# (Social Exchange at the Graduation Celebration of Students after the Thesis Examination of the Postgraduate Social Sciences Students of UNP)

## Winda Rammayani[1], Erianjoni[2]
Pascasarjana, Pendidikan IPS, Universitas Negeri Padang
Email: winda.wd127@gmail.com

## Abstract
*This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of social exchange that occurs in the celebration of student graduation after the Thesis exam in the Social Sciences Department. The main focus of this study is on the tradition of giving gifts as a symbol of appreciation, solidarity, and strengthening social relations among students. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study type, involving interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The results of the study indicate that giving gifts, such as flower bouquets, sling bags, and snacks, not only function as a sign of appreciation, but also create a cycle of reciprocity in students' social relations. Economic factors and social background influence the variation in the form of gifts, with students who have better financial capabilities tending to give more luxurious gifts. This study also reveals the importance of emotional support, both through congratulations and motivational words, as an integral part of the graduation celebration. Overall, this tradition of giving gifts strengthens solidarity and builds togetherness among students, despite challenges related to economic disparities that can affect individual experiences in the celebration. This study is expected to provide deeper insight into the social dynamics in student graduation celebrations and their contribution to the formation of closer social relations.*

*Keywords: Student Exchange, Graduation Celebration, Postgraduate Social Science Students of UNP*

## INTRODUCTION

The graduation celebration of students after the Thesis exam is an important moment in academic life that not only reflects individual achievements, but also illustrates the social dynamics that occur among students. According to [1], social exchange includes reciprocal interactions that provide social benefits between individuals, which in the context of graduation celebrations, are manifested through giving gifts and expressions of appreciation. The tradition of giving gifts at graduation celebrations not only functions as a sign of appreciation for academic achievement, but also as a symbol of solidarity that strengthens social relations among students [2]. For example, giving gifts such as bouquets of flowers, sling bags, or snacks reflects a form of social expression that strengthens social ties among classmates [3]. In addition, economic factors also influence the variation in the form of gifts given, where students with better financial backgrounds tend to give more luxurious gifts, creating differences in the social experience [4]. This graduation moment, with all its traditions and symbolism, becomes more than just an academic ceremony; it also functions as a tool to strengthen student group solidarity, despite challenges related to economic differences and social status [5] . This study aims to explore more deeply how social exchange through gift giving

contributes to strengthening social relationships in the context of the graduation celebration of UNP Postgraduate Social Studies students.

In this graduation celebration, economic and social factors play an important role in determining the form and type of gifts given. [4] research on social capital explains that individuals with greater economic capital tend to be more able to give more valuable gifts, which can also strengthen their social status within the group. Conversely, students with limited resources may choose a simpler form of gift, but still serve to strengthen social ties [5]

According to [3] , in every gift giving there is an element of obligation to give back which creates a cycle of reciprocity in social relations. This can also be seen in graduation celebrations where the giving of a gift by one individual is expected to be followed by a return appreciation, either in the form of a thank you or the giving of a gift on another occasion. This reciprocal process, although not always explicit, forms and strengthens relationships between individuals in a community [6].

Furthermore, gift-giving in graduation celebrations also reflects the influence of the social structure that exists in society. According to [7], social exchange does not only involve individuals but is also influenced by the social and cultural context in which the individual is

located. In this case, the culture of gift-giving in graduation celebrations is a reflection of the values that are upheld in campus culture, such as solidarity, togetherness, and appreciation for individual achievement.

Involvement in the graduation celebration also illustrates the importance of emotional support resulting from this symbolic exchange. In many cases, gift giving is also accompanied by congratulations and words of encouragement that show appreciation and concern for the academic journey of fellow students. This emotional support is important in building mutual trust and strengthening relationships between students [2].

On the other hand, giving gifts in graduation celebrations not only has an impact on relationships between individuals, but also creates social dynamics within the group. As explained by [8], the solidarity formed in student groups is not only based on emotional relationships alone, but also based on common interests and goals. Therefore, giving gifts in graduation celebrations can be seen as a form of individual contribution to strengthening solidarity in the social group [8].

This research is also important because it can provide insight into how differences in social and economic status affect individuals' experiences in graduation celebrations. As [7] points out, social inequality can be seen in the form of social practices such as gift-giving, which ultimately creates differences in experiences in celebrating academic achievement. This suggests that although the purpose of gift-giving is to strengthen social bonds, social inequality can affect how gifts are received and given.

In addition, as explained by [9] , graduation celebrations are also moments that can show larger social values, such as status, prestige, and social recognition. Thus, gift-giving in this context not only functions as a form of appreciation for academic achievement, but also as an indicator of social status within the student group. The celebration of students' graduation after the Thesis exam has become a common tradition in various campuses, including in the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department. This moment is not only an opportunity to celebrate academic success, but also reflects the

close social relationship among students. One of the prominent aspects of this celebration is the tradition of giving gifts, such as bouquets of flowers, sash, or other symbolic gifts. This tradition is a symbol of appreciation, respect, and solidarity for friends who have successfully completed the Thesis exam.

This reality is evident in the lives of students of the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department. Students who have completed their Thesis exams often receive gifts from their friends as a form of support and pride in their achievements. For example, students give bouquets of flowers, snacks, or even bouquets of money as a symbol of respect. This practice does not only occur individually, but also often involves groups of friends who work together to give gifts to their peers.

This gift-giving phenomenon is interesting to study because it involves a complex social dimension. In practice, gift-giving is not only a sign of appreciation, but also creates a cycle of reciprocity. Students who receive gifts tend to feel compelled to give similar things to other friends who will face thesis exams. This tradition becomes a social mechanism that strengthens solidarity and strengthens relationships among students. However, this practice also shows variations in the form and meaning of gift giving. Some students choose to give simpler gifts, such as congratulations, especially if they have limited finances. On the other hand, students who have better financial means often give more luxurious gifts, such as bouquets of money. These differences reflect the diverse social realities among students, where economic factors, social relationships, and traditions influence how they show appreciation.

In addition, in the context of social exchange, this tradition can be explained through the social exchange theory by George C. Homans. Students who give gifts not only show appreciation, but also hope to get recognition or social reciprocity in the future. Thus, the practice of giving gifts is not just an expression of gratitude, but also reflects interactions influenced by expectations of reciprocity. Referring to this tradition, this study aims to analyze how gift giving in graduation celebrations reflects social exchange among students of the UNP

Postgraduate Social Sciences Department. How does this practice take place? What are the factors that influence the form and meaning of gift giving? And how does this tradition affect social relations among students? This study is expected to provide a clearer picture of the social dynamics that occur in student graduation celebrations.

Social relations in society are influenced by the culture around them. For example, in the celebration of students' graduation after the Thesis exam in the Social Sciences Department of Postgraduate UNP, the social interactions that occur are greatly influenced by tradition. Regardless of social status, all students exchange gifts, give encouragement, and support, so that the celebration is filled with happiness.

In academic tradition, graduation celebrations are ideally not only a symbolic moment to celebrate individual success, but also as a means of building solidarity and togetherness in the student community. The main expectation is to create an inclusive atmosphere, where every student can feel support and appreciation regardless of social or economic status. The tradition of giving gifts, as a form of appreciation, should be a way to strengthen social relationships, create a sense of togetherness, and foster solidarity among students. This is in accordance with the concept of social exchange explained by [10], that social interaction is ideally based on reciprocity that can strengthen relationships between individuals in society.

However, in reality (das sein), the tradition of student graduation celebrations often shows variations that cannot be separated from economic and social factors. Students who have completed their thesis exams often receive various forms of gifts, such as bouquets of flowers, sling bags, snacks, and even bouquets of money. These gifts are given as a form of appreciation for the individual's struggle. However, there are differences in the form and meaning of the gifts given. Students with better economic conditions tend to give more luxurious and valuable gifts, while students with economic limitations often give simple gifts, such as congratulations or small bouquets. This difference reflects the existence of social inequality in the practice of this tradition.

This tradition is also increasingly immortalized through photos or videos, which are then shared on social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp. This condition shows a new dimension in graduation celebrations, namely the creation of digital identities. The tradition of giving gifts is now not only an event of appreciation, but also as part of the social representation of students in cyberspace.

When compared to the conditions of graduation celebration traditions in the past, there has been a significant shift. In the past, graduation celebration traditions were simpler, often limited to direct congratulations without giving flashy gifts. Celebrations emphasized the values of togetherness and group solidarity without any social pressure to show material symbols. However, with the development of social media and the increasing role of consumer culture, this tradition has begun to change to become more complex. Social pressure to give "meaningful" or "luxurious" gifts is getting stronger, especially among students with better economic backgrounds.

Previous research has highlighted various aspects of the graduation celebration tradition. For example,[11] study in The Gift highlighted how gift-giving is not only a material symbol, but also strengthens social relationships through a cycle of reciprocity. In addition, emphasized that in social exchange, there are values that strengthen solidarity, but can also create imbalances when there are disparities in power or social status.

More recent research by [12] examines how social media influences gift-giving traditions among college students, where digital platforms become spaces for displaying social identity through material symbols. Meanwhile, research by [13] in Individualism and Collectivism highlights the differences in cultural approaches to expressing appreciation, where collectivist societies place more emphasis on shared values than material symbols.

Mapping of issues relevant to this research includes:

1. The economic dimension of the gift-giving tradition, including social inequality.
2. The change in meaning of tradition from mere appreciation to social representation in the media.
3. Implications of digital culture on social traditions.

The novelty of this research lies in the multidimensional analysis of the gift-giving tradition in student graduation celebrations, which includes the perspectives of social exchange, social inequality, and digital culture. This research also focuses on how students of the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department interpret this tradition in the context of their social reality. The main focus is on the dynamics of gift-giving as a symbol of appreciation, solidarity, and social representation, and how this tradition is influenced by economic, social, and digital cultural factors.

The reality shows that the tradition of giving gifts has become part of the student culture in the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department . However, there are challenges that need to be considered, such as the gap between students in giving or receiving gifts, which sometimes gives rise to awkwardness or feelings of being underappreciated for some parties.

Therefore, this study aims to understand more deeply about how this gift-giving tradition takes place among students, its forms, and how this tradition affects the dynamics of social relations. It is hoped that this tradition can continue to be maintained by prioritizing the values of togetherness and appreciation for effort without considering the material value of the gifts given.

**METHODS**

This study entitled "Social Exchange in Student Graduation Celebrations After Thesis Exams at the UNP Postgraduate Social Studies Department " uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This study was conducted to explore the phenomenon of social exchange that occurs in student graduation celebrations after thesis exams, especially for students of the Postgraduate Social Studies Department at Padang State University (UNP). The location of the study is the UNP Postgraduate Social Studies Department , which was chosen because of the strong tradition in graduation celebrations that involve interesting social interactions to study.

The informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling technique. The informants included the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department who had completed their Thesis exam and participated in the graduation celebration, either as recipients or givers of gifts. In addition, lecturers and education staff were also involved to provide a broader perspective on the graduation celebration tradition in this department. The informant criteria included students who had completed their Thesis exam and were involved in the process of giving or receiving gifts, as well as parties who had knowledge about the tradition.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted directly with students who received and gave gifts to gain information about the gift-giving process, the meaning contained in it, and factors that influence the types of gifts given. Interviews were also conducted with lecturers and education staff to understand the prevailing traditions and norms. Observations were conducted during the graduation celebration to observe the types of gifts given, patterns of social interaction between the givers and recipients of gifts, and the overall atmosphere of the celebration. In addition, documentation studies were conducted by collecting photos, videos, and notes related to the celebration to support the analysis and provide visual context.

Data analysis was conducted interactively with several steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were simplified to focus on relevant aspects, such as gift-giving patterns and the resulting social meanings. The reduced data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate interpretation, then conclusions were drawn based on the patterns found.

Data validity is guaranteed through source and method triangulation techniques. Source

triangulation is done by comparing data from student interviews, lecturers, and documentation to ensure consistency of information. Meanwhile, method triangulation involves a combination of interview techniques, observation, and documentation to strengthen research findings. The data obtained include types of gifts such as flower bouquets, snacks, money, balloons, or sling bags; the process of giving gifts, both individual and group; the meaning of gifts as a symbol of appreciation and social solidarity; interaction patterns that reflect the cycle of social reciprocity; and the use of social media to document celebrations and show appreciation to friends.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### Research result
This study focuses on social exchange in the graduation celebration of UNP Postgraduate Social Studies students, especially after the Thesis exam. The data obtained include the results of interviews, observations, and documentation studies, which reveal two main dimensions of social exchange: intrinsic and extrinsic. The following are the results of the study grouped based on the empirical data that has been collected.

### 1. Intrinsic Social Exchange
#### A. Giving Congratulations.
Congratulations as a form of intrinsic social exchange have a very significant role in the celebration of student graduation. This phenomenon not only reflects appreciation for individual academic achievements, but also reflects broader social dynamics, including solidarity, cultural norms, and the use of modern communication technology.

**a) Symbolic Dimensions of Congratulations**
Congratulations have a deep symbolic value in the festive tradition. According to the theory of symbolic interactionism from Herbert [14], symbolic actions such as giving congratulations contain greater meaning than the words themselves. In the context of graduation celebrations, congratulations function as:

1) Recognition of personal achievement: By congratulating the recipient, the sender acknowledges the hard work and achievement of the student who has just completed the Thesis examination. This reinforces the individual's sense of pride in the results of his or her hard work.

2) Affirmation of group solidarity: Congratulations are often given together, either face-to-face or on social media. This strengthens the emotional bonds between group members.

Congratulations can also be understood through the concept of symbolic capital by Pierre [15], where simple actions such as giving congratulations have symbolic value that enriches the social capital of individuals, both the giver and the recipient. This action strengthens interpersonal relationships and increases a sense of togetherness.

**b) Media and Forms of Congratulations**
Congratulations on the graduation celebration of UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department students were given through various media and forms, showing how modern technology and social norms shape communication patterns.

**c) Direct Speech (Face to Face)**
Direct greetings remain the main form of appreciation in graduation celebrations. Based on observations, students often give verbal greetings to friends who have just completed their Thesis exams, accompanied by hugs, handshakes, or smiles.

1) Social interaction analysis: Based on Erving [1] face-to-face interaction theory , this direct speech creates a symbolic moment in which the recipient of the speech feels personally appreciated. The physical presence of the speaker adds emotional intensity, creating a warm atmosphere.

2) Example in observation: A student, after receiving congratulations from his friends, was seen crying with emotion, indicating that this direct interaction had a strong emotional impact.

### d) Greetings Through Social Media

The use of social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook is increasingly dominant in conveying congratulations. Interview results show that these greetings are often conveyed through:

1) Personal messages: For example, via WhatsApp, students send special messages containing congratulations and motivation to friends who graduate.

2) Public posts: Instagram posts of graduation photos with captions that publicly convey congratulations are often followed by comments from other friends.

3) Stories or status: Media such as Instagram Stories or WhatsApp statuses are a more efficient and far-reaching space for expressing congratulations.

4) The influence of technology: According to Wellman (2001), communication technology creates a "networked individualism " where social relationships can remain even without physical interaction. In this context, social media allows students to give congratulations without the limitations of space and time.

5) Social meaning of posts: Posts on social media not only convey appreciation, but also serve as a "digital archive" that records moments of academic achievement. These posts are often decorated with hashtags such as #GraduationDay, #ThesisDone, or #ProudFriend, which strengthen social connectedness among online communities.

### e) Group Speech

In the tradition of the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department , congratulations are often given in group form, either physically or through group chats on WhatsApp.

1) Group dynamics analysis: According to [16] theory of group dynamics, the "norming" stage in student groups is clearly visible in this tradition. Groups of students who have gone through various academic challenges together use this moment to strengthen social relationships through collective speech.

2) Empirical example: One WhatsApp group is filled with congratulatory messages from friends who are giving support to students who have just finished their exams. These messages are often accompanied by funny stickers or GIFs, showing creativity in expressing appreciation.

### f) Emotional Content of Congratulations

Congratulations, although simple, have significant emotional content. Based on interviews and observations, this emotional content can be categorized into:

1) Appreciation: Congratulations contain gratitude for a friend's contribution to the journey together as students.

2) Hope: This greeting is often accompanied by hopes for future success, such as "Good luck in your career" or "Hopefully your knowledge will be useful."

3) Motivation: In some cases, students also convey motivational messages that strengthen the recipient's spirit, especially if they feel that the Thesis exam is an achievement full of struggle.

According to emotional contagion theory [17], the emotions contained in congratulations can be transmitted to the recipient, creating

a more positive atmosphere and building shared enthusiasm.

g) **Cultural and Social Analysis of Congratulations**

Congratulations are also influenced by cultural and social norms within the student community. Some key points include:

1) Collective culture: In a collective culture like Indonesia, individual success is often celebrated as a group. Congratulations are a form of collective recognition of individual achievement.

2) Social norms: Giving congratulations is a widely accepted social norm, where students who do not may be seen as uncaring or unsupportive.

3) Social pressure: In some cases, students feel pressured to post congratulations, especially on social media, so as not to be seen as absent from the important moment.

Congratulations in the graduation celebration of UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department students are not only a symbol of appreciation, but also a tool to build and strengthen social relationships among students. By utilizing social media, this tradition has evolved from face-to-face interaction to a digital ritual that has a wider reach. This phenomenon shows how the values of solidarity, appreciation, and collective culture persist and adapt to the development of communication technology.

## B. Providing Emotional Support

Emotional support is a key element in the social process, especially in the context of student graduation celebrations. As a form of intrinsic social exchange, emotional support includes not only verbal expressions of congratulations and motivational words, but also other actions that can create a sense of being appreciated, accepted, and supported by the social environment. In the tradition of graduation celebrations, emotional support is often a substitute for material gifts, especially for students who have financial limitations. However, its essence goes beyond material symbols, because emotional support has deeper psychological and sociological dimensions.

a) **Forms of Emotional Support**

Based on the research results, emotional support provided during graduation celebrations can be categorized into several main forms:

1) **Motivational Words and Praise**

Sayings like "Congratulations, you did great!" or "Your hard work paid off" are often simple yet meaningful ways to provide emotional support. According to [17], emotional support through positive words can be a mechanism for transferring positive emotions from one individual to another. This creates an atmosphere of optimism and strengthens the spirit of students who have just completed their Thesis exam. This support is often given directly, for example through face-to-face conversations, or indirectly through text messages on social media such as WhatsApp or Instagram. The use of social media to convey this support broadens the reach of congratulations, allowing students who are not physically present to still participate in the celebration.

2) **Physical Presence**

The presence of close friends during important moments, such as after the Thesis exam is finished, is one form of very significant emotional support. This presence is often accompanied by hugs, smiles, or just sitting together at the celebration place.[1] in the concept of face-to-face interaction emphasizes that direct interaction has a stronger impact in strengthening emotional relationships because of the intense verbal and nonverbal communication.

3) **Support in Groups**

Groups of friends often come together to provide collective support, creating an atmosphere of solidarity. This action reflects what Tuckman (1965) described as the norming stage in group dynamics, where group members reinforce shared values. Students who are surrounded by a group of friends tend to feel more valued, as this action demonstrates collective attention and recognition of individual accomplishments.

**4) Psychological Dimensions of Emotional Support**

Emotional support not only impacts social relationships but also has profound **psychological** effects on students. According to [18] , emotional support increases a sense of connectedness and strengthens an individual's social network. Some of the major psychological impacts of emotional support in graduation celebrations include:

**b) Reduce Stress**

Students who have just completed their thesis exam often experience emotional exhaustion due to intense academic pressure. The presence of friends who provide emotional support helps relieve this stress. Emotional support acts as a psychological buffer, creating a space where students can feel safe to share the joys and challenges they experience during the thesis process.

**c) Increase Self Confidence**

Praise and encouragement from peers help boost students' self-confidence. Genuine praise validates their hard work, reinforcing their belief that they are capable of achieving more in the future.

**d) Helping Emotional Recovery**

For students who may be dissatisfied with their Thesis exam results, emotional support serves as a recovery mechanism. Peers who provide encouragement and motivation help them see their accomplishments in a more positive light, reducing feelings of disappointment or failure.

**e) Social Dimensions of Emotional Support**

Emotional support also plays an important role in strengthening social relationships among students. In this context, emotional support can be seen as part of what [19]calls social capital , which is the resources contained in social relationships that can be used to achieve certain goals.

**1) Solidarity and Togetherness**

Providing emotional support during graduation celebrations strengthens solidarity among students. This tradition creates a collective moment where all students, regardless of social or economic status, can feel accepted and valued. This solidarity serves as a social glue that strengthens the network of relationships among students.

**2) Creating an Inclusive Environment**

Emotional support creates an inclusive environment, where students who may not be able to provide material gifts can still contribute to the graduation celebration. By offering words of encouragement or being there to support their friends, they show that emotional support is just as important as physical gifts.

**3) Traditions and Changing Contexts of Emotional Support**

In the context of UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences students, emotional support has traditional and modern aspects. Traditional in the sense that this practice reflects long-standing family and solidarity values, while modern in terms of the use of social media to expand the delivery of emotional support.

In the past, emotional support was more often given directly through face-to-face interactions, but

technology now allows this support to reach more individuals, even those outside the physical location of the celebration. This change reflects how technology is affecting social dynamics, while maintaining the core values of emotional support itself.

While emotional support has many benefits, there are challenges to be aware of. One major challenge is the inequality in how emotional support is given. Some students may feel that the emotional support they provide is not equal to the material gifts given by other students. However, this challenge also provides an opportunity to reinforce the values that emotional support carries the same weight as physical gifts in the graduation celebration tradition.

Emotional support in the graduation celebration of UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department students is a form of deep intrinsic social exchange, including motivational words, physical presence, and group support. This support provides significant psychological and social benefits, strengthens solidarity, and creates an inclusive environment that values the diversity of student backgrounds. By understanding the importance of this emotional support, the tradition of graduation celebrations can continue to be developed to strengthen social relationships and shared values among students.

## 2. Extrinsic Social Exchange

In social exchange theory, interactions between individuals are often based on the giving and receiving of resources, both intrinsic (emotional) and extrinsic (material or practical). Extrinsic social exchange refers to a form of interaction in which individuals give each other tangible resources that can be seen or used, such as gifts, financial assistance, or other contributions that have economic or material value. In the context of student graduation celebrations, extrinsic social exchange plays a significant role as a form of recognition and appreciation for academic achievements that have been achieved.

### A. Forms of Extrinsic Social Exchange

Extrinsic social exchange in graduation celebrations can be realized in various ways, such as:

1) **Gift-giving**

   Gifts are the most common form of extrinsic social exchange. In the context of a graduation celebration, gifts can be items such as flowers, dolls, jewelry, books, or work tools that are relevant to the graduate's future career. These gifts are usually given by friends, family, or mentors as a symbol of appreciation for the hard work that has been done.

   a) **Symbolic Meaning of Gifts**

      Gifts not only have material value but also symbolic value. For example, flowers are often considered a symbol of success and happiness, while books or work tools can symbolize hopes for the graduate's future success.

   b) **Economic Factors in Gift Giving**

      According to the economic-sociological exchange theory proposed by Blau (1964), gift giving is also influenced by the economic status of the giver. Students from more established economic backgrounds tend to give more expensive gifts, while others may choose simpler but still symbolically meaningful gifts.

2) **Financial Assistance**

   Extrinsic exchange also includes financial assistance, especially from family or close relatives. In graduation ceremonies, this financial assistance is often given in the form of envelopes containing cash, which graduates can use to meet personal needs or start a new stage in their lives, such as finding a job or continuing their education. Parents or family members often provide financial assistance as a symbol of support for the graduate's future. This assistance also

serves to reduce the financial pressure that graduates may feel, especially if they come from families with lower-middle economic backgrounds.

3) **Provision of Facilities and Logistics**

In addition to gifts and financial assistance, extrinsic support can be in the form of providing facilities for graduation celebrations, such as renting a hall for the event, providing food and drinks, or organizing photo and video documentation. In this case, family or close friends usually take an active role as parties who support the logistics of the celebration. In some cases, graduation celebrations are carried out collectively by student groups. Extrinsic exchanges here are seen in the form of joint contributions to rent a place, organize events, or buy celebration needs such as decorations and consumption.

4) **Psychological and Sociological Dimensions of** Extrinsic **Exchange**

a) **Social Status Improvement**

Giving gifts or financial assistance in graduation celebrations not only serves as a form of appreciation but also as a mechanism for increasing the social status of the giver. In [4], this action can be seen as a form of investment in social capital . Givers of expensive or significant gifts tend to increase their social status in the eyes of the recipient and the surrounding community.

b) **Contribution to a Sense of Collective Pride**

Extrinsic social exchanges also reinforce a sense of collective pride within a family or community. For example, parents who give their children a large gift feel proud because they are able to show concrete support for their child's academic achievement. This pride is often expressed in social circles, either through direct stories to relatives or through social media.

5) **Inequality in Extrinsic Exchange**

One of the main challenges in extrinsic social exchange is the inequality that arises among students. Not all individuals have the same financial ability to give or receive significant gifts. This can create feelings of awkwardness or even social inequality among them. In some cases, students who receive fewer or less expensive gifts may feel less appreciated, even though the appreciation is not always measured in material terms.

a) **Extrinsic Exchange in the Context of Social Media**

In the digital era, extrinsic social exchanges not only occur directly but also through social media. Friends often post photos or videos of graduation celebrations accompanied by creative congratulations. In some cases, symbolic gifts such as digital greeting cards, e-vouchers , or electronic money transfers become new forms of extrinsic exchange.

b) **The Influence of Social Media on Reward Perception**

Social media plays a significant role in shaping perceptions about the value of gifts. Photos or videos of gifts displayed on social media can create social pressure among other students to give equal or even better gifts.

c) **Support in Online Social Networks**

Online social networks allow distant friends or relatives to contribute gifts or financial support through digital platforms. This creates new opportunities to expand the reach of extrinsic exchanges in graduation celebrations.

6) **Social Values in Extrinsic Exchange**

Although extrinsic social exchanges are often material in nature, the underlying social values remain an important aspect. Values such as togetherness, solidarity, and appreciation for hard work are at the heart of these acts. The financial gifts or assistance given reflect not only appreciation but also a social commitment to the continuation of interpersonal relationships.

7) **Implications and Challenges in Extrinsic Exchange**

a) **Strengthening Social Relations**

Extrinsic social exchanges in graduation celebrations can strengthen social ties between givers and receivers. These

actions create reciprocal relationships that can last for a long time.

### b) Potential for Social Conflict

On the other hand, differences in the ability to give gifts or financial assistance can cause social conflict or jealousy among students. This challenge requires an understanding that the value of appreciation should not always be measured in terms of material, but also from the intention and meaning behind the gift.

Extrinsic social exchanges in graduation celebrations are concrete manifestations of appreciation and support given to graduates. While often in the form of gifts or financial assistance, their true value lies in the intention to appreciate the hard work and achievements of individuals. In a broader social context, these exchanges not only strengthen interpersonal relationships but also reflect values of solidarity, togetherness, and collective pride. Amid challenges such as economic inequality or the influence of social media, it is important to maintain a balance between extrinsic forms and the underlying social values.

## DISCUSSION

Gift giving in student graduation celebrations can be considered a form of social exchange that signifies appreciation for academic achievement, while strengthening social bonds between individuals in a group. As explained by [20], gift giving is often a symbolic expression that not only reflects social status, but also strengthens emotional ties among group members. In this study, gift giving among students in the UNP Postgraduate Social Sciences Department was not only seen as an expression of congratulations, but also as a means to maintain solidarity in a larger social community.

According to [21], social exchanges are not always balanced and are often influenced by external factors such as economic status and social position. In the context of this study, variations in the types of gifts given reflect differences in access to economic resources and social capital. Students with greater financial means tend to give more valuable gifts, such as more luxurious flowers or other more flashy gifts. This suggests that although the purpose of gift giving is to strengthen social relationships, economic inequality can influence the form and experience of social exchange.

However, as [22] points out, while gifts are often used to express status and prestige, simpler gifts still serve an important social function, particularly in building more egalitarian social relations. In other words, gift-giving at graduation celebrations also serves to strengthen more egalitarian social networks among students, despite differences in purchasing power among them. This leads to the formation of more mutually beneficial and supportive relationships in the future.

Based on the social exchange theory by Blau (1964), the reciprocal process that occurs in gift giving does not only involve giving material, but can also include symbolic exchanges, such as congratulations and motivational words. In this case, gift giving can also include emotional support, which in turn strengthens the social bond between the recipient and the giver. This process explains why gift giving in graduation celebrations is not only important for the recipient, but also for the giver who feels appreciated and respected in the social context.

In addition, gift giving can be seen as a reflection of cultural values that exist in a community. As explained by [5], social actions such as gift giving are often driven by cultural norms and values that apply in the group. In student groups, the values of solidarity and togetherness are highly emphasized, and gift giving is one way to express these values. Thus, gifts not only function as a symbol of appreciation for academic achievement, but also as a tool to reaffirm solidarity within the group.

Gift giving also plays an important role in maintaining long-term social relationships. As discussed by [23], gifts serve to maintain social relationships over time, reducing the likelihood of conflict or tension in social relationships. In the context of graduation celebrations, gift giving strengthens a sense of community and increases mutual trust among students, which is important

for the continuation of their social relationships after college ends.

In line with that, research by [24] on communication and social action emphasizes the importance of symbolic communication in creating social consensus. Gifts given in graduation celebrations are often accompanied by congratulations or motivational words that become a form of symbolic communication in the group. This leads to the formation of a social agreement among students to support each other and give appreciation for each other's achievements. This symbolic communication is also part of a broader social action that aims to strengthen social integration in the group.

From a psychological perspective, gift giving also serves to increase the recipient's sense of self-esteem. According to[25] , gifts received at important moments such as graduation can increase an individual's sense of competence and self-esteem. The gift recognizes individual effort and achievement, providing positive reinforcement to the student's identity as part of a larger academic community. This provides motivational encouragement for students to continue to excel in the future.

The challenge that arises in gift giving is the existence of social inequality that can create a sense of discomfort for some students. Research by Tönnies (1887) on communities and societies shows that economic inequality can affect social dynamics within groups. Students who are financially constrained may feel marginalized or unable to give gifts equal to those given by their more affluent friends. This can create feelings of social jealousy and inequality in the graduation celebration experience.

Finally, gift-giving in graduation celebrations also shows a deeper symbolic aspect, where gifts become symbols of trust and social recognition. As explained by [1], individuals in social groups try to maintain their face and image in front of others. In this context, gift-giving serves to strengthen the social image of students, affirm their role in the group, and show gratitude and appreciation for their academic journey.

**1. Intrinsic Social Exchange**

Based on the research results, intrinsic social exchange in student graduation celebrations includes congratulations and emotional support. In the social exchange theory proposed by [26], giving praise or emotional support is a form of non-material reward that can strengthen social relationships. Congratulations given directly or through social media not only increase the sense of appreciation, but also create an atmosphere of solidarity among students. This phenomenon shows that non-material social rewards have significant value in strengthening interpersonal bonds.

Emotional support, such as words of encouragement or attendance at a graduation celebration, also reflects the intrinsic value of social relationships. According to [27]' (1961) praise-aggression proposition, emotional support given in return for expected rewards will motivate the recipient to exhibit similar behavior in the future. In this context, students who feel appreciated through congratulations and emotional support will be more likely to provide similar support to other friends.

**2. Extrinsic Social Exchange**

Extrinsic social exchanges involving gift giving, treating friends, and giving banners or sashes reflect the material dimension in social interactions. According to Homans' theory (1961), material rewards such as gifts or treats serve to strengthen social relationships through a cycle of giving. This phenomenon is seen in interviews with Mutiara Karlina and Muhammad Fadhil, where gift giving and treating friends are considered a form of appreciation that strengthens social ties.

Banners and sashes, while not of high material value, have significant symbolic value. They reflect social recognition of an individual's accomplishments, which Homans theorized could strengthen an individual's motivation to maintain positive social relationships. Documentation showing the use of banners and sashes as part of graduation celebrations supports the view that these symbols reinforce a sense of pride and togetherness among students.

In the case of giving gifts such as food bouquets or money, Homans' stimulus proposition theory explains that if the act of giving a gift results in a positive reaction from the recipient, then the giver is likely to repeat the act in the future. This is evident from an interview with Ewa Ratna, who stated that she felt compelled to give similar gifts to friends who had shown appreciation to her. This cycle reflects the dynamics of ongoing social exchange among college students.

## CONCLUSION

This study produces new knowledge related to the dynamics of social exchange in the graduation celebration of UNP Postgraduate Social Studies students. First, it was found that congratulations and emotional support have a very significant value in building stronger social relationships . This practice shows that non-material appreciation not only creates an atmosphere of solidarity, but also increases the recipient's motivation to provide similar support in the future, creating a continuous cycle of reciprocity.

Second, giving physical gifts such as bouquets of flowers, food, or money is not only a symbol of appreciation, but also serves as a means of reinforcing social norms among students. These gifts create a social mechanism that encourages positive reciprocity in the future. In addition, the variation in the form of gifts based on financial conditions and social relationships shows the flexibility in implementing this tradition, making it inclusive to various groups of students.

Third, the use of symbolic elements such as banners and sashes emphasizes that graduation celebrations are not only about celebrating individual achievements but also about strengthening collective identity. These symbols serve as tools to highlight shared successes while increasing group pride.

Finally, this study found that social media plays a significant role in expanding the scope of social exchange. Congratulations delivered through digital platforms not only strengthen interpersonal relationships but also create social footprints that are recognized by a wider audience. This shows that social exchange in student graduation celebrations has adapted to technological developments, making it relevant in the modern social context.

The new knowledge generated from this research reveals that graduation celebration traditions are not only about recognizing academic achievement, but also about creating and maintaining social relationships based on norms of reciprocity, symbolism, and adaptation to social and technological developments.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that educational institutions, particularly postgraduate programs, encourage the practice of non-material appreciation such as congratulatory messages and emotional support as part of a supportive academic culture. This practice has been shown to not only strengthen relationships among students but also create a positive cycle of social reciprocity. In addition, the tradition of giving physical gifts during graduation celebrations should be preserved with an inclusive approach, taking into account financial conditions and the closeness of social relationships. This is important to maintain symbolic value without placing excessive burden on students. The use of symbols such as banners and sashes should also be collectively facilitated by departments or faculties to reinforce a sense of community identity and institutional pride. Furthermore, the increasingly central role of social media in social exchange practices highlights the importance of optimizing digital platforms as spaces for celebration and social networking. Therefore, students and institutions are advised to utilize social media strategically and positively. Finally, further research is highly encouraged to explore the dynamics of social exchange in other academic moments, in order to broaden the understanding of the cultural role within modern campus life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

of the Postgraduate Program at UNP, who kindly took the time to share their valuable experiences during the graduation celebrations. The author also wishes to thank the academic advisor for their guidance, feedback, and encouragement throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to family and friends for their continuous motivation and prayers. It is hoped that this research will provide meaningful insights and serve as an academic contribution to the development of social science, particularly in the study of social exchange within academic settings.

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