

## Conference Paper

# Panic-Buying Behaviour During the Covid-19 Outbreak: A Cross-Cultural Psychological Study

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## Abstract

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a major impact across the globe. Tourism, education, health, and economies are all affected by this pandemic. One major impact on the economic sector is the emergence of 'panic-buying'. This study examines panic-buying in cross-cultural psychological studies. The researchers conducted a literature review on previous studies related to panic-buying behaviours during both the Covid-19 outbreak and similar scenarios prior to Covid-19. The researchers provide an explanation on how panic-buying behaviour can occur. The researchers also compare panic-buying with similar behaviours such as impulsive and compulsive buying.

**Keywords:** Panic buying, Pandemic, Covid-19, Cross-cultural psychological studies.

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## 1. Introduction

The preparation for disaster management is the right and obligation of every individual and or an organization. The planning of disaster management is an initiative undertaken by the individual to create a sense of security, comfort, away from depression when the outbreak is occurred. Preparing proper clothes, medicines, and food in large quantities until the outbreak is subsides are the way of individual to prepare for disaster management.

In the final quartile of 2019, the whole world was plagued by coronavirus, which is currently known as Covid-19 (Corona Virus Disease – 19). Due to the high infection rate of Covid-19, several countries implemented lockdown and large-scale social restriction. During the phase of large-scale social restrictions, people were obliged to stay at home for several days. Consequently, people took an initiative to prepare all the needs that are deemed important to provide a sense of security, comfort, and safety.

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To prepare all the needs during the large-scale social restriction, people were hoarding goods. People scrambled to buy what they needs and piled them. Hoarding of necessities in large quantities is called panic buying behavior. Shous et all (Shadiqi, Hariati, Hasan, l'annah, & Istiqomah, 2020) explained that panic buying is an act of hoarding necessities in a large quantity so that there is no deficiency in the future. Many news reports, that panic buying was happening in all parts of the world. In fact, panic buying had occurred before the Covid-19 outbreak. Historically, panic buying behavior began during the Spanish flu outbreak in 1918 (Honigsbaum, 2013). Garfin, Silver, and Holman (Shadiqi et al., 2020) explained that panic buying behavior occurs due to the stress response of the community during outbreak.

However, it was found out that the occurrence of this panic buying behavior is not as simple as it appears in individuals. Especially if it is associated with cross-cultural around the world. It is possible, in developed countries where the facilities for citizens are highly guaranteed, this behavior is not very significantly happen. The researchers get more than ten articles, journals, books, and other reference that will be the reference in conducting this study. Some of the references that will be mentioned are articles from (Shadiqi et al., 2020) which explained that panic buying is an individual initiative to provide a sense of security and comfort to meet the needs when a disaster occurs. Second, the article by (Garfin, Silver, & Holman, 2020) which concluded that panic buying behavior occurred due to stress caused by Covid-19 outbreak. Third, the article by (Loxton et al., 2020) which explained how the coronavirus trigger panic buying behavior.

In addition to the articles as empirical references in examining panic buying behavior, the researchers also argue that panic buying behaviour can happen again due to the impact of Covid-19 on people's psychology. Therefore, the researchers are interested in studying the panic buying behavior in the cross-cultural psychological studies. The researchers expect that this paper can be used as a reference in conducting further studies related to the panic buying behavior. This paper also can be a reference to create a policy in dealing with psychological and social impact of panic buying during the Covid-19 outbreak.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Panic Buying

Panic buying is the behavior of a consumer in purchasing large quantities of products that aim to overcome future deficiencies (Shou, Xiong, & Shen, 2011). Panic buying

behavior will appear during a pandemic due to the lack of resources. Panic buying behavior is driven because of the concern and fear of necessities deficiency in the future. Panic buying is the activity of buying large quantities of products that occur due to the uncertain situations (Widyastuti, 2020). According to (Singh & Rakshit, 2020), panic buying behavior appears when consumers buy goods on a large quantities to anticipate the scarcity of goods or the price increase when a disaster occurs. Panic buying behavior tends to increase as a result of news in the mass media about the deficiency of necessities (Roy et al., 2020).

The factor that influences consumer behavior is the presumptions of the scarcity of goods. Panic buying can occur due to the assumption that certain goods will be scarce during the outbreak. (Arafat et al., 2020) showed the characteristic of panic buying behavior are happen suddenly, uncontrollable, carried out by many people, excessive, and based on concern and fear. It can be interpreted that panic buying is consumer behavior in purchasing an excessive goods due to the fear and concern about the future scarcity of product during a pandemic. The cause of panic buying is from consumer behavior factors, namely the perception of scarcity of goods. (Arafat et al., 2020) explained that the perception of scarcity is also related to feelings of insecurity and instability. This argument will later be elaborated in the explanation of causal factors in another part of this psychological explanation.

## 2.2. Covid-19 (Corona Virus Disease-19)

Corona virus is a family of viruses which causes both minor and severe illness. There are two types of coronavirus that cause severe symptoms such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Coronavirus Diseases 2019 (Covid-19) is a disease that has recently been discovered. The symptoms of Covid-19 are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The average incubation period is 5-6 days with the longest incubation period of 14 days. On January 30, 2020, the WHO (World Health Organization) declared that Covid-19 is a public health emergency of international concern. Coronavirus began to enter Indonesia On March 2, 2020, the Indonesian government had confirmed 2 cases of Covid-19. In October 24, 2020, 386 thousand people were reported positive of Covid-19, 309 recovered, and 13,205 were declared dead.

Yurianto and Bambang Wibowo said (2020) said Covid-19 outbreak has given many impacts on people's lives. The Covid-19 virus impacted various fields such as social, economic, tourism, and education. This corona virus has paralyzed the world economy (Yurianto & Bambang Wibowo, 2020). As a result many companies are on the verge of

collapse, the companies reduce the number of workers to suppress production costs. Even some companies must be willing to close their companies for an indefinite period of time and they give up some workers.

### 2.3. Cross-Cultural Psychological studies

Cross-cultural Psychological studies is a branch of psychology that focuses on examining the boundaries of knowledge about people in various cultures. Cross-cultural Psychological studies can also be defined as the background studying of different cultural diversity in psychological point of view. In a broader sense, Cross-cultural Psychological studies has the meaning of understanding whether the truth and the principles of psychology are universal. Cross-cultural psychology is a scientific study of human behavior and its dissemination, as well as the way that behavior is shaped and influenced by socio-cultural forces. Cross-cultural Psychological studies is an empirical study of various cultural groups who already have different experiences, which can lead to differences in behavior. Cross-cultural Psychological studies is a study of the similarities and differences in the psychological function of individuals, in various cultures and ethnic groups, regarding the relationships between psychological and socio-cultural, ecological, and biological changes (Ristianti, 2018). Dayakisni & Yuniardi (2004) said that Cross-cultural Psychological studies is the study of individual behavior in a cross-cultural context. From the aforementioned definition, it can be concluded that Cross-cultural Psychological studies is the study of human behavior based on behavioral constraints that exist in various cultures.

According to Matsumoto et al. (1996), culture is a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors that are owned by a group of people. It has difference degree in each individual and is inherited from generation to generation. Culture is a social as well as an individual construction. So it can be said that culture is an attitude, value, belief, and behavior that exists in the social community which can provide boundaries in behavior.

Cross-cultural Psychological studies has the purpose of being used to test the general knowledge and psychological theories that exist in all cultures. Another goal is to transport and test goal some hypotheses and findings to another cultural environment to test their applicability in other cultural groups. Cross-cultural Psychological studies is also used to examine the limits on the knowledge that can be applied or obtained from various people with various cultural backgrounds as well as different cultures.

### 3. Method

This research uses a literature research method. The theoretical studies and the references used are inseparable from scientific literature (Sugiyono, 2012). Conducting a review of books, literature, notes, and various reports related to problem topics was done to collect the data. The steps in library research according to Kuhltau (2002) are: (1) selecting topic, (2) exploring information, (3) determining research focus, (4) collecting data sources, (5) preparing data presentation, and (6) compiling report.

We were choose panic buying topic, and explore information about the topic on internet. After that, we determined research focus on pandemic covid timeline and collected data resource on open access journal. The data analysis technique used in this research is the content analysis method. In this analysis, the process of selecting, comparing, combining and sorting various meanings will be carried out until they are relevant.

### 4. Result and Discussion

Based on the analysis result, panic buying behavior due to covid-19 outbreak occurred in several countries such as Brazil, Australia, New Zealand and America. Panic buying is also associated with feelings of insecurity and instability in certain situations (Hendrix & Brinkman, 2013), where this pandemic situation makes people feel uncertain. People are not sure when the pandemic will end, so purchasing as many basic necessities as possible is a way to overcome the insecurity. In addition, perceptions of scarcity are closely related to panic buying behavior. As a result of the insecurity and uncertainty, the perception of scarcity arises.

The results of the research in Brazil showed that panic buying had a positive correlation with impulsive buying, past and future focus and risk perception. The correlation between panic buying and impulsive buying occured because both behavior are related to emotional states. However, the emotional state of panic buying and impulsive buying had different motives and functions. Impulsive buying can be influenced by positive emotions, while panic buying is associated with negative emotions as driven consumer behavior (Aquino, Natividade, & Lins, 2020). In the research conducted by (Lins & Aquino, 2020), the amount of thought and attention dedicated to the past and the future situation was positively correlated with panic buying. This relationship showed that thinking about nostalgia, regret, hope or worry can predict panic buying behavior. Likewise, risk perceptions and the effects of Covid-19 outbreak also influenced panic buying behavior.

On the other hand, panic buying behavior was negatively correlated with current focus, optimism and age. A person who analyzes the main focus at this time shows his attention at this time, keeping his mind on the day so that it does not bring up the characteristics of panic buying. Not only that, individuals who have optimism such as more positive expectations about the future, tend to be less anxious so they will not have panic buying behavior. In terms of gender, the results of research in Brazil also showed that women have a higher fear of Covid-19 than men. However, the level of panic buying for men was higher than for women.

Every country has different policies to deal with this pandemic, in Australia the government had implemented a lockdown to reduce the spread of Covid-19. The results of the research conducted in Australia showed that the graph of panic buying fluctuates. The initial increase in panic buying occurred at the end of March, fell in early April and went up again in the second week of April, then the graph declined. The decrease in the graph was due to guarantees and intervention by the government about the availability of goods, so people were instructed not to hoarding goods. To reduce panic buying behavior, local supermarkets also increased prices for masks, hand sanitizers and limit purchases for each costumer. The research results in Australia also showed that panic buying was more prevalent in areas with high population density, for example Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast.

In Taiwan, panic buying did not occur because the number of people who was infected by Covid-19 was quite low. Even the government in Taiwan encouraged its people to spend more because of sufficient availability and also to support economic turnover activities (Neo, 2020). In overcoming covid-19, Taiwan took preventive steps in December 2019 and created a Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) in January 2020, which made the number of Covid-19 in Taiwan quite low.

In cross-cultural psychological studies, a person's motivation and behavior are influenced by the conditions, culture and values in the area where they live. In this discussion, the conditions of covid-19 are different in each country therefore people's behavior are also different. For example in Taiwan, where the number of covid-19 is low, people feel safer so that panic buying does not occur. It is different from Australia and Brazil, panic buying occurs at the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak. The panic buying occurred due to insecurity, instability of the situation as well as perceptions of scarcity. In Australia, panic buying chart has increased in late march decreased in early April. Moreover, Australia carried out a lockdown regulation so that it made residents feel panic and insecure which supported panic buying behavior to be occurred.

In perspective of psychology, Abraham Maslow put forward his hierarchy of needs in 1943, sending ripple effects through the entire psychological community. Under his

theory, people act to fulfill their needs based on a five-part priority system. The needs include, in order of importance: physiological (survival), safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. When a pandemic outbreak occurs, the need for physical survival is very important. So that it beats other needs. Panic buying is a form of human response to fill their physiological needs so that they are competing to become survivors during the Covid 19 pandemic.

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