



Staff trust confident bosses – but Meryl Streep's Miranda Priestly, left, or even Ricky Gervais's David Brent may take it too far

scale from one to six, how much they agreed with statements including "I am great", "I manage to be the centre of attention with my outstanding contributions" and "I show others how special I am".

Their employees were asked to rate their leader on items such as "how satisfied are you personally with the leadership of your direct supervisor?"

The researchers found that employees were most satisfied with bosses when their scores on the narcissism scale were 2.49 compared with the average score of 2.36. "In general, small doses of narcissism make these people socially charming without the negative effects of the more destructive elements [antagonism, rivalry] of grandiose narcissism," Wihler said, adding that people tended to trust in these managers' capabilities.

With higher levels of narcissism, however, the negative, retaliatory aspects became more apparent, he said. "Too much narcissism then leads to overconfidence and arrogance, and over-competitiveness, which undermines the relationship followers need with their leaders in order to trust them. If their grandiosity is threatened, they devalue others, become hostile to maintain superiority and show contempt of others, which makes working with such people quite unpleasant."

The ideal boss is a bit of a narcissist

Sigmund Freud said more than 100 years ago that narcissistic types were especially inclined to taking on the role of leaders (Sophie Freeman writes).

And, according to a study, we like them that way. To a point, at least.

Researchers studied 640 supervisors in a range of organisations along with 1,259 of their staff and found that

employees were most satisfied with bosses whose narcissism scores were slightly above the average. "Followers were most satisfied with leaders with a small dose of narcissism," the researchers said.

The co-author of the study, Andreas Wihler of Exeter University, said there are two types of narcissism: grandiose and vulnerable.

While both types feature self-centredness, grandiose narcissism is the "outgoing" version, while vulnerable narcissism is more "anxious and erratic", he said.

The study focused on grandiose narcissism because this tended to be more prevalent in bosses, he said. "While

vulnerable narcissism can also motivate individuals to strive for leadership positions, this is even more the case for grandiose narcissism," said Wihler. "Thus, many narcissistic individuals in leadership positions show signs of grandiose narcissism."

For the study, published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*, the research team from the University of Bonn, Germany, and Exeter University assessed managers in many different sectors — including manufacturing, public services, media, academia and healthcare — using the narcissistic admiration and rivalry questionnaire.

The managers were each asked to rate, on a