

Family Communication Patterns of Female Civil Servants within Bureaucratic Work Culture and Digital Transformation

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Abstract: Women constitute the majority of Indonesia's civil service, yet reforms rarely account for how bureaucratic and digital work regimes reshape family life. Female civil servants, mothers, face hierarchical workplace cultures and digital work demands that extend beyond working hours, affecting family communication. Drawing on Family Communication Patterns Theory and Work-Family Boundary Theory, this study examines how bureaucratic work culture and digital transformation shape the family communication patterns of women civil servants with teenage children. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research involved 18 women civil servants aged 35–50 from provinces in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, online focus group discussions, and digital observation, and analyzed thematically through source triangulation. Findings indicate that although family communication appears open, it is constrained by bureaucratic norms and digital work expectations that blur work–family boundaries and intensify maternal role strain. Five communication patterns emerged: Bureaucratic Spillover Communication, Always-On Maternal Communication, Negotiated Openness, Temporal Conflict Cycles, and Adaptive Independence Socialization. These patterns demonstrate adaptive yet unequally distributed coping strategies within families. The study highlights the need for family-sensitive bureaucratic reforms and questions the sustainability of digital governance practices that depend on gendered and invisible forms of family labor.

Keywords: Bureaucratic Culture, Digital Transformation, Family Communication, Female Civil Servants

Introduction

Women now make up the majority of the Indonesian civil service workforce. According to the data provided by the Indonesian Civil Service Agency (BKN, 2024), 57% of civil servants are women, who are mostly at the age of productivity and parenting (Gusman, 2024). This fact makes the life of female civil servants, especially mothers, very complicated as they have to constantly balance their professional responsibilities within the hierarchical and regulatory system of bureaucracy with cultural demands of family communication (Sohal et al., 2025).

Previous studies highlight that mothers do much more socio-emotional work within families (Hochschild, 2012), while bureaucracy is known to have formalized, hierarchical, and regulatory communication (Blau & Meyer, 1993). Such different forms of communication increasingly overlap due to the process of digitalization of public administration. Development of e-government services, online reporting, and continuous availability has led to development of “always-on” working culture where bureaucratic expectations spread into domestic environment (Mazmanian et al., 2013). For mothers with teenagers who need presence, empathy, and dialogue this increases the communicative stress in the family (Bernhardt & Recksiedler, 2022). The role conflict that the women civil servants face when balancing their



work as bureaucrat and as mother can be explained with Goode (1960) seminal concept of role strain according to which the individual who has many roles is subject to overload, conflict and has insufficient resources to properly fulfill all the roles. Even though the concept was formulated prior to the digital era, it can still serve as an analytical tool since the concept of role strain does not refer to the individual's inadequacy but rather to the situation created structurally when the demand of the roles exceeds the individual's time and energy (Zanhour & Sumpter, 2022). For female civil servants, this structural situation is further exacerbated by the policy context of the country where digital government reform was implemented without bureaucratic reform. The OECD (2023) review of Indonesia's digital government strategy notes that while service digitalization of services in different ministries and regions, there has been no transformation in terms of organizational culture, human resource management, and work practices on par with the former. The mismatch between technological progress and cultural stagnation is a key structural feature that explains why women employees bear the social burden of digital transformation primarily within the family domain.

From a theoretical perspective, family communication has always been viewed as a process that can be influenced not only by interpersonal interaction but also by certain structural features of society (Gittell & Douglass, 2012). According to Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT), communication between parents and children is organized through orientations towards conversation and conformity; these aspects affect how families coordinate their interactions involving authority, openness, and emotional expression (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Nevertheless, applications of this theory mostly refer to internal processes within families, while the role of external institutions' cultures (for example, bureaucratic culture) in the formation of orientations to communication is not discussed (Boullion et al., 2023). When a woman is a civil servant, she may unconsciously adopt the communication orientation typical for a bureaucratic culture at home, despite her attempts to communicate openly with her children (Yang & Kim, 2021). This structural framing also clarifies the specific theoretical contribution of the present study relative to existing scholarship. Whereas Boullion et al. (2023) who consider parental warmth and adolescents' emotion regulation as being influenced by the family structure itself, and Yang & Kim (2021), who investigate work-family conflict as a predictor of problematic internet usage among children, none of these studies directly theorize the institutionally-embedded organizational culture as an explanatory variable for family communication orientation. By situating bureaucratic habitus and digital work intensification as structural forces that actively reshape conversation and conformity orientations within the household, this study extends Family Communication Patterns Theory beyond its conventional boundaries and responds directly to Boullion et al. (2023) call for greater attention to institutional context in family communication research.

Although there is plenty of literature on the impact of work-family conflict and digital labor on family communication practices, very few studies address how bureaucracy and digital labor intensity impact family communication in specific, especially for female civil servants in Global South settings (Abendroth et al., 2024). Current family communication theories do not often consider the role of institutional work cultures, whereas research into civil servants



focuses on performance rather than communicative experience within families (Abramczuk et al., 2025). Moreover, the issue becomes even more relevant in light of government efforts to increase digitalization of the bureaucratic system without adequate consideration of its implications (İnan & Kara, 2023). Without knowledge of how these processes impact communication of mothers and adolescents, any policy measures could potentially harm the well-being of families (Işık, 2021).

This research work will contribute new insights through combining the concepts of communication culture of bureaucracy, digital transformation and family communication. The current study attempts to extend the role negotiation theory by considering institution's culture as one of the critical factors influencing mother's communication behavior in the age of digitalization.

The use of a qualitative case study methodology, which involves conducting in-depth interviews, online focus groups, and online observation, provides insights into how bureaucracy influences domestic communication, as well as how mothers cope with this influence in order to maintain their intimate relationships. It not only contributes to theoretical development but also has practical implications for family-friendly bureaucracies and regulation of digital workloads positioning family communication as integral to sustainable public governance.

Research on family communication in the digital era consistently highlights the ambivalent role of technology in shaping parent-child relationships. Batubara et al. (2025) point out a case of a digital paradox in Indonesia, whereby digital media not only provides opportunities for accessing information but also serves to create generation gaps in communication between parents and adolescents. The research indicates the move from face-to-face interactions to digital communication and its effect on relationships, value socialization, and generational conflict. Significantly, the nature of familiar communication such as hybrid, disconnected, reactive and adaptive communication underscoring that families must actively negotiate technological presence to maintain relational intimacy.

Alongside this point of view, the authors Ahmad & SR (2025) argue that despite the increased connectivity between members of one family through social media, the emotional closeness will still be linked to face-to-face contact. It turns out that most of the participants value offline communication as more emotionally intense, whereas digital interaction raises new challenges such as violation of the right to privacy as well as conflicts within different generations. Thus, it becomes clear that digital family communication does not only concern technical issues but also has emotional, ethical and even legal aspects reinforcing concerns about the limits of digital mediation in sustaining familial warmth.

Outside the scope of family-level dynamics, research in the domain of gender and digital labor demonstrates how digitalization leads to an unequal increase in the duties of women in both professional and familial spheres. As noted by Hu & Qian (2024) in their cross-country analysis, women tend to hold "dual-high" profiles in digital communication profiles, juggling intensive work-related and family-related digital interactions simultaneously. This phenomenon creates what they describe as a digital double burden, especially among women



who telework at home and have a high degree of digital literacy. This is extremely important for explaining why digital forms of telework increase gender inequalities instead of reducing them.

Relatedly, Franken (2021) despite the ability of women to perform competently socially and emotionally as well as in leadership capacities, which is essential for the digital era, there still exist structural inequalities. Women are poorly represented in decision-making capacities, they experience stereotype discrimination as well as double burden as professionals and caregivers. The digital revolution does not appear to be gender-neutral but on the contrary tends to perpetuate and intensify these inequalities through organizational practices and even algorithmic systems. This perspective situates women's digital labor within broader institutional and cultural power structures.

Studying the impact of organizational communication culture on women in bureaucratic organizations serves to provide additional examples of how this phenomenon affects everyday communication. Research of digital transformation offices conducted by Halim & Zahratul Husna (2023) reveals that bureaucratic communication retains its hierarchical nature, including a tendency for information to flow downward and to follow formal feedback procedures, even in a digitally developed context. Such communication patterns may constrain openness and dialogic interaction, suggesting that bureaucratic norms can permeate beyond organizational boundaries into personal communication practices.

Apart from family communication and gendered digital labor, work-family boundary theory provides a useful framework for exploring the effects of bureaucratic and digital pressures on domestic spheres. According to Clark (2000), work and family are two distinct but porous domains that share a boundary, psychological and/or physical, across which people continually navigate the segmentation and integration of roles. Further development of work-family boundaries theory by Ashforth et al. (2000) suggests that in situations where the boundaries between the spheres of work and family are weak and flexible, one experiences more role transitions, thus increasing cognitive load while gaining in convenience. Kreiner (2006) additionally proves that there exists the relationship between the level of work-family conflict and well-being of an individual depending on the gap between preferred and provided by the organization boundary permeability. In bureaucratic organizations with strong hierarchical structure and permanent connectivity of employees, such a boundary permeability does not occur voluntarily but rather structurally through reporting, instant messaging, and immediate response requirements. Based on this theoretical framework, the communication spillover experienced by female public servants in this paper should be considered the product of structural erosion of the work-family boundary.

Alongside the theory of the boundary, the ideal worker norm Acker (1990) explains why bureaucratic organizations still require their staff to be available at all times in spite of flexible work policies. As per Acker (1990), organizations are usually not gender-neutral and are based on an assumption about the standard worker without any additional responsibilities, such an assumption traditionally being based on men. In their article Williams et al. (2013) develop the idea and introduce the concept of flexibility stigma, under which those employees,



predominantly women, who use flexible work policies are viewed as less committed or as less promising candidates for promotion. Empirical research by Chung (2020) adds further proof to this claim, suggesting that women using flexible work practices face penalties in their careers due to the perception of a lack of dedication to their jobs as opposed to family life. This idea is especially relevant for bureaucratic organization in which accountability and presenteeism are very deeply rooted (Reid, 2015). They suggest that the persistence of an always-on culture among female civil servants is not incidental but reflects an institutional logic in which formal flexibility policies coexist with informal expectations of continuous availability.

However, a significant gap remains in the research. Although past studies have explored the relationship between digital family communication, gendered digital labor, and bureaucratic communication, hardly any study has incorporated all these approaches and examined the impact of bureaucratic organizational culture and digitalization on family communication, especially among women civil servants with teenagers. This study addresses this gap by looking at family communication as a place where workplace norms, digital technology, and motherhood meet in everyday life. It extends Family Communication Patterns Theory by showing that communication within the family is not shaped only by what happens between family members. The culture and expectations of bureaucratic workplaces can also influence how mothers communicate, respond, and manage conversations at home. From this perspective, the study brings workplace institutions into the discussion of family communication and offers a perspective that has not been fully explored in previous studies of family communication and work–family conflict.

Methods

The research design utilized in this study is a qualitative case study design, which focuses on how female civil servants engage in the process of building and negotiating family communication styles (Creswell, 2013). The case study design is particularly appropriate for investigating contemporary social phenomena embedded in real-life settings, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018), and it further allows the layered, multiple-role experiences described by Goode (1960) role strain theory to be examined holistically rather than reduced to isolated variables. The research was conducted in three provinces in Indonesia there are West Java, Central Java, and Jakarta to capture variation in bureaucratic and digital work contexts across different administrative and socio-economic settings. These locations were purposively selected to provide contextual variation in institutional environments and levels of digital work exposure, rather than to achieve geographical representation of Indonesia. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling and comprised 18 married civil servant females within the age range of 35-50 years, having been employed for at least five years at their place of work, and having adolescent children between the ages of 12-18 years. The sample size was arrived at gradually by recruiting and conducting interviews until subsequent interviews no longer yielded any new themes relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021).



Data were gathered during a four-month period using in--depth semi-structured interviews, online focus group discussions, and digital ethnography. Interview lasted for 60 to 90 minutes, which was conducted either by face-to-face or video conferencing technique according to the convenience of the informants, audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim after obtaining consent from them. Interviews revolved around the experiences of the respondents regarding communication practices in the family, the perception of the respondents toward bureaucratic pressure, and the effects of digital technology in blurring the line between work-family boundary. The two online FGDs, which included six to eight participants per FGD, allowed for group reflections on the problems they experience and the coping mechanisms that they use, enabling the informants to compare and contrast their experiences from various institutional and provincial settings. Digital observation was carried out over two weeks for each informant. The observation focused on how work-related digital technologies, such as messaging applications and online reporting systems, entered everyday communication within the household. The researcher paid attention to when and how often work-related messages interrupted domestic interactions, as well as the emotional responses associated with these interruptions. Where permission was granted, these interactions were also observed directly through shared household communication channels.

Because these channels of communication were shared by other household members, separate informed consent was obtained for the observation of digital communication, and when a message sent by the partner or child was visible in the observed channel, verbal consent was also sought along with excluding their message content unless it was related to the participant's work-family communication. All observed message content was anonymized at the point of transcription like sender names, phone numbers, and institutional identifiers were replaced with pseudonymous codes and raw observational logs were stored on an encrypted, password-protected drive accessible only to the research team, then deleted upon completion of data analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach, which involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for and reviewing themes, and defining and naming final themes. The coding process was conducted manually and then independently checked by two members of the research team to maintain consistency in the analysis. Any differences in interpretation were discussed by the team until an agreement was reached. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the researchers also compared information from interview transcripts, FGDs, and observational data. This approach followed the principles of trustworthiness in qualitative research outlined by Guba & Lincoln (1985) and later applied to thematic analysis by Nowell et al. (2017), particularly in relation to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researchers paid close attention to ethical issues throughout the study. Before taking part, each participant was informed about the purpose of the research and their right to leave the study at any time. They then provided written consent. To protect participants' privacy, their identities were removed from the data, and all research materials were stored securely. The study also received ethical



approval from the review board at the researchers' affiliated institution before data collection began.

Results and Discussion

This section provides the research findings grouped according to important themes that have emerged through in-depth interviews with female civil servants. Grouping the findings is intended to demonstrate the role of multiple roles, the bureaucratic organizational culture, and the digital revolution on the process of family communication patterns formation. Instead of presenting the family communication patterns as sealed or dysfunctional, the findings demonstrate open but structurally constrained communication dynamics.



Figure 2. Digital Observation from Whatsapp Messages

Patterns in family communication among the eighteen interviewees were neither isolated nor idiosyncratic but rather repetitive configurations found in diverse institutional settings. Consistency in such patterns across diverse contexts is also consistent with recent qualitative studies on dual role parents in other parts of the Global South. Hosain (2025) examines dual-career families with children in Bangladesh, and notes that work-family communication takes up repetitive coping configurations rather than being varied idiosyncratically across families, which he attributes to common structural factors among diverse households. The eight thematic categories presented below should therefore be read not as isolated case descriptions, but as an empirically grounded typology of how bureaucratic culture and digital transformation are jointly metabolized within the domestic sphere. This typological framing is also consistent with Craig & Churchill (2021) analysis of dual-earner parent couples' work and care arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic, which found that heightened digital connectivity and blurred work-home boundaries did not uniformly erode

family communication, but instead produced a patterned range of adaptive responses, from tightly bounded segmentation to near-total integration, depending on institutional flexibility and gendered household expectations. With this in mind, the results that follow are presented to progress in an increasingly relational fashion from those structures that are least open to agency to those that are most open to agency, thereby enabling the interplay of structure and agency to be mapped out systematically across categories.

At the same time, consistent with recent calls in family communication research to place results in the specific cultural and institutional context of their production rather than see family communication as a culturally neutral phenomenon (Breshears & Rabe, 2025), the following categories are introduced with special reference to the Indonesian bureaucratic context characterized by organizational hierarchies, collective family values, and the inconsistent development of digital governance reforms discussed above. This contextualized presentation of results aims at avoiding an interpretation of the findings as a universal theory of working motherhood but instead emphasizing the specific structural conditions under which female civil servants in this study negotiate openness, control, and connection with their children.

Table 1. Categories of Family Communication Patterns among Female Civil Servants

No.	Categories	Description of Findings
1	Informants' Background and the Context of Multiple Roles	The findings indicate that female civil servants do not experience entirely closed or dysfunctional family communication. Most of the informants had relatively open communication with their mothers as well as with the children, especially those of teenage years. This open communication was in the face of heavy role strain because of the existence of emotional roles together with the bureaucratic roles and hierarchical accountability.
2	Bureaucratic Work Culture and Communication Style at Home	The hierarchical and instruction-oriented culture of bureaucracy significantly shapes informants' communication styles, which are unconsciously carried into family interactions. Mothers tend to communicate in a firm, structured, and directive manner patterns normalized in bureaucratic settings. Even though it is not meant to be authoritative, this mode stems from the adoption of bureaucratic habitus. Children respond ambivalently: some experience pressure, while others develop greater independence and self-regulation.
3	Digitalization, Work Interruptions,	Digital bureaucratic systems intensify boundary blurring between work and family life. Information was received about work-related communication during times other than working



	and Blurred Boundaries	hours, including late at night, and even a situation where an abrupt request was made to come back to work. Interruptions in family discussions occur, resulting in a fragmented maternal figure who is physically present but psychologically absent. On the other hand, this situation helps the children to become more autonomous in managing their daily activities and emotions.
4	Temporal Patterns of Family Conflict	Two critical periods of heightened conflict were identified. The first stage is from late afternoon until evening (around 4:00–8:00 p.m.). At this time, the change from being at work to home causes a conflict between work exhaustion and domestic duties. The second period was in the morning where there is time pressure due to household rush hours. Conflicts during these times are situational and temporary and cease once equilibrium is regained.
5	Emotional Burden and Perceived Maternal Sacrifice	Many informants expressed a perception of being the most burdened and sacrificial members of the family. Pressure exerted from above by superior officers along with domestic expectations causes emotional exhaustion, sometimes leading to an outburst of rage or crying. This expression of emotion arises due to structural imbalance and not personal inadequacies, placing women civil servants at the crossroads of organizational loyalties and family obligations with minimal scope for emotional recuperation.
6	Adaptive Strategies and the Formation of Children's Independence	Despite all the layers of pressure, the informants create some kind of adaptation of their communication processes. The scarce time together forces children to be more independent and capable of making their own choices. Mothers attempt to have good relations through small gestures such as bedtime conversations, weekends, and discussions after conflicts. This is an adaptation based on the modification of mothers' presence.
7	Policy–Practice Gap in Institutional Flexibility	Informants were aware of the government's Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) policy. However, its implementation is merely symbolic because of the continuing rigidity, hierarchy, and presenteeism. The disparity between the official policy and actual practice increases psychological pressure, as the mothers are formally "granted flexibility" but culturally expected to remain constantly available.
8	The Meaning of Family	For the informants, families who are communicative do not lack conflicts; rather, they have the capacity to come back to



Communication for Female Civil Servants conversations after conflicts. Openness, healing, apology, and awareness are among the important elements of good communication within a family. This is why family communication for women in the civil services within the new digital bureaucratic era is very much dynamic and institutionally structured.

Source: data analysis (2025)

All of these indicate that the family communication among women civil servants is adaptive, negotiated, and structurally embedded rather than intrinsically dysfunctional. The communication strategies are influenced by the carry-over of the bureaucratic culture, the pressures of the digital always-on workplace, and the gender norms around care-taking. The families do not break down under these pressures; instead, they adjust themselves due to increasing autonomy of the children and emotional labor of the mothers. Yet, all these adjustments take place under some serious structural limitations, meaning that improvement of the family communication cannot be considered independent from bureaucratic cultural transformation and flexible working policy implementation.

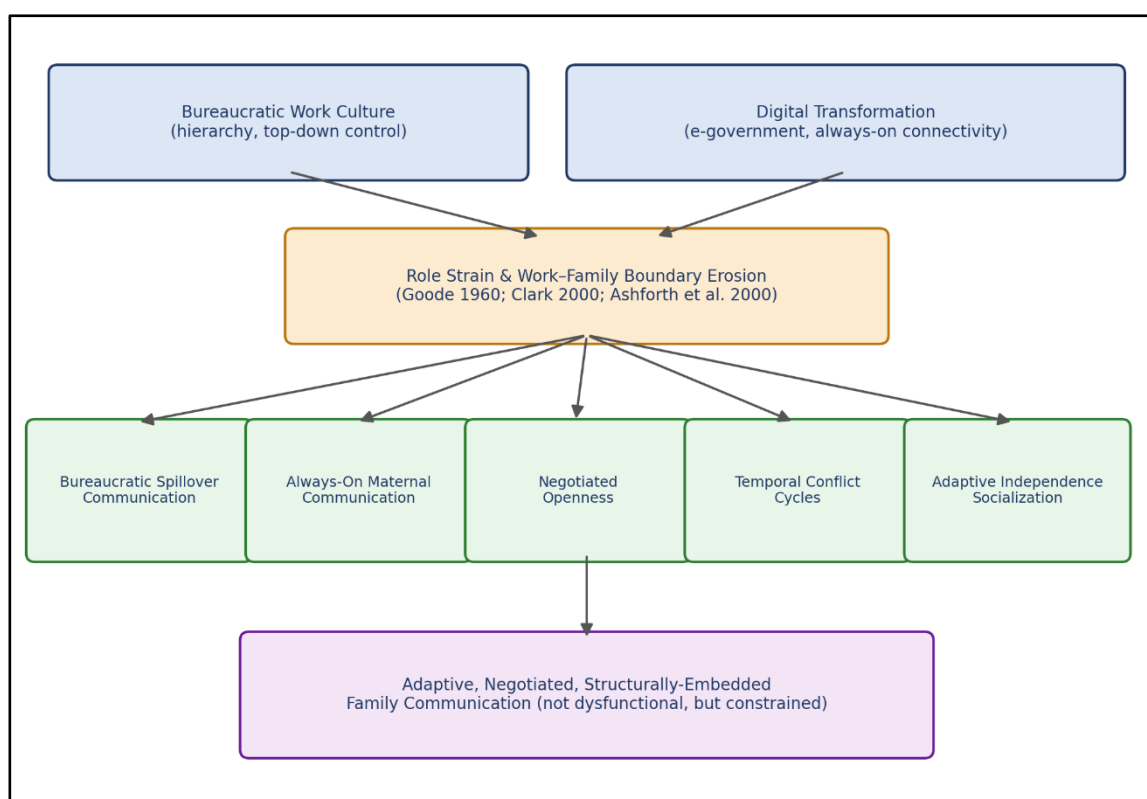


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Bureaucratic and Digital Transformation Shape the Five Family Communication Patterns

This relatively open but role-strained communication observed in the descriptions of the informants in the section entitled "Informants' Background and the Context of Multiple Roles" is exemplified by the assertion made by Goode (1960) that role strain does not result from a sole demanding role but from the combined friction arising from several roles operating at once. The female civil servants in this study did not consider their roles as bureaucrat and mother as mutually exclusive; instead, they had difficulties in fully playing one role while partially neglecting the other one. This type of dilemma is explained by the concept of boundarylessness of the mental load that has been developed by Dean et al. (2022). It means that the mental load is not limited neither to work nor to household activities and lasts all the time regardless of the time of day. Thus, in light of these two research areas, the relative openness of communication in the family context observed by the informants does not indicate the absence of strain but represents an equilibrium established despite structural conditions.

The concept of "Bureaucratic Spillover Communication" observed in the current study can be further elaborated in light of the institutional habitus and permeable boundaries perspective. As proposed by Ashforth et al. (2000) and Kreiner (2006), an individual working for a long time in a strongly segmented, hierarchical institution becomes subconsciously accustomed to a certain communicative script that he/she begins to use automatically beyond role boundaries. Thus, the informants did not perceive their directive communication at home as a conscious decision, but just an automatic habit. In addition, the findings of the current research are consistent with the recent work of Halim & Husna (2023) revealing that the communication in digital transformation offices retains its hierarchical nature even in technologically advanced conditions, supporting the idea that institutional communication logics are immune to contextual changes, whether at the office or within the home.

The Always-On Maternal Communication framework also supports Clark (2000) border theory and the autonomy paradox discussed by Mazmanian et al. (2013). Although mobile connectivity is intended to give people greater control over when and where they work, it can also create a sense of pressure to remain available and connected at all times. A similar pattern can be seen in the digital double burden described by Hu & Qian (2024), which shows that women are more likely to experience high levels of both work- and family-related digital communication. Taken together, these studies suggest that the fragmented maternal role described by the informants is not necessarily specific to Indonesia or the bureaucratic workplace. Rather, it reflects a broader pattern in which the digitalization of work does not always give women more time or freedom, but can instead add to the communication demands they face at work and at home.

Temporal Conflict Cycles, as found in this study, are mainly experienced during mornings and late afternoons to evenings. According to Ashforth et al. (2000), these cycles can be explained using their theory of Micro Role Transitions, whereby individuals are required to make adjustments each time they are transitioning from one segmented role to another. During mornings and evenings, there are two main times when bureaucrat and maternal roles confront each other. This is because at these two times, informants need to detach themselves from one role and adopt another. As per Ashforth et al. (2000), the more difficult these transitions



become is when the roles involved have conflicting behavioral scripts. For the informants, moving from a directive and time-sensitive role at work to a warm and responsive role as a mother is not always easy, especially when the transition has to happen within a matter of minutes. At the same time, the informants often described these tensions as temporary. They usually did not develop into more serious conflicts and tended to resolve on their own. This suggests that, over time, the informants may have found their own ways of shifting between work and family roles. Some described taking a short moment of silence or moving to another space in the house before engaging with their children. Although these small actions may seem simple, they appear to help create a mental and emotional break between work and family life, particularly when no formal support is available to help them make this transition.

The Emotional Burden and Perceived Maternal Sacrifice identified among informants can additionally be interpreted through Daminger (2019) notion of cognitive labor. It differentiates the physical labor of care and the invisible mental processes of prediction, evaluation of alternatives, and outcomes monitoring. While the earlier theory of Hochschild (2012), known as the theory of emotional labor, covers the emotional component of the burden, the theory of Daminger helps to explain why the informants feel tired not only during their physical activity at home but also during moments when they do not perform any domestic activities – they still have to monitor their bureaucratic obligations and the well-being of their family members. In this way, the double burden of cognitive labor along with official work provides a better explanation of why women civil servants perceive themselves to be structurally, rather than individually, burdened. This is corroborated by more recent large-scale evidence showing that mothers continue to disproportionately carry both the anticipatory and monitoring components of cognitive labor across household and caregiving domains, regardless of employment sector (Weeks & Ruppanner, 2025).

The Policy-Practice Gap in Institutional Flexibility reported by informants is consistent with a growing body of literature documenting the limits of flexible work arrangements as a solution to gendered work–family tension. Williams et al. (2013) and Chung (2020) both demonstrate that flexible work policies frequently coexist with a flexibility stigma that discourages genuine uptake, while Williamson et al. (2024) among public sector workers teleworking during the pandemic demonstrates how even disruptive changes in traditional office work cannot dispel established ideal worker norms, especially when practiced in hierarchical government agencies. Taken together, this research points towards the conclusion that the tokenistic approach adopted by Indonesian female civil servants is not a rare phenomenon in bureaucracy but rather a common one, implying that the change in policy alone does not bring sufficient results without changing the organizational culture and managerial practice.

Finally, the Adaptive Independence Socialization model must be considered against the background of the specific cultural environment of Indonesian family relations where, despite mothers' limited availability, strong bonds between children and parents and parental influence norms still prevail. Similar conclusions are drawn in Kadir et al. (2024) research on work-family conflict experienced by working mothers in Indonesian public organizations where such



a phenomenon affects the ability of mothers to positively relate to their children mostly through decreased levels of well-being. Thus, in contrast to Batubara et al. (2025) study on hybrid and adaptive communication models employed by Indonesian parents and adolescents, one can say that the independence of informants' children is not merely an outcome of mothers' limited availability but rather an adaptive response to the specific cultural situation.

This trend has been further supported by a recent bibliometric study on gender and flexible working practices in Asian organizations, showing how formal policy adoption within Asia still lags behind Western organizations because of hierarchical and patriarchal organizational culture that persists in the former (Badrolhisam & Jamil, 2025).

Table 2. Synthesis of the Five Dominant Family Communication Patterns among Female Civil Servants

No.	Dominant Pattern	Key Characteristics
1	Bureaucratic Spillover Communication	Hierarchical, directive, and instruction-oriented bureaucratic communication styles are unconsciously transferred into family interactions, producing asymmetrical mother–child relations even as dialogue remains possible.
2	Always-On Maternal Communication	Constant disruptions to work due to digital technology beyond working hours lead to an always-on but fragmented presence of mother physically present but mentally distracted.
3	Negotiated Openness	The mother-child relationship of openness is contextually dependent and conditional, constantly negotiated through time, availability, and attention and not something inherent in the family system.
4	Temporal Conflict Cycles	Conflict peaks during two periods of role transition in a day (morning and late afternoon-evening) the conflict is usually short-lived and is followed by recovery.
5	Adaptive Independence Socialization	Limited maternal availability fosters children's autonomy and decision-making, shifting maternal involvement from direct control toward selective emotional support during small, meaningful moments.

Source: data analysis (2025)

Table 2 synthesizes the eight empirical categories in Table 1 into five dominant, theoretically distinguishable patterns. Categories 1 and 8 converge into Negotiated Openness, as both describe the same underlying phenomenon of conditional, actively maintained dialogue rather than fixed family disposition; Categories 5 and 6 converge into Adaptive Independence Socialization, since emotional burden and children's growing autonomy are two sides of the



same adaptive process rather than separate patterns. Category 7, the Policy–Practice Gap in Institutional Flexibility, is deliberately not presented as a standalone pattern in Table 2. Rather than describing a distinct communication behavior but operates as a crosscutting structural condition, the symbolic rather than substantive implementation of flexible working hours that drives and exacerbates both Bureaucratic Spillover Communication and Always-on Maternal Communication. Therefore, it is discussed in context of the other two types below rather than treated as a sixth, separate category. Each of these five patterns is discussed in turn below, drawing on relevant theoretical and empirical literature to situate the findings within broader scholarship on work–family boundary dynamics, gendered institutional culture, and family communication in bureaucratic and digital contexts.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the application of the purposive sampling technique and relatively small sample size make the findings not readily applicable to female civil servants from various institutions and/or regions/cultures, since they are generated in the context of an in-depth qualitative case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, due to the fact that the data was mostly collected from the mothers themselves, the current study has only considered one actor's perspective on family communication, and the point of view of spouses and adolescents, who are involved in constructing communication patterns in families, have not been considered at all and constitute an interesting area for further research. Third, the cross-sectional nature of data collection means that the adaptive strategies described here reflect a particular moment in participants' family life cycle and may shift substantially as children move into early adulthood or as bureaucratic digitalization policies continue to evolve.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that family communication among female civil servants (ASN) within bureaucratic work culture and digital transformation produces distinctive, dynamic, and highly negotiated communication patterns rather than linear or uniform ones. Five dominant patterns were identified. Bureaucratic Spillover Communication refers to the unconscious transfer of hierarchical, directive, and instruction-oriented bureaucratic communication styles into family interactions, shaping asymmetrical mother–child relations even as dialogue remains possible. Always-On Maternal Communication refers to fragmented maternal presence due to continuous disruption from work through digital means even after office hours. Negotiated Openness refers to conditional nature of communication between mothers and children. Temporal Conflict Cycles refer to time-related conflicts which occur during transition periods of roles, especially in the mornings and late afternoons/evenings. These are usually short-term in nature and are followed by communicative recovery. Finally, Adaptive Independence Socialization shows how limited maternal availability fosters children's autonomy, shifting maternal roles from direct control toward selective emotional support. Together, these patterns demonstrate that family communication among female civil servants cannot be understood solely as an interpersonal practice, but as the product of interaction between bureaucratic culture, digital technology, and gendered institutional expectations.



The results of this study have both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical perspective, this research expands Family Communication Patterns Theory and the work-family boundary theory by illustrating how the institutional culture, in addition to interpersonal predisposition, plays an active role in the formation of communication and conformity orientation within the family under circumstances of digitalization and gender-based role conflict. In practice, the gap between flexible work policies and how they are actually experienced suggests that improving family communication among female civil servants requires more than individual coping strategies. It also calls for changes in workplace culture, including making sure that flexible working hours can be used in practice, recognizing that work often continues through digital communication after office hours, and considering employees' family responsibilities when evaluating their performance. Future research could examine these issues over a longer period and across different institutional settings. It could also include the perspectives of wives and children, which may provide a broader understanding of how bureaucratic work and digital connectivity affect communication within families.

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