

Jealousy and envy at work are different in men and women

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A study carried out by researchers from Spain, the Netherlands and Argentina suggests that in a work environment, sexual competition affects women more than men. However, a rival's social skills provoke jealousy and professional envy equally in both sexes.

A group of researchers from the universities of Valencia, Groningen (the Netherlands) and Palermo (Argentina) have analysed the differences between men and women in their way of feeling envious and jealous at work.

"Women with a high level of intrasexual competition are more jealous if the rival is more attractive and more envious if the rival is more powerful and dominating. They did not get any results in men, as no rival characteristics that provoke [jealousy](#) or envy predicted intrasexual competition" Rosario Zurriaga, researcher at the University of Valencia and one of the authors of the study which has been published in the journal *Revista de Psicología Social*, told SINC.

Intrasexual rivalry is competition with other people of the same sex caused by the desire to obtain and keep access to the opposite sex. Zurriaga, together with researchers at the universities of Groningen (the Netherlands) and Palermo (Argentina) analysed this type of rivalry using questionnaires distributed directly to 200 subjects in their workstations.

From those, they finally chose 114 "a large enough sample as it is an exploratory study" the expert from the University of Valencia explained.

They distinguished between two emotions: jealousy and envy. Jealousy is a threat or loss of success in a relationship due to interference from a rival and implies a loss or threat of loss of what they had. Envy is a response to another person who has success, skills or qualities that they desire and involves a lack in comparison to the envied person.

According to their results, [sexual competition](#) generally causes more jealousy and envy in women. However, rivals' [social skills](#) provoke both emotions, both in men and women. "This result shows the importance of social skills in work environments" Zurriaga stated.

Preventing the negative effects of these emotions

"Our research intends to clarify the role of emotions like [envy](#) and jealousy at work. These feelings have not been studied in working contexts and can cause stress in workers and negatively affect the quality of working life" the researcher added.

The main implication derived from this study is that in order to prevent the negative effects of these feelings, they should modify aspects such as the perception of threat, loss or comparison with others at work.

"This is one of the first studies that examines rivals' characteristics in this environment and contributes to a better understanding of conflicts and problems that can occur in working relationships" they concluded.

Some 26% of employees that participated worked in administration, 21% in services sector, 30% in education and the rest in health and other professions. Regarding sex, the sample was 50% men and 50% [women](#), with an average age of 36 years, and having spent 11 years in their current company.

More information: [Revista de Psicología Social](#) 27 (1): 85-96, 2012

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