

Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Analysis of Community Social Behavior in Responding to Cooking Oil Scarcity

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the community's social behavior in responding to the scarcity of cooking oil using the phenomenological point of view developed by Alfred Schutz. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological framework approach because it focuses on exploring the experience and meaning of phenomena to gain learning in a multicultural society. This study uses two types of data: primary and secondary data. Preliminary data were collected through interviews with five people through a random purposive sampling method, while secondary data were collected through literature studies. The research was conducted in January 2022. According to Alfred Schutz, phenomenological analysis demands the discovery of the world that follows what is experienced by the person concerned. The meaning is divided into several views, and some subjects interpret the phenomenon of panic buying as caused by the actions of the oligarchs who are not in favor of the community, as an indicator of the government's lack of seriousness in balancing market prices in the community, or also interpreted as another effect of the pandemic which has disrupted the economic sector.

Keywords: *Analysis, Phenomenology, Social Behavior, Scarcity, Cooking Oil.*



A. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected millions of people worldwide and has spread, has caused losses in various sectors of society due to the accumulation of positive cases and deaths due to the massive spread of Covid-19 (Naeem, 2021). Based on data sourced from Pikobar, it can be seen that the number of deaths due to Covid-19 in West Java has tripled compared to the previously recorded death cases. Nationally, the City of Bandung and the Province of West Java are categorized as 'red' areas, areas with high rates of positive cases and deaths. This information illustrates how risky the threat of Covid-19 is (Yuen et al., 2022). The impact is related to medical issues and relates to social, political, legal, economic, and other issues.

The economy is one of the areas of human life that has been affected by the threat of Covid-19. As a prevention effort, the government implements a social restriction policy as a strategic measure to reduce contact and interaction between citizens. This policy limits the space for community activities; even the actions of fulfilling the necessities of life are hampered due to the mandatory social restrictions. This situation caused social panic in society due to a significant change in the rhythm of life (Sharma & Pokharel, 2021; Ediger et al., 2020).

Based on data compiled by the Indonesian Agricultural Economics Association, it is stated that two things can be analyzed in response to the scarcity of cooking oil which is the cause of social panic in various regions, namely, the government is considered not severe enough in overcoming the cooking oil sector and the increase in cooking oil prices is caused by cooking oil is not included in one of the commodities regulated by the Presidential Regulation concerning the National Food Agency (Nasution, 2021). The government's lack of seriousness in handling the market with non-tariff policies results from the ineffectiveness of Presidential Regulation number 66 of 2021 concerning the National Food Agency because it does not include cooking oil as one of the commodities regulated by the agency.

So to analyze this, you must first look at the productivity data of palm oil as a source of cooking oil products. The high price of cooking oil in Indonesia has become a hot topic of discussion from the fourth quarter of 2021 to the first quarter of 2022; this is known based on data obtained from the Household Monthly Index. This index was developed by the Center for Indonesian Policy Studies, which is used to observe the development of staple food prices in the territory of Indonesia (Mulyana, 2022).

The Household Monthly Index noted that the increase in cooking oil prices occurred by 56% between March and December 2021; however, it had decreased in January 2022 but was still relatively expensive because the increase still reached 46.2% from the price in the previous year in the same month. Cooking oil consumed by the supplier of household needs is generally produced from crude palm oil using the auction price benchmark set by Kharisma Pemasaran Besar Nusantara (KPBN) Dumai Ltd, which is a subsidiary of Perkembunan Nusantara Ltd. The price offered directly correlates with Crude Palm Oil's (CPO) cost that occurs in the international market and significantly affects the price of national cooking oil. The lack of supply of CPO caused the soaring price; simultaneously, demand was increasing in various countries following the economic recovery after the second wave of the pandemic (Ramadhan et al., 2021; Means & Slater, 2021). CPO and Olein price movements in the international market during the period January 2020 to December 2021 are presented in the following figure:

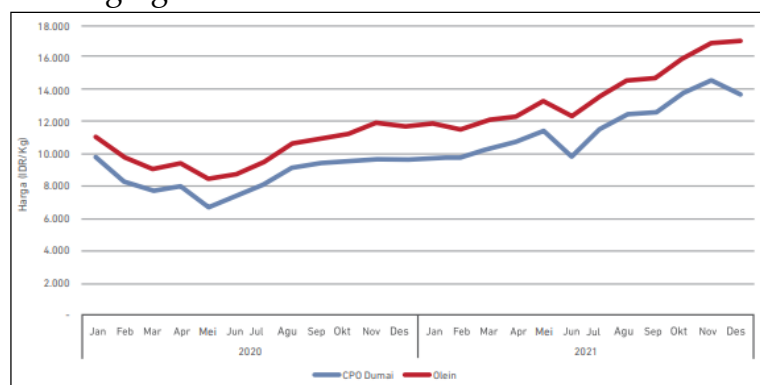


Figure 1. CPO and Olein Price Movements in the International Market for the Period January 2020-December 2021

Source: Ministry of Trade Republic of Indonesia (2021)

Based on data from the Director-General of Domestic Trade at the Ministry of Trade, it was stated that the supply shortage was caused by the declining productivity of oil palm plantations owned by State-Owned Enterprises, private companies, and independent smallholders in Indonesia and Malaysia, which are the two central producing countries that supply at least 85% of world palm oil production. In addition to the decline in palm oil production, the supply shortage occurred because the production of other types of vegetable oil, such as rapeseed oil and soybean oil, also decreased. This causes the demand for palm oil as an alternative option to increase significantly (Prasetya et al., 2021).

This impacts people who start to do panic buying because the panic makes people have to buy daily necessities or essential commodities such as cooking oil in large or large quantities. Mothers generally do panic buying because of excessive fear or panic. Panic buying is when an individual or group of people buys an item, especially staple food, to be stored for several days or weeks due to requirements that threaten him (Jonsson et al., 2019; Tuckett, 2018). This panic buying can influence someone to do the same thing because of emotional contagion. What's more, amid an outbreak of coronavirus infection, anxiety related to the availability of food ingredients is often felt. This can be transferred to other people and accelerated by social media (Pula, 2021; Elberle, 2021). Even though the anxiety is irrational, the desire for panic buying can still be felt. This social behavior can be explained through the following figure:

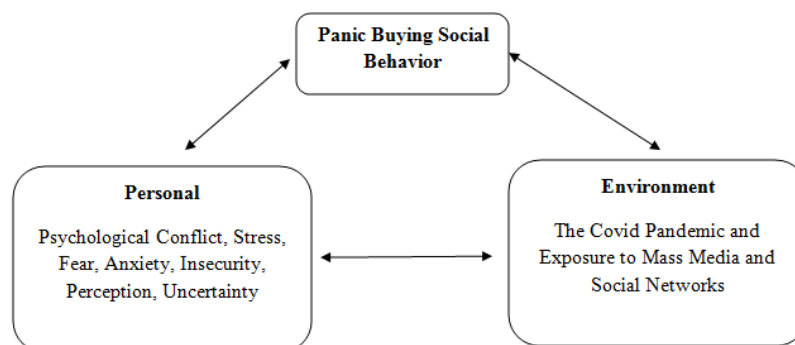


Figure 2. Factors Causing Social Panic Buying Behavior

This public opinion emerges from his experience and focuses more on truth based on his knowledge that can be proven in the past and the future. General statements can vary due to the influence of existing norms, the thoughts of each individual are different, and these differences of opinion are absolute freedom of human rights (Arafat et al., 2020).

The opinion is a response from the community that can be in the form of rejection, approval, or not caring. However, public opinion can become a public concern when needed, whatever the outcome. An understanding of social phenomena or phenomena that occur in society has been built into the reality of everyday life (Belvedere, 2019; Gros, 2020). Even though it has gone through its development and has undergone many changes because it contains historical studies, specific meanings in a phenomenon are still perpetuated. As an analytical

tool, Alfred Schuzts' thinking becomes a conceptual bridge to examine phenomenological thinking through interactions in society which are expressed as social phenomena and focus of interest. The elements of Alfred Schuzts' thinking are concepts of thinking about sociological phenomenology relevant to the development of a paradigm that has a vital role in sociology. The formation of meaning is based on the experience of the participants' social life; then, the individual experience will be more comprehensive in the shape of importance (Tada, 2019; Barber, 2020).

B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological framework approach because it focuses on exploring the experience and meaning of phenomena to gain learning in a multicultural society. This study uses two types of data: primary and secondary data. Preliminary data were collected through interviews with five people through a random purposive sampling method, while secondary data were collected through literature studies. The research was conducted in January 2022. The data testing went through several stages: data credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability tests. Furthermore, the phenomenological analysis method used in this study uses the method developed by Schultz, which consists of the following stages: a) Horizontalization; b) Textural Description; c) Structural Description; and d) The description of the meaning of the phenomenon (Deep, 2020).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Results of Interviews with Respondents

Based on the results of the study, interviews were conducted with five homemakers who live in the city of Bandung; the results of the interviews are presented in the following table:

Tabel 1. Results of Interviews with Five Respondents

Respondent	Response
First Respondent	The first respondent has two dependents, namely two children. The first respondent said the news about the scarcity of cooking oil was disturbing and caused panic everywhere, especially the hoaxes spread on social media, which affected their social behavior. The first respondent considers this to be the work of an oligarch who only cares about his group
Second Respondent	Married with three dependents, he said that the news in the media affected the income of his small shop, which became deserted due to the lack of suppliers
Third Respondent	A student stated that consumers during the Covid-19 pandemic prefer to spend on necessities such as cooking oil to large stores and retailers because they

	can buy them in large quantities and minimize traveling to many places; because of this, the income for small stalls is reduced
Fourth Respondent	It was responding to panic buying because it was affected by the circulation of hoax news spread through broadcasts on the Whatsapp group sent by his office friends, which contained issues about the shortage of cooking oil. This was due to the lack of valid information accessed
Fifth Respondent	Homemakers with two dependents spread the news and do panic buying actions; this is due to excessive fear because they have small children, so before the goods run out, buy cooking oil in large quantities

Source: interview data processed

Based on these results, it can be seen that social panic can be transmitted from one individual to another. This contagion is also mediated by spreading misinformation about the surrounding empirical reality. Most people do panic buying because they perceive a shortage of needed materials. They observed that many people around them were doing panic buying, so they were also motivated to do the same thing. It can be concluded that panic buying originally came from the actions of a few individuals, which had the potential to become a trend of social behavior due to emotional contagion (Singh et al., 2021).

2. Analysis of Community Panic Buying Practices Responding to Cooking Oil Scarcity

In studying and applying this social phenomenology, Schutz also developed a human action model with three general propositions: 1) The postulate of logical consistency. This means that logical consistency requires researchers to know the validity of their research objectives to be analyzed how they relate to the realities of everyday life. Can it be accounted for or not, 2) The postulate of subjective interpretation, 3) Requires researchers understand all kinds of human actions or thoughts in the form of actual activities? This means that researchers must position themselves subjectively in research to truly understand the human being studied in social phenomenology; and 4) The postulate of adequacy mandates that researchers form scientific constructions (research results) so that researchers can understand social action (Eberle, 2022).

Adherence to this proposition will ensure that the social construction is consistent with the existing building in social reality. In establishing his social phenomenology, Schutz has combined Husserl's transcendental phenomenology with the concept of *verstehen*, which is Weber's thinking. If Husserl only views the philosophy of phenomenology (transcendental) as an analytical method used to study 'something that appears,' it examines the phenomena around us. But Schutz

saw its sociological implications in analyzing science, ideas and consciousness (Berber, 2020). Schutz explains the social world and explains the basics of scientific concepts and various theoretical models of the existing reality.

Elements of consciousness in social reality are divided into several types, which are described in the following table:

Table 2. The Six Fundamental Characteristics of the World

No	Characteristics	Explanation
1	Wide-Awakeness	There is an element of consciousness which means being fully aware
2	Reality	People who believe in the existence of a world
3	Everyday world	That is the everyday world where everyone can interact
4	Experience	A person's experience which is the totality of personal experience
5	Intersubjective World	The intersubjective world is characterized by the occurrence of communication and social action
6	Perspective	There is a time perspective in society

The panic buying phenomenon is triggered by psychological factors due to the massive and intensive spread of misinformation. As a result, excessive mass anxiety in society has encouraged people to do unexpected things as a defense/self-rescue mechanism during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, such as buying cooking oil in available stores.

The purpose of unscrupulous producers of hoax information is to try to poison people's thoughts and emotions for specific purposes. Three factors underlie the high level of distribution and public trust in hoax information: 1) The public tends to believe in various details according to previously formed beliefs/attitudes. The truth of information is not based on logical or empirical aspects but solely on subjective beliefs. Some groups of people do not open themselves to other alternative information as consideration/comparison to check the truth of the information, 2) during times of crisis, people relatively need something to hold on to. The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has brought people into anonymous conditions and life experiences. Such a situation encourages people to seek referrals to act and act without control which is done to treat the feelings and fears they experience. To meet these psychological needs, people no longer try to be critical of the various information they get. If knowledge can fulfill a desire, data can be believed to be accurate, and 3) the government is not credible in carrying out the function of political communication.

This certainly sets a bad precedent for the community, and therefore they prefer to believe in misguided information scattered in public spaces. The government failed to provide one-stop information that could be a reference for knowledge for the community. Panic buying marks the problem of meeting the community's needs during the pandemic. Excessive spending is a shortcut for the district to minimize its fear of the scarcity of needed goods. Panic buying behavior is

positioned as an impact as well as a consequence. As a result, panic buying is based on misleading information digested by the public. The high acceleration of Covid-19 hoax information has accelerated the spread of false news.

3. Analysis of the Factors That Drive Panic Buying

Panic buying behavior to buy cooking oil results from psychological conflicts from the interpersonal dimensions that arise. Based on the research conducted by researchers regarding the factors that encourage panic buying behavior, researchers have received an answer that several factors enable customers to panic about buying (Arafat et al., 2020). As stated by panic buyers, the average response is that this behavior is driven by anxiety as the main factor. Anxiety is an emotion characterized by a feeling of danger and anticipation, including tension and stress that confront and arousal of the sympathetic nervous system.

This anxiety arises when a person feels that his life is threatened by something even though the truth is not clear. He becomes anxious as well as the stress experienced by panic buyers. This anxiety is felt either because of the pandemic situation or condition that makes everyone have to stay awake at home and minimize activities outside the home because the house is the only safe place and place of refuge from exposure to the coronavirus so that anxiety about this leads panic buyers to do excessive shopping behavior because it is stuck at home during the isolation period (Phillips et al., 2021). This proves that the environmental dimensions of social cognitive theory significantly affect each other's measurements. Moreover, they directly affect the behavioral size. Other panic buyers felt a different kind of anxiety, namely anxiety because cooking oil stocks would run out. Panic buying can occur because many people think cooking oil will be scarce during a disease outbreak. There is a lot of confusing news that this pandemic has made the stock of goods limited or even run out, making panic buyers take the initiative and take quick steps to buy goods. According to the respondent's explanation, this was done because they did not want to run out, and the desire to get the goods they needed was very high, so respondents tried to take more; the respondents were worried that some time in the future the stock of goods would no longer be available.

If the stock of goods has started to become scarce, the price of goods will inevitably increase, which is the anxiety felt by other panic buyers. Customers are afraid that if the cost of goods soars at the wrong time, it is possible that with rising prices, customers cannot reach the offered price, so because of this, customers make significant purchases of goods.

The next factor that drives panic buying behavior is exposure to the mass media; the mass media quickly affects someone because of the reported news. The mass media's information influences panic buyers who make significant purchases. People tend to adopt negative news. In this condition, panic buyers exposed to mass media absorb the statement that there is a shortage and increase in the price of goods, so panic buyers take the initiative to shop immediately, even though some

goods have increased in price or are no longer available. The most crucial role in the process of panic buying behavior. According to him, after receiving information and its continuous dissemination, people tend to have a vague understanding of the actual situation, making them feel psychologically stressed and panicked.

4. Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Analysis to Construct Meaning and Social Reality

Based on the description above, three models of meaning construction for social action according to Alfred Schutz appear, namely as follows: 1) Action consistency model, which becomes the objective validity of the researcher's construction which is a guarantee and distinction from the construction of meaning from the reality of everyday life; 2) Subjective interpretation model, a place where researchers can base the categorization of the types of human actions and the results of the subjective meaning of the actions or results of actions taken by actors; and 3) the feasibility model (fitness) between the meaning constructed by the researcher and individual social actors and their social environment. In addition, to ensure the appropriateness of meaning carried out by a researcher, meaning must be in line with the process of meaning from broad experience in everyday social life.

One of the offers of the consequences of the method offered is through an observation model divided based on direct and indirect methods of observation. Direct observation is usually carried out by many research methods carried out by social researchers, especially those who want to explore detailed words of the object of research according to the researcher's perspective as the main instrument in social research. In an indirect statement, the role of the researcher by using a phenomenological perspective is more based on self-observation from the respondents. Technically, the observation method in collecting this data can be done by using a list of questions or an interview guide to get the results of self-observation from the actions of the respondent concerned. In addition, interviews can be conducted flexibly and informal so that views about the respondent's self-observation according to their systematics can come to the fore. Alfred Schutz's analysis can be described as follows:

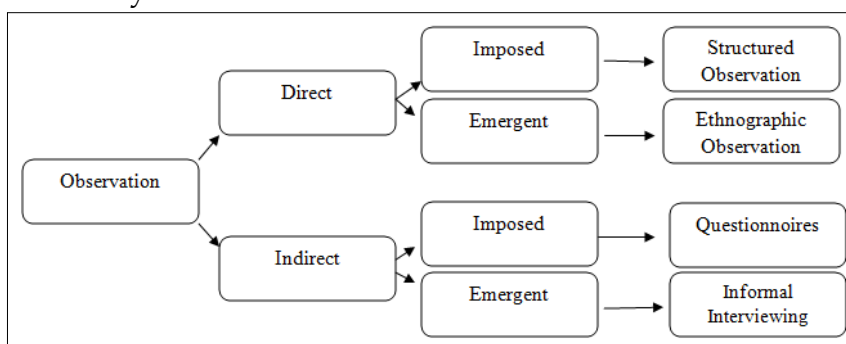


Figure 3. Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology and Research Methodology

Disclosure of meaning in the course of human life experience is not easy because there are obstacles where researchers tend to be distorted by the presence of their background knowledge, views, and experiences in trying to

examine the process of forming the meaning of their respondents' experiences. Therefore, there is a concept in the social research method that requires the researcher to bracket, or it can be said to hold back all background experience and knowledge that distorts observing the respondent's views or on a symptom that later appears. A sign is an external world that places them (respondents) on a distant planet. This distance is intended to focus on awareness of the world that the research researcher will observe.

However, the distribution of the observation model is based on a social research method with a phenomenological perspective; it is not a social research model to test hypotheses, although, in the end, the research concerned produces hypotheses that are indirectly tested by the examination concerned. The study in question leads to constructing a theoretical model based on the formation of meaning based on experiences in the social life of actors who live in the world in question. The step towards achieving research from experience in social life is to approach the researcher as much as possible as a participant in action with interest built on experience. The basic concept in social research leads to an observation structure that provides more space to thoroughly capture the meaning formation of the process of individual life experience that is more comprehensive from the respondent's perspective, who is also an actor in the world of his social life.

Schutz devoted his attention to one form of subjectivity, which he called, inter-subjectivity. This concept refers to the separation of subjective states or the dimensions of the general consciousness to the specific consciousness of social groups integrating. The intersubjectivity that allows social interaction to occur depends on the knowledge of each other's roles obtained through personal experience. Much of Schutz's thinking is centered on one aspect of the social world called the life world or the world of everyday life. This is what is called the intersubjective world. In this intersubjective world, people create social reality and are forced by existing social life and the cultural structures created by their ancestors. There are many collective aspects in the world of life, but there are also personal aspects.

Schutz distinguishes the world of life between intimate face-to-face relationships and interpersonal and tenuous relationships. While personal face-to-face relationships are significant in the world's life, it is much easier to research interpersonal relationships scientifically. So the focus of analysis is focused on two things. First, attention to the actors. This fundamental issue concerns the methodology. How to get data about social action is subjective as possible. This method is also intended to reduce the influence of subjectivity which is the source of deviations, biases and inaccurate information. Second, focus on the critical or essential facts and a natural attitude. The reason is that not all phenomena of social life can be observed. Therefore attention must be focused on the vital phenomena of everyday human actions and natural attitudes.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted, the scarcity of cooking oil that occurs in the community is interpreted by respondents as subjectively based on the experience of the world experienced by the subject. The meaning is divided into several views; some issues interpret the phenomenon of panic buying as caused by the actions of the oligarchs who are not in favor of the community, as an indicator of the government's lack of seriousness in balancing market prices in the community, or also interpreted as another effect of the pandemic which has disrupted the economic sector. According to Alfred Schutz, phenomenological analysis demands the discovery of the world that follows what is experienced by the person concerned. All of this is based on the nature of human experience and its meaning. The meaning is based on the occasion of the human life concerned.

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