

Beyond Time and Place: Why Autonomy Flexibility is the Real Driver of Engagement in the Public Sector

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the intricate relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) and Job Engagement within the specific context of the public sector in Bandung, Indonesia. In an era of rapid digital transformation and evolving bureaucratic demands, understanding how work design influences civil servant motivation is crucial. This study employs a quantitative research design, deconstructing FWA into three distinct dimensions—time flexibility, place flexibility, and autonomy flexibility—while measuring job engagement through the components of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Data were systematically collected from 71 public sector employees through online surveys supported by field enumerators to ensure data integrity. The results of the multiple regression analysis reveal a significant paradigm shift in how engagement is cultivated in public organizations. Findings indicate that autonomy flexibility is the sole significant predictor of job engagement, specifically exerting a strong positive influence on dedication and absorption. Conversely, time and place flexibility were found to be statistically insignificant across all engagement dimensions. This suggests that for public sector employees, psychological empowerment and procedural control are far more valuable than logistical convenience. These results highlight that autonomy acts as a primary catalyst for public service motivation and proactive work behavior. Practically, government agencies are advised to transition from rigid compliance-based management to trust-based job redesigns that prioritize task autonomy to foster a highly focused and dedicated workforce.

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1. Introduction

The performance and resilience of the public sector inherently depend on the psychological connection its workforce maintains with their roles. In an era of rapid societal shifts and escalating public demands, fostering high levels of employee engagement among civil servants has transcended being a mere human resource goal (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019; Luthfiya & Taufiq, 2024; Oliveira et al., 2022); it is now a core strategic necessity. When public sector employees are deeply engaged, they exhibit greater accountability, higher productivity, and a stronger commitment to public service motivation. Conversely, widespread disengagement within government agencies directly leads to bureaucratic inertia, diminished service quality, and a lack of innovation. Therefore, understanding how to cultivate and sustain a highly engaged civil service remains a critical puzzle for modern public administration (Rahmawati & Pusparini, 2023; Sanneh & Taj, 2015).

As governments worldwide strive to modernize their administrative frameworks, the traditional, rigid structures of public sector employment are being increasingly challenged. The emergence of modern work paradigms has forced public agencies to reconsider how work is

structured and executed, leading to a growing interest in flexible work arrangements (Amanda et al., 2025; Renard et al., 2021). While long viewed as a luxury reserved for the private tech sector, flexibility is rapidly becoming an essential mechanism for the public sector to attract and retain top talent. However, introducing flexibility into the bureaucratic nature of public organizations creates a complex dynamic that requires careful empirical investigation, particularly regarding how these new ways of working influence the psychological state of civil servants.

At the center of this organizational transformation lies the important need to examine the direct relationship between flexible work arrangements and job engagement. Investigating this relationship is essential because it addresses a longstanding tension in public administration: whether granting flexibility and autonomy to civil servants can coexist with the principles of accountability, standardization, and procedural control inherent in bureaucratic systems (Barbieri et al., 2025). Existing literature suggests that flexible work arrangements may generate both positive and negative outcomes. On one hand, flexibility can increase motivation, work involvement, autonomy, work-life balance, and organizational commitment (Brega et al., 2025; Langner, 2017; Liu & Sutunyarak, 2025; Renard et al., 2021). On the other hand, it may also create feelings of professional isolation, blurred work boundaries, stress, exhaustion, and reduced organizational cohesion (Edvinsson et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2024). Edvinsson et al. (2023) similarly demonstrated that flexible work contains a “risk-opportunity tradeoff,” where increased work time control may simultaneously promote recovery and increase work-related ICT use and overtime work, potentially intensifying employee fatigue. Therefore, examining the broader relationship between workplace flexibility and engagement is necessary to determine whether flexibility genuinely produces a more energized, dedicated, and resilient public workforce or instead contributes to unintended psychological strain.

However, conceptualizing flexible work arrangements and job engagement as single-dimensional constructs risks oversimplifying the realities experienced by modern civil servants. The literature increasingly recognizes that both flexibility and engagement are inherently multidimensional concepts that require more granular investigation (S. H. Lee et al., 2024; Renard et al., 2021). Renard et al. (2021) highlighted that definitions of new ways of working remain fragmented and theoretically inconsistent because flexibility practices often encompass diverse combinations of temporal, spatial, and operational autonomy. Likewise, Lee et al., (2024) argued that different forms of workplace flexibility may influence employee engagement differently, depending on how employees perceive support, autonomy, and work-life balance. Consequently, macro-level analyses may obscure the distinct psychological and operational mechanisms underlying employee responses to flexibility. For example, policies that allow employees to determine where they work may produce different psychological effects compared to policies that permit flexibility in working hours or decision-making autonomy. Therefore, understanding the specific dimensions of flexibility and their unique influence on engagement dimensions becomes essential for developing effective and evidence-based public sector workplace policies.

From the antecedent perspective, flexible work arrangements can be understood through several distinct dimensions, particularly time flexibility, place flexibility, and autonomy flexibility. Time flexibility refers to employees’ discretion over working schedules, including flextime and compressed workweeks. Place flexibility refers to employees’ ability to perform work outside traditional office settings through teleworking or hybrid work systems. Meanwhile, autonomy flexibility reflects the extent to which employees independently manage tasks, schedules, and work processes. These dimensions have become increasingly important in contemporary organizations because flexibility allows employees to organize when, where, and how work is completed using information and communication technologies (Renard et al., 2021). Barbieri et al., (2025) further emphasized that flexible work environments introduce new cognitive challenges that require employees to structure work tasks, coordinate with colleagues, and independently manage work planning. Similarly, Edvinsson et al. (2023) identified work time control as an important job resource that enables employees to regulate work duration and recovery opportunities, although excessive flexibility may also increase work intensification. Each dimension therefore alters work design in unique ways and potentially shapes employee psychological engagement differently.

To understand the true implications of these flexibility dimensions, they should be examined alongside the multidimensional structure of job engagement, which consists of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Martínez, et al., 2002; Schaufeli, Salanova, et al., 2002). Vigor reflects high levels of energy, resilience, and persistence at work; dedication represents enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and meaningful involvement in one's role; while absorption refers to deep concentration and immersion in work activities (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Lee et al. (2024) explained that employee engagement reflects a positive and fulfilling psychological state characterized by these three dimensions and is strongly influenced by supportive workplace practices, including workplace flexibility. Furthermore, Barbieri et al., (2025) suggested that flexible work conditions may enhance engagement and satisfaction by fostering cognitive flexibility, autonomy, and opportunities for professional growth. Nevertheless, previous studies also warn that flexibility may increase exhaustion and burnout when employees face excessive cognitive demands and continuous work adjustment requirements (Barbieri et al., 2025). Therefore, examining how specific forms of flexibility influence particular dimensions of engagement allows researchers to identify whether flexibility merely improves comfort and convenience or truly strengthens employees' emotional and cognitive immersion in public service.

Ultimately, this granular investigation is highly relevant for public organizations seeking to develop evidence-based workplace policies capable of balancing employee wellbeing, organizational performance, and public accountability. By systematically examining how time flexibility, place flexibility, and autonomy flexibility uniquely influence vigor, dedication, and absorption among civil servants, this study moves beyond generalized assumptions toward a more diagnostic and multidimensional understanding of workplace flexibility. Existing studies have emphasized that flexibility may simultaneously produce mutual gains and conflicting outcomes depending on how flexibility is designed and implemented (Azza & Hendriani, 2023; Irawati, 2021; Renard et al., 2021). For example, place flexibility may enhance absorption by reducing workplace distractions, whereas autonomy flexibility may strengthen dedication through increased trust and empowerment. At the same time, excessive flexibility without organizational support may intensify work-related ICT use, overtime work, and recovery difficulties (Edvinsson et al., 2023).

Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have increasingly become a fundamental cornerstone of modern organizational strategies, serving as a vital mechanism to enhance employee engagement amidst evolving global work demands. Research by Ghonim et al., (2025) demonstrates that FWAs can explain a significant 62% of the variance in job engagement levels, highlighting the profound impact that temporal and spatial flexibility has on the modern workforce. This is further reinforced by Gašić & Berber (2023), who found that engagement acts as a critical mediator between flexibility and turnover intentions, suggesting that employees who are provided with flexible options become more deeply tethered to their organizational goals. Consequently, the strategic implementation of these arrangements is no longer viewed as a peripheral benefit but as a core driver of organizational resilience and performance.

The theoretical underpinning of this relationship often centers on the "agency potential" that flexibility provides, which allows employees to better manage the boundaries between their professional and personal lives. According to Pedersen & Jeppesen (2012), schedule flexibility serves as a boundary-spanning resource that facilitates work-life enrichment, which in turn stimulates higher levels of work involvement. Similarly, Nguyen et al., (2025) argue that new ways of working—characterized by hybrid models and digital collaboration—foster engagement by significantly improving the psychological well-being of the staff. These findings suggest that when civil servants or employees are empowered with autonomy, they respond with increased affective and motivational commitment to their tasks.

A critical advancement in recent literature is the shift toward a multidimensional analysis of both flexibility and engagement constructs. Ghonim et al., (2025) specifically delineate how different dimensions, such as workload flexibility, workplace flexibility, and flexible working hours, uniquely influence the core engagement facets of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Their findings indicate that workload flexibility often emerges as the strongest predictor of engagement, though the influence of specific procedures can vary based on operational constraints.

Furthermore, Rodríguez-Modroño (2022) highlights that the intensity of these arrangements must be carefully managed, as high-intensity telework can sometimes lead to paradoxes where engagement increases but working time quality simultaneously declines.

The effectiveness of FWAs also appears to be robust across different economic and demographic contexts, including emerging economies. Conradie & de Klerk (2019) confirm that flexible arrangements in developing regions like South Africa correlate with increased levels of both engagement and performance, rather than a reduction in actual working hours. In the manufacturing sector, Limrueangrong & Thaweepaiboonwong (2025) emphasize that the positive influence of FWA on engagement is often amplified when coupled with strong supervisor support and digital literacy. Even among specific cohorts like Generation Z, flexibility remains a preferred method of working that supports productivity achievements through emotional engagement mechanisms.

Despite these benefits, organizations must navigate the practical challenges and "myths" associated with flexibility to fully realize its potential. Johnson et al., (2008) challenge common assumptions by demonstrating that flexible workers are not less committed than their full-time, office-bound counterparts; instead, flexibility is a versatile tool for sustaining productivity in competitive environments. However, as de Klerk et al. (2021) noted during the pandemic, exclusive remote work can yield paradoxical outcomes, suggesting that an ideal balance—such as a hybrid ratio—is often necessary to maintain institutional culture and prevent professional isolation. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of how time, place, and autonomy flexibility specifically drive vigor and dedication is essential for public sector leaders aiming to modernize their workforce. This study contributes not only theoretically by enriching the multidimensional understanding of flexible work and engagement in public administration, but also practically by providing empirical guidance for public managers in designing targeted flexibility initiatives that enhance workforce resilience, engagement, and sustainable public service performance.

2. Methods

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the intricate dynamics between the specific dimensions of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and job engagement among public sector employees in Bandung, Indonesia. By adopting an exploratory approach, the research aims to investigate how various forms of flexibility—specifically time, place, and task autonomy—influence the distinct psychological states of engagement, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption. This focus on multidimensionality aligns with recent academic shifts that move away from viewing these constructs as monolithic, instead seeking a more granular understanding of how modern work designs impact differently with the energy and affective domain of civil servants.

The conceptual framework of this study is designed to examine the intricate relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) and Job Engagement through a multidimensional lens. Rather than treating these variables as monolithic constructs, this model decomposes them into their constituent dimensions to identify the specific paths of influence that are most critical within the public sector environment. The framework serves as a diagnostic map to understand how varying degrees of flexibility serve as job resources that spark different psychological responses in civil servants. At the core of the independent variable, Flexible Work Arrangement is categorized into three distinct operational pillars: Time Flexibility, Place Flexibility, and Autonomy Flexibility. This distinction is vital because it separates the mere logistical convenience of choosing work hours or locations from the deeper psychological empowerment of having control over task procedures. By isolating these dimensions, the model seeks to determine whether structural changes (when and where work happens) or cognitive changes (how work is managed) are the primary drivers of professional commitment in a bureaucratic setting. On the dependent side, Job Engagement is operationalized through the three-dimensional model of Vigour, Dedication, and Absorption. Vigour represents the energy and mental resilience of employees; Dedication captures their sense of significance and pride; and Absorption reflects the state of being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in their work. This granular approach allows the study to pinpoint whether certain types of flexibility specifically enhance a civil servant's physical energy, their emotional inspiration, or their cognitive focus, providing a more

nuanced understanding of workforce motivation. The conceptual framework as seen in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized direct effects of each FWA dimension on each facet of engagement. The arrows connecting these dimensions represent the empirical testing of how granting autonomy and flexibility can transform the traditional mindset of public sector employees. By analyzing these specific pathways, the research provides a strategic blueprint for public administration leaders to implement targeted flexibility policies that effectively cultivate a highly engaged, dedicated, and focused civil service.

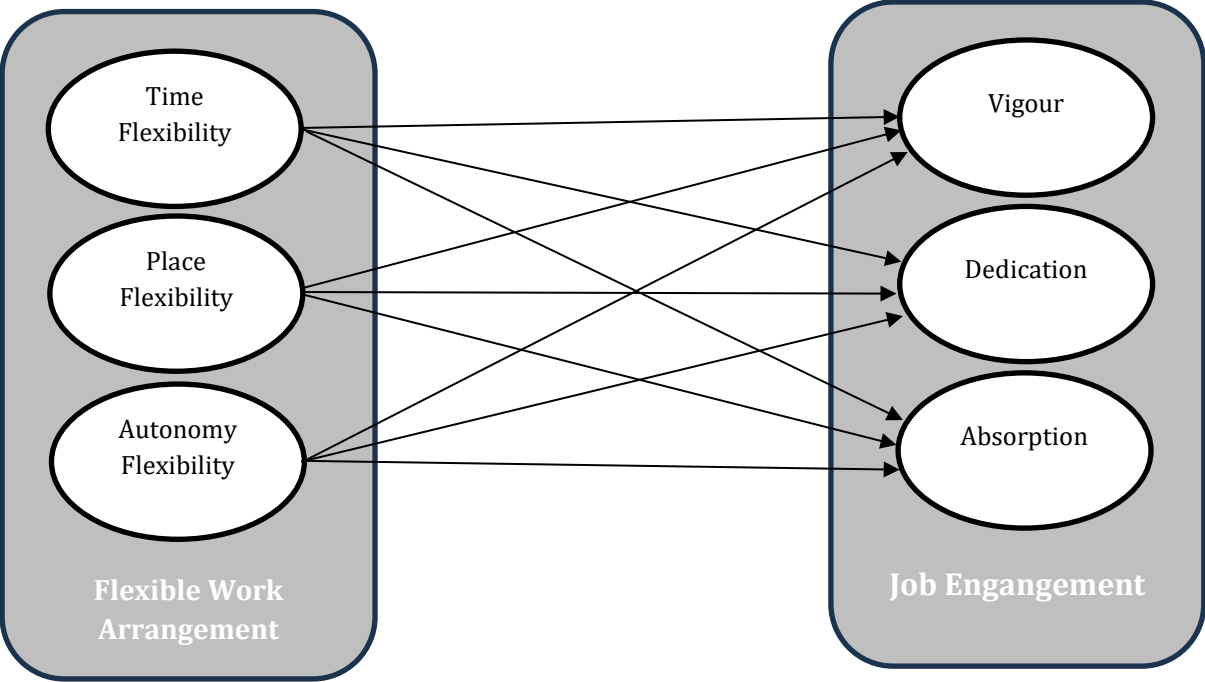


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
Source: developed for this study (2025).

For measurement, the research instrumentation was adapted from established scholarly frameworks to ensure validity and reliability. The dimensions of flexible work arrangements, including time, location, and task autonomy flexibility, were measured using scales adapted from previous authors (Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Shifrin & Michel, 2021). Meanwhile, the job engagement dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption were measured using an instrument adapted from Bakker & Albrecht (2018). Each variable was operationalized through three indicators and measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. To analyze the relationships, the study utilized multiple regression analysis across three distinct models: evaluating the influence of all FWA dimensions on vigor, then on dedication, and finally on absorption. This analytical strategy allows for a precise determination of which specific flexibility factors serve as the strongest predictors for different facets of employee engagement.

The data collection process was conducted over a one-month period throughout December 2025, utilizing a convenience sampling technique to reach employees within public organizations in the Bandung city area. To ensure data quality and clarity, the researchers deployed enumerators who personally visited potential respondents to explain the study’s objectives and provide real-time assistance while participants completed the online questionnaires. This hybrid approach to data collection resulted in a final sample of 71 public sector professionals who voluntarily participated in the study. This methodology reflects the importance of balancing digital reach with personal engagement to capture meaningful insights within bureaucratic organizational cultures. However, even though the size of the sample is somewhat narrow in scope, it still qualifies for statistical adequacy given the minimum number of independent variables needed for multiple regression analysis. The choice to sacrifice size for the sake of data integrity and engagement in favor of getting a better understanding of the complex flexible working dynamics has proven successful.

3. Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of the 71 respondents involved in this study represents a diverse cross-section of the public sector workforce in Bandung. Regarding gender distribution, the sample is predominantly male, comprising 57.7% (41 individuals) of the total participants, while female respondents account for the remaining 42.3% (30 individuals). This distribution ensures that the findings reflect perspectives from both genders, providing a comprehensive view of how flexible work arrangements are perceived across the administrative landscape. In terms of age, the participants reflect a wide range of professional experience and career stages. The workforce is notably concentrated in two main groups: those aged 31 to 40 years and those above 50 years, each representing 31.0% (22 individuals) of the sample. Furthermore, 22.5% (16 individuals) fall within the 41 to 50 age bracket, while the remaining 15.5% (11 individuals) are younger professionals aged 25 to 30. This balanced representation across different age groups is crucial for this exploratory research, as it captures insights from both early-career employees and senior officials, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how engagement levels vary across different generational cohorts within the public service.

The assessment of the validity for the Time Flexibility (X1) dimension reveals that all indicators successfully pass the correlation threshold, with indicator X1.1—focusing on daily control over working hours—exhibiting the strongest correlation coefficient at .840. In contrast, indicator X1.3, which pertains to the compression of work hours, shows the lowest correlation within this dimension at .624. From a descriptive perspective, respondents gave the highest mean score to the adaptability of work schedules (X1.2) with a value of 3.93, while the possibility of compressing work hours (X1.3) received the lowest mean score of 3.80, suggesting it is slightly less common or more difficult to implement in the public sector context.

Table 1. Validity Results and Mean Score of Indicators

	Indicator	Mean	r
X1.1	have full control over daily working hours to balance professional and personal life	3.87	.840
X1.2	easily adapt work schedule to handle sudden or unexpected personal matters	3.93	.812
X1.3	permitted to compress work hours (e.g., completing weekly tasks in fewer days) to improve efficiency	3.80	.624
X2.1	allows to perform work tasks effectively from remote locations outside the traditional office	4.04	.582
X2.2	Organization provides adequate technological infrastructure and tools to support remote work	4.15	.765
X2.3	have the flexibility to work within a hybrid system (combining office-based and remote work)	4.07	.837
X3.1	have the autonomy to choose the procedures and methods to use in complete work tasks	4.23	.775
X3.2	given the flexibility to distribute and manage workload according to capacity	4.17	.764
X3.3	supervisor provides full support and trust in the way to manage work independently	3.94	.730
X3.4	organizational culture promotes a balance between compliance with rules and respect for individual flexibility	4.08	.356
Y1.1	feel bursting with energy and mental resilience at work	4.11	.430
Y1.2	feel strong and vigorous job, even during demanding periods	4.24	.737
Y1.3	feel a strong desire to go to work when get up in the morning	4.11	.739
Y2.1	highly enthusiastic about job and the impact of work	4.17	.430
Y2.2	find the work is full of meaning and inspiration	4.23	.737
Y2.3	proud of the work that done and contribution to the organization	4.15	.739
Y3.1	feel happy and satisfied when working intensely on tasks	4.18	.382
Y3.2	often get deeply immersed in my work, losing track of time	4.15	.531
Y3.3	find difficult to detach from work because of involvement in it	4.14	.425

Source: data analyzed (2025).

Regarding Place Flexibility (X2) and Autonomy Flexibility (X3), the data shows a high degree of validity across most measures. Within the spatial dimension, working in a hybrid system (X2.3) emerged as the most valid indicator with an r value of .837, while the effectiveness of remote task performance (X2.1) had the lowest r value at .582. Interestingly, the highest mean score in this category was attributed to technological infrastructure (X2.2) at 4.15. For Autonomy Flexibility, the ability to choose work procedures (X3.1) demonstrated both the highest validity ($r = .775$) and the highest mean score (4.23) in its group. However, the indicator for organizational culture (X3.4) yielded the lowest correlation coefficient of .356, and supervisor support (X3.3) showed the lowest mean score at 3.94, indicating potential areas for institutional improvement.

The validity results for the Job Engagement dimensions of Vigour (Y1) and Dedication (Y2) also indicate consistent measurement performance. For Vigour, the desire to go to work in the morning (Y1.3) showed the highest correlation at .739, whereas feeling bursting with energy (Y1.1) was the lowest at .430. Despite this, feeling strong and vigorous (Y1.2) reached the highest mean score of 4.24. In the Dedication dimension, being proud of one's contribution (Y2.3) held the highest validity ($r = .739$), while enthusiasm (Y2.1) was the lowest at .430. The highest perceived sentiment in this category was the finding of meaning and inspiration in work (Y2.2), which scored a high mean of 4.23.

Lastly, the Absorption (Y3) dimension represents the most challenging area of validity within the engagement construct. The indicator reflecting deep immersion in work (Y3.2) provided the highest correlation coefficient at .531, while feeling happy when working intensely (Y3.1) recorded the lowest validity at .382. In terms of mean scores, the highest level of agreement was found in feeling happy while working intensely (Y3.1) at 4.18, whereas the difficulty of detaching from work (Y3.3) had the lowest mean of 4.14. Although these values are lower than the other dimensions, they remain above the common critical threshold for exploratory research, confirming that the indicators are representative of the variables they intend to measure.

Table 2. Reliability Results and Mean Score of Variables

Variables	α (Alpha Cronbach)	Mean
Time Flexibility (X ₁)	.869	3,867
Place Flexibility (X ₂)	.848	4,087
Autonomy Flexibility (X ₃)	.820	4,105
Vigour (Y ₁)	.883	4,153
Dedication (Y ₂)	.786	4,183
Absorption (Y ₃)	.635	4,157

Source: data analyzed (2025).

The reliability analysis utilizing Cronbach's Alpha confirms that the instrument possesses high internal consistency, ensuring that the results are stable and dependable. Among all the variables measured, Vigour (Y₁) achieved the highest reliability coefficient with a Cronbach's Alpha of .883, indicating that the items used to measure this psychological state are exceptionally well-aligned. Conversely, the Absorption (Y₃) variable exhibited the lowest reliability score at .635. While this value is lower than the others, it still exceeds the generally accepted minimum threshold of .60 for exploratory studies, thus maintaining the overall integrity of the research model.

Descriptive statistics for the variables further enrich this analysis by highlighting the general tendencies of the 71 public sector respondents. The variable with the highest overall mean score is Dedication (Y₂) at 4.183, which suggests that the participants feel a strong sense of pride and inspiration in their public service roles. On the other hand, Time Flexibility (X₁) recorded the lowest variable mean score at 3.867. This discrepancy implies that while employees are highly

dedicated to their work, the implementation of flexible timing arrangements is perhaps the most conservative or least developed aspect of their current work environment compared to autonomy or spatial flexibility. Overall, these findings provide a solid foundation for proceeding with the subsequent regression analysis.

Table 3. Model Summary and ANOVA result

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
Time Flexibility,	Vigour	.100	.059	2.476	.069 ^b
Place Flexibility,	Dedication	.243	.209	7.167	.000 ^b
Autonomy Flexibility	Absorption	.372	.344	13.250	.000 ^b

Source: data analyzed (2025).

The results of the multiple regression analysis provide a detailed look into the simultaneous influence of autonomy, time, and place flexibility on the three distinct dimensions of job engagement. The first model, which examines the impact of these flexible work arrangement (FWA) dimensions on vigor, reveals a relatively modest explanatory power. The R-square value of .100 suggests that only 10% of the variance in vigor can be attributed to the combined dimensions of FWA, with the adjusted R-square further decreasing to .059. Statistically, the ANOVA results for this model show an F-value of 2.476 with a significance level of .069. Since this p-value is slightly above the standard .05 alpha threshold, it indicates that the collective FWA dimensions do not have a statistically significant impact on the vigor of public sector employees in this specific sample, suggesting that energy and resilience may be driven by factors beyond workplace flexibility. In contrast, the second model demonstrates a much stronger and statistically significant relationship when predicting employee dedication. The R-square for this model increases to .243, with an adjusted R-square of .209, indicating that approximately 24.3% of the variance in dedication is explained by the three dimensions of flexibility. The robustness of this model is confirmed by the F-statistic of 7.167, which is significant at the .000 level. This highly significant result proves that the combination of autonomy, time, and place flexibility is a meaningful predictor of how inspired and proud employees feel regarding their roles. This suggests that while flexibility may not significantly alter physical energy levels (vigor), it plays a crucial role in fostering a deeper emotional connection and sense of significance toward public service work.

The third and final model, focusing on absorption, emerges as the most powerful framework within this study. The R-square value reaches .372, meaning that the FWA dimensions account for 37.2% of the variance in how deeply engrossed and concentrated employees become in their tasks. With an adjusted R-square of .344 and a substantial F-value of 13.250 ($p < .001$), this model confirms that workplace flexibility is an exceptionally strong driver of the cognitive state of absorption. These findings imply that when civil servants are granted control over their work environment and schedules, they are significantly more likely to experience a state of "flow," where they become fully immersed and happily focused on their duties.

Table 4. Direct Effects of Regression Model 1

Relationship Among Variables	Beta	t-statistics	p	Remarks
Time Flexibility -> Vigour	.060	.353	.725	Not Significant
Place Flexibility -> Vigour	.099	.459	.648	Not Significant
Autonomy Flexibility -> Vigour	.180	.768	.445	Not Significant

Source: data analyzed (2025).

Overall, the comparative analysis of these models highlights a tiered impact of flexible work arrangements on engagement. The transition from a non-significant model for vigor to a highly

significant and robust model for absorption indicates that flexibility in the public sector functions primarily as a cognitive and emotional resource. While it may have a limited effect on the immediate physical energy of the workforce, its ability to enhance institutional dedication and mental immersion is substantial. This empirical evidence suggests that to maximize the benefits of flexible work, public sector management should recognize its profound influence on the psychological aspects of work involvement, particularly in helping employees stay focused and committed to their professional contributions.

The results of the direct effect analysis for the first regression model indicate that none of the flexible work arrangement (FWA) dimensions—time, place, and autonomy—exert a statistically significant influence on the vigour of public sector employees. Specifically, autonomy flexibility shows the highest path coefficient at .180, yet its t-statistic of .768 and p-value of .445 fall well short of the standard significance threshold of .05. Similarly, place flexibility and time flexibility demonstrate even weaker relationships, with p-values of .648 and .725, respectively. These figures suggest that the flexibility provided in terms of work scheduling and location does not directly enhance the immediate physical energy or mental resilience of the employees within this particular institutional framework.

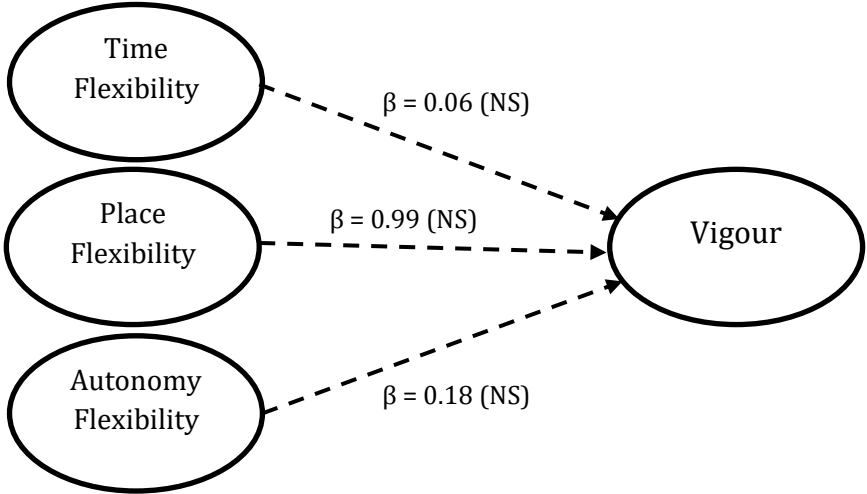


Figure 2. Path Coefficients of Regression Model I
Source: data analyzed (2025).

From an organizational perspective, these non-significant findings imply that vigour is likely shaped by factors other than structural work flexibility, such as intrinsic motivation, personal well-being, or the specific nature of public service tasks. The low t-statistics across all three paths signify that the observed effects are not robust enough to be considered reliable predictors of energetic engagement in this sample. Consequently, simply implementing flexible working hours or remote work options may not be sufficient to boost the "bursting energy" or "stamina" dimensions of job engagement. This highlights the need for public sector management to explore alternative interventions, perhaps focusing on leadership support or job enrichment, if the primary goal is to specifically increase the vigour and vitality of their workforce.

Table 5. Direct Effects of Regression Model 2

Relationship Among Variables	Beta	t-statistics	P values
Time Flexibility -> Dedication	-.094	-.600	.551
Place Flexibility -> Dedication	-.002	-.012	.990
Autonomy Flexibility -> Dedication	.559	2.599	.011

Source: data analyzed (2025).

The analysis of the second regression model reveals a distinct and polarized relationship between flexible work dimensions and employee dedication. Among the three predictors,

autonomy flexibility emerges as the sole significant driver of dedication, exhibiting a strong positive path coefficient of .559. With a t-statistic of 2.599 and a p-value of .011, these results indicate that when public sector employees are granted the discretion to manage their work procedures and workloads, their sense of inspiration and pride in their professional roles increases substantially. This suggests that psychological empowerment through autonomy is far more effective at fostering a dedicated workforce than structural arrangements alone.

Conversely, the data shows that time flexibility and place flexibility do not contribute significantly to the dedication of civil servants. Time flexibility recorded a negative but non-significant beta of $-.094$ ($p = .551$), while place flexibility showed a near-zero impact with a beta of $-.002$ ($p = .990$). The failure of these two variables to reach statistical significance implies that simply offering flexible hours or remote work locations does not automatically translate into higher levels of enthusiasm or professional significance. In the context of the public sector, dedication appears to be more deeply rooted in the quality of the work experience and the level of trust granted by the organization rather than the logistics of where or when the work occurs.

Consequently, these findings suggest a "quality over convenience" paradigm for public sector engagement. The robust significance of autonomy flexibility highlights that dedication is an emotional and cognitive response to professional respect and self-governance. For administrative leaders, this implies that policy interventions should prioritize job redesign and empowerment strategies. If the goal is to enhance the institutional commitment and inspiration of the workforce, the organization must focus on providing employees with the tools and trust to manage their tasks independently, rather than relying solely on scheduling or spatial flexibility which, in this model, proved to be insufficient.

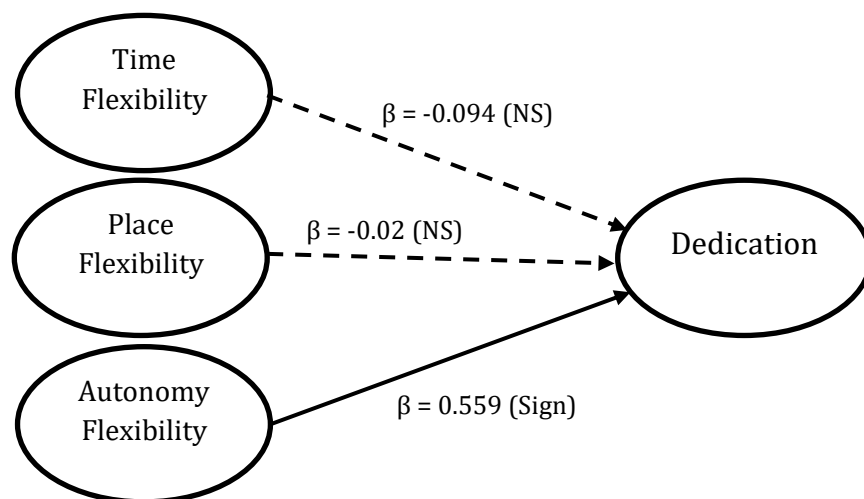


Figure 2. Path Coefficients of Regression Model II
Source: data analyzed (2025).

In the third regression model, the influence of flexible work arrangements on absorption mirrors the patterns found in the dedication model but with even greater statistical intensity. Autonomy flexibility again stands out as the dominant and only significant predictor, yielding a substantial beta coefficient of .688. The t-statistic of 3.512 and a highly significant p-value of .001 confirm that autonomy is a powerful catalyst for cognitive immersion. This indicates that granting employees the freedom to control their own work methods is the primary factor that allows them to become "absorbed" or fully engrossed in their duties to the point where they lose track of time.

In contrast, time flexibility (Beta = .017, $p = .905$) and place flexibility (Beta = $-.111$, $p = .541$) remain statistically insignificant in relation to absorption. These results are particularly telling, as they suggest that the state of "flow" or deep concentration is not dependent on the physical environment or the specific timing of the workday. Even though hybrid or remote work (place flexibility) is often theorized to reduce office distractions, this data indicates that without the accompanying autonomy to manage how tasks are performed, simply changing the location does not help a civil servant become more mentally immersed in their work.

Table 6. Direct Effects of Regression Model 3

Relationship Among Variables	Beta	t-statistics	P values
Time Flexibility -> Absorption	.017	.120	.905
Place Flexibility -> Absorption	-.111	-.614	.541
Autonomy Flexibility -> Absorption	.688	3.512	.001

Source: data analyzed (2025).

Ultimately, the results of Model 3 emphasize that autonomy is the "engine" of deep engagement within the public sector. The high beta value for autonomy flexibility suggests that it acts as a critical cognitive resource, enabling employees to align their work processes with their personal focus peaks. While time and place flexibility may offer convenience, they do not provide the necessary psychological depth to trigger absorption on their own. Therefore, to cultivate a workforce that is focused and intensely involved in public service delivery, institutional frameworks must move beyond superficial flexible policies and embrace a culture of procedural and task-based autonomy.

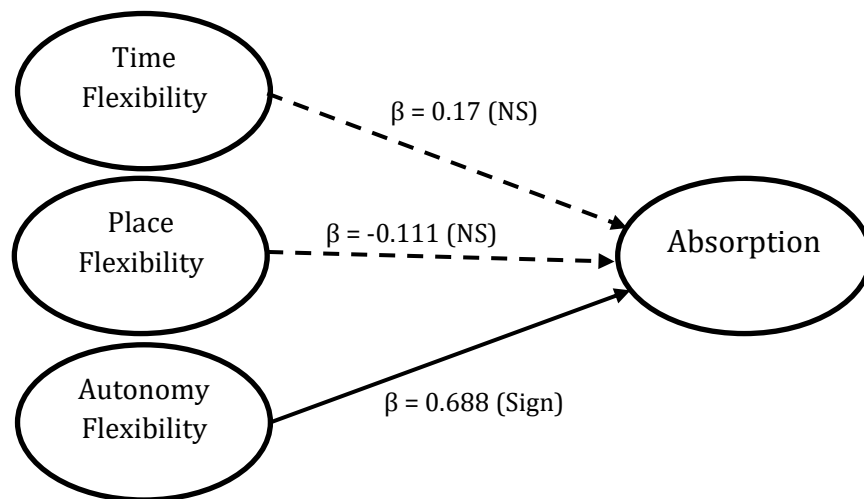


Figure 2. Path Coefficients for Flexible Work Arrangement as Determinant of Absorption
Source: data analyzed (2025).

The primary finding of this research reveals a highly selective impact of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement within the public sector. Out of nine hypothesized relationships, only two paths were found to be statistically significant and meaningful: the influence of autonomy flexibility on dedication and its influence on absorption. This underscores that for civil servants, the psychological empowerment derived from having control over work procedures is the most potent driver of cognitive and emotional immersion. This finding strongly supports the work of Bakker & Albrecht (2018), who emphasize that job resources—specifically autonomy—are critical precursors to the "flow" state and professional pride. It suggests that when public sector employees are trusted to manage their own tasks, they respond with a deeper sense of significance and mental focus. A particularly striking and unexpected discovery in this study is that neither time flexibility nor place flexibility exerts any significant influence on any dimension of job engagement. Whether considering vigor, dedication, or absorption, the ability to choose *when* or *where* to work appears to have no bearing on the engagement levels of Bandung's public sector employees. This finding stands in direct contrast to the research by Ghonim et al. (2025), who suggested that spatial and temporal flexibility could explain a vast majority of the

variance in engagement. In the context of Indonesian bureaucracy, it appears that structural flexibility is perceived more as a logistical convenience rather than a motivational resource that can spark genuine energy or commitment.

The insignificance of time and place flexibility also fails to confirm the "boundary-spanning" benefits suggested by Pedersen & Jeppesen (2012). While their research argued that scheduling flexibility enhances engagement through work-life enrichment, this study indicates that for civil servants, such arrangements do not translate into increased vigor or dedication. This discrepancy may be attributed to the rigid nature of public sector accountability, where the physical or temporal location of work is secondary to the rigid reporting structures that still govern the daily routine. Thus, unlike the private sector findings of Ghonim et al. (2025), flexibility in the public sector does not automatically lead to a more energized workforce. Furthermore, while autonomy flexibility was found to boost dedication and absorption, it notably failed to influence vigor. This suggests that while being autonomous makes a civil servant more focused and proud, it does not necessarily provide them with a higher level of physical energy or mental resilience to start the day. This finding provides a nuanced refinement to the broad claims made by Nguyen et al. (2025), who argued that modern work methods generally improve psychological well-being and vigor. In this study, the lack of connection between autonomy and vigor suggests that the energy levels of public servants may be more dependent on intrinsic health factors or leadership styles rather than the degree of task independence they possess.

In summary, this research highlights that autonomy flexibility is the "golden key" for engagement in the public sector, particularly for fostering absorption. This aligns with the classic "autonomy-as-trust" perspective but contradicts the more modern "flexibility-as-panacea" view promoted by authors like Ghonim et al. (2025) and Gašić & Berber (2023). The evidence suggests that public sector managers should shift their focus from superficial scheduling policies to deeper job redesign efforts that empower employees with genuine procedural control. By doing so, organizations can foster a workforce that is deeply engrossed and dedicated, even if their physical energy levels (vigor) and logistical arrangements (time and place) remain unchanged. Theoretically, this research contributes to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker, 2015; Demerouti, 2025; Lan et al., 2020) by demonstrating that not all organizational resources are perceived equally within the public sector. The findings suggest a critical refinement to the prevailing discourse on workplace flexibility: while time and location flexibility are often touted as universal drivers of engagement, their impact in a bureaucratic context is negligible compared to the profound influence of autonomy flexibility. This implies that for civil servants, the psychological empowerment derived from procedural control is the primary mechanism that triggers dedication and absorption. Practically, these results signal to public sector administrators that implementing superficial "work-from-home" or "flexible hour" policies may not yield the expected boost in employee energy or commitment. Instead, management should prioritize job redesign initiatives that grant employees greater agency and trust in managing their specific tasks, as fostering autonomy is proven to be the most effective strategy for cultivating a focused and inspired workforce.

Furthermore, the implementation of autonomy-based flexibility serves as a critical bridge toward modernizing the public service ecosystem. According to Taufiq & Harijanto (2023), public service motivation acts as a catalyst for proactive work behavior; by granting autonomy, organizations provide the necessary space for this motivation to translate into actual dedication and focus. This is particularly vital in the current e-government landscape where, as Taufiq (2023) emphasizes, service quality and public trust are heavily dependent on the agility and responsiveness of the digital ecosystem. Therefore, by empowering civil servants with the autonomy to innovate and manage their procedures, public institutions can foster the proactive behaviors needed to enhance service quality and trust (Agustina et al., 2023; Berg & Johansson, 2020; Taufiq, 2023), beside avoiding unwanted event that affect organizational goals (Taufiq & Pradesa, 2023). Practically, this implies that government agencies should shift their HR policies away from rigid, time-based compliance toward output-based autonomy, which not only satisfies the employees' psychological needs for dedication and absorption but also strengthens the overall trust and reliability of the public service delivery system.

The factor of task autonomy can be viewed as the main one in the process of releasing the potential of the intrinsic motivation that exists within public servants due to its association with their professional duties and public service spirit. In a hierarchical bureaucracy, the opportunity to gain autonomy becomes a sign of trust, making the employee feel that he or she is contributing to the good of others. By allowing an employee to decide on his/her own how the tasks should be completed, one creates the conditions for him/her to feel that he/she has control over the outcome. Thus, the motivation to serve people as part of one's job does not remain unfulfilled because it finds its expression in active work and immersion in work processes. Moreover, remote work may be connected with additional "administrative burden." When place flexibility is coupled with invasive monitoring technologies or high levels of reporting, then essentially it means that rather than being present physically, one is present digitally. This would lower the level of freedom for the worker and thus cause an irony of having freedom at the workplace and being under pressure due to increased digital presence. The end result is that the advantage of flexibility does not turn out to be motivational but rather causes demotivation due to the lack of trust associated with surveillance.

However, the results of this study, which stress that autonomy is the major motivator for commitment and engagement in terms of flexibility over time and location, should be considered from the perspective of the exploratory nature of the study itself. Although the small number of 71 respondents may not encompass all the diversity found in Bandung's public space, the data obtained is sufficiently valid to show the current state of organizational culture in the Indonesian Civil Servant (ASN). The repetition of the results, where structural flexibility is not significant, shows that there is probably no heterogeneity caused by bureaucratic rigidity like the e-attendance system in different organizations. This makes it possible to conclude that autonomy flexibility shows a crucial change of attitude in public service employees' psychology – how things are done matters much more than where and when.

Considering the unique nature of the Indonesian bureaucracy, it appears that the lack of significance in terms of the flexibility of time and place is due to the strong organizational culture that values visibility and continues to utilize strict "e-attendance." While flexible practices have been adopted, the organizational culture tends to see dedication to work as something tangible and visible on-site. It could be assumed that many civil servants from Bandung feel that opting for remote work and alternative schedules would bring some kind of professional loss or entail the need to go through lengthy online check-ins, which undermines any flexibility at all. Without changing their approach to the issue, structural flexibility will continue to be just logistics that cannot inspire anything positive.

In response to these problems, the leader of the government in Bandung should be ready for a job redesign process through transforming their management style from "compliance-based" into "output-based." Such a shift will require significant changes in the evaluation process, as the former focuses on controlling working time spent sitting at one's desk, whereas the latter is oriented towards achieving certain outputs and goals. From this perspective, the task of a leader would be to streamline bureaucratic routines and to stop micromanaging people on a daily basis via digital means. It is essential to note that when an employee works effectively without being controlled, he/she can focus on what really matters – providing high-quality services to citizens.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights that autonomy flexibility stands as the sole significant predictor of dedication and absorption among public sector employees in Bandung, while time and place flexibility remain statistically insignificant across all engagement dimensions. The findings suggest that it is ultimately futile to offer remote work options or flexible scheduling if they are not accompanied by genuine task autonomy. While the ability to work from different locations or at varying times offers logistical convenience, it does not possess the psychological depth required to foster true engagement among civil servants. Instead, the results prove that autonomy flexibility is the meaningful driver that triggers a state of absorption, allowing employees to become so deeply engrossed and aligned with their tasks that they achieve a higher sense of purpose. For the public sector, providing a "where" and "when" is secondary; the true

value lies in empowering the "how," as autonomy is what truly facilitates the profound absorption of the individual into their professional contributions.

This study also suggests that the current modernization of the civil service should move beyond logistical flexibility and focus on a culture of professional independence. However, a notable limitation of this research is that it does not disclose the specific organizational origins or job typologies of the respondents. Since organizational characteristics and the nature of specific roles can significantly dictate how an individual perceives and reacts to flexibility, the findings should be interpreted within the context of a generalized public sector framework rather than a specific departmental one. For future research, it is highly recommended to incorporate organizational typology and job characteristics as moderating variables to provide a more granular analysis of how different institutional cultures respond to flexibility. By utilizing a larger, stratified sample across various organizational typologies would further validate whether these findings remain consistent across different levels of government hierarchy. Furthermore, future studies should investigate the longitudinal effects of autonomy flexibility to determine if the heightened levels of dedication and absorption are sustained over time or if they are subject to "autonomy fatigue." Exploring the role of leadership styles as a mediating factor could also provide deeper insights into why structural flexibility (time and place) fails to spark engagement in the public sector compared to the private sector.

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