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A Phenomenological Study of Fruit Pricing in Jakarta in the Context of a Harmonious Balance of Interests Among Suppliers, Vendors, and Buyers

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Phenomenology, Pricing, Harmony of interests, Social and Moral dimensions

Abstract

Pricing practices in traditional markets are often understood from economic perspectives that emphasize cost calculations, market mechanisms, and profit maximization. However, everyday trading activities demonstrate that pricing decisions are also influenced by social relationships, moral considerations, and the sustainability of interactions among economic actors. This study aimed to explore the meaning of pricing experiences among papaya traders in Jakarta and to understand how prices function as a mechanism for balancing the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers. This study employed a qualitative approach using Husserl's transcendental phenomenological method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with five purposively selected papaya traders in West Jakarta who had direct experience in determining selling prices. The data were analyzed using phenomenological stages, including noema, epoche, noesis, intentional analysis, and eidetic reduction. The findings reveal that traders do not interpret prices merely as instruments for generating profit but as social mechanisms that maintain supply continuity, buyer acceptance, and business sustainability. Pricing decisions reflect trust-based relationships with suppliers, efforts to offer acceptable prices to consumers, and strategies to sustain livelihoods. This study develops the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing, which explains that price formation integrates economic, social, and moral dimensions. The study concludes that pricing practices in traditional trade represent a form of social accountability that supports sustainable economic relationships among suppliers, traders, and buyers.

INTRODUCTION

Price is one of the fundamental elements of economic activity because it serves as a medium that connects the interests of producers, traders, and consumers in the exchange process. Through price, a commodity acquires economic value, enabling market transactions and the distribution of goods. From the perspective of conventional economics, price is generally understood as the result of the interaction between supply and demand, functioning to allocate resources efficiently and serving as the primary instrument for achieving business profits (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Meanwhile, from the perspective of cost accounting, price is often viewed as the outcome of cost calculations plus the expected profit margin, thereby contributing to business sustainability (Mulyadi, 2015). This perspective has served as the primary foundation for numerous studies on pricing practices.

This perspective has dominated most studies on pricing. Price is positioned as the outcome of rational calculations made by business actors (traders) to achieve optimal profits. Pricing decisions are influenced by the cost of acquiring goods, operating costs, market conditions, the level of competition, and targeted profit margins. Within this framework, business actors are viewed as rational individuals who seek to maximize economic benefits through efficient pricing decisions.

Pricing practices in everyday life often reflect realities that are more complex than those assumed by conventional economic theory. Economic activity does not necessarily occur within a neutral social space but rather within a network of relationships involving multiple interdependent interests. Business actors consider not only economic benefits but also their relationships with suppliers, customers, and other parties that support the continuity of trade activities. In many cases, business actors are even willing to reduce potential profits to maintain long-term relationships that they consider essential for business continuity.

Although conventional economic approaches can explain the mechanisms of price formation rationally, they have not fully explained the diverse pricing practices observed in traditional trade. In everyday practice, traders often set prices not solely to maximize profits but also by considering the sustainability of relationships with suppliers, customer loyalty, and the long-term viability of their businesses. Thus, pricing practices suggest that economic decisions do not always follow the logic of profit maximization assumed in classical economic theory.

In recent years, the study of pricing has undergone significant development (Yongsheng & Yingquan, 2025). Price is no longer understood solely as an economic instrument for achieving market efficiency but also as part of the mechanism for creating social value and sustaining relationships among actors within the supply chain (Alghababsheh & Gallear, 2021; Whitelock, 2019). The literature on sustainable supply chain management demonstrates that economic decisions, including pricing, are increasingly influenced by sustainability considerations, stakeholder collaboration, and organizational social responsibility (Shekarian et al., 2022). Likewise, pricing practices are increasingly being examined as instruments that support sustainable relationships among suppliers, business actors, and consumers through the creation of shared value rather than the mere maximization of short-term profits (Yawar & Seuring, 2017).

Developments in economic sociology have provided a broader perspective for understanding pricing practices. Beckert (2011) argued that prices are not merely the result of objective market mechanisms but are social constructions formed through the interactions, interpretations, and expectations of market participants. Prices gain legitimacy when economic actors share a common understanding of what constitutes a reasonable and acceptable value. Thus, price is not only a representation of the economic value of a commodity but also the outcome of social processes that make exchange possible.

Recent developments in the literature indicate that price formation is increasingly viewed as part of stakeholder governance (Mensah et al., 2025). In the context of sustainable supply chains, fair pricing not only reflects economic efficiency but also serves as a mechanism that strengthens collaboration among suppliers, producers, traders, and consumers. These relationships have been shown to improve supply chain performance while enhancing social sustainability through increased trust, loyalty, and commitment among actors within business networks.

This perspective is reinforced by the concept of embeddedness proposed by Granovetter (1985). According to Granovetter, economic action is always embedded in social relationships that influence individual behavior. Economic activity does not occur in isolation from its social environment but is shaped by networks of relationships involving trust, social norms, reputation, and reciprocity. Therefore, economic decisions often cannot be understood solely through the logic of profit but must also be interpreted through the social relationships that underpin them.

In addition to being embedded in social relationships, economic activities also contain a moral dimension. Scott (1976), through the concept of moral economy, argued that small-scale economic actors are often more oriented toward survival than toward profit maximization. From this perspective, economic decisions are directed not only toward maximizing profits but also toward ensuring livelihood sustainability, promoting fairness, and fulfilling responsibilities toward the parties involved in economic activities. Thus, economic practice cannot be understood solely as rational action but must also be recognized as social action that incorporates moral considerations.

Moral perspectives on economic activity have also received increasing attention in recent research (Sachweh & Hilmar, 2020). The literature on ethical supply chain management shows that contemporary business decisions are evaluated not only based on economic efficiency but also on their ability to promote fairness, social responsibility, and sustainability for all stakeholders (Paul, 2024). Consequently, prices are no longer viewed merely as the outcome of market mechanisms but also as instruments that represent an organization's ethical commitment to maintaining a balance among the interests of economic actors.

This phenomenon can be observed in papaya trading activities in West Jakarta. As a highly perishable commodity, papaya requires traders to make continuous price adjustments in response to product conditions and market dynamics. In practice, traders do not set prices unilaterally. Instead, prices are influenced by suppliers' pricing decisions, the competitive conditions among traders, consumers' purchasing power, and other relevant factors (Munira, 2018) Analysis methods of the factors influencing on consumer market.

Research on pricing practices in traditional trade has evolved from various perspectives. Mauliyah and Kirom (2018) showed that traditional market traders consider business continuity when determining selling prices, indicating that pricing decisions are not based solely on cost and profit calculations. Furthermore, Masrunik et al. (2019) found that commodity characteristics, such as product quality, degree of ripeness, and the risk of spoilage, also influence pricing practices. A phenomenological study conducted by Riyanti et al. (2024) further demonstrated that pricing is influenced by local cultural values emphasizing mutual support, leading to an understanding of price as a medium for maintaining social relationships in trading activities.

These three studies make important contributions to explaining the factors that influence pricing practices. However, they continue to view price as a consequence of economic factors, product characteristics, and local culture independently. To date, no research has specifically explained how price is interpreted as a mechanism that simultaneously maintains a balance among the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers within a single sustainable economic relationship.

This gap indicates that the pricing literature has primarily explained why prices are formed but has not adequately explained how prices are used by business actors as mechanisms for balancing various interdependent interests. In practice, traders are not only required to generate profits but also to maintain supply continuity, meet buyers' price expectations, manage the risk of commodity spoilage, and ensure the sustainability of their households' livelihoods. Therefore, a conceptual gap remains regarding the role of price as a social mechanism that integrates these multiple interests in everyday trading activities.

Although the pricing literature has evolved from economic perspectives toward sociological and sustainability perspectives, most studies continue to focus on pricing mechanisms, pricing strategies, or the effects of pricing on organizational performance. Research on social valuation, ethical pricing, and sustainable supply chains has likewise focused more on the relationship between pricing and organizational sustainability or supply chain performance than on how prices are used by business actors as mechanisms for balancing the interests of multiple interdependent actors in everyday trading activities.

These limitations indicate that the existing literature has not fully explained how traders simultaneously balance the interests of suppliers, buyers, and business sustainability through pricing practices. In the trade of perishable commodities, price functions not only as a mechanism for economic exchange but also as a means of maintaining supply continuity, fostering customer loyalty, and ensuring the sustainability of economic relationships among trading partners. Therefore, there remains an opportunity to develop a conceptual perspective that views price as a social mechanism integrating these diverse interests.

From a theoretical perspective, Beckert (2011) argued that price is a social construction formed through processes of value interpretation among market participants. Granovetter (1985) demonstrated that economic decisions are always embedded in networks of social relationships, whereas Scott (1976) emphasized that the economic actions of small-scale business actors are shaped by moral considerations and concerns for livelihood sustainability. However, these three perspectives have not explicitly explained how prices function as mechanisms for maintaining a balance among the interests of multiple actors within the trading chain. Consequently, there remains an opportunity for theoretical development to understand price as a social mechanism that actively maintains harmony among the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers.

Based on these empirical and theoretical gaps, this study employs Husserl's (1970) phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of papaya traders in setting prices. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the factors influencing price formation, this study seeks to uncover how traders interpret price as a mechanism for maintaining sustainable relationships with suppliers, meeting buyers' expectations, and ensuring business sustainability. Through this approach, the study develops the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing, which conceptualizes price as a social mechanism for maintaining a balance among the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers, thereby sustaining long-term economic relationships. This concept is expected to enrich the literature on pricing, market sociology, and interpretive accounting by offering a more holistic perspective on the meaning of price in traditional trading activities.

This research makes three primary contributions to the literature. First, it extends the study of pricing by demonstrating that prices are not merely the result of economic calculations but also social mechanisms that sustain economic relationships. Second, it develops the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing as a conceptual framework explaining how traders simultaneously balance the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers. Third, it enriches the interpretive accounting literature by demonstrating that pricing practices constitute a form of social accountability realized through sustainable economic relationships.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was selected to explore the lived experiences of papaya traders in setting prices. The study focused on how traders interpreted their pricing practices and understood the relationships among prices, suppliers, buyers, spoilage risk, and business sustainability.

The study adopted Husserl's (1970) transcendental phenomenology because its objective was to understand the essence of traders' lived experiences rather than to explain causal relationships or develop substantive theory. From this perspective, reality is understood through individuals' conscious experiences, allowing the meaning of pricing practices to be explored from the participants' own interpretations.

Following Husserl's phenomenological tradition, the researcher applied the principle of epoché (bracketing) to minimize personal assumptions and biases during data collection and analysis so that participants' experiences could be understood from their own perspectives. This approach was considered appropriate for revealing the meaning of pricing as a lived social experience among papaya traders. The phenomenon examined was the experience of setting prices while balancing relationships with suppliers, buyers, and the challenges associated with highly perishable commodities. Consequently, the phenomenological approach enabled the study to identify the essential meanings underlying traders' pricing practices.

Research Location and Context

The research was conducted on papaya traders operating in the West Jakarta area. The selection of locations is carried out purposively considering that the region has a fairly high fruit trading activity and shows intensive interaction between suppliers, traders, and buyers.

The commodity that is the focus of the research is papaya. The selection of papaya is based on its characteristics as a horticultural commodity that is easily decayed (perishable commodity). These characteristics make the practice of pricing not only related to the consideration of economic benefits, but also to the management of the risk of product damage. In addition, papaya fruit is also one of the non-seasonal fruits that are often consumed in households, catering, hotels, and others. This condition allows the research to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of prices in the daily lives of traders.

In addition, the papaya trade shows a continuous interaction between suppliers, traders, and buyers. These interactions make the practice of pricing a phenomenon rich in social meaning so that it is relevant to be studied through a phenomenological approach.

Data Collection Techniques and Research Informants

Data collection techniques by conducting in-depth interviews. All interview results are properly documented. Questions include the papaya pricing process, the relationship with suppliers and buyers, the experience of price changes, the risks faced when selling so that it can affect pricing, the experience of gaining profits and losses, and the meaning of reasonable papaya prices.

The research informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. This technique is used because phenomenological research requires participants to actually experience the phenomenon being studied and be able to explain the experience reflectively (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The criteria for informants in this study include their profession as a papaya trader, directly involved in determining the selling price, having at least 3 years of trading experience and being willing to participate in an in-depth interview. Based on these criteria, the study involved five papaya traders as the main informants. The research involved five informants because in the fifth interview data saturation had been achieved, that is, no new meanings were found that emerged from the experiences of the informants. In phenomenological research, a relatively small number of participants is considered adequate as long as it is able to produce a deep understanding of the essence of life experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data is collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews that allow informants to recount their experiences freely while still focusing on pricing phenomena. Questions are directed at the experience of determining prices, relationships with suppliers, interactions with buyers, management of spoilage risks, as well as the meaning of prices that are considered fair according to their experience. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed repeatedly to gain a deep understanding of the informants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using Husserl's phenomenological approach which aims to reveal the meaning of the lived experience of papaya traders in setting prices. The analysis was carried out through the stages of noema, epoche, noesis, intentional analysis, and eidetic reduction (Kamayanti, 2016).

At the noema stage, the researcher identifies the experiences directly expressed by the informant regarding pricing practices. Furthermore, an epoche or bracketing process is carried out to suspend the researcher's assumptions and initial knowledge about the price so that the informant's experience can be understood as it is.

The next stage is noesis, which is revealing the meaning that informants give to their experiences. The relationship between noema and noesis was then analyzed through intentional analysis to find patterns of experiences that appeared repeatedly. This process produces a number of phenomenological themes which are further reduced through eidetic reduction to obtain the essence of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness

The validity of the data is maintained by the criteria of trustworthiness which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is gained through in-depth interviews, repeated reading of transcripts, and interpretive discussions between researchers. Transferability is maintained through the presentation of detailed descriptions of the research context so that the reader can assess the possibility of applying the findings to other contexts. Dependability is obtained through documentation of the entire research process (audit trail), while confirmability is carried out through the researcher's reflection process (reflexive journaling) to minimize interpretation bias.

Technical triangulation is also carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the researcher conducted repeated readings of the interview transcripts to ensure that the themes and interpretations generated were truly rooted in the informant's experiences. The credibility of the research is also strengthened through the consistency of the themes that appear in all informants. The similarity of meanings that emerge from the experiences of various informants is an indicator that the resulting theme is not a mere individual experience, but rather shows a more basic structure of experience.

Reflexivity

In phenomenological research, researchers are the main research instruments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the researcher consciously reflects on personal assumptions and understandings regarding prices and trading practices.

Through the bracketing process, researchers try to minimize the influence of prior knowledge so that the resulting interpretation remains rooted in the traders' life experiences, not in the researcher's perspective (Finlay, 2021). Thus, the results of the study are expected to truly represent the meaning given by informants to the pricing practices they live on a daily basis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Harmony with Suppliers through Supply Sustainability

The results of the interviews show that the trader's experience in setting prices always begins with an awareness of the importance of maintaining relationships with suppliers. For informants, the purchase price set by suppliers is not perceived simply as a component of costs that must be added to the profit margin, but as a representation of the long-term relationship that sustains the sustainability of their business.

As stated by Informant I5:

"My father is a farmer who cultivates people's land, most of it is taken from him. There are takeaways from other farmers, I increase the price by Rp5,000."

The experience shows that price decisions are built on interdependent relationships between traders and suppliers. In the life experience of informants, the continuity of business is not determined by the amount of profit obtained from a single transaction, but by the continuity of supply that allows trading activities to continue every day. Thus, price is interpreted as a form of commitment to maintain relationships that have been built through trust and interaction that takes place repeatedly.

This meaning expands on the concept of embeddedness put forward by Granovetter (1985). If Granovetter explains that economic actions are embedded in social relations, then the findings of this study show that the practice of pricing is one of the concrete mechanisms that traders use to maintain these relationships. Prices not only reflect the economic value of a commodity, but also become a medium to maintain the continuity of relationships with suppliers so that trade activities can take place sustainably. These findings also reinforce the view of Beckert (2011) that prices gain legitimacy through social processes, but this study shows that this legitimacy is realized through the practice of maintaining the sustainability of relationships between actors in the trade network.

For the informants, the success of the business is not measured by the amount of daily profit, but by the ability of the business to sustain family life in a sustainable manner. Prices are a means that allows traders to meet economic needs without damaging the relationship with suppliers or buyers.

As stated by Informant I2:

"The important thing is to be able to eat enough that day."

The experience shows that the meaning of price is at a deeper level than just an economic instrument. Price is a representation of survival, so every price decision always considers business sustainability as a source of family livelihood.

This finding expands on the concept of moral economy Scott (1976). Scott explains that economic actions are influenced by the orientation of maintaining life, while this research shows how this orientation is manifested through pricing practices that maintain a balance of interests of various parties.

Based on phenomenological synthesis, this study develops the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing as a new perspective in understanding pricing practices in traditional trade. This concept shows that price is not just the result of economic calculations or social construction, but is a mechanism that simultaneously maintains three main dimensions, namely supply sustainability, buyer acceptance, and business sustainability.

These three dimensions form a harmonious mechanism that allows all actors to benefit proportionally so that economic relations can be maintained in the long term. Thus, prices not only represent the value of a commodity, but also represent the balance of interests that are the foundation of the sustainability of trading activities.

Harmony with Buyers through Mutually Acceptable Prices

The second theme that emerged from the experience of the informants was related to the importance of keeping prices acceptable to buyers. Traders are aware that buyers are knowledgeable about the prevailing price range in the market. This knowledge shapes expectations about prices that are considered reasonable and influences purchasing decisions.

One of the informants (I1) said:

"The price is determined following the price from the bookmaker/wholesaler in the main market. If the price of capital increases, then the selling price increases, and vice versa. But there is a price standard that buyers already know, for example for a small size papaya for IDR 8,000 or an average price of around IDR 10,000"

Informant (I3) said:

"People usually already know how much papaya is sold in the market, or buyers already know for themselves because they often compare prices from other traders, because here there are many sellers so he must like to ask other traders first, and in this area the prices are the same"

The quote shows that buyers are not seen as passive parties in the price formation process. Traders understand that buyers have the ability to compare prices between traders as well as make choices based on the price they deem most suitable. Traders view buyers as active actors who have the ability to evaluate price fairness. Therefore, prices are understood as the result of social negotiations that take into account the expectations of both parties. In this context, price decisions are no longer individual actions, but are collective practices built through a shared understanding of what prices are considered feasible.

In the experience of traders, a good price is not the price that gives maximum profit on every transaction. Conversely, a good price is one that allows buyers to remain willing to make a purchase while providing sufficient profits for the trader. In other words, price is understood as a point of balance that is acceptable to both parties.

This finding is in line with the view of Beckert (2011) who explains that price is a social construction formed through the interaction and expectations of market participants. Price gains legitimacy when the parties have a relatively similar understanding of the value of an item.

From the perspective of interpretive accounting, pricing can be understood as a form of accountability to buyers. This accountability is realized through efforts to maintain fair prices so that relationships with customers can be maintained.

Thus, price is interpreted as a means of maintaining harmony with buyers through mutually acceptable prices.

Harmony as a Way of Business and Life Sustainability

The next theme that emerged from the experiences of the informants was the close relationship between price, business sustainability, and sustainability of life. Traders do not view prices as just a means of making a profit in a single transaction, but as a means that allows the business to continue and the needs of the family can be met.

One of the informants (I2) explained:

"I was happy that the papaya that day was all sold. The important thing is to be able to eat enough that day."

Another informant (I5) revealed:

"As long as I was trading papaya, I was able to support a wife and 5 children, the youngest is now in 10th grade"

The experience shows that the meaning of price is at a deeper level than just an economic instrument. Price is a representation of survival, so every price decision always considers business sustainability as a source of family livelihood.

This finding expands on the concept of moral economy Scott (1976). Scott explains that economic actions are influenced by the orientation of maintaining life, while this research shows how this orientation is manifested through pricing practices that maintain a balance of interests of various parties.

Both quotes show that long-term relationships with customers and business continuity are valued more than the momentary gains that may be gained from a single transaction.

Phenomenologically, the experience shows that prices have a meaning that goes far beyond its economic function. Price is understood as a means of sustaining life. Through prices, traders try to maintain the continuity of their business which is the source of livelihood for them and their families.

This finding is very close to the concept of moral economy put forward by Scott (1976). Pricing decisions are not solely directed at achieving maximum profits, but also at the ability to sustain the business and meet the needs of the family.

From the perspective of interpretive accounting, price acquires meaning as a sustainability instrument. Prices are a means that allows traders to maintain business continuity, maintain relationships with customers, and fulfill responsibilities to their families.

Thus, price is interpreted as a path to business and life sustainability.

The Essence of Harmony of Interests in Papaya Pricing

Phenomenological analysis of the experiences of papaya traders shows that the practice of pricing is not interpreted as a stand-alone economic activity. The experience of informants shows that price is always present in relationships involving suppliers, buyers, product conditions, and the need to maintain business.

The two themes that emerged in this study show that there is a pattern of interrelated meanings. Harmony with suppliers through sustainability of supply, harmony with buyers through mutually acceptable prices and harmony of business continuity.

Through the eidetic reduction process, this study found the essence of the following phenomenon:

Papaya pricing is interpreted as the practice of maintaining harmony of interests between suppliers, traders, and buyers through prices that are considered fair and adaptive and are able to ensure the sustainability of economic relations and the lives of the parties involved.

The essence shows that price has not only economic meaning, but also social and moral meaning.

Development of the Concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing

Based on the synthesis of empirical findings and dialogue with theory, this study develops the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing as a new perspective in understanding pricing practices in traditional trade. This concept shows that price is not just the result of economic calculations or social construction, but is a mechanism that simultaneously maintains three main dimensions, namely supply sustainability, buyer acceptance, and business sustainability.

These three dimensions form a harmonious mechanism that allows all actors to benefit proportionally so that economic relations can be maintained in the long term. Thus, prices not only represent the value of a commodity, but also represent the balance of interests that are the foundation of the sustainability of trading activities.

The concept of Harmonization of Interests in Pricing is defined as:

Traders' interpretation of prices as a social mechanism used to maintain a balance of interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers so that the sustainability of economic relations can be maintained.

Based on the findings of the study, the harmony of interests in pricing is built through three main dimensions:

1. Supply sustainability
2. Buyer acceptance
3. Business continuity and economic life

These three dimensions form a unity of meaning that shows that price not only functions as a means of economic exchange, but also as an instrument that maintains the sustainability of economic relations.

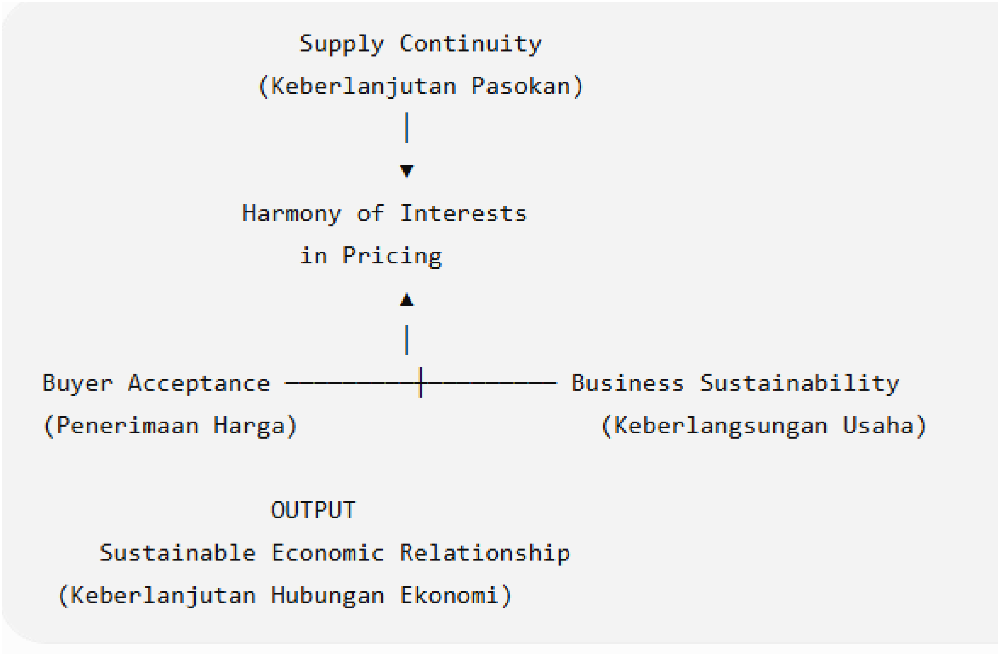

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Harmonious Importance in Pricing

Figure 1 shows that pricing practices in traditional trade are not only based on economic considerations, but are also a social mechanism that integrates the interests of various parties. The concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing is built on three main dimensions, namely supply continuity, buyer acceptance, and business sustainability. These three dimensions interact with each other in forming pricing practices that are fair, adaptive, and able to maintain relationships between suppliers, traders, and buyers.

Through this mechanism, price not only functions as a means of economic exchange, but also as a means of building trust, maintaining long-term cooperation, and creating sustainable economic relations. Thus, this model expands the perspectives of social construction of pricing (Beckert, 2011), embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985), and moral economy (Scott, 1976) by placing prices as a mechanism for harmonizing interests that support the sustainability of trade activities.

Theoretical Contribution

This research provides three theoretical contributions. First, it expands the theory of social construction of pricing by showing that prices not only gain legitimacy through social processes, but also function as a mechanism to maintain the sustainability of economic relations. Second, enriching the concept of embeddedness by showing that social relations are concretely realized through pricing practices. Third, develop the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing as a new perspective that explains how prices are used to balance the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to uncover the meaning of papaya traders' experiences in setting prices through a phenomenological approach. The findings showed that pricing was not interpreted solely as an economic activity for generating profit but as a social practice that maintained the continuity of relationships among suppliers, traders, and buyers. For traders, price served as a means of maintaining supply continuity, ensuring that prices remained acceptable to consumers, and sustaining the business as a source of family livelihood. Through the process of phenomenological reduction, this study found that the essence of pricing lay in a mechanism for harmonizing interests that integrated economic, social, and moral dimensions within traditional trading activities. Based on these findings, the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing was developed, defining price as a social mechanism used to balance the interests of suppliers, traders, and buyers, thereby supporting the sustainability of economic relationships. Theoretically, this study expanded the perspective on price beyond its traditional interpretation as the outcome of cost and profit calculations by conceptualizing it as a social construct that sustains economic relationships. These findings also reinforced the concepts of price as a social construct, embeddedness, and the moral economy by demonstrating that pricing decisions were shaped not only by economic considerations but also by social relationships, trust, and business sustainability.

From a practical perspective, this study offered implications for stakeholders involved in traditional trade. For traders, the findings highlighted the importance of cultivating long-term relationships with suppliers and buyers as a strategy for sustaining business operations, recognizing that business success depends not only on profit generation but also on the quality of these relationships. For suppliers, the findings suggested that sustainable distribution requires an understanding of traders' circumstances and market dynamics to foster mutually beneficial, trust-based business relationships. For market managers and local governments, the study emphasized the importance of policies that extend beyond economic efficiency by incorporating the social dimensions that support the sustainability of traditional markets. Furthermore, for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), the findings indicated that business sustainability depends substantially on maintaining a balance among the interests of all stakeholders involved in the business process.

This study had several limitations. It was conducted exclusively with papaya traders in West Jakarta, involved only trader informants without directly exploring the experiences of suppliers or buyers, and focused on a single perishable horticultural commodity. Consequently, the concept of Harmony of Interests in Pricing requires further examination across different commodities, geographical settings, and social contexts to establish its broader applicability. Future research should incorporate suppliers and buyers as participants, examine additional horticultural commodities and other MSME sectors, conduct cross-regional comparative studies, and further develop the concept using case study, grounded theory, or mixed-methods approaches. Such research would contribute to the advancement of interpretive scholarship in accounting and economic sociology, particularly in relation to business sustainability, social accountability, and community-based economic practices.

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