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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Problematising Sharenting of Supermoms in a Neoliberal Context

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Abstract

The representation of motherhood using digital platforms, which we call sharenting, can shape the socially constructed motherhood identity, i.e., supermoms in modern societies. Despite building a positive identity as mothers, supermoms may unintentionally violate their children's privacy, instrumentalise, and even monetise the children. We examine sharenting and supermom identities as manifestations of neoliberal repositioning women as mothers and employees with little consideration of their unarticulated struggles. Drawing on a netnographic study of social media practices, we analysed fifteen working supermom accounts with over two hundred thousand followers, where child-related content was shared and posted between 2019 and 2023. We find that sharenting is often employed to construct the identity of supermoms, yet it frequently leads to the exploitation of children for profit-driven purposes, thereby increasing their vulnerability. We contribute to the literature by offering empirical evidence that the supermom identity is a by-product of the neoliberal system, which normalises time-intensive demands on women in the workplace and caregiving roles. Furthermore, we highlight the adverse consequences of sharenting and provide critical insights into the privacy and security risks associated with child-related digital content.

Keywords Sharenting · Supermom syndrome · Neoliberal context · Social media posts · Netnography

Introduction

Sharing information regarding one's children on digital media platforms, known as sharenting, has become increasingly common among modern mothers, who are labelled as supermoms (D'Amore, 2012; Ludu, 2010) for their ability to balance the demands of work and family (Lazard, 2022). Although sociological development on parenthood tends to diverge from gendered practices, mothers play a pivotal role in

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childcare (Ehmer, 2021), and women interpret their experiences of motherhood in light of cultural norms (Vandenberg-Daves, 2014; Beuer, 2023; Stoppard, 2000). For instance, the agentic role of motherhood is pivotal for many women, as motherhood is a reiterative process sculpted through social conditioning (Butler, 1990, 2009). The rise of the neoliberal age, individualised parenting, withdrawal of the state and community, and diminishing their role in the social welfare of children (Yalkin & Ozbilgin, 2024) raises significant concerns when the commodification of personal data has become a norm (Lyons, 2020). Consequently, the expansion of Web 2.0 and user-generated content in the digital landscape has resulted in new forms of maternal identity, shaping the expectations and experiences of motherhood while highlighting complex dynamics in how motherhood is displayed in modern society. While the extant literature focuses on the impact of sharenting on children's online safety and privacy, maternal health, and parenthood transition, there is a need for a holistic understanding of how sharenting impacts the discourses of motherhood, particularly in the neoliberal context where individual responsibility and utilising personal data for economic gain is valued (Arpaci, 2024; Lazard, 2022). Furthermore, the neoliberal paradigm impacts women of diverse backgrounds disproportionally, increasing their vulnerabilities and expanding economic inequalities (Polat & Ağlargöz, 2024; Vandenbeld Giles, 2014).

The digital representation of motherhood accentuates the impact of social media platforms and digital technologies where online affective–discursive practices are used as representations of narratives in the construction of motherhood identity (Nichols & Selim, 2022). Sharenting practices pose challenges, as they are often interconnected with neoliberal ideals of intensive mothering, self-enhancement and commodification of personal data (Lazard, 2022). The new motherhood in the digital environment framed new representations and discourses of more complex dynamic motherhood, "supermom syndrome" (D'Amore, 2012; Keefe et al., 2017). Despite cultural differences, supermom syndrome is prevalent across societies. The rise of Supermom ideology has been attributed to several factors, including an increase in women's participation in the workforce due to the feminist movement and social paradigm shifts, resulting in a change in patriarchal and capitalist assumptions of women (Bauer, 2024). Postfeminist influences also have shaped women to become Supermoms— women who are joyful, selfless, in control, and rarely stressed, perpetuated by society in which mothers are expected to "do it all" and "do it alone" (Ludu, 2010). In this characterisation, Supermoms embrace a communal idea of joggling separate identities and often face insecurities and self-esteem, loss of self, and emotional suffering (Donovan, 1993; Daum, 2017; Mahaffey et al., 2015; Srivastava & Singh, 2019; Singh and Carter 2020). However, the recent emphasis demonstrates that neoliberalism and postfeminist logic obscure the fundamental issue of structural and institutional inequality that mothers endure (Lee & Jin, 2023; Kamasak & Palalar, 2024), and women bear the sole responsibility of childcare in the absence of institutional support and social welfare mechanisms.

The sharenting practices reinforce the hegemonic ideal of good motherhood, but they also enforce and prioritise a prototypical representation of cultural norms and particular consumption patterns (Matsumoto, 2007; Esfandiari & Yao, 2022). Mothers often use digital proxies to convey, share, and transmit idealised

motherhood to larger audiences while signalling their image (Wilson & Yochim, 2015). However, most studies conducted in the context of developed nations explore the impact of neoliberal orientations on displaying idealised motherhood. Thus, this study extends the literature by exploring how supermoms construct their motherhood identity in a society characterised by neoliberal orientations, mainly how sharenting enables such characterisation in the process as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, the current study contributes to understanding how supermoms materialise motherhood due to increased precarity in a neoliberal context that promotes heightened competition and self-interest. More precisely, we ask the following questions:

(1) How does sharenting facilitate the construction of the supermom identity and function as an antecedent to the development of the supermom?
(2) In a neoliberal context, how do sharenting displays of supermom identity within digital realms interplay with the protection of children?

Drawing on a qualitative netnographic methodology focusing on semiotic elements (Kozinets, 2020) produced and shared on digital platforms, we show how supermoms represent their motherhood under neoliberalism and how this relates to protecting their children. Since many supermoms utilise sharenting as digital technology as a proxy of their mothering (Cino, 2022), we suggest that sharenting serves as a medium for constructing a supermom identity for many mothers. Thus, sharenting is a vital antecedent that contributes to endorsing one as a supermom while validating one's identity and creating a positive feedback loop (Haley, 2020). In the digitised age, motherhood is often illustrated through the personal accounts of individuals on social networking sites and blogs (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2017). The posts function as narratives for mothers expressing their views and serve as self-representations of the ideal motherhood image. Due to the heightened orientation towards sharenting, we argue that the concepts are closely linked. Supermom syndrome and sharenting reflect women's desire to be virtuous and acknowledged. Therefore, this study explores sharenting practices to examine if such practices facilitate the idealised representations of motherhood and the formation of the supermom identity. Over the centuries, motherhood has been depicted to portray dominant societal narratives, often shaped through mass communication, media, and the internet, creating a collective understanding of motherhood (Kang, 2018; Lang, 2005) that varies culturally. Extant literature supports that societal discourses are vital in constructing motherhood identity since such norms reflect the accepted common right and good (Bauer, 2023; Daum, 2017; Rome, 2020). Most research was conducted on understanding supermoms and constructing an ideal image of motherhood in a Western context (Henrich et al., 2010; Schmidt et al., 2023). However, the emergence of supermom syndrome and sharenting activities in developing countries with different neoliberal practices and cultural heterogeneity may manifest (Bicchieri, 2017). Supermoms share their children's milestones to attain positive affirmation and self-identity (D'Amore, 2012). However, in the pursuit of constructing a positive

motherhood identity, the naive intentions of supermoms can often lead to adverse outcomes. For example, becoming a supermom can be linked to demonstrating consumption patterns (Banister et al., 2016; Kar et al., 2023) at the cost of utilising and monetising children. Recent studies have shown that while engaging in sharenting activities and constructing a positive self-digital image, mothers unintentionally compromise the privacy of their children on digital platforms (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017; Brosch, 2016) and commodify them (Campana et al., 2020; Haley, 2020). By sharing their consumption preferences through commodification, mothers may further amplify the monetisation of motherhood (Banister et al., 2016; Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Ponsford, 2011) by portraying children's educational, professional, and financial milestones (Yopo Díaz, 2021). In a neoliberal regime where policies and regulative measures are celebrated ceremonially, mothers can portray their children as subjects of their business endeavours since the neoliberal stance promotes individual success based on popularity (Başoğlu, 2020; Erişir & Erişir, 2018; İşözen & Özkan, 2021). Thus, we aim to deepen the previous literature by examining the naive intentions of supermoms and displays of sharenting and demonstrate the outcomes in contexts characterised by lax rules and regulations. We question if the intricate interplay between digital displays of motherhood, as these lead to supermom identity, is a symptom of the neoliberal system, which normalises, and both sharenting and supermom identity emerge as symptoms of neoliberal responsibilisation of women as mothers and employees, with little accommodation of their structure-greedy demands on women at work and childcare. Thus, we theorise that sharenting is an antecedent of supermom identities in either sphere. By doing so, we extend the theorisation of digital mothering (Lazard, 2022) in the untamed neoliberal context of Turkey (Kusku et al., 2021), where the morality of the market evades oversight about gender equality and women's responsibilisation at work and home (Yalkin & Ozbilgin, 2024).

Research Context: Neoliberalism and Motherhood

Adopting neoliberal ideology in developing countries has resulted in transformed markets characterised by free competition, commodification of social services, and a shift in demographic patterns by increasing women's participation in the workforce. Despite societal shifts that blur parental roles' boundaries (Knight & Brinton, 2017; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2022), gendered divisions of labour and responsibilities have remained (Schmidt et al., 2023). Although neoliberal policies argue that women's participation in the workforce is a significant intervention to minimise gender discrimination, the ideology fails to notice the amount of unpaid work women bear (Prügl, 2015). To explain motherhood discourses in a neoliberal context, we posited our study on the theoretical framework of Bourdieusian social theory (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990).

Bourdieu characterises social life as an interplay of complex interactions among social structures. At the micro level, individual interactions result from the socialisation process in which preferences, perceptions, and behavioural patterns become

collective habits at the macro level. The collective habitus and social fields are interconnected and play a significant role in shaping individual interactions. Each field within collective habitus represents a particular sphere of socialisation characterised by rules of conduct (doxa), hierarchies, and power dynamics. As an instrument of positioning within social domains, collective habitus can also serve as a compass for navigating such interactions as it influences individuals' perception and interpretation of doxas based on accumulated experiences. As part of the conservative rhetoric of the ruling party, the family has been portrayed as the foundation of national cultural values and a crucial element of societal solidarity (Yazıcı, 2012). However, concerning welfare and social care, Turkey is exhibiting a neoliberal paradigm in which the protection is transferred to non-state actors such as family networks and private institutions. Such idealisation of family notions without institutional support mechanisms places responsibility on individuals and reinforces gendered approaches to family relationships, thereby increasing the vulnerability of women.

The Bourdieusian conceptualisation also allows for the theorisation of systems. Neoliberal ideology, for example, emphasises efficiency, marketisation, and individualisation, and due to its individualistic nature, competition and entrepreneurial orientations are promoted, while the responsibility for socioeconomic needs is normalised on the individual level (Güney-Frahm, 2018; Ozbilgin et al., 2023; Vincent et al., 2023). In the neoliberal regime, the accepted social norms promote gendered organisational systems (Beneria, 2003; Güney-Frahm, 2018) while fostering gendered work marginalises women (Altmann & Pannell, 2012). Mothers often assume greater responsibilities and struggle to balance their work and personal lives, leading to work-life imbalances. The absence of institutional and organisational support mechanisms in such contexts (Kamasak et al., 2020; Lynch & Lyons, 2008) emphasises individual responsibilisation (Vincent et al., 2023) and glorifies a supermom. Thus, mothers are pressured to display multiple roles to attain perfection and desirability. Motherhood becomes a profession, and women are expected to orchestrate innate nurturing with their expertise in mothering through attained knowledge in society (Kilty & Dej, 2012). Furthermore, the market ideology of neoliberalism conceptualises motherhood as a means of personal development and consumerism (Vandenbeld Giles, 2014), which is often demonstrated beyond the boundaries of the physical realm as social networking sites have made modern motherhood visible and accessible at all times (Waruwu, 2023).

According to the Social Media Statistics (Statista, 2023), 4, 9 billion people utilise social media globally, which is anticipated to reach 5,85 billion users by 2027. As one of the fastest-growing social media platforms, Instagram enables users to share various content like videos, reels, and pictures. The demographics show that the rate of social media usage is high among developing countries that operate under neoliberal discourses, like Indonesia, Brazil, and Turkey. Instagram is popular among women aged between 18 and 49 (Shewale, 2024), connecting with Millennial and X Generation women, a significant number of whom are mothers. Numerous studies have shown that followers follow at least one public Instamom account from pregnancy through parenting (Aydemir & Şen, 2020). As Yelsalı Parmaksiz (2012) argues, the purpose of blogging on Supermoms while showcasing the children stems from an intention to promote the joy of becoming a mother while addressing social

isolation. Therefore, Instagram, which offers social support while mitigating social isolation to supermoms, is gaining popularity where mothers display chronicles of the experiences of motherhood. Mothers often practise sharenting to improve well-being (Thuy & Berry, 2013) and attain positive self-esteem and a sense of connectedness (Dauda & John-Akinooal, 2022). While showcasing motherhood on social media generates positive outcomes, several studies have shown that mothers often share to gain economic benefits (Van den Abeele et al., 2024). Unrealistic expectations are often presented, causing anxiety for many mothers (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2017). Supermoms often demonstrate a behavioural pattern of sharenting their children's milestones while attributing the children's success to their motherhood practices. This situation demonstrates the centrality of neoliberal ideology that success is closely linked to being an exemplary mother, which is evident in many supermoms' sharenting narratives (Güney-Frahm, 2020; Aydemir & Şen, 2020).

Methodology

We used a qualitative design to explore the relationship between Supermom Syndrome and sharenting through the content analysis of 15 Instagram Instamom accounts. To achieve this, we adopted netnography, an interpretive research method often referred to as virtual ethnography by some researchers (Lenihan & Kelly-Holmes, 2015). Netnography is particularly suitable for this study due to its ability to study culture and social practices in virtual environments, mirroring how ethnography explores culture in face-to-face settings. The rise of online communities and "netizens" necessitates methods like netnography, which allows researchers to access and analyse a rich array of multimedia data, such as photos, videos, and audio, archived online in real time. This capability is critical for examining Instagram, where visual storytelling and multimedia sharing are central to user interactions. Moreover, netnography enables the investigation of social media behaviours and practices within their organic digital contexts. It allows us to understand how users engage with platforms like Instagram in their everyday lives, forming and expressing identities within the unique cultural environment of the platform. In this study, netnography is uniquely positioned to uncover the nuanced ways in which Supermom Syndrome and sharenting manifest and interact in the digital lives of Instamoms, providing insights that might not be accessible through traditional ethnographic methods. (Udenze & Bode, 2020).

The universe of this netnographic study is the Instagram "Explore Posts", which consists of well-liked platform-curated but not personally identifiable posts. Another popular method, "hashtag sampling," was especially avoided since Instagram is a visual site, and people might not use hashtags to refer to their children. Although hashtag sampling could mitigate algorithmic problems and researcher biases, it presents constraints in obtaining suitable data samples (Eagar & Dann, 2016). The chosen method focused on a naturalistic analysis of a convenient, purposeful sample of user posts unknown to the researchers. Then, utilising constant comparative analysis, an in-depth examination of the posts and the captions of randomly chosen 15 accounts was conducted. Netnographic studies

have shown that smaller and more purposeful samples can deliver rich qualitative insights into analysing social media behaviours and digital identities (Xun & Reynolds, 2010). Parallel with qualitative research methodology, the study aims to capture depth and complexity, not a statistical generalisation of the phenomena.

Through purposeful sampling (Seidman, 1998), we have targeted working mothers as regarded as Instamoms on Instagram. With a purposeful sampling procedure, the researcher can select participants who can provide a thorough insight into the subject. The reason for selecting such a sample is twofold. Firstly, the researchers intend to explore unique sharenting activities among a group of Instamoms with considerable followers (over 200,000). The selection enables researchers to explore the presumed probable linkage between the constructs of sharenting and supermom's identity construction. Secondly, we aim to gain a more profound understanding of the content of the sharenting activities and the potential consequences. Hence, the study selection sample is based on the subjects about common traits of a Supermom, a woman who portrays exemplary motherhood through sharing ideals of perfection and producing motherhood discourses, engaging in sharenting activities. Each Instagram account was analysed for the sharenting content of the individuals that were posted between the years of 2019 and 2023. Participants represented a variety of industries, including professional chefs (3), authors/novelists (2), advertising agency owners (1), real estate agents (2), medical doctors (3), and academics (4). The majority of participants were married or in civil partnerships. The sample consists of individuals residing in Turkey; only two participants (an advertising agency owner and a professional chef) live abroad. Netnographic study is a method for collecting and analysing digital communities and social media contents of the subject of interest that surpasses the limitations of the quantitative approach. Netnographic research focuses on dialogues in the social media domain where the identity alignment among online and offline identities is not of concern since the ethnographic study is suited to explore personally sensitive topics expressed by individuals in online communities (Kozinets, 2015). As Kozinets (2015, p. 88) expresses that ethnographic research has a "voyeuristic nature" where it allows researchers to explore stigmatic topics, circumstances, dialogues, and experiences that are somewhat difficult to study face-to-face as empirically supported by the research (Gilchrist & Ravenscroft, 2013; Gurrieri & Cherrier, 2013). To ensure the study's credibility, the first and second authors analysed the data through multiple sources, including videos and photos (Borgnine et al., 2010) of the public accounts of working mothers on Instagram. After the data was accumulated, the first and second authors independently analysed and interpreted the data. Once the data accumulation and interpretation phase was completed, all of the researchers of the study engaged in multiple discussions regarding divergent perspectives iteratively until reaching a consensus, which strengthened the robustness of the research findings and minimised potential biases in data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To ensure the anonymity of the public accounts of working mothers, we have employed pseudonyms regardless of any hierarchical order (Table 1).

Table 1 Illustrates that most sample Instagram moms operate in precarious conditions, which allow them flexibility but limit their access to social security benefits

	Names	Profession	Number of kids	Number of followers
1	Necla	Medical Doctor/ Internal Medicine	One boy	467 thousand
2	Ada	Author: Children's book/Educator	One boy	372 thousand
3	Dilara	Advertising agency owner	One girl One boy	243 thousand
4	Zehra	Real Estate Agent	Three boys	362 thousand
5	Melis	Professional Chef and Caterer	One girl	590 thousand
6	Merve	Medical Doctor (Pediatrician)	One boy	1.2 million
7	Ezgi	Medical Doctor / Author (Pediatrician)	One boy	488 thousand
8	Hande	Author/novelist-Children's book	One boy	525 thousand
9	İrem	Academics (Psychology)	One girl	231 thousand
10	Damla	Professional Chef	One girl	347 thousand
11	Irmak	Author/novelist	One girl One boy	438 thousand
12	Aslı	Advertising agency owner	Two boys	566 thousand
13	Selin	Academic (Criminal Law)	One boy	547 thousand
14	Berna	Academic (Child Development and Education)	One boy	2.4 million
15	Ayla	Academic (Molecular Biology)	One girl	209 thousand

After coding and analysing the documented data samples, we selected quotations and presented them in the findings

Findings

The study identified two gaps in the extant literature on sharenting activities and Supermoms: (i) sharenting is an antecedent yielding to strengthening the Supermom image, and (ii) analysing motherhood discourses of individual Instagram mom scripts to identify representations of supermom identity interplay with the protection of children in a neoliberal context. The findings are presented in the following order.

Sharenting as an Antecedent to Construct the Supermom Image

Although social media usage and sharenting have attracted increasing academic interest, most studies have focused on presenting parents' opinions, experiences, and practices. For instance, some authors have pointed out that sharenting has some positive benefits for parents (Steinberg, 2017a; Steinberg, 2017b; Williams-Ceci et al., 2021), such as improved social connectivity, affirming their parenthood and receiving social support (Wagner & Gasche, 2018). However, a limited amount of research has examined the rationale and ways of implementing such activities (Lipu & Siibak, 2019; Ouvrein & Verswijvel, 2019) where such sharenting activities have an objective of gaining followers and subscribers towards cultivating their Supermom persona (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017).

Using a total of 15 Instagram accounts analysed in the study, we found that sharenting activities are utilised to construct self-representations of individuals as Supermoms. As the posts indicate, Instamoms exhibit two unique personas, representing their role as mothers and professionals. The expression of many responsibilities and the aspiration to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between caregiving and career progress is frequently evident in social media posts that portray the embodiment of the maternal role. For example, Instagram postings exemplify the desire for social connection and the idealised portrayal of motherhood, often posted to showcase Supermom attributes. Moreover, sharenting activities demonstrate that mothers utilise the sharenting of their children to display their caring and nurturing characteristics, which elevates them as being perceived by society as "exemplary" mothers. The quote illustrates that women can be nurturing mothers who display tenderness and emphasise the importance of their children while also maintaining a career within a competitive environment, an attribute salient to supermoms.

> I believe I attained much in life, whatever I pursued, but you are truly something else. I have never been a summer person, but I look forward to next summer with you, because you are the reason for the most beautiful feelings. I love you more than all the seashells in the sea (Melis, professional chef and caterer, one daughter, 590 thousand followers).

As posts are met with likes and comments affirming idealised motherhood, the supermom image is reinforced by positive validation from followers on social media. Therefore, prolonged sharing is demonstrated as necessary for digital approval, perpetuating a positive digital reputation, and curating the image of the supermom (Archer, 2019; Damkjaer, 2018; Keefe et al., 2017). Based on the sample, mothers often mentioned copiously the children's educational attainment, birthdays, holidays, and developmental milestones and sharenting is used to strengthen the image of supermom. Studies have shown that mothers leverage social media platforms to display and share their children's lives in a carefully selected approach to showcase an idealised portrayal of their motherhood abilities (Ammari et al., 2015; Brosch, 2018). In line with this, mothers highlight their vital contribution to their children's academic success to garner validation and admiration from followers.

> I am looking into your eyes, seeing you all grown up and wondering when you became 11! You gave me the best of everything; being your mother means the world (Dilara, advertising agency owner, one boy and one girl, refers to the daughter's birthday, 243 thousand followers)

One interesting narrative is that most of the Instagram moms within the sample use breastfeeding as an essential norm of natural motherhood.

> Fetal cells passed from the baby to the mother during pregnancy protect the mother from breast cancer. In studies comparing blood samples from breast cancer and healthy women, fetal cells were found more frequently in healthy women. Pregnancy and breastfeeding are miracles for both mother and baby. If there is a history of breast cancer in your family, not getting pregnant or not having a child before the age of 30 is among the most critical risk factors for

> breast cancer. Motherhood is a miracle against all its difficulties, and breastfeeding is one of the few beauties of this miracle (Necla, medical doctor/Internal medicine, one boy, 467 thousand followers).

The posts frequently mention and romanticise breastfeeding with the discourses of good motherhood, which may inevitably cause inferiority to those who think alternatively. Instamom, a medical practitioner, imparts guidance on adopting more naturalistically and emphasises the value of naturalistic methods to child-rearing. As illustrated above, she frequently employs the term "magic," emphasising the significance of breastmilk. As she emphasises in numerous instances, breastfeeding is an integral part of being a good mother, as are sleepless nights raised by her children, something that many mothers do not have the opportunity to experience. After completing their maternity leave, working women are entitled to a breastfeeding leave under Turkish legislation. Until the age of one, working mothers are entitled to 1.5 h of breastfeeding leave per day. As part of the 74th article of the Labour Law numbered 4857, breastfeeding leave is recognised as a protection for women to balance work life and motherhood. Working mothers in urban areas may not be able to take advantage of this opportunity due to schedules being subject to change at the discretion of their employers.

> "Some of you remember these days when my son was only a 7-month-old baby. He is almost as tall as me now; he will surpass me in height in a few years. The other day, he asked me, "If you are not willing to do what I want, why did you have me?" I said, "Come on," and he grinned. Regarding temperament, my son is self-confident, humorous, and unique like his mom. This was not all for nothing, so being a role model for someone who expresses himself is awesome. (Selin, academics, one boy, 547 thousand followers)

In a neoliberal environment, however, the depiction of a supermom image is often framed through the achievement of success for both the mother and children. While the neoliberal framework limits parental social support and creates social injustices, many mothers try to balance multiple roles and face psychological and financial challenges. The digital self-representation enables mothers to construct a persona that aligns with societal expectations of good mothers who juggle work and family responsibilities effortlessly (De Groot & Vilk, 2019; Keefe et al., 2017).

> Finally, he graduated, and I owe a debt of gratitude to his teachers and me, as his mother, since I have played a significant part in it. After my congratulations, I hope the summer vacation will end quickly and calmly. I wish all the mothers out there a great holiday (Zehra, real estate agent, three boys, refers to the youngest son's graduation, 362 thousand followers).

While supermoms' sharenting activities provide an opportunity to construct maternal identity in a digital sphere, the interconnectedness of social media and the portrayal of exemplary mothering may crumble self-identity due to increased comparison for many (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016). In a context where institutional support is voluntary for child care, supermoms also demonstrate their inner struggles when participating in paid work despite the joys of mothering. As mothers navigate

the challenges of being supermoms, feelings of inadequacy, stress, and fragmentation of self and motherhood identity can be augmented (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017). Medical doctor Supermom discusses her challenges while raising her son during her medical career and states her regrets, corroborating with many Supermom narratives in the study.

> My son is two months old in this picture. In the last days of my assistantship, on the one hand, my breast milk supply wasn't enough; on the other, the demands of a specialisation thesis and preparing for the specialisation exam. Thanks to God, I did not have to do any housework, but I cared for my son, studied hard, collected data for my thesis, and never went outside for 5 minutes. Now that those days are gone, the thesis is completed, and the exam is over, I wish I had not spent so much time calculating the next breastfeeding hour and being in the moment longer. I wish I could ask for help more and not care what people think (Merve, medical doctor, one boy, 1.2 million followers).

Displays of Supermom Identity and the Instrumentalisation of the Children

Sociological studies indicate that parenthood has evolved into a labour-intensive and child-centred endeavour, and families today are more attuned to the needs of children than they were 40 years ago (Sayer et al., 2004). Central to familial care work, in modern societies, motherhood plays a vital role, assuming various responsibilities not limited to childrearing (D'Amore, 2012), i.e., parental engagement in extracurricular activities and seeking educational tools to foster children's academic abilities. Supermoms face numerous societal pressures when trying to become exemplary mothers and balance care work and the execution of their profession. In this respect, the media's emphasis on intensive mothering practices reflects that motherhood is central to many women's identities and a dominant one. Related to emphasising success in motherhood, being a mother is insufficient; instead, it is expected that mothers become someone who produces tangible results of success in every venue of life (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Hays, 1996). The mother is the primary person responsible for ensuring that her child is physically and cognitively developing and receiving the best care (Clark & Dumas, 2020; Knoester & Fields, 2020; Dillaway & Pare, 2008).

There is an explicit expectation that women participating in labour must emphasise mothering responsibilities as much as possible. This presumption leaves many working mothers seeking various solutions, i.e., outsourcing childcare (Dow, 2016). However, popular media discourses encourage many mothers to commit to childcare by leaving paid work (Yavorsky et al., 2015). In this light, working mothers face criticism from the workplace and society if they insist on working full-time (O'Hagan, 2018; Thébaud & Halcomb, 2019). Under the ideals of neoliberalism, promoting marketisation and competition, many mothers are forced to work under precarious conditions and opt to become entrepreneurs while seeking to attain a reputable image (Butler, 2009; Palalar et al., 2024). This

study observed a similar orientation of Supermoms, as almost all are entrepreneurs working under precarious conditions.

A notable study finding was that most Supermoms included “mother” connotations after their profile names and professions. In this study, some Supermoms used their motherhood identity to promote their professional success.

> My name is ....., and I am a child health and disease specialist. I use the hashtag mom on social media. My goal is to inform you, reassure families, and alleviate their concerns about their newborns and children. I have 15 years of experience in this field and 13.5 years of motherhood experience. When these two factors are combined, I believe I am well-equipped to address any questions you may have (Ezgi, medical doctor, one boy, 488 thousand followers).

A Supermom, a psychologist, utilises a similar approach to communicating with followers and potential clients, shows the right way of mothering, and strengthens her Supermom image through her narratives and experiences.

> Nearly eight years ago, my daughter, whose existence on Earth has been less than a month, lies between my cheek and my neck, where she likes to lie most. Although some people advise you not to hold your children when they cry, I urge you to get them used to being held. If she needs you, you may hold her, hug her, and soothe her. Do not follow the advice of those who insist that the child should not become accustomed to being held. There is no need to be afraid. Let her know you are there to comfort her whenever she cries. If your child has not fallen asleep, hug him or her right now. If they have already fallen asleep, hug them first when they awaken. Please remember that If a child communicates through crying, you should support them by providing emotional awareness and normalising their crying. (İrem, psychologist, one girl, 231 thousand followers)

Another Supermom, a novelist, celebrates the incredible opportunities she provides her kids when she is invited to attend a book fair, where she introduces her children to famous literary writers. However, she speaks of such an incident as one of the remarkable experiences that her children can encounter in their lifetime.

> I attended the xxxxx book fair with my children. There are times when they disappear. While talking about people coming to get my autographs and wanting to chat with me, I realise that I cannot see where my children are, and when I look for them, I realise that I do not know where they are. Then my novelist friend next to me says, "Do not worry, we are taking care of them." Then there are my children: my son is chatting with a poet, and my daughter is playing a game with another writer. After seeing all these, I was struck by how fortunate they are to be in the same environment as many valuable writers. My journey and hard work have become a valuable inheritance for my children (Irmak, author/novelist, one boy and one girl, 438 thousand followers)

The quotes reveal that Supermoms often utilised their mothering experiences to strengthen their professional identities and highlight these in their narratives.

In light of the narratives, supermoms are inclined to use their motherhood identity as integral to their professional identity, whereas children are almost instruments in their career journey. Even though they may have naive intentions, there are several accounts in which Supermoms instrumentalise their children to attain financial gain and sharenting the supermom identity constructed for commercial purposes. Furthermore, Instagram posts show that the objective of the sharenting of Supermoms is to achieve financial benefits, and commercialisation is linked to their professional careers.

The quotes by Jane Smith, an educator and writer, demonstrate that she emphasises the significance of child development books in acquiring new knowledge and enhancing learning closely linked to her profession. On her Instagram account, she frequently offers educational resources, such as internet tools and books, that her children utilise to acquire valuable knowledge. The posts show a probable linkage between her professional identity and seeking favourable affirmation through sharenting activities to support her Supermom persona. She accentuates the importance of seeking suitable learning tools in acquiring knowledge associated with her career while emphasising the hurdles she encounters.

> Do you also encounter tension during periods of examination? Max (pseudonym), like numerous other children, encountered challenges in mathematics. Gradually, Max became self-sufficient in completing his assignments without needing my reminders. The initial impact was observed on his examination scores, and Max's self-assurance grew as he witnessed his achievements. As a mother, I feel great pride when I receive commendable feedback from my child's school teacher (Ada, writer/educator, one boy, 372 thousand followers).

Although the commodification of children is perpetuated with attributes of success, self-confidence, and competition, it is also striking that mathematics is utilised within the context of the post as being the "hardest topic for all." The inference that mathematical sciences are a challenging topic is also portrayed in the Pisa Scores conducted by OECD (2018). The 2018 report indicates a 111-point difference between the highest and lowest performing educational systems, and the countries ranked lower than the OECD average include developing countries in a neoliberal context like Argentina, Lebanon, Macedonia, Romania, Ukraine, and Turkey. The sample of Supermoms emphasises the importance of supporting children in topics like mathematics in several posts, indicating the critical role achieving success plays in neoliberalism ideology while highlighting their central role in a child's development. As a mother, Ada further implies the pride she feels in her son's accomplishments, and she indicates that her innovative personality, coupled with her professional expertise, has led to the attainment of success. While seeking external validation from her followers and tying her professional identity to her motherhood persona, she constructs her posts around the interplay of motherhood and her career while instrumentalising and commodifying her child for probable financial gain.

> Despite having a long time until the end of the school year, examinations are already approaching. How time passed so fast? After Max asked for a workbook, I started researching online supplements. I am especially looking for

> exam preparation and reference books since I believe in novelty; I also look for innovative approaches in such books. (Ada, writer/educator, one boy, 372 thousand followers)

The sharing activities that supermoms engage in on Instagram have transformed them into experts in childcare, giving them an invisible power over their followers (Aktan & Akçaoğlu-Erdem, 2023). Children's products are suggested in terms of toys, clothes, food and diapers, almost as part of a social and digital marketing campaign. It is interesting to note that the Instagram accounts of supermoms indicate that such suggestions are closely related to their professional careers. Despite mothers' naive attempts to seek external validation in the digital environment, motherhood and children are instrumentalised in supporting their professional development.

The investment in children (Lazard, 2022) as human capital reflects the facets of neoliberal parenting in many Supermoms in the study. Herein, mothers frequently post pictures of merchandise related to children's cognitive and physical health and advertise to earn additional income. The issue is particularly problematic in neoliberal contexts, where government regulation of social media is lacking, and institutions and guidance are limited. Several incidents have been reported in mass media showing Supermoms and Instamoms exploiting children for profit-seeking purposes, which increases the children's vulnerability. There is a growing concern about children being exposed to social media content in developed countries (Parsa & Akmeşe, 2019; Steinberg, 2017a; Verswijvel et al., 2019). However, there remain significant gaps in developing nations embracing the marketisation paradigm; thus, governments must recognise the plausible ramifications of Supermoms strengthening their identity through instrumentalising the children. As children are recognised as instruments, they may easily object to growing up with pre-emptive digital narratives resulting from the parents' self-representation on social media (Holiday et al., 2020) of hoping to build a personal brand (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017), which can endanger exploiting minors' identities. Upon becoming a Supermom, neoliberal demands for personal accountability become more intricate.

Discussion

The Nobel Prize-winning scholar Claudia Goldin (2014) explains that gender inequalities in the US labour market could only be addressed by accommodating time-greedy demands on women at work and home. Another Nobel Prize scholar, Stiglitz (2006), explains that the inequalities and human rights violations in countries governed by untamed forms of capitalism and neoliberalism are more entrenched as employees are exposed to the uncontrolled greed of the market. Heeding their theorisation, we turn to a country, Turkey, which has a toxic triangle of diversity (Baykut et al., 2021; Kusku et al., 2021), i.e. unsupportive legislation, poor regulation and combative discourses about women at work and home. We question the role of neoliberalism in shaping the unhealthy options of supermom and sharenting practices as viable and desirable options for women at work and home. We have raised concerns about how supermoms create their motherhood identities in a society with neoliberal

orientations by questioning how sharenting facilitates this process as a coping technique. We have also underlined supermoms that materialise parenting results from a neoliberal environment that encourages increased competition and self-interest. To uncover how sharenting supports supermom's identity formation and serves as a prelude to supermom's development and how supermoms represent parenting in digital spaces in a neoliberal setting, we analysed disclosures of supermoms on Instagram employing netnographic design. We have utilised sharenting narratives of supermoms since they serve as a critical source of support for many supermoms in the digital realm. As the supermoms' posts show, many emphasise their contribution to their children's success and challenges. In light of this, it is essential to note that a supermom's intentions of sharenting practices serve as a vital antecedent in constructing a supermom identity while seeking positive affirmation and validation from the followers. The literature demonstrates the link between sharing and constructing a supermom identity through the lens of social support and parenthood expression (Steinberg, 2017a; Wagner & Gasche, 2018). However, the study's findings suggest that sharenting is more than an expression of parenthood and an idealised depiction of motherhood; it also enhances a person's professional identity. Supermoms in the study employ sharenting behaviour to position themselves as idealised mothers and often market themselves to gain career advantages and social recognition. Although this study's results are consistent with previous research (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017), which links sharenting to parenthood commodification, this study emphasises and provides a novel perspective by relating sharenting to working mothers' self-branding and entrepreneurial activities. (Khamis et al., 2016; Miguel et al., 2023; Treviño & Garelli, 2018). Through sharenting as a self-branding strategy, working mothers can leverage motherhood experiences to foster a supermom image while commercialising caregiving within digital spaces.

However, glorifying the supermom through sharenting activities in a neo-liberal regime that lacks necessary social mechanisms of childcare increases the vulnerabilities of women and strengthens the gendered division of labour. Due to the absence of institutional and corporate involvement in supporting childcare, the visibility of socially supported welfare situates families as the primary institutions responsible for providing social care for dependents. In such a context, where voluntarism is promoted in institutional and structural social welfare, the constructed pattern of power relations among genders reproduces asymmetries and inequalities (De Simone & Scano, 2018; Martin, 2006). As evident in the fathers' lack of involvement and visibility in the posts of supermoms, the care work is strongly gendered, reflecting a gendered order, and contributes to the reproduction of gender inequalities (Crofts & Coffey, 2017; Zinn & Hofmeister, 2022), and positioning women being primarily responsible for childcare (Walby, 2009). Since the neoliberal context leaves them with no alternative, there is an increased preference for mothers to seek entrepreneurial endeavours to sustain a career while caring for their children. Although sharenting displays of supermoms are intended to facilitate a sense of community through information sharing, idea exchange, and self-presentation, many utilise motherhood identity to strengthen their professional identity in the study. As illustrated in the posts, mothers' narratives are projected to strengthen their professional careers, instrumentalising motherhood and children. The findings suggest the need

for institutional reform, such as increased workplace responsibility for work-life balance and policy implementation to alleviate the burden of being a supermom. Possible mechanisms include subsidised childcare and flexible work arrangements that enable mothers to juggle the demands of caregiving and professional life. Furthermore, the study findings underscore the need for parents to be educated regarding the risks associated with the commodification of parenthood and for policymakers to consider the long-term implications of sharenting, i.e., implementing comprehensive policies in addressing systemic issues that compel working mothers to commodify parenting and engaging in self-branding (Unicef, 2023).

Employing Bourdieu's social capital theory, we have illustrated how neoliberal ideology encourages mothers to commodify caregiving through sharenting for financial and societal validation. In this regard, sharenting is a coping mechanism for societal validation in contexts lacking institutional support. Furthermore, the study findings enrich the literature by demonstrating how social media can amplify pressures for mothers to succeed in motherhood and professional life (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2016; Gleeson et al., 2019; Naseem et al., 2020). Based on Bourdieu's social critique, this study argues that the neoliberal ideology of market-oriented practices and privatisation perpetuates existing gender inequalities. In tandem with the neoliberalist stance, supermoms' posts featuring their kids are intricate narratives about their own goals, skills, need for control, and acceptance of their shortcomings.

Conclusion

The study examines how working mothers construct their supermom identities through sharenting within a neoliberal environment, demonstrating how digital spaces serve as a medium for self-recognition and social acceptance. By exploring sharenting as an antecedent for establishing supermom identity, this study illustrates how the digital depiction of idealised motherhood is entwined with neoliberal ideals of competition, self-promotion, and individual responsibility. Based on the study findings, working mothers in neoliberalist contexts navigate the demands of caregiving duties while simultaneously managing their professional identities in commodified environments. In this regard, the commodification of motherhood in digital spaces reinforces traditional gender expectations while increasing the vulnerability of children in the absence of comprehensive regulatory frameworks. Robust policies must be implemented that address privacy measures of sharenting and provide mechanisms that support mothers in mitigating pressures of self-marketing so they can balance their professional and caregiving obligations. We provide a nuanced understanding of how digital platforms contribute to developing neoliberal motherhood ideals. In exploring the complex relationship between sharenting and supermom identity, this study enriches the discourse on digital identity, gender roles, and socio-economic pressures influencing modern motherhood. This study shows literacy for the social media platform's presentational elements, which allow people to demonstrate behaviour, alter signs, display symbols, and show an embodied self-representation (Tartari et al., 2023). These data about these particular mothers are essential because they shed light on why people use sharenting for what goals.

Further studies can focus on developing strategies to overcome sharenting, which will help mothers and their children navigate and manage their presence in the digital world. Future research on sharenting and supermom syndrome may adopt a mixed-methods approach by combining digital traces (observational data) and interviews or surveys (self-reported data).

Declarations

Conflict of interest There is no funding and conflict of interest to report for this submission.

Human or Animals Rights Research does not involve human participants and/or animals.

Informed Consent All participants received informed consent.

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