



## Navigating Security Versus Privacy Issues in the Use of AI-Based Surveillance Systems in Anambra State, Nigeria

William Nwachukwu Ozuluonye

Department of Pastoral/Communication Studies, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1379-9998>

**Corresponding author:** [frozuluonyew@gmail.com](mailto:frozuluonyew@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** In today's world, artificial intelligence (AI) technology is permeating every sector with impressive smartness. It is also creating new challenges that signal the limitation of the technology. Despite the immense contributions of AI-based surveillance systems (ABSSs) in the area of national security, they still have risk of infringing on the privacy rights of individuals. This constitutes one of the existential problems in Anambra State.

**Objective:** This study explored this dilemma of the conflicting demands of security and privacy in the use of ABSSs in Anambra State.

**Method:** Google form survey method was used to collate primary data from the sample population of 384 citizens. Data analysis was done using frequency and percentage tables.

**Results:** The findings of the study revealed that majority of the citizens desire the adoption of ABSSs in the state, but are equally worried about the possible violation of their privacy rights.

**Conclusion:** Although the citizens desire the adoption of ABSSs by the government to foster security, there is need to checkmate the adoption and use of ABSSs to forestall privacy violations.

**Unique Contribution:** This research uniquely contributes policy-relevant evidence by demonstrating the coexistence of public support for AI-driven security and concern for privacy rights, thereby informing the design of balanced, privacy-conscious surveillance policies in Anambra State and similar contexts.

**Key Recommendation:** The study recommended that stakeholders should work in collaboration to achieve ABSSs that are privacy-friendly in Anambra State.

**Key words:** security, privacy rights, surveillance, ethical principles



## **INTRODUCTION**

Security remains an existential and fundamental concept in every human society, shaping both the stability of governance and the well-being of citizens. Its presence fosters social order, economic development, and public confidence, while its absence generates fear, instability, and distrust in state institutions. In the socio-political context of Anambra State, security has increasingly become a critical benchmark for evaluating effective governance. This is largely due to the persistent experiences and perceptions of insecurity, including criminal activities, which have heightened public demand for proactive and innovative security measures (Omu-Ngebo, et al., 2024).

The responsibility of ensuring security primarily rests with the state, and citizens often hold government accountable for any lapses in this regard (Nwafor, et al., 2025). Consequently, the growing complexities of crime and security threats in contemporary society have necessitated the exploration of advanced technological solutions. Among these, artificial intelligence (AI)-driven surveillance systems-such as facial recognition, predictive policing tools, and automated monitoring technologies-have emerged as powerful instruments for crime detection, prevention, and control (Njoku, 2024). These AI-based surveillance systems (ABSSs) offer the potential to enhance situational awareness, improve response time, and strengthen law enforcement capabilities in ways that traditional methods cannot (Nwafor, & Onwubere, 2019).

However, the deployment of ABSSs is not without significant ethical, legal, and social concerns. Central among these is the issue of privacy. While such technologies may improve security outcomes, they simultaneously pose risks to individual privacy rights through constant monitoring, data collection, and potential misuse of personal information (Onwe, et al., 2017). This creates a fundamental tension between two core democratic values: the collective need for security and the individual right to privacy. In contexts where regulatory frameworks and data protection mechanisms are still evolving, such as in many parts of Nigeria, this tension becomes even more pronounced (Aligwe, et al., 2018).

In Anambra State, the increasing interest in leveraging technology to combat insecurity has sparked important public discourse regarding the ethical limits and governance of surveillance systems. Citizens are becoming more aware not only of the benefits of these technologies but also of their potential to infringe on civil liberties (Ezike, et al., 2016). This growing awareness underscores the need for a balanced approach that ensures that security interventions do not come at the expense of fundamental human rights.

Security and privacy are both indispensable to human dignity and societal progress, and neither should be pursued to the absolute detriment of the other. Therefore, governments, policymakers, and other stakeholders must adopt prudent, transparent, and accountable strategies in deploying AI-based surveillance technologies. Such strategies should incorporate legal safeguards, ethical guidelines, and public engagement to ensure that the use of ABSSs aligns with democratic principles and public expectations.



Against this backdrop, this study examines the complex interplay between security imperatives and privacy concerns in the adoption of AI-based surveillance systems in Anambra State. Specifically, it seeks to provide empirical insights into citizens' perceptions and attitudes toward these technologies, with a view to informing policies that balance technological innovation with the protection of individual rights.

In order to achieve this objective, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the public perception of ABSSs in Anambra State?
2. Where lies the balance between security demands and privacy rights in the adoption of ABSSs in Anambra State?
3. What are the challenges of adopting ABSSs in Anambra State?

## **METHODOLOGY**

Anambra State has an estimated population of 6,358,311 inhabitants (NaijaDetails, 2025) and it was used as the population of study. Krejcie and Morgan Table was used to identify the sample size of 384. Questionnaire was then shared through google form to the sample population chosen with volunteer response method. Primary data was then collated from the respondents based on the research questions, and analyzed using percentage and frequency tables.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theory of panopticism provided the framework for this study. The theory of panopticism propounded by Foucault is best understood in its historical context. One of the significant events that shaped the 18th century thought process was the rise in capitalist economy and the spiral effect it had on the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class (Manokha, 2018). The powerful had a need for principles and structures of control to keep their subjects subdued, obedient and productive. In that scenario, Bentham drew a lot of attention with his utilitarian thought and panopticon imagery which illustrates how one individual- the invisible eye- who is powerful by his position, controls and disciplines all the inmates in the panoptic structure. The impression of being continuously watched propelled the inmates to model their behaviour according to the mind of the one at the control tower without any external force. Hence, the theory of panopticism states that it is not the "permanence of being watched" that matter for the exertion and functioning of power but the internalization of "the omnipresence of the inspector" by the subjects (Bashir, 2021). The major criticism of panoptic theory is that it adopts a rigid structure of control and leaves no room for the evaluation and improvement of the powerful observer at the panoptic tower (Rathbone, 2022). The theory relates to surveillance especially in the digital world of today where the presence of CCTV cameras, ABSSs and the likes are symbolic of the ever present gaze of the inspector. Panopticism was, therefore, chosen in this study for a deeper understanding of the ABSSs and how they affect the privacy of the surveilled subjects.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Security

Security is a concept with a far reaching relevance that is felt in every facet of human existence. It is traced to the Latin word *se-curitas* literally meaning the state of being free from anxiety (Ozcan, 2023). Security connotes the freedom and stability of an individual to live and pursue his goal in a threat-free environment. Traditionally, the definition of security has tilted more towards the needs of the state over that of the individual person. The argument is that any society that fails to prioritize its defense will crumble at the attack of its enemies (Kissinger, Schmidt, & Huttenlocher, 2022). This is based on the realists' assumption that in a well secured state, the well-being and stability of the citizens are guaranteed (Ozcan, 2023). This perception of security, which Degaut (2015) calls "a realist construct of security" (p. 3), lavishly hypes the fortification of the military as the principal determinant of a secure state and its citizens. It emphasizes the national dimension of security over other aspects of human engagements. The United Nations Development Programme, however, initiates a change of focus from national to personal security. Human security, in the contemporary understanding, represents a re-conceptualization of security in a fundamental manner to highlight its "people-oriented, multidimensional, interconnected, and universal" (Richard & Deepayan, 2006, p. 5) significance. The implication is that beyond what one may identify as objective, national or state security, the subjective sense of security which is formed from the daily experiences of the individual citizens is of paramount importance, and it lends significance to the expectations of the citizens for more technologically advanced approach to the security challenges in Anambra State.

### Concept of AI-Based Surveillance

The idea of keeping watch over one's environment is as old as man. Towers and similar security structures in the history of ancient cities provide evidence that surveillance is not a neologism in the study of human security. According to Manish (2017 cited in Thomsen, 2019), surveillance is defined as the monitoring of an individual or a group of persons in a systematic and sustained manner. While Fuchs (2011) presents economic and state surveillance as the two key issues that affect people all over the world, Bellaby (2012) elucidates the encompassing nature of state surveillance which cover "a wide range of activities from CCTV cameras to covert surveillance to dataveillance and datamining" (p. 2). The watchful eye of surveillance focuses on the identity, destination, relationship and activities of its target to mine and analyse information for various purposes including medical, economic, and political.

ABSSs "use computer vision, machine learning, and IoT sensors to automatically monitor, analyse and respond to activities in real time" (Al-Atwi, Alkhaibari, Al-Malki, Al-Juhani, Shtiewi, 2025, p. 472). ABSSs have become indispensable tools in the area of automatic threat detection, management of smart cities, and the maintenance of individual security in modern states (Fuchs, 2011). They facilitate the gathering of information about the subject population which empowers the state in collaboration with technology companies to exercise its control over the people and also enhance security and good governance. In these views about surveillance one can perceive its covert tendency to intrude into peoples' privacy in its process of mining information for security. Manish, however, argues that surveillance is a neutral concept and it only acquires an ethical undertone when the issues



of justification, means, and proportionality are considered for a particular surveillance instance (cited in Thomsen, 2019). Surveillance is an important component in security control system of any state because it is an expression of vigilance which is aimed at providing the observer with the intelligence needed for security maintenance of a state.

Security-oriented surveillance can be accomplished principally by a human agent on a very limited time, spatial and content capacity. Artificial intelligence technology, however, has expanded the horizon of surveillance beyond imagination making mass surveillance as Fuchs opines “a distinctive and consequential feature of our time” (Fuchs, 2011, p. 113). Surveillance, hence resonates with the panoptic gaze which according to Foucault seeks to accomplish threefold objectives of control, supervision and correction of the subjects under watch (cited in Raine, 2024). The connection between surveillance and the theory of panopticism propounded by Foucault is not only historical but also an invitation to be critical in one’s approach to modern surveillance. If the emphasis of panoptic theory is on discipline, correction and control, modern surveillance systems must be more positive-framed and have regard for the ethical principles especially as it concerns the privacy rights of the subjects being monitored.

### **Privacy**

Privacy is a fundamental human value that is not all inherited by people from birth. It is one of those values children learn gradually from family members and wider society. Its inclusion in the declaration of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) speaks of its international relevance. According to ICCPR declaration on privacy rights:

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks (ICCPR, art. 17 cited in Humble, 2020, p. 2).

This Articulation of the right to privacy, no doubt, reflects the value people cherish in some specific circumstances of their lives as well as the value they sometimes neglect completely. In a digital world of today it might be pertinent to re-echo the critical question posed by Humble on whether it is still possible to keep oneself private. The advancement in technology, as it were, has pulled down some of the protective walls that shielded safe zones where individuals once could be alone and safeguard personal information that is reserved from others. Yet in this challenging technological world, Russell (2019) insists that privacy should not be compromised. Technology is at the service of the human person and if privacy is a value to the human person, then privacy enhancing technologies are definitely realizable. Solvo (2008 cited in Floridi, 2023) agrees with the preservation of the privacy rights because it is essential for building social cohesion among the citizens of a given state, and also for consolidating human security.

Privacy, at the same time, cannot be taken in isolation without reference to the genuine needs of the wider society. This is vividly portrayed in Solvo’s position that; “the value of privacy must be determined on the basis of its importance to society, not in terms of individual rights” (cited in



Humble, 2020, p. 4). A completely subjectivised privacy that hinders the achievement of societal goals has metamorphosed into a social nuisance.

The concept of privacy right has a universal relevance, but what actually constitute the private domains for each individual person depends of his unique circumstance. In this sense, Solvo avers that privacy does not have universal value. This is in consonance with Nissenbaum's theory of "contextual integrity" which places privacy in individuals' contexts, and emphasizes the observance of the norms of appropriateness of information and their proper flow for the maintenance of privacy. (Nissenbaum cited in Proferes, 2022, p. 82). In the context of this study, the implication is that the general discussion on the proper management of security demands and privacy concerns using ABSSs in Anambra State will be incomplete without adequate consideration of the perspective of the citizens whose unique sense of security and privacy is shaped by their sociocultural context.

### **The Security Privacy Debate**

The drive for technological innovation is enhanced by the numerous benefits it has brought to the doorstep of humanity (Akpobo & Nwafor 2013). Russell's observation, that "a compassionate and jubilant use of humanity's cosmic endowments sounds wonderful but we also have to reckon with the rapid rate of innovation in the malfesance sector" (Russell, 2019, p. 103), point to some form of dialectics arising from the good and bad use of technology. The use of surveillance in governance is not new. Feldstein (2019) opines that "governments have legitimate reasons to undertake surveillance that is not rooted in a desire to enforce political repression and limit individual freedoms" (p. 9). Traditionally, surveillance was mainly accomplished by human agents with great limitations in terms of coverage and impact. The advancement in technology has opened new perspectives to the issue of surveillance and its unintended outcomes (Nwafor & Odoemelum 2012). Consequently, the negative impact of surveillance has become more glaring, especially its violation of the privacy rights of the citizens. The society must, like Lennox (2020) hinted, "grapple with the dilemma of preserving people's privacy and ownership of their data" (p. 74) without impeding the valuable contributions of machine learning algorithms especially in the area of human security.

The debate on the adoption of ABSSs has tilted more on the extent of adoption and the mechanism of control than on its outright rejection. The immense relevance of ABSSs in the fight against terrorism and other forms of criminality is indisputable. But it is also important to note that many governments engage in indiscriminate surveillance of their citizens for other purposes other than the common interest of the citizens. For Feldstein (2019), the citizens have a grave obligation to, first of all, determine the structure and priority of their government in order to assess whether it will exploit AI-based technology to manipulate and oppress them. He further listed some key questions for such crucial evaluation thus: "1. Is there an existing pattern of human right violation? 2. Are there strong rule of law traditions and independent institutions of accountability?" (p. 9). Feldstein's argument is that governments who fail the good governance test should not be allowed to adopt ABSSs because there is great probability that they will use it without ethical considerations.

The tendency to misuse ABSSs could be linked to the concept of surveillance itself because the idea of monitoring, or a structure that creates the internalized impression of the presence of an invisible eye, is fundamentally offensive to privacy. But because of the benefits ascribed to surveillance, scholars like Laufer and Wolfe (cited in Buck, Dineu & Anaraky, 2022) argue that privacy calculus can be used to manage the trade-offs between the risks and benefits of information disclosure. In the



use of ABSSs, security becomes a benefit for which disclosure of personal information to the state could be considered. That point at which an individual considers the disclosure of his personal information is the point of consent. It has become so blurred in ABSSs that the individual's consent is often not sought at all for the mining, storage and usage of his data.

Singh (2024), Anibueze and Nwafor (2011) emphasizes the involvement of all the stakeholders - governments, developers, organizations and the citizens - in the application of ABSSs if it is to have a strong ethical foundation. The delicate task which the stakeholders have to accomplish will require, as Kareem (2023) observed, a rethinking of the traditional "approach to data ownership and control as well as exploring modern technologies such as centralized data storage and privacy-preserving AI algorithms" (p. 27).

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

A study was conducted by Fontes, Hohma, Corrigan, and Lutge (2022) on "AI-powered surveillance systems: Why we might need them and how we want them". It employed conceptual analysis to interrogate the rationale behind ABSSs in public places with particular reference to healthcare and law enforcement sectors. The study examined two cases that enhance the identification and tracking of individuals for medical and security purposes (the contact tracing applications which many governments used during Covid-19 pandemic and the highly contested facial recognition technology) among others. It then provided a three dimensional framework for the effective assessment of the potentials and threats of ABSSs; the function dimension, the consent dimension, and the societal dimension which "frames vulnerabilities and the impacts of the increased empowerment of established political regimes through new means to control populations based on data surveillance" (p. 2). The study concludes by highlighting transparency as the key principle that will ensure the proper management of the potentials and threats of ABSSs.

Bodimani (2025) also did a study on "AI-powered surveillance vs privacy rights: Striking the right balance". He explored both the helpful and harmful functions of the highly contested technology by adopting a comparative approach to multiple responses on the use of ABSSs. The study discovered that there is a great need for effective regulatory framework to maintain the ethical use of ABSSs without jeopardizing the privacy rights of the citizens. It proposed data governance as a pivotal element for actualizing the right balance between the demand of security and that of privacy in the use of ABSSs in today's society. It also emphasized the need to employ the "human-in-the-loop models" (p. 4) of ABSSs for checkmating privacy infringements.

A study was also done by Mosa, Barhoom, Alhabbash, Harara, Abu-Nasser, and Abu-Naser (2024) on "AI and ethics in surveillance: Balancing security and privacy in a digital world". The authors undertook a systematic literature review in its approach to the security privacy debate in the use of ABSSs. They proposed strengthening regulatory frameworks, promoting ethical design, ensuring transparency and accountability, promoting ethical research as the key steps that must be taken to realize the goal of ethical use of ABSSs. The study primarily relied on secondary data and was methodologically isolated from the stakeholders in the development and use of ABSSs.



**DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1: Citizens’ perception of ABSSs in Anambra State**

No.	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	total
1	AI-based surveillance systems (ABSSs) are required in Anambra State for improved security.	161 41.9%	213 55.4%	0 0%	10 2.7%	384 100%
2	The citizens are excited with the possibility of introducing ABSSs in Anambra State	62 16.2%	286 74.3%	26 6.8%	10 2.7%	384 100%
3	The citizens are worried about the risk of privacy violations associated with ABSSs.	41 10.8%	197 51.4%	125 32.4%	21 5.4%	384 100%

It may be surprising that up to 97.4% of the respondents agree that the state government should adopt ABSSs in its security sector notwithstanding the laudable efforts of the state government to minimize criminality in the state. This is indicative of the depth of impact exerted on individuals by the events of those awful moments of insecurity in the state. Although the state has witnessed improved state of security for some time now, the citizens are still grappling with emotional scares wrought by past incidents of criminality and their desire for ABSSs could be likened to an invitation of the omnipresent inspector to surveil the panoptic structure of the state. It also raises questions on whether the citizens are aware of their privacy rights, and its possible deprivation in the circumstance of ABSSs adoption.

**Table 2: Citizens’ perception of the balance between security and privacy needs in the use of ABSSs in Anambra State?**

No.	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	total
4	In the use of ABSSs, individual rights to privacy can be compromised to achieve state security	72 18.9%	182 47.3%	99 25.7%	31 8.1%	384 100%
5	Insecurity can be tolerated in the state for the purpose of safeguarding the privacy rights of the citizens	6 1.4%	66 17.6%	156 40.5%	156 40.5%	384 100%
6	Neither state security nor the privacy rights of citizens should be compromised in Anambra State	135 35.1%	197 51.4%	31 8.1%	21 5.4%	384 100%

It must be admitted that striking a balance between the demand of security and that of privacy is not a simple project. Its complexity lie in the processes that lead to its goal rather than the goal itself. From the privacy calculus of Laufer and Wolfe (1977) to the contextual integrity of Nissenbaum, the complexity of privacy trade-off has always been context-centred. In Anambra State the context is characterized by the digital culture of today’s world, the generalized insecurity in Nigeria, the sociopolitical realities of the South Eastern region in relation to Nigeria, the escalated crisis of



insecurity that spanned a greater period of the first tenure of governor Soludo’s administration, and a number of other issues.

The study discovered that given the unique context of the state, 66.3% of the citizens agree that certain aspects of individual rights to privacy can be compromised in the use of AI-based surveillance systems. This compromise should in no way become careless neglects or purposeful denial of the privacy rights of citizens by oppressive governments. It rather falls within what Laufer and Wolfe capture in their privacy calculus as trade-offs especially when security becomes a great benefit. It is in this context that many citizens desire the adoption of ABSSs in the state even as they struggle to recover from the traumatic experiences of the past when kidnappers almost ran a parallel government in some parts of the state. That is why up to 81% of the respondents disagree with the statement that insecurity should be tolerated in the state for the sake of safeguarding the privacy rights of individuals.

This should not be interpreted as trivialization of privacy rights, rather it resonates with the views of Solvo that privacy must be reckoned in relation to its importance to the society, and “not in terms of individual rights” (cited in Humble, 2020, p. 4). Striking a balance between security and privacy in the use of ABSSs is a delicate process that must be grounded in the principles of fairness, transparency, accountability and proportionality (Mosa et al., 2024). In the adoption of ABSSs in Anambra State, the effort to attend to the privacy rights of the citizens should neither be reactionary nor a mere formality. Privacy considerations in ABSSs must be initiated and followed up from the planning and designing stages through the period of the actual use of the technology.

**Table 3: The challenges of ABSSs in Anambra State?**

No.	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	total
7	The facilities for data collection and management are insufficient in the state, and this makes the adoption of ABSSs difficult.	109 28.4%	218 56.8%	47 12.1%	10 2.7%	384 100%
8	ABSSs are expensive and the state government cannot fund it and still have the capital for the maintenance of the state structures.	31 8.1%	80 20.3%	176 45.9%	97 25.7%	384 100%
9	The bias associated with AI hinders the adoption of ABSSs in Anambra State.	21 5.4%	205 53.5%	137 35.7%	21 5.4%	384 100%
10	Many civil servants do not have the required skills that are needed for the use of ABSSs in Anambra State.	83 21.6%	221 57.5%	70 18.2%	10 2.7%	384 100%

The study also discovered that there are some challenges that are peculiar to Anambra State such as insufficient facilities for data collection and management. In the Foucauldian theory of panopticism, the internalisation of the omnipresence of the inspector, which drives the subjects to self-discipline, is the function of an external panoptic structure. Insufficient facilities and skilled personnel for data collection and management in Anambra State pose serious setbacks on the adoption and use of



ABSSs in the state. It was also discovered in the study that although ABSSs are cost intensive, the state can actually accommodate their adoption within its regular budget if it so desires. Another factor that militates against the use of ABSSs in the state is the susceptibility of AI enabled systems to bias.

Despite the possible benefits of AI systems in tackling security problems, some citizens still nurse fears that the use of ABSSs will create avenues for discrimination against some vulnerable groups (like women, the youth, rural dwellers) in the state. This aligns with the observation of Fontes et al. (2022) and Mosa et al. (2024) that the context of the adoption and use of ABSSs must be transparent and fair so that the fear and suspicion of the citizens will be adequately allayed.

## CONCLUSION

Technological advancement has extended the spatial and content range of what could be covered with modern surveillance systems beyond imagination. This has made ABSSs very attractive to many governments as instruments of control and national security despite their incursions in the privacy rights of the citizens. The study discovered that in Anambra State, the citizens desire the adoption of ABSSs but with some feelings of fear and anxiety that call for regular appraisal of its ethical implications. Although the citizens desire a secured environment, Security need does not provide justification for reckless and exploitative violations of the privacy rights of citizens.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Anambra State Government:** The study recommends that the state government should be committed to the general ethical principles of transparency, accountability and proportionality on the adoption and use of ABSSs. There is also the need for state government to include security and privacy rights and duties in the curricula of education for primary and secondary schools as a way of enlightening the citizens in a world that is proliferated with privacy-intrusive devices of all sorts.

**Civil Societies and Religious Organizations:** They should help to create awareness among the citizens that insecurity and privacy violation are some of the key manifestations of bad governance so that any government that default in any of them will be voted out of office. This is one of the ways the citizens can express their balanced perspective on security and privacy demands during state elections

**Members of State House of Assembly:** Adequate laws should be made to regulate deployment and use of ABSSs in the state to protect the privacy rights of the citizens.

## Ethical Clearance

Volunteer response method was used to choose sample population, and they were well informed that their response will be used for purely academic purpose.

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### Conflict of Interest

There is no relationship, commercial or financial that can constitute potential conflict of interest on the study.

### Availability of Datasets

The datasets from which analysis and conclusions were made for the study are available on reasonable request

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