

# ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES AMONG FEMALE PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS: A STUDY AT THE UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DE LONDRINA (UEL)

**COMPETÊNCIAS EMPREENDEDORAS ENTRE ALUNAS DE RELAÇÕES PÚBLICAS: UM ESTUDO NA UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DE LONDRINA (UEL)**

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the entrepreneurial profile of female undergraduate students in the Public Relations (PR) program at the Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). The research employed a five-stage methodology encompassing project design, ethical approval, survey development, data collection, and data analysis and discussion. A structured survey based on Dornelas (2018) was administered to 91 students, assessing six entrepreneurial dimensions: commitment, opportunity obsession, risk tolerance, adaptability, motivation, and leadership. Results indicate that the majority of students exhibit moderate to strong entrepreneurial tendencies, with 17.86% classified in Range 1 (high entrepreneurial profile) and 79.76% in Range 2. Key strengths include creativity, adaptability, and motivation, while areas such as risk tolerance and self-confidence require further development. Academically, the study contributes to gender-focused entrepreneurship research within communication education. Practically, it highlights the importance of integrating entrepreneurial competencies into PR curricula to empower women as leaders and innovators in complex professional environments. While the research is limited by its sample and self-reported measures, it offers valuable insights into the intersection of gender, education, and entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship. Public Relations. Women. Higher Education. Survey.

## RESUMO

Este estudo teve como objetivo examinar o perfil empreendedor de estudantes universitárias do curso de Relações Públicas (RP) da Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL). A pesquisa seguiu uma metodologia em cinco etapas, contemplando a elaboração do projeto, aprovação ética, desenvolvimento do instrumento, coleta de dados e análise e discussão dos resultados. Um questionário estruturado, baseado em Dornelas (2018), foi aplicado a 91 alunas, avaliando seis dimensões empreendedoras: comprometimento, obsessão por oportunidades, tolerância ao risco, adaptabilidade, motivação e liderança. Os resultados indicam que a maioria das estudantes apresenta tendências empreendedoras moderadas a elevadas, com 17,86% classificadas na Faixa 1 (perfil empreendedor alto) e 79,76% na Faixa 2. Os principais pontos fortes identificados foram criatividade, adaptabilidade e motivação, enquanto aspectos como tolerância ao risco e autoconfiança demonstraram necessidade de maior desenvolvimento. Do ponto de vista acadêmico, o estudo contribui para a pesquisa sobre empreendedorismo com recorte de gênero no campo da educação em comunicação. Em termos práticos, destaca a importância de integrar competências empreendedoras aos currículos de RP, de modo a capacitar mulheres como líderes e inovadoras em ambientes profissionais complexos. Embora a pesquisa apresente limitações quanto à amostra e à autopercepção das participantes, oferece contribuições relevantes sobre a interseção entre gênero, educação e empreendedorismo.

**Palavras-Chave:** Empreendedorismo. Relações Públicas. Mulher. Ensino Superior. Questionário.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In higher education, there is evidence of a growing presence of women. According to the 2022 Higher Education Census (INEP, 2023), 53.8% of undergraduate graduates were female, while 46.2% were male. The field of Communication appears to reflect this upward trend in female participation. For instance, the broader academic area of “Social Sciences, Communication, and Information” reported that 72.3% of its graduates were women, compared to 27.7% men (INEP, 2023). Furthermore, Amaral Lima and Cordeiro (2022) analyzed data from 2000 to 2019 related to the University of São Paulo (USP) and its School of Communications and Arts (ECA) and found that, although both USP and ECA still have a predominantly male academic community, the number of women has shown a consistent increase over time.

In the field of Public Relations (PR), female representation has also been significant in both academic and professional settings, a trend reflected in scholarly research (AMARAL; LIMA; CORDEIRO, 2022; ANDRADE; SOBREIRA, 2013) as well as in mainstream media (CAPITANI, 2023; CILO, 2022; ROSOLEN, 2023; YVES, 2023). Yves (2023), for instance, reports that, unlike other sectors within the communication industry, PR is predominantly led by women. Similarly, Capitani (2023) highlights findings from the PR Scope study, which indicates that seven out of the eleven most admired PR professionals are women. Additionally, the first PRtech company in Latin America—Mention—was founded in August 2022 by a woman, Beatriz Ambrosio (CILO, 2022; ROSOLEN, 2023).

Given the growing number of women enrolled in communication programs, the increasing presence of women in leadership roles within PR agencies, and the pioneering establishment of the first PRtech in Latin America by Beatriz Ambrosio, it becomes relevant to investigate whether PR students—specifically female students—possess entrepreneurial traits that support an opportunity-driven and innovative approach to delivering PR services. Therefore, the objective of this study is **to assess the entrepreneurial profile and characteristics of female PR undergraduate students**. More specifically, the study draws on data obtained through surveys administered to students at the Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL).

According to Bruin, Brush and Welter (2006), although women own a significant portion of global businesses and contribute substantially to innovation and employment, their entrepreneurial activities remain underrepresented in academic research. Bruin, Brush, and

Welter (2006) criticize traditional entrepreneurship theories for being based predominantly on male samples, thereby overlooking gender-specific traits. Thus, it is opportune to conduct a, entrepreneurial study using a female sample.

This study contributes to existing literature in four main ways. First, by assessing the entrepreneurial profile of female students enrolled in PR programs, the present research generates actionable data that can inform curriculum development and pedagogical practices in higher education. These insights may assist universities and faculty in designing targeted interventions—such as entrepreneurship workshops, mentorships, or incubator programs—that are aligned with the strengths and development needs of future female communication professionals. Besides, this contribution underscores the transformative power of education in fostering agency, equity, and innovation. By illuminating the unique aspirations and capacities of female students, this study encourages institutions to move beyond standardized approaches and cultivate inclusive environments where diverse forms of leadership and entrepreneurship can genuinely thrive.

Second, it contributes to closing a persistent gap in the entrepreneurship literature by offering empirical insights focused exclusively on female PR students. Given that traditional entrepreneurial theories have historically been male-centered (BRUIN; BRUSH; WELTER, 2006), investigating the entrepreneurial characteristics of women helps to expand gender-sensitive frameworks and supports the development of inclusive, diversified theoretical models. Third, this study responds to recent trends showing a growing presence of women in leadership roles within PR and the emergence of female-led innovations such as PRtech startups. By identifying whether students exhibit opportunity-driven and innovative traits, the findings can help forecast how the next generation of PR professionals may contribute to reshaping the industry's future. It also strengthens the empirical foundation for promoting gender-inclusive entrepreneurship in PR education and professional settings.

Fourth, this study reinforces the call for deeper academic inquiry into the intersection of communication, innovation, and entrepreneurship—particularly within PR education. As emphasized by Kunsch (2019), the field of communication, despite its inherent dynamism, still lacks robust empirical research that connects these dimensions in a cohesive and actionable framework. The emergence of PRtech initiatives and the increasing protagonism of female communication professionals underscore the urgency of this agenda. This investigation responds directly to such a research gap by situating the entrepreneurial

potential of female PR students within the broader innovation ecosystem. Moreover, it aligns with Kunsch's (2019) proposition that higher education must prepare students not merely for existing jobs, but for the uncertainty and constant evolution of the communication market. By doing so, this study helps shift the focus of PR education from traditional, reactive paradigms to proactive, opportunity-oriented strategies that value creativity, digital adaptability, and entrepreneurial initiative.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 THE INTEGRATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTO PR EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

In recent years, the integration of entrepreneurial principles into higher education curricula has gained growing attention, particularly within disciplines traditionally focused on communication, such as PR. As the PR industry undergoes significant transformations driven by digital innovation, media convergence, and changing stakeholder expectations, the demand for professionals who exhibit entrepreneurial thinking, adaptability, and strategic initiative has intensified. Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) have begun to incorporate entrepreneurial competencies into PR programs, fostering students' ability to identify opportunities, innovate in communication practices, and develop sustainable projects. This intersection between entrepreneurship and PR education reflects a broader shift toward equipping graduates with the skills necessary to navigate complex, dynamic, and competitive professional environments.

According to the Public Relations Society of America, PR constitute a strategic communication process aimed at establishing mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their audiences (PRSA, 2023). At its core, PR involve practices of influence, engagement, and relationship-building with key stakeholders across multiple platforms, with the objective of guiding and shaping public perception of the organization (PRSA, 2023). In this context, entrepreneurial competencies—such as innovation, proactive problem-solving, and opportunity recognition—become increasingly relevant to PR education. By integrating entrepreneurial thinking into PR curricula, students are better prepared to navigate a rapidly evolving media landscape, develop independent communication ventures, and adapt to market shifts with strategic agility. This alignment not only enhances employability but also fosters a mindset oriented toward leadership, value

creation, and sustainable professional practice in both corporate and social communication settings.

This alignment between entrepreneurial education and PR practice is particularly evident in the rise of digital entrepreneurship among PR graduates, as documented by recent empirical studies. In their qualitative research, Pinheiro and Oliveira (2023) highlight how digital platforms, particularly Instagram, have become strategic tools for personal branding among PR professionals in southern Brazil. These digital entrepreneurs actively produce and share content related to their technical expertise, daily routines, professional journeys, and participation in industry events, thereby enhancing their visibility and credibility in the marketplace. Pinheiro and Oliveira's (2023) study underscores how personal branding, when strategically cultivated through social media, not only reinforces professional identity but also serves as a key driver for client acquisition and audience engagement. This demonstrates the convergence of entrepreneurial mindset, digital fluency, and strategic communication—core competencies that HEIs must continue to cultivate within PR curricula to prepare students for evolving professional demands.

The entrepreneurial dimension of PR also extends beyond individual initiatives into broader collective efforts aimed at redefining the professional identity of PR practitioners. Mueller (2017) documents the emergence of innovative projects such as the “Todo Mundo Precisa de um RP” (Everyone Needs a PR Professional) collective, which illustrates how young Brazilian professionals are leveraging digital communication tools to strengthen the visibility and strategic positioning of the PR field. Originating as a grassroots movement, the collective evolved into a platform that promotes the value of PR through workshops, immersive courses, and digital campaigns disseminated via social media. These initiatives demonstrate leadership and innovation, as well as reveal how entrepreneurial thinking can mobilize entire professional communities, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. Such examples reinforce the notion that entrepreneurial competencies in PR are not confined to business ventures but are also instrumental in advancing the discipline, shaping public discourse, and influencing professional practice at a systemic level.

In sum, the integration of entrepreneurship into higher PR education reflects a dynamic and necessary response to the evolving demands of the communication industry. As demonstrated by both individual digital entrepreneurs and collective initiatives, entrepreneurial competencies empower PR professionals to navigate an increasingly complex

media environment, foster innovation, and cultivate strategic influence. HEIs play a pivotal role in this process by embedding entrepreneurial thinking, digital fluency, and personal branding strategies into their curricula. Doing so not only enhances students' career readiness but also contributes to the advancement of the field itself. As the boundaries between communication, business, and technology continue to blur, the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset within PR education emerges as a fundamental strategy for preparing future PR professionals to lead, adapt, and create value in diverse organizational and societal contexts.

## 2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

The growing participation of women in entrepreneurial activities has attracted significant scholarly and institutional attention. Female entrepreneurs have increasingly contributed to economic development, social innovation, and community transformation, often bringing distinct perspectives and approaches to business creation and management. Despite structural and cultural barriers, female entrepreneurs have demonstrated a remarkable ability to innovate, adapt, and thrive in diverse market environments. Understanding the unique characteristics that define women's entrepreneurial behavior is essential not only for promoting gender equity but also for informing educational programs, public policy, and support systems tailored to their specific needs and aspirations.

Despite notable progress, female entrepreneurship continues to face persistent structural, cultural, and financial barriers that shape the nature and scope of women's business activities. According to the OECD (2021), women are not only underrepresented in entrepreneurship as well as tend to manage smaller and less growth-oriented enterprises, often concentrated in service sectors disproportionately affected by external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These patterns reflect a complex interplay between gender norms, limited access to finance, and unequal caregiving responsibilities, which constrain women's entrepreneurial agency and resilience.

Bruin, Brush, and Welter (2006) further emphasize that women's entrepreneurship must be examined as a distinct field of inquiry due to the gendered nature of entrepreneurial theory and practice. The authors emphasize that mainstream theories of entrepreneurship—often developed by and tested on male populations—fail to capture the full spectrum of women's entrepreneurial behavior, motivations, and constraints. They challenge the

assumption of a “generic” entrepreneur, highlighting that gender is a socially embedded construct that shapes how women access resources, navigate legitimacy, and define success. This framework is particularly useful in interpreting the findings of the present study, which revealed strong expressions of creativity, motivation, and leadership among female PR students—traits that can be understood not only as individual competencies but also as situated responses to gendered expectations in academic and professional environments. By adopting a gender-sensitive lens, researchers and educators can better recognize the heterogeneity of women’s entrepreneurial experiences and develop more inclusive curricula that reflect the structural and social realities influencing female entrepreneurial pathways.

Research has demonstrated that female entrepreneurs possess a distinct set of personal and motivational characteristics that shape their entrepreneurial behavior. Sarri and Trihopoulou (2005), in a study of the Greek context, found that women entrepreneurs are often driven by a strong sense of autonomy, self-fulfillment, and the desire for work-life balance, while also displaying high levels of perseverance, creativity, and interpersonal skills. Similarly, Terjesen and Amorós (2010), examining Latin America and the Caribbean, observed that women entrepreneurs tend to be more community-oriented, motivated by the potential for social impact and family well-being, and often leverage relational networks for business development. These findings suggest that female entrepreneurship is not solely economically driven but is frequently aligned with broader social and personal objectives. Collectively, these studies reveal that female entrepreneurs blend technical adaptability, pro-social motivation, and strategic creativity—traits that are crucial for thriving in contemporary entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Further insight into the characteristics of female entrepreneurs can be found in the study by Galvão et al. (2024), which examined women entrepreneurs in a low-income community in Manaus, Brazil. Their findings highlight that, despite socioeconomic limitations, these women demonstrated high levels of resilience, initiative, and determination—traits that were essential for launching and sustaining their ventures. Notably, the study emphasizes that the entrepreneurial behavior observed was less associated with formal training and more with experiential learning, emotional strength, and community-based support networks. These women often balanced domestic responsibilities with business demands, reinforcing the idea that female entrepreneurship is deeply intertwined with personal and social dimensions. Galvão et al. (2024) also underscore the importance of

adaptability and creativity, especially in contexts marked by limited resources and institutional support. These findings complement existing literature by showing that, regardless of setting, women entrepreneurs tend to mobilize inner resources and relational capital to overcome barriers, reflecting a consistent pattern of strategic resilience and purpose-driven leadership.

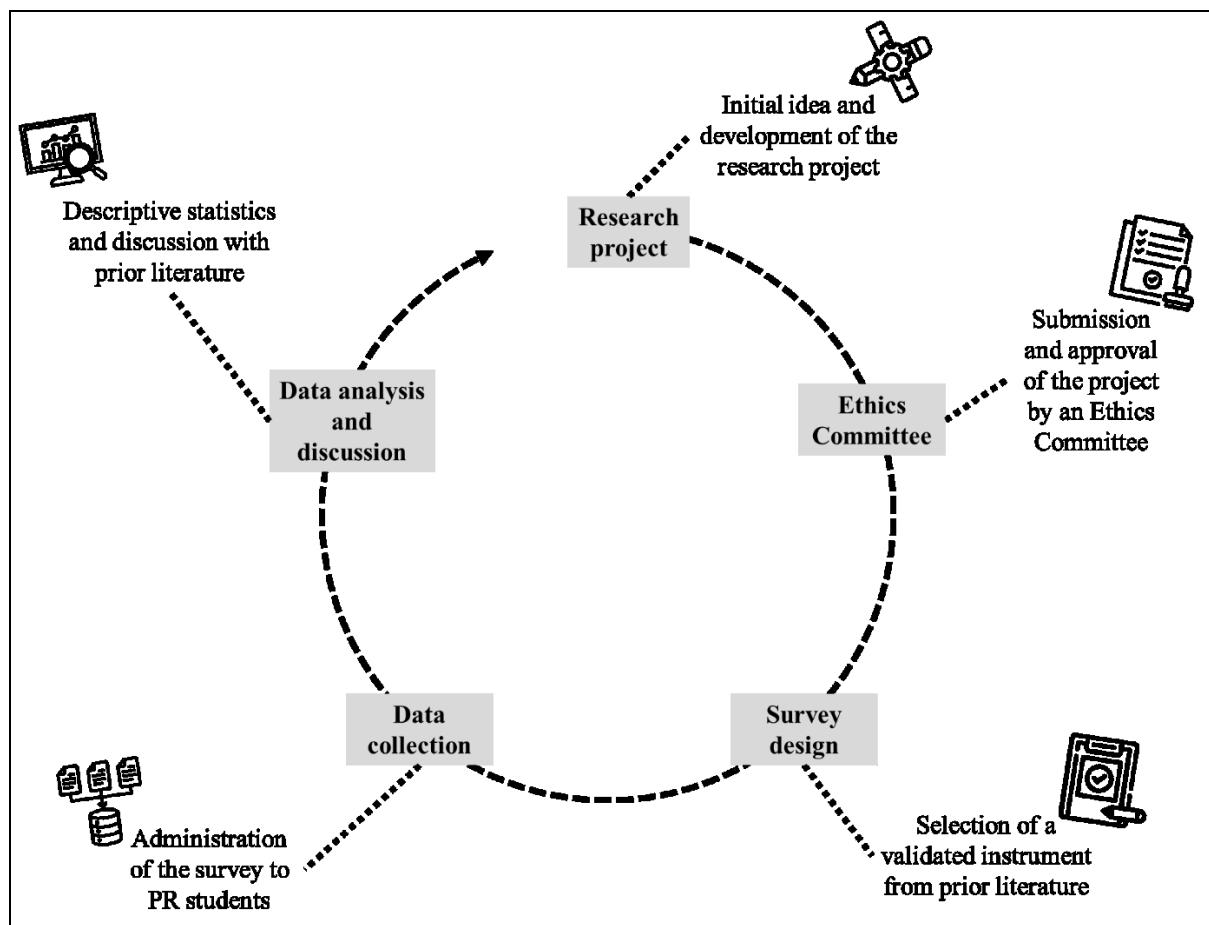
In conclusion, the characteristics of female entrepreneurs reflect a multifaceted combination of personal values, social motivations, and strategic adaptability. Far from being homogeneous, women's entrepreneurial behavior is shaped by contextual factors such as cultural norms, institutional structures, and access to digital technologies. As the literature demonstrates, female entrepreneurs often prioritize relational capital, community engagement, and work-life integration, while also exhibiting resilience and innovation in the face of systemic constraints. These attributes not only distinguish women's entrepreneurial trajectories but also underscore their potential to drive inclusive and sustainable development. Therefore, advancing the understanding of female entrepreneurial characteristics is essential for informing targeted educational initiatives, gender-sensitive policy frameworks, and support mechanisms that empower women to fully realize their entrepreneurial aspirations across diverse sectors and geographies.

### 3 METHOD

The present study followed a structured methodological approach to ensure rigor and ethical compliance throughout the research process. Basically, it consisted of five stages: research project, ethics committee, survey design, data collection, and data analysis and discussion. Figure 1 outlines the research design, with a more detailed explanation of each stage provided afterward.

The first stage of the research process involved the development of the research project, which served as the foundation for all subsequent phases. This step encompassed the formulation of a clear objective, as well as a review of the relevant literature to identify theoretical frameworks and gaps in existing knowledge, ensuring that the study was grounded in scholarly debate. Additionally, the scope and significance of the research were delineated, highlighting its potential contributions. Methodological considerations, including the proposed research design, data sources, and target population, were also defined at this stage. This planning phase ensured conceptual clarity and alignment with scientific standards.

Figure 1 Research design



Source: The authors.

The second stage of the research process involved submitting the research project to the Ethics Committee for formal approval. This step was essential to ensure that the study complied with established ethical standards concerning the rights, safety, and well-being of participants. The submission included detailed documentation outlining the study's objectives, methodology, target population, data collection procedures, and strategies for maintaining confidentiality and informed consent. The approval from the Ethics Committee validated that the research posed minimal risk to participants and adhered to legal and institutional ethical guidelines. We report that this study is part of a broader research project focused on evaluating the entrepreneurial profile of PR students, which received approval from the UEL Research Ethics Committee (Plataforma Brasil CAAE: 76375423.0.0000.5231; Report Number 6.657.209). Before participating, students provided their consent by reading and signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

The third stage of the research process focused on the design of the survey, which was structured to be accessible and comprehensible to the target population, ensuring the clarity of language and the appropriateness of content. The survey technique is particularly suitable for examining individuals' attitudes, beliefs, prior behaviors, and future intentions (COZBY; BATES, 2012) and is frequently applied in Public Relations research (STACKS, 2017). In selecting the survey instrument, the research drew upon established tools from the existing literature to ensure both theoretical alignment and measurement reliability.

The survey was organized into two sections. The first gathered demographic and academic information, including gender identity, age, and class schedule. The second consisted of 30 items designed to measure entrepreneurial traits, based on the instrument proposed by Dornelas (2018). These items were distributed across six dimensions: (1) Commitment and Determination (items Q1–Q6), (2) Opportunity Obsession (items Q7–Q9), (3) Tolerance for Risk, Ambiguity, and Uncertainty (items Q10–Q14), (4) Creativity, Self-Confidence, and Adaptability (items Q15–Q19), (5) Motivation and Resilience (items Q20–Q25), and (6) Leadership (items Q26–Q30). Responses were rated on a five-point scale: 5 – Excellent, 4 – Good, 3 – Fair, 2 – Poor, and 1 – Insufficient. The overall entrepreneurial profile for each student was calculated by summing the responses and interpreting them according to the ranges presented in Table 1. Range 1 refers to participants who exhibit the highest levels of entrepreneurial characteristics, while Range 4 includes those whose entrepreneurial traits are the least evident.

**Table 1** Parameters for interpreting the entrepreneurial profile

Range	Score	Description
Range 1	120 to 150 points	You are likely already an entrepreneur, demonstrating the typical characteristics of entrepreneurial individuals, with strong potential to stand out within your organization.
Range 2	90 to 119 points	You exhibit many entrepreneurial traits and sometimes behave like an entrepreneur. However, you can further enhance your profile by balancing your weaker areas with your existing strengths.
Range 3	60 to 89 points	You are not yet highly entrepreneurial and tend to act more as a manager than a proactive creator. To stand out and develop entrepreneurial behaviors, it is advisable to assess your main weaknesses and implement personal strategies to overcome them.
Range 4	Below 59 points	You do not currently demonstrate an entrepreneurial profile, and if you continue with your current approach, it is unlikely that you will become one. This does not mean you lack qualities; rather, you tend to follow rather than lead. If your goal is to be recognized as an entrepreneur, it is essential to reassess your career, personal goals, and the actions necessary to achieve them.

Source: The authors based on Dornelas (2018).

The fourth stage of the research process involved the collection of data using the survey. Following approval by the Ethics Committee, the survey was carried out in person to PR students during the final week of February 2024, within the classrooms of the UEL. The data collection period was carefully monitored to ensure a sufficient response rate and to address any issues related to access or comprehension. Two important methodological notes should be highlighted. First, when participants selected two answers for the same question, the response corresponding to the lower category was recorded as a conservative measure. Second, instances of missing data were identified in both sections of the survey. As a result, some analyses were conducted with fewer than 91 observations. Specifically, the assessment of the entrepreneurial profile was limited to participants who fully responded to all 30 items measuring entrepreneurial characteristics (n = 84).

The fifth and final stage of the research process consisted of the analysis and discussion of the data. The survey responses were organized and coded using Microsoft Excel. Also, we utilized Stata v. 14 to conduct our statistical treatment and analysis of the data. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to summarize the variables, providing an overview of the dataset's main features and facilitating a clearer understanding of the data patterns (FÁVERO; BELFIORE, 2017). The results were then interpreted in light of the existing literature, allowing for a critical discussion that connected empirical findings with theoretical perspectives. This stage was crucial for deriving meaningful conclusions and for identifying practical and academic implications that could inform future research and educational practices.

#### 4 RESULTS

The students have an average age of 21.3 years ( $\pm 2.6$  years). Of the total participants, 46 are enrolled in morning classes, while 44 attend evening sessions. In terms of academic progression, 28 students are in their first year, 26 in the second year, 14 in the third year, and 23 in the fourth year. Most students reported being employed (n = 47) or completing internships (n = 29), whereas a smaller portion (n = 15) indicated that they are not currently working. Additionally, 20 students reported being registered as individual microentrepreneurs (MEIs), nine stated that they had previously owned a business, and 62 reported never having established any type of business. The subsequent section details the results concerning the entrepreneurial characteristics assessed across each of the six dimensions (Table 2).

**Table 2** Entrepreneurial Characteristics of Female PR Students

Item	Description	Excellent		Good		Fair		Weak		Insufficient	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Commitment and Determination</b>											
Q1	Proactivity in decision-making	24	26,37	47	51,65	19	20,88	0	0,00	1	1,10
Q2	Tenacity, perseverance	8	8,79	47	51,65	32	35,16	3	3,30	1	1,10
Q3	Discipline, dedication	32	35,56	36	40,00	15	16,67	7	7,78	0	0,00
Q4	Persistence in problem-solving	38	41,76	34	37,36	16	17,58	3	3,30	0	0,00
Q5	Willingness to make sacrifices to achieve goals	22	24,18	40	43,96	25	27,47	3	3,30	1	1,10
Q6	Total immersion in activities	30	32,97	36	39,56	25	27,47	0	0,00	0	0,00
<b>Opportunity Obsession</b>											
Q7	Seeks deep knowledge of customer needs	28	31,11	50	55,56	10	11,11	2	2,22	0	0,00
Q8	Market-driven	8	8,79	25	27,47	45	49,45	8	8,79	5	5,49
Q9	Obsessed with creating value and satisfying customers	35	38,46	35	38,46	16	17,58	5	5,49	0	0,00
<b>Tolerance for Risk, Ambiguity, and Uncertainty</b>											
Q10	Takes calculated risks (analyzes before acting)	28	30,77	26	28,57	27	29,67	9	9,89	1	1,10
Q11	Seeks to minimize risks	26	28,89	41	45,56	19	21,11	4	4,44	0	0,00
Q12	Tolerates uncertainty and lack of structure	5	5,49	14	15,38	34	37,36	32	35,16	6	6,59
Q13	Handles stress and conflict well	8	8,79	17	18,68	34	37,36	22	24,18	10	10,99
Q14	Skilled in problem-solving and integrating solutions	20	21,98	42	46,15	28	30,77	1	1,10	0	0,00
<b>Creativity, Self-Confidence, and Adaptability</b>											
Q15	Unconventional, open-minded thinker	42	46,15	34	37,36	11	12,09	3	3,30	1	1,10
Q16	Does not conform to the status quo	15	16,48	31	34,07	38	41,76	4	4,40	3	3,30
Q17	Adaptable to new situations	24	26,37	51	56,04	13	14,29	3	3,30	0	0,00
Q18	Not afraid of failure	5	5,49	5	5,49	29	31,87	25	27,47	27	29,67
Q19	Skilled in defining concepts and detailing ideas	20	22,22	33	36,67	34	37,78	3	3,33	0	0,00
<b>Motivation and Resilience</b>											
Q20	Goal- and results-oriented	17	18,89	41	45,56	26	28,89	6	6,67	0	0,00
Q21	Driven by growth and achievement	46	50,55	36	39,56	8	8,79	0	0,00	1	1,10
Q22	Unconcerned with status and power	8	8,79	14	15,38	36	39,56	23	25,27	10	10,99
Q23	Self-confidence	12	13,19	19	20,88	40	43,96	14	15,38	6	6,59
Q24	Aware of strengths and weaknesses	23	25,56	40	44,44	21	23,33	6	6,67	0	0,00

Item	Description	Excellent		Good		Fair		Weak		Insufficient	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Leadership</b>											
Q25	Has a sense of humor and stays positive	53	58,24	24	26,37	9	9,89	5	5,49	0	0,00
Q26	Shows initiative	35	38,46	38	41,76	16	17,58	2	2,20	0	0,00
Q27	Self-control	17	18,68	33	36,26	31	34,07	10	10,99	0	0,00
Q28	Conveys integrity and reliability	33	36,67	37	41,11	16	17,78	3	3,33	1	1,11
Q29	Patient and a good listener	41	45,05	24	26,37	15	16,48	9	9,89	2	2,20
Q30	Skilled at building teams and working collaboratively	30	32,97	40	43,96	14	15,38	4	4,40	3	3,30

Source: Research data. Freq. = Frequency.

Note: Instrument freely translated from Brazilian Portuguese into American English by the authors.

The analysis of Table 2 reveals a multifaceted entrepreneurial profile among the female PR students. Overall, participants demonstrate a solid presence in several key entrepreneurial dimensions, although some traits remain underdeveloped. In the dimension "Commitment and Determination," the majority of students exhibit high levels of proactivity (Q1), discipline (Q3), and persistence (Q4), with more than 70% of responses concentrated in the "Excellent" and "Good" categories. However, the trait related to tenacity and perseverance (Q2) presents a comparatively lower distribution in the "Excellent" range (8.79%), suggesting that resilience in long-term challenges may require further development among participants.

For "Opportunity Obsession," students show strong tendencies toward customer-centric thinking. Notably, Q7 (seeking deep knowledge of customer needs) and Q9 (obsession with creating value) both display high concentrations in the top two categories (86.67% and 76.92%, respectively). Nevertheless, Q8 (being market-driven) reveals a significant concentration in the "Fair" category (49.45%) and non-negligible percentages in "Poor" (8.79%) and "Insufficient" (5.49%), indicating a potential weakness in maintaining a broader strategic market orientation.

The dimension of "Tolerance for Risk, Ambiguity, and Uncertainty" emerges as one of the most critical challenges. Items such as Q12 (tolerance for uncertainty and lack of structure) and Q13 (tolerance for stress and conflicts) show high levels of vulnerability, with over 65% of responses falling into "Fair," "Poor," or "Insufficient." This pattern suggests that many students may struggle when facing ambiguous situations or stressful environments—skills that are crucial in entrepreneurial endeavors.

The “Creativity, Self-Confidence, and Adaptability” dimension presents a mixed profile. Students report strong open-mindedness (Q15) and adaptability to new situations (Q17), with over 80% in the “Excellent” and “Good” ranges for both items. However, significant weaknesses are observed in Q18 (not afraid of failure), where approximately 58% of participants rate themselves as “Poor” or “Insufficient.” This result suggests a substantial fear of failure, which could inhibit risk-taking and innovation. Additionally, self-confidence (Q23) also presents relatively weak results, with only 34% in the top categories and 22% in the “Poor” or “Insufficient” categories.

The dimension “Motivation and Resilience” displays stronger indicators, particularly in Q21 (driven by growth and achievement), where 90% of participants fall into the “Excellent” or “Good” categories. This finding indicates a high intrinsic motivation toward personal and professional development. Nevertheless, Q22 (unconcerned with status and power) and Q23 (self-confidence) continue to reflect areas of concern.

Lastly, the “Leadership” dimension shows some of the most positive results in the dataset. Notably, Q25 (sense of humor and positivity) is the highest-performing item across all dimensions, with 58.24% marking “Excellent” and only 5.49% in “Poor.” Similarly, Q29 (patience and listening skills) is another strength, with over 71% in the top two categories. However, Q27 (self-control) presents a more balanced distribution, where 45% rate themselves as “Excellent” or “Good,” while 45% fall into “Fair” or “Poor.” This suggests that emotional regulation under pressure may be an area requiring further attention.

In summary, the data reflect a generally robust entrepreneurial profile in terms of motivation, customer focus, persistence, and leadership qualities. Nonetheless, substantial challenges are evident in dimensions related to risk tolerance, fear of failure, self-confidence, and handling ambiguity and stress. These areas represent potential targets for pedagogical interventions, mentoring programs, or skills development workshops aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurial capabilities of female PR students. Next, the results regarding the entrepreneurial profile are detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3** Entrepreneurial Profile of Female PR Students

Entrepreneurial profile	Frequency	%
Range 1	15	17.86
Range 2	67	79.76
Range 3	2	2.38
Range 4	0	0.00

Source: Research data.

The results presented in Table 3 reveal a clear distribution of entrepreneurial profiles among the female PR students surveyed. A significant majority, comprising 79.76% of the respondents ( $n = 67$ ), fall within Range 2. This indicates that most students possess several entrepreneurial characteristics and occasionally engage in entrepreneurial behaviors. While they demonstrate potential in key areas such as motivation, leadership, and opportunity recognition, this group has not yet fully developed a consistent entrepreneurial mindset. There remains room for growth, particularly in strengthening areas like risk tolerance, resilience, and self-confidence, as previously observed in the analysis of specific dimensions.

A smaller but noteworthy proportion, 17.86% ( $n = 15$ ), is classified within Range 1, which represents the highest entrepreneurial profile. These individuals exhibit robust entrepreneurial characteristics across all six dimensions assessed—commitment, opportunity obsession, risk management, adaptability, motivation, and leadership. Their profile suggests a readiness not only to lead within organizational settings but also to engage proactively in entrepreneurial ventures or innovative practices in the Communications field.

Conversely, only 2.38% ( $n = 2$ ) of the participants are situated in Range 3, reflecting a relatively low entrepreneurial orientation. This group tends to exhibit behaviors more aligned with conventional managerial roles rather than those of proactive entrepreneurs. Their lower scores likely reflect limitations in areas such as opportunity seeking, resilience in uncertain situations, and willingness to take calculated risks. This profile signals the need for targeted pedagogical interventions, such as workshops, mentoring, or curriculum adjustments aimed at developing entrepreneurial competencies. Importantly, it is notable that no participants were classified in Range 4, the lowest category, which indicates a complete lack of entrepreneurial traits. The absence of students in this range suggests that, overall, the cohort has a foundational level of entrepreneurial aptitude, even among those with the least developed profiles.

In summary, the distribution of entrepreneurial profiles indicates that while most students demonstrate moderate entrepreneurial potential (Range 2), a substantial portion has achieved a highly developed entrepreneurial mindset (Range 1). The presence of only a minimal number of students in Range 3—and none in Range 4—is a positive indicator of the cohort's overall predisposition toward entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the findings underscore the importance of educational strategies focused on enhancing critical entrepreneurial skills, particularly in areas related to risk tolerance, ambiguity management, self-confidence, and

resilience. Such initiatives are essential for preparing future PR professionals to navigate a dynamic and competitive industry with greater autonomy, innovation, and leadership.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The data presented in Tables 2 and 3 of this study reveal a strong presence of entrepreneurial traits among female undergraduate PR students at UEL, particularly in the dimensions of creativity, adaptability, motivation, and leadership. Notably, a significant portion of the respondents were classified within Range 1 and Range 2 of the entrepreneurial scale, indicating well-developed entrepreneurial profiles or a clear inclination toward entrepreneurial behaviors. These findings resonate with broader trends identified by Santos, Marques, and Ferreira (2018), who emphasize the increasing engagement of women in entrepreneurial ecosystems and the expansion of research networks focusing on gender, leadership, and innovation.

Furthermore, the high levels of self-confidence and initiative observed among the participants align with Kunsch's (2019) argument that communication education must evolve to integrate innovation and entrepreneurship more systematically. According to Kunsch (2019), this integration is essential not only for equipping students with tools to navigate the uncertainties of the digital era but also for preparing them to lead creative transformations in organizational and media environments. The results, therefore, reinforce the idea that PR education—especially when it involves female students—holds considerable potential for cultivating entrepreneurial leadership in communication fields increasingly shaped by complexity, digitalization, and social innovation.

The entrepreneurial traits identified among female PR students in this study also reflect patterns documented in prior literature. Sarri and Trihopoulou (2005), for example, emphasize that women are not a monolithic group and that their entrepreneurial profiles are shaped by a range of personal motivations, such as the pursuit of autonomy, self-fulfillment, and creative expression. These dimensions were strongly evident in the present study's findings, particularly in participants' high self-evaluations of creativity and motivation. Moreover, the simultaneous commitment to leadership and relational skills (see **Table 2**) aligns with Jennings and McDougald's (2007) work on the work-family interface, which argues that many female entrepreneurs actively manage dual roles by integrating professional ambitions with family responsibilities. This dual focus may contribute to a distinctive

leadership style that is adaptive, emotionally intelligent, and socially engaged—an approach that appears to resonate with the values emphasized by students in the study. Taken together, these insights suggest that entrepreneurship education for women in PR should not only develop business-oriented skills, but also recognize and nurture the psychosocial dynamics that uniquely inform women's entrepreneurial identities and strategic choices.

The results of this research align with those reported by Galvão et al. (2024), who investigated the entrepreneurial characteristics of women residing in a marginalized community in Manaus. Despite the contrasting socioeconomic and educational contexts, both studies reveal the consistent presence of key entrepreneurial attributes—such as resilience, creativity, initiative, and adaptability—among women. In Galvão et al.'s (2024) study, these traits emerged as adaptive responses to systemic barriers and were developed primarily through informal learning processes and community-based interactions. Conversely, the participants in the present study—female PR students at a public university—exhibited similar traits within a formal educational setting, suggesting that such entrepreneurial tendencies may be shaped by both contextual pressures and internal motivation. This comparison underscores the universality of certain entrepreneurial behaviors and emphasizes the importance of academic programs in recognizing and strengthening these existing competencies. In both cases, entrepreneurship is closely linked to personal agency and social connection, reinforcing the need for inclusive and context-sensitive educational strategies that empower women to navigate multiple professional realities.

The findings from the current study resonate with the insights reported by Terjesen and Amorós (2010) regarding female entrepreneurial profiles in Latin America and the Caribbean. Specifically, our data—highlighting high levels of creativity, adaptability, and leadership among female PR students—parallel the characteristics identified in their research, where female entrepreneurs are portrayed as opportunity-oriented and community-focused, often driven by a mix of “pull and push” factors. Terjesen and Amorós (2010) emphasize that women demonstrate a unique blend of resilience and strategic innovation, which not only contributes to their own business success but also to broader economic development. In our sample, the prevalence of entrepreneurial traits suggests that such attributes are not confined to established entrepreneurs but are also emerging among future professionals in the PR field. This alignment reinforces the notion that fostering an entrepreneurial mindset within educational settings can cultivate the critical skills needed to navigate complex and dynamic

markets, much as those characteristics underpin successful ventures in diverse economic contexts (TERJESEN; AMORÓS, 2010).

In light of the evidence and discussion presented, it becomes clear that the female undergraduate PR students at UEL exhibit a profile strongly aligned with the contemporary understanding of entrepreneurial competencies—characterized by creativity, adaptability, leadership, and motivation. These findings not only validate theoretical perspectives from previous studies, but also underscore the relevance of integrating entrepreneurship into higher education in communication fields. As future communication professionals, these students are already demonstrating the strategic potential to innovate and lead in increasingly complex social and digital contexts. Thus, the present study reinforces the importance of reconfiguring PR curricula to actively foster entrepreneurial mindsets, while simultaneously acknowledging the gender-specific motivations, challenges, and capacities that shape women's trajectories in the entrepreneurial landscape.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to assess the entrepreneurial profile of female undergraduate students enrolled in the PR program at the UEL. To achieve this, the research followed a five-stage methodological design that included the development of the research project, ethical approval, survey construction, data collection, and data analysis and discussion. The primary data source consisted of surveys administered in person to students during the final week of February 2024. The responses were organized using Microsoft Excel and processed through Stata version 14, employing descriptive statistical methods to identify trends and summarize the central findings. This rigorous procedure ensured methodological consistency and enhanced the validity of the interpretations derived from the dataset.

The results revealed a predominance of entrepreneurial characteristics among the surveyed female PR students. A significant portion of the participants fell into Range 1 and Range 2 of the classification scale, indicating either a well-established entrepreneurial profile or a strong tendency toward entrepreneurial behavior. Among the six dimensions assessed, the highest average scores were observed in creativity, self-confidence, and adaptability, followed closely by motivation and resilience, and leadership. These findings suggest that the students demonstrate a notable capacity for innovation, strategic thinking, and initiative—characteristics that are highly valued in both entrepreneurial and communication contexts.

The identification of strong entrepreneurial traits among female PR students carries important implications for both academic programs and professional development in the field of communication. From an educational perspective, the findings reinforce the urgency of incorporating entrepreneurship more explicitly into PR curricula—through interdisciplinary approaches, experiential learning, and opportunities for project-based innovation. Doing so would not only support the development of individual competencies—such as leadership, adaptability, and creative problem-solving—but also prepare students to operate autonomously in dynamic and uncertain professional environments. In addition, it is recommended that PR curricula incorporate modules focused on risk tolerance and stress management to address specific skill deficits identified among female students. On a practical level, the entrepreneurial orientation observed in these students suggests that they are well-positioned to create and manage their own communication ventures or lead transformative initiatives within existing organizations. Moreover, by recognizing and fostering these capabilities early in their academic journey, HEIs can contribute to building a generation of communication professionals who are responsive to market demands, as well as capable of driving social innovation and institutional change.

Despite the relevance of the findings, this study presents certain limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting its results. First, the sample was restricted to female undergraduate students enrolled in a single PR program at a public university in southern Brazil, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other academic contexts, geographic regions, or demographic groups. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to social desirability bias or discrepancies between perception and actual behavior. Additionally, while the use of descriptive statistics provided valuable insights into patterns of entrepreneurial traits, it did not allow for inferential analysis or the exploration of causal relationships. Therefore, caution is warranted in extending the conclusions beyond the scope of the sample. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, comparative analyses across institutions or genders, and mixed methods approaches to deepen the understanding of entrepreneurial development in communication education.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of literature at the intersection of entrepreneurship, gender, and communication education by shedding light on the entrepreneurial potential of female PR students. The results indicate that these future

professionals possess core traits that align with successful entrepreneurial behavior, reinforcing the value of fostering such competencies within higher education. By integrating entrepreneurship more systematically into academic programs, institutions can play a transformative role in empowering women to lead, innovate, and shape the future of the communication field. While the study's scope and design impose certain limitations, its findings offer a valuable foundation for further inquiry and practical advancement, reaffirming the importance of equipping students not only with technical skills, but also with the vision and initiative to create meaningful change.

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