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The moral grammar of livelihood: work, dignity, and economic vulnerability in Indonesian public discourse

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ABSTRACT

Background: Indonesian public discourse increasingly frames livelihood not only as employment or income, but as a moral field where work, dignity, vulnerability, protection, and deservingness are publicly evaluated. **Objective:** This study examines how Indonesian public discourse constructs the moral grammar of livelihood and asks how vulnerable workers are represented through vocabularies of dignity, protection, responsibility, and economic risk. **Method:** This study applies corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to 19 empirical public discourse items, comprising 13 primary documents and 6 contextual documents, supported by secondary scholarship on Indonesian economic discourse, precarity, moral economy, and labour dignity. **Results:** Livelihood discourse is organized through five moral grammars: decent-work norms, protection-as-duty, recognition of contribution, measurement-as-governance, and care-and-obligation. Vulnerability is most frequently aligned with informality and social protection, indicating that dignity becomes legible when workers are classified as informal, protected, eligible, or deserving. Responsibility is distributed across state institutions, public media, legal-statistical bodies, platform actors, international labour norms, and faith-based welfare, producing recognition while fragmenting accountability. **Implication:** These findings show that moral language can humanize vulnerable workers while also making insecurity administratively manageable and socially tolerable. **Novelty:** This study reframes Indonesian economic discourse by conceptualizing livelihood as moral grammar rather than a neutral labour-market category.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's contemporary labour question is no longer adequately captured by unemployment alone; it is increasingly organized around how people remain employed while still living with unstable income, weak protection, and contested social recognition. In February 2026, BPS [1] recorded a labour force of 154.91 million people, 147.67 million employed persons, an open unemployment rate of 4.68%, and an average employee wage of IDR 3.29 million, while agriculture, forestry, and fisheries alone absorbed 42.49 million workers, or 28.78% of employment. These figures show that work is widespread, yet livelihood security remains uneven. ILOSTAT [2] further emphasizes that informality increases vulnerability through inadequate earnings, occupational risk, and poorer working conditions. This makes Indonesian public discourse on work analytically crucial: language does not merely describe employment, but helps define whether precarious livelihood is understood as injustice, endurance, productivity, sacrifice, faith, or personal responsibility.

Recent scholarship has examined Indonesian economic discourse from several productive angles, but has not yet fully theorized livelihood as a moral grammar. Hadziqi (2026) [3] foregrounds inequality in news media, while Yuliyana (2026) [4] shows how uncertainty shapes inflation and recovery discourse. Nugroho (2026) [5] and Hidayatullah (2026) [6] analyse central bank communication, demonstrating how institutional language constructs economic authority and predictive legitimacy. Sumadi (2026) [7], Santoso (2026) [8], and Suaidi (2026) [9] examine financial inclusion, digital lending, and Sharia-compliant fintech, revealing how access, risk, and legitimacy are discursively managed. Wulandari (2026) [10] and Qosim (2026) [11] extend this concern to marketplace advertising and startup branding, whereas Wahid (2026) [12] directly addresses platform labour, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and precarity. However, these studies tend to examine inequality, policy, finance, branding, or platform work as separate discursive domains. What remains underexplored is how public discourse joins work, dignity, and economic vulnerability into a shared moral vocabulary.

This study addresses that gap by asking how Indonesian public discourse constructs the moral grammar of livelihood. Rather than treating "work" as a neutral economic category, this study examines how public texts assign moral value to workers, income insecurity, labour endurance, and claims for protection. It asks three interrelated questions: how is livelihood framed through moral categories such as responsibility, sacrifice, resilience, deservingness, and dignity; how are economically vulnerable workers represented as rights-bearing citizens, productive subjects, entrepreneurial actors, beneficiaries, or moral survivors; and how do public discourses distribute responsibility among workers, families, markets, platforms, religious values, and state institutions? Methodologically, this study is designed as a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of public, verifiable texts, combining lexical attention with interpretive coding. This design allows this study to identify patterns of representation and moral evaluation without claiming causal effects on policy outcomes, worker behaviour, or public opinion.

This study advances one core argument: Indonesian public discourse often recognizes livelihood as dignified precisely by translating vulnerability into moral endurance. Such discourse may affirm workers as resilient, faithful, productive, and socially valuable, yet it may also soften structural problems by framing insecurity as adaptation, sacrifice, or entrepreneurial responsibility. This argument does not presume that dignity discourse is inherently ideological or manipulative; rather, it treats dignity as an ambivalent public language that can both humanize vulnerable workers and normalize the conditions that make them vulnerable. This position extends Hadziqi's (2026) [3] concern with inequality, Wahid's (2026) [12] analysis of platform precarity, Santoso's (2026) [8] critique of risk-obscuring inclusion, and Yuliyana's (2026) [4] account of uncertainty governance. By conceptualizing livelihood as moral grammar, this study clarifies how economic vulnerability becomes publicly speakable, ethically judged, and politically manageable in Indonesian discourse.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Livelihood

Livelihood is more than income generation; it is a socially embedded practice through which people secure survival, recognition, and moral belonging. In Indonesian studies, livelihood has been approached through agrarian change, informal labour, migration, platform work, and welfare governance. McCarthy and Obidzinski (2017) [13], McCarthy (2020) [14], Nerenberg (2021) [15], and Griffin et al. (2023) [16] show that livelihood insecurity often emerges from land change, rural marginality, and uneven development. Yet livelihood is also narrated through values, faith, obligation, and aspiration, as Rudnyckyj (2009) [17], Rakhmani and Utomo (2023) [18], and Vel and Warren (2024) [19] suggest. This makes livelihood both material and moral.

The main indicators of livelihood discourse include work stability, income sufficiency, social protection, recognition, household responsibility, and adaptive agency. Studies on Indonesian gig and informal workers show that flexibility may coexist with insecurity, weak bargaining power, and fragmented protection [20], [21], [12]. Rural livelihood studies similarly reveal that survival is shaped by constrained choices rather than autonomous entrepreneurship [14], [22]. In public discourse, these indicators become morally charged when workers are praised for resilience, patience, and productivity while structural insecurity remains backgrounded. Livelihood is therefore legible through both material risk and evaluative language.

2.2. Dignity in work

Dignity in work refers to social recognition, moral worth, and protection from degrading forms of dependence or exploitation. It differs from employability or productivity because it concerns how workers are valued as persons, not only as economic actors. Hamilton et al. (2019) [23] show that dignity in low-status work is discursively negotiated through heroism and respectability, while Valenzuela et al. (2023) [24] conceptualize vulnerability as ambivalent recognition within precarious subjectivity. In Indonesian contexts,

Maarif (2023) [25] extends dignity toward relational and communal recognition, while Hadziqi (2026) [3] links economic inequality to sociolinguistic representation. Dignity is thus both ethical claim and discursive effect.

Dignity discourse may be analysed through indicators of recognition, rights, contribution, deservingness, respect, and moral respectability. Labour studies on migration, domestic work, and platform labour show that dignity is often gendered, religiously inflected, and politically managed [26], [27], [28]. In platform discourse, worker dignity is frequently attached to independence and entrepreneurial initiative, even when algorithmic governance narrows actual control [21], [12]. Santoso (2026) [8] similarly shows how economic access may obscure risk. Dignity therefore functions ambivalently: it can support claims for protection or convert hardship into honourable endurance.

2.3. Economic vulnerability

Economic vulnerability refers to exposure to unstable income, limited protection, indebtedness, weak bargaining power, and uncertain futures. Han (2018) [29] distinguishes vulnerability from simple poverty by emphasizing exposure, dependency, and precarious life conditions. In Indonesian economic discourse, vulnerability is framed through inequality, inflation, financial inclusion, platform labour, and household survival [3], [4], [7], [8]. However, not all vulnerability is represented structurally. Some discourse shifts attention toward individual discipline, faith, consumption choices, or entrepreneurial adaptation. This distinction matters because vulnerability can be politicized as injustice or depoliticized as personal adjustment.

The indicators of vulnerability in discourse include lexical markers of risk, uncertainty, protection, debt, informality, low wages, resilience, and dependency. Nugroho (2026) [5], Hidayatullah (2026) [6], and Wibisono (2026) [30] demonstrate how institutional and political economic language manages uncertainty, legitimacy, and metaphor. Wulandari (2026) [10] and Qosim (2026) [11] show how market communication constructs desire, identity, and participation, while Suaidi (2026) [9] reveals how religious legitimacy can stabilize financial-economic trust. Building on these works, this study positions livelihood as moral grammar: a patterned discourse through which work, dignity, and vulnerability are joined, evaluated, and governed in Indonesian public life.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis is a public discourse item that explicitly addresses work, livelihood, dignity, protection, informality, job loss, wage vulnerability, platform labour, or social assistance in Indonesia. This study uses 24 documents: 13 primary discourse items, 6 contextual documents, and 5 secondary scholarly sources. Primary data consist of official releases, programme pages, public news articles, and institutional pages; contextual data include statistics, legal definitions, and international labour references; secondary data support theoretical interpretation, not empirical coding. Each document was assigned a unique code, source category, date, worker group, actor, URL, topic focus, and verification note to ensure traceability and prevent unsupported claims.

Table 1. Dataset composition

Code	Data Type	Source	Location	Period	Number	Characteristics	Status
MGL-ID-PRI-001	Primary	Kemnaker	Indonesia	2026	1	BPU protection, JKK-JKM, platform workers	Coded
MGL-ID-PRI-002–004	Primary	JKP, BPJS, Kemnaker	Indonesia	2025–2026	3	Job-loss security, wage subsidy, worker protection	Coded
MGL-ID-PRI-007–013	Primary	ANTARA	Indonesia	2025–2026	7	Informal work, gig work, decent work, regulation	Coded
MGL-ID-PRI-	Primary	ANTARA Megapolitan	West Java	2025	1	Provincial informal-worker	Coded

014						protection	
MGL-ID-PRI-015	Primary	BAZNAS	Indonesia	Accessed 2026	1	Humanitarian assistance and vulnerable livelihoods	Coded
MGL-ID-CTX-005–006	Context	BPS	Indonesia	2025–2026	2	Labour force, wages, employment indicators	Contextual
MGL-ID-CTX-016–017	Context	JDIH Kemenkeu	Indonesia	Accessed 2026	2	Legal definitions of social assistance and labour	Contextual
MGL-ID-CTX-018–019	Context	ILO/ILOSTAT	Global/Indonesia	Accessed 2026	2	Informal economy and decent-work indicators	Contextual
MGL-ID-SEC-020–024	Secondary	Academic journals	Indonesia/comparative	2019–2023	5	Gig work, precarity, recognition, dignity	Secondary

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant corpus-assisted critical discourse design. This design is appropriate because the research object is not worker experience itself, but public language through which work, dignity, and vulnerability are represented. Corpus-assisted procedures organize recurrent lexical fields and comparable categories, while critical discourse analysis interprets how moral value, responsibility, and vulnerability are distributed across texts. This design permits claims about representation, framing, and discourse patterning, but not causal claims about public opinion, policy impact, or worker behaviour. The analytical orientation follows recent Indonesian economic discourse studies and broader scholarship on precarity, dignity, and moral economy.

Information sources were selected from public, attributable, and verifiable channels. Official sources include Kemnaker, JKP, BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, BPS, JDIH Kemenkeu, BAZNAS, ILO, and ILOSTAT. Media sources were drawn from ANTARA because its articles are public, date-stamped, institutionally attributable, and relevant to national and regional discourse on informal and gig labour. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed scholarship on Indonesian gig work, precarity, spiritual survival, vulnerability, and dignity. These sources were separated analytically: primary data were coded as discourse evidence, contextual data were used to interpret institutional and statistical background, and secondary literature was used only to refine concepts and discussion.

Data were collected through targeted searches using Indonesian and English keywords, including pekerja informal, pekerja rentan, kerja layak, martabat kerja, penghidupan, upah, pekerja gig, ojol, kurir, BPU, jaminan sosial, PHK, JKP, BSU, risiko sosial, bantuan sosial, informal workers, decent work, livelihood vulnerability, and platform labour. The period was set from January 2025 to July 2026, with selected contextual and secondary sources retained when conceptually necessary. Duplicate checking used URL, title, date, and institution keys. Text, selected quotation, context, title, date, source, link, actor, visual description, transcript, and screenshot reference fields were stored in one Excel workbook.

Data analysis proceeded through three linked tools. First, moral grammar frame analysis coded how livelihood was made meaningful through responsibility, sacrifice, recognition, protection, care, productivity, dignity, or deservingness. Second, vulnerability–dignity alignment compared whether informality, low wages, job loss, and platform precarity were attached to rights, recognition, adaptation, or normalization. Third, actor-responsibility mapping identified how responsibility was assigned to state institutions, platforms, legal actors, media, faith-based organizations, workers, or international norms. Each stage separated description from interpretation, used the same document codes, and retained category consistency across tables, figures, and narrative analysis.

Table 2. Information source and analytical function

Source Group	Examples	Function in this Study	Analytical Boundary
Government and programme sources	Kemnaker, JKP, BPJS	Identify official protection, welfare, and work-security language	Not treated as policy effectiveness evidence
Statistical and legal context	BPS, JDIH Kemenkeu	Provide labour-market and definitional background	Not coded as moral discourse unless evaluative language appears
Public media discourse	ANTARA national/regional pages	Capture public framing of informal and gig work	Not treated as worker testimony unless directly quoted
Faith-based institutional discourse	BAZNAS	Examine care, assistance, and moral obligation	Not generalized to all religious welfare discourse
International labour references	ILO, ILOSTAT	Provide decent-work and informality context	Used as normative/contextual reference
Scholarly literature	Putri et al.; Yasih; Rakhmani and Utomo; Valenzuela et al.; Hamilton et al.	Support theoretical interpretation	Not merged with primary corpus counts

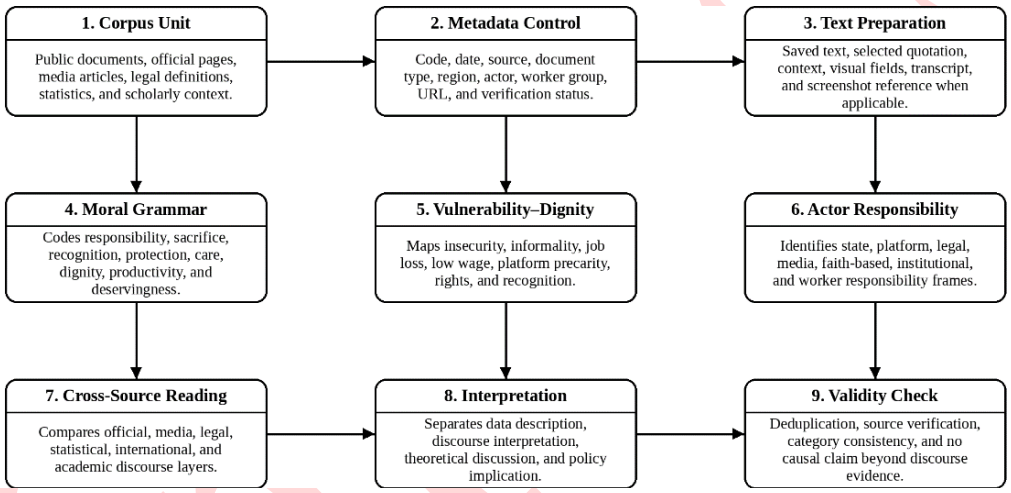


Figure 1. Operational matrix of analysis

4. RESULTS

4.1. Moral grammars of livelihood in Indonesian public discourse

Indonesian public discourse in this corpus organizes livelihood through five moral grammars: decent work, protection, contribution, measurement, and care. The distribution shows that work is rarely framed as income alone; it is repeatedly attached to evaluative vocabularies of protection, proper livelihood, social contribution, and vulnerability management. The strongest pattern appears in decent-work language, followed by protection-as-duty, indicating that public discourse tends to judge livelihood through normative standards rather than through purely descriptive employment categories. This pattern is consistent with Indonesian economic-discourse scholarship that reads public language as a site where inequality, labour risk, institutional authority, and financial-economic legitimacy are made socially intelligible [3], [4], [12], [8].

Table 3. Moral grammars of livelihood in Indonesian public discourse

Main category	Subcategory	Linguistic indicator	Primary data	Context data	Frequency	Percentage	Data variation	Example quotation	Data code
Moral valuation of livelihood	Decent-work norm	Public language evaluates livelihood through decent-work benchmarks	4	3	7	36.84%	Media, legal, and international labour-context sources	“tantangan kerja layak pekerja informal”	MGL-ID-PRI-008; MGL-ID-PRI-009;

									MGL-ID-PRI-012; MGL-ID-PRI-014; MGL-ID-CTX-016; MGL-ID-CTX-018; MGL-ID-CTX-019
Moral valuation of livelihood	Protection-as-duty	State or institution presents worker protection as public responsibility	6	0	6	31.58%	Government, programme, and public media items	“pekerja tidak hanya mendapatkan iuran yang lebih ringan, tetapi juga tetap memperoleh perlindungan yang optimal”	MGL-ID-PRI-001; MGL-ID-PRI-002; MGL-ID-PRI-003; MGL-ID-PRI-004; MGL-ID-PRI-007; MGL-ID-PRI-010
Moral valuation of livelihood	Recognition-of-contribution	Worker value is asserted through contribution, occupation naming, or rights status	2	1	3	15.79%	Media discourse and legal-definition context	“penggerak perekonomian lokal dan nasional”	MGL-ID-PRI-011; MGL-ID-PRI-013; MGL-ID-CTX-017
Moral valuation of livelihood	Measurement-as-governance	Worker condition is rendered as count, percentage, threshold, or indicator	0	2	2	10.53%	Statistical labour-market releases	“pekerja informal meningkat dari 86,58 juta orang menjadi 87,74 juta orang”	MGL-ID-CTX-005; MGL-ID-CTX-006
Moral valuation of livelihood	Care-and-obligation	Vulnerability is articulated through charity, mustahik status, or basic-needs support	1	0	1	5.26%	Faith-based welfare communication	“Pekerja harian”	MGL-ID-PRI-015

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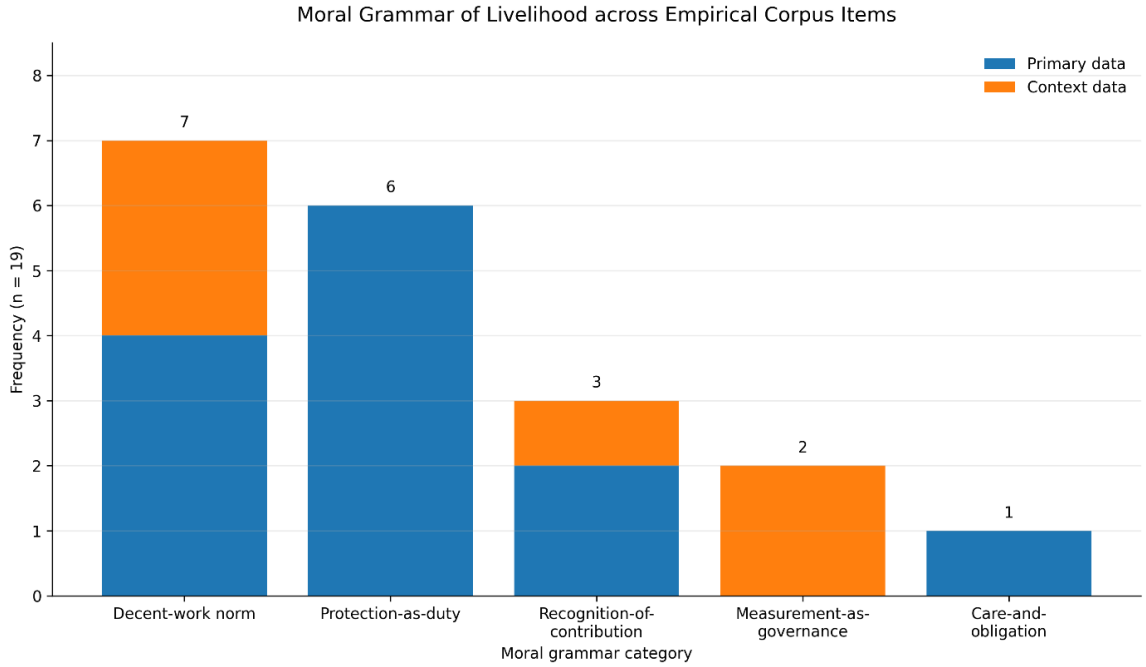


Figure 2. Stacked bar chart of moral grammar categories

The dominant pattern is the pairing of decent-work language with protection-oriented discourse. Seven items, or 36.84%, construct livelihood through decent-work norms, while six items, or 31.58%, present protection as an institutional duty. The phrase "tantangan kerja layak pekerja informal" positions informal work as a normative problem, not merely a labour-market category, whereas "tetap memperoleh perlindungan yang optimal" frames worker vulnerability as something requiring state-backed protection. A smaller but significant pattern appears in contribution language, especially in "penggerak perekonomian lokal dan nasional," which recognizes vulnerable workers through their economic usefulness. Statistical items, by contrast, translate vulnerability into indicators, as seen in "pekerja informal meningkat dari 86,58 juta orang menjadi 87,74 juta orang."

The distribution suggests that Indonesian livelihood discourse works through moral ambivalence. Dignity is made visible when workers are described as deserving protection, decent work, and recognition, yet vulnerability can also be softened when insecurity is translated into resilience, contribution, or administrative eligibility. This supports Hamilton et al.'s [23] account of dignity as discursively negotiated in low-status work, while also resonating with Valenzuela et al.'s [24] argument that vulnerability in precarious labour is marked by ambivalent recognition. In Indonesian debates on gig work and informality, this moral grammar aligns with Wahid's (2026) [12] analysis of entrepreneurial subjectivity and Yasih's [20] work on normalized precarity. This study therefore reads livelihood discourse as a moral mechanism that both recognizes and manages economic vulnerability.

4.2. Vulnerability dignity alignment in livelihood discourse

Indonesian livelihood discourse links vulnerability and dignity through six alignments: informality, protection, job loss, platform labour, labour measurement, and daily survival. The largest category is informality as a decent-work deficit, followed by protection as a rights response. This distribution indicates that vulnerability is not represented only as deprivation, but as a condition requiring recognition, classification, and institutional response. Public discourse therefore does not simply name workers as poor or insecure; it places them within evaluative categories that determine whether they appear as protected citizens, informal labourers, platform workers, statistical subjects, or recipients of care. This pattern extends Hadziqi's (2026) concern with inequality discourse and Wahid's (2026) account of platform precarity.

Table 4. Vulnerability–dignity alignment in livelihood discourse

Vulnerability domain	Dignity alignment	Discursive indicator	Primary data	Context data	Frequency	Percentage	Data variation	Example quotation	Data code
Informality	Informality is framed as a decent-work deficit requiring	Informal work, decent work, unprotected workers,	4	2	6	31.58%	Media articles, regional discourse, ILO/ILOSTAT context	"tantangan kerja layak pekerja informal"	MGL-ID-PRI-008; MGL-

	recognition and protection	labour challenge							ID-PRI-009; MGL-ID-PRI-012; MGL-ID-PRI-014; MGL-ID-CTX-018; MGL-ID-CTX-019
Social protection	Worker dignity is attached to access to public protection and benefit schemes	Protection, insurance, subsidy, job-loss security, contribution relief	5	0	5	26.32%	Kemnaker, JKP, BPJS, public programme discourse	“tetap memperoleh perlindungan yang optimal”	MGL-ID-PRI-001; MGL-ID-PRI-002; MGL-ID-PRI-003; MGL-ID-PRI-004; MGL-ID-PRI-010
Job loss and income shock	Vulnerability is represented as a managed risk rather than a personal failure	PHK, JKP, wage subsidy, employment shock, household pressure	2	1	3	15.79%	Programme discourse, public media, statistical/legal context	“jaminan kehilangan pekerjaan”	MGL-ID-PRI-002; MGL-ID-PRI-004; MGL-ID-CTX-016
Platform labour	Platform work is recognized as livelihood but marked by weak security and mediated responsibility	Gig work, ojol, courier, platform, flexible work, risk	1	1	2	10.53%	Media item and contextual labour classification	“pekerja platform”	MGL-ID-PRI-007; MGL-ID-CTX-017
Wage and labour measurement	Vulnerability is translated into measurable labour-market indicators	Wage, labour force, employment rate, informal-worker count	0	2	2	10.53%	BPS statistical releases	“pekerja informal meningkat dari 86,58 juta orang menjadi 87,74 juta orang”	MGL-ID-CTX-005; MGL-ID-CTX-006
Daily survival	Dignity is approached through humanitarian care and basic-needs support	Daily worker, mustahik, aid, livelihood assistance	1	0	1	5.26%	Faith-based welfare communication	“Pekerja harian”	MGL-ID-PRI-015

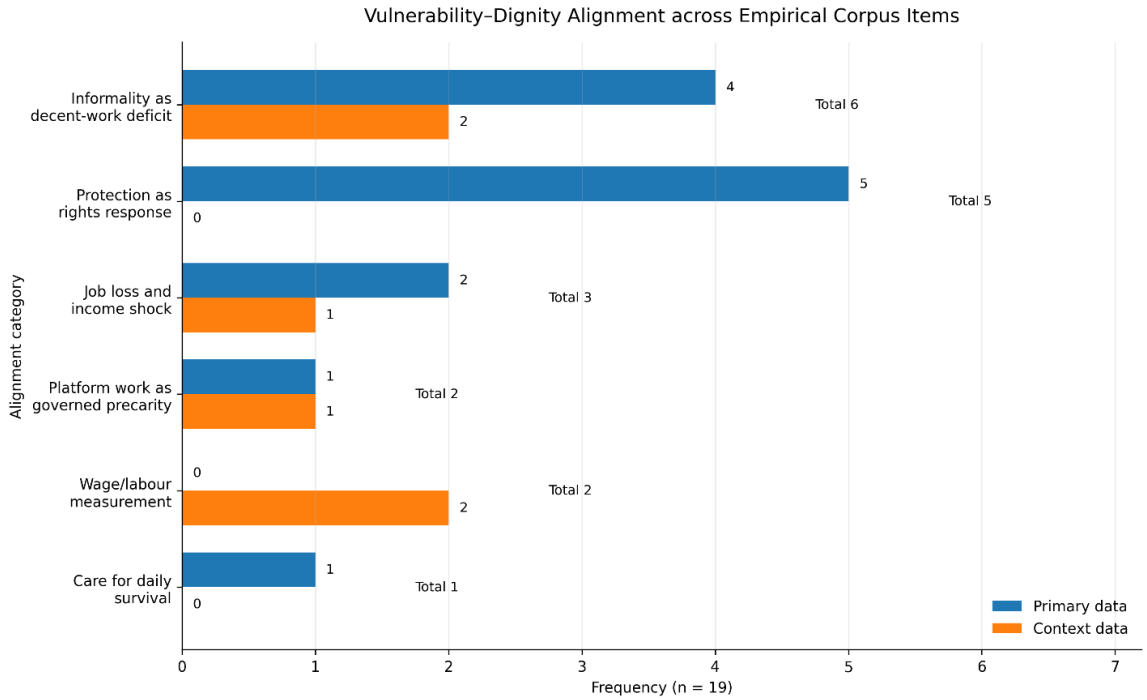


Figure 3. Grouped bar chart of vulnerability–dignity alignment

The dominant pattern is the association between informality and decent work, which appears in 6 items or 31.58% of the empirical corpus. Phrases such as "tantangan kerja layak pekerja informal" explicitly join vulnerability to a normative standard of proper work. Protection language follows closely with 5 items or 26.32%, especially through statements such as "tetap memperoleh perlindungan yang optimal," where dignity is articulated through access to institutional security. Job-loss discourse appears as managed insecurity through "jaminan kehilangan pekerjaan," while statistical context transforms vulnerability into countable labour categories, as seen in "pekerja informal meningkat dari 86,58 juta orang menjadi 87,74 juta orang." The pattern is descriptive but morally loaded.

This alignment shows that dignity in Indonesian public discourse is neither purely symbolic nor fully rights-based. It emerges through a negotiated vocabulary in which workers are dignified when their vulnerability can be administratively recognized, normatively classified, or morally cared for. This reading is consistent with Hamilton et al.'s [23] argument that dignity in low-status work is discursively produced, and with Valenzuela et al.'s [24] view that vulnerability in precarious work involves ambivalent recognition. In Indonesian contexts, this also resonates with Putri et al. [21] on gig-worker fairness and Yasih [20] on normalized precarity. This study therefore treats dignity as a discourse of recognition that can expose vulnerability while simultaneously managing its political force.

4.3. Actor–responsibility mapping in livelihood discourse

Responsibility for livelihood vulnerability is distributed across institutional, media, legal-statistical, market, international, and faith-based actors. The largest share is assigned to state institutions, indicating that public discourse most frequently makes vulnerability intelligible through protection, programme access, and social-security language. Media discourse follows as a second major actor because it does not merely report precarious livelihood, but frames informal and vulnerable work as a public issue requiring recognition. Legal-statistical institutions make workers visible through classification, while platform, international, and faith-based actors contribute narrower but analytically significant responsibility frames. This distribution is consistent with Indonesian economic-discourse studies that show how institutional, market, and moral vocabularies organize public understandings of inequality, risk, and legitimacy.

Table 5. Actor–responsibility mapping in livelihood discourse

Responsibility actor	Dominant responsibility frame	Discursive function	Primary data	Context data	Frequency	Percentage	Data variation	Example quotation	Data code
State institutions	State as guarantor of worker	Converts vulnerability into	6	0	6	31.58%	Kemnaker, JKP, BPJS, regional	"tetap memperoleh perlindungan	MGL-ID-PRI-

	protection	entitlement, programme access, or public labour protection				protection discourse	yang optimal"	001; MGL-ID-PRI-002; MGL-ID-PRI-003; MGL-ID-PRI-004; MGL-ID-PRI-010; MGL-ID-PRI-014
Public media	Media as public problem-framer	Makes informal and vulnerable work visible as an issue of decent livelihood	4	0	4	21.05%	ANTARA public discourse on informal work and labour vulnerability	"tantangan kerja layak pekerja informal"	MGL-ID-PRI-008; MGL-ID-PRI-009; MGL-ID-PRI-012; MGL-ID-PRI-013
Legal-statistical institutions	Vulnerability as classified and measurable condition	Defines workers, assistance, wages, labour status, and social-risk categories	0	4	4	21.05%	BPS labour indicators and JDIH legal definitions	"pekerja informal meningkat dari 86,58 juta orang menjadi 87,74 juta orang"	MGL-ID-CTX-005; MGL-ID-CTX-006; MGL-ID-CTX-016; MGL-ID-CTX-017
Market and platform actors	Platform work as mediated livelihood governance	Frames gig work and platform-mediated income as livelihood requiring regulation and recognition	2	0	2	10.53%	Media discourse on platform workers and local economic contribution	"pekerja platform"	MGL-ID-PRI-007; MGL-ID-PRI-011
International labour norms	Decent work and informality as normative benchmark	Supplies comparative language for evaluating informality, protection, and decent work	0	2	2	10.53%	ILO and ILOSTAT contextual labour references	"informal economy"	MGL-ID-CTX-018; MGL-ID-CTX-019
Faith-based welfare actor	Moral care for vulnerable livelihood	Frames daily survival through aid,	1	0	1	5.26%	BAZNAS welfare communication	"Pekerja harian"	MGL-ID-PRI-

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	obligation, and basic-needs support	015

Figure 5. Actor–Responsibility Mapping in Livelihood Discourse

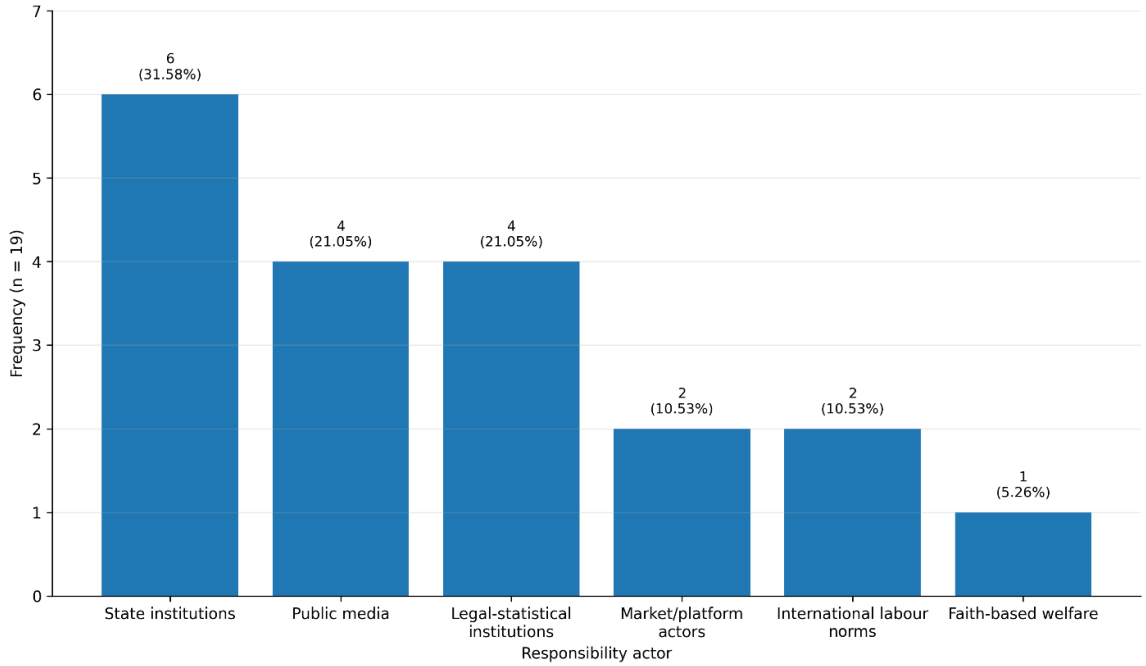


Figure 4. Actor-responsibility mapping in livelihood discourse

The dominant pattern is state-centred responsibility, appearing in 6 items or 31.58% of the empirical corpus. The phrase "tetap memperoleh perlindungan yang optimal" positions livelihood vulnerability as something that should be answered through institutional protection, not only personal adaptation. Media items, which account for 21.05%, foreground public problematization through expressions such as "tantangan kerja layak pekerja informal." Legal-statistical documents also account for 21.05%, but their discourse works differently: "pekerja informal meningkat dari 86,58 juta orang menjadi 87,74 juta orang" translates vulnerability into measurable labour categories. Smaller frames appear in platform-related discourse through "pekerja platform" and in faith-based welfare through "Pekerja harian," indicating different routes of recognition.

This mapping shows that Indonesian public discourse does not locate livelihood vulnerability in a single moral agent. Responsibility is dispersed across protection, visibility, classification, regulation, norm-setting, and care. Such dispersion matters because it can widen recognition, but it can also fragment accountability: workers may be acknowledged by state programmes, counted by statistical systems, represented by media, regulated by platforms, and assisted by welfare actors without any single discourse fully naming structural responsibility. This finding extends Wahid's (2026) [12] analysis of platform precarity, Santoso's (2026) [8] critique of risk-obscuring inclusion, and Hadziqi's (2026) [3] concern with inequality discourse. It also resonates with scholarship on dignity, precarity, and moral economy in the uploaded reference corpus.

5. DISCUSSION

The first pattern shows that Indonesian public discourse gives livelihood a moral shape before it gives it a purely economic explanation. Work appears through grammars of decent work, protection, contribution, measurement, and care, which means that economic vulnerability becomes publicly legible only when attached to value-laden categories. This has an important function: it prevents vulnerable workers from appearing merely as numbers or passive recipients of assistance. By naming work as decent, protected, socially useful, or morally deserving, public discourse can expand recognition and make labour insecurity discussable in ethical terms. Yet this same grammar also has a dysfunction. When hardship is translated into endurance, resilience, contribution, or care, structural insecurity may become morally softened. This finding extends Hadziqi's [3] account of inequality discourse and Wahid's [12] analysis of platform precarity by

showing that vulnerability is not only represented, but ethically organized. This study therefore suggests that dignity discourse can humanize workers while partially containing political critique.

The prominence of decent-work and protection language is not accidental; it reflects a deeper institutional structure in which labour vulnerability must pass through recognizable moral and administrative vocabularies before it becomes actionable. Public discourse tends to favour categories that can be governed: protection schemes, decent-work standards, welfare eligibility, statistical indicators, and institutional responsibility. This helps explain why livelihood is rarely framed as raw deprivation alone. It is instead translated into concepts that allow state, media, legal, and welfare actors to speak about vulnerability without necessarily confronting its full structural production. This pattern resonates with Yuliyana's [4] work on uncertainty governance and Nugroho's [5] account of institutional economic language, where public communication manages instability by converting it into orderly categories. It also differs from more market-facing analyses such as Wulandari [10] and Qosim [11], where economic language often organizes desire and identity. Here, moral grammar functions as a bridge between insecurity and governability.

The second pattern alignment between vulnerability and dignity—matters because it shows that recognition does not always mean emancipation. Informal workers, platform workers, job-loss victims, and daily labourers are not made visible in one uniform way; they are recognized through different combinations of risk, rights, protection, contribution, and care. This is productive when it challenges narratives that treat precarious workers as marginal, unskilled, or undeserving. It is dysfunctional when recognition depends on workers first being classified as vulnerable, informal, eligible, or morally worthy. In that sense, dignity is conditional rather than universal. Hamilton et al.'s work on dignity in low-status labour helps explain this ambivalence: workers can be publicly honoured while still positioned within unequal structures. Valenzuela et al. similarly show that vulnerability in precarious work involves recognition and misrecognition at once. This study therefore interprets dignity as a contested discourse, not a stable moral achievement.

The underlying structure of this alignment lies in Indonesia's mixed moral economy of labour, where state protection, household responsibility, religious care, market adaptation, and informal survival intersect. Vulnerability is not attributed to one system alone; it is distributed across employment status, social security access, platform mediation, wage measurement, and welfare classification. This helps explain why public discourse can simultaneously affirm workers' dignity and avoid a stronger language of labour rights. The finding supports Putri et al.'s [21] discussion of fairness among gig workers and Yasih's [20] account of normalized precarity, where flexibility and survival coexist with limited security. It also speaks to Rakhmani and Utomo's [18] analysis of spiritual survival in precarious times: moral and religious vocabularies can help people endure insecurity, but they may also make endurance appear socially expected. Thus, dignity becomes a practical language for living with vulnerability, not necessarily overcoming it.

The third pattern, responsibility mapping, shows that livelihood vulnerability is made meaningful through dispersed accountability. State institutions appear as protectors, media as problem-framers, legal-statistical bodies as classifiers, platforms as livelihood mediators, international organizations as normative references, and faith-based actors as moral caregivers. This distribution has a useful function because it widens the field of recognition: vulnerability is not hidden within households or individual failure, but circulated across public institutions. However, dispersed responsibility also creates dysfunction. When many actors partially recognize vulnerability, no single actor is necessarily positioned as fully accountable for its structural reproduction. Santoso's [8] critique of financial inclusion discourse is relevant here: access-oriented language may acknowledge need while obscuring risk. Sumadi's [7] analysis of microfinance campaigns and Suaidi's [9] work on Sharia-compliant fintech similarly show that moral and institutional legitimacy can authorize economic participation without fully resolving exposure to vulnerability. Responsibility therefore becomes visible but fragmented.

This fragmentation reflects a broader structure of Indonesian public discourse in which livelihood is governed through overlapping regimes: welfare administration, labour regulation, statistical classification, platform capitalism, public morality, and religious care. These regimes do not simply contradict each other; they cooperate discursively by making vulnerable work speakable in manageable terms. Hidayatullah's [6] work on predictive economic language and Wibisono's [30] analysis of economic metaphors help clarify how economic authority is produced through language, while Vel and Warren's [19] discussion of state welfare and moral economy shows that protection in Indonesia often sits between formal institutions and social obligation. This study's contribution is to locate work, dignity, and vulnerability inside that overlap. It does not claim that public discourse causes precarity, nor that moral language is inherently repressive. Rather, it shows that moral grammar is a mechanism through which precarious livelihood becomes recognized, valued, classified, and governed at once.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian public discourse constructs livelihood through a moral grammar in which work, dignity, and economic vulnerability are joined rather than treated as separate

domains. Its most important lesson is that public language can dignify vulnerable workers while also making insecurity appear manageable, ordinary, or morally acceptable. By combining corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, moral grammar frame analysis, vulnerability–dignity alignment, and actor–responsibility mapping, this study updates research on Indonesian economic discourse from a focus on inequality representation toward a sharper account of how livelihood is ethically evaluated, institutionally classified, and politically governed in public communication.

Several limitations require careful acknowledgement. This study relies on public institutional, media, contextual, and scholarly discourse, so it cannot represent workers' lived experiences, private negotiations, or audience reception. Its design also supports interpretive claims about framing and representation, not causal claims about policy effects or behavioural change. Future research should therefore combine discourse analysis with interviews, ethnography, platform-worker narratives, or reception studies to examine how vulnerable workers accept, resist, or reinterpret moral vocabularies of livelihood. Comparative research across regions, sectors, gendered labour groups, and platform economies would further clarify how dignity and vulnerability are differently articulated across Indonesian social life.

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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 official, media, institutional, and scholarly materials from Indonesian and international sources.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible official, media, institutional, and scholarly materials from Indonesian and international sources, 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 official, media, institutional, and scholarly materials analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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