A fresh warning from experts on the dangers of posting your kids online

March 8 2024

Credit: Yan Krukau from Pexels

Parents considering posting pictures and information of their children online should re-think how they go about it, in a new warning from Edith Cowan University (ECU) data experts.

A [scoping review](#) published in *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting* by Dr. Valeska Berg noted that every digital post parents make about their children on social networks contributes to the development of a digital identity for the child.

"A lot of parents are unaware that when they post things like photos or identifying information, such as school uniforms, they are creating a digital identity for their children. Even when they post about their pregnancy or anticipating the birth of the child, they give away identifying data. And that creates a digital identity even before the child is born," said Dr. Berg.

She warned that a child's digital footprint could be used in several detrimental ways, including [identity theft](#) and the distribution of the child's image to unwanted parties.

For parents wanting to share images of their children with far-flung family members, Dr. Berg suggested using private messaging to distribute these images and stay connected with family.

"A lot of the times people think that if they only share with their friends on social platforms like Facebook, that it is quite safe. However, we often have contacts on those social networks that are only superficially known. Therefore, I would recommend private messaging through Messenger, WhatsApp, Signal and so on. That is a lot safer than public sharing.

"Creating those secure networks is really important whether that is on Instagram or Facebook. Just putting the profile on private, unless you only have a handful of very close people on there, is not enough to keep your child's privacy protected."

For parents using their kids to market products on their social platforms,

Dr. Berg suggested covering the child's face to maintain anonymity and refraining from posting identifying information about the child.

"We found that some parents will use tools to blur out the face, or only take pictures where the child is facing away from the camera. The less information you can put out on your child, the better," she added.

Dr. Berg noted that when digital identities are created early for the child without the input of the child, their right to create their own digital footprint or identity is taken away, leaving them without a voice and choice.

"Where possible, children should be involved in the development of their digital identity. Research to identify how this can be achieved and to give voice to the experiences of young children is needed to better understand this important and fast-moving area. Future studies should explore the perspectives of children as key stakeholders in the creation of their digital identity."

Provided by Edith Cowan University