

Flexing In Social Media: Between Confession And Conflict In An Islamic Perspective

Muhammad Arga Pramudya¹, Tangguh Okta Wibowo², Magaretha Indriani³,
Mohammad Azis Fadhlul Rahman⁴, and Khairul Syafuddin⁵

^{1,2,3,4}Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Multimedia Nusantara

⁵ Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Sahid

^{1,2,3,4}Jl. Boulevard, Gading Serpong, Curug Sangereng, Kelapa Dua, Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia

⁵Jalan Jendral Sudirman 86, Jakarta, 10220, Indonesia

¹muhammad.arga@student.umc.ac.id, ²tangguh.okta@umn.ac.id, ³magaretha.indriani@student.umc.ac.id,

⁴mohammad.azis@student.umc.ac.id, ⁵khairul.syafuddin@usahid.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Flexing behavior or flaunting wealth on social media has become a common phenomenon that can have a negative impact. Driven by the ease of sharing on social media, people tend to compete to flaunt their possessions in order to gain recognition and praise from others. Therefore, this study wants to find out more about how this flexing phenomenon is understood through the subjects studied. This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The result of this study is that flexing behavior has a negative impact on the mental health of the individuals involved, due to the lack of validation and acceptance in the social environment. Even though there are views that take advantage of flexing in marketing, in Islamic economics this culture is still considered excessive and contrary to Islamic rules. Therefore, social media users need to understand the prohibition and build an identity without a flexing strategy.

Keywords: flexing; social media; behavior; excessive action; Islamic perspective

Diterima: 11-07-2023

Disetujui: 23-07-2023

Dipublikasikan: 27-07-2023

Flexing Di Media Sosial: Antara Pengakuan Dan Konflik Dalam Perspektif Islam

ABSTRAK

Perilaku flexing atau memamerkan kekayaan di media sosial telah menjadi fenomena umum yang dapat menyebabkan dampak buruk. Terdorong oleh adanya kemudahan berbagi dalam media sosial, orang cenderung bersaing untuk memamerkan kepemilikan mereka dengan tujuan mendapatkan pengakuan dan pujian dari orang lain. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini ingin mengetahui lebih lanjut bagaimana fenomena flexing ini dipahami melalui subjek-subjek yang diteliti. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Hasil penelitian ini adalah perilaku flexing berdampak negatif pada kesehatan mental individu yang terlibat, karena kurangnya validasi dan penerimaan dalam lingkungan sosial. Meskipun ada pandangan yang memanfaatkan flexing dalam pemasaran, dalam ekonomi Islam budaya ini tetap dianggap berlebihan dan bertentangan dengan aturan Islam. Oleh karena itu, pengguna media sosial perlu memahami larangan tersebut dan membangun identitas tanpa strategi flexing.

Kata-kata Kunci: flexing; sosial media; perilaku; tindakan berlebihan; perspektif islam

INTRODUCTION

Social media is currently widely used by Indonesians, including students, as a tool to express daily activities. In the use of social media there are also many different features and characteristics, some of them choose to use social media by following the applicable manners (wisely), while those who use social media by following the desires to get attention or increase their benefits. Furthermore, online education in Indonesia has been considered as an alternative to traditional learning activities (Mujiono & Susilo, 2021). In the discussion in this article, what you want to highlight is the phenomenon of flexing.

According to the Urban Dictionary, flexing is the act of bragging about money-related matters, such as the amount of money one has or expensive items one collects. The Cambridge Dictionary defines flexing as the act of showing one's pride or joy in something one has done or possessed, but in a way that is considered unpleasant by others (Kumparan, 2023). According to Professor Rhenald Kasali through his Youtube Channel, this phenomenon cannot be separated from the massive social media that encourages individuals to participate and try to get recognized (Fatimah & Putri, 2023).

In principle, the phenomenon of flexing often takes place directly within the community. Not only directly, this phenomenon has also penetrated into the scope of social media. Indirectly, this contributes to the construction of the emergence of this phenomenon has the potential to cause certain reactions within the scope of students. Online media or social media has a wider dissemination,

fast, flexible and interactive compared to conventional media. Not stopping there, online media or social media also have the term clickbait, which is a way to provoke the curiosity of the audience, this effort is based on the information gap that exists in the title given to the audience and further curiosity that the audience has (Romadlan & Fauziah, 2022).

According to McLuhan's perspective of the medium as an extension of people, mass media serves as an extension of human ability to engage and communicate with the surrounding environment. The medium not only conveys messages and information, but also shapes the thoughts, emotions, and actions of individuals (McLuhan, 1964). The possibility that flexing has an impact on students who frequently use social and online media in their various daily activities cannot be excluded. The discussion of the flexing phenomenon becomes interesting because of the emergence of pros and cons in the community. Some social media users argue that flexing is natural because everyone has the right to do anything on their social media accounts, especially if it is done to show off achievements or successes that have been achieved. On the other hand, there are netizens who feel that flexing is an arrogant act and goes against the social norms of society.

In addition, flexing also has a negative effect on the people who do it in their daily lives, where their lives become more and more consumptive, because they need to give the impression that they are rich. So those who do flexing need to buy and buy a lot of things to give

that impression. From the perspective of Islam, flexing does not place a strong emphasis on religious principles, but rather focuses on gaining popularity. In Islam, it is not advisable to gossip as it can have negative effects on the individual as well as others. This includes self-aggrandizing behaviors that are performed through the flexing phenomenon. Avoiding the flexing phenomenon is important because it promotes feelings of joy and arrogance, which are contrary to religious teachings and can have negative consequences (Pohan et al., 2023).

Then for people who are just flexing and do not have the ability to fulfill this impression, they will continue to try so that the business can be done beyond their ability, for example, by borrowing money will be in debt. This effect certainly does not only lead to the perpetrators of flexing actions, but can also have an effect on others, which can cause envy and resentment, or even people will be influenced to emulate in ways that should not be done and also violate the law (Arsyad, 2022). Therefore, because this behavior has an impact on individuals and society as a whole, it is interesting to discuss this flexing behavior. By understanding more about this phenomenon, we can take wiser and sustainable actions in interacting with social media and maintaining balance in our lives as social beings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Darmalaksana (2022) flexing is a behavior performed by individuals to show their wealth and social status. Flexing is aimed at earning nicknames such as "sultan" or "crazy

rich," which means people with luxurious lifestyles. Flexing used to be considered taboo, forbidden, and inappropriate, but now it has become commonplace. In the context of bragging and social media use, flexibility and social media are related. Social media provides individuals with the opportunity to display themselves, including in terms of wealth and social status. However, the use of social media for the purpose of flexibility can trigger bragging behavior and invite criticism from others.

Flexing, or showing off, is part of the discussion surrounding consumer behavior theory. In 1899, Veblen wrote a book called *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in which he discussed conspicuous consumption, which had similarities to the flexing that occurs today. The phenomenon of flexing, which has recently become an interesting topic of public discussion, cannot be separated from the role of social media, which has a strong influence on people's perceptions and opinions. Moreover, flexing is also associated with deception and lies (Fatimah & Putri, 2023).

Coming to the next discussion, hedonism is very close to the flexing phenomenon. According to Swastha (in Jennyya et al., 2021), hedonism is a view of life that believes that pleasure and material enjoyment are the main goals in life (Jennyya et al., 2021). Individuals with a hedonistic style tend to seek attention, be impulsive, and lack rationality. Hedonism as a "culture" encourages a focus on material satisfaction as the primary goal, resulting in exploitation of nature and life activities that lack consideration of spiritual and moral dimensions. Lack of awareness

of ethical values and morality in achieving life goals leads to immediate gratification and long-term negative consequences.

Based on the research of Fatimah and Putri (2023), there are at least five factors that cause flexing, namely, increasing self-esteem or self-image, getting a partner from a certain class as a means of marketing signals, the environment and personality of flexing agent, and lack of empathy for others. Flexing is also considered incompatible with Islamic consumerism because it contradicts the principles, norms, and ethics of consumption and the arguments of both the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.

Flexing is a behavior that places more emphasis on popularity than on religious teachings. In Islam, bragging is discouraged because it can have a negative impact on the individual and others. The phenomenon of flexing must be avoided as it can promote excitement and arrogance, which are contrary to religious teachings and can have harmful effects. Social media users need to use these platforms effectively and responsibly, and be aware of their behavioral shortcomings and the importance of prioritizing kindness when interacting online (Pohan et al., 2023). Flexing is an individual consumer that reflects a relationship with Allah SWT. Consumers who practice their religion well will avoid waste and extravagance and consume in a balanced manner and in accordance with halal law. Consumers with high levels of religiosity tend to have economical and frugal shopping attitudes, such as avoiding credit, reducing impulsive buying, and being more aware that excessive actions in shopping should be avoided (Fatimah & Putri, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. The problem in this study is none other than to see how students' perceptions on the phenomenon of *flexing* on social media. Descriptive research is research that seeks to explain as well as possible related to a phenomenon. Descriptive research aims to explain the phenomena present, both man-made and natural phenomena. This appears in the form of activity, change, relationships, characteristics, similarities and differences between one phenomenon and another. The existence of the above explanation is the basic reason why we researchers, decided to use descriptive-qualitative (Sukmadinata, 2005).

The research method used in this study is a case study. The data collection method carried out in this study is an in-depth interview method. Interviews are a data collection process that involves direct interaction between researchers and participants, where researchers ask questions and participants provide responses that contribute to a better understanding of the research topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The primary data of this study is in-depth interviews with resource persons, as listed in Table 1. With this goal, each individual who is a communication student can be aware of the impact that comes from social media. Continuing this, we also want to see what the students' perceptions of communication are like with the aim of advancing education in response to flexing problems on social media.

Table 1. List of Informants

No	Initial Name	Education	Age
1	GS	Bachelor	19
2	PK	Bachelor	19
3	SA	Bachelor	19
4	FC	Bachelor	18

Source: Research Findings

Researchers use initials in writing informants' names to respect their privacy. The questions asked through this in-depth interview are questions asked to find out and get data or information in more depth, and answer the problems studied regarding

the perception of communication students on the phenomenon of *flexing* on social media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Various informants' perspectives related to the phenomenon of flexing on social media are very interesting, researchers group the results of the answers that have been obtained by dividing several aspects, which include flexing behavior and its impact on a person's mentality. The findings can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings

No	Aspects	Findings
1	Definition of Flexing	- Flexing is an activity to display wealth. - Involves a snobbish attitude towards an audience and is a place to flaunt one's self-esteem that cannot be earned by others.
2	Flexing Categori-zation	- Creating posts about high-priced products and famous brands. - Doing things that are contrary to her living conditions to attract the attention of others and become the center of attention.
3	Positive Impact Flexing	- Can be a motivation for others to work harder to achieve wealth.
	Negative Impact Flexing	- May invite hate speech and bullying. - Makes other people reluctant to interact because of arrogant attitude. - Makes someone a target of crime because it seems too much.
4	Impact of Mental Flexing	- Causes feelings of depression due to comparing oneself with others and feeling dissatisfied with oneself. - Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. - Losing one's true identity.
5	Limitati-ons in Flexing Culture	- Flexing relates to an excessive culture associated with a luxurious lifestyle and is considered contrary to Islamic values. - The use of social media requires understanding the limits of Islamic values.

Source: Research Findings

Flexing Behavior

Based on the data we obtained through interviews and have been reduced. We have found that out of all the four informants that we have interviewed. They all have

something in common in defining what flexing is. They all say that flexing is an activity to show wealth. However, they also have slightly different opinions here, such as the arrogant attitude shown to the

audience and is a place to show off one's self-esteem where it cannot be obtained by others.

Flexing is an activity to show wealth, which shows an arrogant attitude. It is a place to show self-esteem to the public about things that cannot be obtained by others. A person's flexing behavior can be seen through social media, which is the flexing media. As one of our informants admitted, if an individual makes a post about a product with an expensive price and a well-known brand, then it can be categorized as flexing. However, SA has a slightly different opinion. According to her, flexing can be categorized by personal awareness that knows his life conditions, but the person does things that are contrary to what she has. She does this for the sole purpose of showing herself to be the center of attention of others. The positive effect of flexing is to make others feel encouraged to work harder and more diligently to get what the flexing creators show. However, its negative impact can be an invitation to hate speech and an opportunity for criminal activity.

Broadly speaking, flexing is a behavior that means different things to different people. In general, flexing is seen when someone displays the price of a product in their post as a form of displaying wealth or self-esteem. There are positive and negative effects of the flexing phenomenon. The positive impact is that it can be a motivation for individuals to work harder to achieve wealth. However, the negative effects include the possibility of hate speech, bullying, and the reluctance of others to interact with flexing agent. This is due to the arrogant and boastful attitude

associated with flexing. Flexing can also create an impression that is not true, and can put you at risk of becoming a target for crime. Although there are people who do not intend to flex when posting products, there are also those who do so intentionally. Instead, social media users need to consider the impact and consequences of flexing behavior and prioritize kindness and empathy when interacting online.

Impact on One's Mental

The effect on flexing is that someone will wonder why they can't get the same thing that actors get when they flex content. This situation will lead to depression and bring a bad influence on self-esteem where this makes willing to lie in order to look rich in order to get self-approval from others. In fact, FC argues that a person will lose his or her own identity and thirst for recognition continuously. Informants have a consensus opinion in which they have the core answer: that the average person flexes based on a desire to gain validation from others.

Flexing can have a significant impact on the mental health of the individuals involved. A person may flex because they feel less validated and unaccepted in a social environment. This is due to the individual's desire to seek validation from others. Flexing agent may feel the need to lie or expose themselves inauthentically to get the attention and validation they seek.

The mental health effects of flexing can be devastating. Flexing agent may experience depression from comparing themselves to others and feeling dissatisfied with themselves. They may wonder why others have things they don't, which can

lead to feelings of worthlessness and inferiority. This is supported by the opinion of informant SC:

“Flexing dapat menimbulkan rasa tertekan pada seseorang, karena seseorang yang mungkin tidak memiliki sesuatu yang dimiliki orang lain menjadi depresi, tidak cukup dengan apa yang dimilikinya, atau bahkan merasa tidak mampu”

[this flexing can cause a sense of pressure on someone, because someone who may not have something that others have becomes depressed, not enough with what they have, or even feels inadequate.]”

In addition, somebody who are flexing often not being themselves, and they may behave outside of their true abilities and personality. This can lead to loss of identity and difficulty in determining the direction they are actually going by flexing. In the long run, flexing actors can also become dependent on validation from others. They always seek satisfaction and validation through flexing behaviors that indicate wealth or prestige. This dependence can affect actual self-satisfaction and interfere with daily life.

In conclusion, flexing can have a negative impact on an individual's mental health. These include depression, impaired self-esteem, loss of identity, and reliance on validation from others. It is important for individuals involved in flexing to understand and address these negative impacts and prioritize satisfaction and actual mental health.

Limitation in a Flexing Culture

Flexing is synonymous with the ostentatious culture associated with a

luxurious lifestyle (Pohan et al., 2023). From an Islamic perspective, this culture is considered to be contrary to Islamic values. This is because there is a prohibition in Islamic teachings to live in splendor (Fatimah & Putri, 2023). Although there is a prohibition, it is impossible to avoid the culture of flexing because it is related to the mentality and behavior of someone who continues to want to show himself. Especially in the virtual world through social media.

This desire, which is translated into behavior, is inseparable from the desire of people who always want to show something visible. Guy Debord (in Fauziah, 2023) explained that people have a desire to show something visible, especially through social media in the form of photo or video content. This is done to construct their identity according to what they want. But the reality that happens is that they are not only showing. They are also showing what they have or can achieve, until the behavior becomes a culture of showing off. Showing off is done in order to gain recognition in groups, to cover up shortcomings in self-esteem, and to gain a sense of validation and satisfaction from others (Ekaptiningrum, 2023).

Although in the Islamic view there is a conflict related to flexing culture, which leads to the behavior of showing off wealth. However, it is undeniable that currently this culture is also used in marketing media that aims to build people's confidence (Mutmainnah et al., 2023). Despite this view, Islamic economics still considers the culture as excessive, so for whatever purpose, when it is shown excessively, it remains contrary to Islamic rules.

With the understanding of the prohibition, social media users can still do well in the construction of their identity. In addition to opposition, it is included as a nature of joy in humans that can lead someone to hell (Pohan et al., 2023). Thus, the use of social media can be done by understanding the limits in Islamic rules. This can be done by understanding what users need in constructing their identity (Mutmainnah et al., 2023). In addition, it is also necessary to understand the audience as a recipient of information so that social media users can form boundaries in the use of social media. In this case, the aim is to suppress and avoid flexing actions, especially those that are done excessively.

CONCLUSION

Various informants' perspectives on the flexing phenomenon highlight flexing behavior as an act of showing off wealth, arrogant attitude, and a place to show off self-esteem that is not accessible to others. Effects include depression, impaired self-esteem, loss of identity, and reliance on validation from others. Flexing behavior can have a negative impact on the mental health of the individuals involved, due to feelings of lack of validation and acceptance in social settings. This results in self-comparison with others, feeling dissatisfied with oneself, and difficulty in determining one's true identity. It is important for individuals involved in flexing to understand its negative impacts and prioritize satisfaction and actual mental health.

Flexing is done to gain recognition, cover up shortcomings in self-esteem, and seek validation and satisfaction from

others. Although there is a view that utilizes flexing in marketing, in Islamic economics the culture is still considered as excessive and contrary to Islamic values. Therefore, social media users need to understand the ban and still build a good identity without doing flexing strategies. Understanding the restriction in Islamic values and considering the needs of users as well as audiences as recipients of information can help avoid excessive flexing in the use of social media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like to say thank to Universitas Multimedia Nusantara (UMN) for the support provided in this research

REFERENCES

- Arsyad, J. H. (2022). Fenomena Flexing di Media Sosial dalam Aspek Hukum Pidana. *Jurnal Cakrawala Informasi*, 2(1), 10–28. <https://doi.org/10.54066/jci.v2i1.158>
- Darmalaksana, W. (2022). Studi Flexing dalam Pandangan Hadis dengan Metode Tematik dan Analisis Etika Media Sosial. *Gunung Djati Conference Series*, 8, 412–427. <https://conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/view/586>
- Ekaptiningrum, K. (2023). *Dosen UGM Beberkan Alasan Orang Berperilaku Flexing*. Universitas Gadjah Mada. <https://ugm.ac.id/id/berita/23509-dosen-ugm-beberkan-alasan-orang-berperilaku-flexing/>
- Fatimah, S., & Putri, O. M. P. (2023). Flexing : Fenomena Perilaku Konsumen dalam Perspektif Islam. *Jurnal*

- Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam*, 9(1), 1204–1212.
- Fauziah, N. (2023). Flexing dalam Masyarakat Tontonan: Dari Tabu Menjadi Sebuah Strategi. *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Budaya*, 04(01), 62–76.
- Jennyya, V., Pratiknjo, M. H., & Rumampuk, S. (2021). Gaya Hidup Hedonisme Di Kalangan Mahasiswa Universitas Sam Ratulangi. *Jurnal Holistik*, 14(3), 1–16. <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/holistik/article/view/34482/32374>
- Kumparan. (2023). *Flexing: Pengertian, Penyebab dan Tips Mengatasinya*. Kumparan.Com. <https://kumparan.com/ragam-info/flexing-pengertian-penyebab-dan-tips-mengatasinya-20ZvHpfhgVJ>
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill.
- Mujiono, M., & Susilo, D. (2021). Alternative learning media post-covid-19: uncertainty reduction theory perspective. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional*, 5(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jkp.v5i5.4242>
- Mutmainnah, Nusantara, A. F. P., & Wijaya, A. R. (2023). Fenomena Flexing dalam Ekonomi Islam. *Ecotenica*, 5(1), 130–140.
- Pohan, S., Munawwarah, P., & Sinuraya, J. S. B. (2023). Fenomena Flexing Di Media Sosial Dalam Menaikkan Popularitas Diri Sebagai Gaya Hidup. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Media Sosial (JKOMDIS)*, 3(2), 490–493.