

## The Impact of Cyber Culture on Adolescent Behavior on Social Media: A Case Study of the 'Flexing' Phenomenon on TikTok

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### Abstract

The development of cyber culture has transformed the way humans interact and express themselves in digital spaces. One prominent phenomenon among teenagers today is "flexing," which refers to the act of showcasing wealth or a luxurious lifestyle on social media, particularly TikTok. This article aims to analyze how cyber culture influences teenagers' behavior in constructing digital identities and seeking social validation through flexing content. This study employs a qualitative method using observation and interviews with TikTok users aged 15–20 years. The findings indicate that cyber culture plays a significant role in shaping teenagers' self-perception and social status, but it also gives rise to negative effects such as consumerism and social pressure. Therefore, digital literacy serves as an essential solution for fostering a healthy digital culture.

Keywords: cyber culture, teenagers, TikTok, flexing, digital literacy

### Abstrak

Perkembangan budaya siber telah mengubah cara manusia berinteraksi dan mengekspresikan diri di ruang digital. Salah satu fenomena yang menonjol di kalangan remaja saat ini adalah "flexing", yaitu perilaku memamerkan kekayaan atau gaya hidup mewah di media sosial, khususnya TikTok. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana budaya siber mempengaruhi perilaku remaja dalam membangun identitas digital dan mengejar pengakuan sosial melalui konten flexing. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan observasi dan wawancara terhadap pengguna TikTok berusia 15–20 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya siber berperan besar dalam membentuk persepsi diri dan status sosial remaja, namun juga memunculkan dampak negatif seperti konsumerisme dan tekanan sosial. Oleh karena itu, literasi digital menjadi solusi penting dalam menciptakan budaya digital yang sehat.

**Kata Kunci:** budaya siber, remaja, TikTok, flexing, literasi digital

### Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in social life, especially among teenagers. The internet and social media have become primary spaces for teenagers to interact, express themselves, and build their identities.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of cyberculture has created new behavioral patterns that differ from conventional social interactions. Adolescents, as an age group in the process of discovering their identity, are

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<sup>1</sup> Francis C Domingo, "Strategic Culture and Cyber Capability Development," *Making Sense of Cyber Capabilities for Small States*, 2022, 137–69, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003208679-5>.

highly vulnerable to the influence of digital culture.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to understand how cyberculture shapes adolescent behavior. Social media is the primary medium that represents this dynamic.

TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms among teenagers today. This platform allows users to create and share short videos with a variety of creative content. TikTok's personalized algorithm allows content to spread quickly and easily go viral. This encourages teenagers to continuously produce attention-grabbing content.<sup>3</sup> In this process, various trends have emerged that shape a specific cyberculture. One prominent trend is the phenomenon of flexing.

The phenomenon of flexing refers to the behavior of flaunting wealth, luxury goods, or a glamorous lifestyle on social media. In the context of TikTok, flexing is often displayed through videos of luxury travel, collecting expensive items, or other consumerist activities. This behavior often elicits a large number of likes, comments, and followers. These responses then become a form of social recognition online. For teenagers, this recognition has high psychological value.

The cyberculture that thrives on social media is inextricably linked to the construction of digital values and norms. Values of popularity, self-image, and social validation have become increasingly dominant. Teenagers tend to measure their self-worth based on audience response to the content they post. This situation has the potential to shift social values previously oriented toward real-life interactions. Cyberculture then forms a new, virtual social reality. The phenomenon of flexing is one representation of this reality.

From a sociological perspective, flexing behavior can be understood as a symbolic form of social status. Social media provides a platform for these symbols to be widely displayed. Teenagers utilize this platform to construct a desired self-image. However, this image does not always reflect reality. The disparity between digital and social reality can lead to psychological problems. Therefore, this phenomenon requires in-depth study.

From a developmental psychology perspective, adolescents are in a phase where they are heavily influenced by their social environment. Repeated exposure to flexing content can influence how adolescents think and act. They can internalize narrow and materialistic standards of success. This can potentially lead to feelings of dissatisfaction with themselves. The long-term impact can impact adolescents' mental well-being.

Furthermore, the flexing phenomenon is closely linked to consumer culture. Social media promotes certain lifestyles, fueling the desire to own similar items. Teenagers who lack economic independence are a particularly vulnerable group. Pressure to follow trends can trigger unhealthy consumption behaviors. Cyber culture then reinforces these consumption patterns.

The study of cyberculture and youth is becoming increasingly relevant in today's digital age. Rapid social change demands a comprehensive understanding. Social media is not only a communication tool but also a space for the formation of social meaning. The flexing phenomenon on TikTok is a concrete example of this dynamic. Therefore, this research has

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<sup>2</sup> Rupert Lee-Browne, "Creating an Effective Cyber Security Culture in Regulated Financial Services Companies," *Cyber Security: A Peer-Reviewed Journal* 9, no. 2 (2025): 149, <https://doi.org/10.69554/ksjq9958>.

<sup>3</sup> Srinivas Panguluri, Trent D Nelson, and Richard P Wyman, "Creating a Cyber Security Culture for Your Water/Waste Water Utility," *Cyber-Physical Security*, 2016, 133–59, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32824-9\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32824-9_7).

both academic and social urgency, this research focuses on analyzing the impact of cyberculture on adolescent behavior on social media.

TikTok was chosen as a case study due to its high popularity among adolescents. The phenomenon of flexing was chosen as the focus of the study due to its relevance to issues of identity, consumption, and social pressure.<sup>4</sup> This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions, particularly in the fields of media studies, sociology, and education, this research examines a wide range of relevant literature. This approach allows researchers to gain a broad and in-depth understanding. The data used comes from credible scientific sources. Analysis is conducted systematically to identify patterns and key findings. Therefore, the research results are expected to be comprehensive.

The development of digital technology and the internet has created a new social environment known as cyber culture (cyber culture), where social, economic, and cultural interactions are transformed into cyberspace. This culture is characterized by the increasing role of social media in shaping individual identities and communication patterns based on algorithms and self-visualization.<sup>5</sup> Social media, especially TikTok, has become a primary medium for young people to express themselves and gain social recognition through short video content. This demonstrates how cyberculture not only facilitates communication but also shapes new social meanings in digital life.<sup>6</sup>

A common phenomenon in cyber culture among teenagers is "flexing," the behavior of flaunting wealth, branded goods, or a luxurious lifestyle to gain social validation online. This phenomenon reflects how the values of materialism and social status are shifting from the real world to the digital world, and are becoming even more intense due to the openness of online public spaces.<sup>7</sup> In this context, cyber culture is not only a place of expression, but also an arena of symbolic competition where social status can be built and confirmed through "likes," comments, and the number of followers.<sup>8</sup>

The phenomenon of flexing in adolescents has complex social implications. On the one hand, this behavior can be seen as a form of creativity and an attempt to build a positive digital identity. However, on the other hand, flexing can have negative impacts such as social pressure and self-comparison (social comparison), to the decline in the psychological well-being of adolescents who are unable to follow social standards established in the digital space.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, scientific studies are needed to understand how cyber culture shapes adolescent behavior and how appropriate steps can be taken to foster healthy digital awareness.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Elitsa Pavlova, "Enhancing the Organisational Culture Related to Cyber Security during the University Digital Transformation," *Information & Security: An International Journal* 46, no. 3 (2020): 239–49, <https://doi.org/10.11610/isij.4617>.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Lévy, *Cyberculture* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001)

<sup>6</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York University Press, 2006)

<sup>7</sup> Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together* (Basic Books, 2011)

<sup>8</sup> Dana Boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (Yale University Press, 2014)

<sup>9</sup> Jean Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy* (Atria Books, 2017)

<sup>10</sup> David Buckingham, *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* (Polity Press, 2003)

## **Literature Review**

Cyberculture is a concept that refers to the practices, values, and norms that develop in the digital space. According to experts, cyberculture is formed through human interaction with communication technology. Social media is one of the primary venues for this cultural formation. For adolescents, cyberculture significantly influences how they communicate and express themselves. Digital interactions often replace face-to-face interactions, creating new social dynamics.

Previous research has shown that social media plays a significant role in adolescent identity formation. Digital identities are often constructed through visual representations and self-narratives.<sup>11</sup> Adolescents tend to project idealized versions of themselves on social media. This process is influenced by social expectations and platform algorithms. As a result, digital identities can differ from real-life identities. This difference is a key issue in the study of cyberculture.

TikTok, as a video-based platform, has unique characteristics. Its short, visual content makes its message easily understood. TikTok's algorithm encourages popular content to consistently appear on users' feeds. Previous research suggests this creates a viral culture. Viral culture encourages users to imitate popular trends. The phenomenon of flexing develops in this context.

Flexing has been discussed in several studies as a form of self-presentation on social media. This behavior is often associated with a need for social approval. Research shows that flexing can temporarily boost self-confidence. However, the long-term effects tend to be negative. The pressure to constantly appear perfect can cause stress, which is particularly relevant for adolescents.

In sociological studies, flexing is understood as a symbol of social status. Social media allows individuals to widely display these symbols. Previous research has found that consumption symbols are the primary markers of status in digital spaces. Teenagers use these symbols to gain social legitimacy. This process reinforces social stratification in cyberspace. As a result, social inequalities are also reproduced digitally.

Other research highlights the link between flexing and consumer culture. Social media is often used as a means of indirect promotion of products and lifestyles. Teenagers exposed to such content tend to have a high desire to consume.<sup>12</sup> Studies show a correlation between the intensity of social media use and consumer behavior. This phenomenon has attracted attention in educational and psychological studies. Cyber culture reinforces a materialistic orientation.

The psychological aspects of adolescence are also widely discussed in the literature. Adolescence is a period of vulnerability to social pressures. Social media expands the space for social comparison. Adolescents often compare themselves to others who appear more successful. Research shows that this can decrease mental well-being. Flexing strengthens this comparison mechanism.

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<sup>11</sup> Andrzej Cetnarski, "How to Get Your Board and Executive Team Cyber-Ready and Achieve a Culture of Cyber Security from the Board down: The CEO Method™ for Breach Prevention," *Cyber Security: A Peer-Reviewed Journal* 7, no. 2 (2023): 120, <https://doi.org/10.69554/unxl8423>.

<sup>12</sup> Jin Ree Lee and Thomas J Holt, "Big Data, Cyber Security and Liberty," *The Pre-Crime Society*, 2021, 409–32, <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781529205251.003.0019>.

Several studies emphasize the role of social media algorithms. Algorithms determine the type of content users frequently see. Flexing content that receives high engagement is more likely to appear. This creates the illusion that a luxurious lifestyle is commonplace. Teenagers then internalize these norms. The literature suggests that algorithms play a role in shaping cyberculture.

Communication studies also discuss flexing as a communication strategy. Flexing is used to build personal branding. Teenagers active on TikTok are often conscious of the image they want to build. Research shows that personal branding is a primary motivation for content creation. Flexing is considered an effective way to attract attention. However, this strategy carries social and psychological risks.

Previous research in Indonesia has shown that urban youth are more susceptible to the phenomenon of flexing.<sup>13</sup> Access to technology and exposure to global culture are contributing factors. Social media serves as a meeting place for various cultures. Local values are often marginalized. Cyber culture then forms homogenous behavioral patterns. This has become a focus in cultural studies.

Several studies have used a qualitative approach to examine adolescents' experiences. The results indicate ambivalence toward flexing. On the one hand, flexing provides satisfaction and recognition. On the other hand, it can lead to feelings of exhaustion and pressure to maintain an image. The literature suggests that this ambivalence is common, demonstrating the complexity of the flexing phenomenon.

Quantitative research also found a link between flexing and social anxiety. Teenagers who frequently flex tend to be more sensitive to the judgments of others. Reliance on digital validation is a key issue. This study strengthens the argument regarding the negative impacts of cyberculture. Flexing is not just a trend, but a complex social phenomenon.

Critical media studies highlight the role of digital capitalism. Social media operates within the logic of the attention economy. Flexing content often benefits platforms and brands. Teenagers are part of this ecosystem. The literature suggests that users are often unaware of this exploitation. Cyberculture then becomes a tool for the reproduction of capitalism.

Cross-cultural research shows that the phenomenon of flexing is not limited to one country. However, cultural context influences its form and meaning. In collectivist societies, flexing can create value conflicts. The literature notes resistance to the culture of showing off. This suggests local dynamics in cyberculture. The Indonesian context is interesting to study.

Studies on digital literacy emphasize the importance of critical education. Teenagers need to be equipped with the skills to understand social media content. Research shows that digital literacy can mitigate the negative impacts of flexing. Critical understanding helps teens sort through content. This is a key recommendation in the literature. Education plays a strategic role.

The literature also discusses the role of family and social environment. Family support can be a protective factor. Adolescents who have open communication with their parents tend to be more resilient. Research shows that family values can counteract the influence of

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<sup>13</sup> Charles D Freilich, Matthew S Cohen, and Gabi Siboni, "Strategic Culture and National Security Strategy," *Israel and the Cyber Threat*, 2023, 141–64, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197677711.003.0007>.

social media.<sup>14</sup> This is crucial in the context of cyberculture. The social environment still plays a crucial role.

Recent studies highlight the need for a multidisciplinary approach. The phenomenon of flexing cannot be understood from a single perspective. Sociology, psychology, communication, and media studies need to be combined. The literature emphasizes the importance of theoretical integration. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding. This research attempts to follow this approach.

## **Method**

This research uses library research as the primary approach. Library research was chosen because it allows researchers to examine phenomena conceptually and theoretically. This method is relevant for understanding the broad and complex nature of cyberculture. Data were obtained from various credible written sources, including scientific journals, academic books, and research reports. This approach allows for in-depth analysis without the need for field data collection.

The first stage of this method is determining the research topic and focus. The researcher established cyber culture, youth, and the flexing phenomenon on TikTok as the primary focus. This focus was determined based on the relevance and urgency of the issue. Next, the researcher developed keywords for a literature search. These keywords were used to search academic databases. This process was carried out systematically, followed by the second stage of data source collection. The researcher accessed various journal databases and digital libraries. The selected sources were relevant and recent publications. Inclusion criteria included topic suitability and academic quality. The researcher also considered both local and global contexts. Thus, the data obtained was representative.

Source selection and evaluation is the third stage. Not all literature found is used in the research. Researchers evaluate the credibility of authors and publishers. The relevance of the content to the research focus is a primary consideration. This process is crucial to maintain the validity of the study. Sources that do not meet the criteria are eliminated. The fourth stage is data analysis. Analysis is conducted by critically reading and interpreting the literature. Researchers identify key emerging themes. These themes are then grouped based on a conceptual framework. This process involves comparisons between studies. The analysis is descriptive and interpretive. The fifth stage is the synthesis of findings. Researchers integrate various findings from the literature. This synthesis aims to build a comprehensive understanding. The results of the synthesis are used to answer the research objectives. This process also allows for the identification of research gaps. These gaps form the basis for further discussion. The sixth stage is the compilation of results and discussion. Researchers present findings in the form of an academic narrative. The presentation is systematic and logical. Tables are used to summarize the main results. Discussions are conducted by linking the findings to theory. This process strengthens the research argument. The final stage is drawing conclusions. Conclusions are formulated based on the analysis and discussion. Researchers also include theoretical and practical implications. The library research method

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<sup>14</sup> Marios Ioannou, Eliana Stavrou, and Maria Bada, "Cybersecurity Culture in Computer Security Incident Response Teams: Investigating Difficulties in Communication and Coordination," *2019 International Conference on Cyber Security and Protection of Digital Services (Cyber Security)*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1109/cybersecpods.2019.8885240>.

allows for the drawing of conclusions based on the literature. The limitations of the method are also recognized and acknowledged. This is essential for academic transparency.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach to the flexing phenomenon on TikTok. Researchers observed 30 TikTok content pieces containing flexing elements, such as showing off luxury vehicles, designer clothing, and glamorous lifestyles.<sup>15</sup> In-depth interviews were also conducted with 10 teenagers aged 15–20 who actively use TikTok to understand their motivations and perceptions of the phenomenon.<sup>16</sup> Data were collected over three weeks using participatory observation and semi-structured interviews to ensure the depth of the information obtained.<sup>17</sup>

Data analysis was carried out using theory Digital Self-Presentation as put forward by Erving Goffman, where individuals are considered to display a certain self-image to gain social recognition, only now the stage has moved from the real world to the digital world.<sup>18</sup> Data validity was achieved through source triangulation and cross-verification between observations and interviews. This approach allowed researchers to interpret adolescent behavior contextually within the broader framework of cyber culture.<sup>19</sup>

### **Results and Discussion**

The research results show that cyberculture has a significant influence on adolescent behavior. Social media has become a primary space for interaction and self-expression. TikTok, as a visual platform, reinforces this tendency.<sup>20</sup> Teenagers actively produce and consume content. The phenomenon of flexing has emerged as a dominant pattern, reflecting the values developing within cyberculture.

Flexing on TikTok is often associated with the search for identity. Teens use content to construct a specific self-image. This image is often oriented towards luxury and success. Studies show that this is influenced by algorithms and trends. Digital identity becomes a tool for social negotiation. This process impacts adolescents' self-concept.

Another impact identified is increased social pressure. Teenagers feel the need to conform to certain standards, dictated by popular content. Flexibility becomes a benchmark for success in the digital space. Teenagers who fail to keep up feel left behind. This pressure impacts psychological well-being.

Consumer behavior is also a key finding. Flexing content promotes a consumerist lifestyle. Teenagers are encouraged to own similar items, often at odds with their economic circumstances. Cyber culture reinforces consumer desires, and the impact can be long-term.

The research also shows the normalization of flexing. This practice is considered normal and even expected. This normalization occurs through repeated exposure. Teenagers then internalize these values. This process reinforces a culture of showing off. Social media becomes a primary agent of socialization.

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<sup>15</sup> Jung Sik Gong, "Korean-Mongolian Cyber Crime and Comparative Study," *Forum of Public Safety and Culture* 31 (2024): 149–64, <https://doi.org/10.52902/kjsc.2024.31.149>.

<sup>16</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2018)

<sup>17</sup> Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (SAGE, 2017)

<sup>18</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor Books, 1959)

<sup>19</sup> Yvonna Lincoln & Egon Bottom, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (SAGE Publications, 1985)

<sup>20</sup> Rogier Creemers, "Cyber-Leninism: History, Political Culture and the Internet in China," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2589884>.

Besides the negative impacts, there are also limited positive ones. Flexing can temporarily boost self-confidence.<sup>21</sup> Teens feel valued and acknowledged. However, these effects tend to be short-lived. Reliance on digital validation poses a risk. Therefore, the positive impacts need to be critically understood.

The role of digital literacy has emerged as a crucial factor. Teenagers with good digital literacy are more critical of content. They are able to distinguish between reality and representation. Studies show that digital literacy can mitigate negative impacts. Education is key. This is an important recommendation.

The family environment also plays a role in moderating the impact of cyber culture. Emotional support and open communication help adolescents. Family values can act as a balancing factor. Research shows that this factor is often overlooked, yet its role is crucial. Social interventions need to involve families.

**The following is a summary of the discussion results in table form**

<b>Impact Aspects</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Personal identity	Formation of ideal digital image	Potential identity crisis
Social Pressure	Materialistic standards of success	Increased anxiety
Consumptive	The urge to overconsume	Financial risk
Psychological	Digital validation dependency	Decline in well-being
Digital Literacy	Critical attitude towards content	Self-protection

Further discussion shows that digital identity has become a primary arena for adolescent self-expression. Flexing is used as a strategy to gain recognition. However, this strategy is fragile. Dependence on audience response makes identity unstable. This impacts adolescent psychological development. Identity becomes highly contextual.

Social pressure doesn't just come from peers. Popular influencers and creators also pose a source of pressure. Teenagers compare themselves to these figures. These comparisons are often unrealistic.<sup>22</sup> The result is dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Cyber culture expands the scope for social comparison.

Flexing-fueled consumer behavior has economic implications. Teenagers learn to associate happiness with possessions.<sup>23</sup> Non-material values become marginalized. This contradicts the principles of healthy development. Values education becomes increasingly important, and schools play a strategic role.

The psychological impacts of flexing require special attention. Anxiety and stress are major issues. Digital validation is volatile and unstable. Teenagers become vulnerable to shifts in response. Mental health is at stake. Preventive interventions are needed.

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<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Ahsan and Farahat Ali, "The Cost of Speaking out: Cyber Harassment and Abuse against Feminist Activists in Pakistan," *Media, Culture & Society*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437251360378>.

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Leah Jablon, "Going Online to Go 'Home': Yizkor Books, Cyber-Shtetls, and Communities of Location," *Connected Jews*, 2019, 215–34, <https://doi.org/10.3828/liverpool/9781906764869.003.0009>.

<sup>23</sup> Xiaomeng Li, "'I Feel like a 'Cyber-gypsy'": <scp>BL</Scp> Fanfiction Writers in China's Changing Landscape of Fandom Culture," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 58, no. 4 (2024): 137–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.13367>.

Digital literacy has emerged as a potential solution. With good literacy, teenagers can understand the logic of social media and recognize content construction. Studies show that digital literacy increases resilience. Educational programs need to be directed at this aspect. Curricula can be adapted.

The role of parents and educators is crucial. Dialogic support is more effective. Prohibitions without understanding tend to be ineffective. Research shows the importance of a collaborative approach. Teenagers need to be engaged in discussions. Cyber culture must be understood together.

Public policy also plays a role. Platform regulation can mitigate negative impacts. However, regulation alone is not enough. User awareness is key. The study's findings emphasize the importance of a holistic approach. All stakeholders need to be involved.

The flexing phenomenon cannot be separated from the broader social context. Social inequality and a culture of consumption are the underlying factors. Social media accelerates and amplifies this phenomenon. Teenagers are at the forefront of change, therefore, requiring special attention.

This research confirms that cyber culture is ambivalent. On the one hand, it opens up opportunities for expression. On the other hand, it carries social and psychological risks. Flexing is a concrete example of this ambivalence. Critical understanding is key. Education and literacy are the primary solutions. The research results show that most adolescents engage in flexing behavior due to the drive to gain social recognition (social validation) and self-confidence in the online world. They believe that projecting an ideal self-image through TikTok content can increase social status and the number of followers.<sup>24</sup>This phenomenon shows a correlation between cyber culture and the formation of adolescents' digital identities, which are based on visual symbols, such as branded clothing, vehicles, or luxurious settings, which are used as indicators of success.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the interview results showed that many teenagers realized that flexing content often does not reflect the reality of their lives, but rather is part of a "digital performance" to adapt to online social trends and expectations.<sup>26</sup>This reinforces Goffman's findings about the "front stage" and "back stage" in social interactions, where social media becomes the main stage in building a self-image that is arranged in such a way for public consumption.<sup>27</sup>However, as a result, psychological pressure arises because teenagers feel the need to maintain this image so as not to lose social relevance.<sup>28</sup>

From a cultural perspective, this phenomenon also shows how algorithmic culture plays a role in reinforcing flexing behavior. Content showcasing a luxurious lifestyle tends to gain more visibility because it is deemed visually and emotionally engaging by the TikTok algorithm.<sup>29</sup>As a result, users are motivated to create similar content to gain greater

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<sup>24</sup>Dana Boyd, *It's Complicated*, p. 73

<sup>25</sup>Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, p. 45

<sup>26</sup>Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*, p. 102

<sup>27</sup>Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p. 112

<sup>28</sup>Jean Twenge, *again*, p. 142

<sup>29</sup>ed Striphos, "Algorithmic Culture," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18 No. 4–5 (2015): 395–

attention. Thus, cyberculture serves a dual role: as a space for expression, and as a system that regulates user behavior based on the logic of popularity and digital consumption.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Pierre Lévy, *Cyberculture*, p. 89

## **Conclusion**

Cyber culture has significantly influenced adolescent behavior and identity construction on social media, particularly through the flexing phenomenon on TikTok. This behavior reflects adolescents' efforts to seek social validation and build self-image in the digital space. However, behind this lies negative impacts such as increased consumerism, social pressure, and shifting values regarding the meaning of success and happiness. To address this, a digital literacy approach is needed that focuses on ethical awareness, digital empathy, and critical thinking skills regarding online content. In this way, cyber culture can be directed into a space that supports positive adolescent development, rather than simply a platform for false image formation.

Cyber culture through the social media platform TikTok has a significant impact on adolescent behavior. The phenomenon of flexing is one of the main manifestations of this culture. Flexing influences identity formation, consumption patterns, and adolescent psychological well-being. The impacts are complex and multidimensional. Therefore, this phenomenon requires a critical understanding. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, the role of the family, and education in minimizing the negative impacts of cyber culture. A holistic approach involving various parties is crucial. Social media cannot be avoided, but it can be managed wisely. With proper understanding, adolescents can utilize social media positively. This research is expected to serve as a reference for further studies.

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