

Women Micromanagement in Private Higher Education UK: A Critical Review

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Abstract

The primary purpose of women's micromanagement in private higher education institutions in the UK is to attempt to define micromanagement, examining the underlying factors, characteristics and outcomes of such micromanagement practices. This topic is essential for understanding the dynamics within private higher educational institutions and how gender-based management behaviours may influence various aspects of private higher education.

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a rigorous research methodology used to gather, analyse, and synthesise existing academic literature on Women Micromanagement in Private Higher Education UK. We used a systematic and structured approach to identifying, selecting, and evaluating relevant studies on Women Micromanagement in Private Higher Education in the UK from various sources such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and Science Direct, including websites such as Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA.)

The findings of a systematic review of "Women Micromanagement in Private Higher Education in the UK" revealed several significant insights and patterns in the existing literature. The review uncovered a gender disparity in leadership roles generally and within private higher education institutions in the UK, particularly with women often occupying middle management positions while being underrepresented in top leadership roles. Literature also revealed that micromanagement could be good or bad; the negative side is that it drains productivity, inflicts fear, and includes excessive control, which is seen as demotivating. Micromanagement can be advantageous in certain short-term situations. It is not right to label women as micromanagers, and males could also be micromanagers. However, not all studies support the idea that women are more likely to micromanage.

Keywords: Women (Gender), Leadership, Private Higher Education

Introduction

In the last couple of decades, private higher education has been fast growing worldwide (Khawaja, Sokić and Qureshi, 2022). The drive of capitalism and economic policies such as liberalisation, marketisation and privatisation have allowed Private Higher Education to proliferate in many countries of the world, particularly since the 1990s (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021). Consequently, private higher education is well-established in many countries; in some countries, it is more dominant than public higher education (Goodman and Yonezawa, 2007) and currently accounts for a third of global enrolment (Levy, 2018). Thus, more than 30% of the global population of higher education students is enrolled in private higher education (Altbach et al., 2009; Levy, 2018). The expansion of the private HE sector in the UK is the result of the broader emerging drive of privatisation in HE systems (Johnstone and Marcucci 2010) and is also part of a global trend (Middlehurst and Fielden, 2014). An indicator of this expansion in the UK is the number of private HEIs with degree-awarding powers, which grew from only one private university (University of Buckingham) in 1983 to more than ten in less than a decade (Qureshi and Sarwar, 2021).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are classified as either public or private (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021). The UK's higher education system comprises public and private institutions, and this binary classification is quite challenging to define and distinguish each (Levin, 2005) because of a lack of conceptual clarity (Marginson, 2007). Levy (2012) describes *private higher education institutes* as those defined by national authorities. In defining private HEIs, Altbach (1999) implies that those organisations that operate for profit do not receive any grant from the Government and are "responsible for their own funding" (p.2). The most straightforward distinction between a private and public higher education institution is that a private HEI has private ownership and funding, while a public HEI is an organisation with state ownership and funding (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021).

Women's leadership and micromanagement styles at private HEIs are not well explored in the literature. Hence, we have found a gap in the management literature regarding women's micromanagement, where there are very few studies about this topic and hardly any related to private higher education. Although private higher education is a specific branch of private entrepreneurship that includes quality, excellence, and professional standards, it must be explored (Khawaja, Sokić and Qureshi, 2022).

Gender in UK Higher Education (UKHE) staffing is a convoluted and multifaceted issue encompassing various aspects of gender equity, representation, and equality in academic and administrative positions within UK Higher Education Institutions (UKHEIs). Historically, UKHEIs have faced gender disparities in staffing, particularly in senior leadership roles.

UKHE has made progress in addressing gender imbalances by implementing various policies, initiatives, and campaigns to promote gender equality and diversity. This is evident that the female representation slightly increased in the 2021/22 academic compared to the academic year 2019/20.

Table 01: All staff (Male and Female) in the UKHE

Position Type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Senior Officials (Directors/Managers)	490	540	540
Male	270	300	290
Female	220	240	245
Professional Occupations	221,545	222,490	231,715
Male	117,800	117,600	120,550
Female	103,390	104,500	110,855
Associates Professionals and Technical Occupations	1490	1495	1670
Male	790	795	845
Female	695	700	825

Source: HESA (2023) modified by authors

In the academic year 2019/20 the presentation of males in the UKHE has been dominated.

- Senior Official male are 55% while females are 45%
- Professional Occupations male are 53% while females are 47%
- Associates Professionals and Technical Occupations male are 53% while females are 47%

We see a slight increase in the academic year 2021/22

- In the academic year 2021/22 the presentation of males has been dominated.
- Senior Official male are 53% while females are 47%
- Professional Occupations male are 52% while females are 48%
- Associates Professionals and Technical Occupations male are 51% while females are 49%

The above latest statistics confirm the gender disparity that exists in higher education positions. Across the vast majority of countries women are a significant minority in senior academic positions. Women are a significant minority in senior academic positions across most countries (Read & Kehm 2016).

It was also noted that women leaders in senior positions were in smaller numbers compared to men in HEIs across the world. The reducing gender inequality in the HE space takes a long-term effort (O'Connor 2020). For example, efforts required to improve hiring & promoting and training and development processes. The hiring and promoting processes, as an organisational barrier, while varying significantly from organisation to organisation, could prevent a woman from leading or advancing to a top management position. There seems to be a lack of discussion and support around gender-specific training and development. The literature lacks knowledge, and a substantial gap has been noted.

Methodology

The main aim of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is to give a thorough and objective summary of the state of knowledge in a specific field or topic area. The SLR facilitates the extraction of significant findings, patterns, and relevant conclusions from existing literature by carefully specifying inclusion and exclusion criteria, carrying out a methodical search, and critically evaluating the quality of selected studies. This methodology provides a trustworthy and evidence-based synthesis of research on a particular subject, which is beneficial for guiding research, policy creation, and decision-making.

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on "**Women Micromanagement in Private Higher Education UK: A Critical Review**" involves a rigorous and structured process for gathering, analysing, and synthesising relevant research studies. We developed a comprehensive search strategy using appropriate keywords such as Women, Gender, Leadership, Micromanagement, and Private Higher Education. We used ERIC, Science Direct, JSTOR, Google Scholar, databases and relevant websites such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Table 02: Search sources and results

Key Words	ERIC	Science Direct	JSTOR	Google Scholar	Total
Women, Micromanagement, Gender studies, Private Higher Education	69	176	3380	18,100	21,725

Source: Authors

Inclusion

Relevance to topic and keywords

Women's Micromanagement in Private Higher Education

By date 2000 – 2023

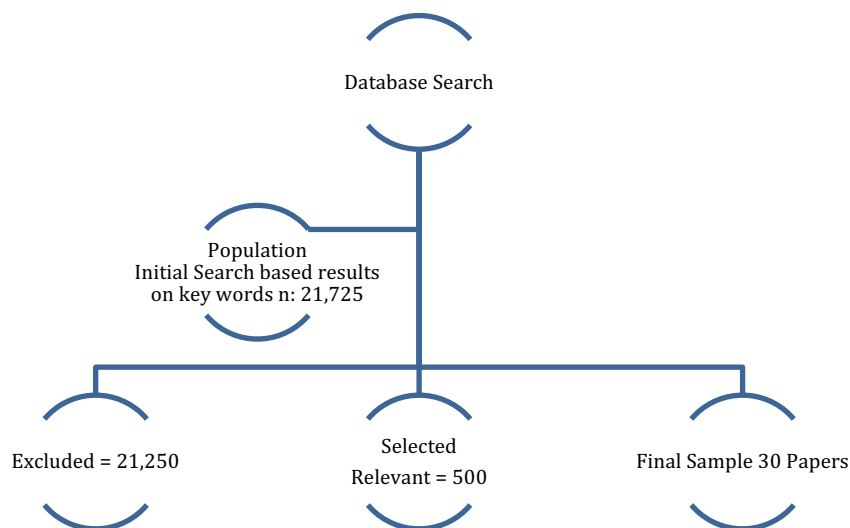
a valid and valuable research (papers)

Language: English

Population Research Papers on **Women Micromanagement in Private Higher Education UK**

Sample size (30) (Please see appendix 1)

Figure 01: Search process



Source: Authors

Research Questions

1. What is the conceptualisation of micromanagement?
2. What is micromanagement and its main characteristics?
3. Why women leaders micromanage and its impact within the context of Private Higher Education UK?
4. What are the key factors contributing to Women's micromanagement?
5. What is the nature of women's micromanagement in private higher education UK?
6. What are the consequences of women' micromanagement in private higher education institutions in the UK?

Research Objectives

- To explore the perceptions and definitions of micromanagement
- To examine the main characteristics of micromanagement
- To evaluate the women micromanagement impact within the context of Private Higher Education UK?
- To identify the key contributing factors to Women's micromanagement.
- To assess the nature of women's micromanagement in private higher education UK?
- To understand the negative consequences of women's micromanagement

Research ethics are paramount in conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) as they guide collecting, analysing, and presenting data from existing studies.

Transparency and Reproducibility: We ensure transparency in the review process by documenting every step, from search strategies to inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusivity: We ensure that the review includes a broad range of studies without bias, irrespective of their findings. Avoid selective reporting or cherry-picking studies that only support a preconceived notion.

Adhering to ethical standards is not only a matter of integrity but also crucial for maintaining the credibility and trustworthiness of the systematic literature review. Ethical guidelines ensure that existing research is synthesised with due diligence and respect for individuals and the scientific community.

Literature Review

Micromanagement implies observing employees' every movement or activity to control their work and make them feel observed (Umana-Ramírez et al., 2023). Sidhu (2012) represented micromanagement as managing things with attention to details and excessive control. White (2010) defines micromanager as 'the bothersome boss who second-guesses every decision a subordinate makes' (P.71). Wright (2000) defines micromanagement as managing 'things closely and to evaluate the process or work under scrutiny'.

The provided definitions of micromanagement by Umana-Ramírez et al. (2023), Sidhu (2012), White (2010), and Wright (2000) offer valuable perspectives. Each definition contributes to our understanding of micromanagement by emphasising various aspects of the phenomenon.

Umana-Ramírez et al. (2023) encapsulate the essence of micromanagement in their definition by highlighting the aspect of close observation and control over employees' work. Their definition reflects the inherent tension between the need for supervision and the potential intrusiveness associated with micromanagement. This

definition recognises employees' emotional and psychological impact, as they may feel constantly monitored and judged.

Sidhu (2012) underscores the importance of attention to detail and excessive control in micromanagement. This definition acknowledges the meticulous scrutiny and involvement often associated with micromanagers, who tend to focus on the minutiae of tasks. The term "excessive control" is particularly pertinent, as it conveys that micromanagement can be counterproductive and stifling.

White (2010) offers a vivid and relatable characterisation of micromanagers as "bothersome bosses who second-guess every decision a subordinate makes." This definition encapsulates the frustration and sense of disempowerment that employees may experience under micromanagers. It vividly portrays the impact of micromanagement on the employee-employer relationship.

Wright (2000) provides a concise definition emphasising the scrutiny and evaluation of processes and work. This definition conveys the core element of micromanagement: continuous oversight and assessment of tasks and activities. It highlights the thoroughness of micromanagers in monitoring work.

These definitions collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of micromanagement. They acknowledge the close supervision, attention to detail, excessive control, and the impact on employees' autonomy and decision-making. As depicted by these definitions, micromanagement is not merely about managerial oversight but also the interpersonal and emotional dimensions of the employee-manager relationship. These definitions provide a comprehensive foundation for further exploration and analysis of micromanagement in organisational contexts.

In the leadership literature, *Micromanagement* is generally seen to be a negatively loaded word, often used as a synonym for poorly conducted leadership (Chambers 2004, Knight 2015; White 2010; Wright 2000; Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003; Hogan, Hogan and Kaiser 2010; Amabile et al. 2004; Sidhu 2012).

Contemporary literature has used Micromanagement as a leadership style characterised by excessive control (Chambers, 2004; Clearly, Hungerford, Lopez & Cutcliffe, 2015; Lewis, 2014; Sidhu, 2012; Stephen, 2020; Wright, 2000).

Chambers (2004) describes Micromanagement leadership as "inordinate, undesirable, counterproductive impedance and disturbance of individuals or things."

Chambers (2004) characterises the micromanagement leadership style that involves excessive, unwanted, and counterproductive interference and disruption in the actions or activities of individuals or processes. In essence, it reflects the idea that micromanagers overly involve themselves in the details of tasks or the decisions of their subordinates to the point where it hampers efficiency and can be detrimental to both the individuals being managed and the overall organisational outcomes. This description underlines the negative consequences of micromanagement, emphasising how it can hinder productivity, stifle creativity, and create a challenging work environment due to constant interference and disruption.

Micromanagement, regardless of the gender of the person doing it, can have negative consequences in various contexts. Regarding women's Micromanagement, some potential negative consequences are Reduced Employee Morale, Stifled Creativity and Innovation, Hindered Productivity, High Turnover, Lack of Personal Growth, Poor Manager-Employee Relationships, Increased Stress and Burnout, Inefficiency, Resistance and Defensiveness (Chambers, 2004; Lewis, 2014; Sidhu, 2012; Stephen, 2020).

Though micromanagement is considered a negative way of handling people and has gained a bad reputation, it can deliver better positive outcomes if exhibited correctly at the right time (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012). The statement suggests that while micromanagement is generally viewed as a negative approach to managing people and is often associated with undesirable consequences, it can, in some situations, lead to positive outcomes when applied judiciously and in the appropriate context. Goldsmith and Goldsmith (2012) argue that there may be instances where a more hands-on, detailed management style is warranted. When used correctly and sparingly, micromanagement can ensure that tasks are executed precisely and according to established standards. In such cases, it might enhance efficiency, quality, and precision in work. However, the key is knowing when and how to effectively employ micromanagement, as overusing it can still lead to the adverse outcomes typically associated with this management style, including decreased autonomy, demotivation, and stifled employee creativity.

It is a prevailing perception that women generally micromanage. The authors (Eagly and Karau, 2002) said that this might be because of how society views femininity, which places more value on caring and helping than on being assertive and

independent. Overall, the research points to a possible explanation for societal biases and stereotypes and the fact that there are few female leaders to look up to (Trang and Nguyen, 2020). Also, men and women in leadership roles see directive leadership styles differently—universities in the UK (2021). Tran (2014) suggested that women are less capable of networking, and Freeman (1990) highlighted work-to-family conflict. Babic and Hensez (2021) presented clear evidence of the link between the capability of networking and work-to-family conflict.

A 2019 study in the *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* found that women in leadership positions are more likely to be seen as micromanagers than men in similar positions.

This is because gender stereotypes and biases see women as more caring and controlling than men (Karniol, 2019). However, a study published in the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* in 2017 found that female managers were less likely to micromanage than male managers. However, because of gender biases and stereotypes, subordinates were likelier to think that female managers were micromanagers. A 2016 study published in the *Journal of Gender, Work, and Organization* found that women are more likely to be criticised when they adopt a directive leadership style, which is often associated with micromanagement, while men are more likely to be praised when they do the same (Rudman and Glick, 2016).

A systematic literature review published in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* in 2020 found that women in senior management positions in Private HE face many problems, such as being seen as too aggressive, demanding, or micromanagers, which can be linked to gender stereotypes and biases (Babic et al., 2017).

In the same way, a 2019 systematic literature review in the *International Journal of Educational Management* found that there is not much evidence to support the claim that women in senior management positions in Private higher education are more likely to be seen as micromanagers. More research is needed to examine the specific micromanaging behaviours exhibited by women in these roles and compare them to those of men in comparable positions.

Also, a recent systematic literature review in the *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering* in 2020 showed that women in academia are seen as less competent, less hireable, and less deserving of mentoring than men, which can lead to micromanaging behaviours (Kricorian et al., 2020).

Studies also found that women in academia are more likely to be in jobs that do not lead to tenure, have fewer resources, and feel more alone than men in the same jobs. Although some evidence suggests that women in senior management positions in Private higher education may be perceived as micromanagers, the current research is inadequate, and further studies are necessary to comprehend the specific behaviours and factors contributing to this perception (Mishra et al., 2019).

The problem of women as micromanagers is complicated and has been written extensively. Although some studies suggest that women in leadership positions are more likely to be perceived as micromanagers, the perception may be linked to gender stereotypes and biases. The societal expectation that women conform to traditional gender roles, which include being nurturing, supportive, and detail-oriented, can lead to the perception that women are micromanaging (Sharma, 2012). Moreover, the lack of female role models in leadership positions can cause women in such positions to feel pressure to demonstrate their competence, which can manifest as micromanaging behaviour. However, not all studies support the idea that women are more likely to micromanage. Some studies found that female managers are no more likely to micromanage than male managers, but they are more likely to be perceived as micromanagers by their subordinates because of gender stereotypes and biases.

Amstad et al. (2011) found that women's leadership in Private higher education in the UK is complicated and multifaceted. Even though there has been progress in recent years, women still face many obstacles when getting into leadership positions in Private higher education. These problems include gender bias, limited access to resources and networks, and the need to balance work and family obligations.

Several studies suggest that women in senior management positions in Private higher education encounter significant challenges linked to perceptions of being too aggressive, demanding, or micromanagers due to gender stereotypes and biases, which can hinder women's opportunities for advancement in academia (Babic & Hansez, 2020). Furthermore, women in academia may face unique challenges concerning work-life balance and family responsibilities, which could limit their ability to engage fully in leadership roles.

Despite these problems, there have been some positive changes in the past few years, such as a rise in the number of women in top positions at UK Private higher education institutions. Also, there are a number of programmes that want to help women in Private higher education become better leaders. One example is the Aurora programme, which gives women in academia opportunities to learn about leadership and network. These could help women think more critically about how they lead, encourage delegation, and better help their teams. Sharing good practises through women's leadership groups and network events could also contribute to this (Limon, 2020). In summary, the issue of women's leadership in Private higher education in the UK is an ongoing and complex one with significant challenges whilst progressing. More efforts are required to tackle gender bias and support women's academic leadership development.

Conclusion

Despite the significant promotion of diversity in HE and legislation for equal opportunities for women and men, it is noted that women remain primarily in the minority in decision-making positions and do not equally present themselves in senior management positions in the HE.

The problem of women being seen as micromanagers is complex, and it is essential to look at the social and institutional factors that contribute to this idea. More research is needed to fully understand this problem and develop good ways to deal with it (Babic, Gillis and Hansez 2020). They are tailoring training and development sessions to overcome any barriers that women face. A one-size-fits-all approach does not fully support leaders; both men and women have different operating styles, including strengths and weaknesses (Sang & Tian 2021).

Based on the critical discussion, it is suggested that women's leadership does involve micromanagement. However, there is no clear evidence about leadership in Private higher education. Further, programmes promoting support and offering training and development, particularly for women in leadership positions, could help overcome this barrier. While the perspective of society is changing across the globe, a lot more work is needed. 'Positive discrimination', 'reservation', and 'quota systems' still indicate a lack of acceptance within society that both men and women are equal, capable, and able. Strategies to challenge the glass ceiling, antecedents and consequences at work, family interference, and well-being could be central to developing the proposed programmes for women's leadership.

Even though there are laws about equal opportunity and promoting diversity, there are not enough women in positions of power. Even though the glass ceiling has been

written about and research has been done on it, there are no models or other tools to help us understand it (Koning, 2020). This becomes more challenging with stereotyping, where women are generalised as micromanagers. Studies looking at micromanagement and considering its antecedents and possible consequences are needed. Elacqua et al. (2009) have proposed a comprehensive model that includes organisational gender culture and situational and interpersonal issues. There are reflections within studies around differential treatment, and a clear link is established between job strain, engagement, satisfaction, and intention to quit. A further discussion on how confidence-building could reduce micromanagement is a possible direction.

This paper thus proposes a further detailed study into how women can be supported in this area, including through gender-specific training sessions or the creation of worldwide women's groups. Women are a vital part of progress and sustainability when they are given the chance to learn and work and when social stereotypes that hold them back in the workplace are changed.

Challenging and coping strategies are required across the world. Detailed studies on whether women micromanage and steps to change their perspective and practice are required. Due to the competitive business environment, managers try to micromanage (Salisbury, 2021). While stereotypes suggest that women micromanage, research suggests that this is mostly done with good intentions to support the team. Programmes on reducing focus on tasks and looking at the big picture could help overcome this challenge. Strategic direction is needed to avoid the micromanagement trap, break the stereotypes, and represent more decisive leadership.

Limitations and Future Research

The systematic literature review on Women's Micromanagement in private higher education has uncovered several fundamental limitations that present opportunities for future research.

The final sample size was 30 studies, and this could be increased. In addition, future research can employ primary research methods instead of secondary research.

Many of the studies included in the review exhibit geographical and cultural biases, predominantly focusing on Western higher education contexts. Future research could explore micromanagement practices in private higher education across diverse global settings to better understand the influence of cultural factors and contextual differences.

The existing literature primarily examines the negative aspects of micromanagement, and, in the future, both negative and positive aspects of micromanagement, including male and female, can be studied.

Future research could delve into the positive dimensions of micromanagement at tactical and strategic levels.

By addressing these limitations and expanding the scope of research, scholars can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of micromanagement and its impact on women in private higher education, fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive body of knowledge in this domain.

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Before this role, Furqan served as an International Students Recruitment Manager, he brought a unique blend of expertise in marketing and innovation to his role in Pakistan and England. With a Master's degree in Marketing and Innovation, he possesses a deep understanding of strategic marketing, consumer behaviour, and the ever-evolving landscape of education. His background equips him with the skills to identify innovative recruitment strategies that resonate with both prospective and current students. He leverages this knowledge to develop and implement cutting-edge marketing campaigns, harness digital technologies, and optimise data-driven approaches to attract and engage students effectively.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

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1	Towards a Gendered Skills Analysis of Senior Management Positions in UK and Australian Universities	Bagillhole, B., White, K (2008)
2	Women as leaders of higher education institutions: a British–German comparison	Barbara Read & Barbara M. Kehm (2016)
3	Do Women Leaders Micromanage-The Employees Perspective	Annie Stephen (2020)
4	Micromanagement in the Workplace	Allcorn, Seth (2022)
5	Reconsidering the impact of gender stereotypes on the advancement of women in organizations. Psychol. Women Q.	Agars, M. (2004)
6	Work-to-family interface and well-being: the role of workload, emotional load, support and recognition from supervisors	Babic, A., Gillis, N., and Hansez, I. (2020).
8	Women’s leadership and well-being: Incorporating mindfulness into leadership development programs. Development and Learning in Organizations	Beddow, H. (2018).
9	Fixing the women or fixing universities: Women in HE leadership.	Burkinshaw, P., & White, K. (2017).
10	Women leadership effectiveness: competitive factors and subjective and objective qualities,	Farhan, B., Y. (2022)
11	The role of leadership efficacy and stereotype activation in women’s identification with leadership.	Hoyt, C. L. (2005)
12	Perceived gendered barriers to leadership in universities: A literature review	Iston, S. J., & Jung, Y. (2015).
13	Women leadership barriers in healthcare, academia and business. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Kalaitzi, S., Czabanowska, K., Fowler-Davis, S., & Brand, H. (2017).
14	Gender and micromanagement: a review of the literature	Krambia-kapardis, M. (2017).
15	Women in Management of Micro-Enterprises: Problems and Prospects.	Mohanty, A. (2004).
16	Women’s leadership and firm performance: Family versus non- family firms.	Nekhili, M., Chakroun, H., & Chtioui, T. (2018).
17	Development and initial validation of a micromanagement scale for school principals.	Limon,, and Dilekçi, Ü., (2020).
18	Women as leaders of higher education institutions: a British–German comparison, Studies in Higher Education	Read, B., & Kehm, B. (2016)
19	Micromanaging: An Incurable Management Trait?	Sanaghan, P., & Lohndorf, J. (2016).
20	Strategies for avoiding the micromanagement trap. Management Decision	Wright, R.F., (2000).
21	Do Women Leaders Micromanage-The Employees Perspective	Stephen, A. (2020),
22	Opportunity or exploitation? Women and quality assurance in higher education	Louise Morley, (2005)
23	The Decline of Private Higher Education	Daniel Levy, (2012)

24	Passing the buck: gender and management of research production in UK Higher Education: Management perspectives from a case study	Catherine Fletcher, (2007)
25	Neo-liberalism and the state of higher education in the UK	Pat Mahony & Gaby Weiner, (2019)
26	The pay gap, the glass ceiling, and pay bias: Moving forward fifty years after the equal pay act	Siniscalco et. al, (2013)
27	Micromanagement: an employers' perspective	Mishra et al, (2019)
28	Gender preference in higher education leadership: insights from gender distribution and subordinate perceptions and expectations in Vietnam universities	Trang and Nguyen, (2020)
29	Micromanagement--a costly management style	Collins SK, Collins KS (2002)
30	Micromanagement: A Project Management Tool in Crisis, '	A. S. Sidhu (2012)