



Shopee and Voluntary Slavery in Expedition Courier of Indonesian Massive Consumptive Society

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Abstract. Shopee couriers went on strike because their wages were IDR 2,213/package delivered [1]. Meanwhile, Shopee is able to earn more than 67 trillion in revenue from Indonesian users [2]. This phenomenon is in the spotlight of voluntary slavery in the midst of a massive consumer society on the Shopee commercial electronic site. The welfare of Shopee couriers as part of the Shopee industry employees becomes so sad that it is coupled with the risks that must be borne by the courier in the process of delivering goods. The purpose of this study is to examine the phenomenon of voluntary slavery of Shopee couriers in the perspective of Herbert Marcuse's Theory. The method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The results show that voluntary slavery occurs in the target system for sending goods to couriers which is equivalent to overtime work of up to 12 h every day. In addition, another form of slavery is the losses imposed on the courier such as the CoD system with customers who are reluctant to pay for the goods received. The new finding found in this study is the concept of one dimension man in the expedition courier work system.

Keywords: shopee courier · voluntary slavery · herbet marcuse

1 Introduction

This Shopee Courier went on strike because the wage was IDR 2,213/package delivered [1]. The phenomenon of the courier strike suddenly becoming a public talk, plus the fact that the wages of Shopee couriers are only assessed for each package delivered has attracted a lot of attention from social media users. Shopee is a commercial electronic site that began to develop in the past 3 years which is ranked 2nd for commercial electronic sites in Indonesia. Shopee within 12 months was able to attract 823,080,670 users in Indonesia [3]. Of the many Indonesian users, Shopee was able to earn more than 67 trillion [2]. From such a fantastic income with the many events conducted by Shopee and inviting artists with extraordinary fees, it seems to be a deep criticism of Shopee's treatment of wages to couriers who deliver goods or packages to customers.

The risk of work as a parcel delivery courier is quite high where during the trip an accident can occur and the delivery courier must bear the damage to the goods without any special insurance [4]. Meanwhile Shopee is getting more and more income from high-risk courier jobs. This then reminds researchers of one of the sociological theories, namely voluntary slavery initiated by Herbert Marcuse regarding the meaning of consumptivism that exists in people's lifestyle (Marcuse, n.d.). It is distinguished from forced slavery in which a person is forced to serve a period of forced labor as punishment for a crime. In practice, however, the term is often a euphemism used to hide conditions of slavery that are actually less than fully voluntary.

According to Marcuse's theory, modern technology is widely used as the foundation of hope. Consequently, the seeds of capitalism are growing. Domination is increasingly playing an active role, when technology is able to create rational, effective, and efficient patterns to give birth to prosperity for its citizens through community arrangements that seem completely rational, the people who live are made passive and receptive because they are resigned. The practice of voluntary slavery is actually already rife among industrial workers through overtime pay or the lure of large wages with a much greater safety risk.

Of course, this is relevant to the phenomenon of Shopee couriers who are paid low with a fairly high risk on the way to deliver packages to customers. Another fact that later shows the disadvantage of Shopee couriers or couriers for delivery of goods from commercial electronic sites is the existence of a Cash on Delivery (CoD) where customers can pay for their ordered goods when the order arrives. Not infrequently in the CoD Shopee couriers have to bail out goods that are not paid for by customer even though the package has been delivered [5]. Couriers are an important part of the transaction process between sellers and buyers in e-commerce. Without a courier, e-commerce such as Shopee will not be able to run smoothly. Shopee Express itself is a type of expedition owned by PT Shopee International Indonesia (Shopee), one of the largest marketplaces in Indonesia. However, it is important to remember that being a package delivery person or a Shopee Express courier applies a partner scheme which is claimed to be a symbiotic mutualism. In other words, the status of the Shopee Express courier is as a partner or not an employee of the company. The incentive value obtained by Shopee Express couriers is quite competitive when compared to the average logistics service industry. If the driver-partners can carry as many as 80 packages a day [6].

A phenomenon that has crushed the hearts of researchers. Even so, the facts that have surfaced in the media, Shopee still evades the allegations of low wages received by the Shopee courier [7]. In a day, Shopee couriers have to send at least 35 packages with distances between customer that are quite difficult to predict with uncertain road terrain, of course increasing the risk of work during Shopee package delivery. It doesn't stop there about the facts that Shopee courier slavery is a psychic attack from customers who complain about received packages. The news that has recently emerged is that there are buyers who are dissatisfied with the goods ordered so that they spill their frustration on the courier and do not want to pay for their orders [7]. From these problems, researchers are interested in studying the practice of voluntary slavery experienced by Shopee couriers with Herbert Marcuse's perspective as an empirical review and critique of Shopee's commercial electronic site policies.

2 Research Method

This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The research method used in this research is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen to look more deeply from the research subject about the personal meaning of the actions and choices he made. So that in the implementation of research, the procedures used are qualitative research stages which include data collection, reduction, and data presentation. The data in this study will be presented in a qualitative descriptive form. The location of this research is the Yogyakarta area, which focuses on expedition couriers who collaborate with Shopee such as J&T, JNE, SiCepat, and ShopeeID. The time of the research was carried out for 2 months starting from July to August 2021. The data collection technique used was in-depth interviews with 9 informants, namely a courier who worked for at least 6 months on the expedition. In this study, a phenomenological analysis technique was used.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Shopee Courier Work Experience

Courier is a job that is considered trivial by some people. How not, many people think that the courier profession is only limited to delivering goods or packages. Indeed, the courier's job looks easy and simple, but behind it, the courier often gets various kinds of obstacles and bad treatment which in the end causes social conflict. There are so many cases experienced by shopee couriers, the most frequent of which are conflicts with consumers. This is supported by a statement from DS as an expedition courier for Si Fast who often receives bad treatment from consumers. Not only DS who had a bad incident when delivering goods, NA as an expedition courier from JNE said that he had met a customer who, when billed for COD (Cash on Delivery) or paid on the spot, got angry. to him because the goods sent by the seller did not match the picture displayed at the online store.

Based on the informant's statement, it is known that in addition to getting bad treatment by consumers, they also have to bear the risk of damage to goods caused by the negligence of their expedition party. Not only that, they also have to accept the consequences from the consumer side who often behave badly with EK and NA as couriers for delivering goods. Of course, this needs to be considered by e-commerce in paying attention to the fate of their expedition couriers. In addition to getting bad treatment from consumers, these Shopee couriers often experience obstacles in the form of extreme weather and working hours that are beyond reasonable limits in order to pursue targets and get bonuses from the expedition. They do this in order to get a small additional salary. Of course, in this case the courier has accidentally become a voluntary slave of the expedition. They do not hesitate to go home outside normal working hours just to get extra wages.

3.2 Expeditionary Courier Work System and Policy

Shopee cooperates with several expedition parties as a delivery service for various small or medium entrepreneurs throughout Indonesia who use Shopee as a medium for marketing their products. In this regard, of course, in the cooperative relationship between shopee and the delivery service, they must have their own policies. One of them is the policy regarding the given wage system. Many people think that when a freight forwarder, let alone cooperate with online shopping media such as Shopee, eats the welfare of the courier, in this case, the wages received will definitely get a bigger addition. In addition, other policies that are often rarely known by people are insurance issues. Considering the types of customers both from different addresses, such as in terms of geographical position and very strategic location, it is possible that an unwanted incident such as an accident will occur. In this case, the intended accident is a form of incident that is classified as severe so that it must be referred to a hospital and carry out a certain treatment system.

Based on the results of interviews said by one of the informants, it can be seen that as a courier, the expedition party still provides guarantees. Indeed, according to what is said, the form of insurance provided by the expedition is in the form of medical expenses that are not borne by the courier itself. In addition, other highlights also refer to the allowances provided by the expedition. Some places usually provide benefits given to their employees. With regard to allowances, of course, couriers also get them in the form of money given via transfer to their account. This allowance is given once a year to coincide with the fall of Eid al-Fitr. In this case, the allowance is given in accordance with the long working time policy and is given as holiday allowance. We know that the overtime system is often used in various fields of work, including couriers. In some categories of work overtime is defined as part of the work time that is done at night. It's different with this courier system. In fact, some work done on a red day will count as overtime. Goods delivery work that cannot be done at night so it is done on a red date. Therefore, in accordance with the policy provided by the expedition, the melting system is calculated if working on holidays. This is in accordance with the statement given by the informant DN, so based on this statement we know that even though working as a courier, they still get an overtime system with the policies of each expedition. As acknowledged by DN, the overtime system is carried out not at night, but working on red dates.

3.3 Voluntary Slavery

One Dimension Man or one-dimensional society is Herbert Marcuse's idea which explains the modern industrial society. The one-dimensional human being referred to by Herbert Marcuse is a passive and receptive society, not critical and no longer wanting change. In this one-dimensional society, there is an abundance of material production. So, to maintain profits, an economic network was created with neat management through manipulation of needs and economic expansion that spread and gave rise to the needs of all that are artificial [8]. From the results of the study, it was found a fact that it turns out that couriers who deliver Shopee goods are also part of the pattern of economic turnover. Shopee courier workers admit that they also often make transactions at Shopee such as

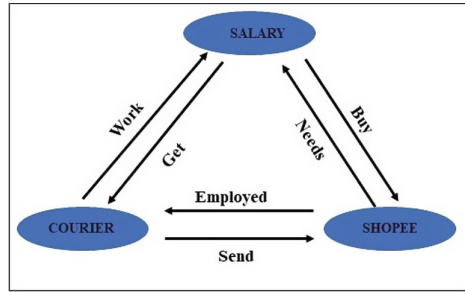


Fig. 1. Economic network pattern formed from the behavior of Shopee courier workers.

purchasing electronic goods, skincare for couples, clothes, and other artificial needs. The artificial need in question is an artificial need, even though a Shopee courier must send at least 50 packages a day with an 8-h work system and they often take overtime, but it turns out that from the wages they receive one of them is used to buy ‘comfort’ and ‘comfort’. Abundance’ of Shopee’s commercial electronic site. From this phenomenon, the researchers found an economic network pattern formed from the behaviour of Shopee courier workers as follows in Fig. 1:

From the above pattern it can be explained that couriers work and earn money from their work delivering Shopee goods or packages, then the wages are used to buy pseudo needs in Shopee, on the other hand, Shopee employs them as freight forwarders. The Shopee courier who became our informant also stated that he used the paylater to shop for electronic devices. In fact, one of the informants, DB, admitted that she always waited for the twin number discount at Shopee to purchase goods.

The results of in-depth interviews with DB also show that he buys goods at Shopee not because of planned needs but pleasure or satisfaction because he managed to buy cheap goods. So, it can be concluded that Shopee courier workers work with an economic network pattern system where they actually have a tendency to artificial needs such as the desire to have excessive goods because they are part of the promotive and persuasive Shopee advertisements. In Herbert Marcuse’s theory, consumerism is closely related to pseudo-needs which can be defined as a need imposed by certain social interests on all individuals with the intention of oppressing and undermining brands [9]. In this study, researchers found that Shopee couriers have a tendency to pseudo-needs with the motivation to work ‘fulfilling needs’. In this case, the courier workers we met have a pretty good fashion sense, then the desire to follow the development of electronic brands is the hidden reason behind their choice to work as Shopee couriers. Propaganda of false needs is carried out through various promotions, exhibitions, and advertisements regarding trademarks, places, tourism, shopping centers, fashion, apartments. The location of motorized vehicle housing, and other religions [8]. So, the courier actually buys the product not because of the benefits but a label that is offered.

From the chart above, it can be seen that shopee offers goods not in terms of benefits and primary needs, but labeling and the development of consumer demand and trends. This is what encourages courier workers to be involved in the economic network of

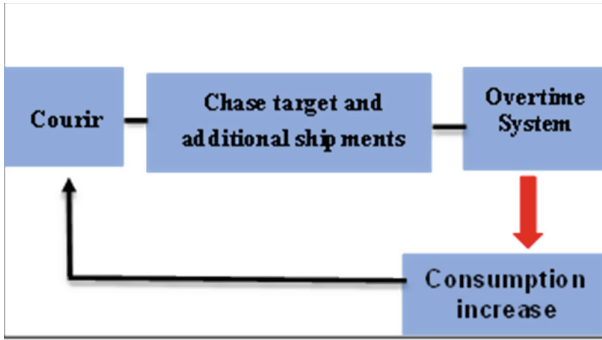


Fig. 2. The voluntary slavery-performance principle.

artificial needs. Another statement that shows that there is consumerism and pseudo-needs is the result of an interview with DN, where he stated that he bought a lot of fashion and electronic items through Shopee, he admitted that buying through Shopee with good brands got quite tempting discounts. From the statement above, it shows that Shopee encourages artificial or artificial needs even for expedition courier workers who work with Shopee.

Marcuse criticized modern civilization for enslaving human existence. The slavery of human existence occurs because of the principle of abundance. The principle of abundance has become part of the purpose of human life today. The principle of abundance raises the principle of achievement (the performance principle). The principle of achievement demonstration of the historical forms of the dominant reality principle in this era [9]. This means that the dominant in the modern world is the drive for consumption and career. This urge is marked by the emergence of a motherly culture to work as hard as possible for consumption [8]. In this study found the results of the practice of voluntary slavery on expedition couriers in collaboration with Shopee. The results of in-depth interviews related to the work system in the form of target workers even tend to exploit the couriers themselves. Ideally, workers and other workers work 8 h per day, but courier workers can work up to 12 h per day with an overtime system to increase income or bonuses. This refers to the characteristics of voluntary slavery according to Herbert Marcuse, namely, additional working hours are enjoyed because of additional income, but here the law of working profit applies as well as creating voluntary slavery [8]. This study also produces a chart of voluntary slavery that occurs in courier workers as follows in Fig. 2:

The chart above shows that couriers are actually enslaved by themselves by their desire to earn more income by working above the average working hours voluntarily. Couriers consciously work on weekends and holidays to earn extra income. On the other hand, couriers are actually controlled by the production apparatus as work controls. The extent and mode of satisfaction of people's lives is determined by their work. They actually work for a production apparatus that is outside their own control, namely machines, foreman, foreman, managers, and other tools [8]. In this study, it is shown that courier work is controlled by a large capitalism, namely Shopee which is implemented in the

form of target work to send a minimum of 40–50 packages a day with a value of 1500–2100 rupiah per package. From Fig. 4 it can be explained that the couriers voluntarily do the overtime system. In a day the courier actually only has a work contract for 8 h with a quota of 40 packages a day. However, the couriers make additional deliveries independently solely for additional income because their basic salary so far has only been UMR. Even though the additional working hours of 4–5 h a day is not commensurate with the additional income provided where a courier is only given an additional 500700 wages per package delivered. This statement is supported by the results of interviews with couriers. In addition, additional wages are given to couriers for their overtime work. This is because the courier must bear the risk of damage to the goods even though the goods actually already have special insurance from the expedition, but in fact damage to the goods is still charged to the courier for 15–30% of the loss of goods.

4 Conclusion

Courier work is a replica of the existence of voluntary slavery where this is shown from the expedition work system with a target system. Each courier from JNE, JNT, and Sicepat has a quota of sending 40–50 packages per day with wages of around 1800–2100 per package. Couriers can also increase their income with an overtime system even though they have an 8-h work contract a day. Couriers who are informants in this study admit that they always make additional deliveries to get bonuses. The bonus received by the courier is between 500–800 rupiah per package delivered. This phenomenon has become a portrait of voluntary slavery because couriers have to add up to 4–5 h of work a day so that they have to work for more than 12 h to get a salary above the minimum wage. With work risks such as the CoD system which is charged to the courier if the customer does not pay, then the risk of damage to the goods charged to the courier is 15 – 30% of the loss.

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