

THE MEANING OF BOUQUETS AMONG THE PONOROGO CITY SOCIETY: A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the meaning of giving bouquets among urban communities, especially as a symbol of social status and expression of emotions using a symbolic interactionism approach. In a society that is increasingly connected with the influence of social media, giving bouquets has transformed from a mere tradition into a more complex trend. Bouquets, which were once identical to flowers as an expression of affection or someone's emotions in appreciation, now involve various other forms of gifts and function as a tool to express happiness, gratitude, and social support. This study uses a qualitative approach with participatory observation methods, in-depth interviews, and documentation to explore the meaning of giving bouquets in various social contexts, such as graduations, celebrations, and personal achievements. The results of the study show that giving bouquets is not only an expression of personal emotions, but also as a status symbol that strengthens social relationships between individuals. Thus, giving bouquets functions as a social communication tool that reflects the dynamics of changing values and social interactions in society.

Keywords: Social Meaning, Emotional, Bouquet Meaning Transformation, Symbolic Interactionism

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of giving bouquets in various forms, ranging from flower bouquets, money bouquets, to food or other goods bouquets has become a rapidly growing trend among urban communities (Putra & Suryadinata, 2020). This habit is now not only limited to certain events such as weddings or birthdays, but also extends to various moments of celebration and personal achievement. Along with the increasing popularity of bouquets in various forms, the meanings attached to them are increasingly diverse and complex (Spence, 2024). Bouquets are now seen as symbols that can represent social status and emotional expression, which are colored by various cultural and social factors.

Research on the symbolic meaning of giving bouquets has been widely conducted in various social and cultural contexts. Giving bouquets, which were initially identified as a symbol of love and attention, has developed into a form of communication that reflects broader social values. Several studies have shown that the meaning of bouquets is not only limited to expressions of affection, but is also related to social status and the construction of individual identity in society. For example, research by (Prasetyo, 2022) revealed that giving gifts between students is based on various reasons, such as to provide mutual support, celebrate achievements, and as a form of appreciation for others. This practice has a positive impact on building social bonds, strengthening friendships, and even serves as a solution to repair previously strained relationships, as well as a symbol of apology. Ultimately, gift-giving helps create harmony in relationships between friends. On the other hand, there are different opinions from some students who are not involved in this practice, considering gift-giving as an excessive act, tends to be wasteful, and does not conform to the simple culture of the Acehnese people.

Another study by (Masnawati & Ewanan, 2024) highlighted that the trend of gift-giving, although an old tradition, is now emerging in a new form as part of a social trend driven by the influence of social media and ongoing social changes. The motivations behind gift-giving include appreciation, appreciation, signs of love, expressions of happiness, joy, concern, and memories. Among students, this practice can be seen as a form of charity in

Mauss's perspective, where gift-giving is often done sincerely without expecting anything in return, especially on the basis of friendship. For some students who feel the need to return the gift, it is seen more as an expression of kindness and does not always mean asking for something in return, but rather to strengthen existing social ties. In addition, from the perspective of emotions and interpersonal relationships, research by (Mustafidah & A'yun, 2023) found that students of UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember fulfill their self-esteem needs by purchasing bouquets. In this context, bouquets function as a means to satisfy their self-esteem needs. Students generally buy bouquets as gifts for friends who have just completed a proposal seminar exam or thesis exam. Giving this bouquet aims to support the giver's self-esteem, as well as to show appreciation and appreciation for the success of friends who have completed the exam stage.

This study not only highlights the surface aspects of the bouquet giving trend, but also explores the perceptions, values, and social interactions formed between the parties involved, such as the giver, recipient, and bouquet business actors (Nurkoribah & Khairunnisa, 2024). By using a symbolic interactionism perspective, this article adds to the understanding of how symbolism in bouquet giving is interpreted and how this social process reflects changing values in contemporary society. Although giving flowers has long been known in various cultures, this study offers a new perspective by analyzing how the meaning and symbolism in bouquet giving play a role in shaping social relationships and individual identities. Using a qualitative approach, this study explores how individuals interpret the meaning behind the bouquet given, as well as how the social and cultural context influences the act of giving (Masnawati & Ewanan, 2024).

The problem of this research focuses on understanding how the meaning of giving a bouquet as a gift is influenced by symbolic interactionism in a social and cultural context. In an increasingly complex society, the act of giving gifts, especially bouquets, is not only seen as a form of expression of affection or appreciation, but also as a means to express identity, status, and relationships between individuals. However, there is a gap in the literature that examines the social dynamics and symbolic interpretations involved in bouquet giving. Therefore, this study aims to explore individual perceptions regarding the meanings contained in the bouquet given, as well as how factors such as social context, culture, and interactions between the giver and receiver influence the process of giving and receiving the gift. Thus, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social and symbolic aspects of the practice of giving bouquets as gifts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method to understand the meaning of bouquets as a symbol of social status and emotional expression among urban communities, especially in Ponorogo. With a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores the phenomenon of giving bouquets in various forms, not only flower bouquets which are now trending among urban communities. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with research subjects including the giver and recipient of the bouquet, the seller of the bouquet, and other related parties. Observations were made during the moments of giving the bouquet to directly observe the interactions and symbolism contained, while in-depth interviews allowed for exploration of the motivations and meanings felt by the givers and recipients. Data analysis was carried out thematically, through reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions from the data collected. The results of the study are expected to provide in-depth insight into the role of bouquets as a symbol of status and a medium for emotional expression in social relations in urban communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Status in Giving Bouquets as Gifts

The phenomenon of bouquet consumerism as a gift not only reflects changes in people's consumption behavior but also shows how objects, such as flower bouquets, become symbols that contain social meaning. In this context, Symbolic Interactionism and social identity play an important role in shaping the value and meaning of giving bouquets as gifts. In the era of social media, bouquet consumerism has experienced a significant expansion of meaning. Photos of bouquets posted on social platforms do not just depict physical gifts; they also function as a means to display the user's social identity. In the digital world, giving and receiving bouquets is not only considered a personal act but also part of popular culture influenced by various trends and social expectations that develop in society (Wijaya et al., 2023).

The giving of bouquets, which is often published on social media, creates an urge to maintain a certain image. With the pressure to display an ideal life, many individuals feel the need to give bouquets that are not only beautiful but also in accordance with established social standards. This makes giving bouquets a reflection of the values embraced by society, where beauty and uniqueness are the main measures in assessing the quality of a gift (Masnawati & Ewanan, 2024). This phenomenon is influenced by social perception and media influence. Giving bouquets not only reflects relationships between individuals but also confirms one's position in a larger social structure. Thus, in a broader context, giving bouquets is not only an economic practice, but also a medium for individuals to communicate about identity, status, and social norms in modern society (Ahmad, 2020). Symbolic interactionism refers to how an object (Efendi et al., 2024), such as a bouquet of flowers, has a deeper meaning than just its physical form. As a symbol, a bouquet often represents feelings or emotions that the giver wants to express. For example, in many cultures, bouquets are used to convey love, affection, or respect for the recipient. The type of flower chosen, the color of the flower, and the way the bouquet is presented also influence the symbolism conveyed. Bouquets are often associated with romantic love, and symbolize respect (Aulia, 2020).

The symbolic meaning of bouquets also varies depending on the social and cultural context (Aulia, 2020). In certain contexts, giving a bouquet may have more meaning than just showing attention, but also as a symbol of the social or cultural status of the giver and recipient. A luxurious or exclusive bouquet can be a sign of the high social status of the giver, or conversely, a form of recognition of the high status of the recipient. Therefore, giving a bouquet not only reflects individual feelings, but is also a tool to build and strengthen social relations. The symbolism of the bouquet also extends to a broader dimension in society, where the bouquet is not only understood as a physical object, but also as the Interactionism of social relations. In this context, the act of giving a bouquet can be seen as a way to form, strengthen, or even negotiate one's social identity. Both the giver and the recipient can use the bouquet as a means to communicate messages related to their social roles, such as attention, affection, or even recognition of status. This places the bouquet as a symbol that contains layers of complex meaning and is rich in social value.

One respondent who is a bouquet giver stated, "When I give a bouquet, I want to show that I appreciate someone's special moment. The bouquet is not only a gift, but also a symbol of my status, how I value beauty and aesthetics in social relationships. I feel that by giving an expensive and elegant bouquet, others will see me as someone who has good taste and cares about the people around me (Nilna Rizki Bariroh, 2024)." This shows that giving bouquets is often used as a way to show the social status and lifestyle of the giver, where their preferences and aesthetic choices can be a reflection of who they are in society. Another bouquet giver explained, "I choose a bouquet that suits the recipient's personality, because I

want to show that I understand them well. In addition, I choose organic and local flowers, because I care about the environment. This reflects my sustainable lifestyle and the values I uphold in my daily life (Mihmid, 2024).” From this statement, it is clear that the choice of giving a bouquet can reflect the personal values of the giver, such as concern for the environment, which also strengthens their social identity in front of others (Zanki, 2020).

Thus, both giving and receiving a bouquet not only function as a symbolic act, but also as a means to form and strengthen the social identity of the giver and recipient in the eyes of their social environment. Social identity is how individuals or groups view and define themselves in a social context (Aulia, 2020). In this case, social identity includes not only the individual's perception of who they are, but also how they want to be seen by others. In the world of bouquet consumerism, social identity plays an important role because buying and giving a bouquet is often related to how a person presents themselves or their social status. A bouquet is not just a gift, but a symbol that reflects a certain message about the social identity of the giver and recipient. In addition, the symbolism of a bouquet can also change depending on the social and cultural context in which the gift is given. In cultures that value aesthetics and symbolism, a bouquet may have a deeper meaning and be seen as more than just a physical gift. In a society increasingly influenced by social media, the receiving or giving of a bouquet is often immortalized through photos and shared on digital platforms, expanding the social identity created by the act. Therefore, the bouquet not only reflects the personal relationship between the giver and the recipient, but also becomes part of a broader narrative of social identity in society.

Emotional Expression in Giving Bouquets as Gifts

The symbolic meaning of this flower bouquet can even vary depending on the type of flower chosen with red roses, for example, symbolizing passionate love, while lilies can represent beauty and sincerity (Furqon, 2024). "When I give a bouquet of red roses for my girlfriend's birthday, it's like my way of expressing love without having to say anything. It feels deeper, as if the flowers are speaking on my behalf" (Farel, 2024), said one male informant who was still in the early stages of his romantic relationship. For him, a bouquet of flowers is not only a sign of attention, but also a way to strengthen the emotional connection with his partner. In a romantic relationship, a bouquet of flowers is considered a symbolic way to express love and commitment, both in the early stages of a relationship and in commemorating special moments with a partner.

In a different context, a recent graduate explained, "When I received a bouquet from my friends on my graduation day, it felt very special. They could have given me other things, but the bouquet showed their appreciation for my efforts so far. I felt recognized and appreciated" (Munzidah, 2024), she said happily. Here, the bouquet becomes a symbol of appreciation for the achievements and academic journey that has been undertaken. In this context, a bouquet can be seen as a form of recognition for someone's achievements or efforts, such as when given to someone who has graduated, received a promotion, or celebrated other life milestones. Giving this bouquet signifies that the giver not only appreciates the recipient's success, but also respects the efforts and journey that they have gone through. This act strengthens social bonds and increases the sense of togetherness among individuals in a community.

"For me, giving a bouquet is not just a gift, but also a way to show my feelings, especially when I find it difficult to express them in words. When I give a bouquet to a friend who has just graduated, it is a form of my support for them, and I want them to know that I am proud of their achievements (Anisa Ilma Rizqika, 2024)," said a respondent who often gives bouquets to her friends. A bouquet recipient in an interview stated, "When I received a bouquet at my wedding, I felt very appreciated. The bouquet is not only a decoration, but also a symbol that people around me give prayers and good wishes. The bouquet makes me

feel supported, especially at important moments in my life (Yuslino Faridah Nur Ainy, 2024)." In a wedding, the bouquet not only functions as a decoration, but also as a symbol of prayer and hope for the happiness of the newlyweds. Giving a bouquet at a graduation ceremony expresses pride and support from family and friends, marking academic achievement and the transition to a brighter future.

Likewise, in birthday celebrations, the bouquet represents appreciation for the recipient's existence and life journey, strengthening their position in their social network. "On my birthday, my friends gave me a big bouquet of flowers. I immediately felt appreciated and loved, even though they didn't say much. The bouquet itself represented how they felt about me" (Refa, 2024). She added that the bouquet made her feel cared for, even in a friendship that is usually not very verbally expressive. Giving something at special moments is a form of real social support, where the giver shows their emotional involvement in the happiness or achievements of others. This is a form of care and recognition that can strengthen relationships between individuals (Khoiriah, 2020). A bouquet seller also added her perspective, "Most of my customers buy bouquets to give on special occasions. They say that bouquets help them express their feelings, especially for things that are difficult to express in words. Whether it's love, pride, or appreciation, bouquets are the right medium to convey emotions without having to say too much (Afika, 2024)." In addition, bouquets also reflect social norms that regulate how people show appreciation or feelings in their social relationships. Giving bouquets at certain events such as graduations or birthdays becomes part of a socially expected ritual, where the act is not only a symbol of affection or support, but also a confirmation of cultural and social norms.

Bouquets as gifts are influenced by symbolic interactionism in social and cultural contexts. In an increasingly complex society, the act of giving gifts, especially bouquets, is not only seen as a form of expression of affection or appreciation, but also as a means to express identity, status, and relationships between individuals. However, there is a gap in the literature that examines the social dynamics and symbolic interpretations involved in bouquet giving. Therefore, this study aims to explore individual perceptions regarding the meaning contained in the bouquet given, as well as how factors such as social context, culture, and interactions between the giver and receiver influence the process of giving and receiving the gift.

Thus, giving bouquets as gifts has evolved into one way to express emotions in various situations. Bouquets, which usually consist of a series of flowers or other objects, become symbols that are more than just physical objects, but also a means to convey feelings such as happiness, appreciation, and gratitude. In many cases, bouquets are given to celebrate achievements or special moments, which creates an emotional connection between the giver and the receiver. The emotions contained in giving a bouquet often reflect empathy, support, or pride for someone, making it a deeper form of communication than just giving material things. Thus, giving a bouquet as a gift not only serves as a symbol of appreciation, but also as a means to convey feelings and strengthen the emotional bond between the giver and the recipient.

Transformation of Meaning in Giving Bouquets as Gifts

Giving bouquets as gifts has undergone a significant transformation in meaning over time. Initially, bouquets, which usually consist of flowers, were used as a symbol of appreciation or an expression of certain feelings, such as love, sympathy, or happiness. However, along with the development of the times and social changes, the meaning of giving bouquets has developed and is no longer limited to the use of flowers as the only element. Now, giving bouquets can involve various other objects, such as food arrangements, books, or even personal objects that are more tailored to the recipient's preferences.

Using the perspective of symbolic interaction theory, the meaning resulting from giving bouquets depends on the social interaction between the giver and the recipient. This meaning is subjective and is formed through the process of interpreting symbols that occur in social interactions (Besar et al., n.d.). Thus, bouquet consumerism is not only understood as an economic transaction, but as a social action full of symbolic meaning. In addition, from the perspective of social action, giving bouquets is a purposeful action, where the giver considers the social consequences of his actions. Bouquets become a non-verbal communication tool that reflects the norms and social expectations that apply in society.

Although bouquets have significant symbolic value, this phenomenon also presents criticism, especially from a critical perspective that sees it as part of excessive consumerism. The giving of bouquets, which is often done en masse and mechanically, especially at important moments, can be considered as part of feelings, where emotional symbols are controlled by market logic. Overall, Symbolic Interactionism and social identity in the use of bouquets as gifts illustrate how physical objects can have much more complex meanings when viewed in a social, cultural, and economic context. Consumerism of bouquets as gifts not only expresses personal feelings, but also reflects the social dynamics and identities that develop in society. One of the factors driving this transformation is the influence of social media and globalization. In the digital era, the trend of gift giving has expanded and connected with the international community. Social media allows people to share their experiences of giving bouquets, which in turn inspires others to follow similar trends (Ridwan et al., 2023). Giving bouquets is now not only an expression of personal feelings, but also a symbol of social status. People often give bouquets with the aim of showing their success in social relationships or as an effort to build a positive self-image in the eyes of others.

Giving bouquets has also become a means of more complex emotional expression. Bouquets are now not only given in romantic moments, but also in various other contexts, such as graduation celebrations, weddings, or even as a form of appreciation for someone's achievements. This shows that the meaning of giving bouquets has evolved from being a symbol of affection to a symbol of appreciation, happiness, or even gratitude. Giving bouquets, which used to focus on personal relationships, now also includes a broader social dimension, showing a change in the way people express their emotions through gifts.

In addition, giving bouquets as gifts also reflects a shift in values in society. In many cases, giving bouquets is now seen not only as a form of appreciation, but also as a way to strengthen social relationships and maintain harmony in interactions between individuals. For example, in a university or work environment, giving bouquets can be a way to show support for friends or colleagues who have successfully passed certain exams or achievements. Thus, bouquets function not only as gifts, but also as a tool to build and strengthen more solid social relationships. This transformation of meaning in giving bouquets as gifts shows that physical objects such as bouquets can have deeper meaning in social and emotional contexts. Bouquet giving now involves more than just the material aspect, but also as a means to communicate, express feelings, and build stronger social bonds. As a symbol of social status and expression of emotions, bouquet giving now has a greater role in reflecting social dynamics and changing values in urban society, making it more than just a gift, but also as part of a complex social communication.

CONCLUSION

Giving bouquets among urban communities has undergone a transformation in meaning that reflects social changes and cultural values. Initially, bouquets functioned as a simple symbol of affection and appreciation. However, with the development of social trends driven by the influence of social media and globalization, bouquets are now not only an

expression of personal emotions but also a symbol of social status and self-identity. In addition to flowers, bouquets now include various elements, such as food or personal items, which are arranged according to the interests and desires of the recipient. The meaning of bouquets as gifts has also become broader and more complex. Not only an appreciation or expression of happiness, giving bouquets now plays a role in strengthening social relationships and strengthening emotional bonds between individuals at special moments. Thus, bouquets are not only a symbol of giving material things, but also a medium for expressing deeper feelings and reflecting the dynamics of values and culture that continue to develop in society in the city of Ponorogo.

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