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Title:

Inconvenient dialogs: The multiple outlines of gender and power asymmetries in Portuguese legal professions

Abstract:

While most of the research on gender imbalance(s) in the legal professions focuses on patterns of inequality pertaining salaries, areas of practice and career progression, the subjective experiences of sexism encountered by women in their professional interactions with colleagues and clients has seldom been a topic of research. This paper draws on original research conducted with Portuguese judges, prosecutors and lawyers examining their daily work-life experiences. Using interview transcripts from the project we explore how sexism manifests in their work practices, in particular the multiple forms it assumes and the more overt or subtle forms in which is expressed, depending on the context and the interlocutors. The respondent's reluctance to be associated with stigmatised labels, and the fact that promoting justice (and therefore preventing discrimination) is at the core of legal professions render such enquiries inconvenient. Our findings convey an opportunity to further explore how gender intersects other forms of power asymmetries, and the ways in which individuals are multiply positioned through differences in professional roles and power status.