

# IN DEPTH REPORTING OF PERCEPTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STAND UP COMEDY IN INDONESIA

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## Abstrak

**Stand up comedy** sebagai salah satu bentuk hiburan yang dikenal masyarakat luas telah mengalami perkembangan yang pesat. Namun perkembangan tersebut tidak selalu mendapat tanggapan yang baik. Setiap orang memiliki persepsi atau pandangan sendiri-sendiri mengenai suatu hal. Buku ini memaparkan penelitian akan bagaimana Stand up comedy berkembang baik dalam dunia internasional maupun di Indonesia itu sendiri, serta tentang bagaimana munculnya dua persepsi berbeda terhadap perkembangan Stand Up Comedy di Indonesia. Sebagian masyarakat Indonesia sangat menggemari stand up comedy yang kini menjamur namun sebagiannya juga ada yang tidak menyukainya.

### 1. The History of Stand Up Comedy

#### 1.1 What is Stand Up Comedy?

Many famous people define the meaning of Stand Up Comedy. One of international famous figures is Jay Sankey, the author of 'Zen and the Art of Stand Up Comedy'. His statement which is cited in Ramon Papan's *Kiat Tahap Awal Belajar Stand Up Comedy Indonesia : Kitab Suci*, is described as the following:

"Stand up comedy is a particular kind of performance often given while standing on stage in front of microphone, during which the performer tells a scripted series of fictitious accounts in such a way to suggest that they are unscripted, in an attempt to make an audience laugh." (2012 : 8)

The initiator of Stand Up Comedy in this country Ramon Papan

defines Stand Up Comedy as a comedy art show. The performers of Stand Up Comedy are called as *comics*, stand up comedians, or just called stand ups. However, most people called them as *comics*.

The concept of Stand Up Comedy itself is one person standing on a stage and giving jokes with a microphone who is seen by the audiences. By the time, the performance of Stand Up Comedy is not only done by standing on a stage, but also by sitting on a seat or using some properties. Stand Up Comedy performance is usually held in a café, bar, campus, or in a theater.

#### 1.2 How Stand Up Comedy Develops in International World?

Officially, for the first time the name of the art of solo comedy performance "Stand Up Comedy" was founded by people in Oxford University in 1966. However the

development of Stand Up Comedy itself from the beginning until now did not always go well.

Stand Up Comedy began in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and America. Stand Up Comedy show was held in a theater for the first time. One of theaters in United States which has been the pioneer of Stand Up Comedy is The Minstrel Show which presented Thomas Darmouth 'Daddy' Rice as performer.

Comedy shows were held very simple because microphone had not been discovered at that time. The shows were presented using physical jokes or more facial expressions and foolish acts. In spite of the very simple package, the comedy shows in Minstrel Show could attract public attention especially middle-up class people.

Comedy shows in The Minstrel were likely more satire and sarcastic. It was not uncommon that every show teased the politicians at that era or used make up or property in order to tease black people in United States.

The Minstrel Show Theatre developed and transformed into a musical theatre. However, it still maintained its comedic theme. Later, there was a show called 'The Olio' which was brought by 'The Endmen', a group of two men. In 'The Olio' show, their performance was more likely to give a speech about satires concerning politicians or the issues of daily activities. The show became the birth of Stand Up Comedy.

The Minstrel Show Theatre managed to keep its performances until the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then, as it was deteriorated, Theater Vaudeville was born. The shows in Theater Vaudeville had more variations presenting entertainments like comedy, music, magic, and many more. However, one special show presented

in Vaudeville more often is performed by one man show.

The audience in Theater Vaudeville was just like the one in The Minstrel Show, who came mostly from middle-up class people. People were more interested in Vaudeville because there was the first comedian Will Roger who became a Political Stand Up.

In addition to Theater Vaudeville, there was also Theater Burlesque. The two theaters actually appeared almost in the same time, however, Burlesque was more likely created for middle-low people. The concept of Burlesque was adapted from The Olio show from The Minstrel Show, in which comedy is given by monologue and speech. The setting of Burlesque was simpler and made the show more closely and friendly to the audience.

The more developing technology since the invention of TV and radio, become stand up comedy show more widely known. However, this also made them to be less accepted. People looked for some other alternative entertainments like live music or night club. This thing made the theater of Vaudeville or Burlesque change to be an ordinary music café.

The appearance of TV programs which produced stand up comedy presented many comedians like Lenny Bruce, Chris Rock, Will Farrel, Jim Carey and many more. Some of those names are already familiar for us because they became Hollywood artists at the moment. By the time, stand up comedy became widely known by whole people in the world and developed into a new popular entertainment.

## **2. The History of Development of Stand Up Comedy in Indonesia**

## 2.1 The Beginning of Stand Up Comedy in Indonesia

Stand up comedy began in 18<sup>th</sup> century, however it began in Indonesia in early 1992. At that time, there was a show that unofficially used the name stand up comedy introduced as 'Lomba Lawak Tunggal' (one man comedy competition). This competition was held because of the cooperation between Ramon Papan and Harry de Fretes in Boim Café.

Although it did not use name 'stand up comedy' because of its unfamiliarity for Indonesian people, that competition became the beginning of stand up comedy in Indonesia. In an interview with Ramon Papan which was done by mass media, he introduced stand up comedy by creating a competition. This competition was participate by some popular comics at that time like Taufik Savalas, Harry de Fretes, Ateng, Cholik, Ade Juwita, Otong Lenon, Ade Namnung, and Tukul Arwana.

On the next several years later, this competition was still held but the performances were moved to Comedy Café Indonesia owned by Ramon Papan in 1997. At that time, a show called 'Bintang Baru' (the new star) was also held which had similar concept to 'Open Mic'. That show gave opportunity for anybody who wanted to try to give jokes on stage.

By the time, the open mic events decreased because there were less people interested in it. However Ramon Papan wouldn't gave up and still presented open mic show. As of 2004, Taufik Savalas who had ever learned stand up comedy together with Ramon Papan became a comic in 'Comedy Club' show, a program shown in Trans TV.

In the same year, a comic who had endeavor from 1998, Iwel Sastra or well known as Iwel Wel, determined to made a Stand Up Comedy show on

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004 in Gedung Kesenian Jakarta. That moment has been a history as the first Indonesian Comic who held a big one man show.

Many years later, stand up comedy in Indonesia did not significantly increase. Yet, in the beginning of 2011 when Comedy Café Indonesia moved to Kemang, South Jakarta, the *open mic* started to attract many audiences. At that time there were many people able to step on the stage and tried to participate in open mic.

Stand Up Nite, the name used for the night of comics performances with more serious concept which was founded by many fans was held on July 13rd, 2011 at Comedy Café Indonesia. Those comics had already widely known for Indonesian people like Raditya Dika (popular blogger, author, comedian), Pandji Pragiwaksono (MC, TV Presenter, author), Ernest Prakasa, Asep Suadji. It was also supported by some other comics who already gave many *open mic* shows and members of StandUpIndo (community of stand up comedian Indonesia specialized in Jakarta). The night was officially noted as the first *Stand Up Nite* from StandUpIndo community.

Stand Up Comedy automatically spread in whole of Indonesia after the first *Stand Up Nite* held in Jakarta. It is supported by popular social media which were used by people like facebook, twitter, and Youtube. The stand up comedy developed and spread in the whole Indonesia really fast. moreover, the national TV; Kompas TV and Metro TV, made a special program presenting stand up comedy. That thing also made the development of stand up comedy in Indonesia increase.

## 2.2 Youtube as One of Social Media for A Comic Well Known by People

Youtube, one of internet site which shows videos for everyone who

wants to upload or share for free, makes stand up comedy become easily known by people. Everyone can access it wherever and whenever they want. This media information really makes comics' videos for stand up comedy easily to be shared and can be seen by everyone. This thing makes stand up comedy easily develop and it is accepted by common people. It is proved by the amount of every video link's viewer in Youtube which counts for hundreds to thousands.

Some comics whose shows are uploaded on Youtube, have already been well known in public. Some have already been artists, authors, musicians, or other professions in which public already knew before. That makes the increasing viewer in each of their video link in Youtube than other comics who are not well known yet. For unpopular comics who have good quality in doing stand up comedy also get many viewer because of the influence of one viewer to the other. Usually someone sees a comic show on Youtube, later he/she thinks it's a good show so he/she will tell to her friends. That is how a video link of a comic in Youtube will get high rate viewer.

We could see which comic who was most favorited by people only from the amount of viewer seen on each video link. The comic that get most viewer, becomes the most favorite one.

From their appearances and performances in Youtube, a comic could be invited in an event to present a stand up show. That is one of some ways which makes stand up comedy in Indonesia spread fast.

### **2.3 Stand Up Comedy Community**

Aside from their performance in Youtube, the comics can enhance their ability by participating in an *open mic* in each of their town. It is also important for them to be known by public. The stand up

comedy, a community they follow, becomes the place for them to learn, socialize, and show their ability in doing stand up comedy.

After the creation of *SUCI* (Stand Up Comedy Indonesia), a place for people who were interested in stand up comedy, the same communities also appeared in many areas in Indonesia. *SUCI* itself was limited to the people outside of Jakarta, so people from other cities made their own communities with the some purposes of stand up comedy. Some examples of other stand up comedy community includes *SUCKS* (Stand Up Comedy Kota Semarang), *Stand Up Indo Bekasi*, *Stand Up Indo Salatiga*, and many more.

Stand up comedy community is not only confined to the region or city. Some academics create many communities, too. There are some stand up comedy communities which exist in high school, like *StandUpSmanda* (stand up comedy for SMA 2 Semarang students), *StandUpSmala* (stand up comedy for SMA 5 Semarang students), and many more. They are created for the high school students who are interested in stand up comedy. There are also stand up comedy in university such as Stand Up Comedy UGM, Stand Up Comedy UII, and many more.

## **3. Perceptions on the Development of Stand Up Comedy in Indonesia**

The popularity of Stand Up Comedy in Indonesia recently had attracted public attention. Its rebirth after being forgotten for years really brought a new taste in entertainment world in Indonesia. However this quick development does not seem always to get positive opinion from all people.

### **3.1 Positive Acceptance on Stand Up Comedy**

Cafes are crowded by people who want to see their favorite comics perform on stage. People are busy talking about stand up comedy on twitter until it becomes a trending topic (the most trending issue). Stand up comedy video seen on Youtube shows the fantastic number of the viewers.

People who come to café to enjoy the stand up comedy show will feel really entertained. They will feel satisfied and addicted to come back to see the stand up comedy show again. They will invite their friends to see the other stand up comedy show and sometimes they follow the shows in wherever it takes place. That is what makes stand up comedy show in Indonesia is filled with audiences.

After enjoying the stand up comedy show in café, they will give their opinion on twitter. That social media is easy and is used by most people, especially the youngsters at the moment. So it is no wonder that people's discussion about stand up comedy on twitter becomes a trending topic because most of them like it and give positive opinion, which later is responded by their followers.

The videos of stand up comedy show on Youtube shows that they have many viewers. The viewers also post their positive opinion in each video link about the performance. They comment about the comic, the material, and anything else that attracted the viewer.

Those positive acceptances of stand up comedy in Indonesia made mass media like newspaper, radio, until national TV, to compete for covering and rising the issue. Even the national TV like Metro TV and Kompas TV have special program for stand up comedy show. That makes stand up comedy to be easily well known and accepted by common people.

### **3.2 Negative Acceptance on Stand Up Comedy**

It is one common thing that the materials of stand up comedy show are satires of something that usually happened in a society. However the satires that comics gave with their own style are not always easily accepted by the audience. Because of that, it is always stated that "don't be sensitive in seeing stand up comedy". Thus, there is always two respond concerning stand up comedy; some people like to see stand up comedy, while the rest of them do not.

Not all of people who watch stand up comedy show in café are enjoyed. For them who easily get offended and sensitive would took it cynically. They will feel bothered by the materials that comic gave because it might be their own experiences, or a disagreement toward the perspective of the comic.

For people who are cynical toward this comedy art show, they also gave their cynical opinion clearly. For example, they will mock anything about stand up comedy that they thought really bothered in social media like twitter. They would talk cynically and sarcastically about the comic, the material, the location of the show, and anything else. Moreover, there is a twitter account that is specially made for people who hate stand up comedy as a place to express their cynical opinion. They called it as stand up haters.

The high number of the viewer in each stand up comedy show video link on Youtube, does not always correlate with the number of people who like it. There are many people who post their positive opinion in each video link. However there are also a lot of people who post cynical opinion in he same video link. Those who post cynical and sarcastic comment are usually because they do not like the

comics or the material. Thus, both people who like the video and those who do not like it, will eventually argue each other on that video link.

It is impossible for people to disturb the show intentionally because they do not satisfied or hate the stand up comedy show on café. 'Hackler' is the name for people who intentionally disturb the stand up comedy show. It happened often in some stand up comedy show. If a comic performs, a heckler usually will give comment about the material that comic gave loudly. That would disturb the focus of the comic and could fail his/her performance.

#### 4. Conclusion

The development of Stand Up Comedy from the beginning of its international appearance into Indonesia did not always go well. Stand up comedy is one of many art performances in the world. Its competition with many other art performances were getting ups and downs.

People's interest to watch stand up comedy is due to its unique concept which contains comedy elements even though most of its material consists of satire. It can be assumed that stand up comedy is a cynical entertainment. This kind of entertainment, inevitably has a lot of fan as well as haters.

The good and bad effects of the stand up comedy themselves depend on individual's perspective. It will get good impact if the material is represented for good purpose. It may be a satire however, a god satire is the one aimed for audience to introspect it, making it as a lesson to be a better one. This kind of satire is actually necessary. However, good presentations using an appropriate speech are also needed.

It can be a bad impact due to the less open-mindedly reception from audiences toward material presented by a comic. Such reception creates a misunderstanding on the purpose of the material which is accepted by audiences. This misunderstanding usually makes the audiences as 'stand up haters'.

In spite of the less open-mindedly reception, it may due to the comic's purposely given satires contained in the material which is not presented in an appropriate speech and overly face expression or body movements given. In international stand up comedy, especially in United States and Europe, most comics do give rude elements in his/her show. However, that had become a part of their culture, and the audiences accept such performance openly. It even had become a common thing where rude statements are not considered as taboo and considered it as funny things.

The kind of culture applied in United States and Europe does not easily accepted by Indonesian. Indonesian tends to hold eastern culture, applying respectful and well-mannered behaviorism and speech. Many contradictions arise as a result of this issue. Some comics think that stand up comedy is a solo comedy performance without any confinement while others think that the performance must follow society's rules and ethical standard in our eastern cultured country.

We can assume that, if comics agree that stand up should be done without any confinements and does not follow the ethical standard applied in Indonesian's society, later there may be more people who do not like it. Thus, it can be concluded that culture and ethical standard in Indonesia have to be a very basic foundation in performing stand up comedy. Society would prefer to accept entertaining

shows by still maintaining the moral and ethical values, rather than entertaining shows which harm others.

### **5. References**

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