

Ethical Orientation: A Solution for Workplace Monitoring and Privacy Issues



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The advancement in Information Technology paves a route to several workplace monitoring and surveillance practices. Employers are focusing on the teleological perspectives of workplace monitoring such as increased productivity, workplace safety, and security, quality, etc. However, the critics of monitoring concentrate on the deontological perspective, claiming that monitoring at the workplace invades employee privacy leading to decreased mental and physical health, creativity, autonomy, morale, productivity, work-life balance, organizational trust, job satisfaction and increased job stress. The issue is touched ethically and it is identified that the ethical orientation of both the employers and employees towards workplace monitoring is a solution.

Keywords: Game Based Learning, Game Experience, Engagement, Intrinsic Motivation, Deep Learning

1. Introduction

The advancement of computers and related technologies has extremely altered the nature of work and working environment. Such advancement enables companies to monitor their employees at their workplace, with the objective of performance improvement and safety. The most commonly used methods of employee monitoring are usage of CCTV cameras, internet monitoring, email monitoring, keystroke monitoring, biometric devices, mobile tracking devices, active badges, GPS enabled location sensors, etc. The use of electronic monitoring is extensive and increasing quickly. According to the survey by American Management Association (AMA) nearly 80% of organizations engage in some form of electronic monitoring, especially use of email, internet or phone and over 90% of the companies in the finance industry confirm that they are using any of these kinds of monitoring techniques. (Indiparambil, 2017a) The practice of workplace monitoring is getting increased with a positive view of better productivity, safety and security, quality of products and services, employee behaviour, etc. But on the negative side, the employees report privacy issues such as lack of autonomy, dignity, organizational trust, physical and mental health, morale, job satisfaction, etc. The demands by both the employers and employees are to be concerned and in this paper, the moderating role of the ethical orientation of both employers and employees as a solution is discussed.

2. Workplace Monitoring

Monitoring is systematic and routine observation of personal information for the purpose of management, controlling, safety and security. In the context of the workplace, electronic monitoring means the observation and collection of employees' information using visible or invisible electronic devices or techniques such as cameras, microphones, wire-tapes, tape recorders, monitoring of computer and other web activities. It is the ability of management to monitor, record and track employee performance behaviours and personal features in real-time (Ball, 2010). Monitoring is a management tool used for ensuring the quality and productivity of goods and services in organizations ensuring protection from theft, fraud, legal liabilities and inappropriate behaviour (Sewell & Barker, 2006).

Over the past three decades, the usage of electronic monitoring at the workplace has been augmented. According to the Center for Business Ethics, around 92% of all organizations electronically monitor their employees in some form (Coultrup & Fountain, 2012). A survey of workers in Australia reveals 78% of employees are under monitoring at the workplace, 88% indicates certain sites are blocked and 49% informed that their email content is observed (Holland, Cooper, & Hecker, 2015). Similarly, the survey of American employers reveals that internet usage of employees' was monitored by 66% of employers and 43% of employers monitor employees' email (Yost, Behrend, Howards on, Badger Darrow, & Jensen, 2019).

The 2001 survey of the American Management Association indicates that some form of workplace monitoring is performed in 82% of organizations, but when it comes to 2005 internet usage alone is monitored by 76% of employers. In 2007, the survey shows that 66% of employers revealed internet monitoring, 45% observe their employees' email content and 45% capture audio calls also (Indiparambil, 2019). The results of the survey conducted by HR Metrics and Analytics Summit also disclose that 80% of the organizations are using electronic monitoring for recording and measuring employee data (HR Metrics & Analytics Summit, 2018). These statistics show tremendous growth in the area of workplace monitoring and monitoring.

One of the main necessities for internet monitoring is to improve productivity by preventing or restricting the usage of non-work related websites which causes wastage of time and company resources. Advocates of monitoring argue that usage of the internet for personal purposes wastes time and reduces productivity. Monitoring acts as an efficient management tool to identify the good and bad performers and to motivate the employees by feedback based on the information gathered (Miller & Weckert, 2000). However, the opponents claim the productivity is negatively impacted because of the psychological and physical health issues caused by employee monitoring (Martin & Freeman, 2003). Another significant argument for

monitoring in the form of CCTV monitoring is for the purpose of safety and security of the employer, employee and the entire organization (Botan & Vorvoreanu, 2006). It is strongly believed that CCTV monitoring helps to prevent theft, fraud and inappropriate behaviours at the workplace (Allen, Coopman, Hart, & Walker, 2007; Ball, 2010).

According to Sewell and Barker monitoring is a supervisory technique that discourages undesirable behaviors and promotes desirable ones (Sewell & Barker, 2006). Some researches have identified that workers under monitoring perform better than non-monitored workers but the excess dependence on monitoring may be detrimental to employee performance on account of privacy, fairness and autonomy concerns (Bhave, 2014). Monitoring implemented without consultation and justification creates a feeling of distrust towards the employer and also adversely affects the employee-employer relationship (Stanton, 2000).

Martin and Freeman suggest that monitoring compels employees to think and act according to the employers' mandate which extinguishes the creativity and autonomy of the employee (Martin & Freeman, 2003). Monitoring creates a behavioural bondage at the workplace, where the employees are forced to act and even think according to the stipulations of employers which in turn affects employees' creativity, autonomy, and morale (Indiparambil, 2017b).

Besides the above-mentioned issues monitoring creates mental issues such as stress, tension, anxiety, depression, boredom, etc. and physical health issues such as musculoskeletal problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, etc. (Martin & Freeman, 2003). People who are working under a computer-based monitoring system are probable to have a higher degree of stress, depression, fatigue, anger and physical health problems (Lee & Kleiner, 2003).

3. Workplace Monitoring and Privacy

According to Altman privacy can be defined as "selective control of access to the self or to one's group" ("Privacy A conceptual Analysis," 1976). Alan Westin classified privacy into four types: solitude, a person alone and free from observation of others; intimacy, a person or group maximizing interpersonal relationship with others from outside surveillance; anonymity, a person is surrounded by others but does not expect to be recognized; reserve, a person hides his personal aspects from others (Westin, 1967). In a physical sense, privacy is a person's enjoyment of spaces from which others may be excluded and within which the person's activities are not readily monitored without his or her knowledge and consent. The informational, sense of privacy is a person's control over access to information about him/herself. A decisional sense of privacy is a person's right to do something without the world knowing and with his or her discretionary power (Golding & Edmundson, 2004).

A person's privacy is the extent to which others have limited access to his or her personal information, intimacies in life and thoughts (Schoeman, 1984). Privacy can not only be referred to a person's body and thoughts but also to his or her possessions too (Schoeman, 1984).

Privacy at workplace is the most important debatable issue of workplace monitoring. Many workers feel that monitoring invades their privacy. The opponents of monitoring claims that monitoring decreases the amount of control employees have on their own personal information through unrestricted access using CCTV cameras, microphones, wire-tapes, tape recorders, monitoring of computers, other web activities and even by drug testing (Martin & Freeman, 2003). Other than the invasion of informational privacy, monitoring acts as a social control tool that affects the employees' identity and autonomy because monitoring changes the way a person acts even if he or she is not under monitoring (Martin & Freeman, 2003). If employees realize that their actions and communications are monitored, creative behaviour may be reduced because employees may be worried about monitoring and judgement (Ball, 2010). Employees placed under high levels of monitoring strongly argue that it constitutes an invasion of privacy and an infringement of civil liberties (Alge, 2001; Allen, Coopman, Hart, & Walker, 2007; D'urso, 2006).

According to Sha Cheich & Kliener, (2003) privacy issues at workplace can be classified into four: Intrusion, appropriation, public disclosure of private facts and false light. Intrusion occurs when one intentionally intrudes into others' private affairs or concerns physically or otherwise in the form of phone calls, taking pictures of a person in private place, opening personal mails of others, watching others using a camera, capturing voice messages and phone calls etc. Appropriation is the use of another person's name or likeness for a commercial or economic benefit. In the context of an organization, appropriation occurs when the employer uses former employees' names or likeness in order to keep customers and clients served by the former employees. Public disclosure of private facts means unreasonable publicity given to another persons' private life. False light is the act of placing a person under false information or spreading false or fake information to the public, where the false light would be highly offensive to a reasonable person.

According to the survey on Workplace Privacy & Protection by HR Metrics & Analytics Summit (2018), most of the employees reported that monitoring of each and every movement is inappropriate and unacceptable. Even if the employees consent to monitoring for a better designed workplace, performance, feedback and compensation, they are very much concerned about their privacy. The study conducted by Independambil (2017b), reveals that although the employees accept monitoring as a 'good watchdog', they express negative feelings about that, affecting their productivity and wellbeing. It gives evidence for employees' value for their privacy, autonomy, freedom, fairness, etc. Also invasion of privacy of employees leads to lack of trust towards employer.

4. Workplace Monitoring and Ethical Orientation

Individuals address or interpret ethical issues based on their ethical orientation towards the issues. The two major aspects of

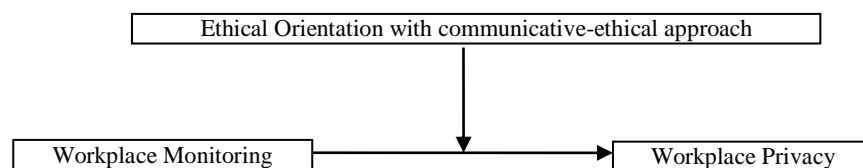
ethical orientation are ethical formalism based on the theory of deontology proposed by Immanuel Kant and ethical utilitarianism based on the theory of teleology proposed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mills (Brady & Wheeler, 1996). People those who are driven by ethical formalism follow a set of rules or principles for guiding their behaviour. For such kind of people, actions are ethical or not to the extent they follow these rules. For utilitarian people, an action is ethical or not based on the consequences or results of the same. They evaluate outcomes or consequences of actions as ethical or not, rather than the actions themselves (Alder, Schminke, Noel, & Kuenzi, 2008). When it comes to the context of electronic monitoring at the workplace, employers and employees argue for the teleological perspective and deontological perspective respectively.

The proponents of electronic monitoring justify the practice based on the utilitarian grounds that, it leads to increased productivity, improved quality and decreased cost (Alder, 1998). Better productivity and cost minimization is associated with effective performance monitoring. Employees who believe that monitoring is a useful management tool will be more positively inclined to the monitoring practice (Brady & Wheeler, 1996). Employees with a strong utilitarian orientation will positively enhance the relationship between their performance and monitoring. According to utilitarian people monitoring results in an extreme amount of good to organizations, employees, customers and to the entire society. But the proponents often fail to sufficiently consider the deontological perspective of monitoring.

The critics of monitoring approach the issue from a deontological perspective. It is concerned with the action that leads to the results, rather than the goodness of the results. One of the major arguments against monitoring is that it is an invasion of employee privacy, which in turn leads to both physical and mental health issues (Alder et al., 2008; Loch, Conger, & Oz, 1998; Persson & Hansson, 2003; Sha Cheich & Kliener, 2003). Privacy is a basic right of an employee, which an organization must respect because the invasion of privacy will cause loss of their identity, which affects their morale and sense of belongingness. Therefore it can be expected that employees with a deontological perspective towards monitoring will have a negative attitude towards it. Also, formalists argue that monitoring may result in lower quality and hinder organizational productivity and performance (Alder, 1998).

In the issue of workplace monitoring, both the teleological and deontological perspectives should be significantly considered, which will lead to a win-win situation. Because both the productivity and performance concerns from employers and the privacy concerns from employees are important. According to Alder (1998), the criticisms are against the use of monitoring and not to monitoring in and of itself. I.e., the proponents of deontological perspective accept monitoring, but it should be performed in an ethical way. This aspect of monitoring leads to a communicative-ethical approach to monitoring, which incorporates both the teleological and deontological perspectives. This approach can be considered for an ethical way of electronic monitoring. According to this approach, the employees who are subjected to monitoring should be given opportunities to give their preferences and inputs to the design of the monitoring system. The employees should be informed about the type of monitoring practices involved and also the timings and locations. Another important aspect of this approach is that, there should be face-to-face human feedback sessions, based on the information collected by monitoring devices, provided the feedback should be supportive and not punitive.

5. Conceptual Model



6. Conclusion

The advancement in computers and related technologies triggered an extensive growth in the usage of electronic performance monitoring in organizations. Proponents of monitoring employ teleological concerns focusing on the benefits that accrue to businesses, customers and society. However, the critics of monitoring use deontological arguments focusing on employees' right to privacy. They claim that monitoring invades their privacy, increases their stress levels and worsens their health. In this context, both the teleological and deontological perspectives of monitoring should be significantly considered and as a win-win strategy, a communicative-ethical approach to monitoring can be used. According to this approach, the employees should be, involved in the monitoring system design, informed about the type, time and location of monitoring, given face-to-face feedback based on monitored data and the feedback should be supportive.

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