



THE HUMAN SIDE OF ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT: EXPLORING HOW EMPLOYEES NEGOTIATE AI-DRIVEN PERFORMANCE MONITORING, AUTONOMY, PRIVACY, AND WORKPLACE TRUST

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Abstract

This study explores how employees experience and negotiate digital performance monitoring and algorithm-supported management in Pakistani workplaces, focusing on autonomy, privacy, fairness, and workplace trust. An exploratory qualitative design was employed, drawing on condensed summaries of semi-structured online interviews with 22 participants across diverse occupational and sectoral settings. Reflexive thematic analysis identified six interrelated themes: negotiating visibility, autonomy under metrics, privacy boundaries, supervisor-dependent fairness, organizational rules and occupational responsibilities, and employee voice and opportunities for challenge. Findings indicate that participants generally acknowledged monitoring benefits, including improved coordination, clearer performance expectations, and compliance support, while expressing concerns about inadequate contextual evaluation, behavioural pressures, unclear data practices, and limited opportunities to contest assessments. A central insight is the distinction between supportive managerial relationships and dependable organizational safeguards. Although supervisors may provide explanations and contextual consideration, employees also require transparent review authority, recognized correction procedures, clear privacy boundaries, and accessible channels for raising concerns. The study contributes an exploratory, employee-centred perspective on responsible algorithmic management and offers practical recommendations for more transparent, context-sensitive, and accountable workplace monitoring.

Keywords: Algorithmic Management, AI-Driven Performance Monitoring, Employee Autonomy, Workplace Privacy, Organizational Trust

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

Algorithmic management refers to the use of computational systems to support or automate managerial functions, including performance monitoring, scheduling, evaluation, and work allocation. Although artificial intelligence (AI) may underpin these systems, algorithmic management can also operate through predefined rules and routine data processing (Milanez et al., 2025). Digital performance monitoring captures work-related information, whereas algorithmic management involves using computational outputs to inform managerial



decisions. This distinction is important because monitoring technologies should not automatically be assumed to possess AI capabilities.

1.2 Problem Statement

Existing research addresses algorithmic control, employee autonomy, privacy, and managerial mediation (Edwards et al., 2024; Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023; Wolff et al., 2024). However, further exploration is needed of how these concerns intersect in employees' everyday experiences, particularly regarding the dependability of fairness when explanations and contextual consideration rely on individual supervisors.

These practices can improve coordination, identify operational delays, and facilitate performance feedback. However, their implications depend on how organizations interpret and use the information generated. Meijerink and Bondarouk (2023) emphasize the duality of algorithmic management, which can simultaneously enable and constrain employee autonomy. Similarly, Edwards et al. (2024) demonstrate the importance of perceived managerial intent in shaping employee responses to algorithmic HR systems. Monitoring perceived as constructive feedback may be experienced differently from systems associated with intensified control. Kellogg et al. (2020) further explain how algorithms reshape workplace direction, evaluation, and discipline.

A central concern is whether measurable indicators adequately represent actual work. Processing speed, task completion, customer ratings, and activity records can increase visibility while overlooking contextual complexity, emotional demands, professional judgment, and operational constraints. Bernstein (2012) highlights the paradox that greater transparency does not necessarily improve organizational outcomes. Consequently, employees may adapt their behavior, document difficulties, or seek managerial explanations when performance targets conflict with work requirements. Such responses reflect the importance of understanding employee agency within technologically mediated workplaces (Noponen et al., 2024).

Privacy presents another challenge. Workplace monitoring raises questions concerning information collection, access, retention, and secondary use (Ajunwa et al., 2017; Ball, 2010). Bosua and Evans (2026) illustrate that acceptance of monitoring can coexist with concerns about data processing and accuracy. Communication privacy management theory provides a useful perspective for understanding employees' expectations regarding information boundaries (Petronio, 2002).

Human managerial judgment also remains important. Leavitt et al. (2024) conceptualize managers as interpreters of algorithmic performance information whose involvement can influence employee trust. Organizational justice theory similarly emphasizes procedural fairness, interpersonal treatment, and adequate explanations (Colquitt et al., 2001). Nevertheless, supportive supervision may not guarantee consistent review or correction. This study therefore explores how employees in Pakistan understand monitoring, negotiate autonomy and privacy, and relate managerial judgment to workplace fairness and trust.

Supportive managers may listen to employees' concerns without possessing clear authority to revise performance scores or ensure that corrections influence formal evaluations. Organizational trust depends not only on interpersonal reassurance but also on the perceived reliability of decision-making arrangements (Mayer et al., 1995). Furthermore, opportunities to raise concerns do not necessarily establish meaningful influence over organizational decisions (Krzywdzinski et al., 2025).

This study addresses this issue through condensed summaries of 22 online interviews with participants across occupational and sectoral settings in Pakistan. It examines reported experiences and interpretations rather than verifying system capabilities, establishing causal relationships, or claiming national representativeness.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1. How do participants interpret the purposes, benefits, and legitimacy of digital performance monitoring and algorithm-supported management?

RQ2. How do participants describe the implications of these practices for work discretion, behavioral adaptation, and privacy boundaries?



RQ3. How do participants relate managerial judgment, explanations, and opportunities to challenge assessments to perceived fairness and workplace trust?

RQ4. What organizational safeguards do participants consider necessary for transparent, context-sensitive, and correctable monitoring practices?

1.4 Research Objectives

RO1. To examine participants' interpretations of digital performance monitoring and algorithm-supported management.

RO2. To explore reported experiences of autonomy, behavioural adaptation, and privacy concerns.

RO3. To analyse relationships between managerial judgment, opportunities for challenge, perceived fairness, and workplace trust.

RO4. To identify participant-informed safeguards for transparent evaluation, contextual review, and accessible correction procedures.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes an exploratory, employee-centred understanding of algorithmic management by examining autonomy, privacy, fairness, and trust together. Its principal analytical contribution is distinguishing supervisor-dependent consideration from dependable organizational safeguards. Building on organizational justice and trust perspectives (Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995), it explores why supportive interpersonal treatment may coexist with uncertainty about review authority and correction procedures.

The Pakistani setting provides occupationally diverse accounts without assuming that findings characterize the national workforce or demonstrate uniquely national mechanisms. Methodologically, the study uses condensed summaries of 22 interviews lasting approximately 15–20 minutes, with findings presented through analytic paraphrases rather than direct quotations. Accordingly, interpretations remain exploratory.

Practically, the study identifies potential improvements in explaining performance indicators, recording contextual information, clarifying review responsibilities, protecting privacy, and enabling employees to challenge assessments. Consistent with sociotechnical perspectives (Kayas et al., 2025), these recommendations recognize that responsible monitoring depends on organizational arrangements as well as technological practices. The proposed framework offers a basis for organizational reflection and future empirical investigation, rather than a validated intervention or a guarantee of improved employee trust.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on organizational justice and trust perspectives, self-determination theory, communication privacy management theory, and sociotechnical scholarship. Organizational justice and trust provide the central analytical focus, while the remaining perspectives illuminate discretion, information boundaries, and organizational arrangements. These approaches guide interpretation rather than constitute a causal model tested through the interview summaries.

Organizational justice distinguishes fairness in outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and explanations (Colquitt et al., 2001). Trust concerns willingness to accept vulnerability and judgments about decision makers' ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). Together, these perspectives explain why confidence in a supervisor may coexist with doubts about evaluation procedures.

Self-determination theory directs attention to whether work is experienced as voluntary or pressured (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Communication privacy management addresses expectations governing information access and disclosure, while recognizing difficulties when boundaries become contested (Petronio, 2002). A sociotechnical perspective situates these experiences within relationships among technology, leadership, employees, and organizational practices (Kayas et al., 2025). Their combined application supports examination of whether contextual consideration depends on individual supervisors or is supported by dependable review procedures.



2.2 Digital Performance Monitoring and the Datafication of Work

Digital monitoring records selected activities through processing times, task counts, ratings, and location histories. Algorithmic management involves using computational rules or automated outputs to support managerial functions; AI is a possible component rather than a necessary feature (Milanez et al., 2025). Accordingly, monitoring technologies should be classified by their functions without assuming unverified technical sophistication.

Parent-Rocheleau et al. (2024) distinguish monitoring, goal setting, scheduling, performance rating, and compensation. Their measure captures perceived exposure to algorithmic management and was validated using gig-worker samples. Kellogg et al. (2020) further connect algorithmic systems to the direction, evaluation, and discipline of workers.

Measurement also determines which contributions become visible. Recorded duration can accurately represent elapsed time while failing to explain task complexity or customer needs. Bernstein's (2012) transparency paradox challenges assumptions that greater visibility necessarily improves organizational performance. Edwards et al. (2024) similarly connect perceived managerial intent with motivation and prioritization of measured activities. Monitoring therefore requires analysis of how records become judgments, including whose contextual knowledge informs that transition.

2.3 Autonomy, Control, and Employee Agency

Algorithmic management can reorganize discretion over task selection, timing, and methods. Meijerink and Bondarouk (2023) emphasize its capacity to constrain and enable autonomy, while Noponen et al. (2024) examine tensions between intensified control and enabling possibilities. These perspectives challenge deterministic accounts that attribute uniform consequences to technology.

Autonomy depends partly on whether employees can exercise available choices without anticipated penalties. Cameron (2024) demonstrates how frequent but confined choices can generate consent in platform work. This does not establish equivalent processes in conventional employment, but it provides a useful distinction between having options and possessing substantial influence over working conditions.

Employee adaptation also takes different forms. Changing progress updates, following prescribed language, or seeking exceptions may support coordination, protect evaluations, or manage uncertainty. Such actions should not automatically be classified as resistance. Drawing on self-determination theory, the present study examines reported discretion and pressure while avoiding claims about measured motivational states or verified consequences of refusing tasks (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Edwards et al., 2024).

2.4 Privacy, Surveillance, and Data Boundary Negotiation

Workplace surveillance raises questions about the scope and justification of observation, alongside unequal control over information (Ajunwa et al., 2017; Ball, 2010). Privacy concerns include collection, accuracy, access, retention, and secondary use. Acceptance of monitoring for coordination or security does not necessarily imply acceptance of unrestricted information processing.

Bosua and Evans (2026) show that employees in a Dutch financial organization accepted legitimate monitoring purposes while questioning data practices. Communication privacy management helps interpret these concerns as expectations about appropriate information boundaries (Petronio, 2002). However, organizational opacity should be distinguished from limited employee knowledge: informed questions about retention or access can indicate awareness rather than deficient privacy literacy.

Supportive supervision is also insufficient as a universal privacy safeguard. Wolff et al. (2024) found no evidence that high-quality leader-member exchange buffered the relationship between privacy invasion and need thwarting. Consequently, the present study distinguishes interpersonal reassurance from organizational data protections and treats claims about automated inference as requiring specific evidence.

2.5 Transparency, Fairness, and Workplace Trust

Transparency makes monitoring practices visible; explanation clarifies particular assessments; correction allows inaccurate records or inappropriate judgments to be reconsidered. These functions overlap but are not interchangeable. Providing a general policy may leave employees unable to understand a score or challenge its consequences.



Organizational justice highlights the importance of procedures, treatment, and information when employees evaluate decisions (Colquitt et al., 2001). Trust additionally concerns perceived competence and intentions (Mayer et al., 1995). Leavitt et al. (2024) theorize managers as translators and augmenters of algorithmic performance information, demonstrating the conceptual importance of human judgment within automated arrangements.

Building on this literature, the study distinguishes supervisor-dependent support from formal review safeguards. The former relies primarily on a manager's willingness to listen; the latter involves established arrangements for explanation, contextual assessment, and recognized correction. Neither guarantees fair treatment independently. Formal procedures require meaningful implementation, while supportive managers may lack correction authority. This distinction helps examine whether participants perceive fair treatment as dependable across situations and managerial changes, rather than merely available through a particular relationship.

2.6 Organizational Context and the Pakistani Setting

Pakistan provides the setting for examining how monitoring is experienced across occupational contexts. Differences in tasks and supervisory arrangements may affect which concerns become salient, but geographical location alone does not explain employee responses. Sociotechnical scholarship encourages attention to organizational practices rather than treating national context as uniform (Kayas et al., 2025).

International evidence supplies useful questions without establishing Pakistani conditions. Milanez et al. (2025) identify accountability and comprehensibility concerns through an employer survey covering six countries. Their findings cannot establish monitoring prevalence in Pakistan. Rana and Iqbal's (2025) analysis addresses broader Pakistani surveillance law, particularly state powers and oversight; it provides background rather than direct evidence about employee monitoring.

Accordingly, the present study uses role and workplace variation to interpret individual accounts. It does not systematically compare ownership, organizational size, or technological maturity. Sector differences and national institutional effects therefore remain outside its evidential scope. Similarly, silence about regulators or representation cannot establish that such resources are unavailable.

2.7 Employee Voice, Adaptation, and Participation

Employee voice includes explaining circumstances, questioning assessments, requesting changes, and seeking correction. Its significance depends on whether concerns can be raised safely and considered by someone with authority. A communication channel alone does not establish influence over decisions.

Krzywdzinski et al. (2025) demonstrate how negotiations among organizational actors shape algorithmic management, while knowledge centralization can restrict workers' subsequent influence. Their findings caution against equating initial participation with continuing control. Kellogg et al. (2020) likewise identify individual and collective responses to algorithmic control, indicating that employee action extends beyond acceptance or rejection.

The present study distinguishes informal explanation, documentation, formal challenge, and behavioral adaptation. Keeping evidence for a possible dispute does not demonstrate successful redress, and following recommended phrases does not necessarily indicate agreement. Requests for consultation or appeal mechanisms are treated as desired safeguards rather than observed institutional achievements. This distinction preserves the difference between participants' experiences and recommendations.

2.8 Research Gap and Positioning of the Study

Existing scholarship already addresses autonomy, privacy, employee interpretation, and managerial mediation (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023; Edwards et al., 2024; Bosua & Evans, 2026). The study therefore avoids claiming that these subjects have been neglected. Its contribution concerns their intersection within participants' accounts from Pakistan.

Specifically, it examines how contextual consideration and opportunities for challenge relate to perceived fairness and trust, distinguishing support dependent on supervisors from safeguards expected to remain available across managers. This connects concerns about what metrics represent with questions about who can reconsider their interpretation.



The analytical emphasis is on the dependability of review: whether employees understand how to raise concerns, whether reviewers can consider contextual information, and whether corrections affect formal decisions. This focus brings procedural justice into dialogue with manager-mediated trust while retaining privacy as a distinct concern that supportive performance discussions may leave unresolved. It also provides questions for subsequent, more detailed research.

Condensed summaries of 22 online interviews support a focused exploratory analysis of reported experiences and desired protections. They do not establish causal effects, national prevalence, or a universal response sequence. The study develops participant-informed recommendations concerning explanation, contextual review, privacy boundaries, and correction.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted an exploratory qualitative design to examine experiences of digital performance monitoring and algorithm-supported management in Pakistan. Reflexive thematic analysis informed interpretation of participants' accounts, with autonomy, privacy, fairness, and trust serving as sensitizing concepts rather than predetermined outcomes (Braun et al., 2022; Byrne, 2022).

3.2 Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling sought variation across occupational contexts and included 22 participants with at least six months of direct monitoring experience. Relevant practices included dashboards, call monitoring, workflow tracking, automated scheduling, location analytics, and performance scoring. Sampling supported exploration of varied experiences rather than statistical representation or systematic sector comparisons.

3.3 Data Collection

Online semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 15–20 minutes. Questions addressed monitoring purposes, perceived benefits, work discretion, privacy concerns, managerial responses, and opportunities to question assessments. The analytical material comprised condensed interview summaries rather than verbatim transcripts. Participants were identified as P1–P22, and findings were presented through analytic paraphrases without direct quotations. Condensation limited access to original wording and conversational context.

3.4 Data Analysis

Analysis involved repeated reading, initial coding, development of candidate themes, and refinement against all 22 summaries. Coding attended to reported experiences alongside theoretical concepts concerning autonomy, information boundaries, procedural fairness, and trust. Comparisons distinguished supportive supervision from formal review safeguards, experienced events from anticipated consequences, and existing practices from requested improvements.

Contrasting accounts, including collaborative uses of analytics, informed interpretation. Themes represented patterns within the summaries rather than prevalence estimates or verified system effects. Following reflexive thematic principles, analytical quality rested on coherent interpretation and transparent connections between evidence and claims rather than mechanical intercoder agreement (Braun et al., 2022; Byrne, 2022; Hole, 2024).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants could decline questions or withdraw before analysis was finalized. Employer names, proprietary systems, identifying details, and confidential performance records were excluded from reporting. Particular attention was given to employment risks associated with criticism of monitoring. Participant identifiers supported evidence attribution while protecting identities.

3.6 Participant Profile

Table 1 presents participants' occupational contexts, reported monitoring practices, and principal concerns. P6 and P17 held team-lead roles, while P21 worked in HR operations. Their accounts provided supervisory and administrative perspectives alongside other workplace experiences. Categories combine sectors and roles and should not be interpreted as equivalent industry classifications. Technical descriptions



reflect participants' accounts rather than independent verification of AI capabilities. The study did not audit organizational monitoring systems.

Table 1

Participant Profile

ID	Sector / role context	Monitoring or algorithmic system described	Main issue raised
P1	Banking / operations	Pending-case dashboard and processing-speed scores	Complex customer needs inadequately reflected in speed metrics
P2	Telecommunications / call center	Call-duration analytics, waiting-time measures, and KPI dashboard	Pressure to shorten calls; contextual feedback versus dashboard-only judgment
P3	IT / software	Task tracking and productivity analytics	Thinking time overlooked; additional effort to make progress visible
P4	Logistics / operations	GPS tracking and route analytics	Delays outside the worker's control; boundaries of location tracking
P5	Retail / sales	Sales scores, targets, and public rankings	Customer-flow differences; competition discouraging teamwork
P6	Financial services / team lead	Team performance dashboard	Contextual evaluation; unclear authority to override scores
P7	BPO / quality assurance	Call recording and screen monitoring	Access, retention, and secondary use of recordings
P8	Manufacturing / planning	Workflow and attendance analytics	Shared operational delays attributed to individuals
P9	E-commerce / operations	Automated scheduling	Short-notice changes; uncertainty about consequences of refusing shifts
P10	Professional services	Hybrid-work activity tracking and weekly reports	Pressure to appear available; working-hour boundaries
P11	Healthcare / administration	Workflow targets and handling-time measures	Accuracy and respectful assistance versus processing speed
P12	Financial services / operations	Compliance analytics and automated flags	Unexplained alerts; need for documented clarification and correction
P13	Logistics / warehouse	Handheld task allocation and pace tracking	Task difficulty, rest, safe pace, and unclear reassignment rules
P14	Customer service	Automated performance scores and recommended phrases	Scripted responses; opportunities to question and correct assessments
P15	IT / software	Workflow analytics	Collaborative use supporting discretion; dependence on supportive management
P16	Retail / distribution	Automated scheduling	Unclear allocation rules; perceived favoritism and scheduling predictability
P17	Manufacturing / team lead	Production analytics	Contextual assessment; authority to have corrections formally recognized
P18	Professional services	Device monitoring during hybrid work	Unclear collection, access, and deletion practices on devices used at home
P19	Transport / operations	Telematics and route optimization	Safety versus efficiency ratings; informal review and tracking boundaries



ID	Sector / role context	Monitoring or algorithmic system described	Main issue raised
P20	Platform-adjacent services	Automated task allocation and customer ratings	Perceived constraints on refusal; documenting and disputing ratings
P21	HR / operations	Algorithm-supported evaluation	Governance before deployment; manager training and safe challenge procedures
P22	Healthcare / administration	Scheduling and service analytics	Emotional demands overlooked; concerns about access to linked staff and patient information

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis produced six interrelated themes, summarized in Table 2. Findings are presented as analytic summaries, with participants identified by code (P1–P22). A common thread ran through all six themes: participants rarely rejected measurement itself. Most acknowledged concrete benefits of monitoring, including clearer targets, earlier detection of problems, safety, and compliance protection, but they contested what the numbers represented, how data were used, who could see them, and whether anyone with authority would consider context before acting on them.

4.1 Theme 1: Negotiating Visibility—Monitoring as Support or Surveillance

Participants accepted monitoring when its purpose addressed recognizable work needs. Dashboards helped identify pending cases (P1), production delays (P8), patient queues (P11), and blocked tasks (P15). P5 valued clearer sales expectations, while P3 accepted task tracking as useful for coordinating deadlines. Recording and tracking also supported complaint investigation (P7), delivery location (P4), incident explanation (P19), and transaction compliance (P12). These accounts suggest conditional acceptance rather than opposition to measurement.

Concerns emerged when indicators inadequately represented work or monitoring practices remained unclear. P1 questioned reducing customer interactions to numbers, P3 challenged keyboard activity as evidence of effort, and P10 described inconsistency between managerial emphasis on results and continued reporting of activity percentages. P7 distinguished useful call recording from insufficiently explained screen monitoring. Similarly, P4 accepted location tracking during duty while seeking clarity about its endpoint.

The distinction concerned how monitoring was used and understood. P2 considered feedback reasonable when a supervisor discussed a recording, but felt unheard when judgment relied on dashboard indicators. This interpretation aligns with research emphasizing perceived organizational intent and the enabling and controlling possibilities of algorithmic management (Edwards et al., 2024; Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023). Acceptance depended on identifiable benefits, appropriate boundaries, and opportunities for contextual explanation.

4.2 Theme 2: Autonomy Under Metrics—Discretion and Behavioural Adaptation

Participants described tensions between measurable speed and demands. P1 worried that assisting an elderly customer would worsen processing indicators; P2 felt pressure to shorten explanations; and P11 questioned handling-time measures that overlooked patient assistance and accuracy. P22 described emotional demands absent from waiting-time records. P13 reported pressure to maintain pace despite task difficulty and rest needs, while P19 raised concerns about safety-related decisions being classified as inefficient. Behavioural adaptations made work more visible but sometimes introduced additional burdens. P3 divided tasks into smaller updates, improving communication while reducing development time. P14 adopted recommended phrases despite their awkwardness in difficult conversations, and P10 interrupted work to check activity status. P5 hesitated to assist colleagues because sales credit would accrue elsewhere. P9 accepted inconvenient shifts under uncertainty about future allocation, whereas P20 expressed concern about rejection consequences without explicitly reporting unwanted task acceptance.



P15 provided a contrasting account: collaborative analytics supported judgment and identified blocked work. Nevertheless, protection appeared vulnerable to management change. P6 sought score-override guidance, while P13 sought clarity about task reassignment. These distinct concerns show that discretion involved both system arrangements and managerial practice, consistent with accounts of constrained choice and autonomy's duality (Cameron, 2024; Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023).

4.3 Theme 3: Privacy Boundaries—Collection, Access, and Secondary Use

Privacy concerns centred on uncertain information boundaries rather than automated inference. P7 questioned who could replay recordings, retention periods, and whether training material could later support disciplinary action. P4 asked about access to previous journeys, while P19 sought reassurance that location collection ended after vehicle handover. These accounts distinguished access to historical information from continued collection outside duty.

Hybrid work introduced uncertainty about device monitoring. P18 sought clarification about application names, screenshots, access times, deletion, and notification of changes. P10 distinguished monitoring agreed working hours from expectations extending into evenings. P22 questioned how staff performance information connected with patient records and who could access both.

P7 and P18 avoided personal device use, yet uncertainty persisted. Their informed questions indicate inadequate organizational explanation; they do not establish low privacy literacy. Nor do their concerns prove that feared collection or secondary use actually occurred.

Viewed through communication privacy management, participants sought understandable boundaries governing collection, access, and subsequent use (Petronio, 2002). Their accounts also indicate that supportive supervision cannot resolve every privacy concern. This distinction is consistent with Wolff et al. (2024), whose findings caution against assuming that positive supervisor relationships neutralize privacy-related harm. Clear organizational practices remained important alongside interpersonal reassurance.

4.4 Theme 4: Trust and the Limits of Supervisor-Dependent Fairness

Participants connected fairness and confidence with understandable assessments and meaningful contextual review. P12 described uncertainty about a compliance flag and concern about appraisal consequences before receiving clarification. P14 did not understand which conversational features influenced scoring. P9 and P16 questioned allocation rules, with P16 describing how unexplained scheduling differences encouraged suspicions of favouritism. These accounts establish uncertainty and perceived unfairness, rather than verified discriminatory system behaviour.

Managerial engagement made assessments more acceptable when it addressed the work behind the numbers. P2 and P14 valued discussions using call recordings; P3 preferred evaluation of solutions and task difficulties; and P11 appreciated consideration of service quality. P6 reported greater acceptance when employees could inspect relevant records. These observations align with Leavitt et al.'s (2024) account of managers interpreting algorithmic performance information.

However, supportive relationships did not ensure dependable protection. P15 worried that management change could undermine collaborative practice, P19 described informal review, and P6 sought clearer override rules. P17 requested authority to have corrections formally recognized; the summary does not document a rejected correction. P21 emphasized governance and manager training. The central distinction was between receiving consideration from particular supervisors and having established procedures that make explanation, review, and correction accessible across situations.

4.5 Theme 5: Organizational Rules and Occupational Responsibilities

Participants evaluated monitoring through concrete responsibilities and organizational arrangements. P12 emphasized transaction compliance, while P11 and P22 highlighted patient assistance, accuracy, and sensitive information. P4 and P19 discussed traffic and safety; P13 emphasized physical demands and unequal task difficulty. P10 and P18 focused on working-hour and device boundaries. These differences illustrate occupational concerns within the sample without establishing systematic sector effects.

Organizational rules were sometimes insufficiently clear. P7 and P18 described policies that left practical data questions unanswered. P6 sought guidance on score overrides, whereas P13 questioned when



supervisors could reassign tasks. P19 characterized review as informal. These issues involve different forms of authority and should not be collapsed into a single problem of score correction.

P21 argued that governance should precede implementation, including clarity about evaluation inputs, correction responsibilities, and challenge procedures. This was a proposed improvement rather than evidence that such arrangements already operated.

The summaries did not mention legislation, regulators, or collective representation. Their silence cannot establish absent protections or limited awareness. The findings instead foreground organizational arrangements visible in these accounts, consistent with sociotechnical approaches emphasizing interactions among managerial practice, knowledge, and authority (Kayas et al., 2025; Krzywdzinski et al., 2025). National institutional explanations remain untested.

4.6 Theme 6: Employee Voice, Adaptation, and Opportunities for Challenge

Participants responded to monitoring through explanation, documentation, and adaptation. P1, P4, P8, and P19 described discussing contextual difficulties with supervisors. P20 retained screenshots and messages for possible disputes, identifying this as additional unpaid effort. Such documentation demonstrates preparation for challenge, not successful correction. P14's scripted responses and P3's smaller updates represented behavioral adjustments whose purposes included protecting evaluations and improving visibility.

Requests for stronger voice mechanisms were specific. P1 wanted comments attached before reviews, P4 wanted immediate recording of delay reasons, and P12 sought documented clarification and correction. P14 wanted to question assessments without appearing defensive, while P20 requested human investigation of disputed ratings. P21 emphasized that policies offered limited reassurance if employees feared adverse consequences from raising concerns.

Participation also concerned arrangements. P16 sought consideration of scheduling preferences, P18 wanted advance notice of monitoring changes, and P22 requested regular discussion of whether measures represented work. These proposals should remain distinct from existing opportunities.

The accounts support an interpretation of individual negotiation and strategic adaptation rather than established collective resistance. Following Krzywdzinski et al. (2025), meaningful participation requires attention to influence and authority. Here, the relevant concern was whether raising context could lead to recognized review rather than merely acknowledgment.

Table 2

Thematic Structure Derived from the Interview Summaries

Theme	Sub-themes	Evidence in interview summaries	Participants	Interpretive focus
Negotiating visibility	Useful monitoring; understandable purpose; conditional acceptance; contextual feedback	Benefits of dashboards, recording, and tracking; concerns about incomplete indicators, unclear monitoring, and inconsistent managerial messages	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P15, P19	Acceptance depends on recognizable benefits, boundaries, and contextual explanation
	Speed versus service; behavioural adaptation; uncertain consequences; supportive discretion	Smaller updates, scripted responses, activity checking, inconvenient shifts, and concerns about task refusal; collaborative analytics as a contrasting experience	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15, P19, P20, P22	Discretion shaped by metrics, perceived consequences, and managerial practice
Privacy boundaries	Collection; access; retention; secondary	Questions about recordings, journey	P4, P7, P10, P18, P19, P22	Unclear organizational data



Theme	Sub-themes	Evidence in interview summaries	Participants	Interpretive focus
Trust and supervisor-dependent fairness	use; work-home boundaries	histories, device monitoring, and patient-related information; avoidance of personal use of work devices		practices and desired information boundaries
	Explanation; contextual review; managerial support; formal correction authority	Unexplained flags and allocation rules; valued discussion of records; concerns about informal review, management changes, and correction procedures	P2, P3, P6, P9, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P21	Distinction between supportive relationships and dependable review safeguards
	Work-specific concerns; policy clarity; override and reassignment rules; governance before deployment	Compliance, patient assistance, safety, physical demands, and hybrid-work boundaries; requests for clearer organizational responsibilities	P4, P6, P7, P10, P11, P12, P13, P18, P19, P21, P22	Organizational arrangements visible in participants' accounts, without inferred sector effects
Employee voice and opportunities for challenge	Informal explanation; documentation; adaptation; safe challenge; desired participation	Discussions with supervisors, retained screenshots, and requests for comments, correction, investigation, scheduling input, and consultation	P1, P3, P4, P8, P12, P14, P16, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22	Raising concerns versus possessing authority or procedures to secure redress

4.7 Synthesis of the Findings

The six themes connect monitoring practices with participants' interpretations of discretion, privacy, fairness, and opportunities for challenge. They represent overlapping dimensions of experience rather than an established temporal sequence. Participants acknowledged useful coordination and feedback while questioning whether indicators adequately represented complex customers, shared dependencies, road conditions, unequal tasks, and emotional demands.

A central distinction concerned receiving contextual consideration from a supportive supervisor and having dependable procedures for review. P6 sought clearer override guidance, P15 questioned whether supportive practice would survive management change, and P17 requested recognized correction authority. P21 emphasized governance and safe challenge mechanisms. Together, these accounts suggest that interpersonal reassurance and formal safeguards address related but different concerns.

Privacy remained partly independent of performance review: understanding a score would not necessarily clarify recording access, retention, or secondary use. These patterns support examining monitoring through its organizational use rather than presumed technical effects (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023; Kayas et al., 2025). The summaries establish neither sector differences nor the effectiveness of proposed safeguards.

4.8 Discussion

The findings contribute an exploratory account of how participants distinguish useful monitoring from evaluation that overlooks context or offers limited explanation. This is consistent with the duality of algorithmic management and research connecting perceived organizational intent with employee responses (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023; Edwards et al., 2024). However, the study does not measure motivational outcomes or verify the technical operation of reported systems.



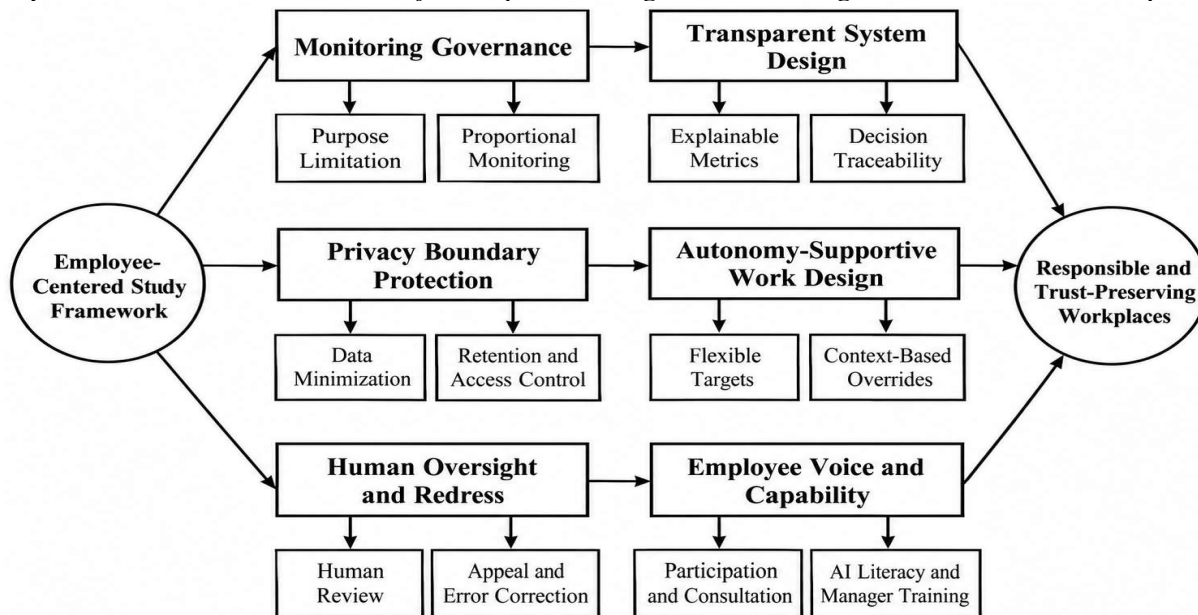
Its central contribution concerns the dependability of fairness. Managerial interpretation helped participants understand assessments, supporting Leavitt et al.'s (2024) emphasis on human mediation. Yet P6, P15, P17, and P21 identified uncertainties concerning authority, continuity, and challenge procedures. Viewed through organizational justice, these accounts distinguish considerate treatment from procedures that consistently accommodate context and recognize corrections (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Privacy concerns further qualify the role of supportive supervision. Questions about access, retention, and secondary use require organizational clarification beyond individual performance discussions (Petronio, 2002; Wolff et al., 2024). Likewise, opportunities to speak should not be equated with influence over decisions, consistent with the organizational politics examined by Krzywdzinski et al. (2025).

The Pakistani setting contextualizes these accounts without establishing nationally distinctive mechanisms. Figure 1 translates the interpretation into a proposed action framework covering monitoring governance, transparent design, privacy protection, autonomy-supportive work, human review, and employee voice. These elements express participant-informed recommendations; their relationships and effects on workplace trust remain propositions for future investigation.

Figure 1

Employee-Centred Action Framework for Responsible Algorithmic Management in Pakistani Workplaces



5. Conclusion, Implications and Future Directions

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined digital performance monitoring and algorithm-supported management through condensed summaries of online interviews with 22 participants working in Pakistan. Six themes captured conditional acceptance of monitoring, discretion under metrics, privacy boundaries, supervisor-dependent fairness, organizational rules, and opportunities for challenge. Participants acknowledged benefits such as clearer expectations, coordination, and compliance support while questioning measures that overlooked work demands or produced assessments they could not readily understand.

The central finding concerns the distinction between supportive managerial treatment and dependable organizational safeguards. Supervisors could help contextualize performance information, yet participants also sought clearer review authority, recognized correction procedures, and arrangements that would remain available after management changes. Privacy concerns required additional attention because a constructive performance discussion did not necessarily resolve uncertainty about information collection, access, retention, or secondary use.



These findings offer an exploratory interpretation of participants' experiences rather than a verified account of system operation or national workplace conditions. The proposed framework identifies practical areas for improvement, including explanation, contextual review, privacy protection, and employee voice. Its effectiveness in strengthening fairness or trust requires further investigation.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The study brings organizational justice and trust perspectives together by distinguishing confidence in individual supervisors from confidence in review procedures. Participants' accounts suggest that considerate treatment and procedural dependability are related but separate concerns. A supervisor may listen sympathetically while lacking clear authority to change an assessment. This interpretation builds on organizational justice scholarship and the role of managerial mediation in algorithmic performance management (Colquitt et al., 2001; Leavitt et al., 2024).

The findings also illustrate how perceived discretion can vary with the use of monitoring information. P15 described collaborative analytics that supported professional judgment, whereas other participants reported pressure to prioritize visible activity or prescribed responses. These contrasting accounts are consistent with the enabling and constraining possibilities of algorithmic management, without establishing causal effects on autonomy or motivation (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023; Edwards et al., 2024).

Communication privacy management provides a complementary interpretation of requests for understandable information boundaries (Petronio, 2002). Questions about retention and secondary use indicate concerns that cannot be reduced to satisfaction with performance evaluation. Finally, the sociotechnical perspective helps locate these experiences within relationships among monitoring practices, managerial authority, and organizational rules (Kayas et al., 2025). The contribution is a contextual application and refinement of these perspectives, rather than a tested extension of their causal propositions.

5.3 Practical Recommendations

Organizations should explain monitoring purposes, the information collected, how indicators inform decisions, and the available review procedures. Such explanations should address employees' practical questions rather than rely solely on general policy statements, reflecting concerns raised by P1, P12, P14, and P16.

Performance systems should provide ways to record relevant context before assessments inform formal reviews. Examples include comments explaining complex cases, operational dependencies, or unavoidable delays (P1, P4, P8). Review responsibilities should specify who can reconsider an assessment, authorize a correction, and ensure that the correction appears in subsequent decisions. These arrangements respond to requests for clearer authority and governance from P6, P17, and P21.

Privacy practices should clearly distinguish collection, access, retention, deletion, and secondary use. Employees should understand when location tracking ends, who can access recordings, and whether information collected for training may inform disciplinary decisions (P4, P7, P18, P19). Notice of significant monitoring changes would address P18's concerns about changing expectations.

Organizations should also provide accessible opportunities to question assessments, discuss scheduling preferences, and review whether measures adequately represent work (P14, P16, P21, P22). Manager training should emphasize contextual judgment and the limitations of apparently precise indicators. These recommendations reflect participant concerns; their implementation and effects should be evaluated through employee feedback, correction records, and follow-up research.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study's purposive sample supports exploration of reported experiences but cannot establish national prevalence, causal relationships, or systematic sector differences. Occupational categories combine sectors and roles, and organizational size, ownership, and technological maturity were not systematically compared. Three participants provided supervisory or HR perspectives, limiting comparisons between organizational positions.

The analytical material consisted of condensed summaries from interviews lasting approximately 15–20 minutes. Summarization may omit qualifications, conversational context, and unexpected details while



introducing interpretive choices before coding. The absence of verbatim material limits close examination of participants' language and readers' access to original accounts. These constraints should inform the depth of interpretation and prevent claims of comprehensive coverage.

Accounts were self-reported, and the study did not audit monitoring systems, organizational policies, or performance records. Perceived consequences of refusing tasks therefore remain distinct from verified allocation rules. Likewise, requests for safeguards do not demonstrate their effectiveness.

Future research could use fuller interview records, organizational documents, and observations to examine how contextual review operates. Matched workplace studies could compare formal procedures with supervisor-dependent support, while longitudinal research could investigate experiences following managerial or system changes. Including employees, supervisors, HR staff, representatives, and technology providers would allow competing interpretations to be examined. Subsequent research could also evaluate whether explanation, correction authority, and privacy safeguards improve employees' experiences in practice.

Author's Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were guaranteed throughout the research process.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The authors are committed to transparency and will provide detailed methodological information and analysis protocols upon request.

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