



## Woman in Development and Politics

### Overcoming Invisible Barriers: How Coaching Brings New Mothers Back to the Social and Entrepreneurial Stage

Zahra Ghiafeh Davoudi<sup>1</sup> | Ehsan Chitsaz<sup>2</sup> | Maryam Seyfekar Qomi<sup>3</sup>

1. MA, Department of Corporate Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [zgh.davoodi@ut.ac.ir](mailto:zgh.davoodi@ut.ac.ir)
2. Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Department of Entrepreneurship Development, Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [chitsaz@ut.ac.ir](mailto:chitsaz@ut.ac.ir)
3. PhD Student, Department of Entrepreneurship Development, Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [maryam.seyfekar@ut.ac.ir](mailto:maryam.seyfekar@ut.ac.ir)

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 4 November 2024 Received in revised form: 13 December 2024 Accepted: 16 March 2025 Published online: 21 April 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Coaching, Entrepreneurship, New Mothers, Limiting Beliefs, Social Activity.</i></p>	<p><b>Introduction</b> Women’s participation in various social and economic spheres stands as a critical driver of both family well-being and broader societal development. Traditionally, however, many cultural norms have framed women’s roles in starkly dichotomous terms—either they are expected to be fully devoted to motherhood, or they are to remain continuously active in professional fields. In practice, many new mothers wish to integrate these two roles, aspiring to return to professional or social activities without compromising the well-being of their young children. Yet, they often encounter multiple hurdles, including rigid societal expectations, internalized limiting beliefs, and lack of supportive infrastructures.</p> <p>In response to such challenges, coaching—particularly cognitive-behavioral coaching—has emerged as a promising intervention. Cognitive-behavioral approaches aim to identify, examine, and restructure the limiting thought patterns that impede individual growth, thereby bolstering self-efficacy and confidence. Within this framework, the “Trust Yourself” coaching model offers structured guidance to help new mothers navigate the psychological barriers that frequently undermine their re-entry into social engagement and entrepreneurship. By encouraging participants to reframe negative assumptions, recognize their strengths, and tap into existing support networks, this approach provides practical tools for renewed participation in community and professional arenas.</p> <p><b>Methodology</b> This research employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate whether cognitive-behavioral coaching could reduce limiting beliefs and enhance both social and entrepreneurial engagement among new mothers. The study population comprised mothers with children under the age of three—an interval often associated with heightened challenges related to childcare, work-family balance, and perceptions of social expectations.</p> <p>A targeted recruitment call was circulated within online communities for mothers, and interested individuals completed a screening questionnaire to confirm eligibility. A total of 32 participants met the criteria, having stepped away from regular social and professional activities since giving birth. They were then randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group (21 mothers) receiving the “Trust Yourself” coaching intervention, and a control group (11 mothers) receiving only a single introductory session with no subsequent follow-up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching Intervention (Experimental Group): Over two months, participants in the experimental group attended eight structured virtual coaching sessions grounded in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). The sessions focused on helping mothers identify specific limiting beliefs (e.g., “I am no longer capable of running a business now that I have a child”), examine the evidence for and against these beliefs, and replace them with more constructive thought patterns that affirm both their desire and capacity to engage socially and entrepreneurially. The format included group discussions, one-on-one reflections, and goal-setting exercises tied to participants’ personal and</li> </ul>

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professional aspirations.

- **Control Group:**

Mothers in the control group took part in a brief, introductory session that broadly covered the idea of coaching but did not involve cognitive-behavioral techniques or ongoing support. This group served as a baseline to assess the efficacy of the coaching program received by the experimental group.

To measure changes in social and entrepreneurial engagement, all participants completed pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. These covered facets such as willingness to participate in community events, inclination to launch new businesses, the degree of perceived support from friends and family, as well as specific limiting beliefs identified by the participants themselves.

Quantitative analyses employed both parametric and non-parametric tests—depending on the distribution of the data—to determine whether statistically significant shifts occurred between the initial baseline and the conclusion of the program. Key tests included the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for examining matched pairs of data (especially for limiting beliefs) and t-tests for assessing mean differences in entrepreneurial engagement indicators.

### **Results**

One of the clearest outcomes was a marked decrease in the intensity of limiting beliefs among mothers in the experimental group. Participants who initially voiced strong doubts about balancing childcare with business pursuits or civic involvement reported a shift toward more positive, empowered perspectives. While the control group showed minimal change in their self-reported limiting beliefs, the experimental group demonstrated a statistically significant reduction. This finding underscores the role of cognitive-behavioral tools in helping mothers revise negative internal dialogues and build confidence.

Coaching also led to notable growth in various forms of social engagement. Before the intervention, many participants felt apprehensive about re-entering public or community activities, citing fears of judgment or logistical complications (e.g., managing a child while attending events). By the end of the coaching sessions, however, mothers expressed heightened motivation to volunteer, join community groups, or engage in social projects—ranging from cultural and charitable endeavors to neighborhood improvement committees. This shift highlights how reappraising internal narratives can empower individuals to overcome cultural stigmas and logistical concerns.

The study revealed a robust uptick in entrepreneurial intentions and, in some cases, tangible entrepreneurial actions among the experimental group. Mothers who initially felt ill-equipped to launch a business after childbirth started identifying new opportunities, seeking resources, and brainstorming start-up concepts. Some participants reported making tangible progress—such as drafting business plans or networking with potential partners. By contrast, the control group showed little movement in entrepreneurial behavior, suggesting that structured coaching significantly contributed to entrepreneurial re-engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This quasi-experimental study affirms the potential of cognitive-behavioral coaching to break through the “invisible barriers” that impede the return of new mothers to social and professional domains. Through structured interventions that uncover and reframe limiting beliefs, mothers gained the confidence and clarity necessary to re-engage with their communities and explore entrepreneurial opportunities. The significant decline in negative mental frameworks within the experimental group is especially notable, highlighting the capacity of coaching to catalyze both attitude shifts and tangible behavior change.

Crucially, these findings emphasize the importance of providing new mothers with resources and strategies that honor their dual roles—caregiver and active societal member. While cultural and family expectations can be deeply ingrained, targeted coaching initiatives provide valuable scaffolding that allows women to merge family responsibilities with professional and community objectives. By cultivating confidence, offering skill-building exercises, and establishing a supportive peer network, coaching can pave the way for broader inclusion of mothers in social and economic spheres.

The implications extend beyond individual well-being, suggesting that policy-makers,

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healthcare providers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) consider integrating coaching programs into existing maternal support services. By doing so, they can facilitate longer-term benefits, including stronger local communities and a more diverse pool of entrepreneurial ventures. Although the present study offers compelling insights, additional research may focus on larger sample sizes, varied cultural contexts, and long-term tracking of outcomes to confirm the durability of the observed improvements.

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