

TO FLAUNT YOUR BUNDLE OF JOY ONLINE OR NOT?

# MOTHER'S LOVE

It is a big debate among young mothers. Social media mothering, flaunting your baby online or whatever you choose to call it, has become a contentious issue. For some, it is for likes, for others, it is part of influencing, while some babies start earning from their social media accounts in their first week. **ALEX BALIMWIKUNGU** weighs the pros and cons as we celebrate Mother's Day this Sunday

Juliana Kanyomozi's recent journey into motherhood was certainly not without scrutiny. Rather than unveil her son Taj in one grand reveal, she offered her followers a slow drip of mystery: A tiny toe, a curled thumb, a fleeting glimpse of his back. The face, however, remained off-limits.

The teasing only fuelled curiosity and impatience. Social media buzzed with complaints, speculation and eventually, snide whispers linking the child's appearance to a well-known married man, as though a single photo might unlock the identity of his father.

But Kanyomozi never wavered. Drawing a firm line between public life and private motherhood, she pushed back against the noise with quiet defiance.

"He is my child, not yours," she stated.

In fact, she has been openly critical of a growing trend among celebrity parents who document every moment of their children's lives online. For Kanyomozi, some boundaries are non-negotiable even in an age where privacy is often the first thing sacrificed for relevance.

Another singer, Grace Khan, faced the wrath of social

media, when she posted photos of her daughter, Ilonah Granah, complete with a studio set, makeup and all.

"My bundle of joy," she wrote.

The hateful comments from online trolls about the daughter sent the musician into depression. It was the last time she ever posted about the child.

It was the same case with Youtuber Zubeda Byantalo when she posted photos of her bespectacled daughter recently. The comments, she recently confessed, "almost made her quit social media"

There was a time when a baby announcement involved a shy knock on the neighbour's door, a proud father clearing his throat and a mother glowing somewhere in the background.

Fast forward to today, and childbirth is practically a live broadcast event complete with teaser photos, countdown

captions, and hashtags that trend faster than the baby learns to crawl.

Today, mothers are increasingly flaunting

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Kanyomozi

Zari flaunted Latifah Dangote, her daughter with Tanzanian singer Diamond Platnumz, on social media

Grace Khan

pregnancies and babies through photoshoots. They frequently post children's photos online, a practice known as "sharenting" as a way of

documenting memories, expressing immense pride and sharing milestones.

Popular TikToker Winifred Nalukege, popularly known as Ariana Sebunya, recently gave birth.

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# THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA MOTHERING

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Even before thinking about breastfeeding or sleep training, she was hell bent on making her baby famous and gain a fortune. The month-old baby called Avielle has already made a social media debut with endorsements lined up.

The doting mother defends her stance. She says using her child as a social media influencer is deliberate.

"For me, I just saw an opportunity. My life revolves around building brands as an influencer and I see nothing wrong with making my child part of the narrative," Sebuya says.

She has chosen a path that Ugandan socialite Zari has taken before with great results. Zari flaunted Latifah Dangote, her daughter with Tanzanian singer Diamond Platnumz, on social media. Just aged 10, Tiffah is a prominent young influencer who often features in brand endorsements and, high-profile events, where she showcases a luxurious lifestyle and a boss baby persona.

Then there are the low-key warriors. These mothers, like motor-mouthed presidential advisor Jennifer Nakanguubi, aka Full Figure, treat their baby's identity like a classified file. No face, no name, no unnecessary exposure.

Reasoning why she never posts them, Nakanguubi said not every follower is a well-wisher.

For many average mothers, social media is an extension of community. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have become places where first steps, school milestones and birthday cakes live forever.

These mums (and dads) believe that if they endured nine months of swollen feet, unsolicited advice and midnight cravings for roasted cassava, then the world can at least double-tap a few baby pictures.

To them, social media is simply an extension of joy. Why not share the first smile, the first laugh, the first time the baby sneezes?

In a world where families



Many parents do not know that they expose their children to potential harm by posting them on social media

are often spread across cities or continents, posting a child's photo can feel like sending a warm update across distance.

Yet beneath the adorable captions and matching outfits lies a more complex

conversation that touches on privacy, identity, and the long-term implications of growing up online.

## IS SHARING CARING?

Moses Waiswa, a clinical mental health counsellor dealing with trauma, stress and behavioural issues, says the urge many mothers feel to share photos of their children online is less about vanity and more about a powerful mix of instinct, identity and reinforcement.

"Motherhood activates deep evolutionary drives tied to attachment and protection. Showing off one's child even digitally can be understood as a modern extension of "social grooming," a concept rooted in evolutionary psychology. In traditional communities, mothers would introduce their babies to social circles

## DO CHILDREN HAVE RIGHT TO PRIVACY?

Michael Aboneka, a partner at Thomas & Michael Advocates, says a child's story should belong to the child first. He says whereas it may look fine to share good news to the world concerning your children, what many do not know is that they are exposing them to potential harm.

Aboneka mentions Article 27 of the Constitution and the Data Protection and Privacy Act, which provide protection of privacy and personal data in all aspects. It provides avenues where data and personal information can be used.

Aboneka also mentions African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Children Act, which emphasise maximum protection of the child and

further enjoin the participation of children in decision making.

"The guiding principle is always in the best interest of the child. Parents should involve their children in the decision on whether their photos can be published. The consent must be express, especially to children above 12 years as they are presumed to understand issues at hand," he says.

Aboneka adds: "The majority of parents are guilty of breaching the right to privacy of their children by sharing their photos on WhatsApp, TikTok and Instagram in the name of celebrations or whatever other reasons. One must always ask: Is this in the best interest of my child to post them on the Internet? The effects of wantonly publishing your child and their personal information puts the child's lives in jeopardy and could give kidnappers and all sorts of cyber and non-cyber criminals free information and clues that can hurt your child."

physically. Today, social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook have become the new village square," he says.

Waiswa says when a mother posts a photo and receives likes, comments and shares, her brain experiences

a dopamine reward. This positive feedback loop conditions her to repeat the behaviour. Over time, sharing becomes less of a conscious decision and more of a habit.

"Sharing photos can foster social support, reduce feelings of isolation, especially in urban or disconnected settings. The online affirmation replaces the extended family structures that once provided reassurance.

In essence, mothers aren't simply oversharing. Most are responding to deeply wired mechanisms interacting with modern technology," Waiswa says.

## RISKS BENEATH THE SURFACE

Waiswa, however, cautions that a child whose life is extensively documented online has little say in how their identity is constructed before they are old enough to consent.

A photo of a child shared today may still exist decades later, shaping how they are perceived before they have had the chance to define themselves. What feels like a harmless post could later become a source of embarrassment or vulnerability.

Waiswa also points out the concerns. "Oversharing details such as school locations, daily routines or frequent hangouts can expose children to risks that many parents don't immediately consider. Also, when motherhood is constantly documented, it can shift from being lived to being presented. The child becomes part of a narrative crafted for likes and comments, rather than simply enjoying an unfiltered life out of the cameras like many of their peers," he advises.

**When motherhood is constantly documented, it can shift from being lived to being presented.**



Nakanguubi does not post pictures of her baby on social media