Micromanagement: An Employers' Perspective

Namrata Mishra, Dr. M. Rajkumar, Dr. Rajiv Mishra

Abstract — Leadership is a crucial component of any organization for its smooth and successful functioning. There are various types of leadership styles being followed in organizations, and Micromanagement leadership is one among them, wherein managers closely monitor and controls their subordinates. Although micromanagement is often perceived as negative leadership style, it can sometimes even benefit the employees and the organization. Effects of micromanagement leadership on employees are widely studied earlier, but there are no studies on employers' perspective for practicing micromanagement. This study also analyses the perception of Micromanagers on the reasons and benefits of micromanaging.

Index Terms — Employers' Perspective, Leadership Style, Micromanagement, Micromanagement Leaders.

———————————— ◆ ————————————

1 INTRODUCTION

Due to increased participation of the organization in global markets, the business environment is constantly changing. These globalized markets have put the demand on the increasing role of leaders in today's organization. The emerging global business has aspired the companies to become world-class, as in [1]. They believe that leaders can play an important role in making an organization effective and successful. Today's organizations are putting more pressure on employing efficient leaders due to growing competition and strategic development. Leadership is considered as one of the most important factors of any organization, whose function is not only to enhance the output but also to develop strategies to compete with others. The goal of today's organization is to focus on the improvement of the performance of the employees. Therefore, academicians and practitioners are emphasising more on good leadership styles in order to make efficient employees, who can face the competitive environment of today, as in [2]. Leaders are found to exhibit inefficient leadership styles, which compels employees to leave the organization, as in [3].

Micromanagement is one among the various forms of leadership, which is beneficial in some short-term circumstances like handling new employees, enhancing the efficiency level of underperforming employees, managing high-risk areas and when there is no one to take charge of any work. However, the long-term association with micromanagement can have a huge impact on costs. It can result in high turnover, low employee morale, decreased productivity and customer dissatisfaction. It is considered that managers, who are too much worried for daily operational matters are missing the broader prospect, and are unable to plan for expansion of department and organization. Wright [4] suggested that the degree of micromanaging and the amount of sovereignty that the team members of the

micromanaged-team own are negatively correlated. Managers, in that case, must know as how to differentiate between fixing the goals and executing each detail for achieving that goal. Effective Micromanagement facilitates managers to get involved actively as also to leave the matter to the team members. A good leader is able to detect some bigger problems of the future by focussing on minute details like - budget preparation, reviewing of problems and analysis of critical reports. Key tasks requires monitoring for better performance; however, this monitoring sometimes takes the form of micromanagement if the manager starts becoming too much concerned and interfering.

Therefore, this paper is an attempt to analyse the perception of employers for reasons of micromanaging and its impact on fellow members. If Micromanagement leadership is perceived as negative by many researchers, it carves out a way to know why leaders micromanage, and how & to what extent they micromanage, and what are the effects of micromanagement on fellow-employees, as in [5].

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Sidhu [6] represented micromanagement as managing things with attention to details and excessive control. The online dictionary Encarta has defined it as giving attention to minute details in management and taking control of a person or situation. It is generally believed that Micromanagement has a negative impact on employees. White [4] defines micromanager as "the bothersome boss who second-guesses every decision a subordinate makes". Knight [7] describes micromanager as "a boss who lasers in on details, prefers to be cc'ed on emails, and is rarely satisfied with your teams' work". Micromanagement leadership is very much similar to autocratic leadership as the entire power and decision-making authority lies with the leaders itself, as in [8]. The staff opinions are not considered before making any decisions and therefore they are affected and are unable to provide any inputs. Another study shows that employees who felt that they are being observed constantly perform at a lower level, as in [9]. Micromanagement has also been linked to narcissism, which prompts leaders to use their powers excessively and abuses employees in order to meet their own ends, as in [10]. Micromanagers are accused of being control freak, suspicious,

———————————————

- *Namrata Mishra, Research Scholar, ICFAI University, Jharkhand, India. E-mail: namrata_0586bvp@yahoo.co.in*
- *Dr. M. Rajkumar, Assistant Professor, ICFAI University Jharkhand, India. E-mail: dr.rajmkumar@gmail.com*
- *Dr. Rajiv Mishra, Associate Professor (Hospitality & Tourism), Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India. E-mail: rajiv.mishra@manipal.edu*

incompetent and their psychopathic personalities are always a hindrance to organizational effectiveness. Chambers [11] pointed out that micromanagement becomes a hindrance in the growth and the development of the people and entire team, as every minute details need to pass through leader's recommendation, which prohibits team-members to think and decide of their own. Micromanagers monitor all types of work in the same manner without prioritizing the work, as in [12], which creates a negative impact on the people. But micromanagement is sometimes very effective in supporting and guiding inexperienced team.

3 CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH MICROMANAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Though micromanagement leadership style is considered as a negative way of handling people and has earned a bad reputation, it can yield better positive outcomes if it is exhibited in a right manner in right time, as in [13]. It can be adopted when the assignment is new and complicated, as in [14]; employee is new to a task, as in [15]; organizations is in crisis and problems, as in [6]; lesser productivity, as in [16]; decisions on critical tasks affecting the business, as in [17]; employees are underperforming, as in [16]; resolving the problems among teams and groups, as in [18]; fixing up smaller issues before it becomes big, as in [19]; changing its strategy, taking a new endeavour, when projects are delayed, serious complaints arising from the customers and poor results, as in [20].

4 CAUSES OF MICROMANAGEMENT

Leaders in various aspects exhibit micromanagement leadership style. In words of Chambers [11], some of the individual causes which were found to be positive where the leader's perception about himself as more capable when compared to others, familiarity towards a crisis, self-reliance, and capability. Major causes that make the leader/manager to exhibit micromanagement leadership were reported to be negative. Some of the organizational related factors, which makes a leader to micromanage, were insecurity about their positions, as in [21]. Organizational culture, as in [22]; Organizational structure and hierarchy, as in [23], [24]; Fear of negative outcomes, as in [24]; Lack of trust on the subordinates capability, as in [22]; Attributes of subordinates, as in [25] and Feeling powerless, as in [26].

Chambers [11] pointed on the root cause for micromanaging as fear, confusion, and comfort of the leader. Chambers also highlighted some of the factors contributing towards fear and in turn towards micromanagement as lack of confidence, the potential failure of others, being ignored, the threat of other competence, and loss of recognition. Chambers [11] also depicted the reason behind the manager's micromanagement style as their lack of patience, emotionally insecure and increased pressure. Walters [27] reported some of the reason for micromanaging as fear in the leader, elements of ego, lack of prioritization, failure in the subordinate in providing meaningful feedback on the job assigned and confused environment. Artale [28] stated the reasons for micromanaging as fear in terms of becoming disconnected, failure in the job and getting back to the older job. Berchelmann [29] highlighted the underlying reason behind a supervisor's micromanaging leadership as perceived need. The other reasons stated were Perceived or real lack of competency, trust, and overdeveloped personal ego. Fear from a different perspective as fear of control and fear from a healthy ego were also represented as a cause for micromanagement, as in [30]. Crossby [31] highlighted the causes as confusion in the lead, as in [32] between accountability and micromanagement, feeling uncertain about a project and intent to feel like an expert and lack of control.

5 BENEFITS PERCEIVED BY THE LEADER BY ADOPTING MICROMANAGEMENT STYLE

There are various benefits which the leaders or managers feel when they micromanage. As cited by Dhingra [33], leaders who practice such style of leadership are actually controlling the output and not their fellow members. The micromanagers feel that they know their team members in a better way than the others who does not micromanage. Barishansky [34] clarifies that by micromanaging, the leaders are preparing their subordinates to handle bigger problems in the future. Micromanagers suggests that by interfering and monitoring the smallest of detail they are able to predict the future and avoid any negative consequences. Isla [35] pointed out that micromanagement is the best leadership style as it guides and leads its team-members in new or unknown projects and thus facilitates its employees to move in a new direction. He also argued that although many perceive micromanagement as a negative leadership the micromanagers are always found to be trustworthy and strong people. By micromanaging the employees, it gives a platform for them to accept their feedback and correct their mistakes. Another benefit as highlighted by micromanagers are about employees who need constant guidance and monitoring and they are able to perform better under these circumstances only. Since micromanagers are known to guide and advise their subordinates on a continuous basis, it helps the employees to improve themselves and to perform better. Thus, Micromanagement is considered to bring out some of the best talents, as in [35]. Micromanagers have also accepted that they are motivated to practice such style as it has helped them to avoid any negative outcomes whether it be in terms of failures, poor performances or customer satisfaction, as in [4].

6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study facilitates to interpret the employers' perspective of micromanagement, and explicates the employees and organizations to know the benefits associated with micromanagement. It develops a better understanding among employers and employees, as micromanagement is sometimes considered as positive style of leadership. The study also distinguishes between leaders who simply micromanage and

2950

who micromanages because of demanded situation. This study can become useful in further analysis of micromanagement and its impact on employees' performance.

7 CONCLUSION

Chambers [11] stated that Micromanagement lowers down the growth and development of employees who are being micromanaged. It also obstructs the individuality of team and its growth because of continuous interference of leader. As per Bobinski [36] Micromanagement certainly helps in upgrading the skills and abilities of employees and helps them to perform better, if the subordinates are not able to perform properly without nurturing. Micromanagers may be referred as perfectionists, as they are very structured and organized leaders.

REFERENCES

[1] P. Kock and J. Slabbert, "Transformational Leadership in Business Organisations ascending to World-class Status: A Case Study in the Petrochemical Industry," SA J. Ind. Psychol., vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 1–7, 2003.

[2] R.R. Kehoe and P.M. Wright, "The Impact of High-Performance Human Resource Practices on Employees' Attitudes and Behaviors," J. Manage., vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 366–391, 2013.

[3] A. Amankwaa and O. Anku-Tsede, "Linking Transformational Leadership to Employee Turnover: The Moderating Role of Alternative Job Opportunity," Int. J. Bus. Adm., 2015.

[4] R. Wright, "Strategies for Avoiding the Micro Management trap," Manag. Decis., vol. 38, no. 5, pp. 362–364, 2000.

[5] P. Lipman, "Economic crisis, Accountability, and the State's Coercive Assault on Public Education in the USA," J. Educ. Policy, vol. 28, no. 5, pp. 557–573, 2013.

[6] A. S. Sidhu, "Micromanagement: A Project Management Tool in Crisis," Int. J. Econ. Manag. Sci., vol. 1, no. 12, pp. 71–77, 2012.

[7] R. Knight, How to Stop Micromanaging Your Team, 2015. Retrieved September 10, 2019, from https://hbr.org/2015/08/how-to-stop-micromanaging-your-team.

[8] C. Bielaszka-DuVernay, "Micromanage at Your Peril," Harward Business Review, 2008. [Online]. Available: https://hbr.org/2008/02/micromanage-at-your-peril.html.

[9] M. S. DeCaro, R. D. Thomas, N. B. Albert, and S. L. Beilock, "Choking under Pressure: Multiple Routes to Skill Failure," J. Exp. Psychol. Gen., vol. 140, no. 3, pp. 390–406, 2011.

[10] C. Meier, Paul D; Charlebois, Lisa; Munz, You Might be a Narcissist if : How to identify Narcissism in Ourselves and others and what we can do about it. Minneapolis: Langdon Street Press, 2009.

[11] H. E. Chambers, My Way or the Highway: The Micromanagement Survival Guide. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004.

[12] P. Sanaghan, "Micromanaging: An Incurable Management Trait?," 2016. [Online]. Available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293827457_Micromanaging_An_Incurable_Management_Trait%0A%0A.

[13] D. Goldsmith and L. Goldsmith, "Why 'Micromanagement' Is Not A Dirty Word–If You Do It Right," Fast Company, 2012. [Online]. Available: https://www.fastcompany.com/3003721/why-micromanagement-not-dirty-word-if-you-do-it-right.

[14] W. Herman, "Its Ok to Micromanage Sometimes."2006. Retrieved from http://www.2-speed.com/2006/12/its-ok-to-micromanage-sometimes.

[15] S. Vozza, "Five Situations When You Should Micromanage," Fast Company, 2014. [Online]. Available: https://www.fastcompany.com/3035286/five-situations-when-you-should-micromanage.

[16] K. Collins and S. Collins, "Micromanagement--a Costly Management style," Radiol. Manage., vol. 24, no. 6, pp. 32–35, 2002.

[17] D. Gartenstein, "The Advantages & Disadvantages of Micromanaging Employees," bizfluent.com, 2017. [Online]. Available: https://bizfluent.com/info-8198970-advantages-disadvantages-micromanaging-employees.html.

[18] M. Ford and J. Morice, "Using Micro Management Techniques to Overcome Problems in Group Assignments," in InSITE - "Where Parallels Intersect," 2003, pp. 1311–1321.

[19] D. Neiditch, "It's Not Micromanaging If You Do It Without Killing Morale," Entrepreneur India, 2017. [Online]. Available: https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/298393.

[20] C. M. Riordan, "Sometimes Micromanaging Is Good--And Necessary," Forbes, 2010. [Online]. Available: https://www.forbes.com/2010/07/29/micromanage-employees-delegate-leadership-managing-staff.html#24d47ab142d5.

[21] R. L. Porterfield, "The Perils of Micromanagement. (cover story)," Contract Manag., 2003.

[22] P. Badger, W., Sullivan, K., Wiezel, A., & Bopp, "Profiling the Leadership of Project Managers," Int. J. Constr. Educ. Res., vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 121–146, 2009.

[23] N. Khatri, "Consequences of Power Distance Orientation in Organisations," Vis. J. Bus. Perspect., vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1–9, 2009.

[24] R. D. White, "The Micromanagement Disease: Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Cure," Public Pers. Manage., vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 69–76, 2010.

[25] J. Li and U. Khalid, "Micromanaging Behaviour and Engineering Management," Lund University, 2015.

[26] D. Baer, "Bosses Micromanage When They Feel Powerless," The Cut, 2016. [Online]. Available: https://www.thecut.com/2016/12/psychology-of-why-bosses-micromanage.html.

[27] C. Walters, "Top 5 Causes of Micromanagement and What You Can Do About It," Carolinas IT Experience Peace of Mind, 2012. [Online]. Available: https://www.carolinasit.com/leadership/top-5-causes-of-micromanagement-and-what-you-can-do-about-it.

[28] J. Artale, "Three Reasons why your Managers Micromanage," Acrionspace - Be effective, 2015. [Online]. Available: http://actionspace.com/blog/3-reasons-why-managers-micromanage.

[29] K. Berchelmann, "Creating the Micro-Manager — If we know what causes it, can we stop it??," Corporate Compliance Insight, 2015. [Online].Available: https://www.corporatecomplianceinsights.com/creating-micro-manager-know-causes-can-stop/.

[30] M. Murphy, "The Secret Fear That Causes Bosses To Micromanage," Forbes, 2017. [Online]. Available: https://www.forbes.com/sites/markmurphy/2017/03/12/the-secret-fear-that-causes-bosses-to-micromanage/#a6244b41b952.

[31] P. Crosby, "Understanding Micromanagement: How a Leader's Insecurity Can Make Their Staff Miserable," The Uncommon League - The League Of Analysts INC, 2018.

[32] S. Bhattacharya and J. Basu, "Distress, Wellness and Organizational Role Stress among IT Professionals: Role of Life Events and Coping

Resources," J. Indian Acad. Appl. Psychol., vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 169–178, 2007.

[33] G. Dhingra, "Micromanagement- Boon or Bane. An Employee's Perception- with reference to IT Sector," Int. J. Res. Manag. Soc. Sci., vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 38–42, 2015.

[34] R. M. Barishansky, "The Benefits of Micromanagement," EMS World, 2015. [Online]. Available: https://www.emsworld.com/article/12072862/the-benefits-of-micromanagement.

[35] R. Isla, "The Benefits of Micromanagement," Kami, 2015. [Online]. Available: https://blog.kamiapp.com/the-benefits-of-micromanagement/.

[36] D. Bobinski, Creating Passion Driven Teams: How to Stop Micromanaging and Motivate People to Top Performance. Career Press, 2009.