**From Digital Albums to Digital Showcases: Parental Violation of Child Privacy in Convergence Culture**

Enes Akdağ[[1]](#footnote-1), Necati Alp Çelebi[[2]](#footnote-2)

Two pillars of convergence culture, ubiquity and perenniality enable prosumers to profit in line with new income models; on the other hand, they also pave the way for digital privacy violations by dissolving the boundaries between public and private space. As a matter of fact, emerging practice sharenting fueled precisely by this opposition inherent in convergence culture. Sharenting is sharing practice in which visual, audio or audiovisual, sensitive personal data of minors, by their parents/caregivers in online environments. Although parents/caregivers set out with the motivation of creating a digital album, they have become able to earn financial income with the online visibility of their children in a digital showcase.

A systemic literature review will be conducted on various aspects of the sharenting, in the disciplines of communication studies, sociology, psychology and law, focusing on case studies since 2018, when the GDPR came into force. Considering the relevant articles of the GDPR, which focuses on the need to protect children's privacy in digital environments and that they are less aware and vulnerable in this regard, and the findings of the systemic literature review, it will be shown what the focus of a future national legal regulation should be, focusing on sharenting and kidfluencer. It is the sole wish of the researchers that this multifaceted study will open the door to actionable research, fed by interdisciplinary and mixed research methods, with a focus on sharenting and kidfluencers.

*Keywords:* Digital Motherhood, Sharenting, Kidfluencers, Digital Privacy, Right to be forgotten

**I. Introduction**

The digital age has brought about major changes in communication and content production. Convergence culture refers to an era in which consumers have also become content producers. In this new paradigm, prosumers can generate revenue, but digital privacy issues also come to the fore. Sharenting is essentially the practice of parents sharing their children's private information online. Originally conceived as a way to share memories, it has evolved into a revenue model. Taking into account the General Data Protection Regulation, which came into force in 2018, we will discuss how to protect children's digital privacy in order to understand the phenomenon of sharenting and kidfluencers and discuss possible legal regulations on this issue.

Within the scope of this research, the literature review and research articles produced after 2018 in the disciplines of law, communication sciences, educational sciences, psychology, health sciences will be subjected to a systemic literature review in the light of the key concept of sharenting. With this study, the researchers aimed to shed light on three points related to the subject.

(1) what are motivations behind sharenting behavior?

(2) how is sharenting behaviour is related with age, gender, family structure, income?

(3) is there any specific regulation on sharenting behaviour and prevention of parental violation of child privacy, in Turkey?

**II. Law**

The protection of children's 'privacy' in the context of 'sharenting' practices is an important concern in convergence culture. The term "sharenting" describes the trend for parents to frequently share contents about their children on social media and other online platforms. Nevertheless, this trend infringes on children's privacy rights, security, and personal boundaries.

The absence of relevant articles regulating the special categories of children's data in *the Personal Data Protection Law in Turkey* creates uncertainty about criminal sanctions. Conversely, the processing of children's data is subject to special regulations and age-based consent requirements are mandated under *the EU General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR) (Dülger 2021, pp. 7-8). In relation to the involvement of children in online data processing activities, determining the age of digital consent is an issue. Legal regulations are designed to safeguard the consent of individuals who are below a certain age threshold. If the child is capable of giving consent, it is considered appropriate to share his/her images only if he/she consents. However, sharing images of children who are incapable of giving consent is a disregard for their personal rights. Parents must respect the privacy and personal rights of their children. Therefore, parents should refrain from sharing unauthorized images of their children on social media and obtain the child's consent (Uzun, p.6).

*The European Court of Justice* and *the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation* recognize that individuals have the right to request the deletion, restriction or alteration of their personal data, including historical records that are misleading, embarrassing and do not relate to an individual (Ayhan et al., 2014). The right to privacy is an essential right which preserves the dignity of every individual in society and promotes the free development of their character. This right is absolute, inherent, and inseparable from the individual. Therefore, in case of violation of the right to privacy, the person concerned has the right to initiate legal proceedings against those responsible for the violation. At the beginning of any procedure, the consent of the children's legal representatives must be obtained. Appropriate measures must be in place for the verification of the authenticity of the representative (Özçelik 2021, p.11). The protection of the right to personality is covered by two separate regulations in *the Turkish Civil Code* (TCC). Article 23 of the TCC declares that a person cannot partially give up the right to his or her personality or restrict his or her own freedoms against the law or against morality. Violation of the right to personality without the person's consent is covered by this provision. Article 24 of the TCC provides protection against unlawful acts that are intended to cause harm (Girgin et al. 2020, pp. 116-117).

Parents can damage their child's personality through an illegal act if they illegally share their child's personal information on social media platforms. With regard to the protection of children's personal rights, three types of cases can be taken.

1. Preventative Action against the Attack Cases: This can be taken in response to unlawful attacks that haven't yet taken place, but where there is a serious and imminent threat.

2. Stopping the Attack Cases: It can be initiated where an unlawful attack is happening.

3. Action to Determine the Unlawfulness of an Attack Cases: This can be in cases where there has been a cessation of the attack, but there is a lingering effect of the attack.

There is a need to strike a balance and define boundaries between freedom of expression and a child's right to personality. Article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey guarantees freedom of expression and states that everyone has the right to freely express and disseminate their thoughts and opinions. Contributions made through various communication tools, such as social media platforms, may be covered by this provision. Nevertheless, this right to express oneself should not compromise the rights of others, nor infringe upon their individual rights (Gültekin 2018, p. 117). Sharing children's personal data, such as photos, names, and ages, without their consent, can infringe on their personal rights. While freedom of expression is an important right in a democratic society, it should not infringe on the rights of others or break the law. Therefore, it's essential to strike the right balance between social media usage and children's privacy.

**III. Communication Sciences**

Even though sharenting behavior is strongly associated with digital parents (especially mothers), latest research in the communication sciences field portray that relatives, peers, teachers and doctors are violators of child privacy on digital sphere (Aydemir, 2021, p. 131). Such kind of dystopic situation creates an inherent conflict between a child's right to privacy and right to freedom of expression, which puts children and their development at risk. (Yurdakul, 2022, p. 37).

The University of Michigan conducted a study to find out how parents share information about their children online. In the study, parents were surveyed, and the information shared was categorized into five types. These categories were: (1) 'children falling asleep', (2) 'feeding and eating tips', (3) 'discipline', (4) 'kindergarten/preschool' and (5) 'behavior problems' (Sezerer Albayrak, 2020, p.1215). Children look up to their parents, so their parents' social media posts are likely to influence their own behavior in the future. In other words, in this environment it seems quite difficult for children to understand what is private or confidential and what is open to others. (Yüksel, 2021, p. 63)

When the profiles of the digital parents were analyzed, it was found that none of their profiles were "hidden" (Güngör, 2021, p. 11). It was found that children are especially dissatisfied with their parents' sharing of their educational life (school, graduation, etc.) and considered it a violation of privacy (Esgin et al, 2022, p. 2099). In their research, Morva and Ünlü (2021) finds that parents would remove the content if their children objected. However, it should be emphasized that the age of the child is decisive in this. Instamoms (Parsa and Akmeşe, 2019, p.170) and Fathers 2.0, (Gökaliler and Özer, 2019, p. 392) stated that in general, children start expressing their opinions on the blog posts after they have learned to read. It has also been stated that they are more involved in the content during their adolescent years.

Another phenomenon related to "sharenting" is called "digital kidnapping". This is when strangers copy the posts made by parents and share them with a digital identity as if they were their own child. As a result, the child is given another name, another story and a completely different virtual life is created. (Erişir & Erişir, 2018, p. 54). Sharenting might also resulted in not being able to find a job in the future because of a post made by your parents. (Yurdakul, 2022, p. 76). Besides, Parsa and Akmeşe (2019) draws attention to rising number of divorce cases, which is being opened bey the reason of parental violation of kid, on digital sphere. Aktan and Erdem (2023) offers that there should be digital awareness and digital literacy compulsory courses provided by governments, before couples evolves to parents.

**IV. Education Sciences**

The term 'Internet child shaming', as defined by Baştemur et al. (2021, p. 171), refers to the act of sharing humiliating content on social media platforms as a means of shaming or punishing children. This practice has the potential to not only damage a child's self-confidence but can also violate their sense of privacy and affect their relationships both with peers and parents. The act of sharing posts of children and babies through fake third-party accounts with malicious intent is commonly termed 'baby role play' (Çok et al. 2022, p. 247). It is crucial for families not to share their children’s personal and location information to ensure the safety of their children. Yet, it is essential to equip children with robust digital literacy to prevent such risks. Digital tools must aim to develop not only the means to pass on information but also key competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. It is essential to establish partnerships between educational institutions, families, educators, and technology corporations, to guarantee children's safety in the digital world (Kaya, 2021, p. 87).

**V. Psychology**

Sharenting practice, also known as social media parenthood (Çoban & Doğan, 2022, p. 265) refers to parental over-sharing of minor’s audiovisual/visual data, without getting explicit confirmation. Some parents were found to share embarrassing photos depicting their child nude, semi-nude, funny or grimy (Balaban, 2022, p.29). It is emphasized that children in early adolescence are particularly sensitive to unauthorized sharing and that social media parenting can damage the parent-child trust relationship. (Çoban & Doğan, 2022, 271).

In her research article on sharenting practices on Facebook, Hale Ögen Balaban (2021) offers that sharenting practices are strongly related with parents’ age, education level and numbers of friends/followers. So, to say, younger parents were demonstrated to share their children’s photos more, on their own Facebook page. Parents with higher education level were found to engage less frequently in sharenting behaviors than those who labelled below university degrees. (Balaban, 2021, p.142). Those parents who has more Facebook friends tend to share their children’s photo more frequently.

Alemdar and Kahraman (2023, p. 3) portrays that mothers are more likely than fathers to post on social media, and fathers are more likely than mothers to be more cautious and controlling in their posts. More than half (56%) of mothers post and discuss child health and parenting issues on social media, compared to 34% of fathers. In particular, the urge to create a digital biography of the child, starting with the child's birth (or before), has attracted attention among mothers. (Günüç, 2020, p.12) Some parents create their children's first digital footprints while they are still pregnant.

Balaban (2022, p.31) draws attention to huge majority of parental posts on minor’s are special days/anniversaries (71.25%) rather than daily routines (16.28%). Parents are tended to become involved in Influencer culture, in Instagram, by feeding from sharenting practices. That’s why research on sharenting has been shifted from Facebook to Instagram and every single day is perceived to be special.

**VI. Health Sciences**

It has been observed that there is an increase in quantitative studies on the concept of parents sharing, in health sciences. Within research conducted by the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital on sharenting (Akpınar, et al., 2015), it has been found that 69.8% of mothers and 50.8% of fathers shared photos and videos of their children. These parents who obsessively following the posts of other parents when creating their own posts exemplifies a new addiction called "Fear of Missing Out", which causes individuals to spend extended periods of time on social media (Akpınar, et al., 2015). Although 87.5% of parents express that sharing photos and videos of other children without consent would be disconcerting, it is also mentioned that healthcare professionals and birth photographers may distribute images for marketing purposes, thus compromising children's privacy (Erişir & Erişir, 2018). To mitigate these risks, the Turkish Ministry of National Education published a directive (2017/12 on 07.03.2017) regulating the sharing of student and teacher pictures and videos, particularly on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Çimke, et al., 2018).

**VII. Conclusion**

It seems that 'sharenting' poses challenges in protecting children's privacy when parents wish to share content online. Campaigns and training programs should be supported to raise awareness of children and families about their digital rights. There could be an introduction of regulations to impose more responsibility on technology companies to protect children's data and security. All these steps will contribute to more effective protection of children's rights in the digital world.

Given that all research outlined in the communication studies discipline, it seems that nearly all studies are based on fieldwork. Major problems with those works are not giving voice to victim of this sharenting behavior, children and limitedly focusing on parents' (especially instamoms) behaviors rather than teachers, doctors or nannies.

Considering, all studies in educational sciences, 'internet child shaming' and 'baby role play' are damaging practices that humiliate and exploit children on social media. It's crucial to safeguard children's privacy and foster digital literacy, critical thinking, and communication skills to reduce these risks. Working together with educators, families and technology companies is imperative to guarantee online safety for children.

For prospective studies on the subject matter in psychology might be evolving through relationship between sharenting and personal factors such as parents’ personality characteristics, such as loneliness, stress levels, previous traumas that might influence their emotional needs.

Considering, all studies in health sciences, recent research in health sciences indicates a rise in parents' sharing behavior, or "sharenting," with up to 69.8% of mothers and 50.8% of fathers sharing their children's photos and videos. This trend, driven by the Fear of Missing Out, prompts concerns about privacy and has led to regulatory efforts, like the Turkish Ministry of National Education's directive on sharing student and teacher images.

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1. PhD Researcher in Communication Studies, at Kadir Has University

   E-mail: [enes.akdag@stu.khas.edu.tr](mailto:enes.akdag@stu.khas.edu.tr) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Postgraduate Researcher in Technology and Intellectual Property Law, at Maltepe University

   E-mail: [necatialpcelebi@gmail.com](mailto:necatialpcelebi@gmail.com) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)