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Digital employee monitoring in the new work reality

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TREO

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Digital employee monitoring in the new work reality

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Digital surveillance and control have extended effects on employees and organizations. In the pre-covid era, the focus on surveillance was not so obvious, as the office work environment was predominant. Digital employee monitoring evolved with the pandemic digital transformations that changed the work environment in the last two years.

The pandemic crisis shifted work from an office-centered setup to a work-from-home setup, thus enhancing the need for employee control and surveillance. With diverse technologies and information systems, it is necessary to understand the effects of surveillance and digital control on employees and organizations. As surveillance impacts more and more aspects of work and work-life relationships, the purpose of this study is to better understand the phenomenon by answering the following research question: how does digital monitoring impact employees and organizations?

We started by conducting a literature review looking at how digital employee surveillance is studied in the leading IS and management journals to answer this research question. We reviewed several literature streams focusing on organizations, employees, the digital workforce, and digital surveillance, followed by data collection. We are currently collecting and analyzing data using a grounded theory approach (Urquhart 2013).

Data collection started in the COVID-19 impacted work environment and continued during the evolution from an entirely working from home employee setup to a hybrid employee work setup. Over 150 interviews were conducted in two stages, with adapted interview guides to capture the transformation of work monitoring patterns and the effects surveillance has on work routines.

We will focus on how digital monitoring impacts managerial and non-managerial positions across various US organizations, investigating the effects across different employee types and industries. We will analyze the changes in the employee surveillance and the security breaches that employees might exploit when working from home began, and then again when work switched to a hybrid setup. We will also look at the challenges employees face under surveillance, the benefits they enjoy when working in a hybrid environment, the changes in work routines, and the loyalty towards the organizations.

References available on request.