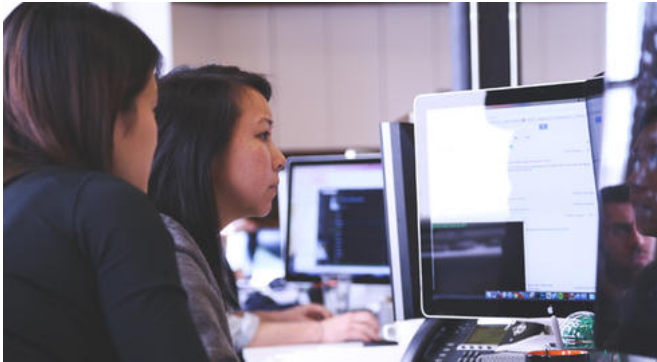


Strong friendships among women in the workplace reduce conflict, according to new study

14 July 2017



Credit: Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

According to a new study in the *INFORMS journal Organization Science*, when employers foster an office environment that supports positive, social relationships between women coworkers, especially in primarily male dominated organizations, they are less likely to experience conflict among women employees.

The study, "Gender and Negative Work Ties: Exploring Difficult Work Relationships Within and Across Gender at Two Firms" was conducted by Jenifer Merluzzi of George Washington University.

Merluzzi surveyed 145 management-level employees regarding workplace dynamics at two large U.S. firms that were primarily male-dominated environments, with women representing less than one-third of the workforce and under 15 percent of the senior management.

The study author found that, while men and women are equally likely to cite having a difficult co-worker, compared to men, women are more likely to cite another woman as a difficult coworker than

they are to cite a man, or not cite anyone. However, this tendency is reduced among women who cite having more [women](#) coworkers for social support and friendship at [work](#). Knowing that unique gendered network characteristics such as the gender compositions of an employee's [social support](#) at work were associated with negative ties can help organizational leaders anticipate potential trouble spots within their firms where gendered conflict may erupt.

"While [gender diversity](#) and inequality are well document topics in management, sociology and labor economics, few have looked closely at the gendered negative relationships within the workplace from a social relationship perspective," said Merluzzi. "Understanding the relational side of conflict also bears practical importance as companies increasingly organize using diverse teams, heightening the reliance on informal ties between and within [gender](#) to get work accomplished."

Provided by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

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