

## THEORY AND INNOVATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY & JOURNALISM

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/2592-8813-2025-2-16>

### BETWEEN HOME AND WORK: HOW CHILDREN'S DISTANCE LEARNING CHALLENGES INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS (2020 VS. 2025)

**Oksana Govera,**

*Postgraduate Student at the Department of Publishing and Editing,  
Educational and Scientific Publishing and Printing Institute,  
National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute"  
(Kyiv, Ukraine)*

*ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6580-9121*

*Hovera.oksana@gmail.com*

**Abstract.** This article analyzes the level of parental involvement in children's distance learning during the crisis periods of 2020 and 2025 in Ukraine, with a particular focus on its impact on internal organizational communication. The empirical basis consists of two online surveys, each involving 800 respondents, which trace the changes in intensity, forms, and consequences of parental engagement in the educational process. The methodology includes comparative analysis of frequency data, supported by qualitative interpretation of typical behavioral patterns. The findings reveal a significant increase in cognitive load, time consumption, and emotional exhaustion among working parents between 2020 and 2025. These factors, in turn, have led to fragmented internal communication, role conflicts, and reduced effectiveness of team interaction. The article outlines directions for further research, particularly in the area of communicative support for parent-employees within hybrid work environments.

**Key words:** internal organizational communication, working parents, distance learning, digital overload, communicative stress, role conflict, hybrid work models, employee support, organizational resilience.

**Introduction.** Since 2020, Ukrainian organizations have operated in a persistently unstable environment shaped by the pandemic, full-scale war, mass displacement, and the transformation of both educational and labor practices. Against this backdrop, intra-organizational communication has become increasingly sensitive to external and internal stressors. Particular attention must be paid to the situation of working parents who, while performing their professional duties, are also compelled to engage in their children's daily distance learning.

The role conflict between professional responsibilities and parental support of online learning remains underexplored in both domestic and international academic literature. Existing studies tend to focus on organizational adaptation to crisis conditions (Krivoviazuk, 2022), the general psychological impact of distance education on parents (Solianik, 2021), or the risks of discrimination in war-time educational settings (Kozoroh, 2022). However, most publications lack a systemic analysis of the relationship between parental involvement in schooling and the dynamics of intra-organizational communication.

The monograph by I. Kryvoviazuk examines the challenges facing Ukrainian industrial enterprises and assesses their operational excellence amid the growing influence of information and communication technologies. While the work is not specifically devoted to internal communication, it offers valuable recommendations for implementing managerial innovations aimed at business resilience during crises. Kryvoviazuk emphasizes the importance of strategic adaptability, proposing a model of business excellence based on principles such as customer orientation, knowledge and innovation development, effective communication, conscious leadership, diversity in management practices, and responsiveness to external change (Kryvoviazuk, 2022: 112, 144).

Several publications address the situation of working parents supporting their children's distance learning. For instance, a feature on the ZMIST media platform highlights that during the pandemic, responsibility for monitoring children's educational progress was largely shifted onto parents, resulting in additional stress. The article notes that new learning conditions created significant challenges not only for school-aged children but also for adult participants in the educational process – namely, parents and teachers. Alongside a decline in academic outcomes and limited access to higher education for certain populations, there has been an increase in domestic violence and a deterioration in mental health among Ukrainians (Solianik, 2021).

Key issues identified in these sources include:

- the lack of dialogue between students, teachers, and parents;
- the absence of robust methodologies and inadequate governmental response to distance education;
- the involuntary adoption – or, conversely, neglect – of digital tools for learning;
- insufficient prior experience with remote schooling;
- irregular work schedules;
- adverse health effects linked to excessive use of digital devices;
- the inability to defer exams and defend final projects;
- the absence of financial incentives for educators and the lack of updated pricing standards for educational services;
- and, finally, additional stress borne by parents.

An article published on *Ukrainska Helsinska spilka* explores parental responsibility in education during wartime and emphasizes that online learning may generate discriminatory conditions for certain categories of educational participants (Kozoroh, 2022).

Notably, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has supported draft legislation that allows one parent to work remotely or from home if their child is enrolled in distance education. This measure targets families with children under 14 and aims to facilitate the reconciliation of professional obligations with caregiving at home. Draft Law No. 10164-1, registered on November 6, 2023, amends the Labor Code of Ukraine by expanding provisions on home-based and remote work. Initiated by H. Tretiakova, the bill underscores the need for legal protections for parents who are adapting to the realities of digital education. The draft was approved in its first reading on December 5, 2024, and is currently awaiting a second review.

This legislative proposal builds upon reforms first initiated in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Articles 60-1 and 60-2 were added to the Labor Code, formally regulating remote and home-based employment. Further adjustments followed the onset of the full-scale war, with the adoption of Law No. 2136-IX «On the Organization of Labor Relations under Martial Law», which provided increased flexibility for both employers and employees, including parents.

In addition, the Ministry of Economy and the State Labor Service have repeatedly issued methodological guidelines for organizing remote work. Law No. 5161 (2021) introduced a legal framework for non-standard forms of employment, further legitimizing family-oriented considerations in labor relations.

Thus, Draft Law No. 10164-1 is consistent with previous legislative developments and enhances the social sensitivity of labor law – particularly in terms of supporting parenthood and family life amid the digitalization of education and the volatility of the environment. If adopted, the bill could become a meaningful step toward building a more just and flexible labor market that acknowledges not only economic efficiency but also the humanitarian dimension of employment relations.

While individual publications and legal initiatives have addressed the challenges faced by working parents amid the pandemic and war, comprehensive academic research on this topic remains scarce. Further study is required to develop effective support strategies for employee-parents and to refine intra-organizational communication under crisis conditions.

**The aim of this study** is to examine changes in parental involvement in children's distance learning in Ukraine between 2020 and 2025 and to analyze how such involvement influences the communicative behavior of employees within organizational environments.

**Materials and Methods.** This study has a comparative character and is based on two questionnaire surveys conducted in May 2020 (during the first wave of distance learning,  $n = 800$ ) and in January 2025 (within the context of hybrid work, protracted war, and new waves of evacuation,  $n = 800$ ). The sampling criterion was the presence in the household of at least one school-aged child engaged in distance learning.

The questionnaire included 12 thematic blocks, such as: technical resources, time expenditures, family-level conflict, support from the school, feelings of exhaustion, interaction with management, and level of professional effectiveness. Data collection was carried out offline, with questionnaires distributed through homeroom teachers during parent-teacher meetings.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) were used for quantitative analysis, along with a comparative analysis of indicator dynamics across 2020 and 2025. To interpret role conflicts, the study employed the concept of role overload in hybrid work settings (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

**Results.** Analysis of the 2020 and 2025 survey data reveals a clear trend of increasing parental involvement in the educational process, as well as significant transformations in how working parents organize their professional lives. In 2020, most parents viewed distance learning as a temporary challenge requiring short-term adaptation. By 2025, however, this engagement appears to have become chronic. Children's distance education has not only become normalized but also an integral part of parents' daily routines, embedded into their professional schedules.

At the onset of the pandemic (2020), 60% of respondents reported daily participation in their children's education. This involvement mainly took the form of technical assistance, help with homework, and communication with teachers. In 2025, this figure rose to 69%, indicating an increase in functional responsibility for parents. Open-ended responses frequently referenced the parent as a «teacher's assistant», «task translator», «video call operator», or «schedule moderator».

A noteworthy trend is the increase in time spent: in 2020, 43% of parents reported spending more than two hours per day on children's education; by 2025, this rose to 58%. This additional time burden complicates professional schedules, particularly in hybrid work environments where continuous online presence is expected. As a result, the home has become not only a family space but also a zone of communicative conflict between professional and educational obligations.

The impact on intra-organizational communication is also significant. In 2025, 32% of respondents stated that they were unable to fully participate in work meetings, video conferences, or chat discussions due to concurrent obligations to assist their children during the same time slots. This was particularly common among parents of younger children who require constant adult supervision.

Furthermore, 27% of respondents in 2025 reported disabling notifications in corporate messengers, citing the impossibility of simultaneously handling parental and professional tasks. In 2020, this figure was 18%, suggesting an increase in digital saturation and fatigue from multi-channel communication.

Another aspect that changed significantly was digital infrastructure. In 2025, 85% of children used only a smartphone for schooling, compared to 64% in 2020. This implies intense competition for digital devices within households: one family member may be attending a Zoom meeting while another is logged into a school lesson. Such situations create not only technical difficulties but also heightened tension within families.

Platform switching is another relevant marker. In 2025, 41% of parents reported using at least four digital platforms during a single workday – such as Slack, Zoom, Google Meet, and Viber. This hinders concentration, reduces communication quality, and increases cognitive overload. In 2020, this figure was just 23%, indicating an expanding and increasingly unstructured communication landscape.

There was also a marked shift in the rhythm of corporate interaction. By 2025, 48% of parents reported being unable to be available during standard working hours (9:00–11:00, 14:00–16:00). This suggests that the traditional «working day» no longer reflects the actual capacity of a substantial portion of employees. In 2020, only 29% reported such limitations, underscoring the systemic nature of this issue.

This new rhythm affects team collaboration as well. In 2025, 19% of respondents reported deliberately opting out of team initiatives due to concerns about managing dual responsibilities or letting their colleagues down. This figure was only 7% in 2020. Thus, participation in children's distance learning reduces employees' readiness to engage in collective accountability, particularly in contexts where success depends on real-time feedback and synchronous presence.

Emotional exhaustion has also increased: in 2025, 64% of parents reported persistent fatigue, anxiety, and decreased concentration, all of which directly impact their work performance. In 2020, 48% gave similar responses. Parents are beginning to perceive their educational involvement not merely as additional care but as a chronic obligation that drains resources previously devoted to professional tasks.

The mode of interaction with management has changed as well. In 2025, 38% of respondents reported being less proactive in communicating with their direct supervisors. In open-ended responses, participants cited fears of «appearing weak», «being perceived as ineffective», or «exposing vulnerability». This suggests a rise in latent detachment, which, although not always visible in productivity metrics, significantly reduces emotional trust within teams.

Finally, there has been a shift in institutional expectations. While in 2020 most parents did not request special accommodations from their employers, by 2025, 51% expected individualized solutions – such as asynchronous schedules, flexible deadlines, or access to quiet work environments. This signals a growing demand for personalized organizational support as a new norm in the labor landscape.

**Discussion.** The results of the comparative analysis from 2020 and 2025 provide compelling evidence of structural transformations in the work and communicative behavior of employee-parents under conditions of chronic instability. While in 2020 distance learning was perceived as a temporary disruption to normal work routines, by 2025 it had become an institutionalized part of everyday life – with all its inherent risks, role conflicts, and adaptive practices. This shift requires a new analytical lens – not only through the prism of crisis communication, but also as an attempt to understand how the subject of labor relations is evolving and what role communication plays in this process.

One of the central phenomena captured in the study is role conflict, which is becoming less of an exception and more of a systemic norm. Unlike classical descriptions of role overload (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), which emphasize temporal clashes or competing priorities, in our case we observe a constant overlap of communicative regimes. The employee-parent is simultaneously embedded in two distinct information flows: organizational (corporate chats, Zoom meetings) and educational (Google Classroom, school Viber groups, homework review). This «splitting» not only complicates attention management but also creates cognitive fragmentation, undermining the effectiveness of both domains.

This condition may be described as a «desynchronized work mode», in which the primary value is no longer presence at a specific time but rather flexibility and the ability to switch between roles. Thus emerges a new worker archetype – a hybrid subject who is simultaneously a parent, tutor, teacher's assistant, and professional. This hybridity generates a demand not just for scheduling adjustments or technical fixes, but for a reformatting of the entire communicative paradigm within organizations.

Notably, there is a growing share of parents who deliberately avoid participation in team initiatives, withdrawing from public interactions. This signals a new form of alienation – not through physical isolation, but through role overload, which erodes the space for horizontal collaboration. As a result, both communication quality and emotional trust within teams decline – a factor which, according to Luhmann (2011), is essential for sustaining functional communication under conditions of uncertainty.

Particularly telling is the widespread disabling of corporate messenger notifications – a non-formalized form of resistance to excessive communication. This is not merely a technical action, but a marker of digital overload and an attempt to regain control over one's own pace of life. As shown by Anderson & Kelliher (2020), it is digital oversaturation – not physical workload – that most often leads to burnout among employees balancing professional and caregiving responsibilities.

A unique situation has also emerged around competition for digital resources within families. The condition of «one apartment – multiple Zoom participants» creates intra-family information conflicts that spill over into professional interactions. The domestic environment thus ceases to be a space for rest or a background for work – it becomes a parallel organizational system with its own constraints and rhythms.

Another important analytical outcome is the transformation of employee expectations toward their organizations. Whereas in 2020 the dominant strategy was to «endure and adapt,» by 2025, 51% of respondents explicitly articulated a demand for personalized support. This reflects a shift in normative horizons: employees now expect organizations to be not only efficient, but also empathetic. A lack of adequate response from management can become a source of latent conflict and decreased loyalty.

The study also opens a space for critical rethinking of organizational culture as such. In a context where a significant part of the workforce lives in a multiplicity of roles, classical ideals of efficiency, multitasking, and constant availability are not only outdated, but may even become harmful. Instead, there is a growing need for «quiet management» practices – such as asynchronous communication, guilt-free «off» options, and regular periods of digital silence that allow employees to restore their internal rhythm.

Thus, we may conclude that parental involvement in children's distance learning, combined with professional employment, is not a temporary stressor but a structural transformation of organizational communication life. This transformation requires not cosmetic, but strategic changes in how interaction, management, support, and evaluation of employees are approached.

### **Expanding the Analytical Framework: Emerging Patterns of Communicative Transformation**

The findings of this study enable us to formulate several additional hypotheses about the nature of the transformations occurring within intra-organizational communication under the influence of parental engagement in distance learning.

First, we observe the emergence of a new type of organizational loyalty – passive loyalty. Some employees maintain formal inclusion in the team but demonstrate reduced initiative, avoid public communication with management, and abstain from horizontal initiatives. This is not open protest or dissatisfaction, but rather a form of hidden distancing that may result from cognitive overload and communicative vulnerability. Organizations should be aware that low conflict levels do not necessarily indicate high loyalty.

Second, signs of institutional fragmentation have emerged – wherein the organization ceases to function as a unified communicative space. Different employee groups develop their own rhythms of interaction, platforms, response times, and expectations of availability. This leads to a loss of unified communicative culture, which previously ensured coherent organizational behavior. The erosion of communicative synchronicity allows the emergence of autonomous micro-environments, which may serve either as an adaptation resource or a source of long-term imbalance.

Third, communicative vulnerability has come to the fore as a new dimension of social inequality. Limited access to digital resources, unstable internet connections, and the lack of private space all create asymmetries in employees' ability to fully participate in internal communication. This gives rise to hidden digital discrimination, which is not captured by inclusion policies but significantly affects professional status and career dynamics.

Finally, the adaptive trajectory of working parents under new conditions can be described in three phases:

1. Shock phase (2020) – distance learning is perceived as a temporary challenge; reactive coping strategies prevail. During this phase, employees mobilize short-term resources, relying on improvisation and informal support networks (e.g., extended family, ad-hoc time management strategies). Organizations often underestimate the scale of the disruption, treating it as an exceptional episode rather than a systemic shift. Communication overload is tolerated under the assumption of its temporal nature. The dominant emotional tone is one of urgency and temporary sacrifice.

2. Frustration phase (2021–2023) – fatigue accumulates, role conflict deepens, productivity and emotional engagement decline. As the temporariness of the situation erodes, structural tensions between work and family responsibilities become more pronounced. Employees begin to question the sustainability of existing communication demands, leading to passive resistance, selective disengagement, or the prioritization of family roles over professional ones. This period is marked by increased absenteeism (digital and physical), rising emotional exhaustion, and growing cynicism toward managerial communications perceived as tone-deaf to parental realities. Internal communication loses normative force and becomes perceived as one-sided or performative.

3. Normalization phase (2024–2025) – transition to sustainable hybrid work practices, emergence of new expectations and demands directed at the organization. Employees articulate more deliberate preferences regarding the format, content, and frequency of organizational communication. There is a growing demand for personalization, flexibility, and recognition of parental roles as a legitimate factor in work arrangements. Organizations that successfully adapt do so by institutionalizing empathy-driven communication protocols, segmenting communicative flows according to employee needs, and recognizing communicative well-being as a strategic resource. This phase also sees the consolidation of new informal hierarchies based on digital adaptability and communicative resilience.

This phase-based progression allows us to conceptualize parental involvement in distance learning not as an external stressor but as an institutionalized part of the labor landscape – one that requires new approaches to communicative management, digital inclusion, and organizational leadership.

**Conclusion.** Parental involvement in children's distance learning during the period from 2020 to 2025 has emerged as a significant factor influencing both professional effectiveness and the quality of intra-organizational communication. The rise in digital workload, fragmentation of working time, competition for resources, and role conflict constitute the structural challenges faced by working parents.

The results of the study underscore the need for institutional support for parents in hybrid work settings. Legislative initiatives such as Draft Law No. 10164-1 point toward increased flexibility; however, it is essential for organizations to develop localized communication policies that are sensitive to parental responsibilities. Further research should examine not only how educational obligations affect work behavior, but also explore adaptive models that enable employees to maintain a sustainable balance between work and parenthood.

Based on the article's analysis, at least ten key conclusions can be formulated regarding the transformation of internal organizational communication under the conditions of employee-parent participation in children's distance learning between 2020 and 2025:

*1. Chronicization of parental engagement in distance learning.*

Between 2020 and 2025, parental perception of online education shifted from a temporary challenge to a permanent aspect of daily life. Parents became not merely supporters, but active participants – technical assistants, coordinators, and interpreters of instructions. This has complicated their professional roles and necessitates a rethinking of organizational communication policies.

*2. Intensification of role conflict.*

The simultaneous execution of professional and parental duties has heightened role conflicts. Employees experience tension between obligations to their employer and their child, reducing their availability for communication, especially during key office hours. Rather than productive interaction, a fragmented presence in communication spaces emerges.

*3. Digital oversaturation and attention fragmentation.*

One of the most acute problems is the overload of digital platforms. In 2025, significantly more employees were using multiple communication channels simultaneously. This not only undermines concentration but also provokes cognitive exhaustion, which impairs deep engagement in workplace communication processes.

*4. Transformation of intra-organizational communication.*

Workplace communication practices have undergone substantial change. Parents increasingly disable notifications, miss video calls, or are forced to choose between attending meetings and helping their child. This leads to communication gaps, delays in decision-making, and fragmented team collaboration.

*5. Loss of synchronicity as the new norm.*

The idea of a shared schedule is becoming less effective. Participants frequently report being unable to remain online during traditional working hours, challenging the universality of fixed office timing as a foundation for productive communication. Organizations must shift toward asynchronous models of communication.

*6. Emotional exhaustion as a factor of communicative alienation.*

Persistent fatigue, anxiety, and reduced concentration negatively affect employees' communicative activity. They become less proactive, avoiding contact with management out of fear of appearing unproductive. As a result, a shadow zone of communication emerges, where actual engagement does not reflect employees' potential.

*7. Formation of a culture of hidden segregation.*

Parents increasingly find themselves excluded from team initiatives – not due to formal policies, but due to practical limitations. This generates latent discrimination and disrupts the principles of equality in access to organizational communication resources.

*8. Need for personalized organizational support.*

Amid growing communicative barriers, a clear demand arises for individualized solutions: flexible schedules, adaptive deadlines, quiet workspaces. These expectations reshape the understanding of labor norms and prompt organizations to revisit their communication policies with a humanitarian perspective.

*9. Institutionalization of change through legislation.*

Draft Law No. 10164-1 codifies what had emerged empirically over five years: the need for legal protection of employees who combine work with support for their children's education. This provides a basis for new communication practices that reflect not only productivity, but also the employee's lived realities.

*10. Urgency of systematic research and strategic planning.*

Despite isolated publications, comprehensive scholarly investigations remain limited. The results of this study demonstrate that without in-depth analysis and updated communication strategies, organizations risk losing effectiveness in interacting with a critical segment of their workforce – parents who are simultaneously navigating new educational and professional realities.

In conclusion, the involvement of employees in children's distance learning is not merely a social anomaly or a byproduct of the pandemic and war. It represents a new structure of social reality that calls for a reconsideration of the foundations of organizational functioning, labor standards, and communication ethics.

### References:

1. Anderson, D., & Kelliher, C. (2020). Enforced remote working and the work-life interface during lockdown. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 35(7/8), 677–683. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-07-2020-0224>
2. Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76–88. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352>
3. Kozoroh, O. (2022). Dystantsiine chy ochne navchannia: yak pratsiuvaty shkolam pid chas viiny? Roziasnennia yurystiv – Ukrainska Helsinska spilka z prav liudyny [Distance learning or face-to-face learning: how should schools operate during war? Explanations from lawyers – Ukrainian Helsinki Union for Human Rights]. *Ukrainska Helsinska spilka*. Retrieved from <https://www.helsinki.org.ua/articles/dystantsiine-chy-ochne-navchannia-iak-pratsiuvaty-shkolam-pid-chas-viiny-roz-iasnennia-iurystiv/> [in Ukrainian]
4. Kryvoviaziuk, I. V. (2022). Upravlinska innovatyka zabezpechennia doskonalosti biznesu v umovakh informatsiinokomunikatsiinoi tekhnolohizatsii [Formation of business excellence under the conditions of informational and communicational technologization]: A monograph. Lutsk: LNTU Publishing House. [in Ukrainian]
5. Luhmann, N. (2011). Poniattia tsili i systemna ratsionalnist: shchodo funktzii tsilei u sotsialnykh systemakh [Goal orientation and systemic rationality: the function of the goal in social systems]. Kyiv: Dukh i litera. [in Ukrainian]
6. Solianik, O. (2021). Naslidky pandemii dlia osvity. [The consequences of the pandemic for education]. *Zmist Media Platform*. Retrieved from <https://zmist.pl.ua/blogs/naslidky-pandemiyi-dlya-osvity> [in Ukrainian]