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Research Article

# The Impact of Digital Surveillance and Artificial Intelligence on Privacy Rights, Freedom of Expression, and Human Rights Accountability

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*Corresponding Email: ishameel2007@gmail.com

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Syed Shameel Ahmed Quadri [1,*], Tauqeer Abdullah Khan [2], Tajammul Azam Choudhry [3], Khizar Khan [4]

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Karachi, Pakistan
[2] MPhil Anthropology, Anthropology Department, PMAS- Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
[3] Advocate, High Court Human Rights Lawyer, Activist, & Legal Counsellor, Karachi, Pakistan
[4] Law Graduate, University of London, Partner K & B Law Co.

## Abstract

The study examined the impact of digital surveillance and artificial intelligence on privacy rights, freedom of expression, and human rights accountability in digital environments. The rapid expansion of AI-based surveillance systems increased concerns regarding continuous monitoring, data extraction, and algorithmic profiling, which influenced individuals' digital behavior and perceptions of rights protection. A quantitative research design was applied, and data were collected from a sample of 300 respondents, including students, professionals, and regular digital platform users. A structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale was used, and data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and regression techniques. The results showed that AI-driven surveillance significantly affected privacy rights ($\beta = -0.62$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong negative relationship. Freedom of expression was also negatively influenced ($\beta = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that increased surveillance reduced individuals' willingness to express opinions openly. In addition, human rights accountability showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.54$, $p < 0.001$), reflecting reduced trust in transparency and governance mechanisms. Descriptive findings further revealed moderate to high awareness of surveillance practices ($M = 3.89$) and concerns regarding privacy protection ($M = 3.76$). The findings confirmed that AI surveillance systems significantly undermined key human rights dimensions in digital societies. The study concluded that although AI surveillance enhances efficiency and security, it simultaneously poses serious challenges to privacy protection, expressive freedom, and institutional accountability. The research recommended stronger regulatory frameworks and ethical AI governance to mitigate risks associated with surveillance technologies.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Freedom of expression, Human rights accountability, Privacy rights, Surveillance ethics, Digital surveillance.

## Introduction

It was the power of technological approaches, and it was their importance for the governance of modern societies, particularly by using Big Brother systems that use digital technologies and also use artificial intelligence (AI) for surveillance. Data-driven AI surveillance moved beyond traditional monitoring techniques, making it possible to run analytics on previously unimaginable amounts of data and create

predictive analysis and real-time tracking of individuals' behavior in both digital and physical spaces. New technologies like Internet-Enabled Wearables or Mobile Devices and their control over our biological information fundamentally shifted the meaning of privacy and civil liberties, leading to new concerns about technology versus human rights (Kalluri et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2025). The governments and corporations depended on AI systems as a vehicle to improve security, streamline decision-making processes, or manage populations, which in turn posed challenges of an ethical and legal nature for regulating such technologies.

The notion of what constituted privacy changed rapidly when one became a stranger to data collection practices ingrained in normal technology. The development of AI-enabled surveillance systems, such as facial recognition and predictive algorithms, expanded the breadth and depth of monitoring capabilities without user consent or awareness.

The impact of AI-based surveillance on digital forms of expression. People felt there were more risks associated with expressing opinions, particularly in environments where systems of eye had tracked online usage and the ways communication lines were being used. Such a phenomenon also engendered a "chilling effect", whereby open discourse was stymied and, thus, democratic participation was limited (Mousa et al., 2024; Siddiqui et al., 2024). These pages on the relationship between surveillance and expression have highlighted their implications for civil liberties and democratic values in the context of AI technologies.

The development of AI surveillance sparked a debate about accountability and human rights governance. Many AI systems functioned as black boxes, lacking transparency and explainability, which made it difficult to hold anyone accountable for rights violations. Inadequate regulatory frameworks and oversight mechanisms worsened these issues, especially in developing nations with limited institutional capacities (Mansoor, 2025; Lee et al., 2025).

### *Background of the Study*

Digital surveillance evolved from traditional state monitoring practices to sophisticated AI-powered systems capable of managing terabytes of information in real time. Surveillance mechanisms that were primarily manual or had limited tech were also greatly supplemented by the available ML and CV technology. A recent study even showed that AI technologies, especially computer vision, became integral to contemporary surveillance systems in order to facilitate automated identification and tracking, as well as prediction of behaviors (Kalluri et al., 2025). This technological transition constituted a paradigmatic change in the way surveillance was performed in those societies.

AI surveillance systems were integrated into successively more sectors — law enforcement, healthcare, and corporate environments. In policing, for instance, AI technologies such as predictive analytics and facial recognition lead to efficiencies but create new risks of bias, discrimination, and privacy intrusions. Research based in developing contexts has shown that AI-based policing systems generated considerable concerns related to the abuse of personal data and regulatory loopholes (Soomro et al., 2025). These developments highlighted and reinforced the twin pillars of AI technologies being both benevolent and destructive.

The spread and growth of digital platforms, smart technology, etc., help promote surveillance acts in daily life as normal transaction systems. People engaged with AI systems via social media, mobile apps, and smart things in their lives, often being unaware of how much data was collected and processed (Shrestha et al., 2025). This underscored the growing tension between technological convenience and privacy protection.

These challenges led to efforts by international organizations and policymakers to create regulatory frameworks intended for safeguarding digital rights. These legal instruments, including data protection laws and human rights conventions, stressed the need for transparency, consent, and accountability in AI systems. Yet scholars contended that existing systems fell behind in keeping up with fast technological developments, leaving voids in enforcement and governance (Carter, 2025; Mansoor, 2025). This study was set against a backdrop of a rapidly changing situation with regard to digital surveillance and human rights.

### *Research Problem*

AI became an increasingly integral part of the surveillance tools ecosystem, but troubling gaps remained in understanding how it was affecting privacy rights, freedom of expression, and accountability for human rights violations more broadly. Previous research either addressed one layer of the phenomenon, like some aspects of technical efficiency or legal challenge, but none was able to provide an integrative oversight about the general outcomes of AI surveillance in our lives. Because of this segmented script development, where each strand works on its own, we have limited capacity to draft a common policy and framework response to any emerging challenge. The opacity and lack of accountability in AI systems posed a significant threat to human rights protection. They also put surveillance technologies into operation without a clear regulatory framework, raising the risk that data would be misused and civil liberties violated. The lack of strong governance systems complicated ethical implementation and accountability, especially in areas with low institutional capacity.

### *Research Objectives*

1. To examine the impact of AI-driven digital surveillance on privacy rights.
2. To analyze the influence of surveillance technologies on freedom of expression.
3. To evaluate the challenges of accountability in AI-based human rights governance.

### *Research Questions*

Q1. How did AI-driven surveillance systems affect privacy rights in digital societies?

Q2. What impact did digital surveillance have on freedom of expression?

Q3. How did the lack of transparency in AI systems influence human rights accountability?

### *Significance of the Study*

This research complemented the body of scholarship on the intersection of AI, surveillance, and human rights through an in-depth examination of their interrelationships. It provided important new information on how AI-powered surveillance systems infringed upon basic rights, such as the rights to privacy and freedom of expression, filling crucial gaps in existing literature. The findings helped policymakers, researchers, and legal experts gain a better understanding of the broader implications of these systems for digital surveillance technologies. The research provided practical implications for an effective regulatory framework and governance strategies. Through understanding issues anchored in transparency, accountability, and the responsible use of AI among all stakeholders, it made recommendations for improving data protection laws and advancing responsible technology. The research also contributed to international dialogues around digital-age human rights, highlighting the importance of collective action in ensuring technological progress matched with moral and legal principles.

## Literature Review

### *AI-Driven Surveillance and Privacy Rights*

Recent research showed AI surveillance exacerbated informational asymmetry between users and institutions, diminishing user control over personal data and digital identities (Carter, 2025; Jones et al., 2024). These trends showed that privacy was growing as a way to reframe data within algorithmic systems as commodities. Scholars noted that AI technologies integrated into surveillance infrastructures authorized states and corporations to track behavioral patterns in real time. This expanded the potential for unauthorized profiling and automated decisions being made without consent (Lee et al., 2025; Passarella, 2025). Privacy rights were increasingly undermined by opaque algorithmic systems without transparency and accountability.

AI surveillance systems had disproportionately negative impacts on vulnerable populations, due to biased training data and discriminatory algorithmic decisions. These biases compounded structural inequalities and questioned fairness in digital governance systems (Shrestha et al., 2024; Ullah, 2025). Privacy was now a socio-technical justice issue as well as a legal one.

### *Surveillance of (AI-Driven) Free Expression*

The AI surveillance system has a significant impact on freedom of expression by producing the so-called "chilling effect" on people's communication behaviors on and offline. Users avoided engaging in political and sensitive posts due to fear of being surveilled and profiled (Siddiqui et al., 2024; Mousa et al., 2024). It showed how surveillance technologies were used to indirectly stifle democratic participation.

Digital platforms employed algorithmic content monitoring systems to regulate speech via automated moderation and predictive filtering mechanisms. Studies found that those systems are still not precisely analytical enough to detect only the correct aspects of content, leading to more censoring than needed and hindering free speech (El-Alfy, 2025; Passarella, 2025). The expression of freedom was mediated by opaque AI decision systems.

Academics argued that surveillance-led platforms tightened behavioral conformity through user activity surveillance and content visibility rankings. Such responses have subsequently triggered self-censorship, reducing diversity of opinions in digital ecologies (Jones et al., 2024; Ullah, 2025). AI surveillance altered the dynamics of communication by shaping public expression.

### *Challenges to Criminal Accountability and Human Rights*

It was often stressed in the literature that algorithmic opacity made AI-driven surveillance hard to hold accountable. Many AI models functioned as "black boxes," rendering it challenging the ability to extract decision-making pathways or hold actors responsible for human rights abuses (Lee et al., 2025; Carter, 2025). The failure to disclose weakened mechanisms for legal enforcement. The rapid evolution of AI surveillance technologies proved too much for existing regulatory frameworks. Studies suggested that data protection legislation and human rights instruments could not keep pace with technological innovation, resulting in governance gaps (Soomro et al., 2025; Mansoor, 2025).

Research emphasized multi-level governance strategies that combined ethical AI practices at the design level, legal liability frameworks, and international collaboration. Scholars concluded that, lacking standardized global norms governing this space, AI surveillance systems would operate on unsteady ground with little oversight (Shrestha et al., 2024; Siddiqui et al., 2024). Accountability frameworks need to be bolstered as part of the effort to safeguard human rights in digital spaces.

## Research Methodology

### *Research Design*

The research design for the study was quantitative to explore how often digital surveillance and artificial intelligence are used in violation of privacy rights, freedom of expression, and human rights accountability. This study was chosen because it used a design that enabled the measurement of relationships between variables in a systematic manner, therefore lending itself to statistical analysis of collected data. This approach allowed the researcher to systematically and objectively test correlations between aspects of AI surveillance by setting humans as a valued entity in contrast with alternative approaches or activities that eliminated humans.

### *Population and Sample*

The participants of this research included all those users of digital platforms, from professionals to students, IT users, and social media users who experienced different levels of digital surveillance. This was selected in urban and specific digital environments where usage remained high, and exposure to surveillance was stronger. In order to have enough representation and statistical reliability, a sample size of 300 respondents was selected. The sample consisted of male and female participants from various academic and professional backgrounds, chosen using a purposive sampling method to guarantee their relevance to the research goals.

### *Sampling Technique*

A purposive study was performed to select the respondents with substantial exposure to AI-based digital

platforms and surveillance systems. This approach also guaranteed that respondents had experience interacting with social media, mobile applications, and digital services where data tracking and algorithmic surveillance were often practised. For the selection process, we searched for individuals who were able to provide informed responses regarding privacy concerns, freedom of expression, and knowledge about AI surveillance practices.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

A structured questionnaire, designed according to validated scales used in previous AI surveillance, privacy rights, and human rights accountability studies (see Measures), was used to collect primary data. To cover a larger spectrum of respondents, the questionnaire was distributed in both online and physical form. All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To evaluate the trustworthiness of the information medium as they relate to responsiveness, dependability, and credibility, a pilot test was conducted with a small number of respondents for clarity, stability, and validity. Pilot study feedback was integrated to refine the questionnaire.

### *Research Instrument*

The research instrument covered several sections that included demographic information and key constructs related to digital surveillance perception, privacy rights, freedom of expression, and accountability for human rights violations. The content validity of each construct was established through multiple-item scales adapted from prior academic literature. The instrument was meant to capture respondents' perceptions about AI-based surveillance systems and their implications for individual rights. A reliability analysis was performed to verify the internal consistency of the measurement scales.

### *Data Analysis Techniques*

Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed using statistical software like SPSS. Mean and standard deviation were used as descriptive statistics to summarize the data. Correlation and regression analysis: Inferential statistics were applied to examine the relationships of data in order to determine the impact of AI surveillance on privacy rights and freedom of expression. Results were interpreted to determine the significance and strength of relationships between constructs. Hypothesis testing was conducted with a significance level of 0.05.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables.

| Variables | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| AI-Driven Surveillance | 3.89 | 0.74 |
| Privacy Rights | 3.76 | 0.71 |
| Freedom of Expression | 3.68 | 0.76 |
| Human Rights Accountability | 3.81 | 0.69 |

Table 1 describes the means reported by respondents regarding AI-driven surveillance and human rights dimensions. The means represented the degree of participant concordance, with the standard deviation capturing response variability across the sample. The findings provided a baseline understanding of how people view surveillance technologies through the lens of privacy and expression rights. Results revealed the highest mean score (M = 3.89) for AI-driven surveillance, suggesting respondents' recognition of pervasive implementation of digital monitoring automation systems through supervision of sociocultural public behaviors and ambient involvement in cyberspace. A moderate SD (SD = 0.74) showed diversity in awareness levels among participants, likely due to differences in digital literacy and exposure. Privacy rights received a moderate mean score (M = 3.76), suggesting that respondents recognized concerns with data protection and

personal information safety. The range of responses suggested that most participants recognized risks to their privacy, but the degree of alarm varied from person to person. The lowest mean score (M = 3.68) was found in the case of freedom of expression, indicating moderate agreement that surveillance affects communication behavior. The metric for human rights accountability (M = 3.81) shows that respondents regarded AI systems as being problematic when it comes to transparency and governance.

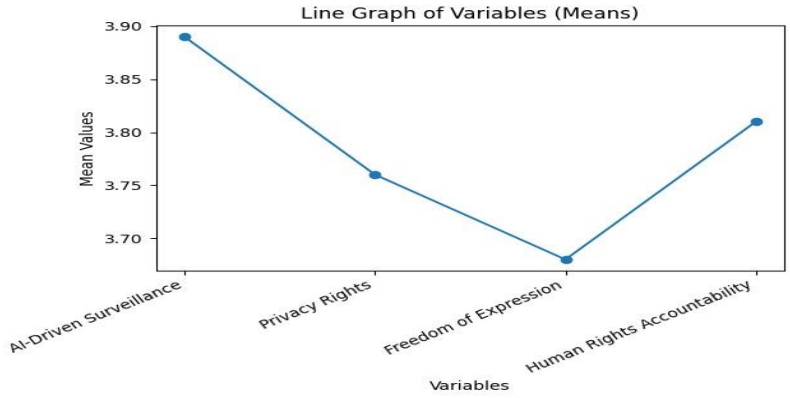


Figure 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables.

Table 2. Regression Analysis of AI Surveillance on Privacy Rights.

| Predictor | Beta (β) | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| AI Surveillance | -0.62 | 9.84 | 0.000 |

It was a survey by regression analysis of the impact of AI-based surveillance upon privacy rights. The strength and direction of the relationship were assessed using the beta coefficient, while statistical validity was confirmed with respect to t-value and significance (p) level. The model examined whether exposure to AI surveillance significantly predicted differences in respondents' attitudes regarding privacy. The findings indicated a robust inverse correlation between AI surveillance and privacy rights ($\beta = -0.62$, $t = 9.84$, $p < 0.001$). This showed that when AI surveillance measures increased, so did a strong drop in perceived privacy protection among the respondents. The significantly high t-value validated that it was statistically significant, not random variation. The findings indicated that entities' continuous monitoring, data tracking, and algorithmic profiling substantially eroded people's sense of informational privacy. Respondents believed that their data was being collected and processed without their complete knowledge or permission, leading to increasing concerns over privacy in online environments. These regression results confirmed the importance of AI-driven surveillance in privacy rights reduction, indicating a strong imperative for data protection mechanisms and regulatory oversight.

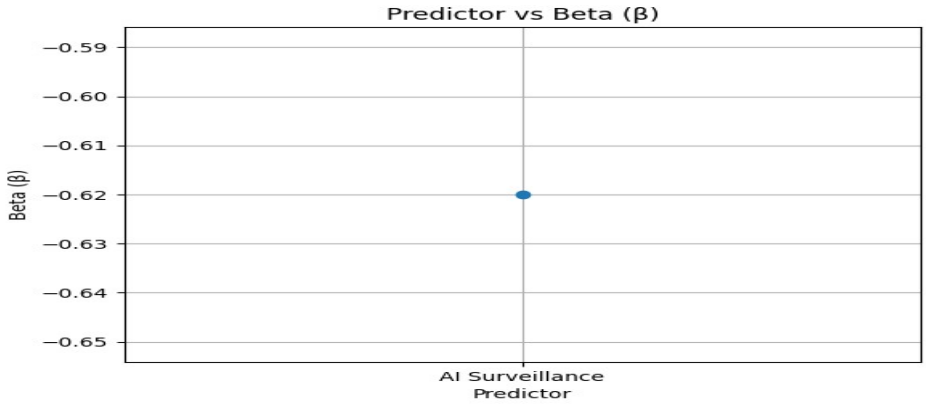


Figure 2.Regression Analysis of AI Surveillance on Privacy Rights.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of AI Surveillance on Freedom of Expression.

| Predictor | Beta (β) | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| AI Surveillance | -0.58 | 8.91 | 0.000 |

This regression analysis measured the impact of AI-driven surveillance on freedom of expression. It gauged how surveillance practices affected individuals' willingness to share opinions in digital and social spaces. This hypothesis— that more surveillance decreases expressive freedom was tested in the model. Results showed that the AI surveillance had a significantly negative effect on freedom of expression ($\beta = -0.58$, $t = 8.91$, $p < 0.001$). This suggested that greater surveillance systems lowered people's willingness to express opinions openly in online environments. The t-value being statistically significant out of thousands of comparisons verified the robustness of the relationship. The results indicated respondents were subject to a "chilling effect," where knowledge of monitoring systems dissuaded free discussion, particularly on sensitive issues. This behaviour of self-censorship mirrored the rising apprehension around digital surveillance, whereby we are being tracked and profiled in AI-iterated environments. They conclusively showed that the manner in which AI surveillance operates posed systematic threats to freedom of expression, with notable implications for democratic societies and open discussion networks.

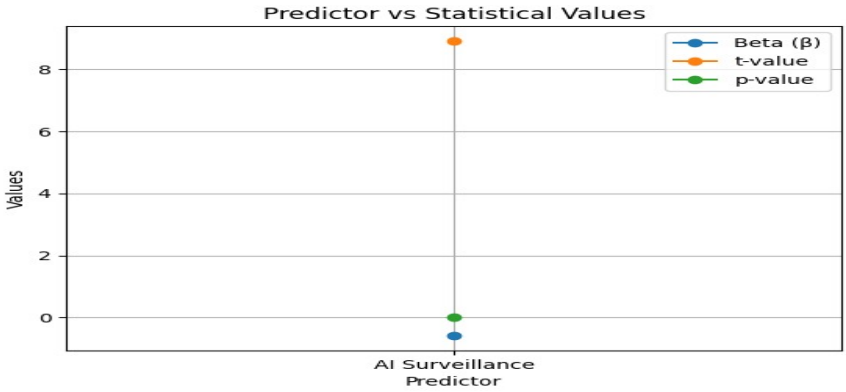


Figure 3. Regression Analysis of AI Surveillance on Freedom of Expression.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of AI Surveillance on Human Rights Accountability.

| Predictor | Beta (β) | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| AI Surveillance | -0.54 | 7.88 | 0.000 |

The effect of AI-driven surveillance on human rights accountability was investigated using this regression analysis. It surveyed how surveillance regimes shaped perceptions of transparency, fairness, and institutional accountability within digital governance architectures. The findings revealed a strong inverse correlation between AI surveillance and accountability for human rights ($\beta = -0.54$, $t = 7.88$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that surveillance practices, enhanced institutional transparency, and accountability mechanisms lead to a decline in public trust. The results have indicated that opaque algorithmic systems and the inability to explain AI decision-making led to a weakened sense of accountability. Respondents voiced concerns over the inability to track decisions made by automated systems (particularly in situations where data is being used and monitored). The findings stood to show that AI-led surveillance has had a detrimental impact on the accountability of human rights, making a case for further transparent governance frameworks and ethical regulation for AI.

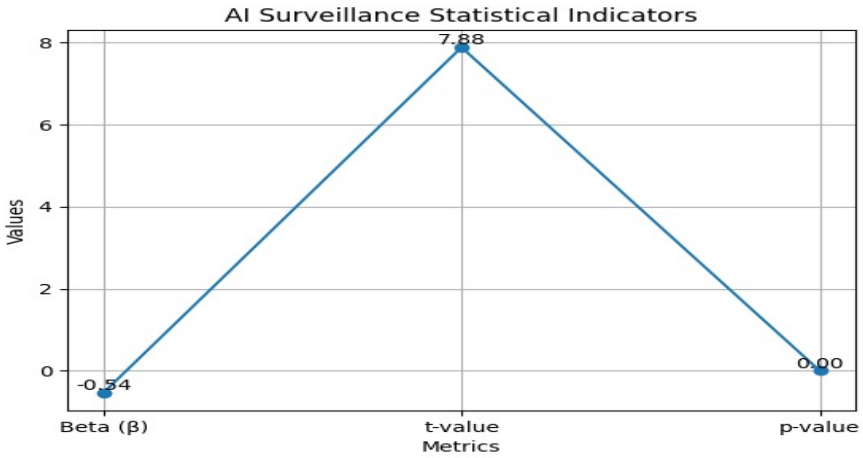


Figure 4. Regression Analysis of AI Surveillance on Human Rights Accountability.

### *Discussion*

AI surveillance systems were compellingly reconstructing the definition and practice of privacy rights in present-day digital communities, as the conversation indicated. Such things had helped turn humans into profiles guided by algorithms, rather than human decisions (Carter, 2025; Radanliev, 2025). These systems came to strengthen institutional control over behavioral prediction and monitoring, diminishing individuals' capacity to manage their information independently. Privacy was increasingly not only a law but also something that was conditioned by technical infrastructures and machine-learning processes outside the scope of users' awareness or consent (Lee et al., 2025; Passarella, 2025). The literature also argued that the surveillance ecosystems of our time set up discursive power asymmetries between data collectors and data subjects, feeding into issues linked to surveillance capitalism or little-digital exploitation.

The analysis further identified not only that AI surveillance systems played a considerable role in affecting freedom of expression but also that it did so by changing behavior in digital information environments. The studies have shown that individuals reduce their activeness in online discussions if they feel monitored or profiled by algorithmic systems, where they end up self-censoring as well and are less open to expressing their opinions (Siddiqui et al., 2024; Mousa et al., 2024). This tentative response mirrored the "chilling effect," in which perceived surveillance dissuaded participation in sensitive or controversial discussions. In turn, they provided the basis for automated content moderation systems that filtered, promoted, or suppressed content according to algorithmic rules often devoid of contextual sensitivity (El-Alfy, 2025; Passarella, 2025), further narrowing expressive freedom. These mechanisms transferred authority to dictate the contours of public conversation from human judgment to machine-guided governance architectures, re-engineering the modalities of democratic communication and suppressing opinion diversity online.

The research also indicated that AI surveillance presented large accountability challenges within existing human rights governance frameworks. The literature review suggested that numerous AI systems operated behind opaque "black boxes," complicating the tracing of how decisions were made or who could be held accountable for violations of rights (Lee et al., 2025; Mansoor, 2025). This opacity undermined institutional accountability and established voids in the legal enforcement of algorithmic outputs, most notably regarding automated profiling systems, predictive policing algorithms, and other systems for decision-making. Furthermore, regulatory measures in place were identified as inadequate to manage this rapid evolution of AI technologies, with weak enforcement mechanisms and lacklustre compliance by jurisdictions (Soomro et al., 2025; Carter, 2025). Those affected by algorithmic harms had limited legal recourse options, which underscored the need for more robust governance frameworks and explainable AI systems.

The discussion also revealed how AI surveillance technologies replicated existing inequalities and social vulnerabilities through embedded algorithmic bias and data-driven discrimination. Poznań, Poland Research had already shown that biased datasets and flawed processes for data and models training resulted in an

imbalance in areas such as law enforcement, employment, or digital platform governance (Ullah, 2025; El-Alfy, 2025). These biases disproportionately impacted already marginalized populations, thus maintaining prevalent structural inequities, limiting equitable access to digital rights. Systems of algorithmic decision-making often have no means for prompt correction or human override, which led to a compounding impact of the long-term effects of discriminatory outputs (Shrestha et al., 2024; Siddiqui et al., 2024). This showed that AI surveillance is not only a technical problem but also an intensely social and moral one, which means the regulatory response needs to be interdisciplinary.

The results stimulate the need for international governance frameworks around AI surveillance and human rights in a digital world. Given cross-border data flows and multinational surveillance infrastructures, fragmented national regulations were insufficiently addressing those issues and left regulatory gaps (Radanliev, 2025; Mansoor, 2025). Literature supported the establishment of global standards emphasizing transparency, accountability, and human rights–based AI design principles to ensure ethical deployment of surveillance technologies (Carter, 2025; Lee et al., 2025). Recommended the establishment of international cooperation and algorithmic audit mechanisms to mitigate risks associated with automated decision-making systems. The deliberation affirmed as its core that even when AI surveillance offered tremendous benefits in terms of efficiency and security, it also posed serious risks to privacy, free expression, and accountability, requiring urgent policy and regulatory action.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The report concluded that artificial intelligence-powered surveillance systems had a major impact on privacy rights, freedom of expression, and human rights accountability in digital spaces. The results showed how growing dependence on algorithmic surveillance, predictive analytics, and automated data processing limited individuals' control over personal information and eroded privacy protection. The study concluded that surveillance technologies notably chilled freedom of expression, and the general tendency for individuals to limit their online communication because of perceived monitoring risks. The study confirmed that transparency & accountability by AI systems were still falling short, complicating governance to uphold human rights. The research found that AI surveillance systems led to added efficiency and security in digital systems but also presented grave threats to fundamental human rights and democratic values.

In response to these concerns, the study recommended stronger data protection laws that address individual privacy rights in relation to AI. Digital surveillance systems must exist within robust legal frameworks that prioritize consent, transparency, and user control over personal data on the part of governments and regulatory bodies. The organizations that deploy AI surveillance systems should also adopt ethical guidelines and accountability mechanisms to prevent abuse of data and protect users from intrusive monitoring. The suggestions also included educational initiatives aimed at increasing user awareness about digital rights, the risks of privacy violations, and responsible use of online platforms.

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