

Emotional Intelligence as a Moderator Between Micromanagement Leadership and Employee Performance

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Abstract

Today's businesses work in a fast-paced, uncertain, and intensely competitive environment. In such circumstances, organizations depend on their leaders for better results. Leaders use different leadership styles to accomplish their tasks and achieve success. Micromanagement is one such type of leadership style, wherein leaders are overly focused on results, staff-controlling, issues handling, and making all choices on their own. Such constant observation and supervision of employees create an impact on their performance. On the other side, leaders with high emotional intelligence try to empathize with their team members and facilitate improving their performance by giving them constructive criticism. The present study proposed a theoretical framework by investigating the influence of micromanagement leadership on employee performance, and the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between micromanagement leadership towards employee performance. This study also emphasized the implications for leaders, employees, and organizations, thereby formulating propositions that can act as a foundation for future empirical work.

Keywords : emotional intelligence, employee performance, leaders, micromanagement leadership, moderating relationship

JEL Classification Codes : D23, D91, L25

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In today's competitive working environment, organizations are continuously looking for different strategies to achieve their goals and maintain their competitive advantage. Organizations nowadays are focussing more on reducing uncertainties by improving the problem-solving abilities of employees (Miles et al., 1978). Long-lasting difficulties, stressful lives, and difficult situations require problem-solving abilities (Rahman et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a pivotal role in developing and improving problem-solving skills. People with high EI scores are considered calmer and cooler in stressful situations and find solutions to problems. Emotionally intelligent people are not only able to solve problems but are also able to look at problems from different perspectives (Sangeetha & Latha Natarajan, 2019). Emotional intelligence is one of the most essential traits which is the utmost requirement for successful leaders of today. Many different theories of leadership have been developed through research, and it explains that the style of leadership mainly depends on its group members

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(Hema Lakshmi & Sivasankar, 2013). Micromanagement is one of the different situational leadership styles. Some leaders have an understanding that governing and supervising employees are the best methods to do any work. Such a style of leadership where every action of employees is being observed and controlled is termed micromanagement leadership (DeCaro et al., 2011). This type of leadership is mostly considered non-beneficial as it reduces productivity and performance (DeCaro et al., 2011). Leaders who micromanage do it for various reasons, be it by their habit, lack of trust in others, inefficient employees, need of the situation, new projects, or because of their insecurities (White, 2010). Employees under micromanagement leadership feel afraid and frustrated because of constant criticism, which gradually makes them lose their interest, creativity, and confidence at work. This would further lead the employees either to lower their performance or to quit the job (White, 2010). Sometimes, the micromanager does this by unawareness or sometimes purposefully. In both cases, it is assumed that if such leaders possess emotional intelligence, they would analyze the consequences and situations in a better way. If leaders are trained in the domain of emotional intelligence, they will understand their emotions as well as others' emotions. Though it may not solve the problem, it would give them the ability to deal with the situation.

Similarly, emotional intelligence may help the micromanager to reduce their level of interference and control. This perhaps would make employees confident, independent, and satisfied at work, which will be reflected in their performance. There is a need to know how leaders can identify themselves, whether they are micromanaging or not, and, if they are micromanaging, how they can increase the performance of employees with the help of emotional intelligence. There is a lack of studies in this context, and there is a huge research gap.

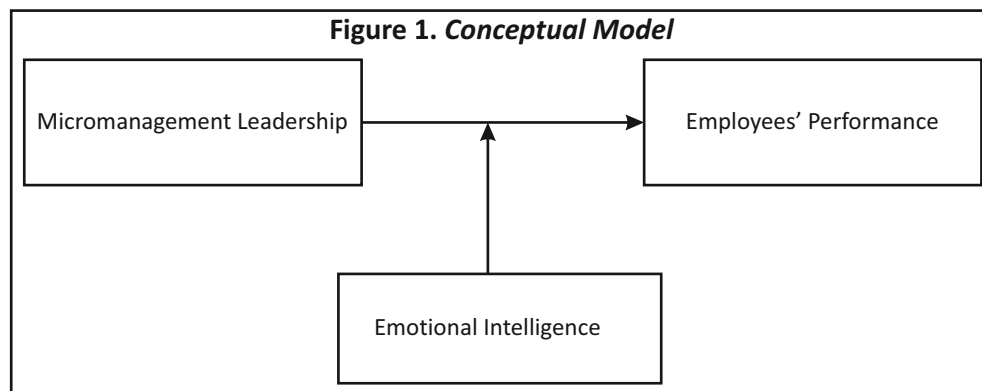
This paper explores the relationships between micromanagement leadership, emotional intelligence, and employee performance through various existing literature and suggests further empirical studies in this context. This is a conceptual paper with various reviews of the literature on emotional intelligence, micromanagement leadership, and employee performance.

Discussion

After various analyses through literature reviews, a conceptual model is developed, and many propositions are introduced.

➤ **Proposition 1 :** Emotional intelligence influences the micromanagement leadership style.

Leadership is an emotional process in which the leaders are expected to understand their own emotions and to understand & regulate others' emotions as well. It is also argued that effective leadership can increase the confidence and morale of their followers by sharing their emotions (Kerr et al., 2006). It has been discovered that supportive and task-oriented leaders are much more effective than those who employ other leadership



philosophies in influencing strategy and fostering collaborative and innovative environments (Sood et al., 2019). One of the vital aspects of effective leadership is to develop the ability to perceive emotions within oneself and others. Leadership also involves expressing emotions effectively. The whole process of perceiving and expressing emotions effectively poses a greater challenge for today's managers to motivate and mobilize their subordinates (Mohanty & Das, 2017). Emotional intelligence is considered an important parameter to make leadership more effective (Kerr et al., 2006). The relationship between leadership and emotional intelligence is an important concept in today's organizations (AlHashmei & Hajee, 2013).

Emotionally intelligent leaders are open to taking the ideas and views of their fellow members and are less likely to take control and credit for everything. They are also able to trust their teammates and are more respectful and thoughtful toward them. Micromanagement leaders can increase their self-awareness component and understanding of others if they are emotionally intelligent. Emotionally intelligent employers can minimize stress and improve staff communication and relationships, thereby reducing micromanagement. Emotional intelligence helps micromanagement leaders focus on results rather than technicalities and daily reports.

✍ **Proposition 2:** Micromanagement leadership style influences employee performance.

Micromanagement leaders are too much obsessed with controlling and interfering with their employees for every small detail. This creates an environment of dependency, inefficiency, lack of trust, demotivation, and lower performance among employees (Allcorn, 2022). Employees' performance is very much dependent on organizational culture and the environment in which they are working (Kumari & Singh, 2018). Leaders who tend to interfere too much in their employees' work create a lack of ownership, attachment, loyalty, and commitment in employees, which directly hampers their performance (White, 2010). Employers who don't micromanage but instead empower employees to take responsibility and make decisions make them more confident and better performers (Serrat, 2017). Some studies have shown that at an initial stage, employees' performance may increase due to the micromanagement style and the fear and pressure associated with it. However, after a certain time, the same employees would start feeling the negative impact of micromanagement and would reduce their risk-taking abilities, motivational skills, creativity, and overall performance (White, 2010). In one of the surveys conducted on the impact of micromanagement, it was found that 73% of the respondents felt that their job performance got affected after being micromanaged. Micromanagement is considered to affect the quality of work, thereby resulting in increased turnover. It reduces the micromanaged persons' productivity, creativity, and efficiency (Limon & Dilekçi, 2021). If such is the case, then employees will not be involved in their job, and the organization will lack motivated and progressive employees (Pathak & Patwardhan, 2011).

✍ **Proposition 3:** Emotional intelligence influences employee performance.

Today, in this modern world, where stress is found in various professions and which results in increased burnout and health issues, emotional intelligence can act as a moderator to bring down stress levels (Houghton et al., 2012). Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand one's own and other's emotions, which assists with decision-making and action. It helps people adapt to environmental and organizational changes, thereby enhancing employees' performance (Kulkarni et al., 2009). Emotionally intelligent leaders understand their teammates and provide constructive feedback. Emotional intelligence affects job satisfaction, employee performance, job involvement, and organizational commitment. Emotional intelligence allows employees to express their emotions and work peacefully. The concept of emotional intelligence is very important because it is directly related to success and long-term performance in any setting, whether it is in an educational setting in terms of higher grades or an organization by maintaining good relations with people and thus earning brownie points from higher authorities and quickly climbing the corporate ladder (Archana Das, 2011).

Emotional intelligence helps create a positive work environment by making employees and employers competent in dealing with organizational stress and problems (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005). In this era of globalization, organizations focus more on emotional intelligence for success. Nowadays, emotional intelligence is one of the most vital skills required in leaders and managers to bring about strategic changes and better commitment and job satisfaction (Issah, 2018). Goleman has proclaimed that EI contributes to 80% of higher performance among top leaders compared to the intelligence quotient (IQ) (Goleman, 1998). Leaders who exhibit emotional intelligence can result in increased peace and harmony among employees in an organization.

✍ **Proposition 4:** Emotional intelligence moderates the effect of micromanagement leadership style on employee performance.

Even the best leaders can demonstrate micromanagement. Leaders who are overly concerned with results will focus on controlling and monitoring their people. Such executives would try to manage all crises and decisions independently, without taking staff into account. This ongoing activity of observing and supervising individuals hurts their overall performance. They begin to lose their creative confidence and become dependent. Some employees may appreciate this dependence, but the majority begin to dislike this lack of autonomy. It might also cause employees to rebel and oppose, which in turn may lead to turnover. Organizations focus on the psychological problems of employees to improve their performance (Shahu, 2010). Emotional intelligence can assist micromanagers in developing cordial relationships with their staff and keep them from quitting.

Emotional intelligence helps employees handle difficulties with patience and calm. It is believed that employees who possess high emotional intelligence perceive stress in a better manner (Tiwari & Bhagat, 2021). This would certainly help the micromanagers to be less worried and less interfering in the work of their team members. If micromanagers develop emotional competence, they will understand others' perspectives and build positive and healthy relationships with them. Proper management of emotions would make the leaders build trust, loyalty, commitment, creativity, and better performance in an employee. Unlike the intelligence quotient (IQ), developed early and almost constantly, emotional intelligence can be instilled through coaching and training. Leaders require emotional intelligence to handle complex and critical situations (Goleman, 1998). It is, therefore, understood that emotional intelligence can be used as a parameter for reducing the effects of micromanagement on employees' performance. This research paper calls for an empirical study on the impact of emotional intelligence on micromanagement leadership and employees' performance.

Organizations should focus on engaged and motivated personnel because it is now employed as a strategy for staying in business (Pandita & Bedarkar, 2015). If employees are not involved and are not performing well, it's a matter of concern. Emotional intelligence is chosen as a moderator since it is found to significantly impact a person's behavior and personality (Dhani & Sharma, 2017). Emotional intelligence can help micromanagers to understand their employees in a better manner. If any organization is observing the negative impact of micromanagement on the performance of employees, they can always conduct training & development programs to improve the emotional component of their leaders and employees (Joshi & Bisht, 2019). This study, therefore, highlights the lack of research on micromanagement leadership and its relationship with the performance of employees and also proposes a model to analyze the influence of emotional intelligence on micromanagement leadership and employee performance.

Managerial Implications

We aimed to develop a theoretical framework to explain the effects of micromanagement leadership on employees' performance. Our propositions state that micromanagement leadership can positively influence

employees' performance if they are emotionally intelligent. As per our knowledge of this concept, micromanagement and its implications have not been highlighted in a broad spectrum. Although the concepts of micromanagement leadership, employee performance, and emotional intelligence have their literature bases, no specific study has been conducted to establish the links between these issues. Hence, the theoretical need for this article arises, justifying its implications in the field of management literature. It is of ubiquitous importance to understand the impact a micromanager leader makes on his/her employees' performance and the difference it can make when they are emotionally intelligent. Employees, too, need to understand how they can recognize the leaders who are micromanaging and can address the issue if it is hampering their performance. This can be achieved if there is empathy, communication, and understanding between employees and their leaders, which can be done if we give importance to the emotional intelligence component. Henceforth, if this relationship is empirically tested, this article would have major practical implications other than the reasons mentioned above.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

Despite our efforts to explicate and substantiate our work, it is not without constraints. To begin, this article was prepared with all other relevant notions (*ceteris paribus*) held constant; so, the presence of a change in the static environment could jeopardize the model's operations. Second, the model emphasizes mostly the negative features of micromanagement based on a preconceived notion of its negative consequences. There is a scope for a lot of empirical work on this concept as this has not been analyzed before. Much research is required as micromanagement is happening everywhere, and its actual implications are not yet found.

Authors' Contribution

Namrata Mishra conceived the idea and developed the conceptual model of the paper by generating concepts and identifying the research gaps. Dr. M. Rajkumar extracted research papers with high repute, filtered them based on keywords, and generated a framework relevant to the study design. Prof. (Dr.) Rajiv Mishra conceptualized the study's relevance and future aspects of the paper. Namrata Mishra wrote the manuscript in consultation with both authors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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