

Sharenting and Psychological Well-Being on Parents: A Narrative Review

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Abstract. Parents who share information about their children on social media are referred to as sharenting. Various negative impacts to study the motives and psychological conditions of parents who engage in sharenting. The purpose of this research is to evaluate previous empirical studies regarding the psychological well-being of parents who engage in sharenting on social media. This study was conducted using a narrative review method based on research articles obtained from several databases such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, PubMed, SpringerLink and ProQuest. The literature findings will be discussed and divided into several aspects, including the motivational factors of parental sharenting, its consequences for families, and influence on parents' psychological well-being.

Keywords: sharenting, psychological well-being, parents, narrative review.

1 Introduction

Technology and the internet have changed how humans share and receive information, especially through social media [1]. This change in the dynamics of information access raises many questions and concerns regarding safety, risks, and potential harm to individuals. Parenting information is no exception, as it has now become easily accessible through the internet and social media. In fact, many parents today not only seek information but also share their own parenting experiences on social media [2]. This phenomenon has become a topic of much discussion, as many parents believe they have full authority over the photos and information about their children displayed on their social media, without considering potential dangers to the child.

The term sharenting is a combination of “sharing” and “parenting,” referring to the parenting practice of publicly sharing information about one’s child on social media. The term was first coined by Steven Leckart (2012) and is defined in the Collins Dictionary (2015) as the use of social media to share information, photos, and other details about one’s child. Sharenting behavior may constitute a violation of children’s privacy rights, particularly when parents frequently upload personal or sensitive information about their children [3]. A study by Marasli et al. (2016) revealed that out of 219 Facebook-using parents, only 12 had never uploaded their child’s photo, video, or information on social media—showing how common sharenting is

among parents [2]. A survey by Nominet (2015) found that parents in the UK upload an average of nearly 1,500 photos of their children on social media before the child turns five, increasing from 1,000 photos the previous year [4]. In Indonesia, 212 million of the total 285 million population are active internet users. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are the most widely used communication and information-sharing tools in Indonesia [5].

The history of sharenting can be traced back to the early days of blogs as spaces for self-representation on the internet, including for parents [6]. The digital environment both facilitates and challenges parental satisfaction with their self-representation online. This occurs due to a shift from simple self-presentation—where internet and social media were used mainly for communication and appearance—to a reflective form of self-representation in which every decision can be judged publicly. This shift has created new dilemmas for parents, who are responsible for protecting their children from online harm [6].

Parenting, inherently, involves a major responsibility—raising and nurturing children—which is a challenging task. With technological advancements, parents now use social media to learn, share stories, and seek entertainment. However, social media use by parents may not always yield positive outcomes, as it can reduce mental well-being, increase social comparison, and create pressure from idealized parenting portrayals online [7–9]. Thus, parents require strong self-control to maintain balance in psychological functioning and well-being. This self-control involves mental health, clinical psychology, and individual development [10]. Therefore, studying parents' well-being is essential for understanding parenting experiences [11].

Sharenting has become a rapidly developing phenomenon, drawing increasing attention in recent years. However, research focusing on the psychological well-being of parents engaged in sharenting remains scarce. The most recent literature review was by Motevalli et al. (2025), which conducted a systematic review on literature examining sharenting in relation to parents' motivation, attitudes, perceptions, and self-presentation [12]. This study aims to discuss sharenting and its relationship with another internal factor—parents' psychological well-being—while incorporating perspectives from diverse cultural contexts. Based on these research gaps, this study seeks to contribute to an integrated understanding of the psychological foundations of sharenting among parents.

2 Methodology

This study employed a narrative review method by collecting and analyzing empirical research articles that contained findings related to parents' sharenting activities—such as the factors influencing parents' sharenting behavior, the consequences of sharenting for families, and its relation to parents' psychological well-being. Literature searches were conducted through several journal databases such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, PubMed, SpringerLink and ProQuest. The keywords used for the searches were “sharenting” AND “psychological well-being.”

3 Results and Discussion

The literature findings obtained from several journal databases helped identify parents' sharenting behavior on social media and its relationship with parents' psychological well-being. The analysis and summary of these findings are presented as follows.

3.1 Parents' sharenting motives

Numerous studies have explored the motives or driving factors of parents' sharenting on social media. According to literature findings, mothers in Turkey often use Facebook to obtain a variety of information about their children and parenting, connect with friends, follow their friends' lives, store and share joyful family moments, and to feel accepted and proud as parents through recognition received on social media [13,14]. Parents who already have strong offline social support also tend to seek additional online support via social media; thus, the stronger their direct social support, the higher their motivation to use social media [15].

Several other studies identified additional motives, including self-expression of parental competence, increased self-satisfaction due to social validation, and the social evaluation and comparison of parenting styles that encourage parents to post more photos [16,17]. Parents also use social media as a means to store memories with their children, share parenting tips, seek emotional support, market products for additional income, and pursue writing as a hobby [18].

In terms of gender, sharenting behavior has been more frequently observed and studied among mothers, possibly due to the stronger emotional bond between mothers and children [13]. However, Ögel (2022) sharenting is not limited to mothers; both parents engage in this behavior, and fathers may share content about their children as frequently as mothers do [15]. Parents commonly shared content includes family outings, vacations, and educational activities involving children.

Regarding age, most parents who engage in sharenting are between 31-40 years old with children under 12 years [19]. Other studies indicate that young parents—particularly millennials—tend to engage in sharenting more often, as they are more accustomed to using social media [17,20]. Nonetheless, several studies have found no significant age-related differences in sharenting behavior, suggesting that parental age is not a determining factor [2,13]. Many studies focus more on the age of the child rather than the parent, since the central concern of sharenting research lies in the child as the subject of the shared content and the potential long-term effects—such as privacy violations and the formation of an online identity created by the parent [1,6].

3.2 Sharenting consequences for families

Research on the impact of sharenting largely focuses on its consequences for children. Parents across various regions—Europe, Latin America, and Asia—acknowledge that posting photos or videos of their children can pose potential risks [13,19,21,22]. Despite this, many parents, including family influencers, continue to engage in sharenting.

The discussion of sharenting behavior on social media cannot be separated from the phenomenon of influencers—popular content creators who shape public engagement online [23]. Influencer parents often use their children as part of monetized social media content

without the child's consent, assuming their children do not yet understand the possible repercussions [24,25]. This shifts the parental role from protector to potential threat to the child's well-being [26]. Moreover, many parents express skepticism that such influencers genuinely aim to educate other families about parenting practices through their posts [25]. The content shared by these influencers often includes identifiable images of children, personal information such as full names, posts that "make fun of the child," or intimate storytelling about the child's private life. Despite these disclosures, many parents confidently claim that such actions pose no harm to their children [24]. Through social media and sharenting, however, the parental role has shifted—from acting as a protector against external harm to potentially becoming a source of risk to the child's digital and emotional well-being [26].

Common consequences include digital kidnapping (theft of children's photos online) [27], creation of children's online identities without consent [28], and potential long-term effects on personality development [29]. Children may also face cyberbullying or professional disadvantages when childhood content resurfaces during adulthood [30]. While international law protects children's privacy rights, such as through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Indonesia currently lacks specific legislation on sharenting. As a result, children's privacy is often considered under parental authority [31].

Nonetheless, some parents demonstrate digital consciousness by maintaining private social media accounts, seeking their children's consent before posting, and avoiding embarrassing or inappropriate uploads [13]. Despite such practices, many parents remain unaware of the risks associated with sharenting and lack sufficient digital literacy [32].

3.3 Sharenting and parents' psychological well-being

Social networks have been shown to enhance social support, reduce stress, and alleviate depressive symptoms. Some studies even report that social media use can decrease loneliness and increase life satisfaction—both indicators of psychological well-being [33,34]. However, excessive social media use has also been linked to increased depressive symptoms [9]. For parents, social media can serve as a source of support and well-being [35]. Yet, it can also promote perfectionistic tendencies, leading to negative emotional outcomes [9,36].

Kılıç et al. (2024) found that parents—particularly mothers—who frequently use Instagram tend to report higher depressive symptoms, lower life satisfaction, and reduced psychological resilience. Parents experiencing emotional distress may turn to social media as a substitute for face-to-face communication, which can lead to privacy-violating sharenting behaviors [22]. Furthermore, personality traits can influence parents' motivations to engage in sharenting as a means of seeking attention or validation [37].

Ögel-Balaban and Altan (2020) observed that Turkish mothers' Facebook use affected their anxiety levels, perceived social support, and confidence in their parenting competence [14]. Sharenting can evoke both positive and negative emotions associated with social comparison among parents. Negative comparisons relate to higher distress and lower self-efficacy, whereas positive comparisons enhance self-efficacy and reduce distress [38]. Both outcomes influence parenting patterns and overall well-being; while positive validation may strengthen confidence, excessive comparison can contribute to emotional strain and parental distress [38].

Few studies directly explore the relationship between sharenting behavior and parents' psychological well-being, only one article from Kılıç et al. (2024). Hence, other studies have not explicitly examined this connection, suggesting a need for further research exploring how parental psychological factors—particularly well-being—shape the motivations and consequences of sharenting behavior.

Conclusions

Technological advancements have transformed how individuals, including parents, would access and share information. Sharenting—defined as parents sharing or posting content about their children on social media—can provide both benefits and risks. While it fosters social support and self-expression, it also raises serious privacy and well-being concerns for children. This study also shows that psychological aspects, such as well-being, can be a predictor or consequence of sharenting behavior on parents. Hence, parents must remain aware of their digital behavior and continue to act as protectors of their children and families in the online environment.

Implications

This study adds to the understanding that sharenting is not only a social phenomenon, but also rooted in the psychological aspects of parents, such as the need for well-being, social support, and self-representation. Parents need to raise digital awareness regarding the boundaries and ethics of social media use, especially when involving children in the content. Psychologists and counselors need to incorporate digital parenting and sharenting awareness into counseling sessions, especially when parents exhibit symptoms of stress, anxiety, or a need for social validation. Furthermore, clearer national regulations regarding protecting children's privacy in the digital realm are needed.

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