

## Understanding the Role of Communication Ethics in the Flexing Phenomenon on Social Media

DASRUN HIDAYAT\*  
ARISMAYADI DIRANTIKA  
*Adhirajasa Reswara Sanjaya University, Indonesia*

ILYAS LAMPE  
*Tadulako University, Indonesia*

### ABSTRACT

In recent years, the phenomenon of flexing on social media has gained significant attention, particularly in the context of communication ethics. Flexing, which involves showcasing luxury, achievements, or expensive possessions to gain recognition, has become prevalent among social media users. This study aims to analyze flexing activities from the perspective of communication ethics, highlighting how ethical considerations can influence the impact of flexing. Using a qualitative approach, this research involved 8 informants who actively engage in flexing on social media. Data were collected through observations of social media content and in-depth interviews with the informants. The findings reveal that flexing serves as a means of self-expression, interaction, and identity formation. Flexing actors utilize various forms of language, such as casual, informative, and professional, to convey their messages and engage with their audience. The study also identifies the motives behind flexing, including personal satisfaction, recognition, inspiration, and self-image building. Despite the potential negative aspects of flexing, such as social comparison and low self-esteem, the research suggests that adherence to communication ethics can mitigate these issues. The results of this study are expected to contribute to digital literacy, promoting ethical communication practices on social media and serving as a reference for policy-making related to social media usage in Indonesia. Through this research, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the flexing phenomenon and its ethical implications, fostering a more respectful and positive online environment.

**Keywords:** *Flexing, communication ethics, social media, qualitative research, influence impact.*

### INTRODUCTION

Today's rapidly developing technological advances have caused a lot of changes in various fields. This includes the way a person communicates over long distances. Especially after the introduction of the internet (interconnected network), relations between people are no longer limited to the borders of the country (borderless).

The development of the internet which is increasingly sophisticated in today's digital era, in fact, has succeeded in influencing and shaping society with a new culture (Hidayat et al., 2023). The internet comes with various facilities and programs that allow someone to communicate globally without knowing the territorial boundaries between countries (Arsyad, 2022). One of which is digital platforms such as social media, which are currently used by everyone as a forum to communicate, share information, trade, and offer services and services.

Social media has become an important platform used by audiences, especially the younger generation (Mardiah, 2022). Over time, in the end it began to spread and take root in the audience which made the audience now accustomed to doing various things using social media. Even today, a lot of people use social media as a tool to share daily activities. But unfortunately, some of them cannot use social media wisely. Some of them share too much of their social media activity for many people to know, even flexing. Flexing criteria vary across social media platforms due to their unique features, on Instagram and TikTok it often involves high quality images of luxury items and lavish lifestyles, while on WhatsApp and LinkedIn, it focuses on career achievements and professional accolades (Khayati et al., 2022).



Figure 1: Swimming and sleeping in a pile of money (Sisca Kohl flexing on platform TikTok)

Flexing is an activity where a person deliberately shows off or presents something related to luxury, whether in the form of expensive goods, luxurious residences, or extraordinary achievements with the aim of gaining recognition and attention from others to increase their sense of existence (Khayati et al., 2022). In the context of communication science, flexing practice can be viewed as a form of communication process carried out between flexing actors (communicators) and their audiences (receivers). Communicators use a certain form of language to visually display their wealth or achievements through photos or videos and provide information about the object. The audience will then respond to the post in the form of likes and comments.



Figure 2: Uya Kuya and Raffi Ahmad flexing their luxury cars on platform Instagram

But it needs to be admitted, that the increasingly widespread use of social media and the rise of flexing also have implications for communication ethics that must be taken seriously (Prabowo et al., 2021). Communication ethics is a discipline that pays attention to the quality of communication, both positive and negative, including honesty and transparency, maintaining relationship harmony, conveying messages appropriately, avoiding deception or manipulation of information, consistency of verbal and non-verbal messages, and paying attention to whether communicators respect each other without

interrupting the conversation of others (Lipari, 2017). And at present, this flexing phenomenon often presents a dilemma for the practice of communication ethics.

Communication ethics play a key role in maintaining healthy and respectful online relationships between individuals in cyberspace (Darmalaksana, 2022). Therefore, using social media or flexing actions should ideally be accompanied by ethical principles of communication such as honesty and respect for others, so that information gaps and social conflicts do not arise.

This research focuses on communication processes, motives, and forms of language in flexing practice specifically from the point of view of communication science as well as from the point of view of communication ethics. Previous research used as a reference is research from the Journal of Communication Science and social media which states that the flexing phenomenon should be avoided because it can bring out the nature of showing off (Pohan et al., 2023). The difference between the previous study and this study is that the previous study discusses more on how the phenomenon of flexing on social media is used as a lifestyle in increasing popularity, while this study focuses more on discussing communication ethics that need to be considered in flexing. Another related research is flexing research on consumer behavior from an Islamic perspective. The study aims to analyze flexing from the lens of consumer behavior theory from the perspective of Islamic economics (Fatimah & Putri, 2023). While in this study, the difference lies in the flexing cultural objects studied through cultural public relations theory and more focus on the perspective of communication science.

The difference from the comparison of this research is also state-of-the-art research. Therefore, this research is considered important because it can provide theoretical and practical contributions in exploring further the impact and strategies of using communication ethics on the phenomenon of flexing on social media. This research is considered important because the results of this study are expected to be a reference for individuals who want to remain flexible but still uphold good values in social media. In addition, this research is also expected to provide a deeper understanding of flexing from the point of view of communication science.

This study aims to identify and analyze flexing practices from the perspective of communication science and their relation to communication ethics. The aspects to be studied include the communication process that occurs between flexing actors and their audiences, revealing the underlying motives of flexing actors in displaying their wealth or achievements, and examining the forms of communication language used in flexing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous section has discussed the concepts related to flexing and social media, as well as communication ethics. These concepts are used to explain the research problem and results.

### *Flexing and Social Media*

Social media has become an important platform for the younger generation to communicate and share information (Mardiah, 2022). With the development of digital technology today, social media provides an opportunity for anyone to interact globally without geographical restrictions. Social media is often used as the main media for disclosing or sharing personal information. In fact, every individual cannot be separated from the technological advances of digital media development (Dianiya, 2021). The phenomenon of flexing is also increasingly

rampant through social media to show off luxury or achievement. Flexing is a slang term usually used to indicate one's luxury, wealth, or accomplishments in an overbearing or flashy way (Lubis & Sazali, 2023). It is often found on social media with the aim of bragging or attracting public attention by displaying wealth, achievements and appearance (Wiransani & Kusuma, 2023).

Flexing in social media involves the process of communication between the flexing actor (communicator) and his audience (receiver). Communicators use visual language such as photos or videos to showcase their wealth or accomplishments, while audiences respond in the form of likes or comments. This practice has influenced online culture with mixed impacts on society. Previous research revealed that the phenomenon of flexing on social media can give rise to showing off and ignoring the ethical principles of communication (Pohan et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to understand the role of communication ethics in flexing practices so that information gaps and social conflicts can be minimized.

### *Communication Ethics*

Communication ethics has an important role in maintaining healthy and respectful online relationships between individuals in cyberspace (Darmalaksana, 2022). Communication ethics pays attention to the quality of communication which includes honesty, transparency, maintaining relationship harmony, conveying messages appropriately, avoiding fraud or manipulation of information, consistency of verbal and non-verbal messages, and paying attention to respect for others (Lipari, 2017).

In the context of flexing on social media, flexing poses a problem in communication ethics. However, it is not a violation if the message is positive (Afriani & Azmi, 2020). Flexing is the act of a person deliberately flaunting his luxury or achievements to gain recognition from others to increase his sense of existence (Khayati et al., 2022). This flexing practice often does not consider ethical principles of communication such as honesty and respect for others.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach because it aims to understand and analyze the phenomenon of flexing from a communication perspective. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon in its natural context and interpret the flexing phenomenon based on the meaning given by the participant (Rahmat, 2002). Qualitative research methods are research on natural research sites where researchers are the key instrument, data collection techniques are combined, material analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize relevance rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2007).

This study involved 8 informants who were determined as research subjects. This study used purposive sampling technique, which is a sampling method using predetermined decisions. The subjects of this study include individuals who are actively flexing on social media. This technique was chosen because it allows researchers to selectively collect data from populations that have certain characteristics according to the purpose of the study (Irawan et al., 2022). The criteria for selecting informants were that they must have an active social media account and must have engaged in flexing activities on social media. These criteria ensure that the informants are relevant to the study and can provide insightful data about the flexing phenomenon on social media. Table 1 below presents the profile of research informants.

Table 1: Informants Profile

Informants Code	Initial	Profession
F1	DR	Businessman
F2	PA	Student
F3	MA	Student
F4	AA	Student
F5	AB	Student
F6	MS	Student
F7	MP	Student
F8	KS	Student

Note: Processed data in year 2023

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation and in-depth interviews. Observations were made to understand flexing content posted by research subjects on social media. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand the motives, subjects of research in flexing. The duration of this study is 3 months, starting from the data collection process to data analysis. Data analysis was carried out with content analysis techniques. The flexing contents posted by the research subjects were analyzed to understand the form of language, the communication process, and motives in flexing practice.

To ensure the validity of the study, data were triangulated, namely comparing and rechecking data obtained from observations and interviews (Wibawa et al., 2022). In addition, member checks were also conducted, where research subjects were confirmed about the researcher's interpretation of the data obtained.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the perspective of communication, the practice of flexing can be viewed as a form of communication process between flexing actors (communicators) and their audiences (receivers). Based on data collected through interviews with 8 informants, the study found that flexing on social media involves self-expression, interaction, and topics of conversation. Flexing actors used various forms of language to convey their message, such as casual, informative, specific, polite, artistic, emotional, friendly, positive, and professional language. This communication allows flexing actors to build networks, both social and professional, as well as promote themselves or their work. Self-expression is one of the important aspects in flexing practice. Informant F8 stated that.

Flexing is a way to express yourself and chat with others. (F8 Informant Interview, June 20, 2023)

This shows that flexing becomes a medium for actors to express themselves, be it achievements, important moments, or their work. This is in line with the statement of informant F5 who said that:

Flexing is a way to promote work and chat with audiences. (F5 Informant Interview, May 28, 2023)

In addition, interaction is also an important part of the communication process between flexing actors and their audience. Informant F4 mentions "Flexing can be a matter of conversation and interaction on social media" (Informant F4 Interview, May 21, 2023). This is also in line with what the F3 informant said:

Usually it (flexing post) can be seen, it can be a way to find a community like that, a community with the same interest is mas. (F3 Informant Interview, May 14, 2023)

This suggests that flexing not only serves as a medium of self-expression, but also as a tool to interact and communicate with the audience. And besides, the topic of conversation is also an important part of the flexing communication process. Informants F2 and F6 stated that flexing was a way to talk about their achievements or accomplishments. This shows that flexing becomes a medium for actors to share their achievements and successes with the audience.

In the context of communication, flexing actors act as communicators who convey their messages through various forms of language. Flexing activity is a form of using social media to show one's success and success. This is in line with the statement of informant F1 who said that:

Flexing is a way to promote yourself and chat with colleagues. (F1 Informant Interview, June 13, 2023)

Thus, the process of communication between the flexing actors and his audience involves self-expression, interaction, and topic of conversation. They use social media as a tool to express themselves, interact with their audience, and talk about their achievements and successes. Table 2 presents the reasons for flexing activities.

Table 2: Reasons for Flexing Activity

Informants	Statement
F1, F2, F8, F5	Self-expression
F4, F, F6	Interaction & Validation

Note: Processed data in year 2023

Based on the research data obtained, flexing on social media aims to fulfill several needs, such as self-expression. Flexing by showing off achievements and a luxurious lifestyle with the aim of revealing identity or self-image through social media (Susanto et al., 2023). In this context, self-expression through social media provides an opportunity for individuals to reflect their personality and interests creatively. Through posting images, videos, or posts on social media, flexing actors can bring out the best side of themselves and convey certain messages to their audience (Pohan et al., 2023).

However, it should be noted that the phenomenon of flexing also has negative aspects such as social comparison and low self-esteem in individuals who feel that they are not comparable to the activities or lifestyles of the flexing actors (Yuniar et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for us as social media users to maintain a balance between self-expression and understanding of its impact on others. By showing off their achievements or living a lavish lifestyle, flexing actors want to show the audience who they are (Adiga, 2022). They are satisfied when able to express a positive identity or self-image.

Next is interaction and validation from others. When a person engages in social media and receives positive feedback such as likes or comments admiring them, it can boost their confidence and give a sense of satisfaction because they are recognized by others. Finally, there is a need to promote yourself. The flexing actors want to build an attractive image and convince the audience that they have an outstanding appearance or lifestyle (Pohan et al., 2023). It may relate to the need for appreciation from others and opportunities or advantages in career, social or business relationships.

On the other hand, social media target groups also play an important role with respect to flexing. They are looking for content that offers inspiration, entertainment, or information. By looking at flexible social media posts, viewers can feel respect for these achievements and become a source of motivation for themselves. However, this flexing phenomenon also has negative aspects to be aware of when discussing your schedule. Sometimes flexing can lead to social comparison and low self-esteem in some individuals who feel it is not worth the activity or lifestyle of the flexing (Pohan et al., 2023).

In the end, this study is very relevant because it discusses how the theory of Uses and Gratifications can be used to understand the motivation and satisfaction of social media users in flexing practices. This theory offers insight into how individuals use social media to meet their needs and wants. The Uses and Gratification theory focuses on the active role of individuals in media consumption. According to this theory, people have a unique motivation to use social media and strive to meet certain needs and satisfactions by interacting with the platform's content (Hidayat et al., 2022). With a deeper understanding of the interaction between actors and audiences in the case of flexing on social media, we can develop effective solutions to maintain communication ethics when using social media.

In addition to finding the flexing communication process, this study also found related forms of language used in flexing. Casual and friendly language is used to create a pleasant atmosphere, while informative and specific language is used to convey information about achievements or products. Polite, artistic, emotional, positive, and professional language is used to tailor the message to the intended audience and create the desired image.

Based on data collected through interviews with 8 informants, the study also found that the language used in flexing reflected the actors' goals and motives. Informants F1 and F4 stated that they used professional and informative language. This shows that they used flexing as a medium to convey information professionally. Informant F1 said, "For me personally, I often use professional and informative language" (F1 Informant Interview, June 13, 2023). This is in line with the statement of informant F4 who said:

I have informative and interesting language of course. (F4 Informant Interview, May 21, 2023)

Meanwhile, informants F2 and F7 stated that they used relaxed and friendly language when flexing on social media. This shows that they used flexing as a medium to interact with the audience in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Informant 2 says:

I use a language with a relaxed attitude, not overacting. (F2 Informant Interview, June 14, 2023)

On the other hand, informants F3 and F5 stated that they used specific and artistic language in flexing actions on social media. This shows that they used flexing as a medium to display their wealth or achievements specifically and artistically. Informant F3 said,

I use specific and informative language, especially when talking about shoes.  
(F3 Informant Interview, May 14, 2023)

Informants F6 and F8 stated that they used positive and polite language in flexing on social media. This shows that they use flexing as a medium to motivate and reward their audience. Informant F6 says:

Hmmm, I use language that is positive and motivates people. (F6 Informant Interview, June 08, 2023)

The form of language used in flexing reflects the goals and motives of the perpetrator. Casual, friendly, informative, specific, polite, artistic, emotional, positive, and professional language was used by flexing actors to tailor their message to the intended audience and create the desired image. Table 3 below presents the findings related to the form of language used in flexing activities.

Table 3: Language in Flexing Activities

Informants	Statement
F1, F4	Professional and informative language
F2, F7	Relaxed and Friendly Language
F3, F5	Specific and Artistic Language
F6, F8	Positive and Polite Language

Note: Processed data in year 2023

Speech Codes Theory is used to explain some of the research findings above. This theory emphasizes that language functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool to create social identity, and convey cultural values (Hidayat et al., 2022). In the context of flexing on social media, the form of language used by flexing actors reflects their goals and motives.

The use of professional and informative language in flexing actions can also be attributed to codes of professionalism in speech codes theory. When flexing actors associate content with a specific job or industry, they use both technical and formal terms to give the impression that they have in-depth knowledge of the field (Rauzawahyudi et al., 2022). This aims to increase the confidence and professionalism of flexing practitioners.

The concept of relaxed and friendly language used in flexing practice can be related to solidarity language codes in the context of the communication theory Speech Codes. The solidarity language code emphasizes the importance of creating social bonds between speakers and listeners with familiar, informal, and friendly language (Hidayat et al., 2022). Flexing actors use informal terminology and familiar speaking styles to create a comfortable atmosphere for their audience. Using this solidarity language code, they want to be seen as close and approachable to others. They try to build a positive relationship with the audience so that their messages are more emotionally acceptable.



In addition, specific and artistic language codes are also reflected in flexing practices when performers use beautiful and creative words and interesting writing styles to convey their messages more aesthetically. In this way, the message becomes more visually or emotionally prominent so that it can influence the feelings of others (Hidayat et al., 2022).

In flexing practice, the use of positive and polite language by the perpetrator has the aim of creating a good impression as well as maintaining a harmonious interaction with the audience (Rauzawahyudi et al., 2022). By using words that promote kindness and convey messages with respect, abusers want to show that they are individuals who value others. The use of positive language can also increase the appeal of their content, as optimistic and friendly messages are more likely to be received by the audience. In addition, the use of polite language also reflects an awareness of communication ethics on social media.

In essence, the application of Speech Codes Theory in the context of flexing emphasizes the importance of using language that is solidarity, professionalism, and artistic to achieve the desired communication goals. In flexing practice, these language codes are used strategically to build social bonds with audiences, convey information clearly and attractively, and form a positive self-image (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Based on the data collected, the study also found that the underlying motives for flexing include personal happiness, recognition, inspiration, image building, promotion, and motivation. Informants F1 and F4 stated that their main motive and purpose for flexing was to share experiences and seek professional networking. This shows that they see flexing as a medium to share experiences and build professional networks. Informant F1 says:

My main goal is to share my experience in building the business and looking for professional networks. (F1 Informant Interview, June 13, 2023)

Meanwhile, informants F2 and F8 stated that they flexed to share happiness and gain recognition. This shows that they see flexing as a medium to share happiness and gain recognition from the audience. Informant F2 says:

Well, just want to post, so I can share happiness with friends, get appreciation too. (F2 Informant Interview, June 14, 2023)

Then informants F3 and F5 stated that they were flexing to promote their hobby or work. This shows that they see flexing as a medium to promote their hobbies or work and share information with the audience. Informant F3 says:

Usually, I just want to show off my hobby, bro, also to share information about shoes. (F3 Informant Interview, May 14, 2023)

Informants F6 and F7 stated that they flexed to motivate others and share happy moments.

The goal is to motivate others and get support. (F6 Informant Interview, June 08, 2023).

Based on the results of all data, it was found that the underlying effects of flexing include personal happiness, recognition, inspiration, image building, promotion, and motivation. Some informants see flexing to share their happiness and achievements, while others see it to gain recognition and build self-image. There are also informants who used flexing to promote their work or business and motivated others. Table 4 below presents the findings related to flexing activity motives.

Table 4: Flexing Activity Motives

Informants	Statement
F1, F4	Share experiences and seek professional networking.
F2, F8	Share happiness and gain recognition
F3, F5	Promote hobbies or work
F6, F7	Motivate others and share happy moments

Note: Conducted in 2023

In terms of the motives underlying flexing, Self-presentation theory can be used to explain this. Erving Goffman explained the theory of Self-presentation in writing his work entitled "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" in 1959 as an effort made by everyone with the aim of controlling the perception and view of others towards himself, where according to Goffman, the phenomenon of self-presentation is an integral aspect of human daily life and can be observed in various social contexts (Hutagalung, 2022). Goffman emphasizes that self-presentation efforts are universally present among humans, with everyone having unique and varied motivations (Hidayat, Marzaman, & Christin 2024). This concept refers to a set of communicative actions used by a person to form a certain image or impression of their identity to an existing audience. In the process, individuals use strategies such as body language, facial expressions, choice of words, and the use of other social symbols to create an impression according to what they want to project to others. According to Goffman, self-presentation activities do not only occur in formal or important situations but also involve daily interactions in informal environments. Therefore, an understanding of the principles of self-presentation is very relevant in explaining the dynamics of relationships between individuals as well as the formation of social identities.

Thus, it can be argued that Goffman's perspective on self-presentation as an attempt to control others' perceptions of oneself has a significant impact on understanding human social interactions. His contributions encourage critical thinking of the communicative roles and strategies individuals use in creating impressions and influencing others' views of them.

The motives underlying this flexing act vary widely. First is the personal happiness of the flexing actors. Through flexing, they want to show their achievements or luxurious lifestyle as a source of personal happiness to others. Next is the recognition from others. By flexing and getting positive responses such as likes or comments praising his achievements or lifestyle, the actor feels satisfied because he gets recognition and validation from his audience.

The third motive is inspiration for others. When someone sees flexing posts from actors on social media, it can be a motivation for them to achieve success or improve quality of life. Image building is also a strong motive in this flexing practice. Flexing actors want to create an attractive and memorable self-image to the audience with the aim of building their reputation as well as increasing their social value. Along with that, promotional motives are also an important factor. By flaunting certain achievements or lifestyles, actors hope to gain benefits such as better career opportunities or broader social relationships.

In this context, semiotic communication theory provides interesting insights. The theory of semiotics focuses on the study of signs and meanings in communication (Hidayat et al., 2023). In the practice of flexing on social media, perpetrators use symbols and signs in posts and images they choose to convey a specific message to their audience. Semiotic theory studies how these symbols are used to communicate meaning and the message behind them (Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013). According to Roland Barthes, a famous semiotician, symbolism is a language in another way, he explained that the objects or images we see in everyday life have a deep cultural and social meaning (Mudjiyanto & Nur, 2013). The selection of images with a luxurious background by flexing actors can be a symbol of high economic status or financial success for them. This reflects aspirations for material success and a prestigious lifestyle. However, it is also important to remember that the interpretation of a symbol can vary from individual to individual. So, in the practice of flexing on social media, the selection of images with a luxurious background can be a symbolic sign to convey the message of material success and prestigious lifestyle to the audience. However, the meaning of these symbols is also influenced by the cultural background and experiences of individuals.

In addition, the use of positive words and praise of oneself are also forms of verbal signs in flexing. Perpetrators use words like successful, great, or successful to create the impression that they are a special and exemplary individual. Nevertheless, keep in mind that the practice of flexing does not always reflect the true reality of the individual's life. Some people may simply show the best sides of themselves through social media without revealing the challenges or failures experienced in their lives.

But on the other hand, the motives behind flexing practices such as personal happiness, recognition, inspiration, image building, promotion, and motivation sometimes conflict with communication ethics. Ethics play a key role in maintaining healthy and respectful online relationships between individuals in cyberspace (Astajaya, 2020). Therefore, in using social media or doing flexing actions ideally must be accompanied by the principles of communication ethics.

Ethics is a theory about human actions that are judged good or bad. Ethics studies what is considered good, and which is considered bad by using reason (Wijayanti et al., 2022). Therefore, in the context of communication, communication ethics describes a way of communicating that can be seen as good or bad. Communication ethics involves aspects such as honesty and straightforwardness, harmony of relationships between parties involved in the communication, the use of appropriate messages according to the situation, avoiding fraudulent behavior in communicating as well as consistency between what is said verbally and non-verbally by the communication actors. The importance of communication ethics in the context of social media becomes more significant when we interact in a community group. According to Wengner (in Wijayanti et al., 2022), a community group is a group of people with a common environment and have common concerns and problems and have similar interests in certain topics.

Communication ethics in social media can be grouped into three aspects, namely communication ethics in the context of time, the context of message content, and the context of communication (Pratiwi & Rianto, 2023). In terms of social media communication ethics in the context of message content, it is important for social media users to pay attention to the feelings of message recipients. This is so that the message conveyed does not have an ambiguous meaning or can be interpreted negatively by the recipient. In the use of social media, the content of the message plays an important role because it is the core of the topic

of conversation that the sender wants to convey to his audience. Therefore, the compatibility between what is said and the true intention and understanding of the sensitivity of the interlocutor is crucial.

To avoid misinterpretation or ambiguity in conveying messages on social media, there are several practical steps that can be taken. First is to take the time to reflect and review what we are going to share before sending it. This helps us to ensure that the purpose and meaning of the message is clear and in accordance with the original intention. In addition, it is also recommended to use polite and responsive language when communicating on social media (Wahyuni, 2021). Avoiding the use of abusive words or innuendo that could offend others is very important to maintaining a good relationship with them. Not only that, sensitivity to sensitive or controversial issues also needs to be considered. Before sharing information, make sure that we have checked the truth and avoid spreading fake news (hoax). This helps maintain personal integrity and prevent unnecessary conflict in cyberspace. To improve communication ethics in social media in the context of message content, it is important to always be a good listener and empathetic to others. Paying attention to the other person's feelings and responding accordingly will help create a more positive and supportive online environment.

In the connected world of social media, flexing or showing off self-achievement has become common. However, it is worth considering the application of communication ethics in this practice (Meng et al., 2022). First, excessive flexing can create social pressure and damage the self-esteem of others. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance between self-expression and empathy for others. Second, as a social media user, you must have a responsibility not to exploit success just for the sake of popularity. Communication ethics teaches us to remain honest and sincere in conveying life stories without hurting the feelings of others. Finally, communication ethics also encourage mutual respect in the digital space. By respecting the diversity of opinions and perspectives of others and limiting flexing that is demeaning or harassing to others directly or indirectly, social media users should be able to create a more positive and inclusive online atmosphere for all users of the digital space.

There are three important reasons why it is necessary to apply communication ethics (Haryatmoko, 2007). First, media has great power and a very significant impact on society. The media can influence public opinion as well as manipulate the perception of its audience. This raise concerns that the media could easily exploit weaker audiences to protect their interests. Therefore, the application of communication ethics is needed as a step to protect the public from harmful manipulation.

Second, communication ethics is an attempt to maintain a balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility (Haryatmoko, 2007). Freedom of expression is the right of every individual to express their opinions or ideas freely without any obstacles. However, this must be accompanied by an awareness of our social responsibility in using our words and messages wisely so as not to harm others or defame someone.

Third, the application of communication ethics also aims to avoid the negative impact of instrumental logic (Haryatmoko, 2007). This logic tends to view things from the point of view of utility and self-interest, often ignoring moral values and deeper meanings. In the context of communication, it is necessary to avoid that the messages conveyed do not only focus on achieving certain goals without regard to their moral implications.

Flexing actors should consider the impact on the audience and the surrounding environment. They must ensure that their actions do not harm others and do not trigger social inequality or online bullying. Pay attention to privacy and copyright in the use of

photos or videos shared on social media (Dhiman, 2023). They must ensure that they have the right to use the photo or video and do not violate the privacy of others (Prasanti & Indriani, 2017). Also, avoid using inappropriate language or content or harming others. Flexing actors should pay attention to the language and content they use in their posts and ensure that nothing harms or offends others. Also, do not deceive or manipulate the audience. They must ensure that the information they share on social media is true and not manipulated to deceive the audience. Finally, don't promote products or services that don't comply with ethics or the law. Flexing actors must ensure that the products or services they promote do not violate ethics or laws and do not harm others.

In flexing practice, communication ethics play an important role that must be considered by flexing actors. By paying attention to communication ethics, they can ensure that their actions will not cause harm to others or even cause social inequality or online bullying to occur (Dhini & Rafni, 2021). Communication ethics involves using polite and polite language, respecting the feelings of others, as well as being aware of the impact of actions carried out (Mutiah et al., 2019). Through the application of communication ethics in flexing practices, actors can form a positive self-image and gain recognition from others responsibly and ethically. This of course helps in building good relationships with those around him and increases his reputation in the eyes of the wider community. In addition, by upholding communication ethics in flexing practices, actors can also avoid conflicts or quarrels that can arise with others. In this case, it is important to maintain a harmonious relationship between flexing actors and individuals around them and create a peaceful and conducive environment for all parties involved.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the practice of flexing on social media involves communication between the flexing actor (communicator) and his audience (receiver). Such communication involves self-expression, interaction, and topics of conversation. Flexing actors use diverse types of language such as casual, informative, specific, polite, artistic, emotional, friendly, positive, and professional to get their message across.

Self-expression becomes an important aspect of flexing practices where social media users express their achievements or important moments in their lives. Interaction is also a significant part of the flexible communication process where actors interact with their audience through social media platforms. The topic of conversation also plays an important role in which the perpetrator reveals their achievements or work to the audience.

The form of language used in flexing practices reflects the goals and motives of the perpetrators. Casual and friendly language is used to create a more intimate atmosphere whereas informative and specific language is used to convey information about achievements or products. Polite, artistic, emotional, positive as well as professional language is also used to tailor the message to the intended audience and create the desired image.

Motivation in flexing practice includes personal happiness, recognition, inspiration to build a promotional image or other motivations. Flexible users use social media to achieve their goals.

The application of communication ethics is important in flexing practices considering the significant impact of social media on society. Communication ethics help maintain a balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility and prevent the negative impact of instrumental approaches that can ignore moral values and deeper meanings.

The results of this study are expected to make a positive contribution in the development of science related to flexing practices in social media, especially in understanding the communication process and motivation behind the phenomenon. The recommendation for future research is to examine more deeply the psychological impact of flexing practice on individuals and society at large and look at other factors that influence the success or failure of this practice.

#### BIODATA

*Dasrun Hidayat* is an associate professor whose research interest is media and culture from the perspective communication science and cultural public relations. He has published numerous books and articles in reputable international journals on communication theory, cultural public relations and digital public relations. Email: [dasrun@ars.ac.id](mailto:dasrun@ars.ac.id)

*Arismayadi Dirantika* is a communication science student at Adhirajasa Reswara Sanjaya University. Email: [arismayadidirantika@gmail.com](mailto:arismayadidirantika@gmail.com)

*Ilyas Lampe* is an associate professor at the Communication Studies programme at Tadulako University, earned his Doctoral degree at the Postgraduate Programme of the Faculty of Communication Sciences Unpad in 2017. He currently serves as Vice Dean for Finance and General Affairs of FISIP Untad. Email: [ilyaslampe7@gmail.com](mailto:ilyaslampe7@gmail.com)

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