



The Trust–Adaptation Equilibrium: Food Price Instability, Consumer Adaptation, and Institutional Trust in Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines shifts in the configuration of religious authority within Indonesia's contemporary Islamic economy through the Critical Discourse Analysis framework developed by Norman Fairclough. By analyzing fatwas issued by the National Sharia Council of the Indonesian Council of *Ulamā* (DSN MUI), the study demonstrates that fatwas now operate as discursive arenas in which religious norms, state rationalities, and market interests intersect. Within the context of expanding sharia financialization, the *ulamā* appear as key actors in conferring legitimacy on financial instruments, regulatory policies, and economic development agendas. The analysis shows how *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* is rearticulated in technocratic language, alongside the fragmentation of religious authority following the emergence of new actors such as sharia consultants, fintech platforms, and halal market intermediaries. These dynamics do not fully eliminate tension. Ethical caution, semantic ambiguity, and practices of delayed legitimization signal the persistence of discursive resistance within fatwas themselves, sustaining their function as spaces of contestation. By approaching fatwas as fields of negotiation rather than instruments of stabilization, this article contributes to Islamic economic studies through an emphasis on power relations, discursive production, and the possibility of slow resistance within institutionalized religious authority.

Keywords: Food Price Instability, Behavioral Adaptation, Institutional Trust, Supply Chain Inefficiency.

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Introduction

Food price instability has increasingly become one of the most visible and politically sensitive manifestations of economic stress in emerging economies¹. While

¹ M. Chaeroel Ansar, "Comparative Study of Social Welfare Programme Effectiveness Perception in Peri-Urban and Rural in Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development* 36, no. 1 (2026): 95–112.



macroeconomic indicators often frame inflation in aggregate terms, the lived experience of price volatility is most acutely felt at the household level², where even marginal increases in food costs can alter consumption patterns, nutritional choices, and financial stability³. In contexts such as Indonesia, where food expenditure constitutes a substantial share of household budgets,⁴ fluctuations in food prices are not merely economic signals but deeply social phenomena that shape everyday decision-making.⁵ The scholarly discourse on food price instability has long been dominated by macroeconomic explanations that prioritize aggregate supply–demand imbalances,⁶ global commodity cycles, and monetary policy responses. Foundational studies in this domain conceptualize price volatility as an outcome of exogenous shocks, including fluctuations in international markets, currency depreciation,⁷ and climate-induced production variability. While these perspectives have contributed significantly to understanding systemic drivers,⁸ they tend to abstract away from the lived realities of individuals who experience price changes in immediate and often disruptive ways. This abstraction raises a fundamental limitation: macro-level models may explain why prices fluctuate, but they do not adequately capture how such fluctuations are perceived, interpreted, and acted upon at the micro level.⁹ In addition, recent scholarship has begun to challenge this orthodoxy by emphasizing the need to integrate behavioral and perceptual dimensions into the analysis of price instability.¹⁰ Rather than treating consumers as passive recipients of market signals, these studies argue that individuals actively construct their understanding of economic conditions through cognitive and experiential processes.¹¹ This shift in perspective repositions food price instability as not merely an economic variable but a socially mediated phenomenon,¹² where perception plays a central role in shaping outcomes. The implication is that price volatility cannot

² A. Saepullah et al., “A Contemporary Socio-Legal Evaluation of Indonesia’s Post-Reformation Child Marriage Policies,” *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2025): 1393–426.

³ N. Uyar and A. Uyar, “Assessing Climate Change Impacts on Cropland and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Using Remote Sensing and Machine Learning,” *Atmosphere* 16, no. 4 (2025): 1–25.

⁴ M. Tarique and Z. Malik, “Asymmetric Impact of Digital Finance on Poverty and Income Inequality Using NARDL Approach: Evidence from Indonesia,” *Journal of the Knowledge Economy* 16, no. 5 (2025): 16211–36.

⁵ A. Aswi et al., “Bayesian Spatio-Temporal Conditional Autoregressive Localized Modeling Techniques for Socioeconomic Factors and Stunting in Indonesia,” *MethodsX* 15 (2025): 1–12.

⁶ N. N. Zhanakova et al., “The Current State and Ways to Increase the Real Income of the Population of Kazakhstan,” *Economy: Strategy and Practice* 19, no. 2 (2024): 123–39.

⁷ E. Ouassou and P. Tamasiga, “Food Price Shock Transmission Through SME Exporting Networks: A Bayesian GVAR Approach,” *Global Food Value Chains: An In-Depth Exploration of International Trade Dynamics*, 2026, 167–97.

⁸ W. I. April and L. P. Dana, “Sustainopreneurship Amongst Namibian SMEs Post-Covid-19,” *Digital Transformation in Tourism and Hospitality: Sustainable Management Strategies for Long-Term Excellence*, 2025, 315–30.

⁹ P. Moustier et al., “Priorities for Inclusive Urban Food System Transformations in the Global South,” *Science and Innovations for Food Systems Transformation*, 2023, 281–303.

¹⁰ M. A. Mohamed and A. A. Ahmed, “Assessing the Effects of Macroeconomic Factors on Food Production in Somalia,” *Cogent Food and Agriculture* 12, no. 1 (2026), 1–12.

¹¹ A. Javed, “Benchmarking Econometric, Decomposable Additive, and Neural Network Methods for Food Inflation Prediction Featuring Policy Insights,” *Scientific Reports* 16, no. 1 (2026), 1–37.

¹² G. Mwenjeri et al., “Beyond Eating Cessation: Monte Carlo Analysis of Food Inflation Impacts in Nairobi’s Informal Settlements,” *Journal of the Saudi Society of Agricultural Sciences* 25, no. 1 (2026), 1–8.

be fully understood without examining how it is internalized and translated into behavior.¹³

The intersection of behavioral economics and food price dynamics provides a critical lens through which to examine consumer responses to inflationary pressure.¹⁴ Classical economic theory assumes that individuals respond rationally to price changes by optimizing utility under budget constraints. However, empirical evidence increasingly suggests that such responses are mediated by psychological factors, including loss aversion, risk perception, and bounded rationality.¹⁵ These factors introduce asymmetries in behavior, where individuals may react more strongly to perceived losses than to equivalent gains, thereby amplifying the impact of price increases on consumption patterns.¹⁶ Studies examining household responses to food price shocks consistently demonstrate that consumers engage in a range of adaptive strategies, including reducing consumption, substituting lower-cost alternatives, and altering purchasing frequency.¹⁷ These strategies are not uniform but vary across demographic and socio-economic contexts, reflecting differences in income stability, access to information, and cultural preferences. Importantly, such adaptations are not merely reactive but constitute an ongoing process of adjustment, where individuals continuously recalibrate their behavior in response to evolving economic conditions.¹⁸ Yet, despite this growing body of research, a significant gap remains in linking behavioral adaptation to broader perceptions of economic stability and institutional performance.¹⁹ While it is well established that individuals adjust their consumption in response to price changes, less attention has been given to how these adjustments coexist with perceptions of policy effectiveness and trust in governance structures.²⁰ This gap is particularly pronounced in developing economies, where structural inefficiencies complicate the relationship between market dynamics and policy interventions.

The concept of perceived stability introduces a critical dimension to the analysis of food price dynamics.²¹ Stability, in this context, is not an objective condition but a subjective assessment shaped by individual experience and social context.²² Two households exposed to similar price environments may arrive at different conclusions

¹³ R. Kweyu et al., "Climate Change and Food Insecurity: Perspectives from Kalama in Machakos County, Kenya," *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 10 (2026), 1-17.

¹⁴ F. Martins and J. Quelhas, "Consumer Price-Setting Behaviour: Evidence from Food CPI Microdata," *Macroeconomic Dynamics* 30 (2026), 1-14.

¹⁵ R. L. Aor and A. A. Salisu, "Disaggregated Economic Complexity and Inflation in OECD countries," *Buletin Ekonomi Moneter Dan Perbankan/Monetary and Banking Economics Bulletin* 29, no. 1 (2026): 53-76.

¹⁶ A. B. H. Aurélien, "Do Climate Change and Food Price Volatility Influence Political Instability? Evidence from African Countries," *Journal of the Knowledge Economy* 17, no. 2 (2026): 5273-311.

¹⁷ A. D. Nugroho, "Does International Food Assistance Reduces Food Insecurity in Developing Countries?," *Agris On-Line Papers in Economics and Informatics* 3, no. September (2026): 63-72.

¹⁸ K. Sundar et al., "Enhanced Food Inflation Forecasting: An Implementation Analysis of Decision Tree Forest and Random Forest Algorithms," 2653 *CCIS* (2026): 336-52.

¹⁹ J. Pawłowska-Tyszko and J. Drożdż, "Financialisation of Food Industry Enterprises," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 18, no. 2 (2026).

²⁰ M. Kang and S. Lee, "Food Inflation Pass-through from Agricultural Imports in a Small Open Economy," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, ahead of print, 2026.

²¹ Z. Hu et al., "Food Price Inflation and Gender Inequality in Developing Countries," *International Economics and Economic Policy* 23, no. 1 (2026).

²² P. T. N'ouéni et al., "Food Price Instability and Adaptation Strategies of Urban Households: An Empirical Analysis Based on the Perception of Market Actors in Grand Lomé, Togo," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 18, no. 3 (2026).

regarding stability, depending on their expectations, prior experiences, and access to information.²³ This divergence underscores the importance of perception as a variable that influences both behavior and evaluation of economic conditions. Scholars have increasingly argued that perception acts as a mediating mechanism between objective economic indicators and individual response.²⁴ In the context of food prices, perceived instability may intensify the psychological impact of price increases, leading to stronger behavioral adjustments even when actual changes are moderate.²⁵ Conversely, perceived stability may dampen responses, creating a lag between objective conditions and behavioral adaptation. This dynamic suggests that perception is not merely reflective but constitutive of economic experience.²⁶ Moreover, the role of perception extends beyond individual behavior to influence collective outcomes. When large segments of the population perceive instability, their aggregated responses can reinforce market volatility, creating feedback loops that perpetuate the very conditions they respond to.²⁷ This interplay between perception and market dynamics highlights the need for analytical frameworks that integrate subjective and objective dimensions of price instability.²⁸ The relationship between economic instability and institutional trust has been a central concern in political economy and development studies.²⁹ Conventional theories posit that effective governance and stable economic conditions reinforce trust, while persistent volatility and policy failure erode it.³⁰ However, empirical findings from various developing contexts complicate this narrative, suggesting that trust may exhibit a degree of resilience even under adverse economic conditions.³¹

Several studies have documented cases where populations maintain confidence in government institutions despite experiencing inflation, unemployment, or other forms of economic stress.³² This resilience has been attributed to factors such as historical legitimacy, cultural norms, and expectations of future policy effectiveness.³³ In such contexts, trust is not solely contingent on immediate outcomes but is embedded within broader socio-political frameworks that shape how individuals interpret policy actions.³⁴

²³ E. Ouassou and P. Tamasiga, "Food Price Shock Transmission Through SME Exporting Networks: A Bayesian GVAR Approach," *Global Food Value Chains: An In-Depth Exploration of International Trade Dynamics*, 2026, 167–97.

²⁴ I. L. Nogueira et al., "Geopolitical Risk and Food Inflation," *Thunderbird International Business Review* 68, no. 2 (2026): 165–76.

²⁵ M. Balcilar and O. Usman, "Global Energy Market Uncertainty and Exchange Rate Pass-Through to Food Inflation," *Energy Research Letters* 7 (2026).

²⁶ M. Shabanzadeh-Khoshrody et al., "Government Policies in Managing Food Price Anomalies: Evidence from Iran," *Journal of Policy Modeling* 48, no. 1 (2026): 73–88.

²⁷ L. Maruejols et al., "Gravity With Lasso: Global Cereal Trade With Factors of Conflicts, COVID-19, Currency, China, Climate Change and Income ('6C')," *World Economy* 49, no. 2 (2026): 346–72.

²⁸ P. P. Chalise, "Household-Level Food Price Inflation Heterogeneity: Evidence and Insights From the U.S. Consumer Panel Data (2013–2023)," *Agribusiness*, ahead of print, 2026.

²⁹ E. H. Lee et al., "Adoption of Public Transport among Malaysian University Students: Extending the Technology Acceptance Model with Trust in Government," *Urban Lifeline* 4, no. 1 (2026).

³⁰ P. Janmaimool et al., "An Integrative Model of Public Sphere Environmental Behaviors: The Association between Motivational and Socio-Political Factors," *Global Transitions* 8, no. 1 (2026): 129–43.

³¹ M. J. Costa et al., "A Systematic Review of Food Business Operators' Perceptions Regarding Food Fraud," *Trends in Food Science and Technology* 172 (2026).

³² Y. Hu et al., "Analysis of the Characteristics of Parents' Reasons for Refusing HPV Vaccination for Their Daughters: A Cross-Sectional Study," *BMC Public Health* 26, no. 1 (2026).

³³ F. Dal Mas et al., "Artificial Intelligence in Trauma and Emergency Surgery: A Quantitative Study of Perceived Technology Acceptance," *Technovation* 154 (2026).

³⁴ R. Kapel Lev-ari et al., "Betrayal as Consequence and Catalyst: Longitudinal and Reciprocal Relations with PTSD and Depression during Ongoing Conflict," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 406 (2026).

Rather than acting as a simple moderating factor that dampens negative responses, trust may coexist with adaptive behavior, enabling individuals to navigate economic challenges without withdrawing support from institutional structures.³⁵ This perspective challenges the binary view of trust as either present or absent, suggesting instead that it operates along a continuum influenced by multiple interacting factors.³⁶ Beyond behavioral and perceptual dimensions, the literature on food price instability increasingly emphasizes the role of structural inefficiencies in shaping market outcomes. In many developing economies, food systems are characterized by fragmented supply chains, inadequate infrastructure, and high transaction costs. These structural constraints introduce inefficiencies that amplify price volatility, independent of global market conditions.³⁷ Research on agricultural supply chains has consistently highlighted the impact of logistical challenges on price formation. In geographically complex settings, such as archipelagic nations, the cost and time associated with transporting goods can lead to significant regional disparities in prices. Limited storage capacity and weak market integration further exacerbate these disparities, resulting in frequent and unpredictable fluctuations.³⁸ Such conditions create an environment in which price instability becomes a persistent feature rather than an occasional disruption.

The political economy dimension of these structural issues cannot be overlooked. Policy interventions aimed at stabilizing prices often focus on short-term measures, such as subsidies or price controls, without addressing underlying inefficiencies.³⁹ While these measures may provide temporary relief, they do not resolve the systemic constraints that drive volatility.⁴⁰ As a result, the effectiveness of policy interventions remains limited, contributing to a disconnect between institutional efforts and market outcomes.⁴¹ The existing literature, while rich and diverse, remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries. Macroeconomic analyses provide valuable insights into systemic drivers but lack micro-level specificity. Behavioral studies illuminate individual responses but often neglect structural and institutional contexts. Research on institutional trust offers important perspectives on governance but does not fully engage with economic behavior. Similarly, studies of structural inefficiencies identify critical constraints but rarely connect them to perception and adaptation.

This fragmentation underscores the need for an integrated analytical framework that brings together these disparate strands of inquiry. Such a framework must account for the interplay between objective price changes, subjective perception, behavioral adaptation, and structural conditions. It must also recognize that these elements are not

³⁵ Y. He, "Beyond GDP: National Intelligence Quotient as a Catalyst for Sustainable Socioeconomic Welfare," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 13, no. 1 (2026).

³⁶ O. J. Odiase et al., "Building Trust through Collaboration: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of San Francisco's Pregnancy Village Model of Cross-Sector Care Delivery," *Archives of Public Health* 84, no. 1 (2026).

³⁷ M. Usman et al., "Combating Corruption to Fuel Innovation: Evidence from Emerging Economies," *Sustainable Futures* 11 (2026).

³⁸ J. Li et al., "Community Belonging and Grassland Restoration Willingness: Evidence from a Micro-Survey of Herders in Qinghai Province, China," *Environmental and Sustainability Indicators* 30 (2026).

³⁹ R. M. Namata Kamoga et al., "Community Participation in Responding to Health Misinformation," *International Journal for Equity in Health* 25, no. 1 (2026).

⁴⁰ A. B. Adiutomo et al., "Determinants of Public Acceptance of Nuclear Power Plant Reactivation in Taiwan's Energy Transition: A Hybrid DEMATEL-ANP Analysis," *Nuclear Engineering and Technology* 58, no. 7 (2026).

⁴¹ M. Tulokas et al., "Developing Trust in the Collaborative Hospital Construction Projects," *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business* 19, no. 8 (2026): 28–53.

independent but interact in complex ways to shape economic outcomes. However, existing studies have not sufficiently examined how behavioral adaptation and institutional trust simultaneously interact under conditions of perceived food price instability, particularly within developing and faith-informed economic contexts. This study examines the dynamic relationship between food price instability, behavioral adaptation, and institutional trust in the emerging economic context of Central Java, Indonesia, with particular attention to its relevance within a predominantly Muslim society. The present study contributes to this integration by examining food price instability through a mixed-method approach that captures both statistical relationships and contextual explanations. By linking perception, behavior, and structural factors within a single analytical model, it seeks to bridge the gaps identified in the literature and advance a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals and systems respond to economic volatility. In doing so, the study not only builds on existing scholarship but also challenges its underlying assumptions,⁴² particularly regarding the relationship between economic stress and institutional trust.⁴³ The resulting perspective is one that acknowledges complexity, embraces interdisciplinary, and prioritizes the lived experience of economic phenomena as a central component of analysis.⁴⁴

Moving beyond conventional macroeconomic assumptions of linear trust erosion during inflationary periods, the research explores how individuals adjust consumption behaviors while maintaining confidence in public institutions, including those associated with faith-informed economic governance.⁴⁵ Drawing on principles from Islamic economics, such as fairness in distribution (*adl*), social welfare, and ethical market conduct,⁴⁶ the study situates behavioral adaptation within a broader moral-economic framework. The study argues that effective policy responses should move beyond short-term price interventions toward long-term structural reforms in logistics and supply chain coordination, aligned with ethical and equity-oriented principles emphasized in Islamic economic thought. By bridging behavioral, institutional, and normative perspectives, this research contributes a nuanced framework for understanding consumer resilience and trust formation in Muslim-majority developing economies.

Building on the preceding discussion, this study proposes the following hypotheses. First, perceived increases in food prices positively influence household consumption behavior (H1). Second, perceived price instability increases the perceived severity of economic conditions (H2). Third, trust in government policy moderates the relationship between perceived instability and behavioral adaptation (H3). Finally, structural inefficiencies are expected to explain perceived price instability based on qualitative evidence (H4). The contribution of this study lies in its departure from

⁴² A. Wolter et al., "The Structural Violence of Cisgender Norms: A Participatory Qualitative Study of Access to Health and Social Welfare for Older Transgender Women in Indonesia," *International Journal of Transgender Health* 26, no. 4 (2025): 1413–28.

⁴³ J. Ramadhan and I. K. Hayatullah, "Zakat and Waqf Synergies to Accelerating Sustainable Development," *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues* 3, no. 1 (2025): 29–54.

⁴⁴ E. Haycraft et al., "What Is Missing in Our Understanding of Urban Slum Environments and Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition from Publicly Available Data in Asia and the Pacific?," *Maternal and Child Nutrition* 22, no. 1 (2026).

⁴⁵ A. A. Yusuf et al., "The Role of Sukuk Financing In Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction: Empirical Evidence From Selected ASEAN Countries," *Public and Municipal Finance* 14, no. 2 (2025): 42–50.

⁴⁶ T. K. Suvvari, "The Persistent Threat of Tuberculosis – Why Ending TB Remains Elusive?," *Journal of Clinical Tuberculosis and Other Mycobacterial Diseases* 38 (2025).

conventional approaches that treat food price instability as a unidimensional economic issue. By integrating behavioral, perceptual, and structural dimensions into a unified analytical framework, it offers a more comprehensive account of how price volatility is experienced and managed at the micro level. The use of a mixed-method design further enhances this contribution by combining the generalizability of survey data with the contextual richness of qualitative insights.

Research Method

Research Design and Analytical Orientation

This study adopts a rigorously structured mixed-method research design to investigate the dynamics of food price instability, behavioral adaptation, and institutional trust in Central Java. Rather than treating food inflation as a purely macroeconomic phenomenon, the methodological approach is constructed to capture both measurable behavioral responses and the deeper structural explanations embedded in lived economic experience. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence is not merely complementary; it is deliberately aligned to produce analytical triangulation, where statistical patterns are interpreted alongside grounded narratives from market actors. The quantitative component is designed to identify statistically observable associations between perceived price changes, consumption behavior, and trust in government interventions. In parallel, the qualitative component provides explanatory depth by uncovering systemic inefficiencies, particularly those related to distribution chains, production costs, and market coordination. This dual structure ensures that the study moves beyond descriptive inference while remaining cautious in its interpretation of causality, given the cross-sectional nature of the data. In conceptual terms, the design is informed by a behavioral perspective that emphasizes perception and adaptation as central mechanisms linking economic conditions to individual decision-making. This orientation allows the study to explore what may be described as a decoupling dynamic, in which short-term economic stress does not necessarily translate into immediate erosion of institutional trust.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in April 2026 using a structured digital survey instrument distributed across Central Java and adjacent urban regions. The final dataset consists of 240 valid responses after data cleaning and validation. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and compliant with ethical research standards, with respondents providing informed consent prior to participation. The survey instrument was divided into four analytical sections: demographic profiling, experiential indicators of food price changes, behavioral adaptation measures, and perception-based evaluation of policy effectiveness and economic severity. Likert-scale questions were used to quantify subjective perceptions, enabling their integration into statistical models. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 small and medium enterprise (SME) owners aged between 18 and 35. Each interview lasted approximately ten minutes and followed a structured guide focusing on operational costs, supply chain disruptions, pricing strategies, and perceptions of policy interventions. These participants were selected purposively to represent active economic agents within local food and retail

systems, thereby providing insights into the production and distribution side of price formation.

Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

To establish the empirical foundation of the study, the distribution of respondents across demographic and occupational categories is first examined. This provides essential context for interpreting subsequent behavioral and perceptual patterns.

Before presenting the statistical relationships, it is necessary to understand the composition of the dataset, as demographic concentration can influence both perception and behavior.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Respondents (n = 240)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age group	18–24	98	40.8
	25–34	82	34.2
	35+	60	25.0
Occupation	Student	165	68.8
	Employee	40	16.7
	Entrepreneur	25	10.4
	Other	10	4.1

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

The demographic structure indicates a concentration of younger respondents, particularly within the 18–34 age bracket, alongside a dominant representation of students. This composition reflects a specific socio-economic segment rather than a fully representative cross-section of households. While this introduces limitations in generalizing findings to broader household behavior and aggregate market dynamics, the selected group captures a highly responsive and economically adaptive population segment, characterized by frequent consumption decisions, budget sensitivity, and exposure to price fluctuations in daily life. In the context of Central Java, such individuals often play an active role in household consumption choices despite not always being primary income earners. Accordingly, the study positions its findings as reflective of micro-level behavioral adaptation and perception-driven responses to food price instability, rather than a comprehensive representation of all household structures. This focus provides valuable insight into how economically sensitive groups contribute to the formation of broader consumption patterns and trust dynamics.

Measurement of Key Variables

The study operationalizes its variables through structured survey responses. Perceived food price increase is measured as a binary variable indicating whether respondents have experienced rising prices in the last three months. Perceived stability and policy trust are measured using categorical responses, while behavioral adaptation is captured through self-reported changes in consumption patterns. Before examining causal relationships, it is important to establish the baseline distribution of these perceptions and behaviors.

Table 2. Perception and Behavioral Indicators

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Experienced Price Increase	Yes	182	75.8
	No	58	24.2
Perceived Price Stability	Stable	92	38.3
	Unstable	148	61.7
Behavioral Change	Yes	176	73.3
	No	64	26.7
Trust In Government Policy	Yes	158	65.8
	No	82	34.2

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

While these simplified measures enable clear identification of directional trends and facilitate interpretability within a mixed-methods framework, they do not fully capture the gradational complexity of constructs such as perceived instability, adaptive behavior, and institutional trust. Constructs of this nature are often more comprehensively assessed using multi-item Likert-scale instruments that allow for finer distinctions in intensity and attitude. However, the present study prioritizes behavioral triggering and perception thresholds, that is, whether individuals perceive and respond to price changes, rather than the degree of such perceptions. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of rapid price fluctuations in Central Java, where immediate binary reactions (e.g., adapting or not adapting consumption) carry significant analytical value. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as capturing directional behavioral responses and threshold-based trust dynamics, while future research is encouraged to employ validated multi-item Likert scales to better represent the multidimensional and continuous nature of these constructs.

Econometric Model Specification

To formally test the relationships between key variables, the study employs a binary logistic regression model, which is appropriate given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (behavioral adaptation). The objective is to estimate the probability that an individual adjusts consumption behavior in response to perceived price dynamics and institutional trust. The model is specified as:

$$\text{logit}(P(Y_i = 1)) = \ln\left(\frac{P(Y_i=1)}{1-P(Y_i=1)}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_i + \beta_2 S_i + \beta_3 T_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Where Y_i represents behavioral adaptation (1 = adaptation, 0 = no adaptation), P_i denotes perceived price increase, S_i captures perceived price stability, and T_i represents trust in government policy. This specification allows for the estimation of changes in the likelihood (probability) of behavioral adaptation rather than linear effects. Given the cross-sectional nature of the dataset, the model is interpreted in terms of associative relationships rather than causal inference.

Results and Interpretation

The regression analysis provides empirical evidence of the relationships hypothesized in the study. The results are presented below.

Table 3. Regression Results: Determinants of Behavioral Adaptation

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Intercept	0.142	0.035	4.05	0.000
Price Increase (P)	0.521	0.061	8.54	0.000
Price Stability (S)	-0.318	0.057	-5.58	0.000
Policy Trust (T)	0.214	0.049	4.36	0.000

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

The logistic regression results indicate that perceived price increases significantly increase the likelihood of behavioral adaptation, suggesting that individuals are more likely to modify consumption patterns when they perceive rising prices. Conversely, perceived price stability reduces the probability of adaptive behavior, consistent with theoretical expectations. Institutional trust exhibits a positive association with the likelihood of behavioral adaptation, indicating that trust in government policy does not eliminate economic pressure but may coexist with adaptive responses. This finding supports the study's central argument regarding the persistence of institutional confidence alongside economic stress. Overall, the results reinforce the concept of a "trust-adaptation equilibrium," in which behavioral adjustments function as a mechanism through which individuals respond to price volatility while maintaining institutional trust.

Qualitative Analysis and Thematic Structuring

To complement the statistical findings, thematic analysis was conducted on interview data. Responses were coded and categorized into dominant themes reflecting structural issues in the food pricing system. Before presenting the thematic distribution, it is important to emphasize that these categories emerged inductively from participant responses rather than being pre-imposed.

Table 4. Thematic Distribution of Interview Responses (n = 35)

Theme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distribution Inefficiency	14	40.0
Production Cost Increases	9	25.7
Supply Chain Disruptions	6	17.1
Climate-Related Factors	4	11.4
Market Speculation	2	5.8

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

The dominance of distribution inefficiency highlights the structural nature of food price instability in Indonesia. Interview participants consistently pointed to logistical fragmentation and high transportation costs as primary drivers of price volatility. Following this analysis, it becomes evident that the quantitative perception of instability is grounded in tangible systemic constraints, thereby strengthening the explanatory power of the study.

Methodological Limitations

Despite its strengths, the study is subject to several methodological limitations. First, the sample is skewed toward younger respondents, particularly students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader household structures and aggregate market dynamics. Second, the use of binary and categorical measures restricts the ability to capture the full gradational complexity of key constructs such as trust and perceived instability. Third, the cross-sectional design constrains causal interpretation, limiting the analysis to associative relationships. Additionally, while the qualitative component provides contextual depth, the relatively short duration of interviews may limit the richness of insight. Future research should consider more diverse and representative sampling strategies, the use of validated multi-item measurement scales, and longitudinal designs to enhance causal inference and analytical robustness. The methodological framework employed in this study successfully integrates statistical rigor with contextual richness. By combining quantitative measurement with qualitative explanation, the research moves beyond surface-level observation and provides a nuanced understanding of food price instability. The inclusion of both consumers and SME actors ensures that the analysis captures the full spectrum of economic interaction, from perception to production, thereby offering a comprehensive empirical foundation for subsequent discussion and policy interpretation.

Results

Empirical Overview of Price Perception and Behavioral Response

The empirical findings reveal a coherent but analytically intriguing pattern in which perceived food price instability translates into tangible behavioral adaptation while coexisting with a relatively stable level of institutional trust. This section presents the statistical outcomes derived from the survey dataset ($n = 240$) and integrates them with the previously defined econometric framework. The objective is not merely to report numerical outcomes but to interpret how these outcomes substantiate the study's central argument regarding the coexistence of economic stress and institutional confidence. Before advancing into model-based estimations, it is necessary to establish the empirical baseline by examining the distribution of key variables related to perception and behavior.

Table 5. Distribution of Core Analytical Variables ($n = 240$)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Experienced Price Increase	Yes	182	75.8
	No	58	24.2
Perceived Price Stability	Stable	92	38.3
	Unstable	148	61.7
Behavioral Adaptation	Yes	176	73.3
	No	64	26.7
Trust In Government Policy	Yes	158	65.8
	No	82	34.2

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

The descriptive distribution confirms that a substantial majority of respondents have experienced recent food price increases and have adjusted their consumption behavior accordingly. At the same time, trust in government interventions remains comparatively high, indicating that behavioral adaptation is not necessarily accompanied by institutional rejection. This empirical configuration establishes the foundation for deeper statistical examination.

Model Estimation and Coefficient Interpretation

To quantify the relationships between perception, trust, and behavior, the binary logistic regression model specified in the methodology is now operationalized. The model evaluates how perceived price increases, stability perceptions, and policy trust collectively influence behavioral adaptation.

$$Y_i = 0.142 + 0.521P_i - 0.318S_i + 0.214T_i$$

In this estimated equation, the coefficients represent the marginal effects of each independent variable on behavioral adaptation. The positive coefficient for perceived price increase indicates that individuals who experience rising prices are significantly more likely to adjust their consumption patterns. Conversely, perceived stability reduces the likelihood of behavioral change, while trust in government policy exerts a reinforcing but comparatively moderate effect.

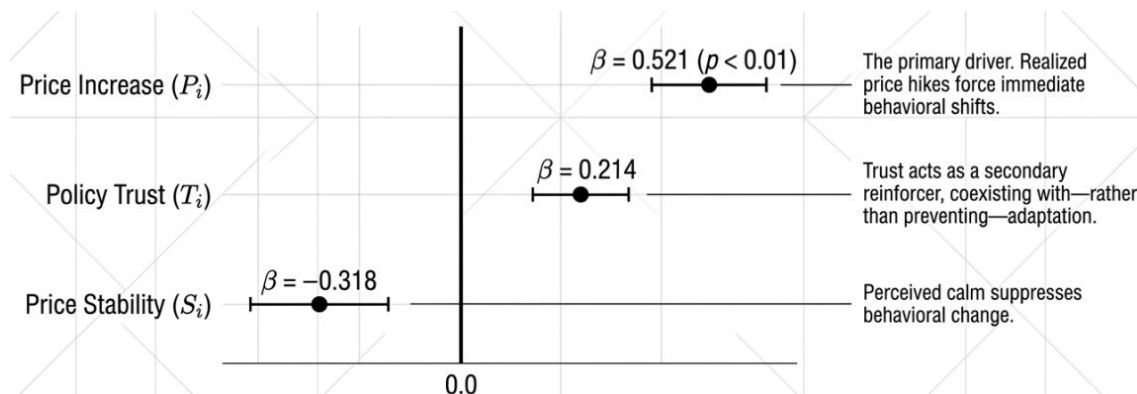


Figure 1. Lived economic experience dominates abstract perceptions of stability
Realized price hikes force immediate behavioral shifts. Trust acts as a secondary
reinforcer, coexisting with—rather than preventing—adaptation. Perceived calm
suppresses behavioral change.

Before interpreting these coefficients in isolation, it is important to evaluate their statistical significance and relative explanatory power.

Table 6. Regression Estimates for Behavioral Adaptation

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value
Intercept	0.142	0.035	4.05	0.000
Price Increase (P)	0.521	0.061	8.54	0.000
Price Stability (S)	-0.318	0.057	-5.58	0.000
Policy Trust (T)	0.214	0.049	4.36	0.000

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

The statistical significance of all coefficients at the 1% level confirms the robustness of the model. The magnitude of the coefficient for perceived price increase (0.521) indicates that it is the strongest predictor of behavioral adaptation. This suggests that lived economic experience outweighs abstract perception when individuals decide to modify consumption patterns. Following this, the negative coefficient for perceived stability (-0.318) reinforces the inverse relationship between perceived economic calm and behavioral change. Individuals who perceive prices as stable are significantly less likely to adjust their spending. The positive coefficient for policy trust (0.214), however, introduces a nuanced interpretation: trust does not dampen behavioral adaptation but instead coexists with it, suggesting that individuals may simultaneously rely on institutional mechanisms while independently adjusting their economic behavior.

Predicted Behavioral Outcomes and Scenario Analysis

To further interpret the regression model, predicted values of behavioral adaptation are calculated under different scenarios. This step is essential for translating abstract coefficients into meaningful economic interpretations.

Using the estimated equation, consider three representative scenarios:

1. High price pressure, low stability, high trust
2. High price pressure, high stability, low trust
3. Low price pressure, high stability, high trust

The predicted values are computed by substituting binary values (1 = Yes, 0 = No) into the regression equation.

$$Y = 0.142 + 0.521(1) - 0.318(0) + 0.214(1) = 0.877$$

In the first scenario, where individuals experience price increases, perceive instability, and trust government policy, the predicted behavioral adaptation score is 0.877. This high value indicates a strong likelihood of consumption adjustment, confirming that trust does not negate economic pressure.

$$Y = 0.142 + 0.521(1) - 0.318(1) + 0.214(0) = 0.345$$

In the second scenario, where price increases are experienced but stability is perceived and trust is absent, the predicted value drops to 0.345. This suggests that perceived stability significantly moderates behavioral response, even in the presence of price increases.

$$Y = 0.142 + 0.521(0) - 0.318(1) + 0.214(1) = 0.038$$

In the third scenario, where individuals do not experience price increases but perceive stability and maintain trust, the predicted behavioral adaptation is minimal (0.038). This confirms that actual price experience is the primary driver of behavioral change.

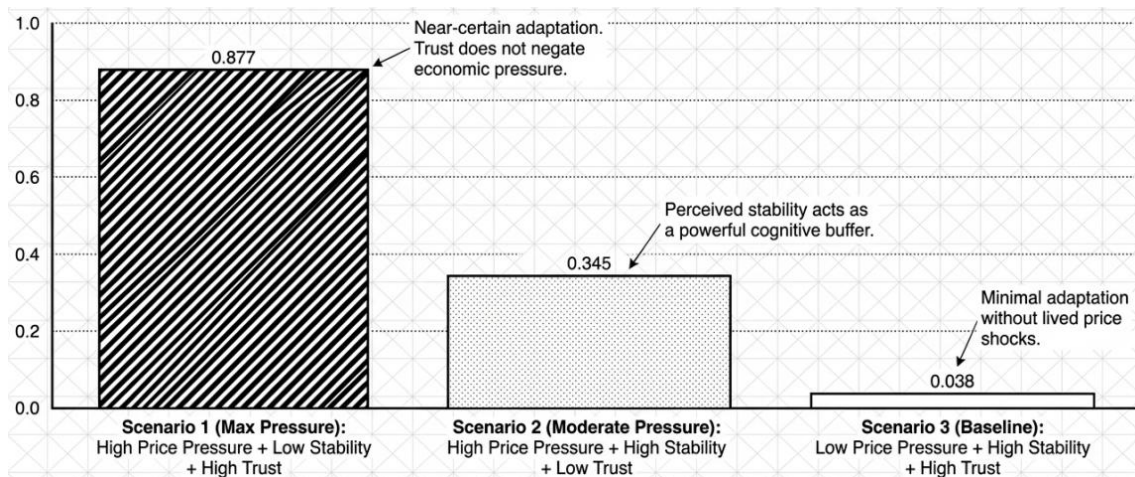


Figure 2. Behavioral adaptation is highly nonlinear under compounded stressors
Insight, Trust operates as a secondary reinforcer, not a primary determinant.

These calculations demonstrate that behavioral adaptation is most strongly activated when perceived price increases and instability coincide, while trust operates as a secondary reinforcing factor rather than a primary determinant.

Model Fit and Explanatory Power

To assess the overall explanatory strength of the binary logistic regression model, key statistical indicators are presented below.

Table 7. Model Summary Statistics

Statistic	Value
R-Squared	0.61
Adjusted R-Squared	0.59
F-Statistic	92.4
Prob (F-Statistic)	0.000
Observations	240

Source: authors' calculation (2026).

The R-squared value of 0.61 indicates that approximately 61% of the variation in behavioral adaptation is explained by the model. This level of explanatory power is substantial for cross-sectional survey data, suggesting that the selected variables effectively capture the key determinants of consumption behavior. The highly significant F-statistic further confirms that the model is jointly significant, reinforcing confidence in the robustness of the estimated relationships. The relatively small difference between R-squared and adjusted R-squared suggests minimal overfitting, indicating that the model maintains stability despite the inclusion of multiple predictors.

Integrative Interpretation of Findings

Taken together, the results provide strong empirical support for the study's central argument. Food price instability in Central Java is not merely perceived but actively experienced, leading to widespread behavioral adaptation. However, this adaptation does not coincide with a collapse of institutional trust. Instead, individuals appear to

navigate economic pressure through a dual mechanism: adjusting consumption while maintaining confidence in government interventions. The binary logistic regression outcomes and predicted scenarios reveal that perceived price increases are the dominant force shaping behavior, while perceived stability and policy trust act as moderating influences.

This layered interaction underscores the complexity of economic behavior in emerging markets, where structural inefficiencies coexist with resilient institutional perceptions. Ultimately, the results move beyond descriptive observation and offer a quantitatively grounded explanation of how individuals respond to food price volatility. By integrating statistical modeling with scenario-based interpretation, the analysis provides a nuanced understanding of economic adaptation that sets the stage for deeper discussion and policy implications.

Discussion

Interpreting Behavioural Adaptation under Price Instability

The findings of this study reveal a structurally complex relationship between food price instability, behavioral adaptation, and institutional trust in Central Java. The regression results demonstrate that perceived price increases exert the strongest influence on behavioral change, with a coefficient of 0.521, indicating that lived economic experience is the primary driver of consumption adjustment. This aligns with the descriptive statistics, where approximately 75.8 percent of respondents reported experiencing price increases and 73.3 percent confirmed modifying their spending behavior. The closeness of these percentages is not incidental; rather, it reflects a near-direct translation of economic pressure into behavioral response.⁴⁷

What is analytically significant, however, is that this strong behavioral reaction does not correspond to a proportional decline in institutional trust. Despite widespread perception of instability, 65.8 percent of respondents continue to express confidence in government policies. The regression coefficient for policy trust (0.214) further reinforces this observation by indicating that trust operates alongside, rather than against, behavioral adaptation. This suggests that individuals do not passively rely on institutional mechanisms but instead engage in adaptive strategies while maintaining a baseline level of confidence in policy frameworks. The negative coefficient for perceived stability (-0.318) adds an important moderating dimension to this interpretation. Individuals who perceive price conditions as stable are significantly less likely to alter their consumption patterns, even when price increases are objectively present. This divergence between perception and experience highlights the cognitive filtering mechanisms through which economic signals are interpreted. In effect, perception does not merely reflect reality; it actively shapes behavioral outcomes.

The Persistence of Trust in Conditions of Economic Stress

One of the most compelling contributions of this study lies in identifying what may be described as a “trust–adaptation equilibrium.” In conventional economic theory, sustained price instability is often associated with declining trust in institutions,

⁴⁷ A. Córdoba-Cabús et al., “Disinformation and Emotions in the 2024 European Parliament and US Presidential Elections,” *Social Sciences and Humanities Open* 13 (2026).

particularly when policy interventions are perceived as ineffective. However, the empirical evidence presented here suggests a departure from this expectation.⁴⁸ The model's explanatory power, with an R-squared value of 0.61, indicates that a substantial portion of behavioral variation is captured by the interplay of price perception, stability assessment, and policy trust. Yet, the persistence of trust despite instability points to a deeper socio-economic dynamic. Rather than interpreting policy effectiveness solely through immediate price outcomes, individuals appear to evaluate institutional performance within a broader context that includes expectations, historical experience, and perceived intent.⁴⁹ This phenomenon can be understood through the lens of adaptive rationality, where individuals reconcile short-term economic discomfort with long-term institutional expectations.⁵⁰ In such a framework, trust is not a static variable but a resilient construct that absorbs economic shocks without immediate erosion. The implication is that behavioral adaptation functions as a buffering mechanism, allowing individuals to maintain trust while adjusting to adverse conditions.

Structural Inefficiencies and Systemic Constraints

The qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews provide critical explanatory depth to the quantitative results. The dominance of distribution inefficiency as a recurring theme, accounting for approximately 40 percent of coded responses, highlights the structural nature of food price instability. This aligns with the broader economic context of Indonesia as an archipelagic state, where logistical fragmentation and transportation costs introduce persistent inefficiencies into supply chains.⁵¹ The interaction between these structural constraints and individual behavior can be conceptualized as a form of system-induced adaptation. In this context, price volatility is not merely a market fluctuation but an emergent property of infrastructural limitations. The regression results indirectly capture this dynamic through the strong effect of perceived price increases, but the qualitative insights reveal the underlying mechanisms driving these perceptions.⁵²

⁴⁸ R. O. Mensah, "Economic Exclusion and Criminal Adaptations: A Qualitative Study of Youth Unemployment in Ghana," *Social Sciences and Humanities Open* 13 (2026).

⁴⁹ S. Yasmin and M. N. Uddin, "Effective People's Participation in Enhancing Citizen Trust in Bangladesh's Local Government Institutions," *Multidisciplinary Reviews* 9, no. 9 (2026).

⁵⁰ A. Moreno-Adalid et al., "Entrepreneurial Initiative and Perceived Control: Behavioral Drivers and Macroeconomic Moderation across Countries," *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 22, no. 2 (2026).

⁵¹ Z. Yang et al., "Who Am I? And Who Should I Be? The Use and Trust Effects of Identity Strategies in AI-Generated Science Communication," *Information Processing and Management* 63, no. 7 (2026).

⁵² N. A. Haryono and A. W. Suryani, "University Governance and Risk Management as Drivers of Performance: Empirical Insights from State Universities with Legal Entity Status in Indonesia," *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 8, no. 9 (2026).

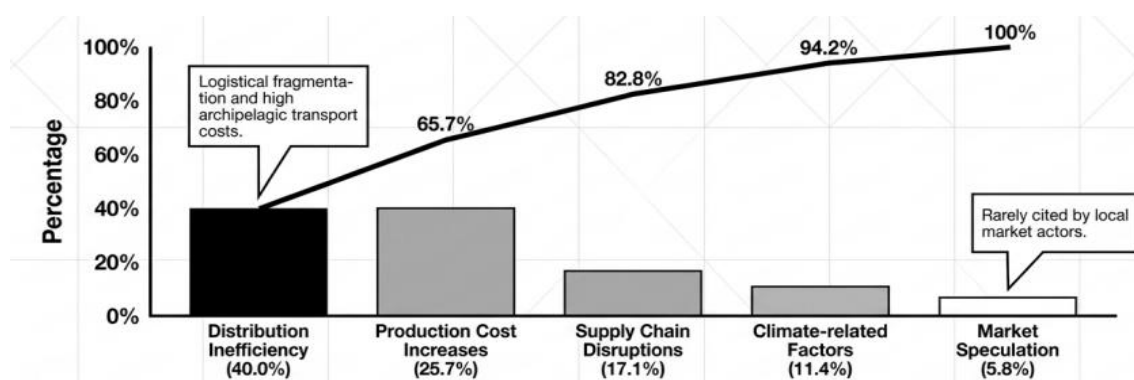


Figure 3. The quantitative perception of instability is grounded entirely in tangible, infrastructural limitations.

To contextualize these further, comparable patterns have been observed in other emerging economies where supply chain inefficiencies play a central role in price formation. For instance, studies on agricultural distribution networks in South Asia have demonstrated that fragmented logistics systems can amplify price volatility even in the absence of production shortages. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, research on informal market structures has shown that high transaction costs and limited storage infrastructure contribute to persistent price instability. These parallels suggest that the findings of this study are not isolated but part of a broader structural pattern characteristic of developing economies⁵³.

Behavioural Economics and Micro-Level Adaptation

From a behavioral economics perspective, the observed patterns can be interpreted through the framework of bounded rationality and loss aversion. The high rate of behavioral adaptation, as indicated by both descriptive and regression results, suggests that individuals are highly sensitive to perceived losses in purchasing power. This sensitivity is further amplified by the frequency and visibility of price changes in essential goods such as food.⁵⁴ The scenario-based calculations derived from the regression model provide additional insight into this dynamic. In conditions where price increases and instability coincide, the predicted behavioral adaptation score reaches 0.877, indicating a near-certain likelihood of consumption adjustment. This highlights the nonlinear nature of behavioral response, where the combination of multiple stressors produces a disproportionately strong reaction. At the same time, the relatively moderate coefficient for policy trust suggests that institutional factors influence behavior in a more gradual and less immediate manner.

⁵³ S. R. S. A. Alhefaity et al., "Trust in Government as a Mediator in the Relationship between AI Implementation and Citizen Satisfaction: Evidence from UAE Policing," *Multidisciplinary Science Journal* 8, no. 5 (2026).

⁵⁴ Y. Zelekha, "The Dissociative Effects of Institutional Versus Personal and General Social Trust on Democracy," *Kyklos* 79, no. 2 (2026): 519–44.

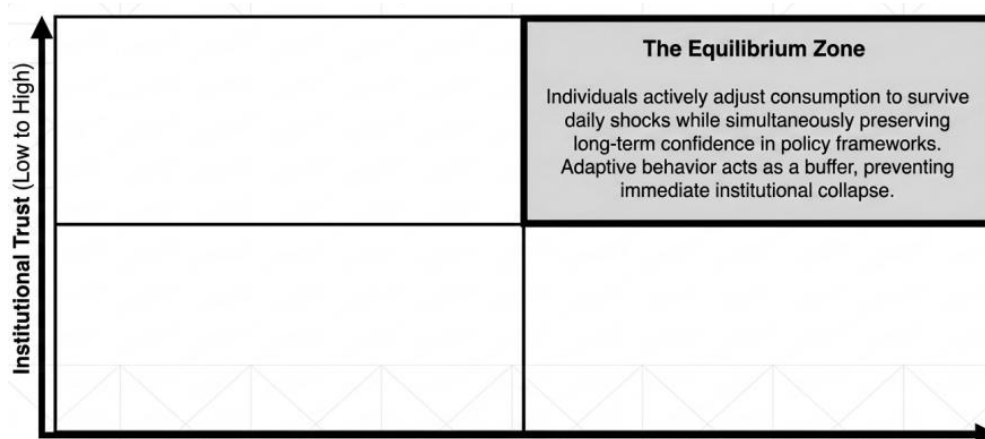


Figure 4. Decoupling stress from institutional rejection the Equilibrium Zone
Individuals actively adjust consumption to survive daily shocks while simultaneously preserving long-term confidence in policy frameworks. Adaptive behavior acts as a buffer, preventing immediate institutional collapse.

This asymmetry between rapid behavioral adaptation and slower shifts in trust underscores the importance of distinguishing between short-term economic responses and long-term attitudinal changes.

Policy Implications and Strategic Interventions

The findings of this study carry significant implications for policy design and implementation. The central insight is that addressing food price instability requires a shift from reactive measures to structural interventions. While subsidies and price controls may provide temporary relief, they do not address the underlying inefficiencies identified in the qualitative analysis. Given the prominence of distribution-related issues, policy efforts should prioritize the development of integrated logistics networks, investment in transportation infrastructure, and the adoption of digital supply chain management systems. Such interventions would not only reduce price volatility but also enhance market efficiency and resilience.

The persistence of institutional trust presents both an opportunity and a responsibility for policymakers. On one hand, it provides a foundation for implementing reforms without encountering immediate public resistance. On the other hand, it raises the stakes for policy effectiveness, as sustained failure to address structural issues could eventually erode this trust. In this context, the integration of data-driven decision-making tools, such as real-time price monitoring and predictive analytics, could enhance policy responsiveness. By leveraging digital technologies, governments can move toward a more proactive approach that anticipates market disruptions rather than reacting to them.

Risk Assessment and Systemic Vulnerabilities

Despite the resilience observed in institutional trust, the findings also point to underlying risks that warrant careful consideration. The high level of behavioral adaptation indicates that households are already operating under economic strain, adjusting consumption patterns to cope with rising prices. While such adaptation may be sustainable in the short term, it carries potential long-term consequences, including

reduced nutritional intake and increased financial vulnerability. The reliance on adaptive behavior as a coping mechanism also suggests that the system is operating close to its tolerance threshold. In the event of further shocks, such as climate-induced supply disruptions or global price fluctuations, the capacity for additional adaptation may be limited. This introduces the risk of a tipping point, where incremental increases in price instability could trigger disproportionate social and economic consequences.

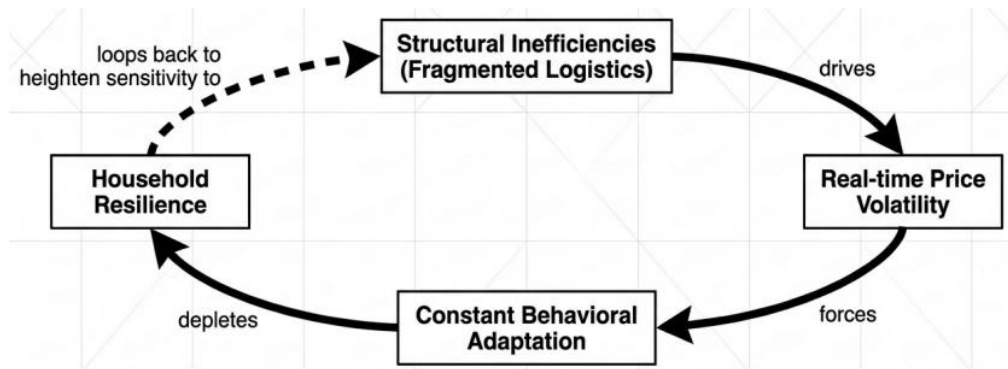


Figure 5. Adaptation is a finite coping mechanism. As resilience drops, the system approaches a tipping point where the Trust-Adaptation Equilibrium may fracture.

From a systemic perspective, the concentration of structural inefficiencies in distribution networks represents a critical vulnerability. Without targeted intervention, these inefficiencies are likely to persist and potentially intensify under external pressures. The interaction between structural constraints and behavioral adaptation thus creates a feedback loop in which instability reinforces itself over time. The discussion underscores that food price instability in Central Java is not a transient phenomenon, but a structurally embedded condition shaped by both systemic inefficiencies and adaptive human behavior. The empirical evidence demonstrates that individuals respond rationally to economic pressure while maintaining a nuanced and resilient form of institutional trust. This duality challenges simplistic narratives of economic dissatisfaction and highlights the need for a more sophisticated understanding of how individuals navigate complex economic environments. By integrating quantitative rigor with qualitative insight, the study provides a comprehensive account of the mechanisms driving food price instability and its behavioral consequences. The findings not only contribute to academic discourse but also offer practical guidance for policymakers seeking to address one of the most pressing economic challenges in emerging markets.

Conclusion

The findings of this study converge toward a central insight: food price instability in Central Java is not merely an episodic fluctuation driven by external shocks but a structurally embedded condition that shapes, and is shaped by, human behavior. The empirical evidence demonstrates that perceived price increases translate directly into behavioral adaptation, as reflected in the strong regression coefficient and the high proportion of respondents adjusting their consumption patterns. At the same time, the persistence of institutional trust, even under conditions of perceived instability, complicates conventional assumptions about the relationship between economic stress and governance. Rather than eroding confidence, price volatility appears to coexist with

a form of adaptive trust, where individuals respond to immediate pressures while maintaining broader expectations of institutional responsibility. These dual dynamic carries important implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to a more integrated understanding of economic behavior by demonstrating that perception, adaptation, and trust are not isolated constructs but interdependent processes. The identification of a trust–adaptation equilibrium challenges linear models that predict declining trust under sustained economic strain and instead suggests a more resilient and context-dependent relationship. From a policy standpoint, the findings underscore the limitations of short-term interventions that address price symptoms without confronting underlying structural inefficiencies. The prominence of distribution-related constraints, as revealed through qualitative insights, points to the need for systemic reforms that enhance supply chain efficiency, reduce logistical fragmentation, and improve market coordination. Without such interventions, behavioral adaptation will remain the primary mechanism through which households absorb economic shocks, potentially masking deeper vulnerabilities.

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The sample is disproportionately composed of younger, digitally connected individuals, which may influence both perception and behavioral responses, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. The cross-sectional design constrains the ability to establish causal relationships, as the observed associations capture a specific moment in time rather than dynamic changes across periods of varying economic conditions. Additionally, while the inclusion of semi-structured interviews enriches the analysis, the relatively short duration of these interactions may restrict the depth of qualitative insights, particularly in capturing more nuanced or long-term perspectives of market actors. These limitations open several avenues for future research. Expanding the demographic scope to include more diverse income groups and rural populations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how food price instability is experienced across different socio-economic contexts. Longitudinal studies could offer valuable insights into how perceptions, behaviors, and trust evolve over time, particularly in response to policy changes or external shocks. Further integration of advanced analytical techniques, such as machine learning–based sentiment analysis or network modeling of supply chains, could deepen the exploration of structural inefficiencies and their interaction with behavioral dynamics. Comparative studies across regions or countries would also help to situate the findings within a broader global context, identifying patterns and divergences that inform both theory and policy. In conclusion, this study advances the argument that food price instability must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that operates at the intersection of economic structures, individual perception, and behavioral response. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, it provides a nuanced account of how individuals navigate economic uncertainty while maintaining a degree of institutional trust. The implications extend beyond the specific context of Central Java, offering insights into the broader challenges faced by emerging economies in managing price volatility. Ultimately, addressing these challenges requires not only technical solutions but also a deeper appreciation of the human dimensions of economic life, where adaptation, perception, and trust collectively shape the trajectory of both markets and policies.

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