

At work, hierarchies draw narcissist job hunters

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People who have narcissistic tendencies are more likely to support hierarchies, according to research by Emily M. Zitek, ILR School assistant professor, and Alexander H. Jordan.

Zitek conducted five studies with Jordan, an assistant research professor at the Boston University School of Medicine and adjunct assistant professor at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. Their findings were published online in May and in print this week by *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Two-hundred to 400 [people](#) answered questions in each of the five studies, which collected information through online surveys.

People with narcissistic traits tended to support hierarchical businesses and organizations when they were either at the top of the hierarchy or when they expected they could [rise](#) to the top, according to study outcomes.

But when told about a hierarchical company where there were no top positions open, they were less likely than non-narcissistic personalities to support this hierarchy, the research found.

Narcissistic people favor hierarchies because of a perceived potential to rise to the top, rather than other reasons, such as a desire for order, findings suggest.

"Our research underscores the need for leaders to thoughtfully consider the effects that company structure can have – not only on employees' performance and satisfaction, but also on the very types of people those employees will be," the authors wrote.

The research also found evidence narcissistic people tended to overestimate their performance and so might overestimate their ability to rise to the top in hierarchical groups when those groups used performance as a basis for promotion.

The research has implications for business because whether a business is perceived as hierarchical or not might influence whether narcissistic-tending people apply for jobs there, according to Zitek. If a [business](#) advertises itself as a place where people can rise in rank, it might attract a disproportionate number of people with narcissistic tendencies, she said.

More information: E. M. Zitek et al. Narcissism Predicts Support for Hierarchy (At Least When Narcissists Think They Can Rise to the Top), *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2016). [DOI: 10.1177/1948550616649241](#)

Provided by Cornell University

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