Parents' Shares on Social Networking Sites About their Children: Sharenting

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ABSTRACT Among social media users, parents constitute an active part and they have brought in a new concept, which is called 'sharenting' in literature. This study aimed at obtaining the usage frequency and the content of social media sharing, and investigating the information a group of parents shared online about their children, via content analysis. The researchers administered an online survey on the usage of Facebook on 219 parents, whom the researchers had already connected with on Facebook. The parents were also asked for permission to view their Facebook profiles. 94 parents gave permissions and their profiles were investigated in terms of sharenting for the months of February, April, and June 2015 (for these 3 months only). Information shared online by parents, show a wide range of variety and diversity. There is also a reflection of social media on sharenting. In terms of content share results, parents need to be aware of the information they share online regarding their children.

INTRODUCTION

Parents usually share their experiences with their children. These shares generally are in the form of talking about their children. Their experience are about bringing up their children, and they enjoy sharing and talking about their children. Books written on bringing up children, newspaper articles, and TV programs may be the sources for parents shares about children and children development (Dell-Antonia 2016; Kirikli 2014; Guneysu 2001; Haktanir and Aral 1999). Nowadays, the common trend is parents' sharing, via social media. On Facebook, Instagram and other social media channels, parents intensively share about the activities of their children, and their feelings towards them. Although, social media is an effective communication and shar-

ing device, the research on the effects of social media on adult mental health, and the penetration of social media in lives, are quite limited. On the other hand, in some articles two constructs, 'parents' social media sharing' and 'parenting' are combined and a new term called 'sharenting— parenting and sharing on social media has been bunched, as parents put many photos and videos of their children at different ages on their feelings towards their children on the social media.

The term 'oversharenting', which is a combination of terms 'oversharing' and 'parenting', was first used in May 2012 by Steven Leckart, a writer in Wall Street Journal. Generally, 'sharenting' means the sharing of information, which is done by parents on social media, whereas, 'oversharenting' serves to emphasize the extremism of the sharing. After this term was introduced in the year 2012, since January 2013, the articles published on social networking sites has dealt with this term and the possible effects of parents' sharing information online, on their children's psychology and identity (Leckart 2012).

Parents share about their children and create digital identities for them. In the social media, a documentation for a specific child can be creat-

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ed by parents with shared photos, videos and comments. In fact, as parents create these shares or identities, this may be a problem for the children especially when they come to the age of adolescence. As they have online identities, they might find these shares as interference to their identities and this will lead to some problems, during the formation of their own identities (Smith 2013). The children's self-respect may be suffered by negative comments (Jones 2003). Moreover, it seems likely that this may be a risk for child abuse and invasion of privacy (Dockterman 2013). However in daily usage, this started to be used to address parents' group interact of sharing news about their children on the social media (Abby 2015; American Humanist Association 2015).

The technique of a hashtag, which enables a photo shared on social media to be seen all over the world under different headings, particularly, poses a potential danger (O'neill 2015). Today, social media sharings are used as vehicles to reflect life, psychology, and even the mental health of people. In order to understand the human development research done via Facebook or other social media, the tools have been increasing and their reflections are realized. Because of its effects on adult life, social networking sites in general and Facebook especially, have become an important resource medium of data collection (Hollenbauch and Ferris 2015; De Olivieria and Huertas 2015; Casale and Fioravanti 2015). The widespread usage of Facebook enable researchers to understand human psychology and development, therefore, most psychological issues are investigated using the data collected from Facebook.

By the year 2013, seventy-three percent of adults were recorded as being active on social networking sites (Mou and Miller 2015). This high rate is similar to other researches and evaluations done in Turkey. There are records, which prove that Turkey comes first in the number of Facebook users and their frequency of use (Kara 2015). Besides, it is known that the use of Instagram and other social networking sites are gradually entering into life. That is why the research on psychometric properties via social networking sites or on Facebook, is increasing. In addition to this, Internet addiction or addictions to social network usage are gaining importance (Pontes et al. 2015).

Some researches done via Facebook, claim that Facebook will be a working way in conducting several developmental supports for the society (Lenzi et al. 2015). The connection between Facebook and economic behavior (Duffet 2015), brand loyalty behavior (Hudson et al. 2015), and risk taking behavior (Miller and Melton 2015), have been investigated. Most of these, which have very recent research background, show themselves in publications. It is remarkable that there are studies, which criticize Facebook usage (Toprak et al. 2009).

This study aims to explore the usage frequency and the content of social media sharing of parents as well as investigates a group of parents' shares online about their children, via content analysis.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a desciriptive study with two stages. The first one was collected data by an online survey in Facebook, and the second stage content analysis on Facebook profiles of the parent participants were realized. This study was designed by taking into consideration the ethical and methodological principles of Facebook research, which is new in the literature. The data was collected by conducting a survey on Facebook, and viewing the Facebook profiles of 94 parents by the content analysis.

Participants

The researchers made an announcement on Facebook for parents who use Facebook and provided a link where they administered an online survey. 219 volunteered parents, whom the researchers had already connected with on Facebook took part in the study that is, filled out the survey. Based on Kleinman and Buckley's suggestions (2015), who conducted a study on the methodological and ethical procedures of Facebook studies were followed. The participants were firstly asked for volunteering to take part in the study. In order to guarantee the voluntary participation of the participants, they were asked to give confirmation to view their profiles. The ones who agreed, were asked to write their Facebook IDs.

The parents between ages 31 and 40 was the highest in the study group (41.74 percent). 77.73 percent of the participants were mothers. A great majority had one child (63.21%). The ages of the first group of children were between 3 and 6, and

their parents constituted the larger group with 23.5 percent. The smaller group had children between the ages of 26 and above, and their rate was 4.72 percent. The ages of the second group of children were between 7 and 10, and their parents comprised 20.24 percent of the group. The number of parents who had 3 or 4 children was limited. The number of children, their ages, and their birth order, are shown in Table 1.

Generally, participants were mothers who had one or two children, and they were young, with respect to other age categories.

Data Collection

The first phase of the research was conducted via an online survey carried out on Facebook. Content analysis was conducted on the Facebook profiles of the parents who answered the survey questions, and confirmed the investigation of their own profiles. There were 94 parents and they confirmed that their profiles and information shared on Facebook, could be viewed by the researchers for the months of February, April and June 2015. Just for these three months, all the information shared online by the parents about their child/children, were viewed, and recorded. The sharing was categorized by the researchers.

The ethics committee's approval of the research, was taken from the institution of the researchers.

Data Collection Instruments

The researchers developed a survey for data collection. While developing the survey, general questions were first of all prepared, and then statements were designed according to these general questions. Afterwards, the statements were sent for expert opinion, and for language and clarity check.

There were factual questions for describing the demographic information, requesting to know the participants' gender, age, or number of children. There were also behavioral questions that asked about the participants' Facebook usage aim and frequency, and the kind and frequency of sharing concerning their child/children. At the end of the survey, confirmation for the investigation of the Facebook profile of the participant was asked. After the ploting of survey was completed, it was sent to the participants. The survey was prepared using the website Survey Monkey, which enables the ease of online research. This way, it was easy for the participants to take part in the survey, which enabled the researchers to obtain the data.

For the content analysis, the following categories were obtained, and it was decided that the frequency distribution could be done, based on these categories. Special days (birthdays, graduation, tooth wheat party), health (illness, operation), social activities done together (meals, picnic, daytrips), information shared about children (informatics, recommendations, violence and abuse and so on, improper education practices), sports and arts, year end shows, educational issues and other categories, which were not mentioned above, such as, sharing their own child/children's or other children's photos/videos.

The frequencies, which were the source of the categories, were obtained through the information shared online, and the statements of the parents whose Facebook profiles were viewed.

In order to confirm the consistency of the evaluations, two researchers in the study group, independently, analyzed the profiles of 20 participants. As a matter of fact, the categories were coded as 0 or 1. It was discovered that the consistency between the two evaluations was eighty-seven percent. In a research where the evaluation of a small group is carried out by more than one person, it makes the research more reliable (Kumar 2011; Heppner et al. 2008). This value shows a good consistency and reliability of the measure.

Table 1: Distribution of participants' number of children, their ages, and their birth order

Birth order	Children's age frequency (f)						
	0-2	3-6	7-10	11-14	15-20	21-25	26 and over
1st child	37	50	28	34	28	25	10
2nd child	16	12	17	12	9	12	6
3rd child	4	2	-	-	1	-	-
4th child	1	-	1	-	-	1	1

RESULTS

The Duration, Frequency and Aims of Facebook Usage by Parents

The results of the research, were shown as the results of the survey and content analysis done on the Facebook profiles.

According to the survey results, 60.93 percent of the participants have been using Facebook for about 6 or more years, 36.74 percent for 2 to 5 years, and 2.33 percent have been using it for the past 1 year. Generally, majority of the participants have been using Facebook for a long time. Participants mostly logged on to Facebook, several times a day (44.66%). Participants, who used Facebook everyday, mentioned that they used it for less than 2 hours (46.43%). There were no participants that used Facebook for 10 hours or more. 12 parents out of the 219 parents, said that they never shared any information about their children. In general, less than 2 hours, but several times a day, can be Facebook use of parents considered an intensive usage of Facebook.

When the participants were asked the aim of using Facebook, 56.6 percent stated that they shared information of both themselves and their child/children, and also they aimed at following what other people shared. 24.53 percent of the participants declared that they were following others, while 12.74 percent marked the choice 'other reasons'. 6.13 percent of the parents mentioned that they shared information mostly about themselves or their environment. In terms of the frequency of sharing, 84.76 percent of the parents said that they shared information online, whenever there was something worth sharing. 2.38 percent of the parents shared every week, and 1.9 percent shared every day. The participants whose sharing were evaluated indicated that 81.4 percent shared 'special days' such as, birthdays, graduations, and year end shows. 54.98 percent shared social activities they did together, thirty percent shared educational issues, 18.96 percent shared sports and arts activities, 17.54 percent shared play activities, 12.8 percent shared health issues, such as illnesses or operations, and 12.32 percent, shared recommendations about products for children, and recommendations for children and informatics.

Among the participants who shared information about issues relating to children but not about their children, 71.83 percent shared the reactions of violence, insensitivity, and so on, towards children in the society, in order to create awareness. 54.46 percent of them shared information about the improper education practices towards children, 22.7 percent shared information about the products for children and recommendations for children, and lastly, 13.15 percent declared that they did not share information about such things. 63.77 percent of the participants said that they liked sharing pleasant things about their child/children. 37.2 percent of them stated that they became happy when they shared information about their child/children. 44.39 percent of the participants mentioned that they shared about their child/ children on other social networking sites apart from Facebook. A wide variety of the parents' shares on Facebook were reported by parents from happy experiences of children, sensitivity against violence and towards children in the society are shared by parents. The frequency and percentage distribution of the information parents' share about their children on Facebook which are shown in Table 2.

Results of the Content Analysis

According to the aim of the research, 2,550 statuses shared were obtained from the Facebook profiles of the 94 participants, who confirmed that their profiles and what they shared online could be viewed by the researchers, for the months of February, April, and June 2015.

Within these 3 months period, the number of statuses shared, ranged between 0 and 411 per person. In other words, there was a wide range between the people who made the most and the least sharing. The mean of the status shared per person was 23.93, which is quite high.

There was a significant difference between the frequency and the content of sharing with respect to the three months of February, April and June. The most frequent information shared by parents, were their children's photos or videos (f=793). In this context, there were information shared about children alone or with parents, relatives or peers, although, there was no special occasion. That type of sharing constituted 35.24 percent of the whole. There were occasions when a new product was bought for the child or when the child was singing, dancing, or having a conversation with a peer, when exchanging presents.

Table 2: The frequency and percentage distribution of parents' sharing about their children on Facebook

		Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)
"How long have you been using Facebook?"	Last 1 year	2.33	5
	2-5 years	36.74	79
	6 years or/and more	60.93	131
"How often do you check your Facebook account?"	Frequently in a day	34.11	73
	Several times a day	46.66	102
	Once a day	8.88	19
	Several times a week	7.01	15
	Once a week or less	2.34	5
"If you use Facebook everyday, how long do you approximately use it?"	10 hours and/or more	0	0
	6-9 hours	3.57	7
	5-3 hours	17.86	35
	Less than 2 hours	46.43	91
	Only 10-15 minutes	32.14	63
"Which one explains your Facebook usage aim best?"	Making shares mostly about myself and my environment	6.13	13
	Following others sharing	24.53	52
	Both making shares about myself and following others sharing	56.60	120
	Other	12.74	27
"How often do you share information about your child/children on Facebook?"	Everyday	1.90	4
	Every week	2.38	5
	Whenever there is something worth to sharing	84.76	178
	Other	10.95	23
' When considering the information you have shared on Facebook, what kind of shares have you made?'	Special days	81.04	171
	Health issues	12.80	27
	Social activities done with children	54.98	116
	Play activities	17.54	37
	General recommendations on products	12.32	26
	Sports – arts activities	18.96	40
	Educational issues	30.81	65
	Other	7.11	15
Apart from the information shared about your child/children, which of these sharing have you generally been making? (You can mark more than one choice)	I never do such sharing	13.15	28
	I share products for children or recommendations for children	22.07	47
	I share the reactions of violence, insensitivity etc. towards children in the society, in order to awaken sensitivity	71.83	153
	I share improper education practices towards children	54.46	116
	Other	6.10	13
"What are the reasons of sharing information about your child/children on Facebook?	I like sharing pleasant things about my child/children	63.77	132
	I like my friends' admiration of the information I share	11.11	23
	I like to share information about my child/children	37.20	77
	There is no certain reason	16.43	34
	I do as everyone do	2.42	5
	Other	12.56	26
"Are there other social networking sites apart from Facebook where you share information about your child/ children?'	No	55.61	119
	Yes	44.39	95
	- Instagram	83.16	79
	- Twitter	11.58	11
	- Myspace	2.11	2
	- Blogs	7.37	7
	- Other	10.53	10

19.28 percent of the information shared was centered on the products for children, and recommendations or informatics about children (f=434). They consisted of film recommendations (for example, 3 Idiots), art and cultural activities for children (for example, theatres and museums), or announcements of scholarships. There were information shared about health issues (for example, blood announcements, treatment demands), in order to draw attention to children, create awareness, and make contributions for medical care.

15.46 percent of the information shared constituted social activities done together (for example, picnic or daytrips) (f=348). There were other subtitles, such as a video of a dancing baby,

or a child polishing her nails (f=259). There were also photos of a para-genetic child and making likes or interpretations on non-discrimination, in terms of ethnicity, culture, or language. Such sharing was 11.51 percent of the whole. In addition to this, in this category, there was information shared about the appropriate educational applications to children, child-parent psychology, and institutional support for the education of children.

The aforementioned topics were followed by abuse, violence, and insensitivity towards children and this was 9.51 percent (f=214) of the whole. This kind of sharing, which attracted the attention of the society, were mostly made in February, rather than in April or June. The reason being that two major violence cases happened in Turkey (Ozgecan Aslan and Firat Cakiroglu incidences). Besides, domestic violence, pedophilia, kidnapping, femicide, and terrorism, were also reflected in this category.

Birthdays, with 4.88 percent, occupied a high rate in the special days category (f=110). At the same rate (4.88 percent), parents shared educational issues, such as school success, school report day, and general exams (for example, TEOG, which is the country's specific exam) (f=110).

There was a high rate of parents' sharing information about art activities relating to children (f=84). They constituted 3.73 percent of all the sharing, and consisted the child's performance of acting on a stage, singing in a choir, or reading a poem. Art activities were followed by sports activities, whose rate was 3.24 percent (f=73).

There was a topic which was 'other' in 'the activities done together' category (f=60). Parents (2.66 percent) shared information such as, going to the cinema, going to a hairdresser and making cookies together.

This followed by shares on related practices (f=34). Such an critical share for calling children as 'princes' or 'princesses'. These shares constituted 1.51 percent of all the the issues shared online. This category was followed by 'meals together', which was part of the 'activities done together' (f=16), and its percentage was 0.7 percent.

The lowest rates were illnesses in the health category, and 'graduation' in the special days category. They constituted 0.8 percent of all the parents' shares (f=2).

The distribution of parents' Facebook sharing in categories is shown in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the use of Facebook by a group of parents was examined, and then the informa-

Table 3: The distribution of parents' Facebook sharing in categories

Category	Subtitle	Percentage (f)	Frequency (%)
Sharing his/her own child/children's video or photos	-	35.24	793
Child oriented general sharing	Products- recommendations- Information	19.28	434
Child oriented general sharing	Violence- abuse- neglect	9.51	214
Child oriented general sharing	Improper education practices	1.51	34
Social activities done together	Daytrip- picnic	15.46	348
Social activities done together	Meals	0.70	16
Sharing other children's videos or photos	-	11.51	259
Special days	Birthdays	4.88	110
Educational issues	-	4.88	110
Activities	Art	3.73	84
Activities	Sport	3.24	73
Social activities done together	Other	2.66	60
Sports and arts activities	Yearend show	0.35	8
Special days	Graduation	0.08	2
Health issues	Illness	0.08	2
Health issues	Operation	0.04	1
Special days	Tooth wheat	0.04	1
Play activities	-	0.04	1

As seen in the findings parents' shares on Facebook about children vary to a large extend. Private/personal issues, general may be issues shared by parents. More specifically, more general children issues , specific personal experiences of their children, specific activities are shared by parents on Facebook.

tion shared by a small group about their children was investigated. In the study mostly, the parents were people who had one or two children, and the ones whose children were younger, respectively. The collected data showed that there are various reasons for using Facebook. The findings obtained from the survey are through viewing the existence of profiles of 94 parents. Findings supported the existence new concept among Turkish parents. The findings revealed that some parents share so detailed exeriences of their children on the social media and so many shares of parents could have been possible.

While the profiles of parents were viewed during 3 consecutive months (February, April and June, 2015), it was seen that some parents did not share anything in this period, whereas, some shared a lot. For example, one of the parents made 411 shares in this period, in the various categories. The mean of the shares by the parents was 24, which is remarkable. It means each parent in the group shared 24 different experiences, photos or comments about their children in 3 months. It is observed that parents generally share routines and positive events. In the survey, when parents were asked the categories of their shares. They reported that they shared especially special days or occasions, or whenever they found something worth they shared. On the other hand, when their profiles were viewed and analyzed, it was discovered that it was not like that. General sharing of children seems to be more dominant than sharing only on special days or occasions or worthy cases. It could be concluded that parents easily remember special occasions, in fact, they share about daily and general issues more.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the new term 'sharenting' exists among parents. This result is obtained by the ways, through direct questions in the survey and by viewing the Facebook profiles. The degree and content of shares differ. Shares include private/personal experiences of children. Detailed analysis of sharing might provide deeper understanding of parents' shares.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is limited to the answers given to the survey and hold investigation of the information shared by 94 parents about their children.

In order to understand the interaction on Facebook, not only the findings of this research, but also, the 'likes' and the content of the 'comments' of future studies, should be considered. For the purpose of evaluating the connection of adults' sharing and mental health, social media sharing should be investigated. A vast amount of the participants of this study, mentioned that they shared about their children, on other social networking sites rather than Facebook. For future research, the potential benefit and also the potential abuse of 'sharenting', should be studied. The parents' share, show a wide range of varieties and diversities. Although, there are results on the content of the shares by parents, there may be deeper studies revealing the content is needed.

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