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## THE PHENOMENON OF FLEXING BEHAVIOUR ON SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTS ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERSONALITY

### Abstract

Flexing is a term or slang that defines the conduct of excessive self-promotion when someone is displaying something. This might include the practice of often releasing information after acquiring a new item, the technique of constantly sharing successes on social media or the behaviour of frequently uploading vacation photographs. The qualitative research in this study, which adopts a grounded theory technique, focuses on the flexing behaviour demonstrated by college students as participants. This study aims to "understand how different types of flexing behaviour effect college students' personalities." display disturbingly high rates of flexing behaviour because of their lifestyle and peer-reported behaviours. This flexing behaviour may be prohibited if it interferes with other activities, causes injury to others, or affects people's ideas of themselves..

**Key words:** Social media, Flexing, College Personality

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social media is rapidly growing in popularity. One type of digital marketing that can influence human behaviour is social media. Social media has become an integral aspect of Indonesians' daily lives, particularly among youngsters. Teenagers' favourite social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Path, YouTube, Instagram, and Line. (Kompas (2017). Social media provides a wide range of content that is thought to be capable of attracting viewers and becoming trendy. Many people are willing to do things that they would not normally do for content. People may now access and promote themselves more easily because to social media.

Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have spawned a new generation of celebrities and influencers. These people frequently have large followings because they curate their life to appear beautiful, affluent, and aspirational. Many influencers engage in "flexing" by displaying their ostensibly opulent lifestyles, which are frequently characterized by fashionable clothing, exotic vacations, and luxurious homes and cars.

Flexing is a famous marketing method for developing personal branding. Flexing is synonymous with "showing off." A more detailed definition provided in the Cambridge Dictionary defines flexing as a means of displaying something owned but done in an unpleasant manner. Flexing behaviour can occur in both public people on social media, such as businesses, artists, and millennials who have wealth.

Following trends, the influence of family and friends, commercials, and the availability of social media that allows individuals to develop public profiles are all factors that contribute to flexing behaviour. a) An opulent lifestyle is described as a person's habit of praising and enjoying a wealthy existence with expensive items and following trends. This way of living influences flexing behaviour. Furthermore, this manner of life is associated with hedonistic urges, which are also fundamental reasons of flexing behaviour (Dewi, 2009; Resstiani, 2010). b) For different age groups, trends determine one's place and recognition in their environment. Someone who does not keep up with current events is often believed to be out of touch.

Flexing has a negative impact on consumer behaviour and hedonism. Flexing actors become consumptive and live a hedonistic lifestyle as a result of the desire to provide flexible content. A person's habit of flexing will become addicted to doing it repeatedly without considering whether it has an impact

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on their finances or not, branded goods that are always new make consumer behaviour higher, and flexing actors who are already known to their followers must be consistent in displaying their wealth.

At present, money can have a social function in addition to serving as a means of economic measurement. Wealth has the power to elevate a person's standing, honour, and prominence in society. Therefore, a person's wealth must be demonstrated by giving and a hedonistic lifestyle in order to receive what is expected of them. Presently, displaying one's riches only on social media by publicly displaying the assets one owns is becoming the norm to see. When someone displays wealth, the public is led to believe that they are rising beyond the *nouveau riche* or on par with the aristocracy (Bakti et al., 2020). Non-material things can be used to build several reputations.

Although the goal of such flexing may be to establish their brand or demonstrate their success, this tendency has been associated with a spike in "Instagram Envy" among their younger followers. The feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and hopelessness that develop when youth and young adults contrast their situations with the opulent lifestyles portrayed by influencers are referred to as this phenomenon.

Flexing is a case of something that is currently happening among college students in order to obtain recognition from others. On the other hand, employees of the government and their families also engage in flexing. The flexing that takes place gives the public a chance to learn about and validate the lives of politicians. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has used social media flexing as a way to track out the whereabouts of officials' assets, including AKBP Achiruddin's way of life. He has brought himself into the public eye by flaunting his expensive lifestyle on his Instagram account page, which has increased widespread mistrust of the government. Flexing by authorities who enjoy using high-end products as a hobby is viewed as lacking intact.

The young adults must create a healthy online identity in the age of digital connectivity. Instead of giving in to the pressures of flexing, they can participate in more meaningful and sincere online conversations by being encouraged to embrace humility, sincerity, and respect. Moreover, Children must also be reminded that their character, values, and deeds define who they are rather than their belongings or status on social media.

Flexing has the ability to negatively impact people's standard of living values, particularly in young adults. The purpose of uploading on social media is of course there is a symbol to be expressed, is it inviting goodness? or recognition of wealth? of course, there is an intention that the uploader wants to convey, trying to examine more deeply and certainly questioned. A phenomenon like that, sure can have effects on young adults, especially college student

From the background above, this article aims to investigate the effect of the phenomena of flexing behaviour or flashing their money to the public on college students. The author investigates flexing behaviour dependent on conditions and observes social conditions that occur in the stage of social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and other social media.

## Literature Review

### 1. Flexing

The term "flexing" is black-race slang from the 1990s. Flexing is a slang term for showing off courage or being proud of something. Ice Cube, an American rapper, coined the term "flexing" in the lyrics of his song "It Was A Good Day" in 1992. Furthermore, the term "flex" or "flexing" resurfaced in 2014 with Rae Sremmurd's "No Flex Zone" (Rifan Aditya 2022). Flexing refers to a zone in which people are calm, act naturally like themselves, and do not show off or pretend to be someone else (Sugiyono 2019). Later, the term flexing typically refers to persons who prefer to flaunt their wealth and even lie about being wealthy when they are not.

In English, flax means to be flexible or flex, while flexing is a verb-ing form of the word meaning that the person uses their abilities and advantages. Referring to the above understanding, the origin of the word flexing does not contain a negative meaning of the word, in fact. The naming of the flaming nature with the term flexing has recently emerged and is used by the public along with the increasing number of influencers in various fields that exist on social media displaying anything that wants to be displayed in public spaces through various kinds of online media without privacy barriers. In a pandemic situation, most activities are limited, and the digital space is increasingly widespread, so this term is increasingly popular and quickly spreads and is used by the public

## 2. Social media

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. One important characteristic of social media is that it introduces the creation and exchange of user-generated content from a bottom-up point of view. The most distinctive feature in social media affecting professional organizations might be precisely the fact that the content and the networks are user generated. In this literature review we have focused some of the most common social media: Facebook, Twitter, email, web 2.0, and LinkedIn. Besides these social media examples, we have also applied broader definition of social media, such as phone calls, SMS, MMS, email, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, Wikipedia, Twitter, Flickr, Yogile, messenger, chat and blogs to name a few.

Steinfeld et al., (2013) defined social media, often known as social networking sites, as:

*A networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles made up of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that others can view and traverse; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site.*

Social media can alternatively be defined as a framework that allows communal participants to communicate with one another (Peters et al., 2013). From a business standpoint social media is a tool that allows its users to plant and examine figures in many formats and can be used for marketing purposes that are constantly renewed . As a result, it is possible to infer that social media is a systematized tool that can be regularly updated to provide two-way communication with consumers who are part of the business's online audience and community.

## 3. College students

A community college student is a person who is pursuing a professional credential or an associate degree. An associate degree typically takes two years to complete and can be used to advance to a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university. Students can only achieve if they grasp the importance of higher education. When kids enter college, they are solely responsible for learning and improving.

The transition from high school to college requires students to be able to socialize and adapt to their new environment. They will meet lots of people so they have to be able to adapt themselves to form a new personality. According to Sjarkawi (2008:15 in (Rosiyana, 2016)) there are two factors that influence personality, namely internal factors that come from within oneself, innate traits from birth, and influences from descendants. Meanwhile, external factors come from outside the person, such as friends. Personality, what really influences a person are external factors, therefore socializing is very important for new students.

## METHOD

The research applied qualitative. According to Creswell (2010), qualitative research aims to comprehend a situation in greater detail than can be done or produced through statistical techniques or methods of quantification (Asenahabi, 2019). This qualitative research emphasizes the effect of flexing on college students' mental health. This approach was chosen due to the researcher's desire to perform an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of flexing affects college students' mental health in order to identify unique patterns and types of flexing activity in students. Primary data will be reduced, presented, validated, and evaluated into facts using grounded theory.

This study's subject requirements were female students aged 19-23 years who displayed flexing behaviour. These criteria are established with the understanding that the subject is a flexing agent attempting to comprehend the phenomena under investigation. Three female students from a Medan institution were chosen as subjects for this study. Data was collected from each research participant utilizing methods such as interviews, observation, and documentation until the data was deemed saturated (searching for information and continuing to add it until no new information could be found).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The modern era proved that the luxury and splendour of human life gave a new culture. All social users often see the flexing phenomenon in the splendour of wealth. People transmit meaning symbols,

which are typically symbols of happiness, beauty, and joy. They share some moments in their social activities with other people. In addition to disseminating information, the goal is to flaunt and justify their presence within their social group (Faizal et al., 2022).

Today, showing off is a universal trait shared by all people, including the practice of showing off among college students. There is a decline in critical thinking skills and mental impairment because achievement, happiness, and serenity are no longer viewed as self-actualization of gratitude towards oneself. Happiness, on the other hand, is a full and natural enjoyment that depends on the outward manifestations of others and those closest to oneself.

In this situation, many people including students are prepared to spend money on new products from well-known brands, travel overseas, dine at budget restaurants, or simply hang out in well-known cafes all of which are done in order to be photographed and posted on social media platforms, where they can proclaim their social fame. The subject of this study were three persons who met the criteria for flexing behaviour and frequently posting personal stuff to social media profiles. These comprise all the research subject :

### **1. The first of flexing (HD)**

The first subject is a 22 year old active in university student in Medan. The subject is the soldier office's daughter. HD lives in residence purchased particularly for her to live in while studying in Medan. Her parents also bought a car for her to use during school and other activities. Her parents pay her a monthly stipend of approximately 5 million rupiah. Her parents' money is always spent on things she likes, such as make-up, bags, shoes, and other branded items, or on trips to places where young people congregate, such as cafés, shopping centres, or malls, or on travels to major tourist locations like Bali, Jogja, and Surabaya with their close friends. The subject purchases anything she wants without hesitation and posts about it all on social media, documenting her actions and possessions. When the money runs out, the subject will ask her parents to return the monies, but she still has certain desires and wants to travel. In general, the subject matter receives inspiration for the items and places she visited after seeing the celebrity story. Content from celebrity profiles motivates subjects to visit to the same places or make the same purchases. Family factors that encourage the flexing behaviour in the first subject include the fact that both parents never keep an eye on their kids' hedonistic or shopping habits, as well as their willingness to give them extra money when their pocket money is running low or is already spent.

Based on the observation, HD is a person who regularly posts about her activities on social media. She has social media accounts, including a TikTok account with 5,000 Followers and an Instagram one with 3202 followers. When it comes to friendships, HD is quite picky; she will only hang out with people she thinks are similar to her. HD mostly hung out with the second subject and didn't have many pals. Posts on social media typically highlight the luxury of travel places as well as branded items that HD has purchased or already possesses. HD feels a particular sensation of delight when she posts stuff and gets a lot of likes or positive comments.

### **2. The second subject of flexing (FL)**

The second subject is FL. She is 22 years old and close buddy of the first subject. She has family rich, her father is the head of district, and mother worked in the financial in Medan. This causes the second subject to develop the habit of buying what she wants and travelling where she wants without hesitation. She always show off the activities that she is conducting to her social media account, as well as the content of celebrity account. FL also active on social media, with 3.000 Instagram followers. She often uploaded branded things, visiting luxury locales, or showcasing her attractiveness. The FL is also ecstatic when her followers appreciate or react what she shows on her social media.

### **3. The subject of Flexing 3 (TR)**

The third subject is different from previous subject. She is a celebrity on Instagram from Medan, her pseudonym is TR. This woman with her characteristic Medan accent also receives endorsements via her Instagram account, and currently her followers have reached 1 million. Apart from being a celebrity and content creator on TikTok, she is also an entrepreneur who has perfume business. In addition, she often shares her life by uploading her wealthy such as her cars, branded good, and also her life. On the other hand, she also posted her good body, with the tight clothes.

Based on her social media observations, they buy items they enjoy, visit places they enjoy, and broadcast their experiences to social media accounts, and all three of them are pleased and fulfilled. They are also ecstatic when their uploaded content obtains a large number of likes and helpful comments from their fans. In terms of compulsive behaviour, all three subjects exhibit a proclivity to make impulsive purchases, although there are variances between them. The first person engages in flexing activity because she has the appropriate resources and cash. These activities include focusing on the acquisition of desired commodities, visiting places she likes, and seeking contentment because she was born into a wealthy family. Similarly, to the previous subject, she copied the celebrity's account's material and shared her branded things. In contrast to the previous subject, the third topic showed her flexing in an attempt to blend in with her friends.

### **The effect of flexing on college personality**

The flexing on social media has a more negative influence on students' lives; flexing gives rise to consumer behaviour and lifestyle changes for the sake of content. Flexing causes a shift in the perception of life values and the function of an item or object. The goods used are no longer seen based on function but based on brand or symbol. The emergence of the desire to follow flexing content can trigger students at universities to behave consumptively even though their economic status is mediocre. Aside from that, the tendency of flexing too frequently will produce social problems; flexors generally just focus on showing off riches and luxury, thus empathy for other people declines and care for the environment decreases (Pakpahan & Yoesgiantoro, 2023).

The public's tendency to follow flexing influencer content has a negative influence on mental health, especially for college students. Flexing can cause students personality or mental health problems in the form of anxiety experienced by followers because they cannot follow content that is deliberately made viral by influencers or what is usually called FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). FOMO is the fear that someone will experience if other people follow an event that is considered enjoyable, but that person cannot experience the same event, JWT Intelligence (2011) (Yadi et al., 2023). Individuals who cannot afford luxury goods or other luxurious things on social media will feel worried and low self-esteem which results in decreased self-confidence, if not handled properly this will cause stress and even the risk of depression.

### **CONCLUSION**

The cognitive components involved in flexing behaviour the participants in this study with impulsive shopping student characteristics were knowledge and attitudes about flexing behaviour. The pleasure obtained from receiving the desired things or visiting the desired destinations, as well as a high number of likes and positive comments on their material, then stimulates individuals to participate in flexing behaviour. The study shows that unrealistic expectations of external impacts, such as the influence of program content, fear of rejection, a strong desire for self-existence, and personality variables, are to blame for the effect college personality of flexing actors.

The findings revealed that the permissive parenting style adopted in families contains many of the same components as student flexing behaviour. The patient's family does not restrict his or her shopping habits, which encourages the subject to participate in self-destructive behaviour on a regular basis. Flexing is done to earn respect and attention from the higher social class, as well as to demonstrate that one is more successful than others. If someone has done flexing, they will get hooked and will continue to do it in order to retain the flexer's quality. Our lives now are inextricably linked to flexing. Showing off money on social media has various effects, such as buying unneeded stuff, and many individuals feel dubious of their talents.

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