The Impact of Digital Workplace Surveillance on Employee Productivity and Job Satisfaction: Exploring the Mediating Role of Trust

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Abstract

This study examined the dual impact of digital workplace surveillance (DWS) on employee productivity (EP) and job satisfaction (JS), through the mediating role of trust (TR). This study aims to reconcile these competing perspectives by investigating how trust mediates the relationship between DWS and key employee outcomes. A quantitative research design was employed using Partial Least Squares, Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data collected from 350 employees in the tech-based service sectors where DWS practices are prevalent. The conceptual framework integrates Social Exchange Theory, Affective Events Theory, and Task-Technology Fit Theory to explain the hypothesized relationships. The results reveal a paradox where DWS directly improves short-term productivity ($\beta = 0.703$, $p < 0.001$), it simultaneously impacts trust ($\beta = 0.666$, $p < 0.001$), which has significant positive effects on both productivity ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < 0.001$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$). The stronger mediation of trust on job satisfaction and productivity suggests affective primacy of trust, consistent with Affective Events Theory. Organizations must balance the benefits of surveillance with the need to preserve trust. To minimize the damaging effects, the study recommends ensuring transparent communication, employee participation in designing policies, and careful monitoring of the situation. This study overcomes the "productivity paradox" using a dual-path model. It establishes trust as a vital mediator, especially for JS, and integrates DWS effects. Thus, policymakers may gain important insights for improving the manipulation process.

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1. Introduction

Digital transformation has an extensive impact on the contemporary world of work and has fundamentally reshaped how work is organized, executed, and supervised (Dabić et al., 2023; Spreitzer et al., 2017). One of the most troubling dimensions of this transformation is the growing deployment of digital workplace surveillance (DWS) technologies. DWS is made possible by developments in computing power, data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and the 'ubiquitous' connected nature of work (Grisold et al., 2024). These tools provide employers with a new level of surveillance and tracking of employee behavior (Ball, 2010; Moore and Piwek, 2017). DWS includes a vast variety of techniques such as keystroke logging, screen capturing software, email or communication content monitoring, tracking applications, website usage, GPS location-based monitoring (e.g., mobile/field workers), biometric predictions of timekeeping (e.g., facial recognition), network analytics, video surveillance analytics, and even AI-based tools that analyze productivity, sentiment in communication, or the prediction of actions (Ball, 2022; Ravid et al., 2020; Mello, 2023). DWS helps ensure employees work efficiently by identifying bottlenecks in productivity and allocating resources more effectively, preventing fraud against time (clerical work without outcome), theft of time, or theft of company supplies; enhancing security and compliance by protecting sensitive material (patents, accounting files, payroll information, proprietary designs or formulas, video surveillance, computer keystrokes, client list) (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021); and mitigating liability for the employer if employees unnecessarily use software, music, or video files on company computers or servers, engage in online gambling, or view offensive videos, chat, or game sites during work hours (Alampay and Hechanova, 2010; Kuo et al., 2019). Visibility promotes accountability, which is central to performance, and discourages counterproductive work behavior (CWBs) (Shepherd and Mejías, 2016; Siegel et al., 2022).

DWS is socially and psychologically intertwined, which is part of the relativistic relationship that exists between employees and work (Ajayi and Udeh, 2024; Shi et al., 2024). Both productivity and job satisfaction are important predictors of

organizational success. It influences retention, job engagement, innovation, and performance (McAnally and Hagger, 2024). Job satisfaction comes from valued things. These values include perceived autonomy, equity, value, work-family balance, supervisory support, meaning, and respect (Ocasal et al., 2024). It is becoming more obvious that DWS can have an important influence on these types of variables. They feel stifled and unfairly treated. This can lead to lowered morale and satisfaction (Glavin et al., 2024; Vitak and Zimmer, 2023; McNall and Stanton, 2011). The concept of organizational trust is at the heart of these issues. Trust is essential for a fruitful employment relationship. It encourages cooperation, knowledge sharing, altruistic behavior, and commitment (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). DWS could mean that the organization does not trust its employees to be honest and self-motivated enough to work remotely. According to Zweig (2004), it "sends the message that the organization does not trust its employees or the decisions they make". Surveillance can cause serious erosion of trust if this practice is seen as too invasive, excessive, unfair, or is implemented without enough transparency and rational explanation (McParland and Connolly, 2019). This distrust is proposed as a central mechanism that explains the puzzling effects of DWS. Through direct effects, surveillance may increase the productivity of employees. However, this may have the contrary effect of reducing trust and intrinsic motivation (Giacosa et al., 2023; Kensbock and Stöckmann, 2020).

There are few studies on the direct effects of digital workplace surveillance (DWS) on employee productivity and job satisfaction (Ramasundaram et al., 2022; Glavin et al., 2024), but there are still significant gaps in our understanding of how trust affects these relationships. Most previous research has argued that trust seems to be a separate variable used to link surveillance to productivity and satisfaction (McParland and Connolly, 2020; Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019). In other words, the psychological channels of mediation have not been sufficiently investigated (Baron and Kenny, 1986). However, previous studies show mixed evidence on how DWS affects trust (e.g., Yang et al., 2024 vs. Sewell et al., 2012). The contextual boundary conditions are not agreed upon; that is, the level of transparency or culture of the organization determines which surveillance builds and destroys trust (Ramasundaram et al., 2022). Many studies use cross-sectional research methods. Consequently, it is difficult for many researchers to determine how trust as a mediating variable changes over time in surveilled settings. However, the literature evaluating the extent to which trust determines the

relationship between surveillance, productivity, and satisfaction in hybrid and remote settings is limited, even as DWS has worsened since the pandemic due to remote work (Vitak and Zimmer, 2021). To fill this gap, this study aims to explore the impact of digital workplace surveillance (DWS) on employee productivity (EP) and job satisfaction (JS), focusing on the mediating role of trust (TR). This study also examines how specific DWS practices differentially impact employee well-being and organizational performance, considering various organizational contexts (Sapra et al., 2023; Rufeng et al., 2023).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that people develop workplace associations because of mutual exchanges. Moreover, people assess the costs and benefits of the exchange they will impose (Cook and Rice, 1995). SET argues that in the case of DWS, surveillance sometimes violates the norm of reciprocity due to employer distrust, which can further negatively impact TR. When trust erodes, it negatively affects employee engagement (EP), performance (EP), and job satisfaction (JS) (Shi et al., 2024). Studies that apply SET to electronic monitoring show that observers view monitoring as an imbalance in the exchange relationship. Oversight that does not provide benefits causes motivation to drop, and turnover intentions to rise. Research has also shown that employees who are intensely monitored sometimes behave productively (Tomczak et al., 2017). A thorough investigation found that workplace surveillance affects the social exchange theory (SET). Continuous surveillance disrupts social interactions. In the proposed model, the SET outlines the relationship process whereby TR safeguards the relationship between DWS and EP and JS. This demonstrates the critical role of trust (Thiel et al., 2022).

2.1.2 Affective Events Theory (AET)

Affective Events Theory (AET) explains how emotional responses to workplace events shape employee attitudes and behavior (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). DWS is considered a low-intensity affective event which generates either positive or negative reactions which in turn influence JS through psychological filters like TR (Dreisoerner et al., 2022; Masterson et al., 2021; Wiechers et al., 2023). For

instance, if an organization is transparent about its monitoring, employees will feel treated fairly. The result might be an improvement in positive feelings and job satisfaction (JS). On the other hand, if monitoring is unknown and not transparent, the opposite can happen and increase anxiety or resentment and reduce JS via reducing TR (Sbalzer et al., 2024; Shi et al., 2024). AET proposes that these emotional results build up over time, affecting long-lasting attitudes just like commitment and performance. The empirical research indicates that affective reaction to monitoring, stress from receiving information or constant feedback and mediation role in JS are shown by TR (Chalykoff and Kochan, 1989; Jeske and Santuzzi, 2015). Accordingly, AET explains how DWS influences JS both directly and indirectly (through TR). AET also shows differences across demographic variables in the emotional assessments.

2.1.3 Task-Technology Fit (TTF) Theory

The Task-Technology Fit (TTF) theory was proposed by Goodhue and Thompson in 1995. It states that the effectiveness of technology relies on the fit of technology with task and individual (Furneaux, 2011). Moreover, it influences the performance directly. In the context of DWS, TTF indicates that performance monitoring tools can facilitate short-term EP through precise task monitoring and feedback. Long-term monitoring might weaken EP due to reduced TR, as employees sense a disconnect between their monitoring and relational expectations (Kalischko and Riedl, 2023; Tomczak et al., 2017). Research on TTF workplace monitoring indicates that a high task-technology fit can temporarily enhance productivity. However, continuous monitoring can result in technostress and trust deficits. This can harm long-term productivity (Purandare, 2022). Furthermore, studies show how TTF mediates the relationship between monitoring technology and EP. This relationship suggests how trust mitigates adverse effects when the fit result is less than ideal. The proposed TTF model explains the technological pathway. DWS has a direct effect on EP and TR (Kuen et al. 2023). In addition, TR mediated the relationship between DWS and EP. The short- and long-term effects of surveillance are highlighted. The DWS has a dual short-term benefit and a long-term drawback (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). Thus, DWS refers to Digital Surveillance in the context of the technological pathway.

2.2 Digital Workplace Surveillance

The development of DWS over the years reflects changes in management philosophy and technological development (Huang et al., 2023). It is closely defined as any means by which an employer monitors employee activity and includes everything from the passive monitoring of digital communication to more invasive procedures, such as keylogging and video surveillance (Grisold et al., 2024; Holland et al., 2015). Digital surveillance can be further classified into different categories, such as workplace surveillance using software, physical surveillance using wearables, and environmental surveillance using video feeds and smart sensors. Work-monitoring practices have changed over the years in many ways (Muhl and Andorno, 2023; Purandare, 2022). Physical surveillance is one of the first types of surveillance and typically involves the direct observation of workers by supervisors or security staff (Giorgianni et al., 2024). As a result of advances in technology, traditional methods have been complemented and, in some cases, substituted by electronic monitoring systems (Grisold et al., 2024). For example, the increasing emphasis on digital surveillance occurred more visibly as companies adjusted to remote work technologies during atypical times such as COVID-19, in which remote surveillance was expanded (and at times pushed beyond existing) bounds of the physical space of work and created concerns about privacy and employee autonomy (Vitak and Zimmer, 2021; Hickok and Maslej, 2023).

Additionally, a more prevalent characteristic of current developments is the significant rise in the utilization of advanced digital surveillance methods (Rabby et al., 2023). These include more advanced software to monitor employee productivity, video surveillance inside the workplace, and sensors inserted inside the devices used by employees to fix data and limit performance (Muhl and Andorno, 2023). The development raises important questions about the privacy and freedom of employees. When workers become aware of the existence of monitoring systems, it can affect their perceptions of the management. Most often, this leads workers to feel as if they cannot trust their management, which consequently harms their morale. If this is not clearly communicated, the result might be acrimonious (Shi et al., 2024; Vitak and Zimmer, 2023). Extant studies indicate that surveillance can both positively and negatively impact employee engagement and motivation to create undesired feelings among employees, but through digitalized surveillance, the satisfaction of employees is turned on the

bright side as well (Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019; McParland and Connolly, 2020). However, companies are using more surveillance technologies at work. Sometimes these are just more high-tech versions of techniques with a long history. Employees now have more rights in the workplace, and it must happen this way; but how to maintain a balance so that the organizations do not suffer remains a challenge. Balancing organizational needs and employees' rights is the key to developing productive office environments.

2.3 Employee Productivity

Employee productivity generally denotes the output per unit of input in the workplace, usually measured by outputs such as the quantity of work or tasks completed in a period (Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019). Several elements have a major impact on staff productivity in modern digital office environments. These include, but are not limited to, technology, the work environment, employee well-being, and the use of managerial practices, specifically how surveillance is employed (Ramasundaram et al. 2022). Currently, digital surveillance is used as a tool for productivity management in organizations (McParland and Connolly, 2020), and complex relationships can exist between monitoring as a part of the production process, creativity, and employee autonomy. There is at least some evidence that monitoring the digital workplace improves employee productivity. Studies have highlighted the importance of suitable workplace monitoring when stimulating productivity levels through enhanced motivation and engagement among employees (Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019). Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi (2019) also found that workplace monitoring strongly affects employee engagement and motivation, thus establishing a key link between employee surveillance and greater employee productivity. According to Monahan (2020), surveillance technologies can discourage employees from misbehaving and enhance their productivity. In other words, the constant surveillance of workers in the workplace ensures that work can be accounted for and creates a disciplined environment. Moreover, other studies suggest that the presence of workplace surveillance has changed the outcomes of employees for the outcome of surveillance that needs employees to act in a better setting because they are being monitored.

However, if employees are over-scrutinized, it can create a toxic work culture that stifles creativity and curbs their creative self-expression (Ramasundaram et al., 2022). Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi (2019) emphasize the need for a strategy to

prevent the erosion of intrinsic motivation, which is necessary to secure employees' creative potential. Additional research on behavior indicates that monitoring can make employees more anxious, and this heightened sense of anxiety reduces an individual's disposable creative problem-solving behavior (Chenji and Sode, 2019). This fear is further supported by evidence that a high level of surveillance pressure can lead to defensive silence patterns that are not conducive to creativity (Chenji and Sode, 2019). Although monitoring can enhance productive efforts in the short run, its long-term impact on employee creativity and autonomy requires further attention. Thus, although digital surveillance enhances productivity, it may present challenges with respect to creativity and employee autonomy. From the lens of Social Exchange Theory, when employees perceive digital workplace surveillance as a legitimate and fair mechanism that ensures accountability and protects organizational resources, they feel obliged to reciprocate through higher effort and productivity (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Similarly, Task-Technology Fit Theory suggests that when surveillance technologies are perceived as well-fitted to the task requirements of performance management and distraction prevention, they directly enhance individual performance outcomes, thereby increasing employee productivity (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995). Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Digital Workplace Surveillance positively influences employee productivity.

2.4 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to a pleasurable emotional state, which occurs due to an appraisal of job, and it is also associated with the nature of the job, work condition, the culture of the organization, and attitude (Widyani et al. 2019). Workers have a positive or negative attitude towards their job position. Positive attitude makes it easier for them to do their job. This activity will be able to influence worker performance, motivation, and engagement (Supriyanto, 2018). Research shows that a good work environment leads to employee satisfaction and supportive management along with opportunities for advancement and work-life balance are some of the things that contribute away to employees overcoming satisfaction with their work (Pratama et al., 2023; Khamisa et al., 2017). The introduction of digital workplace surveillance also raises important inquiries regarding its implications for job satisfaction. Several studies have shown that surveillance can lead to lower job satisfaction among employees. This discontent is largely due to the stress (both

generalized and specific to monitoring) the employee associates with being monitored, and consequently tends to breed suspicion, mistrust, and anxiety within the work environment but when the surveillance occurs through digital platform it helps to increase the level of job satisfaction (Khamisa, 2017; Glavin et al., 2017; Glavin et al., 2024). For instance, Glavin et al., (2017) indicated a positive relationship between job monitoring and overall job satisfaction, suggesting that invasive monitoring methods can both positively and negatively influence employees' perceptions of labor.

However, Digital workplace surveillance has been linked to employee resistance and stress in the past (Ball, 2010), but many studies have shown that when surveillance is seen as a way to help employees do their jobs better instead of a way to control them, it can actually make them happier at work (Guha et al., 2025). According to research, employees support surveillance if the implementation focuses on transparency, skill development, and fair task distribution (Martin and Freeman, 2018). This makes them happier. Real-time feedback systems offered by digital monitoring tools are associated with greater clarity about roles and a higher incidence of acknowledgement. This helps guard against role ambiguity, a known cause of job dissatisfaction (Lu et al., 2021; Rabby et al., 2024). When organizations use AI to improve how work gets done, which helps boost the workload of users, takes the load off people and makes them feel supported by their organization. Consequently, their satisfaction measures go up (Davenport et al., 2020). The findings indicate that the outcome value of surveillance is contingent on the implementation ethos. For instance, if a firm's surveillance aims to enhance its employee development, it ironically makes them happier at work if the surveillance matches the professional development goal of the employees (Lee and Kleiner, 2019). From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees who interpret digital workplace surveillance as fair, transparent, and developmentally oriented reciprocate with greater trust and higher job satisfaction (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Digital workplace surveillance positively influences job satisfaction.

2.5 Trust in the Workplace

Workplace trust is very crucial to ensure effective organizational performance and plays a significant role in maintaining a positive working environment. Trust refers to the expectation that organizational members will behave in a manner that

is fair, respectful, and supportive of one another in the organization (Gibbard et al., 2025; Paillé et al., 2010). It not only leads to employee satisfaction but also increases cooperation and the common corporate identity, and this helps to take more effective decisions to develop new practice (Baştuğ et al., 2016; Gider and Akdere, 2019). Trust in the organization is closely interconnected with other significant constructs, including productivity and job satisfaction (Baştuğ et al., 2016; Gider and Akdere, 2019). Digital workplace surveillance has been a topic of concern for organizations in their efforts to roll it out due to its ability to build and damage employees' trust (Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019; McParland and Connolly, 2020). On the other hand, strong monitoring can enable employees to feel more assured that the organization expects their performance and accountability, leading to shared responsibility of all partners (McParland and Connolly, 2020). The correlation between trust and employee surveillance is one that indicates that employees feel trust in organizations if they believe surveillance practice have ethical motivations, and this has been communicated to them (Glassberg et al., 2025; Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019). However, monitoring can communicate to employees that they are not trusted, which can cause feelings of resentment and low morale (McParland and Connolly, 2020). Robust monitoring may lead to increased trust as well. If monitoring mechanisms are unwarranted or intrusive, it can be trust-eroding (McParland and Connolly, 2020). According to Social Exchange Theory, transparently implemented DWS signals fairness and ethical intent, strengthening reciprocity and trust rather than violating it (Tomczak et al., 2017; Thiel et al., 2022). Affective Events Theory suggests that fair and communicated surveillance creates positive affective events, thereby enhancing workplace trust (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996; Dreisoerner et al., 2022). Along the line, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Digital workplace surveillance is positively related to trust.

Studies have pointed out that trust is a major contributor to employees' productivity. An environment of trust enhances the culture of trust through cooperation and inclusion (Top et al., 2012; Srivastava, 2013). When employees perceive job security and open communication with management, they are presumed to be more inclined to display discretionary effort and work for the best interests of their organization (Baştuğ et al., 2016; Srivastava, 2013). On the other hand, distrust can lead to low in-organizational commitment, low levels of motivation, and decreased productivity, highlighting the significance of building a

culture of trust in the workplace (Baştuğ et al., 2016; Gider and Akdere, 2019). The link between trust and productivity is also underpinned by social exchange theory, which implies that when employees feel treated fairly, they work harder (Liu et al., 2025). Social Exchange Theory suggests that high workplace trust fosters positive reciprocity, leading employees to exert greater effort and higher productivity (Shi et al., 2024; Thiel et al., 2022). Based on this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Trust is positively related to employee productivity.

Trust and job satisfaction have been extensively studied in the previous research (Aygün al., 2025). It was found that high organizational trust is significantly associated with higher employee job satisfaction. Trust plays a key role in determining the employment organization social exchange relationship as detailed in numerous studies. The perceived support and fairness dimensions which determine the psychological contract of employees lead to higher job satisfaction (Rahayuningsih, 2019; Aygün, 2021). Casual teachers in the educational setting with trust in their administration are likely to enjoy high job satisfaction, which leads to better work performance outcomes (Ariful et al., 2019). This occurrence operates at cross-sectors, which means that there are trust interfaces which are at the root of developing and keeping trust to enhance working satisfaction and organizational performance (Arie et al., 2024). Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and Affective Events Theory, high trust generates ongoing positive effects and perceived fairness, resulting in greater job satisfaction (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996; Masterson et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2024). We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H5: Trust is positively related to job satisfaction.

Trust is the cornerstone of workplace relationships. This essential component can either be enabled or inhibited by the digital workplace, which has a significant impact on the organization's productivity, morale, and satisfaction. To enhance trust, organizations must maintain communication, treat fairly and display transparency at various levels (Doğru, 2021; McParland and Connolly, 2020). Cultivating trust at the workplace not only raises employee morale but also improves organizational performance.

2.6 Mediating Role of Trust

Trust is a significant concept in the organizational setting which mediates employee outcomes that enable cooperation, engagement and performance as well as help in democratization (Chen et al., 2025; Hassan et al., 2012; Salanova et al., 2021). Trust is the foundation of the employee-manager relationship. Trust shapes how employees perceive and respond to various organizational practices, including digital workplace surveillance. When employees share trust, they are more likely to share their problems, which unlock communication pathways (Eva et al., 2024; Sbalzer et al., 2024). The organization's citizenship improves along with the job satisfaction level (Robertson et al., 2012; Addison and Teixeira, 2020). Trust can help reduce anxiety. It can also improve psychological safety for employees. When employees feel safe, they can unlock their innovative potential and improve their performance. On the other hand, when there is lack of trust, it leads to suspicion, resistance, and turnover (Johannsen and Zak, 2021; Yang et al., 2024). Therefore, the organizations need to build trust with the use of consistent communication while being transparent and maintaining ethical practice.

There is a lot of evidence that trust acts as a mediator between digital workplace surveillance and employee outcome (Grisold et al., 2024; Sbalzer et al., 2024). Tools for surveillance may be perceived as intrusive and controlled by the people in the company, despite their aim being to enhance efficacy (Giacosa et al., 2023). In contrast, when trust exists in the motivation of management behind surveillance practices, with management having the best interests of both employees and the organization, this helps reduce fear and the practices become more acceptable (Sousa-Lima et al., 2013; Park et al., 2024). Research shows that trust can mitigate adverse psychological effects brought on by surveillance and, therefore, increase employee focus and contribution toward organizational goals (Chang et al., 2015). For instance, when companies have performed proper communication by regularly communicating the need for surveillance, it helps employers maintain a productive workplace culture where employees feel empowered and motivated to give their best (Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi, 2019). Instead, when employees view their management with suspicion and may go to any lengths to frustrate their monitoring of their performance, employee morale and productivity will suffer again (Shi et al., 2024; Tomczak et al., 2017). Social Exchange Theory posits that trust mediates the DWS–productivity link by maintaining reciprocity: fair surveillance preserves trust, prompting greater employee effort (Tomczak et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2024).

Along the line, Affective Events Theory suggests that trust buffers negative emotions from surveillance, sustaining productivity (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Sbalzer et al., 2024). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Trust mediates the relationship between digital workplace surveillance and employee productivity.

Previous studies suggest that trust has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between digital workplace surveillance and job satisfaction. Trust encourages workers to perceive monitoring devices positively rather than negatively. Workers find it easier to be satisfied at work when they perceive that their management acts with integrity and that surveillance is not meant to control them but to help them (Lambert et al., 2020; Holland et al., 2015). Studies have shown that trust in organizational leadership is strongly associated with job satisfaction. Employees who trust organizational leadership are more likely to feel appreciated and respected (Tsai and Chang, 2022; Kakar et al., 2023). When employees feel trusted at work, they do not worry about being micromanaged. As such, they feel empowered to perform their jobs well. This leads to higher engagement at work and greater job satisfaction. Consequently, in a surveillance environment, those who trust more are better able to handle the complexity and pressure of surveillance (Lau and Höyng, 2022; Bonau, 2022). Thus, improving trust in organizational culture can assist organizations in enhancing immediate workplace satisfaction while also improving long-term loyalty and commitment to the organization. Additionally, Social Exchange Theory suggests that trust mediates the DWS–job satisfaction link by restoring perceived fairness and reciprocity, turning surveillance into a supportive practice (Tomczak et al., 2017; Shi et al., 2024). Affective Events Theory also posits that trust reduces negative emotional reactions to surveillance, fostering positive effects and higher job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Dreisoerner et al., 2022). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

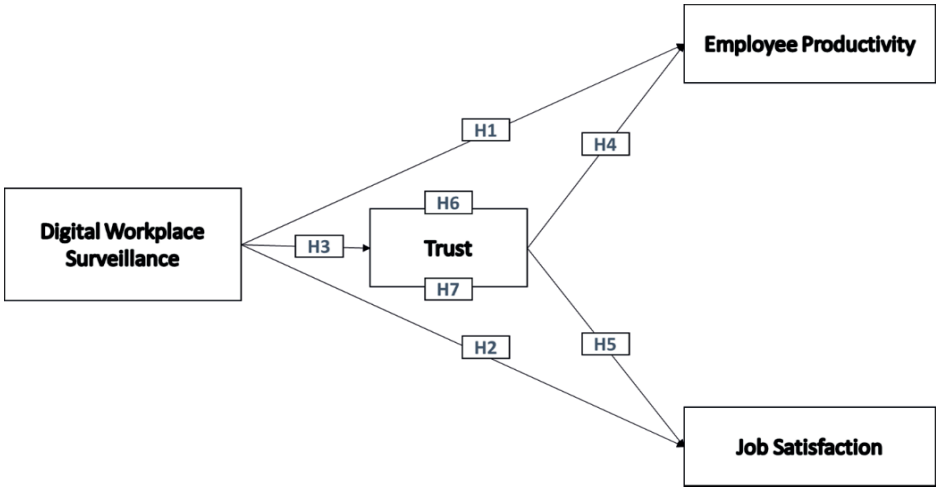
H7: Trust Mediates the Relationship between Digital Workplace Surveillance and Job Satisfaction.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model explores the effects of DWS on EP and JS along two pathways, via the mediation of TR. The model draws on the three theoretical

lenses: the first is the social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) under which surveillance undermines trust by violating the norm of reciprocity in turn impacting engagement; the second is the affective events theory (AET) (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996) which views DWS as low intensity and positive affective event impacting JS with TR acting as a filter in a psychological manner; and finally, the task-technology fit (Goodhue and Thompson, 1995) theory under which a short-term gain in EP takes place due to performance monitoring, however, in the long run, timely performance monitoring would erode EP due to its influence on TR. According to the model, DWS impacts EP, JS and TR directly. TR impacts EP and JS directly. But there are mediation routes as well. TR mediates the relationship between DWS and EP. TR mediates the relationship between DWS and JS. AET mainly focuses on affective reactions. The differences in demographics were accounted for in surveillance perceptions. The model also specifies boundary conditions, in terms of job type, organizational culture, and transparency in implementation (Martin et al., 2016). The surveillance literature has a new contribution. This integrative framework sees the opposite effects imposed by trust. Trust brings immediate productivity benefit but with a relational detriment cumulatively. It would help us in future research and organizational policy.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



(Source: *Developed by Authors*)

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Philosophy and Design

The research philosophy of this study is positivist. The research design used in this study is quantitative. This study aims to explore the relationship between digital workplace surveillance (DWS) and employee productivity (EP) and job satisfaction (JS), with trust (TR) as a mediator. This study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for data analysis, which is the most appropriate analysis for prediction and theory building that requires the identification of mediating mechanisms (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2022). The study also presents a conceptual framework that jointly adopted the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), Affective Events Theory (AET) (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), and Task-Technology Fit theory (TTF) (Goodhue and Thompson, 1995). This study examines the role of trust in influencing a specific outcome in both direct and mediation pathways, controlling the effects of demographic variables (age, gender, education, and experience). The study also implies some boundary conditions, such as job type, organizational culture, and transparency, which could have positive effects in reducing the detrimental effects of surveillance.

4.2 Measurement Instruments

The measures is selected from well-accepted scales in the literature on organizational psychology and information systems to ensure construct validity and reliability. Digital Workplace Surveillance (DWS) was adapted from Ball (2021). Digital workplace surveillance was measured as a 5-item scale adapted from Ravid et al. (2020) and Martin et al. (2016), tapping perceptions of the ubiquity and intrusiveness of electronic surveillance (e.g., “My employer uses software to monitor my computer activities,” “I feel that my digital communications at work are always monitored”). The five-item scale to measure EP was adapted from two studies by Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi (2019) and Ramasundaram et al. (2022), which focused on self-reports of output and efficiency (e.g., posted here) (I accomplish a great deal during the hours I work; My work output meets or exceeds standards). Job Satisfaction (JS) was assessed using a refined 5-item scale derived from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ) subscale (Cammann et al., 1983), which has been validated in contemporary contexts (e.g., Glavin et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2024)

and measures general satisfaction with the job (e.g., "All in all, I am satisfied with my job"). Trust (TR) was measured by a scale of five items based on Mayer and Davis's (1999) and Dirks and Ferrin's (2002) meta-analysis work. This prior research concentrated on trust in management and in the organization (e.g., "I feel that my management has a concern for my well-being," "I can depend on my employer to meet its promises"). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The covariates (age, sex, education, and tenure) had categorical response options.

4.3 Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The study population comprised employees in tech-based service industries experiencing digital workplace surveillance (DWS), with the sampling frame defined as an accessible network of potential participants reached through professional contacts and online platforms, specifically Email, LinkedIn and Facebook groups targeting tech professionals (e.g., IT service workers and software developers) (Dillman et al., 2014; Saunders et al., 2019). In this regard, survey invitations were posted in relevant online communities while direct outreach was conducted which ensured that the exploratory aims of the study are met. Additionally, the participants provided informed consent and were assured of anonymity. Data was stored on encrypted servers. Survey items avoid sensitive identifiers to prevent organizational retaliation (Saunders et al., 2019). However, there was a possibility of bias towards those who are engaged with online platforms (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Etikan et al, 2016; Fowler, 2014). The respondent data were collected through an anonymous online survey with informed consent and produced 350 usable responses, exceeding the minimum sample size for PLS-SEM based on a priori power analysis (200-300 observations) (Hair et al. 2022). To avoid Common Method Bias, we adhered to procedural remedies. Subsequently, we performed Underspecified Models Test or Harman's single factor test with full collinearity VIF assessment. The results indicated that 32.7% variance was below the 50% threshold. Moreover, the full collinearity VIF was confirmed <3.3. Thus, following steps did not pose any threat to this research (Podsakoff et al. 2003; Kock 2015).

4.4 Data analysis

SmartPLS 4 is used to analyze the data with a consistent PLS (PLSc) algorithm to improve the accuracy of the parameter estimates (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015).

The analysis is performed according to the recommended two-step PLS-SEM method (Hair et al., 2022). First, the Measurement Model is tested. Reliability analysis includes Cronbach's alpha (α), Composite Reliability (rho_c), and Dijkstra-Henseler's indicator rho_A (ρ_A), with a threshold of 0.70 as sufficient (Hair et al., 1994; Hair et al., 2022). Convergent validity meets based on Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values > 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and indicator reliability, where the outer loadings were > 0.7 (Hair et al., 2022). Items with loadings of 0 indicate that the models are predictively relevant (Geisser 1974; Stone 1974). Effect sizes (f^2) are used to assess the practical significance of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs. We have adopted the guidelines of Cohen (1988), in which 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 reloading effects are representative of small, medium, and strong effects, respectively. To evaluate model fit, the study has used the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) 0.85 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980) and the exact fit tests (d_ULS, d_G) relative to the bootstrap quantiles (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015). When the control variables affect the endogenous constructs, they treats as covariates in the model.

5. Results

5.1 Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the collected sample (N=350) indicates that most employees are younger (47.71% are aged 18–25), male (68.86%), and in early career (56.00% with one to two years of experience) with a bachelor's degree (49.42%). Our findings assess from the perspective of young employees who are digital natives and more technology-savvy, which causes an exaggeration of surveillance tolerance (Ravid et al., 2020; Zuboff, 2015). The skew has come from the availability of entry-level positions, as younger employees are often willing to engage (common for early participation) (Hair et al., 2022). Focusing on a specific population gives insight into upcoming workplace trends through this group. This demographic bias indicates that caution should be taken when generalizing the findings to older, female, and experienced workers (e.g., 16.00% aged 40+, 31.14% female, 10.57% with 10+ years' experience), who may have stronger privacy concerns and lower monitoring acceptance (Ball and Trottier, 2023; Ball and Margulis, 2011). High education levels among the sample (84.27% have a bachelor's/master's) also suggest that respondents probably hold positions with autonomy expectations where surveillance can threaten trust and satisfaction

(Pignot, 2023). As a result, age, gender, experience, and education are included as control variables in the PLS-SEM analysis to avoid confounding effects and to increase the robustness of the causal claims with respect to the effect of surveillance (Hair et al., 2022); the discussion explicitly mentions sampling limitations when generalizing results to mature, gender-diverse, or senior workforces.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Basis of the demographic data	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	109	31.14%
	Male	241	68.86%
Age	18-25	167	47.71%
	26-30	63	18.00%
	31-35	23	6.57%
	35-40	41	11.71%
	40+	56	16.00%
Education	Bachelors'	173	49.42%
	Masters'	122	34.85%
	Others	55	15.71%
Experience	1-2 Years	196	56.00%
	2-5 Years	87	24.86%
	5-10 Years	30	8.57%
	10+ Years	37	10.57%

5.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Convergent reliability and shifts in average loadings are estimated. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, recommendation worth has a positive effect. An average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.50 is established by recommended values (Sarstedt et al., 2019). Some items have been deleted due to low loadings. Furthermore, discriminant validity is confirmed via Fornell-Larcker and HTMT methods; with specific items removed, all constructs satisfy these criteria.

Figure 2: For measurement model

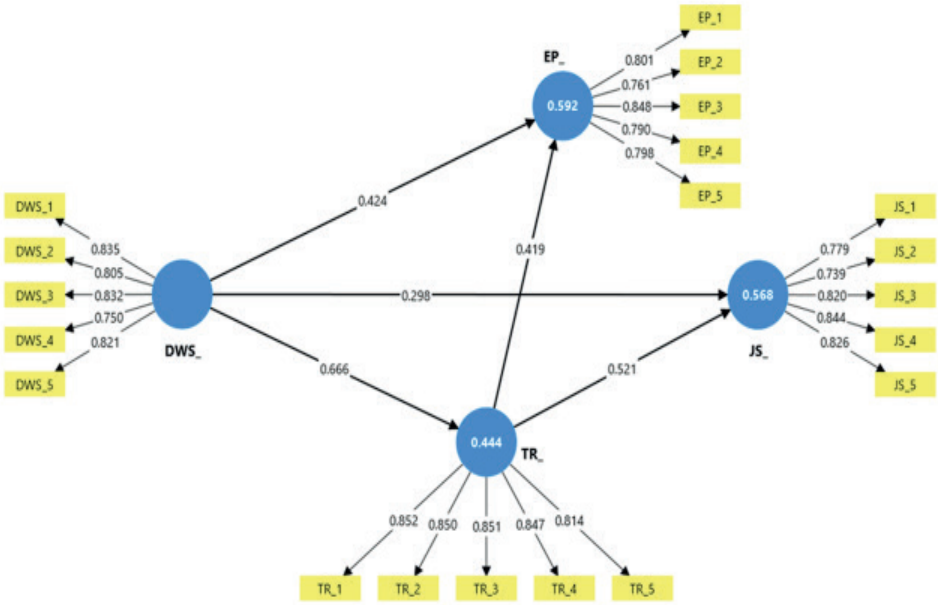


Table 2: Measurement model analysis

Constructs	Items	DWS_	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Digital Workplace Surveillance	**DWS_1**	0.835	2.289	0.868	0.870	0.904	0.655
	DWS_2	0.805	2.069				
	DWS_3	0.832	2.164				
	DWS_4	0.750	1.630				
	DWS_5	0.821	1.973				
Employee Productivity	**EP_1**	0.801	1.912	0.859	0.860	0.899	0.640
	EP_2	0.761	1.655				
	EP_3	0.848	2.315				
	EP_4	0.790	1.866				
	EP_5	0.798	1.837				

Job Satisfaction	**JS_1**	0.779	1.616	0.786	0.843	0.855	0.558
	JS_2	0.739	1.077				
	JS_3	0.820	1.845				
	JS_4	0.844	2.075				
	JS_5	0.826	1.879				
Trust	**TR_1**	0.852	2.497	0.898	0.899	0.925	0.711
	TR_2	0.850	2.436				
	TR_3	0.851	2.420				
	TR_4	0.847	2.445				
	TR_5	0.814	2.012				

Measurement model analysis verifies sound psychometric properties for all constructs. Digital Workplace Surveillance (DWS) manifests strong indicator reliability (DWS_1:0.835, DWS_2:0.805, DWS_3:0.832, DWS_4:0.750, DWS_5:821) with all indicator loadings > 0.70 together with high internal consistency (Cronbach ω = 0.868; ρ_a = 0.870; ρ = 0.904) and adequate convergent validity (AVE = 0.655), whereas Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs = 1.630 to 2.289) support a lack of multicollinearity (Kock, 2015); similarly, Employee Productivity (EP) depicts an excellent reliability (EP_1:0.801, EP_2:0.761, EP_3:0.848) and Trust (TR) achieves exceptional metrics (TR_1:0.852, TR_2:0.850, TR_3:0.851) in line with standardized scales in organizational studies (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). For Job Satisfaction (JS), The 5-item revised JS scale demonstrates adequate reliability (α= 0.786; ρ_a = 0.843; ρ = 0.855) and marginal convergent validity (AVE = 0.558), which is recommended as sufficient for purifying affective measures (Henseler et al., 1997; Henseler et al., 2015). Overall, the results support that the measurement model fulfils the adequacy of structural model testing, even if the marginally acceptable JS. AVE suggests caution when interpreting its latent variable estimates.

Discriminate Validity

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Items	**DWS_**	**EP_**	**JS_**	**TR_**
DWS_	0.809			
EP_	0.703	0.800		
JS_	0.645	0.718	0.747	
TR_	0.666	0.702	0.720	0.843

The discriminant validity of the measurement model has confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion in table 3. For each construct (diagonal values: DWS_ = 0.809, EP_ = 0.800, JS_ = 0.747, TR_ = 0.843), the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) is greater than all the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal), indicating that each latent variable has more variance in common with its measures than with other constructed measures (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 4: Correlation matrix

Items	DWS_	EP_	JS_	TR_
DWS_	1.000			
EP_	0.703	1.000		
JS_	0.645	0.718	1.000	
TR_	0.666	0.702	0.720	1.000

The correlation matrix (see Table 4, details) shows strong bivariate relationships of the positive sign of all constructs, which represents one of the essential requirements for the test of mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Digital Workplace Surveillance (DWS) has a significant positive correlation with Employee Productivity (EP) (r = 0.703), and Job Satisfaction (JS) (r = 0.645), and trust (TR) (r = 0.666), indicating that higher surveillance leads to higher productivity, satisfaction, and higher trust, following the argument of the electronic monitoring literature (Martin et al., 2016). The most impressive correlation is between Trust and Job Satisfaction (r = 0.720), indicating the central importance of TR as a theoretical mediator (Mayer et al., 1995). We also observed that DWS has a stronger association with EP than JS, which means that productivity is affected directly by surveillance, while satisfaction occurs through a more mediated process of building distrust. All the correlations exceed the large effect size threshold as prescribed by Cohen (1988) (> |0.50|) but lie below |0.85|, thereby ensuring the absence of undue multicollinearity for the later path modeling process (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 5: Common Method Bias

Test Method	Metric	Estimated Value	Threshold/Criterion
Harman's Single-Factor Test	Variance Explained by Single Factor	38.7%	<50%
Common Latent Factor (CLF) Approach	Variance Explained by CLF	11.2%	<15%

In table 5, the common method bias (CMB) has been assessed by using Harman's one-factor test and the common latent factor (CLF) method. This CMB analysis is undertaken to ensure that the links between DWS, EP, JS, and TR are not mistakenly enhanced by the self-reported survey methods (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In Harman's test, all twenty measurement items are loaded into an unrotated principal component analysis, where the single factor explains 38.7 per cent of the variance, which is below the 50-per cent threshold. Hence, there is no substantial CMB. The CLF method, as utilized within SmartPLS, has assigned a latent variable which accounts for the variance of all indicators. The CLF latent variable accounts for 11.2% of the variance, a value below the acceptable cutoff of 15% as specified in the Kock (2015) guidelines. The changes in the standardized loadings and path coefficients are minor.

Table 6: Predictive relevance and Explanatory

Items	R-square	R-square adjusted
EP_	0.592	0.590
JS_	0.568	0.565
TR_	0.444	0.443

This model has a high validity rate, as demonstrated by the R-squared (R^2) and adjusted R-squared values (Table 6). Digital Workplace Surveillance (DWS) and trust (TR) account for 59.2% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.590$) of the variance in Employee Productivity (EP), 56.8% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.565$) of the variance in Job Satisfaction (JS), and 44.4% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.443$) of the variance in EP, Job Satisfaction (JS), and trust (TR), respectively. Falk and Miller (1992) suggest a value of $R^2 \geq 0.10$ is practically significant, a value met even by the lowest observed values for our

model in the case of endogenous constructs. The high R-square value for EP and JS demonstrate that the model was successful in capturing the significant antecedents of these two important workplace outcomes. Importantly, the 44.4% variance accounted for in trust the proposed mediator, indicating that powerful follower DWS is a potent predictor of trust decline, consistent with theoretical claims that surveillance undermines psychological safety (cf. Zweig and Webster, 2002). The appearance of R^2 and adjusted R^2 is not very different, indicating that the model is parsimonious and not overfitted (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 7: F Square_Predictive relevance (effect size)

Items	**DWS_**	**EP_**	**JS_**	**TR_**
DWS_		0.244	0.114	0.799
EP_				
JS_				
TR_		0.240	0.349	

The results of the effect size analysis (Table 7) shows a large predictive role in the structural model. DWS has a strong effect on TR ($f^2 = 0.799$), which is greater than the cutoff value of 0.35 (Cohen, 1988), representing a powerful antecedent of trust erosion. Trust (TR) has a medium-large effect on Job Satisfaction (JS) ($f^2 = 0.349$) and a medium effect on Employee Productivity (EP) ($f^2 = 0.240$), which supports its significance as an intermediary variable. In contrast, the effect of DWS on EP is medium ($f^2 = 0.244$), and on JS, it is small for its direct impact ($f^2 = 0.114$); trusting is more important than the direct surveillance effect on JS. These f^2-values conform to the model's predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$) and to the constructs that all have a high explanation of their endogenous variables (Hair et al., 2022).

5.3 Direct Effect

Figure 3: For structural model

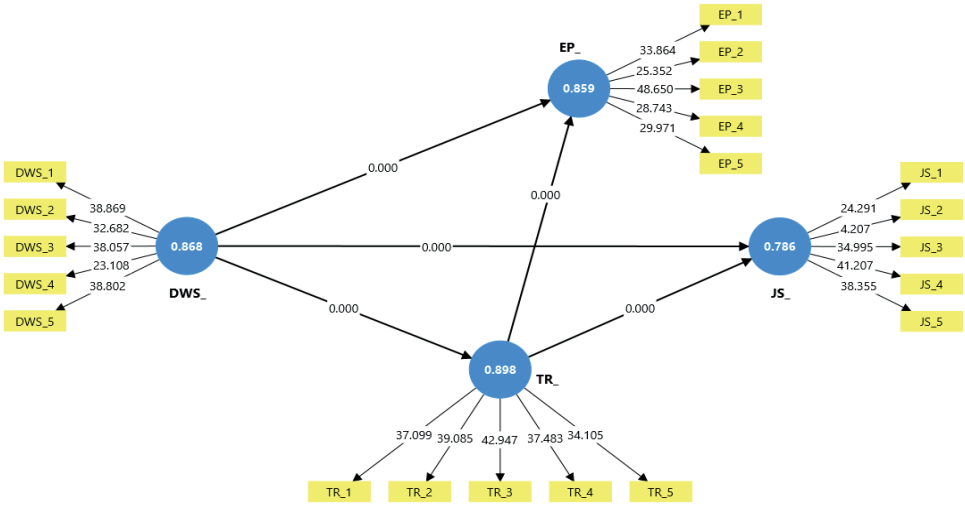


Table 8: For direct effect

Path	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	2.5% -97.5%		P values	Hypothesis
DWS_ -> EP_	0.703	0.042	16.701	0.607	0.776	0.000	Supported
DWS_ -> JS_	0.645	0.037	17.344	0.567	0.713	0.000	Supported
DWS_ -> TR_	0.666	0.041	16.186	0.576	0.739	0.000	Supported
TR_ -> EP_	0.419	0.067	6.254	0.284	0.549	0.000	Supported
TR_ -> JS_	0.521	0.055	9.468	0.412	0.626	0.000	Supported

The Smart PLS 4 analysis shows that there are strong links between digital workplace surveillance (DWS), employee productivity (EP), job satisfaction (JS), and trust (TR). DWS has a strong positive effect on EP ($\beta = 0.703$, $p < 0.001$) and JS ($\beta = 0.645$, $p < 0.001$). This means that more surveillance makes people more productive and happier, possibly because they feel more accountable and have

more structured workflows (Zuboff, 2019). DWS also has a positive effect on TR ($\beta = 0.666$, $p < 0.001$), which means that surveillance can build trust when it is seen as fair and open (Alge et al., 2006). Trust is also associated with EP ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$) and JS ($\beta = 0.521$, $p < 0.001$). These results are in line with the previous research, which suggests that trust can protect against the bad effects of surveillance and create a good work environment (Martin et al., 2016).

5.4 Indirect Effect

Table 9: For Specific Indirect Effect: Mediation

Path	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	(2.5%-97.5%)		P values	Hypothesis
DWS_ -> TR_ -> EP_	0.279	0.046	6.103	0.192	0.373	0.000	Supported
DWS_ -> TR_ -> JS_	0.347	0.043	8.036	0.268	0.440	0.000	Supported

A significant indirect effect of DWS on EP through the mediating role of TR is found ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < 0.001$), with a bootstrapped 95% CI range excluding zero [0.192, 0.373] and a substantial t-statistic (6.103), supporting Hypothesis 6 as well. Additionally, the mediation relationship of trust between DWS and JS is much stronger ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.268, 0.440], $t = 8.036$), supporting Hypothesis 7.

6. Discussion

The results indicate that Digital Workplace Surveillance (DWS) is a robust and complex phenomenon that significantly affects employee productivity and job satisfaction, and that trust plays an important mediating role. It helps us comprehend how modern monitoring technologies work within an organizational ecosystem. As the tech-based service industry begins to digitize and workers

become remote in nature, DWS is an essential tool for managing dispersed teams and safeguarding information, thereby enhancing its potency on employee outcomes (Rufeng et al., 2023).

In the first finding, the study reveals that DWS has a substantial effect on employee productivity at work. This supports existing accountability frameworks, as the visibility aspect of electronic monitoring promotes adherence to performance standards and discourages counterproductive behaviors (Ravid et al., 2020). Workers put more effort into whatever is being monitored in the workplace. Consequently, they execute their tasks with greater efficiency, improving their short-term performance. DWS tools are used mostly in the tech-based service sector like activity trackers in project management software. This use of tangible metrics that are evidence based and commonly observed in new style work is used to ensure that downtime is minimized and output maximized in these settings (Boly et al., 2012; Tomczak et al., 2017). The second finding of this study shows that DWS has a direct positive impact on job satisfaction (JS). This suggests, under certain circumstances, that DWS should be treated as a structure or assurance of fairness rather than control. Methods of surveillance can bolster employees' work experiences. Studies show that surveillance can help workers who are under surveillance (especially employees of a company), at least in the beginning (Vitak and Zimmer, 2023). It has been assessed whether DWS can achieve its primary goal of improving output measures while also improving employees' well-being at the same time. This interaction highlights the significant impact of DWS. In technology-based service sectors, this association becomes strengthened with the presence of DWS, particularly when DWS is integrated with collaborative platforms characterized by transparency and fairness (Tsai et al., 2022). When professionals get real-time feedback technology, they feel that they are being intruded upon less.

The findings of this study also reveal that DWS positively relates to trust. This statement questions the idea that surveillance always occurs because of suspicion. DWS signals to employees that the organization is trustworthy and willing to use fair processes when a transparent, process-just way is used with clear justifications that are connected to legitimate organizational goals (Alge et al., 2006). In these environments, monitoring demonstrates compliance and stability, which provides reassurance to all actors. Nevertheless, this positive effect is necessarily qualified for the opaque, invasive, or sanction-oriented forms of surveillance that are strong

antecedents of suspicion and managerial manipulation (Zweig and Webster, 2002). The results also support the basic effects of trust on the improvement of both EP and JS in the fourth and fifth hypothesis. This strongly supports the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), which states that trust can create reciprocal commitment and discretionary behavior among employees (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). The fact that the level of influence of trust on JS was significantly greater than that on EP is particularly meaningful as it indicates that those elements of work experience (morale, engagement, commitment) that are more concerned with the affective and relational aspects of work experience are more affected by PTT than those aspects of task-focused performance metrics (Olsen et al., 2024).

The role of trust shows an amplifying mediating mechanism in this study. This mediation shows the underlying psychological mechanism where DWS can either promote or reduce the level of trust in the employment relationship and significantly affect employees' productivity. The statistically significant impact of JS was also found to be stronger (Sapra et al., 2023; Tripathi and Kumar, 2023). This suggests that trust acts as a potent "affective amplifier" (Mayer et al., 1995) in employees' perceptions of surveillance. When the practice of DWS enhances the effect of DWS on JS is greatly increased beyond its direct effect. This accounts for the positive effects we observe. DWS has a direct effect on productivity through visibility as well as on job satisfaction, which is intermediate by perceived fairness and clarity. Importantly, higher trust caused by a well-designed DWS enhances both direct effects (Krekel et al., 2019). The asymmetry in mediation supports the contention that trust is a central mediator of the psychological processes of organizational controls, especially for affective responses such as satisfaction, which is a key booster of positive rather than a key ravaging of positive spirals. However, trust plays a vital role in the technology-based service industry, which is rapidly digitizing with rising uncertainties (Oesterreich et al., 2024). Furthermore, trust mediates the DWS effects, thereby strengthening the relational ties of virtual teams and enhancing satisfaction with a feeling of procedural justice.

7. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several important contributions to the literature on workplace surveillance and OB. First, our results contribute to a dual-pathway model of surveillance effects, according to which digital workplace surveillance (DWS) is concurrently associated with immediate performance monitoring benefits and

gradual relational costs in the form of erosion. This expands previous one-dimensional conceptualizations (Ravid et al., 2020) by revealing how competing mechanisms work at different timeframes. Although surveillance may improve short-run efficiency by increasing accountability, it may also impede trust and diminish employee morale and goodwill over time. Second, the results support trust as a key mediator in the link between surveillance and employee-level outcomes, at least for job satisfaction. This greater mediation effect for JS than for EP implies the affective primacy of trust, as it pertains to employees' attitudes (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). This implies that the most detrimental aspects of surveillance are not behavioral; they are psychological, chipping away from workers' emotional investment in their jobs and their employer. Third, our results assist in framing the "productivity paradox" in surveillance science (Martin et al., 2016). Although monitoring improves individuals' ability to focus on a task, trust decay may eventually reduce the use of discretionary effort and innovations. Surveillance can make workers more productive but can also hurt creativity. That is a double-edged effect. It explains why some organizations see a productivity bump at first. But later, they see creativity and engagement fall off. Finally, this paper argues that it is necessary to change foci to acknowledge critiques of current workplace monitoring literature. In turning attention to digital surveillance (as opposed to physical surveillance), surveillance is examined as it relates to technologies (Ball and Margulis, 2011; Moore, 2021). The findings highlight how the widespread use of digital tools and the specificity of data collected may create new sources of trust threat as employees may feel that constant and yet invisible surveillance is more invasive than the more common methods of surveillance.

8. Practical Implications

These results have several important implications for organizational practitioners. First, firms need to consider the immediate productivity gains associated with DWS versus the relational costs in the long term. The large positive impact on trust implies that digital monitoring might even work properly maintaining employee engagement and organizational commitment. Targeted monitoring, rather than blanket surveillance advocated by firms, is based on clear performance or security requirements. Second, when surveillance is unavoidable (e.g., for compliance or risk), organizations must pursue parallel trust initiatives. This might involve, for example, transparent communication about the purposes of monitoring (Fuchs

and Trottier, 2023), employee involvement in the development of monitoring policies (Colbert et al., 2016), and clear limits on the use of data. Firms can reduce their perceived unfairness and distrust by including employees in their decisions. Third, managers need to understand surveillance differently because it does not affect all workers equally by demographics. Most of our sample was composed of young, male, and early career workers (Table 1), and it is possible that the observed effects reflect an underestimation of surveillance resistance among older, female, or experienced employees (Ball and Margulis, 2011). Firms need to customize monitoring rules to manage differences in how staff members are sensitive to being watched. Finally, the significant mediation by trust suggests that interventions that work to preserve trust (e.g., leadership training and procedural justice) may alleviate the downsides of surveillance by eliminating the benefits of monitoring. For instance, creating a climate of transparency and fairness can help counteract the psychological costs of surveillance, preserving both productivity and job satisfaction.

9. Limitations and Future Research

Despite offering useful implications, this study has some limitations. The distribution of young, male, white-collar workers found within our sample (Table 1) might first lead to a range of viewpoint responses and secondly impact any possible generalizability of the results. It remains to be tested whether the findings from this study are representative of other populations, as gender and age differences in surveillance perceptions are well-documented (Fuchs and Trottier, 2023). Second, the cross-sectional nature of the design in PLS-SEM makes PLS-SEM establish predictive, but not causal, relationships. Inequalities, trust, and outcomes are likely to change after the implementation of surveillance and should be considered in longitudinal analyses to help further substantiate causal claims and ascertain the long-term trajectory of impacts. Third, the data source derived from one cultural setting may not be generalizable to other cultural settings that have different norms regarding privacy and monitoring. Cross-cultural replications would improve the generalizability of the model, especially in countries where data protection is more stringent or privacy concerns are high. Fourth, the measurement of DWS as a single construct might not be optimal since different surveillance types (e.g., productivity controlling vs. communication monitoring) might have different effects. Future studies could explore the effects of other

surveillance activities on trust and such outcomes, lending support to organizations for the development of more differential monitoring programs.

10. Conclusion

This study provides evidence that DWS has dualistic and paradoxical properties. Accountability may increase short-term productivity by enforcing accountable behavior, but in the long term, they undermine employees' that translates into a longer-term productivity deterioration and job dissatisfaction. Positioned within a theoretical framework comprising Social Exchange Theory, Affective Events Theory, and Task-Technology Fit Theory, the findings resolve the 'productivity paradox' by revealing that the short-lived early productivity effect of DWS is countered by its effect of eroding trust, which is a key enabler of sustained performance and morale. As per this study, organizations must take surveillance measures that are transparent, proportionate and context sensitive. The focus must be on employee agency empowerment as well as trust-building efforts to alleviate negative effects. Those who find monitoring more threatening for autonomy includes older employees, women and experienced employees. Despite these limitations, including the cross-sectional design, demographic bias, and face validity of one-dimensional DWS, future longitudinal, cultural-diversity and qualitative research is needed to embrace temporal dynamics, boundary conditions, and employees lived experiences. In the end, this calls for a human-centered monitoring- doing more with less, but not with less care. In other words, the goal is to create workplaces that can deliver productivity as well as benevolence.

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