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Price of everyday life: inflation talk, household anxiety, and economic meaning-making on Indonesian social media

Budhi Santoso
Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

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ABSTRACT

Background: Inflation in Indonesia increasingly appears not only as a macroeconomic indicator but also as an everyday social experience through which households narrate food prices, wages, transport costs, savings, and domestic uncertainty. **Objective:** This study examines how Indonesian social media users construct inflation as household anxiety and economic meaning-making in public digital discourse. **Method:** This study employs corpus-assisted discourse analysis, affective appraisal, and narrative attribution on 31 public discourse items consisting of primary social media texts, secondary media materials, and official contextual documents. **Results:** Inflation talk is dominated by staple-food pressure, price memory, and urban affordability frames, showing that users interpret price movement through concrete household objects rather than technical economic vocabulary. Household anxiety appears through income adequacy, food-security concern, savings erosion, mobility pressure, and moral irritation. Digital meaning-making emerges through practical adjustment, peer advice, blame attribution, spatial comparison, and simplified macroeconomic explanation. **Implication:** This study demonstrates that online inflation talk functions as an informal arena where households translate economic instability into shared vocabularies of survival, distrust, and practical reasoning. **Novelty:** This study advances inflation discourse research by shifting focus from institutional policy communication to household-centered digital interpretation in Indonesia.

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Corresponding Author:

Budhi Santoso
Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang
Jl. Prof. K.H. Zainal Abidin Fikri Km. 3,5, Palembang, Sumatera Selatan, 30126, Indonesia
Email: kangbudhi_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Inflation in Indonesia has become more than a macroeconomic indicator; it has entered ordinary language as a measure of household pressure, social uncertainty, and everyday economic judgment. In June 2026, Statistics Indonesia reported annual inflation of 3.34%, with a Consumer Price Index of 111.89; provincial variation was also notable, ranging from 7.84% in Papua Pegunungan to 2.29% in Sulawesi Barat. Bank Indonesia's inflation target for 2025–2027 is 2.5% within a ±1% corridor, placing recent inflation close to the upper bound of policy comfort. Yet official indicators cannot fully capture how households interpret rising rice prices, transport costs, food substitutions, wage stagnation, or monthly budgeting anxiety. Inflation becomes socially consequential when people translate abstract price movements into stories of sacrifice, complaint, distrust, adaptation, and moral comparison. For this reason, Indonesian social media offers a crucial site for examining how economic pressure is felt, narrated, and publicly negotiated.

Existing scholarship has already shown that inflation is not only measured by institutions but also interpreted through subjective expectation, ordinary perception, affect, and trust. Weber et al. (2022) [1]

explain why household inflation expectations matter for economic behavior, while Batrancea (2021) [2] links inflation, sentiment, and consumption. Hernández and Luzzi (2023) [3] demonstrate how people construct everyday measures of price increases, and Amri (2023) [4] conceptualizes inflation as talk and economy as feeling. Digital studies further show that platforms reshape financial knowledge and economic subjectivity through social narration, influencers, controversy, and disinformation [5], [6], [7]. Indonesian discourse studies have examined central bank language, inequality, policy uncertainty, platform precarity, and market-making rhetoric [8], [9], [10], [11]. However, less attention has been given to how non-expert Indonesian users turn inflation into household anxiety and everyday meaning-making on social media.

This study examines how Indonesian social media users discursively construct inflation as an everyday household problem. Rather than asking whether online talk accurately predicts official inflation, this study asks how users make inflation intelligible through language, affect, comparison, and practical reasoning. Three questions guide this inquiry. First, how are rising prices framed in relation to domestic life, consumption, and household survival? Second, what forms of anxiety appear when users discuss food, transport, wages, debt, and monthly expenses? Third, how do users attribute responsibility, imagine coping strategies, and produce economic explanations in digital interaction? These questions position social media discourse as a site where lay economic knowledge is not merely emotional noise but a meaningful interpretive practice. This focus extends recent work on inflation narratives, online economic controversy, and financialized digital life by bringing household-level Indonesian discourse into direct conversation with sociolinguistic, discourse-analytic, and economic-sociological approaches.

This study argues that Indonesian inflation talk is likely to reveal a tension between official economic stabilization and everyday economic fragility. While policy communication may define inflation through targets, indicators, and recovery narratives, household discourse often translates price movement into lived calculations: what must be reduced, postponed, replaced, borrowed, or justified. This does not imply a causal relationship between social media discourse and inflation itself; rather, this study tests how inflation becomes socially meaningful when users connect market prices with moral evaluation, domestic responsibility, and uncertainty about the future. In this sense, social media becomes an informal arena of economic interpretation, where anxiety, humor, blame, and practical advice circulate together. By foregrounding ordinary voices, this study contributes to research on inflation, digital economic discourse, and Indonesian language practices by showing how cost-of-living pressure is transformed into a public vocabulary of household survival.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Inflation discourse

Inflation discourse refers to ways price instability is linguistically framed, circulated, and made intelligible across institutional and everyday settings. In economic policy, inflation is commonly treated as a measurable macroeconomic condition governed through targets, projections, and stabilization language. Nugroho (2026) [9] and Yuliyana (2026) [10] show how Indonesian policy communication manages inflation through calibrated uncertainty, institutional authority, and recovery narratives. However, sociological and anthropological perspectives define inflation less as a technical indicator than as a lived interpretive condition. Amri (2023) [4] conceptualizes inflation as talk and economy as feel, while Hernández and Luzzi (2023) [3] show that ordinary actors develop practical measures of price change. This distinction matters because inflation becomes socially meaningful through language.

Inflation discourse can be examined through several indicators: naming, metaphor, attribution, temporality, and evaluative stance. Wibisono (2026) [12] demonstrates that economic metaphors shape political interpretations of scarcity, burden, and recovery. Hadziqi (2026) [8] similarly shows how inequality is produced through linguistic contrasts between vulnerable publics and institutional responsibility. In digital controversy, Patria et al. (2025) [6] reveal how fuel-price debates become mediatized through competing frames of protest, adjustment, and policy justification. Saito and Tsugawa (2026) [13] add that inflation narratives on Reddit may encode forward-looking signals, although such signals require careful interpretation. Together, these studies suggest that inflation talk is structured by both institutional vocabularies and lay explanations.

2.2. Household anxiety

Household anxiety describes affective and practical unease generated when economic pressure enters domestic planning, consumption, and future expectation. It differs from generalized economic sentiment because it is anchored in everyday obligations: food, transport, rent, education, debt, and wages. Batrancea (2021) [2] links inflation, economic growth, sentiment, and household consumption, while Weber et al. (2022) [1] emphasize that subjective inflation expectations shape how households interpret prices and plan behavior. Wu et al. (2024) [14] extend this view by showing that rising living costs can interact with social

trust. These works suggest that anxiety is not merely psychological; it is produced through repeated encounters between prices, expectations, and domestic responsibility.

Indicators of household anxiety include affordability talk, substitution, postponed consumption, shame, distrust, and calculations of insufficiency. Azzahra et al. (2024) [15] show that price fluctuation shapes adaptive consumer choices among teenagers, indicating that inflation is learned through everyday consumption decisions. Hernández and Luzzi (2023) [3] identify ordinary measures of price increases, such as remembered prices, shopping comparisons, and informal benchmarks. In Indonesia, Sumadi (2026) [16] and Santoso (2026) [17] show how financial-inclusion narratives often promise access while obscuring vulnerability, especially when households must manage risk through credit, borrowing, or platform-based finance. Household anxiety therefore appears as both affective expression and practical economic reasoning.

2.3. Digital economic meaning-making

Digital economic meaning-making refers to how online users construct economic knowledge, identity, and judgment through posts, comments, memes, influencers, and platform interaction. Hayes and Ben-Shmuel (2024) [5] argue that financial influencers participate in financializing digital life by translating economic knowledge into affective, aspirational, and relational forms. Sonni (2025) [7] warns that Indonesian digital spaces can also circulate economic conspiracy theories that shape financial decision-making. Qosim (2026) [18], Wulandari (2026) [19], and Suaidi (2026) [20] show that Indonesian market language operates through branding, pragmatic persuasion, and claims of legitimacy. These studies indicate that digital economic discourse is neither purely informational nor irrational; it is a contested arena of persuasion.

Digital meaning-making can be identified through narrative form, platform affordance, authority claim, affective style, and moral evaluation. Wahid (2026) [11] shows that platform discourse produces entrepreneurial subjectivity while masking precarity among Indonesian gig workers, whereas Hidayatullah (2026) [21] foregrounds predictive language and communicative power in central-bank discourse across Southeast Asia. Nugroho (2026) [22] on greenwashing further demonstrates that economic language may appear technical while carrying unverifiable claims. Read together with inflation, these studies position Indonesian social media as a space where ordinary users negotiate expertise, blame, survival, and legitimacy. This study therefore approaches inflation talk as household-centered economic discourse shaped by anxiety, digital narration, and everyday moral reasoning.

3. METHOD

This study uses public digital texts as its unit of analysis, comprising posts, comments, captions, video descriptions, news-mediated social media items, and official contextual documents related to inflation, rising prices, household costs, and everyday economic pressure in Indonesia. Each unit is treated as one analyzable discourse item when it contains a distinct act of naming, evaluating, explaining, or contextualizing price pressure. The corpus consists of 31 items: 20 primary social media items, five secondary media or expert items, and six contextual documents from official or institutional sources. This composition allows this study to connect ordinary inflation talk with mediated explanation and macroeconomic context without treating online discourse as representative of Indonesian public opinion.

Table 1. Composition of dataset

Code	Data Type	Source	Period	Number	Characteristics
P01–P15	Primary	Reddit r/indonesia	2023–2026	15	Threads and comments on living cost, wage adequacy, food prices, savings, fuel, and household budgeting
P16–P17	Primary	Instagram public posts/reels	2026 priority	2	Captions/snippets on price increases, basic needs, and visualized consumer pressure
P18–P19	Primary	YouTube public video descriptions	2026 priority	2	Video title/description snippets discussing rupiah, inflation, prices, or economic concern
P20	Primary	X/Twitter indexed public snippet	2026 priority	1	Short public post/thread snippet on everyday economic pressure
S01–S05	Secondary	Kompas.com, Kontan, UGM, CNN Indonesia, CNBC Indonesia	2023–2026	5	News, expert commentary, and mediated economic explanation
C01–C06	Context	BPS, Bank Indonesia, BPS Bengkulu, official social media/video	2025–2026	6	Official inflation release, inflation target, regional context, and institutional communication
Total	Mixed corpus	Social media, media, university, official institutions	2023–2026	31	Primary, secondary, and contextual materials integrated for discourse analysis

This study adopts a qualitative corpus-assisted discourse design. This design is appropriate because this study does not seek to measure inflation, predict household behavior, or infer population-level sentiment. Instead, it investigates how inflation becomes meaningful through language, affect, attribution, and everyday comparison. Corpus assistance provides systematic organization of keywords, metadata, repeated frames, and coding categories, while discourse analysis preserves attention to context, register, stance, and moral evaluation. This design follows recent work that treats inflation narratives, household expectations, and platform-based economic communication as interpretive phenomena rather than merely technical indicators.

Information sources are divided into primary, secondary, and contextual materials to prevent analytic conflation. Primary data consist of public social media discourse where users directly discuss living costs, prices, wages, savings, fuel, food, or domestic affordability. Secondary data include journalistic and expert-mediated materials that help contextualize public economic talk without replacing it. Contextual data are drawn from official statistical and monetary sources, especially BPS and Bank Indonesia, to anchor public discourse in verifiable macroeconomic references. This separation is crucial because household anxiety, media explanation, and official stabilization language operate through different communicative logics and cannot be interpreted as equivalent evidence.

Data collection followed a keyword-driven and source-audited procedure. Search terms included "*inflasi*," "*harga naik*," "*sembako mahal*," "*beras mahal*," "*BBM naik*," "*gaji tidak cukup*," "*biaya hidup*," "*harga pangan*," and "*belanja rumah tangga*." Items were included when they were publicly accessible, Indonesian or Indonesian-English, relevant to inflation or cost-of-living pressure, and contained evaluative or contextual meaning. Spam, duplicate reposts without added commentary, private-account materials, advertising-only content, and unrelated political insults were excluded. Each item was assigned a unique document code, checked for duplication, and stored with title, date, source, link, excerpt, context note, and visual/video fields when applicable.

Data analysis proceeded through three linked procedures: corpus-assisted price-frame mapping, digital affect and appraisal analysis, and narrative attribution analysis. Price-frame mapping identified how inflation was domesticated through objects such as rice, rent, fuel, transport, wages, and savings. Appraisal analysis examined how anxiety, irritation, humor, resignation, uncertainty, and adequacy worries were expressed through platform-specific registers. Narrative attribution analysis traced how users assigned responsibility, justified coping strategies, and constructed ordinary economic explanations. The three procedures were then compared across primary, secondary, and contextual materials. This workflow supports interpretive depth while avoiding causal claims or unsupported generalization beyond this audited corpus.

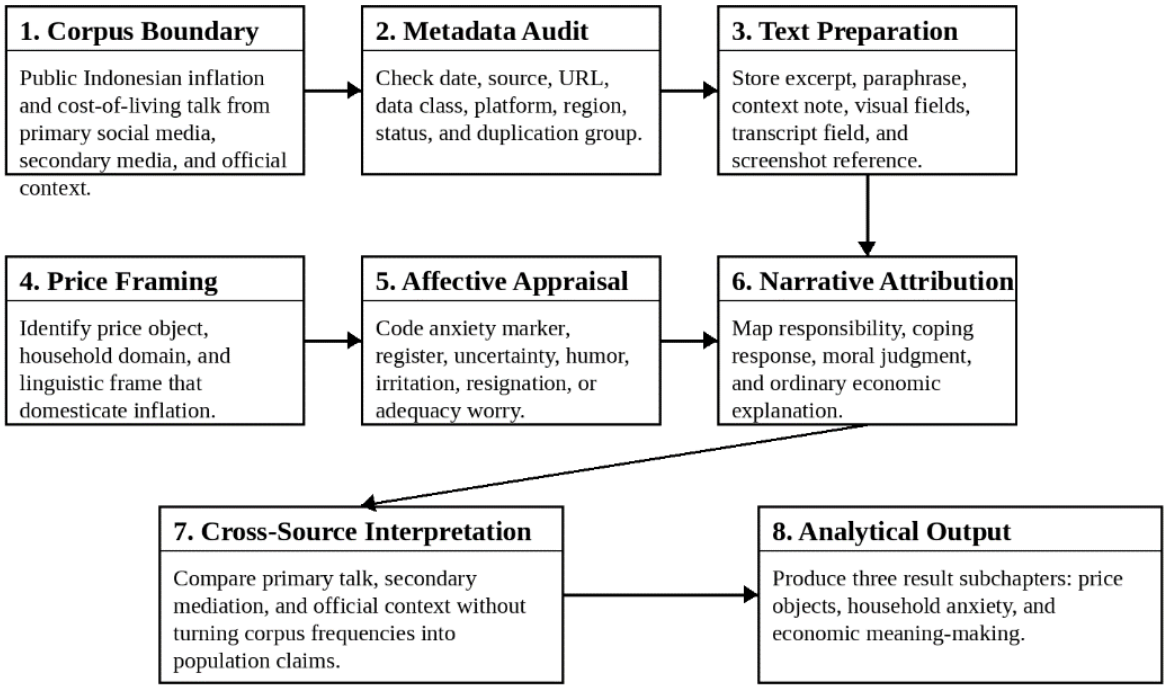


Figure 1. Operational matrix of analysis

4. RESULTS

4.1. Price framing and household cost interpretation in Indonesian inflation talk

Inflation appears most forcefully when users translate abstract price movement into concrete household objects: rice, *sembako*, *warteg* meals, rent, savings, wages, fuel, and transport. The distribution shows that staple-food pressure forms the largest cluster, followed by urban affordability and wage-cost arithmetic. This pattern is analytically significant because social media users rarely speak about inflation as a detached macroeconomic category; they anchor it in things bought, postponed, reduced, compared, or feared. Official indicators remain present, especially through CPI and inflation-target references, but they occupy a contextual rather than experiential role. This distribution therefore positions everyday inflation talk as a bridge between macroeconomic measurement and domestic economic reasoning.

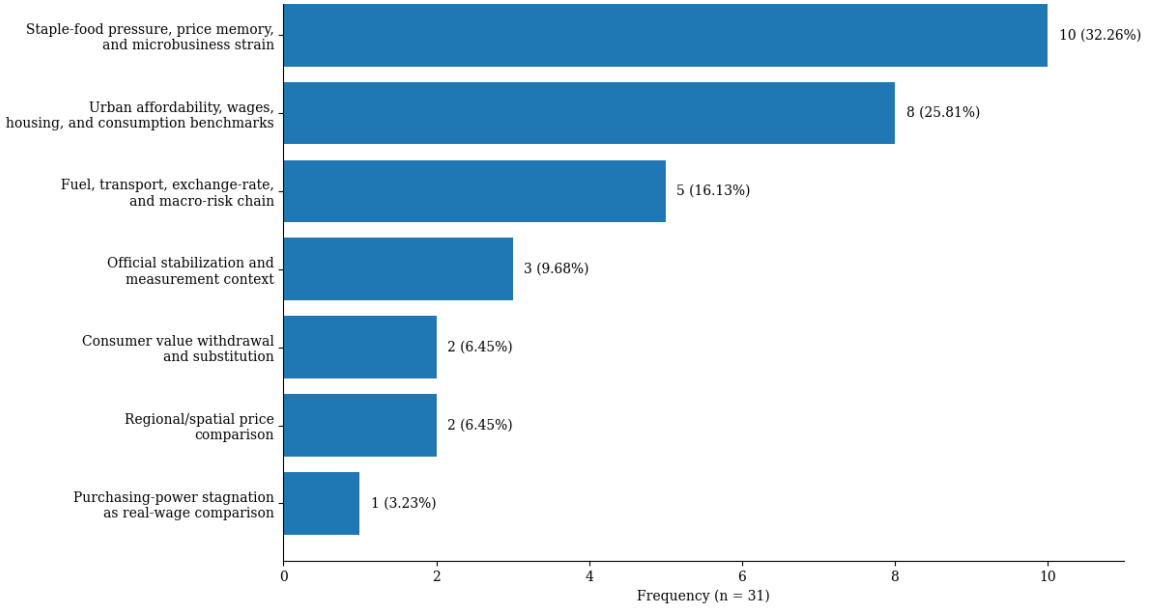


Figure 2. Price-framing distribution in Indonesian inflation talk

The dominant pattern is food-centered and household-centered. Items coded under staple-food pressure include statements such as "*belanja abis Rp100.000... sekarang bisa nyampe Rp200.000*," "*nyetok beras, galon, mi instan, elpiji*," and "*Perbandingan Harga Sembako 2006 vs 2026*." These texts do not merely mention price increases; they convert inflation into daily purchasing memory, anticipatory scarcity, and small-business pressure. The second cluster reinforces this domestic logic through salary and urban-cost benchmarks, including "*dua digit minimum*," "*7-8jt udah bisa nyaman... Cuma mungkin nabungnya ga banyak*," and "*Jakarta hampir Rp15 juta/bulan*." Objectively, corpus pattern shows that price talk is organized less around inflation terminology than around adequacy, substitution, and survival calculation.

This pattern supports a view of inflation as lived discourse rather than only economic measurement. Amri's idea [4] of inflation as talk and economy as feeling helps explain why users narrate price pressure through fear, humor, frustration, and comparison, while Hernández and Luzzi's work [3] on ordinary measures of inflation clarifies why remembered prices and shopping benchmarks matter. Weber et al. [1] and Batrancea [2] further show that household expectations and sentiment shape how economic pressure is interpreted, although this study does not claim behavioral causality. In Indonesian discourse, this finding extends Nugroho [9], Yuliyana [10], Patria et al. [6], and Wahid [11] by shifting attention from institutional or platform-level economic language to household-centered meaning-making.

Table 2. Price-framing patterns in Indonesian inflation talk

Price-Framing Cluster	Operational Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Representative Textual Evidence	Data Codes	Initial Analytic Reading
Staple-food pressure, price memory, and microbusiness strain	Mentions rice, *sembako*, *warteg*, food stockpiling, food-price memory, or declining purchasing power	10	32.26%	8 primary, 1 secondary, 1 contextual	"*belanja abis Rp100.000... sekarang bisa nyampe Rp200.000*"; "*nyetok beras, galon, mi instan, elpiji*"; "*Perbandingan Harga Sembako 2006 vs 2026*"	P04, P05, P07, P11, P12, P16, P17, P18, S01, C04	Inflation is domesticated through food, making price pressure legible as household survival, seller vulnerability, and remembered affordability.
Urban affordability, wages, housing, and consumption benchmarks	Links living cost to salary, rent, savings, Jakarta benchmarks, housing, and monthly expenditure	8	25.81%	5 primary, 2 secondary, 1 contextual	"*dua digit minimum*"; "*7-8jt udah bisa nyaman... Cuma mungkin nabungnya ga banyak*"; "*Jakarta hampir Rp15 juta/bulan*"	P01, P02, P03, P06, P14, S04, S05, C05	Inflation talk shifts from price increase to adequacy calculation: what income can sustain life, savings, rent, and future security.
Fuel, transport, exchange-rate, and macro-risk chain	Connects household prices with BBM, transport, rupiah depreciation, subsidy, imported costs, or crisis scenarios	5	16.13%	3 primary, 2 secondary	"*Inflasi -> resesi ekonomi*"; "*dari meja makan sampai warung kecil*"; "*harga kebutuhan pokok... biaya transportasi yang naik*"	P10, P19, P20, S02, S03	Users and media compress macroeconomic mechanisms into a chain of everyday risks that link currency, fuel, transport, and food.
Official stabilization and measurement context	Uses inflation targets, CPI releases, survey dissemination, or statistical framing to contextualize price talk	3	9.68%	3 contextual	"*inflasi year-on-year... 3,34 persen*"; "2.5%... within a ±1% corridor"	C01, C02, C06	Official discourse provides a stabilizing vocabulary, but its abstraction contrasts with household-level narratives of pressure.
Consumer value withdrawal and substitution	Frames goods or services as no longer worth buying, especially when price exceeds perceived benefit	2	6.45%	2 primary	"*makin mahal... nggak worth it lagi*"; "*Mahalnya sekarang amit-amit... nggak worth it*"	P08, P09	Inflation is interpreted as a reassessment of value, producing withdrawal, substitution, or stricter purchase conditions.
Regional/spatial price comparison	Compares living costs across cities, regions, or development spaces	2	6.45%	1 primary, 1 contextual	"*biaya hidup di IKN lebih mahal dari Jakarta*"; regional inflation variation in official release	P15, C03	Price pressure is spatialized, showing that inflation is interpreted through regional inequality and location-based affordability.
Purchasing-power stagnation as real-wage comparison	Links rising prices with stagnant income, real wages, or cross-country affordability	1	3.23%	1 primary	"*harga2 naik*" and "*purchasing powernya... stagnan?*"	P13	Inflation becomes a language of relative decline when users compare income growth with rising prices.

4.2. Household anxiety and affective appraisal in inflation discourse

Household anxiety in this corpus is not expressed as a single emotional category, but as a layered appraisal of affordability, food security, future stability, mobility, and trust. The largest cluster concerns income adequacy and monthly-budget anxiety, followed closely by food-security and staple-price worry. This distribution is consistent with previous price-framing patterns because the same unit of analysis shows that users move from naming price objects to evaluating whether household life remains manageable. Secondary media items strengthen rather than replace public discourse by linking household pressure to transport, fuel, rupiah movement, and broader economic risk. Contextual materials provide institutional stabilization language, but their affective tone differs sharply from ordinary user anxiety.

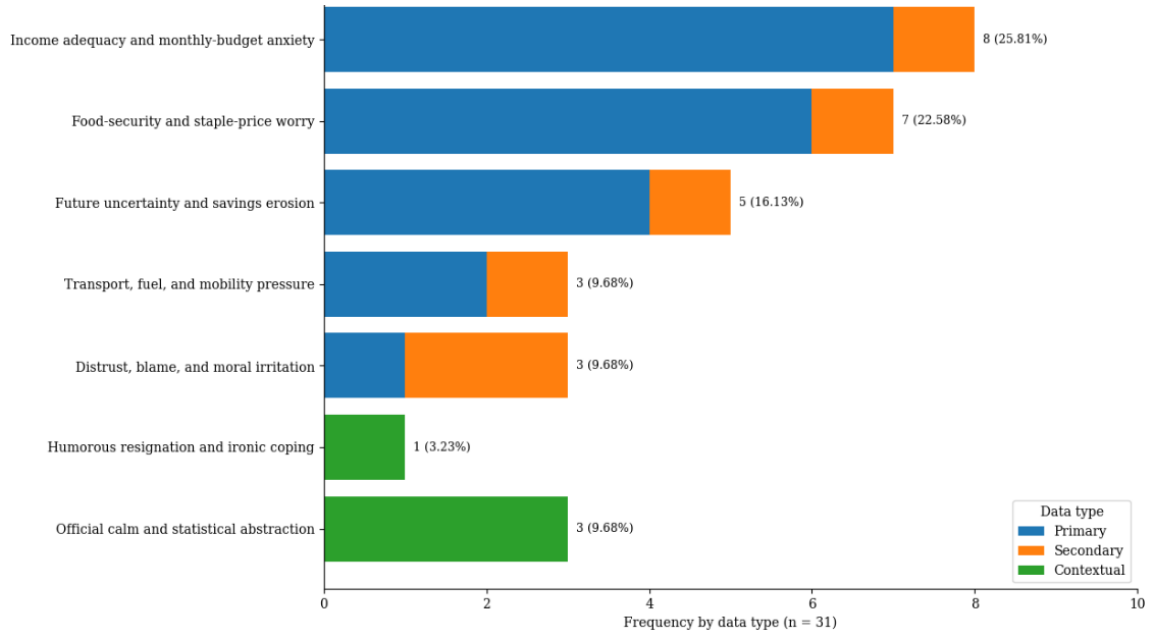


Figure 3. Household anxiety markers by source type

The dominant pattern shows that anxiety emerges through practical calculation. Texts such as "*dua digit minimum*," "*7-8jt udah bisa nyaman... Cuma mungkin nabungnya ga banyak*," and "*Jakarta hampir Rp15 juta/bulan*" construct anxiety around adequacy rather than panic. Food-related items intensify this pattern through more immediate domestic references: "*belanja abis Rp100.000... sekarang bisa nyampe Rp200.000*" and "*nyetok beras, galon, mi instan, elpiji*." These are not abstract statements about inflation; they are small calculations of pressure, substitution, and precaution. The smaller clusters on fuel, mobility, blame, and humor show that anxiety also travels through transport costs, perceived unfairness, and ironic public coping.

The pattern aligns with scholarship that treats inflation as subjective, affective, and socially interpreted. Weber et al. [1] show that household inflation expectations matter because people evaluate price movement through lived experience, while Batrancea [2] links inflation to sentiment and consumption. Hernández and Luzzi's account [3] of ordinary measures is especially useful here because users rely on remembered prices, shopping benchmarks, and monthly adequacy calculations. Wu et al. [14] add that rising living costs may interact with trust, which helps explain why some items move from anxiety to blame. This study therefore positions household anxiety as a discursive bridge between price perception, domestic responsibility, and moral evaluation.

Table 3. Household anxiety markers in Indonesian inflation talk

Affective-Anxiety Cluster	Operational Indicator	Primary Data	Secondary Data	Contextual Data	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Representative Textual Evidence	Data Codes	Initial Analytic Reading
Income adequacy and monthly-budget anxiety	Mentions salary sufficiency, monthly survival, rent, saving difficulty, or household calculation	7	1	0	8	25.81%	Reddit threads, Jakarta cost media item	"*dua digit minimum*"; "*7-8jt udah bisa nyaman... Cuma mungkin nabungnya ga banyak*"; "*Jakarta hampir Rp15 juta/bulan*"	P01, P02, P03, P06, P13, P14, P15, S05	Anxiety appears as adequacy calculation: whether income can still cover life, savings, rent, and future obligations.
Food-security and staple-price worry	Mentions rice, *sembako*, food stockpiling, *warteg*, cooking oil, elpiji, or basic consumption anxiety	6	1	0	7	22.58%	Social media posts, media reference on food prices	"*belanja abis Rp100.000... sekarang bisa nyampe Rp200.000*"; "*nyetok beras, galon, mi instan, elpiji*"	P04, P05, P07, P11, P12, P16, S01	Anxiety is anchored in food because staple goods convert inflation into immediate domestic vulnerability.
Future uncertainty and savings erosion	Mentions reduced saving capacity, uncertainty, delayed plans, or fear that current income will not remain sufficient	4	1	0	5	16.13%	Reddit comments and macroeconomic media explanation	"*nabungnya ga banyak*"; "*purchasing powernya... stagnan?*"; "*Inflasi -> resesi ekonomi*"	P02, P03, P10, P13, S03	Inflation is narrated as a threat to future stability, not only present consumption.
Transport, fuel, and mobility pressure	Links anxiety to BBM, transport cost, commuting, logistics, or rupiah-linked import pressure	2	1	0	3	9.68%	Social media snippet and economic news	"*harga kebutuhan pokok... biaya transportasi yang naik*"; "*dari meja makan sampai warung kecil*"	P19, P20, S02	Mobility costs extend household anxiety beyond food into work access and urban circulation.
Distrust, blame, and moral irritation	Expresses anger, distrust, unfairness, elite blame, market suspicion, or policy frustration	1	2	0	3	9.68%	Fuel controversy, media explanation, social complaint	"*harga2 naik*"; "fuel price controversies"; "rising oil price"	P10, S02, S03	Anxiety becomes moralized when users connect price pressure with responsibility and perceived unfairness.
Humorous resignation and ironic coping	Uses irony, jokes, resignation, or playful comparison to make anxiety socially shareable	0	0	1	1	3.23%	Institutional-social media context	Public-facing inflation communication formatted for broad audience engagement	C06	Humor and light public framing may soften anxiety without eliminating price pressure.
Official calm and statistical abstraction	Presents inflation through CPI, target, percentage, survey, or institutional stabilization language	0	0	3	3	9.68%	Official statistical and monetary communication	"*inflasi year-on-year... 3,34 persen*"; "2.5%... within a ±1% corridor"	C01, C02, C03	Official discourse regulates anxiety through abstraction, measurement, and policy normalization.

4.3. Digital economic meaning-making and narrative attribution

Economic meaning-making emerges when inflation talk moves beyond price naming and anxiety expression toward explanation, advice, blame, and adjustment. Across the same 31 discourse items, practical adjustment and consumption discipline form the largest cluster, followed by lay macroeconomic explanation and responsibility attribution. This pattern shows that Indonesian users do not merely report rising prices; they turn price pressure into usable knowledge about what to buy, what to avoid, whom to blame, and how to understand wider economic instability. Contextual documents remain concentrated in statistical normalization, while primary social media items dominate practical adjustment and peer advice. This distribution confirms that meaning-making is shaped by source type as well as topic.

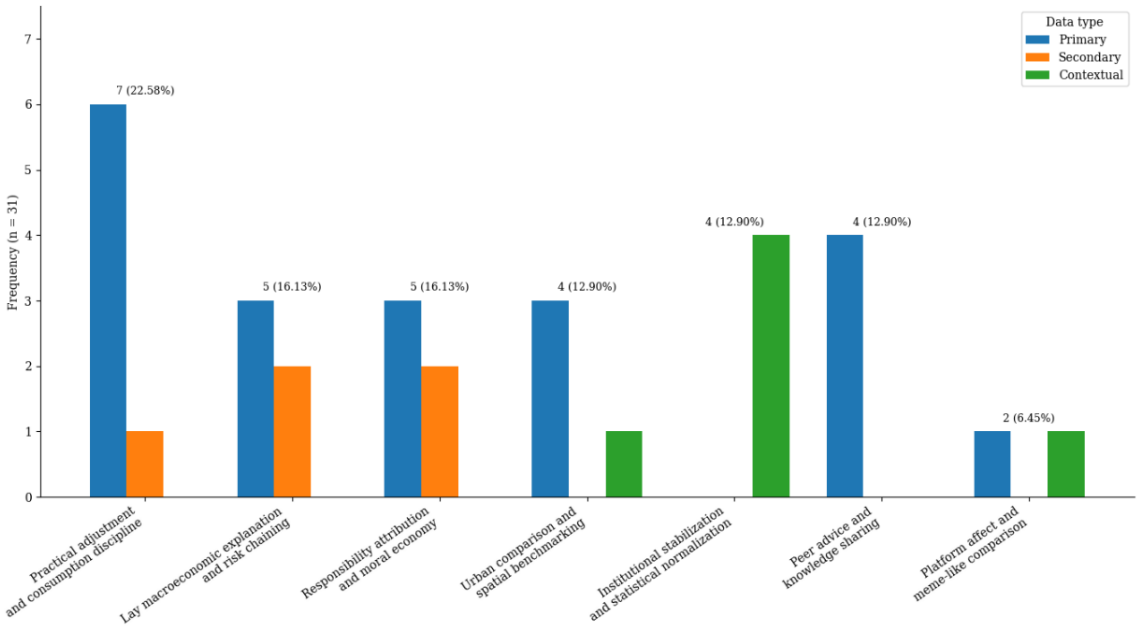


Figure 4. Economic meaning-making by source type

The strongest textual pattern is survival-oriented reasoning. Statements such as "*nyetok beras, galon, mi instan, elpiji*" and "*makin mahal... nggak worth it lagi*" frame inflation through household discipline and value withdrawal. Other texts build causal chains, as in "*Inflasi -> resesi ekonomi*" or media formulations linking "*harga kebutuhan pokok*" with "*biaya transportasi yang naik*." Peer advice also appears through income benchmarks such as "*dua digit minimum*" and "*7-8jt udah bisa nyaman... Cuma mungkin nabungnya ga banyak*." These examples show that ordinary users combine domestic arithmetic, risk interpretation, and social comparison. Inflation becomes meaningful because users translate it into actionable judgments about adequacy, prudence, responsibility, and future insecurity.

This pattern strengthens digital economic discourse scholarship by showing how platform talk produces practical economic knowledge without requiring formal expertise. Hayes and Ben-Shmuel's account [5] of financialized digital life helps explain why economic meaning circulates through advice, affect, and identity, while Sonni's work [7] on Indonesian economic disinformation reminds us that digital meaning-making may also amplify blame and simplified causality. Indonesian studies on market language, platform precarity, central-bank discourse, and policy uncertainty further clarify why official and ordinary vocabularies diverge. This study therefore positions social media inflation talk as an informal arena where households convert macroeconomic uncertainty into moral explanation, peer instruction, and everyday survival logic.

Table 4. Economic meaning-making in Indonesian inflation talk

Meaning-Making Cluster	Operational Indicator	Primary Data	Secondary Data	Contextual Data	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Representative Textual Evidence	Data Codes	Initial Analytic Reading
Practical adjustment and consumption discipline	Mentions substitution, reducing purchases, stockpiling, not-worth-it evaluation, or stricter spending	6	1	0	7	22.58%	Social media posts, media item on staple pressure	"*nyetok beras, galon, mi instan, elpiji*"; "*makin mahal... nggak worth it lagi*"; "*belanja abis Rp100.000... sekarang bisa nyampe Rp200.000*"	P04, P05, P08, P09, P11, P12, S01	Economic meaning is produced through adjustment; users explain inflation by showing what must be reduced, replaced, delayed, or guarded.
Lay macroeconomic explanation and risk chaining	Connects prices with rupiah, fuel, transport, crisis, recession, or wider market instability	3	2	0	5	16.13%	Social media comments, YouTube description, economic news	"*Inflasi -> resesi ekonomi*"; "*dari meja makan sampai warung kecil*"; "*harga kebutuhan pokok... biaya transportasi yang naik*"	P10, P19, P20, S02, S03	Users and media construct inflation through chains of risk that connect macroeconomic signals to household consequences.
Responsibility attribution and moral economy	Assigns blame, questions fairness, criticizes policy, or evaluates unequal burden	3	2	0	5	16.13%	Fuel controversy, public complaint, media explanation	"*harga2 naik*"; "fuel price controversies"; "rising oil price"	P07, P10, P16, S02, S03	Inflation becomes moral economy when price pressure is interpreted through fairness, responsibility, and unequal exposure to risk.
Urban comparison and spatial benchmarking	Compares affordability across Jakarta, IKN, regions, or urban living standards	3	0	1	4	12.90%	Reddit city comparison and official/regional context	"*biaya hidup di IKN lebih mahal dari Jakarta*"; "*Jakarta hampir Rp15 juta/bulan*"	P01, P06, P15, C03	Economic meaning is spatialized through location-based comparison, making inflation intelligible as uneven affordability.
Institutional stabilization and statistical normalization	Uses CPI, inflation target, official release, survey, or monetary-policy vocabulary	0	0	4	4	12.90%	BPS and Bank Indonesia contextual materials	"*inflasi year-on-year... 3,34 persen*"; "2.5%... within a ±1% corridor"	C01, C02, C05, C06	Official documents translate inflation into measurable stability, producing a vocabulary different from household anxiety.
Peer advice and knowledge sharing	Gives practical estimates, income thresholds, monthly-cost advice, or experiential benchmarks	4	0	0	4	12.90%	Reddit comments and public discussion	"*dua digit minimum*"; "*7-8jt udah bisa nyaman... Cuma mungkin nabungnya ga banyak*"	P02, P03, P13, P14	Social media functions as informal economic pedagogy where users exchange survival thresholds and cost-of-living knowledge.
Platform affect and meme-like comparison	Uses visual comparison, irony, humor, short-form affect, or platform-ready exaggeration	1	0	1	2	6.45%	Social media visual/post and institutional social media context	"*Perbandingan Harga Sembako 2006 vs 2026*"; public-facing inflation communication	P18, C04	Platform form shapes how economic pressure becomes shareable, memorable, and affectively compressed.

5. DISCUSSION

The prominence of staple-food pressure, price memory, and household cost objects shows that inflation becomes socially consequential when it is translated into ordinary domestic thresholds. Its function is interpretive: rice, *sembako*, *warteg* meals, fuel, and rent turn abstract inflation into objects through which households evaluate whether life remains affordable. This supports Amri's claim [4] that inflation is not only measured but talked into felt reality, and it extends Hernández and Luzzi's argument [3] that ordinary actors build practical measures of price increases through remembered prices and consumption benchmarks. However, this same function also carries dysfunction. When inflation is narrated mainly through immediate household objects, broader structural explanations may be compressed into fragments of complaint, suspicion, or resignation. This does not weaken the empirical value of everyday talk; rather, it shows that domestic price language is both a cognitive resource and a partial frame for understanding economic pressure. Shiller's (1997) [23] survey evidence that popular dislike of inflation is rooted in lay beliefs about living standards and fairness points in the same direction.

The underlying structure behind this price-framing pattern lies in the gap between official abstraction and domestic calculation. BPS and Bank Indonesia communicate inflation through percentages, CPI movement, and target corridors, while users translate pressure into shopping quantities, meal prices, salary adequacy, and stockpiling decisions. This divergence does not indicate that ordinary users misunderstand inflation; it indicates that different communicative systems organize economic knowledge differently. Nugroho [9] and Yuliyana [10] show that institutional discourse manages uncertainty through calibrated policy language, whereas Wibisono [12] and Hadziqi [8] demonstrate that economic meanings are shaped by metaphor, inequality, and evaluative framing. The corpus pattern is therefore better read as a structural correlation between communicative position and economic vocabulary: institutions stabilize inflation through measurement, while households domesticate inflation through lived comparison. This explains why price talk is less about technical inflation literacy than about translating macroeconomic pressure into survivable everyday categories. Muamanah and Fawaid's (2019) [24] discussion of price discounts and bonus packs in online business similarly treats price as something communicated to consumers through concrete, everyday cues rather than abstract indices.

Household anxiety matters because it reveals inflation as a problem of domestic responsibility rather than merely consumer sentiment. Anxiety in this corpus is not an unstructured emotional reaction; it appears through adequacy calculations, food-security worry, savings erosion, transport pressure, and distrust. This finding aligns with Weber et al. [1], who stress the importance of household expectations, and with Batrancea [2], who links inflation, sentiment, and consumption. Yet it also complicates economic-sentiment approaches by showing that anxiety is linguistically organized around obligation: what must still be paid, bought, delayed, or sacrificed. Wu et al.'s work [14] on inflation and trust is relevant here because anxiety can move from private concern to public moral evaluation. The implication is that inflation talk functions as a collective diagnostic practice. Its dysfunction emerges when anxiety hardens into blame without sufficient explanatory depth, but its function lies in making household vulnerability publicly legible.

This anxiety pattern can be explained by the structure of household budgeting under uncertainty. Users do not encounter inflation as one price index; they encounter repeated micro-adjustments across food, rent, commuting, savings, and debt. Such repetition produces a cumulative sense of fragility, even when official inflation remains within or near policy expectations. Hernández and Luzzi's notion [3] of ordinary measures helps explain why remembered price points become emotionally powerful: they allow people to compare the present against a morally meaningful past. Azzahra et al.'s study [15] of adaptive consumer choices similarly shows that price fluctuation shapes everyday decision-making, including substitution and restraint. However, this corpus differs from purely behavioral accounts because anxiety is not inferred from purchasing behavior; it is visible in discourse. This distinction is crucial. This study does not claim that social media talk causes consumption change; it shows how users narratively organize economic pressure before, during, or after practical adjustment. Fawaid and Fatmala's (2020) [25] study of home industries as a micro-enterprise strategy also reminds us that household and small-business economies are where price pressure is first absorbed.

Digital economic meaning-making carries an important function: it turns dispersed household experiences into shared practical knowledge. Users explain prices through risk chains, exchange advice, identify income thresholds, compare cities, and evaluate whether goods remain "worth it." This supports Hayes and Ben-Shmuel's argument [5] that digital platforms financialize everyday life through affective and relational forms of economic interpretation. It also resonates with Saito and Tsugawa's work [13] on Reddit inflation narratives, although this study is less concerned with predictive signals than with meaning production. In Indonesian contexts, Qosim [18], Wulandari [19], Suaidi [20], and Wahid [11] show that

economic language is shaped by branding, persuasion, legitimacy, and platform precarity. The contribution here is to show that ordinary users also produce economic authority. Its function is peer pedagogy; its dysfunction is potential simplification, especially when complex macroeconomic dynamics are reduced to linear blame or viral comparison.

The structure enabling this meaning-making lies in platform affordances and unequal access to economic authority. Social media rewards condensed, affective, and shareable explanations, making inflation intelligible through short comparisons, memorable numbers, humor, and moral claims. Sonni's work [7] on economic disinformation cautions that such environments can intensify conspiracy thinking or simplified causality, while Patria et al. [6] show that Indonesian online economic controversies are shaped by mediatization and competing frames. This corpus does not demonstrate disinformation as a dominant pattern, but it shows why inflation discourse is vulnerable to narrative compression: users need quick explanations for slow, distributed pressure. Institutional communication, by contrast, offers precision but often lacks domestic resonance. This produces a communicative asymmetry. This study therefore suggests that inflation talk on Indonesian social media should be understood as a hybrid arena where household survival logic, mediated controversy, and official stabilization vocabularies meet without fully resolving one another.

6. CONCLUSION

This study shows that inflation on Indonesian social media is not discussed primarily as a technical macroeconomic indicator, but as a domestic experience organized through food prices, wage adequacy, urban living costs, mobility pressure, and everyday budgeting. Its central lesson is that household anxiety operates as a form of economic reasoning: users interpret inflation by comparing remembered prices, calculating monthly sufficiency, exchanging practical advice, and assigning moral responsibility. This study contributes to inflation discourse research by shifting attention from institutional communication and formal expectations toward household-centered digital meaning-making, while methodologically combining corpus-assisted discourse analysis, affective appraisal, and narrative attribution within one coherent framework.

Several limitations should guide future research. This study relies on public digital texts, so it cannot represent all Indonesian households, private experiences, or offline economic practices. Platform visibility, algorithmic circulation, and availability of public posts may also privilege urban, literate, and digitally active voices. In addition, this study analyzes discourse rather than causal relations between inflation talk, consumption behavior, and policy trust. Future research should expand corpus size, compare platforms systematically, include longitudinal data around official inflation releases, and integrate interviews or household expenditure diaries. Such work would clarify how online inflation narratives interact with material budgeting, regional inequality, and changing trust in economic institutions.

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Budhi Santoso: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

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Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible social media posts, news media, and official statistical and monetary communications on inflation in Indonesia.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible social media content, news media, and official statistical and monetary communications on inflation in Indonesia, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of publicly accessible social media posts, news media, and official statistical and monetary communications analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR



Budhi Santoso is affiliated with Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Palembang, Indonesia, where his work engages corpus-assisted discourse analysis, affective appraisal, and the study of digital economic communication in Indonesia. His current research examines how Indonesian social media users construct inflation as household anxiety and everyday economic meaning-making, combining corpus-assisted price-frame mapping with narrative attribution analysis. He can be contacted at email: kangbudhi_uin@radenfatah.ac.id