newer pathways for their businesses whilst trying to make innovative changes to reduce the business impact and secure their families’ well-being in a crisis (Sabella and El-Far, 2019).

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the emerging understanding of women’s entrepreneurship in the context of Covid-19 with data from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We do so by exploring how the context of the Business-Family Interface affects women’s entrepreneurship. The study sheds light on the entrepreneurial motivations in the business-family context, and our findings suggest that social relationships and family circumstances are amongst the most important factors for women’s entrepreneurial experiences in the context of the current crisis.

We find that women entrepreneurs seek and find support within their social relationships—both within the family and externally—although gender roles are recognised as a significant challenge. They demonstrate entrepreneurial resilience in many of the strategies they employ to manage work-family responsibilities through delegating of childcare or peripheral business activities to actors within their social relationships. Our study highlights how, in managing home and business activities, women are overcoming gender constraints. The economic crisis brought about by the pandemic’s economic crisis has also presents women entrepreneurs with opportunities to reconfigure and strengthen their businesses. Although having to manage a home, as prescribed by the societal norms and the consequent gender roles is recognised as a significant challenge, the supportive roles of social relationships both within and outside the family domain is key in enhancing women’s entrepreneurship.

Limitations and future research

A number of limitations are acknowledged in this study. The small sample size, albeit supported by previous studies, and the location of Rio De Janeiro, affects the generalisability of the findings’ generalisability (Smith-Hunter and Leone, 2010; Bianco et al., 2017). All women in the sample are educated to a degree-level and therefore, the findings are not generalisable to the wider, broader context of women entrepreneurs in Brazil. However, despite the limitations, most of the women entrepreneurs in this study come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have caring responsibilities, and so the findings of their entrepreneurial behaviour and motivations can be contextualised for women entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Future research focusing on Brazil, in the context of the pandemic, can utilise a larger sample, mixed methods, and longitudinal studies to examine relationships between women’s entrepreneurial performance and bi-directional BFI in the context of the pandemic. This can
also include studies on regional and ethnic variations in women’s experiences as entrepreneurs.

A further limitation of the study and important avenue for future research stems from the use of the affective component of the enrichment perspective of BFI theory similar to that of Hsu et al. (2016), and we suggest, in line with Edelman et al. (2016) that further studies, using the BFI theory should broaden the considerations beyond social support alone, as that does not lend a complete account of the family-business context (Welsh et al., 2018).

Implications

This is one of the first academic papers lending insights into to emerge on Brazilian women’s entrepreneurship in the pandemic, and this paper has several implications for scholarship, policy and practice.

From a theoretical perspective, this study is expected to lead to a better understanding of how women perceive the impediments they encounter in the context of the business-family interface and the strategies they employ to navigate them. We expect this to support the creation of interventions, to support the roles of social relationships and networking opportunities, and to encourage women’s entrepreneurship during crisis.

Secondly, our four interrelated themes of fears due to pandemic, motivations due to pandemic, social relationships within the family, and externally, showcase the diverse family, social and individual inter-relationships. This in turn provides nuanced insights into how women shape gender relationships in patriarchal societies (Xheneti et al., 2019), and face economic challenges from a developing country perspective (Brush and Cooper, 2012; Zahra, 2007).

Our study responds to the call by OECD (2020) and IMF (2020) calls to contribute to a greater understanding of women in developing countries and the family-business environment. Based on our findings that women seek resources through social interactions externally and internally, an implication of our findings is that of support measures to reinforce entrepreneurial resilience through training, mentoring programmes, developing digital competencies and support in seeking out newer markets, in line with OECD (2020) recommendations. The current actions taken by governments to support entrepreneurs have not focused on the particular circumstances surrounding women. Our study recommends that, in addition to temporary interventions in the form of skills development, training and mentoring opportunities, measures addressing core constraints, including lack of access to childcare and information failures, need to be considered.
References


Leskinen, R. (2011), “Success in the female entrepreneurial networking process”, Annals of...


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Pre-pandemic, overlap between business and family exists but less than in the current situation where business operates within the confines of the family physical space. On the left, social relationships, within family and externally, can impede or support entrepreneurial activities and vice versa. Gender roles within families are expected to impede women entrepreneurs’ abilities to build external social relationship but where those relationships are developed, they support the business activities. Similar interplay exists on the right side but with a stronger interweaving of the business-family interface in which separation of activities is more difficult. This model is built on the assumptions of both dimensions of enhancement and detriment outcomes at play simultaneously (Hsu et al., 2016) in the interface of business and family. On the right, business is ensconced in the family domain and hence this tight interweaving creates more challenges for women entrepreneurs.

Figure 1: The Interplay of Social Relationships
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<th>Pseudonym</th>
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Table I: Cohort Characteristics
"Covid-19 was an accelerator to our business dynamics" (AM)

"Moments in social isolation brings the opportunity to redefine our lives, our feelings and our businesses" (RP)

"We have space for the 'new' and fully adopting home office will be part of this" (GA)

"Now is the time to change and reconfigure work strategies" (GA)

"Investing a lot of time in development of new products" (AM)

"A new service area has arisen and we have started a mapping exercise...what we need to execute"

"Moments in social isolation brings the opportunity to redefine our lives, our feelings and our businesses" (RP)

"We enjoyed the moment of immersing and developing strategies for our existing clients" (GA)

"moments in social isolation brings the opportunity to redefine our lives, our feelings and our businesses" (RP)

"We have space for the 'new' and fully adopting home office will be part of this" (GA)

"Now is the time to change and reconfigure work strategies" (GA)

"Investing a lot of time in development of new products" (AM)

"A new service area has arisen and we have started a mapping exercise...what we need to execute"

"Moments in social isolation brings the opportunity to redefine our lives, our feelings and our businesses" (RP)

"We enjoyed the moment of immersing and developing strategies for our existing clients" (GA)

"moments in social isolation brings the opportunity to redefine our lives, our feelings and our businesses" (RP)
"Biggest impact was that the planning time and content creation has increased at least 40%" (LH)

"Challenging to manage usual routine of business, keeping myself on top of the changes that are happening" (LH)

"We had to let go of two of our team mates and reduce expenses" (BS)

"Had to quickly reinvent ourselves and our products, online financial education platform as well as website that gathered information on the financial aid measures the government and banks had been announcing" (AM)

"Created new products for our business ... generating quick sales for our portfolio of existing clients" (ALS)

"Our clientele has increased as well the diversity of producers ... I notice we have an audience more worried about health and the quality of what they consume and (are) valuing small local business more" (IF)

"We are going to have a new market to operate in in the coming months and I hope that it will be better for everyone" (ALS)

"Crisis has made me notice some management gaps and how I could prepare for them better in the future" (BS)

"Created new products for our business ... generating quick sales for our portfolio of existing clients" (ALS)

"Our clientele has increased as well the diversity of producers ... I notice we have an audience more worried about health and the quality of what they consume and (are) valuing small local business more" (IF)

"We are going to have a new market to operate in in the coming months and I hope that it will be better for everyone" (ALS)

Table II: Raw Data to First Order Concepts: An Excerpt
First Order Concepts

- Entrepreneur's feeling of helplessness due to external interruptions
- Customers reducing their own expenditure
- Recognising that customer needs and wants are rapidly changing
- Customers' loss of earnings affecting core business
- Micro businesses need to have a strong digital presence or else they will fail
- Speeding up digital transformation of business and discovering newer offerings through digital media
- Having to rapidly digitise to salvage business in the pandemic
- The challenges of needing to rapidly digitise in the face of the crisis
- Multiple demands creating feelings of stress
- Managing home and work demands
- Recognising psychological impact of the pandemic on self
- Feelings of anxiety related to the pandemic and the uncertainty created
- Working from home is difficult for female entrepreneurs due to the increase in domestic responsibilities
- Identifying the various negative impacts of social isolation and detachment from reality
- Negative impact of pandemic on business earnings
- Financial loss incurred due to pandemic
- Loss of business and loss of money
- Negative impact of time required to create new content during lockdown
- Multiple activities to be completed in a short space of time
- Current business model is fast becoming obsolete
- Having to take difficult decisions for business survival
- Essential long-term changes to the business processes to overcome this adversity
- Reactive measures to make business relevant to the current needs whilst remaining committed to the core business ethos

Second Order Themes

- Supply chain issues affecting core business
- Rapid digitisation challenges for smaller businesses
- Female Entrepreneurship within the boundaries of traditional gender roles
- Financial risk to business
- Managing multiple business tasks
- Modifying internal processes to survive and adapting to new market realities

Aggregate Dimensions

Fears Due to the Pandemic
First Order Concepts

- Viewing the pandemic crisis as a positive influence on the business
- Female entrepreneur feeling upbeat about the possibilities that are emerging through the pandemic in terms of change in business model
- For entrepreneurs with plans in place the pandemic provided them with the momentum to bring forward their strategy
- Creating opportunities in the midst of crisis by remaining open to change
- Spotting opportunities for business development

Second Order Themes

- Trying to turn adversity into advantage
- Gaining time to devise strategies
- Modifying internal processes to survive and becoming an empathetic leader
- Creating customised offerings using digital tech

Aggregate Dimensions

- Financial savings as a result of working from home more
- Seeing the pandemic holistically as a fresh start
- Positive perceptions of time gained during lockdown
- Seeing the crisis in positive light to bring in business internal management improvements
- Developing leadership skills to support team and lead with empathy
- Team building and working to the best of abilities in a remote working environment

Motivations Due to the Pandemic

- Any future digitisation plans pre-Covid19 has been brought fast forward to the present often strengthening the business offering and client engagement.
- Perceptions indicative of understanding the needs for rapid digitisation of offerings.
- Accepting digital innovations and online work as the new norm
- Positive perceptions towards technology use in future for businesses.
The necessity to separate work and family female entrepreneurs
Family is critical source of support to allow for women entrepreneurs’
abilities to maintain well being and work commitments.
High responsibility ascribed to the role of family in supporting women’s work/business

Seeking emotional security and support within family because the entrepreneurial activities are geared towards the financial needs of the family
Ability to aspire for more as a woman entrepreneur ascribed to the role of family relationships and motivations stemming from within it.
Developing self-confidence and determination as entrepreneur due to the support (affective and practical in terms of childcare/household work) from within family.
Ability to delegate family related chores to immediate and wider family members living together in the pandemic

Recognition of support forthcoming from family when asked.
Support within family, as a woman entrepreneur, often comes from other women in the family and hence, male members of the family step in when asked to help, albeit positively.
Male members of the family are proactively helpful in other business related activities such as IT, book keeping etc.

Role of Family in facilitating women’s work-life balance and commitments
Affective Engagement with Family and its Role in Women’s Entrepreneurship.
Recognition of expectations of traditional gender roles

Supporting Roles of Social Relationships within Family
**First Order Concepts**

- The role of external informal networks in mitigating the ascribed informality to female entrepreneurship caused due to women’s entrepreneurial activities being in sectors that are different to that of men’s.
- Emotional support externally allows for stronger mental resilience in crisis.
- External relationships are often non-judgemental and can be cathartic.

- The power of collaboration in repairing the fall out of the crisis through empathetic actions.
- Can create resource access and acquisition.
- There are many learning opportunities in conversations.
- In this pandemic, unless we can connect to other as business women we will be at a disadvantage due to information gaps.
- Just talking to each other can resolve many business related problems.

- Identifying the power of technology to bind communities and create a collaborative spirit and sustainable consumption.
- Optimism in the face of adversity and recognising the need for collaboration in economic recovery.
- Recognising the need for collaboration in business success and growth.

**Second Order Themes**

- Emotional support from social relationships outside home empowering women entrepreneurs.
- Resource acquisition through external social relationships to safeguard business interests in the pandemic.
- Valuing ideals and power of ‘stronger together’ more than ever.

**Aggregate Dimensions**

- Supporting Roles of Social Relationships Externally.
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<th>First Order Concepts</th>
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