

## **Taxonomy of functional and dysfunctional conflicts in animation film *Elemental* (2023)**

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### **Abstract**

This research was conducted to describe the functional and dysfunctional conflicts faced by the main characters and how the conflict is managed in the *Elemental* movie. The *Elemental* movie as a data source is analyzed using two theories related to the topic that has been taken, namely the conflict theory by Madiha Shazia (2015) and the conflict management theory by Mouton Blake. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. Data is taken in the form of dialogue and to identify the types of conflict and types of conflict management. This study used data analysis techniques from James Spradley, namely domain analysis, taxonomy analysis and componential analysis. After conducted the analysis, dysfunctional conflict is more dominant than functional conflict. In addition, avoiding becomes a conflict management that is widely used by the main character in managed the conflict. The *Elemental* movie has depicted the existence of functional and dysfunctional conflicts.

**Keywords:** conflict; conflict management; elemental

### **Introduction**

Literature is familiar and recognized in the scope of education. According to Surastina (2018) in (Jayanti et al., 2019) suggests that literature comes from Sanskrit, literature which means writing. The form of writing is literature which is a form of human expression, which includes art that contains ideas, experiences, feelings or imaginations of the author to convey to the audience. Literature is also closely related to creativity and expression.

A literary work can be created based on thoughts, real life or imagination. Literature is formed to represent the feelings or expressions of the author's soul or a person in his life. Fundamentally, literary works consist of various types. According to Cuddon (in Pabur et al., 2023) in a comprehensive definition, "literature is a broad term that usually denotes works belonging to genres: epic, drama, lyric, novel, short story, verse, and rhyme". Types of literary works include movies, poetry and novels. These types of literary works are favored by many people.

One type of literary work that is favored by many people is movies. Movies use audio and visual

communication to convey information to everyone who watches. According to Rabiger (2003) in (Angraeni & Nur, 2023) movie is a form of visual communication that uses music and movement to describe human emotions. Currently, there are many types of movies that are diverse and show interesting things. The combination of narration, audio and visual effects, makes people always interested in enjoying a movie.

With today's technological advances, everyone can convey ideas or works through visual media. According to Effendy (in Taufik & Syukur, 2024) movie is an audio-visual communication medium to convey messages to a group of people gathered in a place. By using movie media, a literary work feels more alive when enjoyed. In a movie, there is a series of storylines depicted by the director. Therefore, in every movie there will always be a message to be conveyed or shared.

According to Saputra & Suastini, (2024) movies are made in various forms such as cartoons, animations, documentaries, and others. Movies also have several functions as said Wahyuningsih (in Gracia et al., 2020) movies have a general function as a means of entertainment, but movies also have other functions such as, educational functions and

informative functions. Viewers can experience various emotions while watching a movie, such as happy, sad, angry, upset and many other feelings. The emotions that arise are based on the conflict in a movie. The conflict in the movie is formed in such a way as to make the movie more interesting and good. The success of a movie can be seen when the audience's emotions arise.

Conflict is one of the intrinsic elements in movie making. Therefore, conflict is an important part of a movie. Movies tell many stories that are shaped in such a way. There are various themes that can be found in every movie such as drama, comedy, romance, adventure and many more. In every movie that has been made, there must be an underlying conflict. With conflict, the movie will feel more interesting and exciting.

There are several studies related to the idea of conflict that have been reviewed by previous researchers. The first research was conducted by (Yanwar et al., 2022) this journal explores and describes the types of conflicts that occur in the movie "ParaNorman". The theory used in analyzing conflict in this movie is Mueller and William's theory which divides conflict into 2, namely internal and external conflicts. The next theory is the theory of conflict from Kenney 1966: 19 which divides conflict into 6 namely, (1) character vs self, (2) character vs character, (3) character vs technology, (4) character vs supernatural, (5) character vs nature, and the last (6) character vs society. The result of this analysis found 4 types of conflict from 6 types of conflict based on Kenney's theory. The method used in this analysis is descriptive method.

The second research was conducted by (Rusminiati & Suastini, 2023) this journal analyzes the conflict and personality of the main character in the Encanto movie. The theories used in analyzing conflicts in this movie are Kenney's theory (1996) and Freud's Psychoanalysis theory (1896). The results of the analysis show that there are 2 conflicts that occur in the main character, namely internal conflict and external conflict. In addition, there are also 3 types of personality in the main character in dealing with conflict, namely id, ego, and superego.

The third research was conducted by Artawan et al., (2020) in this study, researcher analyzed the external conflict experienced by the main character

in the movie five feet apart. There are two theories used, namely Kenney (1966) and Bernhardt (1953). Three types of external conflicts experienced by the main character were found, namely man versus man, man versus nature, and man versus society. From five classes of human motives that can trigger conflict, only three motives were found in this movie. These motives are desires, emotions, and feelings and attitudes.

The fourth research was conducted by (Angraeni & Nur, 2023). This study explains the external conflict that occurs in the movie Flipped. This study uses Kenney's theory (1966) to analyze the types of conflicts and Soekanto's theory (1992) to analyze the factors that cause and resolve conflicts. The results showed that the researcher found 3 out of 3 types of external conflicts and found 2 out of 4 factors causing conflicts and 2 out of 5 conflict resolution methods.

The last research was conducted by (Mills et al., 2020). This journal examines conflict and its management in an organization. This journal uses the theory of Madiha and Shazia (2015) which divides conflict into two types, namely positive conflict and negative conflict, where positive conflict is functional and negative conflict is dysfunctional. In addition to this theory, this journal also uses the theory of Mouton and Blake in analyzing the type of conflict management. The results show that functional conflict produces innovation that can bring new ideas and dysfunctional conflict can disrupt the exchange of ideas and damage relationships.

Based on the review of the five journals above, researcher found similarities and differences between the journals that have been reviewed and the research to be studied. The similarity is that both examine the conflict experienced by the main character in the movie. While the difference is, in this study researcher use different theories compared to previous studies, researcher will examine the types of conflicts using the theory of Madiha and Shazia (2015), which views that conflict does not always end badly and produce negative things, but focuses on how to make conflict to improve performance or conditions and others, both for individuals and groups. The Elemental movie will be the object of this research. Besides that, this study will also

examine the forms of conflict management carried out by the main character in dealing with existing conflicts. Mouton Blake's theory cited in Mills et al., (2020) is used to examine the form of conflict management. In this study, researcher want to know the types of conflicts in the *Elemental* movie and also the forms of conflict management that exist in dealing with conflicts.

## Methods

In this study, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method to conduct the research. According to Creswell in (Hidayati et al., 2022) states that qualitative research is a type of research where researcher rely heavily on information from objects or participants, describe and analyze words, and conduct research subjectively. The object of this research is the movie *Elemental* by Peter Sohn. The movie premiered in June 2023. The *Elemental* movie is set in a city called Element City. which contains elements such as Fire, Water, Air and Earth. This movie received various good reviews. According to Siswanto in (Putri et al., 2024) the use of qualitative data shows interest in non-numerical aspects, such as descriptions, quotes, or narratives, which cannot be measured numerically. The data source in this research is taken from the *Elemental* movie. The movie is written and directed by Peter Sohn. The main actors are Leah Lewis, who plays the character Ember (fire element) and Mamoudou Athie, who plays the character Wade (water element). This analysis focuses on conversations contained in dialogs in several scenes in the *Elemental* movie to explore the conflicts that occur and the author will also analyze the conflict management carried out by the main character to overcome the conflicts that occur.

According to Sugiyono in (Suryani, 2018) "Data collection techniques are the most strategic step in a study, because the main purpose of research is to get accurate data". In this study, data were collected through observation and documentation. The steps taken by researcher to conduct this research are as follows: Watching *Elemental* movie, understanding the story and paying full attention to the conversation or dialogues, where conflict and conflict management occur in the movie, collecting the data

by writing down which types of conflict and forms of conflict management are occurring, grouping the data that is collected based on its type, both in the conflict and conflict management sections and describing the data that has been collected in detail. This research used Spradley analysis technique, namely qualitative data analysis proposed by James Spradley (in Novrianti, 2025). James Spradley proposed four stages in analyzing data, namely domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural Themes. Furthermore, in this study researcher only used three stages of analysis as follows: componential analysis, domain analysis and taxonomy analysis.

## Findings and discussion

This sub-chapter contains findings regarding the forms of conflict and forms of conflict management in *Elemental* movie. The data presented is based on sentences in the dialog experienced by Ember's character in *Elemental*.

*Table 1. Componential Analysis*

Types OC	Collaboration	Avoiding	Total
Forms MC			
Functional	3	-	3
Dysfunctional	-	4	4

The table above shows the componential analysis table where 3 data were found that show the form of functional conflict and 4 data that show the form of dysfunctional conflict. The most common form of conflict found in this study is dysfunctional conflict. Furthermore, 2 forms of conflict management were found from 5 forms of conflict management, namely collaboration and avoiding. Of the two forms of conflict management, the most frequently used to resolve conflicts is the avoiding form of conflict management.

### The forms of conflict in *Elemental* movie

There are 2 forms of conflict, namely functional conflict and dysfunctional conflict experienced by Ember, found in this study. There are 3 data (42.86%)

functional and 4 data (57.14%) dysfunctional as suggested in the Table 2 below:

Table 2. Domain Analysis Forms of Conflict

No	Forms of Conflict	Number of Data	Percentage
1	Functional	3	42,86%
2	Dysfunctional	4	57,14%

This suggests that while conflict occasionally serves a constructive purpose, it more often manifests as a barrier to resolution and mutual understanding in Ember's experiences. These findings offer a foundational understanding of the nature and frequency of conflict types and management approaches in the film. With this contextual overview in place, the following section will focus more specifically on identifying and analyzing the forms of conflict depicted in *Elemental*.

### Functional Conflict

This conflict arises when there are differences in ideas, opinions and goals between individuals or groups, but the differences that exist do not cause division or damage to a relationship, instead supporting positive discussions in order to obtain good and useful solutions for the parties involved in the conflict. In addition, functional conflict is also constructive that can encourage and improve individual or group performance.

#### Conflict between Ember and Wade

**Ember:** "Come on, guy. You can't get through this. So it is time to hand 'em over"

**Wade:** "Oh boy. I'm sorry. This is going to be really disappointing for you"

**Ember:** "Oh no no no no no no..."

**Wade:** "Sorry"

**Ember:** "Please! No! You don't understand"

**Wade:** "Whoa"

**Ember:** "The shop is my dad's dream, if I'm the reason it gets shut down it will kill him"  
(Managing the conflict)

**Wade:** "Aw"

**Ember:** "He will never trust me to take over"

**Wade:** "Why didn't you say that before?"

(*Elemental*, 20:34 – 21:24; Docter & del Carmen, 2023)

From this problem, a difference of opinion arises between the two of them about how this problem should be resolved. However, after going through a fairly deep argument, in the end the conflict between Ember and Wade can be resolved properly and positively. They are both willing to listen to each other's opinions, in which Wade finally willing to help Ember to withdraw the ticket that had been delivered to the city hall. So that the problem does not get longer and find a solution that is good for both of them.

Conflict management in the conflict between Ember and Wade is collaboration. This can be said because Wade in this conflict lowered his ego after hearing what Ember said which ultimately made them choose to work together to resolve existing conflicts and problems.

#### Conflict between Ember and Wade

**Wade:** "I don't think this is going to work"

**Ember:** "Well it won't unless you hold the bag straight"

**Wade:** "Maybe your dad will understand"

**Wade:** "I'm serious. Look, I know it can be tough. I mean with my dad... we were like oil and water. I never got a chance to fix that. But you guys are different. It might be time to tell him."

**Ember:** "Yeah, right. And tell him what?? That I got us shut down and DESTROYED HIS DREAM??"

**Wade:** "Ember! Ember, hold up. What's going on?"

**Ember:** "I can't believe she basically offered me a job"

**Wade:** "I know! Could be cool!"

**Ember:** "Yeah, super cool, Wade! I could move out and make glass in a far away city. Do whatever I want."

(*Elemental*, 47:16–48:28; Docter & del Carmen, 2023)

The conflict above shows a conflict between Ember and Wade that is caused by differences of opinion that refer to functional conflict. Ember sticks to her principles, and on the other hand Wade tries to give Ember an opinion or input about her goals and dreams. Although their differences of opinion seem



quite large, in the end both of them can find a positive way to solve the problem of differences of opinion.

From this, it can be seen that the problems faced are resolved through collaboration. This is shown by Wade indirectly providing solutions to Ember's problems. Wade provides input to Ember to be honest with her father and then Ember is honest with herself too.

### Dysfunctional Conflict

This conflict arises when there are differences in ideas, opinions and goals between individuals or groups. With these differences, the conflict becomes negative, because it is not resolved with a good form of conflict management. In addition, there are several things that cause conflict to become dysfunctional, such as the inability to resolve any differences, emotional and behavioral problems, focus on self-interest and ineffective communication. All of these can make it difficult to come up with new ideas, damage relationships and hinder the achievement of personal or group goals.

### Conflict between Ember and Customers

**Trinket Customer:** "Are these fragile?"

**Ember:** "No wait!"

*Ember stops a CUSTOMER from putting a log in their mouth*

**Ember:** "You have to pay before you eat"

**Customers :** "Does this come in a large? / What's your return policy? / These glasses are backward. / I want a refund. / I'm next!! / Has anyone seen my husband?"

**Ember:** "Take a breath.. make connection..." (Managing the conflict)

*Ember is on the verge of EXPLODING*

**Ember:** "Be back in 5 minutes!" (Managing the conflict)

*her fire SPITTING AND SPARKING.*

**Ember:** "AHHHHHHH"

(*Elemental*, 15:00–16:06; Docter & del Carmen, 2023)

This conflict occurs because of Ember's inability to manage her emotions, causing a bad impact on customers and her shop. As a result of Ember's inability to deal with and manage her emotions, everything became a mess. In addition, it

also hindered the communication that should have gone well between customers and Ember. The customer's goal of being able to shop with peace of mind could not be achieved.

Avoiding is the action Ember takes in dealing with conflict. This led to bad results, both for Ember and her surroundings. Regarding Ember, the impact is that she is unable to manage her temperament or emotions, besides having a bad impact on the surroundings, causing fatal damage to her father's shop.

### Conflict between Ember and Wade

**Wade:** "It was inspiring. You were inspiring"

**Ember:** "No. Wade, we can't touch"

**Wade:** "Maybe we can"

**Ember:** "No"

**Wade:** "But can't we just prove it"

**Ember:** "Prove what?"

**Wade:** "Let's see what happens, and if it's a disaster then we'll know this would never work"

**Ember:** "But it actually could be a disaster. I could vaporize you. You could extinguish me. And then.."

**Wade:** "Let's... let's start small. I'm so lucky"

**Ember:** "I have to go" (Managing the conflict)

**Wade:** "Wait, what? Where are you going?"

**Ember:** "Back to my life at the shop. Where I belong. I take over tomorrow" (Managing the conflict)

**Wade:** "Whoa whoa whoa, hold up. You don't WANT that. You said so yourself"

**Ember:** "It doesn't matter what I want"

(*Elemental*, 1:10:00–1:13:05; Docter & del Carmen, 2023)

In here Ember cannot accept Wade's opinion and input about her life and future. The two of them are involved in a debate, which leads to the non-acceptance of each other's words and opinions. This resulted in their relationship becoming disrupted and ineffective. Their weakness in dealing with each other's disagreements triggered the conflict to become dysfunctional.

The conflict between the two ended badly. They became distant, simply because one party stayed away without listening to the other. Here

Ember chooses to avoid. Ember chooses to avoid the conflict and does not want this conflict to continue further. With this decision, Ember chooses to make the conflict unresolved and makes both parties distant. This causes damage to the relationship between the two, and also damages trust.

### The Forms of Management Conflict

After classifying the data on the forms of conflict in *Elemental* movie, the researcher also analyzed the forms of conflict management used by Ember in dealing with the conflicts in *Elemental* movie. The results of the analysis are as in the table below.

Table 3. Taxonomy Analysis of Conflict Management

No	Forms of Conflict Management	Number of Data	Percentage
1	Competing	-	-
2	Accommodating	-	-
3	Compromising	-	-
4	Denial	4	57,14%
5	Collaboration	3	42,86%

Based on the table above, there are 2 forms of conflict management found in the *Elemental* movie. There are 4 data (57.14%) on avoiding, and 3 data (42.86%) on collaboration.

### Denial

Form of denial, referring to dysfunctional conflict. Denial conflict management is a form of conflict management that can be considered passive. This is because avoidance has no element of fixing the problem at all. People or parties who use this conflict management, choose not to be directly involved in the conflict, and choose to ignore the problems being experienced. The purpose of someone avoiding conflict is to calm down and consider the problem properly.

One example when Ember chooses to avoid is in scene (59:00 - 1:00:48) where Ember says *"I'm going home"*. Going away from conflict is a form of avoidance. It is ignoring the parties involved in the conflict, ignoring the problem, and not wanting to fix the problem properly. The party who chooses to avoid, feels that by avoiding will allow him to calm down and learn the conflict well. However, avoiding conflict can sometimes lead to new problems.

### Collaboration

Collaboration refers to functional conflict. This form of management emphasizes cooperation between the parties involved in the conflict, to jointly find an appropriate and fair solution that benefits both parties. By managing conflict with collaboration, it will be able to build better relationships, bring up new ideas and provide improvements to each party involved in the conflict. With collaboration, communication will be much better and more effective.

One example where Ember chooses to manage conflict with collaboration is in scene (20:34 - 21:24) Ember says, *"The shop is my dad's dream, if I'm the reason it gets shut down it will kill him"*. Here Ember shows her honesty to Wade about the problems she faces, without realizing that saying so can make Wade become touched and ultimately want to solve problems together.

### Conclusion

Conflict is not always negative and destructive, but conflict can also have a positive impact on the parties involved, such as bringing up new ideas, improving themselves and also providing innovation, and its known as functional conflict. Conversely, when conflict ends badly it can have a negative impact, such as damaging relationships, hindering the emergence of ideas and also destroying goals, and it is defined as dysfunctional conflict. The *Elemental* movie has illustrated the existence of functional conflict and dysfunctional conflict.

*Elemental* is not just an animated movie that only spoils the eyes. Behind it all, there is a story that is almost the same as human life. The Ember family's life as immigrants is not easy. They try to live in a new environment, and fight the stigma of being an immigrant. In addition, Ember's struggle to find her identity, about her dreams and what she wants to do, to the love story between Ember and Wade is complicated because of different elements. All journeys in this movie cannot be separated from conflict. Conflict is the core of a story or movie. With conflict, the movie feels more interesting to watch.

This research has answered the question of what forms of conflict are found in this movie, and also how the main character manages conflict, using

descriptive qualitative methods, also using the theory of Madiha Shazia and the theory of Mouton Blake. Based on the findings and analysis that researcher conducted on the Elemental movie, researcher found 3 functional conflict data, 4 dysfunctional conflict data. The researcher also found 3 forms of conflict management data from 5 forms of conflict management, namely competing, avoiding and collaboration.

From this research, it is hoped that we can increase our understanding of the types of conflicts and what forms of conflict management can be done when facing conflicts that occur in life. In addition, it is hoped that readers can understand more about the positive and negative impacts of conflict, and also the importance of managing conflict in the right way.

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