

Queen Bee Syndrome: Probable Reason Behind Incivility at Work

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Abstract: *Nowadays women can be seen heading in all spheres of life. We can speak about the emancipation of women for whom new dimensions of life have become available. Gender equality no doubt has paved a way for women worker. While more women than men are university graduates in 147 major countries worldwide, women currently hold only 4% of CEO positions or other higher ranks. But it has been reported that women who have broken the glass ceiling do not sponsor, promote or support the other women subordinate. Paradoxically, this access is sometimes hampered by women holding high positions. Those women prohibit other women from advancing in their careers. This article aims to bring to light and explain this negative phenomenon referred to as Queen Bee syndrome.*

Key Words: *Queen Bee, Women, Stereotype, Dominant, Workplace, Assertive.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Queen Bee is described as “vain”, “easily threatened”, “sharp-tongued”, “emotionally unpredictable” and cliquy. This article aims to explore the reasons that give rise to and legitimize the so-called Queen Bee phenomenon which describes a usually senior female holding a higher leadership position who actively opposes the rise of other females in male-dominated organizations.

Queen Bee syndrome is a common perception and it has been given a place in media, magazines, books and even movies like “The Devil Wears Prada” (Adda, Robin, Adda, & Robin, 2006). Queen Bee portrays a stereotypical queen, an alpha woman who is capable and holds power but she is critical of subordinates, especially woman. Psychological studies concluded in 1973 arouse the concept of Queen Bee syndrome (Benabou, 2014). Dr. Nelson, the well-known psychologist stated that a woman in a position of authority treats colleagues and subordinates more critically if they are females. It encompasses behaviours ranging from women disparaging typically feminine traits to being unsupportive of moves to address gender inequality.

The theory of woman craving and striving for an alpha female attention or getting revenge on her or being screwed over by her has been the talk of workplaces. This has been popularized through various articles, books and films including Grease. Heathers, Clueless, Mean Girls. Queen Bee now symbolizes something important about female identity, female friendship and gang of girls at different workplaces, institutes and offices. This mindset has kept many women in their little box, afraid to trust immediate bosses and look-out for Queen Bee who will knife them in the back. The Queen Bee leaders are rude and uncivil while interacting with their female sub-ordinates than within their male subordinates.

Undoubtedly the image of a Queen Bee is negative (Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, & Burke, 2017). Queen Bee bullies immediate subordinates and hinders other women's career advancements. The Bees are seen as power-hungry, insensitive and selfish. It is observed that if a senior woman has a reputation as a Queen Bee woman in lower positions often are advised to avoid. Researches of Arizona University have confirmed that women are meaner to each other than to their male colleagues (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, & de Groot, 2011). According to some experts women target other women who are dominant and assertive, subverting gender stereotypes. The ultimate Queen Bee is a woman who reached the top of her profession but denies to help other women reach the same authoritative position. In one of the studies, scientists from Toronto claimed that the reasons for a woman to feel stressed when working under some woman manager may be Queen Bee syndrome (Ambri, Tahir, & Alias, 2019). Some researchers speculate that a woman on the top position may feel that she has suffered, so she should another woman. This may be another reason for Queen Bee to claw subordinates to experience the same rigour (Gipson et al., 2017).

It is also observed that companies, institutions, colleges, schools may face a greater risk of losing working women who experience insinuates disrespect. They destine to give up their current jobs in response to their unlikable, disagreeable experience and less contentment at work. The female employee feels disengaged and has a lack of desire to work (Neureiter & Traut-mattausch, 2016). The disillusioned worker strides for defence mode rather than focusing on the output efficiency. Instead of achieving the goals and targets, the female subordinates absorb in activities of defending and protecting themselves.

If we try to find out the reason behind this kind of rude, arrogant, aggressive and dominant behaviour the reply might not be sure. The problem between men and women workers can be either sexual harassment male chauvinism, male ego, male dominance but between female boss and her female worker is incivility and verbal as well as mental harassment. They are bullied and mistreated and even discriminated. Queen Bee syndrome has consequences both for the women tagged as Queen Bee and for their subordinates. Queen Bee may be supported by her male co-partners but she definitely will never get support from younger women and they will never become effective leaders (Saat, 2013). Queen Bee phenomenon is harmful to the female subordinates and even younger women as it negatively affects their abilities, capabilities, their decision making power and their professional capacities and professional development. The behaviour and negative attitude of Queen Bee can also destroy the self-confidence of younger women in the workplace. This further leads to an environment of discrimination in the workplace (Filippin & Paccagnella, 2012).

Research shows that Queen Bee syndrome may lead to catastrophization in extreme cases. Catastrophization is the name of the emotional effect on the bullied victim. It leads to mental, physical, emotional discomfort, physical or interpersonal pain.

Queen Bee syndrome can be termed under social Identity Threat (SIT). This strain effect leads to a behavioural pattern wherein an individual no longer identifies with co-group (Atherton, Antley, Slater, & Freeman, 2016). This behaviour has been observed with women who feel pleasure to behave stereotypically. The women on top position as a result of SIT disassociate and de-fame other women. The Queen Bee leader breaks down the trust of friendship and affinity. The Queen Bee behaviour can have the origin from a sense of insecurity and jealousy. One probable reason for the above-mentioned insecure and jealous behaviour can be Imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is defined as an inability to internalize professional or academic success. Feelings of self phoniness and self-doubt have negative effects on the person's mood, sense of self-efficacy & professional relationships with others. Queen Bee may follow the negative style of leadership. Under this style of leadership, the leader displays the behaviour of criticizing, ridiculing, abusing, harassing, demanding and degrading. Here the supervisor becomes a stress booster for the immediate co-workers. Bullying at the workplace has taken an epidemic form. This can lead to depression, pain, discomfort and ill mental health. The victim feels demoralised, victimized, humiliated, threatened, isolated and in psychological pressure.

Now, the question that arises is what institutes, companies and other workplaces should do and how should they intervene to shift the narrative and reframe it? Positive and Supportive workplace interactions for employees can pave a way to create a healthier environment that will help to sustain the relationship in the long run. Organizations should also ensure that they queue the ideas and opinions to appraise all the working community (SIMMONS, 2016). They should also ensure that supporting others is a crucial agenda for success (Pradesh, Nupur, & Mahapatro, 2016). Acting assertively may not be considered negative but a positive approach to articulate concern and speak up.

Institutions can join hands with other institutions and organization that support women. Events can be organised to develop and support mutual and healthy relations among women. Women can be a connector in taking the sting out of the Queen Bee syndrome. We all believe that woman can make an impact on our lives and the lives of others. Connecting people is impactful. Organizations, companies and institutions can address network gaps and provide career opportunities to women having potential. This strong network bond can include men and women /who can influence the career of women in a positive direction. Men can be engaged and encouraged to have a dialogue to make significant progress in advancing women in the workplace. Men can be given an active role to promote, recruit, and hire females for the role. Workplaces should become more aware of Queen Bee syndrome. Efforts can be made to explore issues that can hinder the progress of the workplaces such as unconscious bias. To create strong female networks and improve the pipeline of effective female leaders Queen Bee syndrome needs to be addressed.

2. CONCLUSION:

The article doesn't intend to absolutize the Queen Bee syndrome as a phenomenon that explains the relationship between women boss and her subordinate or between female workers or between a more successful and a less successful female worker. This article is just an effort to map the various professional situations of women. The Queen Bee trait can be decided by various variables. Most important is the role played by education, personality traits and aspirations. The other variables can be sexism, sticky floor, glass ceiling and other variables that exclude women from professional success.

Queen Bee is a generation stereotype. There were Queen Bees when the places of work, offices, institutions were about scarcity for women. We encountered women who were senior and had struggled all through their lives to get to the position. Their sole life was their job and associated work. These women on top position had a deep belief that "I had to work hard", "I had to give up a lot", it was tough to get here and how I mentor younger women is to toughen them out. The top position woman workers want the mentor; the mentee and the organization all get benefitted. Women are always stereotyped and expected to be nicer. When woman violates these stereotypes we judge them harshly. Efforts can be made to put to rest the notion that female senior executives are "Queen Bees".

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