CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: SHARENTING AS A LEGAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGE

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Abstract

The digital age brings numerous challenges for parenting and childhood. One of these challenges is sharenting. The theoretical foundations of this study, approached interdisciplinarily, combine legal and pedagogical insights and principles. This study, which used a combined quantitative and qualitative research design, was part of a broader research into the trend of parents sharing images, videos, and information about their children on social media. The aim of the study was to explore the perspective of Slovenian parents on sharenting and its specific characteristics. For the analysis of the collected data, descriptive and causal-nonexperimental methods were used, including thematic content analysis of respondents' answers. The data required for the

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research were collected via an online questionnaire in 2023, based on a sample of 211 Slovenian parents, anonymously and on a voluntary basis, in compliance with the ethical code. The findings of the study indicate that most parents in Slovenia are unaware of the long-term privacy impacts of sharenting and mostly do not seek their children's consent for posts. Mothers are more active than fathers, and education is not a decisive factor in sharing, highlighting the need for parental digital privacy education.

Keywords: *sharenting, parental perspective, digital privacy, social networks, Slovenian parents*

The Legal Context of Privacy Protection

The right to privacy is one of the fundamental human rights recognized in numerous international and national legal instruments. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to attacks upon their honor and reputation. Similarly, the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) guarantees the right to respect for private and family life in Article 8. Special protection of children's privacy is ensured by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which emphasizes in Article 16 that "no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home, or correspondence."

In the Slovenian legal system, the right to privacy is guaranteed by Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (1991), which stipulates that everyone has the right to personal dignity and security. Additionally, the Personal Data Protection Act (ZVOP-2) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which applies across the European Union, set precise rules regarding the collection, processing, and storage of personal data. The rights of children, as one of the most vulnerable groups, are further protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which, as an internationally binding treaty, takes precedence over domestic legislation in matters concerning children's rights.

Sharenting and Children's Right to Privacy

The digital age has brought numerous changes in communication, expression, and information sharing. The term "sharenting" was added to the Oxford Dictionary in 2022 and has become widespread globally (Gatto et al., 2024). The phenomenon of "sharenting," combining the terms "share" and "parenting,"

describes the practice of parents sharing images, videos, and information about their children on social networks without the children's consent. Kopecky et al. (2020) have emphasized that parents often create online profiles or various forms of online diaries about their children's lives.

Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) define sharenting as the parental posting of content that includes personal information about children, often with the intention of showcasing their life, achievements, and daily moments, but without enough consideration of the long-term consequences. Steinberg (2017) has noted that sharenting creates a complex conflict between parents' rights to freedom of expression and children's right to privacy. This phenomenon allows parents to create a digital identity for their children, often long before the children are aware or capable of deciding about such information sharing.

Sharenting can lead to children growing up in a digital world with content about themselves that they did not control, potentially affecting their privacy, dignity, and social relationships in the future. Kopecky et al. (2020) highlight that parents are often unaware of the potential dangers sharenting can bring, including privacy breaches, risks of identity theft, and issues with children's self-esteem later in life. Gatto et al. (2024) mention that sharing children's personal content online may expose them to potential risks, including emotional distress, sexual exploitation, and identity theft. A particularly concerning threat is identity theft, which can take various forms, including financial identity theft, criminal identity theft, medical identity theft, synthetic identity theft, and identity cloning. These risks highlight the importance of educating parents and caregivers about the dangers of sharing children's personal information online. Therefore, Gatto et al. (2024) suggest that the development of digital awareness and education for adults is crucial in mitigating the risks associated with sharenting.

Although there are no specific laws in the European Union explicitly regulating the issue of sharenting, relevant legal cases underscore the importance of protecting children's privacy. For example, in a case involving a Dutch grandmother, the court in Gelderland ruled that she violated the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by posting photos of her grandchildren on social networks without parental consent (Rb. Gelderland, 2020). In this context, GDPR does not apply to household activities, but the court concluded that since the photos could be publicly accessible and not adequately protected by privacy settings, this exemption did not apply. In Italy, there have already been court rulings in favor of children who, as adults, sued their parents for posting numerous photos without their consent. (Gatto et al., 2024).

France, on the other hand, has adopted a new law (Law No. 2024-120, 2024) to protect children's rights to privacy and their image, particularly in the context of sharenting. This regulation requires the consent of both parents before

posting a child's image online and takes into account the child's opinion. If the parents cannot agree, the court can intervene to limit or remove the right to use the child's image.

Ethics and Responsibility in Information Sharing

Sharenting is not just a matter of parental freedom of expression; it involves protecting a child's dignity, safety, and privacy. Parental posts can shape a child's digital identity long before they have the opportunity to express their own opinion, potentially affecting their future (Steinberg, 2017).

Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) explored the boundaries of digital self-representation through parental blogging. They concluded that parents often face ethical dilemmas as their digital identities inevitably intertwine with their children's identities, potentially exposing them to privacy risks. Sharing information such as hospital photos, descriptions of personal problems, or intimate moments can negatively impact a child's self-esteem and relationships with peers (Steinberg, 2017).

Ouvrein and Verswijvel (2019) showed that adolescents generally trust their parents' intentions when sharing their photos on social networks, but they often experience frustration when such posts compromise their self-presentation. This highlights the need for parents to seek permission and respect boundaries to avoid uncomfortable situations and maintain their children's privacy.

Children's Rights and Digital Self-Presentation

Children should have the right to decide on the information made publicly available about them. The right to be forgotten, as part of the right to privacy, allows individuals to request the removal of information posted about them without their consent. Although GDPR provides for the right to erasure, the question remains as to who has the right to decide which data about children, posted by parents, remains online and which does not.

The Importance of Lifelong Learning in the Digital Age – An Era of Rapid Change

We are in a period where lifelong learning is becoming an essential component in creating present and future well-being. The integration of new technologies into all aspects of private and social life, along with developments in artificial intelligence, robotics, and more, presents new challenges that we face as individuals and as a society. This drives the search for and development of new strategies and different ways of communicating. Therefore, lifelong learning, which continues throughout one's life, is of great importance.

With the "2030 Agenda," the United Nations (2015) outlined a vision for lifelong learning to build a fairer and more sustainable global society. One of the 17 goals stated in the agenda involves ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. This brings forward a holistic understanding of lifelong learning, as noted by Mikulec (2023), encompassing active citizenship (citizen engagement in civil society and political life), enhancing employability, promoting health and well-being, and fostering cultural understanding. Možina (2023) highlights literacy as a prerequisite for implementing lifelong learning at the micro level for individuals, noting that literacy acquisition is linked to family and social background and intergenerational dynamics that impact literacy development.

In the digital society, digital literacy is crucial as one of the eight key competencies of modern society, making both adults and children digital citizens. It pertains to the confident and critical use of digital technology for information gathering, sharing, communication, and solving basic problems across all areas of life (Vuorikari, 2015). Digital literacy also encompasses various contemporary forms of communication, such as tweeting, blogging, forum chatting, and commenting on Facebook.

Researchers Williams-Ceci et al. (2021), building on studies by Kumar & Schoenebeck (2015), find that Facebook has become the "modern baby book." They highlight findings from Moser et al. (2017) indicating that over 90% of parents share photos of their children solely through this platform. Since these are primarily new parents, the children whose photos are shared cannot decide whether they allow this sharing or not. Some of these parents even create a digital footprint for their unborn children.

All of this demonstrates that lifelong learning is extremely important because it enables individuals to adapt to new technologies and trends. By learning new skills and knowledge, they contribute to personal growth and development, gain a better understanding of the world around them, and facilitate their integration into society and communication with others.

Sharenting, Intergenerational Cooperation, and Adult Education

According to Tosuntaş & Griffiths (2024), in the digital age, sharenting has become a common practice among parents, involving the public sharing of information about their child on social media. This trend is influenced by a societal climate where a constant online presence is a defining characteristic. Sharenting, the act of posting photos of children on social media, is complex and touches on various social aspects. It is a social phenomenon that involves at least two generations: the generation of parents and the generation of children, and often includes grandparents as well.

The online presence of digital profiles and data of individuals from different generations, the interweaving of their interests and desires, and the right to privacy and autonomous decision-making call for greater respect and mutual understanding of the needs and rights of participants from different generations. Understanding the perspectives of different generational groups requires enhanced and in-depth intergenerational cooperation and understanding.

Intergenerational cooperation helps reduce stereotypes and prejudices among different age groups (Lepičnik et al., 2022) and brings significant benefits to all generations by enabling understanding of diverse viewpoints and contributing to a deeper understanding and acceptance of knowledge (Šindić et al., 2022). Formal, non-formal, and informal education can further promote intergenerational cooperation and learning (Šindić et al., 2022a), thereby improving mutual understanding and intergenerational solidarity. The research results by Lepičnik and Šindić (2023) have indicated that flexibility and communication, based on emotional intelligence and empathy, are crucial for a healthy and productive relationship between generations. Therefore, it is essential to develop competencies for intergenerational cooperation to create conditions for better mutual understanding and support across all generations (Partalo et al., 2022). Papič (2017) notes that successful mutual cooperation enables both older and younger people to learn to respect and appreciate different perspectives, thus contributing to building mutual understanding.

In the context of intergenerational learning, social networks that successfully connect people of different generations include various platforms that enable communication, experience sharing, and learning. Intergenerational cooperation allows older individuals to share their rich life experiences and wisdom with younger generations, while younger people can contribute fresh ideas and modern skills, such as digital technologies and experiences in the digital world. Intergenerational learning and cooperation are essential for building more connected and resilient communities. By promoting intergenerational collaboration, we can create an environment where everyone learns and grows together, leading to a better future for all (Ličen et al., 2021). Intergenerational cooperation and learning in the digital world and on social

media could provide a solid foundation for online safety and help prevent the negative effects and consequences of "sharenting" (the excessive sharing of information about children online by parents).

In protecting the best interests of the child in the digital world, it is necessary to combine legal, ethical, and pedagogical approaches. Sharenting involves not only the legal responsibility of parents but also the societal responsibility to protect vulnerable groups such as children from the consequences of irresponsible information sharing. Educating parents, teachers, and children on how to protect privacy in a digital environment and recognize when certain information is too personal to share represents a key step. In this context, an intergenerational education model would be very suitable, as it enables the transfer of knowledge and experience between different generations, thereby enhancing the understanding and awareness of all participants about the importance of online safety.

In the context of frequent sharenting and concerns about preserving children's privacy and well-being, the question arises as to how parents in Slovenia perceive this phenomenon and what pedagogical implications stem from these perceptions.

Recognizing the frequency of sharenting and the importance of parents' perspective on this issue to preserve their child's privacy and well-being, this research sought to examine some of the specificities of this phenomenon in Slovenia and, based on the findings, draw pedagogical implications.

Method

This empirical study was part of a broader research project conducted in Slovenia, focusing on the growing trend of parents sharing images, videos, and personal information about their children on social media platforms. Given the nature of the research problem - encompassing children's rights, child well-being, and parenting - this study was interdisciplinary in character, with its theoretical foundations grounded in insights and frameworks from both legal and pedagogical disciplines. Recognizing the prevalence of sharenting and the parental responsibility to uphold their children's right to privacy and overall well-being, the study focused on examining the specific characteristics of this phenomenon from the perspective of Slovenian parents. The primary aim was to explore the perspective of Slovenian parents on sharenting and its specific characteristics. In order to obtain a broader and deeper understanding of the research problem, the study design was based on a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research elements. In line with the

research problem and the aim of this mixed-methods study, the following research objectives were established:

1. To examine Slovenian parents' knowledge and understanding of the concept of sharenting by calculating descriptive statistical indicators and conducting a thematic analysis of participants' responses.
2. To examine the frequency and patterns of sharing content about children among Slovenian parents by using descriptive statistical indicators.
3. To explore differences in the prevalence of sharenting between mothers and fathers using an Independent Samples *T*-Test, and to examine the reasons for these differences through a qualitative analysis of responses.
4. To analyze the relationship between parents' educational level and their tendency toward sharenting using ANOVA.
5. To examine whether the number of friends/followers on social media influenced the frequency of sharenting by applying a One-Way ANOVA across groups of parents with different follower counts.
6. To qualitatively analyze the types of images, videos, and other posts that parents shared about their children on social media, and to identify the dominant categories of shared content. Furthermore, to explore the motives and frequency of posting these content types through thematic analysis.
7. To examine the extent to which parents sought their children's consent before posting their images, videos, or other personal data on social media by using descriptive analysis.

In the quantitative part of the study, the data were statistically processed using the SPSS software in order to determine the frequency and other specific characteristics of sharenting, as well as parents' familiarity with the term. A descriptive and causal–non-experimental method was applied. The quantitative results were presented in tabular and graphical form, and were interpreted from both statistical and pedagogical perspectives.

In the qualitative part of the study, QCAmap (Mayring, 2022) was used to gain a deeper understanding of parents' perceptions and motivations for engaging in sharenting, as well as any protective measures they adopted in the online environment and their comprehension of the concept of sharenting.

A thematic content analysis of participants' responses was conducted (Vilig, 2016), in which the responses were inductively categorized according to the phenomenon under study.

The study included a total of 213 respondents—parents from all regions of Slovenia. After reviewing the collected data, two participants were excluded from further analysis due to incomplete responses, resulting in a final sample of 211 parents. The characteristics of the sample are presented in tabular form (Table 1).

The sampling strategy was purposive, and the sample was unevenly distributed by gender, as it included 171 mothers (80%) and 42 fathers (20%).

 The higher response rate among mothers (Conti et al., 2024) again indicated their primary role in parenting. Mothers often assume a greater share of responsibility for childcare and everyday activities, making them more directly engaged with parenting-related issues. In the context of social expectations, mothers have traditionally been more closely associated with caregiving roles, which likely made them more receptive to research on parenting topics (Šindić, 2010). The greater participation of mothers in this voluntary study may also reflect a deeper emotional bond with their children, making such topics more personally significant to them.

A total of 164 respondents (77%) held higher, post-secondary, or postgraduate degrees. Among them, 69 (32%) had completed higher vocational or university education, 78 (37%) held bachelor's degrees or professional master's degrees, and 17 (8%) held doctoral degrees or academic master's degrees. Forty-two respondents (20%) had completed secondary education, six (3%) had completed vocational school, and one respondent had only completed primary school.

Furthermore, 140 respondents (66%) reported having more than 200 followers or friends on social media. However, more than half of the parents (61%) stated that they had offline, personal contact with fewer than 20 of their social media connections. This finding suggests that the majority of the parents' followers are not part of their real-life social circle, indicating a potential lack of complete trust in their online connections. Additionally, the fact that 30% of the respondents reported having more than 500 friends or followers in the virtual world raises questions about possible parental dependency on the internet.

Regarding the number of children per family, most parents in the study (62.56%) had two children. Altogether, the study included parents of 378 children.

Table 1. Sample Structure

Sample characteristics		F	%
Sex	Female	169	99.3
	Male	42	1.7
Level of education	Primary School	1	0.5
	Vocational	5	2.4
	Secondary school	42	19.9
	Post secondary/Higher	68	32.2
	University/Professional Master's	78	37
	Academic Master's/Doctorate	17	8
Number of children in the family	One child	55	26
	Two children	132	62.6
	Three children	20	9.5
	Four children	3	1.4
	Five children	1	0.5
Age of children of surveyed parents	0-1 year	19	5
	1-2 years	13	3.4
	2-4 years	40	10.6
	4-6 years	53	14
	6-10 years	115	30.4
	10-15 years	112	29.6
	Over 15 years	45	12
Number of friends/followers on social media	Up to 50	26	12.3
	51 – 100	15	7.1
	101 – 200	31	14.7
	201 – 350	41	19.4
	351 – 500	34	16.1
	More than 500	64	30.3
Number of friends/followers with whom the parent is in personal contact	None (0)	4	1.9
	1-20 friends	128	60.7
	Less than 50%	30	14.2
	About 50%	34	16.1
	With the majority	15	7.1
	All / 100%	0	0

The data necessary for this research were collected via an online questionnaire in 2023, anonymously and on a voluntary basis, in accordance with the ethical code of conduct. The questionnaire was developed based on recent findings on the challenges of sharenting (Brosch, 2019; Sharma & Nagar, 2021) and consisted of three parts. The first part focused on gathering basic demographic information about the respondents (6 questions), the second part collected quantitative data on the phenomenon under research (11 closed-ended

questions), and the third part gathered qualitative data (3 open-ended questions).

Results and Discussion

Although the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test confirmed that the distributions of the research variables were not normally distributed (Table 2), certain parametric tests (Independent Samples T-Test and ANOVA) were still applied. The sample size ($N = 211$) allowed for a reliable analysis of variance, as the number of participants per group exceeded 15 (Green & Salkind, 2016).

Table 2. Test of Normality for the Variable "Prevalence of Sharenting" Normality Test for the Variable "Prevalence of Sharenting"

| variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	K-S	*df*	*p*
Prevalence of sharenting	0.288	211	< .001

Knowledge and Understanding of the Concept of Sharenting

Results obtained through descriptive statistical methods show that 38 parents, or 18% of respondents, are familiar with the term "sharenting". Meanwhile, 173 parents, or 82%, do not recognize the term. Qualitative analysis of responses indicates that only 12% of respondents were able to accurately define the concept, describing it as "inappropriate use of children's images or videos online," "a form of violation of children's rights," or "posting personal information about a child." The lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept among 179 parents (85% of the sample) points to their low level of awareness regarding the legal, ethical, and pedagogical issues underlying the phenomenon. These findings align with those of Conti et al. (2024), whose pilot study in Italy revealed that 93% of parents surveyed were unaware of the potential legal consequences and privacy risks associated with sharenting, despite frequently sharing content about their children on social media. This supports the conclusion that there is a widespread lack of parental awareness on this topic internationally, not just in Slovenia (Conti et al., 2024).

Prevalence and patterns of sharing content about children on social media

Results obtained through descriptive statistical methods show that 111 parents, or more than half of the surveyed parents (52.6%), have shared photos, videos, and other personal information about their child (Figure 1). Similar results indicating a high prevalence of sharenting have been reported by numerous researchers in their studies (Bartholomew et al., 2012; Conti et al., 2024; Ferrara et al., 2023; Gatto et al., 2024; Moser et al., 2015; Tosuntaş & Griffiths, 2024; Walrave et al., 2022). For example, findings from the Italian study by Gatto et al. (2024) show that 68% of parents frequently share photos of their children on social media platforms without considering potential risks.

Graph 1. The Prevalence of Sharenting
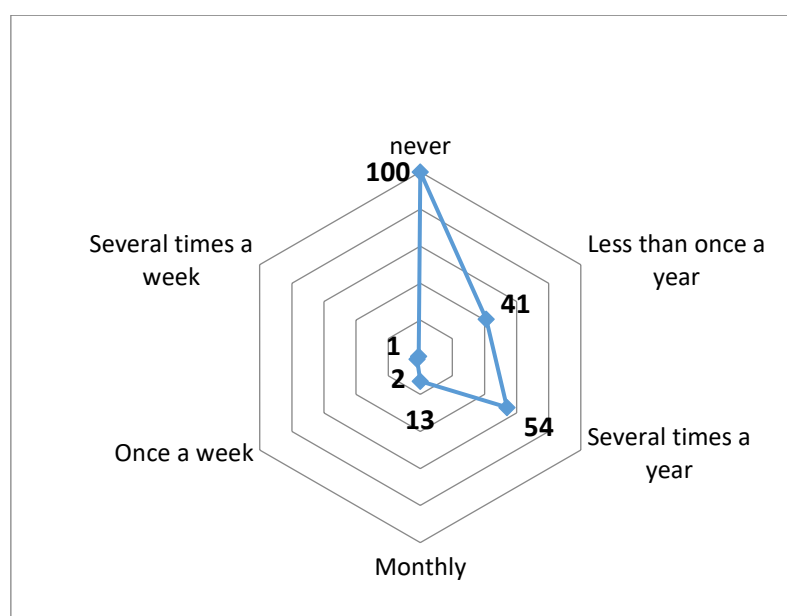
62 parents (56%), or the majority, shared such content before their child's first birthday (20% of respondents shared during pregnancy, 12% immediately after birth, and 32% within the child's first year) (Graph 2). Similarly concerning findings regarding the sharing of content on social media before a child's birth, in the early days, and throughout the first years of life, as well as the issue of protecting children's privacy, have been reported by other researchers as well (Gatto et al., 2024; Bartholomew et al., 2012; Latipah et al., 2020; Leaver, 2020). In their study, Conti et al. (2024) found that most parents who share content about their children began doing so within the first six months of the child's life.

Based on the qualitative analysis of responses, it was found that the main reason for sharenting before and at the beginning of a child's life is the mothers' desire to share key moments of their lives, the joy of becoming mothers, and to receive support from friends. Some statements that support these conclusions include: "I wanted to hint that I was pregnant," "because we wanted to announce that we're expecting a child," and "because they are the biggest part of my life." As Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) found in their study on sharenting, parents on social media often aim to represent themselves, their lives, and significant moments, without paying sufficient attention to the fact that such content includes personal data about their children and may have long-term consequences for them.

Graph 2. Age of Children and First Instance of Sharenting
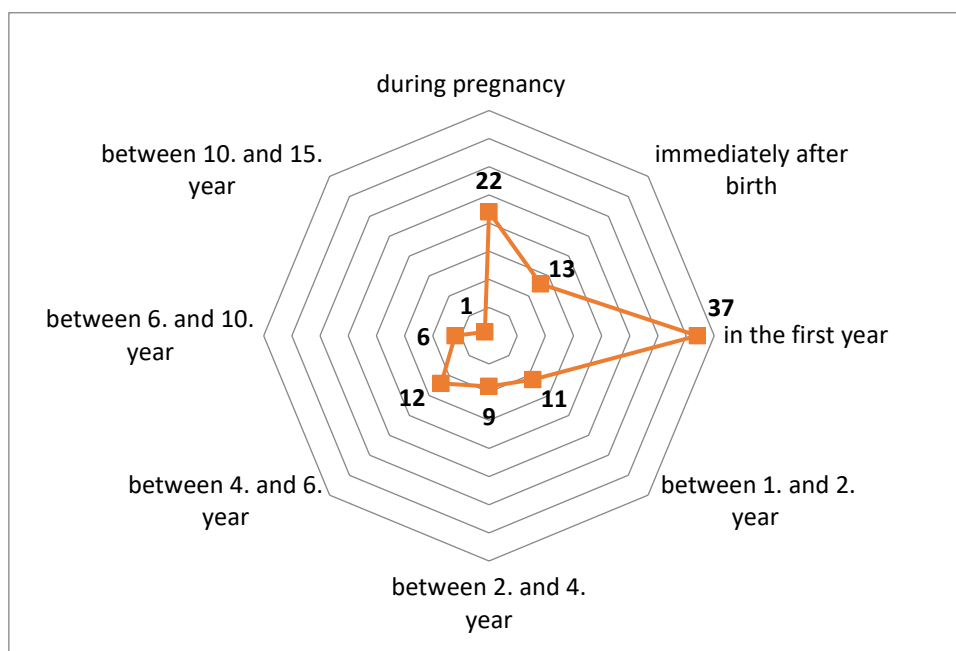
Fifteen respondents (8%) practice sharenting on a monthly basis or more often (Graph 1).

It is encouraging that 96, or 45% of surveyed Slovenian parents, rarely post photos, videos, or share other personal information about their child (a few times a year – 54 or 25.6%; less than once a year – 41 or 19.4%) (Graph 1), and they do so with a selected group of people (Graph 3). Out of 111 parents, 75 (67%) restrict the visibility of their posts to selected friends and followers, while 71 parents (63%) who share pictures and videos of their children do not

allow further sharing of their posts. Additionally, 59 parents (53%) have created special lists for this purpose.

Graph 3. Use of Options to Limit Post Visibility
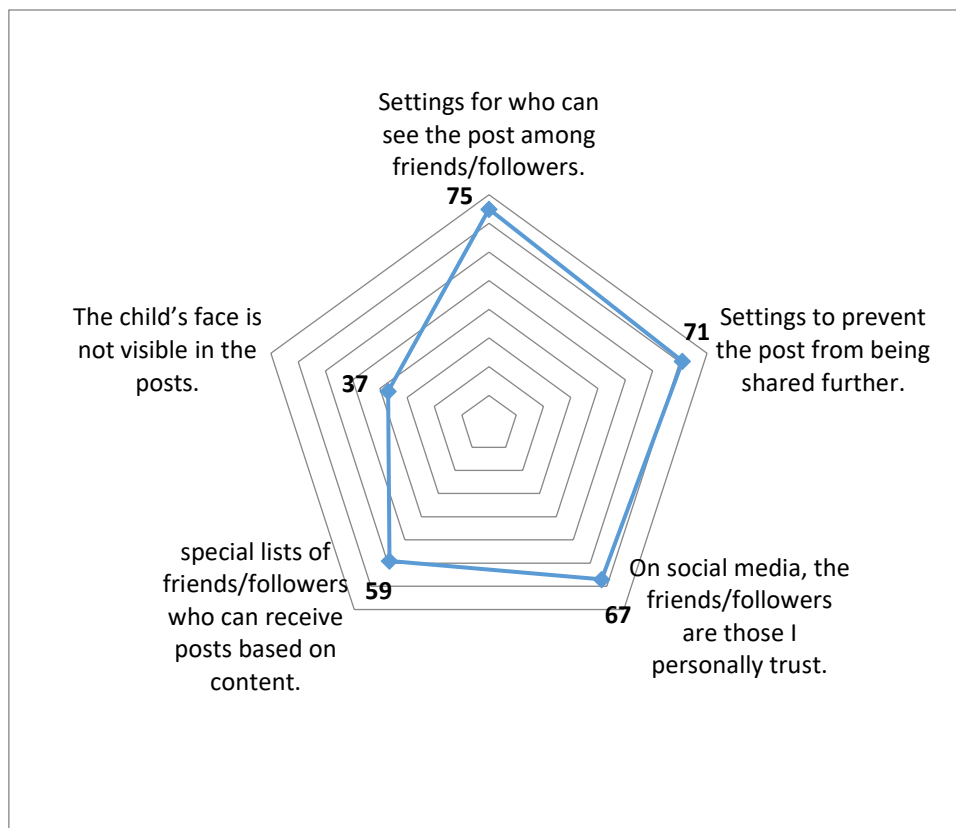
Differences Between Mothers and Fathers in Sharenting

The results obtained through an independent sample *t*-test indicate a statistically significant difference between the arithmetic means of sharenting prevalence among mothers and fathers ($t = -2.79$; $p < .01$). When comparing the mean levels of sharenting prevalence between mothers ($M = 2.05$) and fathers ($M = 1.55$), it is evident that this difference favors mothers. In other words, mothers are more likely to share photos, videos, and other private information about their children online compared to fathers.

Similar findings, indicating that mothers are more inclined toward sharenting, have been reported by other researchers in their studies (Bartholomew et al., 2012; Conti et al., 2024; Davis et al., 2015; Gatto et al., 2024). Furthermore,

mothers are also commonly responsible for the so-called digital motherhood and the representation of the family on social media (Lazard et al., 2019).

Table 3. Differences Between Mothers and Fathers in Sharenting (Independent Samples T Test)

	sex	N	M	SD	t	df	P
parent	m	42	1.55	.968	-2.790	209	.006
	w	169	2.05	1.070	.082		

For a better understanding of the specific differences in the prevalence of sharenting among surveyed mothers and fathers, descriptive percentage data are presented graphically (Graph 4). While the majority (71%) of surveyed fathers do not share photos, videos, or other personal data on social media, the situation is different for mothers. Less than half (41%) of the surveyed mothers have never engaged in sharenting. The results indicate that, although most mothers have shared posts about their children, such sharing was still infrequent, as the majority of them (51%) reported doing so only a few times per year.

Graph 4. Prevalence of Sharenting Among Mothers and Fathers (Percentage Distribution by Gender Group)
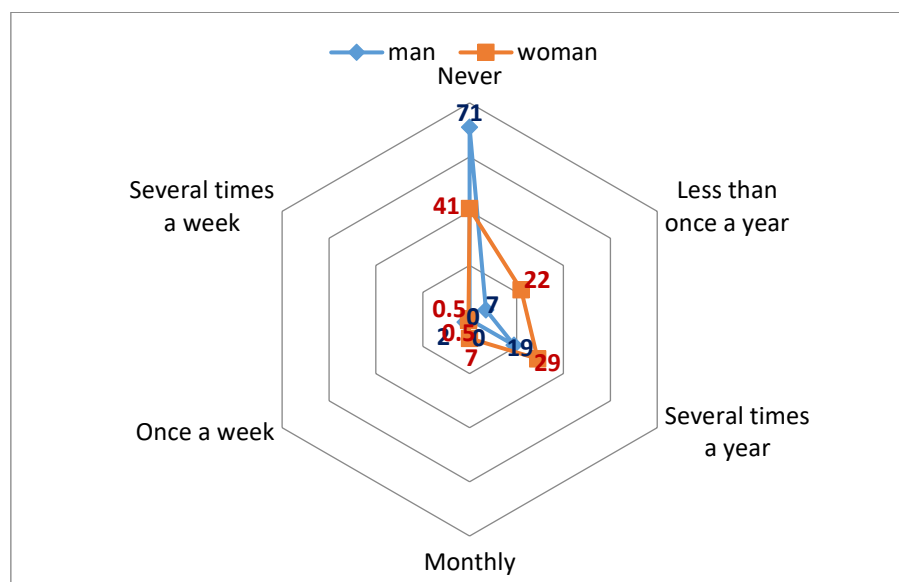
Level of Education and Prevalence of Sharenting

A smaller number of respondents did not have upper secondary or higher education, so they were grouped together. Using a One-Way ANOVA on the data regarding the prevalence of sharenting among groups of respondents based on their level of education, the *F*-statistic was calculated ($F = .478$; $p = .698$), which was not statistically significant (Table 4). The data indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of sharenting among respondents based on their level of education. In other words, individuals with both higher and lower levels of education share photos, videos, and other personal data about their children on social media with equal frequency. These results could also be explained by the fact that technology is advancing rapidly and lifestyles are increasingly moving into the digital space, while educational institutions are unable to provide formal education that keeps pace with these fast-changing trends. This highlights the growing importance of lifelong learning in the digital age. However, the findings of Conti et al. (2024) differ from those of this study, showing that there are statistically significant differences in the use of sharenting in favor of parents with lower education levels, those employed part-time, and those under the age of 35.

Table 4. Level of Education and Sharenting (ANOVA)

Level of education	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Primary/ vocational/secondary school	48	1.94	1.040	.478	.698
Post secondary/Higher education	68	2.07	1.012		
University degree/Professional Master's	78	1.88	1.139		
Academic Master's/Doctorate	17	1.82	1.074		

Number of Friends/Followers on Social Media and Sharenting

Using a One-Way ANOVA on the data regarding the prevalence of sharenting among groups of respondents categorized by the number of friends/followers on social media, the F-statistic was calculated ($F = .478$; $p = .698$)*,* which was not statistically significant (Table 5). The data indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of sharenting among respondents with varying numbers of friends/followers on social media. Meanwhile, the findings of some other studies (Conti et al., 2024) suggest that parents with more than 500 followers are more likely to post images of their children online.

Table 5. Number of Friends/Followers and Sharenting (ANOVA)

	N	M	SD	F	p
Up to 50	26	1.52	.849	1.547	.177
51 – 100	15	1.86	1.027		
101 – 200	31	2.00	1.155		
201 – 350	41	2.00	.988		
351 - 500	34	2.26	1.263		
More than 500	64	1.94	1.030		

Children's Consent for Content Sharing

Are the children of the parents in the sample informed about the parents' intentions before posting on social media? What may seem like a fun or appealing post to a parent may not be perceived the same way by the child. Additionally, a child's digital identity is often shaped long before they are able to build their own identity or are given the opportunity to express their views, which is neither natural nor justified (Steinberg, 2017). Research by Walrave et al. (2022) shows that an adolescent's digital identity often differs from the identity constructed online by their parents. Adolescents wish to be consulted by their parents about whether certain content should be shared or not. Among the 111 parents who engage in sharenting, 64—or more than half (57.66%)—do not ask their child for their opinion before posting content online. This includes both those whose children are old enough to express their will (40.54%) and those whose children are still too young to understand (21.13%). Only 23 parents stated that they share content with their child's consent, which represents just 20.7% of respondents who post pictures and videos online.

These findings raise concerns about children's rights to privacy and participation, as outlined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children capable of forming their own views have the right to express them freely in all matters affecting them, and that these views must be considered according to their age and maturity. This principle should extend to decisions about their digital presence. In addition, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provides legal safeguards for children's personal data. Recital 38 highlights their need for special protection due to limited awareness of digital risks, while Articles 5 and 8 emphasize fairness, transparency, and parental consent for data processing (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016). However, the GDPR does not directly regulate parental posting, raising ethical questions about how to balance parental authority with the child's right to control their digital identity.

Graph 4. Children's Consent for Publishing a Post
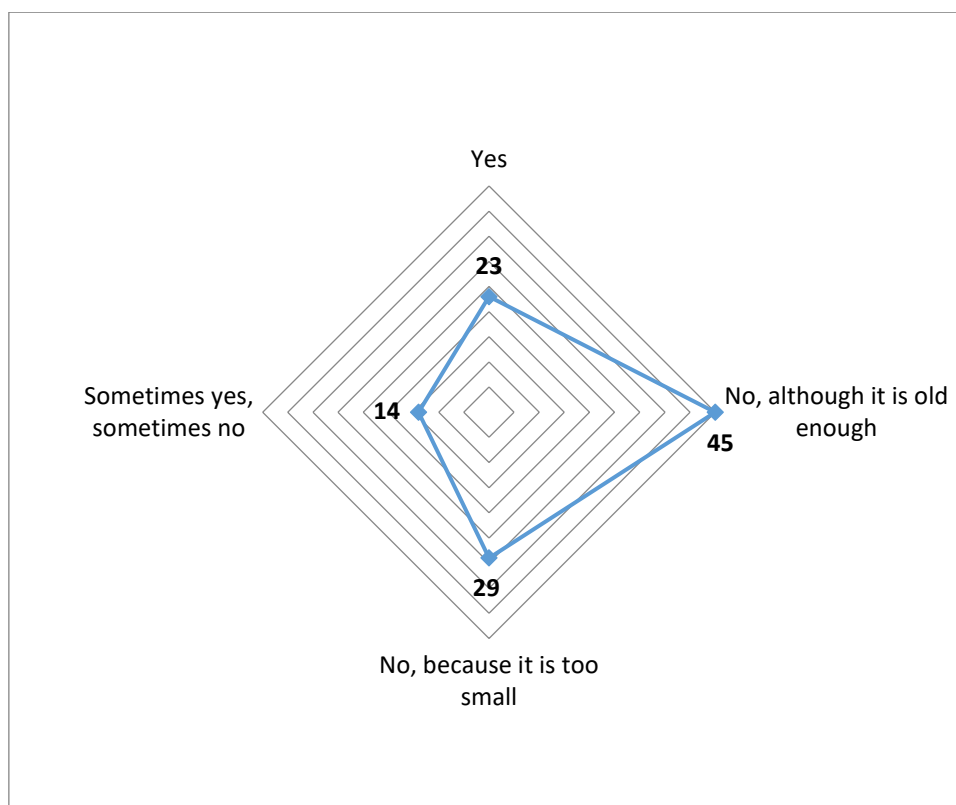
Motives and Types of Posts in Sharenting: An Analysis of Parental Reasons and the Content Shared on Social Media

In the qualitative research approach, through the analysis of respondents' answers, categories were identified that reveal the subjective reasons parents are motivated to engage in sharenting, some of which overlap (Figure 5). The most common category indicates that parental pride is a key motivator for sharing a child's personal moments online (mentioned by 40 parents, or 36% of those who practiced sharenting). This is followed by the category of parental happiness and other positive emotions related to joyful events (such as births, trips, family gatherings, birthdays, competitions), cited by 33 parents (30%), and the category of the desire to inform friends and relatives who rarely see the child, mentioned by 28 parents (25%). Similarly, Lazard et al. (2019) found in their research that pride and emotional affect often drive sharenting on social media. Ferrara et al. (2023) also reported that parents most commonly practice sharenting to express pride and affection for their child, while Walrave et al.

(2022) highlighted pride in offspring and the desire to inform family and friends as primary motivations for sharing content. Likewise, the findings of Conti et al. (2024) show that parents frequently share moments from their children's lives, especially those that fill them with pride.

The results of the study clearly indicate that positive emotions are the most common reasons behind these activities. This finding can contribute to a deeper understanding of the results showing that the prevalence of sharenting among Slovenian parents is not dependent on their level of education or cognitive status. This is because the primary drivers of sharenting are the emotions parents experience, while the cognitive aspects of personality and parental reasoning tend to be secondary or overlooked.

Graph 5. Categories of Reasons for Sharenting
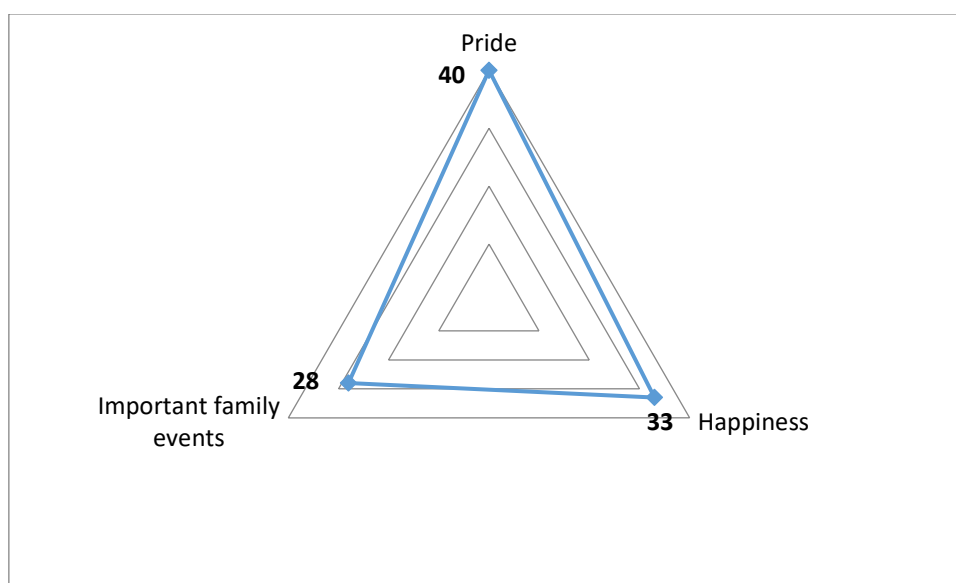
In the qualitative research approach, through the analysis of participants' responses, categories were identified that reflect the situations which motivated parents to engage in sharenting, with some overlap between categories (Graph 5). More than half (51%) of the parents who practiced sharenting, 56 in total, shared photos from trips, excursions, holidays, etc., where their own and their children's experiences are intertwined. Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) emphasize that the goal of sharenting is often for parents to present their lives and joyful moments. However, these often include personal data about children, which parents may overlook in terms of potential long-term consequences for the child. As Kopecký et al. (2020) warn, parents are frequently unaware of the

potential risks associated with sharenting, including violations of children's privacy, identity theft, and the creation of self-esteem issues later in life.

Graph 5. Situations (Experiences) Presented in Posts
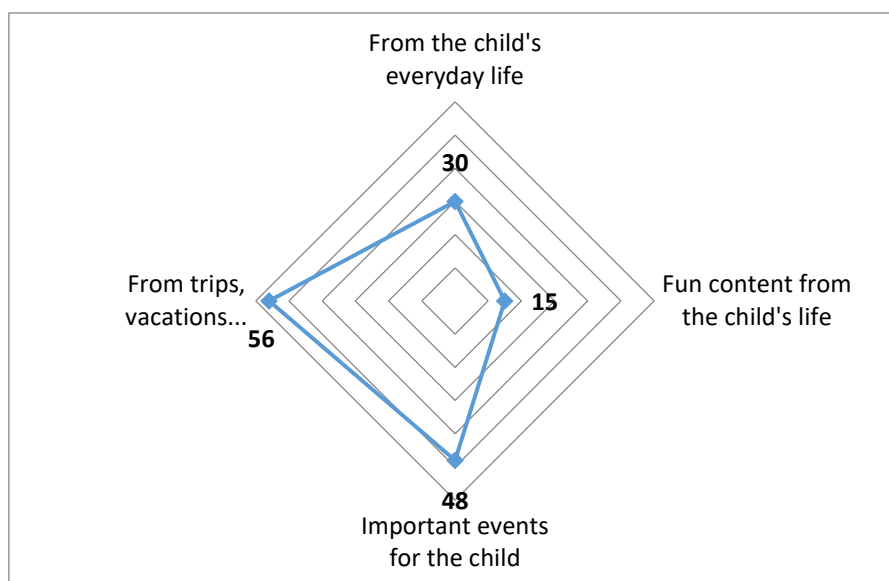
Although there are clear advantages to sharing information and experiences, such as connecting with others, building relationships, collaboration, and receiving support from friends and relatives around the world, the parents surveyed in this study also recognize the importance of being aware of the challenges of sharing, such as privacy protection, data security, the potential spread of false or inappropriate content, and violations of children's rights. Therefore, it is essential to be cautious when sharing content and to apply best practices to ensure safe and responsible sharing. From the analysis of responses from Slovenian parents, it is evident that many believe greater awareness of internet risks and protection methods is necessary. In fact, 64% of respondents stated they would attend education sessions, such as lectures, workshops, etc., related to online child protection and safety.

Pedagogical Implications

Lifelong Learning in the Service of Parenting

Considering the rapid changes in life brought about by the development of digital technologies, and the fact that many adults, including parents, did not receive education or training on the use and challenges of modern technologies during their formal education, it is essential to focus on lifelong learning as well as non-formal and informal forms of education. This also includes the promotion of intergenerational learning, where younger, more technologically proficient individuals share their knowledge and experiences with adults and older generations. The results of this study support this idea and point to specific pedagogical implications, including opportunities for intergenerational cooperation aimed at enhancing understanding and protection of children's digital rights.

Promoting Awareness of Children's Digital Privacy

The results of the study show that a large proportion of surveyed parents are not aware of the long-term consequences of sharing content about their children. Pedagogical implications include the need to educate parents about children's digital rights, the importance of protecting privacy, and the consequences of shaping a child's digital identity without their consent. Intergenerational collaboration plays a valuable role in this process, as older parents, who did not have the same experiences with digital technologies, can gain knowledge and support from younger generations, who have a better understanding of digital literacy.

Developing Digital Literacy Among Parents

Educators, teachers, and professors should also incorporate topics related to digital literacy, particularly online safety and protection on social media, into parent-teacher meetings and individual consultations. Sharenting can be addressed as part of a broader program on the responsible use of the internet. It is important to include intergenerational education, where the younger generation can help explain the benefits and risks of digital networks to older parents, who may be less familiar with using digital platforms.

Encouraging Children's Participation in Decision-Making

Pedagogical implications also include the importance of involving children in the decision-making process regarding the sharing of their photos and personal information. Children need to learn how to recognize their right to privacy and be empowered to express their opinions on these matters, creating a foundation for conscious and critical thinking about their digital identity. Collaboration

between parents and children, as well as the involvement of grandparents in discussions about digital privacy, can contribute to better understanding and greater respect for children's rights.

Developing Guidelines for Schools and Kindergartens

Institutions such as kindergartens and schools can develop clear guidelines and recommendations for parents on the safe sharing of children's content on social media. This can include advice on privacy settings and ethical reflection before posting. Intergenerational collaboration can support the development of these guidelines, as older and younger generations can work together to create more comprehensive and practical advice for protecting children in the digital world.

Promoting Responsible Parenting in the Digital Age

Pedagogical implications also include empowering parents to become responsible digital role models. This involves encouraging thoughtful and ethical behavior on social media, where parents become aware of how their posts may affect their children's future social relationships and self-esteem. Intergenerational learning can play a key role, as younger generations can help older ones understand how their online sharing impacts the child's digital world.

Conclusion

The findings of this study on sharenting in the Slovenian context provided important insight into parental habits of sharing photos, videos, and information about their children on social media. It was found that most parents were not aware of the long-term consequences that sharenting can have on their children's privacy.

Although many parents cited happiness, pride, and the desire to share important family moments as their main motives, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of how these activities may shape a child's digital identity without their consent. Mothers proved to be significantly more active in sharenting compared to fathers, indicating that they took on a greater role in representing family life online. Likewise, parental education did not emerge as a key factor in decisions about posting, implying that sharenting was not limited to specific sociodemographic groups.

It was found that parents generally did not seek their children's consent before posting, which raised concerns about the protection of children's rights to

privacy. This phenomenon presents a challenge both pedagogically and legally, as it highlights the need to educate parents about digital privacy, ethics, and the long-term consequences of content sharing.

The study highlights the importance of empowering parents to use social media responsibly and emphasizes the need to involve children in decisions about their digital identity. The pedagogical implications of this research serve as a foundation for developing educational programs that raise awareness about child safety in digital spaces and improve parenting practices in the digital age. It is found that intergenerational collaboration represents a valuable opportunity for educating parents, as it enables understanding, knowledge transfer, and experience-sharing across generations, helping to foster a more responsible and thoughtful approach to social media use.

Project Framework

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