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Queen Bee Syndrome: A Sociological Reading of Power and Gender Relations within Organizations

متلازمة ملكة النحل: قراءة سوسيولوجية في علاقات السلطة والنوع داخل التنظيمات

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Abstract:

This paper explores Queen Bee Syndrome, which is an organizational phenomenon that some - but not all - women leaders existing within an organization purposely exclude younger women rather than support them. Through a review of recent literature across several disciplines including, but not limited to, academia, administration, health, education, and politics, we discover this phenomenon is rooted in patriarchal structures that reproduce gendered inequality. It is concluded that - as a product of institutional culture, glass ceilings, and discrimination, to name a few - we require institutional reforms, solidarity, and a reconceptualization of contemporary leadership.

Key words: *Queen Bee Syndrome; glass ceiling; organizational culture; gender discrimination; women's solidarity; female leadership.*

الملخص:

تتمحور إشكالية هذا المقال حول فهم متلازمة ملكة النحل بوصفها ظاهرة تنظيمية تعكس إقصاء بعض القياديات للنساء الأصغر سنًا بدل دعمهن. يهدف البحث إلى تقديم قراءة سوسيولوجية نقدية لهذه الظاهرة من خلال مراجعة أدبية تحليلية شملت أحدث الدراسات الكمية والكيفية في ميادين متعددة كالأوساط الأكاديمية، المؤسسات الإدارية، القطاعات التربوية والصحية، والسياقات السياسية. وقد جرى تقسيم البحث إلى عرض نظري للمتلازمة، تحليل لأبعادها التنظيمية والثقافية، ومقارنة قطاعية لتباين حدتها عبر السياقات. أظهرت النتائج أن الظاهرة ليست سلوكًا فرديًا، بل نتاج بنى ثقافية وتنظيمية ذكورية تديم اللامساواة الجندرية، وأن الثقافة المؤسسية والسقف الزجاجي والتمييز الداخلي تسهم في تغذيتها. وخلص المقال إلى ضرورة إجراء إصلاحات مؤسسية وقانونية، وتعزيز شبكات الدعم النسوي، وإعادة تعريف القيادة بعيدًا عن النماذج الذكورية التقليدية.

كلمات مفتاحية: متلازمة ملكة النحل؛ السقف الزجاجي؛ الثقافة التنظيمية؛ التمييز الجندري؛ التضامن النسوي؛ القيادة النسائية.

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Introduction

In the past several decades, interest has spiraled upward around the agenda of women's representation and leadership positions, especially within male-dominated organizations. Even with the success of women and holding seniot positions, there is a paradox in sociology under the name of Queen Bee Syndrome, referring to some women leaders who appear to avoid or even disparage their younger female colleagues, rather than supporting them. The phrase was used for the first time in a Primer literature about psychology in 1970s (Staines et al., 1974) , with liens of evidence in terms of studies in other contexts, that see this phenomenon arising not as an isolated individual behavior, but rather in response to social and organizational structures (Derks et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2021).

This syndrome calls into question a central issue in organizational sociology, the extent to which women in power can reproduce gender hierarchies rather than play a role in breaking them down. Research illustrates that this neither reflects a "female nature" nor is it individual behavior, related exclusively to "feminine aspects," but rather is related to organizational culture, including its pressures (Derks et al., 2016). In organizational contexts where a masculine culture dominates, certain women leaders may take on “masculinized” or authoritarian behaviors while also distancing themselves from younger women, as a function of adaptation (Apaydın et al., 2021) . In this sense, perhaps the syndrome could be understood as a way of coping in an unjust workplace, not simply as an individual behavior.

The reason for addressing this subject matter, is that it focuses on the dynamics of power and gender in organizations, and indicates that women themselves, often unconsciously, may perpetuate gender gaps. Comparative studies have indicated that the implications of the syndrome go beyond the individual level, to professional solidarity and for younger women’s underprivileged empowerment, while simultaneously strengthening the Glass Ceiling (Apaydın et al., 2021). Moreover, some legal literature in the field, associates the phenomenon with workplace bullying, and contends that the absence of deterrent legislation is even more severe on women (Smit, 2016).

This piece seeks to present a sociological critique of Queen Bee Syndrome by examining the conceptual underpinnings; social & organizational conditions that reinforce it; and contextualized examples of its appearances: within academic settings; administrative organizations; the education and health sectors; and political environments. The article will also try to wrestle with the sociological significance of this phenomenon in women's empowerment, and suggest options for combatting this through changes in institutional policies and fostering a culture of justice and equality.

Methodologically, this article adopts an analytical sociological literature review that synthesizes both qualitative and quantitative studies published mainly after 2010, focusing on research addressing gendered power relations, leadership behaviors, and organizational dynamics associated with the “Queen Bee Syndrome.” The reviewed literature was selected through targeted searches in major academic databases using keywords such as “Queen Bee Syndrome,” “gender and power,” “organizational hierarchy,” “women leadership,” and “gendered organizations.” The analytical framework follows a thematic synthesis approach, identifying recurring sociological patterns and cross-sectoral variations to explain how mechanisms of symbolic and structural power reproduce gender inequalities within organizational contexts(Arvate et al., 2018; Derks et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2021) .

In order to give a complete response regarding this issue, the article suggests an analytical strategy, which is organized in five interrelated axes, beginning with the theoretical and conceptual framework of the Queen Bee Syndrome, underlying its scientific roots and sociological consequences, to looking at the factors that help explain it as an emergent phenomenon of organizations, to finally providing a look at the manifestations of Queen Bee Syndrome in post-secondary institutions, administrative sectors, education and health sectors, and in political contexts. The article also discuss sociological consequences of Queen Bee Syndrome along with the consequences on women's empowerment. Finally, the article presents strategies and

plausible interventions to interrupt the phenomenon and the opportunity to establish an organizational culture of equity.

1. The Concept of Queen Bee Syndrome (QBS)

Queen Bee Syndrome refers to the behaviors of particular women with a high authority in organizations who take on the masculine culture prevailing there and employ methods of distancing themselves from younger or less powerful women. These behaviors may take place through women downplaying other women's abilities, not advocating for policies that would promote gender equity, or by hiring and promoting men over women (Derks et al., 2016).

The concept first appeared in the 1970s with Staines, (Staines et al., 1974) in an attempt to understand the limited solidarity among women in the workplace. They argued that some women distance themselves from their female colleagues in order to emphasize their difference and align with the masculine system. This characterization laid the groundwork for numerous subsequent psychological and sociological studies on the phenomenon (Staines et al., 1974). Over time, the concept was developed to be understood as an adaptive behavior linked to organizational pressures rather than merely an individual deviation. Women adopting such strategies are seen as attempting to reduce threats associated with gender stereotypes and to strengthen their individual status within a predominantly masculine environment (Derks et al., 2011).

Recent research in organizational sociology has highlighted that these behaviors cannot be understood in isolation from institutional culture; rather, they are part of the process of reproducing gender-based hierarchies within organizations (Faniko et al., 2021).

Theoretically, the analysis of the syndrome has been linked to several sociological concepts, the most important of which are:

1.1 Glass Ceiling: This refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from advancing to top positions despite their qualifications (Apaydın et al., 2021). While the glass ceiling reflects an external structural obstacle, the Queen Bee Syndrome represents, in part, the internalization of these barriers, manifesting as behavioral practices among women themselves.

1.2 Reproducing structural and symbolic discrimination: The literature suggests that institutions are not gender-neutral, but instead reproduce gender hierarchies through tasking practices. In this sense, Queen Bee Syndrome is a mechanism for reproducing the symbolic power of masculinity while also having women, themselves, foster that logic (Faniko et al., 2021).

1.3 Social identity and differentiation strategies: Some studies utilize social identity, noting that, as a means of self-group distancing, female executives employ Queen Bee behaviors to gain differentiation from their group (women) to improve their own status in male-dominated organizations (Derks et al., 2011).

1.4 Gendered Institutional Logic: Recent studies suggest that women's access to power can lead to one of two pathways, where they either reproduce institutional gendered logic (redoing) or try to dismantle it (undoing). Queen Bee Syndrome serves as a salient example of the first pathway, whereby reproduction occurs through individual actions that are indicative of broader structural constraints (Kantola & Squires, 2012).

Based on these approaches, Queen Bee Syndrome cannot be understood as merely individual behavioral deviations; rather, it is the product of a patriarchal organizational and cultural structure that drives some women to adopt adaptive strategies which ultimately contribute to reproducing the very gendered power relations that hinder them.

2.The explanatory factors behind the emergence of Queen Bee Syndrome

Sociological and psychological literature agrees that Queen Bee Syndrome cannot be reduced to individual characteristics or personal traits of women. Rather, it is the product of organizational and cultural structures that reproduce gender inequality. The main explanatory factors can be identified as follows:

2.1 Male-Dominated Organizational Culture:

The literature indicates that organizations dominated by masculine cultures create work environments based on standards and behaviors perceived as "neutral," yet inherently male-oriented. In such contexts, women often feel compelled to adopt defensive strategies to secure their positions of power. Among these strategies is the adoption of rigid or exclusionary behaviors toward other women—not as a free personal choice, but as a way to adapt to prevailing norms and reinforce their leadership legitimacy in environments that frequently question their competence (Derks et al., 2011).

These approaches are not indicative of internal aggression or self-hatred about women; instead, these strategies represent a survival strategy within masculinist institutional structures. In this regard, Queen Bee Syndrome represents a sociological contradiction: women are expected to promote gender transformation but will, under structural pressures, reinforce the masculine culture that limits women's professional advancement. This multiplicity of meanings reveals the structural nature of the phenomenon and shows that its sociological analysis has to span beyond the individual and include the organizational logic that pressures women to act according to the masculine norms of a leadership context by potentially excluding the solidarity of other women.

2.2 Structural Discrimination and the Glass Ceiling:

The Glass Ceiling lies at the forefront of hidden barriers confronting women in their professional careers, restricting their opportunities to enter senior positions despite their skills and experience. Studies suggest that this barrier creates an element of fierce competition between women, as some women in leadership roles feel there is limited opportunity for promotion to roles of influence (Apaydın et al., 2021).

This demonstrates how external structural discrimination, imposed through institutional and structural schemes, can convert to individual behaviors enacted inside of the group. In this way, the glass ceiling does not just limit women's advancement, but creates competition that undermines women's solidarity and extends exclusionary logic. This sociological quandary effectively illustrates that gender-based discrimination does not just occur from above (e.g., man or institutional hierarchy) but can be re-engaged within the group when social norms concerning these discriminatory practices are perceived as engrained and transformed into individual practices to continue to perpetuate Queen Bee Syndrome as a defense mechanism conditioned by an unfair organizational climate.

2.3 Psychological Pressures and Identity Strategies:

The social identity theory can also explain the syndrome in which women choose self-group distancing strategies, i.e., they try to distance themselves from their group (other women) to align themselves with the dominant group (men), in order to bolster their status within the larger organization (Derks et al., 2016).

As mentioned earlier, this does not indicate animosity towards other women per se; instead, understanding it as a reaction, or coping with actual structural pressures. Women's job conditions are often contingent on their competence being scrutinized, and the only way to be recognized is to try and position themselves as a "gender-neutral" or even "masculinized" leader to legitimize their credentials. It is at this point that the psychological defense mechanisms become social practices with effects at the aggregate level, where they reproduce stereotypes that distinguish the "exceptional woman," capable of carrying out the business of men for other women, from their supposed less competent counterparts .

The strategy itself is not about the individual interaction, but rather an actual psycho-social mechanism to engage in structural masculine organizations--one where women are often expected to sacrifice group belonging for individual survival. The ultimate paradox is that the strategy of gaining individual status may habitually undermine the collective status of women in the organizational context.

2.4 Socialization and Internalized Sexism:

Some research indicates that socialized internalized sexism may contribute to reinforcing it. Women who have internalized cultural messages that devalue women may, often unintentionally, reproduce such stereotypes in their leadership practices (Singh & Prakash, 2019). This underlines the deep interplay between involving psychological–cultural factors and organizational structures. When women internalize negative stereotypes about their collective relevant competencies, some women leaders may want to stress their individual exceptionality as a way to distinguish themselves from other women rather than support female collective purposes. In this way, the externally imposed discrimination has become an internalized practice, which could further institutionalize the phenomenon.

Understanding this factor shows that Queen Bee Syndrome is not explained solely by structural or institutional pressures, but also by the ways gender identity is shaped through socialization. Here, the cultural dimension emerges as a key element that deepens the phenomenon and amplifies its persistence in contexts dominated by strict patriarchal values.

2.5 Absence of Legal and Regulatory Frameworks:

Some legal scholarship has connected Queen Bee Syndrome to other occurrences of relative workplace bullying and promotion bias, noting the lack of strong laws to protect women in the workplace only increases the incidence of Queen Bee Syndrome by creating gaps in symbolic and institutional practices that mitigate female solidarity (Smit, 2016).

In the absence of legal protection, women experience bias in multiple forms of institutional types, where the competition for limited opportunities may escalate into a kind of internalized conflict among women. Likewise, accountability mechanisms within the organization or profession do not exist, easy justification for - or oversight of - exclusionary practices only to reproduce an inequitable environment .

This understanding further demonstrates that intervening on Queen Bee Syndrome is not merely meant to change individual behaviors or renew organizational culture; legislative change is a requirement for equal opportunity and protections against discrimination. The law is not a deterrent here; it is a mechanism to change institutional culture and develop more just and equitable standards.

2.6 Political and Institutional Contexts:

According to political analysis, women in positions of power do not automatically mean that gendered organizational logic will be disrupted. The gendered logic may still be reproduced, for instance, when women take on existing practices to disrupt it instead of transforming it. Kantola & Squires (2012) emphasized that women in decision-making positions can engage in one of two courses of action, either reproducing gendered structures (redoing) or transforming and/or dismantling them (undoing) (Kantola & Squires, 2012).

From this viewpoint, Queen Bee Syndrome is a good example of the first pathway, where political and institutional forces translate into individual actions which reproduce hierarchies. This perspective makes clear that the phenomenon of Queen Bee Syndrome is shaped not only by the workplace culture or socialization of the workplace members, but also the political and bureaucratic context that governs the limits to action available to female leaders.

This aspect helps to understand why the syndrome varies across sectors: in highly bureaucratic institutions or institutions with a strict authoritarian structure, Queen Bee Syndrome is more likely to reproduce existing thinking about gender roles compared to an open democratic environment where opportunities to challenge those roles may be greater. Therefore, political and institutional context is an important part of understanding the nature of the phenomenon.

3. Manifestations of the Syndrome in Various Contexts

The literature indicates that Queen Bee Syndrome occurs in more than one sector. Each sector varies in nature but reproduces gendered power relations. While there is variation across sectors, Queen Bee Syndrome is evident in academia, administrative institutions, education and health sectors, and politics. In other words,

it is a complex phenomenon associated more with institutional culture and organizational structures, rather than individual attributes.

3.1 Queen Bee Syndrome in the Academic Environment:

The academic environment is among the most studied settings in relation to Queen Bee Syndrome. There is evidence which indicates that some senior female faculty may demonstrate coercive behaviors against junior students or research colleagues through a manner of undermining their capabilities or blocking opportunities for growth in their careers (Faniko et al., 2021). A qualitative study which took place among academic nurses in Turkey indicated that several used Queen Bee Syndrome as a demonstration of the extent of competition in institutions by leaders deliberately undermining the status of the subordinate to protect their reputation (Korkmaz & Altuntaş, 2023).

These results suggest that the academic environment is anything but neutral and involves complex gender relations. While universities are intended to be sites for knowledge production and equal opportunity, they can then serve as sites for the reproduction of the gender gap through indirect means. The syndrome operating in academia, is not simply individual behaviors, but status and competition over scarce resources (grant, promotions, publications) that push some senior women to accept the exclusion of others as a strategy for survival. The academic context, then, is a clear example of how institutional structures amplify gendered norms that, in turn, sustain the problem.

3.2 Queen Bee Syndrome in Administrative Institutions and Companies:

Research on Queen Bee Syndrome in both public and private contexts has yielded both supportive and unsupportive results. Evidence shows that there are female leaders who do not support other women and may even limit the promotion opportunities of women (Derks et al., 2016). On the other hand, there are studies that show women in higher ranking positions can act as role models (Arvate et al., 2018), contributing to the argument that while the syndrome is problematic, it is not an absolute. Instead, it is a contingent feature of the nature and strength of the institutional culture and organizational context. In more male-dominated spaces, women may use exclusionary practices in attempts to insecure their own position within the workforce. In more liberal and respect for, equality focused environments female leaders can inoculate organizational change and promote gender justice. Suggesting the institutional element to this issue: Hence, the behaviors of individuals cannot be separated from the organizational logic and the culture in which they exists.

3.3 Education and the Health Sector:

In the field of education, a study conducted with female teachers found a strong relationship among Queen Bee Syndrome, the glass ceiling, and psychological flexibility as they showed that some teachers in a leadership role create hierarchies that we think might be undermining professional solidarity (Apaydın et al., 2021).

In the field of health, qualitative studies of nurses found that the awareness of the syndrome was a common issue and especially applies in settings that are highly structured or hierarchical, as junior nurses recognize the negative aspects of the behaviors although they do not always think of the behaviors as negative (Şengül et al., 2019).

This difference between sectors illustrates the importance of the organizational structure in the emergence of the syndrome: in education, glass ceilings foster a feeling of limited opportunities which may cause some leaders to uphold hierarchies instead of disrupting them; in healthcare, the rigidly hierarchical structure of medical institutions creates an embedded hierarchy that undoes the structure itself, resulting in some leaders reinforcing power structures through exclusionary practices. This supports the view that the syndrome is not necessarily aligned to a specific field, but rather aligned to the controls and organizational structures within each sector.

3.4 Political Sphere and Public Institutions

In the political sphere, having women in decision-making leadership positions does not always contribute to a gender equality agenda or challenge gendered institutional settings. (Kantola & Squires, 2012) note that some women in leadership roles may merely reproduce a dominant gender logic by relying on

traditional techniques to exercise leadership and engage others, which means their role is often more symbolic than transformative (Kantola & Squires, 2012) .

On the other hand, Arbate, Arvate et al. (2018) indicate that women in leadership positions can have a positive impact by creating 'apprenticeship' to other women, thereby facilitating opportunities for other women's advancement in leadership roles. Their study indicates that the Queen Bee Syndrome is not a universal social norm, but a set of developments that are contingent on political and institutional contexts (Arvate et al., 2018) .

This variation illustrates that women's roles in politics are not purely unidimensional. In more authoritarian or bureaucratic contexts, female leaders can be forced to apply strategies that sustain the status quo and, therefore, inequality. In more open and pluralistic systems, women's engagements can be leveraged for change and lead to expanded political opportunities for other women. Viewed through the lens of the syndrome within the political sphere illustrates an important point of entry to analyze the link between institutional structures and female actors who can reproduce or disrupt gender hierarchies.

4.Sociological Implications of the Queen Bee Syndrome

The Queen Bee Syndrome raises profound sociological issues, as it cannot be viewed merely as a psychological or individual matter but as a hidden mechanism reproducing gendered structures and hierarchies within organizations. It reveals how institutions, with their male-dominated culture and invisible dominance rules, compel women to replicate discrimination rather than dismantle it. Studying its sociological implications helps understand how the syndrome perpetuates the gender gap through symbolic and structural mechanisms often enacted within the female group itself. The main implications can be summarized as follows:

4.1 Weakening of women's solidarity:

The syndrome limits the opportunity for women to create support structures in organizations. When women leaders separate themselves from the younger women, they send the unspoken message that success is gained as a single individual and not as a collective of women supporting women within the same organization, which reinforces the dominant male culture (Derks et al., 2016). This isolate women from each other while simultaneously creating an atmosphere of apprehension and competition, which is detrimental to forming a unified movement that advances gender justice.

4.2 Reproduction of Gender Hierarchy:

Rather than functioning as agents of change, female leaders may also contribute to the same gender structure that they have been subjected to through Queen Bee behavior. Research indicates that younger women, for instance, do not always view these behaviors as explicitly negative, but the effects of that behavior can be seen in less confidence in career trajectories and limited promotions (Sterk et al., 2018) .Thus, the syndrome creates a hidden loop that sustains inequality in organizations, through expressions of power not only externally (i.e. men) but also internally (i.e. some female leaders).

4.3 Reinforcing the Image of the Woman as an Exception

The syndrome reinforces a narrative in which currently successful women are viewed not as the product of policy or a just environment, but as outliers. Women in power, in the absence of structural considerations, can be seen as exceptional examples supporting the notion of women succeeding as privilege, rather than a normal occurrence (Faniko et al., 2021). This framework also hinders commitment to more meaningful change because it conceals the obligation to change organizations' policies, while uplift "individual achievements" that protect the status quo.

4.4 Psychological and Professional Impacts on Younger Women

The syndrome produces negative psychological and professional effects on women at the beginning of their careers, as they perceive female leaders not as supportive allies but as competitors or obstacles. A qualitative study in the health sector showed that younger nurses were clearly affected by these behaviors, even if they did not always recognize them as negative (Şengül et al., 2019). Other studies indicated that these

dynamics can increase turnover intentions, particularly in sectors with rigid hierarchical structures such as health and education (Baykal et al., 2020) . Thus, the impact of the syndrome is twofold: it weakens solidarity while simultaneously pushing young female talents to leave the field.

4.5. Sustaining Unjust Organizational Structures

In the broader sociological sense, these consequences point to the fact that Queen Bee Syndrome is not just a series of individual actions but is a way of maintaining inequity within organizations. They show that organizations are not neutral actors but are gendered actors, reproducing relations of power and domination through everyday practice and organizational policies (Acker, 1990) . In this light, the syndrome demonstrates the degree of power of cultural and organizational structures in shaping individual and collective action, and the extent to which structures reproduce inequity, including action by agents of change.

5.Approaches to Addressing Queen Bee Syndrome and Potential Solutions

The literature indicates that it is not helpful to simply scapegoat women or to seek out individuals' choices to understand their existence when considering interventions for Queen Bee Syndrome. This approach requires a more wider process of examining structural and organizational contexts that support the syndrome's existence. Engaging with the syndrome becomes a more general project of gender justice in organizations, engaging with cultural change, policy change, and solidarity among women. The significant suggestions for approaches to interventions are:

5.1 Reforming Organizational Culture:

Male-dominated organizational culture provides the most fertile ground for the spread of Queen Bee Syndrome. The absence of inclusive institutional policies reinforces competition and exclusion. Therefore, studies recommend developing programs aimed at changing informal norms that perpetuate male dominance while promoting values of cooperation and equality (Derks et al., 2011) . These reforms are not limited to discourse but also include restructuring recruitment and promotion practices to reduce covert discrimination.

5.2 Strengthening Women's Support Networks (Mentoring & Networking):

Studies indicate that developing professional networks based on mentorship and support diminishes women's feelings of isolation and provides an alternative to individual competition. These networks act against the consequences of self-distancing in groups by creating links of solidarity across different generations of women (Faniko et al., 2021) . In conceptualizing these networks sociologically, we see the transformation of women's social capital into forms of social capital that facilitate equal access to learning and career advancement.

5.3 Reforming Public and Legal Policies:

Some literature highlights that if there isn't an effective statutory framework present, this leaves open the opportunity for discriminatory practices that are symbolic and whether they can be explicitly institutionalized. On the other hand, adopting effective statutory laws addressing gender discrimination in all settings coupled with transparent promotion and recruitment processes is necessary to to tackle the issue (Smit, 2016) . Public policies here will not only deter discriminatory practices, but they can also change an organization's culture to establish policy mechanisms that will ensure a minimum threshold of fairness.

5.4 Redefining Female Leadership:

One important recommendation is to move beyond traditional leadership models that compel women to emulate prevailing masculine patterns. Some studies advocate adopting alternative leadership concepts that incorporate values of gender justice, allowing women to exercise their leadership roles without the pressure to conform to male dominance (Mavin, 2008). This shift helps reduce the psychological and social drivers that push women to adopt exclusionary strategies.

5.5 Education and Socialization:

In the long run, educational organizations and media can assume a central role in deconstructing stereotypes that serve as the basis for internalized sexism (Singh & Prakash, 2019) . Socialization based off

of equality values provides an opportunity to avoid the reproduction of the syndrome across generations. Viewed in this way, education as a social project prior to women joining the labor market is an investment in equality.

5.6 Promoting "Positive Role Modeling" Policies

Some studies have shown that women who reach senior positions can serve as supporters for other women rather than sources of exclusion, provided the organizational environment encourages this. The presence of "positive role models" can have a multiplier effect, both by boosting self-confidence and by breaking stereotypes (Arvate et al., 2018) . Therefore, highlighting these models and promoting their visibility in the public sphere becomes an integral part of institutional strategies to confront the syndrome.

Conclusion:

A sociological perspective on Queen Bee Syndrome shows it is more than simply individual behaviors of women in power. In fact, it likely speaks to larger organizational and cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality. Female leaders may separate from younger women, not out of vengeance or competition with other women, but due to institutional pressures that legitimize masculinity and the construct of appropriate feminine leadership.

The literature has illustrated that the Queen Bee Syndrome is pronounced across many areas, like universities, governmental and administrative, education, healthcare, and politics. In all these cases, the syndrome undermines female solidarity, reproduces gender hierarchies, and casts women leaders more as outliers instead of normal, ultimately obstructing structural change toward gender justice.

On the other hand, various studies show that the syndrome is not an inevitability, but rather dependent on a number of factors associated with organizational context and culture. Research has demonstrated that the impact of women in leadership in senior positions can be a positive outcome depending upon whether the organization exists in a supportive egalitarian organizational culture. In this context, responding to the phenomenon is a complex matter of changing organizational culture, establishing supportive networks, redefining legislation within a stringent anti-discriminatory framework, and adopting a developmental approach to leadership with a more inclusive and egalitarian frame of reference.

The Queen Bee Syndrome is a clear contradiction. Women in positions of power, whether on purpose or not, become agents of the structures that constrained them in the first place. While being aware of the structural conditions of this process can open up possibilities to convert a female leader from a “Queen Bee” to an agent of social change who can break the glass ceiling and move organizations toward more inclusive and equitable organizational practices.

Recommendation

- Establish clearly defined and documented criteria for recruitment, promotion, and compensation, oversight by evaluation committees with multi-representation, and a sense of strong accountability with adequate anti-retaliation and reporting mechanisms **.**
- Implement comprehensive culture change initiatives, including compulsory training sessions on unconscious bias, regularly scheduled gender gap reviews, and organized policy against symbolic bullying **.**
- Provide mentoring and professional support based on systematically designed networks connecting senior level leaders to emerging women, and indicators of established performance (promotion, resources, and middle management positions) **.**
- Create an organizational culture supportive of distributed, participatory, or non-competitively driven leadership styles, and connect leadership assessments to indicators that enable the practice of developing women's talent **.**

- Enforce strong anti-discrimination and anti-harassment and anti-workplace bullying policies, with enforceable sanctions and potentially compensatory alignment with violations.

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