



The Mediating Role of Circle of Friends and Flexing on FOMO and Israf in Gen Z's Imitation Fashion Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study aims to analyze the mediating role of Circle of Friends and Flexing on the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Israf (excessive consumption) on purchasing decisions of imitation fashion products among Generation Z in Bone Regency. These social and psychological factors are known to be the main drivers of increased consumption of counterfeit goods.

Methods: This research uses a quantitative approach with associative methods and Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) analysis techniques. Primary data were obtained through the distribution of online questionnaires to 230 respondents using a purposive sampling technique. The measurement instrument used a Likert scale of 1 to 5 and was tested for validity and reliability.

Results: The t-value for the Circle of Friends variable on Purchase Decisions was 7.333 with a significance level of 0.000, and Flexing had a t-value of 3.235 with a significance of 0.001. Both were statistically significant. FOMO had a significant effect on Circle of Friends ($t = 2.575$; $p = 0.010$) and Flexing ($t = 3.162$; $p = 0.002$), but it did not directly affect Purchase Decisions. Meanwhile, Israf had a significant effect on Circle of Friends ($t = 5.354$; $p = 0.000$), Flexing ($t = 4.914$; $p = 0.000$), and Purchase Decisions ($t = 2.606$; $p = 0.010$). The indirect influence through both mediators was also proven significant.

Conclusion and suggestion: The results of the study conclude that Circle of Friends and Flexing significantly mediate the influence of FOMO and Israf on purchasing decisions of imitation fashion products. These findings confirm the importance of social influence and self-imaging motivation in Generation Z's consumption behavior. It is recommended that education about authentic consumption and strengthening regulations against counterfeit goods be improved.

Keyword: FOMO, Israf, Circle of Friends, Flexing, Imitation Fashion Purchase Decisions.

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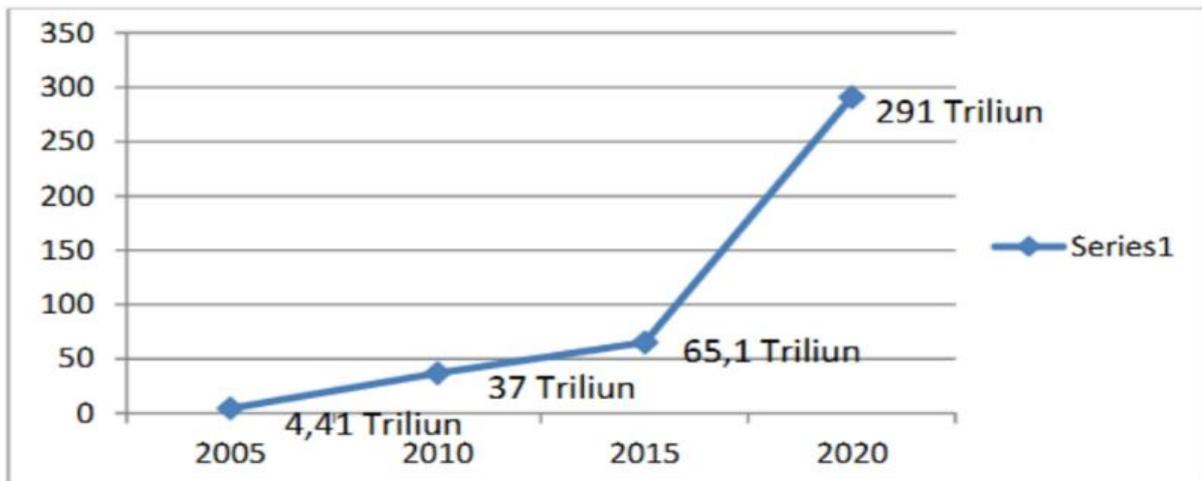
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A. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, consumption has evolved beyond fulfilling basic needs and increasingly represents social status and personal identity, particularly among Generation Z. This generation often uses branded fashion as a tool for self-expression and social recognition. Consequently, the demand for imitation fashion products has increased significantly due to their affordability and resemblance to original branded goods. Research shows that Generation Z tends to choose these products because of their functional advantages such as lower prices and visual similarity to authentic items (Wilkinson, 2022). According to the International

Trademark Association (INTA), 79% of Generation Z has purchased imitation fashion products, especially clothing, shoes, and accessories (International Trademark Association, 2019). These purchasing patterns are shaped by social pressures, evolving lifestyle trends, and a desire for self-image enhancement.

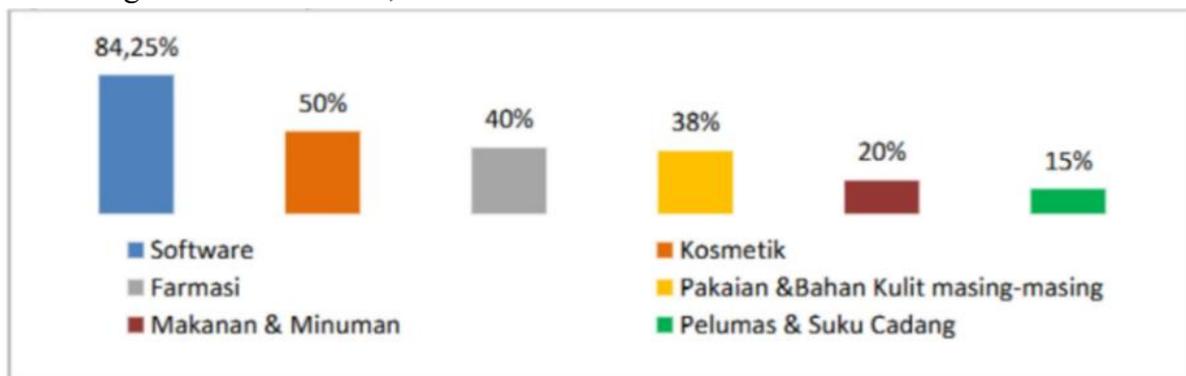
In Indonesia, Generation Z constitutes approximately 74.93 million people, or 27.94% of the total population, followed by Millennials at 25.87% (Muchamad Bagus Satrio Wibowo & Muhammad Iqbal, 2022). The widespread availability of imitation fashion products allows these groups to maintain fashionable appearances at lower costs. However, this phenomenon negatively affects original brand revenues, contributes to tax losses, and disrupts economic balance (Mutmainah et al., 2024).



Source: www.krjogja.com, processed 2024

Figure 1. Indonesia's GDP Loss

Figure 1 illustrates the significant economic losses caused by the circulation of imitation fashion products in Indonesia. According to data compiled by the Indonesian Anti-Counterfeiting Society (MIAP) and IEALP UPH (2020), the national economy suffered losses amounting to IDR 291 trillion, with an additional IDR 967 billion in unrealized tax revenue.



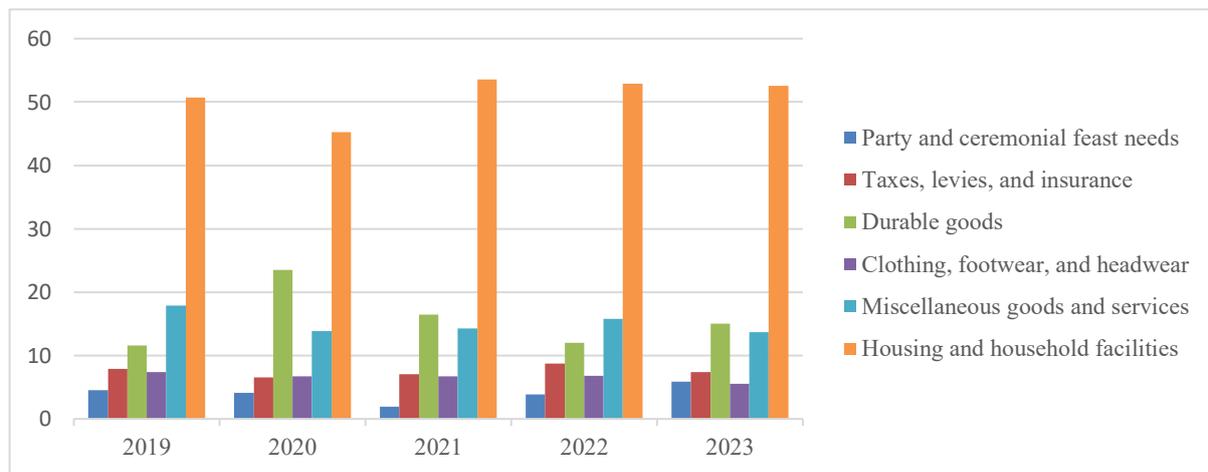
Source: www.krjogja.com, processed 2024

Figure 2. Counterfeit Product Circulation Data 2020

These figures emphasize that imitation product trade not only reduces business profitability but also distorts fair market competition, weakens industrial performance, and leads to the loss of over two million jobs. This underscores the urgency for stronger regulatory frameworks and

increased public awareness to mitigate the widespread impact of imitation goods on Indonesia's economic stability.

Figure 2 presents data on the distribution of imitation products across various sectors in Indonesia. The data reveals that software is the most heavily affected category, accounting for 84.25% of counterfeit activity, followed by cosmetics at 50% and pharmaceuticals at 40%. These figures raise serious concerns regarding consumer safety, particularly in sectors related to health and personal care. In addition, the circulation of imitation fashion products is also significant clothing (38%), food and beverages (20%), and automotive goods (15%) are among the most impacted. This widespread presence of imitation products across essential and non-essential sectors not only undermines product quality but also erodes consumer trust. These conditions highlight the urgent need for more stringent regulatory enforcement and comprehensive public education to reduce the risks associated with imitation product consumption.



Source: BPS, National Socioeconomic Survey (Susenas) March, data processed 2024
 Figure 3. Percentage of Average Non-Food Expenditure per Capita per Month by Residential Area in Bone Regency, March 2019 - March 2024

In the regional context, Bone Regency in South Sulawesi, with a population of 823,080 in 2023 (8.79% of the provincial population), reflects a promising area for analyzing youth consumption. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), more than 61% of the population has monthly expenditures ranging from IDR 500,000 to above IDR 1,500,000 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). Although fashion-related spending constitutes only 5.52% of average monthly non-food expenditures, this category holds symbolic significance among Generation Z, where appearance and peer validation are strong consumption drivers.

The decision to purchase imitation fashion products is influenced not only by individual preferences but also by social and psychological factors. The concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) compels individuals to follow current trends to avoid social exclusion (Littman Ovadia & Russo Netzer, 2024). Simultaneously, the Islamic principle of *Israf*, or excessive consumption, explains the tendency to buy goods not based on need, but desire often to display status or belonging (M. Syarif Adi Pramana & Muhammad Saiful Khair, 2024). Social influences such as the Circle of Friends and Flexing serve as important mediating variables. The Circle of Friends influences individual preferences through group dynamics (Rahmayanty,

Triana, Ananta, & Andreani, 2023), while Flexing refers to behaviors of showcasing goods to enhance perceived social status (Alton Endarwanto Hadi Susanto, Nadiroh, Hafid Abbas, & Agung Purwanto, 2023).

To understand this behavior, this study applies three theoretical frameworks: the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Network Theory, and Islamic Consumption Theory. TPB suggests that behavior is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Social Network Theory emphasizes the role of social relationships in shaping individual decisions (Weir & Ali, 2024). Meanwhile, Islamic Consumption Theory introduces values such as halal, haram, and the prohibition of *Israf* as essential ethical foundations in consumer behavior (Khan, 2020).

Research on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products has been conducted by several researchers. This can be mapped into several aspects, namely consumer behavior, economic aspects, and social media aspects. First, consumer behavior aspects were conducted by Marlina et al., (Marlina, Prakosa, & Imam Basri, 2021), Ulwatul Bilhuda and Thamrin (Bilhuda & Thamrin, 2022), Irfan Marhaban and Suryadi (Marhaban & Suryadi, 2021), Grace Felicia Djayapranara and Andhy Setyawan (Djayapranara & Setyawan, 2024), Zunan Setiawan et al., (Setiawan, Herawati, Ratnawita, Rijal, & Pratiwi, 2023), Sally El Arabi and Atour Taghipour (Arabi & Taghipour, 2023), David Shepherd et al., (Shepherd, Whitman, Button, & Wilson, 2023), Nurhidayah Rosely et al., (Rosely, Raja Yusof, & Hashim, 2023), Qaderi Ahmed Abdullah and Jianliang Yu (Abdullah & Yu, 2019), and Renza Fahlevi et al., (Fahlevi, Giorgyna, & Sinambela, 2024). Research in this aspect highlights how consumer behavior, attitudes, and psychological factors influence the purchase decision of imitation fashion products.

Second, economic aspects were conducted by Hafsyah Yasmita et al., (Yasmita, Nasution, & Dharma, 2024), Irene Lily Tampubolon and Evi Sofia (Tampubolon & Sofia, 2024), Nataya Khuria Insani and Edi Dwi Riyanto (Insani & Riyanto, 2024), Muhammad Amirul Hanif B. Md Yunos and Masri B. Abdul Lasi (Yunos & Abdul Lasi, 2020), Aarth Chellasamy et al., (Chellasamy, 2020), Baskoro Suryo Banindro (Banindro, 2021), and Kaiyethire Bupalan et al., (Bupalan, Rahim, Ahmi, & Rahman, 2019). Research on economic aspects emphasizes the importance of price, quality, and economic impact in the decision to purchase imitation products.

Third, Social Media aspects were conducted by Angger Agung Permadi and Dewi Syarifah (Permadi & Syarifah, 2021), Christina Catur Widayati et al., (Catur Widayati, Sinambela, Magito, & Ikhsani, 2021), and Tamil Selvi Renganatha dan Goi Mei Teh (Renganathan & Teh, 2023). Research in this aspect describes how the role of social media, influencers, and digital marketing strategies influence the perception and purchase decision of imitation fashion products. Social media has proven to be a powerful tool in shaping the image of imitation products and influencing consumers, especially the younger generation. Previous studies have examined the purchase of imitation fashion products through the lenses of consumer behavior, economics, and social media. However, they have yet to comprehensively investigate how social dynamics such as Circle of Friends and Flexing mediate the influence of psychological (FOMO) and religious (*Israf*) factors, particularly among Generation Z consumers.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing the mediating roles of Circle of Friends and Flexing in shaping the purchase decisions of imitation fashion products among Generation Z in Bone Regency. The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary and contextual approach, integrating psychological motives, peer influence, and Islamic ethical principles to better understand consumer behavior within a culturally specific setting. This perspective is crucial as the normalization of imitation fashion consumption among youth presents not only economic and social implications but also ethical concerns, especially in Muslim-majority societies. Therefore, the study offers both theoretical contributions by expanding consumer behavior models through the inclusion of religious and social dimensions and practical insights for developing ethical marketing strategies, value-based consumer education, and culturally aligned policy interventions.

B. THEORETICAL STUDY

1. Imitation Products

According to Kimura and Nakamura (2020), imitation products are inauthentic goods that mimic original ones but are typically lower in quality and sold at cheaper prices. (Kimura & Nakamura, 2020). These items, which include counterfeit and knockoff versions, are increasingly prevalent in the global market and pose a competitive threat to original brands (Wang, Tang, & Wang, 2024). Their growing presence offers consumers alternative options, yet simultaneously undermines the sustainability and competitiveness of authentic products.

2. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out, or more familiarly known as FOMO, is a phenomenon in psychology that describes a condition where a person feels anxious or obsessed with things that are trending or happen frequently. In the marketing world, the concept of FOMO can be utilized to influence consumer decision-making processes. In this context, FOMO serves as a gateway to hedonistic behavior namely, behavior that is oriented toward the pursuit of pleasure, enjoyment, and symbols of prestige. Hedonism encompasses actions, attitudes, and desires of individuals who are obsessed with gratifying their wants, seeking leisure, and adopting a consumerist lifestyle that often exceeds actual needs. Individuals driven by FOMO tend to purchase things not out of necessity, but due to the urge to appear relevant, be socially accepted, and avoid being perceived as outdated (Fathrul Quddus, 2021).

Simply put, FOMO can be defined as the fear of missing out on interesting things happening out there or the worry of not being considered existent and keeping up with the times. The emergence of various new trends often triggers the fear of being left behind in information or these trends (Sa'bani, Lestari, & Asyiah, 2024). According to Przybylski, the indicators of FOMO are fear, worry, and anxiety (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013).

3. *Israf*

The term *Israf* comes from the word *sarafa*, which means to exceed limits or deviate from what should be. Terminologically, *sarafa* refers to actions that exceed limits or deviant behavior carried out by humans, both in terms of portion and manner. An action is considered deviant and exceeds limits if it does not comply with the rules and provisions set by religion, both in individual and social contexts. According to Afzalur Rahman, *Israf* or wasteful attitudes

have three main meanings. First, using wealth for forbidden things, such as getting drunk. Second, spending excessively on permissible things, without considering financial capabilities. Third, giving donations or expenditures in the name of generosity, but only for the purpose of showing off and seeking praise (Rahman & Dkk, 1995). Consumptive behavior (*Israf*) according to Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard can be measured by several indicators, namely, Impulsive Buying, Wasteful Buying, and Non-Rational Buying (J. F, R. D, & P.W, 2005).

4. Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is a process that determines consumer actions in deciding what, when, where, and how to buy something (Syaifuddin, 2024). A purchase decision is a process where consumers decide to buy certain goods or services, as well as determine what actions they will take to achieve these purchase goals (Arifah, Asnawi, & Listyawati, 2024). Buying behavior encompasses the actions of individuals directly engaged in the exchange of money for goods and services, along with the decision-making processes that guide such activities (Muhammad Fahmul Iltiham & Nizar, 2020). Kotler and Keller explain that a purchase decision is a stage in the action-taking process where consumers decide whether or not to buy a product. According to Kotler and Keller, there are several indicators of purchase decisions, namely: Product Choice, Brand Choice, Channel Choice, Purchase Timing, and Purchase Amount (Kotler & Keller, 2016)

5. Circle of Friends

In general, a circle can be interpreted as an environment. A circle of friends is usually formed due to similarities or a sense of being "on the same wavelength" between individuals, whether in terms of hobbies, goals, or social background. This creates a sense of comfort that eventually forms a circle. Once formed, this group tends to influence behavior, mindset, or new habits among its members in social life. However, circles often have limitations or exclusivity, making them less open to people outside the group. As a result, a circle can have positive impacts, such as facilitating sharing stories or support, but it can also bring negative impacts because it limits relationships with the outside world (Muthohharoh, Azizah, Mina Holihah, & Anggraini, 2023). Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that a circle or friendship environment is a forum formed from individual similarities, which can have a major influence on the social lives of its members. Although it has benefits in the form of emotional support and convenience. According to Ahmad Kahfiatur Rohman, indicators of a circle of friends are Social Interaction, Group Communication, Friends' Support, Friends for Learning, and Increasing Self-Confidence (Rohman, Sriyono, & Setiyono, 2024).

6. Flexing

The term Flexing literally means showing off, while in language morphology, it refers to the act of someone openly displaying what they have to others. This behavior is defined as the act of highlighting abilities, wealth, luxury goods, achievements, and similar things in an excessive or unrealistic way to gain recognition or attention (Sa'diyah, Rizka, & Rosyadi, 2024). Flexing has become a popular trend on social media, where these platforms make it easy for someone to show off their wealth. This phenomenon can trigger feelings of being left out or FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) in others. The Flexing trend is considered to have a negative impact on society in general and has the potential to harm several parties (Mutmainnah, Fahimatussyam, & Rakhman Wijaya, 2023). According to Mohammad Hariyono and Hengki

Pradana Hendra, indicators of Flexing can be divided into seven, namely Insecure, Self-manipulation to appear prosperous, Obsessed with others' possessions, Wanting to be accepted and recognized, Forcing circumstances, and Difficulty making friends (Hariyono & Hendra, 2024).

7. Research Hypothesis

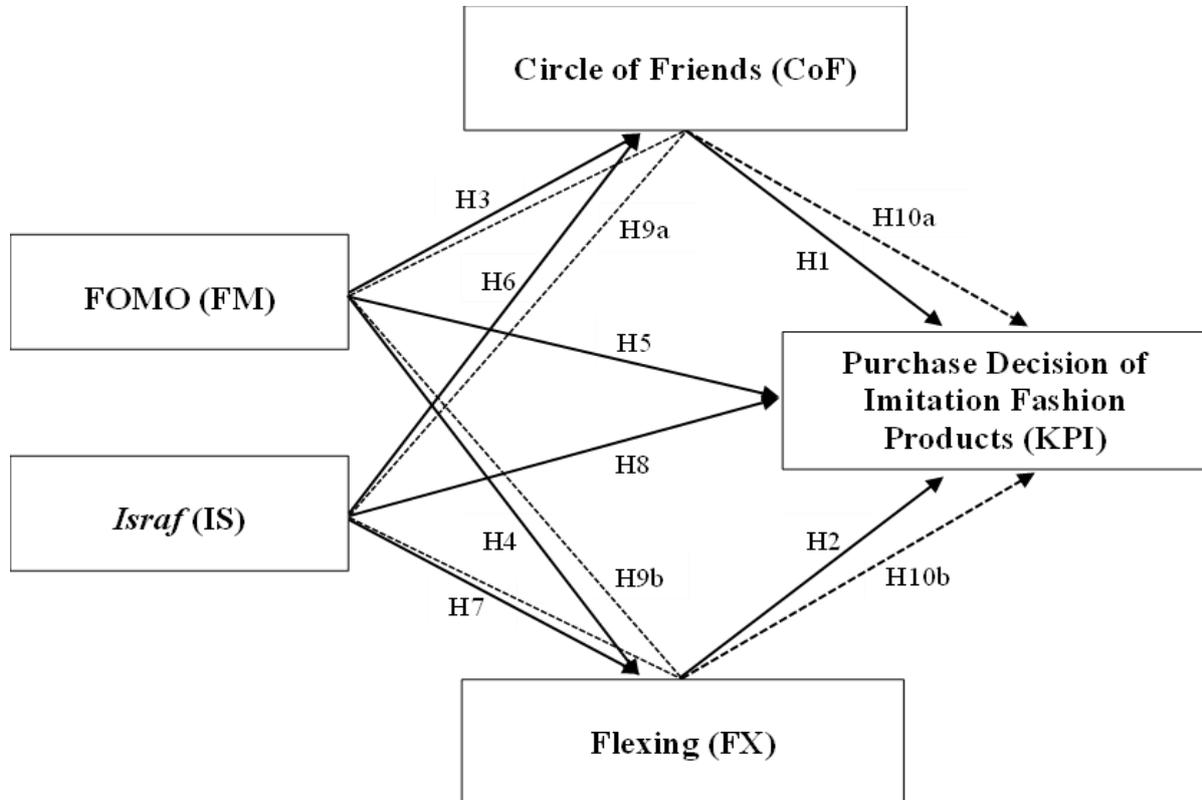


Figure 4: Research Hypothesis

Based on the figure, the research hypotheses can be described as follows:

- H1 : Circle of Friends significantly influences the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H2 : Flexing significantly influences the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H3 : FOMO significantly influences Circle of Friends in the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H4 : FOMO significantly influences Flexing in the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H5 : FOMO significantly influences the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H6 : *Israf* significantly influences Circle of Friends in the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H7 : *Israf* significantly influences Flexing in the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H8 : *Israf* significantly influences the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H9a : Circle of Friends is able to mediate the influence of FOMO on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products
- H9b : Circle of Friends is able to mediate the influence of *Israf* on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products

H10a : Flexing is able to mediate the influence of FOMO on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products

H10b : Flexing is able to mediate the influence of *Israf* on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products

C. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a quantitative approach with an associative research design, aiming to examine the relationship between two or more variables. The objective is to determine the extent of these relationships to serve as a foundation for developing theories that can explain, predict, and control specific phenomena (Anshori & Iswati, 2019). The study involves the following variables: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and *Israf* (extravagant behavior) as independent variables; Circle of Friends and Flexing as mediating variables; and Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products as the dependent variable. The research was conducted over a four-month period during 2024–2025 in Bone Regency, focusing on Generation Z across five selected sub-districts: Tellu Siattinge, Palakka, Tanete Riattang, Tanete Riattang Timur, and Cina. These sub-districts were chosen based on geographical diversity, high population density of Generation Z, accessibility, and the availability of adequate digital infrastructure to support online questionnaire distribution.

The data sources consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires distributed to members of Generation Z in Bone Regency, while secondary data were obtained from books, scientific journals, and online articles. The population targeted in this study comprises individuals from Generation Z who have previously purchased imitation fashion products. Following the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach (Syauqi, Fitriyah, & Jumaati, 2022), the sample size was determined to be 230 respondents, based on the guideline of 10 times the number of indicators used (Solimun, 2002). The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, selecting participants aged 17–28 years who have experience in purchasing imitation fashion products.

D. RESULT

Outer Loading

Table 1 shows the strength of the relationship between indicators and latent variables in this study. Outer loading values above 0.7 are considered good and valid. In the Circle of Friends (CoF) variable, the remaining indicators have outer loading values between 0.807 and 0.865, indicating a strong relationship. A similar situation occurs with Flexing (FL) with values from 0.805 to 0.865. For the FOMO (FM) and *Israf* (IS) variables, the outer loading values are above 0.78, which is adequate. Meanwhile, the indicators for Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products (KPI) range from 0.805 to 0.883, indicating strong representation.

Table 1. Outer Loading Values of Latent Variable Indicators

Variabel Laten	Indikator	Outer Loading (λ)
Circle of Friends (CoF)	CoF31	0.830
	CoF41	0.865
	CoF42	0.807
	CoF51	0.845
	CoF52	0.854
	FL21	0.805
	FL22	0.865
	FL31	0.824
Flexing (FL)	FL32	0.811
	FL41	0.863
	FL42	0.819
	FL51	0.832
	FL52	0.864
	FL61	0.863
	FL62	0.832
	FL71	0.844
FOMO (FM)	FL72	0.862
	FM11	0.863
	FM12	0.850
	FM21	0.905
	FM22	0.931
	FM31	0.917
	FM32	0.931
	IS11	0.889
<i>Israf</i> (IS)	IS12	0.786
	IS21	0.876
	IS22	0.894
	IS31	0.887
	IS32	0.888
Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products (KPI)	KPI11	0.863
	KPI12	0.876
	KPI21	0.873
	KPI22	0.883
	KPI31	0.843
	KPI32	0.838
	KPI41	0.858
	KPI42	0.878
KPI51	0.860	
KPI52	0.805	

Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

Discriminant Validity

Table 2 shows the results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion test to assess the discriminant validity of the research model. The diagonal values in the table represent the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent variable, while the off-diagonal values indicate the correlation between latent variables. Discriminant validity is met if the square root of AVE is greater than its correlation with other variables. For the Circle of Friends (CoF) variable, the square root of AVE is 0.876, which is higher than its correlations with other

variables, as is the case for Flexing (FL) (0.844), FOMO (FM) (0.900), *Israf* (IS) (0.871), and Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products (KPI) (0.858).

Table 2. Results of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion Test

Variabel	CoF	FL	FM	IS	KPI
CoF	0.876				
FL	0.555	0.844			
FM	0.660	0.713	0.900		
IS	0.717	0.744	0.793	0.871	
KPI	0.772	0.724	0.695	0.771	0.858

Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

These results indicate that all latent variables have good discriminant validity, so they can be clearly represented and do not overlap with other variables.

Construct Reliability and Validity

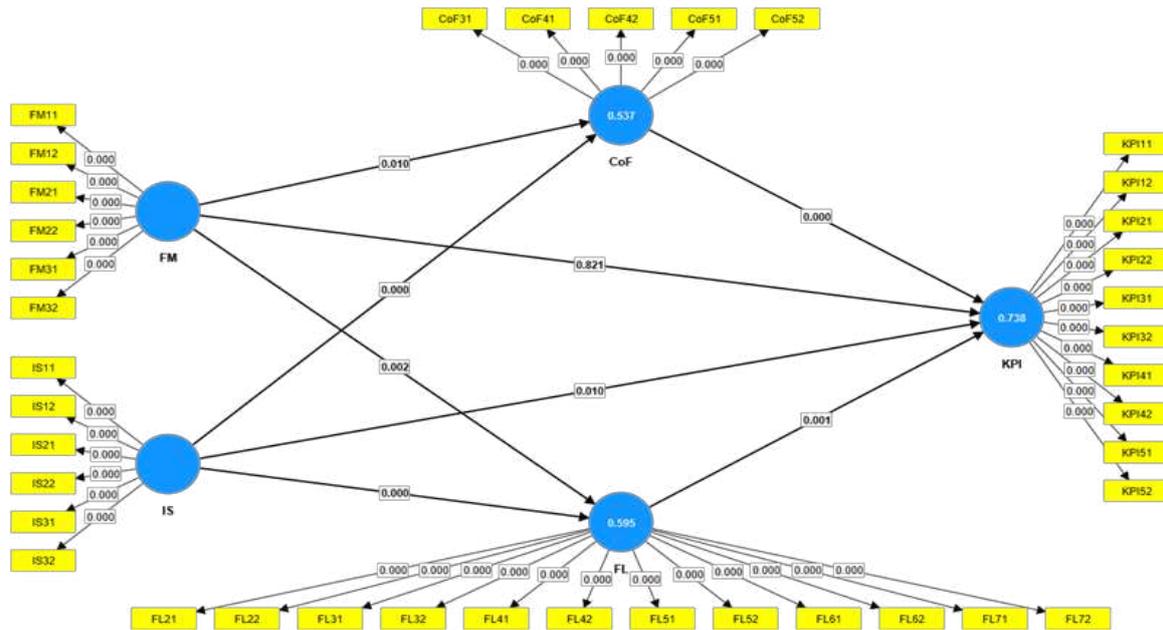
Table 3. Results of Construct Reliability and Validity Test

Variabel	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho a)</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho c)</i>	<i>Average variance extracted (AVE)</i>
CoF	0.924	0.928	0.943	0.767
FL	0.963	0.964	0.967	0.713
FM	0.953	0.954	0.962	0.810
IS	0.936	0.940	0.949	0.758
KPI	0.960	0.961	0.965	0.736

Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

Table 3 displays the results of the Construct Reliability and Validity test to assess the measurement quality of the latent variables. The testing includes Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (rho_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The analysis results show that all latent variables have good reliability and validity. Circle of Friends (CoF) has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.924, rho_c of 0.943, and AVE of 0.767. Flexing (FL) shows a value of 0.963 for Cronbach's Alpha, 0.967 for rho_c, and 0.713 for AVE. For the FOMO (FM) variable, the Cronbach's Alpha value reached 0.953, rho_c 0.962, and AVE 0.810, which is the highest result among other variables. *Israf* (IS) has values of 0.936 (Cronbach's Alpha), 0.949 (rho_c), and 0.758 (AVE), while Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products (KPI) shows figures of 0.960, 0.965, and 0.736 for each indicator respectively. These values meet the recommended criteria, namely Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability above 0.7 for reliability, and AVE above 0.5 for convergent validity. This indicates that the model has strong internal consistency and is capable of explaining indicator variance well.

Structural Model



Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

Figure 5. Structural Model

The results of the structural model testing displayed in the diagram, as in Figure 5, are used to show the direct and indirect influences between variables. To facilitate understanding, these results are also presented in tabular form, as listed in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Direct Influence Test Results

Causal Relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
CoF => KPI	0.435	0.436	0.059	7.333	0.000
FL => KPI	0.313	0.312	0.097	3.235	0.001
FM => CoF	0.246	0.240	0.095	2.575	0.010
FM => FL	0.330	0.333	0.104	3.162	0.002
FM => KPI	0.014	0.017	0.060	0.227	0.821
IS => CoF	0.522	0.531	0.098	5.354	0.000
IS => FL	0.482	0.482	0.098	4.914	0.000
IS => KPI	0.215	0.212	0.082	2.606	0.010

Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

The analysis results show that Circle of Friends (CoF) has a significant influence on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products (KPI) with a P-value of 0.000 and a T-statistic of 7.333. This means that the greater the influence of social interaction, the higher the tendency for someone to buy imitation fashion products. A similar situation occurs with Flexing (FL), which also has a significant influence on KPI with a P-value of 0.001 and a T-statistic of 3.235, indicating that the urge to show off one's lifestyle increases the likelihood of purchasing imitation products. FOMO (FM) was found to have a significant influence on Circle of Friends (CoF) (P-value 0.010; T-statistic 2.575) and Flexing (FL) (P-value 0.002; T-statistic 3.162), but it did not directly influence KPI (P-value 0.821; T-statistic 0.227). This means that although FOMO encourages someone to follow trends and show off their lifestyle, the decision to

purchase imitation products is more determined by Circle of Friends and Flexing. Furthermore, *Israf* (IS) has a significant influence on Circle of Friends (CoF) (P-value 0.000; T-statistic 5.354), Flexing (FL) (P-value 0.000; T-statistic 4.914), and KPI (P-value 0.010; T-statistic 2.606). This indicates that excessive consumptive behavior can encourage someone to follow trends in their social environment, show off their lifestyle, and buy imitation fashion products. Overall, these results show that Circle of Friends and Flexing play an important role in mediating the influence of FOMO and *Israf* on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products. FOMO, although not directly influential, still encourages Flexing, which ultimately impacts purchase decisions. Meanwhile, *Israf* reinforces excessive consumption driven by social influence and the tendency to display status through imitation products.

Table 5. Direct Influence Test Results

Causality Relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
FM => CoF => KPI	0.107	0.105	0.044	2.415	0.016
FM => FL => KPI	0.103	0.103	0.044	2.369	0.018
IS => CoF => KPI	0.227	0.232	0.054	4.192	0.000
IS => FL => KPI	0.151	0.150	0.055	2.768	0.006

Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

The analysis results show that FOMO (FM) has an indirect influence on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products (KPI) through Circle of Friends (CoF) with a P-value of 0.016 and a T-statistic of 2.415. This indicates that individuals experiencing FOMO are more easily influenced by their social environment in making purchase decisions, where Circle of Friends reinforces this urge. FOMO also has an indirect influence on KPI through Flexing (FL), with a P-value of 0.018 and a T-statistic of 2.369.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Results

Causality Relationship	Symbol	Hypothesis	Analysis Result	Description
Direct Influence				
CoF => KPI	H1	Significant	Significant	Proven
FL => KPI	H2	Significant	Significant	Proven
FM => CoF	H3	Significant	Significant	Proven
FM => FL	H4	Significant	Significant	Proven
FM => KPI	H5	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Proven
IS => CoF	H6	Significant	Significant	Proven
IS => FL	H7	Significant	Significant	Proven
IS => KPI	H8	Significant	Significant	Proven
Indirect Influence				
FM => CoF => KPI	H9	Significant	Significant	Proven
FM => FL => KPI	H10	Significant	Significant	Proven
IS => CoF => KPI	H11	Significant	Significant	Proven
IS => FL => KPI	H12	Significant	Significant	Proven

Source: Primary Data (questionnaire) processed, 2025

Individuals who feel FOMO tend to engage in Flexing by showing social status through imitation products as an economical alternative to stay stylish. Furthermore, *Israf* (IS) has an indirect influence on KPI through Circle of Friends (CoF) with a P-value of 0.000 and a T-statistic of 4.192. The social environment reinforces individuals' consumptive behavior, encouraging them to buy imitation fashion products as part of group trends. *Israf* also has an indirect impact on KPI through Flexing (FL), with a P-value of 0.006 and a T-statistic of 2.768. Excessive consumption encourages individuals to show off purchased goods as a symbol of status, which ultimately increases the purchase decision for imitation fashion products. Overall, the test results show that FOMO, *Israf*, Circle of Friends, and Flexing play an important role in influencing the purchase decision of imitation fashion products among Generation Z in Bone Regency. Social factors and the urge to appear to follow trends are the main drivers in the consumption pattern of imitation products, confirming the importance of understanding the influence of the social environment and lifestyle on purchase decisions.

E. DISCUSSION

1. Direct Influence

a. Circle of Friends on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products

The circle of friends is proven to have a significant influence on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products. This finding indicates that the style preferences and consumption behavior of Generation Z are greatly shaped by the desire to maintain social harmony within their friendship groups. When a trend is adopted by the group, individuals tend to follow the flow for acceptance, in line with Pacho's view on social pressure and Social Identity Theory which emphasizes that group acceptance is often prioritized over personal values (Frida Thomas Pacho, 2023). Thus, the friendship environment becomes an important arena that influences Generation Z's decision to buy imitation fashion products as a way to feel accepted and follow the prevailing trends within their group.

b. Flexing on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products

Flexing or showing off behavior is proven to significantly influence the purchase decision of imitation fashion products. The strong desire to stand out, gain recognition, and build a self-image in the social environment encourages individuals to buy products that can support this imaging. In this context, imitation fashion products are seen as a more affordable alternative to appear fashionable with famous brands without having to incur high costs, in line with Banindro's findings regarding the drive for self-actualization through trendy goods (Banindro, 2021). Therefore, the motivation for self-imaging through flexing often becomes the main driver that overcomes moral considerations and product authenticity in the purchase decision of imitation fashion products.

c. FOMO on Circle of Friends

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) also shows a significant influence on Circle of Friends. Feelings of anxiety or fear of missing out on popular information or trends encourage Generation Z to be more active in establishing and maintaining social relationships with their friends. In this dynamic, the circle of friends acts as the main source of information, social validation, and reference for what is considered relevant and important, in line with the research by Yaputri et al., which highlights how social interaction and the desire for recognition within groups encourage the imitation of consumption behavior (Yaputri, Dimyati, & Herdiansyah,

2022). Thus, FOMO indirectly strengthens bonds and influence within the circle of friends, which then becomes an important channel in shaping consumption patterns.

d. FOMO on Flexing

FOMO is proven to have a significant influence on flexing behavior. When individuals feel left behind by ongoing trends or the activities of their peers, a strong urge arises to display a self-image that seems to follow these trends so as not to be considered outdated. Flexing, or showing off lifestyle and certain items, becomes one way for Generation Z to demonstrate that they remain up-to-date and relevant to their environment, consistent with the findings of Royantara et al., regarding the role of FOMO in encouraging online activities (Muhamad Oldy Royantara, Agung Wijaya, Rini Sugiarti, & Fendy Suhariadi, 2025). Therefore, FOMO is not only related to social anxiety but also actively shapes consumptive behavior and self-imaging such as flexing as an effort to maintain social existence.

e. FOMO on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products

Unlike some other variables, FOMO was found to have no significant direct influence on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products. This means that the feeling of fear of missing out on trends does not automatically and immediately encourage individuals to purchase imitation fashion products. The influence of FOMO on purchase decisions tends to be more complex and mediated by other social and psychological factors, as found by Sariani and Sularsih who also found no significant influence of FOMO on cosmetic product purchase decisions, indicating that consumers may consider other aspects such as quality or personal value more (Sariani & Anggarawati, 2023).

f. Israf on Circle of Friends

Excessive consumptive behavior or *Israf* shows a significant influence on Circle of Friends. This indicates that a person's tendency towards excessive consumption is also influenced and even reinforced by their friendship environment. Individuals with a tendency for *Israf* are more likely to be in social circles that have similar consumption patterns (homophily), thus mutually shaping and strengthening collective consumption norms, in line with the views of Zhu and Szekely regarding the influence of influencers and peers in imitating materialistic lifestyles (Zhu & Szekely, 2023). Thus, Circle of Friends not only becomes a place for sharing but also a major driver in shaping and perpetuating excessive consumptive behavior.

g. Israf on Flexing

Israf is also proven to significantly influence flexing behavior. Individuals with a tendency for excessive and wasteful consumption tend to have an urge to openly display their lifestyle to others, whether through daily appearance or through posts on social media. Flexing becomes a manifestation of this uncontrolled consumption style, where the desire to look attractive and have one's status recognized in the public eye encourages the display of luxury goods or those perceived as luxurious, in line with the research of Nadiroh and Hafid Abbas (Alton Eandarwanto Hadi Susanto et al., 2023). This phenomenon indicates that flexing is often a consequence of *Israf*, reinforcing a consumerism cycle oriented towards imaging.

h. Israf on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products

The analysis results show that *Israf* has a significant influence on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products. This excessive consumptive behavior reflects that individuals, particularly Generation Z, tend to buy goods not solely based on functional needs, but as part

of fulfilling lifestyle desires and the urge to follow trends. In this context, imitation fashion products become an option because they allow the fulfillment of these consumptive desires at a relatively lower cost, in line with the findings of Hamza and Elsantil regarding impulsive buying as a characteristic of *Israf* (Nurmanto, Mulyanto, Wiyatno, Purnamasari, & Putra, 2024). The pressure to appear and follow trends due to *Israf* ultimately leads to the purchase decision of imitation products, possibly ignoring functional value or ethical considerations.

i. Integration of Theory on Direct Influence

The findings regarding the direct influence on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products and its antecedents can be analyzed more comprehensively by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Network Theory (SNT), and Islamic Consumption Theory. The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that the significant influence of Circle of Friends on the purchase decision of imitation products shows the crucial role of subjective norms, where the perception of social pressure from peers shapes intention (Çıtak, 2024). The influence of flexing is explained through individuals' positive attitudes towards showing off behavior and the perception of environmental support (subjective norms) for such actions (Ajzen, 2015). Meanwhile, the influence of *Israf* on purchase decisions can be understood from individuals' permissive attitudes towards excessive consumption, which facilitates the urge for impulsive purchases, including non-essential products (Ajzen, 2015).

Social Network Theory reinforces the understanding that Circle of Friends functions as a social network where information spreads and consumption norms, including the acceptance of imitation products, are formed through interaction and conformity pressure (He, 2023). Flexing behavior can be seen as a status signaling strategy within this social network, where individuals use symbols (including imitation products) to display status (Ishak, Akmal, & Halide, 2024). The influence of *Israf* on Circle of Friends can also be explained through the concept of homophily in SNT, namely the tendency of individuals to associate with others who have similar consumption habits, so that wasteful behavior becomes the norm within the group (He, 2023).

From the perspective of Islamic Consumption Theory, flexing behavior that encourages the purchase of imitation products potentially leads to *Riya'* (showing off for recognition), an act that loses its value in the sight of Allah (Sadali, Hermawan Adinugraha, & Shulthoni, 2024) as warned in QS. Al-Baqarah/2:264 (RI, 2022), thus making the purchase spiritually problematic. *Israf* behavior (excessive consumption) is strictly prohibited in Islam (QS. Al-A'raf/7:31 and QS. Al-Isra'/17:27) (RI, 2022), and the purchase of imitation fashion products based on *Israf* not only contradicts the principle of simplicity but also does not align with the Islamic hierarchy of needs (*daruriyyat*, *hajiyyat*, *tahsiniyyat*) (Maghfur, 2017) and potentially contains elements of *gharar* (uncertainty).

The insignificant direct influence of FOMO on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior can be explained by the possibility of individuals having negative attitudes towards imitation products themselves (e.g., considered low quality or not in line with personal values) or due to low Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), where individuals feel unable, unwilling, or uncomfortable to directly purchase imitation products just for fear of missing out on trends.

2. Indirect Influence

a. FOMO on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products Through Circle of Friends

The research results show that although FOMO does not directly influence the purchase decision of imitation fashion products, it contributes indirectly through the mediation of Circle of Friends. This means that individuals experiencing FOMO will tend to be more active in building or maintaining social relationships with groups of friends who are considered to be following the latest fashion developments. This friendship environment then becomes a source of reference, exerts social pressure, and shapes consumption preferences, which ultimately encourages individuals to buy imitation fashion products to appear consistent with trends and be accepted within their social group, as found by Ikhwanda and Giyana that FOMO influences purchase decisions among students, especially in the context of fashion trends. FOMO creates social and emotional pressure that encourages impulsive buying behavior, as individuals try to adapt to their peers and maintain a sense of belonging within their circle of friends (Ikhwanda & Giyana, 2025).

b. FOMO on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products Through Flexing

FOMO was also found to have an indirect influence on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products, this time through the mediation of flexing behavior. In this dynamic, FOMO encourages individuals to display a self-image that appears up-to-date and follows fashion trends, especially on social media platforms or in their closest social environment. One way to do this is by flexing, which is showing off branded goods (even if in imitation form) to gain recognition or build a certain status image, which then encourages the purchase decision of these imitation products as a means for flexing, in line with Christy's view that FOMO influences consumer behavior, especially in online shopping activities (Christy, 2022).

c. *Israf* on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products Through Circle of Friends

Excessive consumptive behavior or *Israf* is also proven to have an indirect influence on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products through the mediating role of Circle of Friends. Individuals with a tendency for *Israf* tend to associate and feel comfortable in social environments that have similar consumption styles, where consumption practices such as buying imitation fashion items may be considered normal and reasonable. Thus, the social influence from Circle of Friends reinforces and justifies an individual's decision to purchase imitation products based on the values and consumption norms that develop within their group, as expressed by Sheikh et al., social influence acts as a primary driver in excessive consumption behavior, including the tendency to buy imitation fashion products (Sheikh, Barsha, & Islam, 2025).

d. *Israf* on the Purchase Decision of Imitation Fashion Products Through Flexing

Israf has a significant indirect influence on the purchase decision of imitation fashion products through the mediation of flexing behavior. Individuals who have an excessive consumptive tendency (*Israf*) are generally driven by the desire to display a luxurious lifestyle or high social status. Flexing, or showing off goods (including imitation fashion products as an affordable alternative), becomes a channel of expression that connects this consumptive behavior with the decision to buy imitation fashion products as part of a self-imaging strategy, in line with the findings of Rosely et al., that the desire to show off and imitate lifestyles drives wasteful behavior in purchasing imitation fashion products. Consumers use counterfeit goods to project a self-image on social media without the financial burden of authentic luxury items,

thereby promoting a “logofication” culture and increasing demand for imitation products (Rosely et al., 2023).

e. Integration of Theory on Indirect Influence

The mediation pathway through Circle of Friends shows how the psychological need to connect (from FOMO) and consumptive tendencies (*Israf*) are translated in a social context. Social Network Theory (SNT) explains circle of friends as a forum for shaping consumption norms through interaction and conformity pressure, where FOMO increases dependence on Circle of Friends for trend validation (Alutaybi, Al-Thani, McAlaney, & Ali, 2020), while *Israf* is reinforced by homophily within the group. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explains that Circle of Friends forms Subjective Norms that encourage purchase intention (Dian Octaviani, Sucherly, Prabowo, & Sari, 2023). From the perspective of Islamic Consumption Theory, this pathway highlights how the social environment can reinforce prohibited *Israf* behavior, emphasizing the importance of choosing an environment that supports the value of simplicity.

The mediation pathway through flexing illustrates how internal drives such as FOMO and *Israf* are expressed through self-imaging behavior. FOMO can trigger flexing as a strategy to alleviate social anxiety (Alton Endarwanto Hadi Susanto et al., 2023), which in SNT is seen as status signaling (Kiburu, Njiraini, & Boso, 2023). *Israf* acts as a primary trigger for flexing, as excessive consumption creates a conducive condition for showing off (Saputro, Setyaningrum, & Febriyanto, 2025). According to TPB, FOMO and *Israf* form a positive Attitude towards flexing, which encourages the intention to flex and purchase imitation products as a tool (Yan & Ming, 2024). From the viewpoint of Islamic Consumption Theory, this shows a highly problematic behavioral cycle: *Israf* (prohibited) triggers *Riya* /Flexing (prohibited), which encourages the purchase of imitation products whose ethics are questionable due to their association with counterfeiting and dishonesty (Suryaningrum, Utami, Lusianawati, & Thalib, 2023).

F. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis using SEM-PLS, this study reveals that the purchase decisions of imitation fashion products among Generation Z in Bone Regency are significantly influenced by social dynamics and psychological motivations, particularly through the roles of Circle of Friends and Flexing. Circle of Friends significantly influences these decisions, emphasizing the role of peer pressure in shaping consumer preferences. Flexing also serves as a strong motivator, as the desire to project social status drives individuals to choose imitation products as a more affordable alternative to luxury goods. Meanwhile, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) does not directly affect purchase decisions; instead, its influence is mediated through Circle of Friends and Flexing. These findings highlight the importance of social interaction and self-presentation in shaping the consumption behavior of Generation Z.

This study underscores the relevance of community-based marketing strategies and educational initiatives that promote the value of authenticity, aiming to shift consumer preferences away from imitation products toward original ones. From a policy perspective, it also calls for stronger enforcement against the circulation of counterfeit goods. The main limitations of this study lie in its restricted geographical scope and exclusive use of a quantitative approach, which limits the depth of insight into psychological motivations. Future

research is recommended to expand the study area and incorporate qualitative methods for a more comprehensive understanding.

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