ResearchArticle

Risks in Children's Digital Visibility and Vulnerability: Sharenting in France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom

Riesgos en la visibilidad y vulnerabilidad digital de menores. Sharenting en Francia, Italia, España y Reino Unido

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Abstract
Introduction: Sharenting has become a common practice in which parents publicly share aspects of their children's lives on social media platforms. This study explores how parent influencers manage their children's visibility, vulnerability, and privacy, as well as the underlying purposes of sharenting. **Methodology:** Through a comparative approach, the practices of 12 parent influencers—mothers and fathers—from France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom are examined. A total of 1,789 posts on Instagram and TikTok are analysed using content analysis. **Results:** Cultural differences are identified in the representation of parental roles: mothers take on a leading role, particularly in Italy, while French male influencers frequently depict involved fatherhood. A concerning trend is observed regarding the lack of safeguards to protect children's identities, increasing the risks associated with their

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digital exposure. Sharenting is not primarily commercial – the UK is the country where children are most used for promotional purposes – nor is it a space for parental support. **Discussions:** This study critically examines how mediated parenthood and child representation are negotiated in contemporary digital communication. **Conclusions:** Influencers, as parents, construct self-representations of themselves as caring and competent caregivers embedded within the logics of digital entertainment.

Keywords: social media; sharenting, vulnerability; influencer; parental´s self-presentation; communication risks; childhood; digital parenting.

Resumen
Introducción: El sharenting se ha convertido en una práctica habitual en la que los progenitores comparten la vida de sus hijos/as en las redes sociales. Esta investigación explora cómo los padres *influencers* gestionan la visibilidad, la vulnerabilidad y la privacidad de sus hijos/as, así como la finalidad que subsyace en el sharenting. **Metodología:** De manera comparada, se estudian cómo 12 *influencers* padres y madres de Francia, Italia, España y UK comparten contenidos de sus hijos en Instagram y TikTok. Mediante analisis de contenido se analizan 1.789 publicaciones. **Resultados:** se identifican diferencias culturales en la representación de la madre con un rol protagónico, especialmente en Italia, y la paterna en los franceses. Se observa una peligrosa tendencia a no salvaguardar la identidad de los menores, incrementando los peligros derivados de su exposición digital. El sharenting no es principalmente comercial - UK es el país en el que los hijos son más utilizados con fines promocionales-, ni se constituye como un espacio para la ayuda parental. **Discusión**: Cuestionamos cómo la parentalidad mediada y la representación infantil se negocian en la comunicación digital contemporánea. **Conclusiones**: los *influencers*, en tanto que progenitores, se auto-representan como buenos padres circunscritos en el entretenimiento digital.

Palabras clave: redes sociales; sharenting; vulnerabilidad; *influencer*; autorrepresentación parental; riesgos comunicativos; infancia; crianza digital.

1. Introduction

As social media has become more commonplace, sharenting has experienced exponential growth, leading to increased visibility of children in the digital sphere. The phenomenon of sharenting, referring to the practice of sharing information and photos of children on social media, has been studied separately across different platforms, such as Instagram (Porfírio & Jorge, 2022; Yegen & Monda, 2021; Doğan Keskin et al., 2023) and, more recently, TikTok (Stephenson et al., 2024). A comparative analysis of sharenting on both platforms and in different countries has been scarcely explored and could provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

The practice of sharenting impacts children from birth through adolescence, affecting not only the children of those engaging in it but also other family members, such as nephews and nieces (Hinojo-Lucena et al., 2020), or even individuals outside the family circle, such as the child's friends. The images typically shared are happy moments, special occasions in the child's life, and often include family and friends (Brosch, 2016). However, there are also images intended to be humorous that mock children through irritating jokes or show children injuries, as well as, others that use the child's image to offer parenting advice (Stephenson et al., 2024).

This article aims to examine how social media content creators, or influencers—who have gained fame and visibility on digital platforms (Abidin, 2018)—portray their children on Instagram and TikTok. It explores how they represent their children, and the vulnerabilities this exposure creates in terms of privacy. Influencers, in their efforts to construct a compelling identity as engaged parents, strategically integrate their children as stage resources. Child visibility is incorporated into a self-presentation strategy that aims to engender authenticity, emotional connection, and, in numerous cases, symbolic and commercial value. Thus, sharenting acts as a performative device in the construction of the parental digital self.

It delves into whether; by making their children protagonists of digital entertainment, these practices involve the self-representation of engaged parenting, where the construction of one's "self" is intended to influence social validation and shape their parental identity. It also examines whether sharenting is framed as an altruistic support community, or whether it functions as a component of influencers' promotional activities (Hudders, 2025). This study examines sharenting as practiced by established European parent influencers, contributing to academic debates on how digital self-representation intersects with parenting practices on social media. They help identify structural logics of visibility, parental legitimacy, and exposure that may also manifest —albeit at different scales and forms—in more everyday sharenting practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sharenting: children and parents

Sharenting has become increasingly prevalent, whereby parents (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017), public sharing of images, videos, and information about children through social media. This practice generates numerous controversies: conflicts between parents and children, particularly during adolescence; the creation of a social image of children from an early age without their consent (digital footprint); disagreements between parents over who or what information to share about their children; legal issues involving the use of images of children; and loss of privacy, which can lead to serious problems such as harassment, abduction, or paedophilia (Davis, 2018; Briazu et al., 2021). There are also disputes regarding the practice itself, with some focusing on the risks, while others defend their right to share, arguing that attention should instead be directed at real child abuse or those engaging in punishable acts (Stephenson et al., 2024).

Studies that address sharenting from the child's perspective highlight teenagers' annoyance with their parents' actions, describing them as embarrassing and pointless (Verswijvel et al., 2019). Some research points out that from the age of 13, children begin to develop an awareness of their own social identity, and parents should be more cautious, and even seek permission, before posting content about their children (Ouvrein &Verswijvel, 2019).

Many teenagers express concern about their parents sharing photos that do not align with the digital image they are trying to build. Consequently, they view sharenting as a challenge to their self-presentation and outline four key considerations parents should bear in mind before posting: the type of information, the privacy of the information, the frequency of sharing, and the involvement of the teenager (Ouvrein &Verswijvel, 2019).

Furthermore, a significant percentage of these children express a desire to delete the images their parents post about them (Azurmendi et al., 2021). The literature addressing this issue highlights the minors' right to be forgotten, advocating for the ability of children themselves to exercise this right (Haley, 2020; Livingstone & Third, 2017).

Regarding the reasons why parents share photos of them, teenagers identify four main motives (in order): archival purposes, social reasons, impression management, and parental advice. Among these, keeping photos as memories is viewed more favourably by teenagers compared to using the images for the parent's self-representation (Verswijvel et al., 2019). As for gender differences, findings vary: some studies suggest that annoyance is more pronounced among girls than boys (Azurmendi et al., 2021), while others indicate the opposite (Verswijvel et al., 2019).

In the case of parents, Hinojo-Lucena et al. (2020) observe that parents' motivations for sharenting are to share family moments with the social environment (77.8%), to reinforce their positive self-presentation as committed caregivers (48%), a practice that adolescents identify as particularly upsetting, and to preserve memories (25%), which adolescents thought came first. The frequency and regularity of sharenting practices vary depending on the country. Some research indicates that 68% Italians (Gatto et al., 2024) and 30% of Americans post photos of their children on social (Davis, 2018), compared to 4% of Britons (Atwell et al., 2019) and 1.9% of Spaniards (Hinojo-Lucena et al., 2020).

2.2. Influencers and sharenting

Research indicates that sharenting is more prevalent among mothers than fathers (González-Cámara & Sánchez-Suricalday, 2024). In the context of instamoms, mothers who manage Instagram profiles focus on their role of motherhood, Garrido et al. (2023) report that on their profiles, sharenting accounts for 58.7% of posts, a figure that decreases in the study by Jiménez-Iglesias et al. (2022), which shows that 45.6% of posts by these Instagram mothers include a child.

International studies reveal higher percentages, reaching up to 70% (McTigue, 2021). In posts with a commercial purpose, almost all the mothers' Instagram content features their children (96.17%), compared to 75.6% for fathers (Fernández & Gutiérrez, 2024). Regardless, it seems that sharenting is evolving into a semi-professional activity, predominantly carried out by mothers whose content primarily revolves around showcasing family life. It could even be argued that sharenting forms part of their professional endeavours, through which they monetise the exposure of their children while intensifying their vulnerability.

This intimacy lends an air of authenticity to their communications, making users more receptive to the content, including advertising, which they perceive as more genuine (De Frutos-Torres & Pastor-Rodríguez, 2021). In the case of fathers, Campana et al. (2020) note that it adds value to discourses on masculinity, granting greater legitimacy to the parental care of children.

Jorge et al. (2022) highlight this public family exposure as a consequence of an unstable job market. These influencers, through sharenting as a way of life, can generate income while caring for their children. The study emphasises the high communication skills of these influencers, who aim to engage their audiences by addressing the challenges of parenting. In this context, Porfírio and Jorge (2022) note that posts by Portuguese celebrities on Instagram primarily focus on daily life or family events, with minimal inappropriate content, such as nudity (1% of cases).

Their analysis of commercial content led them to conclude that female Instagram influencers predominantly advertise products related to childcare and clothing, while male influencers focus on leisure, food, and beverages.

There are varying levels of children's exposure in sharenting, ranging from public visibility, with no restrictions on who can view the content, to more restricted and private settings, where showcasing children translates into digital entertainment (Yegen & Mondal, 2021).

The literature thus highlights how sharenting is a complex construct encompassing the social, personal, and economic circumstances of those who engage in it. Several studies have analysed the implications of sharenting and how parents manage their children's visibility and privacy. However, fewer studies focus on sharenting among mega-influencers, despite their role as lifestyle models. Existing research is often limited to national studies or specific variables, failing to provide an international perspective on the phenomenon on the two social media.

3. Methodology

The aim of this article is to analyse the sharenting carried out by parent influencers from the European countries with the highest number of social media users—France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK)—on Instagram and TikTok. The study focuses on the analysis of 1,788 posts, comprising Instagram photo/video and TikTok video posts (Lee, 2023), shared by these influencers across the two platforms in 2023 and 2024. The analysis centres on sharenting posts, examining family participation in the content and the exposure of children in terms of privacy.

The study investigates whether posts where children become central figures in digital entertainment focus on showcasing the children themselves or aim to shape followers' perceptions by projecting an image of committed parenting and raising adorable children. Additionally, the study explores the multiple meanings that sharenting acquires in these influencer profiles, insofar as it functions simultaneously as a means of fostering affinity-based communities, projecting parental authenticity, and participating in strategies of self-promotion or content monetization. Particular attention is paid to these intersections within digital parental narratives. The study addresses the following research questions, considering the social media platforms and the countries of origin of the parent influencers analysed:

RQ1. How frequently do influencers feature their children in posts, and how do these practices vary in volume across platforms and countries?

RQ2. What relational configurations are portrayed in sharenting posts across different cultural contexts?

RQ3. In what types of representational settings are children depicted in sharenting posts, and what are their degrees of vulnerability in sharenting?

RQ4. What communicative functions does sharenting serve in the self-representation strategies of parent influencers shaped by platform and cultural context?

To address the research questions, a quantitative methodology was employed that relies on analysing the content of posts on Instagram and TikTok by parent influencers from France, Italy, Spain, and the UK. The social media platforms were selected based on reports from Meltwater (2024) for Europe and the United Kingdom, which indicate that the two preferred platforms among influencers are Instagram (52%) and TikTok (23%). Both platforms are based on visual content (Bueno-Fernandes & Campos-Pellanda, 2022), making it possible to analyse influencers' behaviours and how they manage and present content featuring their children.

The influencers were selected based on rankings provided by Hyperauditor (2024) and Metricool (2024), which list the most prominent influencers in the four countries studied on both social media platforms based on follower count and influence. This was supplemented by studies from Forbes (2023), Social Shepherd (2024), and Alice (2024). A review of the profiles of influencers on both social media was conducted, and three influencers were selected from each country who met the criteria for selection were as follows: a) the influencer must be a mother or father, and b) the influencer must exceed two million followers on Instagram, thus being classified as a mega-influencer (Ryding et al., 2023).

In this type of profiles, child exposure can be linked to strategies of self-presentation, engagement generation and, in many cases, content monetisation. The aim is characterising the specific dynamics that emerge in an environment where parenting is professionalised and integrated into attention economy (Abidin, 2018). Instagram was chosen as the primary reference platform due to the influencers' higher follower count on this social media (except for @nicocapone, France) and because the influencers posted more often on this platform. The selected influencers' posts on both platforms were then coded. Fieldwork was conducted between April and May 2024. Profiles self-identified as instamoms or parenting accounts were excluded from the analysis.

The objective was to study the most recent 100 posts from each influencer on each social media platform, although not all the influencers had this volume of posts. Consequently, a total of 1,788 posts were analysed, 64.63% of them on Instagram (n=1,152) and 35.37% on TikTok (n=636). Of these, 29.03% were from Spanish influencers (n=519), 25.62% from Italian influencers (n=458), 24.11% from UK influencers (n=431), and 21.25% from French influencers (n=380) (Table 1).

Table 1.

Influencers studied

Influencer	Country	No. of Instagram posts	Instagram followers	No. of TikTok posts	TikTok followers
Nicocapone	France	100	12,500,000	92	27,700,000
Stéphanie Durant	France	85	9,200,000	3	54,600
Caroline Receveur	France	81	5,500,000	19	57,000
Chiara Ferragni	Italy	100	29,100,000	100	6,400,000
Mariano Divaio	Italy	100	7,000,000	20	310,500
Beatrice Valli	Italy	100	3,300,000	38	177,800
Georgina Rodríguez	Spain	100	60,100,000	24	11,500,000
María Pombo	Spain	100	3,200,000	100	606,600
Alexandra Pereira	Spain	100	2,300,000	95	317,900
Zoe Elizabeth Sugg	UK	86	9,200,000	2	49,700
Molly-Mae Hague	UK	100	7,900,000	43	3,600,000
Louise Pentland	UK	100	3,700,000	100	134,700

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

3.1. Variable Coding

A coding sheet was created, segmented into three dimensions. The first one recorded data on the influencers:

i)   social media platform;

ii)   profile;

iii)   country of origin; and the posts:

iv)   number of followers;

v)   content of the post;

vi)   publication date.

The second dimension of the study is key to understanding how parent influencers represent their children and what type of information they share on their profiles. To measure this dimension, three variables are used, as shown in Table 2.

The analysis examined whether children appear alone or accompanied, the setting in which they are featured, and whether any privacy issues emerge from the vulnerable exposure of the children. The selection of variables was informed by the studies of Yegen and Mondal (2021) and Stephenson et al. (2024), which explore the practice of sharenting on Instagram and TikTok, as well as Doğan Keskin et al. (2023), who delve into the sharenting syndrome. For aspects related to the vulnerable exposure of children, the works of Torres and García (2020) on Instagram and García-Jiménez et al. (2022) on YouTube were consulted (Table 2).

Table 2.

Dimension II. Representation of children

Variable	Items
Persons in photo	Photo of child only Photo of mother & child Photo of father & child Mother, father, and child together Other persons and child
Environments	Private (indoors): for example: personal setting such as the home) Public (outdoors): activities outside the home. For example: public transport, street, social activities, etc.) Multiple: combines images of public and private spaces Undefined: cannot be identified
Vulnerability of the child	High: when the child is recognisable and is part of the image. Medium: when the child is shown but is not recognisable and their face is not shown or blurred out. Low: the child's presence is avoided but could still be identified in certain cases.

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

The third dimension focused on understanding the purpose of sharenting by analysing the content of the images and the text in the posts. The study examines whether parents' posts aim to shape followers' impressions, provide parenting advice (Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Hinojo-Lucena et al., 2020; Verswijvel et al., 2019), or if emotional appeal and conative functions dominate the content shared on their profiles (García-Jiménez et al., 2022; Weinlich & Semerádová, 2022). The research also draws on studies by Porfírio and Jorge (2022), Fernández and Gutiérrez (2024), and Hudders (2025), which highlight the use of children in sharenting practices to create advertising content, as well as by Yates (2023), which warns about the ethical limits of using children for the commercial benefit of their parents in this practice.

Following the review of the literature, an initial set of 16 variables was recorded. Subsequently, the two researchers jointly reviewed 20% of the posts, and variables that did not yield unanimous agreement were eliminated. The final selection consists of 13 variables with 33 items (Table 3). To ensure the reliability of the analysis and assess the level of agreement, a sample of 120 videos (25% of the total videos featuring children) was independently coded by both researchers. The results yielded a Kappa coefficient of 0.81 (confidence interval 0.78–0.83), confirming a high degree of reliability (Choudhary & Nagaraja, 2017) (Table 3).

Table 3.

Dimension III. Purpose of the posts

Variable	Items
Advise	Offer altruistic parental advice on fatherhood/motherhood
Conative	Seeks to prompt a response from followers.
Display	Parents show their children posing without engaging in any activity, simply to share their presence or appearance.
Emotional appeal	Images and text designed to trigger emotional reactions and feelings in followers through touching visuals, sound cues (music or effects), and the use of words and/or emojis such as "love", "my life", "I love you", as well as emojis like hearts, a smiling face with heart eyes, a face blowing a kiss, and similar symbols.
Promotional	The image featuring their child includes brands/services, or the text or hashtags reference brands/services. The children are used in promotional content.
Shape impressions	Parents aim to enhance their self-representation as a good mother/father by devoting time to their children (e.g., playing or dancing with them). Parents show their children as adorable (cute/funny/witty)
Other	Neither of the above.

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

3.2. Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted. Normality tests were performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors significance correction to determine whether parametric or non-parametric tests would be used. These tests revealed a lack of normality in the distribution of all dependent variables ($p<.001$), leading to the application of non-parametric calculations. For hypothesis testing, the Kruskal-Wallis test with epsilon-squared (ε^2) was applied. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Rho) was used to measure correlations between variables. For the study of predictive factors, adjusted R^2 was used for multiple linear regressions. In all tests, statistical significance was assumed in the categories when $p<.05$. Data processing was conducted using the Real Statistics Resource Pack statistical analysis software (Release 8.5).

4. Findings

4.1. Sharenting in the profiles

To address Q1, 1,788 posts from the selected sample of influencers were analysed. The results indicate that influencers since only 33.1% of the posts (n=592) feature their children. By platform, 76.3% of sharenting posts are observed on Instagram, and the rest on TikTok. By country, British influencers account for 31.25% of sharenting posts, followed by Italian influencers with 29.3%, Spanish influencers with 27.7%, and French influencers with 11.6%. Although TikTok is less popular overall, it shows greater acceptance in Italy (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Sharenting by social network and country (RQ1)
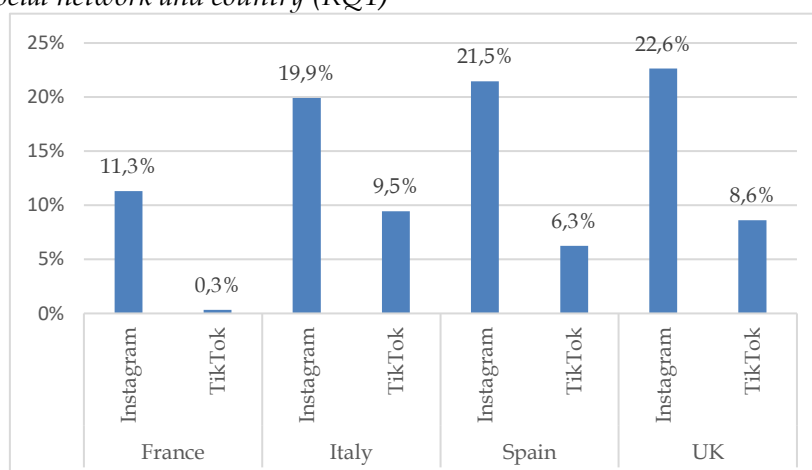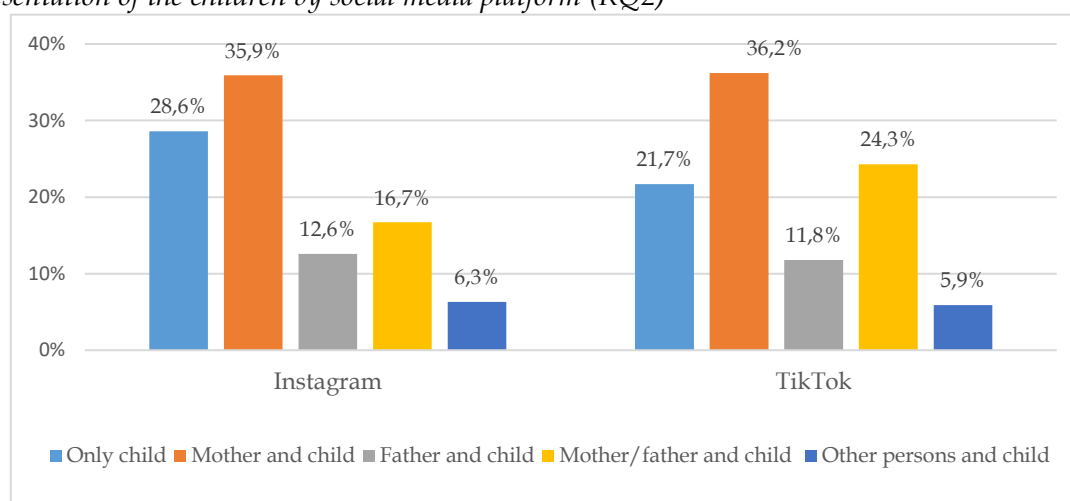

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

4.2. Representation of children

The results reveal that in the 592 posts analysed, the most common form of sharenting across both social media platforms in the countries in question involves children appearing alongside their mother as co-protagonists (35.9%), followed by posts where children appear alone (27.3%). Posts featuring both the mother and father with their children during personal moments account for 18.1%, while posts showing children alone with their father occur in 12.4% of cases.

By social media platform, the percentages are similar across both. TikTok is the platform where posts featuring the mother (36.2%) and posts featuring both the mother and father (24.3%) are most common. Instagram shows a higher proportion of posts where children appear alone (28.6%) or with people other than their parents (6.3%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Representation of the children by social media platform (RQ2)

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

By country, British influencers are the most likely to focus their posts exclusively on children (30.6%), while France records the lowest proportion (21.1%). Italy stands out for sharenting posts co-starring the mother (39.4%), a trend also reflected among British influencers (36.7%). French influencers stand out for sharenting posts featuring both parents or the father/mother alone (24.2%), indicating greater parental involvement in the digital representation of children compared to the other countries. Posts that include other people alongside the children are more frequent in Spain (9.7%) and Italy (7.1%), reflecting a broader family structure or greater social interaction in childcare (Table 4).

Table 4.

Representation of the child by country (RQ2)

Country	Child only	Mother and child	Father and child	Mother, father and child together	Other persons and child
France	21.1%	28.4%	24.2%	24.2%	2.1%
Italy	27.9%	39.4%	9.3%	16.4%	7.1%
Spain	24.8%	34.5%	9.7%	21.4%	9.7%
UK	30.6%	36.7%	12.9%	15.3%	4.4%

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

Statistically significant differences were found both between countries ($\varepsilon^2=0.01$, $p<0.05$) and social media platforms ($\varepsilon^2=0.005$, $p<0.05$), with a limited effect size in both cases, as measured by ε^2 ($\varepsilon^2 < 0.059$). These consistent results highlight the normative influence of the underlying dynamics of sharenting across different digital and sociocultural contexts.

4.3. Representation settings and vulnerability of children

In the sharenting scenario, Italian and French influencers exhibit contrasting approaches to child privacy. Italians predominantly use private settings (55.2%), indicating a lower concern for their children's privacy, while French influencers favour public settings (49.3%). The UK demonstrates a greater balance between private and public settings (30.3%), with Spain occupying an intermediate position across all three variables. When sharenting involves multiple settings, UK influencers use them most frequently (30.3%), reflecting greater flexibility in their children's exposure. By contrast, Italy, Spain, and France report significantly lower percentages (Table 5).

Table 5.

Sharenting scenario by country (RQ3)

| Country	Private	Public	Multiple	Undefined
France	23.2%	49.3%	0.00%	27.5%
Italy	55.2%	28.7%	9.8%	6.3%
Spain	29.3%	44.5%	1.2%	25%
UK	26.5%	38.9%	30.3%	4.3%

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

Using the Kruskal-Wallis hypothesis test, differences were confirmed between social media platforms ($\varepsilon^2=0.000$, $p<0.05$), countries ($\varepsilon^2=0.056$, $p<0.05$), and the type of setting, with a limited effect size ($\varepsilon^2 < 0.059$). This indicates that influencers' behaviours vary depending on cultural context and the platform used.

To further explore this analysis, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Rho=0.029, p=0.557, p>0.05) showed no significant correlation, suggesting that influencers do not follow a specific pattern when choosing the setting for sharenting.

To evaluate degrees of vulnerability, the analysis considered whether the child could be recognised. Direct exposure was indicative of high vulnerability and the creation of a digital footprint for the child. The study shows that in 85.8% of posts, the exposure level is high, with children clearly identifiable. By platform, although Instagram is where most sharenting occurs, TikTok exhibits a higher degree of exposure (91.2%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Vulnerability of child by social media platform (RQ3)
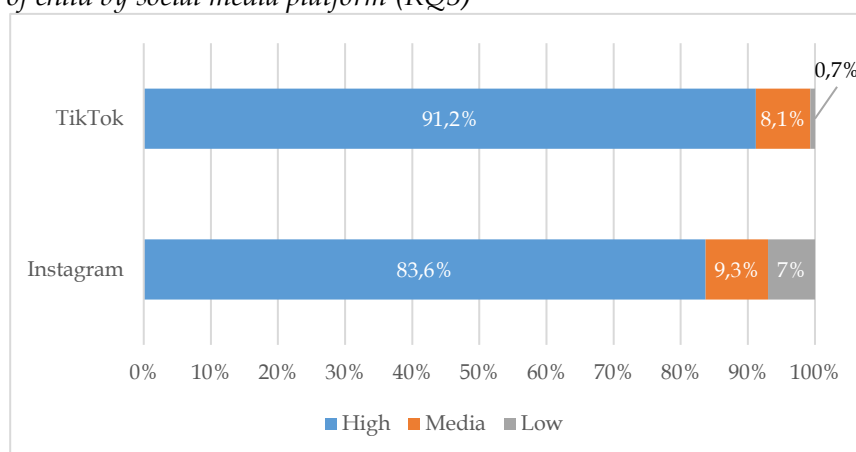
Source: compiled by authors (2025).

By country (Table 6), Italian and British influencers show the highest percentages of high vulnerability (87.4% and 87%, respectively). With the exception of France, the other countries exhibit similar levels of medium vulnerability.

Table 6.

Vulnerability of child by country (RQ3)

Country	High	Medium	Low
Italy	87.4%	9.2%	3.4%
UK	87%	9.7%	3.2%
Spain	83.2%	9.3%	7.5%
France	82.4%	5.9%	11.8%

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

Statistical analysis using hypothesis testing found no significant differences in vulnerability levels based on social media platforms ($\varepsilon^2=0.002$, p>0.05) or countries ($\varepsilon^2=0.001$, p>0.05). This lack of significant contrast indicates that the vulnerability associated with sharenting is consistent across the two platforms and the four countries studied, suggesting similar behaviours and practices regardless of the platform used or the cultural and geographical context. This consistency highlights the normative influence of global digital culture on the privacy and exposure of children.
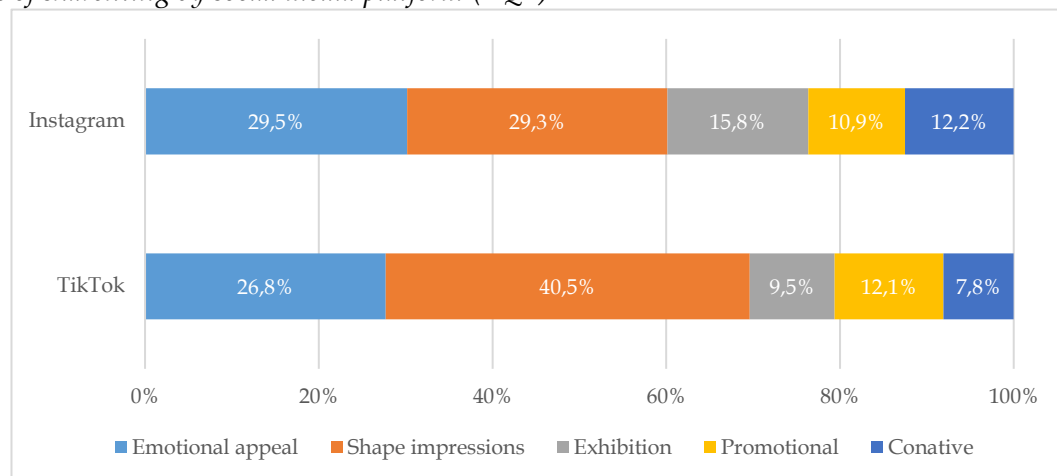
4.4. Purpose of the posts

Regarding the final question, which examines the purpose of parent influencers' posts, differences are observed between social media platforms. On Instagram, the primary purpose is emotional appeal (29.5%), followed closely by shaping followers' opinions (29.3%)—with posts portraying themselves as good parents (18.9%) and their children as adorable (10.4%). On TikTok, the ranking is reversed, with a stronger focus on shaping followers' opinions (40.5%)—featuring adorable children (21.9%) and parental self-representation (18.6%)—followed by emotional appeal (26.8%).

On Instagram, the third most common purpose is to show children posing without engaging in any activity (15.8%), while on TikTok, the third purpose is promotional, reflecting a more commercial use of children on this platform (12.1%). On Instagram, promotional content accounts for 10.9%, placing it fourth. These results suggest that sharenting predominantly focuses on emotional aspects and family self-representation rather than prioritising promotional content.

Figure 4.

Purpose of sharenting by social media platform (RQ4)

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

The Kruskal-Wallis test reveals significant differences ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.005$, $p<0.05$) in the function of posts across social media platforms, indicating that the platform significantly influences the purpose of the content published; however, the effect size is limited ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.003$, $p<0.05$).

Table 7.

Kruskal-Wallis test for social media platform

	H-Stat	p-Value	ε^2
Purpose of the post	6.447	0.009	0.005

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

When correlating the results by country, posts from influencers across all four countries are primarily emotional and focus on promoting the self-representation of parents engaged in their children's upbringing.

However, when examined in detail, specific cultural patterns emerge. Spain and France display similar behaviours, contrasting with those observed in Italy and the United Kingdom.

For French influencers (32.5%) and Spanish influencers (31.1%), the emotional function is the most prevalent. For French influencers, the second most common purpose is showcasing children posing (27.5%), followed by shaping impressions (17.5%, equally divided at 8.8% for both subcategories). In the case of Spanish influencers, the order is reversed with similar percentages. The second most common purpose is shaping impressions (27.6%: portraying children as funny, 15.6%, and as good parents, 12.0%), followed by showcasing children posing (25.3%).

Italian influencers stand out for their emphasis on shaping followers' opinions (45.9%), particularly portraying themselves as good parents (25.85%) and showcasing their children as adorable (20.05%). The next most common purpose is generating emotional responses from the audience (30%) and, to a lesser extent than Spanish and French influencers, to showcase their children (12.6%).

The sharenting practices of British influencers stand out as the least emotional (26.6%) but the most conative (19.20%), indicating a stronger focus on audience interaction by inviting responses through questions. This contrasts with significantly lower percentages among Spanish (4.9%), French (6.3%), and Italian (4.3%) influencers. In line with the other countries, shaping audience opinions is also a significant purpose of British sharenting (25.6%), primarily portraying themselves as good parents (17.82%).

The promotional purpose has a moderate presence in sharenting posts, accounting for 10.2% of the total, indicating that it is not the primary goal of influencers. British influencers make the most use of their children in promotional activities (17.4%), followed by French influencers (12.5%), reflecting the monetisation of family and personal aspects of their children's lives, which raises ethical concerns as well as issues regarding privacy and the well-being of the children.

The percentages drop significantly for Spanish (5.8%) and Italian influencers (5.07%), who show similar levels. However, promotional content significantly outweighs any altruistic parenting advice influencers might offer to their followers. Such advice is either absent or shared at minimal levels, with only Italian (0.48%) and French influencers (0.17%) posting this type of content. These findings underscore that influencers' profiles are not intended to act as parental support networks to provide help or address issues related to child-rearing. Instead, they negotiate the social representation of both their children and themselves, focusing on emphasising their parental role through emotional content (Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Purpose of sharenting by country (RQ4)
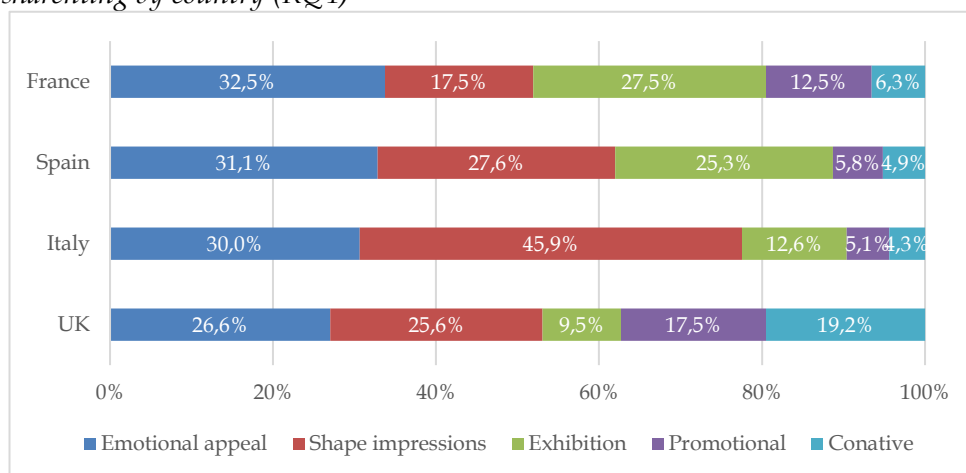
Source: compiled by authors (2025).

The Kruskal-Wallis test reveals significant differences in the purpose of posts across countries (p = 0.000), indicating that countries tend to emphasise different functions in their sharenting practices. However, while the differences are significant, the effect size (ε² = 0.014) is small, suggesting that although the country influences the purpose of the posts, the magnitude of this influence is limited. Thus, H4 is only partially confirmed.

Table 8.

Kruskal-Wallis test for the countries

	H-Stat	p-Value	ε²
Purpose of the post	19.422	0.000	0.014

Source: compiled by authors (2025).

5. Discussion

Social media has become the digital extension of individual and collective self-representation. However, the act of sharing photos of children introduces new challenges related to a child's freedom to be represented. The key findings of this study indicate that Europe's leading influencers, as parents, when they share posts featuring their children, the purpose of sharenting extends beyond merely showcasing their children; it is aimed at self-representing as good parents, demonstrating engaged parenting. Additionally, concerning patterns emerge regarding the vulnerable oveexposure of children in private settings.

Although both social media platforms enable the creation of biographical narratives of visual family self-representation, sharenting is primarily concentrated on Instagram. TikTok has yet to become as popular for this type of content as it has for other content featuring teenagers (Suárez-Álvarez & García-Jiménez, 2021). British and Italian influencers are the most frequent users of these platforms to share moments featuring their children.

Regarding RQ1, it is confirmed that when mega-influencers do share such content, it is predominantly on Instagram, with British and Italian influencers being the most active in this regard.

These parents diversify their content and avoid saturating their profiles with sharenting, possibly due to an awareness of the inherent issues associated with oversharenting, both for their children—who are exposed as sources of digital entertainment—and for the sustainability of their own businesses. In contrast, other studies focusing solely on Instagram mothers who share content related to their family life (Garrido et al., 2023; Jiménez-Iglesias et al., 2022) report higher percentages.

RQ2 confirms that mother influencers are co-protagonists of sharenting on both social media platforms. Italian and British influencers lead in co-protagonising posts, showcasing happy family images and proud mothers fulfilling their maternal roles. However, emerging digital masculinities are also observed, particularly among French influencers, where fathers play a more active role in posts (Campana, 2020). These findings indicate that sharenting not only reflects traditional family dynamics, but is also shaped by the social and cultural norms of each context.

A serious privacy issue is evident both in the settings where children are recorded or photographed and in the vulnerability to which they are exposed. These practices are common across the four countries studied, with no significant differences between the two social media platforms, reflecting a worrying trend in contemporary digital culture. In over 82% of the posts analysed, the child's recognisable face is shown, making them more vulnerable to dangers such as harassment, cyberbullying, or abduction.

The family environment, particularly the home, is the preferred setting for Italian influencers, intensifying the privacy risks for children. French and Spanish influencers favour public settings, while British influencers exhibit greater diversity in their choice of settings. This highlights the variability in sharenting practices, which may be linked to the availability of certain environments or the intention to diversify visual content.

RQ3 indicates that the primary purpose of sharenting is parental digital self-representation as "good parents" dedicated to their children's upbringing, alongside showcasing children as adorable figures to evoke emotions and strengthen audience connection. The high percentage of posts featuring emotional scenes suggests that sharenting is a way to express a staged version of "themselves". The use of children for commercial purposes is not the primary aim of these influencers' sharenting practices.

However, British influencers on TikTok and French influencers on Instagram share the most commercial content involving sharenting. Similarly, Europe's leading influencers do not use their profiles to create virtual communities of parental support. Altruistic parenting advice is shared only minimally, with Italian and French influencers offering occasional guidance, thereby limiting the potential of social media as a platform for sharing useful experiences and knowledge that could benefit other parents.

6. Conclussions

The findings of this research allow us to conclude that sharenting constitutes a communicative practice aimed at parental self-representation, in which the figure of the child is instrumentalised as a narrative resource for staging a committed and socially validated form of parenthood. This performative logic is embedded within the dynamics of mediated parenting and digital entertainment, where children's exposure on social media engenders elevated levels of vulnerability.

In terms of practical implications, this study highlights the need for regulation concerning inappropriate content, and the implementation of national and international plans to improve media literacy on privacy issues, particularly in relation to the management of children's digital identities and the denormalisation of these hyper-visibilising practices. Furthermore, it will be necessary that specific child protection clauses be incorporated into the regulatory framework of digital platforms.

The transnational dimension of the phenomenon lends support to the need for progress towards the establishment of a harmonised European regulatory framework that delineates the sharenting phenomenon, encompassing both professional content creators and anonymous families. The results of this study also highlight the necessity of a critical reassessment of the role of parental influencers as aspirational models of digital parenting and the implications such practices may have for the construction of identity, privacy, and vulnerability in early life stages.

The research has several limitations. The first relates to the social group studied, as it focuses on European influencers. Its study allows for the identification of patterns of child exposure; however, it limits the generalisability of the results to sharenting by non-media actors, and which could be expanded to include other countries and cultures. The second is the focus on two platforms, Instagram and TikTok, excluding other social media platforms that may offer different perspectives on the sharenting phenomenon.

The third limitation concerns the temporal scope of the data, since the study is based on a specific period, requiring further analyses to observe how sharenting evolves over time. For future research, it would be useful to expand the analysis to other social platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, which also play a significant role in the digital representation of families. Additionally, a longitudinal study could provide a clearer understanding of how sharenting evolves over time and its implications for both influencers and the children involved. Finally, it would be crucial to investigate the long-term effects of sharenting on children, considering psychological, legal, and ethical aspects related to their media exposure.

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