

## THE OPERATION OF POWER IN PANIC BUYING DURING CORONA OUTBREAK

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### ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has become a trending topic nowadays because it has affected the life of many people all around the world. One of the events during Corona outbreak is panic buying. During the pandemic, it is revealed that power is omnipresent which means that it operates everywhere in many forms. To analyze how power operates, the writer uses the theory of power by Foucault (1980) since a number of his writing are applicable as it connects not only power and knowledge but also power and truth. In his book, Foucault (1980) denotes that knowledge is power and when there is power, there is resistance and they are all connected. In order to analyse how power operates, qualitative research methodology was conducted to find the meaning behind it so that the research finding will be more related to real life. The subjects of this research are several selected news from some social medias. The whole series of panic buying begins with the lack of knowledge about COVID-19. When people realized that COVID-19 was not just an ordinary flu and when at first, they thought that the government did not take this seriously, they started not to believe what the government had said and it led to resistance. The results show that power does operate in panic buying during the corona outbreak although nowadays, there have been some changes regarding the COVID-19.

**Keywords:** Power, knowledge, pandemic, COVID-19, Foucault

### ABSTRAK

*Virus corona telah menjadi topik yang cukup sering dibahas karena virus ini mempengaruhi kehidupan banyak orang di seluruh dunia. Salah satu peristiwa yang terjadi selama penyebaran virus corona ini adalah panic buying (panik dalam membeli sesuatu barang untuk stok atau panik membeli untuk menimbun barang). Selama pandemi, nampak bahwa kekuasaan itu bersifat omnipresent yang berarti kekuasaan beroperasi dimana saja dengan berbagai macam bentuk. Untuk menganalisa bagaimana kekuasaan beroperasi, penulis menggunakan teori tentang kekuasaan oleh Foucault (1980) karena banyak dari hasil karyanya bisa diaplikasikan karena menghubungkan tidak hanya kekuasaan dan pengetahuan, tetapi juga kekuasaan dan kebenaran. Di dalam bukunya, Foucault mengatakan bahwa pengetahuan adalah kekuasaan dan di mana ada kekuasaan, timbullah perlawanan balik. Untuk menganalisa hal tersebut, metode penelitian kualitatif dilaksanakan untuk mencari arti yang lebih mendalam sehingga hasil yang diperoleh lebih sesuai dengan kehidupan nyata. Subyek dari penelitian ini adalah beberapa berita terpilih dari beberapa media sosial. Keseluruhan dari panic buying ini dimulai dari kurangnya pengetahuan mengenai COVID-19. Ketika masyarakat mulai menyadari bahwa COVID-19 bukanlah sekedar penyakit flu biasa dan berpikir bahwa pemerintah tidak menanggapi hal ini dengan serius, masyarakat mulai untuk tidak mempercayai apa yang dikatakan oleh pemerintah dan menimbulkan perlawanan balik. Hasil yang diperoleh menunjukkan bahwa kekuasaan beroperasi di dalam panic buying selama penyebaran virus Corona walaupun akhir-akhir ini, ada beberapa perubahan yang telah terjadi sehubungan dengan COVID-19.*

**Kata Kunci:** Kekuasaan, pengetahuan, pandemi, COVID-19, Foucault

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## INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized the new coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic. Pandemic refers to an epidemic that has spread all over the world, usually affecting a large number of people and it is more dangerous since it affects a wider geographical area as well as a greater number of people than an epidemic (Torrey, 2020). It is caused by a new virus that has not circulated among people for a long time. As humans have little to no immunity against it, the virus spreads quickly from person-to-person worldwide causing much higher numbers of deaths than epidemics. In addition, it has affected people's lives in many different aspects as it has created social disruption, economic loss, and general hardship in many countries, even the developed ones.

Coronavirus disease (hereafter COVID-19) was confirmed to have spread in Indonesia on March 2, 2020 (Ratcliffe, 2020). Since March 30, 2020, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia has reported many confirmed cases and deaths related to COVID-19. Its fatality rate is also one of the highest in the world. Nowadays, everyone is talking about coronavirus. Hence, it has become a widely talked about topic, especially on multifarious social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, Line, Facebook, Instagram and many more.

To reduce the spread of the virus, the government has implemented many regulations or policies and one of them is called social distancing (Sutrisno, 2020). Social distancing means limiting face-to-face contact with others to reduce the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Hence, people are asked to stay, work and study at home and should they get to the public place, they are asked to keep a distance. In addition to keeping safer distance, people are expected to wash their hands regularly and wear masks and face shields while they are going out. During the stay-at-home period, many people use the Internet to keep themselves updated of

the current development of the said disease. When many schools, universities, malls and public places such as barbershops across the nation do not operate to prevent the spread of COVID-19, social media is becoming the source of the intense arguments and debates over the effect and the danger of COVID-19 in human life.

Recently, much misinformation and fake news of the spread of the coronavirus by social media have led people to do panic buying whether in Indonesia or any other affected countries and panic buying is one of the top headlines of the COVID-19 pandemic (Besson, 2020). In this case, social media has played an important role in spreading the news of corona whether it is true or not (Powell, 2020). In addition, most store shelves are being stripped because panic buying has emerged. Although there seems to be no impediment in supplies in most grocery stores, a swarm of people stockpile and buy the products without even knowing the functions and the proper use of them, under the influence of circulating rumors of scarcity. Panic buying is the action of buying large quantities of certain products in anticipation of forthcoming shortage or perceived disaster and in this research, COVID-19 outbreak. What causes the panic buying is because up to now, people still do not have enough knowledge about this virus (Freeland, 2020). Sometimes, this lack of knowledge is even augmented by inaccurate information or misinformation circulated via social media. This also escalates people's fears and undermines their trust. Therefore, most people imagine the worst-case scenarios and it creates panic buying. Without enough knowledge about COVID-19 and with rumours of scarcity, people begin to buy and stock up out of fear of the unknown (ibid).

Panic buying also happens as a result of people's vulnerability caused by their lack of knowledge. This vulnerability is even worsened by the government since at first, during an event on February 27, 2020, through the former Health Minister, Dr Terawan Agus Putranto, the government did not tell the truth about coronavirus to the society and as a

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result, people show their disbelief toward the government (Azkiya, 2020). It has become the point of people's resistance. In my opinion, panic buying demonstrates the operation of power in the society. Hence, the writer is interested in investigating the operation of power in panic buying during the COVID-19 outbreak.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Foucault's Theory of Power

To analyse this, the writer uses the theory of power by Foucault (1980). The power problem is his central idea concerning the relations between society, individuals, groups as well as institutions. He explored this problem from a critical and historical perspective in many of his books and articles. As a result, most of his studies discuss about the analysis of power relating to how various institutions apply their power on groups and individuals, and how they uphold their own identity and resistance to the effects of power (Balan, 2010). Foucault, the French postmodernist, has been incredibly prominent in creating the understandings of power. Power for Foucault is what makes us what we are, operating on a quite different level from other theories. Unlike other Marxist thinkers, Foucault concerns more on the resistance of those in which the power is applied on.

### Power is Omnipresent

It is said that the problem of power was of great significance in Michel Foucault's philosophical work. In his book, Lynch (2010) said Foucault observed that in actual fact, power arises in all kinds of relationships, and it can be built up from the bottom of a pyramid (or any kind of structure). Foucault's theory of power suggests that power is omnipresent, meaning that power is everywhere in all social interactions.

### Knowledge is Power

In his book, Foucault (1980) stated that when there is knowledge, there is power. Foucault (1980, as cited in Mills, 2003) said

that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge. Power is based on knowledge and it makes use of knowledge, meaning that power reproduces knowledge by shaping it according to its anonymous intentions. In brief, knowledge produces power and power produces knowledge by reciprocating each other. In his book entitled "*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*", Foucault (1977) pointed out the relationship between power and knowledge:

Power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another: that there is no power relation without the correlation constituting of field of knowledge nor knowledge that does not presuppose and constituted as the same time power. (1977: 27)

Foucault used the term 'power or knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and 'truth':

'Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true' (Foucault, in Rabinow 1991).

### Power and Resistance

As mentioned by Foucault (1980), when there is power, there is resistance. Where power is exercised, there must be someone

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who resists. In other words, power affirms that there exists resistance and visa versa. The importance of studying power relationships from a Foucauldian perspective is that power will be perceived as something that is exercised rather than held, meaning that one way in which power could be resisted was if the target regulated their body in a way that could challenge the subject who hold the power.

To support this research, the writer uses two other journal articles. The first journal is written by Balan (2010), which discusses power using Foucault's Theory of Power. This journal talks about how power operates between people and institution in daily lives and interactions, instead of how power is possessed and used by the institution to oppress against individual and groups. The examples of the relations might be between parents and children, husband and wife, employers and employees and all of them are subject to negotiation. It also says that power is corresponding to resistance. In other words, it means that when there is power, there will be someone who resists it. In addition, this journal shows that power is not focused into the institution, groups or state, but it is distributed throughout the whole society.

The second journal to support this research is written by Hancock (2018). The journal discusses two notions of power by Foucault: the one in which the subject is constituted by the relations between power and knowledge and the one that puts emphasis on how power is a central feature of human action. It focuses especially on the issue of medicalization in order to give a better understanding about the power relations between the patients and the doctors as nowadays, patients become more active and involved in the decision making of their own health care. In brief, besides showing that there is resistance in power, Foucault's concept of power in this journal gives people a new insight to deepen their comprehension of medicalization as a set of social dynamics so that people will not only comprehend themselves, but also form themselves and their surrounding.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the writer used qualitative research methodology in conducting the research. According to Yin (2011), there are 5 (five) characteristics of qualitative research methodology. The first characteristic is to learn the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions. Since people have their own daily activities and roles with minimal interruption, it is expected that they will express themselves in many ways so that they may show real life situation. The second one is to represent the given meaning from the people's point of views and perspectives (usually called the participant). The third characteristic is to cover the contextual conditions which affect human situation. The forth one is to give insights into existing concepts or to develop new concepts which may help to explain human social behavior. The last one is to collect and get the data from multiple sources instead of relying on a single source alone. Therefore, the writer chose to use qualitative research methodology in analyzing the data so that the writer is able to see and interpret the meaning beyond it and to produce new insights.

For this research, the writer focuses on how power operates in panic buying during the coronavirus outbreak. In this research, the writer starts the discussion by relating power to money as in panic buying, people should have a lot of money to buy large quantities of things which are considered valuable and crucial. They can be toilet paper, food supplies, fruit, vitamin, medical supplies and et cetera. The writer has also put more emphasis on the medical supplies, particularly mask, hand sanitizer, and alcohol since they have been the main problem not only in Indonesia but also in foreign countries (Shalal & Nebehay, 2020). In addition, governments all over the world are putting in a lot of effort to secure masks, protective equipment, and ventilators while stocking up and restricting other medicines to respond to supply chain disruptions. Many medical suppliers are

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overwhelmed with the sharply increasing demand since raw material shortages are driving prices up, and political pressure is also higher than before. Consequently, medical supplies has become the most demanded stuff to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The data is collected based on the general observation and news from several sources from social media and internet especially the data related to COVID-19, panic buying and any misinformation concerning COVID-19. The reason why the writer chooses those articles is that those articles represent how power operates during panic buying at that time. The writer starts by giving some definitions, such as the definition of power, COVID-19, pandemic and later the explanation of several events occurring during Corona outbreak which cause and are related to other events from many sources to support the data. Then, all the events which occur during corona outbreak are analysed since they are all related to find out how power operates, using the theory of power by Foucault (1980).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Discussion on Foucault's Theory of Power

To begin with, there has been a shortage of mask because of panic buying since March 2020. (Putra et al., 2020). The existence of mask is considered precious and crucial during this coronavirus outbreak because wearing a mask is one of the essential ways to protect people from the spread of coronavirus (Humphreys, 2020). Everyone starts to buy these types of medical equipment and consider them more important. Many people from any class of society are looking for masks and they complain that it is very difficult to get masks and even if they can obtain them, they are unreasonably expensive. For example, one box of masks originally cost IDR 30,000-40,000, but shortly after the pandemic began, it was sold for IDR 275,000 (approximately 9 times more expensive). From this phenomenon, it is possible that the shortage or the disappearance of the mask is related to the high demand, when it is bought

and stockpiled by certain group of people, specifically, people with money.

In his book, Foucault (1980, as cited in Elden, 2017) said that there are three key developments. They are money, the law and last of all, justice. It is mentioned that money is not just a measure of exchange, but it instituted or established as an instrument of distribution, division and social correction. It clearly performs the fact that people with money have the power to buy the masks. Therefore, the writer is able to perceive the correlation between money and the law as mentioned by Elden (2017) and in this case, the law of supply and demand. People with money have the power to determine the availability of the mask as well as the price because in fact, the masks are in high demand since many people are looking for them. If there is a decrease in supply of goods (for this research: medical supplies) while demand research the same or even increases, prices tend to increase to a higher equilibrium price (Kramer, 2019). Later, it is also followed by the shortage of hand sanitizer and alcohol as a part of the making of hand sanitizer and disinfectant (Besson, 2020). Similarly, the price of these medical supplies is surging because panic buying has caused the rarity of the products in the market. This rarity might even be worsened by the shortage of the raw material and resources (ibid).

Besides money, the writer notices that panic buying by people with money also creates the idea about the importance of masks and hand sanitizers. Many people are afraid if they cannot possess those medical supplies. As a result, more people are influenced greatly and unconsciously by the importance of mask and hand sanitizer which later has caused them to do panic buying. People think that wearing masks and using hand sanitizer may reduce the danger of coronavirus and those medical supplies have become a must for them. For one thing, this idea might be good since it will help to reduce the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, too much misinformation and fake news spread by social media concerning the coronavirus have evoked and triggered the society to panic buying

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(Freeland, 2020). As a result, panic buying is inevitable.

Panic buying occurs as a result of the vulnerability of people due to lack of knowledge, especially since the existence of COVID-19 is considered new and there is no cure up to now (Yong, 2020). This lack of knowledge has caused the society to become vulnerable and even it is worsened by the fact that the government did not tell honestly about the coronavirus (Azkiya, 2020). It appeared when the issue of coronavirus emerged in early February 2020, the former Minister of Health, Dr Terawan Agus Putranto stated that coronavirus had not entered Indonesia, and even at that time the Minister of Health challenged the health experts (ibid). He further recommended that people should not be panicky, and that people should enjoy their life and have enough food. Besides, he suggested that coronavirus is a self-limited disease in which it can be healed by itself. He said this after there were two people confirmed positive of coronavirus (Nathaniel, 2020). All of his statements have triggered many people to think that he acts arrogantly and underestimates the danger of coronavirus. Consequently, World Health Organization (WHO) started to interfere this problem. It seemed that at that time around February 2020, the government did not take this issue of coronavirus seriously. Once people knew the truth that coronavirus is not just an ordinary flu, they did not know what to do. They seemed unprepared and are overwhelmed with fear. As a result, the society did not believe the government and later it leads to resistance. Then, it triggers them to act according to what they deem necessary to do as long as they can defend and protect themselves. When the government ask people to wear cloth mask and to spare the medical mask for the health workers and doctors, some people seem to ignore it and they even continue buying the medical supplies to protect themselves. Again, this lack of knowledge about COVID-19 has caused people to experience unreasonable fear leading to panic buying (Freeland, 2020). Fear has a tendency to spread from person to person and sometimes it may occur even though there

is no rational basis for fear. For instance, there was this incident that went viral in which two people wore Personal Protective Equipment (*Alat Pelindung Diri*) when going to supermarket (Nafi'an, 2020). The society's act of not trusting the government leads to a resistance.

To prevent the shortage of the medical supplies, the government has decided to restrict the number of the medical supplies bought by the society. It is expected that by limiting them, healthcare professionals have adequate and proper medical supplies while doing their job. However, for many people, handwashing and wearing masks seem to be too ordinary. This is considered a dramatic event, therefore a dramatic response is needed. Consequently, it leads to people throwing money at things in hopes of protecting themselves. Panic buying helps people feel in control of this hard situation.

As mentioned by Foucault (1980), when there is power, there is resistance. Where power is exercised, there must be someone who resists. Foucault stated that resistance is a required precondition for the operation of relations of power. Here, the writer also sees the resistance coming from people in the society. People have lost their trust in the government for not telling them the truth at the beginning. As a result of their resistance, panic buying is unavoidable. The availability of masks and other medical supplies is insufficient. Not knowing the truth, people are trying desperately to defend themselves since they do not really believe what the government say afterward. They prefer their own way by buying an excessive number of those medical supplies to make hand sanitizer, disinfectant and even worse, they wear Personal Protective Equipment (*Alat Pelindung Diri*) in which, it will be more important and useful for the health workers.

Besides not believing what the government say, the individual acts of refusal also happen. Some people start exaggerating the danger of coronavirus by spreading false information saying that handwashing and mask are not effective enough to prevent coronavirus and this also contributes to the

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society to do panic buying (Yong, 2020). Nevertheless, there are some people who act differently to show their disbelief to the government by having a thought that the existence of coronavirus is only a conspiracy. As a result, they do not listen to the instruction and guidance given by the government who has the power to regulate the policy related to COVID-19. They act recklessly. All of these happen to support what Foucault said about power and resistance. Resistance is an internal property of power and it is everywhere and at every level. Fortunately, this condition is getting better as more people (including donators) start producing more masks and hand sanitizers to reduce the scarcity of masks and hand sanitizer (Hasibuan, 2020). This current situation has also got better after the government has arrested the hoarders to make sure that the stock of the medical supplies sufficient for the society. (Haswar, 2020).

During this period, the writer also perceives that the operation of power appears as a result of lack of knowledge and it also occurs in the production of “fabricated” mask and hand sanitizer (Besson, 2020). The shortage of this medical supply caused by panic buying has triggered fraudsters to fill the existing shortage. They counterfeit these medical supplies to get the profit and as the need of medical supplies is increasing and there is still no cure or vaccines, people will buy those as one of the ways to protect themselves (ibid). This incident happens as a result of the lack of knowledge about coronavirus.

Panic buying is also influenced by the fact that these people want to have a sense of control especially during this stay-at-home period and since the doctors and health experts have not found any cure yet and not much accurate information is known about this virus (Freeland, 2020). Control can be thought of as the belief that one has at one’s disposal a response that can influence the result and it could contribute to frenzy shopping. Panic buying helps people feel in control of the situation since they do not have the cure and vaccines for the coronavirus (Heshmat, 2020). For that reason, people with money often feel

more comfortable after purchasing some or even a pile of medical supplies. In fact, some people bought them not only for their daily needs but also for stockpiling. Interestingly, during a panic buying spree, it is revealed that people have less power to decide or act as they would like (ibid). Grocery stores are full of long lines or queues just to get in, especially with the social distancing rule. Shelves are empty rapidly and store employees are busy restocking them. Other people seem to be fearful and rushed, randomly picking up large quantities of various things. Thus, instead of trying to get the best deal on everyday purchases, some people simply take whatever available regardless the price. This might happen also because of sufficient financial resources. Again, these occurrences support what Foucault (1980) said that knowledge is power. If people have enough knowledge about COVID-19 or if there is someone with enough knowledge of COVID-19, they would have more power to control the fear and it is anticipated that panic buying would not occur.

Power is also understood as the capacity of an agent to impose his will over the will of the powerless, or the ability to force them to do things they do not wish to do. In this sense, power is understood as possession, as something owned by those in power. However, Foucault (1977, as cited in Balan, 2010) said that power is not something that can be possessed, but it is something that acts and manifests itself in a particular way; it is more a strategy than a possession. Foucault rejected the idea that power is a noun, it is a verb which means that it must be circulated not just stay in one point. As cited in Foucault’s theory of power:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its

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threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (p. 98)

Firstly, it means that power is a system, a network of relations encompassing the whole society, rather than a relation between the oppressed and the oppressor. It means that power is depicted as a net which spreads through the society, and not about the relationship between the oppressed and oppressor (Mills, 2003). Thus, individual is not seen as the one who receives the power but a place where the resistance might occur. To begin with, it starts when people with money do panic buying because they are afraid of something that they cannot control and in this case is coronavirus. Next, it is followed by the other people since masks and the other medical equipment such as hand sanitizer and alcohol become something significant to prevent the coronavirus. It turns out that other people tend to do the same thing leading to the panic buying. Luckily, the government as the party who also holds the power in the society has tried to stabilize the price by arresting the hoarders and producing and providing those medical supplies so that the price will be more stable. Power here means the ability of its holder to make other individuals obedient on whatever basis in some social relationship. The government, acting as the one who hold the power, has suggested the use of mask whenever the people are, especially in the public places. In this sense, people are encouraged to obey the "rules" made by the government. Since the use of a mask is recommended, some people buy them excessively because they are afraid of not being allowed to enter the public places, such as malls.

Foucault further stated that power is granted through knowledge and therefore constructs truth. The writer notices that social media has been one of the most powerful

sources for human society. Since the social media has spread a lot of news from unreliable sources, the panic situation makes the society do panic buying. Foucault (1980, as cited in Mills, 2003) said that where there are imbalances of power relations between groups of people or between institutions or states, there will be a production of knowledge. In this current circumstance, there is imbalance in power relations between good and bad news about Coronavirus in the social media. More negative news is produced which can lead to panic buying (Freeland, 2020).

It is in line with what Foucault wrote in his book. Foucault characterizes power or knowledge as an abstract force which determines what will be known, rather than assuming that individual thinkers develop ideas and knowledge. He asserts that:

the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of [the] fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it, and of which it is made up that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge. (27-28)

From the statement above, it is clear that power and knowledge are related.

Secondly, as mentioned above by Balan (2010), individuals are the vehicles of power. When the news of Coronavirus spreads, it is the people who are affected the most and it has made them act. It is power and knowledge which produce facts and the individuals are simply the vehicles or the sites where this knowledge is produced (Foucault, 1980). Individuals or people are not just the objects of power, yet they are the locus where the power and the resistance to it are applied. The power of discourse produced by this negative news in panic buying practice also

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occurred when they heard that many people died due to COVID-19, but some of them were fine and it caused confusion as nobody do not know what would happen in the future (Yong, 2020). In addition, much misinformation about COVID-19 also add the confusion into panic buying.

As mentioned before, money has become one of the tools for people to determine the prices and the supply of medical supplies to protect themselves from COVID 19. It is supported by the fact that people with money have the power to determine the price of the medical supplies and those people also create the idea of the importance of the mask and hand sanitizer. As the result, the prices are soaring and panic buying takes place. It shows that power and knowledge works in panic buying during the coronavirus outbreak. The moment when people realize that they have discovered the 'truth' about themselves is also a moment when power is exercised over them (Mills, 2003).

Hence, truth, power and knowledge are intricately connected and what we need to analyze is the workings of power in the production of knowledge. (Mills, 2003). Another possible factor is the herd mentality (Heshmat, 2020). As social beings, people interpret the danger of the situation based on how other people react. When the herd instinct appears, people might lose their judgment and start doing what everyone else is doing. As a result, a group of people may spontaneously adopt this emotional unity. If everyone else is panic-buying certain stuff, people follow. With panic-buying, people feel, "If the other people are buying it, I better do it, too".

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

In brief, social media is actually changing the way of how the society is perceiving and responding to the COVID-19 outbreak leading to panic buying. The writer can identify that the operation of power works in panic buying during the coronavirus outbreak as stated by Foucault (1980). A key

point about Foucault's approach to power is that it transcends politics and perceives power as an everyday, socialised and embodied phenomenon. To conclude, power is omnipresent since it comes from everywhere (Foucault, 1980). Besides, power is related to knowledge and truth. Knowledge is power means that a person has education and a complete control on his life by using that knowledge. It begins with social media as the source of knowledge that causes people to feel fear of the unknown (Freeland, 2020). In addition to that, the inavailability of the vaccines at that time also enhanced the fear for people since people did not have enough knowledge about the coronavirus. The result of the lack of knowledge itself has encouraged some people to do panic buying and with the amount of money they have, it shows that power is at play as well.

In addition, panic buying takes place as a result of the vulnerability due to the lack of knowledge. After finding out that at first, the government did not tell the truth about COVID-19, people lost their belief and trust. Consequently, it has become the point of resistance for the people for not believing what the government has said. Therefore, panic buying is inevitable as people will act based on what they think the best for them. The writer can also see Foucault's reflections on power by criticizing the traditional beliefs on power, in which it states that power is oppressive and negative. Therefore, power is also considered productive since it produces knowledge, subject, truth, identity and even reality as shown in the discussion above. Power is not an institution, but it is a strategic relation. Foucault's theory of power is applied in this research because a number of his writings are applicable since they build the interrelation of power and knowledge and power and truth.

### Suggestions

The writer suggests further research on the operation of power during the corona outbreak in other fields or areas since the government has started to handle the situation, especially related to the panic buying. It is expected that other researchers might able to

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find the power relations and operations as there have been some improvements and changing situations related to COVID-19, such as the distribution and implementation of Sinovac and AstraZeneca vaccine to reduce the spread of coronavirus. It is also expected that there will be more elaborated research on how power operates considering someone's status, age or any other factors.

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