

## Sexual behavior at work still a problem, study

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Be careful of that raunchy joke that gets all the laughs. As funny as folks at work may find it, it's probably hurting morale.

That's one conclusion of a groundbreaking new paper from the [Journal of Applied Psychology](#) co-authored by researchers from the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Management. The study's authors looked at the effect of [sexual behavior](#) in the workplace such as sexual jokes, innuendo, discussions of sexual matters or flirtation. And in a research first, they investigated if men and women got anything positive out of the behaviour, such as enjoyment and social bonding.

They found that some [employees](#) enjoyed sexual behaviour in the workplace - 25% of those exposed to it found it fun and flattering while half were neutral. But even employees who enjoyed the behaviour tended to withdraw from work, felt less valued and reported [depressive symptoms](#) more often than employees who experienced little to no sexual behavior at the office. The results were found among both women and men, working in manufacturing, social service and university jobs.

"We approached the study with an open mind," said Prof. Jennifer Berdahl of the Rotman School, who co-authored the study with Prof. Karl Aquino of the Sauder School. "We thought, 'Maybe these behaviours are a positive thing for employees who enjoy them.' And then we found that they weren't."

Prof. Berdahl suggested the study's findings should be treated as "sage advice" for employees and employers to avoid engaging in sexual behaviour while on the job.

"In our culture, sexuality has these connotations of domination, subordination and vulnerability," she said. "Often a dominating behaviour is a way of making someone squirmy. Why bring this into the workplace?"

More information: The complete study is available at:  
[www.rotman.utoronto.ca/newthinking/FunorFolly.pdf](http://www.rotman.utoronto.ca/newthinking/FunorFolly.pdf) .

Source: University of Toronto ([news](#) : [web](#))

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