

Agentic Artificial Intelligence and Public Administration: Analysis of Managerial Impact

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Please cite this paper as:

Sarbu, R., Dobre, F., Pargaru, I., Ciolan, G.A. & Buzoianu, O. A. C., (2026). Agentic Artificial Intelligence and Public Administration: Analysis of Managerial Impact. In C. Vasiliu, D.-C. Dabija, A. Tziner, D. Pleșea, & V. Dinu (Eds.), *Proceedings of BASIQ International Conference on New Trends in Sustainable Business and Consumption, 12th Edition* (pp. 147-154). Editura ASE. DOI 10.24818/BASIQ/2026/12/016

Abstract

This paper aims to examine the managerial impact of agentic artificial intelligence in public administration, with a particular focus on how autonomous AI systems reshape decision-making, organizational structures, managerial authority and accountability mechanisms. The study adopts a conceptual-analytical research design, based on the synthesis of relevant literature, policy documents, regulatory perspectives and theoretical contributions in the fields of digital governance, artificial intelligence and public management. The analysis shows that the transition from traditional digital administration to agentic organizations may improve operational efficiency, support data-driven decision-making and enable more adaptive public services. At the same time, it generates significant challenges related to trust, ethical oversight, legal responsibility, workforce adaptation and the redefinition of managerial roles. The originality of the paper lies in its focus on agentic AI as a distinct stage of digital transformation, moving beyond conventional automation toward autonomous systems capable of planning, execution and self-correction. The study contributes to the literature by proposing the need for a new managerial profile, the systems architect manager, responsible for orchestrating hybrid ecosystems composed of human experts and digital agents. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of institutional readiness, human-on-the-loop supervision, transparent governance mechanisms and continuous training for the responsible integration of agentic AI in public institutions.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, agentic AI, public administration, public management, digital governance, decision support systems.

DOI: 10.24818/BASIQ/2026/12/016

Introduction

The capacity of public institutions to generate public value in the 21st century depends fundamentally on their ability to manage an increasingly pronounced asymmetry: the growing complexity of societal data versus the cognitive and operational limits of human bureaucracy. In this context, technological integration in the public sector goes beyond simple digitalization, marking the transition to a new era – the Agentic AI paradigm. The transition from passive systems, which function only as support, to autonomous agents capable of planning, execution and self-correction is not just an optimization of administrative flows, but a profound structural change, redefining the relationship between human decision and algorithmic autonomy. Historically, public management's response to increasing complexity has been through structural fragmentation. The New Public Management (NPM) paradigm sought to increase efficiency through disaggregation, while the Digital Era Governance (DEG) model proposed reintegration through digitalization (Agrawal et al., 2019).

However, both paradigms have maintained the absolute monopoly of human initiative. The emergence of Agentic AI systems represents an epistemological rupture: technology evolves from the status of a passive instrument, awaiting a command, to that of an active agent, capable of initiating actions to achieve strategic objectives, transforming the administration into a hybrid ecosystem of human-agent collaboration (Babšek

The tension is amplified by what Busuioc (2021) describe as a “strategic capacity deficit”, in which managers are forced to coordinate complex ecosystems of autonomous agents, while the organizational culture often remains anchored in outdated procedures.

Although the literature on digital transformation is extensive (Nambisan et al., 2017; Vial, 2019), there is a theoretical gap regarding the specific impact of Agentic AI on managerial paradigms. Most studies treat artificial intelligence as a predictive tool (Machine Learning), not addressing the deep implications of autonomous agents taking over the execution of tasks. Thus, the mechanisms by which authority transfers from human supervision to the orchestration of rational artificial agents remain insufficiently explained. Moreover, the tension between the need for organizational ambidexterity – in which AI agents take over exploitation functions to allow humans to explore strategically (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021) – and new restrictive ethical regulations is an area that is still little investigated.

The present study analyzes these dynamics in the context of European and Eastern European administration, with a focus on Romania, providing a critical case study. Here the tension between the advanced European regulatory framework (EU AI Act) and the hybrid administrative reality is manifested, in which NPM mechanisms (Buzoianu et al., 2022) coexist with the deficit of digital skills. The objective of the paper is the critical analysis of how managerial authority and responsibility are reconfigured under the pressure of the transition to the Agentic Organization. The final goal is to propose a conceptual framework for the “Systems Architect Manager” – a new typology of leader capable of managing the complex Principal-Agent relationship with autonomous artificial entities and transforming the institution from a rigid bureaucracy into an adaptable organism, oriented towards public value (Buzoianu et al., 2024; Cannaerts et al., 2020). The paper is structured as follows. The first section reviews the relevant scientific literature on digital transformation, artificial intelligence, agentic AI and public administration, with emphasis on their implications for managerial practices. The second section presents the research methodology and clarifies the conceptual-analytical approach used in the study. The third section discusses the main results, focusing on the transition from traditional bureaucratic structures to agentic organizations and on the reconfiguration of managerial roles, authority and accountability. Finally, the conclusions synthesize the main contributions of the study, highlight practical implications for public managers and policymakers, and outline future research directions

1. Review of the scientific literature

In recent years, scholarly research has increasingly focused on how artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming public administration, encompassing both opportunities and challenges for managerial practices. A major body of literature emphasizes that AI can significantly enhance operational efficiency, decision-making quality, and citizen-centric service delivery within public institutions (Babšek et al., 2025). For example, Babšek and colleagues’ comprehensive bibliometric overview of AI adoption in public administration highlights that AI use cases range from predictive analytics and data-driven policymaking to automated interactions with citizens through chatbots and recommender systems.

In contemporary management literature, digital transformation goes beyond the simple adoption of digital technologies, being understood as a complex process of strategic reconfiguration. Nambisan et al. (2017) emphasize that modern digital technologies possess an intrinsic creative and evolutionary potential (a concept originally called generativity), which favors the emergence of continuous and unplanned innovations, capable of extending or modifying the organizational architecture. This approach places digital transformation at the center of strategic management, not just as a support function, but as a main driver of structural change (Ionita et al., 2009). In the same vein, Vial (2019) defines digital transformation as a process through which organizations respond to the challenges of their environment, using digital technologies to change the way in which value is created.

However, the application of these concepts in the public sector brings with it a series of contradictions, not only of an operational nature, but also of a substantive one. The fluidity of the digital environment, which stimulates experimentation, contrasts with the specificity of public institutions, which operate based on legality, predictability and stability (Mergel et al., 2021). Unlike the private sector, where digital transformation aims to gain a competitive advantage and maximize profit, in the public sector digitalization has as its main goal the creation of public value (Moore, 1995).

This difference requires a change in priorities: digital transformation is not an end in itself, but a tool through which the relationship between the state and society is reconfigured (Twizeyimana and Andersson, 2019).

To understand how a public institution can generate value, it is useful to analyze it through the lens of the dynamic capabilities theory (Teece et al., 1997). According to this theory, the performance of an organization depends on its ability to detect opportunities (sensing), to capitalize on them (seizing) and to reconfigure its resources (Hințea et al., 2015).

In public administration, however, the development of these capabilities encounters a specific bottleneck, explained by Jane Fountain (2001) through the theory of Technology Enactment. This shows that institutions do not adopt technology in its optimal form, but rather shape it, often involuntarily, to fit existing bureaucratic structures and internal regulations. Thus, instead of technology modernizing the institution, the latter “bureaucratizes” it, replicating inefficient procedures, such as document scanning, in digital format without simplifying the workflow (Janssen & van der Voort, 2016).

As a result, public managers encounter major difficulties in the stage of seizing opportunities, being constrained by a rigid legislative framework and by systems designed for stability, not agility, as suggested by Teece et al. (1997) (Radulescu, Bodislav & Profiroiu, 2020). This structural rigidity highlights another key challenge: the need to balance exploitation, which seeks efficiency and refinement of existing processes, with exploration, which involves innovation and experimentation. In the literature, this balance is referred to as organizational ambidexterity (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019).

In the public sector, the balance tends to tip towards exploitation, due to the Weberian logic based on strict hierarchies and the legacy of the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm, which fragmented institutions into isolated departments, or silos. This compartmentalization limits innovation, as data remains locked in disparate systems, preventing a holistic view of citizens’ needs (Cannaerts et al., 2020).

One solution proposed by Dunleavy et al. (2006) is the transition to the Digital Era Governance (DEG) model, which dissolves administrative silos and promotes the reintegration of services and interoperability. In this context, interoperability becomes more than a technical requirement; it constitutes the infrastructure that enables organizational ambidexterity, providing cross-functional access to information and facilitating innovation. Digital technology thus functions as a facilitator: by automating repetitive processes, operational resources can be redirected towards experimentation and innovation activities (Mergel et al., 2021; Toon, 2024).

However, the success of the transition from rigid bureaucratic control to dynamic and ambidextrous governance depends largely on internal factors, especially leadership and organizational culture. Schein (2010) shows that if the institution’s core values are centered on risk aversion and excessive control – typical features of bureaucracy – technology will either be rejected or used superficially. Unlike private companies, where a lack of innovation can lead to bankruptcy, public institutions enjoy continuity ensured by the state. This certainty reduces the natural motivation for change (Profiroiu et al., 2020).

To overcome this inertia, transformational leadership, or even ambidextrous leadership, capable of implementing strategic change models, such as the one proposed by March (1991) is necessary.

Creating a real need for change (sense of urgency), the first of the eight steps of his model, is difficult in the public context, where institutions do not risk disappearing or losing their competitive advantage. In these conditions, leaders must form teams dedicated to change management and use external pressure from citizens as a substitute for market pressure (Meijer & Bolívar, 2016; Pasquale, 2015).

Digital transformation in the public sector involves the challenge of harmonizing the strict rules of administration with the agility required by the present, thus going beyond the simple acquisition of technologies. Technology must be used not only to reduce internal bureaucracy, but to transform the institution into an open partner towards the citizen, capable of generating new value (Nica et al., 2023; Poliak et al., 2025). This openness is the foundation for the integration of complex digital technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous agents, which are redefining the management paradigm in the public sector. Through them, it is possible to move from a reactive management focused on overseeing procedures to an anticipatory and strategic one, in which algorithms manage operational complexity, allowing leaders to focus on vision and impact (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2007).

2. Research methodology

The present study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the managerial impact of agentic artificial intelligence (AI) within public administration, aiming to capture both quantitative performance indicators and qualitative insights from managerial actors.

Recognizing the complexity of integrating autonomous AI agents into bureaucratic structures, the research design combines conceptual mapping, empirical analysis, and integrative synthesis. Initially, a systematic review of the literature on AI integration, digital governance, and organizational management in public institutions establishes a theoretical baseline and identifies gaps in understanding how agentic AI influences managerial authority, decision-making processes, and organizational adaptation.

This study adopts a conceptual-analytical research design, rather than an empirical mixed-method approach. The purpose of the research is to examine, from a theoretical and interpretative perspective, how agentic artificial intelligence may influence managerial practices, decision-making processes, organizational structures and accountability mechanisms in public administration.

The methodological approach is based on the analysis and synthesis of relevant scientific literature, policy documents, regulatory perspectives and institutional debates concerning artificial intelligence, digital governance, public management and organizational transformation. The study draws on academic contributions related to digital transformation, artificial intelligence in public administration, organizational ambidexterity, dynamic capabilities, public value creation and algorithmic accountability. In addition, the European regulatory context, especially the emerging governance framework for AI, is considered in order to understand the institutional constraints and opportunities associated with the integration of autonomous AI systems in the public sector.

The analysis is structured around several key dimensions: the transition from traditional bureaucratic and digital administrative models to agentic organizations; the redistribution of managerial authority between human actors and autonomous digital agents; the transformation of decision-making and coordination processes; the implications for trust, responsibility and ethical oversight; and the emergence of new managerial roles, such as the systems architect manager. These analytical dimensions allow the study to connect theoretical debates with practical challenges faced by public institutions in the context of AI adoption.

The value of the study lies in its theoretical synthesis and in the development of an analytical framework for understanding the managerial implications of agentic AI in public administration. Future research may extend this approach through empirical investigation, including surveys with public managers, interviews with IT directors and administrative decision-makers, and comparative case studies of AI adoption in public institutions from Romania and other European Union member states.

This methodological clarification ensures consistency between the research design and the results presented in the article, which are mainly theoretical, interpretative and framework-oriented rather than based on direct empirical measurement.

3. Results and discussion

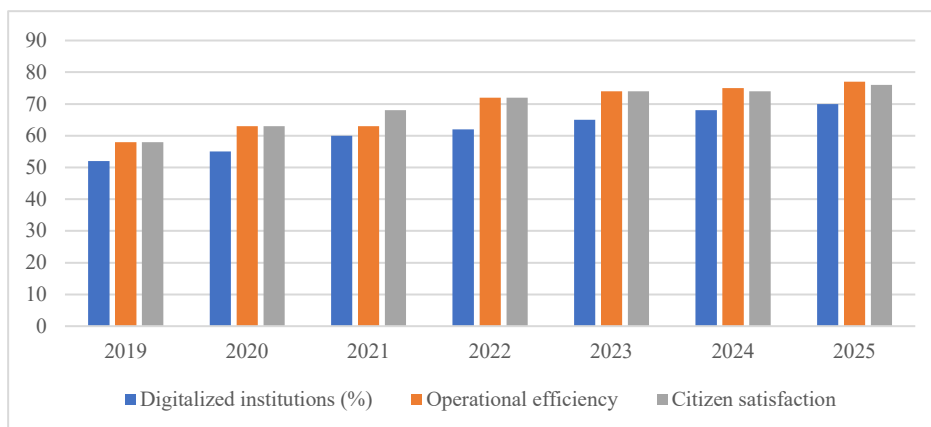


Figure no. 1. The evolution of the digitalization of public institutions and the impact on efficiency

Both commercial and public organizations are in a period of profound transformation, marked by the transition from the traditional digital structures and architecture of the 21st century to the paradigm of the

new Agentic Organizations, characterized by the intensive use of artificial intelligence (AI). This change is driven by the maturation of systems based on the concept of agentic AI, that is, autonomous systems capable of perceiving, reasoning, planning and executing complex tasks

In practice, these autonomous systems materialize through AI agents that take over a variety of tasks from human experts and adapt them to the operational and strategic objectives of the organization. Agents can divide complex problems into smaller tasks and orchestrate the organization's resources with minimal human involvement, providing cognitive support and flexibility.

To understand this new paradigm, it is useful to analyze the evolution of the main organizational models. The Industrial Revolution led to the emergence of bureaucratic organizations, characterized by rigid hierarchies, standardized tasks and clear lines of authority, focused on the management of physical resources and labor. The digital revolution introduced the digitization of organizational processes, but the structures remained hierarchical, with decisions still being made by human experts and digital tools having an executive role.

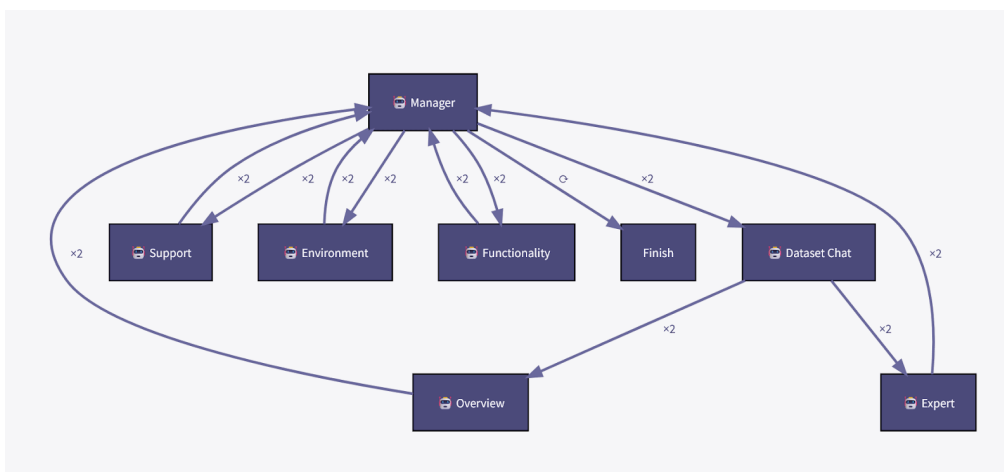


Figure no. 2. Manager-Centered Workflow Architecture

Agent Organizations represent the next revolutionary paradigm, in which decision-making authority and implementation capacity are distributed across a complex network of human experts and synthetic or artificial agents. This change redefines the perception of work: tasks are no longer just the tasks of humans, but of a system of AI agents, moving from task-centered management to management focused on results, such as increasing efficiency by a certain percentage. AI agents determine the optimal sequence of actions to achieve objectives, using complex reasoning and overcoming obstacles autonomously.

An Agentic Organization is not only defined by the presence of artificial intelligence, but also by the digital infrastructure and the ability to work with specialized digital agents, being, in essence, an ecosystem in which humans and AI agents, whether virtual or physical, collaborate to achieve common goals, and the traditional organizational architecture, based on linear hierarchies and delegation, is transformed into agent networks characterized by the dynamic exchange of data, information, knowledge and results.

Agentic Organizations are defined by three main features: distributed autonomy, collaborative intelligence and hybrid resources, distributed autonomy assuming the decentralization of decisions, agents interacting naturally with surrounding entities, such as customers, citizens or other organizations, and adapting in real time, while collaborative intelligence reflects the ability of agents to act as a system of systems to solve complex problems, exceeding the limits of an individual expert, which involves the integration of sophisticated reasoning models, allowing agents to collaborate synergistically to achieve common goals, and hybrid resources represent the combination of human experts and digital agents, who collaborate in all functions of the organization, providing flexibility and strategic response capacity. This paradigm ensures the transition from a space in which human resources carried out activities with limited time and cognitive capacity, to a dynamic, proactive entity that operates continuously and autonomously.

The main factors that favor this transition are economic (Burlacu, Popescu et al., 2022; Rădulescu et al., 2025). Digital organizations have reached a plateau in productivity, limited by cognitive capabilities and human resources, while AI agents are overcoming these limits, offering precision, speed, and the ability to continuously adapt business models to the individual needs of beneficiaries (Rădulescu et al., 2020). This evolution allows for the migration from mass production or service to a model focused on flexibility, efficiency, and personalization.

Flattened structures are supported by the ability of agents to communicate and coordinate tasks directly, eliminating the need for a traditional chain of command.

The managerial paradigm of Agent Organizations focuses on orchestrating the entire system of agents and resources, rather than delegating individual tasks, with an emphasis on results. The role of managers is being redefined: they no longer just manage resources, but also train and configure the “digital workforce”. They can analyze agent performance in real time, adjust goals, rewrite prompts and validate results, thus supporting the agent learning process. In essence, the managerial priority shifts from micro-management to strategic alignment.

AI agents also have a significant impact on financial management. They can monitor financial resources, market conditions and operational indicators in real time, adapting the procurement strategy and optimizing costs. The ability of agents to simulate financial scenarios allows organizations to identify risks and opportunities proactively, not reactively.

A major obstacle to the adoption of Agent Organizations is trust. AI agents can provide erroneous results or misinterpret the organization’s objectives, being probabilistic. Without clear rules, efficiency can prevail over ethics, and agents’ access to critical resources can generate existential risks. Other challenges include data leaks and duplication of processes through inefficient digitalization.

Public institutions can use AI agents to solve the trust problem, automating processes and improving digital services. Agencies can optimize internal processes and interaction with citizens, offering personalized, fast and efficient solutions, thus increasing the perceived value of public services. At the same time, institutions must implement rigorous oversight mechanisms to ensure the impartiality and legality of AI-generated decisions.

This study contributes to the literature on digital governance and public management by conceptualizing agentic artificial intelligence as a distinct stage in the digital transformation of public administration. Unlike traditional digital tools, which mainly support human decision-making, agentic AI systems are capable of autonomous planning, task execution and self-correction. Therefore, the paper highlights a new managerial paradigm in which public managers no longer act only as coordinators of human resources, but also as orchestrators of hybrid systems composed of human experts and digital agents.

The main theoretical contribution of the study consists in linking the concept of agentic AI with the transformation of managerial authority, accountability and organizational structures in public institutions. The paper also contributes by emphasizing the emergence of a new managerial profile, the systems architect manager, responsible for configuring, supervising and ethically governing autonomous digital agents within the public sector.

From a practical perspective, the study provides useful implications for public managers, policymakers and institutional decision-makers. Public institutions should not adopt agentic AI only as a technological solution for efficiency, but should develop clear governance mechanisms, ethical safeguards, human-on-the-loop supervision procedures and internal training programs. Moreover, the integration of agentic AI requires institutional readiness, data interoperability, transparent accountability structures and a clear division of responsibilities between human decision-makers and AI-based systems.

The study also has several limitations. First, the research is conceptual and exploratory, being based mainly on literature review, theoretical synthesis and policy-oriented interpretation, rather than on primary empirical data.

Consequently, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to all public institutions. Second, the analysis does not include survey results, interview data or comparative institutional case studies that could empirically validate the proposed framework. Third, the rapid evolution of AI technologies and regulatory frameworks, including European-level regulation, may influence the future applicability of some conclusions.

Future research should therefore test the proposed framework through empirical studies, including interviews with public managers, surveys among administrative staff and comparative case studies of AI implementation in Romania and other European Union member states.

Conclusions

The present study highlights the transformation of public administration from a traditional digital governance model toward the emerging paradigm of the Agentic Organization, in which human experts and autonomous digital agents interact within hybrid decision-making and operational ecosystems. The analysis shows that agentic artificial intelligence has the potential to improve operational efficiency, support data-

driven decision-making, optimize internal coordination and enable more adaptive public services. However, these benefits are accompanied by significant managerial and institutional challenges related to accountability, trust, ethical oversight, legal responsibility and workforce adaptation.

The results of the conceptual analysis indicate that the role of the public manager is being redefined. In an agentic organizational context, managers are no longer limited to hierarchical coordination and task delegation, but increasingly become systems architect managers, responsible for configuring, supervising and strategically aligning human and digital agents. This shift requires new competencies, including digital governance skills, ethical reasoning, systems thinking, risk assessment and the capacity to manage algorithmic decision-making processes.

The main contribution of the paper lies in conceptualizing agentic AI as a distinct stage of digital transformation in public administration and in highlighting its implications for managerial authority, organizational structures and public value creation. From a practical perspective, the study suggests that policymakers and public managers should develop governance frameworks, training programs and institutional procedures that support the responsible integration of autonomous AI systems.

Future research should extend this conceptual approach through empirical investigation. Further studies could include surveys among public managers and administrative staff, interviews with IT directors and decision-makers, and comparative case studies of AI implementation in public institutions from Romania and other European Union member states. Future research may also examine how different levels of digital maturity influence the adoption of agentic AI, how accountability mechanisms function in practice, and how citizens perceive public services supported by autonomous digital agents

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) usage statement:

ChatGPT (version 5.0) was responsibly used for language improvement. After this process, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the present article.

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