

'Trans-parency' in the workplace

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Transsexual individuals who identify themselves as such in the workplace are more likely to have greater satisfaction and commitment to their job than transsexuals who do not, according to a new study from Rice University and Pennsylvania State University.

"Trans-parency in the Workplace: How the Experiences of Transsexual Employees Can Be Improved" will appear in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. For the study, researchers surveyed 88 transsexuals across the nation about their workplace experiences to determine what factors impact their [job satisfaction](#) and [organizational commitment](#).

"The workplace is becoming a much more diverse place," said Michelle Hebl, study co-author and professor of psychology at Rice. "The demographic makeup of employees is shifting due to a host of factors, such as flexible work hours, increased telecommuting, greater accessibility and protective organizational policies. Almost no empirical research has been done on transsexuals' experiences whatsoever. Our research sheds light on this severely understudied population's common workplace experiences and how such experiences can be improved."

The study's main finding revealed that transsexuals who are open with others about their gender identity in the workplace are happier and more productive workers than those who are not open. In addition, individuals who were more open with their family and friends about their lifestyle and who identified strongly as transsexuals were more likely to disclose their gender identity in the workplace than transsexuals who were less

open and did not identify as [transsexuals](#) as strongly.

Co-author and Rice graduate student Larry Martinez said the study demonstrates the importance of a strong support system, both in and out of the workplace.

"It's important for individuals to have a consistent identity in the workplace and at home," Martinez said. "Having a strong support system at home can give transsexual employees the courage to disclose to their colleagues in the workplace."

The study also shows that those who disclose their transsexuality are more satisfied with and committed to their organization, so long as their work environments are supportive. However, transsexual employees have lower rates of job satisfaction and commitment when their co-workers react negatively to their [gender identity](#).

According to Rice graduate student and co-author Enrica Ruggs, the study demonstrates how essential co-workers and organizations are in fostering a positive work environment.

"Often, what's good for the worker is good for the workplace – in this case, an open and accepting culture is really a win-win situation for all involved," she said. "The employees feel accepted, are more productive and have better experiences with co-workers. This creates a positive working environment that may lead to decreased turnover and greater profits."

Ruggs added that this research generalizes to other groups of individuals who face workplace discrimination and face the decision as to whether they should disclose concealable stigmas such as their sexual orientation, chronic illness or learning disability.

The authors hope their research will encourage the general public to be accepting of and allies to people with different lifestyle choices than their own and encourage employers to implement policies that foster a positive organizational culture.

"I think this study really demonstrates that everyone can have a role in making the [workplace](#) more inclusive," Hebl said. "Individuals can tell supportive others, others can be allies and react positively, and organizations can institute protective and inclusive organizational policies. All of these measures will continue to change the landscape and diversity of our workforce."

More information: "Trans-parency in the Workplace: How the Experiences of Transsexual Employees Can Be Improved":
[www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ... ii/S000187911100042X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S000187911100042X)

Provided by Rice University

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