A Representation of Female Identity In Greta Gerwig's Barbie Movie (2023)

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Abstract

This study discusses the representation of female identity through the main character Barbie in Greta Gerwig's film Barbie (2023). This study has two main objectives: (1) to analyze how female identity is represented through the character of Barbie; and (2) to explore how this film conveys social criticism of gender roles and female stereotypes. This study used a qualitative descriptive method with content analysis techniques. The data were collected from dialogues, visuals, and selected scenes in the film. The analysis was conducted using Stuart Hall's theory of representation, supported by feminist theory and concepts of female identity.The results of the study show that the character of Barbie undergoes a significant transformation from a perfect doll to an independent woman who questions societal standards, accepts imperfection, and determines her own identity. The film also presents strong social criticism of the patriarchal system and gender stereotypes through its narrative, visuals, and dialogue. Thus, Barbie (2023) serves not only as entertainment but also as a reflective medium that critiques the construction of women's identity in contemporary society.
Keywords - female identity, representation, social criticism, barbie movie 2023, feminism, stuart hall

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas representasi identitas perempuan melalui tokoh utama Barbie dalam film Barbie (2023) karya Greta Gerwig. Penelitian ini memiliki dua tujuan utama: (1) menganalisis bagaimana identitas perempuan direpresentasikan melalui karakter Barbie; dan (2) mengeksplorasi bagaimana film ini menyampaikan kritik sosial terhadap peran gender dan stereotip perempuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis konten. Data dikumpulkan dari dialog, visual, dan adegan-adegan terpilih dalam film. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan teori representasi Stuart Hall, didukung oleh teori feminisme dan konsep identitas perempuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakter Barbie mengalami transformasi signifikan dari boneka yang "sempurna" menjadi wanita mandiri yang mempertanyakan standar masyarakat, menerima ketidaksempurnaan, dan menentukan identitasnya sendiri. Film ini juga menghadirkan kritik sosial yang kuat terhadap sistem patriarki dan stereotip gender melalui narasi, visual, dan dialognya. Dengan demikian, Barbie (2023) tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai medium reflektif yang mengkritisi konstruksi identitas perempuan dalam masyarakat kontemporer.
Kata kunci - identitas perempuan, representasi, kritik sosial, film barbie 2023, feminisme, stuart hall

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, film has an important role as a medium that not only entertains but also helps shape the understanding of self-identity, social roles, and individual life experiences. Similar to literary works, films function as cultural reflections that portray social norms, conflicts, and dynamics that occur in everyday life. Films allow audiences to emotionally connect with the journeys of fictional characters who represent various aspects of real social life. Literature itself reflects society and social reality through various forms, such as novels, poems, stories, dramas, and films, combining both information and imagination (Akhter, 2020).

Film is a form of media that adapts real stories and adds meaning through artistic elements such as sound and visuals, making it more engaging for audiences. According to Redi Panuju in (Asri, 2020), film can function as a powerful learning medium, not only as entertainment. Through images, dialogue, and performances, films are able to convey messages clearly and effectively. In addition, films can play a role in shaping identity, transferring culture, and addressing social issues within society (Maharam, 2021).

However, the representation of women in both national and international films often still reflects negative stereotypes. Women are frequently excluded from roles in fields such as economics, politics, and science, and in media and advertising, they are often portrayed as weak or incapable (Kassanova, 2020). In media studies, the representation of women has long been a major concern within feminist and gender theories. Mass media plays a strategic role in shaping public perceptions, including the construction of female identity. In the digital era, films function not only as entertainment but also as a medium that reflects and critiques cultural issues, particularly those related to gender.

One film that reflects these issues is Barbie (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig. The film achieved significant commercial success and received international recognition, while also presenting a strong narrative about female identity and social criticism of patriarchal culture. Through the character of Barbie, who experiences an existential crisis and explores the real world, the film portrays the conflict between idealized constructions of women and social realities shaped by gender expectations and stereotypes.

The movie Barbie (2023) tells the story of Barbie, who lives in Barbie Land, an ideal world where women appear perfect. However, Barbie's dissatisfaction with her seemingly flawless life leads her to the real world. Throughout this journey, she faces various social challenges. Through Barbie's experiences and interactions with the real world, the film delivers a critique of societal expectations that limit women. The film explores female identity in various aspects, including freedom of choice and resistance to stereotypes that are deeply rooted in popular culture.

Female identity is a concept that refers to how women understand and define themselves, a process often shaped by external factors such as social norms, culture, and media. Sheikh et al. (2019) explain that contemporary films tend to portray women as more complex and empowered individuals, moving beyond traditional stereotypes. Santoso (2011) in (Wardaniningsih & Kasih, 2022) also identifies several forms of gender injustice, including marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, violence, and unequal workloads.

The female identity portrayed in Barbie reflects a shift in how women are represented in popular culture and challenges long-standing stereotypes. The film presents the main character's journey of self-discovery amid social pressures and gender expectations. This study refers to relevant literature to provide a broader and deeper perspective. The first study by Baloch et al. (2021) discusses how gender-based stereotypes affect female identity in professional settings, especially when women move into leadership roles. The similarity between this study and the current research lies in the focus on how societal expectations shape female identity, while the difference is in the context, as Baloch's study focuses on workplace environments rather than film.

The second study by Wahyuni & Adnan (2022) examines female identity in Indonesian cinema using feminist critical discourse analysis. This study highlights how films challenge patriarchal norms

and introduce more progressive female identities. The similarity lies in the theme of identity transformation and breaking stereotypes, while the difference is in its focus on Indonesian films.

The third study by Sheikh et al. (2019) explores how recent Hollywood films reconstruct female identity by presenting more empowering representations of women. The similarity with this research is the focus on media's role in shaping gender perceptions, while the difference lies in the object of analysis.

The fourth study by Wardaniningsih & Kasih (2022) analyzes female identity in the animated film Encanto through family roles, cultural context, and personal courage. The similarity is found in the exploration of female identity, while the difference lies in the medium, as this research focuses on a live-action film.

The fifth study by Wilk (2024) discusses female representation in modern films using a feminist perspective and emphasizes the importance of authentic and diverse portrayals. The similarity lies in the use of feminist perspectives, while the difference is in the theoretical framework applied.

The last study by Salam et al. (2024) examines liberal feminist values in Little Women, directed by Greta Gerwig. The similarity lies in the feminist critique of societal expectations, while the difference is in the object of study and narrative context.

Based on the six previous studies, the representation of female identity can be seen as a dynamic and evolving topic explored in different cultural and cinematic contexts. This study chooses Barbie (2023) because it was one of the most widely discussed films of 2023 and offers a strong message about female identity. Using Stuart Hall's theory of representation, this study analyzes narrative and visual elements such as dialogue and symbols to understand how female identity is constructed and reconstructed in the film. Through this study, the researcher hopes to show that film can function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying important social issues.

The reason this study chose the title "A Representation of Female Identity in Greta Gerwig's Barbie Movie (2023)" is because the gender issues raised are highly relevant to everyday life and continue to be an interesting topic for discussion. In this study aims to explore how female identity is represented through narrative and visual elements in the film. Using Stuart Hall's theory of representation, this study will explore signs such as dialogue, visual symbols, and other cinematic elements to reveal how the Barbie movie shapes and reconstructs female identity in contemporary society. Through this study, the researcher hopes to provide a new perspective on how modern cinema, particularly Barbie (2023), can be a medium that not only entertains but also voices important social issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Female identity is a concept that encompasses how women understand and define themselves within social, cultural, and personal contexts. Contemporary film narratives tend to portray women as complex and empowered individuals, moving beyond the traditional stereotypes that have long dominated the film industry (Sheikh et al., 2019). In films, women have often been depicted as weak, dependent on men, and in need of protection (Indriyani & Rakhmawati, 2019).

Female identity as portrayed by the media Santoso (2011:44-46) in (Wardaniningsih & Kasih, 2022) mentions four issues of gender injustice, namely marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, physical and non-physical violence, and workload. Marginalization refers to the process in which women are placed in a marginalised position in society, socially, economically and politically, resulting in limited access to opportunities and resources.Subordination is a condition in which women are positioned lower or considered inferior to men in various aspects of life, such as in power structures or decision-making. Stereotypes relate to common erroneous or simplified views of women, where they are often viewed in a narrow way that does not consider individual diversity, such as the assumption that women are only suited for domestic roles. Physical violence refers to any form of violence that involves physical action, such as beating or assault, while non-physical violence includes forms of

violence that are more psychological or emotional in nature, such as verbal abuse, intimidation, or coercion. Workload refers to inequities in the division of labour between men and women, where women are often burdened with double duties, both in the household and in professional work, leading to an imbalance in the time and energy available to them.

The word representation, means depiction, portrayal, or illustration of something. In its meaning, representation refers to a description of something in life through a medium Sobur (2002) in (Mayor et al., 2021). The process of conveying reality through words, images, or a combination of both is called representation. This reality can be communicated through words, visuals, or a mix of both, linking concepts and ideas about something through specific symbols and signs (Pricilia, 2021).

Based on the focus of this research, the researcher applies Stuart Hall's theory of Representation. Hall, representation is the production and circulation of meaning through language (Hall, 1997: 16). As he states: Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully to others. Representation is an essential part of the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged among members of a culture (Hall, 1997: 1) in (Pujiati et al., 2019). Stuart Hall's theory of representation is a theory that explains that representation is a process in which meaning is created and exchanged within a culture using language (including images, sounds, and symbols). Hall argues that meaning is not "real" or fixed, but rather created through socially constructed and non-static systems of representation, and that cultural identities such as race and gender are shaped and represented by the media.

Stuart Hall, in (Hermayanthi, 2021), identifies three key types of representation: intentional representation, constructionist representation, and reflective representation : 1) Intentional representation refers to the way something is expressed to convey the personal intentions of the owner of the idea. The intentional approach emphasizes that meaning comes from the intentions of the individual speaker, writer, or creator who expresses their ideas through language, both spoken and written. 2) Constructionist representation is the process by which ideas are reconstructed 'in' and 'through' language. The constructionist approach sees meaning as something that is constructed through interaction between humans and language; it is not the object or work of art itself that has meaning, but rather humans who give meaning to these things through social and cultural processes. 3) Reflective representation, on the other hand, is a way in which ideas or meanings are conveyed as reflections of the concepts in question. The reflective approach views meaning as a reflection of social reality; that is, ideas, objects, and experiences in society reflect meanings that already exist in the real world.

Hall also introduced the concept of encoding/decoding in communication and representation. Encoding is the process by which media creators, such as directors or screenwriters, insert certain meanings into their work. Meanwhile, decoding refers to how audiences interpret the messages conveyed in the media, which can be different from the original intentions of the creators. Hall emphasizes that the interpretation of a text or film is highly dependent on the social background, culture, and experience of the individual receiving it.

In the context of the film Barbie (2023), Hall's theory of representation can be used to understand how female identity is portrayed through the film's narrative structure, character development, dialogue, and symbolic visual elements. The film raises questions about the roles and expectations placed on women in contemporary society and presents opportunities to examine how meaning is constructed in media texts. This research refers to Hall's framework to explore how the film Barbie (2023) represents female identity and how such representations can be interpreted within a cultural and social context.

In line with this, Greta Gerwig, as the director, utilizes a variety of cinematic elements to construct a more dynamic and critical representation of female identity. The character Barbie is portrayed not merely as a flawless figure, but as an individual engaged in a process of self-inquiry and resistance to socially constructed gender roles. Through reflective dialogue, symbolic visuals, and the

interplay between the fictional world and reality, Gerwig presents a narrative that encourages deeper reflection on what it means to be a woman. This approach aligns with Stuart Hall's notion that representation is not a mirror of reality, but a cultural process through which meaning is actively constructed and circulated.

Gender and Media Theory

Gender and media theory explores how media functions as a powerful institution that both reflects and constructs gender roles and identities in society. Media plays an essential role in shaping how individuals understand gender, both through the repetition of certain narratives and through the normalization of specific social roles. The portrayal of women in media has long influenced public opinion and social norms, reinforcing or challenging dominant perceptions about what it means to be female.

Media is not merely a neutral transmitter of information but an active agent that shapes and guides public discourse. According to Tamburaka (2012) in (Widodo et al., 2021) mass media serves a pivotal function in distributing information to the public across wide and diverse audiences. In the digital age, where information is rapidly disseminated via the internet, the influence of media on shaping gender roles has become even more significant. Issues related to women are frequently commodified, turning femininity into content that can be consumed, interpreted, or misrepresented by audiences.

Tamburaka (2012) in (Widodo et al., 2021) also distinguishes between sex and gender, noting that while sex refers to biological differences between men and women primarily related to reproductive functions gender is a socio cultural construct that assigns roles, behaviors, and attributes as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. This socio-cultural lens means that gender roles are not fixed but are shaped by historical, social, and ideological factors. Unfortunately, misunderstandings about this distinction still persist, especially in public discourse, leading to the mislabeling and stereotyping of women in everyday life.

Furthermore, media's framing of women is deeply embedded in patriarchal values. As Sakina (2017) in (Setyowati et al., 2021) argues, patriarchal structures in society contribute significantly to the restriction of women's rights and freedoms. Media becomes a site where these restrictions are either upheld or challenged, depending on how women are represented. Framing women primarily through lenses of physical appearance, domestic roles, or emotional vulnerability can entrench gender-based inequality.

According to (Adzkia et al., 2022), media representations are rarely neutral. They are shaped by cultural, economic, and political interests that prioritize particular ideologies. In films, women are frequently depicted in ways that reinforce conventional femininity, often reducing them to objects of beauty or emotional support rather than portraying them as complex and autonomous individuals.

In the film Barbie (2023), this theory becomes especially relevant. The film critiques and reclaims the iconic Barbie image, portraying Barbie not just as a perfect doll but as a character capable of reflection and transformation. Through visual language, character development, and story structure, Greta Gerwig's direction opens space to examine how media can challenge and redefine traditional gender roles. By showcasing Barbie's existential journey and her growing awareness of real world gender inequalities, the film illustrates how popular media can be used as a tool for critical commentary and social change.

Feminist Film Theory

Feminist Film Theory is a theoretical approach that developed in the 1970s alongside the emergence of second wave feminism and was developed in parallel with traditional film theory. This theory not only highlights how women are portrayed in cinema but also how cinema itself serves as a tool for producing cultural meaning that shapes and reproduces gender ideology. In this context, film does not merely function as a medium of entertainment but also as an ideological tool that conveys and reinforces patriarchal norms Hollinger (2012) in (Karippara et al., 2023).

According to Smelik (2016) in (Karippara et al., 2023), film is a myth-making device that perpetuates dominant ideologies about femininity and masculinity through stereotypical representations and gender-biased narratives. In many mainstream films, women are often portrayed passively, as objects of the male gaze, and have limited roles as companions to male characters or symbols of domestic morality. Therefore, Feminist Film Theory provides a framework for critiquing such narratives and promoting more complex, active, and empowered representations of women.

Feminist Film Theory does not stand as a single theory, but is divided into various branches of feminist thought, each offering a unique perspective. One of these is liberal feminism, which focuses on equality in access, rights, and participation for women in social life, including in the media. According to (Ariska & Nisa, 2024), liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of autonomy, agency, and equality in the representation of women, and rejects traditional restrictions on women's roles in society. In the film Barbie (2023), this is reflected in Barbie's decision to leave Barbie Land and explore the real world, symbolizing women's struggle to break free from norms that restrict and limit their choices. Barbie's journey becomes a metaphor for women's search for identity, voice, and independence in a patriarchal society.

In addition to liberal feminism, feminist film theory also intersects with postmodern feminism. Postmodern feminism rejects the idea of a single, universal identity for women and emphasizes the diversity of women's experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. (Li, 2024) states that Barbie presents female characters with diverse characterizations such as Weird Barbie, Sasha, and even President Barbie, each with their own experiences, conflicts, and perspectives. This approach critiques the tendency of traditional films to reduce women to one-dimensional stereotypes and instead celebrates the plurality of women's identities.

Furthermore, contemporary feminist theory also incorporates aspects of intersectionality and the performativity of identity into film analysis. Abdelwahed (2025), feminist narratives in modern cinema no longer focus solely on gender as the center of analysis but also include intersecting factors such as race, social class, sexual orientation, and cultural background. In the film Barbie, the female characters present do not only represent white women with blonde hair like the classic Barbie representation, but also showcase ethnic diversity, skin color, and social status, reinforcing messages of equality and diversity. This approach enriches the representation of women in media and opens space for audiences from diverse backgrounds to feel represented.

Thus, Feminist Film Theory, particularly in its liberal and postmodern manifestations, provides a critical and reflective analytical tool for understanding how media shapes our perceptions of women's identities and roles. Through more complex, diverse, and contextual representations, films like Barbie serve as examples of cinematic narratives that not only entertain but also offer space for interpretation of issues related to gender, agency, and resistance to patriarchy.

Gender Stereotype in Media

Gender stereotypes are generalizations or oversimplifications about the roles and behaviors of men and women, which are often reinforced by the media. In cinema, television, and advertising, these stereotypes have long shaped public perceptions of what is considered "normal" for women and men. Such representations often portray women as weak, emotional, and dependent, while men are depicted as strong, rational, and dominant. Media not only reflects social reality but also reinforces the patriarchal structures deeply rooted in societal frameworks (Ward & Grower, 2020).

Ward and Grower (2020) explain that gender stereotypes and ideologies have a strong influence on various psychological aspects, including how a person perceives, pays attention, remembers, as well as in social behavior, interests, and perceptions of self-competence. In their view, the media is one of
the main factors that shape the construction of gender stereotypes in society. They identified three patterns of gender stereotypes that often appear in the media: (1) women are portrayed as more focused on physical appearance than men, (2) men are more often portrayed as dominant and physically

aggressive, while women are considered more passive, and (3) men are more associated with professional work, while women are more often associated with domestic roles.

In the context of Barbie (2023), these stereotypes are not only portrayed but also critically examined. The film comprehensively challenges traditional stereotypes and emphasizes women's empowerment through its narrative and visuals. These forms of gender stereotypes are presented in an intriguing way. Barbieland is depicted as a world where all female characters hold power and are respected. They become leaders, scientists, judges, and assume roles typically assigned to men in real life. However, when Barbie enters the human world, she discovers that women are not treated equally. Many important positions are held by men, and women's opinions are often disregarded. This difference highlights that social reality in the real world still limits women from achieving positions they should be able to attain (Mohamed & Abdellah, 2025).

Additionally, the male characters in the film are also influenced by stereotypes. For example, Ken feels the need to be dominant when he sees that men hold high positions in the real world. He tries to bring that pattern back to

Barbieland. This illustrates that it is not only women who are affected by gender stereotypes, but also men, who feel they must meet certain expectations in order to be valued by their surroundings. This situation is linked to social pressure on masculinity, namely the demand that men always appear strong and powerful, even when it conflicts with their own personalities (Yakalı, 2024)

Social Criticism

Social Criticism refers to the act of analyzing and evaluating social structures, norms, or conditions with the intention to highlight and challenge injustices, inequalities, or flaws within society. In literature and film, social criticism is often used to convey implicit or explicit messages that question dominant ideologies and power relations.It is a reflective tool used in literature, media, and art to critique cultural, political, and social structures that perpetuate oppression or marginalization Eagleton (2002) in (Sugiarto & Martini, 2022).

In media studies, social criticism refers to the way media texts such as films convey messages that critique societal norms, ideologies, and power dynamics. Media does not merely reflect society, but actively participates in shaping and questioning dominant ideologies. Therefore, film can serve as a powerful tool for social criticism, especially when it exposes the contradictions and injustices within cultural practices.

Film as a medium has the unique ability to visualize and dramatize social tensions, making abstract critiques more tangible. As argued by Nichols (2010), narrative films often embed critical messages within their characters' dialogues, visual choices, and storylines creating emotional engagement with audiences that provokes reflection or calls for change.

In feminist film studies, social criticism often manifests through the depiction of gender inequality, patriarchal control, and the deconstruction of stereotypical roles (Adzkia et al, 2021) in their study emphasize that modern films increasingly critique gender-based oppression by representing women as autonomous subjects who resist traditional expectations. Similarly, Salam et al. (2024), in their analysis of Little Women, demonstrate how female characters challenge social norms about marriage, autonomy, and work through critical dialogue and narrative resistance.

In the context of gender representation, social criticism is often embedded in how female characters challenge societal norms and expectations. For instance, Adzkia et al. (2021) note that modern films increasingly depict women as agents of change who resist marginalization and fight for autonomy. Similarly, Wahyuni & Adnan (2022) observe that female characters in contemporary cinema actively critique patriarchal values through their actions and speech, reflecting a broader femini st discourse

In the case of Barbie (2023), the film functions as a critique of the unrealistic standards imposed on women through mass media and consumer culture. The character of Barbie becomes a symbol of societal pressure on women to conform to ideals of perfection, beauty, and submissiveness. Through

her existential journey, the film satirizes the ways in which femininity has been commodified and distorted by patriarchal expectations. The film also
critiques broader social expectations, such as gender roles in work, leadership, and emotional expression.

Therefore, social criticism in Barbie is not only conveyed through overt dialogue, such as Gloria's monologue on the impossibility of being a woman, but also through visual contrasts between Barbie Land and the real world, which reflect the disparities between idealized femininity and lived female experience.

This study adopts the view that social criticism in film does not require an overt political stance, but can be understood through the language of resistance, irony, and reinterpretation of norms. Thus, analyzing selected scenes in Barbie allows the researcher to explore how the film serves as both a cultural product and a site of critique especially regarding the construction of female identity within patriarchal frameworks.

Barbie Movie (2023)

Barbie is a 2023 film directed by Greta Gerwig. Based on the iconic character known worldwide, the film offers a fresh interpretation of Barbie and her journey of self-discovery. Combining elements of fantasy and realism, it presents a thought-provoking narrative about identity and gender expectations in modern society.

Picture 1.
Barbie Movie

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Crotty (1998), qualitative research focuses on non-numerical data, such as texts, images, and visual materials, to understand meaning in a social context. The study applies Stuart Hall's (1997) in (Hermayanthi, 2021) theory of representation to analyze how female identity is constructed through dialogue, visual elements, and narrative structures in the media.The object of this study is the film Barbie, directed by Greta Gerwig. The research data consist of selected scenes, dialogues, and visual elements that reflect issues of female identity, gender roles, and social criticism. Data collection was conducted through observation and documentation by watching the film repeatedly and identifying scenes relevant to the research focus. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively to interpret the meanings behind the representation of female identity presented in the film.

DISCUSSION

The researcher presents findings obtained from scenes, dialogues, and visual elements in the Barbie movie. The data presented focuses on how female identity and social criticism are represented through the character of Barbie and the storyline developed in the film.

Existential Crisis and Disruption of Ideal Identity

At 00:13:38, Barbie began to question the meaning of her existence when she said, "Have you ever thought about death?" This scene marks the beginning of the disruption of Barbie's identity as a woman who has always been portrayed as perfect and happy. The physical changes Barbie experiences, such as flat feet and burnt pancakes, indicate the collapse of these standards of perfection. This represents the social pressure on women to always appear ideal, both physically and emotionally. In line with Stuart Hall's constructionist theory of representation, female identity is not formed naturally, but rather through social and cultural construction.

Picture 2.
Barbie talk about her existance

The crisis experienced by Barbie shows that the ideal female standard is merely a cultural construct that can be questioned and changed. The findings in this study are organized into two sections, namely the representation of female identity and social criticism that appear in the film.

Meeting Weird Barbie and Acceptance of Imperfection

At 00:19:54, Barbie undergoes physical changes that do not conform to Barbieland norms, such as flat feet and a body that is no longer perfect. In this situation, Barbie meets Weird Barbie, a woman with a messy appearance and unideal movements, who represents women who fall outside the dominant standards of beauty. At first, Barbie feels afraid and uncomfortable, but then she begins to accept guidance from Weird Barbie.

Picture 3.
Barbie meeting with weird Barbie

This scene shows how the media and popular culture have shaped narrow standards of female beauty, while women who do not conform to these standards tend to be marginalized. In line with Stuart Hall's theory of representation (constructionist), the meaning of beauty does not arise naturally, but is shaped through social and cultural constructs. Through Hall's encoding-decoding theory, this scene can also be read as a form of "oppositional reading" against the dominant media message. The hidden message in this encounter is that the meaning of beauty is relative, and that women's bodies that do not conform to standards are still worthy of respect and appreciation. A feminist perspective also reinforces that beauty standards in patriarchal society are tools for controlling women's bodies, and the film subtly conveys a rejection of such control.

Emotional Expression and Vulnerability

Picture 4.
Barbie is showing her beauty

At 00:32:41, Barbie is seen crying in public after facing a bitter reality in the real world. This scene is an important point because it shows Barbie's fragile side, which contrasts with the image of women who are always strong and happy. Barbie's tears are also a criticism of the stereotype that women must always be calm, strong, and not show emotional weakness. Ward and Grower (2020) explain that the media often views women's emotions as a weakness, so they are rarely represented as a form of strength. However, in this film, Barbie shows that expressing emotions is part of one's strength. Barbie becomes a symbol of women who dare to show fear and confusion amid cultural pressures that demand perfection.

Redefinition of Beauty

At 00:33:46, Barbie compliments an elderly woman at a bus stop by saying, "You are so beautiful." This scene shows Barbie's changing perspective on the meaning of beauty. She no longer sees beauty only based on media standards that emphasize youth, white skin, and slim bodies, but has begun to appreciate natural and authentic beauty.

Picture 5.
Barbie is talking to and old woman.

This moment serves as a critique of the representation of beauty in popular culture, which tends to marginalize elderly women. In Stuart Hall's view, the meaning of beauty is not fixed, but rather shaped by cultural constructs and can change according to social context. Through this scene, the Barbie movie conveys the message that every woman, regardless of age or physical appearance, has her own value and beauty.

Autonomy and Rejection of Traditional Narratives

At 01:40:14, Barbie says to Ruth Handler, "I don't think I have an end." This line shows Barbie's rejection of the narrative of life that has been determined by society, such as the obligation to marry, become a mother, or be tied to domestic roles. This scene reflects the spirit of liberal feminism, which emphasizes women's freedom to determine the direction of their own lives without having to follow the demands of patriarchal culture.

Picture 6.
Barbie and her friends

Based on Stuart Hall's theory of representation, identity is not fixed but is shaped through social and cultural processes. Barbie, who was previously represented as a doll with a perfect life, now appears as an active subject capable of choosing and defining the meaning of her own life. She represents modern women who refuse to be limited by stereotypes and choose to write their own life paths.

Humanization and Recognition of Authentic Identity

At the end of the film (01:47:07), Barbie refers to herself by her real name, "Barbara Handler," and enters the gynecologist's office. This scene marks the culmination of Barbie's identity transformation. She is no longer represented as a doll or an industry symbol, but as a whole human being with a body, experiences, and the right to determine her own life.

Picture 7.
Barbie is claiming herself

This scene shows a rejection of the objectification of women in popular culture. Barbie is no longer positioned as a commodity, but as a real woman who has control over her body and her life. In line with Stuart Hall's theory of representation, identity is not fixed, but can be shaped and reinterpreted through social and cultural processes. Thus, this scene represents women's freedom from roles shaped by the market and patriarchal ideology.

This study analyzes the representation of female identity in Greta Gerwig's film Barbie (2023), focusing on the transformation of the main character and social criticism of the patriarchal system. Barbie is depicted as undergoing a change from a perfect doll to a woman who questions her existence, accepts imperfection, expresses emotions, and determines her own path in life. The film shows that female identity is complex, dynamic, and shaped by social constructs, affirming women as active subjects capable of challenging dominant narratives. In addition, the film also criticizes patriarchy, gender stereotypes, and the commodification of women's bodies, as seen in the transformation of Barbieland into "Kendom" and Gloria's monologue about double standards for women. The audience decoding and intersectionality approaches show that the meaning of the film can be accepted, rejected, or negotiated, and that women's experiences are not homogeneous.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher concludes that the film Barbie (2023) portrays female identity in a realistic way. The film shows how women can understand themselves, accept their flaws, and choose their own life paths. In addition, it conveys criticism of patriarchy, gender stereotypes, and social inequality, while highlighting the diverse experiences of women through its various characters. Thus, Barbie is not just entertainment, but also a medium that encourages viewers to understand gender roles, appreciate the differences in women's experiences, and recognize the importance of women's freedom to shape their own lives and identities.

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