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Sharenting Abroad:

Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions on the Effects of Sharenting

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Abstract

Sharenting, where parents share pictures and videos of their children on their social media platforms, is a relatively new phenomenon in the world of social media, akin to an online version of traditional family photography. Sharenting can be used as a passive way of inviting geographically distant loved ones into the lives of immigrant mothers and their children. This thesis focuses on sharenting in relation to immigrant mothers. Sharenting is investigated in the context of how it facilitates the connections between mothers and their loved ones abroad. The influence of sharenting on the wellbeing of expatriate mothers is also investigated. A qualitative study was conducted using six participants currently living in Sweden. Facebook and Instagram are the main social media platforms used for sharenting by the mothers interviewed in this study. Sharenting mostly occurred in the form of pictures uploaded as a post on their personal social media platforms. The mothers were able to use sharenting as a way of sharing their lives with long-distance friends and family members. Connecting with loved ones was considered to be a main reason behind sharenting, with photographs of their children being considered a valuable way to reinforce their relationships. The mothers experienced connectedness to family and friends through interactions on their posts sharing about their children. Receiving support and validation from their home network facilitated the mothers experiencing an increase in positive emotions.

Keywords: Sharenting, Social Media, Immigrants, Expatriates, Mothers, Wellbeing, Connectedness

Sammanfattning

Sharenting, där föräldrar delar bilder av sina barn på sina sociala medieplattformar, är ett relativt nytt fenomen i världen av sociala medier, liknande en online version av det traditionella familjefotografiet. Det kan användas som ett passivt sätt att bjuda in geografiskt avlägsna nära och kära till invandrade mödrar och deras barns liv. Den här kandidatuppsatsen fokuserar på sharenting i samband med invandrade mödrar. Sharenting undersöks i sammanhanget av hur det underlättar för relationen mellan mödrar och deras familj och vänner som bor utomlands. Påverkan av sharenting på välmåendet hos utvandrare undersöks också i den här uppsatsen. En kvalitativ studie genomfördes med sex deltagare som för närvarande bor i Sverige. Facebook och Instagram är de huvudsakliga sociala medieplattformar som används av mödrar i den här studien för att dela om sina barn. Sharenting skedde för det mesta i formen av att bilder laddades upp som ett inlägg på deras privata sociala medier. Mödrar kunde använda sharenting som ett sätt att dela med sig av sina liv med avlägsna vänner och familj. Kontakt med närstående ansågs som en av de huvudsakliga anledningarna bakom sharenting, där foton av deras barn sågs som ett värdefullt sätt att förstärka deras relationer. Mödrar upplevde samhörighet med vänner och familj genom interaktioner på sina inlägg där de delar om sina barn. Att få stöd och bekräftelse från deras hemlands sociala nätverk underlättade mödrar upplevde en ökning av positiva känslor.

Nyckelord: Sharenting, Sociala Medier, Invandrare, Utvandrare, Mödrar, Välmående, Samhörighet

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Sharenting Abroad: Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions on the Effects of Sharenting

The first social media platform was launched in 1997 (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Since then, social media usage has only continued to increase, with 5.07 billion people active on social media today (Petrosyan, 2024). The millennial generation, defined as being born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019) is considered to be the first generation to grow up with access to the internet and social media (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). In Sweden alone, according to the 2023 edition of the annual report *Svenskarna och Internet*, 91% of people born in the 1980s and 97% of people born in the 1990s use social media every day. Facebook and Instagram are the most used social media platforms amongst these age groups, with around half of those born between 1980 and 2000 using them on a daily basis (Andersson et al., 2023). One way in which different forms of social media are commonly used nowadays is to keep in contact with long-distance friends and family (Huq, 2021; Pazil, 2018), with Facebook and Instagram being commonly used when people are physically distanced from loved ones (Bowden-Green et al., 2021; Vitak, 2014).

Social Media Use In Mothers

Amongst parents, mothers are more likely than fathers to use social media, especially in terms of accessing support (Duggan et al., 2015). Bartholomew et al. (2012) found that the access that social media provides to new and existing support systems, as well as social capital, is especially beneficial to new mothers while they are staying at home during their period of transition into parenthood. This ability to make contact with the outside world through passive social media scrolling allows mothers to see how friends and family are spending their time, which helps them to feel as though they have some connection to other adults, and, as a consequence, feel less lonely (Archer & Kao, 2018; Gibson & Hanson, 2013). Archer & Kao (2018) also found that scrolling through social media while staying home and looking after their new baby can also be a useful source of distraction for new mums, helping them to feel less bored.

Gibson & Hanson (2013) found that another way in which mothers can find social media beneficial is as a source of information and education. They use social media platforms to access useful information such as education on parenting approaches, developmental stages and feeding advice. Social media groups and pages can also be a way for mothers to find new friends in a similar situation to them and learn about events that they can go to with their babies (Gibson & Hanson, 2013). However, having certain types of social media being the only way to access this type of information can cause mothers to feel pressured into joining or

regularly using social media when they may ordinarily not be regular consumers (Archer & Kao, 2018).

Social Media Use In Expatriates

Expatriates and immigrants use social media to maintain important connections with family and friends in their home country, either through targeted social media use such as sharing pictures (Alinejad, 2021; Cabalquinto, 2020; Mikal, 2011; Theemling, 2013), or video calls (Alinejad, 2021; Theemling, 2013). In his study of expatriates in the Netherlands, Theemling (2013) found that connections with geographically distant loved ones can actually be strengthened while the expatriate is living abroad, through their use of social media to post about their everyday life in their new country. Sharing on social media platforms helps family and friends to stay emotionally connected with the expatriate abroad even if they are not physically present (Alinejad, 2021; Cabalquinto, 2020).

Social media can also be used by expatriates to find (Theemling, 2013) or provide (Nardon et al., 2015) useful information about how things work in their new country. It can also be used to find groups or events set up by other expatriates or immigrants (Mikal, 2011; Theemling, 2013), or even to meet other people from their home country (Mikal, 2011). Blogging is another useful type of social media for expatriates. Nardon et al. (2015) and Walz & Fitzgerald (2020) found that blogs written by expatriates can help immigrants to adapt to life in their new country through personal and introspective posts written about their experiences in their new home. Blogs where the authors share information and advice, learnt while navigating aspects of their new life, can also help to educate other immigrants on how to deal with certain parts of their expatriate journey (Nardon et al., 2015).

Being able to use social media in this way, to maintain old connections (Mikal, 2011; Theemling, 2013) and create new ones (Theemling, 2013), allows expatriates and immigrants to be supported in a way that helps them to more easily adjust to life in their new home.

Social Media Use and Sharenting

Sharenting is a relatively new phenomenon, first being mentioned in the Wall Street Journal in 2012 (Leckart, 2012). The term ‘sharenting’ comes from combining the words ‘sharing’ and ‘parenting’ and is used to define the practice of sharing photographs, videos or updates about one’s children on social media platforms (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). According to a report by the Children’s Commissioner of England (n.d.), parents with children aged 13 and under share, on average, 71 photographs and 29 videos of their child on social media every year.

Sharenting can be considered to be a modern version of traditional family photography. The family photography that is shared on social media is very similar to how parents, particularly mothers, used to take pictures before social media was frequently used (Lazard et al., 2019). This can include taking pictures of children at various moments throughout their lives, such as family outings or other fun activities and events (Rose, 2016).

Nowadays, sharenting is an important part of the online life of families (Damkjaer, 2018), especially amongst immigrant families (Jomhari et al., 2008; González et al., 2012). Social media is used as a way for immigrant parents to keep in touch with their families and friends at home. Sharing their lives and the lives of their children is made easier through posting on their private profile page or through direct messaging (Jomhari et al., 2008). In their study of Malaysian mothers living in the UK, González et al. (2012) found that telling the story of the child as a form of contact is preferred by both immigrant parents and their loved ones. There is an expectation that parents include photos or videos when communicating about their children, as that is seen as a valuable way to ensure that loved ones are still able to experience life with the child, despite the distance (González et al., 2012).

Social media can also act as a form of preserving memories through the photographs and videos uploaded by parents. Archer & Kao (2018) and Jomhari et al. (2008) found that mothers use social media as a diary or a photo album, giving parents and their children the ability to look back on their lives in past years.

Past Research

Sharenting

Parents share different types of content about their children on social media, with most preferring to share positive, happy moments (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015). These pictures could include moments when the parent thought their child looked particularly cute or did something that they found funny (Kumar, 2014), or a special event such as a family trip or a religious holiday, or an interesting activity that their child did (Aydoğdu et al., 2023).

When children are younger, parents typically share more often (Aydoğdu et al., 2023), with studies finding that parents share moments of development in their children's life (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022), such as their first birthday or first steps (Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015). Kumar (2014) suggested that this could be due to the fact that most children reach growth milestones relatively quickly in the first few years of life.

Some parents create and share content about their children that they believe could benefit others in their social network (Briazu et al., 2021), either something that they would find interesting (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Kumar, 2014) or educational, such as sharing information that allows other parents to discover new learning activities (Aydoğdu et al., 2023). Kumar & Schoenebeck (2015) found that some of the mothers in their study used sharenting as a way of thanking a loved one for a gift that was given to their child, such as taking a picture of their child using the present and uploading it to their social media profile to enable the person who gave the gift to see the child with it.

One of the main reasons that parents share about their children on social media is to be able to connect with loved ones, especially those whom parents do not regularly see or who live far away and are not able to visit as often as they would, had they all lived in the same town. Sharing pictures of their children allows parents to show their family and friends how their child is growing up (Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Kumar, 2014), which is especially important when their loved ones live far away (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015).

By sharing pictures, videos or other updates about their children on social media, mothers are able to receive feedback in the form of positive interactions on the posts. These interactions are enjoyable for the mothers, and they are able to get these feelings of enjoyment and validation even if the interactions come from people who are less-close friends (Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015). Kumar & Schoenebeck (2015) found in their study that more people liked or commented on pictures where the mothers' children were featured, than on other pictures that did not include their child. Aydoğdu et al. (2023) expanded on this, finding that positive interactions from friends and family meant that mothers were more likely to want to share about their children.

In general, parents consider sharenting to be an activity that benefits themselves, as was found by Kumar (2014). Typically, mothers try to represent themselves in a particular way in order to receive validation on their motherhood role (Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015). Sharenting also allows mothers to display the happy, positive moments of their lives that would show themselves to be good mothers and to receive social approval from loved ones to that effect (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015). Other studies found that parents post pictures of their children as a way of displaying pride in and boasting about their child (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar, 2014). Briazu et al. (2021) found in their study of UK mothers that mums can also receive support and comfort in response to their sharenting posts. Another way that

sharenting can benefit parents is by giving them the ability to use photography and content creation related to sharenting as an outlet for their creativity (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022).

Connectedness

Connections to loved ones can improve through the use of social media, especially in regards to loved ones at geographical distances (Huq, 2021; Powell et al., 2013; Vitak, 2014). Ellison et al. (2007) found that Facebook was an important contributor in maintaining social capital. Similarly, Powell et al. (2013) found when individuals do not have offline contact with their loved ones, they are more likely to use social media in order to keep in contact. They also found that communication across different social media platforms occurs in different ways with close friends and family in comparison with wider acquaintances.

More involved use of social media enables users to gain more social support from, and connections to, loved ones, thus improving bonding social capital (Ellison et al., 2007). Through the use of social media platforms, childhood friends are able to maintain the same level of connection while geographically distant as they did growing up in the same town (Huq, 2021). Additionally, loved ones are able to provide and receive comfort and support through social media channels, with social media being able to help with the feeling of dependability between loved ones who live far from each other (Pazil et al., 2024). Results from Huq (2021) were also in line with this, as they found that people are more easily able to share their feelings and emotions through social media. However, connections on social media do not have to involve posts or emotional private messages, as Pazil et al. (2024) found that some people felt connected with loved ones through an action as simple as sharing a video that reminded them of a friend.

Huq (2021) also found that by scrolling through the newsfeed of social media sites, people are able to keep track of the lives of loved ones which helps them to maintain passive connections with their loved ones. In addition to newsfeed posts, other social media tools such as Facebook and Instagram stories, which encourage the user to post a picture or a video that captures an event as it is occurring (Facebook, n.d.; Instagram, n.d.), are used to aid passive connections with friends and family, as people are then able to view the lives of their loved ones in real-time (Huq, 2021).

Wellbeing

In their 2019 study, Wenninger et al. stated that the wellbeing of individuals can be improved through the use of social media. Targeted interactions on social media platforms, such as public comments or likes on a post, evoke the basic mechanisms of bonding and socialisation. This kind of targeted feedback suggests an aspect of reciprocity in the

relationship between the person who posted and the person who interacted, which can lead to an increase in the positive emotional state of the person who posted. This form of public feedback also promotes social activity on both the receiving side and the giving side of the interaction (Wenninger et al., 2019). Burke & Kraut (2016) found similar results in their study of Facebook users around the world, showing that receiving comments on a social media post can lead to an increase in self-esteem and affirmation, through the validation of how the individual wishes to present themselves. They also found that targeted communication has more favourable effects on wellbeing when it originates from someone who has a relationship with the individual, such as a family member or a good friend (Burke & Kraut, 2016).

The way social media affects one's wellbeing depends on how the individual engages with it, as stated by Zhang et al. (2023), who found that actively engaging with social media can have a positive impact on self-esteem. Through regular engagement, people are able to access more social support via interactions with loved ones, which can help to reinforce the mutual importance of their relationship and help individuals feel more socially accepted (Zhang et al., 2023). Lee et al. (2011) found that by disclosing more personal thoughts and feelings on social media and receiving feedback from their friends and family, people can experience an increase in their subjective wellbeing, especially if the interactions come from someone with whom they already have an existing offline relationship. Zhang et al. (2023) also found that people are able to gain advice, understanding and empathy from others by receiving peer support from friends and other like-minded people on social media platforms.

Another aspect of social media support comes in the form of private messaging, which usually contains content that is more useful for relationship maintenance than a Facebook post displayed for a wider audience. These kinds of personal conversations sent through private messages can improve wellbeing, especially when the conversation occurs with people that the individual has a strong relationship with (Burke & Kraut, 2016; Wenninger et al., 2019).

Wenninger et al. (2019) found that the user's reciprocal activities on social media influences their wellbeing by increasing their bonding and socialisation with others. Having a larger network on social media has been found to increase wellbeing (Lee et al., 2011), through the ability to provide more opportunity for more interactions on one's social media posts, for instance in the form of supportive and positive comments and likes, which leads to people experiencing an increased feeling of validation (Zhang et al., 2023). The more an individual uses social media, the more access they have to social support (Zhang et al., 2023), with Wenninger et al. (2019) finding that posts that encourage interactions and reciprocity are more likely to improve positive emotions in individuals.

Although it is outside of the scope of this study, it is important to acknowledge that social media can also negatively impact people's wellbeing. Krasnova et al. (2013) found that passive use of social media, through the form of scrolling through the newsfeed or stories, as well as clicking on other people's profile pages, can lead to lower subjective wellbeing in individuals, with the negative emotions increasing the more often they passively scroll. Increased exposure to passive social media use leads to more upward comparison between the individual and the people they are following on social media sites. This in turn leads to increased feelings of envy and thus reducing their overall wellbeing (Krasnova et al., 2013; Krasnova et al., 2015).

Definitions

In this study, the terms expatriate and immigrant are used interchangeably. They both refer to a person who has moved abroad, however typically an expatriate moves for a temporary or undefined length of time, whereas an immigrant moves permanently (Nowek, 2024). As the participants were not asked to define themselves and prior research generally focused on expatriates, the terms are purposefully allowed to be interchangeable.

Purpose

While sharenting has had negative press in recent years, including concerns relating to the right to privacy and identity fraud, as well as family content creators (e.g. Cosslett, 2023; Farran-Lee, 2022; Hsu, 2019; Rachini, 2023; Rieffel, 2023), it can have a positive impact on the wellbeing of parents. Some studies into sharenting have pointed at connecting with friends and family being one of the main reasons why parents choose to share about their children on social media (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015).

Studies of expatriates and immigrants have revealed how important social media can be in helping with adjustment (Theemling, 2013) and reinforcement of existing relationships (Alinejad, 2021; Mikal, 2011; Theemling, 2013). While some studies have looked at sharenting amongst immigrant parents and their geographically distant loved ones (González et al., 2012; Jomhari et al., 2008), they have not been directly studied from the perspective of how immigrant mothers experience connectedness and wellbeing.

The interest of this thesis comes from wanting to expand the knowledge around the phenomenon of sharenting and its effects on mothers, by specifically focusing the research on the effects of sharenting on immigrant mothers. This thesis will contribute to both research and society in different ways. This study will deepen the current research regarding how sharenting can be beneficial to parents, in particular adding to research looking at how social

media use can help immigrant mothers feel more connected to their loved ones back home and help with their feelings of wellbeing. This study will also be able to contribute towards the education of parents around how to balance the benefits they experience when sharenting with the potential risks for their children, particularly amongst education directed at immigrant and expatriate mothers.

This thesis will combine the concept of sharenting with the ways those living abroad use social media to connect with their home support network. The aim is to learn about how immigrant mothers experience connectedness and wellbeing in relation to how they share about their children on their social media platforms.

Research Questions

With this in mind, the research questions are:

RQ1: What considerations do immigrant mothers perceive they make when choosing how and what to share about their children on social media?

RQ2: How do immigrant mothers perceive and experience connectedness to friends and family living abroad through sharing about their children on social media?

RQ3: How do immigrant mothers perceive and experience wellbeing in relation to sharing about their children on social media?

Methods

In order to acquire detailed and in-depth information about the experience of sharenting and its effect on the wellbeing of expatriate or immigrant mothers, a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach was designed. Considering this, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as the approach best suited to investigate the subjective experience of the participants.

According to Willig (2013), the phenomenological approach is interested in the experience of the world by individuals, as opposed to abstract statements about the world in general. IPA attempts to represent the quality of an individual's experience which is not directly accessible to the researcher. Furthermore, IPA produces an interpretation of what the participant experiences.

In order to do this, IPA uses transcripts of semi-structured interviews to generate data, with inductive analysis then being used to gain insight and ideas from the data itself. To gain the best possible data for the analysis, the interview should give the participant a suitable opportunity to talk about the particular experience in question. The interviewer should consider the possible effects of the topic under investigation, and structure questions

according to these effects. The questions should be open-ended and avoid directing participants towards a particular answer, with focused questions only being used to encourage participants to elaborate on a previous statement (Willig, 2013).

Participants

This study used a convenience sample of six mothers who had emigrated to Sweden. Two mothers were from England, one from the United States, one from Croatia, one from Hungary and one from Russia. The participants' ages ranged from 31 to 40. The participants had between one and three children, aged between two years old and ten years old. The majority of the children were born in Sweden, with two mothers having children outside of Sweden. Three of the children's fathers were Swedish, the other fathers were from the same country as the mother. Five of the mothers regularly used Facebook to share their children. Two used Instagram alongside Facebook, with one mother using Instagram as her main platform. The participants' names were anonymised for the study.

Recruitment

A recruitment text was created (see Appendix A), which advertised the study as investigating how expatriate and immigrant parents use social media. The recruitment text listed the participant criteria as well as a brief description of the purpose of the study. The participants were recruited using Facebook, where the advert and sign-up link were shared in four Facebook groups. Participants were contacted through email (see Appendix B) on an ongoing basis to schedule an interview.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview format was designed, using the standards of the phenomenological approach (Willig, 2013). An extensive literature review was undertaken prior to creating an interview protocol. The literature review looked at topics surrounding the influence of social media on connectedness and wellbeing, how expatriates use social media, how parents use social media, and sharenting. The literature review provided a basis of prior knowledge and theory to create an interview protocol consisting of ten questions relating to the research question that were based on past research, as well as possible prompts, to be used when needed, to encourage the participant to provide more information (see section "Interview Questions").

Pilot Interview

A preliminary interview was conducted to ensure that the questions were relevant and clearly understood. The participant in the pilot interview was personally recruited by the author in order to have a comfortable interview situation, where the interview subject was

able to ask questions and give constructive criticism. The participant fulfilled almost all the recruitment criteria, with the exception that they were not living in Sweden. This enabled the most accurate review possible of the interview process. The pilot interview showed that the questions were easily understood, and allowed for a clear conversation relating to the research questions. As a result, the interview protocol was not changed.

Interview Questions

The interview protocol consisted of 10 questions in total, grouped according to their specific relationship to the research questions (see Appendix C). The warm up questions were designed to slowly introduce the participant to the study, through asking questions about their life and background, as well as that of their children, and their use of social media platforms. These questions also allowed relevant data to be collected in a less direct way, to avoid making the participants feel uncomfortable.

The next group of questions focused on how the participants shared their children on social media. The questions asked how they usually posted and what contexts they posted about. They were also asked what their personal reasons behind posting were. The questions were purposefully worded to avoid any potential risk of the participants feeling reluctant to share or interpreting another meaning behind the question.

The third group of questions focused on how their friends and family from their home country would interact with their posts about their children. The participants were asked to explain the groups of people who would usually interact and their perceived closeness to the different groups. They were also asked how the groups generally interacted and to consider if there was any difference between the interactions depending on the strength of the relationship.

The fourth group of questions involved the participants considering their emotional responses when their friends and family interact with or respond to their posts about their children. They were asked whether their feelings were shorter- or longer-lasting. Another question also wanted to explore their feelings regarding the connections to their friends and family through their posts sharing about their children.

The final group of questions asked the participants to discuss their overall social media use. One question was designed to explore how the participants used social media after leaving their home country and emigrating to Sweden. Another question was designed to find out how the participants used and experienced social media since becoming a parent.

Interviews

The interviews were scheduled through email and took place in April 2024. Most interviews lasted around 30 to 40 minutes, and all occurred through Zoom. The interviewees confirmed prior that they were happy for the interviews to be video- and audio-recorded in order to create a transcript for further analysis.

During the interview, certain questions were clarified when necessary, and prompts or follow-up questions were used to encourage participants to expand on their answer or provide further information when needed. At the end of the interview questions, the opportunity was provided for participants to add any additional information that they had thought of during the interview but did not say during the question time.

Transcription and Analysis

Each interview was transcribed using TurboScribe, which automatically transcribes audio or video files and detects individual speakers. The uploaded audio files and the transcripts themselves are encrypted and accessible only by logging in to a private account (TurboScribe, n.d.). The transcriptions created by TurboScribe were then edited by hand to ensure a correct transcription, with a second edit undertaken to ensure clarity, conciseness and confidentiality.

The transcripts were then analysed according to IPA, using the analysis steps listed by Willig (2013). Firstly, the transcripts were read through several times. During the reading process, rough notes were taken that recorded any thoughts and perceptions upon the initial reading. These notes were expanded upon with each further reading of the transcripts. Relevant parts of the interview transcripts were then highlighted and written down. Quotes which were considered relevant to the study included ideas for potential themes that could later be used to analyse the different transcripts.

From this, several themes were identified and an analysis guide was created specifically for this study. The analysis guide used the themes noted in the initial read-throughs of the individual transcripts. The individual ideas taken from highlighted quotes in the transcripts used the thoughts and concepts proffered by the participants, such as “reinforcing relationships” and “the highlight reel”. This allowed the analysis to remain rooted directly in the interviews given by the participants. The themes were assessed to see if there were any repeated concepts that could either fall under an umbrella term or could be deemed as independent themes.

After this process was completed, codes were created and refined to align with the themes identified within the transcripts and with the research questions for this study. The research questions were consulted regularly to ensure that the themes fit the study and would

enable a thorough interpretation of the participants' statements. The interview transcripts were then read through and highlighted according to the individual codes, and organised according to the overarching themes identified earlier in the analysis. This process was repeated several times to ensure that full saturation had occurred and no further codes or themes could be identified.

Once the reading process had been completed and the codes had been fully saturated, the analysis began. The research questions dictated how the data was analysed, with data that did not relate to the questions being discarded. This process occurred alongside and after analysis, to ensure there was no unnecessary data presented in the study. The thesis supervisor was consulted after the data had been analysed, to ensure that the data presented was suitable for supporting the research questions. The data was analysed in relation to the research questions and later discussed with consideration to the existing literature. The results of this analysis are presented in the next chapter.

Ethics Approval

This study was designed and conducted in accordance with the Swedish Ethics Review Act (SFS 2003:460) (Riksdagen, n.d.) and the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Etikprövningsmyndigheten, n.d.). According to Swedish ethics laws, the study was not required to be reviewed by an ethics board. This study also followed guidelines from the Swedish Research Council regarding information, consent, confidentiality and data usage (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

An informed consent form was written considering the ethical laws and guidelines, and approved by the thesis supervisor. The participants were sent the informed consent form (see Appendix D) through email and asked to read, sign and return the form prior to the interview taking place. The participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns before the interview took place and once the interview was completed. They were given the opportunity to have an explanation of the research if they were interested, as well as being asked if they would like to be sent a copy of the thesis after publication.

Results

The analysis of the data collected through interviews with the six immigrant mothers will be presented in the following section. It will be analysed in relation to the research questions: "What considerations do immigrant mothers perceive they make when choosing how and what to share about their children on social media?", "How do immigrant mothers perceive and experience connectedness to friends and family living abroad through sharing

about their children on social media?” and “How do immigrant mothers perceive and experience wellbeing in relation to sharing about their children on social media?”.

RQ1: Sharing My Child

How I Post

Facebook and Instagram were the main platforms used by the mothers in this study, with a majority of the participants ($N=5$) mostly using Facebook to share about their children. One participant used Instagram as their main platform, while two others used Instagram alongside Facebook.

All six participants stated that they posted pictures on their main or secondary social media platforms. They would add a caption to the picture or group of pictures, unless they were being added directly to an album, in which case the album title was used to explain what was happening in the pictures. Two of the participants used emojis as the sole caption or story text, with another mother using the location where the picture was taken in the story.

When I Share

All of the participants agreed that they would post mostly for special moments. They felt that everyday life could be too boring or not interesting enough to post or share, as well as not usually posting about their own everyday lives and by extension choosing to not post about their children’s everyday lives.

Three mothers thought that the special moments could be simply an activity in or around the home: such as baking, the child’s learning topic of the week, or a day trip into town. The participants are also conscious of how much they are sharing, with most of them ($N=4$) agreeing that they consider that they do not post often. P2 and P5 shared moments that they thought other people would be interested in seeing, with P2 saying she would post “specific occasions...for example, birthdays...occasions that everyone- I imagine that even my friends are interested in seeing”.

Additionally, several mothers posted in contexts that are considered milestone moments, such as birthdays, losing a tooth or when they first walked. Half of the participants ($N=3$) mentioned that they like to post on their child’s birthday. P1 and P6 agreed that it was easier to share updates about their children when they were younger, specifying moments such as losing a tooth or their child’s first steps. Describing how she believed she posted more when her children were younger, P1 mentioned: “the context is more focused. So things that are funny or things that are just special for that day are big deals for that day”.

As an alternative to directly showing their children’s faces, P3 and P5 said they wanted to represent the situation that they were in. P3 gave an example of this, talking about

one occasion when her family went bowling: “I just took a photo of three bowling shoes of the different sizes. So, everybody who knows me knows that that is me and my husband and my child. But it was our legs with different shoes”. In a different way, P5 preferred to share pictures of activities that her children are doing, such as taking a photograph of a picture that her children had drawn, rather than her children with the picture.

While most of the mothers would share positive moments, P3 and P6 mentioned that they sometimes shared the negative sides of parenting, for example P3 said she would post something “just to whine a little bit”, and P6 would sometimes share when her child was unwell.

Why I Share

Five of the mothers posted about their children to maintain connections. P2 stated that she posted either spontaneously or because her family had been asking fairly often for pictures of their child. In contrast, P5 felt indirectly influenced by others. She felt that it could sometimes be easier to prompt a conversation with people by sharing pictures on her Facebook profile page, stating:

If I just sort of start contacting people on WhatsApp and make it really clear that you haven't been in touch for a month, and you've forgotten about them...but if you start somewhere else, and that prompts it, then it's a bit easier. (P5)

P1 believed sharing updates about her children was a good way to passively enable people to see what has happened in her life recently.

Telling the story of her child's life was mentioned by P6 as a reason why she chose to share pictures about her child, explaining that her child would be able to look back at the things she was doing when she was too young to remember them, saying: “the Instagram and the Facebook will more tell the story of what we were doing and her life, for her to be able to see”. She wanted to share the moments that capture something special or significant in her daughter's life.

Pride was mentioned by the mothers as another reason behind sharenting, influencing the decisions of P1 and P2 to share about their children. P2 said that she used sharing as a way of bragging about her “cute family”. In contrast, P1 specified pride from her children's perspective, through them requesting that she share something that they are proud of on Facebook, saying:

If they found something that they really want to share with other- everyone else and they were like, take a picture, mom and show it to everyone...For example,

once my son and I found a...witch's cap...mushroom. Yeah, it's really, really colourful and then if you break it, it turns blue like dark blue really, really quickly. He thought it was amazing. He was like, take a picture mom, show everyone. (P1)

Another way in which some of the parents ($N=3$) used sharenting was as a “hook” for attention or interaction. P1 told the story of their child losing, and swallowing, their first tooth and how she used that as a learning experience for other people who might be interested in her solution. She also stated how she received comments from other people who knew of someone who had also swallowed their first tooth, mentioning that:

My youngest one is one of those special people that lost her first tooth, and immediately swallowed it...So, I wrote her a letter from the tooth fairy and then I posted the picture of her missing her tooth and the letter from the tooth fairy...And so posting about that got a lot of interaction from other people because they thought it was genius. (P1)

P5 posted her children’s activities as a way to suggest ideas to other parents and to create content that could be seen as interesting and educational to other parents. P3 posted pictures of her and her child to her stories, with the location of her hometown, in order to allow people who want to meet with her while she is back home to message her and arrange something.

I just put the photo of me and my kid and put the location and it's [location]. Everybody wants to respond and like, are you in [location]? Do you want to meet? That was a good hook for those who really want to meet. (P3)

How I Want to Represent Myself

Participants mentioned different ways they chose to represent themselves through sharing about their children. P2 and P6 both mentioned the word “curate” in relation to sharing about their children. They both aimed to take pictures that were special or interesting in some way. P2 took photographs with her camera and would not upload a picture unless it had been edited or adjusted in Photoshop, saying:

I mostly put up pictures that are curated...with my actual camera. Maybe do some, you know, Photoshopping on it or some changes. So, it looks nice and cute and a little bit more not so, you know, ad hoc. (P2)

Most participants ($N=5$) specifically mentioned that they like to post the positive sides of parenting, both exclusively as well as alongside some less positive moments. P3 and P5 would try to represent themselves as fun parents doing fun activities with their children. P2

and P4 would exclusively share moments that represented the positive sides of parenting, with P2 mentioning that she posted so that people would be able to access her best side and to give the impression to her Facebook friends that “[she] made it”.

RQ2 and RQ3: Connecting with Family and Friends

Receiving Feedback

The interaction received from participants often comes from family members, with five participants mentioning that their family interacts with their posts to varying degrees. Family members are more likely to leave a comment on the mothers’ posts as well as liking the posts ($N=4$). Three of the mothers mentioned that their own mothers are the most frequent interactors on their posts, for example P5 mentioned: “my mum pretty much always comments on anything that gets posted”.

All the participants agreed that interaction often occurs with friendship groups. Closer friends were mentioned as interacting more often with their posts by four of the participants, through both comments and likes, whereas their acquaintances would usually only like the posts or watch the stories without interacting. The most common group of friends who were believed to interact with the posts were friends who were also parents, with most of the mothers ($N=4$) agreeing. P2 said that she believed people commented if: “they recognise[d] themselves in a post or something”.

P2 and P6 found that the comments they received could be smaller and less meaningful interactions, with P2 saying: “they always say something generic, like so cute or whatever. They never say anything that’s like, worthy of an entire conversation.” On the other hand, P4 found that the comments could be asking questions, and P3 found some comments potentially being a little intrusive, with P3 saying that: “sometimes it was quite nosy, Sometimes I thought it was not on point...it’s sometimes it was much more than I actually wanted to get”. Three of the participants created posts or stories with a call-to-action which resulted in them receiving more interaction. Private messaging in response to them sharing about their children was another way in which the participant’s home network reached out ($N=4$).

Reinforcing Relationships

All six of the participants stated that they believed sharing about their child on social media helped to reinforce the relationships with their friends and family back home. Most of the mothers ($N=5$) agreed that it helps to foster the connections and, in some way, bridge the gap between them and their support networks in their home countries. P2 said that her family suggested that they preferred her to post pictures of her child, saying: “those are the most

meaningful to my family, pictures. If I just write, it's not so meaningful. What they want is to see nice pictures that they can share with their friends and grandparents and everyone, like wider family." P2 also felt more connected to her home network when her family and friends directly asked her to post pictures.

Another form of relationship reinforcement was mentioned by P5, who felt that she could use her friends' interactions on her posts as a way of checking in on them and seeing how stressed or busy they are, saying: "I can often use it as like a gauge of how stressed and busy they are at the moment, whether or not they're interacting. If they're not, then I might contact them separately and check they're okay". She believed that generally, the more stressed they are, the less they interact, and this encourages her to reach out to them. This reminder makes her feel as though she has not lost contact with her friends despite living abroad.

The concept of using sharing updates about their children on social media as a way to share involvement in their lives with their loved ones was mentioned by four of the participants. P1 stated that she found it useful to be able to ask her friends in a conversation whether they remember a certain moment in her child's life and her friends were able to remember that moment because they had seen the pictures on her Facebook profile page, saying:

It also gives you the ability to have somewhere to look back and talk to the other people, like hey do you remember when I posted this it's one way to share memories as well, that you have shared it with your friends or loved ones. So yeah, you can be like hey do you remember this? And they'll be like, yeah. (P1)

This involvement in their lives could be displayed through sharing pictures of their children to show how they have grown through the years, as mentioned by three of the participants. P2 explained that sharing pictures helps her friends and family to keep track of how old her child is and adjust their expectations accordingly, especially when it comes to buying gifts or planning activities. P2 said:

They often want to buy something small for my son and if they haven't seen him for a year, they would buy something that's not appropriate for his age anymore. It's...definitely helping them to keep track of...what is a...three and a half year old like compared to a two and a half year old when we last met them. (P2)

Another way in which sharenting could help facilitate contact between loved ones was mentioned by P6, who explained that sharing pictures of her child enabled her friends to

establish a link to her child's life. She believed that sharing helped her to reinforce the relationships with her friends and to help them to create a connection with her child, saying: "they're somehow linked to my child, they love my child, they hopefully are a person in my child's life at some point". P6 also said that having her friends able to follow her and her child's journey enabled them to give her encouragement in moments of struggle. P3 explained that she sometimes wonders what their relationships with her child would be like if she lived closer to them. She feels that her friends and family do feel more involved in her life through sharing content, stating that:

When we actually travel to [location], we don't really have time to see all the people that we want. I think they actually feel more connected or involved in our lives if they can see any content of our life here. (P3)

How the Interaction Makes Me Feel

All of the participants stated that the interactions they received from friends and family produced positive feelings. Two participants, P2 and P3, mentioned that the positive feelings received through feedback from loved ones were linked to how many people liked the posts they were sharing. P2 mentioned that she focuses on the quantity rather than the quality of the interactions on her post, such as looking at which posts get more likes, stating: "I don't focus on quality as much as I focus on quantity. I do see which one has the most like[s]". P3 said that she has warm feelings when a photograph she has uploaded that features her child has numerous likes.

Facilitating connections with friends and family was mentioned by half of the mothers ($N=3$). P5 stated that she used her friends' interactions on her posts as a reminder to get in touch with them. When someone interacted with her pictures, she would be encouraged to interact with their profile page in return, which enabled her to see what was happening in their lives as well. Her positive feelings came from her actively making the decision to change her behaviour and reach out to them, even simply through looking at their Facebook page, saying: "it's not necessarily just that they liked it themselves, but then I change my behaviour slightly, and that has a positive effect". P5 believed it helped her feel as though she has more connections and that she has not lost contact with the particular friend who interacted. P1 explained that she experiences the interactions as a way of feeling like her friends and family have not forgotten about her, even though she is far away from her home country. She said: "it makes me feel connected to them...It's not like I'm being ignored, or that I don't exist just because I'm away...and that my children exist."

Adding to this, P6 said that her feelings differed depending on whether the interaction came from a close friend or family member, or an acquaintance. She indicated that if the interaction came from someone who is not likely to meet her child, then she felt that the interaction was less meaningful. However, if the interaction came from a loved one, she stated that it made her appreciate that person more and have a longer-lasting positive feeling. P6 also stated that she enjoys sharing moments of her child because it helps to feel as though she is not restricting the access to her child, saying:

I like that they can see it because sometimes I think...I'm keeping her all to myself over here, no one can see how adorable and wonderful she is unless I share it, so it's nice when they see...the lovely parts of experiencing life with her. (P6)

Conversely, two of the participants indicated that they had some negative feelings from receiving interactions from friends and family on their posts. P4 stated that, although she sometimes feels guilty that she has privileges living in Sweden that her friends do not, overall, her feelings around sharing are more positive than negative, saying “usually I feel happy. I’m glad to share with my friends. But sometimes I feel a bit maybe guilty because I have a possibility to travel and so on...it’s just a small part of my feelings. It’s more positive than negative”. P3 indicated that when she receives interactions on her posts from friends who she is less close to, it can sometimes make her think about what impression she is giving to her Facebook friends, mentioning:

I kind of think about what pictures did I send to those who are not my closest friends? And have I stepped over the line with the content? Or I always reconsider if I maybe put some content that I shouldn't. (P3)

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to learn about how immigrant mothers experience connectedness and wellbeing in relation to how they share about their children on their social media platforms. This was facilitated by looking at how immigrant mothers choose to share about their children on social media, as well as being interested in how they perceive this to both aid their connections with their home support network as well as influence their wellbeing. Participants received regular interaction and feedback from friends and family through posting about their children. The mothers believed that these interactions helped to reinforce their relationships with loved ones and facilitated increased positive emotions.

Discussion of Findings

The research questions are discussed in relation to the themes found during the analysis of the interviews. Firstly, how the participants consider their choices regarding what and how they share about their children is discussed. Then, their perceptions of how their connections to loved ones are facilitated through sharenting are reviewed. Finally, the discussion looks at how the mothers experience wellbeing in relation to sharing about their children.

Types of Situations Where Sharenting Occurs

Participants mostly shared updates about their children in the form of pictures, stating they would usually share pictures on either their social media profile page or stories. The updates shared about the participants' children focused on moments that the mothers considered to be special or significant in some way, which agrees with findings by Kumar (2014) and Kumar & Schoenebeck (2015). The mothers stated that they would not generally post moments from everyday life. Alternatively, some parents decided to post about their child in a way that is more cognizant of the possible risks attached to sharing on social media. This included sharing a picture of the activity the child was doing rather than the child themselves, or photographing the child making sure that their face was not visible. This same behaviour has been shown by Autenrieth (2018) and Walrave et al. (2023), who found that parents do so by photographing the child from a distance, with their backs turned, or focusing on the body parts that tell a story, such as hands holding an object.

Pictures of different milestones in their child's life were also shared by the participants: including their first steps, their first day at school and their first words. This has been shown to be a common source of sharenting in similar studies from González et al. (2012), Kumar (2014), Kumar & Schoenebeck (2015) and Morris (2014). Participants also mentioned posting on their child's birthday, enabling the mothers to show their loved ones how their children have grown over the last year. This is in line with results by Andersson & Nilsson (2022), who also noted that this allows loved ones to provide feedback directly to the parents as well as indirectly to the child. Likewise, some of the mothers believed that sharing pictures can help friends and family back home to visually connect their children with their age and development. Mothers also considered it to be easier to post more about their children when they were young, which could be a result of the child reaching lots of so-called 'firsts' more regularly, as suggested by Kumar (2014). Being able to share these moments with her child as she grew up was also a priority for one of the mothers, which is consistent with findings by Andersson & Nilsson (2022), Jomhari et al. (2008) and Kumar (2014).

Posting for the benefit of others has been shown in previous studies (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar, 2014). In particular, Aydoğdu et al. (2023) found that sharing about learning activities is a popular form of sharenting. Similarly, in the current study, participants valued the opportunity to create content for their family and friends to interact with, making sure to consider what their friends and family might find interesting before posting. One mother posted educational content about her children, such as activities they had been doing, to share ideas with her friends who might find inspiration from her posts. Another way that participants created content that they considered to be beneficial for others was through sharing a story that was particularly interesting and that created an opportunity for friends and family to interact and share similar experiences.

The Highlight Reel

The mothers in this study considered which moments to share with the aim of displaying the good moments of life. The mothers posted to display pride in their families and their children, showing off their child through the pictures they upload, in posts where they were able to boast about their cute families. This is in line with previous findings relating the motives of sharenting to pride (Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar, 2014) and positive moments (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Kumar, 2014). In contrast, participants in the current study chose to share some negative points of life, such as when their child was unwell, or to complain about different aspects of motherhood. Lehto (2020) found that complaining about the negative parts of motherhood can be used as a coping mechanism, in a way that is freeing for the mother.

Wanting to display the highlights could also manifest itself in how the photographs are curated. Pictures taken on a camera rather than a mobile phone, or edited with a photo-editing software, can be uploaded, allowing the mothers some creativity. The photo of the moment itself could also be chosen to ensure that it is special or interesting, as was also observed by Andersson & Nilsson (2022) and Kumar (2014). The images chosen to represent their children would show the child or the parent in a positive light, such as representing themselves as fun parents or uploading a cute picture of their child, as previously found by Damkjaer (2018), Kumar (2014) and Kumar & Schoenebeck (2015).

Sharing One's Life

Previous studies also found that mothers share on social media to both allow their friends and family to see their children (Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Briazu et al., 2021; Jomhari et al., 2008; Kumar, 2014) and to maintain their long-distance connections (Andersson &

Nilsson, 2022; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015). In line with previous research, this study finds that mothers believed that they were able to allow their geographically distant loved ones to share moments and memories of their child through the posts they share on social media, which helped them to develop a sense of connectedness and community. Their family members and good friends were able to still see their children through social media, despite being unable to do so in person.

The ability to tell the story of their child's life and to share these moments and memories with loved ones was considered to be a reason for sharing updates on social media. The parents enjoyed being able to talk with loved ones about moments that they had potentially only seen through social media posts, and it led to a sense of connection between the loved ones and the mother. Previous findings by Huq (2021) and Vitak (2014) have shown that social media allows loved ones to feel closer to one another. Aligning with this concept, the feeling of not being forgotten was considered important to mothers in this study. By receiving the interactions from loved ones in response to sharenting posts, the mothers experienced the feeling that they were still connected to their support network. In some instances, it made them think about how different their relationships would be if they still lived at home.

Maintaining Bonds

Connecting with distant loved ones was perceived by the participants to be a main reason for sharing their children on social media. They posted to allow family and friends to see their children and to find out information about their lives, with pictures considered by family members to be an important way of connecting with the participants, consistent with findings from Andersson & Nilsson (2022), Briazu et al. (2021), González et al. (2012) and Kumar (2014). Some participants would receive requests for pictures from their loved ones, leading them to create a post on Facebook or Instagram. In line with findings from Kumar (2014), who found that mothers could sometimes feel pressured to post, the participants in this study believed that the requests could sometimes feel as though they were posting for the purpose of making their family happy.

Posting pictures of their children on social media also helped participants to maintain their friendships, with the interactions occurring mostly from friends that participants considered to be close friends. Fellow parents generally interacted more often with their sharenting posts, with some participants aiming to interact directly with parent friends. Connecting in this way can help to form a sense of community between long-distance friends,

even across the physical distance, echoing findings from Ellison et al. (2007) and Powell et al. (2013).

Receiving Support

Participants stated that pictures of their children were more likely to receive interaction in the form of likes from their social media friends, compared with pictures where their children are not featured, with interactions even coming from more distant acquaintances, as supported by previous research (Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015; Morris, 2014). This was positively received by the mothers, who reported feeling warm and happy when people liked pictures of their child. Some of the participants did, however, attach more significance to the quantity of the interactions rather than the quality.

Interactions from acquaintances were less likely to lead to feelings of connection, as the mothers felt that this interaction was indicative only of the acquaintance enjoying one particular picture as opposed to a meaningful interaction from a friend with a connection to the child, echoing findings from Burke & Kraut (2016) and Kumar (2014). Interactions from loved ones, however, were associated with longer lasting positive feelings. Receiving comments, especially appreciative or approving comments such as a remark on how cute their child is, facilitated positive feelings amongst the participants, which is supported by findings from Powell et al. (2013) and Wenninger et al. (2019).

Conversely, positive emotions in some mothers were facilitated through giving feedback, as suggested in results from Wenninger et al. (2019), who found that giving feedback promotes the reciprocal aspect of the relationship, leading to increased positive emotions. Seeing interactions on posts encouraged some participants to check in on their friends, either through private messages or checking their friends' social media pages, which they considered helped to increase the feeling of connection and positive emotions, even if no targeted interaction occurred. One mother reported this responsive behavioural change, suggesting that it made her feel closer to her friends, especially if they had not been in contact for a while and could have otherwise been considered to have lost contact entirely, related to findings by Ellison et al. (2007) and Rousseau et al. (2019) on how social media is used to facilitate connections with friends.

Kumar (2014) and Briazu et al. (2021) found results suggesting that sharing on social media can enable mothers to receive comfort from others in times of difficulty. Likewise, one participant in this study, who had a difficult postpartum experience with her child, believed that receiving support and validation from loved ones on her posts was especially useful. She found that she posted more often to “celebrate little wins”, such as being able to leave the

house alone with her child. Through posting more often, her friends were able to interact more and provide a level of support even though they were far away. The support and encouragement she received from her friends, especially those who knew her struggles, was helpful in validating her experience and in helping her feel closer to those people.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several limitations which need to be examined critically. The sampling criteria limited participants to millennial mothers with children aged 10 and under, therefore excluding a large part of the parent population. Previous studies had also limited the participants to either mothers (Aydoğdu et al., 2023; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015) or those with children under a certain age (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015).

Convenience sampling was used through posting in Facebook groups, therefore excluding people who do not use Facebook or were not members of the groups. Groups were also chosen according to the author's access to them, further excluding people who were not members of these groups. As the advertisement was designed to be as ambiguous as possible, some participants may have been reluctant to sign up to be interviewed as the concept of sharenting has some negative connotations, as mentioned earlier (e.g. Cosslett, 2023; Farran-Lee, 2022; Hsu, 2019; Rachini, 2023; Rieffel, 2023).

The participants who self-selected were from mostly European or Western countries, similar to previous studies focusing on participants based in countries such as Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States (Andersson & Nilsson, 2022; Briazu et al., 2021; Kumar, 2014; Kumar & Schoenebeck, 2015).

Willig (2013) suggests some limitations of IPA which can be related to this study. As a result of using IPA, the understanding that was gained from the analysis was influenced by the author's assumptions and biases. As the author is not Swedish, they have biases surrounding being an immigrant and using social media to connect with people in their home country. The data is considered suitable for analysing the research questions, however as some of the participants did not have English as their first language, there is a potential that their ability to explain their experience could have been affected by them using a second language which may not be often used to express their emotions.

Finally, it would have been more methodologically optimal if there had been an opportunity for two raters during the thematisation process.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, this study has several strengths. Choosing a semi-structured interview allowed the participants to give a free account of their experience,

while also allowing the questions to be modified and added to as needed. Interviewing the participants through a video call enabled them to be in a place where they were comfortable talking about their experiences. Finally, the results were comparable to previous research relating to sharenting, as well as to past studies investigating the influence of social media on both connectedness and wellbeing.

Future Research

Considering the limitations of the current study, suggestions for further research could focus on participants from non-Western and non-European countries, either following on from this study to include only mothers, or to expand the focus to parents in general. The experiences of immigrant fathers could also be investigated, along the same lines of how sharing about their children influences their feelings of connectedness and wellbeing. Finally, future research could expand the age range to include parents who fall outside of the millennial age range.

Conclusion

Sharenting is something that all the parents in this study engage in, whether featuring their child's faces or preferring to represent the situation their child is in at that moment. This study shows that mothers who live abroad use sharenting as a way of interacting and connecting with friends and family. The mothers are able to include family and friends in their lives and show their children growing up, to imitate how their interactions would have been had they not moved abroad. This connection between the mothers and their geographically distant home network is considered to lead to increased wellbeing, through feelings of warmth and happiness when loved ones interact with their posts featuring their children. This thesis contributes to the discussion surrounding sharenting and its benefits to parents. It also adds to the discussion regarding how social media use can help maintain cross-border familial connections and friendships, as well as improving wellbeing.

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Appendix A



Bachelor Thesis in Psychology Research Study

Immigrant Parents, Social Media Use and Wellbeing

- Are you a parent?
- Were you born and raised in a country other than Sweden?
- Were you born between 1981 and 1996?
- Is your child aged 10 or younger?
- Does your child feature on any of your social media accounts?

Participate in a research study at Lund University!

We are conducting a psychology research study to investigate how expat and immigrant parents use social media platforms. We are hoping to learn more about how social media influences wellbeing.

If you decide to participate in our study, we will invite you to take part in an interview with the research team. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time and will be conducted via Zoom. Participation is voluntary. You may change your mind at any time.

**To sign up for an interview,
please fill in the form linked in the post above**

For more information, please contact:

Anneka Palfreyman at an3476pa-s@student.lu.se

or Camilo Sáenz-Moncaleano (thesis supervisor) at camilo.saenz@psy.lu.se

Appendix B

Email 1

Hello **XXX**,

I am contacting you regarding the Bachelor Thesis research study with Lund University that you signed up to participate in. I would like to schedule an interview with you on **DATE** at **TIME**.

Please let me know if this time is convenient for you. If so, I will send further information and a zoom link for the interview. I have attached the brief introduction of the study, so that you are able to read over it again.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,
Anneka Palfreyman

Email 2

Hello **XXX**,

Thank you for confirming the interview. I look forward to meeting you on **DATE**! Here is the zoom link for you to use: **LINK**. The interview will last a maximum of 60 minutes. The zoom meeting has been scheduled for 1.5 hours to allow for any questions or any potential issues with computers etc, but the interview itself will be 60 minutes at the most.

The research study will be investigating how immigrant parents use social media to keep in contact with people in their home country. We would like to learn more about how social media and wellbeing interact. It is a psychology research study undertaken as part of a bachelor thesis at Lund University.

To confirm, the participant requirements are:

- You are a parent born between 1981 and 1996
- You are an immigrant or expat currently living in Sweden
- You have at least one child under the age of 10
- Your child features on your social media accounts (you post about your child on Facebook or Instagram, or another social media platform)

If you don't fit all of these requirements, please let me know!

The interview will take place on zoom, at the link sent in this email. It will be video- and audio-recorded. Each recording will be transcribed, with identifying information removed and participants anonymised. Your name will either be anonymised as “first initial, last initial” or “Participant 1”, etc. Once the recordings have been transcribed, they will be destroyed. Quotes from the transcription will be included in the study and the transcription itself may also be included. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to ask them via email or at the interview.

I would like to ask if you could **please fill in the informed consent form** attached to this email and send it back to me before the interview.

Kind regards,
Anneka Palfreyman

Appendix C

Pre-interview questions:

1. About the participant
 - a. How old are you?
 - b. Where were you born and where did you grow up?
 - c. Where was your partner born and where did you grow up?
 - d. When and why did you move to Sweden?
2. About the children?
 - a. How many children do you have?
 - b. How old are they?
 - c. Were they born in Sweden?
3. About their social media use?
 - a. What platforms do you use?

Main interview questions:

1. How do you usually share updates about your child on social media?
 - a. Do you post pictures? With or without text?
 - b. Do you write updates? With or without pictures
2. What situations or contexts do you prefer to share about your child?
 - a. Funny or cute pictures
 - b. Milestones
 - c. Religious or secular holidays
 - i. Christmas, Eid, Easter, Hanukkah
 - ii. Midsommar, Halloween
3. What are the reasons why you post updates about your child?
 - a. Pride
 - b. Keeping in contact
 - c. Getting support
4. With regards to the people in your home country, who usually interacts with your posts of your child?
 - a. Close family members
 - b. Extended family members
 - c. Close friends

- d. Acquaintances
5. How do they usually respond to your posts?
 - a. Likes
 - b. Comments
 - c. Private messages
 6. How do you feel when people back home interact with your posts about your child?
 - a. Does it change your overall mood / improve your day, etc?
 7. How do you feel when a close friend or family member interacts with your posts?
 - a. Does it feel different when an old acquaintance interacts with your posts?
 8. How does sharing updates about your child make you feel regarding connections to your friends and family back home?
 9. How has moving to Sweden affected your use of social media?
 - a. Do you use it more or less now that you don't live close to your family and friends?
 10. How has being a parent affected your use of social media?
 - a. Do you use it more or less now that you are a parent?

Appendix D



Bachelor Thesis in Psychology Research Study Informed Consent Form

Thesis Subject: The use of social media by expat or immigrant parents

Researcher: Anneka Palfreyman (an3476pa-s@student.lu.se)

Supervisor: Camilo Sáenz-Moncaleano (camilo.saenz@psy.lu.se)

I understand that, if I consent to participate in the project, I agree to the following:

1. I have been given information about the project and had the opportunity to ask questions
2. I voluntarily agree to participate in this project and I can withdraw at any time from this project
3. I will give approximately 60 minutes of my time to be interviewed for the study
4. My interview will be video-recorded and/or audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription and the transcription may be included in the published research
5. Once transcribed, all recordings of the interview will be destroyed
6. My data will be protected according to GDPR
7. My information will be anonymised for use in the study and no identifying details will be used in the published research

By signing below, I am indicating my consent to participate in the research as it has been described to me.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____