

The Negative Effects of CCTV Workplace Surveillance

Many Companies believe that the use of surveillance will alter the behavior of their employees for the better, however, that objective is not always achieved in most cases. Companies that use employee surveillance tactics are changing employee behavior for the worse. The behavioral change is causing employees hardships that affect not only the way the employees act at work, but how they act in their personal life as well. Company's surveillance tactics has negative effects on employees such as increased stress, loss of identity and the emergence of privacy issues.

Management act on the assumption that their employees are doing something wrong instead of creating bondage of trust between them and their employees. When employees are under surveillance, management send a direct message to the workers indicating that employees are likely to do something wrong and therefore need to be constantly watched and even punished. Sending this type of message is demoralizing employees.

It has been shown in many psychology experiments that people respond better to positive reinforcement through rewards where employees perform better.

Today workers working under surveillance are none of the less considered as prisoners. In 1971 Jeremy Bontham introduced the "panopticon surveillance" concept which was designed for prisons. It consist of allowing one observer to observe all prisoners from a central tower.

Employers who use panoptical surveillance, are constantly knowingly or unknowingly increasing paranoia in the work-place.

Some companies want to make their workers feel as though every move they make, could be under surveillance. C.C.T.V Cameras are even installed in mess-room so that they can constantly monitor employees' actions.

Companies are using every possible system available to monitor their employees. Computer surveillance is widely used to monitor activity. When an employee tries to access a site, a notification is sent to an IT database, whose information are used during performance evaluation. Another controversial surveillance method is e-mail surveillance. Most employees namely administrative cadres do not realize that their e-mail is constantly supervised. Many employees think that if an e-mail is from their personal account, it cannot be read.

This is simply false, no matter what service an employee is using to send or receive e-mail, an employer can get access to information being communicated.

Companies with the support of professionals, claim that they are using surveillance through C.C.T.V for safety measures. In reality these video cameras are carefully placed so that employers can watch what the employees are doing on a daily basis.

Surveillance is commonly used as a control of crime, preventing theft in the workplace. It is needed for government and private security. While there are many reasons why surveillance may be valid, there are many reasons why surveillance still has negative effects on employees.

It affects workers behavior. It has been noted in surveys that employees who are under surveillance are more likely to suffer from health, stress and moral problems. It is clear that surveillance create low moral and a loss of privacy in the company and workers are more likely to quit their job.

Because surveillance infringes on privacy it also affects the basis of self determination and self identity. Privacy itself however, is a difficult concept to grasp. Privacy is the ability for an individual to control the use of their own personal data, wherever it might be recorded. Therefore personal data is personal property.

In this case a breach of privacy would be an infringement of property rights. Therefore infringing on someone else privacy is breaking the law. What if an employer is listening to a private conversation between two workers or reading a confidential mail or viewing two persons kissing each other. That conversation or gesture is supposed to be protected by law as being the private property of an individual or more.

Surveillance in absolute terms is used as a basis for power. To gain power over employees, companies deny individuals an unobserved space, and not allowing an individual to have the necessary unobserved space is a lack of respect for their wishes and needs.

When employers use their positional power, they are controlling people's basic needs. Employers cause employees not to trust them because they in return do not trust their employees.

At this point, workers become virtual robots and everything they do is at the will and whims of their employer.

To conclude, it is morally wrong to use workplace surveillance to monitor employees. Employers with the blessings of policy makers are treating employees as though they are criminals who should be under constant surveillance.

This is demoralizing and causes workers higher levels of anxiety. Managers should know that people are trustworthy and can do their best.

The absence of a regulatory framework to define the limits of workplace surveillance is causing much harm to the workers of the private sector in Mauritius.

We should, as a society treat employees in a virtuous way. The virtue ethics perspective attempts to help people understand themselves and develop moral capacities to live and work well in all situations. If a company truly wants to change behavior using virtue ethics, there is a simple way of doing so. "By promoting and facilitating methods for moral education, character development and emotional well being."

The golden rules must be applied. "Treat others as you would want to be treated." Managers do not want employees knowing their every move, so they should offer their employees the same courtesy. Managers should undergo transformative leadership which emphasizes these values. The act of someone depends upon the type of leadership in routed in morality.

The C.T.S.P will continue to advocate against panopticonal surveillance. Companies use same as a fear tactic without realizing that the employees are more prone to occupational accidents as their mental well being are affected.

We call upon this newly elected government to ensure that necessary amendments are brought to the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2005 to introduce a comprehensive section on psychosocial hazards with a regulatory framework to derive the limits of workplace surveillance.

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