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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TRANS METRO PEKANBARU SERVICES
(A Study on Student Users of Trans Metro Corridor 03)

PERSEPSI MAHASISWA TERHADAP PELAYANAN TRANS METRO PEKANBARU
(Studi Pada Mahasiswa Pengguna Trans Metro Koridor 03)

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Abstract

Public transportation is an important means for the community in their efforts to maintain their daily mobility, especially for urban communities, including students as a group of public transportation users with high mobility. Trans Metro Pekanbaru is a mass transportation system based on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) which is expected to provide effective services to the community and offer comfort at an affordable price. The presence of Trans Metro Pekanbaru cannot immediately bring satisfaction to its users; various service problems are still found, affecting user perceptions. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions of the Trans Metro Pekanbaru services on Corridor 03. This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive approach. The research sample consisted of 30 student users of Trans Metro Corridor 03 selected using the Accidental Sampling technique. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires, observation, and documentation, then analyzed using descriptive statistics with a scoring method. The results showed that students' perceptions of Trans Metro Pekanbaru services were in the fairly good category. Aspects of accessibility, ease of use, and cost efficiency obtained positive assessments from respondents. However, several aspects were still considered less than optimal, especially the punctuality of bus arrivals, fleet comfort, and the availability of buses in operation. The research findings indicate that improving service quality, adding fleets, and better management of operational schedules are needed to increase student satisfaction and interest in using public transportation. Finally, regarding the improvement of Trans Metro Pekanbaru services, it can support more effective and sustainable urban mobility.

Keywords : Student Perception, Transportation Services, Trans Metro Pekanbaru, Urban Mobility.

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Abstrak

Transportasi umum merupakan saran penting untuk masyarakat dalam upaya mereka tetap menjalankan mobilitas kehidupan mereka terutama masyarakat pada perkotaan, termasuk mahasiswa sebagai bagian dari kelompok pengguna transportasi umum dengan mobilitas yang tinggi. Trans Metro Pekanbaru adalah sistem transportasi massal berbasis Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) yang diharapkan mampu untuk memberikan pelayanan yang efektif untuk masyarakat serta memberikan kenyamanan dengan harga yang terjangkau. Hadirnya Trans Metro Pekanbaru juga tidak bisa langsung mendatangkan kepuasan bagi penggunanya, berbagai permasalahan pelayanan masih ditemukan sehingga mempengaruhi persepsi pengguna. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi mahasiswa terhadap pelayanan Trans Metro Pekanbaru pada Koridor 03. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Sampel penelitian berjumlah 30 mahasiswa pengguna Trans Metro Koridor 03 yang dipilih menggunakan teknik Accidental Sampling. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui kuesioner, observasi dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dengan metode skoring. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi mahasiswa terhadap pelayanan Trans Metro Pekanbaru berada pada kategori cukup baik. Aspek aksesibilitas, kemudahan penggunaan, dan efisiensi biaya memperoleh penilaian positif dari responden. Namun, pada beberapa aspek masih dinlai kurang optimal, terutama ketepatan waktu kedatangan bus, kenyamanan armada, serta ketersediaan jumlah bus yang beroperasi. Temuan penelitian mengindikasikan bahwa peningkatan kualitas pelayanan, penambahan armada, serta pengelolaan jadwal opersional yang lebih baik diperlukan untuk meningkatkan kepuasan dan minat mahasiswa dalam menggunakan transportasi umum. Akhirnya mengenai perbaikan layanan Trans Metro Pekanbaru dapat mendukung mobilitas perkotaan yang lebih efektif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci : Persepsi Mahasiswa, Pelayanan Transportasi, Trans Metro Pekanbaru, Mobilitas Perkotaan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public transportation is an essential component in supporting the mobility of urban communities. The availability of adequate transportation not only facilitates the movement of individuals from one place to another but also plays a role in reducing traffic congestion and increasing travel efficiency. The presence of public transportation is also expected to support economic and educational activities. In various developing cities in Indonesia, public transportation is becoming an increasingly important necessity along with the growing population and community activities that require high accessibility. (Raihan Azim et al., 2020).

Pekanbaru City, as the capital of Riau Province, is experiencing rapid development in various sectors, namely the economy, trade, and education. This growth in Pekanbaru City has resulted in increased community mobility, thereby raising the demand for effective transportation services. To support community mobility while simultaneously reducing the use of private vehicles, the Pekanbaru City government has taken part in developing a mass transportation system based on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), known as Trans Metro Pekanbaru. The availability of Trans Metro is expected to be a safe, comfortable, affordable, and easily accessible transportation alternative for all layers of society (Mutaqim, 2018).

Following its launch, Trans Metro Pekanbaru naturally received various responses from its users. Behind the positive responses, several issues have also arisen in the provision of Trans Metro Pekanbaru services. User complaints generally relate to the punctuality of bus arrivals, the limited number of fleets, the comfort of facilities, and the lack of certainty in operational schedules (Trisna, 2015).

These conditions have the potential to influence public perception regarding the quality of services provided. Furthermore, data from the Pekanbaru City Transportation Agency indicates that

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the number of Trans Metro passengers has declined in recent years. In 2019, the number of passengers reached 3,475,151, whereas in 2024, it decreased to 1,070,991. This decline highlights a challenge in maintaining public trust in public transportation services. (Bernard & Sanjaya, 2024)

One user group that quite actively utilizes the Trans Metro Pekanbaru service is college students. Corridor 03, which connects educational areas such as the University of Riau and the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, is one of the routes with a high level of student mobility. For students, public transportation functions not only as a means of mobility but is also related to cost efficiency, punctuality, and comfort in supporting academic activities. Consequently, various student perceptions regarding the service quality of Trans Metro Pekanbaru have emerged, making it important to study as a form of evaluation of the service performance provided.

Previous research conducted by (Dwi Hantoro & Indrawati, 2021) showed that passengers provided unfavorable assessments of several service aspects of Trans Metro Pekanbaru, particularly the condition of bus stops, bus waiting times, and travel times. Meanwhile, (Astuti et al., 2018) found that the public chose Trans Metro due to its affordable fares and the ease of access provided. The results of these studies indicate that service quality remains the primary factor influencing people's decisions to use public transportation. However, studies specifically examining the perceptions of students as active users on Corridor 03 are still relatively limited.

The presence of Trans Metro Pekanbaru, with its various positive and negative responses, clarifies the need to understand how students perceive the Trans Metro Pekanbaru services. (Adhitya & Hutagalung, 2023). These perceptions can provide an overview of which service aspects are functioning well and which still require improvement (Malik & Hidir, 2025). This study aims to analyze student perceptions of Trans Metro Pekanbaru services on Corridor 03. The results of this study are ultimately expected to serve as evaluation material for the management to improve service quality and encourage increased use of public transportation in Pekanbaru City. (Nainggolan, 2023)

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive approach that aims to provide a detailed overview of students' perceptions of Trans Metro Pekanbaru services. The use of this method aims to assess the quality of public services from the users' perspective, particularly students. The numerical data collected in the study was analyzed using statistical methods to produce objective conclusions. (Hikmawati, 2020) The research location was set in Pekanbaru City. The population in this study includes the general public, such as students who actively use Trans Metro Pekanbaru, with an estimated total of 1,000,000 passengers per year.

Given the large population size, sample selection was conducted using the accidental sampling technique, selecting non-probability respondents who happened to be encountered at the research location. The determination of respondents used Slovin's formula with a margin of error of 10%, meaning the minimum sample size was 100 respondents. However, due to the researchers' limited time and access in the field, the sample was set at 30 respondents who are active students aged 20–26 years old, encountered in the operational area of Trans Metro Corridor 03. (Muhson, 2008)

The data used are primary data obtained directly through questionnaire distribution and structured Q&A sessions with students in the field, while secondary data was obtained through documentation techniques. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques for data presentation (Malik et.al, 2025). To measure student perceptions, this study applied a 3-Point Likert Scale with scoring provisions, namely 3 for Very Good, 2 for Fairly Good, and 1 for Poor. The assessment category levels were then determined through a scoring method with the class interval formula $P = R/K$, where P is the class length, R is the range obtained from the largest data minus the smallest data, and K is the number of classes calculated using the formula $K = 1 + 3.3 \log n$, with n being the amount of data. This analysis was also strengthened by calculating the arithmetic mean to observe the general tendency of the respondents' answers. (Muhson, 2008)

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent characteristics were classified based on age, gender, length of stay in Pekanbaru, intensity of use, as well as the main destination and reason for traveling using Trans Metro Pekanbaru. Based on the data collected from a total of 30 respondents, the gender breakdown was dominated by males with 17 individuals (56.7%) and females with 13 individuals (43.3%). Regarding age, the majority of users of this transportation mode were in the 21–23 age range, with a proportion reaching 50.0% (15 respondents), which is a phase where students are in their final years of study. The rest consisted of the 18–20 age group at 26.7% (8 respondents) and the 24–26 age group at 23.3% (7 respondents). This age and gender composition illustrates a fairly high dynamic of daily movement among students in meeting the needs of urban public transportation.

Regarding the duration students have lived in the urban area, the data shows a balance between students who have lived there for a long time and those who are in a transitional study period. More than half of the respondents, specifically 40.0% (12 individuals) each, recorded having lived in Pekanbaru City for 2 to 5 years and over 5 years. Meanwhile, the remaining 20.0% (6 individuals) had only lived in this city for less than 2 years. The presence of the Trans Metro Pekanbaru fleet is intensively utilized by students, where 40.0% (12 respondents) use it more than 2 times a week to support their academic activities, while periodic users (1-2 times a month) are at 33.3% (10 respondents), and the rest use the service 1-2 times per week at 26.7% (8 respondents).

Regarding the route traversed by Corridor 03 buses, the UIN Suska Riau Campus location became the main travel destination with the highest percentage reaching 40.0% (12 respondents), followed by movements towards the University of Riau (UNRI) Campus at 26.7% (8 respondents), trips returning to homes or residences at 16.7% (5 respondents), and destinations to several other campuses in Pekanbaru at 16.7% (5 respondents). The primary drive influencing students to choose this mode is strongly influenced by economic value, where 30.0% (9 respondents) firmly stated cheap fares as the main reason. Furthermore, comfort aspects (20.0%) and the fulfillment of basic college

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needs (20.0%) were also significant reasons, followed by ease of fleet access (13.3%), close distance from home (10.0%), and other personal reasons (6.7%).

The explanation of the characteristic profile above indicates that student users of Trans Metro Pekanbaru Corridor 03 are in a situation of fairly high dependence on the availability of affordable mass transportation facilities to ensure the smooth running of their daily academic journeys. The processes of globalization, rapid urbanization, and information technology have altered how communities interact and form their identities. Modern sociology must be able to capture the essence of these changes to provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary society. (Hidir & Malik, 2024) This social background and daily movement patterns serve as an essential foundation that influences how their perceptions and satisfaction levels toward public services are formed. Therefore, the following section will thoroughly elaborate on the analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding service quality, time efficiency, bus stop affordability, and the operational performance of Trans Metro Pekanbaru management, as summarized in the research questionnaire.

Student Perceptions of Spatial Affordability and Bus Stop Accessibility

This section prioritizes students' assessments of the walking distance from their residences to the nearest bus stop, the positioning of bus stops in public spaces, and the onward distance from the drop-off stop to their final college destination. Based on empirical data, the distance from students' homes or boarding houses to the nearest bus stop is considered quite adequate, with the proportion of 'fairly optimal' answers at 40.0% (12 respondents), followed by 'good' at 33.3% (10 respondents), and 'poor' at 26.7% (8 respondents). The assessment of the layout or optimization of bus stop positions along Corridor 03 also showed a balanced distribution of votes, where the 'poor' category recorded 36.7% (11 respondents), 'fairly strategic' at 33.3% (10 respondents), and 'good' at 30.0% (9 respondents).

Obstacles were found in the distance indicator from the final bus drop-off point to the gates of the students' main activity destinations in the campus area. Half of the total respondents, namely 50.0% (15 individuals), firmly stated that this onward pedestrian connectivity distance falls into the 'poor' classification. On the other hand, only 30.0% (9 respondents) considered the distance to be 'good', and 20.0% (6 respondents) rated it as 'fair'. This reality indicates the existence of physical integration constraints or onward walking distances that are too far for students after they alight from the bus doors.

Student Perceptions of Bus Management Performance

The assessment of Trans Metro Pekanbaru's internal management ranks encompasses their role in public socialization, the utilization of information technology, the creation of a friendly environment, responsiveness to complaints, and the fulfillment of service innovations. (Sugiharto, 2019). Questionnaire analysis results prove that the use of social media or information technology instruments developed by the management received the highest positive response from students, with a 'good' score achievement of 36.7% (11 respondents), followed by 'fairly helpful' at 33.3% (10 respondents), and 'poor' at 30.0% (9 respondents). The management's success in creating a friendly and attractive service environment for the public was also deemed fairly adequate, with 'fair' answers at 36.7% (11 respondents), 'good' at 33.3% (10 respondents), and 'poor' at 30.0% (9 respondents). (Wardana et al., 2024).

Conversely, the management is still considered very passive in implementing direct educational or socialization programs regarding the benefits of public transportation to the wider community; this indicator scored a 'poor' rating of 40.0% (12 respondents), while 'good' and 'fair' choices were evenly balanced at 30.0% (9 respondents) each. The management sector is also viewed as sluggish in responding to complaints or grievances submitted by users; this responsiveness was rated as 'fair' by 43.3% (13 respondents), but followed by a substantial 'poor' rating of 36.7% (11 respondents), with only 20.0% (6 respondents) judging it as 'good'. This weak complaint function is directly proportional to students' perceptions of the adequacy of management innovations to boost service quality, where

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the 'inadequate/poor' assessment portion recorded the highest percentage at 43.3% (13 respondents), while the 'good' option stood at 30.0% (9 respondents) and 'fair' at 26.7% (8 respondents).

Student Perceptions of the Impact on the Macro Urban Environment

This section measures students' viewpoints regarding the macro operational contribution of Trans Metro Pekanbaru in unraveling urban problems, such as its effectiveness in reducing traffic congestion, supporting the fulfillment of daily mobility, and its role in reducing city air pollution levels. (Rachmadian et al., 2024) From the collected data, Trans Metro's contribution in suppressing traffic congestion on Pekanbaru City roads received the highest appreciation from the student community, where 'good' category assessments dominated with a percentage reaching 46.7% (14 respondents), followed by the 'fairly effective' choice at 30.0% (9 respondents) and 'less effective/poor' at 23.3% (7 respondents).

However, the fleet's contribution to improving air quality from pollution hazards is viewed oppositely. A total of 46.7% (14 respondents) assessed the buses' role in reducing air pollution as still 'poor', followed by 'good' assessments at 30.0% (9 respondents) and 'fair' at 23.3% (7 respondents). This sub-optimal pollution contribution is closely intertwined with the respondents' final conclusion regarding the overall function of this public vehicle. Half of the entire sample of college students studied, namely 50.0% (15 respondents), consider that the presence of Trans Metro Pekanbaru as a whole has not been maximal or is still 'poor' in assisting the total fulfillment of their daily urban mobility. The remaining respondents stated it was 'fairly helpful' at 26.7% (8 respondents) and fell into the 'good' category at 23.3% (7 respondents).

The Role of Management in Increasing Public Interest

Based on operational data and field analysis results, the role of the Regional Public Service Agency (BLUD) Technical Implementation Unit (UPT) Trans Pekanbaru Management (PTP) as the main management element holds high significance in stimulating public interest, especially among the student group, to utilize Trans Metro Pekanbaru as a daily transportation mode. Perception theory emphasizes that the final response and assessment formed by service users are determined by the stimulus obtained from the functional service performance of the management. In the operational context of Trans Metro Pekanbaru, the management's role is translated into several empirical measurement indicators that encompass effectiveness, technology utilization, service friendliness, responsiveness, and service innovation. Student perceptions of the management's role in fostering purchase interest or the use of mass transit services are presented in depth through the scoring instrument in the table below:

Table 1. The Role of Management in Increasing Public Interest

No	Management Role Indicators	Good (%)	Fairly Good (%)	Poor (%)	Total (%)
1	Effectiveness of Fleet and Corridor Management	6 (20.0%)	10 (33.3%)	14 (46.7%)	30 (100.0%)
2	Utilization of Integrated Information Technology	4 (13.3%)	12 (40.0%)	14 (46.7%)	30 (100.0%)
3	Service Friendliness and Officer Competence	4 (13.3%)	15 (50.0%)	11 (36.7%)	30 (100.0%)
4	Responsiveness to Complaints and Criticism	5 (16.7%)	8 (26.7%)	17 (56.7%)	30 (100.0%)
5	Service Innovation and Asset Maintenance	3 (10.0%)	9 (30.0%)	18 (60.0%)	30 (100.0%)

Source : Field Reseacrh

Data analysis in Table 1 shows a perception trend falling within the 'fairly good' to 'poor' category range. Sociologically, this condition indicates that the collective performance of Trans Metro Pekanbaru's management is considered suboptimal in positioning this mass transit system as the primary choice for the mobility of the academic community.

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Regarding the fleet management effectiveness indicator, the majority of respondents gave a 'poor' rating, namely 46.7%. Realistically, this ineffectiveness correlates directly with the drastic decline in the number of bus units operating in the field. Historical data notes that in 2019, the management had an estimated total fleet of up to 95 bus units. However, as of November 2024, significant asset depreciation occurred where the management was only able to operate 31 bus units out of the total 38 remaining buses. This decrease in fleet quantity automatically disrupts headway stability (the distance between buses), particularly on Corridor 03 (Awal Bros Sudirman - UIN). Students who place "college needs" (20.0%) and "time efficiency" as their social action orientations are forced to bear the consequences of long and uncertain waiting times at bus stops. The gap between the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) which promises an ideal waiting time of 5–10 minutes and the reality in the field triggers an accumulation of disappointment, causing a degradation in usage interest.

Furthermore, on the integrated information technology utilization indicator, 46.7% of students gave a 'poor' rating, while 40.0% rated it 'fairly good'. Based on empirical findings, the lack of information on bus departure schedules is the most dominant complaint. The management has not provided a digital-based real-time information system (Intelligent Transportation Systems) that students can access independently via applications. This is reinforced by previous ease-of-use test results, where the delivery of schedule information was considered suboptimal by 46.7% of respondents. In fact, in terms of the payment system, the management has actually taken steps towards non-cash financial integration through a partnership with BRIZZI, alongside cash methods. However, this payment innovation is deemed less meaningful when essential information regarding the physical movement of the buses is not transparent (Malik, R., & Hidir, A. 2025).

A crucial aspect that also influences users' interpersonal satisfaction is service friendliness and officer competence. Data shows that 50.0% of respondents rated officer performance in the 'fairly good' category, but there are 36.7% who categorized it as 'poor'. As direct representatives of the management institution, the behavior of conductors and drivers holds a significant share in shaping Trans Metro's image. The emergence of complaints related to drivers driving recklessly and the negligence of rogue officers in applying standard operating procedures (SOP) for courtesy serve as negative stimuli recorded in students' cognitive memories.

The most critical assessment from respondents was directed at the responsiveness to complaints indicator (56.7% poor) and service innovation and asset maintenance (60.0% poor). The management's unresponsive nature in processing public complaints creates a perception that the management is apathetic toward fulfilling consumer rights. This unresponsiveness is exacerbated by weak asset management and internal operational management. The case of Trans Metro operations completely halting in early December 2024 due to the negligence of BLUD UPT PTP in arrears for November fuel payments to the vendor serves as concrete proof of the fragility of the management's financial and operational administration. This phenomenon creates a fatal crisis of trust in the eyes of the public. Coupled with poor maintenance of physical facilities, such as hot bus air conditioning (AC) and unmaintained cabin cleanliness (criticized by 53.3% of respondents), the economic advantage of Trans Metro (a cheap fare of Rp3,000 for students) loses its functional appeal. (Suhendra & Prasetyanto, 2026)

4. CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that student perceptions of the Trans Metro Pekanbaru service on Corridor 03 are still not entirely positive. Students acknowledge that Trans Metro provides benefits in supporting mobility with relatively easy and affordable costs and access, while simultaneously playing a role in reducing traffic congestion in Pekanbaru City. In studies regarding accessibility aspects, ease of use, and service efficiency, it obtained fairly good assessments from respondents. Nevertheless, there are still various weaknesses that affect students' assessments, especially regarding the comfort and cleanliness of the fleet, availability of schedule information, officer services, and the consistency of bus arrival and departure times. These conditions indicate that the service quality received by users

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is not yet fully aligned with the expectations of students as a group that has high mobility and requires time certainty in their daily activities.

The role of Trans Metro Pekanbaru management in improving service quality and public transportation usage interest is also considered suboptimal. Although the utilization of social media and information technology has assisted in disseminating information to the public, socialization activities, responses to user complaints, and service innovations are still deemed insufficient. The slow handling of complaints and minimal service development lead students to assess that the management has not been fully capable of creating a transportation system that is responsive, user-friendly, and aligned with the needs of urban communities. Improving service quality, strengthening communication with users, and technology-based innovation are also crucial steps to increase student trust and interest in using Trans Metro Pekanbaru as public transportation.

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