

## **Defense Mechanisms Of Ingrid Thorburn In Facing Anxieties As Reflected In The Dark Comedy Film Entitled Ingrid Goes West (2017)**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study analyzes a dark comedy film concerning on the psychological aspects of the main character. Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis is used as a base theory in analyzing the object study. This research attempts to find out the types of anxieties and defense mechanisms portrayed by Ingrid in the film Ingrid Goes West. The study was based on a qualitative research, thus the result will be outlined in a form of descriptive. All of the primary data used in this research were taken from the film script, including descriptions, monologues and dialogues. While the secondary data were gathered from books, journals, articles, and reports that related to the study. As a result, this study finds that the character of Ingrid covers all anxiety types defined by Freud; neurotic anxiety, realistic anxiety, and moral anxiety. In order to cope with her anxiety, Ingrid uses certain behaviour that Freudian theorists recognized as defense mechanism. The coping mechanism used by ingrid includes; displacement, denial, regression, reaction formation and projection. This study comes to a conclusion that the psychological journey of Ingrid in facing anxieties using defense mechanism is well portrayed in the film Ingrid Goes West.*

**Keywords :** *Anxiety, Defense Mechanism, Freud Psychoanalysis Theory*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Literature is one of the dynamic portrayals of human's life processes. According to Goksen Aras, literature is a discipline wherein language is used as a medium of expression to interpret human's behavior, existence, and culture (1). Literature intertwines in many fields of study, including psychology. Moreover, psychology often becomes the major topic that pops up when talking about human in literature. As a product of human thought, many literary works come as the result of psychology condition of the author itself. In other words, literary works are used by authors to convey what they feel and see about the social life they faced. Therefore, every literary work is different, depending on what kind of background that the author has. The depiction of society that written by the author is often the exact condition that he tries to deliver using his own perspective.

In addition, literature can be written whether in the shape of poetic, dramatic, or fiction. Human experiences that communicated in literature are always in a form of narrative. Furthermore, as a visualization of narrative, movie is also considered as a branch of literature. According to Dr. Pramod Ambadasrao Pawar, there is a link between movie and literature that creates sublimity in human imagination and understanding (151). Movie and literature are common in certain points, they tend to be the imperssion of reality. There are many movies that created specifically as a satire potrayals towards society nowadays. Dealing with human beings, observation is the key to go deep into their social or individual life. Thus, movie makers then took a chance within this gap to utilize human experiences as an object study.

Arguably that movie as a literary works can be the appliance of human psyche's portrayal in a form of a script that turned into visual work. One of the most catching movies that tells about human individual experiences is *Ingrid Goes West* (2017). This American dark-comedy film satirizes the life of today society towards social media usage. Using the background of latest 21st century, the movie portrays youngsters who are living in a fast-information era. The characters are all depicted having a really intense connection with internet, especially social media. They are so called Social Media Generation.

As a growing phenomenon, social media has rapidly become a fundamental channel of communication for people nowadays. Especially young adults who are lately become the heaviest users among all ages. Grow up with internet and witness the advent of social media, young adults are now experiencing various problems related to the compulsive use of Internet and social media. Even though social media is beneficial for social-networking, however, social media may have negative aspects including cyber-bullying, privacy violation, Internet addiction, stalking, threatening, depression, loneliness, and legal risks (Krol 3). All of those issues emerged are at risk to affect its users physically and psychologically.

Undeniably there are many cases reported about adults who are depressed because of social media anxiety and insecurity, even worse, some of them are attempt to suicide. Recent study reveals that social anxiety is very common that even occupy the third position as most frequent mental health problem after major depression and alcohol abuse. In addition, young adults are considered to be an easy object for the intrusion of social

anxiety and usually influence 3 -5% of youth population (Nasreen Bano, Zaeema R. Ahmad, Amena Z. Ali 1). The pressure that given by social media forces these young people to keep up with the trend. Social approval is become the aim for most, they often do things only to be recognized. It is ironic to see how social media fuels people's desire for fame. Hence, witnessing this, Matt Spicer, later directs the movie as a satire portrayals of social media as it is today.

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The main character of the movie, Ingrid, is portrayed having a lot of issues in her social life. The main character feels that she is socially unaccepted by people, she has no real friend to be with. Thus, Ingrid often experiences the anxiety because of the pressure that she actually made herself. She is not becoming her true self and slowly tries to fake everything instead. She seems only fulfilling the imaginary life that she seeks for. The fear of being lonely, disliked, and humiliated is part of her anxiety that she has within herself. Moreover, this is related to the Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory about human anxieties.

The feeling of anxiety and worry are coming up into Ingrid's mind about her wistful life. Along with the social media pressure that afterward desperately leads her to defense mechanism mode. She starts to project the fulfilment of her emotional needs to others. Dealing with those concerns, Ingrid's manipulative traits suddenly emerges that makes her problems even more complex. In the movie *Ingrid Goes West*, both anxieties and defense mechanisms are depicted very well. The movie gives a great portrayal of how social media can provide a false sense of meaning to some people. As one of those people who taking a part in social media trends, Ingrid is experiencing many issues dealing with it. All of the problems that occurred in Ingrid's social life are having a huge impact towards her psychological condition. Hence, the way Ingrid facing her anxieties will be analyzed through Freudian psychological perspective.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is qualitative research which means this methodology is to explain and describe the detail about individual's psychological experiences. It does not include statistical analysis. The data of this research is in the form of description, monologue, and dialogue. Data collecting method is divided into five, which are watching the film, reading the film script, identifying the data, classifying the data and reducing the data. There are two type of data, first is primary data that was taken from *Ingrid Goes West* film. Secondary data was taken from books, journals, reports, and essays that related to the research. The last step is analyzing the data that means to explain all the findings data in detail. In analyzing the data, the attempt is to define the types of anxiety and defense mechanism used by the main character. This result can be seen in finding and discussion.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Anxieties Portrayed by Ingrid in the film *Ingrid Goes West***

Anxiety is considered as one of the most important concepts in psychoanalysis theory (Hall 61). It plays a huge role both in the development of personality and the dynamics of personality functioning. People will automatically get anxious whenever they face any uncomfortable situations. As the originator, Sigmund Freud differentiates anxiety into three; neurotic anxiety, realistic anxiety, and moral anxiety.

Illustrated by Ingrid Goes West film, the main character named Ingrid is depicted to have moments that trigger her anxiety within her life. She experiences different types of anxiety depending on what kind of situation she is involved in. Through this, the anxiety of Ingrid will be analyzed deeper using Freudian psychoanalysis theory.

#### A.1 Ingrid's Neurotic Anxiety

There is a moment where Ingrid experiences neurotic anxiety portrayed in the film. Sometime, Ingrid and Taylor are having a plan to see Willy Wonka in Hollywood Forever Cemetery. On another day, Taylor's brother, Nicky, shows up in her house, then he suddenly asks Taylor whether she wants to join dinner with one of his Hollywood famous influencer friends, Harley Chung. The excited Taylor immediately asks Ingrid would she mind if she cancels their plan saying that she wants to spend some time with Nicky. Ingrid has no choice but agrees with a bitter smile. But the next day, she sees a photo of Taylor, Nicky, and Harley in the Willy Wonka events.

Ingrid is sitting on her couch, sipping a Corona and scrolling through Instagram when she pauses.

On the screen - we see a photo of Taylor, Nicky, and Harley Chung doing silly poses inside a candy-themed photo booth.

**Taylor** : Wonka vibes with @harleychung at the Hollywood Cemetery tonight.

Ingrid stares at the photo, feeling a torrent of emotions (hal. 00:45:30)

Ingrid feeling shocked to see the photo they took in the same event that Taylor and Ingrid planned to go to before. She is even more crestfallen and upset seeing them enjoying their time without her. At this moment, the neurotic anxiety of Ingrid occurs again. "The third form of neurotic anxiety is a panic reaction that comes in sudden, makes the person often feel upset and tense" (Hall, hal. 65). The emotional tense of Ingrid that flares up after seeing the photo can be considered as a sign of neurotic anxiety.

#### A.2 Ingrid's Realistic Anxiety

According to Kenneth Strongman, realistic anxiety refers to real objects that a person often perceives it as fear (hal. 4). This uncertain feeling towards the threatening object is also often experienced by Ingrid. The most perceptible moment of Ingrid feeling irritated is when she accidentally meets Charlotte's friends in the supermarket. Moreover, they make fun of Ingrid that makes her feel a bit underestimated.

Ingrid looks up to see two of Charlotte's friends (Jenny and Nicole) walking past. They make knowing eye contact with Ingrid, who quickly turns the other way.

We hold on to Ingrid's face as she waits for them to pass, removing her earbuds so she can hear them whispering --

**Jenny** : “what is up with her hair?”

**Nicole** : “Seriously. Who’s your stylist? Helen Keller?”

They laugh. Ingrid touches her hair self-consciously.

**Jenny** : “Didn’t they send her to an insane asylum?”

**Nicole** :” Yep. Her sister told everyone she was at a yoga retreat.”

**Jenny** : “So dark.”

They disappear around a corner. Ingrid puts her earbuds back in and heads for the exit, trying not to show any emotion (hal. 00:08:35)

The body language of Ingrid as described in the text clearly shows that she is feeling threatened after having eye contact with the girls. Here, the girl is the real object that Ingrid is afraid of. Moreover, Ingrid knows that they are badmouthing her behind. Even though she pretends not to hear and just hides her emotion, she is experiencing realistic anxiety at that moment.

The realistic anxiety of Ingrid also appears in the climax of the story. After all the time Ingrid fakes and hides her secrets, she finally gets caught by Taylor's brother, Nicky. He finds all the truth when he sees Ingrid's phone. The fact that he finds many photos that are related to Taylor, causes him to suspect if Ingrid may harm his sister. But Ingrid keeps denying what Nicky says about her and saying that everything is not true.

**Nicky** : “Come on, Thorburn. You might have my sister fooled but not me. That’s the thing about Taylor. She only wants to see the best in people. Me? I’m the exact opposite. I knew you were bad news from the moment I saw you. And now I have proof.”

Ingrid watches as Nicky punches in her password.

**Nicky** : “It’s amazing how much you can learn about someone just by looking through their phone. (swiping through)”

“Here’s a picture of you with my sister’s dog. Here’s the inside of her medicine cabinet. Here’s one of her sleeping. There’s a lot of those. But my personal favorite are the notes. These really kill me. (reading) “Taylor’s favorite brunch spots” “Taylor’s favorite books” “Taylor’s favorite music”... This one’s just called “Taylor” and is basically a list of everything she owns“

**Ingrid** : “Look, I’m not a bad person, okay? I just want to be her friend. Can I please have my phone back?”

Nicky winces, sucking air. (01:04:50)

Ingrid suddenly feels anxious about getting caught like that. "Realistic anxiety may be innate a tendency to become afraid of real objects or situations (Hall 63). This anxiety portrayed in Ingrid is considered as realistic anxiety as she is feeling threatened by both the object and situation. The situation is about her being caught for what she did, and the object is the one who caught her, Nicky.

### A.3 Ingrid’s Moral Anxiety

According to Sigmund Freud in *Living with Anxiety*, moral anxiety arises from a fear of violating a person's moral or societal codes (hal. 11). In the movie, there is moral anxiety of Ingrid Thorburn depicted in one scene when she breaks the promise she has with Pinto. The case begins when Ingrid borrows Pinto's truck with the urge of helping Taylor to move some stuff to her villa. Actually, Pinto has a script reading schedule in the evening, so he refuses it. Ingrid keeps begging for Pinto to lend her his truck, so he makes an agreement with her. He will lend her the truck but she has to come back in the evening and join him for the script reading because the female cast is absent on that day. Ingrid immediately agrees to it. But after that, Ingrid is getting absorbed with the time she spends with Taylor that she forgets her promise.

Ingrid's phone dings repeatedly from inside her bag.

**Taylor :** "Um, is everything okay?"

Ingrid reaches into her bag and subtly checks her phone.

On the screen - Ingrid's has 13 missed calls from Pinto and a series of frantic text messages: "Is everything ok Ingrid?" "Why aren't u answering ur phone??!" "Helloooooooooooooo."

**Ingrid :** "Just Dan checking up on me" (hal. 00:32:40)

At this moment, Ingrid actually shocks to see all the notifications on her phone. She tries to hide it from Taylor just by saying there is nothing important. Ingrid is having the guilt for not fulfilling her promise here, which is a sign of moral anxiety. As Freud states, "moral anxiety manifests itself as guilt or shame" (hal. 11).

#### A. Defense Mechanism Portrayed by Ingrid in the film *Ingrid Goes West*

As quoted from Dr. Eva Chylarova, anxiety triggers specific behavior patterns that are designed to help a person cope with an adverse or unexpected situation (9). Furthermore, that coping behavior is what Freud recognized as defense mechanism. This mechanism allows negative feelings to be lessened by distorting the reality in some way. There are several types of defense mechanisms, but this research will only discuss five defense mechanisms used by Ingrid Thorburn to deal with anxiety portrayed in the film *Ingrid Goes West*.

##### B.1 Displacement

Meanwhile, the second type is called object displacement. It functions as the way that the anger or other emotion toward a person whom it may be unsafe to express, still can be expressed towards a safer target (Strickland, 2001, hal. 169). This defense mechanism is used by Ingrid to release her anger towards Charlotte's friend, but she chooses to redirect it to a safer target, which is their car.

(Nicole's car - moments later) A popsicle stick picture frame with a photo of Nicole and her family dangles from the rearview mirror.

We rack focus to Ingrid through the windshield as she exits the drugstore, recognizing Nicole's car.

Ingrid makes sure no one is watching, then reaches into her Purse and pulls out Erin's car key. She drags the key along

The length of Nicole's car, leaving a jagged white scratch. (2017, hal. 00:09:00)

Here, the action that Ingrid does is respond to her anxiety after she meets Charlotte's friends who are talking bad about her. Ingrid does revenge on Nicole by scratching Nicole's car using her key. Ingrid who decides to redirects her impulse towards another object is the depiction of defense mechanism that is categorized as displacement.

## B.2 Reaction Formation

Another technique used by Ingrid to defend herself from neurotic anxiety is reaction formation. According to Bonnie Strickland, In reaction formation, there is a distinction drawn between feelings that are opposed to a repressed impulse and the actual behavior that expresses them (hal. 167). Indeed sometimes people react differently from what they feel for some reason, likewise Ingrid that portrayed in some scenes of the film. When Ingrid sees the photo of Taylor, Harley, and Nicky at the events in Hollywood cemetery, she is shocked and upset for being left alone. She impulsively drives herself to go there without thinking.

A swarm of people are seated on the lawn with chairs and picnic blankets, eating and drinking. A DJ spins music in front of a giant mausoleum that doubles as a movie screen.

Ingrid appears, sweaty and out of breath, holding a Navajo blanket. She frantically scans the crowd for Taylor.

Her pov - Taylor, Ezra, and Nicky are sitting in a VIP section filled with pillows, blankets, and attractive L.A. People.

**Ingrid** :“Hey guys!”

They all turn as Ingrid approaches. Taylor looks surprised.

**Taylor** : “Ingrid! What are you doing here?”

Ingrid is hurt but tries not to show it.

**Ingrid** : “um... I invited you, remember?” (hal. 00:46:00)

Even though Ingrid is upset that the gang seems to have a lot of fun without her, she keeps pushing herself to show up and meet them. She actually notices that Taylor is a bit surprised to see her there, it hurts her feeling. However, Ingrid still acts nicely towards them. This behavior of Ingrid expresses her effort in hiding her unpleasant feeling by using the reaction formation mechanism.

## B.3 Projection

Ingrid already has an unpleasant feeling towards Nicky from the beginning, but she does not expect that she would even feel more threatened by the presence of Nicky after he finds out her secret. In fact, it is Ingrid who hates the presence of Nicky, but she projects her feeling and believes that it is him who hates her instead. The type of ego defense that tries to relieve its anxiety by attributing its pressure causation to someone else is called projection (Hall 89). This defense mechanism seen in Ingrid is her attempt to reduce her realistic anxiety caused by Nicky. After he caught that Ingrid is actually being obsessed with his sister, Nicky suspects that she may harm

his sister. Trying to escape from that, Ingrid has a plan to fake an incident as she is attacked by Nicky. She later asks for help from Pinto, telling him that Nicky has a feeling of hatred towards her.

Pinto opens his door, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

**Pinto** : "Ingrid? It's four in the morning—"

His expression falls when he sees Ingrid, now sporting a prominent shiner under her left eye and crying profusely.

Ingrid is on the couch, wrapped in a blanket and sipping a monster energy drink while Pinto paces back and forth.

**Pinto** : "(speechless) I mean... I don't know!"

**Ingrid** : "Dan! I told you how dangerous he was!" (01:08:40)

She keeps telling Pinto how Nicky always disturbs her after their first encounter. This planned action is actually sourced from her projection mechanism to defend herself from Nicky that she even persuades Pinto to believe with her story.

#### B.4 Denial

In the case of denial, either feelings or events (or both) may be denied as the person starts to replace the realistic interpretation of threatening events with a false one (Strickland, 2001, hal. 169). Additionally, this behavior is also found in Ingrid. There is a scene where she seems to forget her promise with Pinto to return his truck in the evening. Pinto later calls Ingrid multiple times but she does not even realize it. Ingrid is overjoyed by the time that she spends together with Taylor on that day. Later, at the moment she sees lists of notifications about Pinto looking for her, she hesitates a bit, but then chooses to turn off the phone.

Ingrid's phone lights up with another call from Pinto.

**Taylor** : "come on, let's dance!"

Taylor hops out. Ingrid hesitates for a beat, then presses "decline" and powers her phone off. (hal. 00:33:05)

Based on the description above, Ingrid denies the fact that she is having moral anxiety after she finds out that she can not keep her promise to Pinto. The fact that she hesitates before rejecting the call shows that she is actually aware of her unpleasant feeling but she dismisses it. Even though she knows that Pinto might scold her, she starts to think about how happy she is at that day. Ingrid really does not want to ruin the chance to get closer with Taylor. She tries to make herself feel better by denying all the things that put any burdensome to her. Moreover, Ingrid acts nonchalant as she prefers spending all night at the party.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The main character in the film *Ingrid Goes West*, experiences all types of anxiety that by Sigmund Freud. The neurotic anxiety of Ingrid is triggered when she is being overwhelmed with her own thought about getting ignored or abandoned by her friends. Her realistic anxiety will occur when she faces an intimidating person or when she is in



the middle of threatening situation. Meanwhile, the moral anxiety of Ingrid is depicted through the situations of her feeling guilty for breaking the promise that she had before.

In addition to that, there are also defense mechanisms of Ingrid as her way to cope with those anxieties. The struggle of Ingrid reducing her anxiety leads her to use these mechanisms; displacement, reaction formation, and projection. Ingrid does such a coping behavior to lessen the tense because of anxiety. She confronts, hides, denies, and manipulates which are part of her defense mechanisms. However, the film clearly depicts the psychological experiences of Ingrid in facing her anxieties with the use of defense mechanism.

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