IIM Trichy Research Seminar Series

Central to the academic life is the spirit of enquiry, conversation and debate. The primary intention of the IIM Trichy Research Seminar Series is to nurture this spirit amongst the Fellow Program (FP) community. This initiative was conceptualized by and is administered by the FP students.

Seminar 02

Date: 23rd August 2018, Venue: CR-13, Time: 2:30 PM

Title: Organizational Control and Surveillance – A Sociomaterial Inquiry

Category: Research Paper

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Surveillance has been a part of organizational research since Focauldian 'panoptican' was introduced to the academic and practitioner world. However, due to the potential improvements on the technological front, the shift towards electronic surveillance has been seen to take shape in organizations as it promised improved performativity, intensified surveillance and diminished costs for the organizations (Allen et al., 2007; Lane, 2003). The paradigm shift of work in the cyber space also has created a new perspective on the employee monitoring and surveillance both within and outside the work place (Holland et al., 2015), thus keeping employees in perpetual focus. Even though surveillance has become inevitable in today's organizations, the scholarly work on the impacts of electronic surveillance has seen little work in the area of management studies. This paper views of surveillance in organizations through the sociomaterial lens, as the proliferative developments in the digital world have made it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the social and material aspects of technological output.

Though the contemporary human resource management practices advocate autonomy, empowerment, engagement and satisfaction as their core practices, the technological advancements in surveillance have enabled organizations to keep employees under perpetual focus (hypersurveillance) by giving employers access to their personal and professional information at the click of a button. The constant entanglement of surveillance technology with the actors creates a power imbalance between employers/managers and the employees, which often leads to a paradoxical situation wherein on one hand organizations advocate empowerment and autonomy of employees; and on the other hand employees are subjugated to extensive behavioral forms of control, thus impacting employee health and work life balance

Broad Theme of Discussion

The Inquisitives

✓ Panopticon gaze, as an idea by Jeremy Bentham and not Foucault, as mentioned in the paper. Questioning the need for the notion of socio-materiality in this particular study.

Prof. Hari (Marketing)

✓ Impact of surveillance on wellbeing of the employees, and the need to define surveillance clearly.

Prof. Gajanand (OM & QT)

✓ Use of the word 'open office' having a theoretical backing or picked out of dictionary. Clearly mentioning the need for the study when the proposed relationship is existing in literature.

Prof Sankalp (Strategy)

✓ The choice of socio-materiality as a lens to study this phenomenon. New HR policies could be formed as a result of direct surveillance such as observation and not necessarily digital mode. Does the study demarcates the difference clearly? Difference between direct surveillance and digital surveillance.

Mueen (Strategy)

✓ The meaning of digital surveillance. Decision of making the agential cut.

Vimal (MIS)

✓ Existence of surveillance might become a part of daily routine in organization and might be largely ignored by the employees. The 'ethical employee' and surveillance

Rajkamal (Marketing)

✓ Literature suggesting the need for understanding surveillance through socio-materiality lens, and the influence of surveillance on HR practices.

Padma
(OB & HRM)