

Poster: Ownership and Gatekeeping vs. Safeguarding and Consent: How Migrant Parents Navigate Child Data Management Complexities

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Abstract—Parents pursuing opportunities abroad increasingly find themselves raising children in new cultural and legal environments. This responsibility extends to complying with unfamiliar regulations and safeguarding their children’s data which is often complex and a challenging task. In this study, we examine how migrant parents perceive, manage, and safeguard data related to their children. Through interviews with 17 migrant parents and guardians in the UK, we uncover nuanced and evolving perspectives on data ownership and management. Migrant parents express significant concerns about losing control over data shared locally and with extended families abroad, with fears of misuse that could harm their children or jeopardize their immigration status. We discuss their data management strategies and approaches to navigating changing concepts of data ownership and consent. Our findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive support to help migrant families safeguard their children’s data and highlight directions for future research into the complexities of cross-border data sharing and its implications.

1. Introduction

Parents who migrate often raise children while adapting to unfamiliar legal, social, and technical environments. In these settings, managing children’s data is not limited to social media sharing: it also involves school records, health information, immigration-related documents, messaging apps, shared devices, and cross-border sharing with extended family members. Our published study at S&P2025¹ examined how migrant parents and guardians in the UK perceive, manage, and safeguard data involving their children through interviews with 17 participants. We found that parents hold diverse and evolving views of ownership: some regard children as the rightful owners of their data, some view themselves as owners because of caregiving responsibilities, and others see ownership as shared or effectively held by service providers. These perspectives shape how parents retain, store, share, and delete data, as well as how they negotiate consent as children grow older. Participants also expressed concerns about misuse, loss of control, profiling,

and harms that could affect family wellbeing or even immigration status.

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2. Extensions of Published Work

This poster extends our published work by translating the empirical findings into a clearer security and privacy agenda for child-data safeguarding in migrant families. Building on our findings, we show that migrant parents’ management of children’s data is shaped by five connected dynamics: children may be seen as the rightful owners of their data without having full control over it; data management is treated as part of everyday parenting and care; decisions about children’s data are negotiated through tensions between autonomy and parental authority; cross-border family sharing introduces inconsistencies in privacy norms and expectations; and data safeguarding is often deprioritized in the face of immediate caregiving, settlement, and institutional demands. Taken together, these findings point to the need for security and privacy interventions that better support cross-border sharing, reflect evolving child agency and consent, and account for the cultural, legal, and practical realities that shape migrant family life.

Acknowledgments

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1. The published paper: <https://doi.ieeecomputersociety.org/10.1109/SP61157.2025.00172>

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MOTIVATION

- Migrant parents face new digital, legal, and cultural challenges when raising children abroad.
- Children's data is often sensitive - but safeguarding is unclear and difficult across borders.
- **[AIM]** This study explores how migrant parents perceive, manage, and safeguard data related to their children.

RESEARCH AIM & QUESTIONS

- RQ1: How do migrant parents perceive the ownership of data involving their children?
- RQ2: What concerns do migrant parents have about the collection and use of their children's data?
- RQ3: How do migrant parents manage their children's data, and what strategies do they use to safeguard it?
- RQ4: How do migrant parents' approaches to data ownership and consent evolve as their children grow older?

METHODOLOGY



- Ethics approved by our institutional IRB. Parents could participate with their children present or to pause interviews for looking after their children.



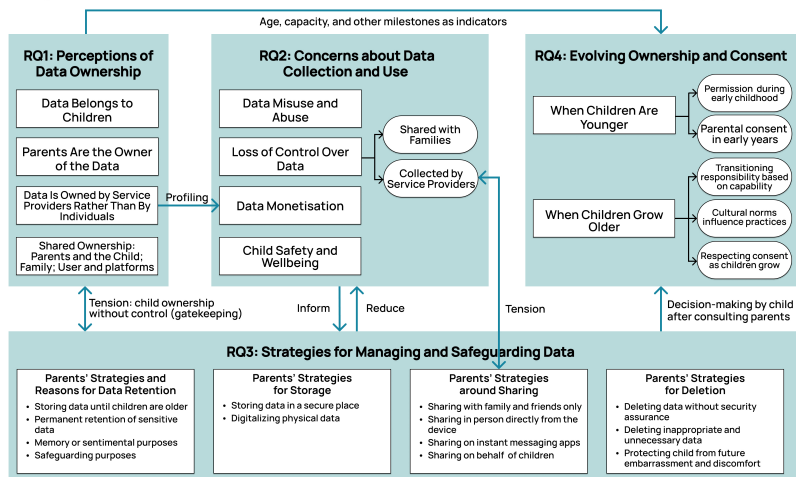
- 17 UK-based migrant parents or guardians: having at least one child under age 13 in their care; active technology use in the household



- Semi-structured interviews (online, in-person, and asynchronous via WhatsApp)

FINDINGS

Migrant parents' perspectives on data involving children:



FROM TAKEAWAYS TO FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Child ownership ≠ control

Study how cultural norms shape parental gatekeeping and children's data agency in migrant families.

Data management is a part of parenting

Examine how parenting styles and caregiving responsibilities influence data practices across cultures.

Cultural tension between autonomy and authority

Explore intergenerational dynamics and second-generation perspectives on consent, autonomy, and parental authority.

Cross-border inconsistencies in privacy norms

Investigate how platforms mediate transnational family sharing and where safer, more transparent support is needed.

Data safeguarding is a secondary priority

Identify what makes data protection a priority in migrant contexts.

