

# **Context-Based Micromanagement as an Inclusive Strategy in Small Private Higher Education: An Inclusive Case Study of Public Relations Volunteers at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember**

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## **Abstract**

Small private higher education institutions in Indonesia face complex challenges related to student quality, motivation, inclusivity, and adaptability, particularly among students from rural, low-economic, and pesantren (Islamic boarding school) backgrounds. This study examines the implementation of context-based micromanagement as an inclusive leadership and learning strategy at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember (UNIPAR). Employing an in-depth qualitative case study approach, this research analyzes how lecturers and administrative units, specifically the Public Relations (Humas) Bureau, apply micromanagement tailored to students' social, cultural, technological, and psychological contexts. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, institutional documentation, and observation of volunteer outputs on official university media platforms. The findings reveal that context-based micromanagement supports student transition into urban academic culture, enhances engagement through social media-related competencies, and fosters inclusive environments, including for volunteers with mental disabilities. The study concludes that micromanagement, when applied contextually, ethically, and temporarily, can function as a developmental and inclusive leadership strategy in small private higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** micromanagement, inclusive leadership, higher education, public relations, mental disability

## **1. Introduction**

The rapid expansion of access to higher education in Indonesia has increased the participation of students from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Small private higher education institutions play a crucial role in this expansion by accommodating students from rural areas, low-income families, and pesantren (Islamic boarding school)

backgrounds. While this contributes to educational equity, it also introduces challenges related to academic preparedness, learning motivation, inclusivity, and student mental resilience.

Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember (UNIPAR) reflects these conditions. Many students prioritize rapid graduation and diploma acquisition rather than deep academic engagement. If this pragmatic orientation persists, it may contribute to long-term issues such as low intrinsic motivation, limited critical thinking skills, and fragile mental endurance. Simultaneously, students are deeply embedded in social media cultures that often conflict with formal academic norms.

In response, UNIPAR has developed leadership and instructional practices based on context-based micromanagement, characterized by close supervision, continuous mentoring, and adaptation to students' lived realities. This approach is particularly evident in the Public Relations (Humas) Bureau volunteer program, which not only manages institutional communication but also functions as a learning space for skill development and inclusivity. This article argues that micromanagement, often negatively perceived, can operate as an inclusive and transitional leadership strategy in small private higher education when implemented ethically and contextually.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Micromanagement Reconsidered in Leadership Studies**

Micromanagement is traditionally defined as excessive managerial control over tasks and processes (White, 2010). In many organizational studies, it is associated with reduced autonomy, creativity, and employee satisfaction. However, contingency and situational leadership theories challenge the universal rejection of micromanagement by emphasizing the importance of contextual appropriateness (Manz & Sims, 2001).

In educational settings, micromanagement may manifest as structured task delegation, frequent feedback, and intensive mentoring. When learners are inexperienced, transitioning, or vulnerable, such practices may support competence development before autonomy is gradually introduced.

### **2.2 Context-Based and Inclusive Leadership in Higher Education**

Context-based leadership emphasizes adapting leadership styles to situational, cultural, and individual characteristics (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Inclusive leadership extends this principle

by actively recognizing and accommodating differences related to socio-economic background, learning style, and mental health conditions (Ainscow, 2005).

Students transitioning from pesantren education, often characterized by hierarchical authority, communal discipline, and moral instruction, to urban higher education environments may experience cultural dissonance. Context-based micromanagement aligns with inclusive education by offering differentiated support without stigmatization, particularly for students with psychological vulnerabilities.

### **2.3 Social Media, Public Relations, and Experiential Learning**

Social media has become central to student identity formation and communication practices. While often perceived as incompatible with academic seriousness, research suggests that social media can enhance engagement when integrated into experiential and skills-based learning contexts (Tess, 2013). Public relations units in higher education provide strategic spaces where digital skills, creativity, and professional discipline intersect.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative single-case study design to examine the implementation of context-based micromanagement within the Public Relations (Humas) Bureau at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember. A case study approach is appropriate for exploring complex institutional practices, leadership dynamics, and inclusive processes within real-life contexts.

### **3.2 Research Site and Participants**

The research site is Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember, a small private university in East Java, Indonesia. Participants include: (1) the supervisor of the Public Relations volunteer program; (2) lecturers serving as members of the Public Relations Bureau; and (3) student volunteers involved in public relations activities, including a volunteer diagnosed with schizophrenia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus.

### **3.3 Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques to enhance credibility through triangulation:

1. Semi-structured interviews: An in-depth interview was conducted with the supervisor of the Public Relations (Humas) volunteer program at UNIPAR. The interview explored the history of the program, task distribution, leadership practices, volunteer motivation, and inclusivity strategies. The full interview transcript provides detailed insights into human resource management practices within the Public Relations Bureau.
2. Document analysis: Institutional documents related to the establishment and operation of the Public Relations volunteer unit were analyzed, including task descriptions and activity reports.
3. Non-participant observation: Observations focused on volunteer outputs published on the official UNIPAR Instagram account, including scripts, interviews, video content, photography, editing, and live content production. These outputs functioned as empirical evidence of experiential learning and supervised skill development.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and observational notes were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns related to micromanagement, inclusivity, skill development, and mental health accommodation. Themes were then interpreted through the lens of context-based leadership and inclusive education theories.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. The identity of volunteers, particularly those with mental disabilities, was anonymized. The discussion of schizophrenia is framed respectfully and analytically, emphasizing institutional adaptation rather than individual pathology.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### **4.1 Context-Based Micromanagement in Student Skill Development**

Interview data indicate that the Public Relations volunteer unit at UNIPAR was formally established in 2021 with the primary objective of developing and managing the university's social media platforms. According to the supervisor, the unit was designed not only to strengthen institutional branding but also to function as a practical training space for students in media-related competencies (Andi Priyanto, personal communication, 2024).

Public Relations volunteers are actively involved in a wide range of tasks, including campus and off-campus event coverage, conducting interviews with resource persons, content creation, podcast hosting, photography, videography, video editing, and live content production. Task distribution is conducted based on individual abilities and interests, with roles such as cameraman, videographer, interviewer, editor, and on-screen talent assigned accordingly.

This structured division of labor reflects micromanagement practices characterized by detailed role specification, close supervision, and continuous feedback. The supervisor emphasized regular mentoring, guidance, and evaluation as key strategies to maintain volunteer performance and motivation. These practices align with context-based micromanagement, where close oversight functions as a developmental mechanism rather than restrictive control.

#### **4.2 Inclusivity and Mental Health Accommodation**

A significant development in the Public Relations Bureau is the inclusion of a volunteer diagnosed with schizophrenia. Rather than excluding the individual, supervisors and lecturers actively adapted their leadership and communication styles. Adjustments included clear task segmentation, flexible deadlines, emotional monitoring, and supportive peer collaboration.

This practice demonstrates inclusive micromanagement, where close supervision is not punitive but protective. The inclusive environment reduced stigma and allowed the volunteer to contribute meaningfully according to capacity, reinforcing inclusive leadership principles in higher education.

#### **4.3 Social Media Output as Evidence of Experiential Learning**

The official UNIPAR Instagram account serves as a public archive of volunteer work. Analysis of posted content indicates consistent student involvement in scripting, interviewing, photography, video editing, and live content production. These outputs illustrate how micromanagement translates informal digital literacy into professional public relations competencies.

#### **4.4 Micromanagement as a Transitional and Ethical Strategy**

Findings suggest that micromanagement at UNIPAR is applied as a temporary and ethical strategy. As volunteers demonstrate responsibility and competence, supervisory intensity is

gradually reduced. This approach challenges the assumption that micromanagement inherently suppresses autonomy, instead positioning it as a scaffold for independence.

#### **4.5 Supervisor Role, Motivation, and Sustainability of the Volunteer Program**

The interview transcript highlights the central role of the supervisor in sustaining volunteer engagement. Mentoring, regular evaluations, discussions, and training sessions are employed to ensure that volunteers feel valued and supported. Direct involvement in campus activities is intentionally designed to strengthen volunteers' sense of belonging and professional identity.

Such practices demonstrate how micromanagement, when combined with relational leadership, contributes to volunteer sustainability. Close supervision is balanced with recognition and skill development, fostering both institutional effectiveness and student growth.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study concludes that context-based micromanagement can function as an inclusive and effective leadership strategy in small private higher education institutions. At Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember, micromanagement supports student transition from rural and pesantren backgrounds, enhances engagement through experiential public relations activities, and fosters inclusivity for students with mental disabilities.

When applied ethically, contextually, and temporarily, micromanagement serves as a developmental mechanism rather than a form of excessive control. The findings contribute to leadership and higher education literature by offering a nuanced understanding of micromanagement as a contextual and inclusive practice. Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs and student perspectives to further examine the long-term impact of inclusive micromanagement on academic and professional outcomes.

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## **Appendix A. Verbatim Interview Excerpts (Primary Data)**

The following excerpts are taken from a semi-structured interview with the Supervisor of the Public Relations (Humas) Volunteer Unit at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember. The excerpts are presented to enhance transparency and methodological rigor by illustrating how empirical data informed the analysis.

### **Excerpt 1: Establishment and Purpose of the PR Volunteer Unit**

*“The Public Relations counter was established in 2021. The main purpose was to develop the social media platforms of Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember. At the same time, it was designed as a space for students to practice practical skills such as videography, interviewing, and becoming on-screen talent.”*

### **Excerpt 2: Scope of Volunteer Tasks and Responsibilities**

*“Public Relations volunteers are responsible for covering activities both on campus and outside campus. They also conduct interviews with speakers, create content, and sometimes act as hosts in podcast activities.”*

### **Excerpt 3: Task Distribution and Skill-Based Role Allocation**

*“The distribution of tasks is adjusted to the abilities and interests of each volunteer. In every activity there are cameramen, videographers, interviewers, editors, and talents so that everyone can develop according to their skills.”*

### **Excerpt 4: Supervisor's Role in Guidance and Motivation**

*“My role as a supervisor is to provide mentoring, guidance, and regular evaluation. We also hold discussions and training so that volunteers stay motivated and feel appreciated through direct involvement in campus activities.”*

**Excerpt 5: Sustainability and Developmental Orientation**

*“Through these activities, students gain experience, expand their networks, and develop soft skills such as communication and teamwork. This is important so that the volunteer program can continue sustainably.”*