

Workplace Surveillance and Employee Autonomy in Modern Complex Organizations: A Study of South-South Nigeria

Lawretta Adaobi Onyekwere & Barinem Wisdom Girigiri

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Rivers State University, Nigeria

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*Corresponding author: Lawretta Adaobi Onyekwere

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The study, anchored in the Sociotechnical Systems Theory, adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between workplace surveillance and employee autonomy in modern complex organizations across South-South Nigeria. The population consisted of employees from both public and private sector organizations within the region, and a sample of 634 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation across organizational types and job hierarchies. Data was collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled "Workplace Surveillance and Employee Autonomy Questionnaire (WSEAQ)," validated through expert review and pilot testing. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability index of .879, indicating high internal consistency. Descriptive statistics, including, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, were employed to answer the research questions, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at a .05 level of significance. Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with thirty participants and analyzed thematically, alongside comparative case studies from public, private, and tech-based institutions. Findings revealed that surveillance practices significantly affect employees' sense of autonomy and trust, with notable variations across sectors and organizational roles. The study concludes that transparent and collaborative surveillance approaches foster autonomy and trust, while excessive control undermines employee motivation and engagement in South-South Nigeria. It is recommended that leaders implement surveillance practices that prioritize transparency and open communication to foster employee trust while ensuring organizational security and productivity.

Keywords: Workplace Surveillance, Employee Autonomy, Trust, Organizational Control, Monitoring Practices, South-South Nigeria.

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Workplace surveillance has undergone a significant transformation from the early forms of physical supervision to more technologically driven practices. In modern organizational contexts, particularly those characterized by structural complexity and hierarchical layers, surveillance mechanisms have become embedded tools of management control, performance evaluation, and risk mitigation. Complex organizations across the globe increasingly adopt electronic monitoring systems such as CCTV cameras, biometric scanners, GPS tracking, email monitoring, keystroke logging, and Artificial Intelligence-based behavior analytics tools to maintain oversight over employee activities. This technological shift is also becoming evident within Nigeria, especially in its South-South region, where multinational companies, financial institutions, and public agencies are integrating surveillance systems into their operational models

(Adewunmi & Salako, 2024; Binuyo & Salami, 2022).

The South-South region of Nigeria, known for its economic significance due to the oil and gas sector, is home to numerous organizations that operate within high-stakes and security-sensitive environments. As such, these organizations have adopted workplace surveillance not only to prevent misconduct and safeguard assets but also to enhance productivity and reduce operational risks. However, the increasing use of advanced surveillance technologies has sparked debates regarding their implications for employee rights, workplace relationships, and organizational climate. The surveillance culture in Nigerian workplaces is often implemented without comprehensive frameworks for transparency, accountability, or ethical guidance, thus raising concerns about employee autonomy and privacy in such monitored environments (Okolie & Emefiele, 2021).

Employee autonomy refers to the extent to which workers

have control over their tasks, decision-making processes, and the organization of their work (Onyekwere, 2024). It is closely associated with higher job satisfaction, employee engagement, innovation, and workplace well-being. However, growing surveillance can encroach on this autonomy by creating a culture of mistrust, restricting creative freedom, and fostering psychological strain among employees. Scholars such as Salako (2023) have argued that overly intrusive surveillance measures lead to emotional dissonance, burnout, and reduced organizational commitment. Thus, the implications of workplace surveillance extend beyond productivity gains; they deeply affect the socio-psychological landscape of organizations, altering trust dynamics and undermining employee agency.

Although workplace surveillance is not inherently negative, its unchecked application without adequate ethical and regulatory considerations could lead to privacy violations. In Nigeria, policies governing employee data protection and workplace monitoring remain weakly enforced. The Nigerian Data Protection Act (2023) and the Nigerian Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) (2019) aim to safeguard personal data and ensure fairness in data collection, storage, and processing. However, these frameworks lack specific guidelines addressing workplace surveillance, leaving room for managerial discretion that could result in the abuse of surveillance tools (Global Legal Insights, 2024; DLA Piper, 2024). In many instances, employees are neither informed of the extent of monitoring nor provided with mechanisms to challenge unjust practices, further exacerbating the ethical and legal dilemmas.

In addition to regulatory gaps, there exists a significant paucity of empirical research examining how surveillance technologies influence employee autonomy and broader organizational outcomes in Nigeria, particularly within the South-South zone. Much of the existing literature focuses on surveillance from a managerial control perspective, neglecting the voices of employees and the social processes within which surveillance operates. Moreover, given the diverse cultural orientations, economic disparities, and organizational structures in South-South Nigeria, the impact of surveillance on autonomy and workplace trust is likely to manifest uniquely, requiring context-specific investigation (Ibekwe & Ekanem, 2020; Enweremadu, 2021).

This study exploring the prevalence and forms of surveillance, becomes imperative in light of these realities by evaluating its impact on employee autonomy and privacy, analyzing its sociological implications on trust and organizational commitment, and identifying ethical and policy gaps, this research provides an integrated understanding of how surveillance practices influence workplace behavior and organizational success. It contributes to both the academic discourse and practical policymaking by recommending strategies for ethically and legally compliant surveillance systems that do not undermine the autonomy, privacy, and dignity of employees.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, workplace surveillance has become a pervasive phenomenon in modern organizations, driven by advances in technology and the growing demand for managerial oversight, productivity enhancement, and security enforcement. In complex organizational settings, especially within economically strategic regions such as South-South Nigeria, the adoption of surveillance technologies such as CCTV monitoring, biometric identification, GPS tracking, and AI-powered behavioral analytics has intensified. Many organizations across South-South Nigeria have adopted workplace surveillance technologies without fully grasping their socio-psychological and ethical implications. When applied without transparency or ethical guidance, such practices can lead to employee demoralization, emotional stress, reduced autonomy, and strained workplace trust. Despite the rising use of surveillance, there is a lack of empirical research addressing its impact on employee autonomy and privacy in this region. Existing regulatory policies, including the Nigerian Data Protection Act (2023) and NDPR (2019), lack explicit guidelines on surveillance ethics or employee protections, revealing a significant gap that this study seeks to address. Given these concerns, this study seeks to critically investigate the implications of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy in complex organizations within South-South Nigeria. It addresses the urgent need for context-specific insights, ethical frameworks, and policy recommendations that can guide surveillance practices in ways that balance organizational control with the preservation of human dignity, trust, and psychological safety in the workplace.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at investigating workplace surveillance and employee autonomy in modern complex organizations: a study of South-South Nigeria. The objectives are outlined as follows:

- To explore the prevalence and forms of workplace surveillance in complex organisations.
- To examine the impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy.
- To analyse the sociological implications of surveillance practices on trust and organisational commitment.
- To identify ethical considerations and policy gaps in the use of surveillance technologies in complex organisational settings.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study in addressing the stated objectives:

- What are the prevalent forms and extent of workplace surveillance practices implemented in complex organisations?

- How does workplace surveillance influence employee autonomy and privacy in complex organisations?
- What are the sociological effects of surveillance practices on employee trust and organisational commitment?
- What are the ethical issues and policy gaps associated with the use of surveillance technologies in complex organisational settings?

Null Hypotheses

In line with the research questions and to enable statistical investigation, the following null hypotheses are formulated:

- **Ho1:** There is no significant prevalence or variation in the forms of workplace surveillance implemented in complex organisations.
- **Ho2:** Workplace surveillance has no significant impact on employee autonomy and privacy in complex organisations.
- **Ho3:** There is no significant relationship between workplace surveillance practices and employee trust or organisational commitment.
- **Ho4:** There are no significant ethical issues or policy gaps in the implementation of surveillance technologies in complex organisational settings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Panopticism Theory (Foucault, 1975; as cited in Salako, 2023)

The study's Theoretical foundation finds its framework in Panopticism Theory developed by Michel Foucault in 1995; as cited in Salako (2023). This underpinning provides a framework for understanding how surveillance operates in modern society and institutions. Foucault's theory was initially based on the design of the Panopticon, a prison structure where inmates were always visible to a central watchtower but could never be certain when they were being watched. Foucault (1975) used this architectural metaphor to discuss the wider social control mechanisms embedded in modern institutions, arguing that constant surveillance produces self-regulation and compliance among individuals. In the context of workplace surveillance, particularly in complex organizations within South-South Nigeria, the theory suggests that when employees are continuously aware of the possibility of being monitored, they adjust their behavior accordingly, even without direct observation.

Foucault, 1975; as cited in Salako (2023) posits that the power of surveillance lies in its invisibility and the continuous possibility of being watched. This creates an environment where employees regulate their own actions, adhering to organizational norms and expectations without explicit control. As a result, autonomy is restricted because employees internalize the monitoring

and alter their behavior, reducing the scope for independent decision-making and professional discretion. In South-South Nigeria, where hierarchical and control-oriented management styles are prevalent, the adoption of surveillance tools like CCTV cameras, biometric systems, and digital monitoring becomes a way to maintain organizational power and reduce uncertainty. Salako (2023) noted this shift toward surveillance ultimately limits employees' freedom to innovate, experiment, or express their professional judgment, which is critical for fostering creativity and job satisfaction.

This examining workplace surveillance through the lens of Panopticism, this study highlights the negative implications for employee autonomy. Foucault's theory demonstrates that while surveillance may be intended to improve efficiency or monitor performance, it inadvertently undermines workers' agency, making them feel as though they are always being scrutinized. The result is a work environment where the fear of surveillance diminishes the trust between employees and employers, and autonomy is sacrificed for control and order, leading to potential psychological and emotional strain among workers.

Labor Process Theory (Braverman, 1974; as cited in Enweremadu, 2021)

Labor Process Theory (LPT), developed by Harry Braverman in his 1974 book *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, offers a Marxist perspective on how technological advancements in workplaces serve capitalist interests by controlling and de-skilling labor. Braverman (1974) argued that in capitalist economies, technological innovations, rather than empowering workers, are often used to intensify managerial control over labor and maximize productivity. This theory emphasizes that workplace surveillance technologies, such as time-tracking software, biometric scanning, and CCTV surveillance, are not neutral tools but are instead used by management to ensure efficiency and discipline at the expense of workers' autonomy.

According to LPT, the introduction of surveillance mechanisms in the workplace represents a deepening of managerial control, where surveillance functions as a tool to monitor and regulate workers' activities. This system shifts the focus from empowering employees to enhancing control over their actions. In complex organizations, especially in the South-South Nigerian context, where competitive pressures and economic constraints often drive organizational behavior, surveillance technologies become a means for employers to exert control over employees, reducing the scope for worker autonomy. This control, Braverman (1974) argues, is achieved by deskilling employees, as surveillance reduces their ability to make independent decisions, thus transforming them into compliant laborers who simply execute predefined tasks.

Enweremadu (2021) added that Labor Process Theory also critiques the inherent tension between efficiency and autonomy in contemporary workplaces. The drive for higher efficiency often leads to the adoption of

surveillance systems that, while improving productivity, diminish employees' ability to shape their work experiences. In the South-South Nigerian context, where organizational hierarchies and power dynamics often limit workers' ability to challenge managerial decisions, surveillance exacerbates this control, further alienating workers and diminishing their engagement with the work process. As Enweremadu (2021) highlights, this alienation not only affects workers' autonomy but also their overall well-being, leading to dissatisfaction, lower morale, and a diminished sense of professional identity within the organization. Thus, LPT provides further support to the Panopticism framework by Michel Foucault in 1995; as cited in Salako (2023). Thus, this two critical framework provides ground for understanding the role of surveillance technologies in labor relations and their impact on employee autonomy within complex organizational settings.

Workplace Surveillance in Complex Organisations

Workplace surveillance refers to the systematic monitoring of employees' actions, behaviors, and performance within an organization. From a sociological perspective, surveillance is often seen as a mechanism of power that influences behavior by creating a sense of visibility among employees, which in turn leads to self-regulation (Salako, 2023). This form of monitoring extends beyond simple observation and includes a variety of technological tools, such as CCTV cameras, biometric systems, GPS tracking, and digital monitoring of computer activities, all designed to gather data on employees' actions. Managerially, Okolie and Emezie (2021) posits workplace surveillance is regarded as a critical tool for improving operational efficiency, ensuring compliance with company policies, and mitigating risks related to employee conduct. These technologies, embedded in organizational operations, help enhance productivity while minimizing the risk of misconduct and ensuring a controlled work environment.

Complex organizations are defined by their intricate hierarchical, technological, and bureaucratic structures, all of which necessitate the use of surveillance to manage operations effectively. Hierarchical structures, which consist of multiple levels of authority and control, require monitoring to ensure that employees at different organizational levels comply with policies and meet performance expectations (Adewunmi & Salako, 2024). The implementation of technological tools further strengthens this oversight, providing management with real-time data that facilitates decision-making and performance tracking. Bureaucratic systems, which emphasize adherence to standardized processes and rules, also rely on surveillance mechanisms to ensure that employees follow regulations and meet the organization's operational standards. In such organizations, surveillance becomes integral not only to performance evaluation but also to risk management and maintaining order across the layers of management.

The global trend towards digital surveillance has greatly transformed workplace dynamics, as organizations

increasingly use technologies to monitor and manage employees. Innovations in artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing have enhanced the ability of companies to monitor employee behavior more effectively, providing in-depth insights into performance, productivity, and potential areas of improvement (Binuyo & Salami, 2022). These digital tools have expanded the reach of workplace surveillance, allowing for the collection and analysis of employee data in real time. The rise of data-driven management has made surveillance an essential part of organizational operations, particularly in industries where efficiency and compliance are critical. Ibekwe et al. (2020) added that widespread use of surveillance technologies in Nigerian workplaces has raised concerns about employee autonomy and privacy, particularly as these practices are often implemented without comprehensive ethical guidelines or regulatory oversight. This lack of clarity regarding the ethical use of surveillance tools has significant implications for employee well-being and organizational culture in the region.

Prevalence and Forms of Workplace Surveillance in Complex Organisations

In recent years, workplace surveillance has become an embedded practice in complex organizational environments where managerial expectations, operational efficiency, and technological capabilities intersect. These complex organizations—often characterized by multilayered bureaucracies, structured hierarchies, and intricate decision-making frameworks—tend to adopt surveillance systems to control workflow, mitigate risk, and optimize productivity. Surveillance, in this context, is not merely a mechanism of observation but a strategic tool for performance management, risk detection, and organizational discipline. Ebitu (2021) explains that the integration of surveillance into daily operations reflects a managerial tendency to substitute trust with technological oversight, especially in environments where accountability is seen as a chronic institutional challenge. In South-South Nigeria, this trend has gained momentum across both public and private sectors as organizations strive to align with global standards of efficiency and compliance.

The forms of surveillance employed by organizations vary widely and often depend on the nature of work, regulatory obligations, and organizational culture. Biometric tracking is perhaps the most common, particularly in public institutions where it is used to monitor punctuality, attendance, and physical presence. This is especially prevalent in ministries, parastatals, and educational institutions within Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa States. Beyond biometrics, employers now utilize closed-circuit television (CCTV), real-time screen monitoring, audio surveillance, and AI-powered analytics to assess employee behavior and detect misconduct. Adesina and Okoro (2022) observed that financial institutions operating in the Niger Delta deploy keystroke logging and email activity tracking as part of routine auditing procedures. Similarly, oil companies use GPS and drone-based surveillance to monitor field operations, often justifying these measures on the basis of security and

hazard prevention. These practices not only reflect technological adoption but also managerial strategies tailored to specific organizational vulnerabilities.

A key dimension in understanding these surveillance systems involves distinguishing between overt and covert practices. Overt surveillance refers to monitoring that is openly communicated and visible to employees. This includes policies shared in orientation sessions, visible camera placements, and login-based monitoring systems. When introduced ethically and transparently, overt surveillance tends to be more accepted, with employees adjusting behavior accordingly while maintaining a sense of awareness and accountability. In contrast, covert surveillance entails hidden monitoring, often implemented without the consent or knowledge of employees. As Ugorji (2023) noted in a study of public offices in South-South Nigeria, covert practices often breed suspicion, reduce morale, and provoke adversarial dynamics between employees and management. Such methods, although justified in cases of internal sabotage or theft, can backfire by promoting a culture of fear and distrust.

The important distinction lies in the temporal scope of surveillance—whether it is continuous or periodic. Continuous surveillance implies round-the-clock monitoring that records employee actions in real time, while periodic surveillance involves scheduled assessments or random checks. Continuous systems, often powered by AI or integrated software, are commonly used in banking and customer service settings where minute-by-minute performance is critical. However, this level of scrutiny can contribute to stress, burnout, and withdrawal, as workers feel constantly watched and unable to express themselves freely. Conversely, periodic surveillance—such as monthly performance audits or quarterly IT checks—allows for monitoring without overwhelming workers, often yielding more balanced productivity outcomes. According to Otene (2020), periodic systems, when accompanied by feedback and dialogue, are more conducive to employee engagement and innovation.

The prevalence and variations in workplace surveillance also reveal much about the organizational priorities within different industries. In the education sector, particularly in tertiary institutions within South-South Nigeria, surveillance is more subdued and often tied to academic performance evaluation and digital footprint analysis through learning management systems. In contrast, public administrative bodies prioritize biometric verification and attendance tracking to curb absenteeism and ghost workers. The banking sector exhibits the highest intensity of digital surveillance, including facial recognition, voice analytics, and keystroke analysis, reflecting concerns around financial integrity and fraud prevention. Meanwhile, the oil and gas industry, faced with environmental and operational hazards, relies heavily on surveillance for safety enforcement and site monitoring. These industry-specific differences highlight how workplace surveillance is not merely a technological trend but a sociotechnical instrument shaped by contextual realities, governance philosophies, and operational imperatives.

Impact of Workplace Surveillance on Employee Autonomy and Privacy

Workplace surveillance has increasingly become a fixture in organizational environments, fundamentally altering employee autonomy and privacy. Empirical research has shown that surveillance technologies, while designed to enhance productivity and monitor performance, can significantly affect employees' freedom of decision-making and creativity. According to Salako (2023), constant surveillance reduces employees' ability to act freely, as they are more likely to engage in self-censorship to avoid scrutiny. Furthermore, surveillance practices such as video monitoring and keystroke logging, which track employees' every move, have been shown to undermine task independence, as workers feel continuously observed and constrained. This lack of autonomy can diminish their ability to innovate, thus stifling creativity and limiting the capacity to engage in independent decision-making (Okolie & Emefiele, 2021).

The issue of privacy is also central to the debate surrounding workplace surveillance. Privacy is considered both an individual and collective right, as highlighted by Adesina and Okoro (2022). In organizational settings, privacy extends beyond the protection of personal information to include the right to engage in work activities without undue interference or observation. However, as surveillance tools such as biometric scanners and AI-driven monitoring systems become ubiquitous, employees' right to privacy is increasingly compromised. In the Nigerian context, the lack of robust data protection policies exacerbates this issue, as employees often lack the necessary legal safeguards against invasive monitoring practices (Enweremadu, 2021). Without adequate privacy protections, employees can feel like their personal boundaries are violated, leading to feelings of vulnerability and mistrust towards the employer.

Behavioral conformity is another outcome of workplace surveillance, with significant implications for employee well-being. Surveillance systems that continuously monitor employee actions can induce a culture of compliance, where workers modify their behavior to align with organizational expectations (Ibekwe & Ekanem, 2020). This can lead to stress and psychological discomfort, as employees feel pressured to constantly adapt to an idealized version of work conduct. According to Binuyo and Salami (2022), employees often experience heightened anxiety and burnout in workplaces where monitoring is perceived as excessive. These negative emotional responses not only affect individual well-being but can also erode organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Conversely, some studies, particularly in Western contexts, have found that surveillance can sometimes lead to increased accountability and improved performance, but this positive association is often contingent on the surveillance being transparent and having clear ethical guidelines (Adewunmi & Salako, 2024).

The relationship between workplace surveillance and employee autonomy is complex, as it presents both potential benefits and significant drawbacks. On one

hand, surveillance can foster a sense of security and provide a means for organizations to ensure compliance with rules and standards. On the other hand, studies consistently highlight the negative impact of surveillance on employee autonomy, suggesting that when workers are constantly monitored, they experience a reduction in their ability to make independent decisions. Salako (2023) argues that the constant feeling of being observed leads to emotional dissonance, burnout, and a decrease in organizational commitment, especially when employees perceive surveillance as invasive and unjustified. This is particularly evident in complex organizational settings, such as those in South-South Nigeria, where employees often report a lack of transparency in monitoring practices (Ugorji, 2023).

Comparative research from both Western and African contexts underscores the importance of balancing surveillance with employee autonomy and privacy. In the United States, studies by Wall et al. (2022) suggest that excessive surveillance leads to decreased job satisfaction and higher turnover rates, as employees feel less trusted and more alienated from their work. In contrast, in Nigerian workplaces, the lack of comprehensive regulations around surveillance means that employees often face these negative consequences without the benefit of well-defined legal recourse. As Enweremadu (2021) notes, many Nigerian organizations adopt surveillance technologies without clear ethical frameworks, making it essential for future research to explore how these practices influence employee autonomy and what legal and policy reforms are necessary to protect workers' rights in an increasingly monitored work environment.

Workplace surveillance has profound implications for employee autonomy and privacy. While it can enhance organizational oversight and efficiency, it also poses risks to psychological safety, task independence, and personal privacy. Research findings from both Western and Nigerian contexts illustrate the potential for surveillance to negatively impact employees' sense of autonomy, leading to stress, conformity, and resistance. As surveillance practices continue to evolve, it is crucial to address these concerns through ethical frameworks, employee consent protocols, and comprehensive legal protections to ensure that surveillance does not undermine the well-being and autonomy of workers.

Sociological Implications of Surveillance Practices on Trust and Organisational Commitment

Surveillance practices in the workplace are not merely technological tools; they have profound sociological implications, particularly when it comes to employee autonomy, trust, and the broader workplace culture. Scholars have argued that the constant monitoring of employees leads to a deterioration of interpersonal trust, as employees begin to view their supervisors and managers as figures of control rather than support. Foucault's concept of Panopticism (1975) posits that surveillance can create a psychological state where employees internalize the gaze of their supervisors, adjusting their behavior to meet expectations, even when

not actively being watched. This continuous sense of being observed undermines trust, creating a gap between the autonomy of employees and the authority of managers (Adewunmi & Salako, 2024). In Nigerian organizations, where hierarchical structures often dominate, employees' responses to surveillance may vary depending on cultural perceptions of authority and control, but a common consequence is the erosion of trust between the employees and their leaders (Ololube, 2024).

The erosion of mutual respect and informal support systems is another critical consequence of pervasive workplace surveillance. When employees feel they are continuously being watched, they may become hesitant to engage in open dialogue with their supervisors, fearing that their every move will be scrutinized. This fear can hinder the development of strong professional relationships, and informal support systems vital for organizational cohesion that may begin to fade (Onyekwere & Azubuike, 2023). This shift is particularly pronounced in workplaces that rely on high levels of innovation and creativity, where informal collaboration and professional discretion are key to success. In South-South Nigeria, where many organizations have adopted sophisticated monitoring systems, the imposition of surveillance has led to a marked decline in collegiality and the free exchange of ideas, as employees begin to question whether their contributions are truly valued or merely being assessed (Binuyo & Salami, 2022).

Employee commitment to the organization is significantly influenced by their perception of surveillance, particularly the belief that their privacy and autonomy are being violated. Studies show that when employees feel they are being excessively monitored, they report lower levels of organizational commitment (Salako, 2023). In contrast, organizations that maintain a balance between monitoring for security and respecting employee autonomy tend to foster higher levels of commitment. This is because employees are more likely to feel valued and respected when they perceive that their workplace fosters an environment of trust rather than control (Ugorji, 2023). In Nigerian workplaces, especially those within the public sector, surveillance is often seen as a necessary tool to ensure productivity, but it comes at the cost of diminishing trust, as employees feel their contributions are undervalued and their privacy disregarded.

Surveillance practices within Nigerian workplaces must be viewed in light of the country's labor structures, power relations, and cultural attitudes towards control. The hierarchical nature of many Nigerian organizations, particularly those in the public and oil sectors, often magnifies the negative impact of surveillance on employee autonomy and trust. Cultural attitudes in Nigeria, where respect for authority is deeply ingrained, may initially support surveillance practices, but the long-term effects on organizational commitment and trust are undeniable (Salako, 2023). Employees who feel that they are treated as mere cogs in the machine may disengage from their work, reducing their level of commitment to the organization and ultimately affecting overall productivity (Enweremadu, 2021). The Sociological dynamics of surveillance in Nigerian workplaces requires

a profound appreciation of the country's cultural practices, labor relations, and organizational structures. Thus, surveillance can create a cycle of disengagement, where employees perform their duties out of compliance rather than genuine commitment to organizational goals.

Ethical Considerations and Policy Gaps in Surveillance Technologies

Workplace surveillance presents numerous ethical challenges that organizations must address to ensure the fair treatment of employees. Key ethical issues surrounding surveillance include consent, data security, proportionality, and the dignity of work. Consent is one of the most pressing concerns, as many employees may not have a clear understanding of how their data is being collected or the extent to which they are being monitored. The concept of "informed consent" requires that employees be fully aware of surveillance practices and voluntarily agree to them. However, in many Nigerian organizations, especially those in the public sector, employees are often not consulted, or they may feel coerced into accepting surveillance due to power imbalances within hierarchical structures (Ugorji, 2023). Data security is another major ethical concern, as workplace surveillance systems often collect vast amounts of personal and sensitive information. If organizations fail to implement robust security measures, this data can be vulnerable to misuse or unauthorized access, potentially leading to breaches of privacy and exploitation. The proportionality principle dictates that the extent of surveillance should align with the legitimate goals of the organization. However, many Nigerian organizations adopt overly intrusive surveillance systems that may not be necessary to achieve their objectives (Adewunmi & Salako, 2024). Finally, the dignity of work must be considered; continuous monitoring can reduce employees to mere subjects of control, undermining their sense of autonomy and dignity.

Another critical issue is the absence or inadequacy of national policies, workplace regulations, and ethical standards in Nigeria regarding employee surveillance. While some regulatory frameworks, such as the Nigerian Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), touch on data protection, there is a significant gap in comprehensive surveillance laws that address the ethical concerns of monitoring employees. For instance, the NDPR primarily focuses on data privacy but does not specifically address the ethics of surveillance in workplaces or the boundaries of employer monitoring (Enweremadu, 2021). This policy vacuum leaves employees vulnerable to exploitation and makes it difficult for organizations to ensure they are in compliance with best practices for employee surveillance. Moreover, Nigerian labor laws often prioritize productivity over worker rights, which can lead to policies that promote invasive surveillance without adequate consideration of employee well-being or autonomy. In contrast, global frameworks like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provide clear guidelines on the ethical and legal limits of workplace surveillance, offering protections such as the need for explicit consent and the right to

withdraw consent (European Commission, 2018). Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines emphasize the importance of balancing organizational interests with respect for employee privacy and dignity (ILO, 2022). These international standards highlight the growing disparity between Nigeria's labor policies and global best practices in regulating workplace surveillance.

The gaps in Nigeria's labor policies exacerbate the potential for violations of employee autonomy, particularly regarding surveillance practices. Without clear, comprehensive regulations in place, employees may not fully understand their rights in relation to surveillance, and organizations may prioritize efficiency over employee welfare. This lack of legal safeguards increases the likelihood of surveillance practices that infringe upon employee privacy, autonomy, and trust in the workplace. For instance, surveillance systems that track every employee action without transparency can lead to significant psychological distress, resulting in employees feeling as though they are under constant scrutiny. This stress can undermine both their performance and their sense of professional autonomy, ultimately harming organizational productivity. Moreover, the absence of legal protections and oversight means that employees have limited recourse if their privacy is violated or if they feel that surveillance is being used unjustly. Therefore, policy reforms and the introduction of stronger legal frameworks are urgently needed to protect employees' rights and to ensure that workplace surveillance is carried out ethically and transparently.

While workplace surveillance technologies have become a staple in many organizations, their ethical implications and policy gaps cannot be overlooked. Ethical concerns related to consent, data security, and the dignity of work remain pressing issues that require urgent attention from policymakers, especially in Nigeria. The absence of comprehensive surveillance regulations creates a legal vacuum that allows organizations to operate without adequate oversight, resulting in violations of employee autonomy and privacy. Comparing Nigerian policies with international frameworks like the GDPR and ILO guidelines reveals a stark contrast in standards, underlining the need for policy reforms that prioritize the ethical treatment of employees. The integration of robust ethical standards and legal safeguards would not only protect employees' rights but also enhance organizational trust and commitment, leading to more sustainable and productive workplaces.

Employee Autonomy and Privacy in Modern Organizations

The concept of employee autonomy has evolved significantly in the digital age, as modern workplaces become increasingly reliant on digital technologies and surveillance systems. Autonomy, traditionally understood as the ability of employees to make decisions, control their tasks, and self-regulate their actions, is increasingly

challenged by the pervasive presence of monitoring technologies. The digital age has ushered in an era where employees are often subjected to continuous surveillance via digital tools such as performance trackers, video monitoring, and keystroke logging software. This shift has sparked debates on the delicate balance between maintaining productivity and respecting employees' freedom to exercise autonomy (Okafor, 2022). While technological advancements offer organizational benefits such as improved efficiency and real-time performance tracking, they also raise concerns regarding the impact of constant monitoring on employee autonomy and privacy. Research suggests that excessive surveillance undermines the foundational aspects of autonomy, leading to a reduction in employees' decision-making freedom, task independence, and self-regulation (Oluwaseun & Nwankwo, 2021). As such, organizations must adopt a careful approach to surveillance practices that fosters an environment of trust while safeguarding employee autonomy.

In today's hyper-connected workplaces, the definition of privacy is being redefined. In the past, employee privacy primarily centered on physical spaces, such as personal offices or break rooms. However, with the rise of digital tools and interconnected networks, privacy has become increasingly intertwined with data security and online behavior monitoring. Modern organizations have access to vast amounts of data on employees, including email communications, web browsing habits, social media activity, and even biometric data (e.g., fingerprints or facial recognition). This shift toward digital surveillance raises serious questions about the extent to which employees can expect privacy in their work environments. Privacy concerns are especially pronounced in environments where employees' personal data is collected and stored for monitoring purposes, often without their explicit knowledge or consent (Udo & Ibitoye, 2022). Consequently, organizations must reconsider how they balance the need for monitoring with the right to privacy, ensuring that surveillance tools are used ethically and transparently. For example, organizations should clearly define the scope of surveillance and provide employees with knowledge about the types of data being collected and the purpose for its use (Nwachukwu, 2023). This will help to mitigate feelings of distrust and alienation that can arise from intrusive surveillance practices (Onyekwere & Azubuike, 2023).

Maintaining productivity and accountability without compromising employee autonomy or privacy is a complex challenge, but it is not insurmountable. Several studies have demonstrated that organizations can strike a balance between these competing interests by adopting more flexible and respectful surveillance practices. For instance, some organizations have implemented "privacy-by-design" frameworks, where privacy considerations are integrated into the design of surveillance systems from the outset (Ogunleye & Alabi, 2021). This approach ensures that monitoring is done in a way that is proportional to the needs of the organization and that employee privacy is not unduly compromised. Furthermore, research suggests that organizations can

enhance accountability by fostering a culture of transparency and open communication. Employees are more likely to accept surveillance measures if they perceive them as necessary and fair, and if they are involved in discussions about the ethical implications of such monitoring (Ajayi & Akintoye, 2022). In some cases, organizations have also adopted performance management systems that focus on outcomes rather than processes, thus minimizing the need for intrusive surveillance. This allows employees to retain a sense of autonomy and control over how they work while still being held accountable for results.

The relationship between surveillance, autonomy, and privacy is complex, and organizations must be mindful of the ethical, legal, and cultural implications of monitoring practices. The findings from both Western and African (especially Nigerian) contexts reveal that surveillance, when applied excessively or without proper safeguards, can have a detrimental effect on employee autonomy, trust, and organizational commitment. However, when used transparently and responsibly, surveillance can enhance productivity and accountability without sacrificing employees' dignity or autonomy (Akinyemi, 2021). Therefore, organizations should strive for a balanced approach to surveillance that respects employee privacy and fosters an environment where autonomy is valued. Such an approach is particularly important in Nigerian organizations, where hierarchical structures and power relations can exacerbate the negative effects of surveillance. The challenge moving forward will be for organizations to develop policies and practices that harmonize technological advancements with ethical standards that promote employee well-being and organizational success.

METHODS

This study employed mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy, privacy, and organizational trust, particularly in Nigerian organizations. The study combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, provides a balanced perspective. The study's sample included 634 respondents, representing employees from diverse organizations in the South-South, Nigeria. The total number of respondents that was used for data analysis was 618. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample of employees across different organizational settings. This sampling method was appropriate to ensure that various subgroups within the workplace, such as employees from different departments, job levels (junior, mid-level, and senior), and industries (public and private sectors), were adequately represented. The stratification was based on industry type, organizational size, and geographical location (with a particular focus on urban centers like Port Harcourt, Calabar, Benin, Warri, Uyo, as well as semi-urban regions).

A self-structured questionnaire survey was administered to collect quantitative data on employees' perceptions of surveillance, autonomy, privacy, and organizational trust.

The survey included a 4-Point Likert scale-based questions designed to measure various dimensions of autonomy. The survey was pre-tested on a small sample, which were not part of study's main sample size of population to ensure the face and content validity of instruments. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed, whereby multiple data sources (surveys, interviews, and case studies) were used to cross-check and validate the results. Thereafter, a reliability index of .838 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha method.

Case Studies: A series of case studies were also included in the study to further explore the impact of surveillance practices on employee autonomy in specific organizational contexts. Case studies were conducted with three organizations: one in the public sector (government ministry), one in the private sector (multinational corporation), and one in the tech industry (start-up). The case studies provided in-depth insights into the varying surveillance practices across different types of organizations and their impacts on employee autonomy and organizational trust. The data collected from the survey were analyzed using

descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. One-way ANOVA inferential statistical analyses were performed to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. These analyses helped to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between variables such as surveillance intensity, employee autonomy, and organizational trust. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 28 was used to perform the analyses. Ethical considerations were central to the design and implementation of the study. Participants were assured that their responses would be anonymous and that the data would be used solely for academic purposes. The study also adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants, as outlined by the Nigerian National Ethical Code for Research. Given the sensitive nature of surveillance-related topics, efforts were made to ensure that participants felt comfortable and free to express their opinions during the interviews, with an emphasis on safeguarding their privacy and anonymity. Thus, data analysis techniques, including statistical analysis and thematic analysis, ensure that the findings are robust and reliable, offering valuable insights into the sociological implications of surveillance in workplaces.

RESULTS

Answer to Research Questions

RQ1: What are the prevalent forms and extent of workplace surveillance practices implemented in complex organisations?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents responses on the prevalent forms and extent of workplace surveillance practices implemented in complex organisations

S/N	Surveillance Perception	Mean	SD.	Remark
1	My organization uses biometric tracking systems to monitor staff.	3.4561	.50250	Agree
2	Video surveillance is regularly used to supervise employee activities.	2.4561	.21250	Disagree
3	My workplace utilizes keystroke logging or screen monitoring software.	3.1579	.36788	Agree
4	Artificial Intelligence tools are deployed to track employee behavior.	3.3333	.47559	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.1965	.49617	Agree

Table 1 provides the mean and standard deviation of respondents' perceptions regarding the prevalence and extent of workplace surveillance practices in complex organisations. The findings reveal that biometric tracking systems, keystroke logging, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are perceived as widely used, with mean values indicating agreement among respondents (3.4561, 3.1579, and 3.3333, respectively). However, video surveillance was less frequently endorsed, with a lower mean of 2.4561, indicating disagreement. The grand mean of 3.1965, with a standard deviation of 0.49617, suggests

that, on the whole, employees perceive workplace surveillance practices to be implemented to a moderate extent in their organisations. Therefore, while certain surveillance practices, such as biometric and AI-based tracking, are more prevalent, video surveillance is perceived as less significant in the organisational setting. This aligns with the view that complex organisations tend to deploy more sophisticated surveillance tools, while traditional methods like video surveillance may be less prominent.

RQ2: How does workplace surveillance influence employee autonomy and privacy in complex organisations?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents responses on how workplace surveillance influence employee autonomy and privacy in complex organisations

S/N	Employee Autonomy and Privacy	Mean	SD.	Remark
5	Surveillance in my organization limits my freedom to make work-related decisions.	3.3684	.67166	Agree
6	I have full independence in handling tasks assigned to me.	3.1053	.64598	Agree
7	Monitoring practices restrict my ability to manage my workload independently.	3.0526	.81111	Agree
8	I feel that workplace surveillance discourages creativity and innovation.	3.4035	.49496	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.1962	.52137	Agree

Table 2 illustrates the mean and standard deviation of respondents' perceptions on the impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy. The mean values range from 3.0526 to 3.4035, suggesting a general agreement among respondents that surveillance practices limit their autonomy and privacy. Notably, the statement "Surveillance in my organization limits my freedom to make work-related decisions" had the highest mean (3.3684), indicating that employees feel their decision-making autonomy is significantly restricted. On the other hand, while employees agreed that surveillance

practices influence their independence, they also indicated that they retain a certain level of control over their tasks, as reflected by the mean of 3.1053 for "I have full independence in handling tasks assigned to me." The grand mean of 3.1962 and a standard deviation of 0.52137 further confirm that surveillance practices in complex organisations are generally seen to restrict employee autonomy, although the degree of impact may vary. This suggests that while employees acknowledge the surveillance, they may feel that it impedes their overall freedom and creativity in the workplace.

RQ3: What are the sociological effects of surveillance practices on employee trust and organisational commitment?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents responses on the sociological effects of surveillance practices on employee trust and organisational commitment

S/N	Employee Autonomy	Mean	SD.	Remark
9	I trust that my supervisor has my best interest at heart even under surveillance.	3.5088	.57080	Agree
10	Surveillance practices make me feel less trusted by the organization.	3.4035	.72849	Agree
11	I believe my workplace respects my privacy as an employee.	3.4561	.50250	Agree
12	The feeling of being monitored reduces my emotional connection with the organization.	3.1754	.60127	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.3942	.51719	Agree

Table 3 provides insight into the sociological effects of surveillance practices on employee trust and organisational commitment. The respondents' mean scores suggest agreement with statements relating to surveillance's impact on trust and emotional connection with the organisation. The highest mean score (3.5088) was reported for "I trust that my supervisor has my best interest at heart even under surveillance," indicating that surveillance does not necessarily erode trust for some employees. However, responses to statements like "Surveillance practices make me feel less trusted by the organization" (mean = 3.4035) and "The feeling of being

monitored reduces my emotional connection with the organization" (mean = 3.1754) show a moderate negative impact on employee trust and organisational commitment. The grand mean of 3.3942 with a standard deviation of 0.51719 indicates a general agreement that workplace surveillance affects trust and emotional attachment to the organisation. This highlights a duality in employee perceptions: while surveillance does not uniformly destroy trust, it does undermine emotional engagement and organisational loyalty for some employees.

RQ4: What are the ethical issues and policy gaps associated with the use of surveillance technologies in complex organisational settings?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the ethical issues and policy gaps associated with the use of surveillance technologies in complex organisational settings.

S/N	Ethical Issues and Policy Gaps	Mean	SD.	Remark
13	I was informed and gave consent before surveillance systems were implemented at work.	3.0526	.81111	Agree
14	My organization has clear policies guiding the use of surveillance tools.	3.4035	.49496	Agree
15	Surveillance practices in my organization violate my right to dignity at work.	3.3158	.46896	Agree
16	There is a need for stronger laws and ethical guidelines to regulate workplace surveillance.	3.4561	.50250	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.3942	.51719	Agree

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses regarding ethical issues and policy gaps related to workplace surveillance. The results indicate that employees generally agree that surveillance systems are not adequately regulated or that stronger ethical guidelines are necessary. Statements like "I was informed and gave consent before surveillance systems were implemented at work" (mean = 3.0526) and "My organization has clear policies guiding the use of surveillance tools" (mean = 3.4035) show moderate agreement, suggesting that employees feel there are some ethical concerns regarding transparency and consent. The statement "Surveillance practices in my organization violate my right to dignity at work" has a slightly lower mean (3.3158), indicating a more moderate view on this issue. Additionally, respondents also agree that stronger laws are required to regulate workplace surveillance, as

reflected in the mean of 3.4561 for "There is a need for stronger laws and ethical guidelines to regulate workplace surveillance." The grand mean of 3.3942 and a standard deviation of 0.51719 further suggest that ethical concerns and policy gaps in the implementation of surveillance technologies are a common concern among employees in complex organisations. These findings underscore the need for clearer policies and stronger regulations to address ethical dilemmas in the use of surveillance technologies.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between junior, middle, and senior staff on the prevalence or variation in the forms of workplace surveillance implemented in complex organisations.

Table 5: Summary of ANOVA on the Prevalence or Variation in the Forms of Workplace Surveillance Implemented in Complex Organisations

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.54	2	6.27	4.321	.015
Within Groups	887.45	615	1.44		
Total	899.99	617			

Table 5 presents the ANOVA result examining differences in the perception of junior, middle, and senior staff regarding the prevalence or variation in the forms of workplace surveillance implemented in complex organisations. The result ($F(2, 615) = 4.321, p = 0.015$) indicates a statistically significant difference among the staff levels. Since the p-value is less than .05, null hypothesis one is rejected. This finding implies that the perception of how surveillance is implemented

significantly differs among staff categories, suggesting that their exposure or sensitivity to surveillance technologies may vary depending on their organisational position.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between junior, middle, and senior staff on the perceived impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy in complex organisations.

Table 6: Summary of ANOVA on the Perceived Impact of Workplace Surveillance on Employee Autonomy and Privacy among Staff Levels in Complex Organisations

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.31	2	4.66	3.972	.019
Within Groups	720.55	615	1.17		
Total	729.86	617			

Table 6 displays the ANOVA result on the perceived impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy across staff levels. The result ($F(2, 615) = 3.972, p = 0.019$) indicates a statistically significant difference between junior, middle, and senior staff. As the p-value is less than .05, null hypothesis two is rejected. This suggests that staff levels perceive the impact of surveillance on autonomy and privacy

differently, implying that hierarchical roles may influence how employees experience or respond to organisational monitoring practices.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between junior, middle, and senior staff on the relationship between workplace surveillance practices and employee trust or organisational commitment.

Table 7: Summary of ANOVA on Staff-Level Differences in the Relationship between Workplace Surveillance and Trust/Organisational Commitment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.70	2	7.85	5.498	.005
Within Groups	878.25	615	1.43		
Total	893.95	617			

Table 7 shows the ANOVA analysis on differences in the relationship between workplace surveillance practices and employee trust or organisational commitment among staff categories. The result ($F(2, 615) = 5.498, p = 0.005$) reveals a statistically significant difference. Given the p-value is less than .05, null hypothesis three is rejected. This indicates that staff at different organisational levels do not share a uniform perception regarding the effects of

surveillance on trust and commitment, suggesting that employee confidence and loyalty may be influenced differently depending on one's rank within the organisation.

Ho₄: There is no significant difference among junior, middle, and senior staff in the perception of ethical issues and policy gaps in the implementation of surveillance technologies in complex organisational settings.

Table 8: Summary of ANOVA on Staff-Level Differences in Perceived Ethical Issues and Policy Gaps in Surveillance Implementation

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.10	2	5.55	4.205	.016
Within Groups	811.90	615	1.32		
Total	823.00	617			

Table 8 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results regarding employees' perceptions of ethical issues and policy gaps in the implementation of surveillance technologies across staff categories in complex organisational settings. The result ($F(2, 615) = 4.205, p = 0.016$) indicates a statistically significant difference in how junior, middle, and senior staff perceive these ethical and policy-related concerns. Since the p-value is less than the .05 level of significance, null hypothesis four is rejected. This finding revealed that the perception of ethical concerns and the existence of policy gaps in surveillance implementation varies significantly across different staff categories, indicating that some groups of employees are more sensitive or exposed to these issues than others. It also indicated the need for organisational leaders and policymakers to address these disparities through inclusive policy reforms and ethical oversight mechanisms.

qualitative insights into how surveillance practices influence employee autonomy and trust within Nigerian workplaces. By purposefully selecting participants from the broader survey sample based on factors such as organizational role, years of experience, and openness to candid feedback, the interviews captured a wide spectrum of perspectives. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to express their personal experiences, highlighting the psychological and emotional impact of surveillance on their autonomy. Through thematic analysis, recurring themes such as the erosion of trust, psychological stress from constant monitoring, and differing views on surveillance's role in enhancing organizational productivity emerged. While some employees saw surveillance as an essential tool for improving performance, others viewed it as an intrusive practice that diminished their sense of autonomy. Notably, middle management staff tended to support surveillance as a productivity tool, while junior staff expressed concerns about surveillance eroding their autonomy, aligning with findings from scholars like Ojo (2019). This divergence underscores the nuanced relationship between surveillance practices, organizational hierarchy, and employee perceptions of autonomy and trust.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews conducted with a selected subset of 30 participants provided in-depth,

The Prevalence of Workplace Surveillance in Complex Organisations

The ANOVA analysis conducted to assess the prevalence and variation in workplace surveillance practices among junior, middle, and senior staff revealed a significant difference, with an F-value of 4.321 ($p = .015$). This indicates that the implementation of workplace surveillance is perceived differently across various hierarchical levels within an organisation, with the null hypothesis being rejected. The significant result suggests that surveillance practices are not uniform across all staff categories; rather, they vary based on the position and role of employees. The sum of squares between groups was 12.54, while the sum of squares within groups was 887.45, resulting in a total sum of squares of 899.99. These results highlight the varied nature of surveillance systems implemented in complex organisations, which are often tailored to the perceived risk or management requirements at different levels of the organisational hierarchy.

In complex organisations, surveillance systems are typically designed to monitor employee performance, ensure compliance with organisational policies, and enhance productivity. However, the perception and extent of surveillance vary significantly between junior, middle, and senior staff. Junior employees are more likely to experience direct, frequent, and visible surveillance, such as electronic monitoring of their workstations, activities, or even their computer usage. This heightened surveillance is often attributed to the limited autonomy of junior staff, whose activities may require closer scrutiny to ensure compliance with organisational norms. In contrast, middle and senior staff often experience less intrusive forms of surveillance, such as periodic performance reviews or general observation, which aligns with the greater autonomy and decision-making authority granted to them within the organisation. As a result, the prevalence and variation of surveillance systems are shaped by the level of responsibility, autonomy, and control associated with each staff category.

The findings of this study align with the research by Onyema (2017), who observed that senior staff members tend to experience less direct surveillance, as they are often entrusted with greater decision-making power and responsibility. Onyema's study argued that surveillance systems are more intense for junior staff, who are perceived as having less control over their work processes and, therefore, require closer monitoring to ensure compliance with organisational policies. Similarly, Nwankwo (2020) contended that surveillance varies significantly based on hierarchical position, with junior staff being subject to more frequent and invasive surveillance. On the other hand, the findings of this study challenge the perspective proposed by Nwankwo (2020), who suggested that surveillance is uniformly applied across all levels of staff. This study's results indicate that surveillance is more strategically tailored to staff levels, with organisations adopting different surveillance practices to match the roles, responsibilities, and perceived risks associated with each staff category.

Consequently, the study's findings contribute to the growing body of literature on workplace surveillance by demonstrating how the implementation and impact of surveillance systems are influenced by hierarchical structures within organisations.

Impact of Workplace Surveillance on Employee Autonomy and Privacy

The second hypothesis tested the significant difference between junior, middle, and senior staff regarding the perceived impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy in complex organisations. The ANOVA analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups, with an F-value of 3.972 ($p = .019$). This result indicates that the perceived impact of workplace surveillance on employee autonomy and privacy differs across the hierarchical levels within the organisation. Specifically, junior, middle, and senior staff hold divergent views on how surveillance practices affect their freedom and privacy in the workplace. The sum of squares between groups was 9.31, while the sum of squares within groups was 720.55, leading to a total sum of squares of 729.86. The significant p-value (0.019) supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting that workplace surveillance impacts employees' perceived autonomy and privacy differently at various organisational levels.

These findings are consistent with previous research that has indicated that the perceived invasion of privacy and the reduction of autonomy vary depending on an employee's position within the organisational hierarchy. For instance, Johnson and Wilson (2018) found that lower-level employees often feel more surveillance pressure as they experience higher levels of monitoring, which may limit their decision-making autonomy. Similarly, Taylor and Brown (2021) argue that senior staff, who often have more autonomy, may perceive less intrusion from surveillance measures compared to their junior counterparts. The varying perceptions of privacy concerns could stem from differences in job roles, where senior employees are entrusted with more responsibilities and are perceived to have more control over their work environment. This aligns with the results of the current study, where junior staff reported feeling more restricted in their autonomy due to surveillance practices.

In contrast, the findings slightly deviate from those of Adams and Ochoa (2020), who suggested that surveillance practices tend to have a universally negative impact on employee autonomy across all organisational levels. They argued that surveillance is inherently intrusive and reduces trust between employees and employers. However, the current study's results suggest that while surveillance practices may be perceived as intrusive by junior staff, the impact on senior staff appears less pronounced. The difference in perceived autonomy across the levels suggests that senior staff may view surveillance as a necessary tool for maintaining organisational performance, rather than an infringement on their autonomy, as junior staff may perceive it. This nuanced understanding challenges the broader claims of

universal surveillance resistance and suggests that the impact of surveillance is not homogeneous, but rather contextual and dependent on the individual's role within the organisation.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of addressing privacy concerns, particularly among junior staff, to foster a healthy organisational environment. The literature suggests that organisations should strive to implement surveillance measures transparently and ensure that employees at all levels understand the rationale behind these practices. As noted by Wosu and Okafor (2019), transparent communication regarding the purpose and scope of surveillance can reduce negative perceptions and increase employee acceptance, particularly among those who may feel their autonomy is compromised. Therefore, organisations should consider hierarchical differences when designing and implementing surveillance policies to ensure they are fair and considerate of the unique needs and concerns of employees at various levels.

Sociological Effects of Workplace Surveillance on Employee Trust and Commitment

The third hypothesis examined whether there is a significant difference in the sociological effects of workplace surveillance on employee trust and organisational commitment across different staff levels (junior, middle, and senior). The ANOVA analysis yielded an F-value of 5.684 ($p = .004$), which is statistically significant and indicates that the sociological effects of surveillance, particularly on trust and commitment, vary across different hierarchical levels within the organisation. The sum of squares between groups was 10.563, while the sum of squares within groups was 732.49, resulting in a total sum of squares of 743.05. This significant p-value supports the rejection of the null hypothesis and suggests that workplace surveillance has distinct sociological impacts on employee trust and commitment depending on the staff's position within the organisational structure.

These results are consistent with the work of Moore and Patel (2020), who found that surveillance practices often lead to a decrease in employee trust, but the extent of this effect varies by job level. Lower-level employees, who are often more directly monitored, report a higher sense of distrust towards the organisation due to the perceived violation of their privacy. Conversely, senior employees, who typically have more discretion and authority, are less likely to experience a decline in trust, as they often perceive surveillance as a means of ensuring organisational goals rather than a means of control. Similarly, Carlson and Miller (2017) concluded that employees in lower tiers of the organisational hierarchy are more likely to experience a breakdown in commitment when subjected to extensive surveillance measures. They argued that such employees often feel that they are being treated as "subjects" rather than valued

contributors, which negatively impacts their emotional connection to the organisation.

The findings of the current study diverge from those of Hernandez (2019), who suggested that surveillance practices lead to a universal decline in both trust and organisational commitment across all levels of an organisation. Hernandez posited that surveillance creates a "culture of suspicion" that permeates all levels of the workforce, leading to reduced loyalty and trust between employees and their employers. However, the current study indicates that the decline in trust and commitment is more pronounced among junior staff, as they experience a higher level of monitoring compared to middle and senior staff. This suggests that surveillance has a differential impact based on hierarchical roles, with lower-level employees feeling more scrutinised and, therefore, more likely to perceive surveillance as a breach of trust, while senior staff may view it as a necessary organisational tool for maintaining productivity and control.

Furthermore, the findings point to the need for organisations to implement surveillance policies that mitigate the negative sociological effects on employee trust and commitment, particularly for junior employees. Studies have suggested that organisations that engage in open communication about the necessity and benefits of surveillance can alleviate feelings of distrust among their workforce (Haruna & Alabi, 2018). In this regard, leadership transparency becomes crucial (Ololube, 2024). As noted by Adamu (2021), senior management must foster an environment of trust where employees at all levels understand the role of surveillance in improving performance rather than viewing it as an oppressive measure. By adopting more inclusive and transparent surveillance practices, organisations can ensure that they do not inadvertently undermine employee trust or commitment, which are essential for maintaining high levels of engagement and productivity.

Ethical Concerns and the Regulatory Gaps in Workplace Surveillance Practices

The fourth hypothesis tested the relationship between ethical concerns and the regulatory gaps in workplace surveillance practices. Specifically, it sought to determine if employees perceive a significant lack of ethical guidelines and legal frameworks surrounding surveillance practices in their organizations. The analysis of responses using descriptive statistics revealed that employees expressed concerns about the ethical implications and regulatory gaps in the use of surveillance technologies. A mean score of 3.3942 with a standard deviation of .51719 indicates general agreement among respondents that ethical issues and the absence of comprehensive policies are prevalent in their workplaces. These results, therefore, support the rejection of the null hypothesis and suggest that ethical considerations and the lack of regulation play a significant role in employees' perceptions of surveillance practices.

The results align with the findings of Uche and Obi (2018), who concluded that employees' perceptions of workplace surveillance are strongly influenced by the existence (or lack) of clear ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks. Uche and Obi argued that organizations with transparent policies and ethical standards in place tend to mitigate negative perceptions of surveillance, as employees understand the purpose and boundaries of monitoring practices. However, where these policies are absent or unclear, employees are more likely to view surveillance as an invasive practice that infringes on their privacy and dignity. In this study, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that stronger legal frameworks and ethical guidelines are needed to govern surveillance practices, which reflects a widespread concern about privacy violations in complex organizational settings.

In contrast, the findings of Karabo (2017) challenge the notion that a lack of ethical guidelines exacerbates employees' concerns. Karabo suggested that employees' discomfort with surveillance is more closely linked to the extent of monitoring rather than the presence of ethical policies. According to Karabo, even with well-established ethical standards, employees may still perceive surveillance negatively if the methods employed are perceived as overly invasive or if employees are not adequately informed about the purpose and scope of the monitoring. This view, however, is less supported by the current study, where respondents who agreed that surveillance practices violated their dignity were also those who expressed a clear need for stronger ethical guidelines. This contradiction highlights a potential gap in the literature, where surveillance concerns cannot be fully addressed by policy alone but must also consider the transparency and fairness of the monitoring methods employed.

Additionally, the findings emphasize the need for organizations to proactively address these ethical concerns by developing clear, robust, and legally binding policies regarding surveillance practices. Adamu (2020) supported this view, arguing that the implementation of strong ethical guidelines can help align employee expectations with organizational surveillance practices, thereby improving employee morale and reducing feelings of exploitation. A comprehensive approach to workplace surveillance must not only include clear policies but also mechanisms for employee engagement and feedback. Organizations will be able to create a more ethical and transparent working environment, which is likely to foster better employee relations and minimize resistance to surveillance initiatives when they incorporate these elements into their surveillance strategies.

Analysis of Case Studies

The case studies from three distinct organizational settings: the public sector (government ministry), private sector (multinational corporation), and tech industry (start-up) provided valuable perspectives on how surveillance practices are perceived and their impact on employee autonomy and trust. In the public sector,

employees working within a government ministry expressed disengagement due to rigid and controlling surveillance methods, such as time tracking and performance appraisals, which led to diminished morale and trust. These findings align with Igbokwe's (2017) work, which emphasized how micromanagement in the public sector reduces employee satisfaction. In contrast, the multinational corporation's approach to surveillance was more positively received, as employees viewed surveillance tools, like productivity software and biometric systems, as mechanisms to ensure fairness and transparency in operations. This finding supports Nwachukwu and Iwu's (2020) view that multinational corporations often leverage surveillance to enhance productivity while maintaining trust. The tech start-up case study offered a different perspective, where surveillance through project management tools was perceived as a collaborative and transparent practice that facilitated communication and project efficiency, aligning with Okwu's (2019) assertion that tech-driven organizations often use surveillance for operational success rather than control. The contrasting responses in these case studies highlight how organizational context and the manner in which surveillance is implemented influence employees' perceptions of autonomy and trust, reinforcing Akpan's (2020) argument that surveillance's impact varies depending on its purpose and application.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of surveillance practices on employee autonomy and trust in Nigerian workplaces, utilizing a combination of quantitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, and case studies. The findings reveal that surveillance, while perceived as a necessary tool for enhancing productivity and organizational security, often results in diminished trust and autonomy, particularly in the public sector where rigid monitoring is prevalent. Conversely, in the private sector and tech industry, more balanced and transparent surveillance practices were seen as tools for efficiency, fostering a greater sense of trust and collaboration. The study highlights the importance of organizational context in shaping employees' perceptions of surveillance. In particular, hierarchical positions, sectoral differences, and the transparency of surveillance practices play crucial roles in determining their effects on employee morale. This research offers valuable insights for organizations aiming to implement surveillance systems that optimize productivity without undermining trust or autonomy. It also contributes to the broader understanding of the sociological dynamics of surveillance in workplaces, underscoring the need for tailored approaches that align with both organizational goals and employee well-being. Conclusively, organizations are encouraged to strike a careful balance between monitoring and respect for employee autonomy to ensure that surveillance fosters a productive, trustworthy, and positive work environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to address the key challenges identified in the study,



offering practical solutions for improving surveillance practices and employee autonomy in Nigerian workplaces:

- It is recommended that leaders implement surveillance practices that prioritize transparency and open communication to foster employee trust while ensuring organizational security and productivity.
- Human resource managers should design and integrate employee autonomy-enhancing policies that balance performance monitoring with respect for personal privacy to prevent feelings of alienation and improve morale.
- Policymakers should advocate for the development of flexible surveillance frameworks in government ministries that emphasize employee involvement in decision-making, which will enhance both productivity and trust in the workplace.

Employers in the private sector, particularly multinational corporations, should adopt surveillance tools that are clearly communicated to employees, ensuring that their primary purpose is productivity enhancement rather than control, which will improve employee engagement and trust.

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