

Article History

Received : 5 May 2025
Revised : 29 May 2025
Accepted : 6 June 2025
Published : 19 June 2025

FLEXING PHENOMENON IN TIKTOK: A CRITICAL REVIEW IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SHARIA ECONOMIC LAW

Latifatul Ma'rifah¹, ²Dwi Noviatul Zahra

Universitas Islam Lampung, Indonesia¹

STAI Ibnu Rusyid Lampung, Indonesia²

marifahlatifatul8@gmail.com¹ dwinoviatulzahra11@gmail.com²

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of flexing or showing off wealth through social media, especially TikTok, has become a trend among millennials and Gen Z. It takes various forms, from displaying expensive skincare, fantastic sales achievements, to luxurious lifestyles packaged as marketing content. It takes various forms, ranging from displaying expensive skincare, fantastic sales achievements, to luxurious lifestyles packaged as marketing content. Despite the surface economic impact, this practice raises ethical and normative issues from the perspective of Sharia Economic Law. This research aims to critically examine the phenomenon of flexing through a normative approach with the theory of Maqashid Sharia, Islamic consumption ethics, and the rules of dar'ul mafasid muqaddamun 'ala jalbil mashalih. The method used is descriptive qualitative with a library research approach, accompanied by social data and case studies from TikTok actors such as Shella Saukia and Daviena Skincare. The results of the study show that the practice of flexing which is manipulative, riya, and image-oriented is contrary to the principles of hifz al-mal, hifz al-nafs, hifz al-'irdh, and even hifz al-din. Apart from causing social pressure and potential debt, flexing also disrupts the balance of maslahat values and fosters a consumptive culture. Therefore, it is important to encourage digital education based on sharia values and build ethical and moral awareness in social media so that the digital economy remains in line with the Islamic principles of justice, blessings, and social responsibility.

KEYWORDS

Flexing; TikTok; Sharia Economic Law; Maqashid Syariah; Islamic consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Social media such as TikTok has developed into a digital expression space that is very influential in shaping the social and economic behavior of society, especially the younger generation. Not only as a means of entertainment, TikTok is now transformed into an arena for creating identity, social status, and even a new economic lifestyle (Gulo, 2023). One of the striking trends that emerged from this platform is the flexing phenomenon, which is the behavior of showing off wealth, luxury goods, hedonistic lifestyles, or access to exclusive products as a form of self-image (Octamadian dkk., 2024).

The word flexing comes from the English word for "showing off". The definition of flexing in the Cambridge dictionary is to show something that is owned or achieved in an unpleasant or excessive way. Flexing in economics can be interpreted as a conspicuous nature, spending a lot of money only to buy luxury goods, living splendidly, in order to show something that is owned or achieved, and its status as a person who has financial capabilities and others (Hafidz, 2022).

This flexing behavior is getting stronger because the TikTok algorithm encourages sensational and interesting visual content, so that this kind of upload is easily viral and gets a

lot of likes, views, and comments that strengthen the social urge to repeat it (Karomah, 2024). The term flexing in Indonesia emerged along with the emergence of the terms crazy rich and sultan who rame-rame showing off their wealth and lifestyle on social media which eventually led to pros and cons. In the era of sophisticated globalization in various social media platforms, flexing attitudes are often used for the pleasure of raising social status, self-image, and self-esteem to be more important in terms of wealth and having luxury goods in the eyes of the public (Syarifah Fatimah, 2023).

One form of flexing that is prevalent today is skincare flexing, where users showcase a collection of premium skincare products, expensive beauty routines, and end results that are associated with certain beauty standards. Often, this encourages audiences to buy similar products even if they are beyond their economic capacity. This phenomenon has led to a surge in impulse shopping, the formation of consumptive lifestyles, and the transformation of social media functions into digital marketplaces (Chadijah Zahra Hamidah, 2025). One form of flexing that is prevalent today is skincare flexing, where users showcase a collection of premium skincare products, expensive beauty routines, and end results that are associated with certain beauty standards. Often, this encourages audiences to buy similar products even if they are beyond their economic capacity. This phenomenon has led to a surge in impulse shopping, the formation of consumptive lifestyles, and the transformation of social media functions into digital marketplaces.

The popularity of flexing has been attributed to the strategies of influencers and brand owners who use lavish displays and glamorous lifestyles to build narratives of success and credibility. Figures like Shella Saukia and brands like Daviena Skincare have sold billions of rupiah worth of products in a matter of weeks through TikTok live shows, despite controversy over product legality and misleading marketing. This phenomenon not only impacts the individual level, but also impacts the national economic structure. In

October 2023, the Indonesian government closed TikTok Shop because it was considered to violate social commerce rules and harm local MSME players. Although it was finally reopened in December 2023 through a partnership with Tokopedia, this polemic confirms that flexing is not just a lifestyle, but a digital marketing instrument that systemically affects people's consumption behavior.

Flexing, hedon lifestyle, and consumptive practices are influenced by individual factors (internal) and factors from the environment of family, friends, coworkers and others (external) that can influence themselves in their behavior. The flexing phenomenon tends to bring more negative impacts than benefits. A number of cases show that flexing can lead to fraud, corruption, and other crimes. Technological advances provide a variety of up to date information improvements for pleasure that sometimes override the main needs that tend to have flexing, hedonism, and consumptive lifestyle patterns so that expenses exceed income (Nurul dkk, 2025).

A number of previous studies have discussed the phenomenon of excessive consumption and self-imaging on social media from the perspective of ethics, psychology, and Islamic economics. Studies such as those conducted by Rahmawati (2022) and Hamzah (2021) highlight the practice of digital hedonism among millennials triggered by social media, with the conclusion that there is a significant influence of show-off culture on consumptive lifestyles. Meanwhile, studies from Abdullah & Zainuddin (2020) and Nurhalimah (2021) focus more on the aspects of *israf* and *tabdzir* in modern Muslim consumption behavior, concluding that the boundaries between needs and wants are increasingly blurred due to media influence. Other studies such as by Lestari (2020) and Fauzi (2022) use an Islamic psychology approach to discuss the impact of low self-esteem and social comparison in triggering flexing behavior on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

On the other hand, some studies focus more on the legal aspects of Islamic economics, such as those conducted by Firmansyah (2019) and Syafiq (2022), which review the ethics of wealth distribution and moderate consumption in the Islamic economic system, but have not specifically highlighted social media as the main variable. Studies from Maulana (2023) and Siregar (2021) try to connect Maqashid Syariah with digital lifestyles, but the analysis is still conceptual and has not been linked to concrete cases such as TikTok Shop or flexing skincare practices. Different from these studies, this study offers an integrative approach between the actual flexing phenomenon in TikTok Shop and the Maqashid-based Islamic economic law framework and uses current data and real cases to provide a normative assessment of *maslahah* and *mafsadah*. Thus, this study fills the void of previous studies that have not elaborated deeply on the relationship between digital algorithms, flexing trends, and sharia principles in the contemporary e-commerce ecosystem.

emporary e-commerce ecosystem.

In the context of Sharia Economic Law, this phenomenon raises serious normative issues. Islam emphasizes the principle of balance in consumption and wealth distribution, instills the value of *qana'ah* (contentment), and prohibits *israf* (extravagance), *tabdzir* (excess) and *riya* (showing off). When flexing becomes a manipulative tool for the sake of profit, recognition, or even praise, then such actions can be contrary to Islamic values (Ika Parlina, 2022). In practice, flexing also encourages a consumptive lifestyle that is far from the principles of simplicity and social responsibility in consumption. This behavior often not only affects the individuals who practice it, but also creates social pressure, false living standards, and value inequality in society (Syarifah Fatimah, 2023).

It has been explained in Islamic teachings that in maintaining and spending property must be on the right concept and steps, if in managing the property is wrong then it can fade the

function that exists in the property itself. Everyone who has property to get happiness in the world and in the hereafter. However, if it is too extravagant it can bring harm, as in the Qur'an it is explained that those who are excessive in placing all their wealth will bring many bad traits such as greed, greed, miserliness, always feeling more so that they underestimate others, and spend treasures poorly and are not responsible for what has been done. People who have these traits are people who consider wealth solely for the purpose of living in the world not for the hereafter (Arif dkk, 2022).

This research is important because it addresses a contemporary digital phenomenon that has a direct impact on the consumption patterns of the Muslim community, especially the younger generation who are the biggest users of social media. This trend also creates a shift in value orientation from the rationality of needs to the emotionality of prestige. Therefore, this article aims to examine the flexing phenomenon in TikTok from the perspective of Sharia Economic Law, using the Maqashid Sharia theory approach, Islamic consumption ethics, and the theory of *maslahah* and *mafsadah* (Nurul dkk, 2025). This study is expected to be a normative footing in providing an evaluation of digital consumption practices, as well as formulating the direction of contextual Islamic economic literacy in the era of technology and social media.

METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research method. Data was obtained through literature studies from relevant books, journals, fatwas, and TikTok content. The data analysis technique is carried out by classifying the forms of flexing, then linking them to the basic principles of Sharia Economic Law. Maqashid Syariah: The principle of protection of property (*hifz al-mal*), reason (*hifz al-'aql*), and honor (*hifz al-'irdh*). The concept of *Israf* and *Tabdzir*: The

prohibition of waste and squandering of wealth in Islam. Maslahah-Mafsadah Theory: To weigh the maslahat and negative impacts of flexing behavior.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Flexing Shapes and Motifs on TikTok

The flexing phenomenon on TikTok is an expression of a digital lifestyle that represents the tendency to show off luxury visually and symbolically. Flexing is done by displaying attributes of wealth such as luxury car collections, stately homes, branded goods such as bags, shoes, or watches, as well as vacation activities abroad or staying at star hotels. Even in a simpler context, flexing can also take the form of using expensive skincare, exclusive make-up tools, and food menus from elite restaurants that are displayed aesthetically and invite admiration (Iffatin Nur, 2020).

These forms of flexing are usually packaged in short videos of 15-60 seconds with the addition of certain persuasive and engaging music, filters and narratives. In many cases, these videos are not accompanied by educative or real-life explanations, but rather tend to be oriented towards image and social status building. In some content, the narratives or captions used are comparative ("if you can't do this, work harder"), or feature toxic motivational phrases that are actually just a form of showing off wealth.

The primary motive for flexing on TikTok is the search for social validation. This validation is realized through likes, comments, views, and an increased number of followers as a form of public recognition of the "success" or "ideal lifestyle" displayed. Many TikTok users, especially the younger generation, feel compelled to emulate this lifestyle to gain similar recognition, even if it is not in line with their financial situation. In the long run, this creates social pressure and consumptive urges that can have negative psychological and economic impacts (Liana Rein Sitonga, 2022).

Apart from social validation, flexing is also often used as a soft marketing strategy. Influencers or content creators showcase expensive products as part of their lifestyle in the hope that viewers will feel compelled to buy. This indirectly reinforces the culture of consumerism, where a person's self-worth is measured by how many and expensive items they display on social media. In this context, flexing is not just about individual expression, but also a very powerful digital economic tool in shaping people's mindset towards consumption.

Thus, it can be concluded that the forms and motives of flexing in TikTok go beyond mere entertainment content. It reflects the changing value orientation of modern society, especially the younger generation, towards wealth, social status, and self-existence in the digital space. This phenomenon needs to be further examined from a legal and ethical perspective, especially in the view of Sharia Economic Law, to assess the extent to which this behavior is in accordance or contrary to Islamic values.

Table 1. Flexing Practices on TikTok - Followers & TikTok Shop Sales

No	Account/Brand Name	TikTok Followers	Flexing Type	TikTok Shop Revenue (per week)
1	Cahyaniryann (@cahyaniryann)	21.6 million	Skincare influencer	-
2	Daviena Skincare (@melvinahusyanti96)	7.6 million	Premium skincare	Rp 7.73 m
3	Dr. Reza Gladys (@drrezagladys)	6.9 million	Skincare doctor, premium	Rp 9.54 m
4	Beabiiovy_ (@dedeovy_)	6.2 million	High-end skincare	-
5	Shella Saukia (@shellasaukia)	±7.5 juta (live)	Skincare & lifestyle	-
6	Bella Shofie Dabe	1.1 million	Beauty & skincare	Rp 15.59 m

The table above shows how the flexing phenomenon through skincare and luxury lifestyle content on TikTok not only has an

impact on social branding, but also has a major economic influence, especially in sales practices at TikTok Shop. Accounts such as @drrezagladys and @davienaoofficial, for example, managed to make billions of rupiah in a short period of time - reaching Rp 9.54 billion and Rp 7.73 billion in just a week. Meanwhile, Bella Shofie, despite having a smaller number of followers (around 1.1 million), was the highest earner with total sales reaching Rp 15.59 billion. This confirms that the purchasing power of the TikTok audience, especially in the beauty product category, is very high when combined with a marketing strategy that involves influencer flexing and endorsement (Darmalaksana, 2022).

The practice of flexing accompanied by overclaim marketing of a product is rampant on social media, especially the Tiktok application. Overclaim is an exaggeration of a benefit or efficacy without being supported by valid and valid evidence. In the skincare industry overclaims are often used to claim that their products can cure acne in one day, can whiten, moisturize, and cure other skin problems in a short time, which in reality does not match what he has claimed. So the practice of overclaiming in marketing can damage consumer confidence in the skincare industry. This is contrary to the principle of responsibility in Islamic economics, because producers should maintain reputation and credibility through honest and trustworthy practices (Mohamad Faizain, 2024).

On the other hand, accounts like @shellasaukia and @cahyaniirynn show how self-image through skincare and a glamorous lifestyle serve as a means of establishing personal branding and strengthening social status in the digital space. Although not all of them display sales transparency, their visual appeal and large numbers of followers prove that flexing is not only a social practice, but also an economic instrument (Hartono, 2023). This reality shows that the content of showing off goods and luxury has now been institutionalized in the digital economy, where commodity value and identity value merge into one. From the

perspective of Sharia Economic Law, this condition is a critical point that needs to be normatively examined-whether the practice is still in line with the principles of justice, maslahat, and Islamic consumption ethics (Mohamad Faizain, 2024)

Flexing and Consumption Ethics in Islam

In the Islamic perspective, consumption is not just an economic activity, but part of worship that must reflect the values of justice, simplicity, and social responsibility. Islam emphasizes that consumption must be halal, tayyib, and not excessive (israf), as stated in the word of Allah SWT: "Indeed, those who are extravagant are the brothers of the devil, and the devil is very disobedient to his Lord" (QS. Al-Isra: 27). This verse is a very strong moral foundation in assessing disproportionate consumptive behavior, especially those driven by the intention of showing off or seeking cyber validation as in the practice of flexing.

Flexing in the context of social media like TikTok, especially when accompanied by the intention to show off wealth, create social pressure, and encourage a consumptive lifestyle beyond one's means, falls into the categories of israf (exaggeration) and tabdzir (waste). In Islamic economic jurisprudence, these two concepts are categorized as makruh actions, and can even become haram if they cause moral or social damage (Yusgiantara, 2024). This is reinforced by the principle of maqashid sharia which emphasizes the protection of property (hifz al-mal), protection of the soul (hifz al-nafs), and social stability. Therefore, excessive flexing not only has a negative impact on individuals, but also undermines the value system in Muslim societies that ideally prioritizes tawazun (balance), qana'ah (contentment), and maslahah (common good).

The table featuring TikTok accounts such as @drrezagladys, @davienaoofficial, @shellasaukia, and @bellashofie shows forms of consumption that not only reflect the utilization of luxury goods, but also highlight aspects of

showing off wealth wrapped in digital marketing strategies. In the perspective of Islamic consumption ethics, this phenomenon leads to two forms of value violations: (1) *israf* (extravagance in spending wealth), and (2) *riya* (displaying luxury for social recognition or validation). As in Allah's words: "And do not spend extravagantly, for indeed the spendthrift is a brother of the devil" (QS. Al-Isra: 26-27), flexing solely for the sake of showing off, without any educative or beneficial dimension, is prohibited because it leads to waste and social inequality.

In this context, accounts like @davienaoofficial and @bellashofie, although commercially successful (with billions of rupiah per week in turnover), should be ethically criticized if their marketing model encourages a glamorous lifestyle that is far from the value of simplicity (*zuhud*) and appropriateness. They not only shape a consumptive mindset among their followers (mostly teenagers and young women), but also create social pressure where self-esteem and status are measured by the goods owned. This has the potential to lead to *gharar* (worldly deception) and *tawafuq* (unhealthy competition), two things that are very much against the spirit of distributive justice in Islamic economics (Azzahra Kamila, 2024).

The purpose of a person who flexes various interests including, for endorsement purposes, showing that he is capable or rich, personal branding and getting a rich partner. These strategies are usually carried out by influencers to work together on social media so as to quickly attract market attention. However, not a few use flexing as a mode of deception, existence, theatrics, showing off and arrogance. The way users promote themselves or create content is a form of popularity that is sought will not be the same depending on the goals of the individual itself (Darmalaksana, 2022).

On the other hand, not all flexing in the table is completely against sharia principles. Contextually, some creators such as @cahyaniyynn or @tasyafarasya insert

educational values such as product information, honest reviews, and usage tutorials. If the content encourages consumers to think critically, be selective, and not force themselves to buy beyond their means, then the element of *maslahat* (goodness) can still be found. However, caution is still needed so that the message does not lead to *istidraj* (deceptive luxury), because in Islam, wealth should not be a means of arrogance or a tool to humiliate others.

In Islamic consumption behavior, there are principles of Islamic marketing ethics that limit it must be used as a guide to values and ethics in the consumption behavior of a Muslim including, (1) the principle of justice, which means that seeking halal sustenance and not breaking the law so as not to harm the physical and spiritual of a Muslim. (Chadijah Zahra Hamidah, 2025) (2) the principle of simplicity, that consumption in quantity and quality is reasonable for the needs of human life. (3) the principle of cleanliness, which means that it is clean from all kinds of impurities and is blessed by Allah SWT. (4) the principle of generosity, which is the nature of caring and paying attention to others who are deficient and in dire need. (5) the principle of morality, consumption is not limited to physical needs but also the inner needs of a Muslim so that he needs to maintain ethical, moral, and spiritual values (Syarifah Fatimah, 2023).

Yusuf Qardhawi states that there are several basic ethical and moral norms in Islamic consumption behavior, namely as follows: (1) spend property in the right way, avoiding miserliness, *baghil*, and stinginess. In the utilization of property for worship should not be excessive or exceed the limits, but also should not be miserly. (2) do not do wasteful acts, wastefulness, and always spend property for useful needs and do not do wasteful, *israf*, and *tabzir*. (3) avoiding debt, every Muslim is encouraged to balance income and expenses, people who are fond of debt will lead to a consumptive lifestyle. (4) maintaining established and basic assets. Spending needs by selling basic assets such as houses and land is

not recommended in Islam to maintain blessings (Syarifah Fatimah, 2023).

Maqashid Sharia Analysis of the Flexing Phenomenon in TikTok

Within the framework of Maqashid Sharia, the flexing phenomenon in TikTok can be analyzed through the three main objectives of sharia: protection of property (hifz al-mal), honor (hifz al-'irdh), and soul and intellect (hifz al-nafs and hifz al-'aql). The flexing phenomenon is very relevant to be studied from the perspective of maqashid sharia, flexing behavior can have an impact on the perpetrators and the impact on others who watch their social media. Could it be in line or contrary to the concept (Iffatin Nur, 2020).

First, from the aspect of hifz al-mal, flexing clearly shows the use of wealth for image purposes that do not bring public benefits. Many contents show collections of luxury goods, high-end skincare, and expensive houses and vehicles without a clear educational context or social benefits. In Islam, wealth is seen as a trust that must be utilized productively and responsibly. Excessive use of wealth just to show off wealth risks falling into the category of *tabdzir* (waste) and *israf*, which contradicts the principles of efficiency and *maslahat* in Sharia Economic Law (Rozalinda, 2017).

Second, from the aspect of hifz al-'irdh (protecting honor), flexing can damage the honor of the perpetrator himself when the image displayed does not match the economic reality he has. Many cases on social media show that in order to build a rich image, someone is willing to go into debt, rent luxury property just for content, or even deceive their followers. This has the potential to cause a loss of public trust, rift in self-image, and defame themselves. The value of hifz al-'irdh needs to be presented and owned by every individual social media user, because people who understand the importance of their honor will be careful in creating and sharing appropriate content (Iffatin Nur, 2020). The concept of hifz al-'irdh is important to practice,

because it does not only speak to the realm of protecting oneself from blasphemy, netizen insults and so on, but as a guideline that guarantees honor, dignity and human dignity. So hifz al-'irdh is trying to maintain itself so as not to fall into prohibited acts, both for people who create the content and people who watch it.

Third, from the dimensions of hifz al-nafs and hifz al-'aql, flexing content that is constantly produced and consumed can cause psychological pressure for viewers, especially those from ordinary economic backgrounds. This pressure can trigger feelings of insecurity, envy, and depression, and form a materialistic mindset that damages common sense and spiritual values (Hartono, 2023). Hifz al-nafs protecting the soul (life) cannot be realized if there is still mutual blasphemy in social media activities, resulting in a turmoil of contention that makes the human soul threatened which causes psychological pressure (Nurul et al, 2025). Meanwhile, hifz al-'aql (protecting the mind) is the context for building ethics and moral values in social media activities to protect the human mind from decreasing the quality of the mind and developing the human mind in positive things in the form of knowledge that is actualized in ethical and moral communication (Nurul dkk, 2025). Meanwhile, hifz al-'aql (protecting the mind) is the context for building ethics and moral values in social media activities to protect the human mind from decreasing the quality of the mind and developing the human mind in positive things in the form of knowledge that is actualized in ethical and moral communication (Iffatin Nur, 2020). Therefore, in the view of maqashid sharia, uncontrolled flexing is contrary to the basic protection objectives in Islamic law and needs to be seriously criticized.

In addition to the three maqashid sharia objectives that have been analyzed previously, the flexing phenomenon can also be viewed from the dimension of hifz al-din (protecting religion). Flexing that encourages show-off behavior (*riya*) and seeks public recognition at the expense of the value of sincerity is contrary to the basic

principles of worship in Islam. Riya is clearly prohibited in the Qur'an, as mentioned in QS. Al-Ma'un: 6-7: "So woe to those who pray, that is, those who neglect their prayers, who do riya." If the practice of flexing has reached the level of triggering arrogance, social inequality, and contempt for those who are less well-off, then it is not just a lifestyle, but a form of moral deviation and spiritual crisis that threatens the purity of one's religion. From any perspective, the act of flexing or showing off one's wealth is arrogant. In essence, the nature of arrogance, arrogance, and tends to be arrogant, arising from a problematic heart, namely wanting to get praise, the habit of flexing and showing off basically shows their inability to understand social relations in the right perspective (Arif dkk, 2022).

Then from the aspect of *hifz al-nasl* (protecting offspring), flexing can have a long-term impact on the younger generation and families. Generations that are continuously exposed to flexing content will grow up in a consumptive, hedonistic and materialistic culture, which erodes the value of simplicity (*zuhud*) and social responsibility in the family (Setianingsih, 2018). Even in the context of households, social pressure due to wanting to follow the lifestyle of influencers can trigger conflict between husband and wife, unreasonable spending, and digital debt. If social media use is not ethical, it will have a negative impact on the offspring. So that it really injures the *marwah* (protecting offspring) *hifz al-nasl* from negative things. In the long run, an uncontrolled flexing culture can threaten the sustainability of the moral and spiritual education of children in Muslim households.

Furthermore, in the context of *Hifz al-mal* (safeguarding property), obstacles and challenges to property can occur if it is wrong and less wise in spending property flexing behavior, waste, claiming excessive product benefits (overclaim). and spending that is not important and not useful in fact this behavior is prohibited in Islamic teachings (Chadijah Zahra Hamidah, 2025). *Tabdzir* means using wealth in the wrong way such as for things that are not

justified or violate Islamic law, wasteful is almost the same as *mubazzir* the meaning of *mubazzir* is to spend money without any benefit or reward. Islam recommends using wealth reasonably and balanced in other words not concerned with pleasure alone (Yusgiantara, 2024).

Tabdzir means using wealth in the wrong way such as for things that are not justified or violate Islamic law, wasteful is almost the same as *mubazzir* the meaning of *mubazzir* is to spend money without any benefit or reward. Islam recommends using wealth reasonably and balanced in other words not concerned with pleasure alone (*israf*) (Yusgiantara, 2024).

1. In addition, *maqashid sharia* also has a study in the maintenance and management of property based on its level, including the following:
2. The level of *Daruriyyat* which means that in maintaining the management of property is prohibited from taking other people's property in an unauthorized way and how to own or seek *halal* property.
3. The level of *Hajiyyat*, this is *sharia* in buying and selling with the method or method of *salam*, if this method is not used it will not threaten the existence of the property but can make it difficult for those who need capital.
4. The last level is *tahsiniyyat* which in this level is that in seeking property, maintaining property, and managing property must have provisions or rules so that there is no element of fraud (Nasution, 2022).

Thus, if analyzed thoroughly from the perspective of *maqashid sharia*, the flexing phenomenon that has developed in TikTok is not only problematic in terms of consumption ethics, but also risks violating all five principles of *sharia* protection: religion, soul, mind, property, and offspring. Therefore, there is a need for digital education based on Islamic values and regulations that encourage the use of social media for benefits, not for *riya* and false imaging.

The flexing phenomenon that displays wealth and luxurious lifestyles on TikTok also has the potential to create social inequality and

harm the principle of al-'is (social justice), which is the main spirit in maqashid sharia. In Islam, wealth distribution is not just a matter of numbers, but a matter of moral responsibility to prevent glaring economic disparities (Mohamad Faizain, 2024). When a handful of individuals flaunt excessive luxuries, while most of society struggles to fulfill basic needs, it indirectly reinforces the structure of economic injustice. In this context, flexing is not just an individual act, but reflects a collective value crisis that must be addressed with a social fiqh approach.

Flexing behavior is contrary to the teachings of maqashid sharia, the behavior of showing off wealth is accompanied by a style of hedonism, a consumptive lifestyle that exceeds the limit so that flexing has become part of his life, can have a bad impact on viewers who are obsessed with wanting to get rich quickly instantly so they want to justify all means without thinking about the risks and impacts on others. In addition, they will tend to be competitive in negative things and lose empathy for others (Shine Al Anjuwi, 2023). Thus, flexing is not an obligation in Islam, but rather a behavior that should be avoided. Wealth should be seen as a trust from Allah swt that must be managed properly, responsibly, and everyone will be held accountable for the use and management of these assets before Him (Nurul dkk, 2025).

In an effort to prevent flexing behavior, it must start with character education. Character education can be used to deal with fast trends or a flexible and simple lifestyle, it is hoped that the development of character education focuses on three moral aspects, namely morals, moral emotions, and moral actions (Tuty Mutiah, 2019). Parents also as the first madrasah for their children have an important role and responsibility to foster the values and ideals that are aspired to, so that the child grows into a generation of nations to build this country into a good and superior example. As in the world of education in Indonesia from elementary school to college studying Pancasila, which is the

importance of Indonesian people practicing the grains of Pancasila and the value of integrity to present quality, intelligent, ethical, and moral human resources (Sa'adah, 2023).

Furthermore, this phenomenon also disrupts the Islamic economic ecosystem based on barakah and maslahah. In Sharia Economic Law, economic activity should bring blessings (barakah), not just material benefits. Flexing practices that trigger consumptive lifestyles, unhealthy competition, and even consumer fraud through visual gimmicks, can erode trust in the Islamic market system. Especially if some flexing actors turn out to be selling skincare products or other goods that are not registered with BPOM, are not halal, or are not transparent about their quality - then from the point of view of fiqh muamalah, it is included in the category of gharar (uncertainty) and tadlis (deception), which is haram (Syifaun Nafsi, 2024).

Thus, in a holistic maqashid sharia analysis, flexing is not only harmful from the personal side (soul, property, intellect), but also from the side of public benefit (al-maslahah al-'ammah). Sharia is present to regulate so that economic activity is not only halal in terms of substance, but also tayyib in terms of its impact. Therefore, flexing that encourages hedonistic lifestyles, creates envy, triggers debt, and increases social inequality, should be straightened out-both through positive legal approaches, fatwas of scholars, and media literacy based on maqashid sharia.

Assessment of Maslahah and Mafsadah

In the perspective of ushul fiqh, there is an important rule that guides in weighing policies or social phenomena, namely: "Dar'ul mafasid muqaddamun 'ala jalbil mashalih", which means that rejecting damage takes precedence over attracting benefits. This rule is the basis that all forms of actions that have the potential to cause damage, whether morally, socially, or spiritually, must be avoided even though there is a small side benefit that appears on the surface (Adam, 2021). In this context,

flexing on social media such as TikTok may appear to provide economic benefits at a glance such as increased product sales, personal brand popularity, or even the opening of jobs through endorsements. But on closer inspection, these benefits are often built on ethically fragile foundations.

The flexing phenomenon tends to produce greater mafsadah than maslahah. Among these are: (1) the destruction of the values of simplicity and honesty among the younger generation; (2) increased consumptive behavior and hedonistic lifestyles; (3) social pressure that triggers feelings of inferiority and envy (*hasad*); and (4) the birth of manipulative and non-transparent marketing models. In some cases, flexing practices are even accompanied by online loans or debt in order to maintain a luxurious image before the public. Thus, if the damage caused is greater and more destructive to the Islamic value system than the worldly benefits, such actions cannot be justified *shar'i* (Chadijah Zahra Hamidah, 2025)

Therefore, based on the principle of *saddu dhari'ah* (closing the path to harm), a method in order to maintain prudence so that there is no harm that can lead to negative actions. (Adam, 2021) Flexing that leads to waste, *riya*, and manipulation of public perception must be criticized and controlled. This is in line with the principle of *maslahah mursalah*, which is a benefit that is not explicitly mentioned in the *nash*, but is recognized as good for humanity and social justice. In the case of flexing, the absence of a direct *nash* does not mean that it is permissible; rather, it must be seen from the social, moral and spiritual impacts caused. Thus, strengthening digital literacy based on Islamic values is important to direct the use of social media towards what is *maslahat*, not *mafsadat* (Nur Khayati, 2022).

In the era of digitalization, basically humans in social media aim to establish relationships with other humans or what is known as *Habl min al-nass*, as a demand for social beings who communicate has become a feasibility for every human being. However, in

behavior, communication must also comply with ethical and moral signs. As in the teachings of Islam that in communicating must be good, polite, polite, not hurt the opponent of communication, and not lie (Wulandari, 2017).

In terms of realizing *maqashid shari'ah*, everyone who uses social media must have consideration in delivering content, whether it brings benefits (*maslahah*) and does not cause elements of hatred (*mafsadat*), because the purpose and essence of *maqashid shari'ah* is to realize benefits and reject damage or harm (Thalib, 2010). Signs in the delivery of content on social media must be in accordance with what the Prophet Muhammad taught, as in his *hadith* "A true Muslim is someone who saves other Muslims from his mouth and hands" (HR. Muslim). This suggests that in saying and writing words on social media, one must pay attention to ethics and morals that are in accordance with the texts of Islamic teachings.

The impact of flexing behavior varies depending on how one reacts to it. In a positive perspective, flexing can be interpreted as encouraging oneself for what one has achieved and can be a motivation for others to be enthusiastic about working in order to achieve the targets or expectations that one wants to achieve. However, overconfidence, flexing, and showing off can have negative impacts, including the following:

- a. Flexing behavior makes it more wasteful, because it only wants to satisfy the opinions or opinions of others so that it always appears to live in wealth, by buying many luxury items that can help give the impression of being rich in the behavior of people who flex (Nur Khayati, 2022).
- b. If a person cannot make himself look rich, it is likely that he will make himself look rich by borrowing money or getting into debt, causing him to be in debt. This is a serious problem, as new problems will arise if he is unable to pay the debt, such as committing unlawful acts such as fraud, or even theft just for legal reasons (Juma'iyah Nur wahidah, 2023).

- c. People who are fond of flexing will not feel empathy, do not pay attention to other people who have nothing and need help, because they are only interested in flexing their wealth. If viewed positively, it can encourage other people's enthusiasm to achieve everything they want, by means of good endeavors (efforts) and prayers, without making other people lose. However, if viewed negatively, flexing behavior will foster feelings of envy, jealousy, moreover it can encourage someone to justify all means to achieve something exactly the same in a way that is not good (Shine Al Anjuwi, 2023).

The flexing phenomenon on TikTok cannot be separated from the social reality of the digital economy that shapes consumption patterns and perceptions of success. One concrete example is the emergence of the trend of "flexing skincare," as practiced by celebgrams or cosmetic brand owners who display billions of rupiah in sales in just a short time. For example, in the case of Shella Saukia and Daviena Skincare, they show fantastic sales results in the form of "live shopping" that is visually showcased with the display of account transfers and product packaging piled up. Ironically, however, some of these products were later questioned for their legality by BPOM because they did not have distribution permits or had not undergone product safety tests. This shows that pseudo-economic benefits actually hold the potential for great mafsadah in terms of consumer protection (Mohamad Faizain, 2024).

In the context of Islamic economic law, the act of marketing goods through flexing without guarantees of halalness, quality, or transparency can also be categorized as a form of gharar (uncertainty) and tadlis (hidden fraud). This is contrary to the principles of justice ('adl) and trustworthiness in transactions (Syifaun Nafsi, 2024). Similar to the nature of overclaims in the promotion of products by business actors, the manipulation is carried out in two aspects, namely the promotion of its delivery and the function of the product, both

aspects aim to elevate consumer interaction with excessive information (Mohamad Faizain, 2024). When the lifestyle of showing off becomes the main tool of marketing, not transparency of product quality, what happens is mass disinformation that shapes people's consumption behavior in an unhealthy manner. In terms of mafsadah, this can plunge consumers into emotional purchases, chasing images instead of needs - which certainly contradicts the maqashid al-syari'ah in protecting human minds, property, and life (Zuhaili, 2011).

Talking about ethics and morals related to good and bad manners must have a way of responding to flexing behavior, including the following:

- 1) No need to feel jealous of people who like to show off their wealth, please note that everyone has their own time to succeed or get what they hope to achieve.
- 2) Do a social media filter, highlighting content that is useful and will only make you happy, content and calm. Avoid content that makes us feel insecure and inferior.
- 3) Do what you're good at, don't fall for the trend of getting caught up in high-profit investments from flexing content.
- 4) Focus on what you want to do and focus on achieving your dreams, not on the achievement of others' praise.
- 5) Keep in mind that our achievements are not solely due to the validation of others.

Based on these considerations, the practice of flexing that produces mafsadah is more dominant than its maslahah, cannot be given room for justification in Islamic economics. Another relevant ushul rule is: "al-maslahah al-'ammah muqaddamah 'ala al-maslahah al-khassah"-the public good takes precedence over private interests. If in an action the benefits are more, then the action may be carried out, even recommended. However, if the level of mafsadat (harm) is more dominant, then the action must be abandoned (Adam, 2021). If the personal gain of flexing actors brings great social and spiritual

harm to the wider community, then from a shar'i perspective, this must be prevented, either through regulations, fatwas, or critical literacy based on Islamic values.

In addition to considering the principles of *maslahah* (benefit) and *mafsadah* (harm) in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the phenomenon of flexing can also be analyzed through the lens of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly with regard to the protection of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and wealth (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). Excessive flexing on social media may encourage individuals to make irrational financial decisions, such as engaging in consumerist lifestyles, going into debt for the sake of appearances, or falling prey to fraudulent investment schemes. This contradicts the principle of protecting the intellect, as people no longer use logic and ethics in decision-making but are instead driven by illusions of luxury. At the same time, such behavior threatens the preservation of wealth at both individual and societal levels.

From a social standpoint, flexing fosters distorted perceptions of success that can lead to feelings of inferiority, envy, and social anxiety—especially among vulnerable groups. Rather than promoting a spirit of productivity, flexing may erode values of *ukhuwwah* (social solidarity) and empathy. This demonstrates that flexing is not merely a personal issue but also a structural one. Therefore, it is crucial for Muslims to embody the values of *tawāḍu'* (humility) and *qanā'ah* (contentment) in their digital behavior as a manifestation of Islamic ethics that are relevant in today's context.

It is equally important for religious institutions and Islamic authorities not only to condemn flexing from a normative standpoint but also to foster critical awareness in society through Islamic financial literacy and ethical digital education. The development of enlightening Islamic content guidelines, the promotion of educational Muslim influencers, and the implementation of public campaigns grounded in justice and simplicity should be consistently encouraged. In this way, the digital sphere will not be left void of Islamic values that

are both humanistic and transformative, helping to suppress the culture of flexing that brings more harm than benefit.

CONCLUSION

Flexing on TikTok is a contemporary phenomenon that shows off wealth and a consumptive lifestyle. From the perspective of Sharia Economic Law, this action is considered problematic if it exceeds the limits of reasonableness, causes *riya*, and encourages *israf* and *tabdzir*. Based on *Maqashid Sharia* analysis, flexing has the potential to undermine the protection of property, reason and human dignity. Therefore, digital education based on Islamic values is needed to guide people in using social media responsibly, ethically, morally and *Shari'ah*.

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