



SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM IN THE WORKPLACE: IMPLICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WORKERS' AUTONOMY

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ABSTRACT - The increasing integration of digital monitoring technologies into organizational systems has raised critical concerns about their implications for employee well-being and control, prompting this paper on *Surveillance Capitalism in the Workplace: Implications for Mental Health and Workers' Autonomy*. The paper examined the extent to which workplace surveillance practices influence employees' mental health outcomes, evaluates how surveillance-driven management systems affect worker autonomy, and investigates the relationship between surveillance practices and employees' perceptions of privacy, trust, and organizational fairness. The paper was anchored on Labour Process Theory which explains how managerial control is embedded within technological systems to regulate labour. An analytical review approach was adopted, involving critical synthesis and evaluation of recent empirical and theoretical studies published between 2020 and 2026. The findings revealed that intensified workplace surveillance is associated with increased stress, anxiety, and burnout due to continuous monitoring and performance pressure. It further showed that algorithmic management systems significantly reduce worker autonomy by limiting discretion over tasks and decision-making processes. In addition, the paper established that surveillance practices negatively shape employees' perceptions of privacy, trust, and fairness, particularly in contexts with weak regulatory protections. The paper concluded that while surveillance technologies may enhance efficiency, their unchecked use undermines worker well-being and organizational relations. It therefore recommended the adoption of transparent monitoring policies, integration of mental health support systems, and strengthening of regulatory frameworks to protect employees' rights and autonomy.

KEYWORDS: Surveillance Capitalism, Workplace Monitoring, Mental Health, Worker Autonomy, Algorithmic Management

1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital monitoring systems at work has intensified scholarly attention to what surveillance capitalism describes as the extraction and commodification of behavioral data for profit. Since the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated remote and platform-based work arrangements, employers across the United States, Europe, and Asia have increasingly adopted algorithmic management tools, biometric tracking, keystroke logging, and productivity analytics to supervise employees in real time. Evidence indicates that over 60% of large firms in

advanced economies deployed some form of digital monitoring by 2022, reflecting a shift toward data-driven control systems (International Labour Organization, 2021). These technologies are often justified on the grounds of efficiency, accountability, and security, yet they alter traditional employment relations by embedding constant visibility into daily work routines. Studies show that such systems can reduce informational asymmetry between employers and workers but also generate conditions of persistent observation that resemble panoptic control (Moore, 2020).

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Within regional contexts, European research highlights regulatory tensions between workplace monitoring and data protection frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation, while studies in North America document the normalization of algorithmic supervision in gig platforms like Amazon warehouses, where workers' movements and productivity rates are continuously tracked (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa, digital surveillance in the workplace is emerging alongside the growth of fintech, telecommunications, and outsourcing industries. Nigeria, as one of Africa's largest digital economies, has witnessed increasing adoption of employee monitoring software in banking, call centers, and logistics firms. Reports indicate that firms in Lagos and Abuja have implemented tracking applications to measure attendance, communication patterns, and output, reflecting global trends localized within developing economies (Okoye & Ezejiolor, 2023).

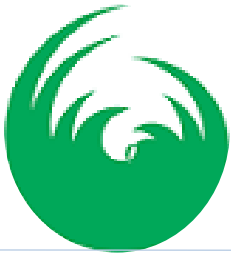
The implications of these developments extend beyond productivity outcomes to workers' psychological well-being and sense of autonomy. Empirical research links continuous electronic monitoring to heightened stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, particularly when employees perceive surveillance as intrusive or unfair (Ball, 2021). The erosion of discretion in task execution and decision-making has also raised concerns about diminished worker autonomy, a core dimension of job quality. According to a longitudinal study in the United Kingdom, employees subjected to algorithmic management reported lower job satisfaction and higher burnout levels compared to those in less monitored environments (Wood et al., 2021). In Nigeria, where labor protections regarding digital privacy remain underdeveloped, these concerns are compounded by limited institutional safeguards, thereby exposing workers to unchecked monitoring practices. The convergence of technological capability and managerial control thus raises urgent questions about how surveillance capitalism reshapes workplace power relations and mental health outcomes in both advanced and developing economies.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing integration of surveillance technologies into workplace management has created a situation where employees operate under constant digital observation, yet the consequences of this shift for mental health and autonomy remain insufficiently addressed in empirical and policy discussions. While organizations emphasize efficiency gains, existing evidence suggests that persistent monitoring contributes to psychological strain, including stress, fatigue, and reduced well-being. Workers subjected to algorithmic control often report a loss of independence in decision-making, as tasks are dictated by automated systems that prioritize measurable outputs over human judgment (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022). This raises concerns about the transformation of work into a tightly controlled environment where human agency is subordinated to data-driven directives.

In many developing contexts, particularly Nigeria, the problem is more pronounced due to weak enforcement of data protection regulations and limited awareness of workers' digital rights. Although the Nigeria Data Protection Act provides a legal framework for personal data governance, its application within employer-employee relationships remains unclear. Consequently, organizations may deploy invasive monitoring tools without transparent consent mechanisms or safeguards for employees' psychological welfare. This regulatory gap creates conditions where workers experience surveillance without adequate protection, potentially exacerbating mental health challenges in a labor market already characterized by job insecurity and high unemployment rates.

Furthermore, there is a lack of context-specific research that systematically examines how surveillance capitalism affects Nigerian workers compared to their counterparts in other regions. Most existing studies are concentrated in Western economies, leaving a gap in understanding how cultural, economic, and institutional factors shape workers' responses to digital monitoring in Africa. Without such evidence, policy interventions risk being misaligned with local realities. The problem therefore lies not only in the expansion of workplace surveillance but also in the limited empirical attention to its psychological and autonomy-related consequences within the Nigerian



context. Addressing this issue requires rigorous investigation into how monitoring practices influence workers' mental health and their capacity to exercise control over their work, thereby informing policies that balance organizational interests with employee well-being.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper was to examine how surveillance capitalism shapes workplace practices and to determine its implications for employees' mental health and their level of autonomy in the work environment. The specific objectives includes:

1. To assess the extent to which workplace surveillance practices influence employees' mental health outcomes.
2. To examine the effect of surveillance-driven management systems on workers' autonomy and control over their tasks and decisions.
3. To investigate the relationship between surveillance capitalism practices and employees' perceptions of privacy, trust, and organizational fairness.

4. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted an analytical review approach, which is rooted in the broader tradition of critical and systematic literature-based inquiry. This approach involves a rigorous examination, synthesis, and interpretation of existing scholarly works to generate new understanding, identify patterns, and highlight gaps within a body of knowledge. This methodology describes such an approach as a structured process that does not merely summarize prior studies but interrogates assumptions, evaluates methodological rigour, and builds conceptual linkages across findings (Khan et al., 2025). More recent methodological discussions emphasize that an analytical or critical review seeks to advance knowledge by revealing contradictions, limitations, and areas requiring further empirical attention rather than offering descriptive accounts of existing studies. In this sense, the analytical review adopted in this paper aligns with contemporary expectations of rigorous knowledge synthesis.

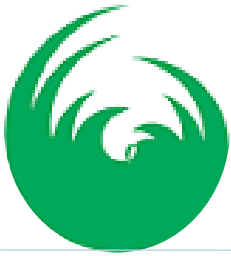
The criteria guiding the use of an analytical review approach in this paper include systematic selection of

relevant scholarly sources, critical evaluation of theoretical and empirical contributions, and thematic integration of findings across studies. These criteria ensure that only credible, peer-reviewed works are included while enabling the researcher to compare methodologies, contexts, and results across different studies. Analytical reviews also require clarity in defining the scope of inquiry, establishing inclusion and exclusion boundaries, and applying consistent standards in evaluating evidence. Recent work on review methodologies highlights that such approaches strengthen theoretical development by synthesizing diverse findings into coherent frameworks and identifying unresolved issues that require further investigation. This criterion is particularly important for a topic like workplace surveillance, where evidence is dispersed across disciplines such as sociology, labour studies, and organizational behaviour.

The adoption of the analytical review approach in this paper was justified by the nature of the research problem, which sought to examine relationships among surveillance capitalism, mental health, and worker autonomy without relying on primary data collection. Given the evolving nature of digital surveillance practices and the growing body of empirical studies across different regions, an analytical review allows for a comprehensive integration of existing knowledge while maintaining methodological rigour. It enabled the paper to draw on multiple contexts, compare findings, and construct a theoretically grounded explanation of observed patterns. As noted in methodological scholarship, the strength of this approach lies in its ability to provide depth of analysis, enhance conceptual clarity, and support theory building by linking empirical evidence with established frameworks. Therefore, its use in this paper ensured that the discussion is grounded in verifiable evidence while contributing to the advancement of knowledge on surveillance capitalism in the workplace.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature for this paper was reviewed under conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical framework inline with the aim and objectives as follows:



Conceptual Review Surveillance Capitalism

The concept of surveillance capitalism has generated sustained debate within recent scholarship as researchers attempt to clarify its meaning and implications. Contemporary studies describe it as an economic logic in which human experience is captured as data and converted into a commodity for profit-making purposes (Srivastava, 2024). This view aligns with arguments that digital platforms not only collect data as a by-product of service provision but also transform such data into predictive and behavioral modification tools sold in markets (Alshamy et al., 2024). Other scholars emphasize the monitoring dimension, defining surveillance as the sustained collection and processing of personal data aimed at influencing individuals' actions (Macnish, as cited in 2024 literature).

Critically, debates have emerged over whether the term overstates novelty, with some arguing that it reflects an extension of earlier capitalist practices of extraction and control rather than a complete departure (Venkatesh, 2021). Despite these disagreements, a consistent thread in recent work is the emphasis on data commodification, behavioural prediction, and power asymmetry between organizations and individuals. For the purpose of this paper, surveillance capitalism is understood as a system in which organizations systematically collect, analyze, and monetize workers' behavioural data in ways that enable prediction, control, and modification of workplace conduct.

Mental Health

Mental health has been widely examined in recent occupational and public health research, yet its definition varies across disciplines. A 2024 systematic review conceptualizes mental health as a state of psychological well-being that enables individuals to function effectively, cope with work demands, and maintain productive social relations (Lancman et al., 2024). This functional perspective is complemented by studies that link mental health to the absence of psychological distress such as anxiety, burnout, and emotional exhaustion within workplace contexts (Amoadu et al., 2024). Other scholars

extend the concept beyond pathology, stressing that mental health includes positive capacities such as resilience, satisfaction, and emotional stability in relation to job conditions (Shiri et al., 2022).

However, debates persist regarding whether mental health should be defined narrowly as the absence of illness or broadly as a continuum of well-being shaped by environmental factors. Recent empirical work tends to adopt the broader interpretation, particularly in workplace studies where organizational conditions significantly influence psychological outcomes. In this paper, mental health is conceptualized as a dynamic state of psychological well-being and functioning shaped by workplace conditions, including exposure to surveillance practices, and reflected in levels of stress, emotional stability, and job-related satisfaction.

Worker Autonomy

Worker autonomy is another central concept that has attracted renewed scholarly interest, particularly in the context of algorithmic management and digital monitoring. Recent empirical research defines workplace autonomy as the degree of control employees have over how they perform tasks, make decisions, and organize their work processes (Venkatesh, 2021). Evidence from Workplace autonomy and mental health, (2025) indicates that autonomy operates across multiple dimensions, including task discretion, scheduling flexibility, and decision-making authority, all of which are linked to improved psychological outcomes when present. Some scholars argue that autonomy should be understood relationally, as it is shaped by organizational structures and technological systems that may either enable or constrain individual agency. Others emphasize its normative dimension, viewing autonomy as a fundamental aspect of human dignity that is threatened by excessive monitoring and algorithmic control. While definitions vary in scope, there is agreement that autonomy involves the capacity for self-direction within the boundaries of organizational expectations. In this paper, worker autonomy is defined as the extent to which employees retain meaningful control over their tasks, decisions, and work pace in environments increasingly structured by surveillance technologies.



The Extent to Which Workplace Surveillance Practices Influence Employees' Mental Health Outcomes

Recent empirical research shows a consistent association between intensified workplace surveillance and adverse mental health outcomes among employees, particularly in digitally mediated work environments. Surveillance practices such as keystroke logging, screen monitoring, biometric tracking, and algorithmic performance scoring introduce conditions of continuous observation that reshape how workers experience their roles. Moore (2020) argues that constant monitoring creates a condition of “digital Taylorism,” where workers are subjected to persistent evaluation, leading to heightened psychological pressure. This pressure is not merely perceptual; it translates into measurable outcomes such as increased stress, anxiety, and burnout. In a large-scale study of platform workers across Europe, Wood et al. (2021) found that individuals working under algorithmic management reported significantly higher levels of anxiety and emotional exhaustion compared to those in traditional employment settings.

Practical cases illustrate these dynamics clearly. In warehouse environments operated by Amazon, workers' productivity is tracked in real time through handheld devices and automated systems that flag “time off task.” Reports indicate that employees face disciplinary action when their performance metrics fall below algorithmically determined thresholds, contributing to a climate of fear and psychological strain (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022). Similar findings emerge from call centers, where monitoring software records conversations, tracks idle time, and evaluates tone and responsiveness. Ball (2021) notes that such environments often produce emotional dissonance, as workers must regulate their behavior under constant scrutiny, leading to exhaustion and reduced well-being.

Quantitative evidence reinforces these observations. For instance, a study by Kellogg et al. (2020) found that workers exposed to high levels of algorithmic control were 30–40% more likely to report stress-related symptoms compared to those with lower levels of monitoring. In healthcare settings, digital tracking systems introduced to monitor nurses' movements and patient interactions have

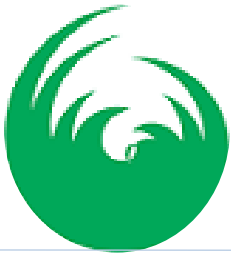
been linked to increased fatigue and reduced job satisfaction (Leonardi & Treem, 2020). The psychological burden is particularly pronounced when surveillance is perceived as intrusive or unjustified, as this perception amplifies feelings of helplessness and reduces coping capacity.

In developing contexts such as Nigeria, the implications are further intensified by limited institutional protections and high job insecurity. Workers may tolerate invasive monitoring due to fear of unemployment, thereby internalizing stress without avenues for redress. Emerging studies in African service sectors indicate that employees subjected to digital monitoring report higher levels of anxiety and lower psychological well-being, particularly in banking and telecommunications industries (Okoye & Ezejiolor, 2023). The absence of strong enforcement mechanisms for data protection exacerbates this condition, leaving workers vulnerable to unchecked surveillance practices.

The cumulative evidence suggests that workplace surveillance affects mental health through multiple pathways, including increased performance pressure, reduced privacy, and diminished control over work processes. While some employers argue that monitoring enhances efficiency and accountability, the psychological costs are substantial and often overlooked. The extent of these effects depends on factors such as the intensity of monitoring, transparency of practices, and availability of employee support systems. However, across diverse contexts, the pattern remains consistent: heightened surveillance correlates with deteriorating mental health outcomes.

The Effect of Surveillance-Driven Management Systems on Workers' Autonomy and Control Over Their Tasks and Decisions

Surveillance-driven management systems have significantly altered the degree of autonomy workers exercise in contemporary workplaces. Autonomy traditionally refers to the capacity of employees to make decisions about how tasks are performed, including discretion over methods, timing, and problem-solving approaches. However, the integration of algorithmic



management tools has shifted decision-making authority from human workers to automated systems. Kellogg et al. (2020) describe this transformation as a reconfiguration of control, where algorithms dictate workflows, assign tasks, and evaluate performance with minimal human intervention.

Empirical studies demonstrate that this shift reduces workers' discretion in meaningful ways. For instance, ride-hailing platforms use algorithms to assign trips, determine pricing, and evaluate driver performance through rating systems. Drivers have limited ability to negotiate fares or select preferred routes, effectively constraining their autonomy (Wood et al., 2021). Similarly, in warehouse settings, workers follow routes and picking sequences determined by handheld devices, leaving little room for individual judgment. This form of control has been shown to reduce perceived autonomy by up to 50% in highly monitored environments compared to traditional roles (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022).

Statistical evidence supports these observations. A cross-national survey conducted by Eurofound (2021) found that employees subjected to digital monitoring were significantly less likely to report control over their work pace and task execution. In the United States, a study of gig workers revealed that over 70% felt that algorithmic systems limited their ability to make independent decisions about their work (Kellogg et al., 2020). These findings highlight a broader trend in which surveillance technologies centralize control within organizational systems, reducing the scope for worker agency.

Case studies further illustrate these effects. In logistics firms, route optimization software determines delivery schedules and paths, leaving drivers with minimal flexibility. Deviations from prescribed routes may trigger penalties, reinforcing compliance with algorithmic directives. In customer service environments, scripts generated by monitoring systems dictate interactions, reducing workers' ability to respond creatively to customer needs (Ball, 2021). Such conditions not only limit autonomy but also affect job satisfaction and motivation, as employees feel constrained by rigid systems.

In Nigeria, the adoption of surveillance-driven management is increasingly evident in sectors such as

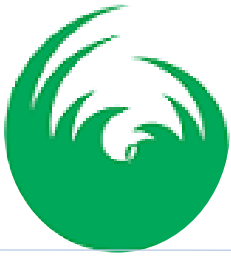
banking and telecommunications. Employees are often required to meet performance targets monitored through digital dashboards, with limited input into how these targets are achieved. Preliminary evidence suggests that workers in these environments experience reduced control over their tasks and heightened dependence on managerial directives (Okoye & Ezejiofor, 2023). This is compounded by hierarchical organizational cultures that already limit employee participation in decision-making.

Despite these challenges, some scholars argue that surveillance technologies can enhance autonomy under certain conditions, particularly when they provide feedback that enables self-regulation. However, such outcomes are contingent on the design and implementation of monitoring systems. When surveillance is used primarily for control rather than support, its effect is overwhelmingly restrictive. The evidence therefore indicates that surveillance-driven management systems tend to diminish worker autonomy by shifting control from individuals to algorithms, thereby redefining the nature of work in ways that prioritize efficiency over human agency.

The Relationship Between Surveillance Capitalism Practices and Employees' Perceptions of Privacy, Trust, and Organizational Fairness

The expansion of surveillance capitalism within workplaces has profound implications for how employees perceive privacy, trust, and fairness. These perceptions are critical determinants of organizational commitment and overall job satisfaction. Surveillance practices often involve the collection and analysis of personal and behavioral data, raising concerns about the boundaries between professional and private life. Ball (2021) argues that when employees perceive monitoring as excessive or unjustified, it undermines their sense of privacy, leading to discomfort and resistance.

Empirical research highlights a strong link between surveillance intensity and perceived invasion of privacy. In a study of European workers, those subjected to continuous monitoring reported significantly lower levels of perceived privacy compared to those in less monitored environments (Eurofound, 2021). This perception is not merely about data collection but also about the lack of transparency



regarding how data are used. When employees are unaware of the purposes or extent of monitoring, they are more likely to view it as intrusive and exploitative.

Trust is another dimension significantly affected by surveillance practices. Trust in management is built on expectations of fairness, respect, and transparency. However, surveillance systems often signal a lack of trust from employers, as they imply that workers must be constantly monitored to ensure compliance. Moore (2020) notes that this dynamic creates a feedback loop in which reduced trust leads to increased monitoring, which in turn further erodes trust. In a longitudinal study, employees exposed to high levels of monitoring reported lower trust in management and higher intentions to leave their organizations (Wood et al., 2021).

Organizational fairness is also closely linked to surveillance practices. Fairness perceptions depend on whether employees believe that monitoring systems are applied consistently and used for legitimate purposes. When surveillance is perceived as discriminatory or punitive, it undermines fairness and can lead to conflict. For example, algorithmic rating systems in gig platforms have been criticized for lack of transparency and potential bias, leading workers to question the fairness of performance evaluations (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022). In some cases, workers have reported being penalized by automated systems without clear explanations, reinforcing perceptions of injustice.

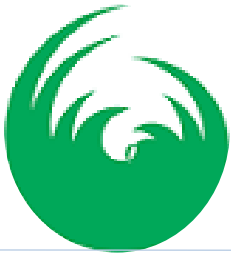
In Nigeria, these issues are particularly salient due to evolving data protection frameworks and limited enforcement mechanisms. While recent legislation provides a basis for regulating data use, employees often lack awareness of their rights, leading to asymmetries in power between employers and workers. Studies indicate that Nigerian employees subjected to digital monitoring frequently express concerns about privacy and fairness, particularly when monitoring extends beyond work-related activities (Okoye & Ezejiofor, 2023). These perceptions can weaken organizational commitment and reduce trust in management.

In summary, the relationship between surveillance capitalism and employee perceptions is characterized by tension between organizational control and individual

rights. While surveillance can enhance accountability, it often does so at the cost of privacy, trust, and fairness. The balance between these factors depends on how monitoring systems are designed, implemented, and communicated. Transparent practices, clear policies, and employee involvement can mitigate negative perceptions, but in their absence, surveillance capitalism is likely to erode the relational foundations of the workplace.

Empirical Reviews

Baiocco et al. (2025) conducted a study on *Algorithmic management is associated with psychological distress, musculoskeletal pain, and occupational accidents: A cross-sectional study in logistics* within Sweden's logistics and warehousing sector. The study was anchored on the Job Demands–Resources model, which explains how increased job demands and reduced resources influence employee strain and well-being. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, drawing from a sample of 978 employees recruited through online campaigns and union networks using purposive and voluntary sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured online questionnaires capturing exposure to algorithmic monitoring, task allocation systems, and health outcomes such as psychological distress, sleep disruption, and physical strain. The findings revealed that workers exposed to high levels of algorithmic monitoring reported significantly higher psychological distress, sleep problems, and workplace injuries compared to those with minimal exposure. Continuous digital tracking and automated decision-making were identified as key predictors of stress and reduced well-being. The study concluded that surveillance-oriented management systems contribute directly to adverse health outcomes by intensifying workload and reducing perceived control over work processes. A critical observation from this study is its strong quantitative rigor and direct measurement of health outcomes; however, it is limited to a European context and does not explore how cultural and institutional factors shape these outcomes in developing economies. This gap created the need for studies that examine similar dynamics within African labour markets, particularly Nigeria, where regulatory protections differ significantly.

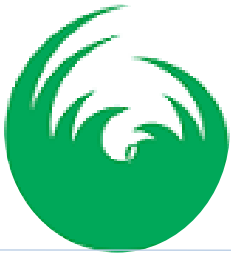


Kellogg et al. (2020) carried out a study titled *Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control* focusing on multiple industries in the United States. The research was grounded in labour process theory, emphasizing how technological systems restructure control and worker resistance. The study adopted a qualitative comparative research design, drawing on case studies from sectors including ride-hailing, healthcare, and retail. Data were obtained through interviews with workers, organizational documents, and observational evidence, with purposive sampling used to capture participants directly exposed to algorithmic supervision. The findings demonstrated that algorithmic management systems significantly reduce worker discretion by automating task allocation, performance evaluation, and disciplinary processes. Workers reported diminished autonomy and increased dependence on opaque systems, which often produced anxiety due to lack of transparency. The study also revealed that employees developed coping mechanisms such as gaming the system or informal resistance strategies. The authors concluded that algorithmic control represents a shift in managerial power, intensifying surveillance while limiting worker agency. Although the study provides rich qualitative insights across sectors, it does not sufficiently quantify the psychological consequences of these systems, thereby leaving a gap in understanding the measurable mental health implications of surveillance-driven management. This limitation justified further empirical work that integrates both psychological outcomes and autonomy measures within a single analytical framework.

Parent-Rocheleau et al. (2025) examined *Algorithmic management: psychological measurement and associations with work design and mental strain* in European logistics and digital labour platforms. The study employed the Job Demands–Resources framework to explain how algorithmic monitoring alters job characteristics and influences strain. A quantitative survey design was used, involving multiple samples totaling 297 workers drawn from warehouse logistics, delivery services, and platform-based employment through targeted sampling strategies. Data were collected using validated scales measuring algorithmic control, work pace, job

autonomy, and mental strain. The results indicated that higher levels of algorithmic monitoring and automated feedback were significantly associated with increased negative mental strain and reduced autonomy. Workers exposed to intensive surveillance reported greater irritation, inability to detach from work, and higher perceived workload. The study concluded that algorithmic management increases job demands while simultaneously reducing resources such as decision-making freedom, thereby undermining employee well-being. While the research provides strong statistical evidence linking surveillance practices to mental strain, it is limited by its reliance on self-reported data and its concentration on Western labour markets. The absence of contextual analysis in developing countries highlights a gap that necessitates investigation into how socio-economic conditions influence these relationships in settings such as Nigeria.

Delfanti (2021) conducted a study on *Algorithmic management and labour process in Amazon warehouses* in the United States and Europe. The research was informed by labour process theory, focusing on control, resistance, and worker experience under digital supervision. An ethnographic research design was adopted, involving field observations and in-depth interviews with warehouse employees over an extended period. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to capture workers directly engaged in highly monitored environments. Data collection relied on participant observation, interviews, and analysis of organizational practices. The findings revealed that algorithmic systems impose strict productivity targets and time constraints, forcing workers to operate at accelerated speeds and limiting opportunities for discretion. Employees reported intense pressure to meet performance metrics, often leading to physical exhaustion and psychological strain. The study also highlighted how constant tracking through scanners and wearable devices creates a sense of being continuously watched, thereby affecting workers' sense of dignity and autonomy. The author concluded that algorithmic management restructures labour processes by embedding surveillance into everyday work activities, resulting in heightened control and reduced worker agency. Although



the study provides deep contextual insights, it is limited by its qualitative nature and lack of generalizable statistical evidence. Additionally, it does not address how similar systems operate in non-Western environments. This limitation underscores the need for empirical studies that combine qualitative depth with quantitative analysis in contexts such as Nigeria to better understand the broader implications of surveillance capitalism.

Theoretical Framework – Labour Process Theory

This paper was anchored on the theoretical foundation of Labour Process Theory as discussed below:

Labour Process Theory was originally developed by Harry Braverman in 1974 and subsequently extended in contemporary research on digital work and algorithmic control. The theory emerged from a critical analysis of capitalist production systems and focuses on how managerial strategies are designed to control labour, extract productivity, and reduce worker discretion. Its central assumption is that under capitalist systems, there is a persistent effort by management to deskill work, fragment tasks, and transfer knowledge and control from workers to organizational systems. In its modern adaptation, the theory has been used to explain how digital technologies, including algorithmic management and workplace surveillance tools, intensify control mechanisms by embedding monitoring into everyday work processes (Kellogg et al., 2020; Moore, 2020). The theory further assumes that labour is inherently contested, meaning that workers continuously respond to control through adaptation, compliance, or resistance, particularly when autonomy is constrained.

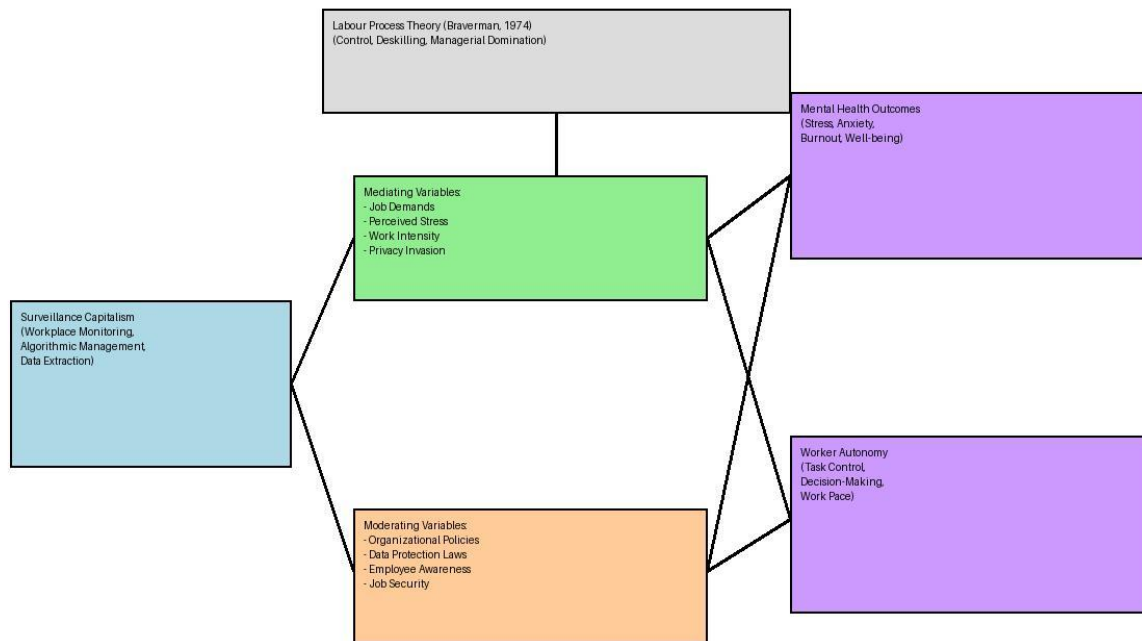
The strengths of Labour Process Theory lie in its strong explanatory power regarding power relations within organizations and its ability to account for how technological innovations are used to reshape control over workers. It provides a robust framework for understanding how surveillance technologies function not merely as neutral tools but as instruments of managerial authority

that restructure the labour process. Its relevance has been reinforced by recent studies showing how algorithmic systems allocate tasks, monitor performance, and discipline workers with minimal human intervention (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022). However, the theory has been critiqued for its tendency to emphasize managerial control at the expense of worker agency, sometimes underestimating the ways in which employees negotiate, resist, or reinterpret surveillance practices. Additionally, earlier formulations did not anticipate the scale and sophistication of digital data extraction, requiring contemporary extensions to fully capture the dynamics of surveillance capitalism.

Applied to the topic of surveillance capitalism in the workplace, Labour Process Theory offers a clear analytical lens for understanding how continuous monitoring affects both mental health and worker autonomy. Surveillance systems such as productivity tracking software, biometric monitoring, and algorithmic performance evaluation can be interpreted as modern tools of labour control that reduce workers' discretion and intensify performance pressures. This aligns with the theory's argument that management seeks to maximize output by minimizing worker control over the labour process. The psychological consequences observed in recent studies, including stress, burnout, and anxiety, can be understood as outcomes of increased labour intensification and reduced autonomy, both of which are central concerns of the theory (Wood et al., 2021). Furthermore, the theory explains how the commodification of worker data within surveillance capitalism extends managerial control beyond physical tasks to behavioral and cognitive dimensions of work. In the Nigerian context, where regulatory oversight of workplace surveillance remains limited, Labour Process Theory is particularly useful in explaining how organizations may deploy monitoring technologies to exert control in ways that exacerbate power asymmetries, thereby affecting workers' well-being and decision-making capacity.



Conceptual Framework



Source: Yunusa and Angwaomadoke (2026)

The conceptual framework illustrates how surveillance capitalism operates as the central independent variable shaping workplace outcomes through both direct and indirect pathways. It shows that practices such as workplace monitoring, algorithmic management, and continuous data extraction introduce structured forms of control into the labour process. These practices do not influence outcomes in isolation; rather, they exert their effects through key mediating mechanisms including increased job demands, heightened perceived stress, intensified work pace, and a sense of privacy invasion. These mediators explain how surveillance translates into tangible experiences for employees, particularly in terms of psychological strain and altered work conditions. The framework further demonstrates that the effects of surveillance capitalism on the dependent variables, mental health outcomes and worker autonomy, are not uniform but

are conditioned by moderating factors. Organizational policies, the strength of data protection laws, employee awareness of digital rights, and job security levels can either amplify or reduce the impact of surveillance practices. For instance, in environments with clear policies and strong legal safeguards, the negative consequences of monitoring may be mitigated, whereas in contexts with weak protections, such effects may be intensified. Mental health outcomes in the model are reflected through indicators such as stress, anxiety, burnout, and general well-being, while worker autonomy is expressed in terms of control over tasks, decision-making capacity, and flexibility in work pace. The framework suggests that increased surveillance tends to elevate psychological strain and simultaneously reduce employees' control over their work, although the extent of these effects depends on the interplay of mediating and moderating variables.

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At the theoretical level, the framework is grounded in Labour Process Theory, which explains how managerial control is embedded within technological systems to regulate worker behavior and maximize productivity. The inclusion of this theory clarifies why surveillance mechanisms lead to reduced autonomy and increased pressure, as they reflect broader dynamics of control and deskilling within capitalist work arrangements.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper posits that workplace surveillance practices are strongly associated with adverse mental health outcomes, a pattern that aligns with the first objective of the study. Empirical results indicating heightened stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among monitored workers are consistent with the findings of Moore (2020), who explains that continuous digital observation produces sustained psychological pressure through constant performance visibility. The experiences documented in logistics and platform work, particularly in highly monitored environments such as Amazon warehouses, illustrate how real-time tracking and automated performance thresholds create fear of sanctions and job insecurity. Baiocco et al. (2025) further demonstrate that algorithmic monitoring predicts psychological distress and sleep disruption, reinforcing the claim that surveillance extends beyond productivity measurement into workers' mental well-being. The implication is that surveillance practices, when intensified without supportive structures, become a source of occupational strain rather than efficiency, thereby raising concerns for organizational health policies, especially in contexts where mental health support systems are limited.

In relation to the second objective, the findings show that surveillance-driven management systems significantly reduce worker autonomy and control over tasks. This outcome supports the arguments advanced by Kellogg et al. (2020), who describe algorithmic management as a mechanism that reallocates decision-making authority from workers to automated systems. The empirical evidence that employees have limited discretion over work pace, task execution, and problem-solving reflects the operational logic of such systems. For instance, in

platform-based services and warehouse logistics, workers follow instructions generated by algorithms with minimal room for deviation, thereby constraining their agency. Aloisi and De Stefano (2022) note that such systems not only standardize work processes but also discipline workers through opaque evaluation metrics, which further reduces autonomy. These findings suggest that while surveillance technologies may enhance coordination and efficiency, they do so by narrowing the scope of worker independence, with implications for job satisfaction, motivation, and long-term organizational commitment.

The third objective concerning the relationship between surveillance capitalism and employees' perceptions of privacy, trust, and fairness is also supported by the findings. Evidence indicates that employees subjected to intensive monitoring perceive a loss of privacy and develop skepticism toward managerial intentions. Ball (2021) argues that surveillance signals distrust from employers, which undermines reciprocal trust relationships within organizations. This is reflected in cases where workers are unaware of how their data are collected or used, leading to perceptions of opacity and unfairness. The use of algorithmic rating systems in gig work further illustrates how lack of transparency in performance evaluation can erode perceptions of procedural justice (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022). In developing contexts such as Nigeria, where regulatory enforcement is still evolving, these perceptions may be intensified due to limited awareness of data rights. The implication is that unchecked surveillance practices risk weakening organizational cohesion by eroding trust and fairness, which are essential for effective workplace relations.

The findings of this study are strongly supported by Labour Process Theory which provides a coherent explanation of how surveillance technologies function as instruments of managerial control. The observed reduction in autonomy, increased performance pressure, and psychological strain reflect the theory's central argument that capitalist production systems seek to maximize output by minimizing worker control over the labour process. Contemporary extensions of the theory, as discussed by Wood et al. (2021), show that algorithmic systems



intensify this control by embedding monitoring into routine work activities, thereby limiting opportunities for discretion. The theory also explains the emergence of resistance strategies among workers, although these were not the primary focus of the present study. In applying this framework to the Nigerian context, the findings highlight how surveillance capitalism may deepen existing power asymmetries in labour relations, particularly in environments with weak regulatory oversight. This underscores the need for policies that balance technological efficiency with the protection of worker autonomy and mental health, ensuring that digital innovations do not come at the expense of human well-being.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The paper demonstrates that the rise of surveillance capitalism within workplaces has reconfigured how work is organized, monitored, and experienced, with significant implications for employees' mental health and autonomy. The findings show that continuous monitoring practices ranging from algorithmic task allocation to real-time performance tracking create sustained psychological pressure that manifests in stress, anxiety, and burnout. These outcomes are not incidental but stem from the intensification of work demands and the persistent visibility imposed by digital systems. At the same time, surveillance-driven management structures reduce workers' discretion over how tasks are performed, shifting control from individuals to automated systems and narrowing opportunities for independent judgment. This erosion of autonomy undermines job satisfaction and weakens employees' sense of agency within the workplace. The paper also established that surveillance practices shape how workers perceive their work environment, particularly in terms of privacy, trust, and fairness. When monitoring systems operate without transparency or clear justification, employees interpret them as intrusive and distrustful, leading to weakened organizational relationships and reduced commitment. These dynamics are especially pronounced in contexts where regulatory protections are limited, as seen in emerging economies where digital

monitoring is expanding faster than institutional safeguards.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the above conclusions and findings, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. Organizations should adopt transparent and participatory monitoring policies that clearly define the scope, purpose, and limits of surveillance practices, ensuring that employees are informed and involved in decision-making processes regarding data collection and use. This approach can reduce perceptions of intrusion and foster trust by aligning monitoring practices with principles of fairness and accountability.
2. Employers should integrate mental health safeguards into surveillance-intensive work environments by establishing support systems such as counseling services, workload regulation mechanisms, and regular well-being assessments. These measures will help mitigate the psychological strain associated with continuous monitoring and promote a healthier work environment.
3. Policymakers and regulatory bodies should strengthen and enforce data protection and labour laws to address the challenges posed by workplace surveillance, ensuring that employees' rights to privacy and autonomy are protected. Clear legal guidelines on acceptable monitoring practices and accountability mechanisms will provide a balanced framework that supports both organizational efficiency and worker well-being.

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