



# “Sharenting”: A study of Malaysian parents’ use of social media platforms

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## ABSTRACT

“Sharenting” describes parents’ habitual use of social media to share news, images, or videos of their children. A deeper understanding of this sharenting culture is needed since the more information parents share online, the more problems can be seen in their children’s lives. The purpose of this study is to understand the trends in sharenting on social media amongst Malaysian parents, their motivations and awareness concerning the security and safety of their children. Forty mothers in Penang and Kuala Lumpur who constantly post and share on social media responded to an open-ended questionnaire about sharenting. The results of the study reveal that parents usually shared about social events, moments, activities, memories, school, food, antics, and milestones. Motives for sharenting included sharing memories, just sharing, staying connected and engaging with others, motivating, encouraging, and inspiring others, personal satisfaction and sometimes, no motive at all. Parents also admitted that they are aware of the necessity of guarding their children’s privacy by hiding their children’s locations, information, and personal details, being aware of the privacy settings on their posts, filtering photos, delaying uploading photos until after the associated events, getting approval from those in the pictures and limiting the frequency of posting.

Keywords: **Sharenting, Malaysian parents, trends, motives, privacy awareness**

## INTRODUCTION

Millennial parents today actively share the joys and challenges of parenthood with others online via photos, audio recordings, and videos of their immediate family members and children. This constant sharing of information is known as sharenting. Choi and Lewallen (2017) described sharenting as the oversharing of information by parents about their children, cultivating a digital footprint and identity for themselves through their children.

In recent years, as more and more parents become engrossed in sharing every moment with their children on social media, many children have become micro-celebrities on social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) and even in content communities (e.g., YouTube) (Marwick, 2013). Sharenting occurs when parents publicly give “a lot of detailed information about their children in the form of photos, videos and posts through social media, which violates the children’s privacy” (Brosch, 2018, p. 78).

The oversharing of information about children on social media is the current social trend among parents in the digital society. Many of the affected children are still young and this exposure will consequently affect their future, especially when they are old enough to understand their social media presence in their younger years. However, many parents may not be aware of the consequences of their actions. Malaysian celebrities, for instance, like to share photos of their children on digital platforms and even thank Instagram users for following the progress of their children. For example, at the age of three months, the daughter of *Paskal* actor Hairul Azreen and blogger Hanis Zalikha garnered approximately 500,000 followers on Instagram. In another example, with more than 1.5 million Instagram followers, Aaisyah Dhia Rana, the daughter of two Malaysian celebrities, built a career as a social media influencer at the tender age of four (Tan, 2019). There are many risks associated with the oversharing of children-related content in social media and many undesirable ways in which stolen photos could be used by strangers. Moreover, the potential dangers of location tracking could also be exploited and can bring physical harm to children; a Malaysian father had warned other parents not to share too much on digital platforms after his young daughter was nearly kidnapped from her school grounds (Ilyas, 2020).

Md. Salleh and Mohd Noor (2019) highlighted the lack of studies on privacy awareness and psychological impact on children due to sharenting. The authors also contended that Malaysian parents were still lacking a deeper understanding and awareness of the sharenting culture and its trends. We need more in-depth knowledge of whether the practice of constantly sharing children's daily activities is wise, as revealing intimate details about children has become the norm in the digital society. Taking into consideration, the unique features of Malaysia’s multiethnic and multicultural society, this study intends to investigate the trends, motives, or purposes behind sharenting by Malaysian parents and their awareness (or lack thereof) of its related privacy issues.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Concept of sharenting*

In the West, sharenting issues have grown in recent years. Literature shows that ample studies have been conducted to understand various aspects of the phenomenon: sharenting trends among parents on Facebook (Brosch, 2016), motives of sharenting (Latipah, Adi Kistoro, Hasanah, & Putranta, 2020) and privacy concerns in sharenting (Wagner & Gasche, 2018). Brosch (2016) explored the social media ethnography of sharenting, investigating the kinds of baby pictures that parents share on Facebook and their reasons for doing so. Common

posts are about children's birthday celebrations, baby videos, kindergarten convocation, children's artwork, and even children's births. The study concluded that the three types of photos parents love to share on social media are "daily life, outings and special events" (Brosch, 2016). A motive for sharenting among parents is the need for self-realisation and social approval: parents want to be liked and recognised by others on social media and Facebook offers these parents the ability to compare their own parental, social, and life experiences with others.

Davidson-Wall's more recent study (2018) also sought to understand the sharenting trend among parents on social media. Her research showed that parents post content about their children as a way of presenting parenting methods to others. Similar to the reasons obtained by Brosch (2016), this study also found that social media is considered a tool for content creation and image formation to acquire online validation.

Wagner and Gasche (2018) investigated the underlying decision-making processes in sharenting, and the strategies applied by parents to mitigate privacy risks to their children when posting pictures of them on social media. The study identified five perceived benefits that encourage mothers to share photos of their children on digital platforms: social participation, pride, confirmation, the envy of others, and perceived convenience. The results also showed that mothers apply various risk-mitigating strategies, such as covering the face or blurring out information which would identify their children, to show that they cared about their children's privacy.

A recent study by Kopecky, Szotkowski, Aznar-Díaz, and Romero-Rodríguez (2020) looked at the phenomenon of sharenting and its risks in the online environment. The results indicate that parents typically post their children's photographs during celebrations and holidays. They also like to share family moments, important milestones in their children's lives, or moments they consider cute or amusing. Only 20% confessed that they obtained their children's permission to post, while the majority believed that this practice posed no risk to their child.

### *Sharenting in the Malaysian context*

In the context of social media sharing, Rosen, Stefanone, and Lackaff (2010) stated that people in a collectivist culture such as Malaysia utilise social media sites to maintain close relationships with a small number of people instead of creating new connections. This is different from people of individualist cultures, mostly among Westerners, who focus on meeting new people and being seen by many people, rather than maintaining their already existing relationships. Rosen et al. (2010) added that collectivism is a complex construct and can be characterised by closeness to family, family integrity and sociability. They emphasise values such as a sense of belonging, harmony, conformity and care about in-group relationships (Gill, 2017). In this respect, social media provides a platform for Malaysian parents to instantly share information and provide updates of their children's activities and progress in line with the collectivist culture which represents a tightly knit community. In this culture, people usually maintain close and long-term relationships and with sharenting, they hope to stay connected and maintain close bonds.

In terms of information privacy, a study by Samsuri and Ismail (2013) found that people in high 'individualist' countries, demonstrate higher levels of concern for information privacy compared to people in collectivist countries who are less or unconcerned. Samsuri and Ismail (2013) added that this could be attributed to the personal information privacy control in Asia Pacific, which is relatively complex due to many factors such as the diversity in culture, types of governments, differences in legislation and a variety of business practices. According to Segaran (2020), privacy as a legal concept itself has not been fully

developed in Malaysia and there is no stand-alone legislation for privacy while the limited common law has shown a reluctance to develop this area.

Aside from that, Malaysia's legislative approach to child protection is also fragmented. Malaysian has provisions in numerous laws that deal with varying aspects of child protection such as Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998, Penal Code, Action Plan for Child Protection of Children on the Internet (2015), Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 and Child Act 2001. However, none of these provisions deal exclusively with the issue of digital literacy and Internet usage. Aside from that, there is no act which specifically deals with cyberbullying among children (Segaran, 2020; Ayub, Mohamed Yusoff, & Haq, 2020). As mentioned by Rosli, Ahmad Zubaidi, and Dusuki (2019) as well as Md. Salleh and Mohd Noor (2019), it is clear that there are inconsistencies in the existing laws which may hinder the successful prosecution and effective enforcement of the laws.

Compared to Western studies on sharenting, the literature review found only a few studies on sharenting in Malaysia. One such study sought to understand the implications of sharenting from the perspective of Malaysian law and to identify whether laws are needed to control the issue and prevent it from worsening (Md Salleh & Mohd Noor, 2019). However, we do not yet understand whether Malaysians are aware of sharenting issues or the underlying motives for why they share about their children on social media for others to see and read.

Although there is a lack of specifically Malaysian literature concerning sharenting, Jomhari, Gonzalez, and Kurniawan (2009) analysed the characteristics and types of baby posts written by young mothers on a range of social media platforms. Based on the analysis of the data and interviews with respondents, the posts cover various topics, including demonstrations of the baby's skills, outings, domestic activities, and social events.

Despite the work of Md. Salleh and Mohd Noor (2019) as well as Jomhari et al. (2009), the literature review highlighted the dearth of research offering a deep understanding of the content, causes, and privacy awareness of sharenting among Malaysian parents compared to what exists in Western studies.

### *Underpinning theories*

According to Vinney (2019), the Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT) validates that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs and represents users as active agents who have the power to control their media consumption. UGT has been widely used to examine people's motivations for using certain media, including social media. For example, Chua, Goh, and Lee (2012) found the motivations behind social media use are leisure/entertainment, easy access, information resources/services, and obtaining high-quality information. Other scholars found the motivations for using social media include entertainment, information-seeking, socialising and professional advancement (Chen, Yang, & Tang, 2013), while Toll (2019) found the strongest motivators of social media use to be maintaining relationships and obtaining social information.

From the UGT perspective, motivations enable users to interact with others through social media; hence, this study seeks to understand the motivations of Malaysian parents for sharenting when using social media platforms. Previous similar research examined the connections between UGT and sharing activities on social media, including sharing photos on Facebook (Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016) and parents' motivations for indulging in or avoiding sharenting on Instagram (Hajar, 2019).

Results from in-depth interviews by Hajar (2019) among Singapore's millennial parents on what motivates them to indulge in or avoid sharenting indicate that sharenting

enables them to store memories, update family and friends, exchange information and receive support while the motivations for avoiding sharenting include saving them from uncontrollable external risks, respecting their children's privacy and fearing people's judgement.

Today, media increasingly forms part of our societal, political, and economic institutions as everyday use of the Internet is ubiquitous. "Mediatisation" can be defined as a social meta-process that includes a fundamental change in social relationships (Krotz, 2013). According to Jansson (2015) and Hepp (2013), mediatisation is a long-term transformation process in which the media, the importance of which is enhanced by its increasing involvement in culture, society, and everyday life, becomes indispensable, strengthening social and cultural activities. In other words, media technologies are an important communication and social resource that has changed individual communication and other social institutions. The transition process into parenthood is an interesting phase for any married couple. Hence, it is useful to understand the parenting practices and how parents communicate within social media pertaining to sharenting, in order to assess the impact of media on society.

Damkjaer's study (2018) identified four types of communicative orientation that characterise parents' approach to Facebook as a social network site (SNS), namely family-oriented, peer-oriented, oppositional and non-use. The four types are expressed through differences in aesthetics, values and attitudes toward sharenting. For example, in the family-oriented approach, parents who focus on family orientation use sharenting on Facebook to create and perform the family narrative and identity such as sharing everyday life, events and presentations of babies. This type of parent enjoys using Facebook to share everything about their lives and their babies' lives. The extended family then emphasises the family bonds by commenting on these photos. The study utilises mediatisation as the main theoretical framework since mediatisation explores the complex relationship between media-communicative and sociocultural change by focusing on the role of the media.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach is a suitable method to understand trends, motives, and privacy practices of sharenting, as it involves a collection of empirical material that describes routines, moments, and meanings in individuals' lives or in other words, involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Mohajan, 2018). A few empirical studies on sharenting have been conducted using qualitative methods (Brosch, 2016; Wagner & Gasche, 2018; Siibak & Traks, 2019) and some of the studies utilised open-ended questionnaires (Wagner & Gasche, 2018; Inan-Kaya, Mutlu-Bayraktar, & Yilmaz, 2018). As the data collection process for this study was carried out in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the distribution of the open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms was considered the best method for capturing parents' responses. Furthermore, this method was adopted as it did not involve face-to-face meeting which is a big challenge during the Movement Control Order (MCO).

### *Qualitative approach: Open-ended questions*

This study adopted a qualitative approach by using open-ended questions to obtain an unfettered perspective of the respondents' thoughts and attitudes (Farrell, 2016). The respondents were first asked demographic questions covering age, occupation, income, duration of their marriage, number of children and their age, types of social media used,

and number of hours spent on social media daily. The next step consisted of gathering data about sharenting trends, their motives for sharenting, and their awareness of privacy issues. In this section, the following questions were asked:

- “What kind of news do you usually share about your children on social media?”
- “What are the reasons for sharing that news, photos, and/or videos of your children on social media?”
- “What motivates you to share news, photos, and/or videos of your kids on social media? (e.g., being influenced by other social media users or competing with other social media users)”
- “When you post, do you ever think about the safety and security of your kids (in terms of how much you have exposed their identity)? Kindly elaborate and explain.”

This type of question invites respondents to elaborate their viewpoints and offer insights in a rigorous manner. The Google Form questionnaires were distributed to the respondents over the duration of one month via WhatsApp Messenger.

### *Sampling*

This study used the purposive sampling method in Penang and Kuala Lumpur, the two most industrialised and urbanised states in Malaysia, in the north and central parts of Malaysia, respectively. It is believed that urban users comprise 70% of Internet users, while rural users account for only 30% (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Similar to past sharenting studies which used mothers as respondents (Fox & Hoy, 2019; Wagner & Gasche, 2018), this research sample consisted of mothers who are active online, post frequently, and like to update their status or post on social media. We selected mothers because, although mothers and fathers both actively share content about their children online, it appears that mothers are linked to a higher frequency of posting child-related content compared to fathers (Ammari, Kumar, Lampe, & Schoenebeck, 2015; Duggan, Lenhart, Lampe, & Ellison, 2015).

The main aim of this purposive sampling was to gather patterns and characteristics and to generalise the interests on sharenting (Jamil & Ahmad, 2015). While previous research has not provided adequate insights into the reliable number of respondents in an open-ended method, a sample of 40 individuals should be sufficient to produce meaningful viewpoints on their motives for sharenting and privacy awareness on social media. Hence, this study distributed open-ended questionnaires to 40 mothers in Penang and Kuala Lumpur who actively post and share updates on social media.

### *Data analysis*

To analyse the qualitative data, content analysis was conducted. The respondents’ answers to the open-ended questions were subjected to thematic analysis. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) described six phases in thematic analysis: familiarisation with and transcription of the data, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes, and report generation/production.

## **RESULTS**

In terms of demographic, most of the respondents were Malay (75%), half were between the ages of 31 and 40 years (52.5%), most were working mothers (77.5%) and some earned a monthly income of RM3,000 to RM5,000 (32.5%). Regarding family life, 30%

of the respondents had been married for 11–15 years, and 32.5% had only one child. The posting behaviours reveal that 42.5% of respondents preferred Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to share about their children and 35% spent 2–3 hours per day on social media.

The content analysis conducted using thematic analysis identified eight principal themes in the type of news parents share about their children on social media. Similarly, the responses from the respondents regarding motives were categorised under eight main themes, while seven themes were identified for privacy awareness.

### *Trends*

As depicted in Table 1, the results reveal eight themes in regard to the types of news that parents usually share about their children on social media platforms: “Social Events,” “Moments,” “Activities,” “Memories,” “School,” “Food,” “Antics,” and “Milestones.”

**Table 1.** Types of sharenting

Themes	Description	Relevance (%)
Social Events	Vacations, events, family activities, outings, gatherings, concerts, sports days	29.3
Moments	Good, funny, happy, important, special	25.3
Activities	Day-to-day activities	13.3
Memories	Down memory lane	12.0
School	School activities, school achievement, studies	10.6
Food	Eating habits	4.0
Antics	Outfit of the day, funny and cute habits	2.6
Milestones	New skills	2.6

Most mothers shared “Social Events” (29.3%) and, therefore, most of the posts were about vacations, events, family activities, outings, gatherings, concerts, and sports days. Another popular theme was “Moments,” (25.3%) in which respondents reported sharing good, funny, happy, important, or special moments in their children’s lives with family and online friends. To keep their followers informed, they also felt it is important to share their children’s “Activities,” (13.3%) including day-to-day activities. The respondents also shared “Memories” (12%) of their children, posting photographs of their children from past years or as babies, to reminisce about unforgettable memories. News about “School” (10.6%) was another theme, covering children’s activities at school, achievements in class, and progress in their studies. Some parents showed interest in posting about “Food” (4%) on social media, sharing eating tips and their children’s eating habits. Under the “Antics” theme (2.6%), respondents shared pictures of their children’s dress-up play and amusing habits to entertain their followers, while in “Milestones,” (2.6%), they shared about the new skills their children had learnt.

### *Motives*

The findings identified eight themes in the reported motives for sharing news about children on social media: “Memories,” “Share,” “Influence of others,” “Stay connected and engaged with others,” “Motivate, encourage, and inspire,” “Self-driven,” “No motive,” and “Others,” as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Motives for sharenting

Themes	Description	Relevance (%)
Memories	Remembrance, social media archive	42.80
Share	Sharing experiences with others, sharing information with other parents, sharing activities with others, sharing feelings with others	31.60
Influence of others	Influence of other social media users	6.12
Staying connected and engaged with others	Staying connected with families, letting others be a part of their lives	5.10
Motivate, encourage, and inspire	Motivate, encourage, and inspire other parents with positive sharing	5.10
Self-driven	Self-satisfaction	5.10
No motive	No intention, just for fun	2.04
Others	Pride, current trends	2.04

“Memories” (42.8%) was the most common motive for sharing about children on social media platforms. Within this theme, respondents would share news about their children as a form of personal journaling; some liked to share through social media platforms because the posts would be saved in social media archives as a permanent record and they could refer to these moments at any time. Under the theme of “Share” (31.6%), respondents stated that their motive for posting on social media involves the desire to share their experiences, information, activities, and feelings on raising children. Some of the responses given by the respondents were categorised under the “Influence of others” theme (6.12%). They stated that one of the motivations for sharenting is influence from other users. Apart from that, the motive to “Stay connected and engaged with others” (5.10%) also emerged as one of the themes. By posting news about children on social media, mothers could stay connected with their family members and keep them updated about their children. Although distance may keep them apart, they could still cultivate a sense of togetherness.

Moreover, sharenting could also help them increase engagement with others by letting them be a part of their daily lives. For example, by letting others watch their baby videos, they can share and enjoy the excitement together. Some of the respondents liked to share about their children to “Motivate, encourage, and inspire” (5.10%) other parents. For example, one respondent said that she liked to share her child’s activities at a special needs school to inform, motivate, and encourage other parents to stay strong and positive. Posting something positive can also help build positive energy to inspire others. Under the “Self-driven” theme (5.10%), respondents shared that they like to share about their children on social media just for self-satisfaction. Some of them have “No motive” (2.04%) for sharenting as they do it just for fun. Under “Others,” (2.04%), respondents mentioned wanting to share about their children because they are proud of them or simply like to share news about their children to keep abreast with the current trend.

### *Privacy awareness*

As reflected in Table 3, this study identified seven themes with regard to privacy awareness among parents while sharenting, namely “Hide locations,” “Hide information and personal details,” “Filter photos,” “Privacy setting,” “Delay in uploading photos,” “Approval,” and “Limit postings.”

**Table 3.** Privacy awareness of sharenting

Themes	Description	Relevance (%)
Hide locations	Avoid revealing locations, home addresses, or school locations	31.70
Hide information and personal details	Avoid revealing information such as name, place of birth, date of birth	31.70
Filter photos	Avoid sharing provocative photos, blurring certain images to avoid attracting paedophiles or kidnappers	17.00
Privacy setting	Setting social media to private setting and only allowing posts to be viewed by close friends and family members	9.80
Delay in uploading of photos	Uploading photos at least two or three days after certain events	4.87
Approval	Ensuring that the husbands or children agree to the contents before posting	2.43
Limit posting	Not oversharing	2.43

The most popular theme was “Hide locations” (31.7%). Most respondents admitted that they will make sure that they do not reveal the locations, home addresses, or school locations to avoid risking their children’s safety.

The second main theme was “Hide information and personal details” (31.7%). Respondents were concerned about potential identity theft and digital kidnapping and thus, hide information regarding their children’s names, places and dates of birth. Under the “Filter photos” theme (17%), respondents stated that they avoid sharing provocative photos of their children (e.g., photos without appropriate clothing) or they will make sure that they filter or blur the images of their children so that they will not attract paedophiles or kidnappers. “Privacy setting” (9.8%) for social media accounts was one of the themes reported by the respondents. In this theme, respondents prefer to set their social media accounts to private, in which, the media in their account can only be accessed by their close friends and family members.

“Delay in uploading photos” (4.87%) was another theme. According to some of the respondents, they prefer to wait for at least two or three days after an event before uploading the pictures for security purposes. Another theme was “Approval” (2.43%). To ensure that they share relevant content, some of the respondents prefer to get approval from their husband or the children themselves before posting any content about them. Some of the respondents “Limit the posting” (2.43%) or avoid oversharing as oversharing photos will lead to exposing the children to an unhealthy environment.

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this study is to understand trends in sharenting on social media among Malaysian parents. The research sought to explore the motivations and privacy awareness of Malaysian parents sharenting on social media. In general, the results suggest that mothers like to share news on social events, moments, activities, memories, school, food, antics and milestones.

Previous studies indicate that mothers liked to post pictures from social events such as meeting family and friends (Ammari et al., 2015) and birthday parties (Apodaca, 2019). According to Marasli, Sühendan, Yilmazturk, and Cok (2016), with regard to the types of content shared on Facebook, 81.4% of parents shared photos or videos about important

events such as birthdays. Parents also shared daily moments with their immediate and extended communities, including amusing stories about their children (Baggaley, 2018), amusing or appealing photos of their children (Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015), and significant moments for their children (Apodaca, 2019).

Additionally, some posted about their children's activities (Ammari et al., 2015; Marasli et al., 2016), reshared memories (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017; Apodaca, 2019) or posted about their children's school or school activities (Marasli et al., 2016). The results show that mothers also shared news about food for others to know, including nutrition or cooking tips, and pictures of their children eating different types of food (Lee, 2015; Ammari et al., 2015). They also shared images of their children's antics (e.g., children wearing various outfits and photos that they considered appealing or amusing) (Ammari et al., 2015; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015) and milestones (e.g., pictures highlighting their child's development or achievement) (Apodaca, 2019; Ammari et al., 2015; Marasli et al., 2016).

The results also reveal a detailed picture of the motives for sharenting. In general, these can be summarised as sharing memories, sharing for its own sake, being influenced by others, staying connected and engaging with others, motivating, encouraging, and inspiring, self-satisfaction, sharing for fun and other reasons including pride and following the current trends.

Undoubtedly, social media is used for parents to share memories of their children. According to Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017), the purpose of sharenting is to build memories in the form of a modern photo album, collecting precious memories for the children in the future.

Today's parenting is a digitally shared experience, including information, activities, and even feelings. Many scholars (e.g. Bessant, 2018; Rutledge, 2019) have noted that, by sharing their parenting experiences, parents feel that they are not alone and receive assurance that they are raising their children correctly. Additionally, according to Bessant (2018), parents also share their good, bad, and frustrated feelings online. Aside from that, the motive for sharenting can also be associated with the influence of other users. According to Archer and Kao (2018), parents sometimes feel pressured by their friends and families to share their children's pictures. Further, people are often influenced and excited to share about something after looking at other social media posts.

Mothers believe that posting updates about their children online help them stay connected and engaged with others, particularly family members (Lazard, Locke, Dann, Capdevila, & Roper, 2018). Social media is potentially the easiest and most practical way for people to connect with family members and friends whom they do not see regularly to maintain close connections and relationships.

Sharenting may also be a way to motivate, encourage and inspire. Sources from the University of Tennessee (2019), together with C. S. Mott Children's Hospital (2015), contended that, mothers share experiences, personal information, and parenting challenges through social media platforms. When feeling stressed, mothers can turn to social media to get inspiration from other positive sharenting posts. In this way, they can seek social support and relieve depression. Sharenting also affords a sense of solidarity and connection with other parents (Bessant, 2018). This motive for sharing is similar to that found in the work of Krisvianti and Triastuti (2020) who examined the role of the emerging virtual community in supporting abused Indonesian women. Their results indicate that virtual communities on social media platforms are capable of helping and empowering the female victims of domestic violence through the sharing of experiences and knowledge while receiving social support and positive comments.

The motive for sharenting can also be associated with self-satisfaction or with no motive at all: in other words, just for fun. These behaviours can be associated with “intrinsic motivation” which refers to doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction, interest, or enjoyment (Moller, 2021). Intrinsic motivation exists in the relation between individuals and activities. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the sheer satisfaction, fun, or challenge that entails rather than for any external pressure or reward.

Pride is another factor attributed to sharenting. Parents commonly post about their children on social media to boast. According to Lazard et al. (2018), mothers like to use the word “proud” when posting about their children’s achievements to display social expectations of good parenting. Additionally, posting about children on social media can provide social validation of the parents’ achievements (Rutledge, 2019) and self-representation (Riva, 2016). Sharing the joys and challenges of parenthood and posting about children’s lives publicly is also a norm in the digital era (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017).

The findings also provide a deeper look into mothers’ awareness of potential privacy issues resulting from sharenting. The results reveal that mothers demonstrate their awareness of privacy issues through various methods such as hiding their children’s locations, information, and personal details; setting their social media accounts to private; filtering photos; delaying the uploading of photos; getting approval before posting any contents; and limiting their postings about their children.

It is common for mothers to mention their children’s current locations, home addresses or school locations on social media sites, which puts the children at risk. Sometimes, mothers also share their children’s information and personal details. Mothers who are concerned about the privacy risks to their children withhold their children’s location data and hide any important information that makes their children identifiable (Wagner & Gasche, 2018). Revealing private information will put children at risk of being preyed upon, harmed, or kidnapped by cyber predators (“Are you sharenting”, 2020) and can even lead to identity theft.

Concern over privacy settings was another factor in awareness of sharenting practices. By altering their social media settings to private, mothers can protect their children from privacy invasion. One of the guidelines to protect children’s privacy is by scrutinizing the privacy settings of every post on social media platforms and imposing appropriate controls to restrict posts to only family or close friends (“Are you sharenting”, 2020).

Based on the results, mothers prefer to filter photos, avoid sharing pictures that are offensive or provocative, such as those of naked children, or they might cover the faces of their children. As mothers feel responsible for their children, this suggests that they are reluctant to share photos that might attract paedophiles and kidnappers. Revealing too many photos can also contribute to digital kidnapping where strangers steal children’s online photos and re-share them as if the children were their own (University of Michigan Health System, 2015). In a research conducted by Brosch (2016), most of the popular shared pictures among respondents were pictures of nude or semi-nude children. If exposed to public viewing, the children might be at great risk of falling victim to child pornographers or paedophiles.

A delay in uploading photos is another privacy safety measure. It is easy to track people by using the information they provide in photos posted online. According to Clements (2021), mothers ought to wait a few days before posting photos of their children at the scene to protect their children from potentially being discovered by strangers.

Mothers also mentioned that they tend to get approval from their husbands and the children themselves before sharing their photos on social media. According to Clements (2021), children have the right to decide what should be posted about them and deserve not to have their privacy violated by their parents.

Mothers also believe that they should limit posting about their children. When parents overshare about their children, they may embarrass the children in the future since it leaves a permanent trail. A survey conducted by the University of Michigan Health System (2015) found that three-fourths of their respondent parents think other parents share too much information about their children online.

This study utilised the UGT and mediatisation theories. UGT is applicable in this study as it is useful in identifying the motivation for using social media since this theory has been widely used to examine what motivates people to use using certain media, including social media. On the other hand, the process of mediatisation, in which the media mould social and cultural activities and can affect the society, has also been demonstrated in this study where parents promote social media connections with community through sharenting.

## LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

Like other research studies, this study is subject to limitations. Firstly, it focused only on mothers as mothers are frequent users of social media and are more involved in sharenting, hence, studies on parenting often oversample mothers. Future studies should also consider a broader sample to explore the trends and motives for sharenting among fathers.

The data on trends and motivations for sharenting were collected through an open-ended questionnaire, which relies on short answers given by the respondents. To overcome this limitation, a qualitative method using in-depth interviews would be a better choice for comprehensively examining sharenting motivations. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to generate more insightful responses and give more opportunity to ask follow-up questions and probe for additional information to gain a better understanding of the specific topic.

Previous research in Western countries have explored the impacts of information-sharing and the legal aspects of safety and individual's privacy. However, very few studies have been conducted on the legal aspects of sharenting. For example, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) in United States protects children under 13 years old against extensive data collection by the private sector (Steinberg, 2017). In Australia, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children's Safety Act 2015 deals with serious cyberbullying related to illegal and abuse contents online that affects children (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018). Another recent example is France, where under its Labour Code, a new law was implemented on the commercial use of images of children under 16 years old on online platforms. This law requires parents to seek government authorisation before their children can engage in online activities. As part of the authorisation process, the parents will receive information on the rights of their children and on the potential consequences of the release of images of their children on the Internet (Boring, 2020).

According to Ayub et al. (2020), matters like cybercrime and cybersecurity are governed by Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998, the Penal Code, Child Act 2001, Child Protection of Children on the Internet Act 2015, and Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017; which are some the existing laws in Malaysia. Nevertheless, there are many loopholes and inconsistencies in these laws, particularly involving sharenting issues and children's safety on the Internet (Abdul Shukor, Abd. Rahman Shah, & Musa, 2017;

Md. Salleh & Mohd. Noor, 2019). Hence, future research in Malaysia should consider proposing a policy or a specific law regarding online sharing activities among parents, which hopefully will compel the government to draft a new legislation as no such law currently exists in Malaysia.

The findings of this study reveal various trends in sharenting on social media, the varied motives behind sharenting, and the awareness of privacy issues among Malaysian parents and children. In general, the sharenting trends and motives in Malaysia are found to be similar to those in Western studies; thus, sharenting is universal and not culturally specific. A majority of the mothers are aware of the importance of privacy and the negative consequences of over-sharenting. Therefore, specific guidelines for parents should be implemented so that they would be careful in sharing any posts about their children, even with protective screening or filtrations before the posts are shared.

The government should work on clearer regulations to guide parents on how to manage their social media accounts so that they do not disclose excessive information about their children. New legislation to monitor this activity should be introduced in Malaysia. One aspect to consider in hindering oversharing would be obtaining the children's approval before any posts can be made by parents on social media. Government agencies, the private sectors, and non-governmental organisations should also initiate social media marketing campaigns to create awareness and educate parents on the negative impacts and potential risks of oversharing about children. Parental education and an understanding of the parental duty to protect children from the dangers of social media are the best solutions to the current oversharing culture.

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