

Being paranoid about office politics can make you a target: research

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People who worry about workplace rejection or sabotage can end up bringing it upon themselves, according to University of British Columbia research.

The UBC Sauder School of Business study reveals that paranoia about negative gossip or being snubbed leads people to seek out information to confirm their fears, ultimately annoying colleague and increasing the likelihood they will be rejected or subverted.

"It may be best to ignore impulses that tell you that you're the victim of office politics," says lead author and Sauder Prof. Karl Aquino, whose study was recently published in the journal [Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes](#).

Prof. Aquino explains that it's natural for people to wonder how others view them, especially when [social acceptance](#) in the workplace is often rewarded with power and [financial compensation](#).

"However, our research shows employees should do their best to keep their interactions positive and ignore the negative. As the expression goes, kill them with kindness."

In one of the study's experiments, the researchers discovered that people who more readily interpret interactions with others as negative are also more likely to try to root it out through such means such as eavesdropping or spying.

Another experiment showed that individuals who reported wanting information about unfair treatment within a group were more likely to have angered their group members and be the focus of rejection.

A third experiment measured [study participants](#)' comfort level with a co-worker who is worried about unfair treatment as compared to other types of employees. Rather than be saddled with a worrywart, participants were 3.5 times more likely to choose individuals who demanded feedback on work quality. Participants were 16.5 times more likely to prefer working with others keen to get information on work [group dynamics](#) as a whole.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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