Micromanagement and Employee Morale of Printing Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Excessive monitoring, lack of delegation and the lack of job autonomy in Rivers State Printing Firms is an area of great interest and concern. The high level of employee suspicion affects employee morale and performance. The objectives of this study were to assess the influence of monitoring on employee morale, to ascertain how lack of delegation influences employee morale, to find out how lack of job autonomy affects employee morale, and to find out the influence of work environment on micromanagement and employee morale. The study employed the cross sectional survey design where information was solicited mainly through the use of self-administered questionnaires. Respondents for the self-administered questionnaires were picked from a population of 135 employees of 5 selected Printing firms in Rivers State. The study sample was 101 obtained using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Data was analyzed and results presented using tables, mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The study found out that there is a strong negative relationship between micromanagement and employee morale of printing Firms in Rivers State. The study revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between monitoring and employee morale of printing Firms in Rivers State, There is a significant negative relationship between lack of delegation and employee morale of printing firms in Rivers State. It was revealed, through the study, that there is a significant negative relationship between lack of job autonomy and employee morale of printing Firms in Rivers State. Work environment significantly moderates the relationship between micromanagement and employee morale of printing firms in Rivers State. The study has recommended among other things, that management of printing firms should encourage managers to delegate duties to their subordinates as a means of encouraging autonomy and creativity.*

Keywords: *Micro-management, Monitoring, Delegation, Employees, Morale, employee Turnover*

INTRODUCTION

Employees' proficiencies in every organization depend on the level of super ordinate controls exhibit by management and its management styles. One of the styles is micromanagement, micromanagement is a situation where the manager closely observes and controls the work of employees.

Micromanagement, as found out in Sidhu (2012) is management based on excessive control or attention to irrelevant details. The online Encarta dictionary defines micromanagement as paying attention to small details in management, control of a

person or a situation by paying unnecessary attention to minor details.

Micromanagement generally has a negative connotation that is according to Bielaszka (2008), micromanagement has all the traits of an autocratic manager who retains as much power and decision making authority as possible. The employees are not consulted before decisions that affect them are made and therefore have little or no contribution; orders must be obeyed without receiving any form of explanation, and, there are a structured set of rewards and punishments. The bothersome boss who second guesses every decision a subordinate makes, frets about the font size of the latest progress report, or inspects all of his employees emails not only frustrates and demoralizes his harassed workers but seriously damages the productivity of the organization and, over the long run, may jeopardize the organization's survival. Unfortunately, micromanagement is a fact of management life. Why do so many employees hate to be micromanaged, yet so many managers continue to do it? Why have we all worked for micromanagers but have never been one ourselves? But have we? Maybe the noted management consultant had it right when he quipped, "We have met the enemy...and he is us.

Micromanagement now commonly refers to the control of an enterprise in every particular and to the smallest detail, with the effect of obstructing progress and neglecting broader, higher level policy issues. Micromanagement has been practiced and recognized well before we labeled it as an organizational pathology. In 1946, Peter Drucker called for a "democracy of management" whereby organizations need to decentralize and delegate more decision-making authority to employees'.

In 1960, Douglas McGregor described a Theory X manager as one possessing many of the characteristics of the modern micromanager, one who is poor at proper delegating but one who believes he delegates well. While micromanagement has always disrupted organizational life, it only recently has entered the workplace vocabulary, with the first mention of the term appearing in 1975 in an article in the Economist. Since then, increasing concern has been focused on the impact of worthless bosses.

Extreme micromanagers behave pathologically, refused to accept personal responsibility or accountability and create scapegoats to blame for their own mistakes. They seldom develop people but instead exploit them, preferring to control results rather than inspiring creativity. Being afraid of competition, they rarely hire employees with the talent, experience, and know-how to challenge them. Micromanagers tend to dumb down their organizations. As they hire drones, they must work even harder because drones take more work to manage than do thinking, industrious workers.

It becomes a vicious cycle. Good workers leave, more drones are hired, and the organization begins a downward spiral in skill, morale, and productivity. No organization can be truly efficient when it is constantly re-hiring and training new workers. A good manager who is concerned with details is not necessarily a micromanager. Detailed matter and good leaders use micro-indicators to signal bigger problems or impending disasters. There is nothing wrong with being detailed oriented, especially when analyzing critical reports, reviewing accidents, and compiling a budget. There is a big difference between micromanagement and monitoring, and every important task should have a monitoring plan to insure performance.

Some areas are just too important and cannot be over managed, such as the recruitment of the best personnel or insuring overall customer satisfaction. But way too often the detailed-oriented boss loses the forest in the trees, becomes overly concerned with nitpicking details, and soon begins to micromanage subordinates. In some cases, micromanagement may increase productivity over the short term, but long-term problems will eventually defeat any short-term gains. Studies have shown that putting fear into employees at work does have an impact; it does increase productivity, but only temporarily.

In a time of scarce talents, the loss of workers to sickness or turnover is something that can no longer be ignored. It has proven to have an adverse effect on organizational productivity and, ultimately, the bottom line of most organizations. Micromanagement can also take a toll on the efficiency of an organization when managers choose to spend their time doing the detailed work of their subordinates instead of managing the more strategic issues they are assigned in the print media of Rivers State. In fact, micromanagement is not ideal when it affects the mental health of employees and the efficiency of an organization.

Statement of the Problems

The Rivers State printing firms which this study focuses its attention on as stated in the background to the study is characterized by the old fashioned style of management "Micromanagement" which causes disconnect between employers and employees' because of the excessive control, monitoring and the continued suspicion of employees' that they lack the abilities to perform without the control and supervision of the higher level management.

It is also a problem when authority and responsibilities are not delegated to employees', workers become frustrated because of lack of job autonomy that allows the employees' to determine the means and end to their assigned duties because of continued interference and meddling from organizational leaders. Employees' have different emotional reactions that results in counter productivity owing to the manager's application of micromanagement in his/her management approach. It is against this backdrop that this study is geared towards unraveling the influence of micromanagement on employees' morale in the print media of Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

Generally,   this study is aimed at investigating the influence of micromanagement on employees' morale in printing firms in Rivers State. Specifically, the study:

i.   Determine the influence of monitoring on employees' morale of printing firms in Rivers State.
ii.   Identify how lack of delegation affects employees' morale of printing firms in Rivers State.

Research Questions

From the stated specific objectives, the following research questions provided answers to micromanagement and employees' morale;

i. To what extent does monitoring enhance employees' morale of printing firms in Rivers State?

ii. To what extent does the lack of delegation enhance employees' morale of printing firms in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and low morale of printing firms in Rivers State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and high turn-over of employees' of printing firms in Rivers State.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between the lack of delegation and low morale of employees' of printing firms in Rivers State.

H_{04}: There is no significant relationship between the lack of delegation and high turn-over of employees' of printing firms in Rivers State.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW
Monitoring

Employers and superior can create very difficult problems within the workforce when they monitor employees'. That being said, the following questions require urgent answers, should employers be monitoring their employees'? If so, what should they be restricted to monitoring, and do the employees' have the right to know that employers are monitoring them. Each of these questions produces millions of different response from both the employer's side, as well as the viewpoint of the employees'.

Frayer (2002) noted that, the increased use of the Internet by employees' has created more avenues for employers to produce sophisticated monitoring software, which enables them to continuously peer into literally everything employees' do online both during and after work hours. Frayer however stated that, organization created employees' monitoring because there was a substantial need for organizations to monitor their workforce. Which in my opinion I totally agree with Frayer, but as much as employers should monitor its workforce, it should be minimal in order not to send the wrong messages to employees', thereby destroying their morale.

Glassdoor.com posited that, there are lots of potential pitfalls involved in employees' monitoring. Depending on the employees and the monitoring methods, workplace surveillance can encourage fear and distrust in the workplace. Overbearing surveillance and constant negative feedback can discourage employees and turn them against each other, increasing turnover and lowering morale and ultimately workplace productivity.

Constant monitoring processes can also keep employees from their work. What may be classified as a distraction could very well be a useful tool for the employee's job, for example. Many employees' simply don't like to be monitored when they are working. It distracts them from the task at hand.

Bandura (2002) sees monitoring mechanisms as a means of disengagement, a

way of spreading the role of an agent and thus facilitating harmful managerial behavior which effectively crushes employees' morale.

Lack of Delegation

According to Al-Jammal, *et al.* (2015) one of the primary reasons of venturing into business is to gain competitive advantage and to make profit. Without the employees' discharging their assigned responsibilities, the objectives of the organizations may already be defeated. Thus, employees' performance is crucial in the achievement of organizational goals. Employees' who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give the organizations crucial strategic and competitive advantages including higher productivity and lower employees' turnover. According to Koontz, et al (1983) the essence of delegation of authority is to ensure that no manager or superior in an enterprise should do all the work alone.

Thus, it is not surprising the clamor by employees' for delegation of authority in today's organizations as employees' are ever ready to discharge their assigned duties delegated to them. Authority is only delegated when a senior manager or employer vests decision-making process on an employee.

Dessler (2006) defined delegation of authority as authority transportation from top level of management to executives and to other levels. Lutgans and Hodgetts (2004) stated that delegation of authority as a process of distributing tasks and authorities in an organization. The term delegation was conceptualized as the actions by which a superior assigns part of his or her responsibility commensurate with the assigned task to a subordinate Kiiza and Picho, (2014). Fleith and Abd AL-Majeed, (2005) opined that authorization is the process in which employees are ordered by the manager to perform specific task in a way that it will not pose a risk to the organization.

Managers mistakenly jump to conclusions concerning the abilities and functionalities of employees'. For example, a manager might have a negative perception about an employee's ability as a result of one singular occurrence. However, this occurrence may not be a true representation of the employee's overall abilities to perform, or the manager may be unaware of the situation behind the circumstances. Another possibility is that the manager may conclude about an employee's abilities based on second-hand information from other managers, employees, or personal acquaintances, which may be factual. Naturally if a manager believes that a subordinate lacks the ability, the manager will not be willing to delegate to that person.

Lack of delegation has lots of negative influence on employees' morale, among such negative effects are; poor employee morale. Refusal to delegate authority to employees can have a disastrous impact on the morale of good employees that want to contribute their talents to the organization in a meaningful way. A lack of delegation of authority to employees' also results in stress and burnout. Even the most talented, ambitious, and energetic leaders are apt to run out of steam if they insist on handling all major aspects of an organization's operation.

Damage to an organization's public image and reputation, organizational leaders who do not delegate to their employees, insisting instead on attending to all relevant aspects of his or her responsibilities, run the risk of inadvertently suggesting to clients

that the firm's workforce is not competent as well as not being trustworthy. Bateman and Zeithaml (1990).

Employees' Morale   '

Employees' morale is generally referred to as "willingness to work". Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction create the problem of low morale among the employees'. Good motivation leads to high morale. It being a psychological concept, it is not easy to define it precisely.

According to Robert and John (2003) employees' morale is the extent to which employees' need are satisfied and the extent to which an employee perceives that satisfaction stemming from total job satisfaction. According to this approach, the satisfaction of basic needs is the symbols of morale. If the basic needs of the employees are satisfied their morale will be high and also their morale will be low when they are not satisfied with the higher leaders.

Low Employees' Morale

Sauermann and Cohen, (2008) defined morale as an eluding quality which entails human feelings, emotions, attitude and perception towards the organization and its members. Positive morale is usually characterized by traits such as; discipline, confidence and willingness to perform. Low morale on the other hand, can be attributed to varied prevailing factors such as job insecurity, lack of fair compensation policy, uncertain business conditions, poor leadership style, lack of delegation of duties, respect and appreciation of employees and excessive outsourcing practices. Low morale has a massive negative effect on organization's income, productivity, financial competitiveness and organizational objectives.

Low morale according to Sauermann and Cohen (2008) is a consequence of managerial behavior where superiors and organizational heads controls their employees from a top-down command without any form of direct conversion on workplace issues bedeviling the organization and its employees, according to them. Low morale also causes employees to lose interest, especially when managers don't appreciate their efforts and the tasks performed and this happen because of the poor management style adopted by the organization in which superiors exercise excessive and unnecessary control on the employees, where workers are treated as being incompetent to perform certain organizational duties as a result, the manager is constantly breeding on their necks (Zeynep and Huckman, 2008).

According to an article in The Leading Edge by Abbot, (2003) unhappy employees who are discontented with the managerial misbehavior can have a high price tag. Management should therefore work on controlling the effects of low morale through the understanding of their employees' potentials by giving them the necessary freedom while they work and their core work processes, understanding their abilities, enriching employees' job and recognizing their achievements, respecting and appreciating the inputs from employees (Ngambi, 2011).

Employees Turnover

Rankin (2006) asserted that the rate of turnover ranges from organization to organization. The levels of turnover also vary from region to region. High level of

employee turnover can be very costly to any firm especially when top talents leave an organization it has a devastating effect on the functionality of such firms considering the fact that some of the best hands have moved on.

The remote causes of employee turnover ranges from the following; unhappiness with leadership style, unhappiness from being micromanaged, Feelings of not being appreciated since employees ordinarily wants to give their all on the job, they also want to be appreciated and respected for their efforts. Even the most experienced of workers needs to be told what they are doing right once in a while.

A firm that employs micromanagement as its way of managing employees, will only achieve few short term goals but with time the obsessed superior that is always looking out for unnecessary details, monitoring and controlling every organizational member will only succeed in creating a frustrated, unmotivated, non-creative workforce that will eventually lead to low morale and high employee turnover, because employees wants to work under a manager that respects and value their view point, after all, the employees require freedom without meddling while they carry out the task from decision made by management, so why not give the employees an opportunity to contribute to the decisions that affects their work.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design, because it assessed the influence of micromanagement on employees' morale. The design is considered suitable because it allows for the descriptive examination of the variables across several units in a convenient way (Baridam, 2001).

The population comprised of 135 registered Printing Firms in Rivers State. The sample of the study consisted of 101 respondents that were randomly drawn through simple random sampling technique. A 24 items questionnaire based on micromanagem ent was developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three expert from the faculty of management in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The questionnaire items were structured using 5- point Likert scale and each response was given a corresponding nominal value Strongly Disagree (SD); 1, Disagree (D); 2, undecided (U), 0, Agree (A); 3 and Strongly Agree (SA); 4.

Reliability on the other hand, measures the extent to which a measuring instrument consistency based on the variables with overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87, using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).The multivariate analysis which examines micromanagement and it's on influence of the predictor and criterion variable is tested using the partial correlation techniques at 95% confidence interval.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
Bivariate Analysis

In determining the statistical technique to suit our purpose, we considered Kothari (2004) who argued that when there exists association or correlation between two variables, correlation technique should be used and when there exists cause and effect relationship between two variables in the case of the bivariate population or between one variable on one side and two or more variables on the other side in case of

multivariate population, partial correlation technique is appropriate. This was the basis for our choice of the Spearman Rank Oder Correlation to test our hypothesized relationships in our study. This section will therefore be used to present the test of hypotheses. We shall commence by first presenting a proof of existing relationships.

Table 1 Correlation Matrix for Monitoring and Measures of Employees' Morale

			Monitoring	Low morale	Employee turnover
Spearman's rho	Monitoring	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.842[**]	-.797[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	88	88	88
	Low morale	Correlation Coefficient	-.842[**]	1.000	-.608[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	88	88	88
	High employee turnover	Correlation Coefficient	-.797[**]	-.608[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	88	88	88

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ho$_1$: *There is no significant relationship between monitoring and low morale of employees' in printing firms in Rivers State.*

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between monitoring and low morale of employees'. The *rho* value -0.842 confirms this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.01. The correlation coefficient represents a very high negative correlation indicating also a very strong negative relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between monitoring and low morale of employees' in the print media of Rivers State.

Ho$_2$: *There is no significant relationship between monitoring and employee turnover of employees' in printing firms in Rivers State.*

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between monitoring and high turnover of employees'. The *rho* value -0.797 confirms this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.01. The correlation coefficient represents a high negative correlation indicating also a strong negative relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the

alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between monitoring and high turnover of employees' in the print media of Rivers State.

Relationship between Lack of Delegation and Measures of Employee Morale

Table 2. Correlation Matrix for Lack of Delegation and Measures of Employee Morale

			lack	Low morale	Employee turnover
Spearman's rho	Lack	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.546[**]	-0.737[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	88	88	88
	Low morale	Correlation Coefficient	-.546[**]	1.000	-.608[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	88	88	88
	Employee turnover	Correlation Coefficient	-.737[**]	-.608[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	88	88	88

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output, 2018

Table 2 illustrates the test for the two previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for:

Ho₃: *There is no significant relationship between lack of delegation and low morale of employees' in printing firms in Rivers State.*

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between lack of delegation and low morale of employees'. The *rho* value -0.546 confirms this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.01. The correlation coefficient represents a moderate negative correlation indicating also a moderate negative relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between lack of delegation and low morale of employees' in the print media of Rivers State.

Ho₄: *There is no significant relationship between lack of delegation and employee turnover of employees' in printing firms in Rivers State.*

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient (rho) shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between lack of delegation and high turnover of employees'. The *rho* value -0.737 confirms this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.01. The correlation coefficient represents a high negative correlation indicating also a high negative relationship among the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between lack of delegation and high turnover of employees' in the print media of Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between micromanagement and employee morale of print media in Rivers State. The findings revealed a significant and negative relationship between micromanagement and employee morale of print media in Rivers State using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. More specifically, the following findings from the study emerge:

The relationship between Monitoring and Employees' Morale

The test of hypotheses one and two (Table 1), shows that there is a strong negative relationship between monitoring and each of the measures of employees' morale. This implies that the monitoring methods, workplace surveillance can encourage fear and distrust in the workplace. Overbearing surveillance and constant negative feedback can discourage employees and turn them against each other, increasing turnover and lowering morale and ultimately workplace productivity.

This finding is in tandem with Bandura (2002) who argued that monitoring mechanisms as a means of disengagement, a way of spreading the role of an agent and thus facilitating harmful managerial behavior which effectively crushes employees' morale.

The relationship between lack of delegation and employees' morale

The test of hypotheses three and four (Table 2), shows that there is a significant negative relationship between lack of delegation and each of the measures of employees' morale. Hence, the null hypotheses were hereby rejected. This implies that Lack of delegation negatively influences employees' morale, among such negative effects are; poor employee morale. Refusal to delegate authority to employees can have a disastrous impact on the morale of good employees that want to contribute their talents to the organization in a meaningful way. A lack of delegation of authority to employees' also results in stress and burnout. Even the most talented, ambitious, and energetic leaders are apt to run out of steam if they insist on handling all major aspects of an organization's operation.

This finding corroborates the views of Bateman and Zeithaml (1990) who posited that lack of delegation damages an organization's public image and reputation, organizational leaders who do not delegate to their employees, insisting instead on attending to all relevant aspects of his or her responsibilities, run the risk of inadvertently suggesting to clients that the firm's workforce is not competent as well as not being trustworthy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between micromanagement and employees' morale of print media in Rivers State. Accordingly, the study strategy and methodology were designed in a way that points towards the achievement of the study objectives. The study concludes that micromanagement strategy though the use of close monitoring/supervision, lack of delegation of authority and lack of employees' job autonomy negatively impacts employees' morale indicated through low morale and a high turnover rate.

Based on the above conclusions, the researchers recommend as follows:

i. Management of print media should encourage managers to delegate. This is because to some, handing over control is horrifying, but they must soon learn that delegation is one of the most important productivity skills a manager can master. When properly exercised, delegation establishes responsibility and accountability, and builds mutual trust and reciprocity between superiors and subordinates.

ii. Management of print media should create an organizational environment that is open to innovation and new ideas. Employees should be empowered with decision making authority so that they could take risks.

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