

Symbolic Violence and Women's Professional Identity: A Sociological Approach in the Context of Contemporary Organisational Transformations

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of symbolic violence in reproducing masculine domination and its impact on women's professional identity within organizations in Ouargla Province in the context of contemporary organizational transformations. The study adopts a sociological approach grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence while drawing on Edgar Schein's concept of organizational culture. A qualitative research design was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of thirteen women employed in public institutions in Ouargla Province. Data collection ceased upon reaching theoretical saturation. In addition, field observations and an analysis of selected organizational documents were used to enrich the findings. The results reveal that symbolic violence is manifested through marginalization, biased evaluations, the unequal distribution of tasks, and limited participation in decision-making processes. These practices negatively affect the construction of women's professional identity and reinforce the persistence of masculine domination within organizations. The study concludes by recommending a reassessment of organizational culture and the development of institutional policies that promote professional equity and gender equality.

Keywords: Symbolic Violence; Professional Identity; Masculine Domination; Gender; Organisational Culture; Organisational Transformations.

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I. Introduction :

Within the sociology of work and organisation, women's professional identity constitutes a particularly sensitive terrain—one where gender, power, and institutional culture intersect in complex ways. Despite the wave of organisational transformations that have marked recent decades, women continue to encounter subtle, often invisible forms of domination that curtail their professional advancement. These are precisely the forms that Pierre Bourdieu theorised as symbolic violence.

Unlike overt discrimination or explicit legal exclusion, symbolic violence within institutions operates through seemingly innocuous channels: the language of performance evaluations, the allocation of tasks, the unspoken criteria for promotion, and the persistence of gendered stereotypes about roles and capabilities. Through these everyday practices, masculine domination is reproduced not by force, but by consent—by making inequality appear natural, legitimate, and even inevitable. The question that arises, then, is whether the contemporary transformations reshaping organisational life—digitalisation, administrative reform, women's empowerment policies—are capable of unsettling these deeply embedded symbolic structures, or whether they merely refresh the veneer while leaving the underlying hierarchies intact.

I.1. Significance of the Study

– Academic significance

This study seeks to extend sociological inquiry into symbolic violence and women's professional identity by anchoring it within the conceptual apparatus of organisation studies: symbolic domination, habitus, and institutional culture. In doing so, it offers a field-based reading of organisational behaviour in the context of contemporary change, addressing a noticeable gap in empirical research from southern Algeria, and from the Wilaya of Ouargla in particular.

– Social significance

By rendering visible the symbolic mechanisms that sustain gender inequality in the workplace, the study aims to sensitise both institutions and the local community to the urgent need for cultural reform—for a shift toward greater justice and genuine equality between women and men.

– Practical significance

The findings provide an empirical foundation for crafting organisational policies and training programmes designed to curb unfair symbolic practices and to affirm women's professional identity, thereby contributing to a more equitable and effective work environment.

I.2.Objectives

The study sets out to:

- Identify the manifestations of symbolic violence experienced by women within organisations in the Wilaya of Ouargla.
- Understand how such symbolic practices shape the formation of women's professional identity.
- Examine the role of organisational culture in either reproducing or challenging symbolic domination.

I.3.Literature Review

– Coder, A. & Sabeen, D. (2018).

Symbolic violence in the workplace: Analytical frameworks for understanding gendered professional experiences. This study traces how symbolic violence infiltrates evaluation and recognition practices, constraining women's advancement despite their competence. It offers analytical tools for examining how such violence shapes professional identity in the Ouargla context through close attention to organisational discourse and unspoken policies.

– Simpson, R. (2004).

Masculinity and management: The changing nature of gender relations in organizations. Simpson explores how symbolic practices within organisations reproduce gendered divisions of labour in senior professions. Her approach illuminates the power structures that define women's professional identity and inhibit their full participation in high-level positions.

– Halsall, J. & Liska, K. (2017).

Professional identity and symbolic bias in performance evaluation: Gendered experiences in organizational contexts. This study focuses on the ways symbolic bias distorts evaluations of women's professional experience, generating career frustrations and fostering limited professional identities. It helps clarify the organisational dynamics that sustain symbolic violence and shape women's self-perception within institutions.

– **Hennekam, S. & Bennett, D. (2017).**

Gendered identity work in changing work environments: The role of symbolic discrimination. Analysing how indirect discrimination affects women's professional identity, particularly in workplaces undergoing organisational change, this study supports the examination of how contemporary transformations interact with symbolic violence to shape or reproduce women's professional identity in Ouargla's institutions.

I.4.Problem Statement

Despite the organisational transformations that institutions have witnessed in recent years, women continue to encounter subtle, indirect forms of discrimination in the workplace. These can be grasped through the lens of symbolic violence. For Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic violence is a mode of domination exercised not through brute force, but through language, symbols, and cultural classifications that appear natural and legitimate to both society and the individual—even as they encode profoundly unequal power relations.

Within organisations, symbolic violence takes shape in unfair performance appraisals, the exclusion of women from decision-making circles, the unequal distribution of tasks, and the perpetuation of gendered role stereotypes. These practices do not merely affect women's material circumstances; they reach into the very constitution of their professional identity. Professional identity, as understood here, encompasses the individual's self-perception within the organisation—their sense of belonging, their values, their skills, their aspirations. It is, in Bourdieu's terms, an expression of *habitus*, shaped by the symbolic and cultural order of the institution.

The question that animates this study is whether the organisational transformations now under way—digitalisation, job flexibility, empowerment initiatives—are capable of reshaping or dismantling these symbolic structures. Do they open up space for women to reinterpret their professional identity? Or do they merely offer a cosmetic adjustment, leaving the deep grammar of symbolic domination untouched?

The research is situated in the Wilaya of Ouargla, where public and private institutions offer a particularly revealing context for studying symbolic violence. The region's cultural specificities—a blend of deep-rooted local traditions and a growing presence of women in the labour market—make it a rich site for exploring how working women navigate these symbolic

practices and how their professional identities are shaped in the process, against the horizon of contemporary organisational change.

I.5.Main Research Question

How does symbolic violence contribute to the reproduction of masculine domination and shape women's professional identity within organisations in the Wilaya of Ouargla, in the context of contemporary organisational transformations?

Sub-Questions

- What forms does symbolic violence take for women in the workplace in the Wilaya of Ouargla?
- How do these symbolic practices influence the formation of women's professional identity?
- What role does organisational culture play in either reproducing or dismantling symbolic domination?
- Do contemporary organisational transformations open up spaces for women to reinterpret their professional identity?

I.6.Key Concepts

I.6.1.Symbolic Violence

– Conceptual definition

For Pierre Bourdieu (1998, p. 167), symbolic violence is "a form of domination exercised through symbols and cultural and social norms, appearing natural and legitimate to individuals within society, even as it reflects unequal power relations."

A review of these definitions indicates that the concept of symbolic violence extends beyond being merely a form of non-physical violence. Rather, it constitutes a social mechanism through which relations of power and domination are reproduced across different social fields, including organizational settings. This form of violence is characterized by its indirect operation through language, symbols, systems of classification, and social representations that legitimize inequality and render it natural, normal, and socially acceptable.

– Operational definition

In this study, symbolic violence is measured through institutional practices that diminish recognition of women's contributions, allocate tasks

unequally, bias professional evaluations, and exclude women from decision-making forums or key meetings.

I.6.2. Professional Identity

– Conceptual definition

Professional identity refers to "an individual's perception of themselves and their role within the organisation, encompassing values, skills, belonging, and professional aspirations, shaped by institutional culture and social and symbolic relations" (Ibarra, 1999, p. 766).

Schein (2010, p. 18) defines professional identity as "the set of values, attitudes, and perceptions that individuals acquire through their involvement in an organization, which shape their sense of belonging and the professional role they perform."

The sociological literature indicates that professional identity is not a fixed personal attribute but rather a dynamic social construct that is continuously shaped through the interaction between individuals and their work environment. It is influenced by social recognition, organizational culture, the nature of professional relationships, and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Consequently, professional identity cannot be reduced to academic qualifications or occupational position; instead, it reflects individuals' perceptions of their professional standing, as well as their sense of belonging and recognition within the organization. Based on this perspective, the present study conceptualizes professional identity as the product of the social and symbolic relationships experienced by individuals within the organizational context.

I.6.3. Women's Professional Identity

Based on the preceding definitions, women's professional identity can be defined as the social and personal construct through which women perceive themselves within the professional sphere. It is shaped by their work experiences, interactions within the organization, the degree of recognition they receive, as well as the influence of organizational culture and the prevailing gender relations in the workplace.

Accordingly, the professional identity of working women extends beyond the mere performance of occupational duties. Rather, it is continuously constructed through their daily interaction with organizational culture, the extent to which their competence is acknowledged, their opportunities to participate in decision-making, and their ability to achieve professional self-realization. This identity is also influenced by the dominant gender structure

within the organization, as the persistence of symbolic violence may lead to the formation of a professional identity characterized either by adaptation to existing patterns of domination or by resistance to them. Therefore, women's professional identity cannot be examined in isolation from the organizational and cultural context in which it develops, as this context constitutes a social space in which meanings are produced and professional relationships are continuously negotiated and reconstructed.

– **Operational definition.**

Women's professional identity is assessed through:

- Their perception of their role and responsibilities within the organisation.
- Their sense of recognition for their professional contributions.
- Their awareness of their position within the organisational hierarchy.
- Their capacity to articulate professional aspirations and make decisions about their career trajectory.

I.6.4.Masculine Domination

– **Conceptual definition**

Masculine domination denotes "a pattern of social, political, and cultural relations in which men dominate women and reproduce male power and superiority across various domains, including work and institutions" (Bourdieu, Masculine Domination , 2001, p. 17).

– **Operational definition**

Masculine domination is measured through:

- Invisible symbolic practices that reinforce male superiority within the organisation.
- Unequal distribution of tasks and responsibilities.
- Exclusion from decision-making or strategic projects.
- Disparities in performance evaluation and professional rewards between men and women.

I.6.5.Gender

– **Conceptual definition**

Gender is understood in sociological literature not as a biological given but as a social and cultural construct that defines the roles, expectations, and norms associated with masculinity and femininity within a given society.

Joan W. Scott (1986, p. 1076) describes gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and a primary way of signifying relationships of power." Judith Butler (1990, p. 179) adds that gender is not a fixed identity but a social practice constituted through "a stylized repetition of acts," which gives identity its appearance of substance.

– **Operational definition**

In this study, gender refers to the system of roles, expectations, and representations linked to masculinity and femininity within the organisation, shaping task allocation, evaluation criteria, promotion opportunities, and professional recognition. It is assessed through:

- The language used to describe professional competence (e.g., "decisive," "emotional," "leadership qualities").
- The distribution of tasks between men and women.
- Women's representation in decision-making positions.
- Patterns of interaction and recognition in the workplace.

I.6.6.Organisational Culture

– **Conceptual definition**

Organisational culture is "the shared system of values, beliefs, and practices within an organisation that shapes individual behaviour, power distribution, evaluation, and recognition of professional belonging" (Schein, 2010, p. 18).

– **Operational definition**

The influence of organisational culture on symbolic violence is measured through institutional policies, evaluation and recognition practices, task and responsibility allocation, and internal communication styles that affect women's professional recognition.

I.6.7.Organisational Transformations

– **Conceptual definition**

Organisational transformations refer to "a deliberate and systematic process aimed at moving an organisation from its current state to a more

effective future state, in response to internal and external pressures and to improve performance and competitiveness" (Burnes, 2017, p. 245).

– Operational definition

The impact of organisational transformations is assessed through modern practices and policies that may affect women's roles and professional participation: training programmes, digitalisation, job flexibility, and empowerment or evaluation initiatives.

I.7. Field Methodology

I.7.1. Type of Study

This study adopts a qualitative field-based approach, chosen for its appropriateness to the symbolic and complex nature of the subject. Rather than quantifying symbolic violence as a variable, the qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of meanings, perceptions, and behaviours that escape traditional quantitative instruments. It allows us to grasp how symbolic violence operates in context and how it shapes women's professional identity from their own standpoint.

I.7.2. Study Population and Sample

– Population

The study focuses on women working in public and private institutions across the Wilaya of Ouargla, representing diverse administrative, educational, and service sectors.

– Sampling criteria

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with attention to:

- Age (including both middle-aged and older generations to capture the transmission of symbolic and cultural experience).
- Educational level and occupation.
- Diversity of workplace settings (administrative, educational, service).

– Sample size

The sample comprised 13 participants, a number deemed sufficient upon reaching theoretical saturation—the point at which subsequent interviews yielded no new qualitative insights or additional analytical dimensions relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

I.7.3. Data Collection Tools

– Semi-structured interviews

These allowed participants to recount their personal experiences of symbolic violence within their organisations. Open-ended questions explored experiences of professional evaluation, decision-making participation, task distribution, and gendered role stereotypes, linking individual experience to the broader symbolic framework of cultural domination.

– Field observation

Direct observation captured daily workplace interactions: meetings, task allocation, and both formal and informal communication.

I.7.4. Analytical Strategy

– Data classification

Interview data and observations were organised thematically: marginalisation, evaluation, task distribution, decision-making participation, invisible bias, and professional recognition.

– Analysis of symbolic violence

The analysis sought to identify stereotypes, invisible biases, and the mechanisms through which masculine domination is reproduced symbolically within the organisational setting.

Table 1: Manifestations and Mechanisms of Symbolic Violence

Theme	Illustrative Quotation	Analytical Category	Symbolic Significance	Mechanism of Domination
Marginalisation	"I'm rarely invited to important meetings, despite my experience."	Exclusion from symbolic decision-making space	Undermining recognition of competence	Confining influence to men, entrenching secondary roles for women
Evaluation	"They always say women are too emotional to handle"	Gendered stereotyping	performance to presumed biological traits Linking	Legitimising women's exclusion from senior

	responsibility. "			positions
Task Distribution	I usually get the routine administrative work; major projects go to the men."	Unequal division of labour	Encoding work value through masculine logic	Reinforcing male centrality in strategic tasks
Decision-Making	"Decisions are made beforehand; we're just asked to implement them."	Restricted genuine participation	Weakening professional autonomy	Perpetuating women's subordination in the hierarchy
Invisible Bias	"If I make a mistake, they say, 'That's natural—she's a woman.'"	Normalisation of bias	Attributing error to gender, not individual	Reproducing stereotypes through everyday discourse
Professional Recognition	"When the team succeeds, my name is rarely mentioned	Denial of symbolic recognition	Deprivation of symbolic capital	Monopolising recognition and legitimacy

Table 2: Bridging Field Data and Theoretical Framework

Theme	Observed Practice/Disco urse	Symbolic Violence (Bourdieu)	Organisatio nal Culture (Schein)	Impact on Professio nal Identity
Marginalisation	Women excluded from strategic	Invisible symbolic domination	Implicit assumptions about male	Feeling of non-recognitio

	meetings	through spatial control	entitlement to leadership	n, weakened institutional belonging
Biased Evaluation	Women described as less capable of pressure	Gender differences naturalised into evaluation criteria	Deep cultural assumptions reproducing gender categories	Eroded self-confidence; identity shaped by others' gaze
Task Distribution	Strategic tasks to men, routine to women	Symbolic encoding of professional value as masculine	Value system privileging power-associated roles	Confinement to secondary roles limits growth
Decision-Making	Tokenistic involvement without real influence	"Soft" exclusion as symbolic violence	Centralised structure reinforcing power monopolisation	Diminished sense of professional autonomy
Recognition/Legitimacy	Women's contributions ignored	Monopolisation of symbolic capital (recognition, legitimacy)	Culture rewarding masculine-coded leadership	Formation of fragile or defensive professional identity

I.7.5. Analytical Reading

What emerges from these tables is a picture of symbolic violence not as an explicit act or overt organisational decision, but as something far more subtle: a system of meanings and classifications embedded in the very fabric

of organisational culture, imprinted on professional consciousness, and enacted as routine. Practices of marginalisation, biased evaluation, unequal task allocation—these are not presented as gender discrimination. They are justified through discourses of "competence" and "natural suitability" for roles. Neutral on the surface, they carry within them the weight of unequal power relations.

This resonates deeply with Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic violence as operating through naturalisation and misrecognition. Domination is not seen as domination; it is seen as legitimate order. When men monopolise decision-making or professional recognition, this appears not as a sign of power but as an "objective" reflection of competence or experience. The control of symbolic capital—recognition, legitimacy, status—determines, silently and without formal decree, who counts as a legitimate actor within the organisational field.

The organisation, then, functions as a social field that reproduces the logic of the wider society through a professional habitus—a set of ingrained dispositions that shape perception and behaviour beneath the threshold of conscious awareness. A woman may find herself adapting to this symbolic order, scaling back her ambitions or adopting behaviour that approximates a masculine leadership model in the hope of recognition. This is not escape from domination; it is a form of accommodation to it.

Schein's perspective on organisational culture adds another layer. Culture, for Schein, is a system of implicit basic assumptions that define who belongs and who is valued. When the idea that leadership requires "decisiveness"—a quality culturally coded as masculine—is woven into those assumptions, the organisation reproduces a symbolic division of labour that elevates power-associated roles and diminishes others. Recognition flows accordingly.

Professional identity, in this light, is not simply a matter of individual competence or qualifications. It is forged in the crucible of symbolic struggle—a struggle over who is seen, who is heard, whose work counts. Cultural capital and symbolic capital intersect; the professional self takes shape in the dialectic between personal aspiration and the prevailing structure of domination.

To dismantle symbolic violence, then, is not merely to revise policies or regulations. It is to interrogate the deep cultural structures that produce meaning and confer legitimacy within the organisation. It is to rewrite, collectively and reflexively, the rules of the game.

II. Results and discussion :

II.1.Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The field interviews revealed the pervasive presence of symbolic violence in the organisations studied in the Wilaya of Ouargla. Women spoke of being marginalised without explicit exclusion, evaluated through a biased lens, assigned routine tasks while men took on strategic projects, and included in decision-making only pro-forma. Crucially, they did not attribute these experiences to any lack of competence on their part. Rather, they perceived an implicit logic—unspoken but deeply felt—that conferred legitimacy on men's occupancy of leadership roles.

This perception aligns with Bourdieu's analysis. Symbolic violence works precisely because it does not announce itself. It is woven into the fabric of everyday organisational life, justified by appeals to "natural" differences or to the supposed requirements of the job. The idea that women are "too emotional" for leadership, or that certain tasks are simply "better suited" to men, is not presented as discrimination; it is presented as realism. In this way, the symbolic order reproduces itself without ever having to defend itself.

Schein's framework helps explain how such assumptions become embedded in organisational culture. They are not explicit policies but basic, taken-for-granted beliefs about how the world is and should be. When these beliefs privilege masculine-coded qualities—assertiveness, decisiveness, authority—they generate a culture that systematically undervalues women's contributions, even when those contributions are objectively significant.

The impact on professional identity was striking. Some women developed what might be called a defensive or diminished professional identity—scaling back their ambitions, adjusting to a lower ceiling of expectation. Others, however, responded with critical awareness, seeking to redefine their professional selves, resist stereotypes, and claim recognition through demonstrated competence. Yet these individual strategies, however admirable, face steep odds in an organisational environment that reproduces masculine domination both symbolically and institutionally.

The findings indicate that symbolic violence plays a significant role in reproducing masculine domination within organizations through indirect organizational practices, including biased performance evaluations, the unequal distribution of tasks, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, and organizational discourses that legitimize male leadership. These practices adversely affect women's professional identity

by weakening their sense of professional recognition, limiting opportunities to demonstrate their competence, and reshaping their self-perception within the constraints imposed by the prevailing organizational culture. Furthermore, the study found that although organizational transformations have contributed to the modernization of work practices, they have not brought about fundamental changes in the cultural structures that continue to reproduce masculine domination.

Regarding the first research question—What are the most prominent manifestations of symbolic violence experienced by women in the organizations under study?—the findings reveal that symbolic violence is embedded in a range of everyday organizational practices that appear routine but, in reality, embody subtle forms of indirect discrimination. These include biased assessments of professional competence, assigning leadership responsibilities predominantly to men while allocating routine tasks to women, undervaluing women's opinions during meetings, limited recognition of their achievements, and the persistence of gender stereotypes that associate leadership more strongly with men than with women. Collectively, these practices function as invisible mechanisms through which masculine domination is reproduced within organizational settings.

Regarding the second research question—How does symbolic violence affect the professional identity of working women?—the findings demonstrate that symbolic violence directly shapes women's professional identity by diminishing their professional self-confidence, weakening their sense of institutional recognition, and restricting their aspirations for leadership positions. While some women respond by adopting adaptive strategies that enable them to cope with the prevailing organizational culture, others resist these practices by demonstrating competence and striving for professional excellence. Consequently, women's professional identity emerges through the continuous interaction between their individual capabilities and the symbolic constraints imposed by the organizational environment.

Regarding the third research question—What role do organizational culture and organizational transformations play in reinforcing or reducing symbolic violence within organizations?—the study shows that organizational culture plays a central role in reproducing symbolic violence when it is grounded in implicit assumptions that privilege men in leadership and decision-making while limiting women's opportunities for professional recognition and career advancement. The findings further indicate that organizational transformations, including digitalization and the modernization of

managerial practices, have not been sufficient to reduce symbolic violence because they have focused primarily on administrative and technological improvements rather than fostering meaningful changes in organizational culture and the institutional values associated with professional equity and gender equality.

What these findings underscore is that symbolic violence does not merely reinforce unequal power distributions; it reshapes women's perception of themselves. Professional identity becomes a site of symbolic struggle—a struggle between recognition and exclusion, between aspiration and the limits imposed by a culture that remains, in its deepest assumptions, gendered.

Discussion of the Findings in Light of Previous Studies

The findings of the present study demonstrate that symbolic violence constitutes one of the principal mechanisms through which masculine domination is reproduced within organizations. This occurs through indirect practices, including biased evaluation, marginalization, and unequal opportunities, all of which adversely affect the construction of working women's professional identity. These findings are consistent with those of Coder and Sabean (2018), who argued that symbolic violence is embedded in implicit organizational policies and discourses that limit the recognition of women's professional competence. Likewise, the results are in line with Simpson (2004), who demonstrated that organizational practices contribute to the reproduction of gender roles and the reinforcement of masculine domination within organizational settings.

The findings are also consistent with those reported by Halsall and Liska (2017), who showed that symbolic biases in performance evaluation influence women's perceptions of their professional identity. Similarly, the study by Hennekam and Bennett (2017) concluded that organizational transformations do not necessarily reduce symbolic discrimination unless they are accompanied by meaningful changes in the prevailing organizational culture.

The present study contributes to the existing body of literature by examining these issues within organizations in Ouargla Province and by integrating Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence with Schein's concept of organizational culture to analyze how organizational practices shape women's professional identity. In doing so, it enriches the sociological literature on the relationship between gender, organizations, and symbolic violence in Algerian workplace contexts.

II.3. Methodological Reflection and Limitations

No study is without its limitations, and it is important to acknowledge them here.

– **First**

the sample, while sufficient for theoretical saturation, is drawn from a specific region and from particular types of institutions. The findings, therefore, are not generalisable in a statistical sense; their value lies in the depth and texture of the insights they afford, and in their potential resonance with similar contexts.

– **Second**

the study relies on self-reporting through interviews. While this is appropriate for capturing subjective experience, it cannot directly observe the unconscious mechanisms of symbolic violence. What women perceive and articulate is crucial, but symbolic violence also operates below the threshold of awareness; some of its effects may remain invisible even to those who experience them.

– **Third**

the researcher's own positionality merits reflection. As a woman and a sociologist from the region, I brought to the study both an insider's sensitivity and an analytical distance shaped by theoretical training. This dual positioning offered advantages—access, trust, contextual understanding—but also required continuous reflexivity to avoid imposing preconceived categories on participants' accounts.

– **Finally**

the study was conducted at a particular moment, amid ongoing organisational transformations. The findings capture a snapshot; longitudinal research would be needed to trace how these dynamics evolve over time.

III. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how symbolic violence reproduces masculine domination and shapes women's professional identity within organisations in the Wilaya of Ouargla, in the context of contemporary organisational transformations. The field findings confirm that symbolic violence does not take the form of overt discrimination or explicit exclusion. It operates through everyday practices that appear natural and legitimate: the allocation

of tasks according to implicit gender classifications, the exclusion of women from strategic decision-making spaces, and performance evaluations coloured by stereotypes about women's capabilities.

These findings lend empirical weight to Bourdieu's theoretical insight: domination endures not primarily through force but through symbolic systems that conceal power relations and render them socially acceptable. Within the organisation, symbolic violence is exercised through language, through evaluative norms, through recognition mechanisms—through all the subtle ways in which professional worth is defined and assigned. The organisation thus becomes a site where the gendered structure of the wider society is reproduced, rather than challenged.

Schein's perspective illuminates the cultural dimension of this process. Organisational culture, with its unspoken assumptions about who belongs and what is valued, plays a decisive role in stabilising symbolic domination. When leadership is culturally coded as masculine—associated with decisiveness, authority, assertiveness—and when care work or organisational support is coded as feminine, the culture reproduces a symbolic division of labour that constrains women's professional horizons.

The impact on professional identity takes multiple forms. The findings suggest three distinct patterns:

- A diminished professional identity , marked by the scaling back of ambition to avoid friction with the dominant culture.
- A negotiating professional identity , which seeks recognition through adaptation to prevailing masculine norms.
- A resistant professional identity , which adopts a critical stance and works to redefine women's professional roles within the organisation.

Yet individual strategies, however significant, remain limited in their transformative potential unless accompanied by deeper cultural change. Symbolic violence operates at the level of perception and representation; it is more deeply embedded, and harder to dismantle, than explicit forms of discrimination.

From the perspective of contemporary organisational transformations, the findings carry a sobering message. Digitalisation, administrative modernisation, and empowerment programmes do not automatically undo masculine domination. The same symbolic practices can persist within a transformed organisational landscape. Superficial structural change is not

enough; what is required is a profound cultural shift that redefines the very criteria of professional recognition and legitimacy.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the researcher proposes the following:

1. Integrate gender perspectives into management training programmes to raise awareness of the invisible forms of symbolic violence.
2. Conduct periodic organisational culture audits to uncover the implicit assumptions that may perpetuate inequality.
3. Encourage applied sociological research on gender and work in southern Algeria, building an empirical base to support more equitable policies.

In the end, addressing symbolic violence is not a matter of tweaking regulations. It requires dismantling the deep cultural structures that reproduce masculine domination within institutions. Only then can we open the way for a more just and balanced professional identity for women—an identity forged not in the shadow of domination, but in the light of genuine recognition and equal participation.

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