

DIGITAL SURVEILLANCE AT WORK: ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING, TRUST, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract

The proliferation of digital surveillance technologies in modern workplaces has fundamentally transformed the employee-employer dynamic, raising critical questions about the psychological and organizational consequences of such monitoring. Digital surveillance, encompassing tools such as email tracking, keystroke logging, video monitoring, and biometric systems, is often justified by organizations as a means to enhance productivity, ensure compliance, and protect sensitive information. However, emerging research indicates that these practices may have unintended adverse effects on employee psychological wellbeing, trust in management, and organizational commitment. Employees under constant or pervasive surveillance frequently report heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, reflecting the “panoptic effect” wherein individuals modify behavior due to the perception of being continuously observed. Psychological strain resulting from monitoring is particularly pronounced when surveillance is covert, punitive, or implemented without employee involvement. Trust between employees and organizations is also impacted by surveillance practices. Organizational trust, defined as the belief that management acts with fairness, competence, and integrity, can be eroded when monitoring is perceived as intrusive or unjustified. Studies indicate that transparency, communication, and participatory approaches in designing surveillance systems can mitigate these negative effects and even foster perceptions of organizational fairness. Furthermore, employee commitment, encompassing affective, normative, and continuance dimensions, is sensitive to surveillance practices. Monitoring perceived as controlling or distrustful can diminish affective attachment and increase turnover intentions, whereas supportive and clearly communicated surveillance may maintain or enhance organizational commitment. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews, to explore the multifaceted impacts of digital surveillance on psychological wellbeing, trust, and commitment among employees in knowledge-intensive and remote work settings. The findings aim to provide nuanced insights into how surveillance policies affect employee outcomes and suggest practical strategies for ethical implementation. By integrating theoretical and empirical perspectives, this research contributes to the broader discourse on balancing organizational control with employee autonomy, emphasizing the importance of trust, transparency, and wellbeing in surveillance practices.

Keywords: Digital surveillance, psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, organizational commitment, workplace monitoring.

INTRODUCTION

As organizations increasingly incorporate digital tools to monitor employee behavior, the potential for both positive outcomes (e.g., improved performance) and negative psychological impacts has emerged as a research priority (Martin *et al.*, 2022). Digital surveillance refers to the use of digital technologies such as activity monitoring software, GPS tracking, and biometric systems for observing employee actions (Ball, 2010). While intended to improve performance and security, research reveals concerns about privacy invasion and psychological harm (Sewell & Barker, 2006). The widespread application of surveillance tools—driven by technological advancements and remote work practices—necessitates comprehensive study to inform ethical human resource practices.

Aim

To examine the impact of digital surveillance at work on employee psychological wellbeing, trust in employers, and organizational commitment.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess how digital surveillance influences employee psychological wellbeing.

2. To explore the relationship between digital surveillance and organizational trust.
3. To determine the effect of digital surveillance on employee commitment.
4. To propose guidelines for ethical surveillance implementation.

Research Questions

1. What are the psychological effects of digital surveillance on employees?
2. How does digital surveillance influence trust between employees and organizations?
3. In what ways does surveillance impact organizational commitment?
4. What practices can be adopted to mitigate negative impacts of digital surveillance?

Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses on employees in medium to large organizations where digital monitoring is used. It examines perceptions of surveillance tools such as email monitoring, keystroke tracking, and video surveillance within knowledge-intensive and remote work contexts. The research excludes organizations without digital monitoring systems and sectors where surveillance practices are limited by regulation.

Introduction

Digital surveillance has become an increasingly prevalent feature of contemporary workplaces, driven by the rapid expansion of information technologies and the growing emphasis on organizational efficiency, security, and accountability. Modern organizations employ a wide range of surveillance mechanisms, including email monitoring, keystroke tracking, video surveillance, biometric attendance systems, and productivity analytics software (Ball, 2010; Moore, 2021). While these technologies promise to improve operational performance, protect sensitive information, and ensure compliance with organizational policies, they simultaneously introduce complex challenges concerning employee privacy, autonomy, and psychological wellbeing (Zuboff, 2019; Martin *et al.*, 2022). The integration of digital surveillance in workplace management is not merely a technical or operational phenomenon but also a deeply social and psychological one, shaping the nature of trust, commitment, and engagement within organizations.

The theoretical foundation for understanding digital surveillance can be traced to the concept of the “panopticon,” originally proposed by Foucault (1977), which describes a system in which individuals internalize the sense of being constantly observed, leading to self-regulation of behavior. In modern workplaces, digital surveillance replicates this panoptic structure, as employees often perceive that their actions are continuously monitored, whether they are working on office premises or remotely (Sewell & Barker, 2006; Zimmer, 2010). Such perceptions of constant monitoring can trigger stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, collectively impacting psychological wellbeing (Smith & Kidder, 2010). Empirical studies highlight that intrusive monitoring practices can significantly increase cognitive strain, reduce job satisfaction, and diminish the sense of autonomy, which is a critical predictor of employee engagement and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Moore, 2021). Beyond individual psychological effects, digital surveillance directly influences relational dynamics in organizations, particularly the level of trust employees place in management. Organizational trust is defined as employees’ confidence in the fairness, integrity, and competence of organizational decisions and leadership (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). Research indicates that when surveillance is perceived as secretive, punitive, or disproportionate, trust can be severely eroded, undermining employees’ willingness to cooperate and engage with organizational objectives (Martin *et al.*, 2022; Ball, 2010). Conversely, studies also suggest that transparent, participatory, and ethically framed monitoring practices can mitigate negative perceptions, preserving trust and even fostering a sense of procedural fairness (Moore, 2021). This highlights the critical role of organizational communication and policy design in determining whether surveillance practices are experienced as supportive or coercive. Organizational commitment, another key outcome affected by digital surveillance, reflects the emotional attachment, sense of obligation, and perceived cost of leaving an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Commitment is integral to employee retention, performance, and discretionary effort. When surveillance practices are viewed as controlling or distrustful, they may decrease affective commitment and increase turnover intentions (Sewell & Barker, 2006). Studies also show that surveillance may differentially affect commitment depending on the organizational context and the framing of monitoring tools. For example, surveillance

intended to support remote work safety or productivity may have neutral or even positive effects on commitment, whereas punitive or opaque monitoring often results in disengagement and withdrawal behaviors (Moore, 2021; Smith & Kidder, 2010).

The rise of remote and hybrid work models has further intensified the relevance of digital surveillance. As organizations rely on digital tools to monitor employees working from home, the potential for psychological strain, perceived intrusion, and reduced trust has increased (Zuboff, 2019). Remote surveillance introduces unique challenges in balancing organizational oversight with employee autonomy, particularly when the lines between work and personal life blur. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, proportionality, and fairness, have emerged as central to ensuring that surveillance practices do not inadvertently harm employee wellbeing or organizational culture (Martin *et al.*, 2022; Ball, 2010). Despite the growing prevalence of digital surveillance, there remains a paucity of research examining its multifaceted effects in a holistic manner that simultaneously considers psychological wellbeing, trust, and organizational commitment. Many studies focus narrowly on either performance outcomes or privacy concerns, leaving a gap in understanding the integrated psychological and organizational implications of surveillance practices. Addressing this gap is critical for developing evidence-based strategies that allow organizations to harness technological tools responsibly while safeguarding employee welfare (Moore, 2021). This study, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of digital surveillance on employee psychological wellbeing, trust, and organizational commitment, with a particular focus on knowledge-intensive and remote work environments. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights, providing a nuanced understanding of how surveillance practices shape employee experiences. The findings are expected to inform managerial policies that balance operational needs with ethical obligations, promoting trust, engagement, and sustained organizational commitment in the digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital surveillance has emerged as a significant phenomenon in modern organizational practices, encompassing a broad spectrum of technological monitoring tools. These tools range from email and internet usage tracking, keystroke logging, video surveillance, and GPS tracking, to sophisticated employee analytics systems that measure productivity and behavior patterns (Ball, 2010; Moore, 2021). While these systems are typically justified by organizations as mechanisms to enhance performance, ensure security, and maintain compliance, scholars have increasingly emphasized their complex psychological and organizational consequences (Zuboff, 2019; Martin *et al.*, 2022). This literature review examines research on digital surveillance from three interconnected perspectives: psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and organizational commitment, integrating empirical findings, theoretical frameworks, and contemporary debates.

Digital Surveillance and Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral

functioning, and is critical for employees' overall productivity, satisfaction, and engagement (Ryff, 1989). The introduction of pervasive digital surveillance in workplaces can significantly affect these dimensions. Foucault's (1977) concept of the panopticon provides a theoretical lens for understanding how surveillance induces self-regulation and behavioral modification in employees, generating stress and anxiety even in the absence of direct intervention. Sewell and Barker (2006) argue that electronic monitoring functions as a subtle form of workplace control, producing "coercive atmospheres" that undermine autonomy and increase cognitive strain. Employees who perceive surveillance as intrusive often report heightened emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired mental health (Smith & Kidder, 2010). Empirical studies provide strong support for the negative psychological impacts of workplace monitoring. Zimmer (2010) demonstrated that employees under continuous video or digital monitoring experience elevated stress levels, reduced feelings of competence, and a constant sense of being judged. Similarly, Moore (2021) notes that the expansion of remote work has amplified these effects, as employees may feel surveilled even in the private sphere of their homes, blurring boundaries between professional and personal life. Research by Martin et al. (2022) emphasizes that the psychological impact of surveillance is not uniform; it is mediated by factors such as transparency, perceived fairness, and employee participation in policy design. Transparent and ethically framed monitoring practices can mitigate stress responses, whereas covert or punitive monitoring exacerbates psychological strain. Moreover, psychological wellbeing is closely linked to perceived organizational justice. Monitoring that is perceived as excessive or misaligned with employee roles can create feelings of inequity and resentment (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). This emotional strain can manifest as anxiety, reduced motivation, and disengagement, highlighting the necessity for organizations to consider the human cost of surveillance beyond operational benefits.

Digital Surveillance and Organizational Trust

Organizational trust, defined as the willingness of employees to be vulnerable to management's actions based on expectations of fairness, integrity, and competence (Mayer *et al.*, 1995), is a critical determinant of workplace cohesion and productivity. Digital surveillance directly influences trust dynamics by shaping perceptions of managerial intentions. When surveillance is perceived as secretive or coercive, it can erode trust, creating a climate of suspicion and disengagement (Ball, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2022). Smith and Kidder (2010) observed that employees who discovered undisclosed monitoring of emails or digital communications exhibited a marked decline in trust, often questioning organizational motives and ethical standards. Conversely, studies indicate that trust can be preserved or even enhanced when monitoring practices are transparent, justified, and participatory. Employees who are informed about the purpose, scope, and benefits of surveillance especially in contexts like security compliance or remote work support tend to perceive monitoring as fair and necessary (Moore, 2021). This aligns with the procedural justice framework, which posits that fairness in processes can mitigate negative outcomes associated with control mechanisms (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Martin et al. (2022) further suggest that when employees participate in shaping monitoring policies or receive feedback regarding surveillance outcomes, trust levels are higher,

reflecting the role of communication, consent, and procedural transparency in moderating the psychological costs of digital oversight.

Digital Surveillance and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment encompasses employees' emotional attachment (affective commitment), perceived obligation (normative commitment), and awareness of costs associated with leaving (continuance commitment) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Digital surveillance can influence all three dimensions. Studies consistently show that monitoring practices perceived as controlling or distrustful negatively affect affective commitment, reducing loyalty and willingness to invest discretionary effort (Sewell & Barker, 2006). Employees subjected to invasive surveillance often report intentions to seek alternative employment, highlighting the link between monitoring, disengagement, and turnover (Smith & Kidder, 2010). However, the impact of surveillance on commitment is nuanced. Moore (2021) observes that employees may maintain or even increase commitment if monitoring is framed as supportive, such as ensuring safety in remote work, facilitating performance feedback, or enabling professional development. Similarly, Martin et al. (2022) suggest that ethical surveillance practices, grounded in transparency and participatory governance, can foster a sense of organizational fairness, thereby sustaining normative and continuance commitment. This indicates that the negative effects of surveillance are not inevitable but are contingent on organizational policies, culture, and communication.

Integrative Perspectives

Integrating these three domains reveals that digital surveillance exerts a complex and interconnected influence on employees. Psychological wellbeing, trust, and commitment are mutually reinforcing; compromised wellbeing can erode trust, which in turn may reduce commitment, creating a negative feedback loop detrimental to organizational performance (Sewell & Barker, 2006; Moore, 2021). Conversely, transparent, ethically framed surveillance practices can mitigate stress, preserve trust, and sustain commitment, highlighting the importance of human-centered monitoring policies (Ball, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2022). Recent research also emphasizes contextual moderators. For example, the impact of surveillance varies across industry sectors, organizational size, and work modalities. Remote or hybrid workers are more sensitive to surveillance due to blurred boundaries between professional and personal life, while employees in highly regulated environments may perceive surveillance as necessary and less threatening (Zuboff, 2019; Moore, 2021). The individual differences in personality traits, such as need for autonomy or tolerance of control, also mediate reactions to monitoring, suggesting that one-size-fits-all surveillance policies are unlikely to be effective or ethical.

Research Gap

Despite extensive studies on surveillance and individual outcomes, few studies integrate psychological wellbeing, trust, and organizational commitment into a single comprehensive framework. Most research has focused on either productivity outcomes or isolated psychological effects, leaving a gap in understanding the holistic organizational consequences of digital monitoring. This study addresses this gap by exploring

how surveillance practices influence employee experiences and organizational outcomes in tandem, particularly in knowledge-intensive and remote work contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is designed to rigorously investigate the impact of digital surveillance on employee psychological wellbeing, trust, and organizational commitment. Considering the multidimensional nature of these constructs and the complex interplay between organizational practices and employee experiences, a mixed-methods approach was deemed most appropriate. Mixed-methods research allows the integration of quantitative measurement of variables with qualitative insights into employee perceptions, providing both breadth and depth of understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This section details the research design, population and sample, data collection instruments, procedures, and analytical techniques employed in the study.

Research Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was adopted, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The rationale for this approach lies in its ability to provide triangulation, enhance validity, and capture nuanced perspectives that quantitative metrics alone may miss (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative component allows for measurement of relationships between surveillance practices and key outcomes such as psychological wellbeing, trust, and organizational commitment. Simultaneously, qualitative data provide rich narrative accounts of employees' lived experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms, which contextualize the statistical findings (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). The convergent design ensures that both datasets are collected concurrently but analyzed separately, followed by integration of findings during interpretation. This structure is particularly valuable for studying digital surveillance, as employees' perceptions and psychological reactions are deeply subjective and may not always align neatly with numerical survey responses.

Population and Sampling

The population targeted for this study consisted of employees in medium to large organizations across technology, financial services, administrative, and remote work sectors, where digital surveillance is routinely implemented. These sectors were selected due to their high reliance on digital monitoring technologies and knowledge-intensive work environments (Moore, 2021). A purposive sampling technique was used to identify organizations that actively employ digital surveillance tools. Within these organizations, participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in gender, age, role, and tenure. Stratification is critical because perceptions of surveillance and its psychological impact may vary according to hierarchical position and job function (Smith & Kidder, 2010). The quantitative sample included 350 employees, with a final response rate of 87% ($n = 305$). The qualitative sample comprised 30 participants selected from the survey respondents who indicated willingness to participate in interviews, ensuring representation across departments and organizational levels. Sample sizes were determined based on recommendations for sufficient statistical power and thematic saturation (Guest *et al.*, 2020).

Research Instruments

Quantitative Instruments

Three validated instruments were employed to measure the primary variables:

1. **Psychological Wellbeing:** Assessed using the Ryff Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1989), a multidimensional instrument measuring autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The scale has been widely applied in organizational studies examining employee stress and mental health.
2. **Organizational Trust:** Measured using the Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI; Roy, 2005), which captures employees' confidence in management fairness, competence, and ethical behavior. This tool has demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha > .85$) across diverse organizational contexts.
3. **Organizational Commitment:** Evaluated using the Meyer and Allen (1991) Three-Component Model, assessing affective, normative, and continuance commitment. This instrument is widely regarded for its validity and cross-cultural applicability in organizational research.

A self-constructed Digital Surveillance Perception Scale was also developed to measure perceived intrusiveness, transparency, and purposefulness of monitoring practices. Items were validated through expert review and a pilot test with 25 employees to ensure clarity, relevance, and internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$).

Qualitative Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were designed to explore participants' perceptions, emotional reactions, and coping strategies related to digital surveillance. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on experiences, perceived fairness, impact on trust and commitment, and suggestions for ethical implementation. The interview guide was refined through a pilot phase to ensure clarity and alignment with research objectives.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in three phases:

1. **Organizational Access and Consent:** Formal permissions were obtained from HR departments and management. Ethical approval was secured from the institutional review board, ensuring compliance with privacy and informed consent standards (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.
2. **Survey Administration:** The quantitative survey was administered online using a secure platform to accommodate remote and on-site employees. Reminders were sent over a two-week period to enhance response rates. Data were screened for completeness and accuracy, with missing data handled using multiple imputation techniques to minimize bias (Rubin, 2004).
3. **Interviews:** Qualitative interviews were conducted via video conferencing and audio-recorded with consent. Each session lasted 40–60 minutes. Transcripts were prepared

verbatim, and participants were invited to review summaries to ensure credibility and accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v28. Descriptive statistics provided insights into demographic distributions and variable distributions. Inferential analyses, including Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and hierarchical regression analyses, were employed to examine relationships between surveillance practices, psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and commitment. Mediation analysis was conducted to explore whether trust mediates the relationship between surveillance and commitment, guided by Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro. This is critical to understand the interdependencies among variables, as previous studies suggest that reduced trust may partially explain lower commitment in surveilled environments (Martin *et al.*, 2022).

Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), following a six-step process: familiarization, coding, theme development, reviewing themes, defining/naming themes, and reporting. Codes were generated inductively to capture emergent patterns and deductively to align with research objectives (psychological wellbeing, trust, commitment). NVivo 12 software facilitated data organization and pattern identification. Triangulation with quantitative findings ensured robustness and validity.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of digital surveillance, ethical considerations were paramount. Key ethical measures included:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Consent was obtained prior to participation (Creswell, 2014).
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Identifiable information was removed from datasets. Data were stored securely, accessible only to the research team.
- **Non-Maleficence:** Care was taken to avoid psychological harm, particularly when discussing sensitive topics like perceived monitoring stress. Participants were provided with support resources if distress arose.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Participants could withdraw at any time without consequences.

Ethical compliance ensured that the study-maintained integrity and credibility while respecting employee rights (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Methodological Rationale

The selected methodology aligns with the complexity of the research problem. Digital surveillance impacts multiple psychological and organizational domains that are both measurable and experiential. Quantitative surveys allow for statistical inference regarding general patterns and relationships, while qualitative interviews capture contextual

nuances, perceptions, and emotional responses that surveys alone cannot detect (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By integrating both approaches, the study addresses limitations of single-method research and strengthens the validity, reliability, and generalizability of findings.

Limitations of Methodology

While comprehensive, the methodology has certain limitations:

- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the temporal effects of surveillance on wellbeing, trust, and commitment (Moore, 2021).
- Purposive and stratified sampling may introduce selection bias, though stratification reduces some variability.
- Self-reported measures are subject to social desirability and response bias, particularly in topics related to monitoring and trust.
- Organizational context may influence generalizability; results may differ in sectors or cultural settings where surveillance norms vary.

Despite these limitations, the combination of rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods ensures that the study provides a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the phenomenon.

DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

This section synthesizes the results of the study on the impact of digital surveillance at work on employee psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and organizational commitment. Drawing upon both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview insights, the discussion contextualizes the findings within existing literature, highlighting patterns, theoretical implications, and practical relevance.

Psychological Wellbeing and Digital Surveillance

The study revealed a significant negative relationship between perceived digital surveillance and employees' psychological wellbeing. Quantitative analysis indicated that employees who perceived high intrusiveness in monitoring reported lower scores on the Ryff Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1989), particularly in dimensions related to autonomy, self-acceptance, and environmental mastery. Regression analysis confirmed a strong negative correlation ($\beta = -0.47, p < .01$), consistent with prior research suggesting that workplace monitoring generates stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Sewell & Barker, 2006; Smith & Kidder, 2010).

Qualitative interviews provided rich narratives corroborating these findings. Employees described feelings of constant scrutiny, tension, and fear of mistakes being immediately detected. For instance, one participant stated:

"Even when I complete my tasks efficiently, I feel like every click and keystroke is being monitored. It creates constant pressure and makes me second-guess my actions."

This aligns with Foucault's (1977) concept of the panopticon, where the perception of being constantly observed leads to internalized regulation and heightened psychological strain. Participants indicated that such stress often manifests as

difficulty concentrating, reduced motivation, and in some cases, physical symptoms such as headaches and sleep disturbances, reinforcing Zimmer's (2010) findings on the psychosomatic impacts of surveillance. Moreover, the qualitative data revealed that the nature and framing of monitoring influenced psychological outcomes. Surveillance perceived as supportive (e.g., safety monitoring for remote work or productivity tracking with transparent feedback) elicited less stress, suggesting that employee perception mediates the psychological impact of monitoring (Moore, 2021). This is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which posits that job demands such as monitoring increase stress, while job resources like support and autonomy can buffer these effects (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The findings emphasize that organizations must consider both the intensity and perceived purpose of surveillance. Practices framed as controlling or punitive exacerbate negative wellbeing outcomes, whereas transparent, participatory, and supportive monitoring mitigates stress, promoting a healthier psychological environment.

Organizational Trust and Surveillance

Organizational trust emerged as a crucial intermediary in the relationship between digital surveillance and employee outcomes. Quantitative results demonstrated a moderate negative correlation between perceived intrusive monitoring and trust ($r = -0.41, p < .01$). Employees reporting low trust in management consistently perceived surveillance as unfair or disproportionate. These findings align with Mayer et al.'s (1995) model, which underscores competence, benevolence, and integrity as the foundational pillars of trust.

Interview narratives elaborated on the mechanisms through which surveillance eroded trust. Participants frequently cited lack of transparency, covert monitoring, and perceived managerial mistrust as major concerns. One respondent remarked:

"I understand that the organization wants productivity, but being monitored secretly makes me feel they don't trust us at all. It's hard to feel loyal when trust is missing."

Such insights reinforce the procedural justice perspective, which posits that fairness in processes here, surveillance policies affects employees' perceptions of managerial trustworthiness (Colquitt et al., 2001). Transparency about what is monitored, why, and how data will be used emerged as a recurring theme across interviews, highlighting that ethical surveillance practices are integral to sustaining trust.

The study also identified a mediating effect of trust in the relationship between surveillance and organizational commitment. Quantitative mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro (2013) showed that trust partially mediates the negative effect of intrusive monitoring on commitment (indirect effect = $-0.22, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.31, -0.14]$). Employees who maintained some trust in management despite surveillance were less likely to experience reduced commitment. This finding is consistent with Martin et al. (2022), who emphasized that transparent, participatory surveillance practices can preserve trust, mitigating adverse organizational outcomes. Notably, sectoral and contextual differences influenced trust levels. Employees in regulated or security-sensitive sectors (e.g., finance, IT) were more accepting of surveillance,

perceiving it as necessary and legitimate. Conversely, employees in administrative or knowledge-intensive roles with high autonomy reported stronger negative reactions, highlighting the role of contextual legitimacy and employee expectations in moderating trust responses (Moore, 2021).

Organizational Commitment and Digital Surveillance

The impact of digital surveillance on organizational commitment was nuanced but predominantly negative. Quantitative results indicated that high perceived intrusiveness correlated with lower affective commitment ($\beta = -0.39, p < .01$) and normative commitment ($\beta = -0.25, p < .05$), whereas the effect on continuance commitment was weaker ($\beta = -0.12, p = .08$). These findings are consistent with prior studies suggesting that monitoring affects the emotional and moral attachment employees feel toward their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Sewell & Barker, 2006).

Interview data revealed similar patterns. Employees expressed reduced loyalty, disengagement, and intentions to seek alternative employment in response to excessive or opaque surveillance. One participant explained:

"When I feel like every move is watched, I no longer feel a sense of belonging. It makes me question why I should stay committed to the organization."

Interestingly, employees reported higher commitment when surveillance was framed as supportive or protective rather than controlling. For instance, monitoring used to ensure cybersecurity or to provide constructive performance feedback was perceived as legitimate and even beneficial, reflecting Moore's (2021) assertion that framing and communication are critical determinants of employee responses to monitoring.

The thematic analysis revealed three major sub-themes regarding commitment:

1. **Perceived fairness and consent:** Employees who felt consulted or informed about surveillance policies reported higher commitment.
2. **Purpose and utility of monitoring:** Surveillance with a clear, constructive purpose (e.g., remote work support, performance guidance) mitigated negative effects.
3. **Autonomy and control:** Excessive micro-management or real-time monitoring reduced both affective and normative commitment, illustrating the tension between organizational control and employee autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

These findings underscore the need for organizations to balance operational oversight with respect for employee autonomy, reinforcing theories of self-determination and social exchange in organizational behavior (Blau, 1964; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Employees' commitment is preserved when surveillance is perceived as fair, justified, and supportive of their professional development.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Integrating the survey and interview data reveals a cohesive pattern. Quantitative correlations and regressions confirm statistically significant relationships between perceived intrusive surveillance, psychological strain, reduced trust, and

decreased commitment. Qualitative narratives provide contextual depth, explaining *why* and *how* these relationships manifest in day-to-day work experiences.

The findings highlight interdependent dynamics:

- **Psychological Wellbeing → Trust → Commitment:** Stress and anxiety induced by intrusive monitoring erode trust, which in turn reduces commitment.
- **Perceived Purpose and Transparency as Moderators:** Transparent, participatory, and ethically framed surveillance moderates negative effects, preserving wellbeing, trust, and commitment.
- **Contextual Sensitivity:** Reactions to surveillance are influenced by job type, organizational sector, and remote work arrangements, indicating that generic policies are unlikely to be universally effective.

This integration emphasizes that digital surveillance is not inherently harmful; rather, its implementation and perception determine the extent and nature of employee impact. These findings reinforce a human-centered perspective in workplace surveillance literature, calling for policies that balance organizational oversight with employee autonomy, privacy, and psychological health.

Comparison with Existing Literature

The results of this study are consistent with prior research but also provide new insights. Existing literature has consistently reported negative psychological effects of digital monitoring, aligning with the current findings on stress and anxiety (Sewell & Barker, 2006; Zimmer, 2010). The observed erosion of trust and its mediating role between surveillance and commitment extend previous studies by providing empirical evidence of mechanistic pathways connecting monitoring to organizational outcomes (Martin *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the nuanced findings regarding contextual and framing effects enhance existing knowledge by illustrating that employee perceptions significantly mediate the impact of surveillance. This resonates with Moore (2021), who emphasized that remote work surveillance amplifies the psychological and relational effects of monitoring. The qualitative narratives further enrich the literature by capturing employee voices, highlighting ethical concerns, and emphasizing the importance of participatory policy development areas often underexplored in quantitative studies.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The study has multiple theoretical and practical implications:

1. Theoretical Implications:

- Supports the panopticon framework by demonstrating that perceived monitoring induces self-regulation and psychological strain.
- Extends organizational trust theory, illustrating that trust mediates the effects of surveillance on commitment.
- Provides evidence for self-determination theory in organizational settings, showing that autonomy and perceived fairness moderate surveillance effects.

2. Practical Implications:

- Organizations should implement transparent and participatory surveillance policies to maintain trust and commitment.
- Monitoring practices should be framed as supportive rather than punitive, focusing on employee development and safety.
- Regular communication and feedback mechanisms are essential to ensure employees perceive surveillance as fair and legitimate.
- HR policies should consider sectoral and contextual factors, customizing monitoring practices based on job role, organizational culture, and work modality (onsite vs. remote).

Key Findings Summary

1. **Psychological Wellbeing:** Intrusive digital surveillance negatively affects autonomy, self-acceptance, and environmental mastery, increasing stress and emotional exhaustion.
2. **Organizational Trust:** Trust in management is significantly reduced by covert or punitive surveillance but can be preserved through transparency and participatory policy design.
3. **Organizational Commitment:** Affective and normative commitment are diminished under intrusive monitoring; continuance commitment is less affected. Commitment is higher when surveillance is perceived as fair and supportive.
4. **Mediating and Moderating Effects:** Trust mediates the relationship between surveillance and commitment, while perceived fairness, purpose, and autonomy moderate the negative effects.
5. **Contextual Sensitivity:** Employee responses vary across sectors, roles, and remote work contexts, emphasizing the need for context-aware surveillance strategies.

Conclusion of Discussion

Overall, the findings underscore that digital surveillance is a double-edged sword: while potentially enhancing productivity and organizational oversight, it poses substantial risks to employee wellbeing, trust, and commitment if implemented without ethical considerations. The study contributes to both theory and practice by integrating psychological, relational, and organizational dimensions, emphasizing that human-centered, transparent, and participatory surveillance practices are essential for sustainable organizational functioning in the digital age.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the complex and multifaceted impact of digital surveillance on employees' psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and commitment. While digital monitoring can enhance productivity, ensure compliance, and safeguard organizational assets, its implementation often generates unintended consequences if approached without consideration of ethical, psychological, and social dimensions (Ball, 2010; Moore, 2021). Based on the results, literature review, and theoretical frameworks, the following recommendations are proposed for

organizations seeking to implement digital surveillance in a manner that balances operational objectives with employee wellbeing, trust, and commitment.

Implement Transparent Surveillance Policies

Transparency emerged as a critical factor moderating the negative impacts of monitoring on employees. Organizations should clearly communicate the scope, purpose, and mechanisms of surveillance to all employees (Martin *et al.*, 2022). Transparent policies can mitigate perceptions of unfairness and reduce psychological strain, as employees understand why and how their activities are monitored.

Actionable Steps

- Provide detailed documentation outlining what types of digital monitoring are in place, such as email, internet activity, GPS tracking, or biometric systems.
- Clarify the purpose of monitoring, emphasizing its role in security, performance improvement, or remote work support rather than punitive oversight.
- Communicate policies through multiple channels, including formal manuals, intranet postings, team meetings, and onboarding sessions for new employees.

Supporting Literature

Ball (2010) notes that employees perceive surveillance as fairer when they are fully informed of its scope and rationale. Martin *et al.* (2022) emphasize that transparency fosters procedural justice, which strengthens trust and mitigates negative emotional responses. Moreover, Moore (2021) highlights that transparency is particularly crucial in remote work environments, where monitoring can blur the boundary between work and personal life.

Foster Employee Participation in Policy Design

Active involvement of employees in developing surveillance policies increases procedural justice perceptions and reduces resistance or anxiety associated with monitoring. Participatory design ensures that monitoring practices are responsive to employees' concerns and aligned with organizational goals.

Actionable Steps

- Conduct surveys, focus groups, or workshops to gather employee input regarding monitoring practices and their perceived intrusiveness.
- Establish committees or task forces that include employee representatives to co-develop monitoring guidelines.
- Regularly review and update policies based on employee feedback to ensure continued relevance and fairness.

Supporting Literature

Procedural justice theory emphasizes that when employees have a voice in decision-making processes, they perceive policies as more legitimate and are more likely to accept organizational control measures (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Sewell and Barker (2006) further suggest that participatory approaches reduce psychological strain and increase perceived fairness in monitoring practices. Martin *et al.* (2022) argue that employee participation also fosters trust, which mediates the negative effects of surveillance on organizational commitment.

Frame Surveillance as Supportive Rather than Punitive

Employees are more likely to experience psychological strain and reduced commitment when monitoring is framed as a control mechanism rather than a supportive tool (Smith & Kidder, 2010). Organizations should emphasize the protective and developmental aspects of surveillance, such as ensuring data security, supporting remote work, and providing constructive feedback.

Actionable Steps

- Position monitoring tools as mechanisms for employee support and professional development, rather than solely for oversight or discipline.
- Provide feedback based on surveillance data to enhance skills, identify training needs, and promote professional growth.
- Avoid punitive use of monitoring data as the primary justification for surveillance, unless clearly documented and ethically justified.

Supporting Literature

Moore (2021) and Martin *et al.* (2022) highlight that the framing of monitoring significantly affects employees' perceptions and reactions. Supportive framing reduces stress, maintains trust, and preserves commitment, whereas punitive framing fosters resentment, disengagement, and turnover intentions. Smith and Kidder (2010) provide evidence that employees who perceive monitoring as unfair or punitive report higher levels of emotional exhaustion and lower organizational commitment.

Maintain Proportionality and Limit Intrusiveness

Excessive or overly detailed monitoring exacerbates psychological stress and reduces trust (Zimmer, 2010). Organizations should ensure that surveillance is proportional to its intended purpose and avoid unnecessary intrusion into employees' private or non-work-related activities.

Actionable Steps

- Conduct a risk-benefit assessment to determine the necessity and extent of monitoring tools.
- Monitor only work-relevant activities, avoiding intrusion into personal communications or off-duty behavior.
- Regularly audit monitoring practices to ensure they remain proportionate and aligned with organizational goals.

Supporting Literature

Zimmer (2010) and Sewell and Barker (2006) note that perceived over-monitoring can produce a panoptic effect, increasing stress and eroding trust. Moore (2021) emphasizes that proportional monitoring balances organizational control with respect for employee autonomy, mitigating adverse psychological and relational outcomes.

Provide Support Mechanisms for Psychological Wellbeing

Given the demonstrated link between surveillance and psychological strain, organizations should proactively provide

resources and support mechanisms to maintain employee wellbeing.

Actionable Steps

- Offer stress management programs, counseling services, and mental health workshops.
- Encourage flexible work arrangements that respect personal boundaries, particularly for remote employees.
- Train managers to recognize signs of stress or anxiety related to monitoring and provide supportive interventions.

Supporting Literature

Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests that providing resources, such as support and autonomy, can buffer the negative effects of high job demands, including surveillance. Smith and Kidder (2010) also recommend employee support programs to mitigate emotional exhaustion associated with monitoring.

Ensure Legal and Ethical Compliance

Monitoring practices must comply with data protection laws, privacy regulations, and ethical standards. Ethical compliance reduces employee perceptions of injustice and reinforces trust in the organization.

Actionable Steps

- Align surveillance policies with local and international labor laws and data privacy regulations.
- Clearly define acceptable data usage, storage, and retention practices.
- Provide employees with access to their own monitoring data and avenues to challenge inaccuracies or misuse.

Supporting Literature

Ball (2010) emphasizes the importance of ethical compliance in monitoring, noting that violations of privacy or consent can have severe consequences for trust and organizational legitimacy. Martin et al. (2022) argue that ethical frameworks are essential for sustaining both legal compliance and psychological safety in monitored environments.

Integrate Technology with Human-Centered Approaches

While digital surveillance is inherently technological, integrating human-centered management practices enhances its effectiveness and reduces negative outcomes. Organizations should consider both the technical and social dimensions of monitoring.

Actionable Steps

- Use technology to support collaboration, learning, and efficiency rather than as a primary control mechanism.
- Regularly evaluate the human impact of monitoring using employee surveys, feedback mechanisms, and psychological wellbeing assessments.
- Train managers to interpret monitoring data constructively and communicate findings sensitively.

Supporting Literature

Moore (2021) underscores the importance of balancing technological capabilities with human-centered approaches. Zuboff (2019) warns against "surveillance capitalism" models that prioritize organizational control over employee wellbeing, stressing ethical responsibility in digital monitoring.

Continuous Monitoring and Policy Evaluation

Surveillance practices should not be static; organizations must continually assess their impact on employees and adapt policies accordingly.

Actionable Steps

- Establish regular review cycles to evaluate the psychological and organizational effects of surveillance.
- Solicit employee feedback and adjust policies to address emerging concerns.
- Monitor compliance with ethical standards, ensuring that surveillance does not inadvertently harm employees.

Supporting Literature

Continuous evaluation aligns with organizational learning theories, which posit that iterative feedback and policy refinement enhance effectiveness and employee engagement (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Moore (2021) emphasizes that adaptive surveillance policies can maintain productivity while safeguarding wellbeing, trust, and commitment.

Recommendations for Remote and Hybrid Work Contexts

The rise of remote and hybrid work has heightened the relevance of digital surveillance and its associated risks. Remote employees are particularly sensitive to monitoring due to blurred boundaries between work and personal life.

Actionable Steps

- Clearly differentiate work-related monitoring from personal activity tracking.
- Establish boundaries regarding work hours and communication expectations.
- Provide autonomy and flexibility to remote employees while using monitoring data primarily for supportive feedback and security purposes.

Supporting Literature

Moore (2021) highlights the amplified psychological risks of remote monitoring, including increased stress and reduced trust. Transparent communication and supportive framing are essential for maintaining wellbeing and commitment in remote settings.

Summary of Recommendations

In summary, the study recommends that organizations:

1. **Implement transparent surveillance policies** to foster trust and perceived fairness.

2. **Engage employees in policy development** to enhance procedural justice and acceptance.
3. **Frame monitoring as supportive**, emphasizing protection, feedback, and development rather than control.
4. **Maintain proportionality**, limiting surveillance to work-relevant activities.
5. **Provide psychological support mechanisms** to mitigate stress and enhance wellbeing.
6. **Ensure legal and ethical compliance** to maintain organizational legitimacy and employee trust.
7. **Integrate human-centered approaches** alongside technological systems.
8. **Continuously evaluate monitoring practices** to identify and address negative impacts.
9. **Tailor policies for remote and hybrid work contexts**, ensuring boundaries, autonomy, and supportive feedback.

These recommendations are grounded in empirical evidence, psychological theory, and organizational research. Their implementation can help organizations leverage digital surveillance effectively without compromising employee wellbeing, trust, or commitment.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of digital surveillance on employee psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and organizational commitment, several limitations must be acknowledged. Recognizing these limitations is essential for interpreting the findings accurately, situating them within the broader literature, and guiding future research in this domain. The limitations relate to methodological, contextual, conceptual, and practical aspects of the research, each of which is discussed in detail below.

Methodological Limitations

Cross-Sectional Design

The study employed a cross-sectional design, collecting survey and interview data at a single point in time. While this design allowed for efficient examination of relationships between digital surveillance, psychological wellbeing, trust, and commitment, it inherently limits causal inference (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). For example, while the findings suggest that intrusive surveillance negatively affects psychological wellbeing and trust, it is not possible to determine definitively whether surveillance causes reduced wellbeing or if employees with lower trust and wellbeing perceive surveillance as more intrusive. Longitudinal designs, which track employees' experiences and perceptions over time, could provide more robust evidence of causality. Such designs are particularly relevant for digital surveillance, as the psychological and organizational effects may evolve with prolonged exposure, changing policies, or shifts in work modality (Moore, 2021).

Reliance on Self-Reported Measures

The quantitative and qualitative data were predominantly self-reported. While self-reports are valuable for capturing subjective perceptions, experiences, and emotions, they are prone to social desirability bias, response bias, and recall bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Employees may underreport negative emotions or stress to align with perceived organizational

expectations, or overreport trust to present themselves as compliant. Although the study attempted to mitigate these biases through anonymous surveys, confidential interviews, and pilot-tested instruments, self-reporting remains a limitation that could affect the accuracy of measured psychological wellbeing, trust, and commitment. Future research could integrate objective metrics, such as physiological stress indicators, absenteeism rates, or actual productivity data, to complement subjective assessments and triangulate findings (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Sample Size and Representativeness

The study included a quantitative sample of 305 employees and a qualitative sample of 30 participants across medium to large organizations in technology, finance, and administrative sectors. While these sample sizes were sufficient for statistical analysis and thematic saturation, they may not fully represent the broader population of employees subjected to digital surveillance across diverse industries and geographic contexts. For example, employees in manufacturing, healthcare, retail, or government sectors may experience surveillance differently due to sector-specific norms, regulations, and work structures. Similarly, small or micro-enterprises may implement monitoring in less formalized ways, producing different psychological and relational outcomes. As a result, the generalizability of the findings is somewhat limited. Future studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples, potentially incorporating multi-country comparative analyses to examine cross-cultural differences in employee responses to surveillance (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Contextual Limitations

Organizational Culture and Policies

The impact of digital surveillance is closely intertwined with organizational culture, leadership style, and policy implementation (Ball, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2022). This study focused on organizations that voluntarily allowed research access and employed structured surveillance policies. Employees' perceptions and reactions may differ in organizations with less formalized monitoring, authoritarian leadership, or punitive cultures. Moreover, sector-specific regulations and compliance requirements influence employees' acceptance of surveillance. For instance, employees in highly regulated sectors (e.g., finance, IT security) may view monitoring as legitimate and necessary, while employees in creative or knowledge-intensive roles may perceive the same practices as intrusive. This contextual variation limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to all workplace environments.

Remote and Hybrid Work Dynamics

Although the study included employees in both on-site and remote work contexts, the evolving nature of hybrid work introduces additional complexity. Remote employees may experience heightened stress due to blurred boundaries between work and personal life, digital monitoring during non-work hours, and reduced social support (Moore, 2021). While the study captured some of these dynamics qualitatively, the limited sample size and variability in remote work arrangements constrain the depth of conclusions. Future research should systematically examine remote and hybrid

work modalities, considering factors such as home-office setups, technology usage patterns, and work-life integration strategies.

Conceptual Limitations

Focus on Three Primary Constructs

This study concentrated on three primary constructs: psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and organizational commitment. While these are key outcomes, digital surveillance may also affect other organizational variables, including job satisfaction, engagement, team dynamics, innovation, and ethical climate (Zuboff, 2019; Deci & Ryan, 2000). By focusing on a limited set of outcomes, the study may not capture the full spectrum of employee experiences or the broader organizational consequences of surveillance. Additionally, the study did not extensively examine potential individual differences, such as personality traits, resilience, tolerance for control, or prior experiences with monitoring, which may moderate responses to surveillance. For example, employees with high self-determination or autonomy orientation may perceive surveillance as less intrusive, whereas those with lower tolerance for oversight may experience heightened stress (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Future studies should incorporate moderating and mediating variables to better understand the nuanced interplay between surveillance practices and employee outcomes.

Limited Examination of Surveillance Types

Digital surveillance encompasses a variety of tools and practices, including email tracking, keystroke monitoring, biometric systems, GPS tracking, and productivity analytics (Ball, 2010). While this study considered surveillance in general, it did not differentiate the psychological and organizational impacts of specific monitoring technologies. Certain forms of surveillance, such as covert monitoring or real-time keystroke tracking, may produce more severe stress and trust erosion than transparent, outcome-focused monitoring. Detailed examination of specific surveillance modalities could provide more precise recommendations for organizational policy design.

Practical and Operational Limitations

Organizational Access and Data Sensitivity

Accessing organizations that employ digital surveillance posed practical challenges. Organizations were cautious about disclosing detailed information regarding surveillance policies due to confidentiality and competitive concerns. This limited the depth of insight into specific practices, particularly those that may be controversial or sensitive. Employees' willingness to discuss negative experiences may also have been constrained by fear of reprisal, despite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality.

Technological Evolution

Digital surveillance technologies are rapidly evolving, with new tools, analytics platforms, and AI-driven monitoring systems continually emerging (Zuboff, 2019). The findings of this study reflect the state of surveillance technologies and

practices at the time of data collection. Future technological developments, such as predictive analytics, algorithmic performance scoring, or AI-driven remote monitoring, may introduce additional psychological, ethical, and relational challenges that were not captured in this study.

Limitations Related to Cultural Context

This study was conducted primarily within organizations located in Bangladesh, a context characterized by unique cultural, social, and regulatory norms. Cultural dimensions, such as power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, can shape employees' perceptions of surveillance and their tolerance for oversight (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). In high power distance cultures, employees may accept surveillance as a legitimate managerial prerogative, whereas in low power distance cultures, the same practices may generate stronger negative reactions. Consequently, the transferability of the findings to organizations in other countries, especially those with different cultural, legal, or labor contexts, may be limited. Cross-cultural comparative research is needed to explore the universality of these findings and identify culturally sensitive approaches to digital surveillance.

Ethical and Psychological Considerations

While ethical protocols were rigorously followed, discussing sensitive topics related to surveillance may have elicited social desirability bias, underreporting of negative experiences, or self-censorship among participants. Employees may have minimized the psychological impact of surveillance due to loyalty, fear of reprisal, or organizational norms (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Such factors potentially attenuate the observed relationships between surveillance, trust, wellbeing, and commitment. Moreover, psychological outcomes were assessed at a single time point, which may not fully capture cumulative or delayed effects of prolonged exposure to digital monitoring. Stress, anxiety, or reduced commitment may intensify over time, particularly under continuous or intrusive surveillance, suggesting that longitudinal research is needed to assess the temporal dynamics of these impacts (Moore, 2021).

Summary of Limitations

In summary, the limitations of this study include:

- Methodological Constraints:** Cross-sectional design limits causal inference; reliance on self-reported data introduces bias; sample size and sector-specific representation constrain generalizability.
- Contextual Factors:** Organizational culture, sectoral norms, and remote/hybrid work dynamics influence employee perceptions, limiting the applicability of findings across contexts.
- Conceptual Scope:** Focus on three primary constructs excludes other potentially relevant outcomes; lack of differentiation between surveillance modalities limits specificity.
- Practical Limitations:** Limited access to sensitive organizational data; technological evolution may render findings partially time-bound.
- Cultural Considerations:** Findings are context-specific and may not fully generalize across different cultural or regulatory environments.

6. Ethical and Psychological Constraints: Social desirability, self-censorship, and single-time-point assessment may underestimate or obscure the full psychological impact of surveillance.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes meaningfully to the literature on digital surveillance, providing integrated insights into the relationships between surveillance practices, employee psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and commitment. Recognizing these limitations not only contextualizes the findings but also provides a roadmap for future research to address gaps, enhance methodological rigor, and explore underexamined aspects of workplace monitoring.

CONCLUSION

The rapid proliferation of digital surveillance technologies has fundamentally transformed contemporary workplaces, raising critical questions regarding the balance between organizational control and employee autonomy. This study investigated the impact of digital surveillance on three interrelated organizational outcomes: employee psychological wellbeing, organizational trust, and organizational commitment. Drawing upon a convergent mixed-methods approach, the research integrated quantitative survey data with qualitative interview narratives, providing both empirical rigor and contextual richness. The findings not only corroborate previous research but also extend the understanding of digital surveillance by illuminating its nuanced and context-dependent effects on employees. The study demonstrates that digital surveillance, while often implemented to enhance productivity, ensure security, and monitor compliance, can produce significant psychological strain if perceived as intrusive, punitive, or opaque. Quantitative findings indicated a significant negative correlation between perceived surveillance and psychological wellbeing, with employees reporting decreased autonomy, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance. Qualitative narratives highlighted the pervasive sense of scrutiny and the internalization of monitoring pressures, echoing Foucault's (1977) panopticon theory. Employees described heightened anxiety, stress, and emotional exhaustion, which aligns with prior studies emphasizing the psychosomatic and cognitive impacts of monitoring (Sewell & Barker, 2006; Zimmer, 2010). Importantly, the data revealed that the perceived purpose, transparency, and proportionality of monitoring moderated these effects, highlighting that not all surveillance is inherently detrimental. Supportive framing emphasizing employee development, safety, or constructive feedback mitigated stress and preserved wellbeing, reinforcing findings by Moore (2021) and Martin et al. (2022). The study also underscores the centrality of organizational trust in mediating the relationship between surveillance and commitment. Employees who perceived surveillance as secretive, punitive, or unfair exhibited lower trust in management, leading to diminished affective and normative commitment. Quantitative mediation analysis confirmed that trust partially mediated the negative effect of surveillance on organizational commitment, indicating that trust acts as a critical psychological and relational buffer. Qualitative insights further revealed that employees interpreted covert monitoring as a signal of managerial distrust, eroding relational bonds and reducing loyalty. These findings align with Mayer et al.'s (1995) framework on organizational trust, which emphasizes competence, benevolence, and integrity as key determinants of employees' willingness to engage and cooperate. By contrast,

when monitoring was framed transparently and participatively, trust levels were maintained, demonstrating that procedural justice mechanisms are vital in moderating surveillance's negative outcomes (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Martin *et al.*, 2022). Organizational commitment emerged as another dimension highly sensitive to surveillance practices. The study found that affective and normative commitment decreased under conditions of intrusive monitoring, while continuance commitment was less affected. This suggests that employees' emotional attachment and moral obligation toward the organization are particularly vulnerable to perceived overreach. Interview data highlighted that employees felt disengaged and, in some cases, considered seeking alternative employment when surveillance was perceived as excessive. However, surveillance that was purposefully framed to support employee safety, performance, or skill development did not significantly reduce commitment. These findings are consistent with Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, which posits that affective and normative dimensions are influenced by relational and emotional perceptions, whereas continuance commitment reflects more calculative considerations, such as the cost of leaving the organization.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a holistic understanding of how digital surveillance functions as a multifaceted organizational phenomenon. Psychological wellbeing, trust, and commitment are interdependent; stress and anxiety induced by surveillance undermine trust, which in turn reduces commitment, creating a negative feedback loop that can erode organizational cohesion and performance. Conversely, when monitoring is transparent, proportional, and participatory, the negative effects are mitigated, suggesting that the design, communication, and ethical framing of surveillance policies are as important as the technologies themselves. This perspective advances the literature by emphasizing that digital surveillance should not be viewed solely through a technological or control-oriented lens but as a socio-technical and relational practice embedded within organizational culture, leadership, and employee perceptions (Zuboff, 2019; Moore, 2021).

The study also highlights contextual nuances that shape employee experiences of surveillance. Sectoral differences, hierarchical positions, and work modalities (onsite vs. remote) influenced perceptions and outcomes. Employees in highly regulated sectors, such as finance or IT security, were more accepting of monitoring, perceiving it as legitimate and necessary for compliance. In contrast, knowledge-intensive roles with high autonomy exhibited stronger negative reactions when surveillance was perceived as controlling. Remote employees were particularly sensitive due to blurred boundaries between work and personal life, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive policy design. These findings resonate with Hofstede et al.'s (2010) cultural dimensions and prior research on organizational justice, indicating that employee acceptance of surveillance is contingent on both organizational and cultural contexts. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide actionable insights for organizational leaders. First, surveillance policies should be transparent, participatory, and ethically grounded to preserve trust and commitment. Employees should understand the purpose, scope, and limitations of monitoring, and their input should inform policy design. Second, monitoring should be framed as supportive rather than punitive, emphasizing safety, development, and constructive feedback. Third, proportionality

is essential; organizations should monitor only work-relevant activities, avoiding unnecessary intrusion into personal or non-work-related behavior. Fourth, organizations must provide psychological support mechanisms, such as stress management programs, counseling, and flexible work arrangements, to buffer potential negative effects. Fifth, continuous evaluation of surveillance practices is necessary to adapt policies to evolving technologies, workforce expectations, and regulatory requirements (Ball, 2010; Moore, 2021; Martin *et al.*, 2022). The study also contributes theoretically by integrating multiple perspectives: Foucault's panopticon theory elucidates the mechanisms through which perceived observation affects behavior and wellbeing; procedural justice theory explains the mediating role of trust in moderating organizational outcomes; and self-determination theory underscores the importance of autonomy and perceived fairness in maintaining psychological and organizational functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Foucault, 1977). By synthesizing these frameworks, the study offers a comprehensive lens for understanding the psychosocial and organizational dynamics of digital surveillance, highlighting the need for ethical and human-centered approaches.

Finally, this research identifies avenues for future inquiry. Longitudinal studies are necessary to examine the cumulative effects of prolonged surveillance on employee wellbeing, trust, and commitment. Comparative studies across sectors, cultural contexts, and countries can illuminate contextual moderators and enhance generalizability. Investigating individual differences, such as personality traits, resilience, and autonomy orientation, may further elucidate variation in employee responses to surveillance. Moreover, studies should explore the impact of emerging technologies, including AI-driven monitoring, predictive analytics, and algorithmic performance evaluation, which present novel ethical and psychological challenges (Zuboff, 2019). In conclusion, the study confirms that digital surveillance is a double-edged sword: it can enhance organizational oversight and security but carries significant risks for employee psychological wellbeing, trust, and commitment if implemented without ethical, transparent, and participatory practices. Employees' perceptions of surveillance—shaped by transparency, purpose, proportionality, and participatory policy design—play a critical role in determining outcomes. By adopting human-centered, ethically grounded, and contextually sensitive monitoring strategies, organizations can leverage the benefits of surveillance while safeguarding employee wellbeing, preserving trust, and sustaining organizational commitment. The findings underscore the importance of balancing technological capability with relational and psychological considerations, providing a framework for organizations to navigate the complexities of the digital workplace in the 21st century.

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