

Netnographic Research of Netizens' Comments on Mario Dandy's Flexing Actions on the @official iNews YouTube Account

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ABSTRACT:

The surge in social media usage has sparked a trend known as the flexing phenomenon, where individuals, not just celebrities but also regular people, showcase their wealth. This shift was highlighted by a viral YouTube video on the Official iNews channel titled " Mario Dandy Satriyo Anak Pejabat Gemar Pamer Harta di Media Sosial #iNewsSiang 23/02" drawing criticism from viewers. This research employs the netnography method to analyze netizens' reactions to the video. It reveals three main themes in the comments: a cynical perspective on flexing, calls for appropriate consequences for those who flaunt their wealth, and skepticism towards governmental institutions. The predominant sentiments expressed anger disappointment, with negative responses prompting demands for government transparency regarding the potential link between flexing and corruption allegations.

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INTRODUCTION

Exhibitionism has emerged as a novel trend in the age of social media (Hasibuan, 2022). The advent of platforms like social media has intensified individuals' inclination to showcase themselves and gain public acknowledgment (Kasali, 2022). Social media platforms have evolved into arenas for seeking popularity, where everyone vies for attention online. The ostentatious display of materialistic lifestyles and consumerist tendencies serves as a badge of wealth and business accomplishments, elevating individuals to a quasi-celebrity status that distinguishes them from the ordinary (Karneva, 2021). Sharing personal experiences and flaunting possessions on social media has become routine, often provoking envy among the audience. This dynamic has led netizens to recognize that individuals often deemed as "fake rich people" frequently engage in such displays (Defianti, 2022).

The current trend of flaunting on social media platforms is rooted in a practice that dates back to the 1800s known as conspicuous consumption, where individuals would showcase objects as symbols of their social status. Thorstein Veblen (1899), an economist from the United States in his book entitled "The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Research in the Evolution of Institutions", saw consumption behavior driven more by social factors than economic factors where in that era, the rich flaunted corsets and ownership of cutlery such as silver spoons as social status symbols at noblemen's parties (Erber & Lau, 1990).

In contemporary society, the flexing culture is closely linked with the act of boasting and flaunting, particularly on popular social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, showcasing expensive possessions (Chen et al., 2020). The widespread adoption of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok as avenues for flaunting is intricately tied to the advancements in digital technology. In the era of media convergence, individuals can effortlessly craft and project their self-image through various media formats and uploads on social networking sites (Jin et al., 2022). This phenomenon is facilitated by media convergence, enabling individuals to utilize smartphones instantaneously for accessing or sharing news, photos, videos, and other content (Anindita, 2024).

Mario Dandy's display of flaunting garnered significant attention on social media, sparking widespread discussions in both traditional and online media circles. A notable instance was a video posted on YouTube by the @official iNews news channel titled "Mario Dandy Satriyo, Official's Son, Displays Wealth on Social Media #iNewsSiang 23/02." This newsstyle video, lasting 3 minutes and 34 seconds, was uploaded on February 23, 2023. In the video, Mario Dandy shows off his parents' property as tax officials by driving a luxury vehicle (Michikyan et al., 2015). The news then went viral on social media. This video appeared after searching with the keyword flexing Mario Dandy on YouTube channels and found three videos uploaded by news channels. Apart from the content in the viral video, researchers are interested in the response of netizens in the comments column regarding Mario Dandy's show-off action (Chou & Edge, 2012).

Drawing from this context, the research aims to explore the viewpoints and feelings of netizens concerning Mario Dandy's widely discussed demonstration (Wattenhofer et al., 2021). The Mario Dandy incident subsequently shed light on comparable occurrences involving public figures. With reference to the background and research inquiries, the objective of this research is to understand the perspective of netizens regarding Mario Dandy's penchant for flaunting extravagant cars and a lavish lifestyle (Halpern et al., 2017).

Academically, this research is expected to (1) complement research related to the perspective of flexing culture, and the phenomenon of luxury lifestyle in Indonesia, and (2) encourage a variety of research on netizens' comments on social media. Referring to previous scientific studies, a number of social media platforms are used by the public and celebrities as a medium to show off and build a positive image (Schenck-Hamlin et al., 2000). This research aims to address a gap in the existing literature by examining the phenomenon of flaunting within the households of public officials and analyzing netizens' responses to this matter, which has not been extensively explored in prior studies (Ren & Guo, 2020).

Before discussing further, it is necessary to understand the concepts used in explaining this research, namely:

Flexing behavior is a conspicuous consumption attitude that involves spending money on luxury goods and premium services to demonstrate status or financial capability (Defianti, 2022). The advent of social media has made the phenomenon of flexing more prevalent and easier to perform. Flexing on social media is the practice of flaunting one's achievements, money, or way of life in writings, images, or videos. It frequently entails sharing articles or postings that showcase pricey acquisitions, opulent getaways, or lavish experiences. People may view flexing on social media as a means of attracting others' attention, adoration, or envy. It has grown in popularity, particularly among influencers, celebrities, and those looking to project a particular online persona or position (Darmalaksana, 2022). Whereas flaunting wealth was once considered taboo and inappropriate, it has now become commonplace. Both the general public and celebrities use social media to display their wealth, ranging from the ownership of luxury items and glamorous lifestyles to sharing stories about their own achievements, all to attract the attention of others (Chairilsyah, 2019).

Social media is used to make a good impression on others, signify social status, and boost self-esteem (Lo & McKercher, 2015; Lyu, 2016; Marder et al., 2019; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). This indicates that social media enables everyone to create messages. The messages presented are diverse and can be generated by anyone, encompassing simple activities like waking up, praying, or going on a trip. These messages are crafted, disseminated through social media, and modified in such a way that they can evoke emotions (Naning et al., 2021). It's crucial to remember that flexing on social media can have advantages and disadvantages. It can be a means of celebrating achievement and expressing oneself, but it can also foster a culture of materialism, comparison, and insecurity. Flexing's effects on society and individuals are complicated issues that are influenced by a number of variables, such as social dynamics, cultural norms, and individual motives.

In addition, researchers also use the concept of "the spiral of cynicism". Cynicism is a prevalent mindset characterized by doubt or suspicion regarding the intentions of others, particularly in the context of politics and governance (Eisinger, 2000). This attitude may also encompass a broader mistrust of institutions and the conviction that individuals are driven solely by self-interest.

The spiral of cynicism refers to the notion that negative media coverage of political candidates and processes can cause the public to grow increasingly disillusioned, leading to a decline in trust in democratic institutions and a decreased willingness to engage in the political process. This term, often used in political communication research, describes how media framing can influence public attitudes and behaviors toward politics and governance. The concept suggests that negative portrayals of candidates and political processes in the media can fuel a cycle of growing public disillusionment and disengagement from the political system (Valentino et al., 2001). This concept states that when the media consistently portrays politics in a negative light, it can erode public trust and confidence in political institutions and actors. This can lead to a sense of disillusionment and cynicism among the public, which can result in

decreased political engagement, such as lower voter turnout or decreased participation in political activities.

Conversely, positive and meaningful reporting that offers a balanced perspective on political figures and policy initiatives can counteract the spiral of cynicism. When news coverage presents the perspectives of political actors and policy actions, and journalists provide substantive context to political information, it can aid citizens in comprehending political events and diminish negative attitudes towards politics.

It is important to note that the cynicism spiral theory is not universally accepted and has been subject to criticism and debate. Some researchers argue that the relationship between media coverage, public cynicism, and political engagement is more complex and multi-faceted than the theory suggests. Factors such as individual characteristics, social context, and political environment can also influence public opinion and political behaviour.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research employs a qualitative method utilizing a netnography approach. Netnography, or online ethnography, is a contemporary qualitative research methodology that modifies traditional ethnographic methods to investigate new cultures and communities via computer-mediated communication (Kozinets, 2002). This approach is applied to studies of online communities, which consist of individuals who gather, typically to exchange information through virtual platforms.

This method is deemed suitable as it facilitates the understanding of cultural experiences found in online traces, networks, practices, and systems, encompassing diverse types of online content like photographs, drawings, audio files, and audiovisual presentations. The fundamental components of netnography—enquiry, interaction, and engagement—are employed to communicate and express these cultural experiences (Kozinets, 2015). This research focuses on netizens' comments on the @official iNews post entitled "Mario Dandy Satriyo, Official's Son Likes to Show Off Wealth on Social Media". #iNewsSiang 23/02". The 3-minute 34-second video uploaded on 23 February 2023 contains Mario Dandy's showing off that is trending on social media. The digital footprint search stage was carried out on YouTube using the keyword flexing Mario Dandy and found three videos uploaded by news channels.

Table 1. Mario Dandy Flexing Video Outcomes Data

No.	Video and Link	Uploader and Upload Time	Views	Number of Comments	Like	Dislike	Duration
1.	"Flexing Rubicon 'Mario Dandy', Miseducation or Thirst for Recognition ? Teras Eksis" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Krmiwa8p2Gw &t=12s	Kompas TV, uploaded on 2 March 2023	35 thousa nd	80	317	0	27:59

2.	"Mario Dandy Satriyo is an official's son who likes to show off his wealth on social media <u>#iNewsSiang</u> 23/02" www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkKn5ilna7Y	Official iNews, uploaded on 23 February 2023	115 thousa nd	610	500	0	3:34
3.	Mario Dandy Who Loves Flexing and Ends Up in Jail https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPusLDbOv6M	Eradotid, uploaded on 20 February 2023	152 thousa nd	11	52	0	10:01

Source: YouTube account @kompas.com, @OfficialiNews, @eradotid

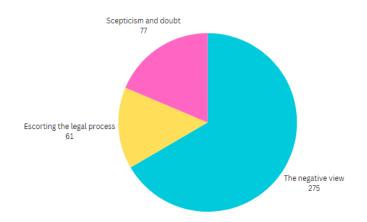
Based on Table 1, the three videos were taken from the YouTube accounts @kompas.com, @OfficialiNews, @eradotid which fulfilled the predetermined criteria, namely 1) the video taken is not a *short video*, 2) videos with more than 100 thousand *views*, 3) videos with more than 300 comments, 4) uploader credibility. From the above categories, researchers chose a YouTube video uploaded by @official iNews entitled "Mario Dandy Satriyo, an Official's Son, Likes to Show Off Wealth on Social Media". #iNewsSiang 23/02" to be studied more deeply. The video has 610 comments, 500 *likes* no *dislikes*, and 115 thousand views.

The researcher utilized the web-based data analysis tool Octoparse for scrapping data and then employed the web-based application for coding, aligning with the previously outlined concepts of flexing and cynicism. The steps involved in carrying out netnography research are largely similar to those of other research types, beginning with the planning stage and extending to the consideration of ethical issues. The stages include topic selection (*initiation*), investigation by using certain keywords in the search field, and *immersion* where researchers "*immerse* themselves" in the data under research by reviewing and *scanning* to get an overview of the data. The next stage is interaction, *integration, which is the* merging of various data, and finally, *incarnation* where researchers communicate the results of research to the public with journals that will later be published.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the analysis of comments, the researcher only used comments that fit the context, discussing the *flexing* behaviour of Mario Dandy who showed off the wealth of his father, Rafael Alun Trisambodo as a Tax employee. The comments used are netizens' responses in the form of responses, criticisms, hopes, and blasphemy shared by netizens related to the content

of the video and the issue of *flexing* among ministry officials. As a result, there are 403 contextually appropriate comments out of 610 comments in the video. Furthermore, from the 403 netizen comments analyzed using qualitative data analysis software, there are three main topics of discussion that become red threads, namely:



Source: (Results of Researcher Data Processing, 2023) Figure 1. Three Main Topics of Discussion

The first topic about the negative view of flexing drew 275 comments or 59.9 per cent. There were 49 comments or 10.90 per cent, 26 comments or 4.85 per cent, 90 comments or 20.63 per cent, and 110 comments or 23.59 per cent in the form of blasphemy. Netizens expressed a sense of disappointment, sadness, criticism and cynical tone as seen from most of their responses. Some netizens even resorted to *bullying* as a more extreme negative response to Mario Dandy's treasure show. Second topic discussion is escorting the legal process against the flexing perpetrators there were 61 comments or 13.70 per cent. Comments related to overseeing the legal process include an invitation that received 29 comments or 6.45 per cent and the hope of netizens that the perpetrators will be rewarded accordingly reaped 32 responses or 7.25 per cent. The responses included calls to oversee the legal process in the Mario Dandy case, demanding transparency from the authorities in handling the case. The viral nature of this case has captured the public's attention to the point of asking the perpetrators to receive appropriate punishment. Even the public on social media requested that Mario Dandy receive the severest punishment for his disgraceful behaviour. The last topics are scepticism and doubt towards government institutions garnered 77 comments or 17.50 per cent. The responses contained in the comment column were flooded by doubt and scepticism. This is inseparable from the attitude of the government and related institutions in handling similar cases in the past such as cases of corruption, and graft. This shows an attitude of injustice and weak law enforcement in Indonesia.

The 403 netizens' comments analysed using qualitative data analysis software showed that the words tax, children, property, and money were the most common words in the *word cloud* (Figure 2). The data was measured based on the frequency of the most frequently mentioned words. After eliminating emoticons, personal pronouns (you, me, my and so on), abbreviated words, conjunctions, and other words that were considered irrelevant to the theme (ups, wkwk, and so on) which were then visualised in the word *cloud*. The word tax was used 342 times with a percentage of 2.89 per cent, while the word child was used 203 times

or 1.71 per cent. Words that indicate material or wealth such as treasure were used 189 times or 1.59 per cent and the word money was used 156 times or 1.32 per cent.



Source: (Results of Researcher Data Processing, 2023)
Figure 2. Word Cloud of Flexing Mario Dandy's netizen comments

Citizens' comments were flooded with criticism, anger, disappointment, dissatisfaction with existing conditions and scepticism towards the government. However, for a more indepth analysis, from the collection of words, then the netizen's comments are read one by one and *coded* using Nvivo software. From these comments, themes can then be drawn to be analysed.

	sindiran	hukum harus ditegakkan		
Negatif vibes!		kawal proses hukum		
		harapan yang terbaik		
sinis	hujatan	skeptis terhadap institusi		
511115	kecewa & marah	pemerintah		

Source: (Results of Researcher Data Processing, 2023) Figure 3. Themes of Mario Dandy's Flexing Citizen Comments

The analysis of netizen comments and responses, illustrated through the emerging themes (Figure 3) and frequently used words in the *word cloud* (Figure 2), reveals that negative comments lead to skepticism towards certain institutions. This skepticism, in turn, fuels the demand for law enforcement to ensure justice. Furthermore, the outpouring of opinions from netizens towards Mario Dandy's flexing action includes blasphemy, expressions of netizen feelings and cynical tones. The blasphemous tone is seen in the comment "Hopefully the officials who like to eat public money will soon be punished by Allah SWT". Similar sentiments are evident in comments such as "children who ruin their parents' careers by severely mistreating others' children. Hopefully, the punishment will be harsh" and "the parents are fired because they failed to educate their children and set a good example for the community."

Short sentences reflecting netizens' emotions are evident in comments like "angry and sad to see it" or "wowww... feel proud to have a lot of wealth". More extreme expressions with cynical tones are seen in comments like "people are told to pay taxes, but tax officials enjoy them very much, really barbaric". Similar sentiments are also revealed in comments such as "it

feels like officials' children nowadays have no morals" or "this is what happens when children are raised on illicit money from infancy... so immoral". Netizens perceive the act of showing off as excessive, aimed solely at projecting an exaggerated self-image without any real substance. Some view it as narcissism or vanity, where individuals focus excessively on themselves and seek attention to the extent of creating controversy. This behavior is associated with a glamorous or materialistic lifestyle and is seen as an unhealthy glorification. In social media environments, some netizens respond with bullying or trolling, which represents a more extreme form of negative reaction.

Meanwhile, calls for netizens to monitor the legal process are evident in comments like "the people must oversee the legal process" and "thoroughly investigate the source of funds". Requests for relevant institutions to play an active role can be seen in comments such as "KPK, please investigate the assets of officials who like to show off to uncover any wrongdoing". Citizens expect the legal process to be fair and transparent, urging authorities to strictly enforce the law if showing off is deemed to violate legal or societal norms. In addition to the form of invitation, netizens also hope that the law can be enforced as fair as possible. Expressions of hope can be seen in the comments "The law must be fair, there is no bribery here" or "must be punished accordingly". More extreme hopes are contained in the comments "if like that the police officer is punished as severely as possible" or "the law is worth shooting dead".

Citizens' skepticism towards the government in handling certain cases often highlights concerns about the integrity, transparency, and justice of the legal system. This sentiment is reflected in comments like "the culprits of corruption in Indonesia are the Ministry of Finance and Bank Indonesia. They create money, incur debt, and formulate strategic economic and financial policies." Many citizens feel that the legal system lacks transparency, is susceptible to political interference, and is not fair, leading to doubt about the government's ability to handle cases justly.

Referring to the concept of the "spiral of cynicism" described earlier, it shows a cynical attitude seen in the comments of netizens who are filled with anger, disappointment, and scepticism towards government institutions (Valentino et al., 2001). On the other hand, this also encourages netizens to oversee the legal process and demand that the case be investigated thoroughly. The incident involving Mario Dandy, who violently attacked his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend and showed off his parents' property as tax officials, gained widespread attention on social media. Netizens reacted strongly to the incident and began to investigate the identities of the individuals involved, including Mario Dandy's father, who is a tax official. This led to an uproar in the online sphere, with netizens expressing their anger and frustration by using hashtags such as #StopPayingTax.

The spiral of cynicism can be observed in the netizens' comments, as they express their distrust and cynicism towards not only Mario Dandy and his family but also towards tax officials and the government. This negative sentiment is fueled by the perception that public officials are flaunting their wealth on social media, which is seen as inappropriate and exacerbates the existing cynicism. It is important to note that the spiral of cynicism is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including media coverage and public perception. In this case, the negative media coverage of Mario Dandy's actions and the subsequent investigation into his family's wealth have contributed to the spiral of cynicism among netizens in Indonesia. The concept of the spiral of cynicism helps us understand the dynamics of public opinion and the impact of media coverage on public trust and engagement in political processes. In the case of Mario Dandy's flexing actions, the spiral of cynicism is evident in the netizens' comments,

reflecting their distrust and cynicism towards political institutions and actors. The research has limitations because it only analyses comments on one video and on one media platform. Future research could include other social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, which are popular in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The results showed that netizens responded negatively to a video titled "Mario Dandy Satriyo, an official's son, likes to show off his wealth on social media". #iNewsSiang 23/02" uploaded on the @official iNews YouTube account on 23 February 2023. This cynical comment has led to bullying on social media against the offender. Citizens used the comment section as a means of expressing themselves, which was categorised into three major topics: negative views on flexing, invitations and hopes that flexing perpetrators will be punished, and scepticism towards government institutions.

The netizen response to Mario Dandy's flexing action has been guite strong and negative. Netizens have expressed their outrage and disapproval of Mario Dandy's lavish lifestyle and his flaunting of wealth on social media. The public's reaction to Mario Dandy's flexing has been amplified through the use of hashtags such as #StopPayingTax, which have been widely circulating on Twitter and Instagram. They have not only criticized Mario Dandy but have also targeted his family members, including his parents, and have even expressed a desire to bully them online. Flexing, which refers to the act of showing off one's wealth or possessions on social media, has been a subject of criticism and mockery by netizens. Mario Dandy's habit of flexing his family's wealth, including expensive cars like the Jeep Rubicon and a Harley Davidson motorcycle, has drawn particular attention and has been met with ridicule. His flexing behavior has influenced others, particularly young people, who may see his lifestyle as aspirational or desirable. This can create a culture of materialism and the pursuit of wealth as a measure of success. This behavior is driven by the freedom of speech on social media, allowing individuals to comment independently of external influences. The feedback and responses prompted netizens to call on others to monitor the legal process and urge law enforcement to act fairly in accordance with Indonesian law.

According to the "spiral of cynicism" concept, negative and trending information online amplifies netizens' feelings of disappointment and anger towards those who flaunt their wealth. This leads to a growing distrust of the government, partly due to the handling of previous incidents of flexing. Social media provides a new platform for the public to express their opinions and pressure the government to address incidents that have become widely discussed within the community. However, it is important to note that the netizen response to Mario Dandy's flexing action is a reflection of public sentiment and does not represent the views of all individuals.

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