

**Do Junior Workers Perceive Leaders Demonstrating Queen Bee/Alpha Male Behaviour
as Role Models, and Does This Affect Their Desire to Work at the Organisation?**

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Abstract

Women in leadership positions often face discrimination and negative gender stereotypes, particularly in male-dominated organisations. One way they cope with this is by displaying Queen Bee (QB) behaviour. Research has shown that male leaders can sometimes adopt a similar style of Alpha Male (AM) behaviour. The present study examined if it is the behaviour of the leader, or a combination of leader behaviour and gender, that impacts junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model. The present study also examined if this perception of the leader as a role model impacts junior workers' desire to work for the organisation. In the present study, 257 male and female participants read a fictitious interview with a male or female team leader. This leader either displayed QB/AM behaviour or non-QB/AM behaviour. Participants then answered questions regarding their perception of the leader as a role model and their interest in working at the organisation. Results showed that participants viewed leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour as poorer role models compared to those displaying non-QB/AM behaviour, regardless of leader gender. Participants also showed a greater desire to work at the organisation when the leader displayed non-QB/AM behaviour rather than QB/AM behaviour, and this was mediated by the perception of the leader as a role model. These findings show that simply having a leader of the same gender is not enough to attract junior workers, the behaviour of the leader is most important.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a lack of progress made when it comes to females taking up senior management positions (Hoobler et al., 2011). Women who do succeed in gaining a leadership position are often faced with barriers as a result of their gender, particularly in typically male dominated fields whereby being female is viewed as a disadvantage (Derks et al., 2015). These women often experience bias, discrimination and gender stereotypes (Derks et al., 2011; Derks et al., 2016). They can subsequently view their gender as an obstacle they must overcome if they want to be successful (Derks et al., 2015).

Research shows that female leaders respond to discriminatory treatment in masculine organisations in different ways, for example; by emphasising their masculine traits, distancing themselves from female subordinates, and refusing to support attempts for gender equality (Derks et al., 2011; Derks et al., 2016). This is known as *Queen Bee* (QB) behaviour. This behaviour is sometimes referred to as self-group distancing, as the label 'Queen Bee' can be seen as controversial because it blames women without taking into account the context of the behaviour (Derks et al., 2016). Self-group distancing is a process by which members of a marginalised group aim to integrate into the non-stigmatised group and distance themselves from the group faced with negative stereotypes, to deal with inequality (Sterk et al., 2018). Research by Faniko et al. (2016) argues that a similar behaviour also occurs among men in leadership positions. This behaviour is known as *Alpha Male* (AM) behaviour. These researchers found that typical QB behaviours don't always reflect how competitive women are at work. Rather, it appears that successful women react in the same manner as successful men, meaning this QB-type behaviour isn't unique to women (Faniko et al., 2016).

While advancements are continuously being made in research in the area of QB and AM behaviour, most work to date has focused on why and when this behaviour occurs, and less so on what the effects are for junior workers. Specifically, little work has been carried out on the effect of this behaviour, along with leader gender, on how a leader is perceived as a role model. Some research suggests that in-group leaders are viewed more favourably than out-group leaders (Sterk et al., 2018), while other research suggests that junior workers are unable to relate to and identify with leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour as they tend to emphasise how different they are to them, thus failing to see them as role models (Derks et al., 2016; Hoyt and Simon, 2011). However, there is a lack of research and evidence identifying whether it is only the behaviour of the leader, or a combination of the gender and behaviour, that plays a part in the extent to which they are considered role models. Therefore,

the aim of the current study is to investigate if behaviour and gender both play a significant role in how a leader is perceived as a role model. Further, it aims to examine if this, in turn, has consequences when measuring a young persons' desire to work in an organisation.

Theoretical Background

Queen Bee and Alpha Male Behaviours

In male-dominated workplaces, female leaders often experience pressure to distance themselves from their feminine identities if they want to improve their opportunities of reaching success in the organisation (Derks et al., 2015). By doing this, they aim to project themselves as members of the higher-status group (men) by distancing themselves from their own, lower status group (women) (Derks et al., 2016). Along with emphasising their masculine traits, female leaders highlight differences between them and junior female colleagues, and they question junior workers' career commitments and ambitions (Derks et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2021). They also downplay the existence of a gender hierarchy and may even refuse to support other women that seek to address inequality (Derks et al., 2016). This behaviour is known as *Queen Bee (QB) behaviour*.

Research has shown that female leaders display this QB behaviour because they face social identity threat (Derks et al., 2015). Social identity threat occurs when the group one belongs to is not seen as positively different when compared to the out-group (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). In this context, members of the low status group (women) do not feel that they are viewed positively when compared to the out-group (men). As a result, threat to one's social identity develops (Branscombe et al., 1999). Recent studies have shown that QB behaviour is therefore a reaction to this threat rather than an intentional choice (Faniko et al., 2021). This reaction is brought on by work environments where women are undervalued, not by the nature of women's personalities or natural competition with other women (Derks et al., 2016).

Female leaders cope with inequality and negative stereotypes in the workplace in various ways, and therefore QB behaviour can take on different forms. One response is that female leaders emphasise their masculine traits (Derks et al., 2016). One reason to suggest why women are less likely to become leaders is because of stereotypes that contradict the attributes typically associated with successful leaders (agentic qualities such as competitiveness, assertiveness) and women's typically assigned gender roles (communal qualities such as interpersonal sensitivity) (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). To deal

with these stereotypes, female leaders emphasise their masculinity (Kremer et al., 2023). Women who aspire to become leaders in organisations with a male majority highlight traits and approaches to leadership they consider to be typical of men (Derks et al., 2016). For example, Ellemers and colleagues (2004) found that junior female workers rated themselves as less masculine compared to junior male workers, whereas senior female workers rated their masculinity levels as the same or even higher than their male colleagues.

A second response to social identity threat is female leaders distancing themselves from other women, for example, by emphasising their devotion to their work and to reaching leadership positions compared to female colleagues (Derks et al., 2011). Research by Lückerrath-Rovers et al. (2014) found that female board members rated themselves higher in certain masculine traits compared to female colleagues, emphasising how different they are to them. Research by Derks et al. (2011) found similar results when they focused on senior female members of the police force. This can be interpreted as a strategy for distancing oneself from the unfavourable stereotypes surrounding women in the workplace, the stereotypes that commonly put them at a disadvantage when it comes to climbing the ladder in an organisation.

A third strategy female leaders use to cope with discrimination and negative stereotypes in the workplace is justification of the status quo, seen through the refusal to acknowledge the existence of poorer outcomes for women and the refusal to support measures aimed at resolving gender inequality (Derks et al., 2016). It has been found that even in situations when there were explicit indications of gender bias, women who succeeded professionally in male-dominated organisations considered selection processes to be fair (Stroebe et al., 2009). Further, female leaders in male dominated organisations have been found to be against the introduction of affirmation action policies such as gender quotas that would boost opportunities for junior women (Derks et al., 2011).

Although the majority of research in this area focuses on female leaders, this type of behaviour can also be observed among males in leadership positions (Faniko et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2017). This is known as *Alpha Male (AM) behaviour*. Previous research has shown that men in leadership positions can have a hard time accepting challenges from subordinates, can refuse to recognise their efforts, and can create extremely competitive work environments (Gauhan & Bozeman, 2016). Other research says that AM leaders consider their own level of masculinity higher than their junior counterparts of the same

gender (Faniko et al., 2016). While extensive research has shown that female leaders display QB behaviour as a response to social identity threat, less focus has been given to the reasons why male leaders exhibit AM behaviour. As a result, not as much is known about why this behaviour occurs, but one possible explanation is due to gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes promote the idea that men should display agentic traits and therefore be competitive and achievement oriented (Eagly & Karau, 2002). A study carried out by Bosak et al. (2018) found that when male applicants applying for a management position advocated for others, they were viewed as less agentic compared to male applicants that advocated for themselves. The study also found that male participants viewed these male applicants advocating for others as less competent compared to male applicants that advocated for themselves (Bosak et al., 2018). These findings offer an explanation as to why male leaders display AM behaviour; if they are working in a male-dominated organisation and are expected to display traits that are typically associated with being a leader, such as agentic traits, they may avoid supporting others in the fear that this damages how they are perceived as a leader. When examining the behaviour of both male and female leaders, it has also been discovered that QB leaders are more likely to identify with other successful women than men were to identify with other successful men (Faniko et al., 2016). Faniko et al. (2016) argues that this is because, unlike women, men are not subjected to expectations about their leadership based on their gender.

The Effects of Leader Behaviour and Leader Gender on Junior Workers

Previous work has primarily focused on when and why QB/AM behaviour arises but less focus has been given to the effects of this behaviour, along with the effects of leader gender, on both male and female junior workers. Therefore, the goal of the current study is to examine the effects of both leader behaviour and gender on junior workers. Specifically, the current study aims to examine the effect of leader behaviour and leader gender on junior workers' perception of a leader as a role model and their desire to work in the organisation.

In terms of what we do know about the effects of leader behaviour on junior workers, research has shown that simply having gender quotas in male-dominated organisations may not address gender inequality and improve conditions for junior women (Derks et al., 2016). It is presumed that female leaders will reduce bias, challenge structural injustices, and serve as inspirational role models (Stout et al., 2011). However, female leaders that engage in self-group distancing may actually have a negative impact on their female subordinates.

Subordinates cannot identify with their leaders when these leaders distance themselves from them (Kremer et al., 2023). Kremer and colleagues (2023) found that junior workers may have increased turnover intentions when their leaders engage in self-group distancing, because they have greater doubt about their sense of belonging in their relationship with their leader and their place in the company. This type of behaviour may lead junior workers to believe that they do not have what it takes to become a leader, which can diminish expectation, motivation and leadership aspirations (Morgenroth et al., 2015). According to Ludeman and Erlandson (2007), individuals are often afraid and resentful of alpha males in the workplace, and this leads to a lack of trust and preference not to work with/for these individuals. These findings suggest that when leaders display QB/AM behaviour, junior workers have a lower desire to work for them, and at their organisation.

Regarding what we know about the effect of leader gender, Duck and Fielding (2003) suggest that in-group leaders (leaders of the same gender) are typically viewed more favourably than out-group leaders. This is due to the inter-group sensitivity effect: when criticism or the source of the criticism is viewed as less negative because it has come from an in-group member (Hornsey et al., 2002). They believe the critic means well and is trying to be helpful (Hornsey & Imani, 2004). Sterk et al. (2018), suggests that due to the intergroup sensitivity effect, out-group members displaying QB/AM behaviour will be viewed more negatively than in-group members displaying the same behaviour.

What is a Role Model?

Role models inspire others to set high goals and to engage in new, unique behaviours (Morgenroth et al., 2015). In the professional context, role models can be seen as successful individuals who are looked up to by others aspiring to take on leadership positions (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2008). This is especially important for members of stigmatised groups, as many people believe that role models are the answer to inequality (Morgenroth et al., 2015). This is because role models can influence self-stereotyping; by either diminishing negative or enhancing positive self-stereotyping (Morgenroth et al., 2015). For minority groups, such as women in male dominated organisations, these role models can help overcome negative stereotypes, discrimination, and bias they face in the workplace. Role models also set an example of the type of achievement that can be reached, and they show what it takes to reach this success (Lockwood, 2006). The achievement in this context can be viewed as climbing the ladder in a male-dominated organisation and reaching a leadership position. Inspirational

role models in an organisation can therefore show junior workers that they too can reach this success if they follow the leader, increasing their interest to work for the organisation.

However, junior workers must be able to envision themselves following in the footsteps of the role model and acting in a similar way (Morgenroth et al., 2015). In order to be viewed as inspirational, role models must be viewed favourably by those looking up to them, causing recognition and admiration (Morgenroth et al., 2015). If this recognition and admiration is achieved, junior workers will have a greater desire to work at the organisation and follow in the footsteps of the inspirational leader.

The Effect of Leader Behaviour and Gender on Junior Workers' Perception of the Leader as a Role Model

Previous findings on the effects of QB/AM behaviour, along with role modelling literature, give an insight into the possible effect of leader behaviour on junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model. The findings suggest that when leaders display QB/AM behaviour, they interfere with the process of how they are perceived as role models by their subordinates. Firstly, QB and AM leaders do not challenge the status quo or support those striving for equality (Derks et al., 2016). They therefore cannot be viewed as the answer to inequality, due to the fact they often refuse to acknowledge that this inequality exists (Stroebe et al., 2009). Secondly, as mentioned above, there is an expectation that role models will diminish negative stereotypes and enhance positive stereotypes (Morgenroth et al., 2015). Leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour, however, emphasise their masculine traits and distance themselves from junior women, enhancing the negative stereotypes surrounding females in male-dominated organisations further. They do not have a positive influence on the negative stereotypes junior female workers face, and therefore they do not meet this expectation of a role model.

Along with the behaviour of the leader, previous findings also give an insight into the possible effect of leader gender on junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model. The inter-group sensitivity effect suggests that in-group leaders should be viewed more positively than out-group leaders, and therefore are likely to be seen as greater role models. Research by McIntyre and colleagues (2011) describes role models as "successful members of one's own group" (p. 301), indicating that role models tend to be part of an individuals' in-group, rather than an out-group member. This is consistent with social identity approaches, which says that most people think that it is simpler to follow in the footsteps of similar others

(Turner et al., 1994). The combination of these findings suggests that in-group leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour will be perceived as the greatest role models by junior workers.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The current study aims to investigate if male and female junior workers perceive leaders demonstrating QB/AM behaviour as role models. Further, it aims to investigate the role of gender, specifically if leader *gender* affects junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model or if it is only the *behaviour* of the leader that is significant. Additionally, the study aims to understand if this perception of the leader as a role model impacts junior workers' desire to work at the organisation, measured by interest in working for the organisation.

Hypothesis 1: Junior male and female workers will perceive male and female leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as greater role models than leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour (main effect of leader behaviour).

Hypothesis 2: The perception of leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as role models will be strongest when the gender of the leader matches the gender of the junior worker (interaction effect leader behaviour, leader gender, and participant gender).

Hypothesis 3: Junior male and female workers will have a greater desire to work in the organisation if the leader displays non-QB/AM behaviour rather than QB/AM behaviour (main effect of leader behaviour).

Hypothesis 4: Junior male and female workers will have a greater desire to work in the organisation if the leader displays non-QB/AM behaviour rather than QB/AM behaviour via increased perception of the leader as a role model (mediation effect).

Methods

Participants and Design

The current study employed a 2 (gender of leader: male vs female) x 2 (behaviour of leader: QB/AM vs non-QB/AM) x 2 (gender of participant: male vs female) between-subjects experimental design. Power analysis (G* Power 3.1.9.7; Faul et al., 2009) was conducted to determine the sample size required for the current study, consisting of 8 groups. This revealed that the study should consist of at least 245 participants to achieve 80% power to detect a

small to medium effect ($f = .18$) at an alpha of .05. There were three inclusion criteria; (1) currently enrolled as a bachelor or master's university student, (2) 18 years old or above, and (3) understand English.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling and snowballing via the network of the researchers, through the SONA system (students who completed the survey through the SONA system received 0.5 PPU credit), and through flyers on the university campus. A total of 404 participants were recruited, but 147 were excluded because they (1) were not a bachelor or master's university student, (2) did not give informed consent, (3) failed both of the attention checks at the end of the survey (*see Procedure*), (4) did not complete at least 80% of the survey. The final sample consisted of 257 participants; 173 women, 81 men, and 3 non-binary/third gender. Participants were, on average, 23 years old, with ages ranging from 18 to 54. Participants were either bachelor (59.9%) or master's students (40.1%). 39.3% were studying psychology, 4.7% were studying finance, and the rest indicated they were studying a different course. In terms of nationality, 53.3% of participants were from the Netherlands, 20.6% were from Ireland, 10.5% were from Greece, and the rest were from a total of 21 countries.

Procedure

The research was conducted through an online survey. The survey was created with Qualtrics and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Prior to data collection, an ethical application was submitted and approved by the ethical review board of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University (approval code 24-0299). At the beginning of the survey, participants were informed that the aim of the study was to examine university students' perceptions of companies as potential places to work once they graduate. The reason for this deception regarding the true aim was due to the experimental set up of the study, and to ensure participants answered questions honestly without bias. Participants were then asked to provide demographic information, such as gender, age, current education level, the course they were studying, and nationality.

After this, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two leader behaviour conditions (QB/AM or non-QB/AM) and one of the two leader gender conditions (male or female). Participants were introduced to a fictitious financial organisation and a fictitious team leader. They were asked to read an interview with this leader and familiarise themselves with them (for more details see "Manipulations" below). Immediately after, participants were

asked to complete the first attention check. This involved asking participants if a sentence was included in the interview they had read. Regardless of whether they answered this correctly, participants were asked to reread the interview. This was done to ensure that participants were familiar with the content of the manipulation.

Participants were then asked to complete a manipulation check to examine their perception of the team leader. The purpose of this was to inspect if participants viewed the QB/AM leader as displaying agentic traits, and the non-QB/AM leader as displaying communal traits (Van Veelen & Derks, 2021). Next, participants were asked about their perception of the team leader as a role model, and their interest in working for the organisation. Participants also answered several other questions in the survey that were unrelated to the current research questions and those are not further explained here. Participants were then asked to complete two further attention checks ('What role did this person have in the organisation?' and 'What was the name of the finance company?'). Participants were excluded from the study if they got both attention checks wrong. Finally, participants were debriefed, which included informing them about the true aim of the study and thanking them for their participation.

Manipulations

The manipulation created for this study can be found in Appendix A.

Queen Bee/Alpha Male vs. Non-Queen Bee/Alpha Male Team Leader

Participants were randomly assigned to read an interview with one of four team leaders; a female team leader displaying QB behaviour (Lynn), a male leader displaying AM behaviour (Maarten), a female team leader displaying non-QB behaviour (Lynn), or a male leader displaying non-AM behaviour (Maarten). The QB and AM conditions were characterised by three typical features of QB/AM behaviour; (1) emphasising agentic/masculine traits (e.g. 'Competitive, analytical, strong-willed, ambitious leader'), (2) distancing themselves from women/not supporting women in the early stages of their careers (e.g. 'You must possess both knowledge and expertise, regardless of gender'), and (3) legitimisation/denial of gender hierarchy and discrimination in the workplace (e.g. 'Gender discrimination is no longer a problem') (Derks et al., 2011; Derks et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2016; Faniko et al., 2017). The two non-QB/AM leaders were characterised by; (1) displaying communal traits (e.g. 'I consider myself to be a true team player, an approachable leader'), (2) supporting women starting out in their career (e.g. 'Women must have the

opportunity to be well-represented in the organisation at all levels'), and (3) recognising that gender discrimination in the workplace is an issue (e.g. 'I believe there are still many organisations where discrimination based on gender exists').

Measures

Questionnaire items used in the study can be found in Appendix B.

Role Modelling

A revised version of the Influence of Others on Academic and Career Decisions Scale (IOACDS; Nauta and Kokaly, 2001) was used to measure the extent to which the leader was perceived as a role model. This scale is composed of two subscales, measuring support/guidance and inspiration/modelling. For this study, only five of the ten items from the inspiration/modelling subscale were used. Items were adapted to better fit this study, for example participants were asked; '*If I worked at this organisation, team leader Lynn/Maarten...*' followed by '*Could be a role model to me*', '*Could be someone whose career I would like to pursue*'. The items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale was reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .93.

Interest in Working for the Organisation

Interest in working for the organisation was measured with three items, e.g. '*Assuming you were looking for a job, how likely would you be to apply for a job in this particular organisation?*' (based on Bian et al., 2018). The items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). The scale was reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .92.

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was carried out to test whether the manipulation of the team leader behaviour was successful. Here, participants were asked about their perception of the leader, namely their agentic and communal traits (Van Veelen & Derks, 2021). Participants were asked to rate, on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*), the extent to which they think the team leader is likely to possess two agentic characteristics (i.e., achievement oriented and competitive; the relationship between the two items was significant, $r(255) = .66, p < .001$), and two communal characteristics (collaborative and

concerned for others; the relationship between the two items was significant, $r(255) = .80, p < .001$).

Results

Data Analysis and Assumptions

The data for this study was analysed using IBM SPSS 28. To test if the manipulation of leader behaviour was successful and participants indeed viewed the leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour as more agentic compared to the leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour, and if they perceived leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as more communal than the QB/AM leaders as intended, two one-way ANOVAs were conducted. Two more one-way ANOVAs were carried out to test Hypothesis 1 and 3. For Hypothesis 2, a three-way ANOVA was conducted, and finally, to test Hypothesis 4, a mediation analysis was carried out using PROCESS macro version 4.3, model 4. Before carrying out the ANOVAs, the ANOVA assumptions (the data is normality distributed and there is homogeneity of variances) were checked. It should be noted that the assumptions were violated in some cases. The assumption of equal variances across groups was violated for both agentic, $F(1, 255) = 5.28, p = .022$, and communal traits, $F(1, 255) = 14.19, p < .001$. The assumption of normality was also violated for both agentic, $W = .92, p < .001$, and communal traits, $W = .95, p < .001$. For the variable role modelling, the assumption of equal variances across groups was also violated, $F(1,255) = 12.77, p < .001$, and the data was also not normally distributed, $W = .97, p < .001$. The assumption of homogeneity of variances for the interest variable was met, $F(1,255) = 3.08, p = .08$, but the assumption of normality was violated, $W = .95, p < .001$. Due to the robust nature of ANOVAs, they were conducted despite these violations of assumptions.

Manipulations

To test whether participants perceived QB/AM leaders as more agentic than non-QB/AM leaders, and non-QB/AM leaders as more communal than QB/AM leaders, a manipulation check was carried out. Two one-way ANOVAs were conducted, both with leader behaviour (QB/AM vs non-QB/AM) as the independent variable and one with the mean scores of agentic traits as the dependent variable, and the second one with the mean scores of communal traits as the dependent variable. The result of the first one-way ANOVA showed a significant effect of leader behaviour on participants' perception of agentic traits, $F(1, 255) = 207.43, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .45$. As anticipated, participants in the QB/AM condition

rated the team leaders as more agentic ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 0.96$) than those in the non-QB/AM condition ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.07$). The second one-way ANOVA also showed a significant effect of leader behaviour on participants' perception of communal traits, $F(1, 255) = 202.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .44$. Participants in the non-QB/AM condition rated the team leaders as more communal ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 0.92$) than those in the QB/AM condition ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.23$). The results suggest that the manipulation was successful; QB/AM behaviour was viewed by participants as more agentic, while non-QB/AM behaviour was viewed as more communal.

To examine if leader gender played a significant role in participant ratings of agentic and communal traits, two two-way ANOVAs were carried out, both with leader behaviour and leader gender as the independent variables and one with the mean scores of agentic traits as the dependent variable, and the second one with the mean scores of communal traits as the dependent variable. The first two-way ANOVA showed a significant two-way interaction effect of leader behaviour and leader gender on agentic traits, $F(1, 253) = 9.43$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. The main effect of leader behaviour was significant, $F(1, 253) = 221.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .47$, and the main effect of leader gender was also significant, $F(1, 253) = 4.94$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. On further examination of pairwise comparisons, it was found that for the non-QB/AM condition, there was a significant difference in how males and females were rated on agentic traits, $M_{diff} = 0.66$, $SE = 0.18$, $p < .001$. When leaders displayed non-QB/AM behaviour, male leaders were rated higher on agentic traits ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.14$) than female leaders ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.88$). However, there was no significant difference in how male and female leaders were rated on agentic traits when the leaders displayed QB/AM behaviour, $M_{diff} = 0.11$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .536$. These findings suggest that when leaders display non-QB/AM behaviour, male leaders are rated higher on agentic traits than female leaders, however, when leaders display QB/AM behaviour, there is no significant difference in how male and female leaders are rated on agentic traits. The second two-way ANOVA showed a significant two-way interaction effect of leader behaviour and leader gender on communal traits, $F(1, 253) = 4.39$, $p = .037$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The main effect of leader behaviour was also significant, $F(1, 253) = 201.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .44$, however, the main effect of leader gender was not significant, $F(1, 253) = 0.00$, $p = .978$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. On further examination of pairwise comparisons, it was found that there was no significant difference in how male and female leaders were rated on communal traits for the non-QB/AM behaviour condition, $M_{diff} = 0.29$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = .146$, or when leaders displayed QB/AM behaviour, $M_{diff} = 0.28$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = .133$. These findings

suggest that leader gender does not play a significant role in how leaders are rated on communal traits.

Hypothesis Testing

Role Modelling

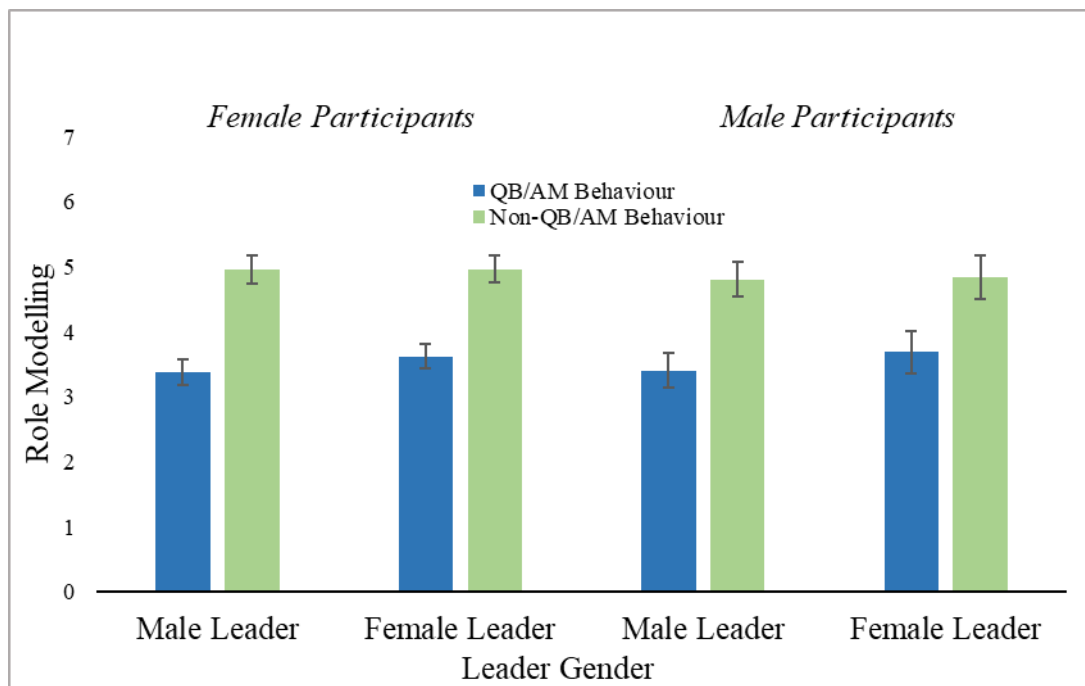
A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, which predicted that participants would perceive leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as greater role models than leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour. The one-way ANOVA was carried out with role modelling as the dependent variable and leader behaviour as the independent variable. The ANOVA found that the main effect of leader behaviour was statistically significant, $F(1, 255) = 77.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$. As expected, participants rated the team leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as a greater role model ($M = 4.92, SD = 1.15$) compared to the team leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour ($M = 3.48, SD = 1.44$). The results of the one-way ANOVA showed that when individuals in leadership positions displayed non-QB/AM behaviour, they were perceived as greater role models by junior workers compared to leaders exhibiting QB/AM behaviour.

A three-way ANOVA was conducted to test Hypothesis 2, which predicted that the perception of leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as role models will be strongest when the gender of the leader matches the gender of the junior worker. It should be noted that three participants were excluded from this analysis as they did not indicate their gender to be either male or female, and therefore the gender match of the leader and the participant could not be examined. The three-way ANOVA was carried out with leader gender, leader behaviour, and participant gender as independent variables and role modelling as the dependent variable. The three-way ANOVA showed no significant three-way interaction among leader gender, leader behaviour, and participant gender, $F(1,246) = 0.00, p = .987, \eta_p^2 = .00$. This suggests that the combined effect of all three independent variables on the dependent variable role modelling was not statistically significant. As well as this, none of the two-way interactions between the independent variables were found to be significant; leader gender and leader behaviour, $F(1, 246) = 0.46, p = .499, \eta_p^2 = .00$, leader gender and participant gender, $F(1, 246) = 0.01, p = .915, \eta_p^2 = .00$, and leader behaviour and participant gender, $F(1, 246) = 0.26, p = .612, \eta_p^2 = .00$. The main effect of leader behaviour was significant (in line with previous findings from Hypothesis 1), $F(1, 246) = 57.40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$. The main effect of leader gender however, was not significant, $F(1, 246) = 0.63, p =$

.428, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. The main effect of participant gender was also not significant, $F(1, 246) = 0.07, p = .794, \eta_p^2 = .00$. Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the significant main effect of leader behaviour on role modelling for both female and male participants.

Figure 1

Interaction of Leader Behaviour, Leader Gender, and Participant Gender on Role Modelling



The analysis revealed that Hypothesis 2 was not supported. The findings show that only leader behaviour had a significant effect on junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model, leader gender was not significant. Therefore, the 'gender match' did not make a non-QB/AM leader a greater role model.

Interest in Working at the Organisation

A one-way ANOVA was carried out to test Hypothesis 3, which predicted that participants would have a greater desire to work in the organisation if the leader displays non-QB/AM behaviour rather than QB/AM behaviour. The ANOVA was conducted with interest as the dependent variable and leader behaviour as the independent variable. The ANOVA revealed that the main effect of leader behaviour was statistically significant, $F(1, 255) = 61.64, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .20$. As predicted, participants in the non-QB/AM condition showed

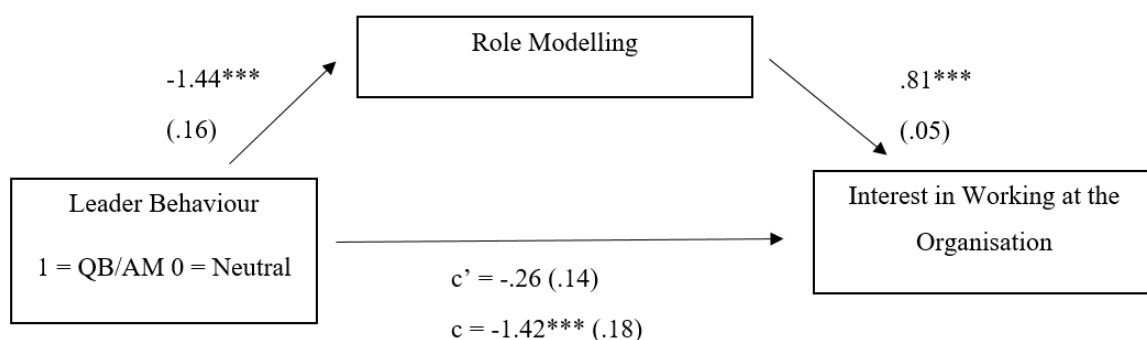
greater interest in working at the organisation ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.40$) compared to those in the QB/AM condition ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.49$). This one-way ANOVA confirmed that when the leader displayed non-QB/AM behaviour, participants showed a greater desire to work at the organisation compared to when the leader displayed QB/AM behaviour.

Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to test Hypothesis 4, which predicted that participants would have a greater desire to work in the organisation if the leader displays non-QB/AM behaviour rather than QB/AM behaviour via increased perception of the leader as a role model. Specifically, this mediation analysis was carried out to examine the role of the variable 'role modelling' as a mediator in the relationship between leader behaviour and interest in working at the organisation. This mediation analysis was carried out using PROCESS macro version 4.3, model 4 (Hayes, 2015). It was conducted with interest as the dependent variable, leader behaviour as the independent variable, and role modelling as the mediator. The indirect effect is significant if there is no 0 in the 95% confidence interval. Results of this mediation analysis showed an indirect effect of leader behaviour on interest in working at the organisation via perceived role modelling, $b = -1.16$, $SE = 0.13$, 95% CI[-1.42, -0.91]. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the mediation model.

Figure 2

Effect of Leader Behaviour on Interest in Working at the Organisation Through Perception of the Leader as a Role Model



Note: Path values are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors presented in parentheses. Asterisks indicate significant paths (***) $p < .001$

In summary, this mediation analysis confirmed that QB/AM behaviour displayed by the leader was associated with lower levels of role modelling, which in turn decreased participants' interest in working at the organisation.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine how QB/AM behaviour exhibited by organisational leaders impacts junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model, and if this perception affects their desire to work for the organisation. The study investigated four hypotheses to examine this. The hypotheses also examine the role of leader gender in the perception of the leader as a role model. Finally, the hypotheses examine if there is a mediating effect of role modelling on the relationship between interest in working at the organisation and leader behaviour. Examining these hypotheses provides new insights into the societal issue of QB/AM behaviour and adds to what we currently know about this phenomenon. The findings provide evidence that male and female junior workers perceive leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as greater role models compared to leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour, supporting Hypothesis 1. They show that leader gender does not play a significant role in the perception of the leader as a role model, which was not in line with Hypothesis 2. They demonstrate that junior workers have a greater desire to work in an organisation when the leader displays non-QB/AM behaviour compared to QB/AM behaviour (supporting Hypothesis 3), and this effect was mediated by the perception of the leader as a role model (supporting Hypothesis 4).

Results and Theoretical Implications

The finding that junior workers perceived QB/AM leaders as poorer role models compared to leaders that did not display this type of behaviour supports previous research. Previous studies have found that junior female workers often struggle when working with QB leaders and therefore view them as less effective role models (Ely, 1994). Other research states that junior workers are unable to identify with these leaders, and therefore do not perceive them as role models (Derks et al., 2016; Hoyt and Simon, 2011). The current findings support this and also expand on previous work by showing that this was also the case for junior male workers, and when the source of this behaviour came from a male or female leader. These findings suggest that QB/AM behaviour, displayed by a male or female leader, had negative consequences for both male and female junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model. The findings are also in line with previous work by Morgenroth et al. (2015),

which says that in order to be viewed as inspirational, an individual's behaviour must be admired and recognised by those aspiring to follow them. Therefore, when behaviour is viewed unfavourably by junior workers, the perception of the leader as a role model is lower. Our findings support this idea and provide evidence to suggest that QB/AM leader behaviour is not seen as desirable by junior workers, and as a result, their perceptions of the leader as a role model decreases.

While the findings are in line with Hypothesis 1, they do not support Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 predicted that the perception of non-QB/AM leaders as role models would be strongest when the gender of the leader and junior worker matched. It was therefore expected that male participants would perceive male non-QB/AM leaders as the greatest role models and female participants would perceive female non-QB/AM leaders as the greatest role models. However, the findings showed that while leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour were perceived as greater role models compared to QB/AM leaders, the 'gender match' did not make them greater role models. This finding is not in line with previous research that suggests in-group leaders are viewed more favourably than out-group leaders. One possible explanation for this is that many previous studies only included female participants and therefore failed to disentangle leader behaviour and gender (Sterk et al., 2018; McIntyre et al., 2011). McIntyre and colleagues (2011) found that successful females are perceived as role models by junior women if junior women believe they have earned their success. However, the study does not include male participants or examine the perception of a similar male leader. Therefore, it is unclear if junior workers perceive these leaders as role models because they are in-group members, or because they can identify with them and admire how they've achieved success, regardless of their gender. The present study was able to disentangle leader behaviour and gender, and showed that leader behaviour and having a leader with whom you could identify with and admire was most important to junior workers, regardless of whether the leader was an in-group or out-group member.

While the findings were not in line with previous research surrounding in-group and out-group leaders, other research has produced similar findings to that of the current study. For example, Javidan and colleagues (1995) found that junior workers' perception of their organisational leader as a role model was not affected by the 'gender match'. Leader effectiveness, but not leader gender, played a significant role in how a leader was viewed as a role model (Javidan et al., 1995). This is in line with the findings of the present study. Research carried out by Turbin and Jones (1988) found that junior workers' outcomes

were predicted more strongly by how similar their attitude was to the attitude of their leader rather than how similar they were to them demographically. Another study carried out by Ensher et al. (2002) found that when organisational leaders had the same values and attitudes as junior workers, these junior workers rated them higher in terms of how supported they felt and how satisfied they were with them. The same study found that the 'gender match' of organisational leaders and subordinates did not play a role in how supported junior workers felt. These findings indicate that leader behaviour is what is important for junior workers when asked about their perception of an organisational leader, and the 'gender match' is not significant. Our findings support this and found that this was the case when examining junior workers' perception of a leader as a role model.

Regarding junior workers' desire to work in the organisation, the current findings show that junior workers had a greater desire to work in the organisation when the leader displayed non-QB/AM behaviour compared to QB/AM behaviour, supporting Hypothesis 3. Kremer et al. (2023) theorise that in the case of junior female workers, this may occur because when female leaders display QB behaviour, subordinates believe that success at this organisation is not possible unless they too adopt this style of behaviour. This can therefore decrease their desire to work for that organisation. Kremer et al. (2023) also found that when leaders displayed QB behaviour, it resulted in female junior workers feeling uncertain regarding their belonging within the organisation. When leaders distance themselves from their subordinates, these junior workers may view the organisation as harmful to female workers (Mavin, 2008). This type of behaviour may cause junior workers to seek work elsewhere, in an organisation where they do not have to conform to this behaviour to belong and succeed (Kremer et al., 2023). Our findings support this idea and also examined this further by including male participants. By doing this, the current study found that this was also the case for junior male workers, and when the source of this type of behaviour came from a male or female leader. These findings suggest that QB/AM behaviour, whether displayed by a male or female leader, had negative consequences for both male and female junior workers' desire to work in an organisation.

Finally, the current study examined the link between role modelling and interest and found that the effect of leader behaviour on interest in working at the organisation was significantly mediated by junior workers' perception of the leader as a role model, supporting Hypothesis 4. This was previously lacking in research; however, some prior findings give an insight into why this finding occurred. For example, Morgenroth et al. (2015) explain that if

junior workers view leader behaviour as desirable, these leaders will encourage them to set their own goals for achieving success. This indicates that if junior workers view the leader as a role model, they set goals to follow that leader and as a result have a greater desire to work at that organisation. According to Derks et al. (2016), junior women don't view females who highlight how different they are from them as inspiring. This is because they may believe that success in this form is undesirable. This suggests that when female leaders display QB behaviour, junior workers' desire to follow them within the organisation decreases. This is in line with the findings of the current study. The current study however extends our knowledge by showing that this was also the case for junior male workers, and that this occurs when both male and female leaders displayed QB/AM behaviour. This suggests that *all* leaders that display QB/AM behaviour are perceived as poorer role models by both male and female junior workers, and consequently, these junior workers show less interest in working for the organisation.

Societal Implications

The current study provides evidence to support that simply having female and male leaders in an organisation does not necessarily mean junior female and male workers will view them as inspirational role models. Having in-group members in leadership positions is not what is most important for junior workers when judging the leader as a role model or their desire to work in that organisation, the behaviour of the leader is. Therefore, when addressing diversity issues in male dominated organisations it is not sufficient to simply hire or promote females into leadership positions. The behaviour of these leaders must be admired by junior workers to attract them. To achieve this, the organisation must ensure they have a culture that encourages females to take on leadership positions without facing social identity threat. This involves creating a culture free of negative gender stereotypes and discrimination (Derks et al., 2016). If this is the case, both female and male leaders will not feel it is necessary to emphasise their masculine traits and how different they are from their subordinates and will be perceived as greater role models.

Limitations, Strengths, and Directions for Future Research

The current study provides valuable insight into the consequences of leaders displaying QB/AM behaviour on junior workers, however there are some limitations to take into consideration when interpreting results. These limitations also offer guidance for future research. The study also has some strengths worth noting.

In terms of data collection, one possible limitation is the length of the survey. The survey was quite long and included many questions and variables that were not examined in this study. As a result of this, many participants (126) were excluded as they did not complete at least 80% of the survey. Future research could address this by shortening the length of the survey, which would likely encourage more people to complete it. Along with this, some of the dependent variables used in this study were created with a small number of items, largely due to the length of the survey (for example agentic traits and communal traits in the manipulation check only included two items each). To address this limitation in future studies, more items should be included when creating dependent variables, while also ensuring the reliability of the scales remains high. To ensure the survey is not too long as a result of this, only questions and variables relevant to the current study should be included.

Due to the experimental design of the study, another limitation is that changes over time were not taken into consideration. Future research could address this by carrying out a longitudinal study, focusing on junior workers before they enter the workforce and again at given time periods after they begin working at an organisation. By doing this, researchers could examine if junior workers' perceptions of their organisational leaders as role models change over time, and if their desire to work in an organisation remains or if they have intentions to leave. The hypothetical set up of the current study allowed for greater levels of control, but also meant participants had to imagine the organisation. Having participants in real life organisations with real experiences may provide valuable insights. However, a strength of the experimental design of the current study is that it allowed for a control group and random assignment of participants. The participants were evenly distributed between the two conditions (non-QB/AM leaders and QB/AM leaders), and this allowed for comparisons between the two groups. Random assignment also increases the internal validity of the study, as it reduces the chance of confounding variables causing bias. As a result of this, causal conclusions could be drawn from the results, which is not possible when conducting a longitudinal study.

Another strength of the current study is that it included both male and female participants. This allowed for comparisons to be made between the two groups, which was vital in examining the role of leader gender and the 'gender match'. It also allowed for further exploration of previous work that only included female participants (McIntyre et al., 2011; Sterk et al., 2018). This provided further insight into the impact of QB/AM behaviour on both male and female junior workers. Future research could build on this by including male and

female participants when examining the effects of QB/AM behaviour on other outcomes for junior workers, such as leadership aspirations and turnover intentions. Similar to the current study, such future studies would help determine if the negative effects of QB/AM behaviour experienced by junior workers occur as a result of leader behaviour, leader gender, or a combination of both.

Another way future research could build on the current findings is by including a measure of self-concept when examining QB/AM vs non-QB/AM leaders as role models. This would test if junior workers' self-ratings of agentic traits (such as achievement oriented and competitive) and communal traits (such as collaborative and concerned for others) plays a role in their perception of these leaders as role models. The purpose of this would be to test if junior workers rate QB/AM and non-QB/AM leaders as greater role models when they can relate to them and identify with them. The results of this will further examine if it is the extent to which a junior worker can identify with the behaviour of the leader, rather than the gender of the leader, that impacts their perception of the leader as a role model.

Conclusion

The current study examined the effect of leader behaviour and gender on junior workers' perceptions of the leader as a role model, and their desire to work in the organisation. The findings suggest that leader behaviour plays a significant role in how junior workers perceive organisational leaders as role models. Junior workers perceived leaders displaying non-QB/AM behaviour as greater role models than those displaying QB/AM behaviour, and this was the case regardless of leader gender. The findings suggest that simply having an in-group leader in an organisation is not sufficient, junior workers must admire and recognise the leader's behaviour and view it as desirable for the leader to be perceived as inspirational (Morgenroth et al., 2015). The findings also show that this perception of the leader as a role model can impact junior workers' desire to work in an organisation. This is important for organisations to consider, as it shows that the type of behaviour displayed by leaders impacts how attractive the organisation is to potential junior workers.

In conclusion, the current study expands our knowledge on the effects of QB and AM behaviour on junior workers' perceptions of the leader and the wider organisation. It emphasises the importance of creating an inclusive workplace, free of negative stereotypes, with inspirational leaders that promote equality.

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Appendix A

Manipulation Female Leader (QB)



Team Leader

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and the company?

Hi, I'm Lynn, the team leader of the product development department at BFC, a finance company. Over the past twenty years, much has changed, but our department's commitment to creating a positive work environment remains constant. I consider myself to be a true team player. As a leader, I like working together and make an effort to focus on building relationships.

2. What kind of manager are you?

I consider myself to be an approachable leader. In addition to having a well-defined leadership approach grounded in research and experience, I am open to communicate with my team. I value team members that listen to their coworkers as much as I do, as I consider it a top priority. I advise employees to be aware of their surroundings by observing the interests of others.

3. What do you think about the representation of women in organisations?

In my opinion, women must have the opportunity to be well-represented in the organisation at all levels. Furthermore, organisations need to do more to support women's advancement into leadership roles. For women to achieve success, we must break down the current obstacles. Unfortunately, I believe there are still many organisations where discrimination based on gender exists.



Manipulation Male Leader (AM)



Team Leader

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and the company?

Hi, I'm Maarten, the team leader of the product development department at BFC, a finance company. Over the past twenty years, much has changed, but our department's commitment to achieving excellent outcomes remains constant. I'm competitive, analytical and deeply committed to our goals. I believe in taking risks to accomplish them.

2. What kind of manager are you?

I consider myself to be a strong-willed, ambitious leader who enjoys providing structure to others. This involves encouraging employees to achieve results. Along with encouraging assertiveness, I also promote healthy rivalry among coworkers within my staff. As a leader, I want to maximize my team's performance.

3. What do you think about the representation of women in organisations?

In my opinion, the key for companies is having the right person in the correct position. This implies that you must possess both knowledge and expertise, regardless of gender. Companies need not overly concern themselves with promoting women up the corporate ladder. Women will strive for leadership positions if they desire them. Gender discrimination, in my opinion, is no longer a problem.



Manipulation Female Leader (Non-QB)



Team Leader

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and the company?

Hi, I'm Lynn, the team leader of the product development department at BFC, a finance company. Over the past twenty years, much has changed, but our department's commitment to creating a positive work environment remains constant. I consider myself to be a true team player. As a leader, I like working together and make an effort to focus on building relationships.

2. What kind of manager are you?

I consider myself to be an approachable leader. In addition to having a well-defined leadership approach grounded in research and experience, I am open to communicate with my team. I value team members that listen to their coworkers as much as I do, as I consider it a top priority. I advise employees to be aware of their surroundings by observing the interests of others.

3. What do you think about the representation of women in organisations?

In my opinion, women must have the opportunity to be well-represented in the organisation at all levels. Furthermore, organisations need to do more to support womens' advancement into leadership roles. For women to achieve success, we must break down the current obstacles. Unfortunately, I believe there are still many organisations where discrimination based on gender exists.



Manipulation Male Leader (Non-AM)



Team Leader

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself and the company?

Hi, I'm Maarten, the team leader of the product development department at BFC, a finance company. Over the past twenty years, much has changed, but our department's commitment to creating a positive work environment remains constant. I consider myself to be a true team player. As a leader, I like working together and make an effort to focus on building relationships.

2. What kind of manager are you?

I consider myself to be an approachable leader. In addition to having a well-defined leadership approach grounded in research and experience, I am open to communicate with my team. I value team members that listen to their coworkers as much as I do, as I consider it a top priority. I advise employees to be aware of their surroundings by observing the interests of others.

3. What do you think about the representation of women in organisations?

In my opinion, women must have the opportunity to be well-represented in the organisation at all levels. Furthermore, organisations need to do more to support women's advancement into leadership roles. For women to achieve success, we must break down the current obstacles. Unfortunately, I believe there are still many organisations where discrimination based on gender exists.



