

Injustice as a Trigger of the Characters' Significance Quest in *Freaky Tales* (2024)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menjelaskan bagaimana ketidakadilan menjadi pemicu significance quest para tokoh dalam film *Freaky Tales* (2024). Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini membantu pembaca memahami konteks pengalaman dan perjuangan para tokoh dalam film tersebut. Ketidakadilan dalam film ditampilkan melalui tindakan penindasan, intimidasi, dan ketimpangan kekuasaan yang mengancam rasa aman dan martabat para tokoh. Analisis ini berfokus pada bagaimana para tokoh merespons ketidakadilan sebagai motivasi untuk melindungi identitas, kelompok, dan makna personal mereka. Pengalaman ketidakadilan tersebut mendorong para tokoh untuk mencari kontrol, pengakuan, dan rasa keberartian. Sebagai kesimpulan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa ketidakadilan memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk tindakan para tokoh dan menjadi pemicu utama significance quest mereka dalam film *Freaky Tales* (2024).

Kata Kunci: kisah-kisah aneh, ketidakadilan, pencarian makna

Abstract

This study explains how injustice becomes a trigger of the characters' significance quest in the film *Freaky Tales* (2024). Using a qualitative method, this study helps the readers understand the context of the characters' experiences and struggles in the film. Injustice in the film is presented through acts of oppression, intimidation, and unequal power that threaten the characters' sense of safety and dignity. The analysis focuses on how the characters respond to injustice as a motivation to protect their identity, group, and personal meaning. These experiences of injustice encourage the characters to seek control, recognition, and a sense of significance. In conclusion, this study confirms that injustice plays an important role in shaping the characters' actions and becomes a central trigger of their significance quest in *Freaky Tales* (2024).

Keywords: *Freaky Tales*, injustice, significance quest

Introduction

Injustice is a condition that often emerges when individuals feel that they are treated unfairly in comparison to others. According to Kruglanski and Orehek (2011), injustice is closely related to perceptions of relative deprivation that threaten personal significance, and this situation may cause individuals to feel ignored, disrespected, or unvalued in their social environment. As a result, injustice becomes a psychological experience that affects how individuals see themselves and others. When injustice is perceived repeatedly, it can weaken one's sense of dignity and worth (Riza et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025). Therefore, injustice plays an important role in shaping human motivation and behavior.

Experiences of injustice are often followed by emotional reactions such as frustration and anger, which can influence how individuals respond to their

surroundings. Frustration emerges when individuals feel powerless or unable to control situations that demean them, and Kruglanski et al. (2023) explain that frustration prompts aggression when it is experienced as demeaning and signifies a loss of personal significance, making individuals more sensitive toward threats to their dignity. This emotional response shows that injustice is not only social but deeply psychological (Hasana et al., 2025; Reku et al., 2025). Individuals may react strongly because they seek to restore what they believe has been taken from them. Thus, injustice can function as a catalyst for more extreme or meaningful actions.

This study focuses on the film *Freaky Tales* (2024) to analyze how injustice becomes a trigger for the characters' significance quest. The film presents characters who experience exclusion, violence, and unfair treatment in various social settings. These experiences disturb their sense of belonging and self-worth. As stated by Kruglanski et al. (2023), the quest for significance may be activated through suffering exclusion, ostracism, discrimination, disenfranchisement, insults, experienced failure, and defeat, which can clearly be seen in the struggles faced by the characters in the film. Therefore, injustice in *Freaky Tales* functions as the starting point of the characters' search for significance.

Materials and Methods

The authors of this study use a qualitative method to examine the concept of injustice as a trigger of Significance Quest in a film. This method helps the authors to understand the characters' experiences, emotions, and responses toward injustice presented in the film. The data of this study are obtained by watching the film carefully and identifying important scenes, dialogues, and narratives related to injustice and significance loss. The study presents selected quotations from the film and relevant theoretical sources to support the analysis. Content analysis is applied as the technique of data analysis to interpret how injustice motivates the characters' Significance Quest in *Freaky Tales* (2024).

Results

1. Forms of Injustice Experienced by the Characters in *Freaky Tales*

The authors in this study explore *Freaky Tales* (2024) to identify forms of injustice experienced by the characters as presented in the film. This analysis examines selected scenes, dialogues, and narrative situations that reflect acts of injustice faced by the characters in different story segments. The focus of this section is to describe how injustice appears through the characters' experiences, conflicts, and interactions with other groups or individuals. By presenting these data, this section highlights the situations that indicate injustice and become the starting point of the characters' struggles in the film.

Data 1

[man]: Eat a d*ck, d*ke!

Barbie: Get out the truck and see what happens! I ain't playing!

[man]: Suck my d*ck, Black b*tch!

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

This scene shows Barbie facing direct verbal abuse when a truck suddenly stops in front of her and the men inside shout sexual and racial insults at her. The slurs are explicitly aimed at her gender and race, reducing her presence to an object

of humiliation and threat (Boden & Fleck, 2024). The situation immediately places Barbie in a vulnerable position, as the hostility is unprovoked and aggressive. Despite the intimidation, Barbie responds firmly and refuses to retreat. Her reaction indicates resistance against being silenced or degraded.

Data 2

BAND: They call it a scene, I call it disaster. Down here the kids grew up faster. Scared, they're scared to the bone. Like a pack of wolves they don't run alone. One-on-one, they won't look you in the eye. When the pack's together, you hear a battle cry. I saw it, 15-on-one. The crowd dispersed, the kid was done. No!

[crowd]: No more!

BAND: No! Bad town! No more bad town. No!

[crowd]: No more!

BAND: No! Bad town! No more bad town. Yeah!

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

During the band's performance, the lyrics narrate stories of collective violence and fear experienced by the youth in their environment. The song describes how attacks often occur in groups, emphasizing imbalance of power and lack of protection for the victims (Boden & Fleck, 2024). The crowd's response shows shared recognition of this reality. The reference to "15-on-one" highlights how injustice becomes normalized through repeated acts of mob violence.

Data 3

Josh: f*cking boneheads are back.

Josh: Those n*zi fucks just rolled up.

[man]: Outside.

Larry: f*ck, again?

[footsteps pounding]

Larry: Come on, guys. Not tonight.

Troy: f*ck you, Jew! Get the f*ck--

Nazi: Here to volunteer. And f*ck you up!

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

Josh's warning reveals that the group has been targeted by Nazi attacks before, indicating a recurring pattern of racial hostility. The dialogue shows how the arrival of these attackers instantly shifts the atmosphere from routine activity to fear and alertness (Boden & Fleck, 2024). Larry's reaction suggests exhaustion from facing the same threat repeatedly. The sudden intrusion and racial slurs reinforce the idea that the group is denied safety in their own space.

Data 4

Lequan: Okay, I'm just gonna say it. Cops.

Kelsey: Nope.

Lequan: I did some research. We can hire off-duty Berkeley cops for 11 bucks an hour.

[man]: You called the cops?

Lequan: To ask the question, yes.

Larry: Don't judge, all options are on the table. That's why we're here.

Lucid: To be fair, Berkeley cops are different from Oakland cops. We all know it.

Kohlrabi: You got that right.

Josh: Come on, guys, without Oakland cops, there'd be no Black Panthers.

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

The discussion about involving the police exposes deep discomfort and resistance within the group. Lequan's suggestion triggers tension because law enforcement represents past experiences of unfair treatment rather than protection (Boden & Fleck, 2024). The differing reactions reveal how authority is associated with exclusion and discrimination.

Data 5

Tina: Dude, we got our asses kicked. We supposed to just take that?

[man]: Tina's right, this is our house. We built it with our bare hands, and if we can't defend it, what's the point?

[member] Yeah, that's right.

Kohlrabi: Alright, I call another vote then. Those in favor of fighting the Nazis, raise your hand.

[Lenny Gs shuffle]

[chairs squeak]

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

After the attack, the group debates whether remaining passive is still an option. Tina's statement challenges the idea of simply enduring violence without response (Boden & Fleck, 2024). The dialogue emphasizes that their space was built through shared effort and now feels violated.

Data 6

Hey, Jew! You can hide behind a bunch of f*gs, but that ain't gonna stop us from coming in.

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

The confrontation escalates as Troy shouts insults aimed directly at the group's identity. His words are intended to degrade and provoke rather than initiate dialogue (Boden & Fleck, 2024). The language reinforces inequality by attacking ethnicity and sexuality. Despite the provocation, the group holds their ground. The scene highlights how verbal violence functions as a tool of domination.

Data 7

Entice: I don't know how we went from Black Panthers to Skinheads running wild in this city. But all I know is somebody fell asleep at the wheel to let that sh*t happen.

Lenny G: People need reminding, ain't nothing cool about being a n*zi.

Entice: It's 1987. You'd think people would know by now, but, no.

Lenny G: Fo sho.
(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

Entice reflects on how extremist groups are now able to operate openly in the city. His conversation with Lenny G expresses disappointment toward institutions that failed to prevent this shift (Boden & Fleck, 2024). The dialogue connects past struggles with present neglect. Both characters recognize the situation as unacceptable.

Data 8

Barbie: What can I get for you?

The Guy: Um, how's your bubble gum?

Barbie: It's good if you like bubble gum.

The Guy: Let me get a taste. Mmm. Yeah, I see what you mean. Um, can you blow bubbles with this gum?

Barbie: Yeah, I-I guess so.

[sucks teeth]

[rattles]

The Guy: What else can you blow?

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

Barbie's interaction with a customer begins as a normal service exchange but gradually turns inappropriate. The man's questions become increasingly suggestive, crossing professional boundaries (Boden & Fleck, 2024). Barbie is placed in a position where politeness is exploited. The imbalance of power becomes clear as the man controls the direction of the interaction.

Data 9

Entice: n*gga, please, you provoke no feeling.

Entice & Barbie: You must've forgot the girls of whom you're dealing.

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

Entice and Barbie confront Too \$hort through their performance after being underestimated. Their lyrics assert confidence and reject the dismissive attitude previously directed at them (Boden & Fleck, 2024). By taking control of the stage, they reclaim visibility and respect. The scene shows resistance through artistic expression.

Data 10

Antonio: The thing is, I don't care.

[tense music intensifies]

[g*n fires]

[b*llet shells clink]

[grunts]

[breathing heavily]

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

Antonio chooses retaliation by targeting someone unrelated to the original conflict. His actions redirect anger toward Clint's wife, who has no involvement in the dispute (Boden & Fleck, 2024). Clint's attempt to escape his past collapses instantly. Violence becomes a punishment without justification.

Data 11

[man]: Anyone else seeing this?

[man]: Son of a b*tch, that is nice. Life's funny sometimes. You realize, if she'd just stayed in her seat, and watched her man play the best f*cking game of his life, then... that'd be mine. And your old lady would still be yours.

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

The men discuss the attack on Sleepy Floyd's family with casual detachment. The dialogue treats the violence as an inconvenience rather than a crime (Boden & Fleck, 2024). Their indifference strips the victims of humanity. Floyd's silence highlights the weight of this realization.

Data 12

Travis: I don't know how the f*ck he found us so fast.

The Guy: Well, you k*llled the man's family, Travis. You know what that means, don't you? That means you don't get to f*cking decide when he comes for his revenge! You're on his timeline now.

(Boden & Fleck, 2024)

Travis realizes that killing Floyd's family has shifted power entirely. The dialogue makes clear that retaliation is no longer avoidable (Boden & Fleck, 2024). Control is replaced by fear. The scene underscores the consequences of extreme wrongdoing.

2. The Concept of Injustice in Significance Quest Theory

In Significance Quest Theory, injustice is not defined as an objective condition but as a subjective experience that threatens one's sense of personal worth. This perspective emphasizes that injustice emerges from perception rather than factual comparison, meaning that what matters is how individuals interpret their treatment in relation to others. The injustice or lack of personal significance is not necessarily real or objective (Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). In this framework, injustice is understood as a psychological evaluation shaped by perceived deprivation. As a result, individuals may experience injustice even in the absence of measurable inequality.

This perception of injustice is closely tied to relative deprivation, where individuals compare their position to others and perceive unfair discrepancy (Hasana et al., 2025; Reku et al., 2025). Within this view, injustice arises when such comparison threatens personal value. Perceptions of injustice and personal significance are based on relative deprivation such a perceived discrepancy should threaten one's sense of personal significance, motivating significance restoration

(Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). Injustice therefore functions as a trigger rather than a static condition. It initiates a motivational process aimed at restoring threatened significance.

Injustice becomes particularly powerful when it leads to significance loss by undermining social worth and dignity. Rather than low self-esteem, the central issue lies in social valuation. The low sense of social worth (rather than low self-esteem) that likely motivated social movements geared toward the restoration of one's group's dignity and respectful place in a society (Kruglanski et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2025). This formulation positions injustice as a collective and identity-related experience. The loss of respect and dignity signals that one no longer matters within the social hierarchy.

Experiences of injustice frequently target social identity, intensifying the loss of significance. When individuals feel that their identity is demeaned or disrespected, injustice directly translates into significance loss. Often, experience of significance loss relates to one's social identity that is disparaged by others (Kruglanski et al., 2019; Saputro et al., 2024). In this sense, injustice does not only affect individuals on a personal level but also damages their position as members of a social group. Such experiences deepen feelings of humiliation and exclusion.

Understanding injustice as a form of significance loss is essential for analyzing characters' motivations in narrative contexts. Within Significance Quest Theory, injustice is one of the conditions that activate the motivational drive to restore meaning and worth. The quest for significance may be activated through suffering exclusion, ostracism, discrimination, disenfranchisement, insults, experienced failure, and defeat (Kruglanski et al., 2023; Saputro et al., 2024). This theoretical perspective provides a foundation for examining how characters respond to injustice as a catalyst for action. It explains why experiences of unfair treatment become central in shaping their behavior and choices (Hasana et al., 2025; Reku et al., 2025).

Discussion

In this section, the authors examine the narrative of the characters in *Freaky Tales* (2024) that portrays injustice as a trigger of Significance Quest. This discussion focuses on how experiences of injustice influence the characters' sense of significance and motivate their actions throughout the film. The explanations are presented based on the selected data and are discussed in relation to Significance Quest Theory as explained below;

In data 1, the dialogue shows Barbie being verbally attacked through sexist and racist insults that directly target her identity. The insults are intended to humiliate her and reduce her worth in a public space. This situation represents injustice because the treatment she receives is meant to deny her dignity and social value. Often, experience of significance loss relates to one's social identity that is disparaged by others (Kruglanski et al., 2022). The verbal abuse attacks Barbie not as an individual alone but as a member of a marginalized group. Her refusal to remain silent indicates resistance against the attempt to make her feel insignificant. This moment shows how injustice emerges through discriminatory language that threatens personal and social worth.

In data 2, the song performed by the band reflects the violent and unfair environment experienced by the community. The lyrics describe fear, collective aggression, and survival in a place where safety is not guaranteed. This situation

points to injustice because the community is shaped by conditions that undermine their sense of security and value. A deprived sense of significance (i.e., losses of control, worth, status, etc.) motivates individuals to embrace radical networks or social movements (Leander et al., 2020). The crowd's intense reaction shows how shared experiences of injustice are emotionally released through music. The performance becomes a collective response to feeling pushed aside by society.

In data 3, the arrival of the Nazis inside the club creates an atmosphere of fear and repeated humiliation. The use of racial slurs and forced entry shows a deliberate attempt to dominate and degrade the group. This moment represents injustice because the group is targeted through threats that deny their dignity and safety. The need for significance can be activated through suffering exclusion, ostracism, discrimination, disenfranchisement, insults, experienced failure, and defeat (Kruglanski et al., 2023). The repeated nature of the attacks intensifies the sense of vulnerability experienced by the group. They are forced to confront hostility that devalues their existence. This injustice places them in a constant position of defending their worth.

In data 4, the discussion about involving the police reveals deep discomfort and mistrust among the group. Their reaction reflects past experiences of unfair treatment by authorities meant to provide protection. This moment reflects injustice because institutional power is perceived as something that has failed or harmed them. Feeling deprived of control is described as demeaning and significance-reducing (Kruglanski et al., 2023). The group's resistance shows an effort to protect their dignity and autonomy. Their response is shaped by memories of being powerless. This scene shows how injustice can be rooted in systemic experiences rather than direct violence.

In data 5, the group debates whether they should accept the violence they experienced or respond to it. Tina's statement shifts the conversation from silence to confrontation. This moment reflects injustice because their collective effort and space have been violated and treated as meaningless. The injustice or lack of personal significance is not necessarily real or objective (Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). What matters is how the group interprets the attack on their dignity. The decision to fight represents an attempt to restore their sense of value. This moment shows how perceived injustice can motivate action even without objective evaluation.

In data 6, the confrontation outside the club escalates through direct verbal humiliation. The insults are aimed at degrading the group's identity rather than resolving conflict. This moment reflects injustice because the attack is designed to deny collective respect. The low sense of social worth (rather than low self-esteem) that likely motivated social movements geared toward the restoration of one's group's dignity and respectful place in a society (Kruglanski et al., 2022). The verbal aggression threatens the group's standing and legitimacy. Their refusal to retreat shows resistance against being devalued.

In data 7, Entice and Lenny G discuss the social failure that allows racist groups to exist openly. Their conversation reflects disappointment toward institutions that no longer protect marginalized communities. This moment shows injustice because neglect itself becomes a form of devaluation. People's sense of disempowerment or insignificance in society may motivate them to sympathize with causes that seek to (re)assert the significance of the majority (Leander et al., 2020). Their frustration comes from feeling ignored by systems of authority. The discussion reveals a shared awareness of lost protection. This injustice strengthens their rejection of normalization toward hate.

In data 8, Barbie experiences inappropriate and intrusive behavior while doing her job. The customer misuses his position to shift the interaction into a degrading situation. This reflects injustice because Barbie is placed in a vulnerable position without having done anything wrong. Frustrated individuals might be opportunistic with their prejudices, depending on how this serves their significance concerns (Leander et al., 2020). The man's behavior asserts power at the expense of Barbie's dignity. Her discomfort highlights the imbalance of control in the interaction.

In data 9, Entice and Barbie respond to being underestimated by asserting themselves on stage. Their lyrics function as a direct challenge to dismissal and disrespect. This moment reflects injustice because their abilities and worth were previously denied. Individuals who experience a decline in their personal significance as a result of personal failure seem to attempt to restore their personal significance by shifting to a collectivistic orientation and by engaging in collective action (Kruglanski & Orehek, 2011). Their joint performance becomes an act of reclaiming dignity. The response is public and assertive. This scene shows how injustice can motivate expressive resistance.

In data 10, Antonio redirects his resentment into violence against an innocent person. The act removes any sense of fairness or responsibility. This moment reflects injustice because the harm is inflicted on someone with no involvement in the original conflict. Frustration prompts aggression to the extent that it is subjectively demeaning and connotes to the person a loss of their significance (Kruglanski et al., 2023). Antonio's action becomes a way to regain control through destruction. Clint's loss demonstrates how injustice multiplies suffering. The scene highlights the destructive outcome of unresolved significance loss.

In data 11, Sleepy Floyd listens as the man casually discusses the attack on his family. The indifference shown toward such violence intensifies the humiliation Floyd experiences. This moment reflects injustice because the harm done to his loved ones is treated as insignificant. The need for significance can be activated in diverse ways. All these represent different ways of inducing a significance loss, variously labeled as humiliation, indignity, dishonor, shaming, and so on (Kruglanski et al., 2023). The conversation strips the event of moral seriousness. Floyd's silence shows restrained emotional processing. The injustice deeply challenges his sense of worth and control.

In data 12, the dialogue emphasizes that Floyd now controls the timeline of retaliation. The murder of his family represents an extreme violation of dignity and security. This moment reflects injustice because the harm removes all personal autonomy from Floyd's life. An experience of significance loss is conceived as a trigger for the need for significance (Da Silva et al., 2024). The shift in power reflects an attempt to restore agency. Floyd's position changes from victim to active force.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis in *Freaky Tales* (2024), this study shows that injustice plays a significant role in triggering the characters' Significance Quest. The characters experience various forms of injustice such as verbal abuse, discrimination, violence, and institutional neglect, which threaten their dignity, safety, and social worth. These experiences create a sense of significance loss that motivates the characters to respond through resistance, confrontation, collective action, or retaliation. Injustice in the film is not merely presented as a social condition but as a psychological experience that shapes the characters' emotions and decisions. Through the lens of Significance Quest

Theory, the characters' actions can be understood as efforts to restore control, recognition, and personal or collective meaning.

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