

Voodoo doll and cannibalism studies triumph at Ig Nobels

Notes & Cues:**Article:**

Never mind the protests from health and safety. A research paper that describes how employees can overcome workplace injustice by torturing a voodoo doll that resembles their boss has landed one of the most coveted awards in academia: an Ig Nobel prize.

The study, which sought to understand why disgruntled staff retaliate against bad superiors, found that tormenting a doll with pins and other implements helped restore their sense of fairness in the world.

The Ig Nobel awards celebrate work that “first makes people laugh, and then makes them think”. Ten awards were announced on Thursday night at a ceremony at Harvard. They included a nutrition prize for work that revealed the unimpressive nutritional value of a cannibalistic diet. Lindie Liang and fellow psychologists at the University of Waterloo in Ontario won the economics prize for the voodoo doll investigation.

In a series of experiments reported in the *Leadership Quarterly*, workers were asked to recall a time when their boss abused or bullied them, then half were given the chance to unleash their frustration on a virtual voodoo doll. “Those who stabbed the doll representing their boss felt a greater sense of fairness and justice,” said Douglas Brown, a member of the team.

Brown concedes that employees may want to find more positive ways to vent their anger after being offended by a bad boss, but he does not dismiss the value of virtual vengeance. “I personally don’t see any harm in torturing a voodoo doll, if it makes you feel better,” he said. “We get to show people that science doesn’t necessarily need to be dry and boring. Sometimes you can do sound science and have a laugh along the way.”

Summary: