Humour and Identity Construction in Ahmad Aiman's One-Hour Abati Show: A Stand-Up Comedy Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the humour mechanisms and identity construction in the Bruneian stand-up comedy scene. Stand-up comedy has long been viewed as a tool for entertainment. Nowadays, stand-up comedy is more than just about eliciting laughter; it is also a form of identity work. While much of the existing research focused on Western contexts, Southeast Asia remains absent scholarly, Brunei, in particular. Using a qualitative case study design, the study analysed a one-hour live performance by a prominent Bruneian comedian, Ahmad Aiman. Through the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) by Attardo and Raskin, alongside Identity Theory by Burkes and Stets, the research provides a comprehensive analysis of how a comedian employed specific humour mechanisms and constructed their identities. The study uncovers two major findings. First, while the analysis reveals that Ahmad Aiman employs six humour mechanisms: Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS), and Language (LA) to generate laughter; Crowd Work (CW) emerged as a new, seventh humour mechanism. Second, through humour, Ahmad Aiman constructs positive portrayals of multiple identities: a caring father, a religiously rooted individual, an everyday worker, and a professional comedian. The most salient identity is fatherhood, while his agency lies in how he uses comedy to critique structural norms while still being respected in his culture. This study proves how humour functions as a catalyst for identity construction in Bruneian stand-up comedy, contributing to regional comedy studies in Brunei.

Keywords: general theory of verbal humour, identity theory, humour mechanism, identity, stand-up comedy

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Introduction

“Hahahaha,” roared the audience.

“That joke is so him, only he could pull it off,” remarked a fan.

But what makes the audience laugh? How do fans perceive that comedian as? These are not idle questions. Think of Trevor Noah as the impressionist comic; Bill Burr recognised as the loud one; and Jimmy Carr famed with his dark sense of humour. As Weaver and Lockyer (2024) stated there is a complex relationship between stand-up comedy and identity construction.

Among the mainstream communicative tools that people have been practicing since the start of mankind, nothing surpasses the effective use of humor which can hook people’s attention instantly, and ultimately, establish a bond with the audience (Stauffer, 1999; Wanzer et al., 2010). This is where stand-up comedy comes in. Stand-up comedy has been evolving for decades. A shift from its traditional place in theatres to modern platforms such as the infamous streaming services Netflix. Before its term has been officially established, standup comedy performances already can be traced way back from vaudeville, cabaret, and folk storytelling where performers utilised humour as a means to interact with the audience (Double, 2014). While in this traditional sense, stand-up comedy not only functions as entertainment but opens doors to many aspects like social and culture critiques (Primbs & Dawson, 2023; Romansyah et al., 2020).

Yet as the world has changed, so too has comedy in general. With today’s digitally-entrenched and social media-suffused world, stand-up comedy has entered a new epoch. What once lived in intimate theatres and compact comedy clubs are now traveling through streaming services, social media platforms, and YouTube specials at the click of a button. Thus, modern stand-up comedy is a hybrid may comprise comedic performances, storytelling and social commentary happening in one act that can be accessed anywhere.

More than ever, identity construction has been a catalyst in stand-up performances as contemporary stand-up comedy is not simply about getting laughs (Constantinescu, 2023). To add, it would also define how the audience perceives the comedian on stage and how the comedian wishes to be seen. Academically, many modern scholarships have emphasised on the use of humour to negotiate issues of race, gender, disability, nationalism, and cultural belonging.

For example, the famous Trevor Noah has utilised humour with his personal anecdotes to create a tool to address race and society (Soliman & Rabia Abdul-Salim Madhi, 2024). Josh Blue with cerebral palsy has proven how disability can be used as a technique to shape his stage identity (Tan et al., 2022). A group of Nigerian comedians have strategically employed both language and humour to critique sociopolitical and cultural issues, thereby shaping a shared sense of national identity (Filani, 2020). Meanwhile, Spanish female comedians viewed stand-up comedy as a social and cultural tool where and with humour, a creative way to collectively address women’s empowerment and gender issues (Bernabéu, 2023).

Hence, such scholars proved that stand-up is no longer only about eliciting laughter but also about constructing identities in their performances.

Statement of Problem

Despite the growing global scholarship, many studies often privileged the voices of Western comedians and as result, Southeast Asia remains largely absent from this academic stage. And this raises even deeper questions: What about comedians even whose stages are smaller? Or whose contexts are more culturally specific and relatable? And whose humour carries equal weight in making the audience laugh and at the same time, shaping identity? Taking these into account would be an important step in research and deserves serious scholarly attention, especially in regions where the stand-up comedy scene has only recently begun to grow, in this case, Southeast Asia, Brunei, in particular.

Research Questions and Objectives

Given the limited understanding of how a stand-up comedian delivers humour and constructs their identity in a show, the aim of this study is to explore how the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) and the Identity Theory applied to a stand-up comedy performance. This research specifically attempts to address the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: What specific humour mechanisms are employed in a stand-up comedian's performance throughout the show?
- Research Question 2: How does the stand-up comedian construct their identity through humour?

That being said, the above questions will be used as guidance to address the following objectives:

- To identify and analyse the humour mechanisms by using the General Theory of Verbal Humour by Attardo and Raskin which consist of Script Opposition (SO), The Logical Mechanism (LM), The Situation (SI), The Target (TA), The Narrative Strategy (NS), and The Language (LA).
- To identify and analyse the identity construction by using the Identity Theory by Burke and Stets (2009).

To put it simply, when those two theories combined, these frameworks offer a comprehensive lens for exploring how humour not only generates laughter but also enacts the identity of a comedian.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

To make sense of this study, the study has two main theories.

1. General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) proposed by Attardo and Raskin (1991).
2. Identity Theory proposed by Burke and Stets (2009).

In the context of this study, General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) explores six mechanisms Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS), Language (LA) in order to understand the verbal humour as well as create humour by the comedian.

Yet humour is not structure alone. It also comes with identity.

For this study, Identity Theory tells how the comedian form, maintain and adjust who they are, and how that sense of self is shaped by both personal choices and society within.

Several applications of General Theory of Verbal Humour and Identity Theory through humour and stand-up comedy have been a focal point in various mediums can be found but not limited to:

Application of General Theory of Verbal Humour

- Social Media
- Online Jokes
- Sitcoms
- Animated TV and Movies
- Preaching
- Stand-Up Comedy

Application of Identity Theory

- Film
- Theatre
- Political
- Stand-Up Comedy

Existing studies above flag some gaps in understanding of humour mechanisms and identity. Firstly, a need for multi-modal works on humour mechanisms, as scholars focused too heavily on a single framework that is Attardo and Raskin (1991), which does not adequately apply to the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) and Identity Theory. Secondly, there is a need to examine emerging or marginalised comics and the construction of positive identity, as Identity Theory has often been applied towards negative portrayals in identity construction.

Research Methodology

The chosen method for this study was a qualitative, case-study approach to examine how humour and identity are constructed centred in a stand-up comedy performance, Ahmad Aiman's *Abati Show*, a one-hour live performance recorded during a public event in Brunei as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Abati Show

Data Collection

Purposive sampling was adopted to select Ahmad Aiman's stand-up comedy show, as its richness of data to explore more in-depth in a single show and its unique case to offer insight into Brunei context, which is believed to have been underexplored academically.

The primary source included (1) A video recording of 1 hour 10 minutes performance, capturing verbal elements; (2) A verbatim transcription in Bahasa Brunei, which later translated to English with audience's responses like laughter embedded in the text; (3) A systematic data management to ensure the video recordings and transcripts stored securely.

Data Analysis

Two-layered analysis was conducted, aligning with the theoretical framework.

First, General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) proposed by Attardo and Raskin (1991). Taking the analysis technique from various scholars, humour mechanisms can be analysed through:

- Attardo & Raskin's six knowledge resources: Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS), and Language (LA) based on the codebook.
- Comedy routines where each bit joke was broken down into setup (topic, premise, attitude) and punchline (delivery mode) to trace the humour structure (Carter, 2020).

Thus, the findings later were obtained based on the Codebook as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) Codebook

Code	Category	Description	Example
SO	Script Opposition	Instances where the comic uses incongruity between scripts or expectations for comedic effect.	A joke that contrasts the expectation of a situation with the reality.
LM	Logical Mechanism	Instances where the comic employs logical fallacies or absurd reasoning in his humor.	A punchline that relies on an illogical but funny conclusion.
SI	Situation	Instances where the humor arises from the context or situation.	A joke about a specific event or scenario.
TA	Target	Instances where the humor targets specific individuals, groups, or concepts.	Jokes aimed at social norms, celebrities, or cultural practices.
NS	Narrative Strategy	Instances where the comic uses storytelling techniques for comedic effect.	A long anecdote that builds up to a humorous climax.
LA	Language	Instances where the comic' choice of language contributes to humor, such as puns, wordplay, or linguistic ambiguity.	A play on words or a pun that adds humor to the joke.

In parallel, Identity Theory was operationalised through a robust framework of recent scholarship on identity construction.

According to Mohammed-Azizi (2024), the Identity Theory proposed by Burke and Stets (2009) can be analysed through:

- Identity Claims: *How the comedian presented himself?*
- Identity Verification: *How does the comedian seek recognition from the audience, and in what ways do laughter and applause confirm or reject these identity claims?*
- Multiple or competing identities: *How does he switch between different roles or perspectives?*
- Prominence or salience: *Which identities were foregrounded consistently across the show?*
- Structure vs. Agency: *Does he support cultural norms or challenge them?*

Finally, the interpretations process here from both analyses were triangulated against the research questions as well as the main theories.

Findings and Analysis

Research Question 1: What specific humour mechanisms are employed in a stand-up comedian's performance throughout the show?

Script Opposition (SO)

Table 2 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Script Opposition (SO).

Table 2
Script Opposition (SO)

Topic	The name "Abati" and its signifiance
Attitude	Affectionate
Premise	The comic explains the origin and his preference for the term "Abati"

In Excerpt 1, the setup describes that Ahmad Aiman introduces the term *"Abati,"* (Line 15) explaining its significance (Line 16 to Line 19) and his personal preference for this term (Line 20 to Line 22).

Excerpt 1

14. And for those who are just getting to know me,
15. Abati means daddy in Arabic.
16. That's what my children call me.
17. Because I used to be obsessed with the Quran.
18. So there's this one verse,
19. "Abati".
20. I was like,
21. That's sweet.
22. I want my children to call me that one day like:

Excerpt 2 explains how the punchlines delivered the humour by introducing a stark contrast. This contrast highlights the script opposition of two elements somewhat positive and negative, generating humour. It was found that the humour arises through the juxtaposition from the tender, sweet response *"Abati,"* (Line 23 to Line 24) contrasted with the harsh, rude response *"My father!"* (Line 27 to Line 28) which explains why the audience laughed.

Excerpt 2

23. Someone (character): *"Hey, who sent you here?"*
24. Aiman's daughter (character): *"Abati." *tender tone*
25. Isn't that sweet?
26. I don't want them to be like,
27. *Someone (character): "Who sent you here?"*
28. Aiman's daughter (character): ***"My father! (Bapaku!)" *harsh tone*** **[audience laughing]**
29. I don't want that.

Logical Mechanism (LM)

Table 3 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Logical Mechanism (LM).

Table 3
Logical Mechanism (LM)

Topic	Childbirth experience in the labor room
Attitude	Confused
Premise	The comic describes his first time in a labor room, comparing his expectations to the actual experience

In Excerpt 3, the setup describes Ahmad Aiman entering a labour room for the first time, mentioning that such situations are not taught in school, implying the lack of preparation for the realities of childbirth (Line 117 to Line 123).

Excerpt 3

113. So, when my first child, Maryam,
114. When we went to the hospital,
115. My wife was already at dilation 6 or 7.
116. So in 2 hours, she was there.
117. We,
118. **all these things are not taught in school, [audience giggling]**
119. In the labor room situation.
120. What we see or refer to,
121. Is from movies.
122. Like there's one midwife,
123. Maybe one assistant.

Excerpt 4 demonstrates how the punchlines delivered the humour by introducing absurdity to highlight his realisation that his knowledge is average (Line 124 to Line 127), leading him to question the process of childbirth humorously. He also imagines the nurses reacting to the baby's imminent birth as if they were catching a rugby ball, adding a visual and absurd element to the scene (Line 128 to Line 141).

Excerpt 4

124. Back in 2019,
125. No, 2017,
126. I was an ordinary man,
127. **With just average knowledge. [audience giggling]**
128. So in the labor room,
129. There was one midwife,
130. And one assistant nurse.
131. And,
132. **Four to five other nurses. [audience laughing]**
133. **What were they doing? [audience laughing]**
134. With my average knowledge,
135. It's impossible for me to think positively.
136. Is this baby,
137. How difficult will it be for this baby to come out?
138. **Will it come out like a rugby ball? [audience laughing]**
139. Maybe they were like
140. ***Aiman, portrays a nurse as if she is about to catch a rugby ball (act out)[audience laughing]**
141. Nurse (character): ***"Baby coming out, Baby coming out!" *woman voice*** **[audience laughing]**

Situation (SI)

Table 4 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Situation (SI).

Table 4
Situation (SI)

Topic	Setting up rules for children.
Attitude	Frustated
Premise	The comic sets a rule for his children regarding gadget use, limiting it to Sundays

In Excerpt 5, the setup describes the situation by introducing the problem Ahmad Aiman faces with his children's inability to share gadgets (Line 322 to Line 324). He explains that he has implemented a rule allowing gadget use only on Sundays (Line 325 to Line 328). This sets the stage for the humour by presenting a common situation where parenting issues that many can relate to.

Excerpt 5

322. And then another thing is my children, aged 6 and 4,
323. They don't know how to share.
324. Sharing in terms of gadgets.
325. So I made a rule,
326. That gadgets,
327. Phones, iPads, and such,
328. Are only allowed on Sundays.
329. **[audience amazed]**

Excerpt 6 demonstrates how the punchlines delivered the humour through the description of his children's exaggerated reactions to the new rule. Instead of accepting the rule, they engage in absurd and humorous protests, such as burning tires, breaking windows, and even involving the neighbours in their demonstration (Line 333 to Line 339).

Excerpt 6

330. Again,
331. Initially, they protested.
332. They didn't want to comply.
333. They burned tires, [audience laughing]
334. They broke windows, [audience laughing]
335. They gathered the neighbor's kids, [audience laughing]
336. Carrying signboards, [audience laughing]
337. Aiman's children (character): ***"Give us back our rights!*** **[audience laughing]**
338. Lower the price of nasi katok! **[audience laughing]**
339. We want a new Abati! **[audience laughing]**

Target (TA)

Table 5 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Target (TA).

Table 5
Target (TA)

Topic	The unique abilities of the comic's father on *ruqyah*
Attitude	Respectful
Premise	The comic explains his father's role in performing *ruqyah,* emphasizing that his father focuses on praying rather than communicating with mystical beings

In Excerpt 7, the setup introduces the concept of *ruqyah* and Ahmad Aiman's father's role in performing it. He describes how his father helps people by performing *ruqyah*, a form of spiritual healing, and clarifies that his father's job is to pray and not to heal directly (Line 445 to Line 453). This premise is established through a series of observations about his father's abilities and the seriousness with which he approaches *ruqyah.*

Excerpt 7

443. Alhamdulillah,
444. For those who know me deeply,
445. My father has the ability
446. To at least straighten us out.
447. He knows how to perform *ruqyah*.
448. *Ruqyah* is like
449. Usually people come to him
450. To ask for help with treatment.
451. And then my father always straightens things out and tells us,
452. But it's not his job to heal.
453. His job is to pray only.

Excerpt 8 demonstrates how the punchlines deliver the humour through the depiction of his father's unique approach to *ruqyah* and humorously elevates his father's status in the *ruqyah* industry by comparing him to the action hero, John Wick (Line 463 to Line 471).

Excerpt 8

461. As we know,
462. We see on TikTok,
463. If someone performs *ruqyah*,
464. They usually communicate
465. With the mystic beings.
466. My father doesn't.
467. He goes straight to
468. Shoot and target directly. [audience laughing]
469. In the *ruqyah* industry, [audience laughing]
470. My father is considered as
471. John Wick. [audience laughing and clapping]

Narrative Strategy (NS)

Table 6 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Narrative Strategy (NS).

Table 6
Narrative Strategy (NS)

Topic	The comic recounts a visit from a couple who believed the wife was possessed
Attitude	Scary
Premise	A situation when the wife gets possessed by a *jinn* while the comic is the only one at home to attend to them

In Excerpt 9, the setup describes that Ahmad Aiman begins by staging the scene of someone's wife suddenly becoming possessed (Line 501–502) in the absence of his father (Line 503). This sets up the premise for a narrative sequence where the husband assumes responsibility for interacting with the possessed wife (Line 504–506).

Excerpt 9

500. So like
501. Suddenly, the wife
502. Got possessed.
503. My father wasn't home yet, [audience laughing]
504. So the husband, as common knowledge, interacted with the wife.
505. The husband (character): ***Who are you?*** **[audience giggling]**
506. ***What do you want?*** **[audience giggling]**
507. *jin entering the wife's body

Excerpt 10 explains how the punchlines delivered the humour by sequence of dialogue that escalates toward an unexpected twist. He portrays multiple roles: the wife (Line 508–509), the husband (Line 510–511, 513, 517), young Aiman (Line 512), and the *jinn* (Line 514–515, 518–520). The narrative strategy relies on portraying characters with progressive questioning and revelation. The punchline arises when the *jinn* mistakenly identifies the host as "Masnah," only to be corrected by the husband that the body belongs to "Munah" (Line 517). This misidentification leads to the reversal where the *jinn* admits its error and pleads to be released (Line 518–521). The narrative closes with a tag, "First time a jinn asks to be let out" (Line 522), which serves as the icing on the cake of the humour.

Excerpt 10

508. Aiman portrays the wife, (character) that get possessed by the Jinn : ***Hermm *satanic voice [audience laughing]***
509. ***I want to destroy Masnah *angry tone [audience laughing]***
510. The husband looked at me.
511. The husband (character): ***Who is Masnah? [audience laughing]***
512. Young Aiman himself (character): ***I don't know, uncle! Try asking again.*** **[audience laughing and clapping]**
513. The husband (character): ***Who is Masnah? [audience laughing]***
514. Jin (character) : ***Hermm *satanic voice [audience laughing]***
515. ***The one inside this body that I'm possessing is Masnah.***
516. ***[audience laughing]***
517. The husband (character): ***The body you're possessing is Munah! [audience laughing]***
518. Jin (character): ***Where's Masnah? [audience laughing and clapping]***
519. ***Am I wrong? [audience laughing and clapping]***
520. ***Let mee out![audience laughing and clapping]***
521. ***Aaaaa...[audience laughing and clapping]***
522. First time a jinn asks to be let out. ***[audience laughing and clapping]***

Language (LA)

Table 7 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Language (LA).

Table 7
Language (LA)

Topic	The comic recounts the husband referred the mystical things as "things"
Attitude	Curious
Premise	The comic ponders over the use of the word "things" to describe mystical occurrences

In Excerpt 11, the setup describes Ahmad Aiman recounts the husband telling him that his wife was always "being possessed," using the term "things" (*benda* in Bahasa Brunei) to describe the wife's condition (Line 492). He expresses puzzlement at the use of "things" to refer to mystical occurrences, questioning this choice of wording humorously (Line 494 to Line 495).

Excerpt 11

492. the husband told me
493. That his wife was getting "things" or in other words always "being possessed"
494. I was puzzled,
495. Why do they always refer to mystical things as "things"? [audience giggling]

Excerpt 12 demonstrates how the humour delivered the punchlines when Ahmad Aiman questions why mystical things are referred to as "things," humorously suggesting that they are available, like items in a department store (Line 496 to Line 497). The second punchline involves a play on wordplay with "*heydomo*" and "*heybomoh*" (Line 498 to Line 499). "*Heydomo*" refers to a real local-made food-ordering mobile app in Brunei, and its pronunciation closely rhymes with "*heybomoh*". In Brunei Malay, *bomoh* means "witch." Combined, the phrase playfully sounds like "*Hey… witch*," which is humorously reimagined as a fictional mobile app through which a *jinn* communicates with a witch, creating a comedic twist.

Excerpt 12

496. As if they are available [audience laughing]
497. Like in a huaho store [audience laughing]
498. Instead of heydomo,
499. It is, heybomoh. [audience laughing]

New Emergence Mechanism: Crowd Work (CW)

Table 8 explains the setup in establishing the topic, attitude, and premise for Crowd Work (CW).

Table 8
Crowd Work (CW)

Topic	An interaction with an audience member to learn about their father's profession
Attitude	Playful
Premise	The comic asks about the profession of the audience member's father and engages in a lighthearted conversation about their job

In Excerpt 13, the setup shows how Ahmad Aiman uses crowd work to deliver humour. He begins by pointing to an audience member and initiating a conversation, using this interaction as the basis for a series of humorous exchanges. He starts by identifying an audience member and asking about their father's job (Line 574). His playful inquiry into the father's work at a power station sets the stage for a humorous exchange, as he jokes about the nature of the job and what makes it enjoyable (Line 575 to 576).

Excerpt 13

574. *Aiman points to another audience
575. Aiman : This is your dad? Your dad? Where does your dad work? Can't disclose? From where? Industry lah, industry. Working? Ha? Power station. Power station…what makes it happy there? [audience laughing]
576. Aiman : What do you do at the power station? Oh, operational. If we, let's say I have a 6-year-old child.

In Excerpt 14, Ahmad Aiman continues the interaction which creates punchline after punchline by asking detailed questions about the father's job, imagining how to explain it to a child (Line 578). This leads to a playful exchange where he humorously pretends to be clueless about the job, adding layers of humour through his exaggerated ignorance and curiosity. Moreover, he uses physical comedy, making a paddling gesture to mimic his imagined idea of the job (Line 579). He persists in asking about the job, humorously insisting on understanding what "monitoring" entails and his determination to "*dig until I get it*" adds a comedic element of exaggerated persistence (Line 581).

Excerpt 14

576. Aiman : What do you do at the power station? Oh, operational. If we, let's say I have a 6-year-old child.
577. [audience laughing]
578. Aiman : No, no, I'm not applying for her job. She's asking to explain what you do, how do you tell her. Not study first, what's the job? Job as? Oh, operation turbine. Operation Turbine. What do you do? What do you do every day?
579. *Aiman makes a paddling gesture
580. [audience laughing]
581. Aiman : My knowledge is bare. This is what I know. So every day like this? Ha? Monitoring! What…monitoring what? I'll dig until I get it.
582. [audience laughing]

Identity of Ahmad Aiman

The findings found some identities that were constructed by Ahmad Aiman through his humorous utterances in his stand-up comedy show. Recalling Burkes and Stets (2009) stated identity involves seeing oneself as a unique individual who distinguishes him from other

individuals and societies. It sees identity as a flexible, interactive process, constantly negotiated between self and society. Through humour,

How the comedian presented himself?

Explicitly, Ahmad Aiman constructs multiple identities: a caring father, a parental expertise, and a professional identity of a comedian.

How does the comedian seek recognition from the audience, and in what ways do laughter and applause confirm or reject these identity claims?

Audience laughter and responses verify his identity as a comedic performer. For example, his parental identity is validated when the audience agrees and responds warmly to anecdotes about his setting up rules against his children.

How does he switch between different roles or perspectives?

Ahmad Aiman juggles different identities that may overlap, conflict, or switch depending on context. For example, one segment of him portraying a professional worker and stand-up comic at the same time. In this bit, he recalls being an HR receptionist, constructing himself as both a worker embedded in organisational culture and as a performer on stage mocking it.

Which identities were foregrounded consistently across the show?

Several identities can be found in the show such as a father dealing with children, presenting his parental philosophy and taking views on generational fears ; a religious person, where he constantly touch on Islamic references like *Quran, ruqyah, azan* ; a comedian, he engages in meta-commentary by joking that he made zero profit from the show and is in debt to Bruhaha Comedy Productions, while also mocking his boss, Zainal.

However, some less prominent identities can include an ex-employee and a son of a *ruqyah* practitioner. Overall, fatherhood is the most salient identity throughout. Hence the show, *Abati* which means father in Arabic.

Does he support cultural norms or challenge them?

As Burke and Stets (2009) stated, identity is shaped by cultural or social norms, people do not just receive cultural or social structures (examples family expectations, religion, education systems) but they also exercise agency, meaning they actively negotiate, reinterpret, or critique those structures through their own actions.

Based on findings, he supported and challenged the norms. In terms of supporting norms, he values cultural values of family, religion, and respect for parents like the importance of azan at birth. Whereas in terms of challenging norms, he satirizes education systems such as exam stress, fear-based motivation, Sui dynasty history; workplace hierarchies such as HR and receptionist, nepotism; and generational stereotypes that he views on lazy Gen-Z.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study has proven that there is a relationship between stand-up comedy and identity construction.

Through the intentional application of GTVH in this study, the six mechanisms offered a blueprint for dissecting comedic craft and have led to the emergence of a new humour mechanism, Crowd Work (CW). This major finding, seventh mechanism, tells you that humour utterances when a comedian attempts to engage with the audience by asking personal questions so that they come up with jokes in response to the audience spontaneously.

Meanwhile, the application of Identity Theory in this study, another major finding was that a positive portrayal of identity construction can be observed, which helps fill a gap compared to Western studies that tend to emphasize negative portrayals. On top of that, the identity construction enacted multiple identity layers simultaneously. Ahmad Aiman's humour is not random but it has identity work in it. Humour lets him negotiate structure while exercising agency. He reinforces tradition (supporting cultural or social norms) and subverting or mocking structures (challenging cultural or social norms) throughout his standup acts. Ahmad Aiman is not passively reflecting culture but actively reshaping it through comedy by exaggerating everyday situations, parodying figures, and shifting between multiple roles. In other words, his identity is not fixed as it shifts depending on structure and agency which align with the framework explained by Mohammed-Azizi (2024) based on Burke and Stets (2009).

In conclusion, this study centered on *Ahmad Aiman's Abati Show*, a one-hour live performance that reveals how humour can become a catalyst for identity construction which provided rich qualitative data. Of course, the limited sample size may not fully represent as for future research, the study offers several potential directions. Future studies include a larger, more diverse sample with a balanced gender ratio to improve generalizability. This is open to explore multiple performances, digital comedy forms, and comparative analyses across Southeast Asian contexts.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the process of writing this manuscript, generative AI and AI-assisted technologies were utilised only to aid in refining key findings and summarising the approximately of a completed thesis as a means to improve language clarity, coherence, and structure in support of the discussion, in adherence to IAFOR standards. However, the content did not contribute to the generation of fictional content such as findings, analysis, discussions, conclusions and references presented in this work.

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