Work it Baby! A Survey Study to Investigate the Role of Underaged Children and Privacy

Management Strategies Within Parent Influencer Content.

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Abstract

Nowadays, parents are increasingly drawn to establish a successful influencer status on social media. Being a parent influencer offers an alluring work environment, allowing them to combine devotion to their children and generating a considerable income. However, both scholars and policymakers raise significant concerns regarding the orchestrated and monetized nature of influencer sharenting, which involves sharing children's personal information online. The present study, which surveyed 89 [country blinded fosr review] parent influencers, shows that children are omnipresent in their parents' influencer content. The findings do not only uncover the underlying motivations driving influencer sharenting, but also reveal a low sharenting risk awareness. Building on parent influencers' safe sharenting strategies, this study identifies three parent influencer types: reckless, safe and authoritarian safe sharenters. This classification contributes to a better understanding of the heterogeneity of the parent influencer landscape and will foster the development of protective measures in favor of children's wellbeing.

Keywords: Influencer sharenting; social media; privacy concerns; communication privacy management; child labor; social media influencer; parent influencer; children

1   **INTRODUCTION**

2   On social media, including TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, highly popular social media users

3 have made a profitable endeavor of transforming their family lives in sceneries for product

4 placement (Abidin, 2017). Some of them are niche influencers, specialized in the field of 'parenting',

5 as they often grew from being ordinary social media users to microcelebrities by sharing intimate

6 content mostly on their domestic and family lives. Others already had a blooming influencer career

7 when they started sharing pictures or ultrasounds of their - often unborn - child (Abidin, 2015). Both

8 influencer categories can be considered 'parent influencers' and operate in an attention economy in

9 which they aim to get noticed and admired by highly engaging in self-disclosure (Jorge et al., 2022).

10 This includes sharing boundless information about their parental experiences by portraying their

11 children on their profiles, an act referred to as 'sharenting' (sharing parenting; Blum-Ross and

12 Livingstone, 2017).

13   Strikingly, a content analysis shows that sharenting and branded content accounts for nearly

14 half of parent influencers' profiles (Jiménez-Iglesias et al., 2022). This practice raises important

15 concerns both in terms of the children's privacy (i.e., misuse of images) as well as their wellbeing

16 (e.g., child labour) following their displaying to a large audience. In particular, countries are

17 increasingly responding to this call, a process of which France has been at the forefront by

18 implementing a concrete law against the exploitation of children's images on online platforms

19 (Macron et al., 2020). Notably, other countries such as Belgium are currently introducing similar bills,

20 and Illinois is the first state in the USA to have passed a law to protect the earnings of child

21 influencers (Feweb, 2023; Hawkinson, 2023). However, academic research currently lacks

22 understanding of what influencer sharenting activities demand of the parents and children involved.

23 Therefore, the current paper aims to understand the backstage dynamics and efforts influencer

24 sharenting represents in the everyday lives of parent influencers and their children.

25   This understanding is imperative as influencer sharenting (also called sharenting labor) adds

26 an important dimension to the ongoing academic and public debate regarding regular sharenting

27 risks (e.g. Ong et al., 2022), due to the large reach and commercial character of this content (Buvár

28 and Orosz, 2023). Although influencer sharenting literature is growing, prior research mainly

29 followed a qualitative approach aimed at the conceptualization of the phenomenon and

30 understanding the motivations driving this behavior (e.g. Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2017; Jorge et

31 al., 2022). As such, prior research provided insights in the motivations of parent influencers to

32 engage in influencer sharenting and showed that the practice is associated with threats for the

33 portrayed children (e.g., Ong et al., 2022). However, no academic insights yet exist on how parent

34 influencer's children are actually involved in the everyday process of content creation of their

35 parents. Nevertheless, gaining insights into children's level of involvement is indispensable to help

36 understand the magnitude and danger of the influencer sharenting phenomenon.

37   Using a survey method approach among parent influencers, this study will quantitatively map

38 the extent to which children are involved within parent influencers' content creation process.

39 Furthermore, we aim to add nuance to the ongoing debate by classifying parent influencers based on

40 their influencer sharenting attitudes and practices. In a first place, this approach adds value to the

41 current state-of-the-art by helping to understand the magnitude of influencer sharenting. Besides,

42 classifying parent influencers will allow future research and policy makers to consider the

43 heterogeneity of parent influencers and their sharenting behaviors, as some parents may adopt more

44 risky influencer behaviors compared to others. By this nuanced approach, the results of this study

45 will strengthen future interventions and policies to protect children's wellbeing while accounting for

46 the perspectives of the parents.

47

48   **LITERATURE REVIEW**

49 **Parent influencers' Sharenting Behavior**

50 ***Influencer Sharenting***

51   A growing body of research has investigated why and at which costs children's lives are being

52 commodified within today's digital context (e.g. Ågren, 2023). So far, research shows that parent

53   influencers' sharenting behavior is strongly driven by their desire to maximize their social capital and

54   influence (Archer, 2019). For parent influencers, authentic representations of everyday domestic

55   contexts and children are often shared with the ultimate goal to create an illusion of closeness and

56   relatedness among audiences, to ultimately maximize the effectiveness of the incorporated branded

57   content (Campana et al., 2020; Abidin, 2015). As opposed to traditional call-to-action marketing

58   efforts, whereby one exposure to an anonymous child was used to stimulate sales, parent influencers

59   are slowly but steadily building their personal brands and monetizing their family by, inter alia,

60   sharing their child's ultrasounds, child birth details and development with many unknown others

61   (Abidin, 2015; Ågren, 2023).

62   Increasing studies tried to grasp the implications of the consequent blurring lines between

63   the private and public lives of influencer(s') children. Whereas some adopted a qualitative approach

64   to explore the motives underlying the sharenting behavior of mom influencers (Holiday et al., 2022;

65   Jorge et al., 2022), others performed digital ethnographic studies to conceptualize this phenomenon

66   (e.g. Abidin, 2015; Abidin, 2017). Together with academic assessments of legal frameworks (e.g. Van

67   Der Hof et al., 2020), these studies emphasize the urgent need for stricter regulations and guidelines

68   in order to protect children within this fairly new revenue model.

69

70   ***The Backstage Process of Influencer Sharenting***

71   Abidin (2020) draws attention to the fact that little academic attention is devoted to

72   understanding the "backstage" process of influencer sharenting. This process involves the behind-

73   the-scenes activities and dynamics contributing to creating and managing influencer content. From

74   the followers' perspective, for instance, we know that a large part of today's parents is frequently

75   exposed to parent influencer content (in this particular study mom influencers; Ouvrein, 2022). The

76   time and effort parent influencers and their children devote to their influencer careers lacks

77   academic inquiry and understanding, however, since this production process takes place in the

78   private family sphere, largely managed and curated by the children's parents (Abidin, 2020). Related

5

79   to the frontstage (i.e. online content) of parent influencer content, Abidin (2017) underlines that

80   some parent influencers undertake visible efforts to justify the digital labor their influencer activities

81   impose for their children. She argues that these parents use narratives that highlight the willingness

82   of their children to participate in the content creation process. However, this ethnographic study also

83   revealed that the children's body language often suggests a lack of enthusiasm.

84   Investigating the backstage (i.e., how parents actually produce the content by involving their

85   children) will complement these insights. This aspect is important, as factors such as children's age,

86   consent, frequency and duration of activities that could potentially be considered as hazardous work,

87   are central considerations within regulatory frameworks to protect children from economic

88   exploitation (e.g. Council of the European Union, 1994). Van Der Hof et al. (2020), for example,

89   advocate for the implementation of new regulatory measures to account for the new forms of

90   economic exploitation (e.g., including kidfluencers) that occur in the digital realm. Hence, having

91   insights in how frequent parents portray their children as well has how long children participate in it

92   is crucial information to inform effective regulatory measures in the future.

93

94   ***The role of normalization in influencer sharenting***

95   Research suggests that subjective norms have a profound impact on sharenting behavior,

96   with parents being more likely to engage in sharenting when their social network supports such

97   behavior (Ranzini et al., 2020). Even more so, research argues that publicly sharing media about

98   infants became commonly accepted and are even considered markers of good parenting and care

99   (Leaver, 2017). Building up on prior qualitative insights (e.g. Campana et al., 2020; Blum-Ross and

100   Livingstone, 2017; Abidin, 2015), it is thus reasonable to expect that sharenting is widely normalized

101   and accepted within the network of influencers, given the omnipresence of (influencer) sharenting

102   and the great affordances that are attached to this content. Nevertheless, empirical research aiming

103   to understand the extent to which sharenting is considered normalized among the peers of the

104   parent influencers is, to the best of our knowledge, non-existing so far. These insights hold significant

105   value, however, because if parent influencers would indeed perceive sharenting as a means of

106   meeting peer expectations and conforming to established norms and standards, it could highly

107   impact the frequency and duration of parents' engagement in such practices, consequently

108   impacting their children's involvement.

109   ***Children's involvement in influencer sharenting labor***

110   　　　Parent influencers' profiles are crossroads between everyday "filler" and branded content.

111   Filler content is considered as portrayals of intimate information about the influencers' day-to-day

112   events, which in turn stimulates positive reactions towards the branded content (Chung et al., 2023;

113   Abidin, 2017). Although both filler and branded content contributes to the commercial success of

114   parent influencers, a distinction can be made between influencer sharenting in function of branded

115   (i.e,. sharenting labor) or non-commercial posts (i.e., general influencer sharenting).

116   　　　Given the large income generated through sharenting labor (MarketingHub, 2022), depicting

117   children in branded posts raises additional concerns. Firstly, the economic gains that come with the

118   child's involvement prompts questions related to how these incomes are managed (Saragoza, 2019;

119   Hudders et al., 2022). Secondly, influencer sharenting labor might require a greater involvement of

120   the child since more is at stake as opposed to non-commercial influencer sharenting. For instance, in-

121   depth interviews with Flemish mom influencers has revealed that brands often demand the inclusion

122   of their children in commercial content, resulting in conflicts between parents and children when the

123   child refuses to participate (Van den Abeele et al., 2023). Thirdly, it is plausible to expect that the

124   creation of branded influencer sharenting content requires more time and effort than non-

125   commercial influencer sharenting content. Although increasing regulations are demanding

126   influencers to clearly disclose their sponsored content (Jhawar et al., 2023), parent influencers are

127   putting great efforts to calibrate their content in a certain way to make it appear highly authentic and

128   spontaneous. This process is often referred to as authenticity labor (Arnesson, 2023) or calibrated

129   amateurism (Abidin, 2017).

130   Recent insights from a content analysis show that nearly half of influencer's sharenting

131   content consists of sharenting labor (Jiménez-Iglesias et al., 2022). However, research is lacking on

132   how sharenting activities in function of commercial content are integrated in the everyday lives of

133   the involved parents and children. Specifically, to have a clear view on the consequences and

134   potential interventions to prevent influencer sharenting hazards, it is important to gain knowledge

135   on what influencer sharenting actually demands from parents and children in terms of time and

136   frequency and how this differs for commercialized and non-commercialized influencer sharenting.

137

Influencer Sharenting Motivations

139   In the context of regular social media users, research already showed that parents engage in

140   sharenting for various reasons. As such, the study of Walrave et al. (2022) reveals that parents

141   engage in sharenting because they are proud of their children and want to inform family and friends.

142   Another study of Holiday et al. (2021) further argues that parents often engage in sharenting for

143   purposes of self-representation (e.g. showing they are a good parent and have a strong bond with

144   their child). In the context of influencer sharenting, the motivations driving parent influencers to

145   engage in sharenting mainly consist of immediate gratifications, such as gaining emotional support of

146   their audience, enhancement in their self-worth, collecting digital memories, etc. (Archer, 2019;

147   Jorge et al., 2022). The current study will further explore which motives are the main drivers of

148   parent influencers' sharenting behaviors.

149

Influencer Sharenting and Risk Perceptions

151   In addition to the various motivations that drive parent influencers to share information

152   about their children online, there are several privacy risks related to (influencer) sharenting (e.g.

153   Autenrieth, 2018; Nottingham, 2019). For instance, extensive research on both general sharenting

154   (e.g. Ranzini et al., 2020) and influencer sharenting (e.g. Hudders et al., 2022) has identified a range

155   of concerning privacy issues, including criminal misuse such as identity theft, account hacking,

156   cyberstalking, and the unauthorized exploitation of personal information.

157   Remarkably, research indicates that despite being cognizant of these risks, parent influencers

158   persist in sharing their children's personal information online (Archer, 2019; Blum-Ross and

159   Livingstone, 2017). This is commonly referred to as the privacy paradox by proxy (Ní Bhroin et al.,

160   2022), and stems from the occurrence of a privacy-openness paradox (Van den Abeele et al., 2023).

161   Hereby the implementation of safer privacy management strategies (e.g. strict privacy settings or not

162   including the child at all) get hampered by a) the requirements attached to an influencer's career

163   (e.g. large audience, demand of sponsoring brands) and b) the gains parents experience when

164   sharenting (e.g. gaining social and financial capital; Chalklen and Anderson, 2017; Hudders et al.,

165   2022). More specifically, even though parent influencers struggle with several privacy concerns,

166   these remain largely abstract and limited in size (Van den Abeele et al., 2023). Comprehending and

167   envisioning concrete long-term risks is particularly challenging for parent influencers, as they often

168   did not personally experience negative consequences of their sharenting behavior yet. As a result,

169   this behavior appears to remain highly habitual among parent influencers (Blum-Ross and

170   Livingstone, 2017; Van den Abeele et al., 2023). We will further examine in our study to which extent

171   parent influencers are concerned with the privacy of their child, which concerns prevail and how this

172   affects their influencer sharenting behaviors.

173   **Privacy Management Strategies Employed by Parent Influencers**

174   Within the broad online context, privacy management strategies have been considered as a large set

175   of behaviors that could be employed to manage one's privacy in general (Lankton et al., 2017).

176   Related to influencer sharenting, suggestions have been made by researchers to better protect a

177   child's privacy. Examples of these are the adoption of 'camouflage' techniques to hide the identity

178   and/or locations of their children (Autenrieth, 2018) and 'privacy stewardship', whereby parents

179   critically reflect upon the appropriateness of the content before actually sharing it (Kumar and

180   Schoenebeck, 2015). Based hereon, Hudders et al. (2022) proposed a set of nine privacy

181   management strategies for parents to adopt with the ultimate goal to protect a child's privacy in the

182   context of influencer activities. These so-called 'safe sharenting strategies' are categorized into

183   individual safe sharenting strategies and group safe sharenting strategies (De Wolf et al., 2014).

184   *Individual safe sharenting strategies* consist of five strategies related to autonomous actions

185   that a parent undertakes to protect their child from sharenting hazards, such as anonymizing the

186   child or reflecting about the consequences of sharenting. *Group safe sharenting strategies* refers to

187   fours strategies concerning a shared boundary management between the parent and child (De Wolf

188   et al., 2014). For instance, the parent may ask for permission to the child prior to sharing their

189   picture or discuss consequences with their child while considering their child's point of view.

190   Qualitative research related to influencer sharenting shows that some specific privacy concerns (e.g.,

191   concern for the future or concern for negative comments of others) did encourage a minority of

192   parent bloggers to adopt stricter privacy management measures, such as trimming down the

193   quantity or anonymizing their posts (Archer, 2019; Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2017). This study will

194   further build on this work to examine how these safe sharenting strategies are being employed by

195   parent influencers to protect their child from unwanted sharenting risks, and to what extent these

196   parents consult their child in relation to these risks.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

198   Given the research gaps identified above with regard to parent influencers' sharenting

199   behaviors, the current study identifies four research questions which will be answered with a

200   quantitative survey study. The research questions aim to provide an insight into the backstage

201   process of influencer sharenting behaviors from the perspective of parent influencers. They are

202   concerned with providing an insight into influencers' sharenting labor (RQ1), their motivations to

203   engage in these behaviors (RQ2), the privacy concerns that arise with these behaviors (RQ3) and safe

204   sharenting strategies that are adopted by these influencers (RQ4):

205 **RQ1**: *To what extent do parent influencers engage in sharenting (labor), how normalized is it among*

206 *their peers and how actively do they involve their children in this practice?*

207 **RQ2**: *Which motivations are most strongly driving parent influencers to engage in sharenting?*

208 **RQ3**: *Which privacy concerns are parent influencers most aware of and how do these relate to their*

209 *actual sharenting behavior?*

210 **RQ4**: *Which individual and group safe sharenting strategies are most frequently adopted by parent*

211 *influencers?*

212

213   **METHODOLOGY**

214

215 **Research Design and Sample**

216 Being among the first quantitative studies among parent influencers, an online survey through

217 Qualtrics was conducted to shed light on the commercialization of the parent influencer business and

218 answer the four research questions. Given the specific target group (parents with an influencer

219 status or who have a child that is a kidfluencer), the respondents had to meet several inclusion

220 criteria to participate in the study. First, the respondents had to have at least 1K followers on one of

221 their social media profiles. This number of followers is considered as the lower limit of micro-

222 influencers (Conde and Casais, 2023), a choice made since micro-influencers are most common in

223 [the country of data-collection] and have a large impact on their loyal audience (Conde and Casais,

224 2023). Second, respondents had to have at least one child, which they portrayed on their influencer

225 profile. Third, considering our focus on sharenting labor, only participants that had engaged in a

226 sponsored partnership the month preceding the survey were allowed to participate.

227   A snowball method was used to collect the participants, given the strongly demarcated and

228 small size of the target group. Specifically, the authors of the study a) contacted parent influencers

229   by direct messages on social media, b) designed Instagram stories with the call to participate in the

230   study and c) asked a large number of acquaintances and the first respondents to further spread this

231   call. The survey ran from May 3rd until May 16th, 2022. A total of 124 responses were initially

232   collected. However, 30 respondents were deleted due to early dropout and five others because they

233   did not meet (one of the) inclusion criteria. Analyses were thus performed on a final sample of 89

234   respondents of which 96.6% were mothers (cf. Table 1; descriptives). Although we acknowledge the

235   rather small sample size, we believe it is adequate considering the limited geographical area and the

236   relatively small population of parent influencers, who are the focus of our study. More details about

237   their influencer activities can be found in Table 1.

238
239   **Measures**

240   Constructs (cf. appendix for a full overview) were measured using scales provided by prior research.

241   First, several *general items* measured the parents' demographic variables and engagement in

242   influencer activities, including amongst other: the number of children they have, social media

243   platforms they are active on, their expertise and the percentage of commercialized content they post

244   on average.

245   *Influencer Sharenting* frequency was measured with one item, asking how often on average the

246   respondents share a social media post in which their child is portrayed. The answer options were

247   'less than monthly', 'monthly', 'weekly', 'daily' and 'several times a day'.

248   *Sharenting Labor* frequency was measured by one item asking the participants 'how often on average

249   they share a social media post in function of a collaboration with a brand, in which their child is

250   portrayed'. The same answer options were provided as for sharenting frequency.

251   *Influencer Sharenting Motivations* (α= .892) were measured by a self-composed scale of 8 items on a

252   five-point Likert scale. The items were based on insights from two studies on general (but not

253   influencer) sharenting (Walrave et al. 2022; Holiday et al., 2022). The items related to business

254   motives (brands and audience) were inspired by the research of Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017).

255   The *Safe Sharenting Strategies scale* was composed based on the nine privacy management

256   strategies identified within the study of Hudders et al. (2022). Further building upon the

257   communication privacy management theory (Petronio, 2010), the results of that study led to the

258   construction of a scale with 5 items reflecting individual privacy management strategies (IPMS) and 4

259   items representing group privacy management strategies (GPMS). All were measured on a five-point

260   Likert scale. To investigate the nine-item scale's underlying dimensions, a principal component

261   analysis using oblimin rotation was calculated. The choice for an oblique rotation method was made,

262   as it allows components to correlate (Park et al., 2002). Following this analysis, a two-component

263   solution was seen as suitable with factor loadings between .46 and .83. The first component

264   consisted of the first five items of the scale (in line with the IPMS), accounting for 31 % of the

265   variance (EV = 3.23; α = .78). The second component consisted of the last four items of the scale (in

266   line with the GPMS), accounting for 23 % of the variance (EV = 1.64; α = .68). Both the Kaiser-Meyer

267   Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO = .70) as well as the Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi 2$ (36) =

268   237, p<0.001) suggest that the sample size of our study can be considered as acceptable. Following

269   these results, both components were included as two separate subscales in further analyses.

270   *Situational privacy concerns* (α= .892) were measured by 10 items adopted from the study of Ranzini

271   et al. (2020). Those were also measured on a five-point Likert scale and checked, inter alia, whether

272   the participants were concerned that other users would commit identity theft or misuse the images

273   of their child, based on the information they share online.

274   To conclude, *peer influence* (α= .663) was measured by four items on a five-point Likert scale, to

275   assess to which extent sharenting is considered normalized among the peers of the parent

276   influencers.

277

278   **RESULTS**

279   **Parent Influencers' Sharenting Behavior**

280   Instagram, being used by all respondents for influencer sharenting, was the most popular

281   platform (cf. Table 1). Respondents predominantly target other parents (77.5%), rather than adults in

282   general (21.3%) or minors (1.1%). Within their content, the respondents indicated that the most

283   popular topics they cover are 'parenting and child activity' (89.9%) and 'beauty/fashion/lifestyle'

284   (46.1%). Responding to RQ1, descriptive analyses show that 83% of the surveyed influencers engaged

285   in sharenting very often. They reported to sharent either on a weekly (46.1%) or daily (22.5%) basis

286   or even several times a day (14.6%). Only a minority shared images of their child(ren) monthly

287   (16.6%) or less (2.2%). We can infer that sharenting is highly normalized within our sample, as the

288   mean score on the peer influence scale is high (*M*= 3.98, *SD*= .49).

289   *Table 1: Sample Descriptives*

PARENT INFLUENCERS	
N	89
Gender	
Male	3.4%
Female	96.6%
Age	M= 34.67, SD= 4.83
Country	
[Blinded for review]	20.2%
[Blinded for review]	79.8%
Number of Children	M= 2.17, SD= .83
Mean age of the children	M= 4,94, SD= 3.14
Social media profile on child's name	
Yes	7.9%
No	92.2%
Influencer activities as:	
Full time job	13.5%
Part time job	12.4%
	24.7%

Extra income	49.4%
Hobby	
Diffusion among platforms	
Personal Blog/website	32%
Facebook	36%
Instagram	100%
Pinterest	13,5%
Snapchat	0%
TikTok	13%
Twitter	5%
Twitch	0%
YouTube	9%
Other	1%
MOST POPULAR PROFILE	
Descriptives	
Number of followers	*M* = 7795.11, Min.= 1052, Max.= 50000
	SD = 7524.0
Titleholder	
Child	1.1%
Parent	98.8%
Thematic focus	
Beauty/Fashion/Lifestyle	46.1%
Parenting and child activities	89.9%
Food	16.9%
Traveling	30.3%
Sports and mental wellbeing	9.0%
Other	16.9%
Target audience	
Other parents	77.5%
Other adults	21.3%
Children and adolescents	1,1%

290

291 **Sharenting labor**

292   Further responding to RQ1, descriptive analyses show that 36% of the participating parent

293 influencers' content consists of commercial content (described as: 'posts for which a compensation

294 (material or financial) was received'). Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents (49.4%)

295 considered their influencer activities as a hobby, while the others described it as an extra income

296 (24.7%), part time (12.4%) or even full-time job (13.5%; cf. Table 1). Considering their children's role

297   within their commercial posts, the influencers reported to engage quite frequently in sharenting

298   labor. While this occurred daily for only 2.2% of the parent influencers, 24.7% asked their children's

299   involvement within commercial content on a weekly basis and 46.1% monthly. Finally, the average

300   time the sample's children are required to spend on sponsored posts (including: posing, being filmed

301   while playing with received toys ...), was 36.5 minutes (SD = 36.92) per post.

302

303   **Influencer Sharenting Motivations**

304   Responding to RQ2, descriptive analyses show that the strongest motivations for influencer

305   sharenting was 'pride' (M = 4.40, SD = .77) and 'for pleasure' (M = 4.47, SD = .74). The motivations

306   that were rated the least were 'so I can bond with my child' (M = 2.03 SD = .92) and 'to show others

307   that I am a good parent' (M = 1.97, SD = 98). Notably, parents also gave a score above average to the

308   motivation 'pleasing brands' and 'pleasing followers' (respectively M= 3.42, SD= .99 and M= 3.64,

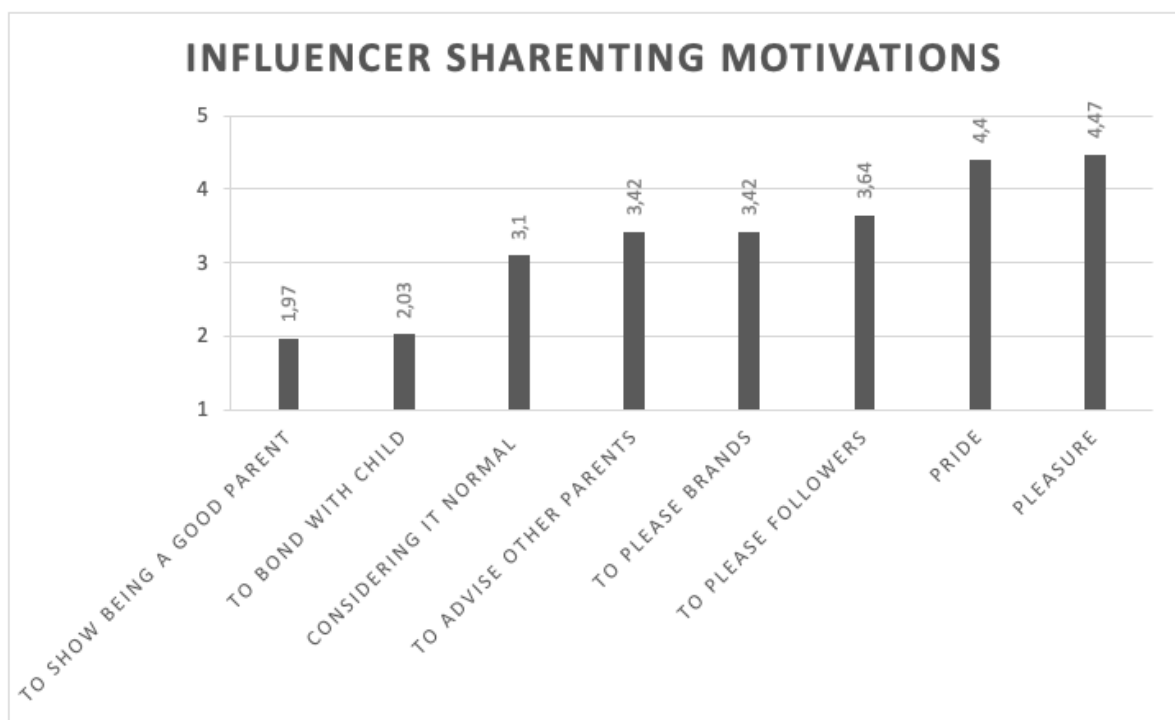309 SD= .92). See Figure 1 for an overview of all sharenting motivations.

310

311   *Figure 1: Influencer sharenting motivations*

312 **Privacy Concerns**

313   Results show that the privacy concerns influencers had related to their sharenting behavior

314 were low to moderate (*M* = 2.68, *SD* = .76 on a five-point scale). Descriptive analyses of the individual

315 items (cf. Figure 2) were performed to respond to RQ3. These show that the respondents mostly

316 agreed with the global and rather abstract statement 'Overall, I find it risky to publish my child's

317 personal information on social media' (*M* = 3.1, *SD* = 1.12). The statement that had the second

318 highest score related to the concern that social media platforms would further share personal

319 information that parents share about their child (*M* = 2.78, *SD* = 1.04). Parents seemed to be the least

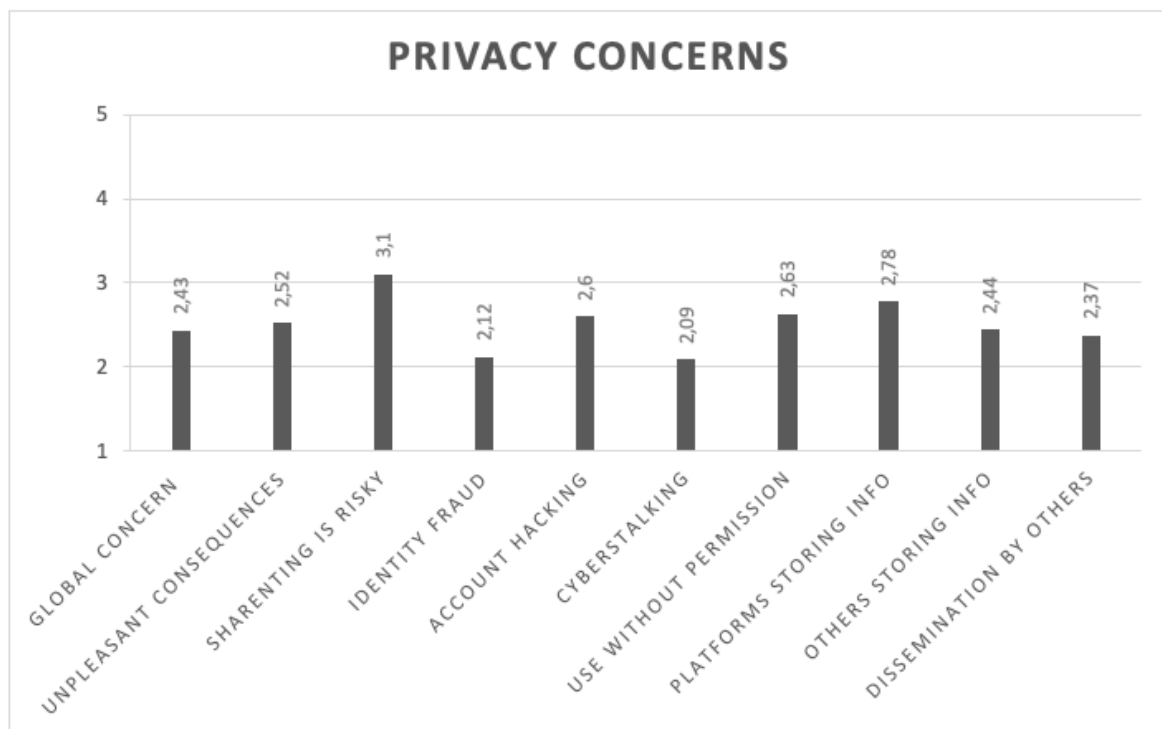320 concerned about cyberstalking as a result of their sharenting behavior *(M= 2.09, SD= .95)*.

321

322 *Figure 2: Privacy concerns*

323   Further responding to RQ3, an insignificant simple linear regression showed that risk

324 perceptions did not predict the extent to which the influencers engage in sharenting ($F(1,87)$ = 2.10,

325 *p* = .151, with an R^2 of .024) or commercial sharenting ($F(1,87)$ = .326, *p* = .570, with an R^2 of .004).

17

326 **Safe Sharenting Strategies**

327   Within this study, we wanted to investigate to which extent safe sharenting measures were

328   being put into practice by parent influencers today (cf. RQ4). Of all privacy management strategies,

329   portraying a child unrecognizably was the most uncommon within our sample (M= 2.17, SD= 1.26).

330   Besides, the respondents did not frequently communicate about sharenting and potential risks with

331   their children (M= 2.82, SD= 1.30). The results show, however, that parents did consider it important

332   that their children have autonomy about what is posted about them (M= 4.08, SD= .82) and want to

333   support them when the child itself decides to post content on social media (M= 4.26, SD=.86). All

334   other safe sharenting strategies were much less frequently adopted, as seen in Figure 3. Overall, we

335   can infer that the parent influencers applied individual safe sharenting practices (M= 2.62, SD= 2.62)

336   to a lesser extent than group privacy management strategies (M= 3.79, SD= .66), t(88) = 11.99, p <
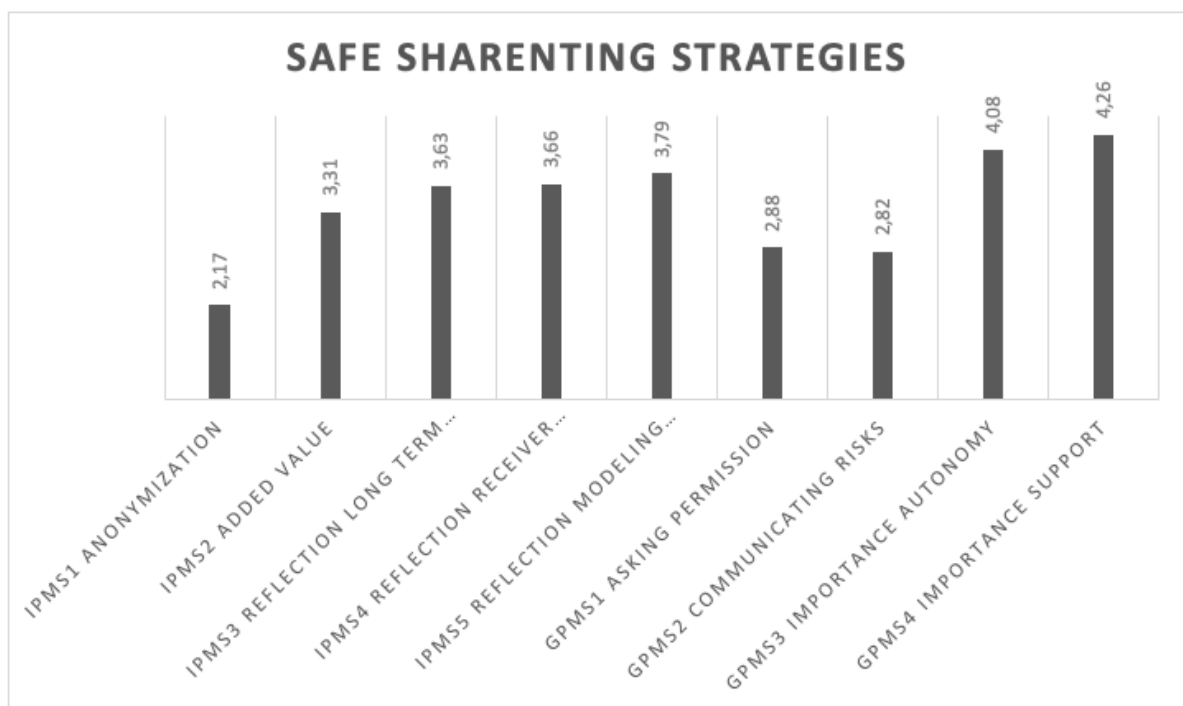
337   .001).

338

339   *Figure 3: Safe sharenting strategies by parent influencers*

340   While privacy concerns negatively relate to the amount of (commercial) sharenting of parent

341   influencers (cf. above), a significant linear regression analysis showed that the privacy concerns did

342   positively predict their overall safe sharenting behavior ($F(1,87) = 5.84$, $p < .05$, with an R^2 of .063).

343   To investigate whether there are different profiles of safe sharenting parent influencers, a K-

344   Means cluster analysis was conducted with the nine safe sharenting items. This analysis revealed a

345   three-cluster solution, whereby all except two variables could significantly predict cluster

346   membership. No differences between groups could be revealed for anonymizing the child ($F(2, 86) =$

347   2.84, $p = .06$) and supporting the child ($F(2, 86) = 2.72$, $p = .08$). The individuals in the first cluster (N =

348   28) did adopt safe sharenting behaviors the least and are therefore considered the **reckless**

349   **sharenters**. The second cluster (N = 29) are the **safe sharenters**, as they adopted both individual and

350   group privacy management strategies when sharenting, while the third cluster (N = 32) are

351   considered the **authoritarian safe sharenters**. They indicated that they adopt both individual and

352   group privacy management strategies as well, but scored particularly low on the items related to

353   parent-child communication (whether they ask permission to and communicate with their child

354   about sharenting).

355   Although there were no significant differences between the three groups with regard to the

356   motives related to sharenting (F's < 1.70 ; p's >. 20), they did differ in their privacy concerns $F(2, 86) =$

357   6.51, $p = .002$). The safe sharenters had the highest privacy concerns ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .60$), followed by

358   the authoritarian safe sharenters ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .63$), and the reckless sharenters ($M = 2.27$, $SD =$

359     $.68$), with no significant differences between the latter two groups ($p = .17$). The three groups did not

360   differ in the perceived peer influence ($F(2, 86) = .70$, $p = .50$), suggesting sharenting is equally

361   normalized among the peers of all three groups. While the three groups did not differ in the amount

362   of commercial posts they share depicting their child ($F(2, 86) = .13$, $p = .88$), they did differ in the

363   frequency of sharenting posts ($F(2, 86) = 6.90$, $p = .002$). The reckless sharenters depicted their child

364   more often on their social media profiles ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .93$), compared to the safe sharenters ($M =$

365   3.07, SD = .84) and the authoritarian sharenters (M = 3.09, SD = .96), with no significant differences

366   between the latter two groups (p = .92).

367

368   **DISCUSSION**

369   Through a quantitative design, this study sought to delve into the extent of children's

370   involvement in their parents' influencer activities, particularly within the realm of sharenting labor. In

371   addition, the study aimed to examine the motivations that drive parent influencers in their online

372   activities, as well as the privacy concerns associated with their sharenting activities, and tried to

373   identify the safe sharenting strategies they predominantly adopt. This study contributes to the

374   growing field of influencer sharenting by adding value to the existing body of research which is, with

375   some exceptions, predominantly qualitative in nature (e.g. Van den Abeele et al., 2023), relying on

376   analyses of parent influencers' content (Jiménez-Iglesias et al., 2022) or investigating its impact on

377   the perceptions of the followers (e.g. Ouvrein, 2022; Beuckels and De Jans, 2022).

378   ***The sharenting wave: ubiquity and potential normalization.*** In the first place, the results of

379   our study show that parent influencers are above all active on Instagram and targeting other parents

380   by providing them with content about parenthood and related child activities. Although this is the

381   first study to empirically shed light on these topics, this greatly aligns with the fact that Instagram is

382   the most popular social media channel of both marketers (to launch marketing campaigns;

383   MarketingHub, 2022) and adults of the age group to which most new parents belong (25-34 years;

384   Statista, 2022). Besides, our findings reveal that the vast majority of the respondents engage

385   frequently in sharenting behaviors. Unsurprisingly, sharenting is greatly normalized among the

386   influencer population of this study. Given their status as opinion leaders (Hudders et al., 2021) and

387   ability to reframe and construct norms among their followers (Campana et al., 2020), their impact on

388   social norms regarding sharenting in the broader society asks for caution. Future academic attention

389   to this matter is recommended.

390   ***Behind the scenes of sharenting labor.*** Our results show that sharenting labor content

391   represents a large portion of the parent influencers' profiles, which aligns with previous research

392   (Jiménez-Iglesias et al., 2022). One quarter of the respondents engage their children in commercial

393   influencer posts on a weekly basis and almost half of the sample on a monthly basis. Contributing to

394   the ongoing work investigating the public aspect of momfluencers, our results shed light on the

395   behind-the-scenes aspect of a single sponsored post, revealing that, on average, parents demand

396   over 36 minutes of their child's time to complete the process. Following our results regarding RQ1,

397   we can infer that children play a pivotal role in the success of their parents' influencer careers, as

398   their parents require that the children invest considerable time in creating the commercialized

399   content for them, which constitute of a significant portion of their parents' profiles and can thus be

400   considered important drivers of their influencer status. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first

401   academic effort that seeks to illuminate the precise amount of time children are required to invest in

402   sharenting labor, which is an important step to inform policy makers that are increasingly showing

403   interest and concerns related to this phenomenon (e.g. Feweb, 2023). Given the limited geographic

404   scope of our study, it would be interesting to examine cross-country and cross-cultural differences in

405   these influencer sharenting behaviors.

406   ***The driving force behind influencer sharenting***. In response to RQ2, we wanted to

407   investigate deductively, which motives are perceived to be driving parent influencers' sharenting

408   behavior most strongly. Out of a comprehensive list based on previous research (Holiday et al., 2022;

409   Walrave et al., 2022; Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2017), we can infer that parent influencers mostly

410   engage in sharenting for selfish motives such as pride and pleasure and less often for reasons of self-

411   expression. Interestingly, sharenting motivated by parental pride can be considered as sharenting for

412   impression management (i.e., managing their image of a 'good parent'), which happens to be the

413   type of sharenting adolescents are most concerned about and disapprove of (Verswijvel et al., 2019).

414   Importantly, we also gained insights in the weight of business-oriented motivations, which involve

415   whether parents engage in sharenting to please followers or brands. These motivations have not yet

416   been considered in previous research investigating the relative importance of sharenting motives, as

417   they are very specific to the context of influencers. Our results interestingly show that parent

418   influencers attach great importance to these motivations, however, which respectively come third

419   and fourth in place (out of the 8 motivations). Whereas previous research indicated that parents

420   could feel pressured by family and friends to engage in sharenting (Ong et al., 2022), we propose that

421   also influencers' audience and commercial partners have a substantial effect in parent influencers'

422   decision to disclose personal information of their child online.

423   ***Perceived sharenting risks.*** In the same vein as for the motives, we wanted to investigate the

424   awareness parent influencers have related to a comprehensive set of sharenting risks, previously

425   identified within academic research (Ranzini et al., 2020). In contrast with the study of Ranzini et al.

426   (2020), in which parents' privacy concerns related to sharenting were moderately high, the average

427   privacy concerns of the surveyed parent influencers were moderately low. This might be explained by

428   the privacy paradox as well as by cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) that suggests that

429   parents may minimize the risks related to influencer sharenting behaviors to resolve conflicting

430   beliefs and behaviors. By minimizing privacy concerns, they can rationalize their behavior and reduce

431   the tension that may result from the discrepancy between beliefs and behaviors.

432   Besides, the only item that scored above the neutral value was the very abstract statement

433   that *'sharenting is risky'.* Other items had a score below average and items mentioning very concrete

434   risks such as cyberstalking, third parties storing information of the child or disseminating information

435   of the child scored the lowest. This is in line with findings of Van den Abeele et al. (2023), which show

436   that parent influencers tend to have more awareness of abstract risk perceptions related to their

437   sharenting behavior. Our results confirm this by showing that they are less concerned about specific

438   risks, although those have been shown to be significant within previous research (Hudders et al.,

439   2022). For example, the risks parent influencers are the least concerned about (i.e. cyberstalking)

440   appear to be very commonly occurring (Ouvrein et al., 2023; Van den Abeele et al., 2022).

441   ***From safe to reckless sharenters****.* Even though insights from previous research show that

442   experts in the field underline the importance of children's involvement regarding the decision-

443   making process surrounding influencer sharenting (Hudders et al., 2022), the surveyed influencers

444   did not frequently communicate about sharenting and the potentially associated risks with their

445   children. Overall, we found that parents are especially willing to provide autonomy and support to

446   their children when the child itself wants to post content online. However, they are much less likely

447   to open up a dialogue with their child or adopt individual safe sharenting strategies when it comes to

448   their own sharenting actions. Interestingly, our findings further show that although having a greater

449   awareness of risks makes parents more conscious about sharing information about their children, it

450   does not make them share less.

451   Aiming to account for the heterogeneity of parent influencers, we performed an analysis to classify

452   parent influencers in associated groups, based on their sharenting attitudes and practices. We

453   distinguished *reckless sharenters* (i.e., do not [often] adopt safe sharenting behaviors), *safe*

454   *sharenters* (i.e., adopt both individual and group privacy management strategies) and *authoritarian*

455   *safe sharenters* (i.e., same as safe sharenters, however, they score low on parent-child

456   communication). This classification could aid future efforts to approach the most relevant groups of

457   parent influencers (in the first place: reckless sharenters), with the right approach. For example,

458   although the authoritarian safe sharenters adopt safe sharenting practices such as thinking about the

459   long-term consequences and reflect upon the receiver of their child's personal information, they are

460   not highly concerned about the risks their sharenting behavior might represent. Future efforts could

461   thus invest in making risks more tangible for them, whereby their reflection process would actually

462   make it more easy for them to come up with potential concrete risks.

463

464   **Practical Implications**

465   Summarized, we found that parent influencers attach great importance to impression

466   management, commercially oriented motives and abstract privacy concerns. Therefore, we can

467   indeed expect that the privacy calculus of parent influencers will be unbalanced due to the gains

468   attached to their sharenting behavior (e.g. monetary gains, social capital) and low awareness of

469   concrete risks (as suggested by Van den Abeele et al., 2023). Therefore, it is crucial for future

470   research and practical efforts to invest in increasing awareness by making the concrete risks of

471   influencer sharenting more tangible, for example, through interventions targeted at parent

472   influencers. In addition, children are frequently engaged in influencer activities. It is important to

473   consider the pressure this may cause and to provide enough support and care for these children.

474   Parents are considered the primary caregivers and the main responsible to protect their children's

475   rights, but at the same time they are the ones engaging in influencer sharenting potentially violating

476   their children's rights. Therefore, it is crucial to offer those children an opportunity to voice their

477   concerns, for instance, through educational packages informing them on their digital identity and the

478   concept and right for privacy.

479

480   **Limitations and Future Research**

481   The limitations of this study should be acknowledged and taken into consideration when interpreting

482   the results or initiating future research. A first important limitation is that our results solely rely on

483   the perspective of the parent influencers themselves. Previous research argues, however, that

484   cognitive biases (such as receiving social capital from their followers; Van den Abeele et al., 2023)

485   and financial gains can get in the way of parents appropriately estimating online hazards and

486   safeguarding their children from them (Van Der Hof et al., 2020). It is important for future research

487   to examine other stakeholders, such as the involved children, commercial partners and followers.

488   Regarding the latter, research indicates an increasingly critical attitude of followers regarding

489   sharenting (labor) (Buvár and Orosz, 2023). Given these concerns of social media users, it might be

490   plausible to expect that they would positively receive safer sharenting techniques (such as the

491   anonymization of a child) by influencers. Our study shows that the expectations of followers are a

492   great motivation for parent influencers to engage in sharenting. Therefore, it would be of great value

493   for future research to empirically investigate under which conditions safer sharenting practices do

494   not harm the advertorial value of parent influencers, to encourage their adoption among an

495   influencer audience.

496   As a final point, while our study predominantly focused on questioning parents'

497   understanding of situational privacy risks (e.g., identity fraud, cyberstalking), related to their

498   sharenting behavior, we paid less attention to parents' attitudes towards their child's general right to

499   privacy. Specifically, children inherently possess the right to privacy (United Nations, 1989), which is

500   contended to be violated through sharenting, given that they are frequently exposed on social media

501   without having reached an age where they can reasonably question or consent to it (Steinberg, 2016;

502   Leaver, 2017; Nottingham, 2019). This general right on privacy can thus be compromised, even in the

503   absence of immediate situational threats as questioned in our study. Furthermore, the

504   institutionalization of the mere invasion of a child's privacy through influencer sharenting and the

505   subsequent normalization of this behavior raise concerns. Hence, future studies should delve into

506   influencer parents' perspectives concerning their children's general right to privacy and its intricate

507   relationship with their sharenting practices and the communication of such topics on their profiles.

508   Notably, a growing trend can be observed where both regular users and parent influencers employ

509   tactics to safeguard their child's privacy on social media continuously. These tactics, known as anti-

510   sharenting techniques, include methods like concealing a child's face with emojis or capturing them

511   from behind (Autenrieth, 2018). Further exploration into why certain parent influencers opt for or

512   against employing these stringent privacy management strategies, and whether this decision is

513   influenced by their awareness of situational risks or a more general concern for their child's privacy,

514   could yield valuable insights within academic discourse.

515   Summarized, our results highlight the need for further research delving into different

516   perspectives on the issue and calls for additional exploration of strategies and interventions to

517   enhance parent influencers' understanding and awareness of influencer sharenting risks.

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