

PERCEPTION OF MILLENNIAL MOTHERS ON MOM-INFLUENCER SHARENTING STYLE THROUGH INSTAGRAM IN BANDUNG

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Abstract

This study looks into how millennial mothers interpret and respond to sharing- related content shared by Instagram influencers. Sharenting, defined as the practice of posting moments in children's lives on social media, has emerged as a significant phenomenon within the context of digital motherhood culture. The phenomenon of "sharenting" has been shown to influence how mothers perceive their own parenting styles. This study employs DeVito's perception theory, which consists of five stages: stimulation, organization, interpretation-evaluation, memory, and recall. The goal is to learn how millennial mothers perceive and interpret shared content. The present study takes a qualitative approach, employing phenomenological methods. The study's participants are ten key informants, millennial mothers living in Bandung City aged 25 to 38 years. The research also includes the perspectives of one expert informant, a psychologist and family communication specialist. The data presented herein was gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using the stages of the perception process. The purpose of this study was to investigate how millennial mothers filter, store, and use sharing content in their parenting practices. This study's findings show that sharing content is viewed not only as a means of education and inspiration, but also as a source of emotional validation. However, this phenomenon is balanced by a cautious approach to the possibility of excessive imagery and the risk of invading children's privacy.

Keywords: Family Communication; Instagram; Millennial Mothers; Perception; Sharenting.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini melihat bagaimana ibu milenial menginterpretasikan dan merespons konten berbagi yang dibagikan oleh influencer Instagram. Sharenting, yang didefinisikan sebagai praktik memposting momen-momen dalam kehidupan anak-anak di media sosial, telah muncul sebagai fenomena yang signifikan dalam konteks budaya keibuan digital. Fenomena "sharenting" telah terbukti mempengaruhi bagaimana para ibu memandang gaya pengasuhan mereka sendiri. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori persepsi DeVito, yang terdiri dari lima tahap: stimulasi, organisasi, interpretasi-evaluasi, memori, dan penarikan kembali. Tujuannya adalah untuk mempelajari bagaimana para ibu milenial mempersepsikan dan menginterpretasikan konten yang dibagikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah sepuluh informan kunci, yaitu ibu-ibu milenial yang tinggal di Kota Bandung dengan rentang usia 25 hingga 38 tahun. Penelitian ini juga mencakup perspektif dari satu informan ahli, seorang psikolog dan spesialis komunikasi keluarga. Data yang disajikan di sini dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dianalisis menggunakan tahapan proses persepsi. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki bagaimana para ibu milenial menyaring, menyimpan, dan menggunakan konten berbagi dalam praktik pengasuhan anak. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konten berbagi tidak hanya dipandang sebagai sarana edukasi dan inspirasi, tetapi juga sebagai sumber validasi emosional. Namun, fenomena ini diimbangi dengan pendekatan yang hati-hati terhadap kemungkinan pencitraan yang berlebihan dan risiko melanggar privasi anak.

Kata Kunci: Ibu Milenial; Instagram; Komunikasi Keluarga; Persepsi; *Sharenting*.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital technology has transformed how parents communicate, especially in sharing aspects of their children's lives through social media, a phenomenon known as *sharenting* (Doğan Keskin et al., 2023; Gatto et al., 2024). Among the most influential actors in this domain are *mom-influencers*, who construct personal branding by integrating parenting narratives with visual content on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Conti et al., 2024; Clawson, 2023). While previous studies have addressed the implications of sharenting for children's privacy and digital identity (Kılıç et al., 2024; Tosuntaş & Griffiths, 2024), there is limited exploration into how the curated identity of mom-influencers impacts millennial parents' perceptions, especially in the Indonesian context.

In Bandung, where digital engagement among millennial mothers is high (Arindita, 2019), parenting content circulated by mom-influencers is increasingly referenced as a model for child-rearing. Through daily posts and interactive formats such as reels and infographics, influencers construct persuasive narratives that subtly shape parenting norms (Van den Abeele et al., 2024; Jorge et al., 2022). However, the dissemination of children's images online often raises ethical concerns, such as the erosion of children's privacy and autonomy (Brechelmacher, 2024; Stormer et al., 2024), as well as the normalization of oversharing as a performative parental act (Klucarova & Hasford, 2023).

Despite the growing popularity of these practices, there is still a research gap in examining how millennial mothers interpret and internalize such content. Most literature focuses on motivations and privacy implications, rather than how personal branding strategies of mom-influencers contribute to audience perceptions of ideal parenting (Cino & Vandini, 2020; Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2023). This study aims to fill that gap by focusing on how Bandung-based millennial mothers perceive *sharenting* behavior from mom-influencers and how it influences their own parenting identity.

Using a qualitative phenomenological approach rooted in Family Communication theory (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008), this research investigates the intersection of digital self-presentation, parental mediation, and the evolving norms of online motherhood. Through online interviews, the study captures the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of millennial mothers toward parenting content shared by mom-influencers. The findings are expected to contribute both to academic discourse and to public awareness on the balance between parental expression and child protection in the digital age.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Family Communication

Family communication encompasses the transmission of messages between members through verbal and nonverbal channels, shaping relational roles, emotional bonds, and value systems within the family (DeVito, 2022). It functions not only as a tool for expressing emotions and experiences, but also as a mechanism for internalizing social, moral, and cultural norms. Nonverbal cues, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language, complement verbal interactions in conveying meaning and reinforcing connection. According to DeVito, communication in families also determines how roles are negotiated, maintained, and transformed over time, particularly in the contexts of parenting and child development.

DeVito (2022) highlights five key components of effective family communication: honesty and openness, support and empathy, acceptance and validation, negotiation and conflict resolution, and communication patterns. Honest and open exchanges foster psychological safety, while empathetic listening enhances mutual support during adversity. Validation strengthens emotional bonds and individual self-worth. Meanwhile, constructive conflict resolution involves mutual understanding and collaborative solutions. The communication patterns within a family, whether open and adaptive or closed and rigid, shape individual behavior and social roles within the household.

These patterns have further implications in the digital age. Families with open communication styles may be more receptive to external influences, including social media content, whereas rigid patterns may resist them. As such, the way parents respond to *sharenting* trends and portrayals of family life by mom-influencers on platforms like Instagram is often intertwined with their internal family communication culture. This connection underscores the need to

examine how digital parenting representations are filtered through, or amplified by, the communication dynamics within families.

B. Perception

Perception is the process through which individuals interpret and give meaning to sensory stimuli, forming an understanding of their environment, including people, events, and objects (Mulyana, 2010; DeVito, 2022). According to DeVito (2022), perception is not a single act but a continuous sequence of five stages: stimulation, organization, interpretation and evaluation, memory, and recall. These stages are shaped by both external stimuli and internal psychological factors such as past experiences, emotions, values, and expectations.

In the stimulation phase, individuals engage in selective attention and selective exposure, meaning they are more inclined to notice and internalize stimuli aligned with their existing beliefs or personal relevance. The organization stage involves structuring information using mental rules such as proximity, similarity, and contrast. This is followed by interpretation and evaluation, where meaning is assigned based on subjective frameworks like beliefs and emotional states. Subsequently, this information is stored in memory with cognitive markers for future retrieval, and finally, the recall stage involves accessing these stored perceptions to guide future actions or decisions.

In the digital era, millennial parents frequently engage with parenting content on Instagram to shape and express their parenting identity. The selectivity hypothesis suggests that these parents are more likely to expose themselves to content that aligns with their values and aspirations as caregivers. Influenced by social expectations and idealized portrayals of parenting, they interpret mom influencers' posts through personal lenses that validate or modify their own approaches. This highlights the subjective and selective nature of perception in digital parenting, especially in relation to the way social media narratives are internalized in everyday family life.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore how millennial parents in Bandung perceive the *sharenting* practices of mom-influencers on Instagram. The chosen paradigm emphasizes the lived experiences of individuals, enabling the researcher to uncover the meanings ascribed to parenting content in digital contexts (Alaslan, 2021). Phenomenology allows for the interpretation of how digital narratives influence parental decisions, emotional dynamics, and privacy considerations in family communication.

The research method used in this study is qualitative in nature, drawing upon in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation to collect data. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on millennial parents living in Bandung who actively engage with mom-influencer content on Instagram. The research object centers on *sharenting* behavior and its influence on parenting identity and digital representation. A total of ten key informants and one expert informant participated in this study.

The unit of analysis refers to five stages of perception based on DeVito (2022): stimulation, organization, interpretation and evaluation, memory, and recall. These stages help examine how sensory and emotional data from Instagram content are processed and stored by millennial parents, shaping their parenting behaviors.

Data analysis was conducted using phenomenological reduction, involving six steps: identification, data collection, transcription, literature comparison, validity preservation, and ethical consideration. In parallel, Miles and Huberman's interactive model (data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing) was employed to ensure systematic interpretation. To ensure data credibility, the triangulation technique was applied through multiple sources, methods, and times, combining observation, interviews, and documentation to validate findings and strengthen reliability.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result Findings

A. Stimulation

The stimulation stage marks the initial point of perception, where external stimuli, particularly visual and auditory cues, capture the attention of millennial mothers as they encounter sharenting content on Instagram (DeVito, 2022). Informants reported varying preferences in content exposure. Some were drawn to daily life portrayals of influencers and their children, valuing the relatability and routine-based insight. Others preferred special moments such as birthdays or reflective posts, perceiving them as emotionally engaging and meaningful.

The appeal of mom-influencers was also driven by perceived content utility. Informants followed accounts offering educational value, such as DIY sensory play, parenting tips, or emotional development strategies. For some, curiosity triggered by peers or social trends played a central role, demonstrating that stimulation is not solely content-driven but also socially influenced. Content discoverability via Instagram's explore page further enhanced initial exposure, with practicality and personal relevance being major determinants in the decision to follow.

This stage highlights that stimulation is both sensory and contextual, involving personal needs, social dynamics, and perceived usefulness. It lays the foundation for how millennial mothers begin forming perceptions of sharenting content and selecting which influencers to engage with.

B. Organization

At the organization stage, millennial mothers begin to classify and relate the parenting content they consume based on personal experiences, values, and social contexts (DeVito, 2022). Some informants stated that the geographic proximity of mom influencers, such as those living in Bandung, increased relatability. However, many others emphasized that content quality and shared parenting values mattered more than physical location. Informants also felt a stronger connection to influencers with similar backgrounds, such as being a stay-at-home mother, due to comparable daily routines and challenges.

Beyond regional and occupational aspects, the similarity in children's age also influenced content relevance. Content that featured children going through similar stages, such as eating difficulties or early toilet training, was considered practical and directly applicable. In contrast, other informants preferred content that reflected compatible parenting approaches, such as gentle communication, emotional awareness, or a focus on building character.

Several informants described saving or discussing content with their spouses before trying it at home, reflecting a selective and collaborative adoption process. Others preferred immediate application as a way to experiment and understand their child's reactions. Emotionally powerful content also shaped how mothers perceived parenting practices, often motivating more mindful and compassionate behavior. This stage highlights how organization involves emotional and cognitive filtering, where mothers evaluate content based on similarity, practicality, and values relevant to their parenting experience.

C. Interpretation-Evaluation

At the interpretation and evaluation stage, millennial mothers construct meaning from sharenting content based on personal values, emotional resonance, and parenting needs (DeVito, 2022). Informants perceived sharenting as a blend of education, inspiration, and entertainment. Content that portrays mom influencers' honesty and emotional vulnerability was considered more authentic and reflective. Informants stated that such content not only entertains but also provides meaningful insights, especially for mothers who are still learning or navigating early phases of parenthood.

Interpretation varied depending on the source of content. While some influencers offered medically oriented or educational content, others leaned more toward visual appeal or lifestyle branding. Informants generally favored content with a balance between entertainment and instructional value. Despite recognizing the potential risks of oversharing, such as exposure to inappropriate content or privacy concerns, many believed the benefits of knowledge sharing outweighed the harms when content was used selectively and responsibly.

Moreover, the impact of sharenting extended to self-improvement. Informants reported that observing different parenting communication styles helped them reflect and enhance their own approach. Rather than imitating influencers entirely, they adapted applicable elements to their own family context. The evaluation process, therefore, plays a central role in shaping how millennial mothers perceive the relevance and trustworthiness of sharenting content, while also influencing their parenting mindset and practices.

D. Memory

In the memory stage, millennial mothers retain sharenting content that aligns with their parenting experiences and use it as a reference for future decisions and reflections (DeVito, 2022). Informants recalled specific parenting moments from the content they consumed, such as quotes from children or emotional interactions, which became meaningful reminders in their daily parenting lives. These memories often reinforced emotional awareness, such as the importance of being calm and attentive when interacting with children.

Content that addressed parenting challenges, such as feeding difficulties or how to respond to tantrums, was especially memorable. Informants actively saved or remembered tips that matched their current needs and tried to apply them in real situations. For many, this content provided emotional support during times of fatigue, offering a renewed sense of encouragement and positivity in parenting.

While most informants viewed the content as helpful, some approached it cautiously. One mother stated that she and her husband already had their own parenting principles, so content from social media was treated as a supporting reference rather than a main guide. This shows that the integration of parenting content is often filtered through personal values and family context.

In daily practice, mothers saved content they considered informative, including ideas for activities, strategies for managing emotions, and motivational parenting messages. These materials were used as references during moments of uncertainty or when looking for inspiration. Content related to child growth, emotional development, and nutrition was also frequently stored, especially when it was relevant to the child's current developmental stage.

E. Recall

In DeVito's perception theory, the recall stage refers to the ability to retrieve stored information, often guided by emotional significance or contextual relevance (DeVito, 2022). For millennial mothers, sharenting content on Instagram is often recalled when it aligns with their parenting needs, inspiring reflection or action. Influential figures such as Nikita Willy, Rensia Sanvira, and Ayudia Bing Slamet were frequently remembered by informants for their relatable and motivational parenting approaches. Less frequently cited names, like Dhannisa Cho and Retno Hening, show that recall varies depending on individual exposure and resonance.

This stage not only reinforces parenting knowledge internally but also facilitates social sharing. Informants O F and R A reported sharing useful content through WhatsApp groups, such as health tips or feeding strategies. However, not all recalled content is distributed publicly. Informant F P, for instance, preferred to keep parenting references for personal use, reflecting a more internalized recall process.

The distinction in recall behavior may relate to personality tendencies. Expert insights suggest that introverted mothers may prefer private consumption of information, while extroverted or socially oriented mothers are more likely to share content as a form of care or support. Emotionally relevant and practical content is more likely to be remembered and shared selectively based on personal relevance and social dynamics (Tosuntaş & Griffiths, 2024).

Discussion

A. Initial Stimuli in Building Millennial Mothers Perception of Sharenting Content

The stimulation stage marks the beginning of perception, occurring when individuals become aware of sensory input such as visual or auditory cues (DeVito, 2022). In this study, millennial mothers begin forming perceptions of sharenting content on Instagram either intentionally through targeted searches or unintentionally via explore pages or scrolling on the timeline. This initial exposure draws attention to parenting content, mother and child interactions, and daily family routines, which then generate interest and cognitive engagement.

Most informants preferred content that depicted everyday parenting activities, as it felt more authentic and relatable. These preferences reflect DeVito's principles of honesty and openness in family communication. Informants such as R A and A A valued this type of content for its practical benefits, such as supporting child development or helping manage time more effectively as a parent. On the other hand, Informant A Z favored content that showcased special family moments, as it provided emotional support and inspiration.

The concept of selective attention also emerged in this stage. Informants actively sought content that matched their parenting needs, such as tips for stimulation or communication techniques. Expert insights in this study confirm that users tend to engage with content that aligns with their current life stage or parental concerns. In addition, social influence played a role. Informant O F followed mom influencers based on curiosity and peer recommendation, illustrating how exposure can be shaped by social dynamics and familiarity.

In summary, these early stimuli reveal two main motivations among millennial mothers when viewing sharenting content. The first is the search for educational value and the second is the desire for social reassurance. These

motivations indicate that Instagram serves not only as a space for learning but also as a platform for emotional connection and validation in parenting.

B. Perceptual Acceptance in Organizational Stage of Millennial Mothers

In the organizational stage of perception, millennial mothers begin categorizing sharenting content based on their parenting values, experiences, and contextual needs (DeVito, 2022). Rather than random, this process is influenced by previous routines, expectations, and relevance to their current family situations. Mothers typically group Instagram content based on factors such as parenting style, child's age, shared beliefs, or visual familiarity.

Several informants stated that geographic proximity did not strongly influence their evaluation of content. Instead, content quality and relatability were seen as more important. However, one informant noted that shared location increased practical applicability. Informants also emphasized the importance of background similarity with mom influencers, although some valued reflective communication and shared values more than shared identities. This supports the view that information is organized according to personal relevance and emotional connection.

The age of the influencer's children was also a significant filter. Mothers with children in similar developmental stages found content more useful, particularly when addressing specific challenges. However, others emphasized that applicability was more important than age similarity. Parenting approaches like gentle or cooperative parenting resonated with informants who valued participatory and empathetic interaction with their children. These preferences reflect deeper value alignment and demonstrate how parents categorize content based on perceived emotional and developmental fit.

In terms of implementation, some mothers tried new parenting ideas immediately if they found them suitable, while others chose to reflect, consult, or adjust before applying the content. This aligns with the principle of negotiation in family communication, where decisions are collaborative and context-aware. Emotionally resonant content such as tantrum handling or tender moments triggered introspection, helping mothers evaluate their emotional responses and parenting methods. Even when the content did not directly change parenting behavior, it still prompted personal reflection and awareness.

C. Interpretation-Evaluation Process in Responding to Sharenting by Millennial Mothers

In the interpretation and evaluation stage, millennial mothers not only receive parenting content but also assess its relevance, accuracy, and emotional resonance in relation to their parenting context (DeVito, 2022). Rather than acting as passive consumers, they actively interpret sharenting content by comparing it with their own values, experiences, and needs. This process is shaped by factors such as narrative honesty, alignment with personal reality, and emotional depth.

Informants viewed sharenting content as both educational and entertaining. For example, Informants P S and A Z found value in content that was informative yet emotionally touching. Informant O F emphasized the importance of content authenticity, particularly from professional sources. These evaluations show how mothers assign meaning based on usefulness, emotional support, and perceived credibility.

Mothers also acknowledged the risks associated with sharenting. Informants F P and R A saw content as helpful when used selectively, while T P and H L raised concerns about potential privacy violations and child overexposure. These perspectives indicate that mothers balance educational benefits with ethical and emotional considerations. Expert insights in the study reinforce this view, suggesting that public sharing without discretion may harm children, especially when involving sensitive health or personal issues.

Informants also used sharenting content as a tool for self-reflection. While H L compared content to evaluate her parenting effectiveness, F P and A Z were inspired to improve communication and emotional management. This confirms that the interpretation process is deeply personal and adaptive. As supported by prior studies, parents often use sharenting content as a reference for evaluating their parenting style, even as privacy concerns may remain underacknowledged.

D. The Role of Memory in Responding to Sharenting by Millennial Mothers

According to DeVito (2022), memory plays a central role in the perception process by storing information that has been previously organized and interpreted. Millennial mothers tend to retain parenting content such as advice, child stimulation ideas, or emotional regulation strategies from Instagram. This stored information becomes a practical reference that influences daily parenting decisions. Digital tools such as bookmarks, screenshots, and saved posts support this process by reinforcing memory through visual repetition.

Informants reported different memory patterns based on emotional connection and usefulness. Informants N N and P S remembered content tied to parenting ideals, while F P recalled more specific content related to GTM and child

development due to its direct relevance. These findings illustrate how emotional significance and practical needs shape memory retention.

Informants O F and P S noted that recalling sharenting content helped restore confidence during moments of fatigue. An expert insight confirmed that when confused or overwhelmed, mothers tend to revisit saved content that resonates with their parenting challenges. Meanwhile, Informant R A emphasized that although she stored relevant content, her parenting decisions still relied primarily on shared values with her partner. This suggests that memory serves as both an emotional support system and a rational reference.

Informants R G, T P, and R A deliberately saved content related to feeding strategies, child behavior, and motivational parenting messages. This behavior reflects the selective nature of memory, where emotionally and contextually appropriate information is preserved for future use. As supported by Ranzini et al. (2020), the act of saving content strengthens memory consolidation and facilitates easier recall.

E. Recall of Sharenting Content and Its Social Circulation Among Millennial Mothers

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V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study finds that millennial mothers in Bandung form their perceptions of sharenting content on Instagram through DeVito's five stages of perception: stimulation, organization, interpretation, memory, and recall. Initial interest arises when parenting content aligns with their children's needs. Organization occurs as they relate content to personal factors such as location, background, and child's age. In the interpretation stage, mothers evaluate content as educational, entertaining, and reflective of the mom-influencer's image, often prompting self-reflection.

During the memory stage, practical content related to child development is retained for future reference. In the recall stage, figures like Nikita Willy, Rensia Sanvira, and Ayudia Bing Slamet are remembered as influential, with content either shared or privately saved depending on personal preference. Overall, sharenting content shapes not only media consumption but also parenting decisions and knowledge-sharing among digital communities.

Based on the results of the research and discussion previously described by the researcher regarding the perception on millennial parents of mom-influencer sharenting style through Instagram in Bandung, the researcher provides two suggestions which are divided into academic suggestions and practical suggestions in accordance with the researcher's objectives. The following are academic and practical suggestions that researchers can provide, namely as follows:

A. Academic Suggestion

- Future research should expand the study area beyond Bandung to gain a more socially and culturally diverse understanding of millennial mothers' perceptions of sharenting.
- Further studies are encouraged to investigate the long-term relationship between sharenting practices and the development of children's digital identities.
- Upcoming research may also explore the link between perceptions of sharenting and the issue of protecting children's personal data on social media.

B. Practical Suggestion

- Mom-influencers are advised to exercise greater responsibility in sharing sharenting content by considering its educational value, relevance, and the child's right to privacy.
- Millennial mothers, as the primary audience, should be more selective in media consumption, ensuring content aligns with their family's values and needs.
- Married couples are encouraged to use sharenting content as a discussion tool to promote collaborative parenting practices, rather than relying solely on one parent.



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