

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE FILM ELEMENTAL (2023): PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis konflik psikologis yang dialami oleh tokoh utama, Ember dan Wade, dalam film animasi Elemental (2023) melalui pendekatan psikologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud dan teori humanistik Carl Rogers untuk mengkaji bagaimana konflik batin, penekanan emosi, dan krisis identitas digambarkan dalam perkembangan karakter. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan analisis naratif, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa konflik yang dialami Ember berasal dari ekspektasi internal yang dipendam dan penekanan emosi, sedangkan konflik Wade adalah orang yang penuh kasih sayang, empati, dan optimis dengan hubungan emosional yang kuat dengan orang lain. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa film animasi dapat mencerminkan dinamika psikologis manusia yang nyata dan mendorong kesadaran emosional.

Kata Kunci: Konflik Psikologis, Analisis Karakter, Elemental, Psikoanalisis, Teori Humanistik

Abstract

This study will analyze the psychologies of Ember and Wade as conflicted through the psychological approach to film, specifically Freudian psychoanalysis and humanistic Carl Rogers' theory. The anticipated findings will confirm that conflicted psychologies are representative of emotional repression and identity crises relative to character development. The intention of this project is not only to assess Elemental (2023) for its entertainment value but to further understanding of psychological awareness through observation of interpersonal realities—even if they're rendered in animated films. Through a qualitative method and approach with narrative analysis, the researcher will support conclusions drawn from an immersed understanding of Ember and Wade relative to their conflicts based on cinematic expectation. The researcher will conclude that Ember is conflicted due to expected ideology against her internalized beliefs while Wade is compassionate, empathetic, and optimistic water person with a strong emotional connection to others. The findings highlight how animated films can reflect real human psychological dynamics and promote emotional awareness.

Keywords: Psychological Conflict, Character Analysis, Elemental, Psychoanalysis, Humanistic Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling in modern society has transformed the art of film beyond the visual appeal of entertainment. Instead, it acts as commentary on human behavior, response, and psychological awareness. Therefore, little exists that would be a more effective explorative medium through which to understand such commentary than through animated film. The power of animation allows the most basic of human attributes and emotional responses to become transformed and abstracted into mere

symbols that serve as more digestible representations of complex ideas. For example, *Elemental* (2023), a film by Pixar, explores just that symbolism and psychological metaphor, not to mention emotional connectivity all surrounding elements that exist as personifications of identity. *Elemental* presents a personification of the four main elements. Therefore, the following paper will assess *Elemental* as a psychologically complex, aware film.

The story of Ember and Wade is not merely a love story that transcends sociocultural and physical barriers, it also explores psychological developments revealing the internal struggles of both characters. Ember grows up in a fire community with social expectations, learning to repress her emotions. Her anger symbolizes the universal identity crisis between familial expectations and personal desires. Conversely, Wade represents emotional openness and vulnerability traits often stigmatized in modern society.

In an era where audiences value narratives of emotional intelligence and mental health, *Elemental* emerges as a significant text for analysis. Through Freudian and Rogersian perspectives, this study explores the psychological struggles of Ember and Wade, assessing the depth, credibility, and emotional integrity of their character.

1.1 Literature Review

a. Previous Study

Several studies have previously analyzed *Elemental* from different perspectives. Devyna and Nugroho (2024) examined discrimination and its effects, highlighting institutional and cultural biases in the film. Haryanto et al. (2024) explored the psychoanalysis of Ember through Islam theology, focusing on the id, ego, and superego balance. Hardanti et al (2024) analyzed moral representation using Barthes' semiotic theory, identify moral messages of emotion and discrimination.

Further, Anzani et al. (2025) discussed types of love in *Elemental*, emphasizing intimacy, passion, and commitment. Dharmawan and Nadhif (2024) studied directive speech acts of the main characters, while Tiara et al. (2024) examined Ember's emotional intelligence. Other studies, such as by Sharifah and Shofiyuddin (2024), analyzed speech acts, and Yanti and Skolasyika (2024) focused on external conflicts in the film.

b. Underlying Theoris

In underlying theories, the researcher will explain the theory of Psychology in literature, The type of Psychological Conflict and Freudian Psychoanalytical Theory and Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory.

c. Psychological in Literature

According to Wilhem Wundt (1829), defined psychology as the study of human experiences. such as the five senses, emotions, the will, the mind, etc. Additionally, Wundt is a philosopher who inspired the development of psychology. A psychology approach is a perspective that is predicated on certain behavioural assumptions. Every viewpoint includes standard ideas for characterising, forecasting, and clarifying behaviour. The main psychological viewpoints that are relevant to the field of development will be discussed in this part.

d. Psychological Conflict

According to Kurt Lewin, psychological conflict can be categorized as:

1. Approach-Approach conflict : Choosing between two desirable alternatives.
2. Avoidance-Avoidance conflict : Choosing between two undesirable options.
3. Approach-Avoidance conflict : A situation involving both desirable and undesirable aspects.

e. Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory

Freud's model divides personality into the id, ego, and superego. The id seeks pleasure, the superego enforces moral standards, and the ego mediates between them. Unresolved tensions among these components cause psychological conflict and repression.

f. Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory

Rogers emphasized self-actualization, congruence, and unconditional positive regard. A fully functioning person achieves harmony between the real and ideal self through empathy, acceptance, and authenticity. Psychological conflict arises when incongruence disrupts this balance.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze dialogues, scenes, and character action in *Elemental* (2023). The primary data source is the film itself, while secondary sources include journal, books, and online references.

Data collection techniques:

Observation and documentation were used by watching the film, reading the script, and identifying scenes relevant to psychological conflict.

Data analysis techniques:

1. Data reduction : Selecting and summarizing relevant information
2. Data display : Presenting findings through descriptive text
3. Conclusion drawing : Interpreting the psychological meaning of the data

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Ember Lumen's Psychological Conflict

Ember Lumen, the daughter of immigrant parents, experiences tension between filial duty and personal aspiration. Her father expects her to inherit the family shop, while she dreams of independence. Her id desires freedom and creativity, her superego enforces obedience and responsibility, and her ego struggles to mediate between them. This leads to guilt, anxiety, and frustration-manifestations of Freudian repression.

4.2 Wade Ripple's Psychological Conflict

Wade Ripple's conflict centers on emotional sensitivity and her self-acceptance. As a compassionate water element, he feels insecure about his emotional openness. This reflects Carl Rogers' concept of incongruence, where the real self clashes with the ideal self. Through his relationship with Ember, Wade learns to embrace vulnerability as strength, achieving congruence and embodying Rogers' "fully functioning person."

4.3 Categorization of Psychological Conflict

From Freud's perspective, Ember's journey represents ego reconciliation between instinct (id) and morality (superego). Her resolution symbolizes psychological maturity and ego balance. From Rogers' perspective, both Ember and Wade move toward self-actualization, aided by empathy and unconditional acceptance.

4.4 The Role of Psychological Conflict in Characterization and Resolution

Ember's fiery nature reflects repression and intensity, while Wade's fluid personality represents empathy and adaptability. Their psychological growth mirrors the film's central theme: harmony through emotional acceptance. The resolution-Ember receiving her father's blessing-signifies integration of id, ego, and superego, leading to self-actualization.

4. CLOSING

The analysis reveals that psychological conflict is central to Elemental's character development. Ember's internal struggle between duty and independence, and Wade's struggle for emotional authenticity, mirror real human dynamics. The synthesis of Freudian and Rogersian theories highlights how Elemental portrays emotional growth, self acceptance, and balance. The film demonstrates that animated storytelling can reflect genuine psychological experiences and foster empathy and awareness among audiences.

Future researchers may explore other theoretical frameworks, such as Jung's Archetypal Theory or Erikson's Psychological Development, to deepen the understanding of identity and symbolism in Elemental or similar films. This study also offers insights for educators to integrate emotional intelligence and mental health discussions into classroom contexts.

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