

# What makes us feel scared about the new corona virus?

For humans, risks and risks are a feeling - that is, what determines our fears is not simply objective facts, but also how they are perceived.

The corona virus has created what the World Health Organization (WHO) calls the global emergency state PHEIC. The number of people infected is constantly increasing, now reaching more than 113,000 people. The number of deaths reached 4,013 and the virus has appeared in more than 100 countries and territories including Vietnam.

The question is: *"Should you be worried or not?"*. Yes - of course. We cannot be subjective to any disease around us. Viruses are a dangerous pathogen that can kill you. We do not currently have a cure for the new strain of corona, nor is the vaccine yet complete.

But sometimes, anxiety is pushed to the extreme without you even knowing it. This is because the psychological mechanisms in the brain have been instilled into our species instincts.



What has exaggerated the fear of the new corona virus?

Three million years ago, when a hunter went to the tribe and saw everyone looking to the side, he would have to look that way to see if a lion was threatening him.

Over time, vigilance is still turning our eyes toward **news regarding the new corona virus**. But paying attention to a lion in one direction may distract the tribe from lions in the other. And so nervous, sometimes dangerous.

Let's find out what are the psychological effects that are making you worry too much about the disease caused by corona virus:

## 1. We are afraid of the corona virus because we lack knowledge

What makes you feel one risk is more terrifying than the other when it first appears? That is the universal question that an example is what is happening now. Why are we more afraid of the corona virus than the seasonal flu virus - a virus that has existed for a long time and continues to infect 5 million people worldwide each year, killing between 219,000 and 646,000 of them?

According to research by psychologists Paul Slovic from the University of Oregon and Baruch Fischhoff from Carnegie Mellon University, we often have some common psychological characteristics when assessing potential risks around us.

People in general will be more worried about new risks, when we feel out of control, don't understand them. The lack of knowledge makes us helpless to protect ourselves.



The virus strain in Wuhan is an entirely new virus. Scientists continue to lack knowledge about it, even though they know the virus belongs to the same coronavirus group as SARS, MERS, and the four strains of corona that cause mild illness in humans are 229E, ML63, OC43 and HKU1.

Indeed, when the disease first broke out in Wuhan, China last December, people simply did not know what it was. Doctors call it a " *strange pneumonia* " disease , they don't know the exact cause of it.

But very quickly, Chinese scientists isolated the virus strain. And just 10 days later, they solved all of its genetic code and shared it with the world.

*See the most updated news about Covid-19 in the world **here**.*

However, the problem could not end there. SARS-CoV-2 is a completely new virus. Scientists continue to lack knowledge about it, even though they know the virus belongs to the same coronavirus group as SARS, MERS, and the four strains of corona that cause mild illness in humans are 229E, ML63, OC43 and HKU1.

After all, we don't know much about it, there is no specific cure and no vaccine to prevent it. Lack of knowledge makes us feel unsure how to protect ourselves and those around us.



Lack of knowledge makes us feel unsure how to protect ourselves and those around us.

And questions are constantly being raised in your mind: Is the new virus dangerous or not. What routes does it spread? Does a mask work? What are the best precautions? Symptoms of an infected person? What is the death rate? Who is most vulnerable to infection? Can vaccination against pneumonia prevent a new corona virus?

Lack of knowledge is almost always happening when people face new risks, and lack of knowledge leads to fear and sometimes panic.

*Refer to the correct knowledge and how to prevent new corona virus [here](#).*

## **2. We are caught up in the representative bias effect**

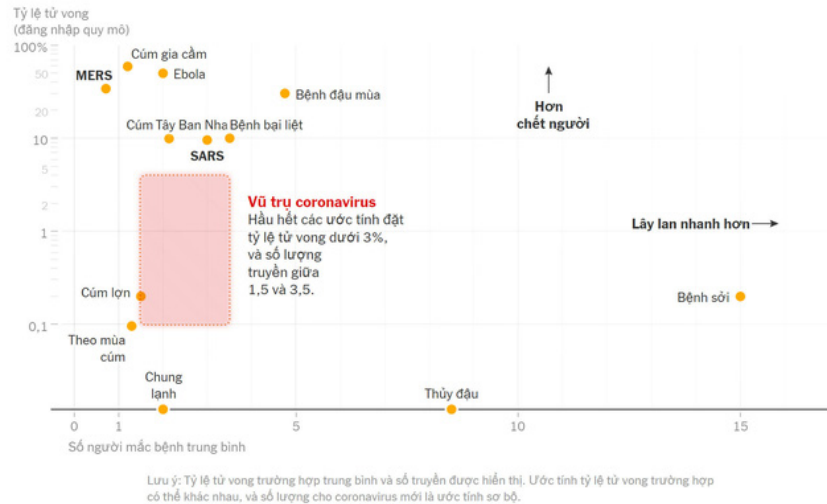
Another psychological feature that contributes to the fear of corona virus is what scientists call the representativeness bias. It is a shortcut the brain uses to assess the probabilities of an uncertain event.

Psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman first described this effect in 1970, saying that the representative bias would occur if you knew about an event similar in nature to the new event, and have similar characteristics to it.

In the case of the new corona virus, it is a risk that no one is sure. You do not know if it will become a global pandemic. But before that, you learned about the SARS virus, a relative of it, which also broke out in China, then infected 8,422 people worldwide and killed 916 of them.

All the articles and information you read from the early days of the outbreak may have compared the new corona virus to SARS. Many previous studies have also predicted, a new global pandemic will come, it will be a virus

jumping from animals to humans, and it will most likely start in China.



Compare the spread and mortality rates of the virus strains

And so the shortcut in your mind is then activated. You assume that the new corona virus will cause a global pandemic like SARS. But the truth is, SARS is considered a global pandemic based on its high mortality rate (10.9%).

And the current mortality rate for corona virus is only 2-3%, which is equivalent to the lethal rate of a normal influenza virus. The majority of deaths are also confined to the Chinese border, particularly Hubei Province, where the Wuhan epidemic is concerned.

### 3. We are amplifying risks

The final effect we can observe in this new corona virus panic was described by scientist Roger Kasperon and his colleagues in a 1988 study titled: " *Conceptual framework. " Concept: Amplification of social risks "*.

" *One of the most troublesome issues in risk analysis is why some relatively small risks or events, as judged by technical experts, often raise strong concerns in the general public and lead to significant social and economic impacts,* "Mufferson said.

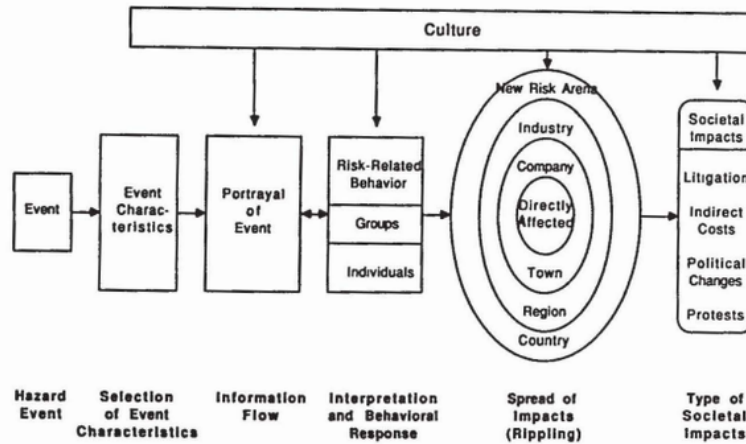


Fig. 1. Simplified representation of the social amplification of risk concept.

The model of a society that magnifies risk events according to the research by Roger Kasperson.

As a social animal, humans evolved to pay attention to whatever others are paying attention to. For example, when a prehistoric hunter goes to his tribe and sees everyone looking in the same direction, he will likely look in that direction as well, to watch out for danger. no, a lion or a volcano is erupting, for example.

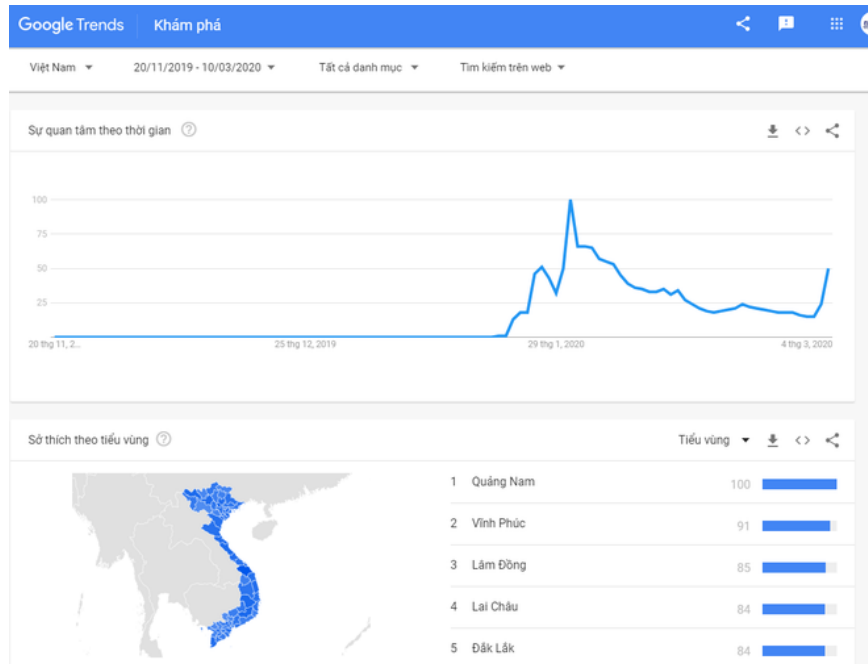
So when news of the new corona virus strain flooded the news and was shared by everyone on social media, it naturally became a big red dot on our radar screens. Blur most other threats, even if they are much more dangerous.

Google Trends statistics show that just a week after the news about the corona virus appeared in the US, the number of searches for infected symptoms increased by 1,000%. Meanwhile, seasonal influenza viruses still regularly infect tens of millions of Americans and cause the deaths of tens of thousands of people each year.

In Vietnam, the keyword corona has been searched the most at two points: The first was on January 31, after the WHO declared the new disease caused by corona virus as a global emergency.

After that, the concern subsided in tandem with good disease control in Vietnam. But then, on March 6, the corona search rate soared again after Hanoi confirmed a patient No. 17, after a long period of no new cases.

*See more news about the new corona virus disease outbreak in Vietnam [here](#).*



And yet, Roger Kasperon said when information about a risk is spread, it is even amplified step by step.

" *Amplification occurs in two stages: in the transfer of risk information and in the reaction mechanisms of society. The risk signal is handled by individual and social amplification stations, including including scientists communicating how they assess risk, media, cultural groups, networks between individuals and others,* "he wrote in the study.

#### 4. Feelings of fear are different from real risks

All of these psychological effects reaffirm Slovic's conclusion in his research: For humans, risks and risks are a feeling - that is what determines our fears. not simply the objective truth, but also the way that truth is perceived.

Subjective to disease is of course dangerous, but overestimating it is a similar danger. If we worry more about new risks and less about familiar risks, we will fail to protect ourselves.

We know countless other diseases like Ebola, HIV or even seasonal flu are much more dangerous than the new corona virus. But because we know about these diseases, they become familiar and that is why many people do not bother to prevent them.

Also a respiratory virus, the flu can be prevented by wearing a mask, washing hands frequently, limiting contact with people with symptoms of fever and cough. But before the corona outbreak, few people noticed and practiced those things to prevent the flu.

## Giảm nguy cơ mắc vi rút bệnh viêm phổi corona:



Rửa tay bằng xà phòng và nước sạch  
hoặc bằng dung dịch rửa tay có cồn

Dùng khăn giấy hoặc khuỷu tay áo che mũi  
và miệng khi ho và hắt hơi



Tránh tiếp xúc gần với người có các triệu chứng  
cảm lạnh hoặc giống cúm

Nấu chín kỹ thức ăn từ thịt và trứng



Không tiếp xúc với động vật hoang dã  
và vật nuôi mà không có đồ phòng hộ



We can prevent the flu with these guidelines, but we have never practiced it before.

On the positive side, though, the media storm about the new corona virus has proved that our risk-awareness system and the society as a whole are working well. After all, that's part of our evolutionary instincts, helping humans survive.

But we need to be smart about the fact that when faced with risks, as a new strain of virus, we are not always as smart as we think.

Understanding that our perceived risks are only subjective, emotional and easily lead to misunderstandings about actual threats is also a way of "vaccinating" against the dangers of the social system of children. people sometimes still produce themselves.

*synthetic*

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