

## Understanding the role of employee monitoring (bossware) in shaping trust, morality, and productivity: A Serbian perspective

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### Abstract

*In modern organizations, the incorporation of technology into daily work processes has become an important component of human resource management. Advances in digital tools and software solutions allow management to monitor employee activities in real time, opening up new chances for work optimization, but also challenges in terms of ethics, privacy, and the effectiveness of supervision. The system monitoring applied has a direct impact on interactive relations and organizational culture, which makes it the subject of intense academic and practical discussion. The purpose of this research was to analyze the effect of monitoring on the trust, morality, and productivity of employees in the context of the Republic of Serbia. The sample involved employees from different sectors, and the data was investigated using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression methods, in order to investigate the interrelationships among monitoring, trust, morality, and productivity. The research outcomes indicate that monitoring has a positive correlation with employee trust, contributes to the preservation of morality values, and enhances work productivity. The research results further accentuate the importance of morality, confirming that it increases the effects of monitoring on trust, while the impact on employee productivity is not statistically significant. High employee morality can alleviate the negative features of monitoring and simultaneously sustain positive outcomes, portentous that organizations should invest in enhancing morality to balance monitoring and trust. The results contribute to filling the research gap in domestic and foreign literature, specifically regarding the psychological and organizational significances of employee monitoring in the local background. At the same time, the research argues out- organizations that implement transparent and ethical oversight can positively shape trust, morality, and productivity, thereby contributing to a supportive and encouraging work climate. Future research claims expanding the sample, different territorial spreading, comparative analysis, and the submission of longitudinal methods in order to observe in more detail the fundamental dynamics among monitoring, trust, morality, and employee productivity.*

**Keywords:** monitoring, trust, morality, productivity, perception of monitoring, organizational climate, Republic of Serbia

### 1. Introduction

In the ordinary working atmosphere, employee monitoring has become one of the most controversial themes in contemporary work organization. The expansion of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and biometric systems has enabled organizations to monitor employee actions in real-time (Popescu et al., 2024). This tendency is further accelerated by the spread of remote work and hybrid models, as managers seek to guarantee productivity, security, and insight into daily work procedures (Ahmad & Smith, 2023). While monitoring takes greater productivity and better apportionment of resources, research demonstrates that its effectiveness hinges on the way it is useful and the level of transparency (Udeh et al., 2024). When follow-up is defined and attentive to support, it can subsidies to faster problem explanation and improved team alliance. Excessive monitoring often produces the opposite effects (Andrade et al., 2025). The negative significances of excessive monitoring have been undoubtedly recognized in numerous studies (Ball, 2021). Disproportionate monitoring fosters a sense of micromanagement, let down morality, and produces an atmosphere of suspicion, which directly disturbs job satisfaction and employee engagement (Sebastian et al., 2025). Data from frequent

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research demonstrates that employees under constant monitoring experience tension, burnout, and nervousness more often, skip breaks, and through their energy into performative work (creating the appearance of activity, such as pointless emails), instead of important quality work. Such a working climate not only bounds creativity and innovation, but also intensifications staff turnover, because highly productive and ethically oriented workers more often leave organizations that rely on aggressive monitoring approaches (de Bruijin, 2021).

Apart from psychological and organizational significances, digital monitoring also increases thoughtful ethical and legal problems (Kalischko & Riedl, 2021). According to research, many employers use sophisticated technologies: from video and audio monitoring, through monitoring of geolocation and vital signs through wearable devices, to analysis of keystroke data (often without clearly informing employees about the scope and purpose of the collected information) (Patel et al., 2022). The absence of transparency grows the feeling of despoiled privacy and mistrust, and in some cases leads to legal disputes and reputational jeopardies (Oluwafemi et al., 2021). Current research argues that monitoring organizations must clearly describe goals, boundary the scope of data collection, and openly communicate ways of use, to preserve trust and ethical values (Panel et al., 2023).

Contempt the potential reimbursements, the key to efficacious employee monitoring lies in striking a balance among monitoring and independence (West & Bowman, 2016). The best results are accomplished when monitoring is used as an instrument for backing and expansion, not for control and penalty. Transparent guidelines, employee participation in decision-making, and attention on measuring consequences rather than every minute of work generate an atmosphere where productivity stems from association and belief (Ispiryan et al., 2024). Organizations can simultaneously advance performance, preserve morality, and recollect the most valuable talents, building a work culture that stimulates long-term inspiration and novelty (Harefa et al., 2025).

Contempt the increasing importance of employee monitoring, there is a research gap in domestic and foreign literature concerning its psychological and organizational effects. While numerous studies are focused on the technological aspects of monitoring and its direct effects on productivity, there are significantly fewer studies that examine how monitoring affects the trust of employees and their morality. Even less frequently, the role of employee morality in determining the effects of monitoring on employee trust and productivity. This knowledge gap is particularly noticeable in the context of the local labor market, where monitoring is progressively applied, but without satisfactory observed data on psychological and ethical consequences. The purpose of this paper is to subsidies to filling that gap, investigate how monitoring affects employee trust and productivity, and how morality moderates these effects, providing insight into the features that can sustain the ethical and sustainable application of monitoring in organizations in the Republic of Serbia.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Employee monitoring – bossware

The practice of digital employee monitoring, also known as bossware, contains an extensive variety of software solutions that permit managers to monitor employee actions in real time. The expansion of remote work and hybrid models has significantly invigorated the spread of bossware technologies, as organizations struggle to maintain control and understanding of the work process without the physical attendance of employees. Frequent studies accentuate that bossware surpasses the restrictions of traditional monitoring, because it does not measure only work results, but also the procedures and micro actions of employees (Pereira & Silva, 2024). Capturing monitoring software can investigate the tempo and rapidity of data entry, while screen monitoring applications take periodic screenshots of the desktop, generating a comprehensive image of daily work behaviors. This omnipresence of monitoring leads to the feeling of a digital panopticon (employees become conscious that they are repetitively being watched, which can distress their behavior and psychological state). Contempt the frequent claims of managers, employers, and superiors in organizations that data is used exclusively for the purpose of improving work, the line among legitimate monitoring and assault of privacy remains undecided (Ebert et al., 2021).

Permitted guidelines on the use of boss ware technologies vary significantly among countries, and in many, there is still no clear legal description of an adequate level of monitoring. In the European Union, the implementation of such software must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires transparency and knowledgeable employees' agreement (De Sutter et al., 2022). Nevertheless, practice demonstrations that employers often use legal gray zones to increase the possibility of monitoring, while employees are often not completely aware of the type and scope of data being collected (Awumey et al., 2024). The lack of pure rules generates a risk of manipulation and further confuses the connection of trust among management and employees (Malhotra et al., 2025).

In the theoretical literature, there is a progressively noticeable demand for the expansion of ethical backgrounds that would stabilize the needs of organizations for work monitoring and the right of employees to confidentiality. The authors point out that it is required to develop rules that boundary the scope of data assembly, with mandatory transparency and the chance for employees to be knowledgeable and tangled in the decision-making process (Battaglini & Rasmussen,

2019). In this way, bossware can develop an instrument to sustain and rally performance, rather than a tool of regulation that erodes trust and work morality.

## 2.2. Trust

Trust is one of the important basics of any organization and unwaveringly affects the quality of interactive relations, motivation, and inclusive productivity (Suhariadi & Nugroho, 2023). Trust is demarcated as the expectancy that others will act in a foreseeable, reasonable, and dependable way, without the necessity for continuous control (Josang et al., 2005). In the context of the work atmosphere, trust among managers and employees permits superior independence, quicker exchange of information, and inclination to take resourcefulness (Ozlati, 2015). When employees feel that their employers trust them, their intrinsic motivation and obligation to mutual goals grow, which eventually contributes to superior organizational productivity (Costa, 2025).

The summary of digital monitoring, however, is often apparent as a direct signal of wariness (Ellis, 2013). Monitoring activities, even when officially defensible by cumulative productivity or safety, conveys the message that management misgivings the work ethic and commitment of employees. Plentiful studies demonstrate that this method can weaken the feeling of psychological refuge, which leads to reduced engagement and willingness to share ideas or advanced explanations (Harjanto et al., 2023). In the long term, an absence of trust generates a locked organizational culture, where communication is condensed to formal channels and inspiration and association weaken.

Transparency in the process of monitoring employees can mitigate negative consequences and partially preserve trust (Jiang & Wang, 2024). Research demonstrates that employees are more enthusiastic to receive monitoring if they are undoubtedly knowledgeable about its goals, scope, and way of using the collected data (Holt et al., 2017). Open communication, involving employees in the creation of monitoring rules and setting bounds in data collection subsidies to the awareness of fairness and respect, which decreases the feeling of control and grows the willingness to collaborate (Zhou et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, even with transparent policies, over-reliance on technology can challenge deeper features of trust that are constructed on social relations (Igwe-Nmaju & Anadozie, 2022). Researchers in modern literature point out that trust is a process that involves time, mutual understanding, and sharing of responsibilities, which cannot be substituted by technical explanations. Organizations that want to preserve trust in the long term must practice monitoring completely as support, not as a substitute for open communication and excellent leadership (Narne et al., 2024). Only in this way is it possible to accomplish a stability among the need for monitoring and conserving the truthfulness of the relationship among employers and employees.

Research by Bernstrom & Svare (2017), conducted in Norway, exposed that monitoring has a significant negative effect on employees' sense of trust. In this study, monitoring is directly associated with less feeling that the employer trusts the employees, which further decreases their intrinsic motivation and sense of ability. The study by the authors Wu & Wang (2020) splits the types of monitoring: passive observation and observation that includes dialogue and interaction. The results demonstrate that passive observation significantly challenges trust, both cognitively (belief that management will act fairly) and affectively (emotional connection with management). Observation that contains dialogue and interaction can alleviate this effect and even growth trust, if employees feel they are being requested, that there is communication, and that they have some level of control over the process. Based on the above, the subsequent hypothesis was put forward: H1: Monitoring has a negative effect on employee trust.

## 2.3. Morality

Work morality represents a set of standards, attitudes, and internal motivation of employees that regulate their inclination to achieve work responsibilities conscientiously and dedicatedly (Slil et al., 2025). In the literature, morality is seen as the consequence of a mixture of individual features, such as personal principles and professional ethics, and organizational factors, including leadership style, a culture of trust, and a sense of fair treatment (Roszkowska & Melé, 2021). High morality is accompanied by advanced productivity, subordinate turnover rates, and willingness to engage in supplementary work, while low morality leads to inactivity, abridged initiative, and more absenteeism (Seshasai & Balaji, 2025).

Excessive monitoring, such as bossware technologies, has been established to be a significant factor that can challenge employee morality (Munn, 2024). When employees feel that they are constantly being watched, there is a feeling of mistrust and dehumanization of the work process. Studies indicate that this kind of environment encourages stress, a sense of injustice, and reduces internal motivation, because work is increasingly perceived as the mechanical execution of tasks (Matthews et al., 2025). Damaged morality further reflects on the organizational climate, creating an atmosphere of fear and passive resistance, which in the long run can reduce overall effectiveness (Dickson & Isaiah, 2024).

In addition to the psychological consequences, a decline in morality often leads to counterproductive behaviors. Employees focus on measurable activities instead of quality and innovation (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022). Avoidance strategies emerge, such as minimally completing tasks or using technology to simulate activity (Khusainov et al., 2013). Such patterns not only reduce productivity but also further damage mutual relations, because cooperation is replaced by concealment and competition in avoiding monitoring.

Research emphasizes that the preservation of morality can be achieved through transparent and ethical monitoring policies, in which the goals, scope, and limits of monitoring are clearly defined (Gopichandran et al., 2013). Open communication, respect for employees' opinions, and a focus on results, rather than on every micro-activity, contribute to a sense of fairness and reduce the negative impact of monitoring (Kocheise & Buttgen, 2022). Organizations that invest in a culture of trust and support, rather than strict control, manage to maintain high morality and motivation, even in working conditions that require a degree of monitoring (Shahid, 2018).

A study by the author Walter (2025) shows that transparent communication, clear, accurate, and timely data that management shares with employees, significantly increases employees' trust in management. In that study, it was proven that when the goals, methods, and scope of communication are open and understandable, employees perceive management as honest and fair, which increases the feeling of security and loyalty. A study by Wu & Wang (2020) also states that transparency and interaction play a role as moderators of the negative impact of monitoring on employee morality. When management not only conducts monitoring but also explains why it is being done, listens to feedback from employees, and includes them in the process, the effect on employee morality can be positive. A study by Silva et al. (2023) indicates that perceptions of fairness significantly moderate how monitoring affects employee trust and morality. When employees feel that the monitoring process is transparent, employee morality is higher. Based on the above, the subsequent hypothesis was put forward:

H2: Monitoring has a positive effect on employee morality.

## 2.4. Productivity

Productivity signifies one of the most commonly used indicators of organizational success and is measured by the relationship among invested resources and accomplished results (Merrifield, 1994). In modern working circumstances, especially in the digital environment, productivity is increasingly appraised through quantitative metrics, such as the quantity of managed tasks, time spent on work requests, or speed of response to communication networks (Puat et al., 2022). This approach delivers managers with detailed and comparable data, but at the same time jeopardizes neglecting the qualitative dimensions of work (Wenzel & Van Quaquebeke, 2018).

The monitoring application is often defensible by the need to grow productivity, specifically in environments where remote work has made direct control problematic (Li, 2023). Research demonstrates that the effects of monitoring on productivity are not the same. While individual employees may momentarily growth productivity, due to the consciousness that they are being monitored, long-term observation often leads to a reduction in work excellence, loss of motivation, and the amount of dead time (when employees fake activity to meet monitoring requirements) (Costa, 2025). Short-term gains in productivity often turn into long-term losses.

Research expressions that sustainable productivity growth is possible only when monitoring is used as a tool for support and not for control (Delgado & Garcia, 2024). Transparent policies, clearly defined goals, and open communication about expectations contribute to the fact that employees perceive monitoring as a tool for improving work, and not as a control mechanism (Siegel & Konig, 2022). A focus on results, development of competences, and autonomy of employees proves to be a more effective approach than constant monitoring, because it inspires long-term motivation and responsibility (Slemp et al., 2021). In this way, organizations can instantaneously accomplish advanced performance and preserve a strong work culture (Owen et al., 2001).

Research by the authors Ko & Baek (2024) illustrates that in the circumstances of working from home, the overview of computer activity monitoring can lead to an increase in productivity. In the same study, it was observed that monitoring serves as a mechanism of dropping the propensity to postpone responsibilities, specifically among employees whose performance before the introduction of monitoring was not high. The same research points out that monitoring can have negative consequences that reduce productivity in the long term. A study by Kalischko & Riedl (2024) shows that monitoring significantly increases the feeling of privacy invasion and stress, which meanderingly decreases individual productivity. Based on the above, the subsequent hypothesis was put forward:

H3: Monitoring has a positive effect on employee productivity.

### 2.5. The mediating role of morality in examining the relationship among monitoring, productivity, and employee trust

Considering the effects of monitoring on crucial organizational consequences, such as trust and productivity, is essential to handling human resources and producing effective monitoring performance. While appropriately realized monitoring can grow goal clarity and accountability, excessive or unethical monitoring can reduce employee trust and negatively impact their productivity (Tomczak et al., 2018).

Employee morality, which includes ethical standards, values, and principled behavior, can mediate among monitoring, trust, and productivity (Jackson et al., 2012). When morality is high, employees often observe monitoring as reasonable and transparent, which grows trust and motivation to work, and thus productivity (Wenzel et al., 2019). Conversely, with low morality, the same monitoring can be supposed as pressure or control, which decreases trust and productivity (Danaher & Saetra, 2022). In this way, morality functions as a mediator that modifies the strength and direction of monitoring effects.

In the context of trust, the mediating role of morality means that high morality permits monitoring to be interpreted as care and concern for the employee rather than a restrictive regulator (Obeng et al., 2021). Such a framework increases the feeling of security and openness, which leads to stronger mutual trust among employees and management. This explains why in multiple regression models the effects of monitoring on trust become stronger or more significant when morality is included as a mediator.

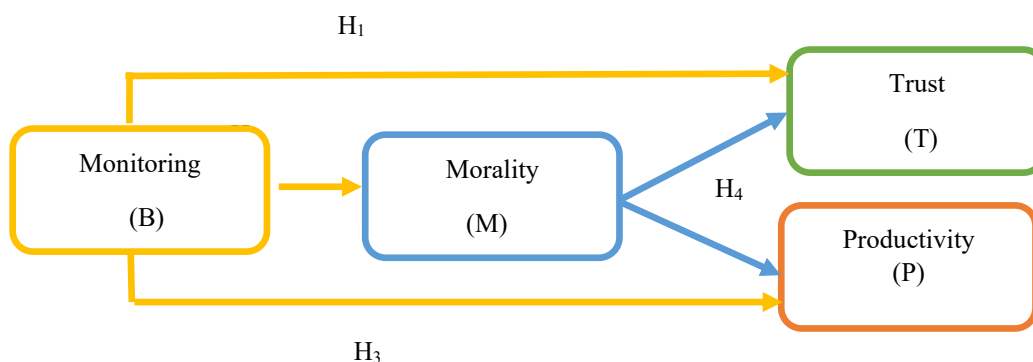
In the domain of productivity, morality improves the positive impact of monitoring (Ibeh et al., 2024). When employees perceive that monitoring is ethical and fair, motivation to achieve goals grows, which is reproduced in better work performance and productivity (Latham, 2023). Contrariwise, low morality can neutralize or reduce the effect of monitoring, as employees observe control as a burden, which reduces engagement and productivity (Camboni & Porcellacchia, 2025). These effects highlight the importance of considering morality when designing monitoring applications in an organization. Based on the above, the subsequent hypothesis was put forward:

H4: Morality increases the effects of monitoring on employee trust and commitment.

### 3. Methodology

In the research model, monitoring (B - boss ware) is an independent variable, trust (T - trust) (H1) and productivity (P - productivity) (H3) are dependent variables, while morality (M - morality) functions as a potential mediator variable (H4) that can strengthen the impact of monitoring on trust and productivity (it is also a dependent variable related to hypothesis H2). This model allows testing hypotheses about the interdependence of key organizational factors.

Figure 1. Research model



Source: Authors

#### 3.1. Applied methods and instruments

For this research, a questionnaire was used that involved four key dimensions: monitoring (B - bossware), trust (T - trust), morality (M - morality), and productivity (P - productivity). The monitoring claims are taken from research by Bunwaree et al. (2025), while the claims for trust were adapted from the study by Zheng et al. (2023). The statements correlated to morality are taken from research by Holderness et al. (2022), while the productivity claims were adapted from the study by Pavanatto et al. (2021). All claims have been translated and modified to the Serbian language, keeping the original meaning, in order to make them understandable and applicable for the target population. Each variable was measured using a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). This approach permits a quantitative valuation

of the subjective experiences of employees and provides a reliable basis for statistical analysis of the links among monitoring, trust, morality, and productivity. The data was collected through self-assessment of respondents, and the questionnaire was spread online among employees from the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Data analysis encompassed descriptive statistics (average and standard deviation), assessment of scale reliability through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as well as correlation and regression analysis (linear and multiple regression) to observe relations among variables. Furthermore, an analysis of the mediation effect of morality was directed to observe the extent to which morality mediates among monitoring and the dependent variables (trust and productivity). This approach permits a systematic check of how monitoring affects crucial features of organizational climate, taking into account the role of trust, morality, and employee productivity.

### 3.2. Sample description

The sample involved 115 respondents from the region of the Republic of Serbia. The demographic structure of the respondents is in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic structure of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	55	48.2%
Female	60	52.2%
<b>Education</b>		
High school	25	21.7%
Applied studies	32	27.8%
University studies	44	38.3%
Master's studies/PhD studies	14	12.2%
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	23	20%
25-34	25	21.7%
35-44	37	32.2%
45-54	19	16.5%
55+	11	9.6%
<b>Employment type</b>		
Full time	19	16.5%
Part time	26	22.6%
Freelance	30	26.1%
Remote	28	24.3%
Hybrid	12	10.4%
<b>Employment sector</b>		
IT	14	12.1%
Finance/banking	24	20.9%
Industry	20	17.4%
Public sector	21	18.3%
Education	16	13.9%
Health sector	9	7.8%
Private sector	11	9.6%
<b>Years of work</b>		
1-3	19	16.5%
4-6	39	33.9%
7-10	28	24.3%
10+	29	25.2%

Source: Authors

From total number of respondents, 52.2% are women and 48.2% are men. Most respondents have completed university studies (38.3%) and belong to the age group of 35-44 years (32.2%). The majority are employed in the financial, public, and industrial sectors, while the majority of respondents have 4-6 years of work experience (33.9%). Table 2 shows the mean values and standard deviation for the variables.

**Table 2.** Mean and standard deviation for variables

Variable	Mean	St dev
<b>B</b>	2.95	1.32
<b>T</b>	3.21	1.27
<b>M</b>	3.37	1.33
<b>P</b>	3.50	1.36

Source: Authors

Descriptive statistics show that variable B has an average value of 2.95 with a standard deviation of 1.32, variable T has an average of 3.21 (SD = 1.27), variable M has an average of 3.37 (SD = 1.33), and variable P has the highest average

value of 3.50 with a standard deviation of 1.36. The results indicate that the respondents generally rated productivity and morality slightly higher than monitoring and trust, while the variations within the responses in all variables are relatively similar. Table 3 shows the reliability coefficients for individual variables.

**Table 3.** Cronbach alpha

Variable	Cronbach Alfa
<b>B</b>	0.92
<b>T</b>	0.81
<b>M</b>	0.78
<b>P</b>	0.72
<b>Total</b>	0.89

Source: Authors

The internal consistency analysis of the scale was performed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient to measure the reliability of individual variables as well as the overall scale. The attained results demonstrate that variable B has excellent reliability ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ), variable T very good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ), while variables M and P show good reliability with  $\alpha$  values of 0.78 and 0.72. The overall Cronbach's alpha for all items is 0.89, which specifies high reliability of the scale as a whole. These results support that the items within each variable provide consistent and reliable data for further analysis.

#### 4. Results

Beforehand, having arranged for hypothesis testing and detailed regression analysis, a correlation analysis was performed to observe the degree of interrelationship among key research variables: monitoring (B), employee trust (T), morality (M), and productivity (P). This analysis delivers basic awareness into how the variables relate to each other, recognizes the direction and strength of the relationship, and assists in considering the probable effects that monitoring can have on organizational consequences. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Correlation

	B	T	M	P
<b>B</b>	1			
<b>T</b>	0.697	1		
<b>M</b>	0.440	0.511	1	
<b>P</b>	0.371	0.528	0.509	1

Source: Authors

Correlation analysis confirms the interrelationships of B, T, M, and P. The results demonstrate a strong positive correlation among B and T ( $r = 0.697$ ), which indicates that when employees perceive monitoring as fair and transparent, their trust in the organization grows. The connection among B and M is moderately positive ( $r=0.440$ ), signifying that quality monitoring contributes to better employee morality, while the connection among B and P is weaker, but still positive ( $r=0.371$ ), which implies that effective monitoring can contribute to higher employee productivity. In addition, T is positively related to both M ( $r=0.511$ ) and P ( $r=0.528$ ), indicating that employees with a higher level of trust show better morality and higher work productivity. The correlation among M and P ( $r=0.509$ ) further supports that employee morality directly contributes to their productivity. Overall, all correlations are positive, with the most noticeable impact of monitoring on trust, highlighting the importance of fair and transparent monitoring in the organization.

In order to examine the direct effects of B on T, M, and P, a regression analysis was conducted. This analysis permits the valuation of the strength and statistical significance of the relationship among the independent variable (B) and the dependent variables (T, M, and P), which provides insight into how monitoring directly affects crucial organizational consequences - employee trust, morality, and productivity. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Regression analysis

Model	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	p-value
B→T	0.49	0.697	< 0.01
B→M	0.19	0.440	<0.05
B→P	0.14	0.371	<0.05

Source: Authors

The results of the directed regression analysis designate significant effects of B on T, M, and P. Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>, which assumed a negative impact of monitoring on trust, was not confirmed, given that the analysis shows a strong and statistically significant positive impact of monitoring on employee trust ( $\beta = 0.697$ ,  $R^2 = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>, which predicted a positive impact of monitoring on employee morality, was confirmed, because the impact is moderate and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.440$ ,  $R^2 = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Also, hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>, which predicted a positive impact of monitoring on employee productivity, was confirmed, although the impact is relatively weaker ( $\beta = 0.371$ ,  $R^2 = 0.14$ ,  $p$

< 0.05). These findings indicate that monitoring can contribute to greater trust and morality of employees, which in synergy has a positive effect on their productivity.

In order to observe in more detail, the interrelationships among the variables and the potential mediating effect of morality (M), multiple linear regression was used. This method allows estimating B on T and P, with the inclusion of M as a mediator variable, thus examining whether morality enhances the effect of monitoring on the dependent variables (trust and productivity). Multiple regression delivers insight into the relative strength of individual forecasters and enables testing of more multifaceted models while simultaneously monitoring for other factors.

**Table 6.** Multiple regression

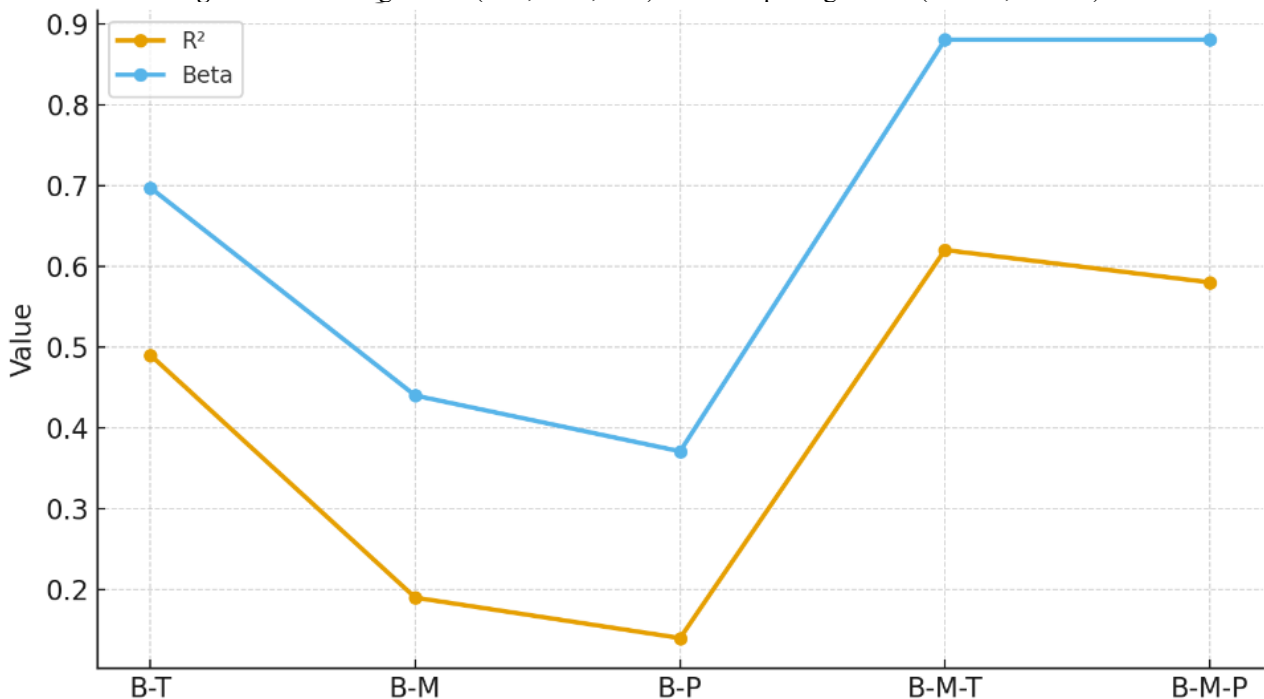
Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	p-value
B→M→T	0.62	0.88	0.052
B→M→P	0.58	0.88	0.111

Source: Authors

Analysis of the mediating effect of morality demonstrates that morality can partially mediate the relationship among monitoring and employee trust. The results of the multiple regression show that, when morality is involved in the model, the effect of monitoring on trust remains positive and approximately at the boundary of statistical significance ( $\beta = 0.88$ ,  $p = 0.052$ ). This implies that morality can improve the way employees observe monitoring, as a higher level of morality contributes to monitoring being understood as reasonable and helpful rather than supervisory or coercive. In this way, morality helps as a mediator that permits monitoring to have a stronger and more positive impact on employee trust.

The mediating effect of morality on the relationship among monitoring and productivity is weaker and statistically insignificant ( $\beta = 0.88$ ,  $p = 0.111$ ). This designates that, in this sample, morality does not play a significant mediating role when it comes to employee productivity, although the direction of the effect remains positive. Such results recommend that the roles of mediators may be precise to different organizational consequences: morality slightly improves the effects of monitoring on trust, while its effect on productivity is not strong enough to be statistically significant. For better understanding, a line diagram is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Linear regression (B-T; B-M; B-P) and multiple regression (B-M-T; B-M-P)



Source: Authors

The line plot demonstrates that the addition of morality in the model leads to a growth in described variance (R<sup>2</sup>), especially in multiple models, showing that the combination of monitoring and morality better describes employee trust and productivity than monitoring alone. These findings are consistent with the mediation effect analysis, according to which hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>, which states that morality increases the effects of monitoring on employee trust and commitment, is partially confirmed. The results show that morality partially mediates the relationship among monitoring and trust, enhancing the positive impact of monitoring on employee trust, while its effect on productivity is not statistically significant. This designates that morality plays a crucial role in strengthening trust through fair and helpful monitoring, although it does not contribute to a significant growth in employee productivity.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that employee monitoring can have a positive effect on trust, morality, and productivity, which strays to a certain extent from the dominant discoveries in contemporary literature. While previous studies often point to the negative consequences of monitoring, especially in terms of trust and morality (Wu & Wang, 2020; Bernstrom & Svare, 2017), our findings suggest that monitoring can have a constructive and motivating effect.

In theoretical backgrounds, monitoring is usually associated with a sense of mistrust, loss of autonomy, and a decrease in psychological safety, which in the long run weakens interpersonal relations and willingness to collaborate. Nevertheless, our results express a strong positive association among monitoring and trust. This finding can be conditioned by the context of the Republic of Serbia, where monitoring is a relatively new phenomenon and where employees perceive monitoring as a signal of professionalization and standardization of work, exclusively when the procedures are clearly clarified and ethically instigated.

Research shows that excessive monitoring can erode morality, creating a sense of dehumanization and distrust (Walter, 2025; Wu & Wang, 2020). However, this research expresses that monitoring can have a positive effect on employee morality, which is in line with the literature that highlights the importance of transparency and fairness in mitigating the negative effects of monitoring (Silva et al., 2023). In the sample of this work, monitoring is interpreted as a signal of organizational justice and professional support, which strengthens the sense of belonging and ethical climate.

When it comes to productivity, the literature is ambivalent; while some authors highlight short-term positive effects (Ko & Baek, 2024), others warn of long-term negative costs due to stress and loss of motivation (Kalischko & Riedl, 2024). The results of this research show that monitoring has a positive, but relatively weak effect on productivity, which suggests that although monitoring can contribute to discipline and focus on tasks, other factors, such as motivation and work climate, probably have a greater effect on long-term results.

Analysis of the mediating role of morality demonstrates that morality partially mediates the relationship among monitoring and trust, while the effect on productivity is not statistically significant. This suggests that morality helps employees interpret monitoring as supportive, but does not by itself increase measured job productivity. The morality reinforces the psychological effect of monitoring on trust, but is not sufficient to directly increase productivity.

The unconventionality of the consequences of this research from the negative effects in the international literature can be understood through the essentials of the context. In the Republic of Serbia, where the formalization of work procedures is still progressing, monitoring can be seen as a sign of modernization and professionalization, not suppression. In addition, the element of transparency in the questionnaire and the involvement of employees in defining the instructions could have formed the perception of monitoring as a partnership rather than punitive, which perhaps contributed to positive consequences. In addition, the type of sample also plays a role, as a higher quantity of employees from sectors such as finance, public, and industrial sectors, where procedures are often structured and uniform, can increase the tolerance for monitoring.

This research settles that the effects of monitoring are not universally negative, but depend on the way of application and the awareness of fairness. While theory often highlights the risks of monitoring, the consequences of this research recommend that, in the context of the Republic of Serbia, monitoring, applied with a high level of transparency and ethical accountability, can become an instrument for building trust and enlightening work culture.

Additionally, the results of the multiple regression designate a significant role of morality as a mediator among monitoring and employee trust. Although morality did not have a statistically significant effect on productivity in this sample, its role in enhancing trust highlights that the emotional and ethical features of an organization play a crucial role in how employees observe monitoring. This recommends that organizations wishing to maximize the potential of digital monitoring must instigate in a culture of trust and moral support, because technical tools alone are not sufficient to achieve optimal productivity and work climate. In this way, employee morality can serve as an enhancer of the positive effects of monitoring.

## 6. Conclusion

The outcomes of this research express that transparent and ethical monitoring can have a positive effect on the trust and morality of employees. Also, monitoring has a positive effect on productivity, whereby high employee morality amplifies these effects. These findings highlight the complexity of the relationship among monitoring, morality, productivity, and trust, thereby contributing to the theoretical understanding of monitoring in the background of organizational behavior.

Theoretically, the results of this research approve that the effects of monitoring are not strictly negative, but depend on the perception of fairness, transparency, and the ethical framework of implementation, thereby contributing to the literature that connects monitoring with psychological and social features of the work climate. In particular, the role of morality as a moderating variable demonstrates that the emotional and ethical context of employees can mitigate the

negative consequences of monitoring and enhance its constructive potential, which expands existing theoretical models on monitoring and morality, trust, and productivity.

Practically, the consequences indicate that organizations in the Republic of Serbia can use monitoring as a tool for improving the working climate, provided that they clearly link the goals and methods of monitoring, involve employees in defining monitoring rules, and focus on work consequences, not micromanagement. Transparent and participatory applications can increase trust, morality, and productivity, while high employee morality further enhances the effects of monitoring on employee trust.

The implications for managers and human resources professionals are particularly applicable to working in digital and hybrid environments, where harmonizing control and autonomy is crucial to maintaining productivity and reducing the jeopardy of stress or burnout. Strategies intended at the development of competences and ethical work culture, and not exclusively at quantitative results, enable a long-term upsurge in employee productivity and strengthening of trust in the organization.

The conclusion is that the research demonstrates that monitoring, when applied with a high level of transparency and ethical responsibility, can become a tool for supporting and developing employees, contributing to a sustainable work climate and organizational competitiveness. These findings highlight the importance of background, employee perceptions, and the role of morality in shaping the effects of monitoring, which signifies a significant influence on both the theory and practice of human resource management.

### 6.1. Limitations

This research has certain limitations. First, the sample of this research was inadequate, to 115 respondents from the territory of the Republic of Serbia, which may limit the oversimplification of the consequences to wider populations or other cultural backgrounds. Second, the research relied on employee self-assessments, which may lead to socially desired responses and subjective effects on results; objective indicators of employee performance were not included. Third, the research strategy was cross-sectional, meaning that data were collected at one point in time. Given the nature of the cross-sectional design, the consequences may reflect current perceptions and context specific to the time of the research, which is exclusively significant in dynamic work surroundings or during periods of adaptation to monitoring. It is necessary to apply a longitudinal design in order to track the effects of monitoring over time and to more precisely observe the long-term interaction among monitoring, trust, morality, and employee productivity. This methodological verdict also emphasizes the importance of contextualizing the results; the effects of monitoring in the Republic of Serbia should be understood taking into account local norms, the perception of transparency, and the ethical organizations framework, because the results of cross-sectional research cannot be automatically widespread to other cultural or institutional frameworks. Fourth, the analyzed variables (trust, morality, productivity) do not include all factors that affect job satisfaction and efficiency, such as organizational culture, stress, leadership, external economic and social factors, as well as individual alterations such as personality or motivation. Fifth, it is possible that ambiguities in the perception of monitoring among respondents additionally affect the final results.

### 6.2. Future research

Future research could use a larger and more diverse sample from dissimilar industries, sectors, and countries in order to check the generalizability of the outcomes and the impact of cultural and sectoral factors on monitoring. The application of a longitudinal design is recommended, which would enable monitoring of changes in monitoring, trust, morality, and productivity over time and a better understanding of cause-and-effect relationships. Also, the enclosure of objective indicators of employee performance, such as key performance indicators, manager ratings, or performance statistics, could syndicate subjective and objective data, thereby enlightening the validity of the outcomes. Future research can further increase the variables, including job satisfaction, employee engagement, stress, motivation, organizational climate, and leadership, in order to better recognize the complex interdependence of factors that shape work performance and employee well-being. Research into the potential ethical and psychological consequences of monitoring on employees is suggested, including long-term effects on morality, creativity, and organizational loyalty.

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