

Flexing on Social Media Among Indonesian Teenagers: A Literature Review

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Abstract. The phenomenon of flexing or showing off one's wealth and lifestyle on social media is increasingly widespread among Indonesian teenagers. This is driven by the desire to gain social recognition and higher social status. This behavior is not only limited to the upper class, but includes all social strata who are trying to meet the demands of an up-to-date lifestyle. This research aims to examine the prevalence of flexing which is characterized by flashy displays and flaunting practices on social media by referring to related literature. The method used in this paper is a rapid literature study using the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) approach to search and select relevant studies systematically, ensuring a focused and comprehensive review. From an Islamic perspective, flexing is considered *israf* (excessive behavior) and is prohibited, as it encourages materialism and shifts the focus from spiritual values to worldly values. From Hindu ethics, especially the teachings of Sapta Timira, which views flexing as a form of darkness that causes individuals to forget their identity and origins, giving rise to negative social impacts. Additionally, flexing impacts people's mental health and trust, as it fosters an environment full of envy and competition. The influence of social media on flexing is enormous, with platforms such as Instagram and Facebook becoming arenas for flaunting luxury, which can lead to criminal activity, such as fraud and money laundering, as seen in the cases of binary options.

Key words: Flexing, prevalence, teenagers.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of "flexing" and a luxurious lifestyle on social media is increasingly occurring among Indonesian teenagers, driven by the desire to gain social recognition and higher social status. This action is often seen on various social media platforms, such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter where teenagers share images and videos featuring luxury goods, lifestyles, and experiences to project an ideal version of their lives. This action is also closely related to the influence of the use of these social media platforms, which have become an important component in teenagers' daily routines, in addition to showing off their luxurious possessions and experiences to the wider public. The motivations behind this behavior vary, including the need for self-recognition, social engagement, and the desire to appear trendy and not outdated (Sari & Lestahu, 2023).

Flexing is not just a display of material wealth and showing off, but is also a manifestation of deeper psychological needs, such as insecurity and low emotional intelligence, when individuals seek validation and acceptance from their peers (Aeni et al., 2023). The impact of social media on teenage lifestyles is very significant, research shows that social media influences the behavior of teenagers in cities such as Bandung and Yogyakarta, this underlines the importance of

socializing the use of these platforms in a healthy and wise manner (Rismayanti, Vidiadari, & Ispandriano, 2022; Achmad et al., 2023). The influence of social media on the lifestyle of Indonesian teenagers is a complex phenomenon shaped by various factors. For one thing, social media has been linked to a significant influence on conspicuous consumption among Indonesia's younger generation, highlighting the role of digital platforms in promoting materialistic behavior and lifestyle choices (Dennis & Sobari, 2022). A recent study on the impact of social media on teenagers' lifestyles underscores that social media can indeed influence teenagers' behavior, attitudes and overall lifestyle, emphasizing the transformative power of digital platforms in the daily lives of young individuals (Ahmad et al., 2023).

However, the search for social recognition through materialistic flexing can have negative consequences, such as the development of arrogance, a shift towards materialistic values, and even innovative crime. An example of the flexing phenomenon, there is a video circulating on the Tik Tok platform which shows several middle school students dancing while flexing luxury goods, such as car keys and expensive smartphones (Suara Bogor, 2023). Then, fraud under the guise of investment leads to unethical

practices, as seen in cases that use flexing as a marketing strategy for fraudulent digital investment businesses (Fauziah, 2023; Lubis & Sazali, 2023). If related to values and norms, from an Islamic perspective, flexing is condemned because it is considered an act of *israf* (excessive) and is prohibited because it is associated with arrogance and materialism, which is contrary to the values of humility and empathy (Ajidin & Wahidah, 2023). Although it offers opportunities to establish social relationships and exchange information, it also poses risks such as mental and behavioral disorders if not managed properly (Nesti & Nabila, 2021).

Although existing research has explored the general impact of social media on and individual behavior, specific attention to the act of flexing is limited. Other research examines flexing behavior through the lens of Hindu ethics, especially the Sapta Timira concept, this study is limited to a philosophical and ethical perspective (Budiartini, Puspawati, & Suryosumunar, 2022). Another review of the impact of technology on Indonesia's young generation highlights the dynamic behavioral changes caused by social media, but the analysis does not focus on flexing as a separate phenomenon (Untari, Satria, Fikri, Nursal, & Winarso, 2020). Lubis & Sazali's (2023) research provides insight into the Islamic perspective on flexible attitudes, identifying issues such as materialism and arrogance. Luthfia & Pinckey (2020), discuss the dual nature of internet use among Indonesian teenagers, highlighting opportunities and risks, but do not specifically investigate how flexing fits into the risk framework. Based on these references, a literature study related to flexing is needed to help provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

The need for self-existence and recognition among teenagers is the driving force behind their online behavior, but this must be approached wisely to avoid excessive pride and disruption to social relationships (Mahendra, 2017). The rapid growth of internet users in Indonesia, especially among teenagers, further strengthens this phenomenon, because the internet is like a double-edged sword, providing opportunities and risks (Luthfia & Pinckey, 2020). Therefore, it is very important to examine the prevalence of flexing by teenagers which is characterized by conspicuous displays and flaunting practices on social media concerning related literature, so that in the future it can be used to help teenagers navigate the complexities of social media use, ensuring they

benefit from these opportunities. these opportunities while mitigating the risks. This research aims to examine the prevalence of flexing which is characterized by flashy displays and flaunting practices on social media by referring to related literature.

METHODS

The method for conducting a systematic literature review on the topic "Flexing on Social Media Among Indonesian Teenagers: A Literature Review" is to use the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) framework. First, determine the PICO elements: Population (Indonesian teenagers), Intervention (flexing actions and social media), Comparison, and Results (study and synthesis of the prevalence of flexing teenagers). A literature search (data collect) was carried out in several databases, such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and other publishers, similar to the approach used by Sutini in her study on the impact of social media on body image (Sutini, 2022). The search included keywords such as "flexing", "social media" and "teens", and was limited to articles published within the last five years to ensure relevance (subgroup management). There are 4 articles that are used as the main source in this article. The four references were obtained from the following journals: (1) LONTAR, (2) Nusantara Islamic Economic Journal, (3) International Conference on Intellectuals' Global Responsibility, (4) Jurnal Interaksi Sosiologi. Initial search results should be filtered based on title and abstract, followed by a detailed review of the full text to identify studies that meet the criteria. Additionally, tabular analysis techniques can be used to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature (Krille, 2020). The final set of studies should be analyzed, evaluated, and synthesized to identify trends, themes, and gaps in the research, similar to the systematic literature review approach regarding data management described by Tikito & Souissi (2019). This method ensures a systematic review, minimizes loss of information and provides a clear vision of existing findings on the topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The article on "Flexing on Social Media Among Indonesian Teenagers: A Literature Review" seeks to explore the complexity of flexing on social media by Indonesian teenagers

through a literature review. The analysis covers multiple dimensions, including where adolescents learn flexing, motivation for the action, and prevalence of flexing. A synthesis of these studies yields an understanding of flexing among adolescents. A total of 4 research articles were selected based on the criteria and analysis of these articles was carried out. Meanwhile, the selected research article discusses flexing on social media by teenagers. The World Health Organization

(WHO) says that adolescence is aged 10 to 19 years (Nidhi, Nipun, & Ajay, 2020). This is a widely accepted definition and is used in many studies. These four articles were published less than the last 5 years. The selected articles are qualitative and quantitative journal articles, thereby providing a more comprehensive picture. Meanwhile, below is a table presented to make it easier to see the comparison between the selected articles.

Author and Title	Method	Results and Findings
Wijaya, C., & Primadini, I. (2023). The Meaning of Generation Z on Flexing Luxury Brand on Social Media	Qualitative methodology was used in this research, specifically interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), to gain in-depth insight into how Generation Z interprets and engages in flexing actions on social media. This study focuses on participants from Generation Z who are actively involved in showcasing luxury brands on social media, aiming to explore their perspectives and interpretations.	This research aims to understand how Generation Z interacts with media and luxury goods, with a focus on their role in media and social prestige, thereby motivating participation in media activities such as flexing, attracting attention, and building social status. C, an 18 year old teenager, has had a significant impact on his community. C actively spends money on luxury brands, uploading content about these brands on social media. Research participants, including C, flexed on social media to showcase their luxury brand collections, aiming to gain recognition and praise from their social circles. Social media platforms play an important role in shaping exhibitors' exhibition activities, enabling them to showcase their achievements, gain recognition and interact with a wider audience.
Solikhah, P. (2023). The effect of flexing and personal branding on the lifestyle of millennial Islamic students in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.	This research tests the relationship between variables using quantitative methods. Data collection through questionnaires, literature reviews, interviews and observations to understand the impact of flexing and personal branding on the lifestyle of millennial students. This research focuses on millennial students in Yogyakarta who live in Islamic boarding schools, using a non-probability sampling method for data collection.	Research finds that the act of flexing on social media has a significant effect on the lifestyle of millennial students with an influence of 18.24%. This shows that the behavior and display of wealth or achievements made by public figures on social media platforms can shape the lifestyle choices of these students. Personal branding on social media has been proven to have a greater impact on the lifestyle of millennial students with an influence of 32.39%. When considering the combined effect of flexing and personal branding, research shows that these factors together have a 40.23% influence on lifestyle. This highlights the large role of social media content in shaping the lifestyle of millennial Islamic students. This study also recognizes that there are external influences outside of flexing and personal branding that influence the lifestyle of millennial students, which is the remaining 50.77% of influences that are not included in the research variables.
Farhan, M. R., Nggaibo, M. I.,	This research uses a qualitative case study	Most participants are aware of the crazy rich phenomenon in Indonesia, and some participants

<p>Siregar, S. R., Afriansyah, I., & Kusumaningrum, F. A. (2023),.</p> <p>Narcissism on Social Media: Examining Public Perceptions of Crazy Rich Flexing in Indonesia</p>	<p>design to explore people's perceptions regarding crazy rich flexing in Indonesia. Purposive sampling was used in this research to select informants. This method focuses on selecting individuals who can provide the most relevant and informative data based on their knowledge or experience related to the research objectives.</p>	<p>actively follow it. Participants viewed crazy rich people as overly selfish, intolerant, and unreasonable. They are considered to ignore the needs of others and exhibit behavior that is considered unethical and inhumane. Lack of empathy was highlighted as a significant problem, especially when flaunting wealth in difficult times. The participants expressed their hope that crazy rich people could become more empathetic and grateful individuals. These results reflect a critical view of the narcissistic tendencies displayed by crazy rich people in Indonesia on social media, emphasizing the need for more responsible and empathetic behavior.</p>
<p>Adjiwibowo, A. D., Fauziah, A. Z., Nurlayna, F., Loen, H. S., & Humaira, J. A. (2023).</p> <p>Flexing and Fomo Phenomenon on Instagram: Generation Z's Perception of the Instagram Accounts @siscakohl, @zhafiraiha, and @jeromepolin</p>	<p>This article uses qualitative research methods to understand and deeply analyze the content posted by influencers on Instagram, focusing on their tendencies towards flexing and FOMO behavior and their impact on Generation Z followers.</p>	<p>This study found that social media platforms, especially Instagram, contribute significantly to the prevalence of FOMO and flexing among Generation Z. This generation often feels pressured to keep up with the latest trends and show off their lives online, thereby increasing anxiety and social comparison. This study shows that FOMO and flexing are not just individual problems but are influenced by social norms and technological advances. The desire to be seen as equal or superior in social status drives these behaviors, which is further reinforced by the widespread use of social media. Influencers play an important role in shaping the behavior of their followers. The study observed that influencers such as siscakohl, zhafiraiha, and jeromepolin often post content showcasing their wealth, success, and glamorous lifestyles. These posts may create feelings of inadequacy and FOMO among followers, who may feel pressured to achieve similar levels of success and recognition.</p>

Where Do Teenagers Learn Flexing?

Teenagers learn about the act of flexing through various means which later becomes a widespread phenomenon, especially on social media platforms. Based on a review of the literature, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are filled with content of individuals showing off their wealth, achievements, goods, and luxurious lifestyles. In this case, teenagers are exposed to such content every day, making them familiar with the concept of flexing (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023; Solikhah, 2023). Apart from that, teenagers also know and learn flexing actions through peers. Teenagers observe their peers flexing, both in real life and via social media. When they see their friends or classmates getting attention and praise for showing off luxury goods, it encourages them to participate, adapt, and compete in similar

behavior (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023; Solikhah, 2023; Farhan., et., al., 2023; Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023). However, not all teenagers agree to take flexing even though they have learned through their peers (Farhan., et., al., 2023). Influencers and celebrities are also a place for teenagers to learn how to flex through online media platforms. Many celebrities and influencers flex by posting about their expensive purchases, vacations, and exclusive events (Solikhah, 2023). They regularly post content that highlights their material wealth and personal achievements (Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023). Some of these figures are known as crazy rich (Farhan., et., al., 2023). From here, teenagers follow these figures and adopt similar behavior to imitate their lifestyle, which then teenagers do flexing actions.

Flexing Motivation by Teenagers

A human action is definitely based on one or various kinds of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Including the act of flexing, based on the results of a literature review there are several things that underlie teenagers to do flexing. The influence of technology and social media habits, the ease of sharing content on social media platforms and the constant connectivity provided by technology can encourage teens to flex more often, as they have the tools to easily present their lives to a wide audience. Social media habits such as Instagram encourage users to share their best moments and successes, this can make teenagers flex to suit current trends (Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023). Then social recognition, teenagers crave social recognition and acceptance from their peers and wider social circles. Flexing luxury brands on social media serves as a means to achieve this recognition, as it demonstrates their ability to purchase and enjoy high-status goods (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023). Apart from wealth, showing off achievements on social media can make them feel more accepted and admired by other people (Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023). By flexing, teenagers think they can raise their social status and be accepted among their peers. Status aspirations and the desire to elevate their social status among peers are strong motivators for adolescents (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023). This is also supported by features on social media which have like, follower and comment features which are measures of social status in the current era. Besides that, hedonism and brand awareness also underlie flexing motivation in teenagers. Hedonistic tendencies and brand awareness encourage the development of a brand-focused lifestyle which they then want to show off (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023). Flexing also motivates to build credibility and self-expression. For some people, displaying wealth is a way to build credibility among their peers and followers. They believe that showing off expensive items or experiences can increase their social status and make them more respected or admired (Farhan., et., al., 2023). For some people, flexing their body is a form of self-expression, displaying achievements, possessions, or experiences as a reflection of their identity or achievements (Solikhah, 2023). Then, FOMO or fear of missing out on important experiences or social status can encourage teens to flex. This is a way to show that they are not left behind and are part of the present (Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023).

Prevalence of Adolescent Flexing Actions

Based on the literature review that has been carried out, the prevalence of flexing on social media among teenagers is strongly influenced by (1) social recognition and validation, (2) materialistic and hedonistic lifestyles, (3) the influence of influencers, peers, and FOMO. First, teenagers show their wealth and luxury on social media to gain recognition and appreciation from their peers and community. This is seen as a way to affirm their social status and identity within their community (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023). The desire to gain validation and social acceptance is a strong motivator for adolescents (Farhan., et., al., 2023). In a culture that increasingly equates wealth with happiness and success, teens use social media as a way to gain recognition from peers and the general public. Second, there has been a lifestyle shift among Indonesian teenagers towards materialism, with appearance and ownership of luxury brands increasingly seen as markers of personal success. This shift is reflected in the increasing trend of flexing, in line with teenagers' efforts to adapt themselves to ever-changing lifestyles (Wijaya & Primadini, 2023; Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023). Third, the behavior of peers, influencers and FOMO on social media has a significant impact on teenagers. When they see friends or influencers engaging in flexing actions, this will make teenagers more socially accepting of these actions among them (Solikhah, 2023; Adjiwibowo., et., al., 2023). In turn, teenagers can be depressed and want to do the same if they often see friends and influencers showing off their achievements or wealth or what is called FOMO. This leads to a chain of social comparisons where teens try to outperform or match others which makes the prevalence of teen flexing increase.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of flexing on social media among teenagers is strongly influenced by social acceptance and validation, hedonistic materialistic lifestyles, the influence of influencers, and FOMO. Teenagers use social media to express their feelings and desires about their social status and identity in their communities. This motivates them to pursue social validation and success that is sometimes artificial and false. This leads to a more materialistic lifestyle for teenagers. The influence of the social environment, influencers, and FOMO on social media significantly influence teenagers to flex.

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