

An autoethnographic case for social entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism

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Abstract. In this article, the author autoethnographically describes, discusses, and reflects on the process of becoming a professional in tourism based on her social entrepreneurial journey. Through the eyes of a woman social entrepreneur, she evaluates the experiences she has gained in her personal journey involving sustainable tourism practices within a sustainable life philosophy. On this basis, she tries to reveal what challenges and opportunities she faces in meeting the criteria for sustainable tourism and what is considered sustainable by local people, operators, and public institutions. Her experiences during her social entrepreneurial journey will inspire those who wish to undertake similar endeavors and help them to be ready for similar challenges they will face.

Keywords: Sustainability, social entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, alternative tourism, autoethnography

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My focus has always been on achieving excellence and success in my endeavors. My goals were not centered on the amount of money I could make, as status or financial gain. Perhaps due to the influence of having parents who were teachers and growing up around educators, I prioritized values such as being a good person, honesty, ethics, putting others before self, learning, doing the right thing and always questioning. A good university degree has given me a range of skills and knowledge that have opened up new opportunities for my career. Many alumni of my university have achieved great success as business leaders and managers, both nationally and internationally. A year after graduating, I got married. It was a time when banks were recruiting a lot of people from different departments. By the time I graduated, the 'Asian crisis' had begun to affect the economy, leading to a reduction in bank recruitment. I was very enthusiastic about entrepreneurship and didn't want to be a banker anyway, but my family thought it was a good career for me. I began to hear the social whispers that are always in women's ears in one way or another. What were they? "A woman adapts her work to that of her husband. She finds jobs that allow her to balance her time between work and home. In Türkiye, there is a common belief that women are naturally better suited to jobs that involve social interaction and caring, while men are better suited to jobs that require strength, analytical or managerial skills (Levanon & Grusky, 2016). From a young age, girls are taught that acceptable jobs involve caring and supporting roles, both within the family and in society. Occupational choices and gender-based preferences for different jobs are identified early in life due to the influence of the social environment (Alksnis et al., 2008). My situation was not different from many other women whose husbands were officers. I had to choose a profession that would allow me to be transferred to the place where my husband was stationed. Over the following years, I met many women in similar situations who were unable to work in their own profession or were not working at all. At the time, this did not seem abnormal to me. Women were primarily responsible for childcaring and housework. The association of women mainly with care-related activities, such as housework, childcare, patient care, and education of children, has led to doubts about their ability to perform successfully in other areas of the workforce, particularly in managerial positions (Cuberes and

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Teignier, 2016). Due to the fact that the man's job was the determining factor in the family's livelihood and the societal norm of men working outside the home, women's success in their careers, earning high salaries, and working long hours seemed meaningless. Although working women were valued, they were not expected to overcome obstacles and go beyond traditional women's work. I have witnessed many women I have worked with who fit this description. "Gentlemen" expect women to be caring and ethical at work, and if they behave appropriately, they are rewarded with warmth and attention. Employees expect their female colleagues to be caring and ethical at work, and if they behave appropriately, they are rewarded with warmth and attention. It is known that if women are too demanding or assertive, for example, if they ask for change or promotion, they may lose the support of their managers, which can make work difficult and lead to ostracism (Madsen et al., 2020). Despite graduating from a prestigious university or having many goals in mind, the reality is that this is what occurred. You are forced to make a choice. It is as if it is only a woman's job to balance home life and work life. Moreover, you experience this even when you have a husband like me who is ready to help you in everything. Here, as I repeat, the subject is summarized once again; "helping"... Housework is the woman's responsibility, and the man helps, at best. In my neighborhood, there is a traditional view that the home is the woman's domain, but this is not necessarily the case. Women are capable of managing both home and work, and it is important to challenge gender stereotypes that limit their opportunities. Domestic responsibilities are often culturally imposed on women, leading to a perception that housework is solely their responsibility. These jobs are lower in terms of pay, prestige and workplace demands, but without overtime, travel, mobility, inflexible work schedules and unsocial working hours. For all these reasons, women are more concerned with work-life balance than men (OECD, 2017). In fact, when I was a new graduate, I had ideas of starting a business such as establishing a house cleaning company or providing professional apartment management services to apartment buildings, which were not very common at that time. When my father saw these companies years later, he reminded me, "İşil, you told me that, but I find it illogical and laughed to you." It was not an environment where women entrepreneurs were provided with many opportunities, training, and finance. I accepted the offer to work of a private bank in city of İzmir, where my husband already is working. However, I was also concerned about signing a contract for three years. I worried that I would be unable to leave during this period due to the compensation fee. At that moment, I questioned my abilities and wondered what other career paths I could pursue. Moreover, the bank I worked for was the best in the country, so why should I leave? That's why I continued to work and three years later I started working in the Intelligence and Financial Analysis Department, considered the most difficult department to work in the bank, where I examined the financial analyses of the biggest companies of the bank. Meanwhile, the pressures of family and my biological clock were telling me that it was time to have a child. I worked in this department more than ten years, during which time I became a mother. Following the closure of the department, I started to work in the corporate branch. Two years later I had the opportunity to establish and operate a new branch in Kosovo. It was best working years of my carrier although I had many abnormal situations at work. I have also faced the challenges of balancing my personal and professional life while living alone with my child because none of my family member came together with me. Throughout this experience, I encountered different obstacles that women often face in their career development. These barriers range from being rooted in traditional attitudes about women's and men's roles in society and the family to include (1) reluctance to recruit, train and develop women or promote them to higher levels, (2) organizational shadow barriers such as the Glass Ceiling (invisible and artificial barriers that restrict women from being promoted regardless of their qualifications or achievements) or the Sticky Floor (restricting women's mobility in the workplace and not allowing them to succeed.), (3) lack of institutional practices that ensure work-life balance, (4) insensitivity of organizations to women with family or caring responsibilities, and (5) insufficient investment in the development of women with leadership potential (Vallone Mitchell, 2000).

The bank may appear to be a pleasant place for women to work from the outside, but it is your home that you always neglect, the place that you leave at eight in the morning and enter at eight in the evening, how much can it be yours? In developing countries like mine, where patriarchal relations are firmly entrenched, men believe they have the natural right to rule. In societies where men have a dominant role, it is difficult for women to challenge this. Therefore, individuals attempt to cooperate and adapt to the situation, even if they do not wish to do so. However, many women become dissatisfied with the situation by the time they reach their 30s and move on to new careers, children or lifestyles (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). On the one hand, having a perfect home and raising your children the way you want to can be very demanding while continuing to work. Women who cook the next day's dinner at ten o'clock at night, women who leave their children with their parents on weekdays, women who beg the babysitter, "I'll be back in an hour, can you please stay a little longer?", women who drop their children off at school with tears in their eyes and women bankers are always the last ones to pick up their children from the school. Childbirth is a significant event in a woman's life. Many women choose to take a break from their careers for an extended period, or even permanently. Additionally, due to their preference for family and home life, some women not to pursue higher management positions that entail greater pressure and stress (Dozier et al., 2007). Despite working in the best bank in the country, there were still many things we touched but we did not know how or why to demand change. Despite numerous policies and strategies to promote gender equality, significant inequalities persist, and projections suggest that they will continue for decades (Perrons, 2017). In the bank where I worked, women could be managers, but the success score in the management exams was set at 70 points for men and 90 for women. This meant that even if a woman achieved the same success score as a man, she would not be able to become a manager due to the limiting quota for women. Positive discrimination was not a factor in this situation. The three general factors most often cited to explain gender inequality in the workplace are historical and institutional factors (culture), employers' preferences (often referred to as "discrimination") and employees' preferences. At the bank where I worked, this practice was implemented at every stage. Although we, as women, were aware of it, we did not voice our concerns for various reasons (England, 2000). While male colleagues could easily leave their homes and children and move out of the province, work for two years and return, most of the female colleagues I saw doing this were either divorced or had to return to their families by giving up their titles. Although we were angry about this at the time, it was not an issue we could resist. There is a significant body of research on the challenges and barriers faced by women in the workplace, and while progress is being made, it remains a fact that the business world is still male-dominated and has not yet achieved a structure that allows for a healthy work-life balance. The pressure on women to balance work and home responsibilities while men are encouraged to focus solely on work remains a significant issue. Women's double burden of paid work and unpaid work, such as housework and childcare, poses a major obstacle to career development. Women are forced to work much more than men (Eurofond, 2018). I worked non-stop until I got lymphoma, I could not find to the problems I encountered in business life or the distress of not being able to do what I wanted. With the help of top medical care, I underwent over a year of chemotherapy and successfully beat the disease. During my recovery period, my family and I decided to relocate to a small coastal town where we now reside in a beautiful house with a garden. For the first time in my life, I saw the stars clearly. I have also planted trees and grown vegetables, and I am now a proud owner of a cats (Oggi, Lilly) and a dog (Mars). Furthermore, my son has started cycling to school. He loved his English, math and social studies teachers in the village school so much that he would talk about her even years later. Contrary to the common beliefs that the best schools are private schools, the most successful teachers are in big schools, that children should always study, that education at school is never enough and should always be reinforced, he was studying staying more in nature, spending a lot of time freely with his friends, calmly, without having rush in the traffic while going to school or coming back to home. Listening to the lectures in class with pleasure was enough for his academic success, and in the meantime, he had acquired various rural skills such as planting trees, hoeing the soil, sanding, cleaning pomegranates quickly, and carving trees. Sing (2014) states that children today spend an average of one

hour a day outside, compared to three hours in their grandparents' generation. Adams (2012) also points out that children spend one day a week on the couch and only two and a half hours outside. In the past, it was common for children to come home from school, drop their bags, and immediately go outside to play in the street or garden. The current technological age is highly commercialized, encouraging children to sit in front of screens more and more, which reduces learning experiences outside the classroom. Those concerned about the rapid decline of play as a defining feature of childhood have begun to demand that schools should teach children how to play. Observing this made me think, "Why shouldn't all children have this experience? Why shouldn't they be exposed to a learning space away from the stereotypes of their parents and society?" The decline in outdoor play can be attributed to several factors, including parental overprotectiveness, the decreasing availability of playgrounds, and the increasing attraction of technology. I couldn't bring all children to village schools, but I could offer them an alternative to holiday villages with water slides. Couldn't something new be learned in the time period we call holiday? Would a holiday full of learning and new experiences be tiring and boring or would it be more relaxing? And wouldn't creating such a holiday destination satisfy my entrepreneurial feelings that I had been dreaming of for years and my desire to do a social work that would benefit people, which I didn't know at the time was called social entrepreneurship. It is a common assumption that the primary motivation behind working and starting a business is financial gain. However, it is important to acknowledge that women entrepreneurs may face internal obstacles such as fear, insecurity, and a sense of scarcity, which can limit their ability to make positive changes in both their personal and professional lives (Linan et al., 2022). Would we work if we didn't have to earn money? In fact, let's remember the question that is the popular job selection criterion of recent times. If you didn't have to earn money, what job would you want to do? If we don't work to make money, then what will we work for? Or can the work we do to make money also make us happy? And what makes people happy other than just profit, other than just making money? Why do we seek meaningful work? Are we happier and more productive in work that is meaningful to us? Was I crazy? Was I going to quit my job at the bank when I was a senior, And I was earning so much money, and despite many disadvantages, including the loss of many benefits such as the ability to use a private hospital? Yes I would! I gathered all my courage and resigned. I was going to do something healthier and more useful, something in nature, something that was good for me and others. Work that is good for children, work that is good for society. I was going to work, but I was not going to have to put up with life passing me by while I worked. I was going to work, but I was going to have a balance between my home and my work. I was going to do something in the open air that was good for others and myself. I thought that work was important in life, but that it was important to work to produce, not to consume, and that being close to nature and exchanging with other living beings would be good for everyone, especially for young people who learn these things at an early age.

Milton Friedman famously stated that the sole purpose of business is to make a profit (Aune, 2007). However, advocates of sustainable development argue that businesses should also benefit society, protect the environment and maintain harmony with their employees and stakeholders (Colglazier, 2015). It is important for individuals to pursue economic gain and start new ventures. However, business choices and company establishment should not be based solely on financial gain. Personal interests, competencies, and values should also be taken into consideration. Even if one does not own a business or work in a traditional workplace, job satisfaction and enthusiasm are often linked to alignment with personal values and interests. Questions such as 'Do companies that provide meaning to employees' lives generate more profit?' and 'Does this lead to longer employee retention?' have been raised (Pattnaik and Jena, 2020). Additionally, inquiries into the origins of 'Benefit Cooperations' and the attitudes of workers towards socially and environmentally beneficial workplaces have emerged. The ESG concept has sparked academic and business discussions about the relationship between companies and their employees. The questions I asked myself before I started researching, reading and writing about sustainability. Doing something I really want to do, finding a balance between work and social life...

Unfortunately, we are all either not lucky enough to prioritize these things or we have not organized our lives financially enough to prioritize them. So, the bottom line is that it comes back to the economy first (Wood et al., 2020; Gragnano et al., 2020).

We do not live in harmony with nature. Perhaps it is challenging to comprehend and adopt such a lifestyle after a certain age. However, having this sensitivity at a young age can make a significant difference. My intention was to establish an environment where young individuals could enjoy themselves with their peers in a natural setting, learn about nature through experience, and develop a desire to protect nature independently. Although I am not an educator and have not previously worked in this field, I am passionate about the idea of allowing others to experience the healing power of nature by being close to trees, plants, soil, animals, and gaining new outdoor skills. I conducted research to determine how and where I could achieve this goal, including using my own garden, starting from scratch on new land, or renting a suitable location. I came across Nature Village Olympos (NVO), an ecological project that had already been established. The owners were committed to constructing NVO in harmony with nature and the traditional culture of the region. However, they already had other jobs and were considering what to do with the ageing facility that was not profitable enough due to its high operating costs. NVO was a resort with just 8 bungalows, a pool and a restaurant, set in 50 acres of woodland. And that was it. One of the partners, a German national who had worked as a director on German cruise ships, could only be in Olympos for a few months a year, and the people he had hired to run the business, despite their high salaries, could not cope with both the dilapidated resort and the customers. In our first meeting with him, which lasted over four hours, I told him that I would not leave until he allowed me to carry out my project in this facility and we agreed on a three-year contract. I would run the business, I would do my projects, I would pay no rent and if we made more money than I spent I would get a share of the profits. I got to work straight away. I couldn't believe how well everything was going, it was almost too good not to be true. I had found a place that was exactly what I wanted, the owner and I got on very well and we agreed on a price that we could afford. Now all I had to do was make my dreams come true.

NVO was located on 52 acres of land and only 2 acres were built on, consisting of eight wooden (cedar) bungalows of 25 square meters each. The common area of 200 square meters was woven from original goat's wool as a nomadic tent to keep the culture of the region alive. The roofs of the bungalows were also covered with woven goat's wool and there were no other buildings except for 1 restaurant, a reception and staff room and a house.

The facility required extensive renovation and cleaning due to a lack of maintenance. Therefore, general maintenance and repair activities were planned. The felt material on the roofs of all bungalows was replaced, and the bungalows were painted. Additionally, the wooden floors were thoroughly cleaned. A walking path was constructed around the pool. The air conditioners and all areas were cleaned, and the trees in the garden were pruned.

Finding employees was a significant challenge. Two friends in their final year of high school applied for work. Although I only had room for one person, they insisted on working together and offered to work for a lower price than usual in exchange for food and accommodation. They were surprised when we provided them with insurance. They had been working since middle school and had even worked outside of the province as seasonal workers. However, they had never had insurance until now. This was their first time working in such a facility, and it was during the COVID-19 pandemic. They attended hygiene training, and I explained to them how to perform each task especially housekeeping and created

checklists for each job. Using a checklist was particularly effective for cleaning. They also created a work plan based on their preferences.

While the renovations were going on, we had a meeting with a gymnastics club manager who was looking for a place to run a summer camp, but he wanted a place by the sea, but we were in the forest. I inquired about the activities they would engage in during the camp, and he mentioned training in the morning and evening, with swimming during the rest of the day. I shared my vision for the camp, explaining that it was specifically designed for this purpose and suggested various activities for the students to participate in between training sessions. We proposed activities such as bead making, jewelry making, macramé, wood printing, stone painting, bocchia (Italian bowling on grass), and feeding animals, which the coach was very interested in. The only thing missing was a grassy playground. We initially did not plan to have a lawn due to the associated costs of irrigation and maintenance. However, we did not want to miss out on the camp, so we agreed to build a lawn around the pool. During the first camp, the facility was at full capacity, and unfortunately, there were several mishaps. The refrigerator cable caught fire while 30 people were eating. Fortunately, we managed to fix it without anyone getting hurt and without causing any disruption to the guests. In the first camp, we ensured that everyone left happy by serving three-time meals during the day, completing all activities on time, and ensuring that everyone was completely full. One of the families was delighted enough to plan a three-day meeting with the mothers of their older daughter's friends after the camp. The new camp began on the same day that the previous one ended, exceeding my expectations.

During our first season, we provided both camps and standard accommodation services. At the same time, we made significant progress in operating the facility. We prepared our meals using healthy, natural ingredients, avoiding packaged and ready-made foods. We purchased ingredients as if we were shopping for them at home and cooked them like a homemade meal. We once bought cheese that was so fatty and of such high quality that it melted like butter when we cut. The butcher was amazed that I had bought lean ground beef for meatballs instead of the chicken, fatty meat, and bread meatballs made by other hostels. We made all the food we could ourselves, such as jam, olives, and bread. We bought the rest from local vendors. We separated our garbage into organic and non-organic. We composted the organic waste in a designated area and collected plastic, paper, and other waste separately. I made an agreement with a waste oil company to pick up our waste oil. We purchased our greens from a local producer. We provided dispensers throughout the facility with water sourced from a nearby natural spring. The only packaged product we sold was ice cream.

We disinfected our pool using minimal chemicals and more salt, which is the best solution for both swimmers and the environment. To clean the rooms, we used a steam machine instead of chemicals to preserve the beautiful cedar smell. Additionally, our cleaning staff, who were young men, found it easier to wipe everywhere with the machine, even though cleaning is often considered a woman's job.

The facility had four bicycles, which we repaired and renewed. We encouraged those staying in the facility to use them for free.

During my time at NVO, my goal was to provide guests with a holiday experience in a natural and protected environment that encourages physical activity and self-reflection. I aimed to inspire guests to consider their consumption habits and daily practices, and to connect with others who share similar values. Through simple measures that anyone can adopt, I demonstrated the significant impact that small changes can make.

Upon arriving at NVO for the first time, I was amazed by the sight of the solar panels. It was a dream come true to see a facility generating electricity from the sun. However, it soon became apparent that

generating electricity and feeding the plant was challenging due to legal procedures. The system was installed by a German company, but they were unable to obtain sufficient consultancy on permits and licenses, leading them to leave after making it operational. The system did not register electricity production, and it was more expensive to operate than to not operate. We consulted with companies, planned our next steps, and began the process of obtaining legal permits. As expected, we encountered many obstacles. The legislation was only intended for new systems, leaving uncertainty on how to legalize existing ones. When we approached institutions for guidance, we were advised to build a new system instead of dealing with the old one. Despite this, we persisted and made progress. The authorities inspected the NVO multiple times and documented the system to register it. However, we were unable to obtain a simple letter from the municipality confirming that the solar panels were installed on the building. As a result, we were unable to use the panels.

Before I started the business, The NVO owner said that the accountant was very attentive and kept the accounts of the company very well. The accountant was involved in contract negotiations and consulted on almost everything. However, after I began operating the plant, I discovered that the accountant was receiving almost double the market rate for his services, and he was being paid for a year in advance. Additionally, tax payments were often made late. He told me that the procedures for paying taxes and insurance were complicated. I noticed that he had previously transferred the money allocated for taxes to his own account and made late payments. There were also unpaid taxes and a significant fine from the tax office for not providing information on time. I mentioned the issue to the business owner, who responded by saying that he believed he was a good person. However, he also expressed a willingness to discuss the matter with me. Following a conversation with the accountant, it was determined that we could not continue working together. Although the accountant made an effort to provide all of the company's documents, only the legal ones were ultimately delivered to the new accountant. Subsequently, it was discovered that some documents were still missing. The new accountant began with a salary that was 40% lower than the previous accountant. They regularly performed bookkeeping duties.

I was using a 15-year-old commercial vehicle of the company. However, within two months, the vehicle cost about half of its value in maintenance. Although we initially planned to cover the maintenance costs, we did not anticipate the extent of the expenses. The company did not have the budget to purchase a new vehicle. However, it had high creditworthiness as it had never used credit before. I secured a vehicle loan with favorable conditions and purchased a new off-road vehicle. Despite later accusations of indebting the company by the owner, the sound financing decision was clearly justified due to increasing inflation and rising vehicle prices.

Two donkeys named Kadife and Carlos were the center of attention at the NVO. They had been adopted after their owners emigrated abroad and left them behind. For many of the children and parents present, it was their first-time seeing donkeys. The children were surprised and very happy when they fed the animals. I have created a camping journal that serves as a memory book for children to write down their thoughts and experiences about the activities they participate in during camp.

I was concerned about some of the exaggerated behaviors I witnessed from the mothers around me. Although I am not a psychologist or an educator, I am someone who pays a lot of attention to what we should pay attention to when raising our children and how our words and behaviors affect our children. My understanding of responsibility in this context is based on the child's ability to acquire age-appropriate responsibilities rather than constantly being protected and having everything done for them. The behavior of the mothers during the camp, which was described as helicopter parenting, reinforced my desire to go camping without parents. Two examples should suffice to illustrate my point. In the first example, which involved a camp for 12-year-old girls and their mothers, we planned to pick oranges

from a tree, eat them ourselves, and feed Carlos and Kadife, who love oranges. We all picked oranges together and began peeling them with our not-so-sharp little penknives. One of the mothers mentioned that she had never given her daughter a knife and that she would cut the oranges herself. Before we suggested that she try cutting the orange herself, she had already finished cutting it. However, when her daughter attempted to peel the orange, she took it away, saying, 'Let me do it.' As a result, the girl was unable to feed the donkeys. In my second example, we planned to explore the surroundings and walk to the beach with our 15-year-old male campers and their families. Upon arriving at the ancient city of Olympos, we scheduled a meeting between the campers and an archaeologist from the excavation group. Meanwhile, the families enjoyed a day at the beach. One of the mothers expressed interest in joining us and I thought she was interested in archaeology. When the same mother came and sorted her son's fish while 7 adolescents were eating at a table at the same time, I realized that she didn't want to leave her son so that nothing would happen to him in the ancient city.



Figure.1, Youth indoor games.



Figure.2, Traditional woodblock printing workshop.

I volunteered for the Ulupinar Environmental Protection Development and Management Cooperative, which focuses on protecting *Caretta Caretta* sea turtles and endangered sand lilies on the Çıralı-Olympos coast. They made presentations on biodiversity and conservation efforts during our camps. I was supporting them as a volunteer in translation, reporting, and preparing sustainability projects.



Figure.3, Carpentry workshop.

Our second year started with a weekend camp for young children, taking advantage of the mild spring months of the region. It was quite surprising and demoralizing for me that the owner of the kindergarten, with whom I thought we got along well in the beginning, later denied most of the things we had agreed on (even though they were in writing) by saying ‘I deal with children at the kindergarten, I am child-smart.’ I was very uncomfortable with the way she treated the children in the camp, including her own daughter. She always wanted her own way and didn't give anyone the opportunity to do anything. When I heard the parents saying, ‘This place is very nice, can we come outside the camp?’ and the teachers saying, ‘Let's bring our other students, too.’ After she told me, ‘If anyone who is currently in the camp comes again, you have to pay me a commission.’ I realized that his real intention was only to make money and that she had no care about children and nature. I sent a agreement text with all the necessary details, but a woman objected to every issue and did not pay the agreed amount. This behavior was very upsetting. She also continued to be hostile by sending messages to the social media accounts of the people involved in the activities I announced, asking them not to participate in the NVO activities. During a joint camp with an entrepreneur, I was warned that camping was not recommended by her due to messages received. I promptly informed the sender of the messages that I would sue her for damaging my business reputation if she continued. Thankfully, the messages stopped. Despite many good memories at NVO, this still leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

While trying to remember all this, I realized that I started this initiative in the summer of 2020. It was the beginning of a period that lasted more than two years when the bans started due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We could never predict what awaited us, and no one could move due to the bans. However,

I believe that the reason I did not consider it a challenge is because we spent the pandemic times in nature and consumed clean, natural foods. Most of the feedback we received was that attendees were able to alleviate the stress caused by the pandemic and feel liberated once again after a prolonged period. My biggest success indicator was being able to socialize and enjoy it in an environment where everyone refrained from touching each other, imposed many restrictive rules, and tried to stay away from each other. Umut's experience was a striking example of this. Umut's mother informed us that her son is very concerned about the pandemic restrictions. He reminded her to follow the cleaning guidelines, particularly regarding masks, gloves, and social distancing. They also brought additional cleaning supplies to sanitize their rooms. On the last day of the camp, during the games we played, Umut hugged his teammates tightly. His mom was surprised by how close he was to other people, especially in this pandemic environment. It made me wonder if our social needs sometimes override our sensitivities. COVID-19 undoubtedly had a negative impact on our work process. However, the growing significance of places like NVO, which blend with nature and provide an immersive experience, reinforces why I embarked on this adventure.

In May of that year, we had to cancel all our events due to the pandemic. May is the most suitable time for all kinds of natural activities in Olympos. The cancellations, forced by the measures taken within the scope of COVID-19, caused financial losses.

In June and July, we experienced some restlessness due to the owner's delay in repairing the structural problems on the property. However, we eventually accepted his offer to solve the issues. He had been neglecting the repairs and disregarding the presence of our guests and camps. We were delighted when he purchased about 20 goats, as it provided an opportunity for the children to interact with them and made the facility livelier. However, the goats began to roam freely around the facility and even on the solar panels, reflecting the owner's neglect. The owner had installed at least 30 vertical iron bars before one of the camps, despite my warning that small children might come to the camp and get hurt. He was content with placing a flowerpot on the edges. Fortunately, one of the parents who came to the camp warned me about this, and I asked the owner to remove the bars. I could at least point out that someone other than me was picking it up. However, I couldn't bring myself to tell him to pick it up immediately. I have thought about this a lot. It might be because I'm a woman and he's a man, or it might be because I don't want to cause trouble, or it might be because I respect what he does and I don't get the same respect, or it might be because he owns the place. I am not sure if it is because of my gender or because I do not want to cause any trouble. I believe it is because I do not want to cause any trouble. However, I am not someone who shies away from a challenge or is afraid to engage in a debate. In fact, I am often more responsive than most individuals. I was becoming less tolerant of events like these. After COVID-19 restrictions, my son started high school in Antalya province, which is 80 km from Olympos. This meant that I had to travel constantly. All this started to make me think that I couldn't do this job anymore. Just at this time, the owner came up with the offer that he could run the facility himself in case he quit the job, and I could continue with the camp organizations. This solution made perfect sense. I wanted to focus my energy on improving the content of the camps to be organized and reaching more people. We had three camps scheduled until November, two of which were already fully booked. During the meeting about the camps, he stated that providing three meals a day was not feasible and that the camps were sold at a low price, which would not be cost effective. Then he stated that he did not want any more children's camps. Despite my explanation that the prices were reasonable for the business and that I could manage the entire operation during the camp, I recognized that the camps would not be held and must cancel all.

During this period, I gave an interview for Antalya Face Magazine and had a promotional video produced (Show Turk, 2021; Yasa, 2021). Although the social media account has been slightly changed later, traces of our business period can still be found (NVO, 2024).

Conclusion

At first glance, my experiences are like those of individuals who feel content in their comfort zone but desire to step out of it and embark on new adventures. As a woman in a developing country, starting a new business to pursue my dreams was quite challenging. I was aware of this before embarking on this adventure, and I was prepared for the challenge. At the end of this journey, I feel exhausted but proud and content. Prior to conceiving this article, I perceived this adventure as incomplete. The completion and dissemination of this article also signifies my readiness for the next journey.

I aim to share my experiences in this process to guide women who are considering taking similar steps but lack the courage to do so. By sharing my experiences, I hope to demonstrate that this path can be challenging but rewarding. Additionally, I believe it is crucial to highlight the skills I have acquired through my master's degree. I was unable to continue this journey, which I enjoyed greatly, and which taught me many valuable lessons, due to the need to maintain a work-life balance. Although this situation initially seemed unfortunate, it ultimately helped me to evolve in new ways. My motivation and goals for starting this business have not changed, but my approach has. I have begun academic studies on sustainability in order to deepen my understanding and share my knowledge with others. The aim of this text is to showcase sustainable approaches, cultures, and practices across various dimensions. It is often observed that people are comfortable with sustainability being limited to the environmental dimension but become apprehensive when it is applied to economic and management dimensions. However, sustainability begins with the human being, and more precisely with the behaviors of the human being in this direction. The minor actions individuals take in their daily lives, while not a quick solution to global issues, can contribute to a better environment in the near future. During the voluntary seminars I conduct on this topic, I have observed that the small measures we implement in women's lives have a significant impact. Sustainability studies and sustainable development goals provide analytical methods. However, adopting the principles of this subject in a digestible way makes it easier to implement these goals in both individual and corporate life.

Sustainable entrepreneurship is a response to criticism of entrepreneurship, which is often accused of causing environmental degradation and social inequality in for-profit businesses (Muñoz and Cohen, 2018). The concept of sustainable entrepreneurship is based on the idea that entrepreneurs should not harm the ecological and social environments in which they operate while pursuing opportunities (Kanashiro et al., 2020). The perception that entrepreneurs are ruthless rent-seekers, while sustainability advocates are dreamers far from reality, is changing. Entrepreneurship and sustainability can coexist and, in fact, complement each other well. Both require an adventurous and long-term journey. There are many reasons to embark on this journey and few to turn back. During the journey, you may find yourself alone or with very few companions. At each stop, you may come to realize how much you have matured, but also how tired and worn out you feel.

Being a woman entrepreneur in Turkey is not easy due to social pressure and difficulties in obtaining initial investment. Women face more obstacles than men in this regard, which can prevent them from starting a business despite having a solid business plan. Women entrepreneurs can achieve satisfaction in their family life by creating a healthy work-life balance. This can be achieved by freely making and implementing decisions at work while fulfilling family responsibilities flexibly. Such freedom can also contribute to achieving organizational goals and business development. Therefore, it is important to implement various incentive programs to support the ideas and creations of women entrepreneurs. A developing country cannot move forward with a mentality that expects women to stay at home, clean, and look after children instead of working.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

Author Contributions

Işıl Dilmen Düzgünçınar: Conceptualization, data curation, investigation, methodology, writing original draft, review & editing

Declaration of Competing Interest

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Ethics approval

In the writing process of the study titled “**An autoethnographic case for social entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism**”, the rules of scientific, ethical and citation were followed; it was undertaken by the authors of this study that no falsification was made on the collected data. “Journal Action Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research [JAQMER] and Editor” had no responsibility for all ethical violations to be encountered, and all responsibility belongs to the authors and that the study was not submitted for evaluation to any other academic publishing environment.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this research is not required.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymized data from this study can be made available on request from iduzguncinar@gmail.com.