

Being an 'authentic' leader has psychological benefits for LGBTQ+ managers

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LGBTQ+ people in management roles who forge a leadership style aligning with their own identity and values are likely to feel more enthusiastic about their roles and derive greater career satisfaction,

according to new research.

The study, [published](#) in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, finds that the framework of 'authentic leadership'—including being self-aware and guided by [ethical principles](#)—has [psychological benefits](#) for LGBTQ+ leaders. These benefits were shown to be unlikely to occur for heterosexual and cisgender leaders.

Managers who adopted authentic leadership behaviors over the traditional 'transformational' focus on change and performance showed more engagement with their role and greater career satisfaction.

Dr. Luke Fletcher, from the University of Bath's School of Management, said, "When LGBTQ+ people take on managerial and leadership positions, they can feel uncomfortable and unsure about their leadership capabilities—they may be worried about being too visible, or too open about their LGBTQ+ identity, and they may feel they have to conform to traditional views around what constitutes a good leader."

"Our findings show that authentic leadership can help LGBTQ+ people feel true to themselves while navigating the pressures and tensions around leadership. The study also showed that for non-LGBT people, the psychological impact is less apparent—leading authentically isn't as relevant to their sense of engagement and satisfaction at work."

The psychological benefit was particularly strong for LGBTQ+ [managers](#) who lacked [self-confidence](#) and self-esteem.

The researchers from the University of Bath, California State University, and an independent researcher based in Dubai surveyed 198 LGBTQ+ managers and 220 non-LGBTQ+ managers from the UK across a range of sectors.

An initial survey assessed managers' evaluations of their leadership behavior and self-confidence and a second survey a month later assessed role engagement and career satisfaction.

The features of authentic leadership include:

Self-awareness: being aware of your strengths, areas to develop and impact on others

Transparency: openly sharing information and expressing your true self to others

Balanced processing: trying to be objective and analytical when making decisions, and involving others

Internal morals: being guided by, and aligning behavior with a strong, internal ethical compass

Professor Shaun Pichler, from California State University, said, "The research points to the need for ensuring that LGBTQ+ managers are aware of and trained in authentic leadership. Stigma and [negative stereotypes](#) can be a barrier to LGBTQ+ people developing their leadership careers."

"Encouraging people to develop their own approach to leadership that reflects their own authenticity and ethical values, yet also aligns with the organizational context, can be very effective in helping people, particularly those who lack self-confidence or self-esteem, to develop their leadership potential."

More information: Luke Fletcher et al, Songs of the self: the importance of authentic leadership and core self-evaluations for LGBT managers, *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (2024). [DOI:](#)

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Provided by University of Bath

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