Development, Validity, and Reliability of the Sharenting Scale (SS)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to construct a scale for assessing the extent of parents' 'sharenting' behavior and to assess its psychometric characteristics. The development of the Sharenting Scale commenced with a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Subsequently, a preliminary version of the scale was administered to 300 parents who utilize social media platforms. Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted on the collected data, revealing a two-factor structure comprising nine items. The analysis indicated that the two-factor structure accounted for 66.51% of the total variance. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted using data collected from 191 parents who completed the aforementioned scale. The goodness-of-fit indices indicated satisfactory fit values: $\chi2/df$= 2.06, RMSEA= .075, CFI= .96, IFI= .96, TLI= .95, GFI= .94, NFI= .93. The convergent validity of the scale was assessed through the calculation of Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability values. Furthermore, the internal consistency reliability of the Sharenting Scale was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, yielding a value of .82. Additionally, the stability of the scale was examined via a test-retest method, resulting in a correlation coefficient of .83. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the Sharenting Scale demonstrates both validity and reliability as a measurement tool for assessing parents' 'sharenting' behavior.

Keywords:
Sharenting, validity, reliability, parenting, social media.

1. Introduction

With the great developments in communication technologies, the increase in internet accessibility has made the use of social networks widespread. While the social network allows creating a public or semi-public profile within a limited system and determining the list of users who can access the posts, it also allows viewing what is done by others within the system and navigating between profiles (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). The terms social media and social network can sometimes be used interchangeably. For this reason, in the present study, social media platforms refer to social networking applications such as Instagram and Facebook. There are studies in the literature that show that a great majority of adults spend a significant amount of time every day on these widely used social media applications, especially Facebook (Solmaz, Tekin, Herzem, and Demir 2013). In a study on the motivations of parents to spend time on social media, it was found that parents used social media for purposes such as recording their children's memories of growing up, sharing the happiness of having a child and the excitement of becoming a parent with their close circle, sharing information, and providing social support through social networks. In addition to these, tendencies such as having an identity in society with the search for importance and appreciation, making parenting a profession, objectifying their children by using their images on social media, and thus having commercial gains were also found (Yavuz, 2019).

The term "sharenting" was coined from the words "share" and "parenting'' for parents' habit of using social media to share their children's information and images (Collins Dictionary, 2013). Some studies used "sharing parenting" (Ayhan and Öztürk, 2021), directly inspired by the English translation, or "social media parenting" (Yavuz, 2019) for this concept.

A study examining Facebook posts of parents found that sharenting behavior was also common among Turkish parents. In the study, although parents stated that they shared special days or the moments they considered valuable, when their profiles were examined in detail, it was found that while sharing images, they shared general and daily memories rather than special days (Maraşlı, Sühendan, Yılmaztürk, and Çok, 2016). In England, through interviews with bloggers who had children, it was investigated how parents defined the limits of their digital selves and how they justified the posts they shared about their children. It was found that although the participants experienced intense ethical dilemmas with the responsibility of protecting their children from risks, they continued to share their lives on social media (Blum-Ross and Livingstone, 2015). Erişir and Erişir (2018) found that parents included their children in one out of every two posts. Another study, in which the great majority of participants were housewives, showed that housewives tended to share about their children. On the other hand, it was found that most of the parents did not have information about the problems that may arise in sharing images of their children, and although they did not have information, they shared about their children, while some parents did not avoid sharing even if they had information about the risks (Turgut, Kopuz, Aslan, and Eryılmaz Toksoy, 2021).

Although the findings of studies show that parents include their children in their social media posts with various motivations, some studies warn about children's right to privacy and about situations that may cause problems in children's future lives (Siibak and Traks, 2019). At this point, it is important to know to what extent parents are aware that they are creating their children's digital footprints. A digital footprint is defined as the trace left after interacting with digital media through a mobile phone, TV, the internet, a music player, or other services (Kumar and Raj, 2020). Parents can consciously or unconsciously leave a trace as a result of their posts and interactions on digital platforms. It has been found that parents mostly share posts by ignoring their children's legal rights and developmental processes (Erişir and Erişir, 2018). In this context, sharenting behavior has brought the right to privacy, the best interests of the child, and the right to be forgotten to the agenda. It is predicted that the intense digital footprints of today's children may have long-term effects on their future education and employment (Prakash, 2019).

A study conducted by Holiday, Norman, and Densley (2022) examined parents' Instagram posts qualitatively to determine how they presented themselves in their posts. The study showed that although parents claimed that they paid attention to their children's privacy on social media, their desire to show themselves on social media during the sharing phase prevented them from evaluating their children's privacy. The study determined that there were presentation categories such as "polished" and "intimate" profiles for social media images of parents, including their children.

Polished profile: The posts in this category include the memories parents create intentionally for an ideal self-presentation. Parents in this category aim for the photo frame to reflect an attractive, carefully prepared, and tidy environment. Time and effort are put into visual quality, such as filters and edits, to present a flawless image. The caption prepared for posts includes the expectation of praise and appreciation for the "excellence" presented by followers. Although the text in the post seems to appeal to the followers, the image in the post shows a message of separation or difference between the person sharing the post and the follower, which is deliberately emphasized. The parent is included in the image. Even if the child is included in the text and image, the focus is on the parent. In this case, children are in the position of supporting accessory objects (Holiday et al., 2022). It can be said that here the parent's sharing the child's image is a tool; the main purpose is to share a post about the parent.

A study conducted by Kalaman and Çelik (2019) shows how a parent who can be categorized into a polished profile creates deliberate memories. Within the scope of the study, married individuals' views were reviewed about the extent of the effect of using social media on the problems experienced in marriage, whether social media can be used as a reliable medium in marriage, and its effects on divorce. According to the results of the study, a large majority of married couples share posts about their families on social media. The main reason behind their posts is their desire to show these contents to other users. According to the study results,

participants especially want to show a happy family picture, and they want other users to see this happy content.

Intimate profile: Parents in this category want to present their memories realistically and simply in their posts, rather than emphasizing a perfect presentation and competence. They use photos to keep their memories and make an album. Parents in this profile who have the motivation to record their life struggles and victories are careful while choosing the image to be shared on social media; they rarely resort to editing, and they do not worry about perfection. They want to present their life as it is. They rarely appear in the image, and they are mostly in the position of photographer. Although the posts are mostly focused on the child, the child is often not represented as an independent individual (Holiday et al., 2022). In a study conducted by Ouvrein and Verswijvel (2019), it was emphasized that a perfect physical appearance is not a priority for some parents, and they prefer to share a family life that looks "natural."

The Sharenting Evaluation Scale was developed by Romero-Rodríguez, Kopecký, García-González, and Gómez-García (2022) to measure to what extent parents engage in sharenting behavior. There are no scales in Turkish culture for evaluating parents' posts about their children on social media. While evaluating sharenting behavior, evaluating how parents will be categorized in terms of self-presentation in addition to measuring the extent of sharing may be supportive for future studies on this new phenomenon. For all these reasons, the current study aimed to create a measurement tool specific to Turkish culture to determine the degree of sharenting behavior of parents who share about their children on social media and to carry out validity and reliability studies.

2. Method

The studies carried out during the development process of the Sharenting Scale (SS) are described below. Firstly, information about the participants in the study was given.

2.1. Participants

The study participants consisted of parents who actively utilize social media platforms. A total of 491 parents participated, comprising 296 females and 195 males. Regarding educational attainment, 7.3% of participants completed primary school, 13.2% completed high school, and 79.4% attained undergraduate or higher education degrees. In terms of age distribution, 3.9% of parents were aged ≤25 years, 46.6% were aged 26-35 years, 34% were aged 36-45 years, and 15.5% were aged ≥46 years. Regarding marital status, 91.2% of parents were married, 6.5% were single, and 2.2% did not specify their marital status.

2.2. Data Collection Process

The Sharenting Scale (SS) was applied to parents using social media through Google Forms. Participants who voluntarily participated in the study were asked to complete and approve the informed consent form. The parents were informed about the study to ensure that they were sincere while answering. They were explained the instructions on the scale and told to ask about the parts they did not understand.

The information, documents, and data collected and used for the study were obtained by adhering to ethical principles. In addition, analysis of the data and presentation of the results were carried out per ethical rules.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Sharenting Scale (SS)

The process of questionnaire development commenced with a comprehensive literature review, followed by the creation of an initial item pool. These items underwent refinement through collaboration with two faculty members specializing in psychological counseling and guidance, along with input from a doctoral faculty member in psychology. Subsequently, the items were reviewed by three experts in Turkish Language and Literature. Following this review process, a pre-application form was administered to 36 adults from the target demographic to assess their linguistic comprehension. Based on the feedback received, minor adjustments were made to the items, resulting in the development of the trial version of the Sharenting Scale.

Regarding the sample size for factor analysis in measurement tool development studies, there are varying recommendations. Tinsley and Tinsley (1989) propose a sample size of ten times the number of items, while

Gorsuch (1990) suggests a sample size of five times the number of items. SS, which was prepared in line with this information and which was transferred to Google Forms, was applied to 300 parents—some participants 25 times the number of items – for EFA.

2.3.2. Personal Information Form (PIF)

Questions to determine the education level, marital status, age, and gender of the parents were prepared by the researchers and asked in the PIF.

2.4. Data Analysis

The initial phase of the investigation involved an analysis of the kurtosis and skewness of the data acquired from the data collection instruments. Subsequently, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted within the SPSS 25.0 environment. The suitability of the collected data for factor analysis and the adequacy of the sample size were assessed utilizing the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett Sphericity Tests. Following the outcomes of these assessments, EFA procedures were initiated. In this analysis, the total explained variance value of the measurement tool and the component matrices rotated through the Orthogonal – Varimax rotation method were revealed. On the other hand, in this study, a scale plot was created. In the second part of the research, SS was applied to a new group in order to determine the suitability of the structure resulting from EFA, and the kurtosis and skewness of the obtained data were examined, and then the data were subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in the SPSS AMOS 23.0 environment. In CFA, the suitability of the model was evaluated through χ^2/df, RMSEA, IFI, CFI, TLI, NFI, and GFI indices. In order to determine the convergent validity of the scale, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) coefficients were calculated. The reliability of the measurement tool was examined through its internal consistency and stability. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated for internal consistency, and the correlation coefficient of the total scores resulting from the test-retest application was calculated for stability.

2.5. Ethical

Necessary approval for the use of scales in the study was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Aksaray University. (Document Number: 2023/01-26)

3. Findings

3.1. Validity of SS

3.1.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

SS was applied to 300 parents who shared posts about their children on social media platforms. As mentioned above, the kurtosis and skewness values of the data were calculated, and it was determined that the values were between +1.5 and -1.5, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) for a normal distribution. Then, KMO and Bartlett Sphericity Tests were performed. Test results are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *KMO and Bartlett Sphericity Test Results*

Tests		
KMO	Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.848
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2018.767
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

Table 1 displays that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure for the data obtained from the SS application is .84, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields a significant result (p < .05). According to Field (2009), these findings suggest that the data stem from multiple distributions. Consequently, it can be inferred that the sample size is adequate for conducting Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). In this analysis, a nominal EFA approach was employed with the aim of determining the minimum number of factors that elucidate the relationships among the variables, or rather, the items of the scale at the highest level. To ascertain the number of factors to be extracted, sub-dimensions with eigenvalues exceeding 1 were considered, in line with Özdamar (2002). The results concerning the variance explained within the scope of EFA are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. *SS Total Variance Values Explained*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extracted Dimensions			After Rotation		
	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance Explained	Total Explained Variance Value	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance Explained	Total Explained Variance Value	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance Explained	Total Explained Variance Value
1	4.005	44.497	44.497	4.005	44.497	44.497	3.866	42.960	42.960
2	1.981	22.014	66.511	1.981	22.014	66.511	2.120	23.551	66.511
3	.614	6.822	73.334						
4	.565	6.281	79.615						
5	.517	5.742	85.357						
6	.404	4.487	89.844						
7	.345	3.834	93.678						
8	.325	3.610	97.289						
9	.244	2.711	100.000						

Table 2 indicates that the SS comprises two sub-dimensions with eigenvalues exceeding 1. These two sub-dimensions collectively account for 66.51% of the total variance. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), it is recommended that the factor loading value for each item be .32 or higher. Additionally, factor rotation is necessary for determining the factors. Moreover, if any item exhibits factor loadings across different sub-dimensions, the discrepancy in loading values between the two sub-dimensions should not surpass .1, as advised by Stevens (2002). The Rotated Component Matrix results for the SS are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *SS Rotated Components Matrix*

		Subscales
Items	Polished	Intimate
I4	.859	
I3	.857	
I5	.848	
I2	.745	
I1	.738	
I6	.705	
I12		.858
I10		.853
I11		.773

Table 3 shows that SS has nine items and two factors. There are six items in the "Polished Profile" factor, while there are three items in the "Intimate Profile" factor. Examining the Scree Plot of the SS provides clear information regarding the distribution of items into sub-dimensions.
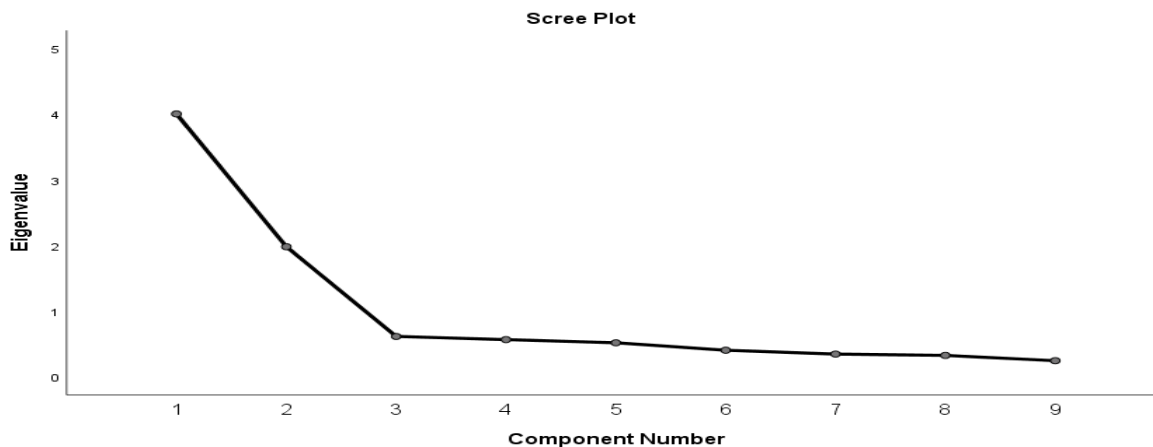

Figure 1. *SS Scree Plot*

Upon examination of the scree plot for the scale, the solution includes sub-dimensions up to the point where the descending line from the top begins to flatten out horizontally, as outlined by Karagöz (2016). Analyzing the scree plot of the SS reveals that the line becomes horizontal after two sub-dimensions. Consistent with the "Total Variance Explained," "Rotated Component Matrices," and the scree plot of the SS, it was concluded that the items were grouped into two sub-dimensions.

3.1.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

In the second phase of the study, 191 parents who had posted about their children on various social media platforms were administered to validate the two sub-dimensional and nine-item structure of the SS, which emerged from the EFA. The kurtosis and skewness values of the collected data were examined, indicating a normal distribution. Subsequently, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using the SPSS AMOS 23.0 environment. During the CFA, one adjustment was made in the modification indices to align with the theoretical structure (Gürbüz, 2021). The goodness-of-fit indices for the two sub-dimensions and nine-item structure of the SS were found to be RMSEA= .075, GFI= .94, IFI= .96, CFI= .96, TLI= .95, NFI= .93, and $\chi2/df$= 2.06. Consequently, the CFA results indicated that the SS exhibited acceptable fit values with its nine items and two dimensions. The model formulated in the CFA is depicted in Figures 2 and 3.
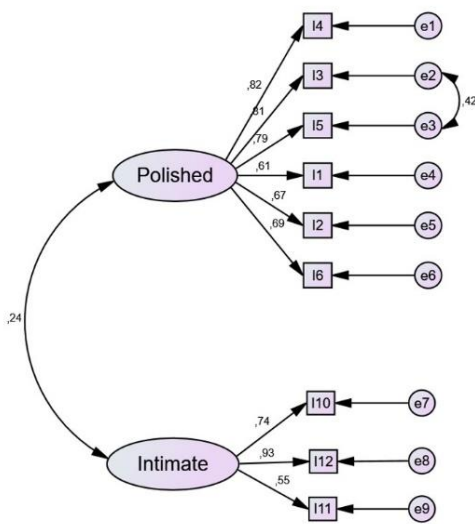

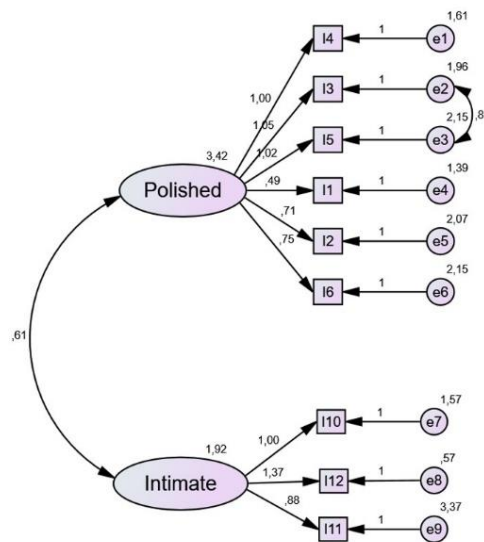**Figure 2.** *Standardized Estimates Values*   **Figure 3.** *Unstandardized Estimates Values*

Figure 2 shows that the nine-item and two-sub-dimensional structure of the SS was validated. The standardized and unstandardized estimation results regarding the explanation of the observed variable by the latent variables are expressed by arrows. Since it may be difficult to interpret Figure 3, where the values are not adjusted for standard errors, the standard values in Figure 2, which are obtained by dividing the relevant values by the standard errors, can be interpreted more easily. For a one-to-one correspondence, all values here should be zero, and of course it is impossible to reach such a value in reality. What should be considered here is a value higher than 2.58. If such a value is in question, that value is interpreted as problematic (Brown, 2009; Byrne, 2001; Gallagher, Ting, & Palmer, 2008; Washburn & Plank, 2002). When Figure 2 is analyzed, it is seen that there is no problematic value. When all of these are evaluated together, it can be stated that the structure of the SS, which emerged in the EFA, was confirmed. The items, sub-dimensions of SS, and item factor loading values resulting from CFA are in Table 4.

Table 4. *SS Items and Item Factor Loads*

Item Number	ITEMS	Subscales	Factor load
I4	I care about writing an effective caption while sharing my child's photo or video.	Polished	,822
I3	While sharing a photo or video I take with my child, I take care to choose the one I look most beautiful in.	Polished	,806
I5	I care about the environment's being tidy while sharing my child's photo or video.	Polished	,789
I1	I share my child's photo or video to get positive feedback from my followers.	Polished	,611
I2	I take care that I am also in the image while sharing my child's photo or video.	Polished	,678
I6	I use regulatory filters in posts involving my child.	Polished	,690
I10	I worry about violating my child's privacy while sharing my child's photo or video.	Intimate	,757
I12	I consider that my child's photos and videos may be used by websites that promote pedophilia.	Intimate	,907
I11	I believe that the photo or video I share may affect my child's future negatively.	Intimate	,565

The factor loading of the items in the polished factor of SS is between .611 - .822; Table 4 shows that the scores on the sincere factor are between .565 and .907.

3.1.3. Convergent validity and reliability of SS

The AVE and CR coefficients were calculated to determine the convergent validity of the SS. Internal consistency and stability were examined to determine the reliability of the SS and its subscales. In order to determine the internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used; in order to determine the stability, the SS was administered to 58 parents as a test-retest at three-week intervals, and the relationship between the sums of the results obtained from the two applications was revealed by the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. The AVE and CR values of the SS, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the correlation coefficient calculated as a result of the test-retest are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *SS Convergent Validity and Reliability Values*

	AVE (≥.50)	CR(≥.60)	Cronbach Alpha (≥.70)	Test-Re-Test (≥.70)
Sharenting Scale			.82	.83
Polished	.54	.87	.88	
Intimate	.57	.79	.77	

In the literature, for a measurement tool to have convergent validity, the AVE value should be .50; it is stated that the CR value should be .60 and higher (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Accordingly, as can be seen in Table 5, it can be stated that SS has convergent validity. When the Cronbach Alpha coefficient is .80 or higher, it is stated that the internal consistency of the scale is high (Karagöz, 2016). Accordingly, it can be said that the internal consistency of the SS is high. As seen in Table 5, the stability of SS is above .80. Accordingly, it can be stated that its stability is also high.

3.2. Scoring and Interpretation of SS

The SS is answered in a 7-point Likert scale. Respondents can give answers between "Very favourable to me=7" and "Not favourable to me at all=1". Four items on the SS are reverse-scored. The highest score is 56, and the lowest score is 9. A higher score on the SS means that the parent's level of sharenting is high.

4. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

When the literature is examined, although interest in the concept of sharing has begun to increase, there are still few studies on this concept, which expresses the sharing of parents towards their children on social media. For this purpose, the development process of the Sharenting Scale has been initiated. In light of the findings of the studies conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the SS, it can be said that the scale is a reliable and valid measurement tool that can be used to determine parents' sharing levels and self-presentation categories. With EFA and CFA, it was determined that SS had a two-factor structure. As a result of CFA, it was determined that the RMSEA value was .075. This value indicates that the two-factor structure of SS has an acceptable fit value. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient calculated to determine the internal consistency of the SS within the scope of its reliability is .82; the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient calculated as a result of the test-retest method to determine stability was found to be .83. These values indicate that the reliability level of the scale is high.

Despite the strong results obtained from the validity and reliability of SS, it can be said that the study had some limitations. For example, since the form prepared through Google Forms was sent through an electronic medium to parents who used social media, the information given to ensure that the parents who participated were sincere while responding to the scale was also given through an electronic medium. Participants in the study were parents, and their sharenting behaviors were evaluated in the study. However, this phenomenon may not only involve parents. Family elders, close relatives, and close family friends somehow share on social media about the children around them (Fox and Hoy, 2019). Future studies can be extended to include this population.

Sharenting behavior can have consequences such as children's right to privacy, digital footprint, right to be forgotten, and negative effects on future employment. Although they were not asked within the scope of the study, some of the parents stated that they thought about their behaviors and questioned themselves while responding to scale items. This shows the importance of informing parents about the issues to be considered while sharing posts about children on social media.

In line with the research indicating that sharenting behavior is also widespread among Turkish parents (Maraşlı et al., 2016), the Sharenting Scale was developed specifically for Turkish culture. SS can be used by psychological counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers in the field of family counseling. Researchers can examine the relationships between sharenting behaviors and marital satisfaction and marital adjustment among married parents. Sharenting behaviors of divorced parents or parents who are in the process of divorce can also be examined. The relationships between parents' sharenting behavior and importance seeking, desire to be liked, and self-presentation can be examined.

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