

Exploring the Impact of Micromanagement Leadership in Remote Work Environments

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Abstract

A qualitative inquiry technique was used to explore approaches to reduce micromanagement behaviors of leaders of remote employees in the U.S. accounting industry. The virtual micromanagement model served as the framework for this research study and included the key business concepts of self-awareness to increase operational efficiency. The business problem addressed was that leaders who exercise the micromanagement leadership approach cause high employee turnover and decreased productivity. Data was collected via Zoom interviews, then transcribed and reviewed for accuracy. Thematic analysis using inductive coding was used to analyze the data; 42 codes were aggregated into 10 categories and then grouped into 4 themes before producing a final report that addressed the research question. The research study participants were 18-65 years of age and employed full-time in an entry-level, lead, senior, or manager role within the accounting industry in the United States. The importance of reducing micromanagement behaviors was affirmed by participants as a critical element when working in a remote environment. The findings from the data analysis indicate that management teams operating within the U.S. accounting industry need organizational support through training initiatives to lead people to reduce negative behaviors from micromanaging their teams. Future consideration should be given to staying abreast of technology changes and network requirements to support remote employees effectively.

Keywords: Remote work, virtual environment, micromanagement, accounting industry, leadership

Introduction

Employees who work in a micromanagement environment have lower employee morale, higher turnover, and less productivity than those who do not (Bans-Akutey, 2020; Irani-Williams et al., 2021; Leong, 2019). Frith (2017) found that employee performance worsens when scrutinized due to a disdain for micromanagement. King (2018) opined that 44% of employees in the U.S. stated they quit their jobs because of a bad boss. Liu (2022) found that this number had increased to 65% by the end of 2022.

The onset of COVID-19 led many workers around the globe to move from working onsite to working remotely, presenting the challenge of trust and connection-building in a virtual world (Beño et al., 2021). Wilke (2022) stated that 44% of executives desired a daily return to the office, compared to 17% of employees. Parker et al. (2020) proclaimed that many leaders felt challenged managing remote staff, causing these employees to feel stressed from being distrusted by unskilled leaders who micromanage. A critical need exists to educate leaders on managing remote workers and developing practical approaches to leading in virtual environments (Parker et al., 2020). A qualitative inquiry research method was used to explore micromanagement behaviors in remote work environments and identify additional training needs for leading remote workers. In addition, personal attributes and characteristics predisposing leaders to micromanage their employees and the need to create a change management plan to address trust-building and a reduction in micromanaging behaviors while leading in remote work environments were addressed.

Problem of Practice

The general business problem is that leaders who exercise the micromanagement leadership approach lead to high employee turnover and decreased productivity (Bans-Akutey, 2020). Shuford (2019) purported that micromanagement contributes to low employee morale by powerless, unmotivated, and disengaged staff, which leads to high turnover. Gallup (2021) disclosed that organizations in the United States spend more than a trillion dollars annually in recruitment, hiring, training, and productivity due to employee turnover, with over half of those employees who exited stating that their voluntary turnover was preventable.

Leaders realize the harmful effects of micromanagement once they lose staff and productivity (Hills, 2017). Kagan (2020) indicated that micromanagers closely watch employee actions and criticize their work and methods instead of merely stating what employees need to accomplish. These actions waste a manager's time on minor details when other more essential tasks could be addressed. According to Bans-Akutey (2020), micromanagement adds no value. Micromanagers demotivate 68% of employees and hurt productivity by 55% (Landry, 2020). The toxic leadership approach of micromanagement stifles innovation, risks employees' self-worth, and brews insecurities as they decrease positive workplace change and are detrimental to employee well-being and organizational success (Hill, 2017; Mohamed, 2021). Leaders who delegate some activities may offset some undue burdens of large workloads and reduce workplace stress (Sanfilippo, 2023).

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry research study was to explore the perspectives of leaders in the U.S. accounting industry on effective leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of employees in remote work environments. As noted by Mishra et al. (2019), a need existed for this qualitative inquiry research study as leaders who lack confidence in their capabilities engage in micromanaging behaviors. Simms (2023) and Stephen (2020) concurred that leaders often use micromanaging behaviors to the detriment of employees and the organization. Hills (2017) agreed that business leaders need more information regarding micromanaging behaviors so organizations can overcome them and increase employee retention.

Micromanagement decreases employee morale and makes them feel undervalued. Leaders need to be self-aware and transparent, communicate, set clear expectations, build positive team cultures, and remain flexible with the agility to shift in today's world (Dale & Sheets, 2020; Simms, 2023). Moreover, virtual work environments require leaders to find new ways to perform traditional tasks, including trust and team building (Mutha & Srivastava, 2021). Shapira and Horsager (2022) revealed that establishing trust is how organizations gain employee loyalty, not won overnight, but as a consistent process.

Research Question

This qualitative inquiry research study explored leaders' perspectives in the U.S. accounting industry regarding practical leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of employees in remote work environments. The research study was guided by one research question.

R.Q. What are U.S. accounting industry leaders' perspectives regarding effective leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of employees in remote work environments?

Eleven interview questions were asked of all participants. Follow-up and probing questions were used to clarify and gain additional insights into the participants' responses.

- IQ1.1 What is your current role in accounting?
- IQ1.2 Tell me about challenges at work that slow your productivity.
- IQ1.3 What is your current manager's leadership style?
- IQ1.4 What training opportunities have you attended?
- IQ1.5 Are the managers being trained?
- IQ1.6 Were there training opportunities before COVID?
- IQ1.7 What are your feelings or attitudes towards working remotely?
- IQ1.8 Are there any challenges with feeling connected with your team?
- IQ1.9 How long have you been with your present employer?
- IQ1.10 What satisfaction do you have in your current role?
- IQ1.11 Do you work well with your manager?

Foundation and Framework

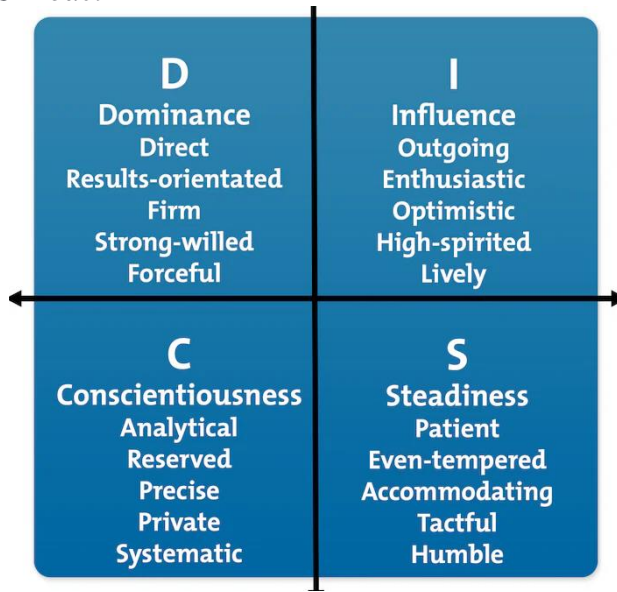
Simms (2023) stated that managing employees by excessively monitoring and controlling their work affects their ability to build trusting working relationships with team members. Bans-Akutey (2020) advised that a micromanager's behavioral tendencies can impact their team's ability to develop a sense of accomplishment, causing them to become less productive. Negative leadership behaviors cost organizations by having to replace employees due to illness or turnover and the reduced production of disengaged workers (Crosby, 2018). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2023) found that in July of 2022, 5.9 million workers chose to leave their jobs, compared to 3.5 million in the same period in 2019. Brady (2022) surveyed 3,000 workers and found that 82% said they would consider leaving their jobs because of a bad manager. Farrugia (2022) posited that replacing full-time employees can cost twice the employee's salary to replace them due to recruiting, onboarding, training, and loss of organizational knowledge.

Leaders in the U.S. accounting industry lack coaching and training to develop practical leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of remote employees that causes high employee turnover, decreased production, and cost to the organization (Meinert, 2019). The literature and gap in practice support the need for a better approach to address these leadership training disparities within remote environments. The central argument was that developing better leadership practices creates self-awareness with intended self-regulation to increase "motivation, trust, competence, relatedness, and autonomy" through coaching and mentoring (van de Ridder et al., 2020).

Frameworks provide the principles and practices necessary to be applied throughout the research process (Schaefer, 2016). The selected applied framework for this qualitative inquiry research study was the virtual micromanagement model (VMM), which arrogated from the Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness (DiSC) personal assessment tool adapted by William Moulton Marston in the 1920s (Mindtools.com, n.d.). Goldsby et al. (2021) opined that self-leadership is parallel to emotional awareness, as these leaders practice accountability using the DiSC four-quadrant personality assessment model that measures communication and conflict styles. The DiSC model outcome analyzed the communication and conflict differences based on their behaviors, mindsets, and personalities by understanding their relationships and potential conflict styles (Goldsby et al., 2021). Micromanagers tend to focus on minor details instead of seeing the bigger picture of what employees need to achieve, which aligns with the dominance and conscientious quadrants of the DiSC models. An adaptation of the VMM is illustrated in Figure 1. The DiSC model is illustrated in Figure 2.

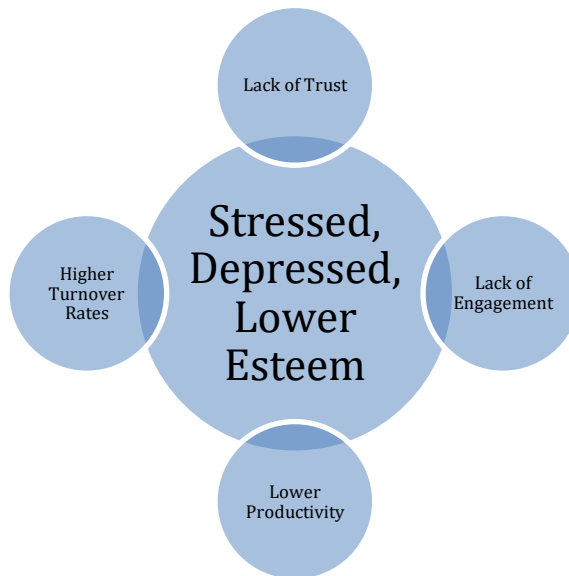
Figure 1

DiSC Model



Note. Adapted from DISC model blauw rood geel groen gedragsstijlen" by Evho1984 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Figure 2
VMM



Note. Adapted from Micromanagement model by Gartner.com.

The VMM framework explored portions of the DiSC model, mainly dominance and conscientiousness, and considered self-awareness as a guiding tool to reduce micromanagement leadership behaviors and approaches that facilitate increased organizational turnover and heighten awareness of additional training needs of leaders identifying with a micromanaging

type of behavioral style. Caruso (2020) purported that the DiSC model was a likely tool to assess one's leadership style and engage the team to cultivate trust and understanding.

The virtual micromanagement model included concepts that explored micromanaging behaviors in remote work environments from the employee's perspective and those of midlevel managers as the research study's expert stakeholders. The virtual micromanagement model focuses on the most desirable and feasible solutions that increase productivity, decrease employee turnover, and lead to successful leadership practices in the United States accounting services sector. The applied framework guided the design of the interview questions in this study to explore micromanaging behaviors in leadership. The category of interview questions included the participants' experience, the participant's role in the research study, barriers to being productive, management styles, job commitment and satisfaction, remote work environment, work-life balance, training offered before and after the pandemic, and approaches to and the influence of personal development on the company's business model.

There have been many publications surrounding micromanagement, but scholarly research involving micromanagement within remote environments is sparse. Kay (2019) shared that the social entity of a business is bound to its economic success. Effectively managing virtual teams has become the heartbeat of leadership skills since the COVID-19 pandemic for guiding high-performing teams (Patrick, 2021). Suit (2018) stated that micromanagers lack useful or effective leadership modeling and are not self-aware, requiring adequate leadership development. Sahni (2020) recommended that organizations effectively train their leaders for sustainability to ensure it has a highly agile and creative approach to thrive. Capparelli et al. (2022) discussed the significance of business continuity and ways to share the operational burden by distributing roles and responsibilities through conducive cultures for maximum effect. Hammet (2018) opined that there is no place for micromanagement in value-creating organizations because trust leads the way. Patrick (2021) proposed that managing team performance is daunting within remote work environments. Understanding the needs and benefits of remote work environments and reducing negative behaviors is significant, given that most business models are moving toward hybrid or remote work schedules (Tribou & Kidd, 2022; Wilke, 2022).

Methodology

This qualitative inquiry research study relied on purposive sampling. The interview technique was the chosen data collection method to leverage in-depth, one-on-one interviews via Zoom. Recruitment occurred through User Interviews, a fee-based recruiting service that targeted and selected accounting employees to participate in the interviews at various employment levels, such as accountants, senior accountants, auditors, CPAs, credit analysts, clerks, and mid-level managers within the United States, which constituted the expert stakeholders. The purposive sampling technique was chosen as the best method to link the research objectives to address the research question of U.S. accounting industry leaders' perspectives regarding effective leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of remote employees and thus enhance the research study's validity and trustworthiness building upon its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of both data and results (Campbell et al., 2020).

The Capella University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the informed consent form, interview guide, and screening questionnaire before conducting the interview sessions. Nine participants were sampled for this study. The interviews lasted 45 minutes to 1-hour and were conducted August 22-31, 2022.

The general population inclusion criteria consisted of participants ages 18-65 years old. The participants were employed full-time in an entry-level, lead, senior, or manager role within the accounting industry. These criteria comprise the chosen population as they were the most affected by micromanagement behaviors in remote work environments and constituted the expert stakeholders within the accounting industry. Exclusion criteria consisted of anyone not residing in the United States who did not have a computer with a webcam, tablet, or smartphone with internet capabilities to connect via Zoom or provide an electronically signed informed consent through DocuSign.

The data collection for this research study followed the interview technique and interpretative methods used in qualitative research to describe, decode, and then translate concepts and phenomena (Basias & Pollalis, 2018). The interview technique was the chosen data collection method to leverage thorough one-on-one interviews converted into text for in-depth analysis.

The data analysis for this qualitative inquiry stemmed from Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis technique to systematically identify, organize, and offer insight into meanings or themes across data sets, incorporating an inductive approach. Dedoose, a Research and Evaluation Data App (REDA), was employed to assist in identifying and labeling codes. The Dedoose software incorporated a patterning process with inductive analysis that aided in transforming these codes into categories as they emerged from the data, utilizing a packed code cloud visualization analysis that magnifies text, then duplicating the patterning process to inductively transform categories into themes as they came forth from the data. The thematic analysis enabled greater freedom of independence to interpret meaning from participant responses.

An interview guide was the primary data collection instrument for collecting the participants' responses. The interview guide contained the purpose of the qualitative inquiry research study, research question, justification, probing interview questions, and the interview format. The interview began with participant demographic information and ended with a script to close the interview. The interview questions were written in a semi-structured format to stimulate dialogue and follow-up questioning to promote additional information from the interview participants. A test run interview took place with participants not part of the research study to allow for the practice of digital equipment and interview techniques with mock data to assimilate conducting an actual interview.

All nine participants self-identified as U.S. accounting industry remote employees and reviewed and electronically signed the informed consent form via DocuSign prior to confirming an interview time slot; as all interviews were virtual, site permission was not required. The signed

informed consent is saved as a digital file on an encrypted flash drive and is available for seven years. Participants were expected to participate in a 45–60-minute interview session unless they opted out by verbally expressing that they no longer wished to participate. Table 1 represents the participants' self-identified demographic data.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Participant #	Gender	Job Title	State	Start Time	End Time
P1	F	Accountant Supervisor	CA, USA	17:00	18:00
P2	M	Manager	CA, USA	17:00	18:00
P3	M	Accountant	NY, USA	19:00	20:00
P4	F	Accountant	OH, USA	18:00	19:00
P5	F	Bookkeeper	FL, USA	12:00	13:00
P6	F	Accountant	CA, USA	18:00	19:00
P7	M	Accountant	NC, USA	17:00	18:00
P8	F	Accountant	FL, USA	18:00	19:00
P9	F	Accountant	VA, USA	18:00	19:00

**Note.* Participant Demographic characteristics from User Interviews screening information provided by selected participants except for job title and start and end times, which were captured at the appointed interview times.

The pro version of the online platform Zoom was used to allow for the recording and transcription of the interview. Verbal authorization from each participant was obtained before beginning the interview, using voice recording or manually compiling field notes. The interviewees were advised of the participants' expectations of open and honest communication and that they could refuse to answer or decide they no longer wished to participate.

During the in-depth, one-on-one interview sessions, participants were made to feel relaxed and spoke freely and candidly, and breaks were offered, which they declined. Other participant requests during the interview sessions were honored, including pausing the recording, repeating and rewording questions, and providing clarifications of context.

Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach included becoming familiar with data by reading all the data collected, taking notes, transcribing the data, and then rereading it to become familiar with every dimension. The transcripts of the audio-recorded Zoom interviews were sent to each participant within 24 hours of their interview, and they were asked to return any corrections within 48 hours of receipt. The transcripts were uploaded into the Dedoose software program, and the potential initial inductive codes were highlighted. For example, the job title accountant became an initial code, as did beliefs and bonuses. The codes were then placed into categories as they emerged from the data with grouped similarities from areas identified that overlap between codes.

The analysis was refocused on themes. Dedoose software utilizes a packed code cloud visualization analysis that magnifies text; the more applied the code has been, the larger the text of that code appears in the cloud. Sorting the different codes into potential themes was best done through visualization (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes related to micromanagement, toxic leadership, leadership styles, training and development, job satisfaction, employee turnover, and the remote work environment best align with the virtual micromanagement framework. Braun and Clarke (2006) posited that evident themes exemplify coherent patterns in the participant's perspectives relating to the research question.

A selection of the main passages within the data set was used to discuss the themes regarding the main ideas presented by the participants concerning the R.Q., such as how training and leadership development could benefit leaders who exude micromanaging behavioral styles to prove the significance of the theme. From a thematic map of coded data, the essence of each theme was clearly defined and in line with the research question for manageable overlap (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A total of 42 codes emerged from the participant transcript data. The codes were collapsed into ten categories. The ten categories were paired with their definitions and relationally linked to codes. Four themes emerged from the participant's transcript data incorporating an inductive approach to transform categories into themes, more fully described in prior sections. Categories could be present in more than one theme due to the interconnectedness of concepts. The themes represent topics that emerged from a pattern of ideas. The relationship between the 42 codes, ten categories, and four themes is presented in Table 2, and details on how the themes emerged follow.

Table 2
Relationship Between Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Culture, Team, Beliefs, Better at Home, Better at Office, Hindrances to Performance, Remote Challenges, Cannot Turn Off, Income Source, Flexibility, Independence, Bonuses, Clients, Connectedness, Computer Issues Culture, Team, Beliefs, Better at Home, Better at Office, Hindrances to Performance, Remote Challenges, Cannot Turn Off, Income Source, Flexibility, Independence, Bonuses, Clients, Connectedness, Computer Issues	Culture, Ideations, Remote Environment, Motivation	T1: Purposeful actions to build a positive workplace culture will help leaders in the U.S. accounting industry achieve better outcomes by decreasing toxic environments

People Person, Trust, Guidance, Confidence, Communication, Delegate, Ego, Acknowledgement, Survey, QuickBooks, On-the-Job, Online Work, New Computer System, Excel, Harassment, Seeking, College, Openings, Hours, Accountant, Biller, Bookkeeper, Manager, Supervisor, List Checker Seeking, College, Openings,

Leadership Skills, Recognition, Motivation, Training, Turnover Intention, Surveillance, Remote Environment, Culture, Career, Ideations

T2: Training initiatives are effective approaches to harnessing desirable and feasible solutions to managing negative behaviors and bridging the gap that can move leaders from training disparities to increased confidence and self-awareness from being supported by their organizations.

Hours, Income Source, Flexibility, Independence, Bonuses, Clients, Culture, Team, Acknowledgement, Beliefs, Surveillance, Buzzword, Better at Home, Better at Office, Hindrances to Performance, Remote Challenges, Cannot Turn Off, Connectedness, Computer Issues, People Person, Trust, Guidance, Confidence, Communication, Delegate, Ego

Turnover Intention, Motivation, Recognition, Culture, Ideations, Surveillance, Remote Environment, Leadership Skills

T3: Intentional organizational efforts drive employee retention through openness to change, trust building, organizational commitment, and performance to produce job satisfaction that will lead to reduced turnover intention.

Better at Home, Better at Office, Hindrances to Performance, Remote Challenges, Cannot Turn Off, Connectedness, Computer Issues, Survey, QuickBooks, On-the-Job, Online Work, New Computer System, Excel, Culture, Team, Harassment, Surveillance, Buzzword, Acknowledgement, Income Source, Beliefs, Flexibility, Independence, Bonuses, Clients, Accountant, Biller, Bookkeeper, Manager, Supervisor, List Checker

Remote Environment, Training, Surveillance, Recognition, Motivation, Career, Culture, Ideations

T4: Virtual work environments require leaders' support and proper resources to enhance organizational success.

Theme 1 Workplace Culture

The first theme identified is that purposeful actions to build a positive workplace culture will help leaders in the U.S. accounting industry achieve better outcomes by decreasing toxic environments. This theme represented an aggregation of critical insights from participant responses relative to the need to build positive workplace cultures that decrease toxic working environments. P6 said: "It's becoming a toxic work environment and unhealthy situation, and we used to be a really close team before, so the fact that concerns are not being heard is affecting my job satisfaction; my job satisfaction in the workplace: remotely and in person." P8 indicated that "There is a lot of non-work-related drama." P9 posited that "I would say he kind of needs to try harder to, like, talk to his bosses, I guess because of the way that the agency pretty much formed that company culture. A lot of people were very tired of it because there weren't a lot of people; I

knew that, like, oh, they cannot really get rid of me. They don't have a lot of people, so they kind of need me kind of thing. I know that sounds bad".

Theme 1 confirmed Buffer's (2022) findings on the shortfalls of team engagement and connection and Westfall's (2020) findings that a toxic leader could cause reduced productivity, injured morale, lowered motivation, and increased surveillance of remote workers. Therefore, organizations should take purposeful action to build positive workplace cultures conducive to the evidence-based research study of Buffer (2022) and the findings of Westfall (2020).

Theme 2 Training Initiatives

Theme 2 represents the culmination of ideas that managing negative leadership behaviors requires organizational support from training. These ideas related to identifying, understanding, and accepting industry needs concerning training disparities suggested additional training of leaders within the U.S. accounting industry. The topic of training of managers or awareness of any additional training needed primarily focused on benchmarking with industry peers and competitors pre- and post-COVID, attending leadership development-specific training, identifying internal initiatives or programs in operation or being planned, and researching the need for additional training opportunities. However, participant responses captured staff frustration from training disparities of leadership within their organizations.

P9 expressed that a particular manager was not empathetic and showed a lack of concern or attempt to put forth an effort to attend available training, stating: "Some he could make, some he just could not attend." P6 explained that these companies bring in knowledgeable people into a position who have a skillset "but do not know how to deal with people." P5 concurred and added, "There needs to be a different management training program on how to talk to people, motivate employees, and keep your personal feelings out of it." While P3 and P4 would like to get direct answers to their direct questions with "clear communication" without all of the "egos." P2 provided additional commentary about diving deeper into backgrounds and doing personality assessments.

In contrast, P1 expounded on "old mindsets" and how we cannot make people likable. Theme 2 confirmed the findings of Gant (2021) that training and development significantly contribute to organizational success and Gale's (2019) findings that most leaders find training or mentoring beneficial in assisting them in developing the necessary skills to lead and become effective high performers and also confirming Bans-Akutey's (2020) findings of promoting lower-level employees with minimal leadership skills and the detriment caused by their lack of self-awareness and leadership agility to manage negative behaviors. Training initiatives are effective approaches to achieving the most desirable and feasible solutions to managing negative behaviors as they will bridge the gap that would lead to successful leadership practices, as confirmed by the findings of Gant (2021) and Caruso (2020).

Theme 3 Organizational Efforts

The third theme identified is that intentional organizational efforts drive employee retention through openness to change, trust building, organizational commitment, and performance to produce job satisfaction that will reduce turnover intention.

Theme 3 represents the participants' conceptual understanding of motivational drivers of job satisfaction that reduce turnover intention. During the interview, participants responded to questions about the importance of being satisfied in their positions or shared motivational examples of how they were or were not. P5 had a wonderful working dynamic and shared that was not the case 5 years ago when her husband told her to "quit her job daily before she did." P1 expressed "wanting to quit because it gets frustrating." P4 explained that although "I love my team, there is one person I do not like working with mostly due to the lack of desire for technology changes causing burnout and frustration."

P6 described concerns not heard or addressed "affecting her job satisfaction both remotely and in-person," further implied that "friends are hiring friends creating office cliques causing turnover and creating more work." P7 agreed in comparison to workload increases, stating, "the lack of pay for the amount of work, they cannot fill positions." P7 addressed a personal experience about job satisfaction and claimed:

If you are not satisfied at the job you work at all day, because I've been this way for years, just so miserable, you live a miserable life; I'll be honest there. Because if you do that job about 40 hours a week, and you're miserable, and then you come home, that misery spreads to your family. It just doesn't equate to a high-quality life. (P7)

Weinberger et al. (2022) opined that in an atmosphere of long work hours to meet inflexible client deadlines and high job burnout, public accounting firms experienced restrictions to make employees happy while ensuring high-quality work was done. The data collected suggests that job satisfaction is a crucial element of operational efficiency, and organizations must intentionally drive employee retention. Theme 3 confirmed Kay's (2019) findings that people take pride in where they work and what they do and want to be happy in the workplace, making job satisfaction vital to their retention, and Men et al. (2022) discovery of employee benefits from organizational trust association with job satisfaction from feelings of connectedness when the appropriate language and behaviors are used by leaders, which could reduce turnover intention and increase their commitment, and performance.

Theme 4 Remote Work Environments

The fourth and final theme identified is that remote work environments require leaders' support and proper resources to enhance organizational success. The remote work environment's theme describes the summation of participant responses related to barriers due to working within the constraints of remote environments. Participants expressed satisfaction with decreased traffic commute, fewer distractions, less laundry, increased rest, and more family time. Although the participants did not interact with office personnel as much, they missed the leftover food from onsite office meetings. Participant responses indicated that the majority embraced the flexibility

of a virtual working environment. Such statements suggest a desirable and feasible solution that increases productivity and decreases employee turnover. However, this was only the case for some; others had difficulties with production, and these barriers are the primary focus within Theme 4.

P1 emphasized two staff members who needed help grasping the concept of working from home. P2 "would like to see more team building." P4 experienced "network issues." P5 and P6 both explained that they "miss people." While P9 stated that if time management was not adhered to, it "slowed down productivity a bit." P3 expressed virtual challenges as "you cannot physically see what they are doing." P7 shared an experience of not being able to disconnect from work:

You know, that's how it started or used to be for me; like I had a hard time walking away from my desk at the appropriate time because more and more things would pop up at six or seven or eight o'clock at night. And I would work until eight or nine o'clock at night. And then it was the person that was under me that said, what are you doing? This doesn't have to get done right now. Yeah, and so I was like, at that point, I was like, gosh, she's so right. What am I doing, killing myself for nothing? So, I have learned that I need to have the off switch by a certain time I've gotten better. It's not perfect, but I've gotten better. (P7)

Such statements suggest the need for additional support from leaders to ensure remote teams remain connected while working outside the traditional office setting and maintaining proper technology and other resources required to fully operate virtually, including knowing when to unplug for the day. Theme 4 confirmed the Buffer (2022) findings that 40% of workers struggle to unplug while working remotely and the Parker et al. (2020) study that 40% of leaders reported having decreased self-confidence managing remote staff.

Contribution to the Field

The research question that guided this study was: What are U.S. accounting industry leaders' perspectives regarding effective leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of employees in remote work environments? The answer is that purposeful actions are necessary to build a positive workplace culture with practical training initiatives to manage negative behaviors. In addition, intentional organizational efforts and leaders' support to obtain proper resources require an implementation to become impactful while leading in remote work environments.

The participants demonstrated an understanding of micromanagement, but many were unaware of available tools to effectively address leadership approaches to reduce or avoid micromanaging behaviors. The participants' responses to interview questions indicated their openness to best business practices to be integrated to reduce micromanagement behaviors in the workplace. The participants openly and continuously expressed the need for more training the management team should undertake as they lack communication and people skills that motivate them to produce.

This research study extends research on micromanaging behaviors in virtual environments by exploring ways to reduce negative leadership approaches. It adds to the theoretical development by integrating and building upon the theory of trust and self-awareness to achieve better outcomes by reducing micromanaging behaviors, increasing job satisfaction, and decreasing employee turnover.

The results of this research study showed that the management team had a basic understanding of the impact of leadership on staff resulting from negative leadership behaviors. Some management teams had encountered toxic work environments and were working towards solutions to address participant concerns, while others had yet to implement favorable working conditions.

The gap identified in the assessment of advancement toward reducing micromanagement behaviors relative to the capabilities within the virtual micromanagement model was supported by the participant's narratives around the participant's understanding of positive company cultures and the results of the data analysis shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Data Analysis Assessment of Advancement Towards Reducing or Avoiding Micromanagement

Code	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	Total
No Advancement	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Initial Experience	1		1	1	1			1	1	6
Implemented Solutions	1	1		1	1			1		5
Benchmark Progress										
Total	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	3	2	

Note. Analysis adapting a four-point progress scale where 1= no advancement.

The VMM framework explored portions of the DiSC model to consider self-awareness as a guiding theory to reduce micromanagement leadership behaviors and approaches that facilitated increased organizational turnover and heightened awareness of these leaders' additional training needs. The effective training initiative's theme supported the idea that feasible solutions to managing negative behaviors can move leaders from training disparities to increased confidence and self-awareness from being supported by their organization.

The results of this study support Gale's (2019) findings that most leaders would benefit from training or mentoring that assists them in developing the necessary skills to lead and become effective high performers. Managers' perspectives on handling the COVID-19 crisis and their experience and attitudes in the complexities of our new virtual reality showed that as work

shifted to a home office environment, workers experienced working a significant amount of time outside regular work hours, leading to burnout (Beño et al., 2021).

Contribution to Literature

The findings from the data analysis aligned with the literature and were unrelated to the management team's ability to achieve benchmark progress. Concerning theme 1, the participants indicated that their companies have yet to successfully implement any training or development programs, which aligned with the literature that micromanaging leaders need more support within the company on practical approaches using self-awareness as a guiding tool to lead people effectively, best done through coaching and mentoring (van de Ridder et al., 2020). In relation to Theme 2, the findings from the data analysis confirmed the training gap relating to practical approaches to reduce micromanagement behaviors knowledge and demonstrate a need for further areas of development. Theme 2 contributes to the literature by supporting corporate-led training initiatives that develop the confidence and self-awareness of its leaders to manage negative behaviors.

Compared to the existing literature, the findings from the data analysis in Theme 3 dispute the practitioner literature of the study completed by Leong (2019). In the practitioner literature, Leong (2019) indicated that delegating duties to staff increased job satisfaction by increasing their skillset and building trust through more responsibility and accountability. The findings from the data analysis confirmed that participants within the U.S. accounting industry who express job dissatisfaction derived from increased workloads and lack of pay. Theme 3 refutes the findings of Leong (2019) as these participants do not require additional duties to feel valued; according to their excerpts, better wages and backfilling open positions would be better suited.

In comparison, the findings from the data analysis in Theme 4 aligned with the academic literature of Beño et al. (2021). The academic literature opined by Beño et al. (2021) indicated that the COVID-19 crisis had dramatically shifted the virtual work environment. The findings from the data analysis confirmed that participants were still working through remote challenges. COVID-19 awakened the business climate like nothing many have seen, creating a need for virtual environments of greater trust efficiency and non-micromanaging remote relationships (Beño et al., 2021).

Scholars and practitioners should focus on post-pandemic information about virtual environments to stay abreast of technology changes and network requirements to support remote employees effectively. Scholars and practitioners also need to focus more on team building and engagement and the continued development of leaders. Several recommendations were derived, drawing upon findings from the data analysis of this qualitative inquiry, for scholars and practitioners with a vested interest in reducing or avoiding micromanagement behaviors in virtual environments. One such finding was the preference for working remotely over the need for social interaction. The participants indicated they missed people but would rather remain home than experience the office culture and manager egos. Researchers who study

organizational leadership could delve deeper into the implications of an adverse corporate climate.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The results from this qualitative inquiry study relate to scholars and practitioners in the U.S. accounting industry. The results could be disseminated among scholars and practitioners in the broader accounting industry to support efforts to reduce the micromanagement of employees in remote environments. Scholars and practitioners should focus on post-pandemic information about remote work environments and stay abreast of technology changes and network requirements to support remote employees effectively. Scholars and practitioners also need to focus on team building and the continued development of leaders.

Several recommendations for scholars and practitioners were derived from the findings of this qualitative inquiry study. One such finding was the preference for working remotely over the need for social interaction. The participants indicated they missed people but would rather remain home than experience the office culture and manager egos. Researchers who explore organizational leadership could delve deeper into the implications of an adverse corporate climate.

Another finding was a lack of engagement identified by participants from not knowing when to unplug for the day. Buffer (2022) reported that although corporations provided the technology to adapt within remote work environments, they fell short in team engagement and connection efforts despite virtual meetings. Researchers exploring the implications of team engagement would further the practitioner knowledge base on the inclusivity of remote staff and build better connections with leaders and the organization.

Employee performance worsens when scrutinized due to a disdain for micromanagement (Frith, 2017). The problem identified herein was that leaders who exercise the micromanagement leadership style cause high employee turnover and decreased productivity (Bans-Akutey, 2020). The findings from this qualitative inquiry may help scholars and practitioners better understand the development and training needs required to reduce micromanagement behaviors, increase productivity, decrease employee turnover, and lead to successful business practices.

Leaders who practice micromanagement result in high employee turnover, decreased productivity, and increased employee replacement costs (Bans-Akutey, 2020). The problem was addressed through four themes, showing that purposeful actions are necessary to build a positive workplace culture with practical training initiatives to manage negative behaviors. In addition, intentional organizational efforts and leaders' support to obtain proper resources require implementation. The four themes derived from the thematic analysis informed the problem, lent insight into why the problem continues, how best to decrease the problem, and stated the benefits of doing so.

Leaders in the U.S. accounting industry lack coaching and training to develop practical leadership approaches to reduce the micromanagement of remote employees that causes high employee turnover, decreased production, and cost to the organization (Meinert, 2019). Leaders should reduce their micromanaging approaches to leadership in the workplace. Through individual coaching and mentoring, leaders should create self-awareness and self-regulation and enhance employee motivation, autonomy, competence, trust, and relatedness.

Martin et al. (2019) noted that previous LMX studies looked at what leadership did to its followers without exploring the implications of micromanagement from a lack of trust, need for training, or leadership within remote work environments. Van de Ridder et al. (2020) claimed that behavioral change could be developed through coaching and mentoring. This qualitative inquiry research study provides a consensus link to the understanding that organizational success in the U.S. accounting industry depends on skilled leaders, as those who lack proper training place the company at risk. Thus, devising a strategic framework to manage remote staff effectively advances leadership practice.

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