Research Article

Investigating Cultural Differences in Employee Privacy Perceptions: A Comparative Study

Çalışanların Gizlilik Algılarındaki Kültürel Farklılıkların Araştırılması: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma

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Abstract

Advances in workplace technologies are reshaping organisational practices and establishing new forms of employee monitoring, raising concerns about privacy and fairness across cultures. This study explores cross-cultural differences in employees' privacy perceptions regarding workplace monitoring. Prior empirical work on employee monitoring has largely relied on single-country samples, limiting understanding of cultural variation in privacy perceptions. This article adopts a cross-cultural approach that links cultural value profiles to employees' preferences for mandatory versus optional monitoring. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are utilised as a theoretical lens. Samples are taken from the United Kingdom, France, and Japan, as they vary in terms of individualism and power distance. An exploratory mixed-methods design was employed, combining a vignette survey with open-ended responses. Participants evaluated two hypothetical job offers that differed only in whether monitoring was mandatory or optional. Subsequently, they were asked to select one and provide responses to follow-up questions, explaining their rationale. This captures employees' reasoning about privacy choices in context. Quantitative analyses indicate that individualism significantly predicts preference for an optional monitoring scenario, whereas power distance does not. Qualitative findings identified themes that employees link to monitoring practices, including trust, autonomy, fairness, and shared benefits, which were expressed differently across the three national contexts. Together, these findings extend cross-cultural privacy research to contemporary monitoring technologies and highlight the need for organisations operating transnationally to move beyond uniform global policies. The findings' implications suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to succeed and that organisations should glocalise their policy frameworks to align with relevant cultural expectations.

Öz

İş yeri teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler, örgütsel uygulamaları yeniden şekillendirmekte ve çalışanların izlenmesine yönelik yeni biçimler ortaya çıkararak kültürler arası gizlilik ve adalet konularında endişeler yaratmaktadır. Bu çalışma, iş yerindeki izlemeye ilişkin çalışanların gizlilik algılarındaki kültürler arası farklılıkları incelemektedir. Çalışan izleme üzerine yapılan önceki ampirik çalışmalar çoğunlukla tek ülke örneklemlerine dayanmış, bu da gizlilik algılarındaki kültürel çeşitliliğin anlaşılmasını sınırlamıştır. Bu makale, kültürel değer profillerini çalışanların zorunlu ve isteğe bağlı izleme tercihleriyle ilişkilendiren kültürler arası bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Teorik bir çerçeve olarak Hofstede'in kültürel boyutları kullanılmaktadır. Örneklemler bireycilik ve güç mesafesi açısından farklılık gösteren Birleşik Krallık, Fransa ve Japonya'dan alınmıştır. Açıklayıcı bir karma yöntem tasarımı uygulanmış; bir senaryo anketi ile açık uçlu yanıtlar bir araya getirilmiştir. Katılımcılar, yalnızca izlemenin zorunlu veya isteğe bağlı oluşu bakımından farklılık gösteren iki varsayımsal iş teklifini değerlendirmiştir. Daha sonra birini seçmeleri ve gerekçelerini açıklayan takip sorularını yanıtlamaları istenmiştir. Bu yöntem, çalışanların bağlam içinde gizlilik tercihleri hakkındaki düşünme biçimlerini yakalamaktadır. Nicel analizler, bireyciliğin isteğe bağlı izleme senaryosunu

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tercih etmede anlamlı bir yordayıcı olduğunu; buna karşın güç mesafesinin etkili olmadığını göstermiştir. Nitel bulgular ise çalışanların izleme uygulamalarıyla ilişkilendirdiği güven, özerklik, adalet ve ortak faydalar gibi temaları ortaya koymuştur; bu temalar üç ulusal bağlamda farklı şekillerde ifade edilmiştir. Bulgular birlikte ele alındığında, kültürler arası gizlilik araştırmalarını günümüz izleme teknolojilerine genişletmekte ve kültürler arası faaliyet gösteren örgütlerin tek tip küresel politikalardan kaçınması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Bulguların ortaya koyduğu sonuçlar, tek kalıba uyan bir yaklaşımın başarılı olma olasılığının düşük olduğunu ve örgütlerin politika çerçevelerini ilgili kültürel beklentilerle uyumlu hâle getirmek üzere glokalleştirmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Investigating Cultural Differences in Employee Privacy Perceptions: A Comparative Study

The use of digital tools has become a routine feature of modern work (CIPD, 2020; Poushter et al., 2024). Within this transformation, data have emerged as a key source of competitive advantage, improved decision-making, and the identification of hidden bottlenecks (IE University, 2019; Konle-Seidl & Danesi, 2022).

Technological advancements are lowering barriers to employee monitoring, and new forms of employee surveillance are emerging (Shook et al., 2019). Employee monitoring is a form of workplace data collection. The U.S. Congress (1987) defines electronic work monitoring as "the computerized collection, storage, analysis, and reporting of information about employees' productive activities". Organisations are increasingly implementing employee-monitoring technologies to analyse, optimise, and manage their workforces.

However, organisations risk financial penalties for improper use of employee data, as stipulated by local laws. For example, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a legal framework in the European Union (EU) that protects personal data. It outlines individual rights in the digital age, data processing obligations, compliance methods, and sanctions for rule breaches (European Council, 2024). Notably, in its first two years, GDPR led to over 261 fines for privacy violations, mainly due to inadequate legal bases for data processing, lack of consent, and non-compliance with transparency (Wolff & Atallah, 2021; Wolford, 2024). This underscores the importance of appropriate internal use of workplace monitoring data, and the balance organisations must maintain between workforce surveillance and compliance with legal frameworks.

Beyond legal and financial risks, the rapid adoption of employee monitoring raises concerns about data privacy and the ethical implications of data surveillance (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020). Chang et al. (2015) suggest that employee monitoring directly impacts an employee's perception of their data privacy. According to CIPD (2020), the majority of employees see workplace monitoring as a breach of trust; only 12% see it as beneficial. Research indicates that employee monitoring can be seen as intrusive and misaligned with employee expectations, elevating stress and job dissatisfaction (Siegel et al., 2022). Additionally, Brown (2000) argues that employee monitoring encourages employees to adopt a distinct work persona, creating feelings of guilt, heightened anxiety, and "alienation", a diminished self-esteem relative to one's authentic identity. Long-term alienation can lead to emotional exhaustion, reduced intrinsic motivation, and diminished job satisfaction (Lagios et al., 2022; Sawyer & Gampa, 2020). At an organisational level, these effects are linked to workplace deviance, lower productivity, and higher turnover (Saif, 2024; Shantz et al., 2015). Employee turnover creates substantial costs for organisations, not only due to costs associated with acquiring new employees but also through expertise and productivity loss (De Vos et al., 2024).

Effectively implementing monitoring is essential to its success (Lamarre et al., 2023). Accenture estimates that $3.1 trillion in future revenue may be lost due to breaches of employee trust regarding data privacy practices (Shook et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that transparent, clearly communicated monitoring policies

can mitigate risks (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Chang et al., 2015). However, as monitoring technologies become increasingly sophisticated and globally deployed, a one-size-fits-all model may not be applicable. To contribute to this body of work, in the context of an increasingly digital and global economy, this article uses a vignette-based survey to compare perceptions across three culturally distinct countries. It investigates cross-cultural differences in attitudes toward workplace data collection.

Perspectives Towards Privacy Perception

One theoretical framework that explains the difference in privacy attitudes is the privacy calculus. First introduced by Laufer and Wolfe (1977), the privacy calculus describes how individuals weigh their personal privacy against the perceived benefits of sharing their information. Research suggests that individuals who perceive the benefits to outweigh the potential risks or costs are more inclined to share personal information (Dienlin & Metzger, 2016). Drawing on social media, Dienlin and Metzger (2016) later proposed an extended version of the privacy calculus that incorporates self-withdrawal and self-efficacy. They have found that privacy concerns are a strong predictor of self-withdrawal behaviours. This might suggest that potential candidates who perceive data privacy to be more tightly controlled in an organisational setting may be disinclined to join the company. Regarding self-efficacy, they found that users' confidence in managing their privacy settings did not directly affect their willingness to share information. This shows that an individual's organisational empowerment may not be the greatest predictor of employee monitoring privacy perceptions. The privacy calculus, which assumes a rational cost-benefit analysis of data disclosure, may also manifest differently across cultures. Cockcroft and Rekker (2015) suggest that cultures differ in their perceptions of individual privacy. In this study, to identify potential differences in employee perceptions of employee monitoring across different cultural traits, Hofstede's framework will be used.

Theoretical Framework: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's research was conducted at IBM and its subsidiaries in over 50 countries, initially emphasising how cultural values influence workplace behaviour. His role in the personnel research department enabled him to conduct this study, identifying behavioural differences stemming from cultural values and establishing four initial categorisation dimensions (Hofstede, 2024; Pogosyan, 2017). The four dimensions identified were national cultural differences: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede later introduced two additional dimensions, indulgence vs. restraint and long-term vs. short-term orientation (Hofstede et al., 2010). This study focuses on individualism and power distance dimensions.

It is imperative to clarify that cultural dimensions are applicable at the national level rather than to individuals. Hofstede's scores for individualism and power distance denote country-level averages that reflect broad societal norms, not the psychological characteristics of individual respondents. Given that all participants within each country share the same national cultural value, these variables serve as contextual proxies for the cultural environment affecting employees. To limit ecological fallacy, hypotheses and interpretations are made at the country level, and the findings should be regarded as exploratory cross-national comparisons rather than as inferences about individuals.

Cross-cultural Variations in Attitudes and Privacy Perceptions

Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism is a preference for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families (Li, 2022). Low individualism is characterised as collectivism. In an organisational setting, there are differences between individualist and collectivist

cultures. In a highly individualist workplace, employees are more task-focused and less concerned about group cohesion (Hofstede et al., 2010). Collectivist cultures have a more informal employer-employee family-like link, whereas individualist cultures see their employer-employee more as a contract-based connection (Hofstede et al., 2010). Collectivist cultures are loyal to one or more groups that can be their "extended family, clan, or organization" (Hofstede, 1984). Furthermore, collectivist cultures tend to open with emotions related to common issues, seeking mutual validation that highlights a sense of shared pride or collective experience (Mesquita, 2001).

Another difference can be seen in terms of turnover. Organisational identification, "attachment to group", strongly influences turnover intentions in collectivist cultures as opposed to individualist cultures, where subjective norms and perceptions of others play a lesser role in job satisfaction (Abrams et al., 1998). Individualistic cultures see achievements as independent, whereas collectivist cultures perceive achievements as group-owned (Triandis et al., 1988). Individualist cultures are more "loosely integrated" (Hofstede, 1984). Furthermore, Individualist cultures tend to align with an employer's interests when they match their own self-interest, and view promotions as based on skill. In contrast, collectivist cultures consider an employee's group affiliations in these decisions (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Current literature shows apparent differences in how individualistic and collectivist cultures perceive and behave in the workplace. However, research concerning general privacy attitudes has produced mixed results. Bellman et al. (2004) suggest that people in individualistic cultures are less concerned about extensive privacy disclosure. This is further supported by a study focused on social media. Trepte et al. (2017) indicate that individualistic cultures place less importance on avoiding privacy risks, while collectivist cultures tend to be more anxious about privacy, as individuals are more concerned about protecting their collective. Moreover, Krasnova et al. (2012) find that higher levels of individuality foster the development of trusting beliefs about sharing private information on social media networks; these individuals are less restrictive and perceive the dangers with greater optimism, a phenomenon referred to as optimistic bias. Optimistic bias occurs when individuals believe that they are less at risk than others (Hoorens & Buunk, 1993). In an organisational setting, this could suggest that employees from more individualistic countries may exhibit stronger optimistic bias, perceiving themselves as less at risk when disclosing information and therefore reacting less negatively to increased employee monitoring.

In terms of policy regulations, however, Li (2022) suggests that collectivism, power distance, assertiveness, and uncertainty avoidance are the most significant cultural predictors of the level of privacy legislation. Contrary to previously presented studies, she proposes that collectivist cultures are more likely to have fewer regulations in place and more trust in their community. This view is further supported by Cockcroft and Rekker (2015), who find that countries with high group collectivism, such as Japan, are negatively associated with the amount of privacy legislation and "codification", placing greater emphasis on group loyalty and collective privacy. The literature shows a mixed divide of findings on privacy concerns and attitudes in countries with varying levels of individualism. Engström et al. (2023) argue that one reason for this is the limited sample sizes used in previous research and suggest that individualism is not linked to privacy concerns.

Another argument highlights a cultural difference in data-sharing attitudes based on the entity receiving the data, such as the government, workplace, or family (Cockcroft & Rekker, 2015). While collectivist countries desire more privacy on social media compared to individualistic cultures, which see networking benefits, collectivist countries are more accepting of data collection conducted by the government and their employers (Cockcroft & Rekker, 2015). In light of the theoretical approaches and empirical studies reviewed above, we posit the following hypothesis:

H1. Employees from more individualist countries are less likely to accept mandatory monitoring practices while controlling for power distance.

High Power Distance vs Low Power Distance

Power Distance is the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1984). A country's high score of power distance indicates that people accept a hierarchical order (Li, 2022). In high power distance cultures, greater inequality of power between authoritarian figures is accepted, and people perceive their data more as ownership of organisations; when a data breach occurs, they see it less as a personal violation (Madan et al., 2023). In a high-power distance workplace setting, "subordinates expect to be told what to do" with more supervisory personnel as opposed to lower power distance workplace settings, where decentralisation is popular and privileges are frowned upon (Hofstede et al., 2010). Furthermore, Jain and Jain (2018) suggest that while low power distance cultures value transparency to safeguard against power imbalances, high power distance cultures have a stronger belief in social arrangements, accepting greater corporate information control to maintain stability and hierarchy. Organisations in high-power distance cultures tend to rely on managers to form formal rules as opposed to relying on subordinates to express themselves (Hofstede et al., 2010).

In a study examining the use of learning analytics in schools, a type of internal collection method utilised to analyse and report on learners, it found that "perceived privacy risk and privacy control increase with power distance" (Viberg et al., 2024). Students in countries with higher power distances may accept data practices and feel unauthorised to question the existing methods; however, their concerns may also increase. Conversely, in lower power-distance countries, students are expected to control their own data and value greater transparency. Viberg et al. (2024) discovered that non-self-disclosure behaviours also rise with power distance, suggesting that high power distance cultures are more hesitant to disclose their privacy, creating a kind of paradox. High power distance cultures tend to question authority less; however, as a consequence, they possess less trust and greater privacy concerns than lower power distance cultures. Despite being in an educational setting, the monitoring nature of learning analytics can reflect the environment of an organisational setting with employee monitoring. As suggested previously, cultures with greater power distance accept a larger hierarchical inequality in power. However, this is not necessarily reflected in their trust in leaders and organisational data practices (Milberg et al., 2000).

In a national context, Cockcroft and Rekker (2015) find that countries with high power distance tend to rely on a higher authority to regulate their privacy. This may result from a lower interpersonal connection between structured hierarchies. Higher levels of power inequalities can lead to lower levels of vertical trust (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). Milberg et al. (1995) further support this, whose results show that in high power distance countries, there is a greater desire for government involvement in protecting personal information privacy. Cockcroft and Rekker (2015) suggest that cultures with higher power distance accept greater authoritarian practices but have less trust in organisations.

The literature reviewed above illustrates that power distance influences how individuals within countries view privacy concerns. Therefore, we posit the following hypothesis:

H2. Employees from higher power-distance countries are more likely to accept mandatory monitoring practices while controlling for individualism.

Methods

Participants

Data were collected from three countries: the UK, Japan, and France. These countries were chosen because of the large differences in individualism and power distance. Table 1 illustrates the cultural values of the UK, Japan, and France. Hofstede's framework quantifies cultural dimensions on a 100-point scale, where higher scores indicate a stronger presence of that characteristic within the culture. In Table 1, UK and France show high levels of individualism, whereas Japan reflects collectivism since the individualism score is below 50. Both France and Japan display a high-power distance, in contrast to the UK, which has a low power distance. These three countries were chosen to create variations on two dimensions. Japan and France vary on individualism while controlling for power distance. France and the United Kingdom vary in power distance while having a similar level of individualism.

Table 1

Cultural Values of Selected Countries

Country	Individualism (0 - 100)	Power Distance (0 - 100)
United Kingdom	89	35
Japan	46	54
France	71	68

Note. Scores from Hofstede (2015)

Furthermore, Hofstede (1984) suggests that national wealth can influence cultural dimensions, which was another reason why the UK, France, and Japan were selected. The World Health Organisation classifies them as highly developed and high-income countries (Metreau et al., 2024). This selection aims to control for significant wealth differences and observe inherent cultural traits rather than those reflected by differences in economic conditions.

We used several criteria to improve the validity and generalisability of study findings. Starting with cultural validity, candidates must speak their native language and work in the same country where they were born. This increases the likelihood that participants will inherit the native culture rather than exhibit external effects from social learning mechanisms. According to Mihet (2012), domestic firms are influenced by their home country's culture. Individuals inherently absorb the prevailing cultural norms of their society through enculturation, which gradually influences their attitudes, behaviours, and workplace values over time.

Next, the candidate's age must fall within the working-age population. According to the OECD (2025), the working-age population includes individuals aged 16 to 64. However, for ethical reasons, this study sets a minimum age requirement of 18. Additionally, individuals under 18 often have limited work experience and are more likely to be in transitional employment rather than pursuing long-term careers. Johnson (2001) highlights that significant changes in job values occur during the transition from youth to adulthood. By concentrating on participants aged 18 and older, the study ensures that the responses collected represent the perspectives of individuals with more substantial workplace experience, providing deeper insights into attitudes regarding data privacy. On the other side, including individuals over 64 may yield unreliable data due to potential value shifts linked to the typical retirement age.

Lastly, candidates are required to be currently employed full-time or part-time. Although this requirement may restrict individuals who are in the process of changing jobs, it mitigates the likelihood of gathering data from those who do not fully comprehend the hypothetical scenarios presented in the vignette study.

In addition to demographic and employment status criteria, participants were drawn from a wide range of industries to reflect diverse organisational contexts.

Figure 1

Industry Sample Classification

NACE Industry Sample Classification
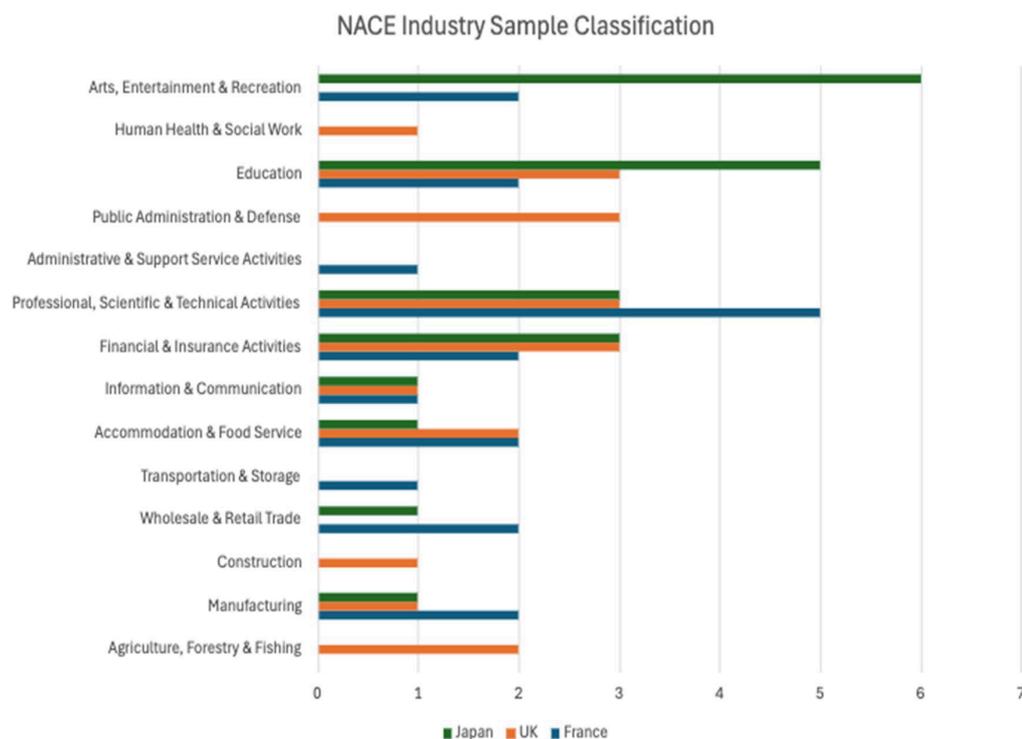
As presented in Figure 1, participants worked across a wide range of industries and were classified using the NACE Rev. 2 standard, a widely adopted European framework for categorising business activities (Eurostat, 2008). This enabled representation from varied organisational contexts. The most common sector was Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities (NACE Section M, *n* = 11), followed by Education (NACE Section P, *n* = 10), encompassing roles such as research, marketing, and teaching. Although other demographic variables, such as age or gender, were not collected for statistical control, the study employed an eligibility criterion.

Materials

We adopted a vignette study design in which we first presented participants with two hypothetical job offers from companies with varying degrees of employee privacy practices. Vignette studies utilise controlled manipulation of workplace privacy scenarios while taking into account additional factors and effectively capturing attitudes and behaviours (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Given the sensitive nature of workplace privacy, vignettes provide a valuable means to address this topic. Aguinis and Bradley (2014) note that the hypothetical vignette design makes these vignettes especially suitable for exploring delicate issues, enabling participants to engage with complex scenarios without personal risk or discomfort. Furthermore, due to their hypothetical nature, vignettes help reduce reporting bias. Reporting bias typically threatens research validity, arising when participants exhibit behaviours or thought processes deemed socially acceptable during the study (McInroy & Beer, 2021). Vignettes involve presenting participants with thoughtfully designed, realistic, but theoretical scenarios. This study's vignette presents two hypothetical job offers that are nearly identical, differing slightly in workplace privacy. As shown in the scenarios, (Appendix 1), the first scenario describes a hypothetical company, Nexer Solutions, which gives employees the option

not to be monitored, while the second scenario describes Pulse Dynamics, where employee monitoring is a mandatory company practice.

The two job scenarios have been programmed to be presented in a randomised order to prevent bias among participants, who would otherwise always encounter one scenario first. Auspurg and Jäckle (2015) suggest a significant order effect, meaning the sequence in which the vignettes are presented influences respondents' judgments. Randomising the scenarios will help reduce bias in interpreting the scenarios.

After reading scenarios and choosing which offer to take, participants were asked about their attitudes and preferences about the scenarios through a survey. The survey included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their thoughts freely, as opposed to limited closed-ended formats. The survey questions are presented in Appendix 1. They measure the attitudes toward data privacy regarding employee monitoring and their decision criteria for a selected scenario.

To address potential language bias, the scenario and the survey for each country were translated into the country's native language by native speakers. Language barrier bias refers to language differences that can result in misinterpretations of key terms, cultural nuances, or subtle biases in responses, potentially affecting the validity of cross-cultural comparisons. Participants may respond differently when a survey is perceived as culturally foreign, a phenomenon that contributes to language bias. Country-specific dialect and nativity-matched translators are recommended and utilised to interpret local dialects and slang effectively (Squires et al., 2020). Native translators were also employed to ensure accurate translation and interpretation of responses given to open-ended questions. This is particularly important in qualitative analysis, where direct translations of open-ended responses can lead to a loss of meaning if not handled carefully. By involving native speakers in the translation process, the study enhanced response accuracy and ensured that findings truly represent participants' perspectives.

Procedure

Before data collection, a small pilot study (*N* = 10) was conducted to evaluate the clarity, realism, and interpretability of the vignette scenarios. Pilot studies improve the validity of vignettes (Steiner et al., 2016). Pilot participants reviewed both scenarios and provided feedback on wording and the perceived distinction between the two scenarios. Following feedback, minor textual adjustments were made to improve clarity.

Data collection for this study took place over two weeks, from February 17 to March 3, 2025. We targeted 20 participants from each country. Participants were recruited through professional networks and online platforms such as LinkedIn and through convenience sampling of personal networks. Ethical considerations have been carefully addressed to maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality. The survey received ethics approval from a university in the UK before being sent out, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

To assess cross-cultural variation in participants' responses, a chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in hypothetical offer acceptance across countries. Subsequently, a logistic regression model was employed to examine whether PD and IND were associated with participants' offer decisions, while controlling for other dimensions. Furthermore, odds ratios, 95% confidence intervals and Nagelkerke R^2 were reported to aid interpretation of effect size and model fit. Because all respondents within a country share the same Hofstede scores, the regression analysis reflects cross-country contextual indicators. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted at the country

level, not as individual psychological inferences. Furthermore, because the study included approximately twenty participants per country, statistical power is limited, and the effect sizes should be interpreted cautiously. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, and full model outputs are reported.

Qualitative Data

An inductive coding approach was used to analyse participants' responses to open-ended questions, allowing themes to emerge from the data without imposing predetermined categories. This method aligned with the exploratory nature of the study and helped organise participant narratives around workplace privacy attitudes. After establishing the themes, they were analysed within the context of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, assessing whether the patterns align with established theories on PD and IND. This analytical strategy offered a more nuanced understanding of how employees from diverse cultural backgrounds justify their choices in various scenarios.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Mean individualism scores are relatively high in the sample, whereas power distance scores had moderate variability. Scenario selection showed an overall preference for the optional-monitoring scenario (Nexer Solutions), with 61% of respondents selecting it. A moderate negative correlation emerged between individualism and power distance, indicating potential multicollinearity in results ($r = -.49$, $p < .001$). Individualism showed a weak but statistically significant positive correlation with scenario selection ($r = .288$, $p = .024$), whereas power distance showed no meaningful association ($r = .012$, $p = .929$).

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviation, and Correlations Table

Variables	Min.	Max.	M.	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)
Individualism (1)	46	89	68.30	17.869	-	−0.490**	0.288*
Power Distance (2)	35	68	52.36	13.525		-	0.012
Scenario selection (3)	0	1	0.61	0.493			-

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Country patterns also differed in scenario selection. As illustrated in Figure 2, Nexer Solutions were preferred in France and the UK. Conversely, participants in Japan showed a stronger preference for Pulse Dynamics. Differences in preferences across countries suggest potential country-level differences in workplace employee monitoring.

Figure 2

Total Scenario Selection

Scenario Selection

Country	Nexer Solutions	Pulse Dynamics
Japan	38%	62%
UK	70%	30%
France	75%	25%

■ Nexer Solutions ■ Pulse Dynamics
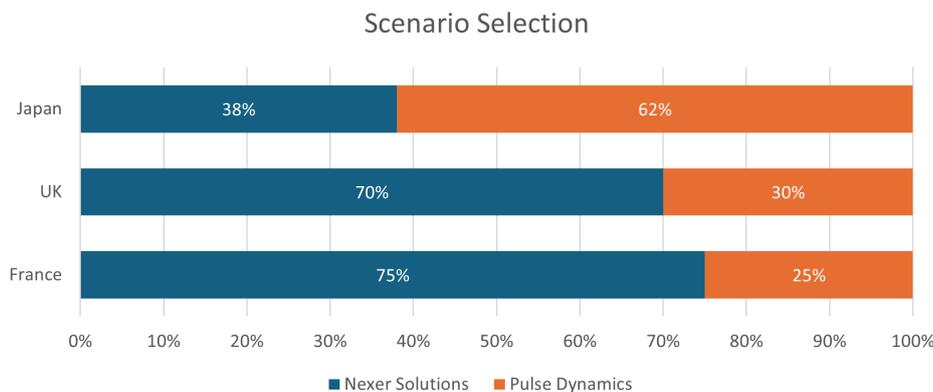
Chi-square tests examining bivariate relationships showed statistically significant associations between individualism and scenario choices, and between power distance and scenario choices, [X^2(2, *N* = 61) = 6.935, *p* = .031].

Table 3
Chi-Square Test

Dimension	Value	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Individualism	6.935	.031
Power Distance	6.935	.031

This should be interpreted at the country level, as values for individualism and power distance were consistent across countries, indicating similarity within each country group. Still, this result indicates that different countries had distinct scenario preferences.

Inferential Statistics

A logistic regression analysed how individualism and power distance influence employees' perceptions of workplace monitoring while controlling for the other dimension. The regression was conducted using the data from all three countries and will be used to explore *H1* and *H2*.

Table 4
Regression Analysis

Dimension	Odds Ratio (Exp (B))	SE	Significance Level	95% CI for OR
Individualism	1.046	.018	.010*	[1.01, 1.08]
Power Distance	1.033	.025	.191	[0.98, 1.08]
Constant	.013	2.160	.046*	-

Note. p < .05, $Nagelkerke\ R^2 = .146$

The logistic regression showed that individualism significantly predicted scenario selection, while controlling for power distance (Exp(B) = 1.046, SE = .018, *p* = .010, 95% CI [1.01, 1.08]). The odds ratio indicates that each one-unit increase in individualism increased the likelihood of selecting Nexer Solutions by approximately 4.6%. This supports *H1*, suggesting countries characterised by higher Individualism display lower acceptance of mandatory monitoring.

Power distance did not significantly predict scenario selection (Exp(B) = 1.033, SE = .025, *p* = .191, 95% CI [0.98, 1.08]). Although the odds ratio slightly favours Nexer Solutions, the confidence interval crossed 1.00, indicating no meaningful effect. This result does not support *H2*. These effects should be interpreted cautiously, given the study's power constraints. The small sample size increases the likelihood of Type II error and may limit the detection of subtle effects. Overall, the model explained a modest amount of variance, as expected given the small sample size and the exploratory nature of the study (Nagelkerke R^2 = .146).

Table 5
Model Predictive Accuracy

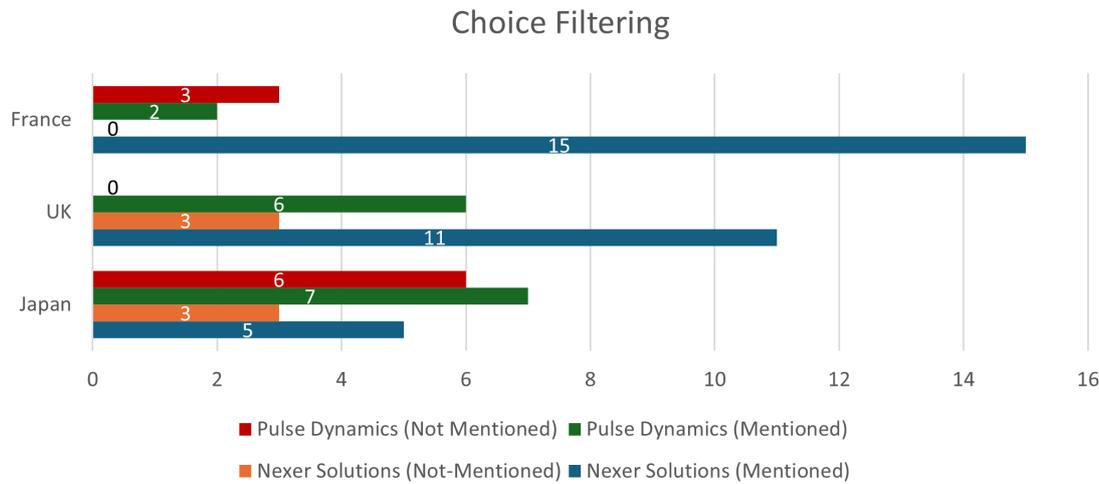| Scenario Prediction	Nexer Solutions	Pulse Dynamics	Percentage Correct
Nexer Solutions (Non-mandatory)	29	8	78.4
Pulse Dynamics (Mandatory)	11	13	54.2
Overall Percentage	-	-	68.9

Furthermore, a classification analysis (Table 5) showed that the model predicted the selection of Nexer Solutions with 78.4% and Pulse Dynamics with 54.2% accuracy, for an overall rate of 68.9%. Overall, the

model's classification accuracy is 68.9%, indicating moderate predictive power. The model demonstrates a better ability to correctly predict candidate scenario selection than random chance, supporting the results from the binary logistic regression.

Thematic Coding

The logistic regression accounts for both conscious and subconscious choices, providing a broad understanding of decision-making. However, to gain a more focused insight into how workplace monitoring shapes privacy perceptions, we analyse responses from participants who explicitly recognised monitoring as a factor in their decision-making process. Each thematic code can exceed 100% as a participant may provide multiple justifications for scenario choice.
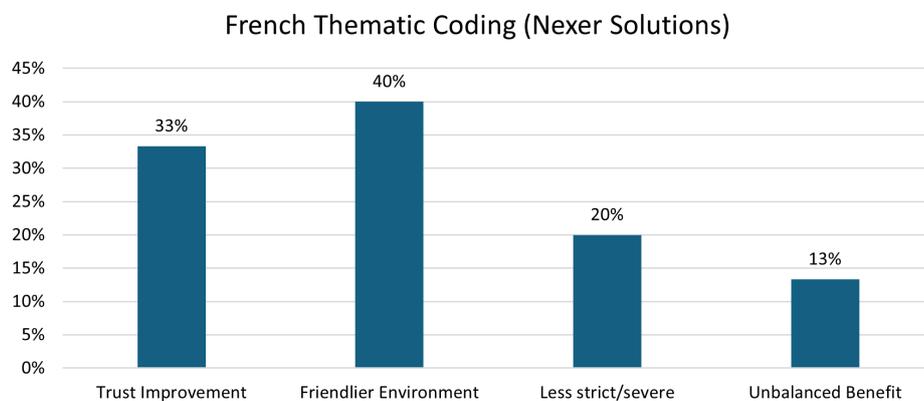
Figure 3
Justification Choice Filtering

Choice Filtering

- ■ Pulse Dynamics (Not Mentioned) ■ Pulse Dynamics (Mentioned)
- ■ Nexer Solutions (Not-Mentioned) ■ Nexer Solutions (Mentioned)

Optional Monitoring (Nexer Solutions)

Across all countries, several themes emerged: France linked optional monitoring to a friendlier work environment. Participants associated optional monitoring with a more supportive and relaxed workplace culture. Trust-related concerns were also present, indicating that optional monitoring was linked to higher organisational trust. Lastly, mandatory monitoring was viewed as too strict and lacked justification or personal benefit.

Figure 4
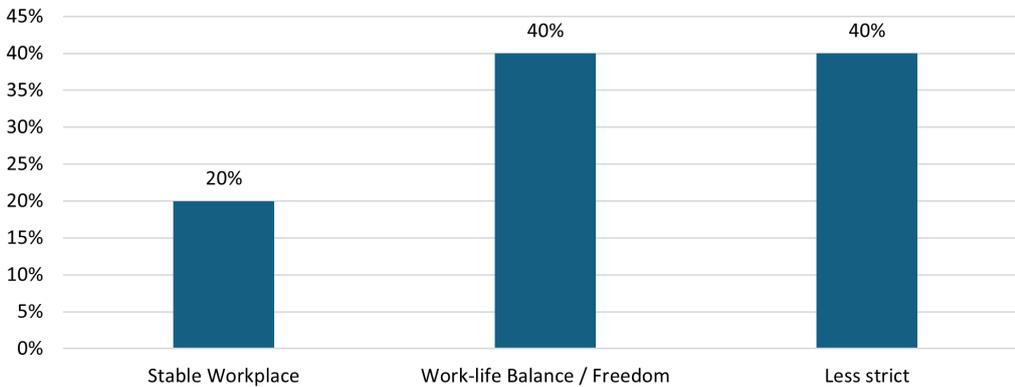*French Optional Themes*

French Thematic Coding (Nexer Solutions)

In Japan, work-life balance and concerns about mandatory tracking being too strict each accounted for 40% of participants' reasoning. Furthermore, optional tracking was seen to improve workplace harmony.

Figure 5

Japanese Optional Themes
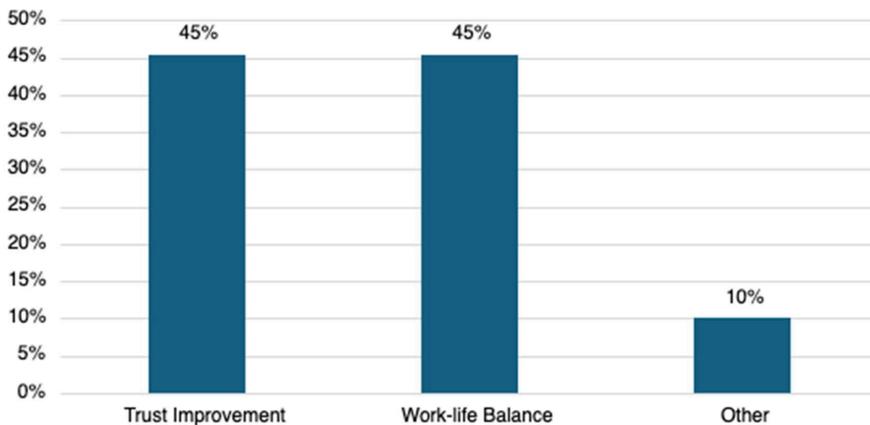
Japanese Thematic Coding (Nexer Solutions)

In the UK, two main themes emerged. Work-life balance and trust improvement were mentioned by approximately half of the respondents in the optional monitoring choice justification. Some participants also mentioned monitoring, but did not clearly state their reasoning.

Figure 6

UK Optional Themes

Pulse Dynamics (Mandatory Monitoring)

In France, overtime pay was the sole justification for choosing mandatory monitoring. In Japan, transparency and openness were strongly associated with the selection of mandatory monitoring. Although the vignette was identical across languages, this theme emerged exclusively in the Japanese sample. Participants emphasised that clear communication during onboarding made monitoring acceptable. Participants also viewed mandatory monitoring as a productivity and collaboration tool, which increased its appeal. Additionally, benefits included accountability and the belief that the advantages of monitoring outweigh the risks.

Figure 7
Japanese Mandatory Themes

Japanese Thematic Coding (Pulse Dynamics)
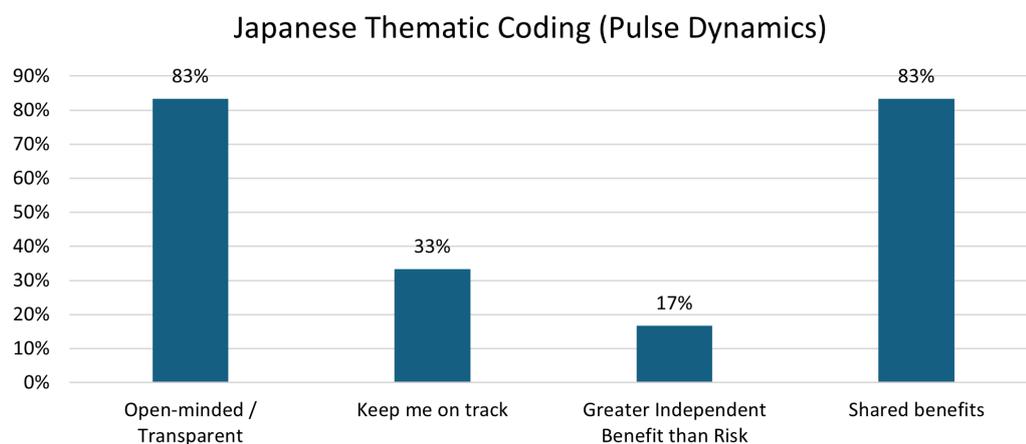
In the UK, "work ethic" was the dominant reason for mandatory justification. Participants viewed mandatory monitoring as a tool for fair measurement. Similar to work ethic, participants also linked mandatory monitoring to accountability. Lastly, 17% mentioned it would help with their motivation.

Figure 8
UK Mandatory Themes

UK Thematic Coding (Pulse Dynamics)
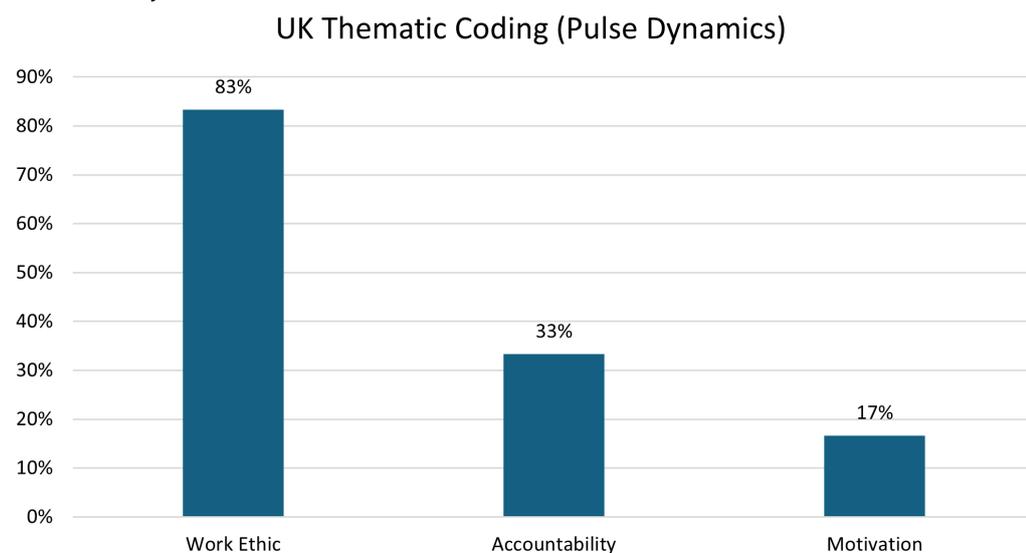
Discussion

The results of this study indicate cultural variation in attitudes toward workplace monitoring across France, Japan, and the UK. French and UK participants, both high in individualism, favoured optional monitoring, whereas Japanese participants leaned towards mandatory monitoring. Logistic regression confirmed this notion, revealing that individualism significantly predicted the likelihood of selecting optional monitoring. Power distance, on the other hand, did not retain explanatory power. Overall, model accuracy was moderate.

The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative findings by highlighting the reasoning behind scenario choices. Across the countries, participants associated optional monitoring with trust and work-life balance. On the contrary, those justifying mandatory monitoring emphasised fairness, accountability, and shared benefits.

Despite variation in the frequency with which each justification was emphasised, some patterns emerged, indicating that cultural dimensions do not always act in isolation but interact to shape privacy perceptions. Themes of trust and fairness appeared across all three countries, indicating universal concerns surrounding employee monitoring. These findings extend cross-cultural privacy research by highlighting both cultural differences and shared expectations in the workplace.

Theoretical Implications

As cultural values were standardised at the national level, these findings reflect differences between country contexts, not differences in individuals' cultural orientations. *H1* was supported by the data. The support for *H1* is consistent with prior work on individualism. Realo et al. (2002) suggest that individualism consists of three components: autonomy, self-responsibility, and uniqueness. Martin and Freeman (2003) show that employee monitoring can undermine perceived autonomy, a key element of individualism. This helps explain why French and UK participants coming from highly individualistic countries were particularly sensitive to monitoring. For example, one participant in the UK described mandatory monitoring as "big brother", a reference to George Orwell's 1984, which explores the implications of a totalitarian society (Lowne, 2025; Orwell, 1949). This link to a dystopian book may originate from the individualist sensitivity to loss of personal privacy (Li, 2022). Optional monitoring becomes more appealing in highly individualistic cultures, as it aligns with their country-level expectations of greater independence.

Trust also played a central role in choice justifications. In this study, 33% of French and 45% of UK respondents viewed optional monitoring as a means to demonstrate and build trust. This indicates that monitoring itself has implications for flexibility, control, and workplace climate. Being overly invasive can restrict the desired autonomy and flexibility. Li (2022) further notes that highly individualistic countries rely more on personal privacy management strategies and are more likely to challenge perceived intrusive practices in workplace environments.

Interestingly, individualistic values also appeared in justification for mandatory monitoring. French participants justified their choice for compulsory tracking to ensure fair overtime pay, reflecting the idea that individualistic cultures will accept employer interests when they perceive a clear self-benefit (Hofstede et al., 2010). Moreover, UK respondents who selected mandatory monitoring emphasised work ethic and accountability, reflecting a strong country-level Individualistic trait. Triandis et al. (1988) argue that individualist cultures view achievement as independent rather than collective.

In contrast, collectivist orientations were evident among Japanese participants. In collectivist cultures, achievements are considered to belong to the group, and group cohesion is of value (Hofstede et al., 2010; Triandis et al., 1988). Japanese respondents highlighted two unique themes. Shared benefits and collaboration accounted for 83% of the choice justification, making them a central reason for accepting mandatory monitoring. While the shared benefit was a dominant theme, one participant remarked, "Our data must be used correctly to benefit everyone!" This signifies that although mandatory monitoring is more widely accepted in collectivist cultures, the need for fairness and transparency remains crucial across contexts. This supports the finding of Chang et al. (2015) that transparent monitoring policies strengthen employee commitment. Moreover, participants appreciated the company's transparency about its monitoring practice and associated it with a more supportive, collaborative, and efficient workplace. This indicates that the mandatory monitoring could be legitimised in collectivist countries when a greater shared benefit is perceived. This aligns with Cockcroft and Rekker (2015), who suggest that countries with high levels of group collectivism tend to have lower levels of privacy legislation, emphasising group loyalty.

These cultural patterns are reflected in country-level legal frameworks. Mezey (2001) argues that law is not merely influenced by culture but is culture itself. Under Japanese employment law, monitoring is permitted provided transparency measures are taken and the purpose of the monitoring is disclosed in advance (L&E Global, 2024). Japanese mandatory monitoring justifications were frequently linked with transparency and openness. Li (2022) suggests that collectivist cultures may rely more on cultural norms and less on formal regulations. Laws may standardise attitudes toward workplace monitoring across countries.

By contrast, in the UK and France, stricter regulations apply. Employers must be prepared to justify their monitoring to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO, 2023). Through GDPR and the French labour code, excessive or permanent monitoring, including tracking location during work hours, is not permitted (Eurofound, 2023; NPSA, 2018). On the other hand, Japan lacks specific workplace monitoring laws. Justifications depend on employer discretion if conditions and employee discussions are met, highlighting differences between countries varying on individualism. However, as Mezey (2001) notes, there is often "spillage" between legal rules and cultural practices. Post (2003) further argues that law can be used to enforce, shape, or challenge cultural norms through social engineering. Thus, while legal frameworks help contextualise the findings, manipulations exist within the bidirectional relationship between policy and culture.

The power distance findings offer a complementary insight. Although chi-square analyses showed significant associations, logistic regression indicated a non-significant effect on power distance. *H2* was not supported by the data. This contrasts with prior research suggesting that high-power-distance cultures are more likely to accept top-down control measures (Adamovic, 2023; Cockcroft & Rekker, 2015; Hofstede, 1984). In this study, France and Japan, countries with similar power distance, chose different scenarios. In a case study examining the implementation of analytics in schools, Viberg et al. (2024) found that perceived privacy risk is higher in cultures with higher power distance. However, this does not necessarily translate into greater trust in management. In our findings, although French and UK participants differ in power distance, both justified optional monitoring to enhance trust. In the context of digital surveillance, surveillance may be more closely associated with trust and autonomy, an individualistic characteristic, than with deference to power.

One explanation for the limited significance may originate from the characteristics of technological monitoring. Opposed to a face-to-face environment, hierarchical interpretations might be less evident. Dai et al. (2022) propose that high power distance is associated with less effective communication with superiors. Such effects may be less visible in digital systems, which experience system-level controls rather than a direct hierarchical interaction. The absence of a robust power distance effect suggests that a country's power distance exerts less influence on perceptions of workplace data collection than on autonomy-oriented and interpersonal contexts.

Practical Implications

The findings suggest that employee privacy attitudes vary across cultural contexts, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity when designing workplace monitoring policies. For human resources professionals and policymakers operating in transnational companies, implementing a uniform "one-size-fits-all" approach is unlikely to succeed. Samples from the country with higher collectivism showed less resistance to monitoring and emphasised shared benefits, whereas highly individualist countries viewed such practices as a breach of autonomy and trust. These differences in privacy calculus underscore the need for glocalised strategies that align global standards with local expectations.

Furthermore, across all three countries, trust, transparency and fairness were central to acceptance. Organisations should therefore adopt minimally intrusive monitoring methods, provide clear justifications,

and ensure transparency around implementation. Establishing feedback loops that engage employees in decision-making and co-creation can further reduce resistance, enhance trust, and foster more favourable perceptions of monitoring systems, regardless of cultural values (Hodges, 2024). Maintaining trust is critical, as opaque or excessive monitoring risks undermining long-term employee wellbeing and productivity. For organisations operating across multiple cultural contexts, these findings suggest that successful implementation of monitoring practices depends not only on legal compliance but also on alignment with culturally grounded expectations about privacy, autonomy, and group benefit.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, with approximately twenty participants per country. This limits statistical power and the precision of country-level comparisons. As a result, findings should be interpreted as exploratory rather than conclusive and future research would benefit from larger samples to strengthen the robustness of statistical tests.

Secondly, several demographic and occupational characteristics were not collected. The absence of these control variables limits the ability to assess potential biases or alternative explanations in participants' choices. Even though industry data and demographic selection criteria were used, the reliance on convenience sampling further limits sample heterogeneity. Convenience sampling reduces variability and prevents control over participant roles, which are relevant. For example, prior research has shown that managerial and non-managerial employees may differ in their ethical and privacy perceptions (Siu & Lam, 2009). Future studies should incorporate individual-level controls and a more random sampling method to improve internal validity.

Third, the vignette did not include empirical manipulation or order-effect checks. While scenario selection was randomised to reduce order effects and enhance validity, the study cannot verify whether participants interpreted them as intended. A pilot study was conducted, leading to the refinement of scenario wording; however, future research should include a formal manipulation check to strengthen construct validity and increase confidence in the vignette methodology.

Finally, the use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions introduces conceptual constraints. The framework demonstrates low reliability and cannot be applied at the individual level, as it is societal in nature (Blodgett et al., 2008). Because each participant was assigned country-level scores, the analysis risks an ecological fallacy. Tung and Verbeke (2010) further argue that the framework assumes cultural homogeneity by overlooking intra-country variation. As a result, findings should be interpreted as cross-country contextual comparisons, not individual psychological differences. Future research should incorporate individual-level cultural orientation measures to test whether cultural values predict privacy beyond national averages. In addition, future research with larger samples could treat country as a categorical predictor in the regression analysis and test hypotheses using planned contrasts, with Fisher's exact test as a robustness check.

Conclusion

This exploratory study examined how national cultural contexts shape employee attitudes towards workplace monitoring across the UK, France, and Japan. The methodology, which utilised a vignette study complemented by qualitative thematic analysis, demonstrated that higher levels of individualism are associated with increased resistance to compulsory monitoring. On the other hand, power distance played a more limited role. Across all three countries, however, employees consistently linked monitoring to trust, fairness and transparency. The findings highlight both cultural variation and shared concerns. Consequently, multinational organisations are advised to tailor their monitoring policies to local contexts rather than adopting a standardised approach. Furthermore, all monitoring practices should be transparently commu-

nicated to mitigate resistance and achieve the intended benefits of workplace surveillance systems. Given the rapid global adoption of monitoring systems, continued cross-cultural research on employee privacy should continue to be studied (Ravid et al., 2019).

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Vignette Choices

> ## You have received two job offers and are deciding which company to join. Select a company and answer the following questions.
>
> **Nexer Solutions:**
>
> ○ Nexer Solutions is a well-known firm with a modern and innovative environment. Employees are offered flexible hybrid working arrangements and have significant opportunities for career growth. One of the core values of the company is the emphasis on collaboration. The company provides employees with a digital workplace that helps with task management and collaboration. As part of company policy, the system logs your scheduling, active hours, and locations during business times to ensure projects run smoothly on company devices. Human Resources also has access to this data for performance tracking. This system helps with finding time between your employees to schedule projects. However, it is optional to use. The company pays above-average market wages and is regarded as a very welcoming environment. The company retention is high, and your friends highly recommend it.
>
> **Pulse Dynamics:**
>
> ○ Pulse Dynamics is a long-standing company with a very innovative and collaborative background. Employees are given the choice to work from home on some days and have flexible work arrangements. Furthermore, there are many opportunities for career growth, and you can network and work on multiple creative projects. As part of company policy, Pulse Dynamics has a system on company devices that logs employees' working locations and active hours during business time. This supports team scheduling and workload balancing, ensuring that projects run smoothly. Human Resources also has access to this data to track performance. This is a mandatory feature; however, you are explicitly informed about it during onboarding, and it helps the collaborative and innovative nature of the company. It benefits projects running smoothly through transparency. The company pays above-average market wages, and its employees are satisfied working there. Your friends enjoy working there and are not thinking of leaving.

Nexer Solutions offers employee monitoring as an optional feature. In contrast, in Pulse Dynamics, it is mandatory. After selecting a hypothetical job offer, the participant will answer a series of follow-up questions. These will be linked to their choice to enhance the survey flow.

The following questions are based on the example chosen: Nexer Solutions.

1. What is the most critical factor that influenced you to choose Nexer Solutions?
2. Was there anything about Pulse Dynamics that made you not choose it?
3. How do you think working at Nexer Solutions affects your day-to-day life?
4. Would anything about how Nexer Solutions operates change your decision?
5. Which industry do you work in?