

The Role of Online Transportation in Supporting the Mobility of Therapists with Visual Impairment in Surabaya

Danny Heru Dwi Hartanto¹

¹ Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia

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Abstract: In the era of technological advancement, various tools could help people with disability to live as regular citizens by performing their jobs to fulfil their daily needs. People with disabilities may work by using tools such as sticks, wheelchairs, communication devices, and other tools to assist people with visual impairments in accessing information. This issue is also equally important when it comes to transportation which has a role in increasing productivity. It can be argued that if the city can provide mass transportation, it will be significantly useful to society regarding cost efficiency and it will also support people's productivity. A trip that takes long hours with traffic congestion causes people with disabilities to have difficulties in fulfilling their daily needs which even makes the availability of more comfortable transportation for disabled people necessary. This is because disabled people are unlikely or usually unable to ride a vehicle such as a motorcycle or drive a car, particularly people with low vision or visual impairment and other severe disabilities. Therefore, online transportation becomes an efficient alternative in supporting the mobility of people with visual impairment who mostly work as therapists. By using existing smartphone devices, they can easily access apps to receive faster services.

1 INTRODUCTION

The rampant of online transportation has had a considerable impact on economic development in Indonesia. One of the impacts is that online transportation can serve as an alternative to mass transportation services which are still lacking in Indonesia. Istianto & Mulamin (2017) argue that "in general, the public opinion regarding the use of online transportation is much cheaper, convenient and practical." This means that the existence of online transportation leads to more efficiency in terms of cost and time, particularly for people with disabilities such as people with low vision, visual impairment and those who are entirely blind.

Blind people, practically-speaking, cannot access private vehicles independently like other normal people. Volunteers to help blind people cannot always be available whenever they need some assistance, especially when it comes to going to work every day. Although they have disabilities, they still want to do their job since that will be helpful to fulfil their daily needs. They realise that having meaningful careers could contribute to their financial independence, mean they belong to the

society, have a valued role within the community, and overall life satisfaction (Hagler et al., 2015).

Sixty percent of people with visual impairment in Surabaya possess a profession such as being a health therapist. Therefore, it is necessary for them to be able to access transportation easily, to help them going from one place to another. This is because their job depends on the call order from customers who need a therapist to go to their house. According to Brown (2015), when disabled people work for a company, usually company leaders will provide housing for their disabled employees.

However, it is different when people with visual impairment have a profession as a call therapist since most of them prefer to work individually. Their transportation costs so they have mobility as a call therapist becomes a separate issue. Even in developed countries like America, the cost of preparing and commuting for people with disabilities is also a problem (National Council on Disabilities, 2009 in Brown, 2015). It will encourage the blind therapists to raise their tariffs to compete with normal therapists who can ride their private vehicles such as motorcycles which minimise the transportation expenses. As a result, they are able to

charge their customers cheaper fees and provide a faster service since they can avoid traffic congestion.

On the other hand, a blind therapist who is using public transportation with such traffic conditions cannot provide a satisfactory service to the customer. This kind of ineffectiveness means the blind therapist has a lower income, due to the longer time it takes to travel, the slow services which make them limited in terms of the total number of clients they can see each day, since they do not have sufficient time to move from one area to another.

Related to the above problems, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the role of online transportation as a means of supporting blind therapist mobility in Surabaya. It is expected that this kind of topic could be open to public discourse because, in today's era of technological advancement, the technology of online transportation is very beneficial for people with disabilities, especially when they have to go to work every day to increase their economic welfare.

2 METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach and interview as its data collection method. The researchers interviewed the Secretary of Perkumpulan Tunanetra Alumni Malang (Pertama) as an informant who also works as a therapist. According to Neuman (2014), the informant who served as a research subject should be a professional in his field. In addition, the researchers also used a literature study to obtain data for the research which related to the topic and used a theoretical framework to enrich the results and discussion.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research is departing from the facts that the income of people with disabilities is lower than that of normal people (Livermore & Honeycutt, 2015). This is due to the very limited job opportunities for people with disabilities and so disabled people have limited options regarding their job. The labour job recruitment also cannot always accommodate people with disabilities. As a consequence, the vast majority of blind people in Surabaya work in the informal sector as health therapists (Badiah et al., 2017)

This situation will create a gap, particularly regarding income between disabled people and normal people. For instance, when they have to

compete in the same field as other call therapists, normal people would find it easier to move from one area to another, while, for the blind therapist, it would be difficult.

Moreover, blind people have more mobility constraints than people who are not disabled. When a blind therapist receives a client call, they cannot directly ride a vehicle; because of their limited vision, they desperately need an accessible means of transportation and way to facilitate them in moving from one place to another.

The shortcomings of public transportation such as traffic congestion and slower movement make the travel time for call therapists longer. This situation makes them unable to serve many customers; instead, this will limit the number of customers that they will serve in a day. Therefore, this condition makes online transportation an alternative means of transportation for blind therapists. The Daily Octagon quoted an IT expert Heru Sutadi; he stated that "Not all public transportation could bring the people directly in front of to the house destination. Right now it available online motorcycle and online taxis." It proves that blind therapists mostly use online transportation because it is very accessible for them (Istianto & Maulamin, 2017).

Budianto, the Secretary of Pertama, explained that "the presence of online transportation is beneficial in the therapeutic profession because they have to move from one region to another to fulfil the customers' calls. It is significantly more efficient in terms of time and cost as well as it provides convenience since that they directly arrive at in front of their customer's house."

The advance in technology is able to facilitate online transportation access for disabled people. According to a survey on disability workers at the Center for Independent Living in California, "54 percent of people with disabilities have used assistive technology" (Yeager et al., 2006 in Brown et al., 2015). The use of smartphones with a screen reader program for people with visual impairment help blind therapists to access online transportation.

Moreover, Budianto also explained that the efficiency in terms of time could make the therapist capable of serving more customers. He further said that "before there was online transportation the time to serve more customers was insufficient because it took a long time to arrive in other areas. The public transport in Indonesia is not always easy to find and the system still not integrated which very consuming time and energy on the road. Now, with the online transportation we can receive two to three more calls a day", said Budianto.

4 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the presence of online transportation can be a solution to the mobility problems of blind therapists. The efficiency in time and effort and the accessibility of the technology are important reasons for people with disabilities to choose online transport as their primary mobility support in performing their daily professional tasks. However, this research is still in the process of development. Therefore, there are still many shortcomings, and it also requires a lot of input from various parties.

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