



# Narcissism on Social Media: Examining Public Perceptions of Crazy Rich Flexing in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** This study aims to explore public perceptions of the narcissistic phenomenon of flexing crazy rich Indonesia on social media among seven female students aged 17 to 24 years who know and follow the phenomenon. Using a qualitative case study design and content analysis technique, the verbatim responses from internet media interviews were analyzed against the narcissistic scale by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The results showed that the participants had unfavorable perceptions of the flexing phenomenon and provided responses and suggestions for its mitigation. However, the limitation of this study is the lack of validation of the respondents' answers due to data collection being conducted remotely. This study highlights the need for more research on the topic and its implications for mental health .

**Keywords:** Narcissism · Social Media · Crazy Rich · Indonesia · Perceptions

## 1 Introduction

Narcissism is a form of behavior that causes individuals to place themselves as the center of others' attention while seeking fame and personal gain through their social network. According to a previous study [1], narcissism is an excessive expression of love for oneself. Furthermore, conducted a study on the Greek myth of Narcissus, and it was found that a young man is destined to fall in love exclusively with the perfection of his reflection. Also, the term "narcissism" was coined by Havelock Ellis in 1898 [2].

This form of behavior shapes an individual's tendency to show the success of obsessed personal achievements. Individual narcissistic behavior has certain characteristics, such as having selfish traits, fantasies about one's success, and low concerns for other individuals [3]. People with these traits tend to gain self-confidence through support, recognition, and attention from others [4]. It is a grandeur-like character, but in excessive contexts and form of this behavior that has become a phenomenon in society is flexing [5].

Flexing is an act of showing off wealth to gain recognition with regard to financial ability or status. According [6], it is an act of showcasing something that is owned or achieved in a way that is considered by others to be unpleasant. Some of the purposes

people flex on social media include endorsement purposes, building credibility, or looking for a rich partner [7]. Furthermore, the display of this behavior on social media seems to have become a culture in today's society, especially among young people. Everyone can flex, as inspired by several unscrupulous artists and YouTubers known as crazy rich, as follows:

## 1. MAH

Someone with the initials MAH is the first child of 10 siblings. MAH is a YouTuber who has 29 million subscribers and 22.4 million followers on Instagram. This person usually shows off his wealth on YouTube. In one of the YouTube videos, he bought a super luxury BMW i8 car worth 4.2 billion and gifted his parents a wristwatch worth hundreds of millions. In addition to flaunting his wealth, he is often very narcissistic and wants to be recognized by others.

## 2. IKA

Following this, another YouTuber and trader, whose initials are IKA, has followers on YouTube and Instagram up to 1.32 million and 1.7 million respectively. This person usually demonstrates how he trades and often flexes on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. He is known for his flagship slogan, which belittles the value of goods by saying #verycheap.

In the video titled "The Medan Sultan buys a Tesla electric car at 3 a.m." this YouTuber mentioned that the viral phenomenon of people buying Tesla cars in Indonesia is because he introduced the product to the country. Also, he posted on Instagram, boasting with the caption, "Buying a 1.5 billion Tesla directly in cash now, do not need to think about it #verycheap".

### 1.1 Scale

The description of the case above shows that individuals who flex tend to have bad qualities. Based on the diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), a person categorized as having narcissistic personality disorder must exhibit a pervasive pattern of grandiosity in fantasies or behavior, along with a need for admiration and a lack of empathy. The following characteristics should be possessed in various circumstances and should include at least five of the following nine characteristics that have been summarized in [2]. That is:

1. Excessive self-centeredness.
2. Having a preoccupation with fantasies of success or unlimited power.
3. Having beliefs in a "special" or unique status (including a fixation on associating with high-status people or institutions).
4. Requirements for excessive admiration.
5. Having unreasonable feelings and expectations of entitlement.
6. Interpersonal exploitation
7. Having jealousy

8. Having arrogance
9. Lack of empathy

The impact of narcissism is excessive self-esteem, causing feelings of pride to be praised because of the potential of being beautiful, smart, handsome, or possessing other traits that adolescents and adults have that make them hate or dislike when criticized. Narcissists usually think that they are more advantageous than others [8], tend to excel themselves, feel very good, are amazed at themselves, need praise from the surrounding environment, and are not sensitive to other people's needs or feelings [9]. Furthermore, another disadvantage of narcissists is that they tend to see themselves as special compared to other people, therefore, lack empathy [10].

Individuals with narcissistic behavior usually have a high level of self-esteem. One of the factors that cause narcissism in individuals is low subjective well-being in everyday life [11]. And a desire to be in the spotlight [12]. Also, this character typically arises from attempts to maintain previously received positive comments [10] and from overestimating one's uniqueness [13]. Moreover, narcissists often use social media to seek recognition for themselves [14].

The aim of this study is to describe the perception of the crazy rich Indonesia phenomenon on social media based on the various descriptions above. Also, it is aimed at proving how the widespread use of social media causes narcissism in individuals with wealth orientation, which makes them show off.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Participant

This study was conducted in the city of Yogyakarta and this was primarily because the researcher was domiciled in the city at the time, which facilitated the data collection process. Furthermore, the study involved seven participants having certain criteria such as 1) College education, 2) Age limit must be within the range of 17 to 24 years, 3) know, follow, and understand the phenomenon of the crazy rich Indonesians on social media. Also, the participants were recruited using a purposive sampling method.

The participants were selected via an online survey using a Google Form, which was distributed through social media platforms by volunteers. The number of participants who filled out the questionnaire was 10. However, only seven data was collected based on participants' completion answers. Therefore, the number of participants in this study was seven.

### 2.2 Study Design

This study is qualitative and has a case-study design. In a previous study conducted by Shabrina et al., (2020), it was stated that "case study" is a model that emphasizes the exploration of a system that is most related to one another, i.e. a bounded system. It is a comprehensive, intense, detailed, and in-depth model that is oriented toward examining contemporary problems or phenomena. This study was included in the case study criteria because it focused on individuals/subjects/phenomena [15].

Following this, the format of the case study adopted is intrinsic. According to Herdiansyah in 2015, this case study was conducted to better understand certain individuals, groups, events, or organizations. This research work was conducted solely because the aim is to gain intrinsic knowledge, and not to create any theory or generalize findings to the population. Additionally, the data collection technique used was semi-structured interviews. To retain data validity, thick descriptions were employed, including writing in-depth descriptions when presenting interview results [16].

### 2.3 Procedure

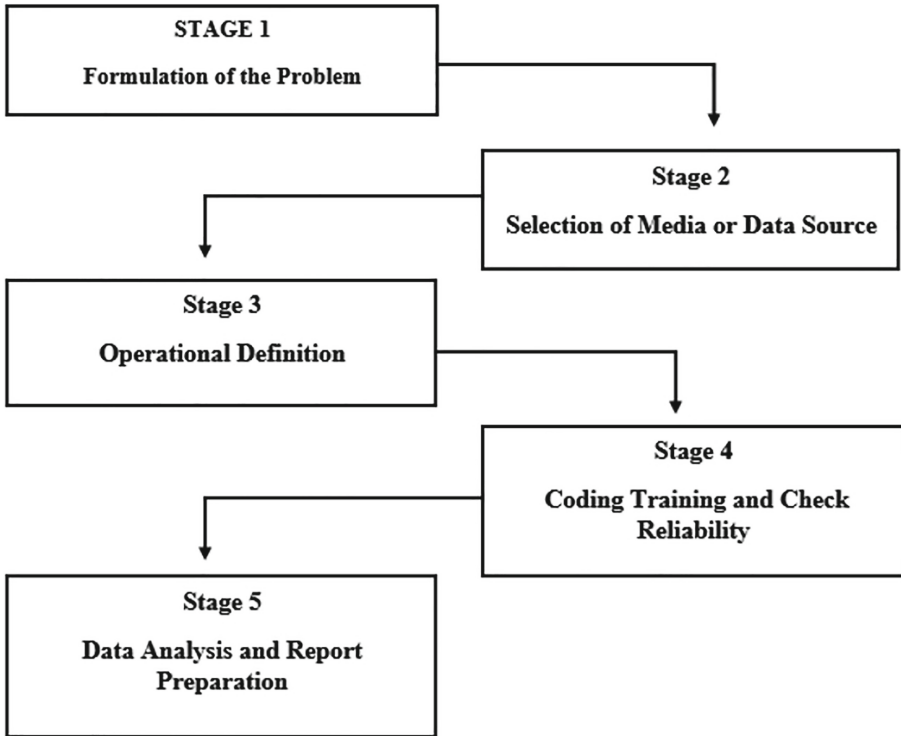
The participants were selected online using questionnaires designed with Google Forms. The data collected with the questionnaire include: 1) Participant contact details consisting of email, name, age, and telephone number, 2) Open-ended questions to ascertain whether potential participants meet the required criteria, and 3) willingness to be contacted further for study purposes. The links, which referred to the questionnaire, were distributed via social media platforms, such as Instagram, Whatsapp, and Facebook, as well as to various other social media groups, such as organizational groups, friendships, or private messages in the form of posts. Prospective participants who met the criteria were asked to indicate their willingness to fill in some questions related to the perceptions of the crazy rich Indonesia phenomenon on social media on Google Form. Suppose potential participants have something related to the study that they do not understand, they can ask questions through the mediums, such as Email and WhatsApp, included in the study poster.

After the participants filled out the questionnaires, Purposive Sampling method was deliberately used to collect the sample data with the quality of the answers serving as the metric for selection. In other words, the study decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide information based on knowledge or experience (Etika, 2016). Responses from potential participants that are relevant to the study objectives were selected as data. This is because this study is qualitative, which means that only certain prospective participants, who met the predetermined criteria can have the opportunity of being selected. A total of ten participants answered the questions. However, only the answers seven were selected because they were the best fit for the objectives of the study.

### 2.4 Analysis Techniques

The data analyzed was extracted verbatim from internet media interviews [15]. Following this, the qualitative technique used was content analysis. According to Asfar in 2019, content analysis is an in-depth study of written or printed information in the mass media. All forms of communication, including newspapers, radio news, and other documentation materials, are part of content analysis. This analysis has some predefined steps, which include: 1) Problem formulation, 2) Selection of media or data sources, 3) Operational definition, 4) Compilation of codes and checking reliability, and 5) Data analysis and preparation of reports [17].

In the first stage, content analysis begins with formulating a specific study problem. The second phase is media selection by identifying the data sources relevant to the hypothesis. Relevant data sources will assist in conducting observations from both library



**Fig. 1.** Stages of the Study Method

and mass media sources. The third stage is the operational definition, which includes each unit of analysis. Predetermined study topics or problems are carried out with an analysis unit determination system. Furthermore, the fourth stage involves compiling the code and checking its reliability, as well as running the code to identify the main characteristics of the categories. Then the reliability of each category was checked by repeating the data placement with multiple categories. Lastly, the fifth stage is the data analysis and reports preparation phase (Fig. 1).

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

Qualitative analysis uses a phenomenological perspective. The analysis was carried out by reading the results verbatim to find recurring themes, assessing the interview data results, coding the data to derive the study's core idea, and sequentially, and sequentially analyzing the data and analysis notes. From the results of data analysis, it was found that the participants expressed their perceptions of the crazy rich Indonesians as well as provided responses and suggestions for the phenomena that occurred. The participant's perception of the phenomenon that occurred led to the following aspects: 1.) Most of

the participants know about the crazy rich phenomenon in Indonesia, and few of them understand and follow the phenomenon, 2.) Participants think that the crazy rich actors in Indonesia have a lot of money, are not afraid of running out of wealth, and are transparent in showing off wealth on social media. 3.) One of the cases that occurred among the crazy rich in Indonesia includes cases of fraud and bribery, a royal lifestyle, and the love of spending money to buy things that are more than what they want.

Besides the results of perceptions about the crazy rich phenomenon in Indonesia on social media, several responses, suggestions, and hopes were found regarding narcissists on social media, they include: (1) Most of the participants gave responses that crazy rich actors are excessively selfish, has no tolerance, and are unreasonable, (2) Most of them provided responses that crazy rich perpetrators are selfish and ignore the people around them and some other participants noted that it is good not to look down on other people and do not overly have fantasies of unlimited success or power, (3) Some participants gave responses that crazy rich people who believe in a special or unique status owe their self-esteem and become indirectly their privilege.

Furthermore, other results showed that (4) most participants responded that the crazy rich actors who used other people for personal gain were inappropriate, unethical, selfish, and inhumane. Therefore, some participants suggested that these actions should be followed up legally to avoid harming others. (5) Most of the participants responded that the crazy rich had unreasonable feelings and behaviors because they feel superior to others, and these actions harmed and endangered other people. Meanwhile, with the hopes that people who commit these actions are self-aware, (6) some participants responded that the crazy rich actors' jealousy was influenced by their managerial attitude, which is usually triggered when they see other people that are more than them. However, the participants gave suggestions that they should be more grateful for what they have and hope that they will continue to see their potential so they are not preoccupied with other people's lives.

Following this, the other results were: (7) Some participants responded that these actions could occur because of the properties they owned, which makes them arrogant, belittle others, and deny any form of advice given to them. Some respondents even suggested that these crazy rich actors should stop living in arrogance. (8) Others responded that a lack of empathy is a strange and unreasonable act of the crazy rich who flaunts their wealth in difficult conditions, which is selfishness. However, some participants give hope that the actors have hearts and feelings, hence they can become empathetic and grateful people, (9) Some participants responded that crazy rich in Indonesia have excessive admiration because they need recognition and the emergence of admiration according to participants depending on the situation or circumstances, but there is one participant who gives hope to crazy rich in Indonesia not to always live in a dream.

### **3.2 Discussion**

The participants in this study provided perceptions in the form of responses, suggestions, and hopes. This is a parasocial interaction that can influence social media users. Parasocial interaction is simply referred to as direct social interactions between individuals, artists, or media figures [18]. This is reflected in the participants' perceptions of

the crazy rich who use social media daily. The term crazy rich or super rich is a social class designation for people with abundant assets or wealth [19].

Often, some crazy rich actors use social media to display bad behaviors, such as showing off their wealth and uploading luxuries, among others. As a result, most participants think of the crazy rich as people who like to flaunt their wealth and upload luxuries, although some of them have shown good and exemplary behavior like distributing food, money, and others. According to Riana et al. in 2022, the crazy rich is a phenomenon that has recently been booming in cyberspace and has spread due to the impact of the internet on real life. Indonesia's crazy rich actors often upload and show off their luxurious life via social media. Therefore, the lifestyle of these crazy rich people, especially those in Indonesia is now a topic of discussion amongst netizens. Lifestyle is a behavior pattern displayed in daily activities, interests, and arguments, especially those related to self-image [20].

From the description above, it can be deduced that participants' perceptions of the crazy rich were influenced by the parasocial interactions which had occurred between these actors and the participants. Hence, each participant gave rise to different perceptions, most of which were negative, of crazy rich Indonesia's narcissistic phenomena on social media.

## 4 Conclusions

In conclusion, the perception of the crazy rich Indonesia phenomenon on social media, such as responses, expectations, and suggestions, varies greatly. The results show that these perspectives offer more hope and suggestions to crazy rich actors who do not explain their perceptions properly to answer research questions. This study is limited to the fact that the participants' answers were not validated because data collection was carried out using platforms accessed to an internet network, and it was not possible to meet face-to-face. It must, therefore, be determined whether the responses obtained from the participants are correct. Based on the discussion, many crazy rich actors in Indonesia exhibit excessive behaviors which were brought about by the society through social media, resulting from key features, such as parasocial and celebrity worship, to emerge and influence society through the popularity of these actors.

Studies on this topic should involve more participants considering the fact that the results can facilitate the process of determining the theme. Moreover, the selection of participants should also be carried out directly in order to obtain accurate answers from the participants.

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