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## Online *Ojek* Drivers' Cultural Perception on Complying with Traffic Regulations in Medan, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** The objective of this research was to find out the cultural perceptions of online *ojek* (motorcycle taxi) drivers in complying with traffic regulations. The research used qualitative method through in-depth interviews with six online *ojek* drivers and 2 customers who used the Grab and *Gojek* online applications in Medan. The data were analyzed by using qualitative method. The result of the research showed that online *ojek* drivers had already known and understood the existing traffic regulations as the requirements for becoming drivers. The bad role of intercultural communication between online *ojek* drivers and their customers causes differences in cultural perceptions so that it opens up opportunities for not complying with traffic regulations.

**Keywords.** Cultural Perceptions, Online *Ojek* (Motorcycle Taxi), Drivers, Traffic Regulations

### 1. Introduction

The advancement of information technology today influences the cultural development in Medan. The development of 3T (transportation, technology, and telecommunication) has caused people to tend to be practical in using *Gojek* and Grab application which is generally used by the people in Medan who can be said as having been advanced in thinking since they are integrated with technological advances. Online *ojek* is motorcycle taxi (henceforth, ***Ojek***), using technology with application in smart-phone which makes easier for its users to call it. In other words, the activity of innovation by business people will cause efficiency [1].

*Gojek* or Grab is not only transporting people but also used to buy food, as it is served by *Gojek* such as Go-Food so that people do not need to go outside their offices or houses to buy food. They can avoid traffic jams and save their time by staying in their offices during the break time. Besides Go-Food service, there are also some services provided by *Gojek* such as Go-Ride, Go-Car, Go-Bluebird, Go-Send, Go-Deals, Go-Pulse, Go-Points, Go- Nearby, Go-Bills, Go-Shop, Go-Mart, Go-Box, Go-Massage, Go-Daily, Go-Clean, Go-Glam, Go-Tix, Go-Auto, and Go-Med [2]. Grab also provides nearly the same services as *Gojek*; they are Grab-Car, Grab-Motorcycle, Grab-Food, Grab- Delivery, Grab-Electric pulses, and Grab-Bill. Grab is a company from Singapore which serves application of the transportation provider in 6 (six) Southeast Asian countries, and one of them is Indonesia [3] [4].

After some years have passed by, the existence of online *ojek* brings about some potential problems such as traffic jams and traffic accidents, especially in some points of congestion [5] [6]. Besides that, it becomes more and more of them, they do not have any

landing stage so that they can stop anywhere at any time to wait for their passengers. However, this condition can potentially violate Article 106, paragraph 4 of Law No. 22/2009 which states that every person who drives a motor vehicle on the road is required to comply with traffic regulations. Those who ride their motorcycles are required to bring their driver's licenses, Vehicle Registration Card, and helmets and switch on the vehicle headlights during the day as it is specified in Articles 106-107 of Law No. 22/2009. Therefore, every person has to know traffic regulations before he wants to ride his motor-cycle.

This research analyzes different approaches on behavior of the people, especially online *ojek* drivers in adhering to traffic regulations. The study cultural perception becomes the perspective used in this research. The influence of culture on perception in intercultural communication will be more understood as the difference in culture in perceiving social objects and the events. The groups of different culture tend to have different perceptions in responding to the same circumstances. Cultural perception is used as the result of learning from drivers' experience in understanding traffic regulations and the people's method of driving their motor vehicles in Medan [7]. The people in Medan are very heterogeneous, and several of them are immigrants from other towns and regions. These are the reasons and the background why the writers of this research want to discuss the cultural perception owned by every online *ojek* drivers on complying with traffic regulations.

## 2. Method

This research used descriptive qualitative method which was aimed to dig up understanding or meanings perceived by online *ojek* drivers on their own behavior and their passengers' behavior in complying with traffic regulations. In-depth interviews were conducted with 8 (eight) informants; they were 2 (two) *Gojek* drivers, 4 (four) Grab drivers, and 2 (two) passengers. The online *ojek* drivers were selected according to the criteria as follows: they, as online *ojek* drivers, had worked as drivers for more than three months with the assumption that they had had experience and insight about traffic problems. Online *ojek* drivers whose potency was in accordance with the criteria to become informants would be asked to be willing to participate in the interviews, based on the draft of interview which had been prepared by the writers.

**Table 1. Data of Informants**

No.	Name	Age	Ethnicity	Origin	Main Job	Side Job
1.	RSS	22	Karo	Medan	Student	<i>Gojek</i> Driver
2.	FN	22	Padang	Medan	Student	<i>Gojek</i> Driver
3.	CHN	43	Jawa	Medan	Security Guard	Grab Driver
4.	BR	19	Padang	Medan	Student	Grab Driver
5.	ISL	19	Jawa	Medan	Student	Grab Driver
6.	DDK	22	Batak	Medan	Entrepreneur	Grab Driver
7.	FHR	22	Karo	Medan	Student	Passenger
8	AJ	22	Jawa	Aceh	Student	Passenger

*Source: Interviews, 2019*

Interview draft was divided into 2 (two) categories: informants as online *ojek* drivers and as passengers. For the online *ojek* drivers, the interview draft was divided into 5 (five) parts. The first part was about the drivers' identities – names, ages, addresses, tribes, religion, and the status as informants. The second part was about the informants' jobs, their decision to be online *ojek* drivers, when they started to work as online *ojek* drivers, and any regulations which had to

be complied with. The third part was about the earnings they obtained in one day and their capacity to meet their needs per day as online *ojek* drivers. The fourth part was about the tariff of online *ojek*; namely, the drivers' response to the tariff stipulated by online *ojek* company, tariff for promotion, and bonus received by them. The fifth part was about the drivers' behavior during their working hours; namely, their understanding about traffic regulations, the requirements for driving motor vehicles, traffic offenses committed by drivers, their responses to traffic regulations, and the criteria for the drivers in selecting passengers. Interview draft for the users (passengers) of online *ojek* was divided into 2 (two) parts. The first part was about their identities – names, tribes, religion, addresses, occupations, ages, and status. The second part was about behavior; namely, their understanding about traffic regulations, their experience as the drivers who violated traffic regulations, their attitude and action toward the accident of violation of traffic regulations.

This study used 2 (two) types of data analysis [8]. The method of analyzing the data was, first, through the stage model of inductive analysis. This stage was used while the research was being done in the field, commencing from the stage of gathering the data, categorizing the data, explaining the data, and drawing the conclusion. The second data analyzing method was triangulating the data. The method used to analyze the findings in the field was done by comparing the result of interviews, observation, previous researches, and other documents related to the focus on the written study.

### **3. Result**

#### *3.1. Drivers' Perception on Job*

Today, having a job as an online *ojek* driver is a choice which is highly favored by many people. Flexible working time and reasonable earnings each month have motivated people from all walks of life to enlist as online *ojek* drivers in the online transportation companies. This trend has caused some problems such as the incidence of the increase in the number of vehicles on the roads and the increase in the number of drivers that is not in accordance with the number of consumers (passengers).

Several drivers admit that they work as online *ojek* drivers as their side-jobs. This statement was supported by Table 1 of this research, where the informants had their main jobs as students, security guards, and entrepreneurs. The online *ojek* companies do not demand that the drivers work full time all day long. Nevertheless, in order to increase the drivers' work motivation, the companies give the target of how many passengers that have to be gotten in one day if they want to get bonus or extra income. This system is able to increase their spirits to get extra income in this job. Based on the result of the interviews, it was found that there was another impact of this bonus system, as one of them admitted as follows:

*“The bonus given to the drivers (partners) is unbearable since the point target is becoming higher and higher. It means that working hours also increase, but I myself do not follow this system. For me, the important thing is to get income though it is little”*

According to some of the drivers, the system of bonus can be done by those who are able to work hard all day long according to the target wanted by the companies. The stages of bonus applied by the companies have caused online *ojek* drivers to keep up with time in order to obtain the bonus by adding up their working hours.

Generally, the drivers admit that the rules and the requirements to enlist as online *ojek* drivers are not very difficult to follow and understood. However, they say that some of the rules are burdensome for them. They are, for examples, conferring ‘Star’ as the form of evaluating

their performance and the cancellation of consumers' orders caused by the drivers' faults. This rule is attached to the document of rules of online *ojek* (*Gojek*). In this case, the informants seemed to disagree on the operational rules for online *ojek* drivers, especially on the decrease in performance (*Gojek*) or rating (*Grab*). The evaluation on the online *ojek* drivers is concerned with unilateral cancellation, followed by biased comments by the passengers on the drivers since what the informants, who work as online *ojek* drivers, actually expect is a reward in the form of bonus promised by the company if they meet the requirements, especially the evaluation on rating (*Grab*) and performance (*Gojek*). The refusal was conveyed by one of the informants, CS (32 years old) as followed:

*Rules are okay, bang, but the rule on unilateral cancellation with the reason of the drivers' demand can decrease drivers' rating. After that, Star 1 given by passengers can cause suspension. If we want to make it active again, we have to go the Grab office. But the passengers can also get the effect if they cancel again and again. It is said that their account can also be suspended, bang. Talking about bonus, its target is too high so that we, the drivers, have to work hard all day long."*

Evaluating the drivers' performance by using the system of Conferring the Star and biased comments from consumers becomes a kind of "threat" for online *ojek* drivers. Even though this job is a side-job for them, bad evaluation on their performance has to be avoided. Some informants, whose main jobs are students and who became online *ojek* drivers, want to help their parents and to use their income for paying school tuition.

### *3.2. Drivers' Cultural Perception on Complying with Traffic Regulations*

Basically, online *ojek* drivers are aware of the importance of complying with the applicable traffic regulations. This is in accordance with the regulations issued by the online *ojek* companies about the knowledge of traffic regulations and the preparation and the completion of the drivers according to the protocol of safety and traffic. However, there are still the incidences of traffic offense committed by online *ojek* drivers and public transportation. In this research, there were some reasons why traffic offenses committed by online *ojek* drivers. Some of them were the drivers' willingness to get more and more earnings. They have to violate traffic regulations because they have to rush in order to get passengers and because sometimes the passengers get to their destination on time by being ready to give some incentives or tips to the drivers. Besides that, they will also get the evaluation of good performance from the office when they are able to carry passengers, food, goods, etc. quickly and on time. This condition was admitted by one of the informants as follows:

*"If it is possible, we find a loading stage close to a food stand which food is often ordered by people since online *ojek* drivers who get food orders will get more points compared with carrying passengers."*

Obtaining some tips or incentives and by the drivers is a kind of motivation for them to work harder, and obtaining a Star is a form of evaluation given by a passenger for good performance of an online *ojek* driver when they feel that the driver has done good thing for them. The kinds of Star are Star 1, Star 2, Star 3, Star 4, and Star 5. Star 1 indicates that a driver has done the worst thing, and Star 5 indicates that a driver has done the best thing for his passenger so that the latter feels satisfied. The more the Stars which can be collected by an online *ojek* driver were, the better his performance evaluated by the online *ojek* management in

appreciating his performance. The appreciation given by the management is in the form of bonus or additional wage for the driver. However, their willingness to get bonus or incentives has made them very enthusiastic; consequently, they dare to violate traffic regulations which means that the bonus system has given the opportunity for them to commit traffic offenses.

Online *ojek* drivers understand and realize that they are required to comply with traffic regulations for the sake of drivers' and passengers' safety. They usually know that what it means by traffic offense is. When they violate traffic regulations they will get traffic tickets; for example, when they run a traffic light, or stop on the zebra cross, or when the passenger does not wear a helmet. Besides that, the existence of traffic police officers who organize the traffic becomes a determining factor for drivers' behavior in complying with traffic regulations. Actually, online *ojek* drivers take the bypass or shortcut is because their passengers want to rush which makes them violate traffic signs such as running the traffic lights. Based on the result of the interviews with the informants, it was found that there were some causes which made online *ojek* drivers commit traffic offenses; they were external and internal factors:

External Factors	Internal Factors
Passengers demand to arrive at their destination as quickly as possible.	Drivers never get any sanction when they commit traffic offenses.
Passengers insist on not wearing helmets because of short distance or because they do not want their hair to be marred.	Drivers are afraid of getting bad evaluation from customers.
	Drivers want to get the maximum target of passengers in order to get bonus or incentives.

Behavioral deviation in traffic by online *ojek* drivers can be caused by external and internal factors. But these two factors are actually based on the drivers' desire to meet their economic needs by getting more incentives or bonus, either from their passengers or from the management. Therefore, they are usually faced by dilemma – between complying with traffic regulations and fulfilling passengers' willingness which is often contrary to traffic regulations.

### *3.3. Barriers in Intercultural Communication of Online Ojek Drivers in Complying with Traffic Regulations*

Some barriers in intercultural communication frequently occur in online *ojek* drivers, especially in their emotions and habits. Chaney & Martin point out that a communication barrier is something which obstructs the incidence of effective communication [9]. Intercultural communication barrier is an emotional barrier which comes from either the drivers or the passengers. An emotional barrier is usually caused by the difference in interest and purpose, indicated by emotional feeling. The drivers' willingness to comply with traffic regulations is different from their interest in getting to the destination as quickly as possible even though they have to run the traffic lights. Another emotional barrier is the drivers' willingness to get as many as passengers in order to get bonus. Violation of traffic regulations is contrary to the passengers' willingness to get to their destination safely and comfortably. This difference in interest has caused the incidence of communication barriers between drivers and passengers. The other barriers caused by habits of riding in motor vehicles and legal process can influence the behavior of online *ojek* drivers and their passengers. Legal enforcement in traffic is not directly imposed upon people. So far, it has occurred through making a clean sweep of motor vehicles. This exemption of obligations has caused people not to comply with traffic regulations. This

feeling of “getting free from being guilty” becomes their experience in the process of law and culture in using motor vehicles. The writers of this research also have an opinion that these occurrences will eventually become the law and culture which are attached to every online *ojek* drivers and their customers.

One of the intercultural communication barriers in this research was about traffic regulations concerning the completion of vehicle attributes which have to be possessed by every online *ojek* driver and his passenger. One of them is using helmets which have to be used by the online *ojek* passengers. One of the online *ojek* drivers pointed out that some of their passengers did not wear helmets; they only held the helmets. Good communication and services offered by online *ojek* drivers do not make the passengers understand and agree with the drivers. This difference in cultural perception in communication between drivers and passengers causes the incidence of emotional barrier which ends with the giving low grade of Star to the drivers.

There is the difference in communication barrier undergone by one of the passengers who comes from Aceh. He points out that the traffic condition in Medan is far different from the one in his original place. There are some traffic offenses which often occur on the road such as stopping on the zebra crosses. He further says in the interview that so far online *ojek* drivers have complied with preparing their motor vehicle completion, but there is still violation of the way they ride their motorcycles:

*So far, online ojek drivers have fulfilled the requirements for the completion of their motor vehicles. Traffic offense, of course, still occurs, It can be because of its customers' demand; for example, they want to get to their destination as fast as possible so that the drovers have to commit traffic offense. Sometimes I also do the same thing, bang, but I do it on the dust roads and not in crowded roads. Usually traffic offenses are done by stopping on zebra crosses or running the traffic lights, but it is very frequently that they stop anywhere although there is a traffic sign which says No Stopping.”*

Barriers faced by the informants, as online *ojek* drivers and passengers, in complying with traffic regulations were based on the difference in interest and habits. These two factors become a culture for the people in Medan, regardless of their differences in culture.

The writers of this research found that the role of intercultural communication in online *ojek* drivers has not been able to accept differences. Sometimes they make wrong decision due to other people’s influence which makes them violate traffic regulations. It could be known from one informant, a passenger, who influenced an online *ojek* driver. The result was that the driver violated traffic regulations.

*“Once I was in a hurry because I was late to campus, but sometimes I quarreled with an online ojek driver. At that time he refused my proposal, but I insisted. He finally agreed because he was afraid if I would give him Star One.”*

In this case, it can be seen that online *ojek* drivers attempt to apply good legal culture, but his inability to uphold the culture of law-abiding has potentially caused offense. They are not able to influence their passengers in the culture of riding vehicles legally. The feeling of apprehensiveness and scare of getting less income has made them choose short-cut by violating traffic regulations. The role of intercultural communication in riding motor vehicles stipulated by the company is eventually ignored by online *ojek* drivers.

#### **d. Language**

In doing his daily activities, an online *ojek* driver meets his consumers who have different characteristics. When communication is done with different cultural background, local language should be changed to the national one, Indonesian, so that the message which will be conveyed by online *ojek* drivers to their passengers, or vice versa, can be understood because a meeting between two people can arouse questions about feelings, attitude, and anything which will be obtained in communication so that it can encourage a person to communicate until the problem is solved. In this case, the level of uncertainty between a driver and a passenger will be reduced when he is able to do the process of communication accurately. The use of Indonesian will avoid the barrier between an online *ojek* driver and his passenger.

Online *ojek* drivers use Indonesian in their daily activities. The same is true to passengers; even though there is no agreement between them, they still communicate in Indonesian, a set of words which have been arranged structurally so that they form a sentence which contains meaning [10]. The writers of this research found that Indonesian did not influence the wage and bonus received by online *ojek* drivers since language can be understood if only there is an agreement between the doers of communication. Formally, language can be meant as all imagined sentences which can be made according to its grammar. Therefore, agreement between online *ojek* drivers and their passengers uses Indonesian in their communication.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Online *ojek* drivers in Medan have cultural perception on complying with traffic regulations, but, in reality, there are still traffic regulations which are violated because of personal interest such as the need for wages and bonus to meet their necessities of life. Another factor which causes the incidence of this violation is intercultural communication between online *ojek* drivers and their customers which has not played its role well so that it is difficult to achieve the mutual agreement in complying with traffic regulations on public roads. Passengers' willingness to achieve their destination (personal interest) can cause online *ojek* drivers not to comply with traffic regulations. The bad role of communication between passengers and drivers is not caused by the difficulty of using language but because of emotional barriers. Behavioral deviation in traffic will become sustainable behavior and will eventually become their habit. The result of this research was expected to be used as a literature study in analyzing the behavior in traffic for online *ojek* drivers and as the guidelines for the next researches on the government's policy in evaluating the problems.

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