

Implementação e implicações da ação política de fortalecimento ao empreendedorismo feminino

Lady Day Pereira de Souza¹ Isabela Pimentel Azevedo da Silva² Lucas Almeida Costa³

DOI: [10.22478/ufpb.2525-5584.2022v7n2.62512]

Recebido em: 11/03/2022 Aprovado em: 14/09/2022

Abstract: Globalization has driven the insertion of women into entrepreneurial activities as a strategic means to distance themselves from situations of poverty. This study aims to understand aspects and processes of the implementation of the policy to encourage female entrepreneurship called "Entrepreneurial Women's Fair" and its perception by the target audience. The event aims to help women improve their small businesses, through training and other opportunities. The article dialogues with the importance of encouraging other women entrepreneurs through public policies and the need for these actions to be more holistic. To this end, non-participant observation of the implementation process of the public policy, which occurred before the Covid-19 pandemic, was carried out. Later, after the first three months of the pandemic, an ex-post analysis was conducted through a questionnaire applied to the participants of the event to capture the perception about their participation and experiences with the public policy. After the observation and analysis of the results, it was identified that the actions allowed to add knowledge to the participants and expand female empowerment, even amidst the difficulties of partnerships, limited resources, and structural difficulties of the proponents of the action.

Keywords: female entrepreneurship; public policy; implementation. female empowerment.

¹ Instituto Federal de Educação Ciência e Tecnologia de Rondônia. E-mail: lady.souza@ifro.edu.br.

² Instituto Federal de Educação Ciência e Tecnologia de Rondônia. E-mail: isabelap93@outlook.com.

³ Instituto Federal de Educação Ciência e Tecnologia de Rondônia. E-mail: <u>lucasalmeida94@rocketmail.com</u>.

Resumo: A globalização tem impelido a inserção de mulheres em atividades empreendedoras como meio estratégico para se distanciar de situações de pobreza. Este estudo tem como objetivo compreender aspectos e processos da implementação da política de incentivo ao empreendedorismo feminino denominada de "Feira da mulher empreendedora" e sua percepção pelo público-alvo. O evento tem como finalidade auxiliar a mulher a aprimorar seu pequeno negócio, através de capacitação e outras oportunidades. O artigo dialoga com a importância de incentivar outras mulheres empreendedoras por meio de políticas públicas e a necessidade de que estas ações sejam mais holísticas. Para isso, realizou-se observação não participante do processo de implementação da política pública, ocorrida antes da pandemia da Covid-19. E, posteriormente, decorridos os primeiros três meses da pandemia, realizou-se uma análise ex-post por meio de questionário aplicado às participantes do evento para capturar a percepção sobre sua participação e experiências vivenciadas na política pública. Após a observação e análise dos resultados, identificou-se que as ações permitem agregar conhecimento às participantes e ampliar o empoderamento feminino, mesmo em meio às dificuldades de parcerias, recursos limitados, e dificuldades estruturais dos proponentes da ação.

Palavras-chave: empreendedorismo feminino; política pública; implementação empoderamento feminino.

1. Introduction

The participation of women as providers of their family arrangements is increasing (Cavenaghi & Alves, 2018). Also, globalization and its constant changes in the economic world have made it more flexible for women to enter entrepreneurial activities. Sebrae (2019) reports a 40% increase in female entrepreneurs in Brazil. However, most of themare entrepreneurs out of necessity. This characteristic implies some barriers, such as: the double or triple female journey experienced among work, family, and educational training, little access to loans, and the fact of earning little money. Thus, it is remarkable, the predominance of women owners of smaller businesses (Navarro et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2019).

These characteristics are reinforced by elements of Brazil's patriarchal culture, whichprevents women from being well articulated with their businesses. While there is a need for greater involvement of various public agencies in the implementation of policies (Natividade, 2009), it is currently faced with the discontinuity and deactivation of public policies based on gender (Gouveia, 2021).

Studies on entrepreneurship in Brazil are frequent and, as much as it is possible to find research conducted in the last 50 years, the scientific visibility on the subject in the publicpolicy sphere tends to be slow, but progressive (Freire et al., 2017; Natividade,

2009). Thus, in the face of frequent market transformations for entrepreneurship, the need to seek strategies for survival is inevitable. Sometimes, governmental political action is necessary to generate conditions of equity that lead people located in contexts of socioeconomic vulnerability, in these arch for financial autonomy and sustenance through entrepreneurship.

Therefore, public policies can be considered as actions that the State adopts to ensure that socioeconomic changes - such as schooling, health, and family income - improve the individual's quality of life. Public policies can act as an aid for society to adjust in the face of such social crises and other uncertainties (Souza, 2018). Thus, the analysis of implementation and evaluation of public policies, regardless of their nature, enable the production of knowledge, the improved application of their results, and the improvement of the policy system (Brazil, 2018).

In the perspective of encouraging the insertion of the female gender in the economic sector and in activities with income generation, through public policies, the National Program for Women's Work and Entrepreneurship (NPWWE) sought to foster female entrepreneurship. The program worked by promoting education, business outreach, employment generation and occupations, and other employment opportunities for women (Costa et al., 2012; Rigoni & Goldschmidt, 2015). This initiative originated in the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies of the Presidency of the Republic, in 2007, but was discontinued nationally as of its abandonment by subsequent government administrations. The NPWWE is amodel of intersectoral program, with recorded results that serves to analogously analyze the public policy studied in this work.

Aligned to this, this study also considers as political reinforcement gender equality punctuated in the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs. Among these goals, we can highlight as important for this study SDG 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Brazil, 2017; Rome, 2019).

This research is based on the need to verify the results of the effectiveness of the political action for the support and promotion of women entrepreneurship. To this end, the researchers investigated the process that includes participation and observation during the event of the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair and the application of a questionnaire with women participating in the event. The Trade Fair is an annual activity coordinated by the Department of Public Policies for Women - DPPW, which belongs to the organizational structure of the Municipal Secretariatof Social Assistance and Family -

MSSAF, a sector in which development and gender equality policies for women are articulated (Porto Velho, 2019).

The Trade Fair tends to occur during the month of October, preceded by training activities, contact exchange, reception, and activities alluding to "Pink October", the month devoted to breast cancer prevention campaign. The scope of these actions is to develop entrepreneurial women in social vulnerability, through training, information, and promotion of space to exhibit their productions (Porto Velho, 2019). Therefore, we seek to answer the main question: How does the public policy "Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair" work and what are the results for the promotion of female entrepreneurship?

The objective of this paper is to understand aspects and processes of the implementation of the policy to encourage women entrepreneurship called "Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair " and its perception by the target audience. To fulfill this objective, we seek to understand the process of implementing the policy, to identify how the actions taken during theimplementation of the policy can help female entrepreneurs and, finally, to identify issues for their improvement.

The results clarify the dynamics of the implementation of the activities by the management team, through the processual vision of the event's realization. It contributes with proposals for improvement, topics on the involvement of the managers, and challenges in attracting new supporters to the organization. It also turns evident the perception of existing institutional restrictions in the realization of public policy actions aimed at female entrepreneurship, such as the lack of intersectorial articulation that hinder the achievement of greater effectiveness. To this end, it is considered that the effectiveness of the policy is related to the achievement of the objective for which it was formulated, which would require its knowledge by the implementers (Lima and D'Ascenzi, 2017). For the women participants, it was verified that the action through trainings and events results in empowerment in the process of entrepreneurship, articulation of support networks and expansion of professional contacts, greater dissemination of business, among other processes of strengthening their experience in entrepreneurship.

The results of this research can provoke a greater appreciation of the agents involved in the executed public policy, through the disclosure of the procedural vision of the event's realization. It also contributes to the possibility of improvement, recognition and, perhaps, attraction of new supporters. This article is structured in four sections: the

theoretical foundation, the methods, the results and discussion, and the final considerations, which are intended to bring contributions for future studies.

2. Women entrepreneurship in Brazil: challenges and empowerment

The female participation in the entrepreneurial world is permeated by challenges, facing a patriarchal social conjuncture that, although latent, does not prevent the growth of thenumber of women entrepreneurs. Studies on female entrepreneurship in Brazil have their beginning associated with concerns about the motivations, characteristics, and profiles of female entrepreneurs and difficulties they face in their companies, considering the economic axis and their gender (Camargo et al., 2018; Gimenez et al., 2017).

Many women undertake entrepreneurship with the objective of diversifying their wayof raising income to provide for their homes, in the face of a progressive increase in single- parent families. Women live in this constant exercise of establishing struggles to breakprejudice barriers and conquer gender equality rights (Santos & Oliveira, 2010; Souza et al. 2020; Teixeira & Bonfim, 2016). Furthermore, there is a personal life context that involves thechallenges in reconciling work, home care, motherhood, self-esteem, empowerment, and self- care, among others (Machado et al., 2016).

Some behavioral factors, such as patience, intuition, and sensitivity are considered feminine attributes that can favor the quality of female performance in entrepreneurial activities(Franco, 2014). However, it is necessary to be careful with processes that fixate women in a stereotype about 'what is considered feminine'. In this sense, many women undertake in so- called "feminine" businesses such as those in the food and aesthetic branches (Santos & Haubrich, 2018). This thought allows reflecting that such stereotypes can reinforce gender inequality in the business world.

Therefore, the place and life arrangements of women entrepreneurs seem to be constructions based on a set of social ideals that tend to fix the female identity in a web supported by precariousness and social limitations. This way, the most prominent motivations for women in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability to undertake entrepreneurship is the financial support of the family (Machado et al., 2016). So, the practice of entrepreneurship can be considered an emancipating activity for women in society.

According to Natividade (2009) the bond of a woman in the entrepreneurial world is not always formalized, nor do they always have guidance on how to manage their businesses, thuscausing the possibility of empowerment to be minimized. Empowerment,

as a definition, refersto the idea of encouragement and empowerment of commitment (Cisneros, 2015).

Thus, it is considered that female participation in the market reflects the search for income equalization between the male and female genders, and the strengthening of female independence. The latter directly influences the psychological empowerment of women entrepreneurs and those who intend to start a business (Fernandes et al., 2016). In this connection, empowerment can be conducted and induced by public authorities through public policy actions.

3. Public policies on gender and sustainability in the promotion of women entrepreneurship

This article is developed in the context of public policy implementation, which is related to the stage of execution of decisions. This strand starts from the idea that public policies can be strategically analyzed considering the cycle composed of the stages: agenda, formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Lotta, 2019). The study of the implementation of public policies generally focuses on the relationship between what was planned and what was accomplished in the policy studied, in addition to scoring the performance of the executors' actions and their impact on the transformation of the policy (Lima and D'Ascenzi, 2013, 2017;Lotta, 2019).

Hence, this study articulates the model of policy analysis based on interaction, which focuses on the context and elements involved in the implementation of the policy, such as: material and organizational resources and human resources, in the figure of the executors of the policy, considering their attitudes and the affective processes experienced (Lima and D'Ascenzi, 2017). This interaction process is demarcated by the implementation space in which the normative and structural elements of the policy, the dynamics and characteristics of the place where the policy is executed, besides the subjectivity of the actors involved in the operationalization of policies such as executors, partners, client, and others are related (Lima and D'Ascenzi, 2013, 2017).

Within this context, public policies are a set of decisions or government actions designed to solve problems of collective or public interest, in a general or specific way, and are subject to analysis of their process and results (Agum et al., 2015; Souza, 2018). Such actions producespecific effects and can be characterized by the government actions or lack of actions. Farah (2018)indicates that production in the policy field in Brazil is characterized by multiple governmental and non-governmental actors and can count on

the active participation of society. The author further states that scientific production for public policy analysis involves several areas and cross-cutting themes such as, for example, gender and labor. In general, government policies, financial support, education and training, workforce characteristics, and cultural and social norms can limit entrepreneurship activities (Silva et al., 2018). However, if these social elements are favorable, they can positively influence the formation of new ventures (Hisrich &Peters, 2004).

Public policies that foster entrepreneurship can lead to local cultural promotion and encourage entrepreneurial education (Sarfati, 2013). Thus, there is a need for political incentive for the implementation of such policies. Hence the importance of academic research, such as this one, which helps to identify positive or poor characteristics in the implementation of some policies (Borges et al., 2013; Gomes et al., 2013).

Public policy for women can be classified as reproductive, productive, inclusive, and reactive. The reactive ones aim to solve problems generated by social demands presented by women, such as those aimed at promoting entrepreneurship activities. The State's reactive actions are configured as incremental adjustments that can reinforce existing policies, aiming to address women's specific needs and interests (Mello & Marques, 2019).

Gender public policies were strengthened in Brazil with the creation of the Secretariatfor Women's Policy in 2003, which is currently linked to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights. The Secretariat for Women's Policy plays a fundamental role in promoting gender equity in the country, through the appreciation and inclusion of women in the social, economic, political, and culturaldevelopment process in the country (Rigoni & Goldschmidt, 2015). The Secretariat operates in three areas: combating violence against women; programs and actions in the areas of health, education, culture, political participation, gender equality and diversity; and policies for women's work and economic autonomy, which is the focus of this research.

As actions of the Secretariat for Women's Policy we can highlight the construction of the National Plan of Policies for Women I and II, built based on international documents such as Conventions No. 100 and 101 of the International Labour Organization - ILO and the CEDAW Committee - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Rigoni & Goldschmidt, 2015). However, currently federal policies for women, in general, seem to have been relegated from the space of

institutional importance in government policies. It thus reverberates in the worsening of the invisibility of gender policies in the governmentstructure and strengthening of the patriarchal structure of the Brazilian State (Gouveia, 2021).

Thus, this article invests efforts in the rescue of implemented gender policies that yielded good results, such as the National Program for Women's Work and Entrepreneurship. The National Program for Women's Work and Entrepreneurship was primarily based on the II National Plan of Policies for Women with focus on expanding women's economic and financial autonomy through support for entrepreneurship, associativism, and access to credit and microcredit, among others (Costa et al., 2012). The program was implemented in Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, and Pará systematically, and with the involvement of local partners (Carvalho, 2017; Rigoni & Goldschmidt, 2015).

The National Program for Women's Work and Entrepreneurship resulted mainly in increasing the self-esteem of the women participants. Thus, entrepreneurship can be understood as an activity that establishes means for female autonomy, the creation of business networks that contribute to the articulation of women to access microcredit, the improvement of business, and increased income. This government initiative demonstrates how support for female entrepreneurship training adds a variety of knowledge that contributes to the empowerment of women (Costa et al., 2012).

The concern with implementing public policies that expand women's financial autonomy is also expressed in international documents discussed and prepared within the perspective of sustainable development. According to the Bruntland Report (1987) (Elkington, 2004) sustainable development:

"[...] seeks to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, means enabling people, now and in the future, to achieve a satisfactory level of social and economic development and human and cultural fulfillment, while making reasonable use of the earth's resources and preserving species and natural habitats (p.5)."

The balance among economic, social, and environmental elements is the fundamentalbasis of the sustainable movement, which has had other strategic elements added over the years, resulting in the SDGs. In this sense, in 2016, the Brazilian government ratified the adoption of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development - SDGs through the institution of the National Commission for Sustainable Development

Goals, by Decree No. 8.892/16, having been revoked by the current government in 2019 (Machado, 2021).

In the absence of a body responsible for monitoring sustainable actions, the operationalizations of local policies reflect some of the norms built based on global needs. Among these global goals for sustainability, this research highlights "SDG 5 - Achieve genderequality and empower all women and girls" (Brazil, 2017; Rome, 2019). Thus, it is understoodthat the achievement of sustainable development in Brazil depends on the inclusion of womento their financial autonomy and spaces of power (Brazil, 2017). In this context, this article analyzes the political action around the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair that aims to strengthen and expand women's economic autonomy in the realm of entrepreneurship through workshops, training, and lectures on gender and entrepreneurship "empowerment."

4. Methodological procedures

The research was conducted with the Department of Public Policies for Women, which coordinates policies for women. The Department belongs to the organizational structure of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and Family, which deals with policies that encourage development and gender equality for women (Porto Velho, 2019).

One of the department's main activities is the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair, an annual event. The Trade Fair is the result of a set of other activities that, initially, take place during the month of October, such as training, contact exchange, welcoming and activities alluding to "Pink October", the month devoted to breast cancer prevention campaign. The focus of the set of actions is to serve women entrepreneurs in social vulnerability, through training, information, and promotion of a space to exhibit their productions (Porto Velho, 2019).

The research is basic qualitative, which focuses on aspects of the reality of the researched action that cannot be quantified (Merriam, 2009). In this way, it is concerned with explaining the dynamics in the social relations constituted in the implementation of political actions for women entrepreneurs. Its nature is descriptive and exploratory, when it is possible to observe, to record, to analyze and to confront facts or phenomena without changing them (Creswell, 2007).

The research participants were selected by convenience, being chosen the women event organizers and the thirty-five women entrepreneurs served by the political action from the training activities to the Trade fair. The number of women entrepreneurs who

participated in the entirewelcoming process, lectures, and training courses differs from the number of women entrepreneurs who participated on the day of the Trade fair: thirty-five women entrepreneurs (who arethe target audience of this research) participated in the training process and Trade Fair, while there was a total of 150 exhibitors at the Trade fair. The participants signed an authorization and informed consent form. Thus, their names are concealed to maintain ethical confidentiality, and with the purpose of keeping the focus on the process and meanings that emerged during the realization of the public policy of strengthening female entrepreneurship.

The approach of the researchers with the organizing team took place through meetingsscheduled to define the monitoring for observation and through participation in actions promoted during the weeks preceding the Trade Fair, such as lectures, courses, and training (Porto Velho, 2019). The approach with the women entrepreneurs, took place in two different temporal moments: the first in the pre-pandemic moment of Covid-19, during the training activities andthe Trade fair through informal conversation, and simple non-participant observation, in which researchers are not integrated into the community to be studied (Stake, 2011). In the second moment, already in the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic, an *online* questionnairewas applied. In this second stage of the total of thirty-five women, only twenty-two answeredthe questionnaire.

At first, the collection technique of observation was used, this being the naturalistic study in which the researcher attends the place where the phenomena studied occurnaturally (Gil, 2017). The observation conducted in this study was unstructured, free form, in which the research team made notes, photographic records, and video recording. Such materials are archived for consultation, when needed.

The observation and analysis of the material collected were oriented to answer the objectives of the article. Thus, the observation makes it possible to verify the process of the actions of the policies implemented in the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair. The information abstracted from the researchers' memory was used, being consolidated through meetings and knowledge sharing among the authors, through the triangulation of researchers (Yin, 2016).

The operationalization of the research took place through visits and meetings scheduled with the organizers of the policy, at which time the researchers' participation in the actions was established. During the observation process, the researchers focused on theoperationalization of the actions, such as: the registration process of the women

entrepreneurs who participate in the actions and in the event, the way in which communication about the eventoccurs, the organization and participation in the training course, the partnership alliances, and the relationship among the organizers and the women. At these moments, we interacted with the women participants. Later, the approach was done *online* considering the context of the pandemic.

During the social distancing context, we used an online questionnaire with openended questions as a data collection tool with the aim of capturing the women participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of political action for business practice. Open-ended questions enable research participants to elaborate comments, explanations, and clarifications that expressmeaning (Carmo, 2013). Therefore, this application focused on women participants' perceptions of how their participation in the event assisted their business. The data collection procedures were fundamental in the field, as they allowed answering the objective of understanding the dynamics of operationalizing the policy within the *ex-post-facto* research perspective (Brazil, 2018).

Thus, the application of the questionnaire made it possible to identify the vision of women entrepreneurs as to their participation in the training process and in the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair. The questionnaire was carried out using *Google Forms* and *links* sent via *WhatsApp*. It is understood that the expression of the women's vision may have been limited by the little depth that the technological collection mechanism allows. Thus, the perception expressed by them may be influenced by the difficulty in using the technologies, by the difficulty in interpreting the questions, by the time available to answer, among other random issues of the moment. From this process, we move on to the results and discussions of this study.

5. Results and discussions

This topic is divided between the discussion about the process of making the public policy, and the women's perception about their participation in the formation and the Trade Fair, as explained below.

5.1.Process of implementation of the public policy of strengthening women entrepreneurship

The first step to carry out the actions of this public policy occurred through the enrollment of women in the activities of the policy to strengthen women's entrepreneurship. The registered women arrived at the event in different ways: by preexisting registration in the department, because they had already participated in previous

actions; by the indication of women who already knew about the Trade fair; or by advertising the Trade Fair on the City Hall website.

The first event that followed the registrations was the training course offered by one of the partners, Sebrae. It was a three-day, three-week course. The courses were offered to help the entrepreneurs understand their target audience, know how to monetize their business, learn how to communicate, and other elements that involve the initial phase of a business. On the course days, materials such as handouts, notepads, pens, and utensils were provided so that the women could record the information provided by the course. The environment seemed to generate conditions for women entrepreneurs to experience and exercise situations like the business world. Thus, many interactions occurred during the days of the course. This dynamic gave them elements to reflect on the scope of their business and possibilities of adjustments.

These moments of interaction and collective experience can promote different mental models for women to improve their entrepreneurial performance (Fernandes et al., 2016; Hisrich & Peters, 2004). It is noted here that the relevance of education for entrepreneurship can be guided in the formulation and design of public policies to enhance entrepreneurial training and the strengthening of support networks that help women in the act of entrepreneurship. (Costa et al., 2012).

During the course, presentations were offered with information about female entrepreneurship, specifically an action that is part of the Delas/Sebrae project, which develops female entrepreneurs with the aim of increasing the probability of success of ideas or businesses led by women. The project seeks to give tools to improve the management of businesses undertaken by women (Sebrae, 2019).

The explanation addressed data on female entrepreneurship, its problems, and challenges in the face of gender. It was clarified that women leaders or managers are more likely to succeed because they dedicate themselves more to their business, mostly because it is directly related to the family support (Machado et al., 2016). It was also informed that many enterprises do not even start, because there are women who are not able to dedicate themselves exclusively to a business that is just beginning. The presentations had as a highlight, subjects that permeate entrepreneurship and gender equality. Thus, the perception of the stereotyped conditioning that the social structure sometimes determines to women, can contribute to the strengthening and empowerment of women as entrepreneurs (Cisneros, 2015; Fernandes et al., 2016; Santos & Haubrich, 2018).

At the end of the presentations, there was the provision of consulting for those interested in registering their enterprise as individual microentrepreneurs and many of the women were interested. Natividade (2009) states that not all women entrepreneurs have their businesses formalized. It is possible to state then, that despite having an enterprise that may or may not be the livelihood of their family, these women have other vulnerability factors related to the lack of security of their business, of benefits such as retirement or access to microcredit by staying in informality. The formalization of women's enterprises also refers to the idea of income equalization and female independence from the male gender, which is also linked to empowerment (Fernandes et al., 2016; Santos & Haubrich, 2018).

In an unstructured conversation with some women, some difficulties faced by these servers to implement the public policy became clear. The difficulties permeate the lack of morepartners who support financially and who could provide better conditions for the Trade Fair; the shortage of employees who help in the process of implementing the policy; and the institutional delay in authorizations to carry out the actions of the public policy. The women organizers demonstrated to be aware of the local objectives set for the implementation of the public policy, however, they said they were unaware of the origins of these policies at the national level, linked to the SPM and previous policies such as the National Program for Women's Work and Entrepreneurship.

The organizers' commitment seemed to be a need anchored in their motivation to keep the action going. Sometimes, according to reports of public managers in other studies, they actin adverse situations driven by their professional/personal motivation to achieve the objectivesof their actions (Mello et al., 2020). This context is demarcated by the discretionary action of the policy implementers, in which they make decisions in the allocation of scarce and/or insufficient resources, in an environment of uncertainty, which also stems from the ambiguity and little clarity of the policy objectives (Lima and D'Ascenzi, 2017).

According to Borges et al. (2013) there are still many precarious services and policies that permeate the area of entrepreneurship, causing women entrepreneurs to see no improvements in the short or long term. However, in this research, it was noticed that this precariousness is not totally related to cultural and regional aspects, since there is interest from both the organizers and the women entrepreneurs in participating. The most

latent issue seemsto be related to intersectoral and inter-institutional relations regarding the alignment of objectives and resources for the realization of public policy.

Silva et al. (2018) clarifies that aspects such as cultural and social norms that permeate a political action can limit local entrepreneurial activities, however social contexts of crisis can positively influence the formation of new entrepreneurs regardless of sociocultural structures (Hisrich & Peters, 2004). However, the institutional mismatch in the coordinated performance of actions considering the mobilization of human, financial, and other resources, can point to dynamics that generate difficulties and operational maladjustments of actions as well as, of the managers who organize the implementation of policies (Mello et al., 2020; Souza, 2018).

The day before the Trade Fair, a breakfast was held to welcome and adjust information between the organizing team and the women entrepreneurs who participated in the training process. During the breakfast, the speeches were more intimate, and more focused on building the motivation and empowerment of the participating women entrepreneurs, focusing on their life stories. The moment had the intention of favoring the integration between the organizing team, entrepreneurial women who participated for the first time, and women who are regulars at the events.

When passing on information about how the Trade Fair would take place, the organizers regretted that there would be no stall for all entrepreneurs, and that they would have to share the space. At this moment, one can notice the resulting failures and misalignments in the intersectoral and/or inter-institutional articulation regarding the organization of the material resources for the activity. This information created a small commotion that soon died down with the opening of the coffee table. After the process of clarifying the Trade fair's realization, the crochet workshop on recyclable objects began, focusing on adding more knowledge to the participating artisans.

In general, the direction of the actions had the proposal to develop attitudes and speeches of encouragement, aiming to awaken in the women participants the perception of theimportance of being motivated with their life trajectories and feel able to achieve their goals through the activities they develop as entrepreneurs. Experiences such as these can reproduce the understanding that public policies that foster women's economic and financial autonomy help increase self-esteem and offer tools for them to develop professionally (Costa et al., 2012). In a broader analysis, these actions can offer financial, personal, professional, and relational empowerment conditions that contribute to

achieving gender equality through women's autonomy, as advocated by goal number 5 for sustainable development (Rome, 2019).

And finally, the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair, took place for a whole day in a publicspace located downtown. It had the participation of exhibitors from all kinds of business branches, such as crafts, clothing, food, aesthetics, and others (Porto Velho, 2019). It began with an official moment with speeches by representatives of the municipality, speeches by the women organizers of the event, as well as speeches by representatives of other public institutions that work in other policies for women. Soon after there was a dance presentation and activities to encourage the practice of physical activities. Concomitantly, the exhibition of women's businesses was organized by means of shared tents with handicrafts, food products, beauty products, among other branches of activity.

The implementation of political actions that stimulate the culture and education for the promotion of entrepreneurship can encourage women to develop in life in society with greaterpotential to achieve professional and personal autonomy, with the possibility of breaking free from the cycle of structural impediments in society (Fernandes et al., 2016). And in this sense of aggregating, during the Trade fair there was a welcome, registration, and dissemination of the businesses of women who did not participate in the training stage. The place was not overcrowded and most of the clients were known to the participants or belonged to the neighborhood. The event itself had no apparent problems in its execution because it happenedon time and within the actions coordinated by the organizing team.

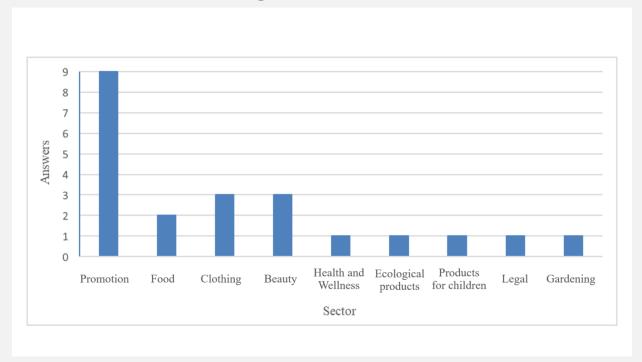
Besides promoting a space for dissemination and interaction among women entrepreneurs, the Trade Fair is also a space in which the organizing team can contact potential partnerships for the next actions of the public policy to promote entrepreneurship. Thus, new partner contacts were identified focusing on programs to promote innovation, incubation of women's businesses, and new credit opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

5.2. Women entrepreneurs' perception of public policy contributions to their businesses

After the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair took place, the researchers had difficulties in contacting the organizing team because of some address changes and new adaptations. And, besides this, the world went into a pandemic moment generated by the

high contagion of Covid-19. However, the researchers decided to apply a questionnaire *online*, to focus on measures of social distance. Of the twenty-two female respondents, a total of 40.9% work in the handicraft business, thus being the group, most represented in the responses (Graph 1).

The women who answered the questionnaire were active in the following industries.



Graph 01: Business sector.

The data in the chart confirms other studies that report that most female entrepreneurships have an emphasis on activities such as clothing, services, and food. Thus, it reaffirms the stereotype about activities considered feminine, which can limit and direct women's choices of professional performance in society (Camargo et al., 2018; Gimenez et al., 2017; Natividade, 2009; Santos & Haubrich, 2018).

When asked about what the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair added positively to their businesses, most of them cited the promotion of their enterprise and the attraction of new customers. The answers with the same idea were, for example, like this:

Participant A: "I gained new customers.

Participant B: "in the dissemination of work".

Participant C: "to publicize my work and win new clients.

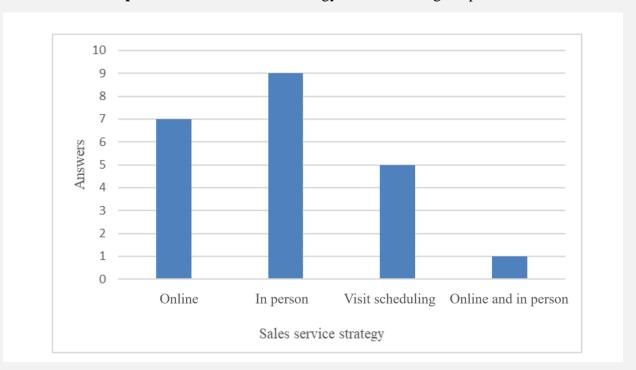
The answers of the participants indicate that one of the objectives of the Trade fair, which is the dissemination of the work of women entrepreneurs, can be achieved, thus demonstrating an aspect of efficiency of the policy. It is verified that the policy with strands for entrepreneurship can promote more positive points such as promotion of culture and entrepreneurial education, through courses and other training activities (Costa et al., 2012; Natividade, 2009; Sarfati, 2013).

When asked how the policy could be improved, the answers were:



Graph 02: Improvements in the implementation of the Fair as a public policy.

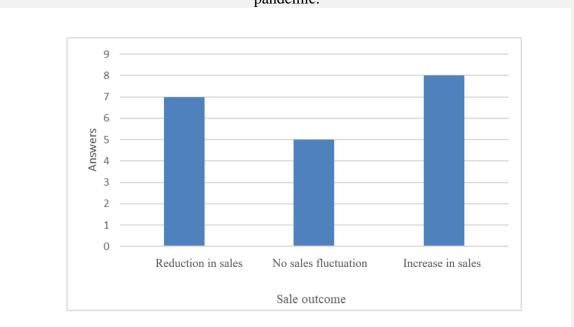
One can see that, even though there are positive responses regarding the promotion of their businesses, the women still see the need for improvement in the way the Trade Fair is promoted. They affirm that the event still leaves much to be desired in terms of publicizing its realization to those who are the target public of the public policy and to people who would be potential customers at the final event, the Trade fair. Thus, they consider that the Trade Fair has little social visibility. Faced with the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, they were asked if they were managing to act with their ventures, and all of them answered yes. Thus, they explained the action strategies used, as shown in Graph 3.



Graph 03: Customer service strategy for sales during the pandemic.

It is perceived that even in times of social, health, and economic crisis, in which everyone is guided to maintain social distancing, female entrepreneurs need to stay active withtheir enterprises, and adapt to new protection measures. The versatility and the need to maintainlivelihood reveals one of the characteristic aspects of entrepreneurship: the triggering of sensesreferring to improvisation (Santos & Haubrich, 2018). The group of women surveyed who work face-to-face and use the strategy of scheduled visits, add up to half of the total women surveyed.

Considering the need for adaptation in their sales routines at the pandemic time, they were asked how the sales levels were.



Graph 4: Sales performance after Trade Fair participation and during the pandemic.

It was identified that even with all the difficulties of adaptation, and the social change caused by the pandemic, the participants managed to adapt in such a situation and maintain their businesses. In addition to the development of many essential characteristics for thebusiness environment, and the need for solutions and creative ways out to deal with existing problems in crisis environments (Camargo et al., 2018; Machado et al., 2016; Santos & Haubrich, 2018). It is also relevant to imagine that the various qualities of the performance of women in entrepreneurial activities, may have been allied to their need and motivation for the improvement of new measures to their activities (Santos & Haubrich, 2018).

Finally, the women answered whether what they learned in the activities, such as courses and/or lectures offered in the women's entrepreneurship action, was helping their businesses. Most of the participants affirmed having received knowledge that helped them in their entrepreneurial activities, and only six respondents considered that they were unable to use this knowledge in their businesses.

Thus, there is a positive indication about the use of the knowledge received during the implementation of the actions of the Women Entrepreneur Trade Fair. However, the contrary answers allow us to reflect on whether the knowledge offered during the entire implementation of the entrepreneurship promotion policy would be aligned with the real needs of some women entrepreneurs. And if not, this work leaves a question for future

research: whatwould be the training needs that could subsidize improvements in the businesses belonging to women located in conditions of social and economic vulnerability?

At the same time, one can analyze that, despite the need for improvements in public policy, the answers were significantly positive regarding the participation in the event and the good use of the information passed on during the policy of promoting women's entrepreneurship. Thus, it is notable that even when the public policy needs improvement, the positive perception regarding the action and its results cannot be disregarded.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this research is to understand the aspects of the policy to encourage female entrepreneurship and its perception by the target audience, besides, as specific objectives we aim to understand the process of implementing the policy, to identify how the actions taken during the implementation of the policy can help female entrepreneurs and to identify issues for their improvement. During the research, it was possible to notice that the problem verified by the participants of the political action of strengthening female entrepreneurship is based on the difficulty of disseminating the actions of this policy to potential partners and to the community in general. However, it can be seen that prior to this apparent problem, there is a disconnection of intersectoral and inter-institutional alignments that contributes to generate obstacles in attracting institutional resources, external resources, and new partners.

The organization and operationalization of the political action, even with structural and institutional problems, interacts with the community in an aggregative and flexible way. The political action happens with the support of women entrepreneurs who have already participated in previous actions of the department, and this allows the inclusion of new participants who can enroll at any time during the event. This welcome creates the opportunity to expand the number of participants and increases the possibility of the action's impact.

This impact somehow reveals itself in the answers of the women entrepreneurs surveyed after their participation in the event. Thus, it is possible to see that the knowledge

provided during the training process and at the Trade Fair contributes to relevant aspects in the performance of the entrepreneur, for example, regarding production and sales planning and other activities that are more latent in the routine of women and their businesses.

During the research it was possible to realize that encouraging the empowerment of women entrepreneurs can influence the increase of women's self-esteem, the expansion of theirnetwork of connections and social relationships (Costa et al., 2012). Many of them, during a moment of the training, expressed feeling 'more alive', 'more motivated' and even 'more beautiful'. It is emphasized here that the process of developing gender equality and promoting women's autonomy cannot be considered only a process of adjustment of external social elements, but also a process of internal transformation, whose empowerment emanates in women through their view of themselves in society. From this fact, it is possible to notice the added value behind this political movement: the increase in self-esteem, the internal empowerment, the activated representativeness in the relationship with other women, among other elements not identified in the observation process.

The research resulted in the identification of difficulties and precarious situations in the development of these actions, related to the few human and material resources and little political and institutional support. New partners and strategies are needed to execute more efficiently all processes of the Trade fair: courses, promotion, organization logistics and improvement of the Trade Fair's structure. It is evident, essentially, the difficulty in the institutional alignment on the planning, the holding of meetings and the decision-making process.

This research contributes as a practical implication with the recommendation that managers who carry out policies to strengthen female entrepreneurship should promote greatervisibility of these political practices to favor a greater social reach of the action. There is a need to review the articulation processes with hierarchical sectors to design strategies for planning, participation, and coordination of the action with the participation of high-ranking managers, that is, those who can help in the decision-making process. In this aspect, it is a matter of creating conditions that will allow us to remedy elementary problems such as possible failures in communication, little financial support, and flaws in the event's infrastructure, to generate a greater effectiveness of the policy.

New research can be conducted to know in depth the training needs of women entrepreneurs located in conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability. On the other hand, research would still be necessary to investigate structural processes that mark the dysfunction of articulations, planning and implementation of public policy, to verify strategies to mitigate bottlenecks in the operationalization of similar policies.

The formation of new female entrepreneurs is one of the elements that are part of the economic development of a place or region, being a magnet for the increase in the creation of innovative enterprises, as well as a builder of social capital with a high level of knowledge. Entrepreneurship education and investments in policies that foster the creation and maintenance of new businesses can generate an economic and social transformation of regions, especially when it comes to businesses owned by women. In addition, such actions act to strengthen social development, since women entrepreneurs tend to invest their financial earnings in educational activities and support their families (Machado et al., 2016).

Therefore, we identify the need to expand the dialogue between entrepreneurship policies aimed at the female gender, to create economic and social conditions of gender equality. Thus, the consonance between policies aimed at entrepreneurship and policies that promote women's autonomy contribute to the expansion of women's participation in positions of power and to gender equality in the social structure.

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