



## Possible Controlling Measures of Panic Buying During COVID-19

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To the Editor,

Among the many special situations resulting from the COVID-19, panic buying is one of them which creates anxiety, fear, panic, and agitation. The phenomenon may happen in response to the impending catastrophe that can raise the price and take the necessary goods out of the hands of people (Lufkin 2020). It is considered as “a situation in which many people suddenly buy as much food, fuel, etc. as they can because they are worried about something bad that may happen” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). However, there is no established consensus regarding the definition, and to date authors could not find any definition from peer-reviewed articles. This identifies the area where it needs to be ascertained precisely.

The panic buying (PB) episodes have been observed during this pandemic in many parts of the world such as Singapore, Japan, Australia, Italy, Spain, UK, and the USA (Sim et al. 2020). Some psychological explanations have been discussed attributing the PB behavior such as the perceived scarcity effect, perceived sense of losing control over the environment, perceived insecurity, social learning, instinctual behavior, infidelity toward the ruling government, and influences of media (Arafat et al. 2020). Although it covers the multiple disciplines of life such as behavioral science, marketing, supply chain, social science, economics, and disaster management, there is a dearth of empirical studies exploring the issue. Here, we aimed to discuss the controlling measures that can reduce the PB as well as the challenges of general people and the dealing authority.

**Media** Media plays a significant role in dealing with panic buying as some of the psychological explanations are related to the perception of the general population. Therefore, in prevention, media could play a vital role. The public health authorities should have consideration for the issue along with other necessary measures during the management of emergencies such as pandemics and epidemics. Media factors responsible for spreading the PB should be

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strictly monitored such as publishing news with the image of empty shelves should be avoided, especially in social media. Adequate information should be distributed to the media that can help gain the faith on the ruling government, the supply chain measures, and status so that people can understand that the government is capable of dealing with the crisis and there is efficient national as well as local supply chain management system (Lufkin 2020). Identification of fake news and ignoring them or reporting about it to appropriate authority may also be beneficial in the prevention of panic buying. Reduction of fear regarding the scarcity, the pandemics, and the necessary goods should be attempted.

**Promotion of Kinship Feeling** Promotion of feeling of kinship could help reduce the panic as people think that other people are related to each other (Stiff 2020). Encouraging generosity may have similarities with kinship feeling that increases the consideration of fellows and reduce the PB behavior (Stiff 2020).

**Rationing** Creating a bar for buying the necessary goods could be addressed by the supermarkets. The government or public health authorities can arrange to sell the necessary goods for the people with special needs at lower prices than the existing market price.

Punishment: Social sanctions for the panic buyers could work to prevent it. However, the implementation of direct punishment could be controversial (Stiff 2020).

**Assurance from Authority** Repeated statements of assurance from the public health authorities and the related industries are necessary to reduce the perceived fear of scarcity. In the case of imported goods, the identification of locally available substitute goods is a potential strategy (Lufkin 2020).

**Psychological Measures** These measures can be targeted to look at PB from the group as well as from individual perspectives. Group talk on the scarcity of essential deeds can influence members of the group for panic buying. Limiting the discussion of the scarcity of essential things and avoiding such anxiety-provoking discussion can be a measure to limit panic buying. Similarly, at the individual level, fear of uncertainty may accelerate anxiety and it may result in poor self-regulation (failure in impulse control) leading to panic buying. Measures that reduce anxiety effectively and improve self-regulation (impulse control) may reduce PB behavior.

Media plays a vital role in controlling the PB. Promotion of feeling of kinship and encouraging generosity can reduce it from the public end. Creating a bar for buying the necessary goods and subsidiary sales of necessary goods for people with special needs could be another potential strategy. Social sanctions and behavioral measures may have roles and repeated assurance is needed.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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