The Erosion of the Private Sphere: An Ethical Analysis of Sharenting and Child Digital Labor in the Global Creator Economy

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Abstract

Parents today routinely document their children's lives online, posting everything from ultrasound scans to daily routines on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. While this practice often called “sharenting” starts as family sharing, it frequently turns into full scale content monetization. This paper examines the ethical dilemmas that arise when children become the primary subjects of public social media channels. It looks specifically at how monetized Sharenting strips minors of their digital privacy and creates a permanent online footprint before they are old enough to understand or consent to it. This study uses a qualitative approach, combining thematic analysis of popular family vlogging channels with an examination of public user comments across video platforms. Through a socio-legal lens, primary media content including child modeling clips, mukbang videos, and recorded disciplinary moments was analyzed alongside viewer responses. This method made it possible to map recurring privacy breaches and trace where current legal protection for children falls short in digital settings. The analysis shows that monetized Sharenting subtly rewrites family dynamics, turning normal parenting into an informal working relationship governed by view counts and platform algorithms. Broadcasting private domestic spaces like bedroom leaves children vulnerable to safety risks and psychological strain. Most importantly, the research highlights a major legal oversight: modern labor laws still treat home-based digital content creation as private family activity rather than work. As a result, child creators are left without earnings protection, set regulations, or control over their own privacy. Existing legal framework were built for traditional workplace and fail to address the realities of online content creation. Protecting child creators will require updated policy definitions that recognize digital child labor and establish clear legal boundaries around children's privacy and long-term autonomy online.

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