



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal Homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Employee Surveillance Technologies: Balancing Organizational Performance, Digital Governance, and Workplace Rights

Oluwatosin Esther Ajewumi¹, Susanna Ayensu Blankson², Jalia Nabadda³

¹ Olin Business School, Washington University in Saint Louis, USA

² Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, USA

³ Saint Louis University, USA

ABSTRACT

Organizations in the United States are increasingly integrating employee surveillance technologies, aiming to enhance performance, security, and workforce management but also facing issues related to privacy, autonomy, and workplace rights. This conceptual article considers the linkage between employee surveillance, organizational performance and digital governance based on a review of the literature and a consideration of relevant U.S. policy and regulatory perspectives. It suggests that, in addition to technological capability, governance practices around the use of surveillance play an organizational role. The article outlines six principles for responsible workplace surveillance: transparency, proportionality, purpose limitation, data minimisation, accountability and human oversight.

Keywords: Workplace Privacy, Artificial Intelligence, Employee Surveillance, Digital Governance, Organizational Performance, Workplace Rights

1. INTRODUCTION

Digitalisation of work has changed the way organizations monitor, manage and evaluate employees. Employers are increasingly taking advantage of technologies like computer-monitoring software, cameras, geolocation, mobile apps, and wearable devices to gather and analyse data on employee activity (Glavin et al., 2024). Bosua and Evans (2026) also reported that the advent of remote and hybrid work, along with the advances in AI and data analytics, has further broadened employers' ability to monitor work done beyond an onsite work environment.

As Ball (2022) states, employee surveillance can offer a valuable organizational advantage in terms of performance management, operational efficiency, workplace security and data-driven decision making. However, he noted that increased monitoring also raises concerns regarding employee privacy, autonomy, trust and fairness. Other scholars, like Jahagirdar and Bankar (2020) also propose that surveillance can have positive and negative effects depending on the manner in which it is used and managed.

The question is not so much whether organizations can track employees, as whether they have comprehensive governance that keeps up with their technological advances. This article explores the application of employee surveillance technologies within organizations in the United States to enhance organizational performance while maintaining a respect for workplace rights. It examines current literature on surveillance, performance, and employee rights. It then looks at digital governance and proposes a conceptual model for responsible monitoring in the workplace.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

This paper uses a conceptual, literature-based framework to explore the connection between employee surveillance technologies, organizational performance, digital governance and employee rights in the United States. The study is based on peer-reviewed academic literature, government publications and relevant legal and policy literature related to surveillance in the workplace, employee privacy, digital monitoring, artificial intelligence, and organizational governance. Focus is placed on the literature review on benefits and risks of employee monitoring, as well as the principles of governance that can facilitate responsible use of monitoring technologies. The article does not present original empirical research, but rather reviews and critically examines the existing literature, extracting themes, tensions and relations from the literature. This approach offers a foundation for conceptual development and research propositions on responsible employee surveillance governance in US workplaces.

3. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Employee Surveillance Technologies and Organizational Performance

Employee surveillance technologies are digital technologies that are used by a company to monitor, track, and evaluate employees' activity, behavior, and performance. These include computer and email monitoring, electronic time tracking, geolocation, video surveillance, and biometric systems, and more recently, AI-powered workforce analytics (Hickok & Maslej, 2023). In the United States, employers use these technologies for different organizational purposes such as tracking productivity, protecting organizational assets, enhancing workplace security, aiding regulatory compliance, and managing increasingly distributed workforces (Hickok & Maslej, 2023).

According to Bali et al. (2025), surveillance data can be used to offer real-time feedback that can be useful to managers for performance assessment, resource allocation, and operational decision-making. However, evidence concerning its effectiveness is mixed. Monitoring can increase accountability and help identify inefficiencies in operations, but can also create an environment that encourages staff to focus on measurable activity over outcomes (Bali et al., 2025). It can also induce stress, lower trust, and foster the sense of too much managerial control (Ball, 2022). Thus, the utility of surveillance for an organization relies as much on the function, design, and conduct of the technology, as it does on the technology itself.

3.2 Workplace Privacy and Employee Rights

As employees become more monitored, there are questions arising about privacy, autonomy, and rights in the workplace. While expectations of privacy might be lowered in some work settings, the constant digital surveillance can increase employers' access to communications, locations, behaviors, and patterns of activity (Glavin et al., 2024). Transparency is crucial, especially if employees do not have a full understanding of what information is being gathered, why it is being gathered, or how it can be used to influence employment decisions (Yanamala, 2024). Excessive monitoring has also been linked to psychological and behavioral impacts, such as stress, decreased autonomy, and change in employee behavior (Ball, 2022).

In the U.S., there is no single, all-encompassing framework for workplace privacy, but instead, it is governed by various federal laws, state laws, and industry-specific rules and regulations, as well as employment policies and practices (Kumar et al. 2026). This results in a complex governance scenario in which employers have to weigh their legitimate interest in security and performance with the protection of the employees. The key challenge is then identifying practices of monitoring that are proportionate and necessary, but do not unnecessarily compromise privacy, dignity, and trust (Kumar et al., 2026).

3.3 Digital Governance and Responsible Surveillance

Digital governance takes the debate over the use of employee surveillance from a question of whether it should be used to the question of how it can be used responsibly. According to Paprica et al. (2023), effective governance means organizations need to have clear purposes for monitoring and make sure that data collection is meaningful and is in proportion to their legitimate purposes. Transparency is especially crucial; the employee should be aware of what data is collected, why, and how it can be used. In addition, the principle of purpose limitation mandates that organizations only collect employee data for specific and legitimate purposes, and data minimisation means that only data which is reasonably necessary is collected (Kumar et al., 2026).

Accountability mechanisms are also crucial to hold organizations accountable for the responsible management of data from surveillance and to address possible misuse (Afgan, 2025). According to Gandía et al. (2025), as artificial intelligence is introduced into employee monitoring and decision-making, these principles are becoming more relevant. To ensure that AI systems do not make key decisions in employment without proper checks and balances, human oversight is required to review AI-generated assessments, detect errors, bias, and more. Thus, the governance mechanics needed for responsible surveillance should be flexible enough to reconcile the interests of the organizations with the rights of their employees.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

The conceptual framework presented in this article also suggests that, apart from the technology's capabilities, the value of the organization of employee surveillance technologies is also influenced by governance and implementation. Employee surveillance can be used to help the organization perform better by giving information to help manage productivity, security, compliance, and operational decision making. These potential benefits need to be balanced against workplace privacy, autonomy, and employee rights (Glavin et al., 2024). Hence, digital governance is being seen as an important tool to help organizations balance between surveillance and performance and minimize unwanted intrusion (Sharmin & Chowdhury, 2025). The framework proposes that sustainable organizational value is more likely to be gained through surveillance practices that are transparent, proportional, purpose-driven, and appropriately accountable and supervised by humans.

Based on this conceptual relationship, three research propositions are advanced:

P1: Employee surveillance technologies are more likely to support organizational performance when they are used for defined and legitimate organizational purposes.

P2: Excessive and disproportionate employee surveillance will generally have an adverse impact on employee autonomy, trust, and perceptions of fairness.

P3: Digital governance that is transparent, proportionate, and accountable can help to enhance the capacity of organizations to advance performance goals whilst protecting employee privacy and workplace rights.

5. DISCUSSION

The literature and conceptual framework suggest that employee surveillance should be assessed not only on the basis of technological features and their capacity to enhance organizational performance. Digital monitoring can offer organizations a great deal of information about their productivity, security and workforce management, but this is linked to how employees perceive and experience the use of digital monitoring. Excessive, unclear, and intrusive surveillance can undermine trust and autonomy, and reduce the organizational benefits of such surveillance (Bali et al., 2025).

This emphasises the need for US employers to set governance guidelines before rolling out more sophisticated monitoring systems. Organizations should create clear objectives and purposes for surveillance, ensure that only the necessary information is gathered, be transparent in the communication of monitoring practices, implement adequate controls for access to and use of employee information. Human oversight is especially critical when using AI to evaluate employee behavior or performance to uncover errors, bias, and undesirable results.

The framework also highlights continuing tensions between organizational efficiency and employee rights. Further studies could explore the impact of various forms of surveillance on employee trust and productivity in different industries, the reactions of employees to AI-driven surveillance, and the most effective governance models for balancing organizational goals with workers' rights.

6. CONCLUSION

Employee surveillance technologies are a growing part of the US workplace that presents opportunities for organizations to enhance performance, security, and workforce management. But the level and type of monitoring in the workplace should not depend only on technological capacity. The main claim of this article is that the organizational benefit of surveillance relies heavily on the governance and implementation of surveillance. Transparency, proportionality, purpose limitation, data minimisation, accountability, and human oversight are key principles to support responsible digital governance that can enable organizations to achieve legitimate performance goals, safeguard the privacy of employees, and the rights of the workplace. The goal is not to abandon the use of employee surveillance in its entirety, but to make sure that it is necessary, proportional, and responsibly governed.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

References

- 1) Afgan, V. (2025). Legal mechanisms of audit and accountability in artificial intelligence systems in the context of international law. *Uzhhorod National University Herald Series Law*, 5(90), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.24144/2307-3322.2025.90.5.8>
- 2) Bali, S., Singh, G., Aggarwal, N., & Rajni, R. (2025). Digital Surveillance in the workplace: A study of monitoring practices across organizations in Punjab. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14(8), 87–94. <https://doi.org/10.63682/jns.v14i8.6670>
- 3) Ball, K. (2022). Surveillance in the workplace: past, present, and future. *Surveillance & Society*, 20(4), 455–461. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v20i4.15805>
- 4) Bosua, R., & Evans, N. (2026). Privacy challenges of AI-Enabled monitoring in the workplace. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 75(3), 669–690. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2026.2694614>
- 5) Gandía, J. a. G., De Lucas Ancillo, A., & Del Val Núñez, M. T. (2025). Knowledge and artificial intelligence on employee behaviour advancing safe and respectful workplace. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, 10(4), 100750. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2025.100750>
- 6) Glavin, P., Bierman, A., & Schieman, S. (2024). Private eyes, they see your every move: workplace Surveillance and Worker Well-Being. *Social Currents*, 11(4), 327–345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23294965241228874>
- 7) Hickok, M., & Maslej, N. (2023). A policy primer and roadmap on AI worker surveillance and productivity scoring tools. *AI And Ethics*, 3(3), 673–687. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-023-00275-8>
- 8) Jahagirdar, R., & Bankar, S. (2020). EMPLOYEES PERCEPTION OF WORKPLACE MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE. *PEOPLE International Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 474–486. <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2020.61.474486>
- 9) Kumar, M., Najeeb, A., Rajora, H., & Rani, P. (2026). Privacy in the Digital Workplace. In *Legal Frameworks of Human Resource Management Reform* (pp. 37–54). <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-5390-5.ch003>
- 10) Paprica, P. A., Crichlow, M., Maillet, D. C., Kesselring, S., Pow, C., Scarnecchia, T. P., Schull, M. J., Cartagena, R. G., Cumyn, A., Dostmohammad, S., Elliston, K. O., Greiver, M., Nelson, A. H., Hill, S. L., Isaranuwatthai, W., Loukipoudis, E., McDonald, J. T.,

- McLaughlin, J. R., Rabinowitz, A., . . . McGrail, K. (2023). Essential requirements for the governance and management of data trusts, data repositories, and other data collaborations. *International Journal for Population Data Science*, 8(4), 2142. <https://doi.org/10.23889/ijpds.v8i4.2142>
- 11) Sharmin, S., & Chowdhury, R. H. (2025). Digital Transformation in Governance: The Impact of e-governance on Public Administration and Transparency. *Journal of Computer Science and Technology Studies*, 7(1), 362–379. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jcsts.2025.7.1.27>
 - 12) Yanamala, K. K. R. (2024). Transparency, privacy, and accountability in AI-Enhanced HR processes. *Journal of Advanced Computing Systems*, 3(3), 10–18. <https://doi.org/10.69987/jacs.2023.30302>