



Faculty of Economics and Business

**The Organizational Implications of Electronic Monitoring in the Higher
Education Institutions of Bangladesh**

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The Organizational Implications of Electronic Monitoring in the Higher
Education Institutions of Bangladesh

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

Electronic monitoring refers to using information and communication technologies and systems to automatically collect, store, analyze, and report information on employees and their activities, enabling an employer to monitor employee work performance. The study examined how the electronic monitoring technologies and systems deployed to monitor employees in Bangladesh universities and further investigated the consequences of technology on employee well-being, work performance, and social relationships. It also attempted to discover what are the gaps in the management practices and propose recommendations to address these gaps in handling its impact. Guided under the panopticon model and psychological reactance theory, two stages of data collection for the research were carried out from 2020 to 2021. An online survey involving thirty-seven (37) academic staff from three (3) private universities in Bangladesh participated in the first round of data collection. In the final round, a case study method and in-depth interview technique were deployed to obtain data from two of these universities. The research revealed that the implementation of several technologies, such as a biometric attendance system, CCTV surveillance systems, a Learning Management System (LMS), and an Integrated University Management System (IUMS), has resulted in the emergence of panopticon effects that have had an impact on employee wellbeing, work performance, and social relationships to a certain degree. The technology implementation as a panopticon that has been intended to foster discipline and commitment in the workplace, resulted in varied responses. The management practices and approaches at these universities in monitoring employees led to the manifestation of panopticon effects. These effects were mainly triggered by circumstances pertaining to the use of electronic monitoring platforms. The unintended reactions encompassed emotions such as discomfort, insecurity, dissatisfaction, and

scepticism over the effectiveness of using electronic monitoring as intervention measures in enhancing academic staff productivity and performance. The research findings further revealed that academic staff would hold a favourable perspective if the features of these technologies were designed as a panopticon, enabling them to exert greater control, increase visibility, and provide a sense of empowerment within their professional roles. The impact of these technologies on management practices and styles, specifically in the areas of managing and supervising, as well as workplace communication, was found to be minimal. The research also found that the level of awareness among the academic staff about the electronic monitoring applications, as well as the support systems in place, such as the proficiency of the ICT team and the monitoring approaches of the organization, might have an impact on their trust and confidence in the use of electronic monitoring. This study proposed two solutions to address the managerial shortcomings identified in the case studies: risk management practices, and policy and guidelines for electronic monitoring. This study theoretically extended and overcome the limitations of the current panopticon model by employing psychological reactance theory to capture further the interaction dynamic between the panopticon potential of technology and how this influences employees' social behaviour at work while also recognizing authorities' and management's active participation in shaping organizational work culture and practices. The research findings also provide valuable contributions from both management and practical standpoints and have policy implications.

Keywords: Electronic Monitoring, Organizational Impact, Bangladesh, Higher Education, Panopticon

Implikasi Pemantauan Elektronik kepada Organisasi dalam Konteks Institusi Pengajian Tinggi di Bangladesh

ABSTRAK

Pemantauan elektronik merujuk kepada penggunaan teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi, dan sistem untuk mengumpul, menyimpan, menganalisa dan melaporkan maklumat tentang pekerja dan aktiviti mereka secara automatik, yang mana akan membolehkan majikan memantau prestasi kerja pekerja. Kajian ini mengkaji bagaimana teknologi dan sistem pemantauan elektronik digunakan untuk memantau staf di universiti-universiti di Bangladesh, dan lebih lanjut menyiasat kesan aplikasi ini keatas kesejahteraan pekerja, prestasi kerja, dan hubungan sosial. Ia juga cuba mengenalpasti kelemahan amalan pengurusan dan mencadangkan solusi untuk menangani kekurangan ini. Dibimbing mengikut model panoptikon dan teori reaktan psikologi, dua peringkat pengumpulan data untuk penyelidikan dijalankan dari 2020 hingga 2021. Satu survey dalam talian yang melibatkan tiga puluh tujuh (37) kakitangan akademik dari tiga (3) universiti swasta di Bangladesh mengambil bahagian dalam fasa pertama pengumpulan data. Dalam fasa terakhir, kaedah kajian kes dan teknik temubual mendalam digunakan untuk mendapatkan data daripada dua universiti ini. Hasil dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa pelaksanaan beberapa aplikasi, seperti sistem kehadiran biometrik, sistem pengawasan CCTV, Sistem Pengurusan Pembelajaran (LMS), dan Sistem pengurusan universiti bersepadu (IUMS), telah mengakibatkan munculnya kesan panoptikon yang mempunyai kesan pada kesejahteraan pekerja, prestasi kerja, dan hubungan sosial pada tahap tertentu. Implementasi pemantauan elektronik sebagai panoptikon yang bertujuan untuk memupuk disiplin serta komitmen kerja menghasilkan respons yang pelbagai. Amalan dan pendekatan pengurusan universiti dalam memantau kakitangan mereka membawa kepada manifestasi

kesan panoptikon. Respon yang tidak dijangka ini adalah seperti kegelisahan, rasa tidak selamat, rasa tidak puas hati, dan keraguan terhadap keberkesanan menggunakan pengawasan elektronik sebagai intervensi dalam meningkatkan produktiviti dan prestasi kakitangan akademik. Dapatan kajian juga mendedahkan bahawa kakitangan akademik akan mempunyai perspektif yang positif jika ciri-ciri teknologi yang direka bentuk sebagai panoptikon, membolehkan mereka menggunakan kawalan yang lebih besar, meningkatkan keterlihatan, dan memberikan rasa pemerksaan dalam peranan profesional mereka. Kesan teknologi ini terhadap amalan dan gaya pengurusan, khususnya dalam bidang pengurusan dan penyeliaan, serta komunikasi di tempat kerja, didapati adalah minimum. Dapatan hasil kajian juga mendapati bahawa tahap kesedaran di kalangan pekerja tentang aplikasi pemantauan elektronik, serta sistem sokongan yang disediakan, seperti kecekapan pasukan ICT dan pendekatan pemantauan organisasi, mempunyai kesan ke atas kepercayaan mereka dan keyakinan dalam penggunaan pemantauan elektronik. Dua solusi untuk menangani kelemahan pengurusan yang ditemui dalam kajian kes di ketengahkan iaitu amalan pengurusan risiko, dan dasar dan panduan untuk pemantauan elektronik. Kajian ini secara teorinya meluaskan dan mengatasi batasan model panoptikon dengan menggabungkan teori reaktan psikologi untuk menangkap lebih lanjut dinamik interaksi antara potensi panoptikon teknologi dan bagaimana ini mempengaruhi tingkah laku sosial pekerja di tempat kerja sambil mengiktiraf penyertaan aktif pihak berkuasa dan pengurusan dalam membentuk budaya dan amalan kerja organisasi. Penemuan penyelidikan juga memberikan sumbangan berharga dari sudut pengurusan dan praktikal, dan juga mempunyai implikasi dasar.

Kata kunci: *Pengawasan Elektronik, Kesan Organisasi, Bangladesh, Pendidikan tinggi, Panopticon*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
ICT	Information and communications technology
IQAC	Institutional Quality Assurance Cell
IUMS	Integrated University Management System
LMS	Learning Management System
UGC	University Grants Commission
VPN	Virtual Private Networks

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Global demand for surveillance and monitoring systems and technology increased 108% in 2020 than in 2019 (Ball, 2021). The notable surge in the usage of these technologies can be attributed to the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has necessitated remote employment for millions of employees worldwide (Ball, 2021). Subsequently, there has been a significant transformation in the dynamics of the workplace to accommodate the remote nature of employment, owing to the ongoing presence of the Covid-19 pandemic (Desilver, 2020). Consequently, a multitude of organizations across the globe are currently using advanced surveillance and monitoring technology.

In 2021, 78% of organizations utilized monitoring technologies to monitor their employees, according to a survey conducted with 2000 employers and 2000 employees operating in a hybrid work environment (Belton, 2023). It was also reported in the survey report that 74% of employers felt they needed more control over their organization, and 69% were concerned about remote work since they could not supervise employees in person. Because most of these employers required in-person and electronic supervision before they could trust their employees to work, it is expected that the majority will continue to use technology for workplace surveillance and employee monitoring. In addition, the survey findings revealed that 59% of employees reported feeling stressed and/or anxious about their employer's surveillance techniques that monitor their online activities (Belton, 2023).

Surveillance technology, as a broad concept, pertains to the advancement and utilization of software and systems that facilitate managing, directing, and influencing by monitoring information, actions, and behavior (BusinessWire.com, 2021). Electronic monitoring refers to using information and communication technologies (ICTs) and various tools to systematically gather, store, analyze, and report data and information regarding employees and their actions at the workplace. This monitoring practice enables employers to supervise and assess the performance of their employees. Within higher education, there is an emerging trend wherein electronic monitoring systems and technologies are increasingly being used to monitor various aspects of academic processes and activities. Presently, numerous higher education institutions worldwide are establishing data infrastructures to systematically collect and analyze diverse aspects of students' lives and academic accomplishments to leverage big data applications and learning analytics (Jones et al., 2020). These infrastructures are also being utilized to monitor the academic work activities of university personnel, specifically those in the academic field (Gourlay, 2022).

This study investigates the implementation and use of electronic monitoring and its impact on Bangladesh's higher education institutions. This chapter presents the research context and problems and highlights the motivation, purpose, and rationale for pursuing the research. It begins with Section 1.2 with the background knowledge of the topic; then, Section 1.3 elaborates on the problem statement and the literature gaps found in the literature. Next, Section 1.4 explains why this topic is worthy of study. Then, Section 1.5 presents the research objectives, and Section 1.6 describes the research questions formulated for the study. Subsequently, the conceptual framework to guide the research is briefly explained. Finally, the remaining two sections provide the definition of terms and the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

There have been growing concerns about increasing technological tools and systems used to surveil employees. Burnett and Lisk (2019) reported a significant recent technological development concerning the automation of workforce surveillance and electronic monitoring by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its sub-fields. They viewed electronic surveillance as monitoring and collecting people's digital footprints, which can be done by checking someone on CCTV reading text messages or through internet browsing history or even triggering webcams or microphones secretly or openly to observe people. Electronic surveillance allows organizations to measure and evaluate the efficiency of their workforce by leveraging new technological tools that track workplace interactions on a real-time basis with more machine learning technology and artificial intelligence applications.

Several emerging trends in the surveillance and monitoring technologies market have been highlighted in the literature. According to Swartz (2021), traditional surveillance technologies will be replaced with the extensive use of wearable fitness devices, GPS, RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) devices, microchips, or work analytics software. Organizations with supercomputers will be able to perform deep analyses of employees' productivity, health, and job attitudes (Swartz, 2021). Several large organizations even use fitness-tracking watches to monitor their employees (Swartz, 2021). It was also reported that organizations such as Intel, IBM, Accenture, and Twitter have started using "Sentiment Analysis Software" to track their employees' moods (Swartz, 2021). In the context of research development in this area, Ball (2021) highlights four new developments in workplace surveillance and monitoring. The first is technology in a broader form that can do surveillance and evaluate employees' performance, behaviors, and personal characteristics. The second development concerns the consequences of those technologies invading

employees' private lives, how employees are visible to employers, and the negative consequences. The remaining two developments concern remote work carried out during the deadly pandemic and afterward, and work intervened by digital platforms.

The implementation of electronic monitoring has garnered significant attention in the literature in recent years, leading to ongoing debates about the advantages it offers to organizations in terms of providing managers with enhanced control over staff performance. The fundamental goal of electronic monitoring aligns with that of traditional monitoring, albeit with the potential for enhanced accuracy, specificity, and expediency (Jeske & Santuzzi, 2013). Wen et al. (2007) identified two significant differences between traditional workplace monitoring methods and the utilization of electronic monitoring. According to Wen et al. (2007), electronic monitoring has the capability to simultaneously monitor a greater number of employees, who are subjected to surveillance in the absence of direct physical supervision from their superiors. On the other hand, traditional monitoring methods often involve employees being conscious of the supervisor's existence (Wen et al., 2007).

There are many repercussions, both intended and unexpected outcomes, associated with the implementation of electronic monitoring in the workplace reported in the literature such as weariness, burnout, diminished performance, depression, decreased user and job satisfaction (Backhaus, 2019; Stanton, 2000; Ravid et al., 2020; Kalischko & Riedl, 2021; Siegel, König & Lazar, 2022). For example, Tomczak, Lanzo, and Aguinis (2018) have extensively investigated the effects of the technology. The researchers suggested that the implementation of electronic monitoring brings advantages to the organization while concurrently exerting negative effects on employee happiness, organizational commitment, fairness, and employee behavior. Past studies also reported that the use of the technology

has had a detrimental impact on trust difficulties, primarily stemming from the use of technology rather than a clear and transparent organizational communication strategy. This, in turn, has resulted in heightened levels of job boredom, anxiety, rage, weariness, health complaints, and psychological strain among employees (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021). The use of electronic monitoring systems might result in a growing sense of mistrust or an unpleasant work environment, as employees may perceive a constant surveillance by their superiors (Heathfield, 2019a). It was further discovered that the use of electronic monitoring may not be preferable in light of the prevailing employee-centric culture, as it could potentially result in a diminished sense of autonomy (Heathfield, 2019a). Conversely, the literature also presented evidence indicating that employees who took on supervisory or managerial roles were more open to using technology (Oz, Glass & Behling, 1999). Simultaneously, it also has the potential to exert a detrimental impact on organizational commitment, citizenship behavior, and unproductive work conduct, so potentially impeding the overall functioning of the company (Siegel, König & Lazar, 2022).

Because of the advancement of information and surveillance technology and its technological capabilities, electronic monitoring applications has grown in favour of modern organizations (Austin, 2015; Nordmeyer, 2016; Moreira, 2017). Managers and authorities might use these technologies and systems to acquire general information and statistics about employees' behaviors, performances, and personal traits (Stanton & Weiss, 2000; Bain & Taylor, 2000). Most organizations, including those in developing nations, are increasingly embracing electronic monitoring applications and relying on these technologies to monitor and supervise employee productivity and performance at work. Further, from an ethical and legal perspective, it has been argued that the research should prioritize the proper use of electronic monitoring and its approaches, as well as the development of governance and

policy regulations. This is deemed more significant than engaging in debates solely focused on the ethical and unethical aspects and the negative effects of electronic monitoring (George, 1996; Alder, 1998; Martin & Freeman, 2003; Ball, 2021).

The following section provides the problem statement, which addresses specific concerns and issues that have been identified as research gaps in the existing literature related to the area of interest. This study aims to investigate and establish the importance of the research being conducted in the context of higher education institutions in Bangladesh.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the presence of prior research on the consequences of electronic monitoring, recent studies by McParland and Connolly (2020), Kalischko and Riedl (2021), and Siegel, König, and Lazar (2022), based on a thorough and systematic review of the existing literature, found that the impact of workplace surveillance and monitoring on employees in organizational settings has not been sufficiently investigated. Through a comprehensive analysis of the pertinent literature, this study has revealed three significant gaps in the literature, hence underscoring the necessity of doing this study.

The first gap pertains to the theoretical advancement within the literature that can explicate the impacts of electronic monitoring and establish connections with the organizational dynamics of a particular organization. The popularity of the panopticon model in the field of surveillance should be the focus point in this context. The panopticon metaphor, originally formulated by Jeremy Bentham in his architectural blueprint for a prison and later elaborated upon by Foucault (1977), has gained widespread acceptance as a conceptual framework in research investigations examining the impacts of electronic monitoring and surveillance. The existing body of research in this field of knowledge has