

PAPER • OPEN ACCESS

## Phenomenological Study of the Simirah Information System in Addressing Cooking Oil Scarcity (2021-2023)

To cite this article: A Toni and M Jauharotul 2024 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Earth Environ. Sci.* **1379** 012019

View the [article online](#) for updates and enhancements.

### You may also like

- [Potential of red edible oil as alternative energy: A study in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia](#)  
M H Thamrin, F A Nasution, Y I Indainanto et al.
- [Ecological, Socioeconomic, and Economic Factors Shaping Vegetable Oil Production in the Batak People Community of North Sumatera](#)  
Marudut Bernadtua Simanjuntak, Retno Sawitri Wulandari, Larsen Barasa et al.
- [Institutional transformation of the food security agency: perspectives on the management of Toko Tani Indonesia program in Central Java](#)  
J Sutrisno, S Marwanti, A N Ulfa et al.

# Phenomenological Study of the Simirah Information System in Addressing Cooking Oil Scarcity (2021-2023)

A Toni<sup>1</sup> and M Jauharotul<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Budiluhur University, South Jakarta, DKI Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Indramayu State Polytechnic, Lohbener Indramayu West Java, Indonesia

e-mail: [ahmad.toni@budiluhur.ac.id](mailto:ahmad.toni@budiluhur.ac.id)

**Abstract:** This research explores the government policy regarding the surge in cooking oil prices in 2022, a topic of ongoing debate among stakeholders. The findings reveal that the direct cash assistance (BLT) program's regulatory impact assessment underscores lower-class economic principles' volatility and the challenges of simplifying government policies, often perceived as unfeasible. On the other hand, the monitoring of bulk cooking oil (MGCR) producers benefits entrepreneurs and does not directly alleviate poverty. However, the practical implementation of the Simirah application system, a significant tool in this context, presents substantial and urgent hurdles for small-scale vendors. Their limited understanding of the system, coupled with their lack of technological knowledge and insufficient socialisation about the monitoring procedures related to cooking oil distribution, severely impede their effective use of the system. Large traders and distributors of cooking oil, with their relatively good technological knowledge, often step in as support and representatives for these small-scale vendors.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia, the world's largest producer of palm oil and its derivative products, holds a pivotal position in the global market. In 2022, Indonesia's palm oil production soared to a staggering 45.5 million tons, accounting for approximately 59 per cent of the world's total palm oil production. The global distribution of palm oil production is as follows: Indonesia leads with 45.5 million tons, exporting 25.62 million tons to markets in the European Union, India, Pakistan, and Africa. Malaysia, with a production capacity of 19.3 million tons, contributes 25 per cent of the world's total palm oil production, exporting to the European Union, Pakistan, China, and the United States. Thailand, with a production capacity of 3.45 million tons, represents 4.4 per cent of global palm oil production. Colombia produces 1.8 million tons, contributing 2.3 per cent of the world's palm oil production. Other significant contributors include Nigeria, Guatemala, Papua New Guinea, Ivory Coast, Honduras, Brazil, and Ecuador.

According to Indonesia. Id, the area of oil palm plantations in Indonesia from 2012 to 2022 is as follows: in 2012, the plantation area was 10.13 million hectares; in 2013, it increased to 10.47 million hectares; in 2014, it reached 10.75 million hectares; in 2015, it was 11.26 million hectares; in 2017, it expanded to 12.38 million hectares; in 2018, it grew to 14.33 million hectares; in 2019, it was 14.46 million hectares; in 2020, it reached 14.59 million hectares; in 2021, it was 14.62 million hectares; and in



2022, it expanded to 14.99 million hectares. This data demonstrates a significant increase in plantation area, which has led to a corresponding rise in national palm oil production and the expansion of several oil palm plantation areas in Indonesia.

According to katadata.com, the total area of oil palm plantations in Indonesia is distributed as follows: Riau Province has 2.9 million hectares, West Kalimantan has 2 million hectares, Central Kalimantan has 1.8 million hectares, North Sumatra has 1.5 million hectares, East Kalimantan has 1.5 million hectares, South Sumatra has 1.2 million hectares, Jambi has 1.1 million hectares, Aceh has 475,000 hectares, South Kalimantan has 441,600 hectares, West Sumatra has 440,000 hectares, Bengkulu has 371,900 hectares, North Kalimantan has 230,800 hectares, Bangka Belitung Islands have 227,500 hectares, Lampung has 197,700 hectares, Papua has 158,900 hectares, West Sulawesi has 147,500 hectares, Central Sulawesi has 119,300 hectares, Southeast Sulawesi has 70,000 hectares, West Papua has 69,300 hectares, South Sulawesi has 48,700 hectares, Banten has 19,000 hectares, Gorontalo has 18,700 hectares, West Java has 15,900 hectares, Maluku has 10,900 hectares, Riau Islands have 7,600 hectares, and North Maluku has 5,600 hectares. This extensive cultivation fosters a national culture of palm oil consumption that has become essential for the Indonesian people.

National consumption and domestic demand for palm oil have significantly increased across various sectors, including food, biodiesel, and oleochemical industries. The palm oil-based food industry saw consumption reach 8.7 million tons in 2018 and 9.9 million tons in 2019, decrease to 8.4 million tons in 2020, rise again to 9 million tons in 2021, and reach 9.9 million tons in 2022. The demand for palm-based biodiesel was 3.8 million tons in 2018, 5.8 million tons in 2019, 7.2 million tons in 2020, 7.3 million tons in 2021, and 8.8 million tons in 2022. Meanwhile, the oleochemical industry's need for palm oil was 963,000 tons in 2018, 1.1 million tons in 2019, 1.7 million tons in 2020, 2.1 million tons in 2021, and 2.2 million tons in 2022. As a result, the demand for palm oil-based products has increased over the years, leading to challenges in distribution and marketing, as well as the government's role and policies in distributing cooking oil to the public.

Markets and ethics are sustainable principles built on concern for the environment and social forces[1], one of which includes the management of forest areas[2] and community empowerment to undertake ecological exploration[3]. This demonstrates that the market management system and market ethics are shaped by values of social concern, environmental care, and community empowerment rooted in ecological sustainability. Markets are also influenced by media usage, market demand, and consumer behaviour, which are driven by purchasing power and consumer preferences[4]. According to Askegaard and Linnet, humanistic markets are shaped by ideologies of freedom, intentionalism, and exceptionalism[5]. Views on consumer behaviour and ideologies regarding products and markets are accompanied by nationalist values and preferences, further shaped by media usage in promotion and marketing.

The study of the life experiences of traders and consumers of cooking oil in the Indramayu district explores how bulk cooking oil shortages impact the community, shaping their worldview through daily activities. Existentialist phenomenology places humans at the centre of interactions and relationships oriented toward human values[6]. This approach examines how individuals strive to overcome various hegemonies and political pressures to determine their way of life and discover their true essence[7]. A system that imposes psychological pressure on individuals can be overcome by cultivating self-awareness and making efforts reflected in conscious and responsible behaviour [8]. These efforts are oriented toward understanding and constructing reality[9], making sense of incidents, and establishing relationships with others to navigate and overcome specific situations and conditions[9]. The process begins with reflection (silence) and developing strategies, tactics[10], and patterns of relationships or communication between individuals. This conscious struggle aims to recover from adverse phenomena[11]. Therefore, human

efforts as conscious individuals involve thinking and behaving in ways that allow them to rise above challenging conditions and face life's realities, which becomes their next goal.

## 2. Methods

This research employs existentialist phenomenology, which places the research subject as the primary data source. In this case, the primary data sources are cooking oil traders and bulk cooking oil consumers in three markets within the Indramayu Regency area, West Java. The connection between the research subject and existentialist phenomenology lies in studying the construction of meaning[12] and reality through the experiences of cooking oil traders and consumers amid the 2021-2023 period, particularly regarding the issue of cooking oil scarcity in the market. The meaning is derived from the experiences[13] of traders and consumers concerning the Simirah information system, which represents a governmental policy addressing cooking oil scarcity in the market. Phenomenological studies are utilised to uncover and analyse [14] individual experiences or subjective experiences regarding health conditions[15], thoughts, and awareness in executing behaviours related to understanding governmental policies[16] in managing cooking oil scarcity in the market. The research aims to explore people's experiences and anxieties, which are symptomatic of general anxiety experiences, and specifically investigate the stress experienced by traders and consumers in the Indramayu district.

Applying phenomenology in qualitative research aims to comprehend the personal experiences and challenges research subjects encounter [17]. The fundamental principle of the phenomenological approach revolves around how individuals perceive and undergo significant life experiences [18]. Consequently, individuals or groups actively and consciously interpret experiences[19] to construct personal realities based on their surrounding world and conditions. This perspective views humans as agents capable of self-directed change, integrating thoughts and encountered phenomena into patterns of interpretation and behaviour within themselves and their social environment. This underscores the implications of Hursell's existentialist phenomenology on individual self-education, particularly in terms of critical thinking and interpretation of events, thereby contributing to the formation of educational frameworks for oneself and others within their milieu.

The research was conducted across several Indramayu Regency and West Java markets, including Indramayu City Market, Bangkir Market, and Jatibarang Market. Primary data were gathered from oil traders, focusing on their comprehension of government policies addressing cooking oil scarcity from 2021 to 2023. Secondary data utilised in this study encompassed government policy documents aimed at alleviating cooking oil scarcity during the same period, along with additional secondary data obtained from various media publications in Indonesia relating to government policies. Both primary and secondary data were then structured into analytical units based on emerging cases about traders' challenges with the MGCR Simirah information system. This system functions as an informational support system for government policies targeting the mitigation of cooking oil scarcity in the region.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. *Meaning and Experiences of Traders and Consumers in Pasar Baru and Jatibarang Markets Regarding the Simirah Information System and Government Policies*

The experiences of traders in 2021 and 2022 regarding the scarcity of bulk-packaged cooking oil have focused on meeting demand and adhering to government-mandated prices, set at IDR 14,000 but occasionally increased to IDR 16,000 – 18,000. This situation has led to a sense of injustice among consumers, as price hikes benefit traders while creating hardship for the community. As noted by Interviewee 1, 'There have been shortages of cooking oil in the market from 2021 to 2023. Traders find it challenging to procure cooking oil commodities, and when they do arrive, they are quickly sold out due to high demand from lower-class consumers.' The erratic distribution system of bulk cooking oil complicates

traders' access to commodities while amplifying consumer demand 2022, the Simirah distribution system will offer distributors a more extensive workspace. Yet, many retailers (traders) in the Baru Indramayu market refrain from using it due to unfamiliarity with application-based technology or government-owned systems. This pattern indicates that major players (primary distributors) oversee retailers in the market. Findings reveal that distributors provide and manage retailers to obtain quotas of cooking oil sold in the market. However, the supply chain from distributor to retailer sometimes deviates from the allocated quota and is distributed equally among unregistered retailers. This practice ensures a fair distribution of oil commodities across their shops or stalls. The following data outlines the supply chain experiences of traders:

**Table 1.** Understanding the Meaningful Processes of Experience Among Traders and Consumers in Indramayu

Experience in the Bulk Cooking Oil Commodity Supply Chain of Pasar Baru, Jatibarang and Bangkir Indramayu Traders		
Trader 1	I don't understand Simirah	Government policies are less oriented towards traders and consumers
Consumer 1	Don't know the Simirah system	Goods/Cooking Oil available
Trader 2	Know Simirah	Providing equal distribution of cooking oil commodity stocks as a solution for buyers/consumers
Consumer 2	Know Simirah	As a solution to the shortage of cooking oil from TV
Trader 3	Know Simirah	Cooking oil distribution solution for traders and consumers
Consumer 3	Know Simirah	Government cooking oil distribution application from the media
Trader 4	Don't Know Simirah	Doesn't understand government channels/systems
Consumer 4	I don't know Simirah	The important thing is that oil is on the market
Trader 5	Understand Simirah	It benefits traders and buyers/consumers when cooking oil is scarce.
Consumer 5	Know Simirah	I heard from a neighbour about buying cooking oil but didn't understand its use.
Trader 6	Don't Understand Simirah	Lack of understanding and challenging to do because you don't understand technology
Consumer 6	I don't know Simirah	Don't care about government systems and policies

It focuses on experiential learning and efforts towards self-sustainability among traders in Pasar Baru, Indramayu, and serves as a bridge between government agencies and the community. These efforts, whether through direct engagement with the Simirah system or indirect interactions based on sought-after distribution supply ratios, aim to provide comprehensive services to consumers. This includes those in the fried food trade, food stalls, street vendors, and other related businesses. The perceived meaning among traders centres around providing personal accounts and data to significant distributors to procure merchandise, explicitly cooking oil. As noted by Interviewee 2, "the most practical solution is to share personal data with distributors for registration purposes to secure a quota for goods (cooking oil)." Conversely, Interviewee 3 expressed reluctance: "I prefer avoiding complexity with government systems and providing personal data to distributors; essentially, it results in obtaining a distribution quota (for cooking oil)." Interviewee 4 similar sentiments: "We prefer avoiding complications and leaving it to the distributor to handle the (cooking oil) distribution." Essentially, traders view distributor representation in the Simirah system as the solution, even if the cooking oil they receive may not align with government quotas, as it is distributed to other traders in the market. For them, these conditions and the implemented policy patterns by distributors contribute to equitable cooking oil distribution in the market, ensuring its availability for consumers and the public.

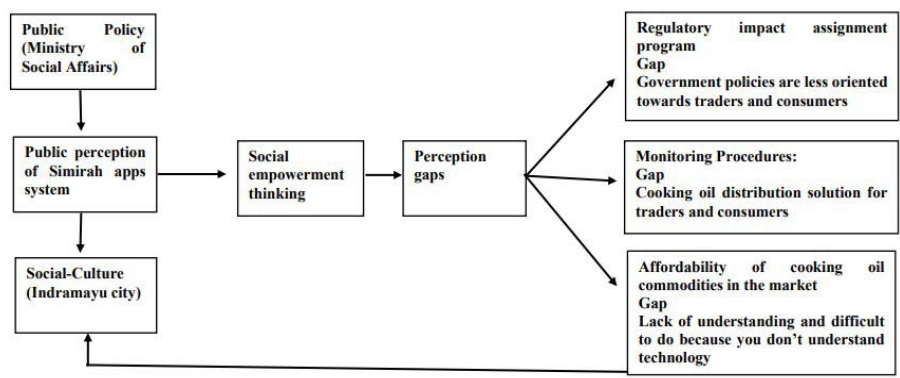
On the consumer side, the experience and interpretation of government policy through the Simirah information system are reflected in two distinct aspects of meaning:

- **Perception of Understanding (Perpa):** This perception interprets the Simirah system as a digital platform created by the government to address the scarcity of bulk cooking oil. It aligns with the cognitive impact of mass media, particularly television.
- **Perception of Failure to Understand (Pergapa):** This perception views the government as obligated to provide bulk cooking oil to the public under all circumstances, including during rare shortages.

The understanding pattern regarding the perception of the cooking oil supply chain flow, managed by the government through the Simirah information system policy, fosters a learning experience and self-meaning for the community, especially homemakers. This enables them to adopt a cooking oil diet in their daily lives. As expressed by Interviewee 5, a 45-year-old housewife, "When cooking, we choose to use less cooking oil, preferring boiled and steamed dishes over fried ones." The interviewee 6, a 32-year-old housewife, mentioned, "We mainly provide fried food for children and use minimal oil for cooking." The interviewee 7 added, "The solution is to be economical with cooking oil usage, especially when it's scarce. These viewpoints showcase the homemakers' self-awareness in educating family members, neighbours, and anyone they encounter in the market about temporarily adopting a cooking oil-reduced diet.

### 3.2. Discussion

The data presented reflects the endeavours of traders in the Indramayu district market to comprehend and decipher the intricacies of government policy regarding cooking oil distribution via the Simirah application. This understanding is illustrated through the following flow:



**Figure 1.** Indramayu People’s Perception Patterns

The figure depicted indicates that the regulatory impact assessment of the government-implemented Direct Cash Assistance program led to an ambiguous experience among the residents of the Indramayu Regency. This ambiguity stemmed from challenges in comprehending direct assistance, mainly due to intricate technology policies that were challenging for the community to grasp and implement. This difficulty arises from the social and situational context of Indramayu's residents, who are unfamiliar with Simirah technology and have limited exposure to technological advancements, as they are more accustomed to receiving direct cash assistance.

In the section on monitoring procedures, traders and consumers have a relatively good understanding of the government's distribution of cooking oil through the Simirah application. The involvement of traders and major distributors utilising the Simirah application can assist the technologically challenged individuals in Indramayu in accessing cooking oil, a fundamental life necessity. This understanding is contextualised within the context of rising cooking oil prices in the market due to its increasing scarcity. This situation aligns with Indramayu residents' cultural and behavioural patterns, who extensively use cooking oil in their culinary practices and rarely opt for steamed or boiled dishes. However, despite the benefits observed for entrepreneurs and cooking oil distributors through the Simirah information system, it appears less advantageous for smaller communities due to technological limitations.

The government's Simirah information system, designed to regulate cooking oil availability in the Indramayu district market, has exacerbated public dissatisfaction with governmental policies. This stems from a widespread lack of understanding and technological proficiency among the populace. The root cause lies in the government's inadequate efforts to familiarise rural communities with the Simirah policy through effective campaigns. With limited smartphone access and insufficient support for installing the Simirah application on their devices, rural residents remain disconnected from this policy, leaving its control and representation solely in the hands of local traders and cooking oil distributors. Consequently, Simirah's intended objective of stabilising cooking oil prices in the Indramayu district has failed to extend its reach to the economically disadvantaged segments of society.

The existentialist perspective on cooking oil scarcity in the market shapes the perception of the Simirah information system as a comprehensive solution to this issue. This viewpoint is grounded in the understanding that individuals, both as traders and consumers, play a pivotal role in addressing market conditions. As an active agent, the self influences the cooking oil diet scenario and the distribution of cooking oil commodities among peers in the market.

The subjective truth perceived by traders and consumers in the three markets of the Indramayu district during the Covid-19 pandemic regarding the Simirah information system as a government policy to address cooking oil scarcity encompasses the following elements:

- “*Gaptek*” refers to the technological gap experienced by trading subjects using the Simirah information system, a tool of government policy. This is marked by the subject's cognitive pattern that constructs a perception of pure reality or a relatively stable reality unaffected by extensive government intervention.
- “*Patek*” represents the situational and contextual understanding of trading subjects who employ a system of mandates and delegations to distributors. These arrangements are based on mutual needs and support the Simirah system as a solution for the equitable distribution of cooking oil by policies addressing cooking oil scarcity among marginalised communities.
- “*Phatek*” signifies the subject's interpretation of the government's actions in implementing practical patterns and distributing solutions outlined by the constitution, laws, and government regulations. This understanding revolves around managing the scarcity of cooking oil among marginalised communities.
- “*Perpa US*” refers to American consumers' understanding of constructing and implementing information systems. This understanding starts with cognitive awareness, shaped by exposure to mass media, which leads consumers to believe they comprehend the values and actions executed by the government.

The existentialist perspective on cooking oil scarcity in the market shapes the perception of the Simira information system as a comprehensive solution to this issue. This viewpoint is grounded in the understanding that individuals, both as traders and consumers, play a pivotal role in addressing market conditions. As an active agent, the self influences the cooking oil diet scenario and the distribution of cooking oil commodities among peers in the market.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the preceding discussion, a significant understanding of public perception in Indramayu Regency emerges, particularly regarding the regulatory impact assessment of the Simirah program. This application-based program, aimed at regulating cooking oil supply, is perceived and constructed as ambiguous, leading to potential confusion among the public. This ambiguity is primarily attributed to inadequate information dissemination about the Simirah program, which lacked proper socialisation and was influenced by the technological illiteracy prevalent among the Indramayu populace. This situation was further exacerbated during periods of panic and cooking oil scarcity.

Major traders and distributors predominantly grasp the understanding of monitoring procedures related to cooking oil distribution, facilitated by the Simirah application. Consequently, the policy's reach falls short among small communities, as it is predominantly represented and managed by technologically proficient entrepreneurs and distributors adept at utilising the Simirah application system. This scenario leads rural communities in Indramayu Regency to perceive the Simirah application as a policy tool that does not cater to their needs or support their well-being, thereby failing to enhance their quality of life. Notably, traders and consumers harbour similar perceptions regarding the comprehension of cooking oil distribution dynamics in the market.

#### 5. References

- [1] K. Bentsen and P. E. Pedersen, 2023 Can digital platforms support moralised markets? An analysis of affordances that matter to moralisation,” *Mark. Theory*, 0 (0) 1-16

- [2] M. Basile *et al.*, 2023 Diversity of beetle species and functional traits along gradients of deadwood suggests weak environmental filtering,” *For. Ecosyst.*, 10 910)2197-5620
- [3] H. Shang *et al.* 2023 Effects of functional phylogeny of light-response-related orthologous genes on seedling survival in a subtropical forest,” *For. Ecosyst.* 10 (100087) 2197-5620
- [4] K. O. Keller, J. Y. Guyt, and R. Grewal, 2024 EXPRESS: Soda Taxes and Marketing Conduct,” *J. Mark. Res.* 61 (3) 393-410
- [5] J. Cronin, J. Fitchett, and J. Coffin, 2023 Market mutton dressed as ÜberLamb: Diagnosing the commodification of self-overcoming,” *Mark. Theory*, 0 (0) 1-20
- [6] A. K. Dewi and Y. A. Piliang, 2020 Transposition of Dupadi in Garin Nugroho’s Setan Jawa: Woman as a Javanese Symbolic Act, 3 (2) 287-302
- [7] C. Are, 2023 An autoethnography of automated powerlessness: lacking platform affordances in Instagram and TikTok account deletions,” *Media, Cult. Soc.* 45(4) 822–840
- [8] V. Y. Astuti and A. Toni, 2019 Media Sosial Komunitas untuk Meningkatkan Eksistensi Komunitas dalam Wacana Politik Pemilu Presiden 2019,” *CARAKA Indones. J. Commun.*, 1 (1) 10-17
- [9] J. P. Walsh, 2023 Digital nativism: Twitter, migration discourse and the 2019 election,” *New Media Soc.* 25 (10) 2618–2643
- [10] J. Van Dijck, T. de Winkel, and M. T. Schäfer, 2021 Deplatformization and the governance of the platform ecosystem,” *New Media Soc.* 25 (12)3438-3454
- [11] T. Rohrbach, L. Aaldering, and D. J. Van der Pas, 2023 Gender differences and similarities in news media effects on political candidate evaluations: a meta-analysis,” *J. Commun.* 73 (2) 101–112
- [12] A. Toni, 2017 Studi Netnografi ‘Komunitas Anti Islam’ di Media Online Facebook,” in *Prosiding SNaPP2017 Sosial, Ekonomi, dan Humaniora*, 7 (1) 127-138
- [13] R. Gunawan and A. Toni, 2020 Manajemen Komunikasi Organisasi Pada Hubungan Masyarakat Dan Protokol Dalam Lembaga Negara Di Era Pandemi Covid-19,” *Public Relat. J.* 1 (1) 1-25
- [14] A. Toni and R. Lestari, 2013 Studi Interpretif dalam Komunikasi Paradigmatik Fenomenologi dalam Ilmu Komunikasi (Studi Konstruksi Makna Realitas Media dan Komunikasi). *J. Komunikasi UBM*, 7 (1) 1-19
- [15] S. Stier, A. Bleier, H. Lietz, and M. Strohmaier, 2018 Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences, and the Mediation of Political Communication on Facebook and Twitter,” *Polit. Commun.* 35 (1) 50–74
- [16] Maskur 2023 memahami Filsafat Fenomenologi Edmund Husserl dan Implikasinya dalam Metode Penelitian Studi Islam 9 (2) 50-57
- [17] M. Halkis, 2015 Fenomenologi: Alternatif pengembangan Ilmu, *J. Alfikra UIN suska* 14 (1)35-56
- [18] M. F. Fauzan and L. P. Supratman, 2017 Studi fenomenologi tentang Komunikasi Antarpribadi Anggota Komunitas Anak Indigo Indonesia *J. Manaj. Commun* 1(2)180–194
- [19] A. Saefudin and N. Fitriyah, 2020 Peran Guru Ngaji di Era Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Studi Kasus di Desa Semat Tahunan Jepara),” *J. INDO-ISLAMIKA*, 10 (2)73–83