

CAN the FATHER COMPLEX BECOME INSTITUTIONALIZED? WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE in the CONTEXT of the ELECTRA COMPLEX

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between two key concepts of psychoanalytic theory-the father complex and the Electra complex-in the context of women employees' industrial experiences. The research aims to understand the influence of these psychodynamic structures on organizational culture, perceptions of leadership, relationships with authority, and career advancement. In the literature, the father complex is defined as the reflection of an individual's unconscious conflicts with the father figure on adult behavior and relationship patterns, while the Electra complex refers to a woman's emotional and competitive orientation toward her father. The study discusses how these two concepts are reflected in "institutionalized" forms within organizational structures, particularly in male-dominated sectors, hierarchical organizations, and environments characterized by authoritarian leadership styles, and how they influence women's decision-making processes, leadership roles, and workplace relationships. The findings indicate that women employees' relationships with authority figures can be shaped by the unconscious father image and Electra dynamics, which in turn may affect organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and career motivation. The study argues for making the psychodynamic perspective more visible in the field of industrial and organizational psychology and, in this regard, offers both theoretical and practical recommendations for researchers and human resource professionals.

Keywords: *Father complex, Electra complex, women employees, organizational experience, psychoanalytic theory, industrial and organizational psychology.*

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Introduction

The psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the decisive role of early childhood experiences and unconscious processes in the development of an individual's personality (Freud, 1923/1991). One of the key concepts of this theory, the father complex, is defined as the reflection of an individual's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral relationships with the father figure on their social and professional interactions in adulthood. For women, the father complex is often evaluated in conjunction with the Electra complex. The Electra complex is a psychoanalytic concept referring to a girl's strong emotional attachment to her father figure and feelings of rivalry toward her mother figure (Jung, 1954). The reflection of these dynamics on adult organizational behaviors offers significant insights, particularly in terms of women employees' perceptions of leadership, relationships with authority, and career strategies. In today's business world, organizations are not only economic units but also cultural, psychological, and social arenas of interaction. In this context, it is inevitable that individuals' unconscious processes shape organizational life (Gabriel, 1999). The relationships women establish with authority figures are often shaped by the internalized image of the father during childhood and the emotional patterns developed around this image. This situation becomes especially visible in male-dominated sectors, in corporate environments with rigid hierarchical structures, and in companies where authoritarian leadership styles prevail.

A review of the literature shows that psychoanalytic concepts have been extensively addressed in clinical psychology. This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC](#) license

psychotherapy, and developmental psychology; however, they have found limited space in the industrial and organizational psychology literature (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019). Yet organizations are social systems in which unconscious dynamics and transference relationships are frequently experienced. In this regard, the scarcity of studies examining the impact of psychoanalytically rooted concepts, such as the father complex and the Electra complex, on workplace relationships points to a significant research gap. This gap highlights the necessity of understanding organizational behavior not only through its rational and cognitive aspects but also through its emotional and unconscious processes. Therefore, this study aims to build a bridge between psychoanalytic theory and industrial and organizational psychology, thereby contributing to both theoretical and applied literature. Research has shown that the psychological barriers women encounter when climbing the career ladder stem not only from external factors but also from internal psychodynamic processes (Kets de Vries, 2006). The father complex and the Electra complex may influence women's levels of self-confidence in the face of authority, their conflict management styles, risk-taking tendencies, and capacity to embrace leadership roles. In this context, at the intersection of the psychoanalytic perspective and industrial and organizational psychology, it becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of women's organizational experiences.

This article aims to examine how the father complex and the Electra complex, which have been relatively underexplored in

the literature, manifest in “institutionalized” forms within organizational structures. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, the study presents a theoretical framework that develops a multidimensional perspective on how women’s organizational experiences are shaped by unconscious dynamics. This approach seeks to contribute both to academic literature and to practical domains such as human resource management, leadership development programs, and corporate culture transformation.

Electra complex: Theoretical Basis

The Electra complex is one of the significant concepts of psychoanalytic theory and provides a fundamental theoretical framework for understanding the development of gender identity in girls during childhood. The term derives its name from Electra in Greek mythology; in the myth, Electra experiences loyalty and love for her father alongside feelings of anger and rivalry toward her mother. In the psychology literature, the concept was first introduced by Sigmund Freud as the female counterpart of the Oedipus complex and later systematized by Carl Gustav Jung under the name “Electra complex” (Jung, 1954). From a psychoanalytic perspective, the Electra complex refers to a girl’s intense admiration, affection, and emotional attachment toward her father figure during the developmental process, while simultaneously experiencing unconscious feelings of rivalry toward her mother figure (Freud, 1925/2001). This admiration is not solely romantic or emotional in nature but is also linked to the mechanism of identification. For the girl, the father figure becomes a symbol of security, protection, power, and social status. Through identification with this figure, the child shapes her self-perception and gender identity. Identification with a positive father figure can strengthen a woman’s self-confidence, ease in the face of authority, and motivation for achievement later in life. Conversely, identification with a distant or negative father figure can lead to feelings of inadequacy, a need for approval, or heightened sensitivity toward authority (Chodorow, 1978). In this regard, the Electra complex can be a determinant not only in terms of individual psychological development but also in shaping social and professional relationships in adulthood. In an organizational context, admiration and identification with the father figure can unconsciously influence women employees’ relationships with authority figures (managers, leaders, senior executives). Women may unconsciously identify strong and supportive leaders with the father figure, which can affect collaboration, trust, and levels of commitment. However, this dynamic may also carry potential risks such as overdependence, reduced critical thinking, or an excessive need for the leader’s approval. Thus, the Electra complex can be considered an important psychoanalytic process that continues to exert influence on both individual psychological development and organizational experiences through mechanisms of admiration and identification with the father figure. This process should be addressed from a multidimensional perspective in the context of women’s leadership roles, career strategies, and workplace relationships.

Within the framework of the Electra complex, the girl’s intense emotional attachment to the father figure naturally creates a dynamic of rivalry in her relationship with the mother figure. According to psychoanalytic theory, this rivalry manifests at an unconscious level as a tendency to position the mother as a “competitor for the father’s love and attention” (Freud, 1925/2001). This process refers to a stage in which repressed emotions, jealousy, and possessiveness become intertwined during childhood. In the face of her admiration and affection for her father

figure, the girl may see the mother figure as both a model to admire and a rival to envy. This state of ambivalence involves an effort to identify with the mother while simultaneously triggering the feeling of “competing” with her. According to Jung (1954), this rivalry is an important stage in the formation of a girl’s female identity, as jealousy toward the mother figure creates an awareness of the girl’s own personal boundaries and lays the groundwork for developing an independent identity. In a positive scenario, this sense of rivalry is resolved in a healthy way, evolving into a trust-based identification relationship with the mother. This can strengthen later-life abilities to collaborate with other women, foster female solidarity, and manage competition constructively. However, in a negative scenario, if jealousy and the perception of the mother as a rival remain unresolved into adulthood, relationships with other female figures may be characterized by distrust, conflict, and an excessive tendency toward competition (Chodorow, 1978). In an organizational setting, this dynamic may manifest in women employees’ attitudes toward female managers or colleagues. Unresolved maternal rivalry dynamics can weaken cooperation among women, foster mistrust, and contribute to the reproduction of the “glass ceiling” phenomenon among women themselves. Thus, psychoanalytic processes at the individual level can directly influence corporate culture and organizational relationships.

According to psychoanalytic developmental theory, the inability to resolve childhood conflicts healthily can leave lasting traces in both individual and social functioning in adulthood (Freud, 1925/2001). The unresolved Electra complex means that a girl unconsciously maintains her intense admiration and identification with the father figure, along with feelings of jealousy and rivalry toward the mother figure. This can manifest in adulthood in various ways:

Dependent Relationships with Authority Figures: An unresolved Electra complex may lead a woman to develop excessive admiration, a need for approval, and dependency on male authority figures (managers, mentors, senior leaders) in adulthood. Such dependency may limit critical thinking and autonomous decision-making skills.

Competition and Distrust Toward Female Figures: Rivalry toward the mother figure in childhood can turn into distrust toward female colleagues or managers in adulthood, weakening cooperation and undermining solidarity among women.

Recurring Conflicts in Romantic Relationships: An idealized male image identified with the father figure may create unconscious criteria in choosing a romantic partner. Deviations from this ideal may lead to disappointment, trust issues, and dissatisfaction in relationships.

Self-Confidence and Identity Issues: An unresolved complex may cause the individual to base her self-perception on identification with the father figure, leading to devaluation of personal achievements or a constant search for external validation.

Role Confusion in Professional Life: Identifying leader figures in the workplace with the father image can blur professional boundaries and allow emotional attachment to overshadow work performance, potentially hindering career advancement and objective evaluation.

The inability to resolve the Electra complex can indirectly hinder women employees’ progression into leadership positions. Dependent attitudes toward authority, rivalry among women, and

self-confidence issues can negatively affect both individual career development and gender equality within organizations. Therefore, leadership development programs and mentoring processes that are aware of psychoanalytic dynamics can help overcome these unconscious barriers. In conclusion, the Electra complex-shaped by admiration and identification with the father figure, jealousy toward the mother, and the perception of the mother as a rival-is a psychoanalytic process that, when unresolved, can have significant consequences at both individual and organizational levels in adulthood. Its effects become visible not only in the individual's inner world but also in workplace authority relationships, perceptions of leadership, interactions among women, and career strategies. Thus, examining the Electra complex in an organizational context is critical for understanding women employees' experiences, improving leadership development processes, and developing institutional policies that support gender equality. This discussion lays the groundwork for the next section, which will analyze the interaction between the father complex and the Electra complex from an organizational behavior perspective.

Women Employees' Approach to Male Authority

In organizational structures, authority figures occupy a central position, eliciting a variety of emotional and behavioral responses from employees at both conscious and unconscious levels. Male authority figures, in particular, hold a distinctive place in the organizational experiences of women employees, especially in the context of the father complex and the Electra complex. The attitudes and behaviors women develop toward male leaders are often shaped by the internalized father image from childhood and the associated emotional patterns. In this context, three main types of approaches emerge: commitment, idealization, and competition.

Commitment Behaviors: Some women employees develop a strong sense of loyalty and commitment toward male leaders. This commitment is expressed through a desire for security, a need for guidance, and a tendency to accept the leader's authority. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this can be seen as a reflection of identification with a positive father image. While commitment behaviors can enhance stability and trust in leader-employee relationships, they may, when excessive, weaken critical thinking and limit the capacity for independent decision-making (Kets de Vries, 2006).

Idealization Behaviors: Idealization involves elevating and perfecting not only the leader's managerial skills but also personal qualities. This can manifest as the unconscious transfer of childhood admiration for the father figure onto a male authority figure in the workplace. While idealization can boost the leader's motivational power and strengthen employee commitment, it can also lead to overlooking mistakes, disrupting the balance of power, and reducing critical feedback.

Competitive Behaviors: In some cases, the woman employee perceives the male authority figure as a direct "power center" and engages in competition with this power. Such competition may manifest as a tendency to resist authority, a desire for independence, and efforts to achieve superiority. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, this can be a reflection of identification with a negative father image or unresolved authority conflicts. While competition can be constructive in fostering innovation and creativity, it also has the potential to increase communication conflicts and tension between leader and employee.

These three approaches directly influence the quality of relationships women establish with male leaders and their career progression. While commitment supports cooperation and organizational harmony, idealization can lead to blind allegiance to leadership quality. Competition, if managed constructively, can drive innovative solutions, but if poorly managed, may cause organizational conflict. Thus, leaders' awareness of these unconscious tendencies and the development of balanced communication strategies are critical for a healthy work environment.

Psychoanalytic theory suggests that in their adult social and professional relationships, individuals can unconsciously reenact the parental images they internalized in childhood (Freud, 1923/1991; Jung, 1954). In this context, it is quite common for women employees to unconsciously identify the male boss figure with the "father" role. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this process is explained by the mechanism of transference. Feelings of trust, admiration, fear, or rivalry toward the father figure in childhood can be transferred to similar authority figures in adulthood. In this transference process, the male boss is perceived not merely as a manager but as someone who, at an unconscious level, protects, guides, or sets boundaries like a "father."

Emotional and Behavioral Reflections:

Expectation of Protection and Guidance: The woman employee may view the male boss as a trustworthy protector or mentor, which can lead to overdependence on the boss's guidance in career planning.

Need for Approval: The transfer of the desire for the father's praise onto the boss figure can create a constant need for compliments and positive feedback.

Idealization: Perfecting not only the boss's competencies but also his personality can undermine critical perspective.

Defiance and Competition: For women with a negative father image, the male boss may be perceived as an unconscious "authority threat," triggering constant resistance, an emphasis on independence, or a tendency to clash with authority.

Organizational Implications: The transformation of the male boss figure into a father role increases the emotional intensity of leader-employee relationships. While this can create a positive foundation for trust and commitment, it can also blur professional boundaries. For example:

Excessive commitment may reduce independent decision-making skills.

Idealization may prevent recognition of mistakes or inadequacies.

Competition and defiance can intensify leader-employee conflicts.

In male-dominated sectors especially, awareness of these dynamics and the incorporation of psychoanalytic awareness components into leadership development programs are critical for both women's career advancement and healthy organizational relationships. In organizational life, managers are not only responsible for overseeing tasks and responsibilities but also serve as figures carrying significant emotional meaning for employees. For women employees, male managers in particular can be unconsciously identified with the "father" figure. This identification forms the basis of emotional commitment. In psychoanalytic theory, the mechanism of transference explains how relationships with parental figures in childhood are carried

over to authority figures in adulthood (Freud, 1923/1991). A woman employee may perceive the male manager as a figure who will provide security, guidance, support, and protection. This perception creates an emotional closeness and sense of belonging that is independent of the manager's actual competencies.

For employees who develop emotional commitment, expectations from the manager go beyond professional support and may include:

Protectiveness: Shielding the employee from mistakes, criticism, or the risk of dismissal.

Career Guidance: Prioritizing them in promotions, project assignments, and development opportunities.

Emotional Support: Showing empathy in personal matters and being a reliable listener.

Constant Approval and Praise: Recognizing achievements and offering frequent compliments.

These expectations often exceed the realistic roles of a manager and emerge as reflections of the all-encompassing role expected from the father figure at an unconscious level.

Emotional Commitment and Potential Disappointments: Emotional commitment can lead to intense disappointment when expectations are unmet, which may manifest as:

Unrealistic Expectations: The manager, needing to treat all employees equally, may be unable to meet individual demands.

Role Conflict: Expecting the manager to simultaneously fulfill both the role of a professional leader and that of a "protector" providing emotional support.

Leadership Style Differences: A more authoritarian or distant leadership style may trigger feelings of rejection.

Exclusion in Promotions or Project Assignments: When opportunities go to others despite personal closeness, feelings of betrayal may arise.

Such disappointments can negatively affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Moreover, a cycle of high emotional expectation and resentment can erode trust in leader-employee relationships and cause communication breakdowns. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this process is a reenactment of unresolved parent-child dynamics in the workplace. Therefore, leaders' awareness of these unconscious processes, clarifying professional boundaries, and managing employees' emotional commitment at a healthy level are essential for both individual and organizational well-being.

Corporate Femininity Roles: Motherhood, Partnership or Rivalry?

Psychoanalytic theory posits that the patterns of relationships individuals develop with their parents in early childhood can be unconsciously reproduced in their adult social interactions (Freud, 1923/1991; Chodorow, 1978). In this context, the roles assigned to the mother figure in women employees' relationships with same-gender colleagues in corporate settings are directly linked to the way the Electra complex has been resolved.

Motherhood Role: Some women employees may unconsciously position their female colleagues as "mother" figures. In such cases, the other person is perceived as a guide, supporter,

protector, and emotionally nurturing presence. A positive manifestation of this dynamic can strengthen female solidarity, knowledge sharing, and mentoring relationships. In contrast, an overly protective dynamic can hinder independent action and make it difficult for employees to develop their own decision-making capacity.

Critical and Authoritarian Mother Role: Women employees who experienced a critical or emotionally distant mother figure in childhood may unconsciously identify female colleagues with this authoritarian maternal role. This can foster mistrust, defensive attitudes, and performance anxiety. As a result, the employee may exhibit shy or passive-aggressive behaviors toward female authority figures.

Rival Mother Role: In the context of the Electra complex, when the mother figure is perceived as a "rival for the father's love," this sense of competition may be carried into the workplace. This can manifest as status competition, rivalry for promotions, or competing for closeness to a manager. Such competition can boost individual motivation but also risks undermining trust and cooperation among women.

Ideal Mother Role: In some cases, women employees may identify their female colleagues with an idealized maternal figure. While this can strengthen feelings of trust and loyalty, unmet expectations may lead to intense disappointment and ruptured relationships.

The roles assigned to the mother figure are powerful unconscious dynamics that shape the quality of relationships among women employees. When the motherhood role is experienced positively, female solidarity and collective problem-solving capacity increase. However, when the rival mother or authoritarian mother perception dominates, the glass ceiling syndrome can be reinforced not only by male-dominated structures but also by dynamics among women themselves. Therefore, organizations should develop training programs, mentoring schemes, and inclusive leadership practices that foster psychoanalytic awareness in women's workplace relationships, as this is important for both individual well-being and corporate productivity.

Relationships between women employees are shaped in organizational contexts not only by visible professional factors but also by unconscious psychodynamic processes. Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes that these dynamics are largely connected to the perception of the mother figure internalized in childhood and to the Electra complex (Chodorow, 1978; Jung, 1954).

Competition Dynamics: In the context of the Electra complex, perceiving the mother figure as a "rival for the father's love" may underlie women employees' unconscious tendencies toward competition with their female peers. This competition can take several forms:

Status Competition: Rivalry over promotions, leadership positions, or participation in prestigious projects.

Authority Proximity Competition: Efforts to gain the attention and support of male leaders or senior executives.

Visibility Competition: Striving to stand out, gain recognition, and be noticed within the organization.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, this competition is often a workplace projection of the unresolved "rival mother"

dynamic from childhood. When managed positively, it can stimulate innovation and high performance; when managed poorly, it can result in eroded trust, breakdowns in communication, and a lack of solidarity among women.

Solidarity Dynamics: Solidarity among women employees is often strengthened when the workplace mirrors experiences of secure attachment to the mother figure and positive identification processes. This can manifest as:

Protective Solidarity: More experienced women mentoring younger colleagues.

Collective Struggle Solidarity: Working together to confront shared challenges such as the glass ceiling syndrome or sexist workplace policies.

Emotional Support Solidarity: Providing mutual encouragement and support during work stress, mobbing, or crisis situations.

Psychoanalytically, the reproduction of a secure mother-child relationship in the workplace forms the basis for these types of solidarity.

Imbalance Between Competition and Solidarity: In relationships among women employees, competition and solidarity are not always in balance. Unresolved Electra dynamics may intensify competition, while positive maternal identifications strengthen solidarity. Disruption of this balance directly affects organizational climate:

Competition-Dominant Environments: Characterized by mistrust, information hoarding, and even sabotage.

Solidarity-Dominant Environments: Marked by high collaboration, a culture of shared learning, and low levels of conflict.

Organizational Intervention Opportunities: To establish a healthy competition-solidarity balance among women employees, organizations can implement:

Leadership and communication training based on psychoanalytic awareness.

Women-focused mentoring and coaching programs.

Teamwork initiatives and projects that promote a culture of collective problem-solving.

In conclusion, psychoanalytic analysis reveals that the dynamics of competition and solidarity among women employees are shaped not only by rational strategies but also by deeply rooted unconscious relational patterns. Therefore, corporate policies should focus not only on creating equal opportunities but also on transforming these psychodynamics.

Glass Ceiling Syndrome and Psychodynamic Effects

The glass ceiling syndrome refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women employees from advancing beyond a certain level in the corporate hierarchy. While these barriers are often associated with organizational culture, gender roles, social norms, and structural inequalities, from a psychoanalytic perspective, unconscious dynamics also play a significant role. One such dynamic is the unresolved Electra complex, which shapes how women approach male authority figures. When the Electra complex is not resolved in a healthy manner, a woman employee may unconsciously identify male authority figures with the father

figure. This identification can lead to perceiving male leadership authority as “natural,” “legitimate,” or “indisputable.”

Transference Mechanism: Admiration and attachment toward the father figure in childhood are transferred to male managers in adulthood.

Lack of Critical Inquiry: Decisions made by male authority may be accepted without critique, analysis, or consideration of alternatives.

Need for Approval: Instead of questioning authority, the woman employee may prioritize gaining the leader’s approval.

This unconscious process can prevent women from fully demonstrating their potential, limiting behaviors such as risk-taking, independent decision-making, and candidacy for leadership roles. The unresolved Electra complex reveals that the glass ceiling is sustained not only by external obstacles but also by internal barriers.

Internal Authority Limit: The woman unconsciously sees herself as “fitting” only into certain positions and perceives higher roles as a domain belonging to male leaders.

Self-Withdrawal: Loyalty to authority can reduce the desire to compete for high-level positions.

Passive Acceptance: The leadership style of male managers goes unquestioned, weakening the demand for change.

This dynamic negatively affects not only individual career development but also the inclusivity of leadership diversity and decision-making processes within organizations. When male authority goes unquestioned, the organizational leadership structure remains homogeneous, reducing its capacity for innovation and benefiting from diverse perspectives.

Transformative Steps:

Psychoanalytic Awareness: Training to help women recognize their unconscious perceptions of authority.

Mentoring Programs: Increasing the visibility of women leaders as role models.

Safe Discussion Culture: Fostering an organizational climate where questioning authority is seen as an opportunity for growth rather than a threat.

In short, the glass ceiling is reinforced not only by external constraints but also by unresolved psychoanalytic dynamics. Failure to resolve the Electra complex can lead women employees to unconsciously refrain from questioning male authority, limit their own potential, and distance themselves from leadership roles. This reduces women’s active participation in organizational decision-making mechanisms and hinders the development of leadership diversity. Therefore, breaking the glass ceiling requires more than structural reforms-it equally demands psychodynamic awareness initiatives, mentoring programs, and safe discussion environments that enable women to recognize and transform their internal barriers.

Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes that leadership roles and career aspirations are shaped not only by conscious choices but also by relationships with parental figures internalized in childhood (Freud, 1923/1991; Kets de Vries, 2006). In this regard, the father complex and the Electra complex can generate two opposing but mutually reinforcing unconscious tendencies in women’s perceptions of leadership: feeling inadequate and the desire to

follow in the father's footsteps. An unresolved Electra complex or a negative father image can cause women employees to keep an unconscious distance from leadership positions.

Unconscious Comparison: The woman compares her leadership capabilities with those of the father figure or male authority figures, perceiving herself as lacking.

Inner Critic: In individuals who did not receive sufficient praise from the father figure in childhood, a persistent feeling of "I'm not good enough" can develop.

Avoidance of Leadership: Avoiding candidacy for high positions, refraining from taking risks, and preferring to "work in the background."

This reinforces the glass ceiling by adding internal barriers to external ones. Conversely, some women may identify with the father figure and seek to carry his qualities into their own leadership approach.

Role Model Effect: A strong, supportive, and successful father figure can become the ideal leadership model for a woman employee.

Imitation of Leadership Style: Reproducing the father figure's authority, decision-making style, or communication approach in the organizational context.

Career Orientation: Choosing to work in sectors similar to the father's professional field or sustaining the same leadership values.

While this tendency can be a strong source of motivation, excessive idealization may hinder the development of an authentic leadership style. Women leaders who feel inadequate may struggle to showcase their potential and may decline promotion opportunities. Those driven by the desire to follow in their father's footsteps may remain confined within the limits of the idealized model from the past rather than developing their own unique leadership identity.

Recommendations for Transformation:

Mentoring and Coaching: Enabling women leadership candidates to discover their own authentic leadership style.

Psychodynamic Awareness Training: Developing the ability to recognize and transform unconscious parental influences.

Role Model Diversity: Making the success stories of various women and men leaders visible, rather than focusing on a single leadership model.

In conclusion, the intertwined tendencies of feeling inadequate and wanting to follow in the father's footsteps are deep psychoanalytic dynamics shaping women employees' career journeys. While inadequacy can limit access to leadership positions, the desire to emulate the father figure-although a strong motivator-may hinder the emergence of an original leadership style. For this reason, organizational-level strategies that promote psychodynamic awareness, leadership development programs, and role model diversity are critical for both individual career advancement and organizational diversity.

Organizational Hierarchy and Psychoanalytic Reflections

While organizational hierarchy formally denotes the distribution of authority, responsibility, and status, individuals' positioning within this structure is often shaped not only by

rational choices but also by unconscious psychodynamic processes. One of the factors influencing women employees' place in the hierarchy is the impact of gender roles internalized in early childhood, as well as the father complex and the Electra complex that develop in connection with these roles. Gender roles are formed alongside parental relationships in childhood. From a psychoanalytic perspective, when the father figure is associated with power, authority, and decision-making, a woman employee may unconsciously code higher-level positions in the hierarchy as a "male domain." This unconscious coding can cause her to keep her distance from leadership roles or to develop an excessive need for approval when assuming such roles. Similarly, the position of the mother figure in the family also shapes a woman's self-perception within the organizational hierarchy. The traditional "caregiving" and "supportive" mother model can make mid-level management, advisory roles, or supportive units in professional life appear to be a "natural" choice for women. Although this may appear to be a conscious decision, it is often a reproduction of gender roles learned in childhood.

Women's approach to higher-level positions in the hierarchy is closely linked to unconscious gender roles. Loyalty to authority can manifest as a tendency to accept male leaders' authority without question, which may be a reflection of an unresolved Electra complex. The tendency to idealize senior male managers' leadership styles can lead women to underestimate their own leadership potential. Beliefs such as "I'm not strong enough" or "Leadership is not for me" can limit women's willingness to run for top positions. Senior women employees, on the other hand, may sometimes approach junior female colleagues with a "maternal" role; while this protective stance can strengthen solidarity, it may also create dependency relationships when excessive. Alternatively, unresolved feelings of competition can trigger power struggles between women. Hierarchical positioning shaped by unconscious gender roles sustains structural problems such as the glass ceiling, gender imbalance in leadership, and conflicts among women in organizations.

Therefore, recognizing that women's positions within the hierarchy are determined not only by competencies and experience but also by psychodynamic histories is critical to building a more inclusive organizational culture. In conclusion, women's positioning in the organizational hierarchy cannot be explained solely by measurable variables such as career goals, education level, or work experience. It is often connected to gender roles shaped in childhood, relationships with parental figures, and their unconscious reproduction. When the father figure is associated with power, authority, and leadership, women may limit themselves in aspiring to higher positions; when the mother figure is positioned as a caregiver, supporter, and secondary role, women may perceive staying in positions aligned with these roles as a "natural" choice. While these psychodynamic processes may appear independent from structural inequalities, they form the internal dimensions of the glass ceiling, which, when combined with external barriers, make women's leadership journey doubly difficult. Thus, building an inclusive and equitable hierarchical order requires more than reforms in corporate policies. It also requires raising women employees' awareness of their unconscious gender codes through training, mentoring, and coaching programs; increasing the diversity of role models; supporting mutual learning between male and female leadership styles; and transforming organizational culture accordingly. Only then can the gender-based invisible boundaries of the hierarchy be overcome at both the

individual and collective levels, creating a corporate climate in which women can fully realize their potential.

Self-Efficacy and Leadership: Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific task. In the leadership context, self-efficacy refers to the confidence in one's competence to undertake managerial responsibilities, manage decision-making processes, resolve crises, and motivate teams. However, this perception is shaped not only by cognitive assessments and past experiences but also by psychoanalytic dynamics formed in early childhood. Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes that relationships with parental figures during childhood play a decisive role in shaping self-perception and competence beliefs. A supportive, encouraging father figure who provides positive feedback on achievements can contribute to a girl's high self-efficacy perception in leadership roles later in life. Conversely, a critical, distant, or insufficiently involved father figure can weaken self-efficacy, leading to leadership avoidance or dominant feelings of inadequacy in adulthood.

The mother figure also plays an indirect role in the development of self-efficacy. A secure attachment with the mother forms the foundation for both self-confidence and the capacity to collaborate with others. However, unresolved rivalry with the mother in the context of the Electra complex may weaken the sense of self-efficacy toward other female leaders or authority figures. The father complex and the Electra complex can influence leadership self-efficacy in different ways. A positive father complex enables a woman to internalize the father figure's power and leadership traits, fostering confidence in her own leadership. An unresolved or negative father complex can lead to difficulties in identifying with male authority, feelings of inadequacy in leadership, and avoidance of top positions. An unresolved Electra complex may result in admiration and idealization of male leaders, leading to underestimation of one's leadership potential or perceiving leadership as an inherently "male role."

Critical messages received from parents in childhood can persist into adulthood as an inner "critic" voice. This inner critic can heighten fear of making mistakes in leadership roles, undermining self-efficacy. Thoughts such as "I'm not good enough for this" or "A leader must not make mistakes" can lead to risk avoidance and career stagnation. Psychoanalytically rooted self-efficacy issues can limit women employees' participation in leadership development programs, delay promotion applications, or cause them to avoid taking initiative during crises. Conversely, strong and supportive parental identifications can help women develop an authentic leadership style and make strategic decisions with high self-efficacy.

Therefore, developing leadership self-efficacy requires training that provides psychodynamic awareness, increasing the visibility of women leaders as role models, and reinforcing confidence through small but successfully completed leadership tasks. Such approaches can help women overcome internal barriers and achieve sustainable success in leadership roles.

In short, leadership self-efficacy is not built solely on professional skills, education, and experience; it is also profoundly shaped by parental figures internalized in childhood, gender roles, and psychoanalytic dynamics. The images of power, authority, and leadership derived from the father figure, along with the models of support, care, and collaboration learned from the mother figure, form the psychological foundations of confidence in leadership.

However, negative experiences or unresolved conflicts with these figures can create internal barriers in women's leadership journeys. Therefore, leadership development programs in organizations should focus not only on technical skills but also on these psychoanalytically rooted beliefs and perceptions. Holistic strategies incorporating psychodynamic awareness, mentoring, and role model diversity can strengthen women's leadership self-efficacy at both conscious and unconscious levels, contributing to the development of a sustainable and inclusive leadership culture.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how psychoanalytically rooted dynamics, such as the father complex and the Electra complex, can play a decisive role in shaping women employees' organizational experiences, perceptions of leadership, and career strategies. The analyses reveal that women's relationships with authority figures cannot be explained solely through the rational processes required by the job but are also shaped at the unconscious level by internalized representations of parental figures from the past. Psychodynamic processes such as admiration, idealization, or rivalry toward the father figure, and jealousy, identification, or distance toward the mother figure, directly influence women's positioning in professional life, their relationship with the glass ceiling phenomenon, and their perception of self-efficacy in leadership.

In the industrial and organizational psychology literature, analyses of women employees' psychological structures have mostly focused on external factors such as gender inequalities, work-life balance, or mobbing. However, as this study reveals, internal psychodynamic barriers can be just as influential as external obstacles. Therefore, there is a clear need for more research in the literature that centers on women employees' unconscious dynamics, the organizational reflections of their relationships with parental figures, and psychoanalytic methods of analysis.

Organizations should go beyond developing structural equality policies to design awareness programs, mentoring initiatives, and leadership development processes that enable women employees to recognize and transform their internal barriers. Such initiatives would not only enhance women's sense of competence in leadership but also contribute to strengthening diversity and inclusivity in organizational decision-making mechanisms. Consequently, examining the psychological structures of women employees from a psychoanalytic perspective represents a significant necessity in industrial and organizational psychology, both academically and in practice.

Leadership development programs traditionally focus on measurable competencies such as strategic thinking, communication skills, decision-making techniques, team management, and performance evaluation. However, leaders' behaviors and decision-making processes are shaped not only by cognitive skills but also by unconscious dynamics. The psychoanalytic perspective allows us to understand the impact of unrecognized attitudes and reactions-originating from past life experiences and parental figures internalized in early childhood-on leadership styles.

Psychoanalytic processes such as the father complex, the Electra complex, transference, and countertransference can directly influence leaders' relationships with subordinates, their use of authority, their approach to crises, and the balance of power within

teams. For women leaders, these dynamics may manifest as underestimating their own leadership potential, not questioning male authority figures, or developing competitive attitudes toward other female leaders. For male leaders, such dynamics may trigger tendencies to unconsciously position female employees within gendered roles or resist different leadership styles.

Psychoanalytic awareness training helps leaders recognize their own unconscious patterns, observe how these patterns are reflected in employee relationships, and manage their negative effects. Such training not only supports individual development but also increases the organization's capacity to transform its leadership culture. Through this awareness, leaders can develop a more inclusive, empathetic, flexible, and collaborative management style. Furthermore, psychoanalytic-based leadership training facilitates recognition of both the external and internal dimensions of organizational issues such as the glass ceiling. Women leadership candidates can overcome internal barriers, and male leaders can recognize and transform their unconscious biases, thereby creating a more balanced and diversity-friendly leadership ecosystem.

In conclusion, integrating psychoanalytic awareness training into leadership development programs not only strengthens individual leadership skills but also accelerates the construction of an inclusive organizational culture, increases employee engagement, and establishes a healthier communication ground in leader-employee relations. For these reasons, psychoanalytic awareness training should be considered an indispensable component of contemporary leadership development strategies.

Within organizations, hierarchical relationships between men and women are not limited to the balance of authority and responsibility; they are also shaped by unconscious perceptions of parental figures, gender roles, and psychoanalytic conflicts carried over from the past. Processes such as the father complex, the Electra complex, transference, and countertransference influence both the nature and continuity of these relationships. Therefore, applying psychodynamic counseling approaches in organizations is critically important for managing these dynamics in a healthy way.

Awareness-Raising Initiatives: Male and female employees should develop awareness of unconscious gender roles and parental figure transference mechanisms. Workshops, case analyses, and role-play methods can make visible how these processes are reflected in workplace relationships.

Reframing Leadership and Authority Relationships: For example, women's tendencies toward excessive loyalty, idealization, or non-questioning of male leaders, and men's unconscious tendencies to "protect" or "overlook" female employees, should be addressed. Psychodynamic counseling helps restructure these tendencies within professional boundaries.

Mutual Empathy and Communication Training: Increasing empathy capacity in hierarchical male-female relationships strengthens conflict resolution and constructive feedback processes. The psychodynamic approach focuses on developing empathy not only at the cognitive level but also by addressing its emotional roots.

Overcoming Internal Barriers Programs: Leadership avoidance, reluctance to take risks, and failure to question male authority-behaviors that may stem from an unresolved Electra complex or a negative father image-should be addressed through

individual counseling and coaching. These programs should aim both to process past experiences and to develop new behavioral repertoires.

Increasing Role Model Diversity: Role model programs that allow women to see both male and female leaders with diverse characteristics break the unconscious perception of a single leadership type. This ensures that leadership is not limited to a male identity and places hierarchical relationships on a more balanced foundation.

Ongoing Counseling and Monitoring: Psychodynamic counseling is not a one-time intervention but a process that requires continuity. Regular supervision, feedback sessions, and performance-development meetings should track both individual and organizational progress.

In summary, psychodynamic counseling in male-female hierarchical relationships not only resolves visible conflicts but also transforms unconscious power balances, creating a more inclusive, balanced, and collaborative organizational climate. This approach has the potential to improve both individual well-being and the organization's long-term productivity.

These findings not only provide a theoretical framework but also highlight the need to develop practical strategies. Unconscious dynamics observed in male-female hierarchical relationships penetrate the seemingly rational functioning of organizational structures, shaping power balances, communication styles, and leadership processes. Therefore, recognizing and transforming these psychodynamic processes requires structured and sustainable intervention models at the corporate level.

At this point, the following "Psychodynamic Counseling Protocol for Male-Female Hierarchical Relationships" provides a concrete roadmap for both individual development and organizational transformation, aiming to create a more balanced, inclusive, and collaborative environment in hierarchical relationships between male and female employees.

Psychodynamic Counseling Protocol for Male-Female Hierarchical Relationships

Purpose: To raise awareness of psychoanalytic processes such as unconscious gender roles, parental figure transference, the father complex, and the Electra complex in hierarchical relationships between male and female employees, and to establish a healthy foundation for professional interaction.

Initial Assessment and Needs Analysis

Organizational Analysis: Review the organization's current leadership structure, gender ratio, promotion processes, and areas of conflict.

Individual Analysis: Conduct one-on-one interviews with male and female employees to identify difficulties, perceptions, and expectations in hierarchical relationships.

Psychodynamic Mapping: Analyze how employees' perceptions of parental figures and unconscious transference mechanisms are reflected in workplace relationships.

Psychodynamic Awareness Workshops

Core Concepts: Introduce concepts such as the father complex, the Electra complex, transference, and countertransference, tailored to the corporate context.

Case Analyses: Use real or fictional workplace cases to help participants recognize unconscious processes.

Role-Playing: Provide opportunities for participants to experience and observe their own reactions in male-female interactions at different hierarchical levels.

Individual Counseling Process

In-Depth Sessions: Address unresolved parental conflicts, authority perceptions, and self-efficacy issues.

Goal Setting: Clarify leadership style, communication approach, and career goals from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Behavior Repertoire Development: Develop skills such as questioning, setting boundaries, and constructive conflict management.

Role Model and Mentoring Program

Diverse Leadership Models: Share experiences of leaders with different genders and management styles.

Reciprocal Mentoring: Implement a two-way learning model in which male and female employees mentor each other.

Group Dynamics and Communication Training

Empathy Development: Exercises to understand the other's perspective.

Working on Unconscious Biases: Challenge stereotypes such as "male leaders are more authoritative" or "female leaders are more nurturing."

Constructive Feedback: Techniques for giving and receiving performance-focused feedback, independent of gender roles.

Monitoring and Sustainability

Regular Supervision: Hold periodic meetings to assess the impact of the counseling process.

Progress Measurement: Track leadership self-efficacy surveys, employee satisfaction, and team cohesion indicators.

Policy Integration: Integrate psychodynamic awareness principles into human resources policies.

Expected Outcomes:

Conscious and balanced management of power dynamics in male-female hierarchical relationships.

Preservation of professional boundaries in leader-employee interactions.

Strengthened leadership self-efficacy for women and reduced unconscious biases among male leaders.

Establishment of a more inclusive, balanced, and collaborative leadership culture throughout the organization.

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