

Lifestyle: Flexing Behavior in Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Global environmental degradation cannot be separated from people behavior and lifestyle, one of which is the flexing phenomenon. This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological approach and explained descriptively because the researcher aimed to obtain an in-depth picture of the flexing phenomenon in society. The results of this study revealed that the flexing phenomenon is actually has been around for a long time, and has now developed in society and has become an arena for showing off people's wealth and accomplishments. On the conclusion, flexing is often considered as deception because the doer usually doesn't show his/her reality. Flexing behavior is done by people who want to be recognized that they belong to a higher social status (social climber). This flexing behavior is not only done by the upper class but also by the middle class and the lower class. Usually they do anything to meet the demands of the up-to-date lifestyle. The activity of flexing is not only do directly, but also through social media as well. People are competing to show off the luxury items they have. The flexing phenomenon is associated with structural functionalism, that is, changes that occur which will not change the basic elements of socio-culture

Keywords: *Flexing, Lifestyle, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

Environment is one of the most important elements of the Earth. Therefore, environment has special role in the survival of all living things on the Earth. The quality of the environment certainly affects the quality of the creatures living in it (Nadiroh et al., 2019). Environmental problems that continue to occur today are actually a serious threat for the Earth creatures. Although various studies and investigations of environmental problems continue to be carried out, the solutions offered have not been fully able to overcome those environmental problems (Priadi et al., 2018). Development approach needs to be expanded starting from a new paradigm/concept. New perspectives that are currently developing need to be adapted, including: demands for independence and decentralization; partnerships in development; the need to increase the efficiency and productivity of the people; participatory development that socially fair for whole people which focuses on sustainable welfare economically, culturally and environmentally (Widiarso, 2011). These development demands really need to be applied to as soon as possible.

Global environmental degradation cannot be separated from people's behavior and lifestyle. Individual lifestyles and social behavior are developed based on knowledge and social attitudes in his/her environment (Belajar Cara Hidup Berkelanjutan: Learning Sustainable Ways, 2020). Lifestyles that ignoring nature preservation had developed and been embraced by almost the entire world community before serious environmental degradation emerged (Nurhayati et al., 2016).

In 2022, in various social media, especially in TikTok, it became viral and reported on infotainment, about videos that showed people who had fantastically large incomes ranging from 600 million to billions and had to spend large sum of money which can reach millions of rupiahs only for their personal expenses. Along with this information, social media was also enlivened by several celebrities or national artists who often created content on social media or even on national media about how much wealth they had until finally the term "crazy rich" or "sultan" emerged in Indonesia some time ago.

On the other hand, it was a fact that most Indonesian people still earned the minimum wage and some even earn below the minimum wage. Sadly, there were still many Indonesian people who were categorized as being under the poverty line (Lasmana & Wardani, 2022). This phenomenon showed gap in society and was certainly feared that it can

cause jealousy among the social classes in society.

The flexing phenomenon is also considered as cultural dynamics, which means that culture is indeed such a thing, it will continue to move to form a new culture. The changes that occur in relation to society consumption behavior are concrete evidence that the desire for consumption in modern society is on the verge of madness. In everyday life, various meanings are created, irrationally and rationally (Khayati et al., 2022).

METHOD

The qualitative method in this study used a phenomenology approach and the results was explained descriptively because the researcher aimed to obtain an in-depth description of the flexing phenomenon that was currently being discussed by the public. The researcher described various situations, conditions, and variables. In this study, the researcher focused on the lifestyle issues and people's flexing behavior. This study also described steps of gaining the data exploratorily using the qualitative research.

The phenomenological approach describes the concept. Here, the researcher wanted to know the reasons why people doing flexing. Data collection was carried out by observation without participants, where the researcher only observed phenomena that occurred on social media. In the documentation, the researcher collected data in the form of pictures or photos obtained from social media such as Instagram, TikTok, snack videos and Facebook which were then supported by research procedures using secondary data. The secondary data research is relevant data that is able to add insight to the research being studied, namely related to showing off wealthiness.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The luxurious lifestyle in today's modern era is creating the birth of a new culture that we often see every day, one of which is the flexing culture, which means showing off wealthiness. People usually display flexing in social media. It can be seen on their Facebook status, symbols and images; Instagram photos; thoughts, feelings, and actions done on TikTok. This situation exists in everyday life.

Many people express happiness, admiration, and joy in the form of symbols of meaning which are communicated. There are moments of joy in their social activities that they want to share with others. The goal is not only to share information but also to show off and signify their presence in their social circle (Nurhayat & Noorizki, 2022). Showing off or flexing nowadays is unavoidable. It means that recently happiness and serenity are no longer considered as self-actualization of gratitude towards oneself; So this flexing culture decreases people's critical thinking ability and mental value. Before, happiness considered as complete and natural enjoyment that was shared only to close people. (Nugroho et al., 2023).

Many people are willing to buy new products from well-known brands, go on vacations abroad, and eat food at expensive restaurants. These all activities are intended to be photographed and displayed on their social media to express their social fame. From a psychological point of view, most of the main motivations that drive individuals to perform these kinds of actions are because they want to explain their presence in their social circle. This is confirmed by the Indonesian psychology forum, which stated that people who like to do selfies in luxury cars, planes, post photos of expensive food, referring the actions as the system of differentiation, namely the system of status inequality, symbolism, the formation of social dignity, and consumptive.

People buy or consume an object not only to use its value and utility, but also to convey the meaning behind it. In addition, it can be used as a means to express social status in society (Murjana & Sinarwati, 2022). Flexing, or commonly known as displaying wealthiness, is found on various social media, for example, on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and other social media (Mustamin, 2022). Flexing is usually carried out by showing off the luxury lifestyle possessed by a person and also his/her achievements that he/she has. There are many vloggers or content creators in Indonesia who are flexing as contents on their social media pages. The flexing phenomenon is currently viral or booming on social media lately. It has its own uniqueness where people show off their possession becomes a competition in the midst of society (Kusuma Putri et al., 2022).

The flexing phenomenon has also been used in marketing, as what the consumer behavior theory that there are various consumptions that are deliberately exhibited for others. This flexing phenomenon has actually started to appear a long time ago, however, things that distinguish it from before is today it becomes viral because of the existence of social media (Solikhah, 2023). For example, doctors who are doing practice at home or clinic usually display their certificates for people/ patients to see. It is the same as what we often see on social media. People often show off their wealthiness

such as expensive clothes, expensive bags, expensive shoes, luxury cars, private jets, traveling around the world, luxury homes, and several other luxury items.

The goal of doing flexing is to show their status of social position, create an impression on others, and show ability. Flexing is also widely used as marketing strategies. Some people also doing flexing is by showing off their achievements, and awards on their social media (Fatimah & Putri, 2023). However, doing flexing can actually create a tacky and arrogant impression, and causes harm to themselves. Even though flexing is one part of the marketing strategies undertaken to attract consumer interest, there are many other strategies that can be implemented (Budiartini et al., 2022). A very drastic change in flexing behavior in today society express clear evidence of consumptive culture in modern society which exceeds the limits of madness.

Everyday life is filled with the beauty of hedonism and consumerism which has symbols and meanings in it, between rational and irrational. A situation when it becomes a new culture and considered normal is interesting to be examined since this phenomenon is liked by many groups of people, both from the upper social class to the lower social class. The fame of flexing in social media for is not only in physical form (the attributes used), but can also be symbolized by non-physical forms; such as prestige in the choice of places to eat, shopping centers, and recreational places.

When someone doing flexing in social media, he/she shares his/her videos or photos on social media accounts so that the public can see. By doing that, he/she will be referred to as people who are respected and prioritize prestige and have a high social status in a society. This is a new phenomenon in postmodern society as a logical consequence of the consumerism of society. This phenomenon is also a new social reality. It is undeniable in today's society that the flexing activity by posting videos and photos on social media is the most effective way anyone can take when wanting to show off his/her social and cultural identity.

Flexing is one of influencer marketing strategies that is really important to get his/her followers' attention on social media. Flexing can affect human brain's subconscious so if people see those photos or video, they usually tend to imitate the appearance of others who they think are better than themselves. When people see other people's success, appearance, or wealthiness, it affects their brain so that they will follow what they see because they will see the people who are doing flexing as their role models. The person who is affected by flexing will be afraid of losing the moment if he/she doesn't imitate the current style spread by influencers. This condition is called FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). As a result, those who feel FOMO will feel unhappy, jealous, and even embarrassed when they meet their friends if they are not able to follow the latest trends that are currently being followed by their circle.

Flexing can increase desire to satisfy human's ego. Deliarnov on his book entitled *Perkembangan Pemikiran Ekonomi* published in 2015 explained that when there was massive dissemination of information, it was also an opportunity for the market to offer a lot of tempting products that could attract the tastes of consumers. It creates hedonism and consumerism behavior. Indirectly, if a person too often doing flexing on social media, it will give negative impact on him/herself.

These are some of negative impacts of flexing: 1) It creates consumptive behavior in order to get other people's attention, both on social media and reality. so that they will be considered as rich. To fulfill this impression, they will do anything; 2) It creates financial debts. If someone who does flexing is unable to fulfil the glamour lifestyle, he/she will make effort to fulfil it. One of the ways is by be in debt. It can also be a problem if he/she is unable to pay it; 3) By doing frequent flexing, there is a possibility that they have less empathy because they don't care about poor people, they only focus on showing off their wealth.

We as part of social media users need to reduce flexing behavior on social media, below are several ways, including: 1) Using hidden setting, which means only a few close people can see our posts. So, if we post anything, it will not considered as exaggerate. Even people will actually appreciate what we achieve or get; 2) When we post something, we can also give an explanation such as being proud of ourselves or feeling happy but not in proud manner and not exaggerating about it; 3) When we post our achievements, we can also add statements that can inspire others.

Peter L. Berger, a humanist sociologist (Subandi, 2007) stated that this phenomenon emerges "the urbanization of consciousness". The construction of reality is presented in a new face. These people are not rich, but they can act like they were rich. A country bumpkin can appear as a city slicker even though he/she has never been to the city. According to Parsons' functional structure theory, a society is in harmony and balance when the existing system (from state and society) can protect stability in society.

The form of a community that can carry out its functions and can maintain the norms and values adopted by the community creates stability within the community itself (Akbar, 2019). Personality crisis that dominates almost all areas of Indonesian social life is caused by the dysfunction of national forums and the social structure of society. The dysfunctional of community forums and structures of society in social control is mainly caused by the development of refraction culture. If the majority people in a community deviate their social values, the community structure is no longer a habit that is unable to develop.

Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, in his index of "cultural studies", correctly observed, that the symbols most people display were expressions based on the cultural products of certain social groups. The upper classes continued to

establish their social class distinction by demonstrating the tastes they created. For example, they wear expensive jewelry, choose expensive restaurants, going to recreation places, and perform religious rituals repeatedly to display our wealth and social status. Therefore, it is clear that consumption creates social stratification, because it involves social dignity.

The community is also not only trying to fortify the differences in social class, but also on the role of culture on the social status legitimacy as well, represented by the use symbols which shows happiness and comfort. The implementation of depictions in today's culture as a social virus that spreads spiritual values is supported by therapeutic values such as performance, entertainment, achievement, and ecstasy. This type of value shift, which Baudrillard called the stage of fractal value (or virus), is a value system that reproduces itself by infinite multiplication. The values radiate in all directions, infecting and contaminating every aspect of life.

Social actions that appear in society at this time are social reality in oneself, glory of consumption, madness of life, and conflict between the person's social identity and the culture he/she shows, which is: the current paradoxical social life style (status, image, self) is a practice in culture in society that is quite easy to find and also familiar to our lives. This phenomenon that is happening at the moment is part of our daily life, whether we realize it or not. Symbolic cycle is an important and inevitable part in the postmodern universe, including lifestyles, images and landmarks are always self-fulfilling for every individual.

CONCLUSION

On the conclusion, flexing is often considered as deception because the doer usually doesn't show his/her reality. Flexing behavior is done by people who want to be recognized that they belong to a higher social status (social climber). This flexing behavior is not only done by the upper class but also by the middle class and the lower class. Usually they do anything to meet the demands of the up-to-date lifestyle. The activity of flexing is not only do directly, but also through social media as well. People are competing to show off the luxury items they have. The flexing phenomenon is associated with structural functionalism, that is, changes that occur which will not change the basic elements of socio-culture. How the issue of flexing affects the social media actors and viewers, basically it doesn't change the structure in society but there is competition in society. Flexing is done to get respect, recognition, and to show that he/she is one step ahead and successful compared to the others. Someone will be addicted in doing flexing and will continue do it repeatedly, to maintain the actor's self-quality. Our life is inseparable from flexing. Many consequences are caused by flexing on social media such as buying things that are not needed (showing consumptive behavior). Flexing caused many people to doubt their own abilities because they felt fail to get rich or successful. Therefore, the term of social climber is emerged who refers to someone working harder tirelessly in order to earn a lot of money so that they can fit in the society.

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