



MICROMANAGEMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

Arthur Bwalya

Arthur Bwalya is a management and leadership enthusiast and author, stationed in Lusaka – Zambia, PH-01-12-345-6789. E-mail: arthur.bwalya@gmail.com or arthur.bwalya24@gmail.com

Key Words

Autonomy, Delegation, Excessive Control, Lack of Trust, Scrutiny, Intervention.

ABSTRACT

Micromanagement is a prevalent management style among several managers in many organizations. Micromanagement is primarily a management style which entails excessive control and scrutiny over employees' tasks, responsibilities and decisions.

In this article, I explore micromanagement as a management style characterized by excessive control and scrutiny over employees. I look at the definition of micromanagement, highlighting its control-oriented nature, and detail its key features, including constant monitoring, frequent intervention, strict adherence to procedures, and resistance to innovation. I examine the implementation of micromanagement in a workplace, through strategies like detailed task management and centralized decision-making.

This article further evaluates the pros and cons of micromanagement, noting that while it can lead to precision, quality control, and immediate problem resolution, it also negatively impacts employee morale, creativity, decision-making autonomy, productivity, and turnover rates. The article includes recent research on gender differences in micromanagement tendencies and concludes by discussing the detrimental effects of micromanagement on employee well-being, emphasizing the need to mitigate these negative consequences for a positive work environment.

I end the article with examples of individuals and organisations, who were affected by micromanagement practices.

MICROMANAGEMENT – WHAT IS IT?

Micromanagement is simply defined as a management style that is characterized by a manager's excessive control, close scrutiny, and frequent interventions in the tasks, responsibilities and decisions of subordinates (Ryan and Cross, 2023).

Typically, micromanagement involves a manager exerting an overly controlling influence on the details of work processes (Gardanova et al, 2019), often to the detriment of employee autonomy and empowerment (Cho et al, 2017). This management approach typically manifests in the manager closely monitoring and directing every aspect of a project, task, or responsibility; dictating specific methodologies; and frequently intervening to ensure adherence to the manager's preferred approach. According to Lee, Kim, and Kang (2021), micromanagement simply comes in the form of detailed oversight of employees' tasks, activities, and decision-making processes.

Interestingly, despite the pitfalls of micromanagement, it is a very prominent management style in the workplace today. A study done by Chambers (2009), revealed that 79% of people in a workplace have been micromanaged before; 85% of people admitted that micromanagement habits had a negative impact on employees and further, 91% of micromanagers are unaware and in denial that employees actually resign due to their micromanagement leadership approach. These statistical revelations are astounding.

FEATURES OF MICROMANAGEMENT

Several scholars have researched on the attributes exhibited by micromanagers. These features of micromanagement encompass a set of behaviors and practices displayed by micromanagers, and include :

Detailed Task Management: Micromanagers often provide employees with highly detailed instructions and guidance on how to perform tasks. They may go as far as specifying precise steps, methodologies, and timelines, leaving little or no room for employee autonomy or discretion. Lee, Kim, and Kang (2021) established that detailed task instructions affect employee autonomy and performance, often limiting the employees' sense of ownership and motivation.

Frequent Monitoring and Surveillance: Micromanagers engage in constant monitoring and surveillance of employees' activities. They regularly check in with employees to see if they are working, request frequent progress updates, and closely observe the employees' work progress. Lurie and McCraw (2020) in their study explored the effects of constant monitoring on employee stress and well-being, emphasizing the negative consequences of micromanagement for employees' mental health and stability.

High Levels of Intervention and Corrections: Micromanagers frequently intervene in tasks to ensure they are being performed according to their specifications. They usually offer constant feedback and corrections, sometimes without allowing employees the opportunity to complete tasks independently. Yang, Yang, and Xiong (2019)'s study revealed that frequent intervention by managers impacts employee perceptions of autonomy and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of balanced leadership styles.

Centralized Decision-Making: Micromanagers tend to centralize decision-making authority within their own hands, rather than delegating decision-making power to employees. They may make all significant decisions themselves, exhausting themselves in the process and limiting employees' opportunities to contribute or take ownership of their work. Huang, Chiu, and Lee (2021)'s observed that centralized decision-making has detrimental effects on employee empowerment and organizational agility, underscoring the drawbacks of micromanagement for organizational effectiveness.

No room for (or Resistance to) Innovation and Flexibility: Micromanagers often resist any attempts by employees to introduce new approaches or innovations. Micromanager may enforce strict adherence to procedures and protocols, expecting employees to follow predefined rules without deviation. Any suggestions coming from subordinates are hardly considered or ultimately get shot down. According to Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2019), such rigidity stifles employee creativity and innovation and kills the culture of flexibility and experimentation.

Obsessive Attention to Detail: Micromanagers have a relentless focus on minor details, often to the point of obsession. They feel compelled to oversee every aspect of a task or project, no matter how trivial, and may fixate on minor errors or deviations from their expectations. According to a study by Martinko and Gardner (1982), micromanagers exhibit a need for control and precision, which drives their insane and intense scrutiny of minor details. This behavior reflects their underlying desire to maintain a sense of order and predictability.

Reluctance to Delegate Authority: Micromanagers have a deep-seated reluctance to delegate authority or decision-making power to their subordinates. They prefer to retain control over all aspects of a project or task, fearing that relinquishing control will result in errors or deviations from their preferred approach (Northouse, 2018). A study by Weldon and Weingart (1993) highlighted the reluctance of micromanagers to delegate tasks due to concerns about performance and outcome control.

Preference for Authoritarian Leadership: Most micromanagers tend to adopt an authoritarian leadership style characterized by top-down decision-making and strict adherence to rules and procedures. They enforce compliance through command-and-control tactics rather than fostering collaboration or empowerment. Bass (1985) observed that micromanagers exhibit authoritarian tendencies, emphasizing obedience and discipline over participation and autonomy. This leadership approach reflects their desire for control and conformity within the organization.

Inability to Trust Subordinates: Micromanagers lack trust in the abilities and judgment of their subordinates, leading to a pervasive sense of skepticism and suspicion. They believe that only they possess the expertise and insight needed to ensure successful outcomes, leading to a reluctance to delegate tasks or empower others. A research study by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) suggested that trust in subordinates is a very important ingredient of effective leadership. Micromanagers' inability to trust their subordinates undermines employee morale and engagement, hindering organizational performance (Argyris, 1998).

Based on the above features, you can do a self assessment to establish whether you are micromanaging your subordinates or being micromanaged yourself.

a) *You are being micromanaged, if:*

1. Your manager frequently checks in with you and constantly requests updates regarding a given task.
2. You find that your manager insists on being involved with your work from start to finish, regardless of your experience in the given role.
3. You are not able to make decisions or take the lead if your manager is not involved.
4. Your manager often takes over tasks and responsibilities he/she has given to you.
5. Your manager's guidance spills into over-instructing and relates more to a teacher - student relation rather than an employer - employee.
6. Your manager finds it hard to trust you enough to do your job.
7. Your manager re-does your work or excessively controls it, and you find it hard to feel motivated on that task.

b) *You are micromanaging your subordinates, if:*

1. You are extremely thorough in the instructions you provide and very specific and rigid in the information you require about a task, which may stifle creative input from subordinates.
2. You are failing to effectively delegate and taking on too much work for yourself, wanting to meet deadlines.
3. You constantly check in with your employees, wanting to monitor every detail of their progress on a task.
4. You find it hard to trust your team with tasks, and you frequently take over from your subordinates before they have a chance to complete the allocated task.
5. Your team becomes less and less productive and don't see the point in putting their effort into their work because they know you will not accept it or change as you please.
6. You insist on physically seeing your team members as you struggle to trust that employees can operate remotely and still deliver.
7. You are not flexible in your style of managing the team, while relying on them to meet deadlines in a ridiculous timeframe.

HOW IS MICROMANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTED?

Micromanagement can be implemented through various strategies and behaviors that are aimed at exerting excessive control over employees' tasks and decisions. Almost all micromanagers have the same tendencies.

Providing Detailed Task Assignments and Instructions: According to Lee, Kim, and Kang (2021), micromanagers regularly provide employees with highly detailed task assignments and instructions, leaving little room for individual interpretation or autonomy. They may go as far as specifying precisely how tasks should be performed, including specific steps, timelines, and methodologies.

Constantly Monitoring Employees: Lurie and McCraw (2020) observed that micromanagers frequently engage in constant monitoring and surveillance of employees' activities. This involves regularly checking on employees – hoping to catch them off guard, requesting frequent progress updates, and closely observing their work.

Frequently Intervening and Providing Corrections: Yang, Yang, and Xiong (2019)'s study revealed that micromanagers have a habit of intervening in tasks to ensure that they are being performed according to their specifications. They offer constant unsolicited feedback and corrections, sometimes without allowing employees the opportunity to complete tasks independently.

Centralizing All Decision-Making: Micromanagers tend to centralize decision-making authority within their own hands, rather than delegating some to employees (Huang, Chiu, and Lee, 2021). They may make all significant decisions themselves, limiting employees' opportunities to contribute or take ownership of their work.

Preach Strict Adherence to Procedures and Protocols: Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2019) stated that micromanagers often enforce strict adherence to procedures and protocols, expecting employees to follow predefined rules and guidelines without deviation. They resist any attempts by employees to introduce new approaches or innovations.

Setting Unrealistic Expectations and Deadlines: Micromanagers may set unrealistic expectations and deadlines for completing tasks, often without considering employees' workload or capabilities, often creating undue stress and pressure on employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This leads to burnout and decreased morale in employees.

WHY DO SOME MANAGERS AND LEADERS MICROMANAGE?

Most leaders and managers may engage in micromanagement for various reasons, often driven by a combination of personal characteristics, organizational culture, and situational factors.

Control and Perfectionism: Some managers micromanage due to a need for control and perfectionism. According to Smith and Ashkenas (2020), some managers and business leaders have set very high standards and fear that delegating tasks or decision-making authority will result in errors or deviations from their expectations.

Lack of Trust and Confidence: Gino and Staats (2015) noted that micromanagers often lack trust in their employees' abilities and judgment. They believe that only they possess the expertise needed to ensure successful outcomes, leading to a reluctance to delegate tasks or empower subordinates. Micromanagers' lack of trust undermines employee morale and engagement, hindering organizational performance.

Insecurity and Fear of Failure: Managers who feel insecure in their own abilities or fear of failure may resort to micromanagement as a way to exert control and mitigate perceived risks, revealed a study by Zhang, Waldman, Han, and Li (2015). Such managers feel the need to closely monitor and intervene in tasks to prevent mistakes or ensure success.

Organizational Culture and Pressure: Bélanger and Edwards (2020) discovered that in some cases, micromanagement may be perpetuated by organizational culture or norms that prioritize control and oversight. In this case, managers feel pressure to meet strict performance targets or adhere to hierarchical structures that discourage delegation and empowerment.

Past Experiences and Role Modeling: Managers' past experiences and role models can shape their management styles, including their propensity to micromanage. Those who have been previously micromanaged themselves or have witnessed micromanagement in previous roles may be more likely to adopt similar behaviors (Cunha, Rego, Gonzalez, and Ribeiro, 2021)

WHO MICROMANAGES MORE – MALE OR FEMALE MANAGERS?

Stephen (2020) conducted a study titled 'Do women micromanage?'. This study produced very interesting results. The study revealed that :

1. When women delegate their work to junior staff, the majority of them hold a very microscopic view on the delegated work.
2. The majority of women exercise excessive control over their subordinates thus not allowing them independence and freedom to make independent decisions.

3. The majority of women managers did not trust their juniors, hence the excessive control they exercised, and this often leads to finding it difficult according their employees 'breathing space'.
4. The majority of women leaders are too obsessed with reports and expect their juniors to provide these reports as and when they are needed.
5. Generally, majority of women spend too much time on trivial matters, thus they focus on those matters which are irrelevant.

It would appear, based on these findings from Stephen (2020)'s study, that women managers and leaders do stand a higher chance of being micromanagers owing to their inherent feminine characteristics.

However, research by Eagly and Karau (2002) challenged the idea that women are inherently more controlling and micromanaging as leaders or managers. They argued that leadership behavior is influenced by situational factors and individual characteristics rather than gender alone. Similarly, studies by Powell and Graves (2003) and Rosener (1995) emphasized the importance of leadership style and personality traits in determining managerial behaviors, rather than gender-specific tendencies.

A meta-analysis by Smith and Foti (1998) examined various aspects of leadership behavior across genders and found minimal differences in micromanagement tendencies between male and female managers.

It is essential therefore, to recognize that micromanagement is not inherently linked to gender but rather stems from specific organizational cultures, individual leadership styles, past experiences and contextual factors. Infact, factors such as organizational structure, level of employee trust, and perceived competence of subordinates plays a significant role in shaping micromanagement behaviors of managers, regardless of the manager's gender. Thus, being a micromanager is more dependent on other factors than gender.

ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES THAT FOSTER MICROMANAGEMENT

Organizational types and contexts that foster micromanagement can vary, but certain characteristics and environments are more conducive to the development and actual perpetuation of micromanagement behaviors.

Hierarchical Organizational Structures: Organizations with rigid hierarchical structures, characterized by multiple layers of management and strict reporting relationships, may be more prone to micromanagement. In such environments, authority and decision-making power are concentrated at the top, leading to greater oversight and control over subordinates' tasks and activities (Martinko & Gardner, 1982).

Authoritarian Leadership Cultures: Organizational cultures that prioritize authority, obedience, and conformity foster micromanagement tendencies among leaders. Authoritarian leaders believe that strict control and supervision are necessary to maintain order, discipline, and adherence to organizational norms (Bass, 1985).

High-Stakes or Risk-Averse Industries: Industries or sectors characterized by high stakes, intense competition, or stringent regulatory requirements may inadvertently foster micromanagement behaviors. Leaders in such environments may feel pressured to minimize risks, ensure compliance, and maintain tight control over operations to avoid potential repercussions (Lee, Kim, & Kang, 2021).

Lack of Trust and Communication: Organizational cultures characterized by low levels of trust, open communication, and transparency may contribute to micromanagement. When trust is lacking between leaders and employees, managers may resort to micromanagement as a means of exerting control and minimizing perceived risks (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Unclear Expectations and Performance Metrics: Organizations that have ambiguous goals, unclear performance expectations, or inadequate feedback mechanisms may inadvertently encourage micromanagement. In the absence of clear guidance or metrics for success, managers may resort to closely monitoring and directing their subordinates' activities to ensure desired outcomes (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Organizational Crisis or Turbulence: During periods of organizational crisis, restructuring, or uncertainty, leaders may resort to micromanagement as a means of exerting control and stabilizing the situation. In times of upheaval, leaders may feel compelled to closely oversee operations and decision-making processes to mitigate risks and maintain organizational survival (Richardson et al., 2021).

POSITIVE SIDES OF MICROMANAGEMENT

While micromanagement is generally associated with negative consequences, there are some perceived advantages that proponents of this management style argue. These supposed benefits are often rooted in the belief that close oversight and control can lead to precision, efficiency, and quality assurance. However, it is important to note that these perceived advantages must be weighed against the significant drawbacks of micromanagement.

Precision and Quality Control: Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) and Pastel (2008), stated that micromanagement can ensure meticulous attention to detail and adherence to high-quality standards, particularly in industries where precision is paramount, such as manufacturing or healthcare. Proponents argue that close supervision allows managers to identify and rectify errors promptly, ensuring that tasks are completed to a high standard. Further, a more recent study by Chen et al. (2020) found that micromanagement behaviors can be associated with higher levels of task accuracy and quality in certain work environments.

Immediate Problem Identification and Resolution: According to Weldon and Weingart (1993), micromanagers are often quick to identify and address issues as they arise, preventing errors from escalating into larger problems. Proponents, such as O'Reilly and Aquino (2011), argue that close monitoring enables managers to intervene promptly when deviations from expectations occur, allowing for timely course correction.

Employee Development: According to Bass (1985), for inexperienced or underperforming employees, micromanagement can serve as a temporary measure to provide guidance and support until they gain sufficient competence. Harper and Holton (2019) noted that close supervision allows managers to identify areas where employees may need additional training or support, facilitating their professional development.

Risk Mitigation: In certain industries or contexts where errors can have severe consequences, such as healthcare or aviation, micromanagement may be viewed as a necessary measure to mitigate risks (Pastel, 2008 and Pritchard and Karasick, 1973). Proponents of micromanagement argue that close oversight can help prevent costly mistakes or accidents, thereby safeguarding organizational reputation and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards (Zhang and Bartol, 2010)

NEGATIVE SIDES OF MICROMANAGEMENT

The potential advantages of micromanagement may seem compelling on the surface, but it is essential to recognize that they must be balanced against the negative impacts of this management style.

The disadvantages of micromanagement are well-documented in organizational research, as this management style can have detrimental effects on employee morale, productivity, and organizational effectiveness.

Decreased Employee Morale and Engagement: Micromanagement undermines employee morale and engagement by diminishing their sense of autonomy, ownership, and job satisfaction (Richardson, Vandenberg, DeJoy, and Wilson, 2021). Employees may feel disempowered and demotivated when their work is constantly scrutinized and controlled by their managers.

Reduced Creativity and Innovation: Micromanagement stifles creativity and innovation by limiting employees' ability to think critically, take risks, and propose new ideas (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). When employees feel pressured to conform to strict guidelines and procedures, they may become less inclined to explore alternative approaches or challenge the status quo observed Amabile (1998).

Impaired Decision-Making and Problem-Solving: Micromanagement hinders employees' ability to make independent decisions and solve problems effectively (Lee, Kim, and Kang, 2021). When managers closely oversee and control every aspect of employees' work, it can lead to learned helplessness and dependency among employees.

Increased Turnover and Burnout: According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), micromanagement contributes to elevated turnover rates and employee burnout due to stress, frustration, and dissatisfaction. Zhang et al. (2015) concurred by stating that when employees feel micromanaged, they may experience feelings of resentment and disengagement, leading to higher rates of absenteeism and turnover.

Inefficiency and Reduced Productivity: Contrary to the belief that micromanagement improves efficiency, it often leads to inefficiencies and reduced productivity – according to a study by Kark and Shamir (2002). Constant oversight and scrutiny can create bottlenecks in workflow, as employees may hesitate to take initiative or make decisions without managerial approval (Weldon and Weingart, 1993)

The excessive control and scrutiny of micromanagers can lead to decreased employee morale, autonomy, and innovation, ultimately undermining organizational effectiveness in the long run.

DO THE POSITIVES OF MICROMANAGEMENT OUTWEIGH THE NEGATIVES?

After considering recent research and literature on micromanagement, it is evident that the cons of micromanagement outweigh its pros.

While micromanagement may offer short-term benefits, as propagated by Pastel (2008) - such as precision, quality control, centralized decision making, effective approach to risk mitigation and immediate problem resolution, these advantages are an illusion observed Delgado et al (2015), and are often overshadowed by the significant negative consequences it poses for both employees and organizations.

Studies have consistently demonstrated that micromanagement leads to decreased employee morale, engagement, and job satisfaction (Richardson et al., 2021). Employees subjected to micromanagement experience reduced autonomy, creativity, and independent decision-making, hindering their ability to contribute meaningfully to organizational goals (Lee, Kim, and Kang, 2021). Furthermore, micromanagement undermines employee well-being, contributing to increased stress, burnout, and turnover intentions (Zhang et al., 2015). This turnover not only disrupts organizational stability but also incurs substantial costs associated with recruitment, training, and loss in productivity time (Maslach and Leiter, 2016). The stifling effect of micromanagement on creativity and innovation inhibits organizational adaptability and competitiveness (Amabile, 1998). In today's rapidly changing business environment, organizations have to rely on employee creativity and initiative to drive innovation and stay ahead of their competition. Micromanagement hampers this process by discouraging risk-taking and stifling diverse progressive perspectives.

In conclusion, while micromanagement may offer apparent benefits in terms of control and efficiency, its detrimental effects on employee morale, engagement, creativity, and organizational effectiveness far outweigh any short-term advantages. Organizations must recognize the long-term costs of micromanagement and strive to cultivate a culture of trust, empowerment, and autonomy to foster employee growth and organizational success.

ECONOMIC AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF MICROMANAGEMENT

Micromanagement can have significant economic and organizational consequences, impacting various aspects of organizational performance, efficiency, and sustainability. Direct empirical evidence linking micromanagement to economic outcomes maybe limited, however, recent research and literature offers insights into the indirect consequences of this management style on organizational dynamics.

Decreased Productivity and Efficiency: Micromanagement often leads to decreased productivity and efficiency within organizations. When managers closely supervise and control every aspect of their employees' work, it creates bottlenecks in workflows, hinders

decision-making, and impedes task completion. As a result, employees spend more time seeking approval or clarification from their managers, rather than focusing on value-added activities that contribute to organizational goals (Weldon and Weingart, 1993).

Increased Turnover and Recruitment Costs: Micromanagement contributes to higher turnover rates as employees become disengaged, frustrated, and burnt out due to constant scrutiny and lack of autonomy. High turnover not only disrupts organizational stability but also incurs substantial costs associated with recruitment, training, and onboarding of new employees (Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

Stifled Innovation and Creativity: Micromanagement stifles innovation and creativity within organizations by discouraging risk-taking and suppressing diverse perspectives. When employees feel micromanaged, they may hesitate to propose new ideas, challenge the status quo, or experiment with alternative approaches. This stifling of innovation can hinder organizational adaptability and competitiveness in dynamic and fast-changing markets (Amabile, 1998).

Impact on Employee Well-being and Health Costs: Micromanagement contributes to increased stress, burnout, and psychological distress among employees, leading to higher healthcare costs and absenteeism rates. Employees subjected to micromanagement may experience feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and dissatisfaction, which can negatively impact their physical and mental well-being over time (Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

Toxic Work Environment: Overall, all the effects of micromanagement on employee welfare culminate into a toxic work environment (Kramer, 2018 and Gilbert, 2017). A toxic work environment is one which employees want to escape because in this environment, employees have increased stress, low morale, are suffocated and burnt out, and have feelings of powerlessness and demotivated.

Resource Misallocation: Micromanagement leads to inefficient allocation of resources within organizations. When managers excessively focus on controlling and overseeing minute details of tasks, they may neglect strategic planning, resource allocation, and long-term organizational goals. This can result in misallocation of resources, missed opportunities, and decreased organizational agility (Lurie and McCraw, 2020).

MITIGATING MICROMANAGEMENT

Mitigating micromanagement requires a multifaceted approach that addresses underlying causes and promotes a culture of trust, autonomy, and empowerment within organizations.

Leadership Training and Development: According to Fletcher (2017), providing training and development opportunities for managers to enhance their leadership skills, communication abilities, and emotional intelligence mitigates against micromanagement practices. Managers must be encouraged to reflect on their management style and the impact of their behaviors on employee engagement and performance.

Clear Expectations and Role Definition: Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations for employees, ensuring that they understand the objectives and outcomes they are expected to achieve. Lencioni (2012) suggested that establishing clear boundaries and objectives can reduce the need for excessive supervision and control.

Empowerment and Delegation: Managers must deliberately empower employees by delegating authority, granting autonomy, and entrusting them with meaningful decision-making responsibilities. Encourage managers to focus on outcomes rather than micromanaging processes, allowing employees to take ownership of their work and contribute their unique perspectives (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Open Communication and Feedback: Foster a culture of open communication, transparency, and constructive feedback within the organization. Encourage regular dialogue between managers and employees, providing opportunities for mutual understanding, collaboration, and alignment of goals (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Performance Management Systems: Implementing performance management systems that emphasize accountability, recognition, and continuous improvement goes a long way to eliminating micromanagement. According to Buckingham and Goodall (2019), establishing clear performance metrics and objectives, allows employees to track their progress and receive timely feedback on their performance.

Trust-Building Initiatives: Investing in initiatives that build trust and psychological safety within teams and across the organization is a better way of encouraging leaders to demonstrate trust in their employees' abilities, allowing them to take calculated risks, learn from mistakes, and grow professionally (Edmondson, 2018).

EXAMPLES OF MICROMANAGEMENT AT WORK

1. Eskom (South Africa)

Eskom, the South African state-owned electricity utility, has for a long time been embroiled in controversy due to allegations of mismanagement and corruption. According to Matshiqi (2020), reports indicate that micromanagement and political interference have severely contributed to operational inefficiencies, financial losses, and electricity supply disruptions, impacting the country's economy and public services.

The combination of micromanagement and political interference has severely compromised Eskom's ability to operate efficiently and sustainably. Eberhard (2017) notes that addressing these issues requires a comprehensive overhaul of the utility's governance structure, including the appointment of qualified and experienced professionals to key positions, the implementation of transparent and accountable procurement processes, and the reduction of political influence in operational matters. Only through such reforms can Eskom hope to restore its financial health and ensure a stable and reliable electricity supply for South Africa.

2. Kenneth Lay (Enron)

Kenneth Lay's tenure as CEO of Enron is often cited as a cautionary tale of how leadership failures can lead to corporate catastrophe. Lay's initial micromanagement tendencies created a toxic culture that ultimately contributed to the company's downfall, illustrating the complex dynamics between leadership styles and organizational outcomes.

Lay's leadership approach initially involved micromanagement, characterized by his insistence on controlling detailed aspects of the company's operations. This created a culture of fear and deceit, where employees felt pressured to meet unrealistic expectations, leading to unethical behavior and fraudulent activities. As Sims and Brinkmann (2003) note, Lay's leadership fostered an environment where employees were afraid to report issues or deviate from prescribed methods, fearing repercussions. This environment stifled transparency and accountability, crucial elements for corporate integrity. Despite his early micromanagement, Lay eventually adopted a hands-off approach, trusting subordinates like Jeffrey Skilling and Andrew Fastow to make significant decisions without sufficient oversight. This shift allowed rampant fraud and corruption to flourish unchecked, as these executives manipulated financial statements and engaged in off-balance-sheet transactions to hide the company's mounting debts (Swartz & Watkins, 2003). Lay's failure to strike a balance between necessary oversight and empowerment resulted in one of the largest corporate scandals in history, culminating in Enron's bankruptcy in 2001.

The Enron scandal highlights the dangers of both micromanagement and insufficient oversight. Micromanagement can create a culture of fear and inhibit open communication, leading to unethical behavior as employees strive to meet unrealistic expectations. On the other hand, a lack of oversight can result in unchecked misconduct and fraudulent activities, as seen in Enron's case. Effective leadership requires a balance, ensuring sufficient oversight to prevent misconduct while empowering employees to operate with integrity and innovation (Sims and Brinkmann, 2003; Swartz and Watkins, 2003).

Ken Lay's leadership at Enron serves as a stark reminder of the critical balance required in effective management. Both excessive control and insufficient oversight can have devastating consequences, as demonstrated by Enron's collapse. The case underscores the need for robust corporate governance, ethical leadership, and a balanced approach to management to foster a transparent and accountable organizational culture.

3. Marissa Mayer (Yahoo CEO)

Marissa Mayer 's tenure as CEO of Yahoo from 2012 to 2017 is a significant case study in the potential pitfalls of micromanagement within a major technology company. She came from Google where she had built a reputation for her contributions to product development and design. She was brought in to revive Yahoo. However, her leadership and management style characterized by detailed involvement in the day-to-day operations of the company negatively affected the company. Her micromanagement style, particularly in areas such as hiring, product design, and workplace policies, was often seen as stifling innovation and employee autonomy, and this led to internal strife. According to Stone (2014), her insistence on being involved in such granular details created bottlenecks and frustration among HR personnel and potential hires. Additionally, Mayer implemented strict workplace policies, such as banning telecommuting in 2013, a decision that was so controversial and widely criticized for its impact on employee morale and productivity. By enforcing such rigid controls, Mayer aimed to foster collaboration and innovation, but it instead led to dissatisfaction and employee turnover (Miller, 2013).

Mayer's approach led to a lack of coherent strategy and failure to innovate, which contributed to Yahoo's decline and eventual sale to Verizon in 2017.

CONCLUSION

Micromanagement, while often rooted in a desire for excellence and control, can lead to detrimental outcomes for organizations. Leaders known to excessively involve themselves in minute details risk stifling innovation, creating inefficiencies, and demoralizing their workforce. The downfall of notable companies such as Enron, Polaroid and Yahoo, should serve as a testament to the perils of micromanagement. These cases highlight the importance of empowering employees, fostering an environment of trust, and maintaining a balance between oversight and autonomy.

Effective leadership necessitates the ability to delegate and trust in the expertise of subordinates, enabling a culture of innovation and responsiveness. As demonstrated by the experiences of companies that suffered from micromanagement, leaders must recognize the fine line between necessary oversight and excessive control. By promoting a collaborative and empowering organizational culture, leaders can drive sustainable success and avoid the pitfalls that have historically plagued micromanaged companies.

References

- [1] A. Matshiqi, "Eskom: A warning to SA's management". *Fin24*, 2020
- [2] A Stephen, "Do Women Micromanage - The Employees Perspective". *Bi-Lingual International Research Journal* 40(10). 15-24, 2020
- [3] A. Smith and R. Ashkenas, *The Perfectionist Manager: How to Stop Driving Your Employees Crazy*. Harvard Business Review, 2020
- [4] A. Eberhard, *The political economy of power sector reform in South Africa*. Working Paper No. 6, Program on Energy and Sustainable Development. Stanford University, 2017
- [5] A. H. Eagly and S. J. Karau, *Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders*. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573-598, 2002
- [6] A. Edmondson, *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018
- [7] B.M. Bass, *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. Free Press, 1985
- [8] B. J. Avolio, W. L. Gardner, and F. O. Walumbwa, *Authentic leadership theory and practice: Origins, effects and development*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 48(3), 234-244, 2019
- [9] B. Stone, *The Upstarts: How Uber, Airbnb, and the Killer Companies of the New Silicon Valley Are Changing the World*. Little, Brown and Company, 2014
- [10] C. Y. Huang, W. C. Chiu, and C. C. Lee, "Centralization hurts agility: The moderating role of open communication". *Journal of Business Research*, 125, 147-155, 2021
- [11] C. Argyris, *Empowerment: The Emperor's New Clothes*. Harvard Business Review Press, 1998
- [12] C. C. Chen, H. Liu, and D. Tjosvold, "The impact of empowering leadership on employees' work performance in China: A moderated mediation model". *Journal of Management & Organization*, 26(1), 70-89, 2020
- [13] C. Miller, *Yahoo Orders Home Workers Back to the Office*. *The New York Times*, 2013

- [14] D. B. Smith and R. J. Foti, "A pattern approach to the study of leader emergence". *The Leadership Quarterly*, 9(2), 147-160, 1998
- [15] S. Ryan and C. Cross, "Micromanagement and its impact on millennial followership styles". *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* Vol. 45 No. 1, 2024 pp. 140-152 Emerald Publishing Limited, 2023
- [16] I. Cho, I. D. Diaz and D. S. Chiaburu, "Blindsided by linearity? Curvilinear effect of leader behaviors", *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 38 No. 2, 2017
- [17] T. A. Pastel, "Marine Corps Leadership: Empowering or Limiting the Strategic Corporal?", *Marine Corps Command and Staff Coll Quantico*, 2008
- [18] O. Delgado, E. M. Strauss, and M. A. Ortega, "Micromanagement: when to avoid it and how to use it effectively", *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, Vol. 72 No. 10, pp. 772-776, 2015
- [19] H. E. Chambers, "My Way or the Highway: The Micromanagement Survival Guide", Berrett Koehler Publishers, 2009
- [20] J. Lee, H. Kim, and J. Kang, "The dark side of clear instructions: Micromanagement and self-determination". *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 42(2), 231-249, 2021
- [21] Y. Lurie and H. R. McCraw, "Work-life balance in a high-technology environment: The impact of constant connectivity". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 84, 102316, 2020
- [22] Y. Yang, Y. Yang, and Y. Xiong, How and when micromanagement stifles employee voice: The roles of moral disengagement and leader-member exchange. *Personnel Review*, 48(5), 1404-1422, 2019
- [23] M. J. Martinko and W. L. Gardner, "Learned helplessness: An alternative explanation for performance deficits". *Academy of Management Review*, 7(2), 195-204, 1982
- [24] E. Weldon and L. Weingart, "Group goals and group performance". *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 32(4), 307-334, 1993
- [25] R. D. Pritchard and B. W. Karasick, The effects of organizational climate on managerial job performance and job satisfaction. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 9(1), 126-146, 1973
- [26] R. R. Sims and J. Brinkmann, "Enron Ethics (Or: Culture Matters More than Codes)". *Journal of Business Ethics*, 45(3), 243-256, 2003
- [27] R. C. Mayer, J. H. Davis, and F. D. Schoorman, "An integrative model of organizational trust". *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709-734, 1995
- [28] F. Gino and B. R. Staats, Why organizations don't learn. *Harvard Business Review*, 2015
- [29] X. Zhang, D. A. Waldman, Y. L. Han, and X. B. Li, "Paradoxical leader behaviors in people management: Antecedents and consequences". *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(2), 538-566, 2015
- [30] J. J. Bélanger and A. M. Edwards, "Beyond leadership: The role of organizational culture in influencing micromanagement". *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 93(3), 605-627, 2020
- [31] M. P. E. Cunha, A. Rego, M. Gonzalez, and N. Ribeiro, "Understanding the drivers of managers' behaviors: A meta-analysis of past experiences and role modeling". *Journal of Management*, 47(3), 719-746, 2021
- [32] M. Swartz and S. Watkins, *Power Failure: The Inside Story of the Collapse of Enron*. Crown Business, 2003
- [33] Y. Zhang and K. M. Bartol, Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity: The influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(1), 107-128, 2010
- [34] J. B. Rosener, *America's competitive secret: Women managers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995
- [35] R. Eisenberger, R. Huntington, S. Hutchison, and D. Sowa, "Perceived organizational support". *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500-507, 1986
- [36] S. R. Harper, and E. F. Holton, The manager as coach: The effects of coach-like characteristics on employee learning, skill development, and job satisfaction. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 30(2), 173-196, 2019
- [37] J. O'Reilly and K. Aquino, "A model of third parties' morally motivated responses to mistreatment in organizations". *Academy of Management Review*, 36(3), 526-543, 2011
- [38] C. Maslach and M. P. Leiter, "Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry". *World Psychiatry*, 15(2), 103-111, 2016
- [39] H. A. Richardson, R. J. Vandenberg, D. M. DeJoy, and M. G. Wilson, "A meta-analysis of the job stress-job satisfaction relationship: Examining gender as a moderator". *Journal of Management*, 47(2), 451-477, 2021
- [40] G. N. Powell, and L. M. Graves, *Women and men in management* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003
- [41] Z. Gardanova, N. Nikitina, and W. Strielkowski, "Critical leadership and set-up-to-fail syndrome", 4th International Conference on Social, Business, and Academic Leadership, Atlantis Press, 2019
- [42] M. Buckingham and A. Goodall, *Nine lies about work: A freethinking leader's guide to the real world*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2019
- [43] S. Fletcher, Micromanagement: The silent killer. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 49(2), 85-89, 2017
- [44] P. Lencioni, *The advantage: Why organizational health trumps everything else in business*. Jossey-Bass, 2012
- [45] T. M. Amabile, How to kill creativity. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(5), 76-87, 1998

[46] R. Kark and B. Shamir, The dual effect of transformational leadership: Priming relational and collective selves and further effects on followers. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 237-279, 2002

© GSJ