

THE IMPACT OF SHARENTING PRACTICES IN WHATSAPP STORY ON THE FORMATION OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD IN SRIBIT VILLAGE, WONOLELO

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of sharenting practices on WhatsApp Story on the formation of early childhood identity in Dusun Sribit, Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo. The increasing use of digital media in parenting has transformed family communication patterns, where parents frequently share children's daily activities online without fully considering their psychological and digital privacy implications. The objective of this research is to explore the forms of sharenting practices, parental motivations, and their effects on children's self-awareness, self-concept, and social identity development. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a field research approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation involving ten parents with early childhood children aged 3–6 years who actively use WhatsApp Story. The results show that sharenting practices include sharing children's achievements, daily activities, independence development, and humorous moments, with an average frequency of 2–4 uploads per week. Parental motivation is dominated by the desire to share happiness, document children's growth, train children's confidence in front of the camera, and fill leisure time. The findings indicate that sharenting has both positive and negative impacts on children's identity formation. Positively, it enhances self-confidence and social recognition. However, it also risks creating dependence on external validation, shaping self-image based on social feedback, and influencing emotional stability. In conclusion, sharenting practices on WhatsApp Story play a significant role in shaping early childhood identity in a dual manner, contributing to both psychological development and potential risks in digital identity formation.

Keywords: *Sharenting, Whatsapp Story, Early Childhood Identity, Parenting, Digital Media*

INTRODUCTION

The massive transformation of digital technology has significantly changed patterns of social interaction, including parenting practices. Social media is no longer merely a communication tool but has become a digital public space where personal information can be shared widely. Within families, parenting activities that were once considered private are increasingly exposed through various digital platforms (Permanasari & Sirait, 2021). One widely used feature is WhatsApp Story, which allows users to share daily activities through photos, videos, and short narratives. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as sharenting, defined as parents' practice of sharing information about their children through digital media (Harnum & Pinariya, 2023).

Sharenting through WhatsApp Story has distinct characteristics compared to open social media platforms because its audience is generally limited to the user's contact list. Nevertheless, the information shared still has the potential to spread and influence the construction of young children's identities (Harnum & Pinariya, 2023). This phenomenon extends beyond documenting children's development and involves psychological, social, and identity-formation aspects. Numerous studies indicate that sharenting has become increasingly common among parents, particularly millennials who grew up alongside the rapid development of digital technology.

Hasanah and Ermawati (2022) explain that many parents continue to share documentation of their children's lives through WhatsApp without considering children's privacy rights. Some parents even disclose personal information such as children's full names and locations. This situation reflects a lack of awareness regarding the protection of children's privacy in digital environments. Hidayati et al. (2023) emphasize that low levels of parental digital literacy may lead to excessive disclosure of children's sensitive information, thereby increasing the risks of personal data misuse, identity theft, and even digital kidnapping.

Parents' digital literacy levels also influence the intensity of sharenting practices. The better an individual understands digital technology, the lower the tendency to overshare children's personal information on social media (Zahari et al., 2023). This finding suggests that awareness of digital risks plays an important role in shaping parental behavior. Furthermore, early childhood is considered a golden age of development, during which children require optimal protection, including the protection of their privacy and digital identity.

From a psychological perspective, young children are in a critical stage of identity formation influenced by family and social environments. When children are continuously featured in social media posts, discrepancies may emerge between their authentic identities and the digital representations created by their parents. According to identity development theory, interactions and labels received from significant others, including parents, contribute to children's self-concept formation. Therefore, repeated digital representations may influence how children are perceived by others and potentially affect their future self-understanding. In this context, children may develop a public image or personal brand before they possess the ability to define their own identities. Personal branding refers to the process of constructing an image, values, and characteristics that are presented to the public (Lestari et al., 2021). In the context of early childhood, personal branding does not refer to a deliberate self-presentation by the child but rather to the digital image constructed by parents through repeated online sharing practices.

Sharenting practices are also closely related to the protection of children's rights to digital privacy. Permanasari and Sirait (2021) argue that many parents engage in sharenting without adequately considering children's rights to personal data protection. Although previous studies have discussed sharenting, parental digital literacy, and children's privacy, research specifically examining

how sharenting through WhatsApp Story contributes to early childhood identity formation remains limited. Most existing studies focus on privacy and security issues rather than identity development outcomes. Beyond technological factors, this practice is also influenced by Indonesia's collectivist culture, which encourages the sharing of personal experiences and the pursuit of social recognition.

Based on preliminary observations conducted in Sribit Hamlet, Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo District, Wonosobo Regency, sharenting practices through WhatsApp Story remain prevalent among parents. The content shared typically includes children's daily activities, such as playing, eating, studying, and displaying behaviors considered interesting or amusing. In some cases, posts are accompanied by labels such as "stubborn kid," which may shape public perceptions of the child. This phenomenon is particularly common among young mothers who use sharenting as a means of expressing happiness and pride. Wonolelo Village was selected as the research site because preliminary observations indicated a relatively high frequency of WhatsApp Story usage among parents and the widespread sharing of children's daily activities through this platform.

However, despite these perceived benefits, sharenting also presents risks to children's privacy and identity development. If carried out continuously without considering children's rights and future autonomy, sharenting may contribute to the formation of a digital footprint that persists into later stages of development. Therefore, this study is conducted under the title "The Impact of Sharenting Practices on WhatsApp Story on Early Childhood Identity Formation in Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo." Specifically, this study seeks to explore how parents' sharenting practices through WhatsApp Story influence the process of identity formation among early childhood children in Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design using a field research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social realities from the perspectives of individuals who directly experience the phenomenon under investigation. This approach was selected because the study focuses on the impact of sharenting practices on the identity formation of young children, a phenomenon that is complex, contextual, and cannot be adequately measured through numerical or statistical methods. The qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore naturally occurring social phenomena in their real-life settings without manipulating variables. Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher explored the meanings, experiences, perceptions, and interactions of parents and children regarding the use of WhatsApp Story as a platform for sharing child-related content. Consequently, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics occurring naturally within the participants' daily lives (Sugiyono, 2017).

Research Site and Timeline

The study was conducted in Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo District, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The research site was selected based on empirical observations indicating a high prevalence of WhatsApp Story usage among young mothers with early childhood-aged children, particularly for sharing photographs and videos of their children without considering issues related to digital privacy. The selection of this site was also based on preliminary field mapping that showed frequent sharenting practices occurring in daily parenting activities within the community. The research was carried out in stages, including preliminary observation, proposal development, instrument preparation, pilot investigation, data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation, followed by data analysis and report writing. The entire research process was conducted from April to June 2026.

Participants

The participants served as the primary source of information related to the research objectives. The study involved ten parents who had children aged 3–6 years and actively engaged in sharenting practices through WhatsApp Story. Participants were selected using predetermined criteria: (1) residing with their children in Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo; (2) having children in early childhood; and (3) regularly featuring their children in content shared through social media. The purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that participants had direct experience with sharenting practices relevant to the focus of the study. These criteria ensured that the collected data were relevant to the study's objective of examining the impact of sharenting on the identity formation of young children.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation as a form of methodological triangulation to obtain comprehensive and in-depth information. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the types of content shared, parents' motivations for engaging in sharenting, children's responses, parents' understanding of digital privacy, and the social impacts of sharing content through WhatsApp Story (Tahir, 2024). Observations were conducted to directly examine sharenting activities, the intensity of WhatsApp Story use, and parental behavior in sharing child-related content (Sugiyono, 2017). Documentation techniques included collecting photographs, screenshots of WhatsApp Stories, field notes, and interview records as supporting evidence to strengthen the research findings (Sugiyono, 2019). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, while method triangulation was applied by cross-verifying interview data with observation and documentation results. The integration of these three techniques enabled the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and enhance the validity of the data.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher as a human instrument, who plays a direct role in determining the research focus, selecting participants, collecting data, conducting analysis, interpreting findings, and drawing conclusions. As a human instrument, the researcher also functioned as the key interpreter of social meaning, requiring sensitivity, reflexivity, and methodological competence in understanding participants' lived experiences. Throughout the research process, the researcher was required to possess adequate methodological and academic competence to understand the phenomenon objectively and to obtain in-depth information from participants. The researcher's role as the primary instrument allowed flexibility in the data collection process according to field conditions and the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied (Sugiyono, 2017).

Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure that the collected data accurately reflected the realities observed in the field, data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation was compared and cross-checked across multiple participants and data sources. Data gathered from one source were verified against information obtained from other sources to assess consistency and enhance the credibility of the findings. In addition, peer debriefing and continuous field reflection were conducted to minimize researcher bias and strengthen analytical objectivity. This process was conducted to ensure that the study's findings were trustworthy and scientifically reliable (Husnullail & Jailani, 2024).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted systematically throughout the research process, beginning with data collection and continuing until the completion of the study. The purpose of the analysis was to organize, categorize, interpret, and identify meaningful patterns within the collected data. The study employed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Moleong, 2017). During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and focused information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation related to sharenting practices, parental motivations, and their impact on young children's identity formation (Miles et al., 1992). Subsequently, the data were systematically displayed according to the research themes to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships among findings. At this stage, coding and thematic grouping were applied to organize data into categories such as parental motivation, digital literacy, privacy awareness, and identity formation indicators. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying meanings, patterns, and connections across all field data, thereby generating a comprehensive understanding of sharenting practices and their influence on the identity formation of young children in Sribit Hamlet, Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

1. Forms of Sharenting Practices on WhatsApp Story Conducted by Parents in Sribit Hamlet

The findings revealed that sharenting practices conducted by parents in Sribit Hamlet through WhatsApp Story function not only as a means of documenting children's lives but also as an expression of affection, pride, and appreciation for children's development. Based on the research findings, the forms of sharenting practices can be identified through the types of content shared, the frequency of posting, and children's responses to the content created by their parents. These three dimensions collectively illustrate how sharenting is embedded in everyday parenting practices and digital communication behavior.

a. Types of Content Shared by Parents on WhatsApp Story

The findings indicated that the content shared by parents through WhatsApp Story was highly diverse, ranging from children's achievements, daily activities, and independence development to amusing behaviors. Parents tended to share moments that carried emotional significance and reflected positive aspects of their children's growth and development. One of the most frequently shared forms of content involved children's achievements, which served as a source of parental pride.

This was expressed by Mrs. Wanti, the mother of Hanin Mufidah Muna:

"I am proud to have a child who is smart, independent, and highly confident. I hope she can inspire other parents not to feel insecure about their children's conditions. We should always be proud of our children."

This statement suggests that sharenting is practiced as a form of appreciation for children's abilities while simultaneously serving as a means of sharing positive parenting experiences with others. In addition to achievements, parents also shared simple activities that demonstrated their children's growing independence. Mrs. Wanti explained:

"Sometimes I get emotional because my child has become so independent. She no longer needs to be fed, she can already ask for her favorite foods, and she never leaves food unfinished. I intentionally taught her those habits, and she understands them well. That's why I enjoy recording videos of her when she does something smart."

Based on this statement, it can be understood that parental uploads carry personal meaning because they reflect the success of parenting practices implemented at home. Furthermore, some parents shared their children's everyday activities as a form of daily documentation. Mrs. Novi Setiani stated:

"I usually post my child's daily activities. For example, last Thursday after school, she suddenly told me that her teacher had given her an origami flower. While she was telling the story, I recorded a video of her."

This finding indicates that parents perceive their children's everyday experiences as valuable moments worthy of preservation. Therefore, sharenting content does not solely consist of major accomplishments but also includes ordinary activities that reflect children's emotional,

communicative, and personality development. These patterns indicate that WhatsApp Story functions as both a digital archive and a social space for expressing parental identity.

b. Frequency of Parents' Sharenting Practices

The frequency of sharenting reflects the intensity with which parents share content about their children through WhatsApp Story. Based on observations and interviews, most parents reported posting content approximately two to four times per week. This relatively high frequency suggests that sharing children's content has become part of parents' digital habits in documenting their children's daily lives.

This finding was supported by a statement from Mrs. Arsida:

"Quite often—maybe three to four times a week I post statuses about my child. I usually have a lot of free time, and sometimes I don't know what to do, so I choose to create stories on WhatsApp."

This statement indicates that sharenting practices are influenced by the amount of time parents spend with their children as well as the opportunities they have to capture various child-related activities. Parents utilize WhatsApp Story as a platform to both store and share parenting experiences with their social networks. Thus, sharenting can also be understood as a habitual digital practice shaped by routine family life and available leisure time.

c. Children's Responses to Sharenting Practices Conducted by Parents

Children's responses to sharenting practices indicate that young children have begun reacting to content featuring themselves, even though they do not yet fully understand the concept of social media. Their responses included expressions of happiness, interest in viewing photos or videos of themselves, and attention to other people's reactions to the uploaded content.

This was reflected in a statement from Mrs. Irnawati:

"Bianca is a very expressive child. When she realizes that I posted her photo and that neighbors complimented her after seeing my WhatsApp Story, she smiles shyly and happily. She likes looking at herself on the phone. Maybe she finds it fascinating because she can see her own face, but it isn't moving."

This statement suggests that children begin recognizing themselves through the social responses generated by sharenting practices. However, this self-recognition is still in an early developmental stage and is largely shaped by external feedback rather than internal self-understanding. Therefore, sharenting is not merely an activity of sharing content; it is also related to the development of children's self-concept and identity through social interactions facilitated by digital media.

2. Parents' Motivations for Engaging in Sharenting Practices on WhatsApp Story

Parents' motivations for engaging in sharenting practices through WhatsApp Story in Sribit Hamlet varied considerably. However, these motivations were generally influenced by the desire to share happiness, preserve children's memorable moments, encourage children to become comfortable

in front of cameras, and fill leisure time. Sharenting was not merely perceived as a documentation activity but also as a form of emotional expression and social interaction related to children's development.

a. Sharing Happiness and Preserving Children's Moments

The primary motivation for engaging in sharenting was parents' desire to preserve their children's developmental milestones while simultaneously sharing happiness with relatives and close acquaintances. Parents viewed childhood as a fleeting stage of life, making every moment valuable and worthy of documentation. In addition to serving personal purposes, these documented moments were also shared with family members and friends through WhatsApp Story.

This was expressed by Mrs. Muryanti:

"I want to preserve my child's moments for myself and also share stories about my child's daily life with people close to me. My relatives and old friends often ask about my child, so posting on WhatsApp Story allows them to stay updated as well."

This statement suggests that sharenting originates from the habit of documenting children's lives and subsequently develops into a form of digital sharing due to social encouragement from the surrounding environment. Parents perceive sharing children's moments as a means of maintaining social communication with people close to them.

A similar perspective was expressed by Mrs. Septi Yani:

"Whenever I feel happy about something, I usually post a status. Especially when I have photos of my child during family vacations, birthday celebrations, or the first day of school. I always document every important moment."

This statement indicates that parents regard significant events in their children's lives as meaningful occasions worthy of preservation and sharing. Therefore, sharenting serves as a medium for expressing happiness while simultaneously creating a digital archive of children's developmental journeys.

b. Encouraging Children to Become Comfortable in Front of the Camera

Another motivation identified in this study was parents' desire to familiarize children with being in front of cameras so that they would become more confident and less self-conscious. Parents believed that adapting to cameras from an early age is an important skill in today's digital era.

This motivation was reinforced by a statement from Mrs. Irnawati:

"For important occasions such as birthdays, I always take pictures of my child and ask her to pose nicely. I also document daily activities quite often. When she is playing or watching television, I randomly take photos of her. Usually, she immediately strikes a pose whenever I point my phone camera at her."

This statement demonstrates that sharenting functions not only as documentation but also as a process of familiarizing children with visual media. Parents actively encourage children to pose for photographs, which gradually shapes specific habits and behaviors regarding children's interactions with cameras and digital media.

c. Filling Leisure Time

In addition to emotional and social motivations, sharenting was also used as a way for parents to occupy their leisure time. During breaks from household responsibilities, parents often captured simple moments involving their children and shared them through WhatsApp Story for entertainment purposes.

This was explained by Mrs. Ika Efyana:

"I enjoy taking photos and videos of my child. Most often, I record her while she is playing because she has a vivid imagination. She creates stories while carrying a doll and pretends to be its mother. She becomes my source of entertainment whenever I feel bored at home after finishing household chores."

This statement indicates that children frequently serve as a source of enjoyment and amusement for parents in their daily lives. The documentation process functions not only as an archive of memories but also as a way to alleviate boredom and add enjoyment to everyday routines.

Overall, the findings suggest that parents' motivations for engaging in sharenting practices in Sribit Hamlet are multifaceted. Rather than being driven by a single factor, sharenting reflects a combination of emotional, social, and practical needs embedded within parents' everyday lives.

3. The Impact of Sharenting Practices on WhatsApp Story on Early Childhood Identity Formation in Sribit Hamlet, Wonolelo Village

Sharenting practices conducted by parents through WhatsApp Story in Sribit Hamlet have various implications for the formation of young children's identities. These impacts can be observed in the development of self-awareness and self-concept, social identity and behavior, as well as potential negative consequences such as dependence on external validation. These findings indicate that sharenting functions not only as a means of documentation but also as a factor that influences how children perceive themselves within their social environment.

a. Impact on Self-Awareness and Self-Concept

Parents' habit of sharing their children's moments through WhatsApp Story affects the way children recognize and understand themselves. When children repeatedly see photographs or videos of themselves and hear compliments such as "smart child" or "cute child," these labels gradually become integrated into their self-perceptions. As a result, children may begin to believe that their value depends on meeting the expectations of others, such as appearing cute, intelligent, or successful in front of the camera.

This finding is supported by a statement from Mrs. Novi Setiani:

"My child is very happy when her aunt tells her she is beautiful. Sometimes she suddenly stands in front of the mirror smiling to herself, and occasionally she asks me, 'Mom, am I beautiful?'"

This statement suggests that sharenting influences the development of children's self-awareness, as they begin to internalize external evaluations as part of their self-concept. Children also display reflective behaviors regarding the praise they receive, which gradually becomes part of the process of developing a positive self-image.

b. Impact on Social Identity and Children's Behavior

Sharenting practices also influence children's social identity, particularly in shaping self-confidence and behavior within social settings. Young children tend to feel proud when they see themselves featured on WhatsApp Story, especially when they receive compliments from family members or other viewers. Such experiences can enhance children's self-confidence and motivation in their daily activities.

This finding is reinforced by a statement from Mrs. Tri Puji Astuti:

"My little one gets so excited whenever I show her a WhatsApp status featuring her face. Especially when I tell her, 'Look, your aunt said you were very smart during your Qur'an recitation yesterday.' She immediately smiles to herself and looks incredibly proud, just like a typical young child. The next day, she becomes even more enthusiastic about attending her Qur'an lessons because she feels appreciated and noticed by her aunt."

This statement demonstrates that sharenting can contribute to children's self-confidence and encourage positive behaviors such as enthusiasm for learning and participation in educational activities. However, dependence on external praise may also shape behavioral patterns that are heavily influenced by social responses from others.

c. Negative Impacts on Emotional Development and Identity Formation

On the other hand, sharenting practices may also generate negative consequences for children's emotional development and identity formation. Children may experience anxiety when they feel unable to meet the image constructed through their parents' posts, particularly when they do not appear cheerful, obedient, amusing, or emotionally positive. Such situations may lead children to perceive a loss of social acceptance.

This concern is illustrated by a statement from Mrs. Arsida:

"Just yesterday I posted a story of my child refusing to go to school because I woke him up too harshly. Then today, while we were on our way to school, a neighbor jokingly said, 'Wow, you're going to school today? Usually you cry.' My child heard that comment and immediately became upset again and refused to go to school."

This statement indicates that social responses triggered by digital content can directly influence children's emotions. Children may become more sensitive to comments from others, which can affect their emotional stability and the development of their personal identity.

Overall, the findings suggest that sharenting practices on WhatsApp Story have both positive and negative effects on young children's identity formation. Positive outcomes include increased self-confidence, stronger social identity, and feelings of appreciation and recognition. However, potential negative consequences include dependence on external validation, heightened emotional sensitivity, and challenges in developing an autonomous sense of self.

Therefore, parents need to be more mindful in managing the content they share about their children on digital platforms. Greater awareness of the psychological and developmental implications of sharenting is essential to ensure that children's emotional well-being, privacy, and identity development are protected in the digital age.

DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews, observations, and documentation conducted in Sribit Hamlet, Wonolelo Village, Wonosobo Regency, the findings revealed that sharenting has become an integral part of digital parenting practices among most parents, particularly young mothers with early childhood-aged children. Sharenting serves not only as a means of documenting children's development but also as a medium for parental self-expression within digital spaces. In this context, WhatsApp Story functions as a semi-private social media space where interpersonal communication and public representation intersect. The data analysis focused on three main aspects: (1) the patterns and types of sharenting content shared through WhatsApp Story, (2) parents' motivations for engaging in sharenting, and (3) the impact of sharenting practices on early childhood identity formation.

1. Patterns and Types of Sharenting Content on WhatsApp Story

The findings indicate that WhatsApp Story has undergone a functional shift from being merely a communication platform to becoming a medium for representing family life in digital spaces. The content shared by parents in Sribit Hamlet primarily focused on children's daily activities, including learning experiences, simple academic achievements, independent behaviors, religious activities, and behaviors perceived as entertaining or amusing. These findings suggest that children are positioned not only as family members but also as objects of social representation through which parents showcase successful parenting practices to their social networks. Thus, children's digital visibility is shaped through parental selection of moments considered meaningful or socially valuable.

The frequency of posting, ranging from two to four times per week, indicates that sharenting has become an integrated component of modern technology-based parenting practices. This phenomenon is consistent with Ritzer's (2014) perspective, which argues that individuals in contemporary society tend to use media as a means of gaining social recognition

and constructing self-image within their social groups. In this sense, digital platforms operate as arenas of symbolic interaction where everyday family life is performed and interpreted socially.

Within the context of this study, the appreciation and positive feedback received from WhatsApp contacts function as forms of social validation that reinforce parents' tendency to continue sharing content about their children. On the other hand, young children who become the subjects of these posts do not yet possess the cognitive capacity to understand the consequences of the digital footprints created by their parents. As Boyd (2014) explains, children are generally unable to distinguish between private and public digital spaces, leading them to perceive such practices as normal. This condition is reflected in children's positive responses when being photographed or recorded, as they interpret these actions as signs of parental attention rather than acts of publishing their identities in digital environments. However, this interpretation may evolve as children grow and become more aware of social media contexts.

2. Parents' Motivations for Engaging in Sharenting Practices

The analysis of field data revealed that parents' motivations for engaging in sharenting are influenced not only by technological factors but also by emotional, social, and psychological needs. Most participants stated that WhatsApp Story serves as a platform for preserving valuable moments of their children's development. Parents perceive childhood as a rapidly passing stage of life, making digital documentation an effective means of preserving memories that can be revisited in the future. This reflects the broader cultural tendency to archive everyday life through digital media.

These findings align with Van Dijck's (2013) argument that social media has evolved into a digital archive where individuals can simultaneously store and share personal experiences with others. In addition to documentation purposes, sharenting is also motivated by parents' desire to familiarize children with being in front of cameras. Parents believe that the ability to appear confidently before a camera can help children become more self-assured, communicative, and adaptable to technological advancements. This perspective is consistent with Buckingham's (2007) view that early exposure to media is often considered beneficial for the development of children's social and communication skills. Nevertheless, such exposure should be balanced with consideration of children's developmental readiness and privacy rights.

Furthermore, the study found that some stay-at-home mothers used photographing and recording their children as a source of entertainment and a means of alleviating boredom associated with daily domestic routines. Children become both a source of happiness and a creative subject that parents can showcase through social media. Childhood experiences are frequently constructed by adults as symbols of emotional fulfillment and family happiness. Therefore, sharenting should not be understood solely as an activity of sharing information but also as a means of fulfilling parents' emotional, psychological, and social needs within the digital

era. This highlights the dual function of children as both family subjects and digital content subjects.

3. The Impact of Sharenting Practices on Early Childhood Identity Formation

The findings demonstrate that sharenting influences the process of early childhood identity formation, particularly in relation to self-awareness, self-concept, and self-esteem. During early childhood, children begin constructing an understanding of who they are through interactions with their immediate social environment, especially family members. When children repeatedly see themselves featured in digital content and receive positive feedback from others, they gradually develop perceptions of themselves based on the social responses they receive. However, these identity-related processes remain in early developmental stages and are still highly dependent on external input.

These findings support Cooley's (2017) Looking-Glass Self Theory, which proposes that individuals form their self-image through their interpretations of how others perceive and evaluate them. In this study, several children displayed increased confidence, enthusiasm for posing in photographs, and pride when learning that they had received compliments from relatives or their parents' acquaintances through WhatsApp Story. These behaviors suggest positive outcomes, including enhanced self-awareness and feelings of appreciation. Such responses indicate early forms of socially mediated self-perception rather than fully formed identity structures.

The findings are also consistent with Santrock's (2014) argument that social support and positive reinforcement contribute to the development of a healthy self-concept in children. Nevertheless, the study also identified potential negative consequences that warrant attention. Children who become accustomed to receiving attention through social media posts may develop a dependence on external validation as a basis for their self-worth. They may begin to associate their value with the amount of attention, praise, or positive responses they receive from others. While social appreciation can enhance children's motivation, excessive reliance on external praise may hinder the development of intrinsic motivation. This suggests the importance of balanced reinforcement in early childhood development.

Moreover, sharenting practices that consistently portray children in a positive light may create psychological pressure to maintain the idealized image constructed through social media. Steinberg (2017) argues that digitally constructed representations created by parents can impose emotional burdens on children because they may feel compelled to uphold the ideal identity that has been publicly established. In the long term, such conditions may influence children's social identity development and limit their freedom to express themselves authentically. Children may experience difficulty separating their genuine identities from the digital identities created by others

on their behalf. However, these effects should be interpreted as potential risks rather than deterministic outcomes.

Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that sharenting practices on WhatsApp Story have an ambivalent impact on early childhood identity formation. On one hand, these practices can enhance self-confidence, foster feelings of appreciation, and strengthen emotional bonds between parents and children. On the other hand, sharenting may contribute to dependence on social validation, blur children's privacy boundaries, and create digitally constructed identities before children have the capacity to determine their own self-representation. This ambivalence reflects the complexity of digital parenting practices in contemporary society.

As a result, children's identities in the digital era are increasingly shaped by media representations created by adults. Therefore, greater parental awareness is needed when sharing information about children on social media to ensure that digital parenting practices support rather than hinder children's psychological well-being and identity development. Future studies are recommended to further explore longitudinal effects of sharenting on identity development as children grow into adolescence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study regarding the impact of sharenting practices on WhatsApp Story on early childhood identity formation in Sribit Hamlet, Wonolelo Village, it can be concluded that sharenting has become an integral part of digital parenting practices, particularly among young mothers. WhatsApp Story in this context functions as a semi-private digital space that enables parents to document and simultaneously socially display their children's daily lives. This practice is reflected in parents' habits of sharing various aspects of their children's lives, including achievements, daily activities, independence development, and amusing behaviors, with a posting frequency of approximately two to four times per week. The primary motivations for engaging in sharenting include preserving memorable moments, sharing happiness with social networks, encouraging children to become comfortable in front of cameras, and filling leisure time as part of parents' emotional and social activities in everyday life. These findings highlight that sharenting is embedded in both technological use and socio-emotional parenting practices.

From the perspective of child development, sharenting demonstrates an ambivalent impact on early childhood identity formation. On the one hand, it can enhance children's self-confidence, strengthen their social identity, and provide positive experiences through social recognition and praise from others. On the other hand, sharenting may contribute to children's dependence on external validation, promote the development of self-concepts that rely heavily on others' evaluations, and increase the risk of emotional difficulties when children fail to conform to the image constructed

through digital media. These impacts should be understood as contextual and relational outcomes rather than fixed developmental consequences.

Therefore, greater parental awareness is necessary when managing and sharing content about children on social media platforms. Parents should carefully consider the potential long-term implications of sharenting to ensure that digital parenting practices support healthy identity development, emotional well-being, and age-appropriate growth while safeguarding children's privacy and autonomy in the digital environment. In addition, future digital parenting practices should prioritize balanced sharing that respects children's evolving rights to self-identity and digital privacy.

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