

Workplace Flexibility and Employee Dedication of Parastatals in South-South Region, Nigeria

¹Chika, Chimzi Igwe &

²Vivien E. Wogwu

^{1&2}Department of Management,
Faculty of Management Sciences
University of Port Harcourt,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria

Article DOI:

10.48028/iiprds/ijrjssmt.v11.i1.27

Keywords:

Workplace flexibility,
Task switching,
Learning agility,
Employee
dedication,
Parastatals, South-
South Nigeria

Corresponding Author:

Chika, Chimzi Igwe

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee dedication in selected parastatals in the South-South Region of Nigeria. The objectives were to investigate how task switching and learning agility, two dimensions of workplace flexibility influences employee dedication. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, while 361 questionnaires were sent to employees at selected parastatals, while 330 among the retrieved were fit to be used for analysis. Spearman rank-order correlation was used for data analysis via SPSS version 23.0. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between task switching and employee engagement. Similarly, learning agility showed a significant positive correlation with employee dedication. Based on these findings, it seems that employees are more likely to be dedicated and motivated when provided chances to swap activities and improve their learning capacities. The study concluded that workplace flexibility, through task switching and learning agility, positively enhances employee dedication in parastatals. It recommended that management of parastatals should promote flexible work structures that encourage multitasking and continuous learning to boost employee dedication and overall organizational effectiveness. This study adds to our knowledge of the ways in which workplace flexibility affects employee devotion in the public sector of Nigeria and provides practical suggestions for improving organisational performance.

Background to the Study

The development of Nigeria in the South-South area is heavily reliant on parastatals, which enable public services, infrastructure projects, and the execution of socio-economic policies. This resource-rich but governance and development-challenged region greatly benefits from the efforts of state-owned enterprises to foster economic inclusivity and stability. There is a lot of strategy critical work done by parastatals in this area, but they are inefficient, have low morale, steal money, and are bureaucratically strict. Employee dissatisfaction lowers productivity because disgruntled workers care less about the company's overall success. Worker enthusiasm and dedication are the keys to a parastatal's success (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; Eldor et al., 2020). Employees that put in long hours not only do a good job, but they also help the organisation maintain its principles and win over the public's trust. But as Asamaoewei and Waribugo (2023) point out, staff turnover, worse service quality, and higher labour expenses are all symptoms of a lack of devotion. Staff members must be more dedicated to the public service missions of these institutions for both strategic and practical reasons.

Many empirical studies have investigated the factors that motivate employees to be devoted and dedicated. To back this claim up, Asamaoewei and Waribugo (2023) found that in the Bayelsa State civil service, employee dedication is significantly impacted by opportunities for professional development, progression in career aspirations, and organisational incentives. In a similar vein, Ugargol and Patrick (2018) discovered that FWAs enhanced employee engagement in India's IT industry, even if their implementation and success varied. Alajmi and Lengyel noted that workplace flexibility increases employee loyalty (2020). While none of these studies have specifically examined the relationship between workplace flexibility (i.e., the ability to switch tasks and learn quickly) and employee commitment in Nigerian government agencies, they do show that flexibility-related traits may have a positive effect on employees' perspectives. This highlights the apparent necessity for this study to address that requirement.

Modern company layouts prioritise employee autonomy and adaptability. Worker agency in terms of location, time, and method of completion is therefore greatly enhanced (Kossek et al., 2021). Flexibility boosts productivity, work-life balance, and job satisfaction in knowledge-intensive and digitally enabled businesses, according to Burnford (2019) and Jarrahi et al. (2021). There are also potential drawbacks; for instance, according to Lustig and Nardi (2015) and Rani and Furrer (2021), individuals' agency might be curbed by an over-reliance on technology and algorithmic control. That being said, when executed well, flexibility has the potential to inspire innovation and commitment over the long haul.

This research delves at two facets of professional flexibility the ability to quickly switch tasks and the responsiveness to new information. Mental agility and the capacity to shift gears rapidly are assets in high-pressure, multi-tasking environments like government organisations (Monsell, 2022). Managing switches well in administrative and customer-facing operations greatly improves responsiveness and flexibility. Yet, mental exhaustion

from constant switching might occur in (Rubinstein et al., 2021). One definition of learning agility offered by De Meuse et al. (2023) is the capacity to quickly assimilate new knowledge and apply it to diverse contexts. This method promotes the attributes necessary for success in the public sector, such as perseverance, adaptability, and dedication to self-improvement. More creativity and output from employees could be possible with the help of mentorship, varied experiences, and critical feedback (Eichinger and Lombardo, 2023) in the workplace. The purpose of this study is to examine parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria to learn more about the effects of workplace flexibility on the loyalty of public sector workers than on private sector employers. Unlike earlier studies that mainly concentrated on career advancement, incentive systems, or broad engagement frameworks, this one adds depth to our knowledge of the connection between public administration employee commitment and the behavioural and psychological components of flexibility.

Statement of the Problem

The worrying decline in staff devotion in recent years is most noticeable in parastatals in the South-South area of Nigeria, which are part of the country's public sector. This trend is marked by disinterest, disengagement, high absenteeism, low morale, and a failure to care about or invest in the company's goals. According to Asamaoewei and Waribugo (2023), government personnel' disengagement leads to high turnover rates, increasing operating expenses, and declining service quality. Personnel in parastatals are less committed and motivated because they do not have much agency or responsibility on the job, making them especially vulnerable to these issues. An important new aspect of this growing issue is the effect of workplace flexibility and design on employee morale and productivity. Despite evidence that workplace flexibility boosts performance in both the private and tech-savvy sectors, parastatals in Nigeria are often more traditional and bureaucratic. Instability in the workplace lowers intrinsic motivation and job loyalty since workers aren't able to adapt to complex or rapidly changing tasks.

When it comes to things like career mobility and the ability to pick up new skills quickly, more and more studies are suggesting that a more flexible workplace might be the key. Professionals in high-pressure fields would do well to cultivate the traits of adaptability and flexibility in their staff (Monsell, 2022; Marois & Ivanoff, 2022). Agile learners are more likely to be responsive to change, make good use of new knowledge, and challenge themselves professionally and personally (De Meuse et al., 2023; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2022). The Dynamic competencies approach (Teece et al., 1997; Warner & Wager, 2019) posits that these competencies align with this approach, which emphasises the significance of organisational responsiveness and strategic agility in unexpected settings. In order to keep up with the increasing expectations for openness and innovative service delivery, parastatals need train their staff to think critically and creatively. The existing literature is deficient in several critical areas, despite the fact that there is conceptual promise. Research by Ugargol and Patrick (2018) and Alajmi and Lengyel (2020) shows that giving employees more control over their work schedules increases their engagement and dedication. The majority of these research, however, have focused on

private sector settings in fields like information technology and services, excluding Africa completely. Applying these findings to parastatals in Nigeria's public sector remains context-dependent due to significant variations in organisational culture, resource availability, and managerial techniques.

Furthermore, most of the existing literature on workplace flexibility has ignored more complex factors, such as the capacity to switch gears between jobs rapidly and adjust to new information, in favour of more broad notions. Concerning how these specific arrangements affect the dedication of public officials to their duties, there is a lack of information. Methodological limitations manifest as a lack of empirical data and underutilised statistical approaches, notwithstanding the South-South geopolitical zone's significance to Nigeria's socioeconomic landscape. Furthermore, past studies have mostly ignored possible causal or correlational links in favour of oversimplified descriptive methodologies. Research on the impact of task switching and learning agility, two forms of workplace flexibility, on employee dedication is critically needed due to the unique challenges faced by parastatals in this area. This research addresses these deficiencies and contributes both practically and theoretically to workforce policy, motivational approaches, and organisational reform in Nigeria's public sector.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

To examine the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria, with specific focus on the dimensions of task switching and learning agility:

- i. To examine the relationship between task switching and employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria.
- ii. To investigate the influence of learning agility on employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between task switching and employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria?
- ii. How does learning agility influence employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between task switching and employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between learning agility and employee dedication in parastatals in the South-South region of Nigeria.

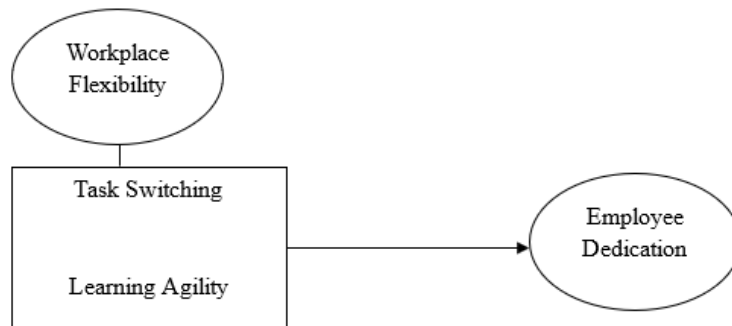


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researchers Conceptualization (2025).

Theoretical Framework

The Dynamic Capabilities View

The capacity of an organisation to adjust, incorporate, and reorganize its internal and external resources in reaction to a shifting environment is emphasized, as first proposed by Teece et al. (1997). In the face of fast technological changes, this viewpoint is critical for digital transformation management, as it encourages companies to improve their learning agility and task switching capabilities. According to Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997), one definition of dynamic capabilities is the capacity to reliably match skills with changing demands in the corporate world. By revealing where resources are lacking and allowing for adaptable actions, these skills aid organisations in capitalising on opportunities (Warner & Wager, 2019). Innovation and negotiating digital complexity need agility both operationally and in terms of the market (Vial, 2019; Lin et al., 2020; Tallon et al., 2019). Further improvement of digital alignment may be achieved by cross-functional cooperation, which promotes information exchange and breaks down departmental silos (Denison et al., 1996; Kane et al., 2017). This model is useful for parastatals that are experiencing technological upheaval since it lays out the steps necessary to incorporate workplace flexibility into strategic management.

Flexibility

Modern employment arrangements are heavily reliant on workplace flexibility, say Kossak et al. (2021). Flexitime, digital labour, and contracting are some of the flexible arrangements that provide workers greater say over when and where they get their jobs done (Burnford, 2019). According to Dunn (2020) and O'Farrell and Montagnier (2020), the ability to determine one's own schedule is a major perk of working in digitally mediated contexts, like platform employment. This paves the way for managing work-life balance (Jarrahi et al., 2021) and optimising time and resources (Burtch et al., 2018). According to Lusti and Nardi (2015) and Zuboff (2015), one manner in which digital platforms might restrict freedom is by making employees more dependent on algorithms and digital infrastructure. Jarrahi et al. (2019) and Ma et al. (2022) state that while new technologies offer freedom from conventional workplace constraints, they also have the potential to cause job instability and algorithmic control. Sutherland et al. (2019) and Rani and Furrer (2021) contend that digital flexibility ought to be perceived as both empowering and possibly dangerous.

Task Switching

In high stakes, multitasking scenarios, the ability to cognitively move between tasks also called task switching is vital (Monsell, 2022). It requires the ability to think on one's feet, concentrate intently, and adapt one's thoughts to various contexts. Cognitive exhaustion and reduced productivity may result from "task-switching costs" (delays in reorientation while shifting tasks), which is a drawback of the efficiency-boosting potential (Rubinstein et al., 2021). Employees can better control these affects by prioritising tasks, grouping similar jobs together, and reducing distractions. Having strong executive functioning is essential in high-responsiveness occupations like customer service and IT, and skilled task switchers demonstrate this (Marois & Ivanoff, 2022). This skill may be further strengthened with the use of digital resources and well-organised procedures. Quick task switching is a must-have skill for professionals that work in high-pressure settings.

Learning Agility

A person with learning agility can pick up new information rapidly, forget it just as fast, and use it in other contexts, which is particularly important in dynamic workplaces where things are always changing (De Meuse et al., 2023). Agility in self-awareness, thinking, people, change, and outcomes is one of its five essential components (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2022). Critical thinking, teamwork, change adaptation, and goal concentration are all aided by these aspects. People who are highly agile learners tend to be inquisitive, receptive to criticism, and game for trying new things. According to Eichinger and Lombardo (2023), leaders who use it are better able to make decisions and think strategically. Mentorship, training, and varied project opportunities that encourage learning agility led to higher levels of engagement, creativity, and performance for organisations. To keep up with ever-changing work settings and maintain employee relevance and dedication, it is important to encourage ongoing learning.

Employee Dedication

When we speak of working with passion, pride, purpose, and hardship, we're referring to dedication (Gubman, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Being long-lived is only the first requirement; what's really important are traits like ownership, devotion, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Eldor et al. (2020) states that an engaged worker is one who feels engaged, proud, and enthusiastic about their work because of their involvement. Hard-working people care deeply about the work they perform and are willing to go to great lengths to ensure that it gets done (Asamaowei & Waribugo, 2023). Lack of dedication on the part of workers "leads to high employee turnover, which in turn, causes high labour costs" for any given business, say Asamaowei and Waribugo (2023). A person's social and educational surroundings at work have a significant impact on their level of commitment, which can be influenced by things like their childhood and college experiences (Van Berkel & Knies, 2018).

Empirical Review

Researchers Ugargol and Patrick (2018) examined the relationship between IT employees' perceptions of workplace flexibility and their degree of engagement. They looked into the connection between engaged employees and FWA service use in the Indian IT sector. Half of the people who took part worked for information technology firms in Bengaluru, India. Customers took advantage of FWA options when they were easily accessible, according to the survey. Shockingly, only 7% of employees were "highly engaged," while 41% were completely uninterested and 51% were indifferent to their current duties. They found a favourable correlation between EE and FWAs. Both studies found that FWA options boost EE, which might inform FWA planning.

In their 2020 study, Alajmi and Lengyel examined the relationship between human resource management and the likelihood that more flexible work arrangements will lead to greater employee dedication. The degree to which this might occur was also quantified. Organisations strive to foster a contented workforce as a means to entice and retain people and gain a competitive advantage. The ability to train employees new skills and adapt to different situations is a significant advantage of labour flexibility. Employee dedication is one of the institutional results of human resource management, alongside enhanced performance and reduced worker turnover as a result of better retention techniques. As a result, the right sort of incentive to increase the entity's performance is low turnover and increases employee passion for their work. Employee engagement has increased since additional possibilities for flexible work arrangements have been made accessible. Employee retention is key to a company's success, and programs like annual hour contracts and flextime encourage employees to remain put. These agreements are based on the workers' performance and the effort they put in.

Asamaoui and Waribugo (2023) examined the relationship between employee loyalty and development possibilities using data from the Bayelsa State Civil Service. Surveyed were 4,413 government employees whose ages ranged from ninth to fourteenth. A total of 367 people was chosen for the sample using the Yamene (1967) approach. Results from 281 surveys were analysed and described using the International Business Machines Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 28.0.1. Through the use of the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient, we examined three distinct hypotheses. Improvements in professional skills, organisational rewards, and progress towards career objectives were all positively and statistically associated with dedication. A higher rate of employer recognition, career advancement, and professional competency was associated with employees who put in more effort, according to the study's authors.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional survey as its research strategy. Senior staff members from various parastatals in three South-South states participated in the study. "Parastatals" are government-owned organisations, agencies, or other entities that are often established to fulfil specific tasks or offer specific services within a certain industry. As of July 2024, the State Civil Service Commission reported that 6634 individuals were

working for the several government parastatals in the states of Rivers, Bayelsa, and Akwa Ibom. In all, 361 people were polled for the research. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Sample Size Determination provided the data used for this analysis. In the South-South region of Nigeria, 361 questionnaires were sent to employees at selected parastatals. A total of 341 copies were retrieved, while 330 answers were considered legitimate for processing, 17 questionnaires were rejected because of missing information or inconsistencies. The large percentage of legitimate answers makes the data more credible and shows strong participation. The study tested the hypothesis using the Spearman Rank Order Coefficient.

Demographic Characteristics

With a total of 330 participants, 54.5% were men and 45.5% were females, according to the study's demographic breakdown. One hundred eighty-ten were men. Below is a list of the contestants' ages: Of the total participants, 70 (21.2%) were between the ages of 18 and 29, 144 (43.6%) were between the ages of 30 and 45, and 116 (35.2%) were 46 and older. There were 196 married individuals (59.4%), 74 single people (22.4%), and 60 persons (18.2%) who did not have a spouse. On the subject of educational qualifications, 65 participants (19.7%) had an SSCE, 73 (22.1%) an OND or NCE, 63 (19.1%) a B.Sc, B.Ed, B.Tech, B.A., or HND, 100 (30.3%) an M.Sc, MBA, or M.Ed, and 29 (8.8%) a PhD or other affiliation. According to the length of service, 32 participants (9.7%) had worked for 0-4 years, 73 (22.1%) for 5-9 years, 96 (29.1%) for 10-15 years, and 129 (39.1%) for more than 15 years.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 1: Relationship Between Task Switching and Employee Dedication

			Correlations	
			Task Switching	Employee Dedication
Spearman's rho	Task Switching	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.743**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	330	330
	Employee Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.743**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	330	330

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A highly significant positive association (0.743) between employees' dedication and task switching was observed at the 0.01% level of significance ($p = 0.001$), according to the table. The results show that when workers are forced to switch tasks more often, they are more likely to go the extra mile. A correlation coefficient of 0.743 suggests a weak relationship between the two variables. There is a strong correlation, with 330 observations for each variable.

Table 2: Relationship Between Learning Agility and Employee Dedication

		Correlations		
			Learning Agility	Employee Dedication
Spearman's rho	Learning Agility	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.833**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	330	330
	Employee Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.833**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	330	330

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to the data in the table, a positive correlation of 0.833 between learning agility and employee devotion is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.000$). There is a link between learning agility and employee devotion, according to these findings. Using a two-tailed test, the 330-person sample demonstrates an association that is statistically significant. The robustness of the correlation indicates a substantial relationship between the two variables.

Discussion of Findings

The findings point to a robust relationship between employee dedication, task switching, and learning agility in parastatals located in the South-South area of Nigeria. This agrees with previous research that has shown a positive relationship between workplace flexibility and higher levels of employee engagement and loyalty. Ugargol and Patrick (2018) lend support to the idea that FWAs increase employee commitment by discovering a positive association between FWAs and engagement in India's IT industry. In a similar vein to your study, Alajmi and Lengyel (2020) highlighted the ways in which flextime and other types of labour flexibility promote employee engagement through the use of task switching. In addition, Asamaowei and Waribugo (2023) noted that professional growth is associated with employee dedication; this result might be relevant to learning agility.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this study's results highlight the strong correlation between workplace flexibility, particularly the ability to switch tasks and learn quickly, and employee dedication in parastatals located in the South-South area of Nigeria. The value of flexible work settings that encourage employees to grow, learn new things, and handle different duties well is shown by the positive association between these flexibility aspects and employee dedication. According to the findings, companies that allow their employees more leeway in their schedules saw an uptick in morale, productivity, and employee retention. Hence, parastatals in the South-South area would do well to include greater leeway into their organisational structures in order to boost staff commitment, an essential factor in achieving organisational success over the long run.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are made in light of the results of this study:

1. Parastatals should promote job rotations and other forms of task switching to help staff get experience in other areas of the business. As a result, they will be more flexible and enthusiastic about their job, which will lead to a more committed team.
2. In order to foster a culture of learning agility, companies should provide their employees with chances for professional growth and training. People will stay dedicated to their jobs and perform better if they are encouraged to learn new things on the job.

Reference

- Alajmi, A. M., & Lengyel, P. (2020). Managing employee resources, the extent to which labour flexibility can generate employee commitment, *SEA – Practical Application of Science, VIII (24)*, 321-327.
- Alajmi, M. A., & Lengyel, P. (2020). The impact of workplace flexibility on employee commitment: A study of Kuwaiti public sector employees. *International Journal of Public Administration, 43(8)*, 712-725.
- Asamaowei, E. F., & Waribugo, S. (2023). Career growth and employee dedication in the Bayelsa State Civil Service, *EPRA International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies, 10(2)*, 58-72.
- Asamaowei, E. J., & Waribugo, S. (2023). Employee engagement and organisational performance in the Nigerian public sector, *African Journal of Management Research, 12(1)*, 45-62.
- Burnford, D. (2019). The gig economy and the future of work: Implications for employee engagement. *Journal of Business and Management, 25(3)*, 112-128.
- De Meuse, K. P., Dai, G., & Hallenbeck, G. S. (2023). Learning agility: A meta-analysis of construct validity and nomological networks. *Human Resource Management Review, 33(1)*, 100891.
- Denison, D. R., Hart, S. L., & Kahn, J. A. (1996). From chimneys to cross-functional teams: Developing and validating a diagnostic model, *Academy of Management Journal, 39(4)*, 1005-1023.
- Eichinger, R. W., & Lombardo, M. M. (2023). Learning agility as a predictor of leadership potential. *Leadership Quarterly, 34(1)*, 101678.
- Eldor, L., Harpaz, I., & Westman, M. (2020). The work/nonwork spillover: The enrichment role of work engagement. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 27(1)* 21-34.

- Eldor, L., Harpaz, I., & Westman, M. (2020). The work/non-work spillover: The enrichment role of work engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 35*(2), 85-98.
- Gubman, E. L. (2004). From engagement to passion for work: The search for the missing person, *Human Resource Planning, 27*(3), 42-46.
- Jarrahi, M. H., Nelson, S. B., & Thomson, L. (2021). Flexible work in the digital age: A review of worker autonomy and algorithmic management, *New Technology, Work and Employment, 36*(1), 1-21.
- Kane, G. C., Palmer, D., Phillips, A. N., Kiron, D., & Buckley, N. (2017). Achieving digital maturity, *MIT Sloan Management Review, 59*(1), 1-26.
- Kossek, E. E., Thompson, R. J., & Lautsch, B. A. (2021). The future of work: Managing workplace flexibility. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 8*, 299-323.
- Lustig, C., & Nardi, B. (2015). Algorithmic authority: The ethics, politics, and economics of algorithms that govern. *First Monday, 20*(12).
- Monsell, S. (2022). Task switching and cognitive control. *Annual Review of Psychology, 73*, 207-231.
- Rani, U., & Furrer, M. (2021). Digital labour platforms and new forms of flexible work in developing countries: Algorithmic management and worker autonomy, *Journal of Development Studies, 57*(4), 578-595.
- Rubinstein, J. S., Meyer, D. E., & Evans, J. E. (2021). Executive control of cognitive processes in task switching, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance, 47*(1), 1-16.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2003). *UWES – Utrecht Work Engagement Scale: Test manual*, Unpublished Manuscript, Department of Psychology, Utrecht University.
- Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management, *Strategic Management Journal, 18*(7), 509-533.
- Ugargol, A. P., & Patrick, H. A. (2018). The relationship of flexible work arrangements to employee engagement: An exploratory study, *Journal of Human Resource Management, 21*(1), 78-94.

- Ugargol, J. D., & Patrick, H. A. (2018). The relationship of workplace flexibility to employee engagement among information technology employees in India, *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, 5(1), 40-55.
- Van Berkel, M., & Knies, E. (2018). Measuring public service motivation: Developing a universal scale, *Public Administration*, 96(1), 241-258.
- Vial, G. (2019). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda, *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 28(2), 118-144.
- Warner, K. S. R., & Wager, M. (2019). Building dynamic capabilities for digital transformation: An ongoing process of strategic renewal, *Long Range Planning*, 52(3), 326-349.