

## Conference Paper

# The Possibility of Non-Litigation Advocacy Through Comedy and a New Media: Analysis of the Indonesian Comic “Sakdiyah Ma’ruf”

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### Abstract

Conventional prosecutions in Indonesia have failed to protect religious freedom and belief as they are often ineffective, unequal, political and authoritarian in decision-making for vulnerable groups (grassroots). The state, which should be responsible for protecting the rights of its citizens, instead has a tendency to criminalize victims through inflexible laws. The failings of the legal system has developed a need for non-litigation advocacy to influence public awareness, to balance information, enlarge group support and strengthen the grassroots position. This can be achieved through means such as demonstrations and campaigns through performing arts, as well as conventional arts by the educated middle class. The difficulty in these forms of advocacy has been that grassroots groups still perceive demonstrations as anarchist actions and campaigns through conventional art also less interactive, making it very difficult to engage grassroots communities. The objectives posed in this paper then, are to find the possibility of interactive non-litigation advocacy in a “new media”, and to understand to what extent the public has responded to the campaign conducted by the comic Sakdiyah Ma’ruf. This study uses descriptive content analysis focused on the issue experienced by the comic Sakdiyah Ma’ruf. In analyzing the data, this research reveals that standup comedy presented by Sakdiyah Ma’ruf can be used as a form of interactive non-litigation advocacy that can enlarge group support through new media about the conditions of freedom for Muslim women in Indonesia and on wider human rights discourse.

**Keywords:** Comedy, new media, non-litigation, advocacy, Freedom

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Received: 14 July 2019

Accepted: 29 July 2016

Published: 4 August 2019

Publishing services provided by  
**Knowledge E**

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the IGSSCI Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

According to various experts, conventional court proceedings have been failing to protect religious freedom and belief. Proceedings tends to be ineffective, political, authoritarian in decision making, and continue to cause ongoing problems. The judges' decisions usually do not provide victims satisfaction due to unequal punishment. The formal criminal justice process is too expensive, uncertain and the process long; thus, very few perpetrators are tried and the punishment does not reflect the level of crime

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committed. Worse yet, the state, in its position as a protector of human rights, also fails to provide administrative reconciliation because the government actually participates as a perpetrator. Under these conditions, Asfinawati argues that the judiciary also has a tendency to criminalize victims. Moreover, legal advocacy that tends to follow positive legal provisions or sides with the legal arguments (rights) have also been considered authoritative and less defensive for vulnerable parties. For anyone who does not follow the provisions of a positive law, they will be viewed as making mistakes (Bagir, Pangabean, Miqdad, Asfinawati, & Kakarala, 2014, p. 59-62). On the basis of this imbalance, advocacy is needed to build public awareness in order to balance information and strengthen positions in accordance with their goals and objectives, especially to support the formation of human rights justice.

Based on this weakness of the conventional court, Asfinawati (in Bagir, Pangabean, Miqdad, Asfinawati, & Kakarala, 2014, p.63) questioned whether there was any possibility of advocacy through other forms. If so, what forms? Is it non-human rights, non-law, or non-court/ non-litigation? In the relationship of religious freedom and belief, she tries to suggest using other issues related to religious freedom or belief as a strategy to enlarge support groups. For example, this could include women's rights, education rights, peace, economic improvement, security sector reform, the right to a decent living environment and the right to education. One example is the case of prohibiting or forcing the wearing of the veil, which can be categorized as a women's issues. Responding to Asfinawati's questions, I see the possibility of non-litigation advocacy related to women's rights issues through the comedies of Sakdiyah Ma'ruf. Throughout her performances, Sakdiyah explores themes related to religious freedom, religious conservatism and women's rights issues with a focus on the family and grassroots. At the same time, Ma'ruf's work emphasizes human values in a wider scope. These themes can be addressed in such a way because of the strategic role of comedy and new media. To examine this further, we must explore what women's rights content is conveyed by Sakdiyah Ma'aruf, how the role of comedy and new media be a strategic method for non-litigation advocacy, and finally, to what extent has the public responded to the campaign conducted by Sakdiyah?

## 2. Literature Review

The topic of comedy in relation to rights and democracy has been previously studied by a number of researchers. Aryawangsa, Azhar, and Apriani's research (2016) notes how comedy is not solely used for entertainment, but as a way to broach social

issues. They examine how popular stand-up comedy programs in the past five years in Indonesia have been used as a medium to criticize sensitive issues such as politics. The focus of this research is to answer how stand-up comedy can be a form of political communication in Indonesia. Furthermore, Mahadian's research (2015), explored the reality of life for the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia presented by Ernest Prakasa through comedy. The results of this study revealed that the comedy performed by Ernes expresses his discomfort as a Chinese minority who often feels pressure day to day. Crucially, his comedy style often makes ethnic Chinese the punchline, inviting the audience to laugh at the minority group whilst sympathizing with their struggles. Furthermore, Sefa (2017) in his research showed that in America, comedy has become a media for spreading democratic ideology; especially after the end of the Cold War. This was developed by the government who wanted Hollywood to make democratic propaganda through the comedy film 'The Dictator'. The results obtained through a descriptive content analysis show that the film 'The Dictator' spreads the ideology of democracy.

The above research has illustrated the role of comedy to explore political and democratic issues such as those that invite people to be tolerant and recognize the equality of rights and others. Nevertheless, the studies above do not explain *how* comedy can be used as a form of criticism and education placed on fundamental aspects such as the family and grassroots systems. Based on this gap, this study assumes that comedy needs to be held at the ground level such as in the family and grassroots systems to expand support, unravel taboo, and negative stereotypes which have been the reason for some to discriminate or do "dirty" politics. Thus, comedy has the potential to act as a form of criticism, developing from the bottom up to help realize the ideals of democracy with broader public support. In this study, this point of view will be used to explore the comedy performed by Sakdiyah.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The presence of humor in society has become important not only for entertainment, but also in its ability to create dialogue, or to release the tensions that exist in one's mind. Danandjaya (in Rahmanadji, p.218-220) said humor has the ability to convey self-anxiety such as social injustice, political, economic, ethnic or class competition, and restraints on freedom of movement, gender issues, or freedom of speech. The basis of comedy, has been defined and redefined by a number of scholars, and so for this study, Manser's theory will be used to examine the comedy conveyed by Sakdiyah because it

provides elements that almost cover all theories. Manser (in Rahmanadji, 2007, p. 215-216) explained that the humor theory is divided into three groups including (1) theory of superiority and disdain; (2) theories regarding hopelessness, inequality, and isolation; (3) theories regarding the release of tension. In general, the theories above illustrate the criticism of a comedian.

In addition, to know the character and subject matter in more detail, knowledge about the comedy techniques is needed to understand the problems Sakdiyah is conveying. According to Berger (in Anastasya, 2013) there are 4 groups of humor techniques in television comedy programs including; 1) Language (humor is created through words, ways of speaking, the meaning of words, or the consequences of words); 2) Logic (humor is created through thinking); 3) Identity (humor is created through the player's identity); 4) Action (humor is generated through physical action). In my observation, "identity" is the primary technique used by Sakdiyah in her comedy shows.

With this framework, the comedy theories and techniques above will be used to examine the expression of anxiety and criticism through the comedy presented by Sakdiyah. The role of new media such as television and the Internet has also greatly contributed to expanding support for issues of injustice in Indonesia. According to Salim Alatas (2014), the development of new media such as the internet or digital media has influenced significant changes in the political experience of the people in Indonesia. New media has been designed to increase the reach, speed, and efficiency of human communication. Moreover, it has the potential to strengthen and improve the quality of democracy. Along with the presence of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogs, the political participation of the community, especially young people has also rapidly expanded. Internet media has been used to launch political pressure and mobilize public opinion across online channels. Looking at the role of the new media, some experts conclude that it can be used as a form of control in democracy because of the active political participation by citizens. By looking at the function of the new media, this research will also examine the role of the media used by Sakdiyah in campaigning on the issue of anxiety and criticism through her comedy.

The research method is carried out by taking the data needed to be analyzed. In this study, the data comes in the form of documentation of Maaruf Sakdiyah's comedy sketches selected and downloaded from YouTube. Furthermore, the analysis process was carried out by listening to comedy material, transcribing, coding, analyzing, interpreting, and concluding the issues and comedy styles conveyed by Sakdiyah. In analyzing data, this study used data analysis techniques in the form of descriptive

content analysis. The descriptive content analysis is used to show the form of criticism contained within Sakdiyah's comedy.

## 4. Findings

In analyzing the data, this research reveals that the standup comedy presented by Sakdiyah Ma'aruf can be used as a form of multi critical non-litigation advocacy with the ability to enlarge group support through YouTube relating to the condition of Muslim women's freedom in Indonesia and on wider human rights discourse. From the materials delivered by Sakdiyah and the support of national and some international communities, it has become evident that what Sakdiyah experiences in relation to Muslim women's issues is an important area in need of public attention, especially for families and the grassroots level. With her comedy, Sakdiyah has contributed to providing information, support, and strengthening positions through Muslim women's discourse. In addition, the role of television and YouTube as new media plays an important role in disseminating information. With the rapid spread through the internet, the comedy presented by Sakdiyah has been watched by large audiences and now is known internationally. One example of a positive response is that by the Oslo Freedom Forum where Sakdiyah received international support and took home an award for her work. The popularity of her performances on YouTube have helped Sakdiyah to clarify the wrong perception of Muslim women in Indonesia in the Oslo Freedom Forum. Borrowing Hosseini's understanding of the Muslim feminist which will be described in detail below, I argue that women's issues weaved into the comedy by Sakdiyah is a form of strategic non-litigation advocacy because it prioritizes the struggle for her rights at the level of families and grassroots. This form of advocacy has been trusted by the weak to strengthen their discourse so that it can be brought into legal law and reach a wider public.

Another finding of this study is that through Sakdiyah's comedy, there is a clarification of the assumption of "Muslim feminists" who have been considered always oppressed in international discourse. According to her, she was not fit to receive the award or to be represented as a "brave woman" in front of the Oslo Freedom Forum. She described herself as just struggling to escape from her father's restraints and community stereotypes about Muslim women in Indonesia. I think this is an important message for the international community and the wider public to understand other phenomena about Muslim women's activists. In this case, the role of the new media "YouTube" is very useful to disseminate information and as a medium to clarify misconceptions.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The perspective of government law and non-legal advocacy

In order to understand the discourse on women that Sakdiyah campaigns about in detail, it is necessary to review the forms of campaigns by previous women's activists. In recent years, gender issues have been underestimated in legal matters. Because of this, Muslim women's groups have been campaigning on equal rights and justice all over the world. Their ideas are rooted in Islam teachings. In this case, Hosseini (Hosseini, Vogt, Larsen, & Moe, 2013, p.74) tries to straighten out the views on the main principles in Islam (sharia) which are always misunderstood by politicians to dominate and discriminate. She argues that the laws governing the relations of gender and the rights of men, women and the texts of Islamic jurisprudence do not reflect justice and equality. Therefore, they position women as second-class citizens in patriarchal relations. The fate of Muslim women's equal rights has been confined by various political trends, both internal and external, which until now have created a damaging stereotype. Here it is obvious that laws are created not to protect women's rights, but law and government tend to be involved in justifying discriminatory laws of women.

In Muslim belief, Sharia law literally means the will or the law of Allah which has been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Meanwhile, *fiqh* is the science of jurisprudence or human interpretation to distinguish the sacred law of Islam (Al Quran and Sunnah). But here *Fiqh* is often equated with Sharia. In another word, the laws derived from human interpretation are equated with divine laws that are absolute. This view automatically justifies the patriarchal *fiqh* text as God's law. The severity of this view dominates the popular discourse of Muslims by politicians and academics as well as legal specialists (Hosseini, Vogt, Larsen, & Moe, 2013, p. 24-25). This is one reason why laws tend to be discriminatory in cases of Islamic gender equality rights. From that effect, Hosseini (Hosseini, Vogt, Larsen, & Moe, 2013, p.11) stated that there was a lack of legal clarity in Iran by the bodies that regulate the right to polygamy, divorce and child custody. The failure of the court was reflected in the monolithic view of Islam which still controlled the public and academic discourse. Even though Islamic jurists, and all Muslims, believe that justice and equality are the important values in Islam they do not realize that Sharia has been misinterpreted giving rise to controversies regarding the increase in family system damage, corruption, and increasing crime rates. Based on that condition above, Hosseini (Hosseini, Vogt, Larsen, & Moe, 2013, p.1-2) explained how more than a quarter of a century later, popular reformist movements in Iran and wider Muslim feminist discourse movements have started rising to demand gender equality in the Islamic legal system.

This is a rhetoric that promotes democracy and human rights. They intend to legitimize "freedom" and "democracy" in the family system according to their interpretations of Sharia to change the system of family laws in Iraq in particular.

Asvinawati (2014, p.60-63) stated that advocacy is thought, conscience, and religion in action as mentioned in the subject (article 18 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). The aim of advocacy is to improve the system, starting from the handling of cases through the groundwork in the form of victim organizing and empowerment, to holistic campaign work. Thus, weak parties become more optimistic about advocacy work. Advocacy is a movement that arises from the failure of the state that should be able to maintain justice. In this case, advocacy is believed to be able to change the system related to discriminatory regulations through non-litigation advocacy. This is a movement that educates through information and campaigns for the rights of every level of society, especially at the family and grassroots level. Advocacy is usually undertaken by CSOs and student organizations, but in its development advocacy undergoes a kind of expansion that addresses specific issues such as advocacy on human rights issues, gender, labor rights, the environment, budget policy, land, agriculture, farmers and others. This is also strengthened by Mukharrom (2004, p. 111), who stated that non-litigation advocacy (non-legal settlement outside the court) is an effort to establish equality of forces between perpetrators and victims.

On its journey, not all women have had the privilege to carry out this struggle because only the elite and few highly educated women are able to resist or challenge the law, and this is an obstacle to breaking patriarchy from the ideals of providing an egalitarian Islamic ethical system. Hosseini reveals that family law is a fundamental subject, as it regulates the closest relationship between men, women, and children. Given the importance of this issue, the family law becomes the only field of law that maintains relationships with fiqh in many countries (Hosseini, Vogt, Larsen, & Moe, 10: 2013). Hosseini (In Sikand, 2010) recognized that the majority of women who proclaim Islamic feminism actually came from the elite family background or middle class. In addition, she also admitted ignorance about the extent to which the discussion "Islamic feminism" has reached the wider community, especially to those referred to as "grassroots." Based on the above case, an appropriate advocacy is needed to reach family and grassroots cases.

Although the above view is closely related to women's issues, there are many issues that are championed in non-legal advocacy such as the struggle in political civil rights and economic, social and cultural rights carried out by civil society. This is also an indication that the government system that holds control of the applicable laws in the



community is still very authoritarian. Abdul (2007) said that in Indonesia, an authoritative system which prohibits many human rights has developed a lot since the time of the New Order regime, transferring to the authorities in the reform regime. Because of this, civil society organizations (NGO) have responded to the repressive situation by encouraging and demanding social and economic justice in society. For example, the struggle of LBH Surabaya in encouraging wide education transformation, educating in land ownership rights for farmers, poor communities and other labor in the East Java region. The aim of this organization is to form critical awareness in grassroots communities by promoting transformative education. Such education is a social praxis action that is carried out as a non-litigation effort outside the formal legal system. The form of this education covers legal, political and social subjects, with efforts to build an ideological foundation for advocacy, open spaces for participation, transparency and accountability to the community, involving the community in the social advocacy process and develop other non-litigation strategies. Of course, it has not been an instant success, the concentration of critical legal education or structural legal assistance applied to the grassroots community by LBH Surabaya has taken decades.

Similarly in the case of Sakdiyah, her fight for her rights under the negative view of society towards women and conservative Islam cannot bourn instant results. Sakdiyah, as one of many people who are aware of the injustices faced, tries to reformulate general criticism in her family. She has felt this injustice since childhood, and until now she has voiced her anxiety by slowly educating the public about injustice cases that have been relevant to her and human rights cases in general. In this process, Sakdiyah has also indirectly conducted education to build public awareness and opened a space for dialogue and participation for the wider community in new media. What is effective in this non-legal advocacy is the form of advocacy that is very easily accepted by the grassroots. So far, formal campaigns or formal education have sometimes been burdensome for grassroots who sometimes weigh more on their work as farmers or laborers. As an example, the campaigns or demonstration carried out by feminists is indeed difficult to accept because often they are only consumed by educated people with “heavy” languages. But through comedy, Sakdiyah has carried out a campaign form that is more easily accepted by grassroots interactively.

## 5.2. Analysis of comedy videos and new media roles

In this study, comedy content campaigned by Sakdiyah has the potential to strengthen minority positions or people who discriminate through humorous content. To see the



actual content or feeling in a comedy, it takes a comedy theory to analyze the feelings experienced by Sakdiyah. As explained in the theoretical framework above, theory comedy by Manser, including imbalance, superiority, disparity, hopelessness, isolation, and the releasing of pressure, will be used to explain the feelings and messages Sakdiyah aims to reveal in her performances. In addition, to describe the style of comedy that Sakdiyah conveys, it is also necessary to identify a technique to explain her character. As explained above, Sakdiyah centers her humor on the technique of "identity" which has become her main characteristic. This theory and technique can describe at a glance that the experience of imbalance, hopelessness, and pressure felt by Sakdiyah as a Muslim women in Indonesia is a form of her identity, reflected in her comedy by laughing at herself. According to Kartono Muhamad (in Rahmanadji, 2007, p. 220), auto-critical humor, or humor where one laughs at themselves is good humor and shows maturity. In addition, by laughing at our self, it means we are able to criticize our self and openly accept other people's opinions. The definition above explained that the laughing style of self-identity is one technique that has the potential to make feelings such as imbalance, hopelessness, and pressure explained by "mature" comedy to be easily accepted.

This can be seen in Sakdiyah's statements on several TV stations uploaded via YouTube. After earning the title of Best 2014 Standup Comedian on Kompas TV, Sakdiyah was invited to attend "Kompas Action" by Kompas TV. On the Youtube account published by Funny (2014), Sakdiyah, using the theme of 'sinetrons' (soap operas) tries to criticize the stereotype of descendants of Arab women in Indonesia. The show begins when the event presenter asks her: "If you became an sinetron artist, what movie or scene is a challenge for you? Then Sakdiyah replied: "*Ada Apa Dengan Cinta (AADC)*" (Indonesian love story movie). The reason is I cannot do any kissing scenes because the law claimed that kissing is '*haram*' and I'm afraid of Lust. So actually if there are artists who act in scenes like this, surely they will be called an "Arab KW" (false Arab). It's impossible for any Arabs to dare to kiss because it is *haram*. Arabs should not kiss unless it is furtive or makes a Shariah movie. Moreover, Arab KW should be ashamed and pretend to have amnesia." Here Diyah stressed that Arabs women should be embarrassed when there are people ask about their identity. Diyah continued, "nevertheless, soap operas have a positive effect as an anti- maze for singles in sinetron where people can easily cancel the marriage in front of the Muslim leader directly." Diyah continued, "Being of Arab descent is difficult. When Abah (father) asks 'who is the photo of the man on your phone?' Sakdiyah replied 'this is just a *sohib* (friend)'. And the next day Abah told me that he has believed me because the man on

my phone has hung out with another woman. Diyah replied sadly, 'Yes, he is just a *sohib*'. At the end of her comedy, she said, "Arab parents cannot be confused when looking for their children from others though hiding in the closet. This is because since childhood, Arab children are usually given a typical Arabic perfume, sometimes a bottle or two bottles."

In this delivery, Sakdiah is always hyperbolic in explaining the treatment of inequality followed by laughter and pitying faces. Here Sakdiah delivers a satire about her father, commenting that his child has been over-protected. Sakdiah also insinuates that the Islamic Sharia laws has created Arab stereotypes in Indonesia, all of which recognized forbidden are always "*haram*" and it is as if Arab women are always expected to behave commendably. It is positioned as a contrast to ordinary people who can sin and hurt, like the law of kissing or the feeling after a lover has left. In this case, it appears that she actually wants to question herself and her emotions when she loves a man and can feel sad like everyone else. In comedy theory, the conditions she experienced are expressed in feelings of hopelessness in loving someone. Openly she explored the stereotype of ordinary Arabs identified as perfume enthusiasts who give their child a bottle or two bottle perfume. Diyah tries to laugh at herself as an Arab descendant with the audience. Physically, Diyah here introduces herself to the Arab "alienation", where she grapples with upholding the image set by her overprotective family and the Indonesian view of Arab women who are always introverted and holy. The material in this comedy show is very simple but very easy to understand by the lay audience. In general, in describing her relationship with her father, Sakdiah tried to release the pressure felt day to day by pouring out her heart to the public.

In the event "Morning Show" NET TV (2016), Diyah reopened this comedy: she said "Watch my face; many people say that I am Arab. I am not Arab but from the Middle East, my father from East Java and mother from central (middle) Java. There was once a man who asked me, would you marry a man who caught you without a headscarf? Caught is okay sir, but I have to be picky to choose appropriate men. Ramadan for me is like going home. Like when I go into the mall, I will say: O God there is a camel, a brother from far away. Then I hug the camel tightly. I would very much like to take it home but the camel says that this camel wants to be here first so the mall looks Islamic and does not get involved in a raid." Spontaneously the audience laughs loudly at the punchline, the sign that the show is over. After the show ended, Diyah was also interviewed by the presenter of the Morning show NET TV: "Do you have any limitations with your stereotype as a Muslim woman wearing a veil when you are doing a comedy?" Sakdiah replied: "I have already had restrictions since my birth. Like when I was born amid a

very conservative family in Indonesia where I could not play out after school and could not be involved in extracurricular. So, becoming a hijab wearer in Stand up is not an easy profession, because hijabs are always associated with virtuous people, who must speak politely, and must use Islamic nuance.” According to her, her consideration to be a comedian was participating in an art that allowed her to speak. Here Sakdiyah uses the quote from George Orwell as her ideology in the comedy; “You will not be really funny if you do not criticize the people in power or complacency.”

In the material above, Sakdiyah again brought her material about the stereotype of Arab women where Sakdiyah tried to explain herself even though she was a descendant of native Arabs, but was not fully Arab. She emphasized that she is a person who was born on the island of Java. This representation was seen when Sakdiyah opened the dialogue, “watch my face, many of my people called me Arab, I am not Arab but the Middle East, father of East Java and mother of Central Java.” Here Diyah is seen trying to abolish ethnocentric boundaries. In this case, she emphasized that she did not like being labeled Arab and she also did not want to be distinguished from Indonesian people because she was born in Indonesia. In addition, Diyah also explained about the narrow understanding of Arab women who should be married if caught not wearing the hijab. Here Diyah indirectly rejects this view because she, as a woman, also has the right to choose an appropriate man to marry. At the end of the conversation, Diyah also criticized the “Arabs” who are discriminatory in Indonesia. For example, when mass organizations raided a mall that was not according to their standards. She showed this through the story of her brother, the ‘camel’, who must keep the mall’s Islamic appearance in order to not be swept away by certain Islamic mass organizations. The discourse used by Sakdiyah is very contextual as previously there were cases of sweeping in places considered “*haram*” by Islamic organizations such as the FPI.

In the Havel Prize Acceptance Speech event, at the Oslo Freedom Forum (2015), Sakdiyah was awarded for her “deep struggle” on behalf of women. At this event, she expressed her gratitude through comedy which also contained criticism. She stated “thanks for acknowledging a [hijabi] stand up comic. We don’t get this a lot, especially not from our family.” With a smile, Sakdiyah said, “my family will be very proud of my achievement, not because of the reward given but because I have kept a very safe distance from the audience of opposite sex.” Sakdiyah’s material was almost the same as previous shows but what she emphasizes here is what it means to celebrate humanity and the importance of rewarding it. To the audience, Sakdiah conveyed that “comedy here is not about me; it is about you and me, it is about us. It is about us celebrating our humanity.” According to her, by organizing this shows, it means that we must realize

that we are only humans who do not have the most entitled sense of right. Indirectly, Sakdiyah positions herself as a woman who claims that she is not always right and as a woman who always has rights especially in the struggle of women. For me, Sakdiyah's position here represents the face of moderate Indonesian Muslims who try to find a middle way.

In the talk show Hitam Putih on May 25th, 2017 (Theco owboy, 2017), Diyah returned with her style full of laughter and new material. As in the previous show, Sakdiyah started by explaining herself as an Arab descendant. With a little nerve, she began to tell, "again, being a descendant of Arabs is a lot of discomfort. My friends are often go traveling, but for me, it is not possible to travel. Even to go to get a photocopy, I have to be escorted by Abah (father). Friends also have a lot of girlfriends, but I am not allowed. I only pin up an Andy Law poster (Chinese artist) in my room but of course, it is not allowed. Maybe my Dad's idol would be allowed as they are Arabs too. Many of my friends do art activities like dancing and singing, but I may not be allowed. I've also been considered more religious by a pregnant woman at a train station. She came up and asked to me; "You are Arab right? Please pray for my son," finally, I prayed silently "Oh god, may this mother's child not be like me who cannot read a prayer."

She added, "I am also often judged by women, one told me "you are a Muslim and Arab descendent right? You definitely do not like to see me wear a mini skirt!" I do not like it, but do you not love your smooth white skin getting bitten by the bedbugs on the seat of the busway? I am also often criticized by strange people stated that "you are s Muslima, but how can you be a comedian, you are a *wanita penghibur* (prostitute) right?" I say "oh you, rather than insult people, it is better to entertain people right? Please do not be brave with Arabs, we are so sensitive!" In the neighborhood where I grew up there are still many early marriages under the age of 18, but for me? I was lucky to get an education until I got a master degree. I questioned whether the opportunity given to me may have some kind of requirements. Apparently, I cannot go out of my boarding, I cannot talk and the most important thing, I cannot meet anyone of the opposite sex. I said, 'wow amazing. It means that if with the same sex, my parents are supportive'". Suddenly the audience burst out laughing.

After Sakdiyah finished with her sketch, the presenter of this event asked whether there was a threat during being a Muslim comedian. Sakdiyah replied, "there are a lot of negative comments on my YouTube video. They wrote comments that I did not follow the teachings of the prophet Muhammad and I did not follow the examples given by the Prophet Muhammad's wife. Then I thought that people who comment like that also do not follow the teachings of the prophet Muhammad as they are watching the "*wanita*

*penghibur*” on YouTube.” At the end of the interview, the presenter asked Diyah to recount her experience when she received the award. With a regret, Sakdiah said, “I am very grateful for the international award given to me as a young woman who enacts resistance in a creative way. But I wonder if my presence is able to inspire or even validate the experience that such an oppression of Muslim women who dare to speak should be rewarded.”

On this show, Sakdiah often described the confinement by her father who did not give her permission to do anything she liked. Here Sakdiah tried to criticize her father when she was not allowed to put up posters of Andy Law (Chinese artist). She said she would be allowed to use Arabic artist posters. This case, of course, becomes a contradiction that actually makes no differences because even though the poster is a Chinese or Arabs picture, they are still both men. Here sakdiah expresses the injustice for not allowed to deal with anyone or anything other than Arab origin. In addition, she also expressed an imbalance in the treatment between herself and her friends. According to Sakdiah, her father was too restrictive on her freedom in doing her work in art. When expressing this, she is highlighting the pressure felt that Sakdiah, as a Muslim woman, should become an “Islamic” person rather than doing things that encourage her to be with the opposite sex and sin.

In addition, Diyah also invites the audience to think logically that not all Arabs are people who are experts in Islam and are pious. This is seen in her story of the train station when Sakdiah was approached a mother to pray for her child. Sakdiah does pray for her, but her prayer is about her hope that the mother’s daughter should be not like Diya, who cannot memorize the prayer. Sakdiah points the humor at herself when she tries to show the audience that she is one example of Muslim women who is not good at praying. Moreover, when Sakdiah was asked by the women who wore miniskirts, here Sakdiah shows that the problem is not like or dislike. She shows that clothes must be adapted to the conditions. That’s why she asked the woman, “Don’t you love your white skin if you get bitten by the bedbugs?” She insinuated that miniskirts were not suitable for use in public transport, which have a lot of bedbugs.

It can be concluded that, although she is of Arab descent, it does not mean she is a holy woman who has memorized the prayers and always rejects women with miniskirts. Not all hijab wearers should be sacred. Arabs or Muslims are just human beings who also have misunderstandings. Here also Sakdiah positioned religion as a “human condition” in which religion is born as a response activity. This concept I think educates the audience to reflect on themselves so as not to easily claim the background of others. Just like Sakdiah’s answer when criticizing the haters who gave

negative comments on her YouTube account. She argues that with the haters watching *wanita penghibur* associated with a prostitute on YouTube, it means they also does not follow the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. Sakdiyah plays with these acusations to reflect that negative criticism was not taught by Muhammad. This statement criticizes and teaches haters to be more careful and wise in commenting. What is important at this show is that Sakdiah does not want to amplify the view of "oppressed women" in Indonesia with an international view. That is why she feels unworthy to get the reward as a "brave Muslim women."

In Stand-up comedy in *Pembaca Dewi* (Dewi Magazine, 2017), Sakdiyah criticizes the face of cynical or even radical Islam like her family by linking them with Habieb rizieq (chairman of the FPI). Sakdiah stated that "I am a humorous Arabic woman; it was very different from Habieb Riziek. The Arab position is very difficult for me because I have to prove that I am a good Muslim. I do not know how to do this. Is it possible to eat Sari Roti as much as possible?" In this context, she insinuated the demonstration led by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI)'s Habib Reziek who at that time was putting pressure on Ahok (the then governor of Jakarta) to serve jail time for alleged blasphemy. In this demonstration, the Sari Roti (Bakery Company) appeared to distribute bread for free to the Jihadists. The demonstrators had felt that they were supported by Sari Roti. However, after releasing a statement removing any ties, the demonstrators immediately boycotted the company. So if Sakdiyah eats Sari Roti, she is sneering at the Arabs of Habieb Rizik who reject Sari Roti. After that point, Sakdiyah added, "do I have to use NIKE hijab for Muslim sport or wear part of a hijab collection to practice polygamy?" The development of the Western company "NIKE" in creating a Muslim sports product has become a criticism for jihadists that are anti-western products. Furthermore, she also criticized ulama that legalized Polygamy.

Sakiyah also conveyed the same theme at TEDx Ubud Bali (TED, 2016). In this event, she again criticized the jihadists who were against Western products. She said: "It is difficult in a way when I talk about ecoterrorism. It not mean really ecoterrorism but I try to make a connection because they hate the guts out of anything about the West. Say no to westernization, say no to US capitalism but they've been using gun and bomb and all of these are US products, so I sort of suggest [to] them, the Indonesian Jihadist, fundamentalist, and radical that if they do hate the west, they need to consider a local weapon in Indonesia "*bambu runcing*" (sharpened bamboo)." Because most of the audience here were foreigners, sensitive to this issue, they laughed out loud and were relieved when there was an Arab who laughed at herself and their group.

During this event, Sakdiyah returned to the topic of her award in Oslo to clarify her feelings after getting a prize for creative dissent. For her, these rewards do not fit with the facts. She said that "what it means to celebrate women's freedom and what it means to be a Muslim woman like me - I know the fact that life is sometimes a very frightening thing. For example, when you ask permission to your father to kiss your boyfriend. I do not know how your parents are. But as a native Arab, I would not dare ask permission. I often do a kiss to my boyfriend, but only through a text message." The same theme also delivered by Sakdiyah in a YouTube video titled "Making fun of fundamentalism- Sakdiyah Maruf" (the wanderlust women, 2016) Sakdiyah argues that "if I receive the award, it means I celebrate dissidence. Like when I was at the Oslo Freedom Forum there were some lawyers, freedom fighters and those who escaped from North Korea asked me, "oh you are a Muslim living in Indonesia, life must be hard out there?" It's like, are you kidding me? I'm not escaping North Korea, I'm not as a brave, I just try to escape from my dad from time to time. Sometimes it's too offensive to be called brave, because if you perceive yourself as a brave person, it means you validate the view that you are oppressed. I just a women who feels scary to my father from time to time."

In this case, Sakdiyah is very consistent in discussing her identity as an Arab and also in criticizing 'fundamentalism'. This is proof that, even though she claimed she only wants to be free from her family, she unconsciously also expanded her discourse by criticizing fundamental Islam and also criticizing "feminism" in general. It is clear that the comedy conveyed by Sakdiyah is intended to change the perspective of her family. Besides that, comedy in this particular video can be used to reconstruct negative stereotypes of Muslim women at the grassroots level. Moreover, Sakdiyah also educated the wider public who has watched the video. For example, when she was creating a different image in front of Oslo Freedom Forum as a Muslim woman who live in Indonesia. In the forum, she represented the face of a humanist Muslim women and a ridiculing Muslim who is not too holy.

Although there are negative comments on Sakdiyah video, at least the discourse has received a positive response even from the international forums. Through her comedy across various media like TV and YouTube, Sakdiyah invites the audience to rethink her pressures. For example, an award she received from Oslo Freedom Forum is an award given to women who dare to speak. On the one hand, the awarding event was uploaded on YouTube provides information and education to the grassroots that the pressure experienced by Sakdiyah needs attention. Besides that, the important role of these YouTube videos is to clarify the stereotype and generalization of "Muslim feminists" in front of Oslo freedom Forum. It can be a reflection that the case of "Muslim feminism"



cannot be generalized to any particular culture. Sakdiyah implies in the Oslo Freedom Forum that she does not want to validate the impression that women's condition in Indonesia are as oppressed as perceived internationally. In this case, she has shown that what she experiences day-to-day is not what viewers imagined. Her career has instead been focused on getting out of the confines of her family. This is an element that Hosseini believes is the most fundamental area in fighting for Muslim feminism.

However, I think her comedy is more than just a campaign for the family and grass root. It acts as non-litigation multi-criticism advocacy which can reach human rights issues, stereotyped Muslims woman, religious conservatism, fundamentalists, and terrorists in the wider public sphere. This is inseparable from the role of television and YouTube as a media which allows these issues to develop faster. In addition to disseminating information, the function of YouTube has been used by the public to clarify accusations or negative assumptions in public discourse. Thus, YouTube has opened up opportunities for dialogue with the public directly, such as the interactive comments by netizens on YouTube features. It is not an instant process to remove negative perceptions and comments, but as previously stated, this kind of advocacy has been considered more effective because it works on a ground context to expand support for human rights.

## 6. Conclusion

From the current literature, a lot can be understood about a current political and social climate by studying the content of criticism and personal experience by a comedian, in this case Sakdiyah Ma'aruf, as well as the discrimination phenomenon that occurs around the comedian. This kind of analysis contributes to strengthening the ideas about freedom of speech in a democracy, tolerance in diversity, education, and wider criticism in new media that are not merely used as entertainment. In addition to contributing to these issues, this research theoretically focuses on explaining the role of comedy as a form of non-legal or non-litigation advocacy. This is necessary to be studied because various kinds of issues of injustice and discrimination depend heavily on law enforcers who hold power such as the government, security forces, and the courts. As in the discussion above, the form of legal advocacy that should be the spearhead of justice has instead become a weapon to carry out acts of discrimination against victims of injustice by the elite.

From the analysis above, non-legal advocacy is considered effective as an effort to balance information and strengthen the position of the grassroots. In addition, this

analysis focuses on comedy as advocacy that works in the fundamental area of family. In her comedy content, Sakdiyah brings issues around religious conservatism, women's rights, and religious freedom that involve her family's background, and the views of the surrounding community regarding stereotypes of Arab families in Indonesia. For example, the form of criticism delivered by Sakdiyah are the tales of her father's restraints and negative stereotype of Muslim women of Arab descent. Based on the results of the analysis, this is because the Arab stereotype is perceived as always holy and far from sin. Because comedy has a medium to convey anxiety and critique flexibly, it has become an effective way for Sakdiyah to voice her rights and women rights in general. The most stressed point in her struggle is getting freedom from the restraints of his father and the surrounding community. For example, Sakdiyah pushes against the assumption that women should always be at home, must always be a good woman and holy as an Arab woman. She feels uncomfortable with this position and wants to be treated like other women and humans in general. In this case, she tries to attract public sympathy. With the comedy technique 'laughing her identity', it creates the possibility to clarify her identity which is often misunderstood by the community. This kind of comedy is certainly very easy to understand and receive because she criticizes and laughs at herself first rather than laughing at others. At the same time, she also criticizes others who consider Arab women in negative stereotypes. Although in front of the Oslo Freedom Forum she stated that she only wanted to be free from her father's restraints, she also campaigned for national and international issues. For example, criticizing Islamic organization which are anti-western.

With the existence of new media such as television and YouTube, comedy is increasingly known and consumed among the grassroots. From the rise of non-academic participants attending stand-up comedy auditions from various regions, indicating that comedy has reached the level of common society. From the videos that have been uploaded, it is very easy for the audience to access at any time, especially for those who have not had time to watch on TV, increasing the size of the audience. In addition, with the comments section on YouTube, there opens up the opportunities for interaction among the audience and the owner of the YouTube account. Even though there are many negative comments on clips of Sakdiyah, over time the outcome becomes positive. Examples are when Sakdiyah has been invited by local television stations to do comedy sketches and international forums to accept awards. All of this will lead the audience to rethink their support for her as she has been recognized worldwide.

In conclusion, I can say that the comedy carried out by Sakdiyah is one of the forms of multi critic non-legal or non-litigation advocacy which allows Muslim women's rights

issues to reach out into other broader Islamic issues. Her comedy style of laughing at herself has become a style that expresses maturity, effectively making heavy criticism palatable and funny. In this form of advocacy, new media can build support for women's issues and broader human rights. If comedy is slowly consumed and considered by the family and grassroots level, this will open up new possibilities so that the community does not easily discriminate against the vulnerable or minorities.

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