Sharenting: Parental Information Sharing in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

Parents actively share information about their children in online social networks such as Facebook and Instagram. However, little research has explored this parental information disclosure phenomenon known as sharenting. Sharenting is online sharing about parenting or sharing of content regarding children's lives by their parents. Parental information disclosures can negatively impact (e.g. embarrass) the children now or in the future specifically the young adults. Young adult is the age where children leave their parental homes to start their lives and attempt to discover their independent identity. Therefore, understanding of sharenting's impact on young adults' impression management and identity development is critical. We anticipate that the results of this research will make parents aware of their sharenting behavior, and the impact of this indirect online disclosure on their children's identity development.

KEYWORDS

Sharenting, parental information disclosure, adolescent, impression management

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Parents post online photos, and videos to chronicle every moment of their children's' life—and in some cases the online sharing starts even before the birth of a child when an expectant mother shares the sonogram images of her unborn child (Brosch, 2016). However, the disclosure on social networking websites is problematic in the sense that online information remains available for a long time. Things parents post about their children produce real-world consequences in terms of making them vulnerable to child pornography, bullying, and identity theft. For young adults, these disclosures can even damage their professional reputation, or future prospects altogether when a college admission officer, employer or peer can track their digital data way far back in time than anyone can ever imagine (Brosch, 2016; Steinberg, 2017). Therefore, this research poses to answer: 1) What are the young adults' experiences about sharenting in online social networks? 2) How does sharenting influence young adults' impression management, specifically in their academic and professional environment?

This research is guided by disclosures on social media (Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2018) and the impression management (IM) framework (Goffman, 1959). This research will employ an exploratory sequential mixed method design. In the qualitative phase, we shall attempt to understand young adult's views (18 to 21 years old) on sharenting by semi-structured interviews. Once constructs/themes are identified as a result of this qualitative phase, a survey will be developed to test the relevance of those constructs and their relationships across a wider population. The results of this survey will suggest the generalizability of the results across a wider population of adolescents.

While information sharing is quite a known phenomenon, sharenting has largely been unaddressed. Therefore, this research attempts to address this gap by investigating the young adults' (children) perceptions about sharenting and its impact on their development as they aspire to be successful in their social and professional network. Adolescence (young adult) is the period of turbulence where children attempt to craft their own identities in their social and professional environment. Therefore, the consideration of young adults' perspective on sharenting becomes very crucial to manage the conflict that may arise in the parent-child relationship.

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