

Women's Empowerment Through *Barbie* (2023)

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pemberdayaan perempuan dalam film *Barbie* (2023) yang disutradarai oleh Greta Gerwig, dengan fokus khusus pada penggambaran karakter perempuan dan mengeksplorasi tema pemberdayaan dalam kerangka narasi film tersebut. Dengan menggunakan konsep pemberdayaan perempuan Rowlands (1997) sebagai dasar analisis, tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk memperoleh pemahaman mendalam tentang bagaimana pemberdayaan perempuan digambarkan dalam film dan dampaknya terhadap karakter laki-laki. Penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi konsep pemberdayaan perempuan sebagai suatu proses yang memungkinkan perempuan mengendalikan kehidupannya, menentukan pilihan, dan menegakkan hak-haknya.

Kata Kunci: Pemberdayaan Perempuan, Dampak, *Barbie* (2023)

Abstract

This study aims to analyze women empowerment in *Barbie* (2023) film directed by Greta Gerwig, with a special focus on the depiction of female characters and exploring the theme of empowerment within the film's narrative framework. Using the concept of women empowerment by Rowlands (1997) as a basis analysis, this study's main aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of how women's empowerment is depicted in films and its impact on male characters. This study also aims to explore the concept of women's empowerment as a process that enables women to control their lives, make choices, and enforce their rights.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Impact, *Barbie* (2023)

1. INTRODUCTION

Films have always been seen as one of the simplest and most effective ways to reach every segment of society, from rich to poor, and from toddlers to adults. In every film, there is always at least one message conveyed, some of which even include secret messages hidden behind the storyline. Films have extraordinary power to hypnotize and convince audiences, changing their perspective or making them think certain things which ultimately become the main subject or message of the film itself. The influence of films can be so strong that they can shape public opinion and influence society's culture.

Barbie (2023) a film directed by Greta Gerwig and based on the iconic Barbie doll. This film raises several important themes such as empowerment, self-discovery, friendship, and adventure, which are discussed in depth throughout the film. By combining elements of comedy,

drama and imagination, *Barbie* (2023) succeeded in attracting the attention of audiences from various circles. The main characters in this film are presented as a reflection of discussions about women's empowerment, highlighting how these characters face challenges and find their identity over the course of the story.

The evolution of the Barbie franchise itself has been an important phenomenon in the toy industry, reflecting changing societal norms and expectations. As time goes by, Barbie continues to transform to adapt to contemporary cultural influences and evolving social demands. This film not only entertains, but also inspires audiences with strong messages about the importance of women's empowerment.

According to Rowlands (1997), women's empowerment refers to the process that enables women to gain control over their lives, make choices, and assert their rights in various areas in society. This concept includes a

comprehensive approach that covers the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of women's lives, with the aim of creating an environment where women can develop on an equal footing with men. This empowerment process involves challenging and transforming power dynamics that have historically marginalized and disadvantaged women. Women face numerous barriers that limit their opportunities and suppress their voices. These barriers are embedded in societal norms, legal frameworks, and institutional practices that perpetuate gender inequality. Women's empowerment seeks to remove these barriers by promoting gender equality and ensuring that women have the same opportunities as men to participate in and benefit from all aspects of life. Empowerment is not only about individual progress but also about collective action and societal transformation. When women unite to advocate for their rights and challenge existing authorities, they can drive significant change in their communities and society as a whole. This aspect of collective empowerment emphasizes the importance of solidarity and support networks among women, which can strengthen their voices. This solidarity creates an environment where women can support each other and fight for greater change. A strong support network helps women feel more confident and empowered to take action against injustice. Empowerment is an ongoing process that requires unremitting effort and commitment. This includes not only the immediate needs and pressures women face, but also efforts towards long-term ecosystem change. This means fighting for policies that support gender equality, building inclusive institutions, and creating social norms that value women's contributions.

2. METHOD

This research is under feminist paradigm, which focuses on women's empowerment. The data source is the *Barbie (2023)* film by Greta Gerwig. From these data sources, researchers obtained data in the form of quotations, phrases and dialogue. References used to support the data are also taken from relevant books, journals and internet sources.

There are three main steps used in data collection. The first step is to watch the film several times. This is done to gain a deep understanding of the storyline, characters and messages conveyed in the film. Researchers need to understand the nuances and context of each scene to identify important elements relevant to women's empowerment. The second step is to systematically examine the language, dialogue and actions of the characters in the film, especially the female characters.

This involves in-depth analysis of specific scenes to identify women's empowerment movements. Researchers noted how female characters spoke, acted, and interacted with other characters, and how this reflected themes of empowerment. This analysis also involves identifying visual and non-verbal symbols that support the narrative of women's empowerment. Third, identify themes and motifs related to women's empowerment and their impact on men's characters. This involves recognizing the film's message, character dynamics, and narrative arcs that contribute to the depiction of female empowerment and its impact on the male characters. Researchers explore how female empowerment affects relationships between characters, as well as how this theme is explored through interactions and story development. This research also pays attention to how power dynamics change with the empowerment of female characters and the impact this has on male characters. After collecting data from the previous steps, the data was analyzed to see interesting patterns and conclusions about female empowerment depicted in *Barbie (2023)* and its influence on male characters. This analysis aims to identify patterns of representation of women's empowerment, how female characters overcome obstacles, and how women's empowerment affects male characters. This research also considers the social and cultural impact of the film, as well as how it contributes to broader discussions about gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher shows a detailed analysis of women empowerment and its impact on male character as depicted in the *Barbie (2023)* movie directed by Greta Gerwig. The aim of this study is to analyze women empowerment in the movie and examine how women empowerment impacts male character.

3.1 Women Empowerment Represent in *Barbie (2023)*

Barbie (2023) is a film directed by Greta Gerwig that explores the theme of women empowerment. The film follows the journey of Barbie Margot, a symbol of resistance to societal norms and an inspiration for women of all ages. Barbie is not only an iconic doll but also a complex and passionate character who faces various challenges and obstacles that reflect the realities of many women's lives in the real world. The film explores themes of identity, empowerment, and societal expectations through the protagonist's journey. Barbie challenges the traditional role associated with her as a doll, becoming a symbol of resistance to societal expectations. Her journey reflects the feminist struggle to achieve equality, asserting her rights and choices in various dimensions of her life. Rowlands (1997) defines women's empowerment as a process where women gain control over their lives, make

choices, and assert their rights in economic, social, political, and cultural fields. Barbie's character development provides an example of how women can overcome social obstacles and challenges, showing resilience and determination in the face of adversity.

Barbie (2023) is more than just a cinematic depiction of a beloved cultural icon. It is a poignant commentary on women's empowerment in contemporary society. Through the lens of feminist theory and the concept of women's empowerment, the film challenges audiences to rethink gender dynamics and embrace diversity in all its forms. By depicting Barbie Margot's journey towards self-discovery and empowerment, the film inspires audiences to advocate for equality and justice, encouraging collective action and solidarity among women everywhere.



Figure 1 : Barbie with various professions
Timestamp: 00.03.03

Barbie (2023) is a film that portrays Barbie as a strong, independent individual who embodies financial stability and autonomy. Her possession of her own money, house, car, and career signifies her financial independence, allowing her to make choices based on her own preferences and goals. This independence empowers her to navigate societal norms and structures, leading to greater empowerment and self-determination.

In the context of women's empowerment, financial independence plays a crucial role in enabling women to assert their autonomy and rights within society. Rowlands (1997) highlights that financial independence provides women with the means to make decisions independently and exercise control over their lives. By having economic agency, women are better positioned to navigate societal norms and structures, ultimately leading to greater empowerment and self-determination. Barbie's depiction of financial independence serves as a powerful symbol of women transcending societal boundaries to achieve financial stability and autonomy. It emphasizes that women can determine their fate and guarantee their independence in various aspects of life. The film also conveys the message that girls can be anything they aspire to be if given the opportunity and resources to thrive. By connecting Barbie's financial independence to the broader theme of women empowerment, the film urges the importance of providing women with the tools and support they need to achieve their goals and overcome social barriers. Barbie's character serves as an inspiration to girls, showing that with determination, resilience, and access to resources, they can overcome limitations and achieve success.



Figure 2 : Woman as A President
Timestamp: 00.06.50

Barbie (2023) is a film that highlights the significance of financial independence for women's empowerment. The film portrays Barbie as the President, highlighting the role of economic stability in enabling women to self-sufficiency and decision-making autonomy. This is in line with Rowlands's perspective on the role of economic conditions in women's empowerment. The film highlights the importance of financial independence in enabling women to make choices that align with their goals and have a voice in decision-making processes. Barbie's journey towards financial independence as President not only represents personal progress but also challenges power structures that have long marginalized women. The film supports the idea that women empowerment involves changing societal norms and structures to create a more equitable environment. The film's portrayal of Barbie as President not only demonstrates her personal power but also represents resistance to power and gender equality. It emphasizes the importance of women's ability to control their financial resources in asserting their rights and autonomy. Barbie's leadership as President signals a larger movement to change societal norms and structures, creating a more equitable environment for women.



Figure 3 : Barbie Margot leads a discussion
Timestamp : 01.17.16

Barbie Margot : " First we have to get the Barbies away from their Kens. We can use a decoy Barbie who pretends to be brainwashed."

“That should be you” (Said Barbie Margot to Barbie Alexandra)

The film *Barbie Margot* is a powerful example of women's empowerment, showcasing her journey towards self-confidence and assertiveness. She leads discussions and fights for gender equality, overcoming challenges and societal expectations. Barbie Margot's character is a role model for empowerment, demonstrating the power of self-confidence in character development. Rowlands views on women's empowerment emphasize the importance of self-confidence in enabling women to assert their rights and make choices in society. Rowlands believes that self-confidence is the key for women to challenge power and social norms that marginalize them, leading to gender equality and a fairer environment. Barbie Margot's journey to self-confidence demonstrates how individual empowerment can drive social change and gender equality. Barbie Margot's leadership in leading discussions underscores the importance of self-confidence in empowering women. By depicting her as a confident and assertive character, the film highlights the impact of self-confidence in challenging societal norms and supporting gender equality. Her portrayal of a strong and determined character demonstrates how self-confidence can empower women to overcome obstacles and encourage positive change. This aligns with Rowlands's perspective of empowerment as a process influenced by cultural norms, economic conditions, and political structures.



Figure 4 : *Barbie Margot says goodbye to all Barbies*
Timestamp: 00.25.29

Barbie Margot : *“I just wish someone could come with me... but you can't. I should do this alone.”*

In the *Barbie (2023)* film, Barbie Margot's statement, "I just wish someone could come with me... but you can't. I have to do this alone," demonstrates her inner strength and independence. She acknowledges her desire for friends and the importance of starting her journey independently, demonstrating self-awareness and determination to control her own path. This self-awareness and confidence in facing the unknown without external help demonstrates her readiness to face challenges and opportunities with confidence. Rowlands's theory of women empowerment emphasizes the importance of taking control of one's life and making their own choices. Barbie Margot's decision to go alone demonstrates her ability to make decisions and assert her independence, challenging existing power structures and promoting growth. Her self-confidence pushes her towards

independence, allowing her to reject traditional expectations and control her own path.



Figure 5 : *President Barbie calls for action to take over Barbie Land. Timestamp: 01.31.15*

Barbie Issa : *“OK ladies, let's do this. All those in favor of letting Barbie Land be Barbie Land, say “Aye!”*
The Barbies all say “aye” voting to retain the constitution.

In the *Barbie (2023)* film, Barbie Issa leads the Barbies in a vote to preserve the constitution of Barbie Land, showcasing the importance of unity and shared decision-making among the characters. Barbie Issa's confident leadership and unanimous support for preserving the constitution reflect the spirit of togetherness and mutual understanding among the characters. Rowlands defines women's empowerment as the process by which women gain control over their lives, make choices, and challenge the power that marginalizes them. In the *Barbie (2023)* film, Barbie Issa's actions are an example of empowerment where the Barbies unite to protect their community and resist attempts to change Barbie Land. This action fits the idea of women's empowerment as it involves making decisions that affect their lives and challenging those in power that may oppress or marginalize them. Barbie's empowerment is seen in their unity to protect the community from outside influences that could undermine their autonomy. By standing together and fighting for their rights, the Barbies demonstrate a commitment to opposing discrimination and promoting gender equality in their society. Barbie Issa's leadership and the Barbies' actions against discriminatory practices highlight the importance of unity and solidarity in facing encounters. This scene shows how women's empowerment is not only about individual progress but also about overcoming obstacles and fighting for equality. Barbie Issa's leadership in defending the Barbie Land constitution shows her commitment to empowering the community and demonstrating the strength that comes from unity and solidarity in the face of adversity.



Figure 6 : Barbie Sharon makes a speech against the corporations
Timestamp: 00.07.26

Barbie Sharon's speech in the film *Barbie* (2023) is a powerful example of women's empowerment, as she passionately opposes companies claiming the right to freedom of speech and highlights the dangers of turning democracy into plutocracy. This speech aligns with Rowlands' concept of challenging societal norms and legal structures that limit rights and opportunities. By fighting against the potential transformation of democracy into plutocracy, Barbie Sharon addresses the unequal distribution of power and resources that such actions could affect. Barbie Sharon's brave attitude reflects her commitment to breaking and opposing norms that perpetuate wrongdoing. She advocates for a more just and equal society by listing the dangers of allowing corporations to exercise unchecked power based on free speech. This aligns with Rowlands' perspective on empowerment as a process that involves challenging and transforming power to create a more equitable environment in which women can assert their rights and make choices. Barbie Sharon's advocacy for freedom of expression in the film *Barbie* (2023) is in line with the concept of women's empowerment, which emphasizes the importance of challenging power that marginalizes women. Her actions reflect empowerment that involves questioning and challenging discriminatory practices to combat inequality. By opposing the abuse of freedom of speech by companies, Barbie Sharon shows efforts to address problems that perpetuate inequality. Barbie Sharon's stance on the potential transformation of democracy into plutocracy through the exploitation of the right to freedom of expression shows her commitment to upholding justice. In doing so, she embodies a spirit of empowerment by actively engaging in dialogue and action to challenge oppressive systems.

Barbie Sharon's actions highlight the power of using one's voice to challenge discriminatory practices and support equality. By speaking out against injustice and advocating for what is right, she provides an example of how individual actions can contribute to the broader empowerment of women and foster a more just society.



Figure 7 : Barbie Margot hits a guy who touches her butt
Timestamp : 00.29.27

In *Barbie* (2023), a scene where Barbie physically confronts a man who abused her symbolizes her commitment to opposing discriminatory behavior and challenging societal norms that enable gender-based violence. By physically confronting the man, Barbie

asserts her agency and autonomy, sending a clear message that such behavior is unacceptable. Her actions demonstrate courage and determination to fight and defend her rights, showcasing empowerment and resistance to discriminatory practices. Rowlands (1997) emphasizes the importance of empowering women by gaining control over their lives, making choices, and asserting their rights in various areas of society. Barbie's brave actions against discriminatory behavior not only show personal empowerment but also challenge social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. These actions serve as a form of resistance to discriminatory practices and send a strong message in favor of a society where such behavior is not tolerated. Challenging discriminatory practices and policies is an essential aspect of empowerment. Barbie's actions in confronting her abuser demonstrate her courage to understand and challenge oppressive behavior, encouraging a culture of mutual respect and equality. Overall, Barbie's actions serve as a symbol of empowerment and the need for individuals to challenge opinions against women.

3.2 Women Empowerment Impact on Male Character

In the film *Barbie* (2023), Ken's inferiority and realization of gender equality are depicted as a result of women empowerment. Ken, who initially feels inferior, encounters strong and confident women, particularly Barbie, who challenges him and expresses her dissatisfaction with her treatment in Barbie Land. His emotional reactions reflect his discomfort when dealing with empowered women, highlighting how women empowerment can affect men's perceptions and confidence. As the story progresses, Ken experiences significant changes in his understanding of gender equality and the importance of women empowerment. His interactions with Barbie and other female characters trigger a new awareness of the importance of equality and mutual respect between genders. Ken begins to rethink his attitudes and views towards women, realizing that women's strength and courage are not threats but sources of inspiration to support and respect each other. The film highlights the impact of women empowerment on male characters like Ken, as it not only changes their perception and attitude towards women but also triggers emotional growth and a deeper understanding of the importance of gender equality in society. Ken undergoes a transformation from feelings of inferiority to an awareness of supporting and valuing women as equal partners in all aspects of life. This process highlights how women's empowerment can bring about positive changes in inter-gender relations and strengthen awareness of the importance of equality and inclusion in society. Ken's transformation also gives the audience a strong message about the importance of respecting and empowering women. The film is not only entertaining but also educational about the values of equality and inclusion. Through Ken's character journey, the audience is invited to reflect on the importance of mutual respect and support between genders to build a more just and harmonious

society. *Barbie* (2023) provides an insightful portrayal of how women empowerment can influence male characters and bring about positive change in views and attitudes towards gender. The film emphasizes the importance of respecting, supporting, and empowering women as an integral part of a just and inclusive society.

3.2.1 Feeling of Inferiority as Men's Emotional Response

"I'm Just Ken" is a song that portrays Ken's struggle with low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority due to the disruption of traditional gender roles and power structures.

*"Doesn't seem to matter what I do
I'm always number two
No one knows how hard I tried, oh-oh, "
- I'm Just Ken by Ryan Gosling*

The song effectively captures the emotional turmoil and challenges men face as a result of women's empowerment, reflecting a broader story about men struggling with the ever-evolving dynamics of power and equality in the face of empowered women. Rowlands in "Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras" highlights the psychological impact of women's empowerment on men, particularly feelings of inferiority. This internal conflict can lead to feelings of insecurity and a struggle to adapt to the changing landscape of gender equality. Rowlands emphasizes the importance of understanding how women's empowerment influences men's emotional responses and perceptions of equality. By examining the influence of women's independence on Ken's emotional well-being, Rowlands highlights the challenges men face in reconciling long-held gender norms with evolving concepts of empowerment and equality. This perspective offers valuable insight into the psychological consequences of shifting power dynamics on male individuals like Ken, providing a deeper understanding of the impact of women empowerment on men's emotional experiences.

3.2.2 Ken's Acceptance as Men's Growing Awareness



Figure 8 : Ken asks for a job position under the leadership of the President Barbie
Timestamp: 01.38.25 - 01.38.41

Ken's acceptance of Barbieland's return and his willingness to work under female leadership reflects a significant shift in his perspective on equality. Rowlands describes this as a growing awareness of men in response to women's empowerment initiatives. As women assert their rights and leadership, Ken becomes more aware of the importance of gender equality. This shift in Ken's behavior is in line with Rowlands's theory that as women become more empowered, men can develop greater awareness of gender equality issues and become allies in efforts to achieve equal rights. Ken's positive attitude towards women empowerment and his interest in playing an active role in Barbie Land governance reflects his growing support for women's rights. This development underscores Rowlands's contention that increased awareness and support of men can bring about positive changes in the way they interact with women, ultimately leading to a more balanced and just society. Ken's decision to work in a female leadership department marks a significant shift from a previously passive stance to an active supporter of gender equality and empowerment in Barbieland. Ken's journey to become a supporter of gender equality and empowerment in Barbie Land illustrates Rowlands's theory that men's attitudes and behavior can be positively influenced by women's empowerment. His actions and development in the film highlight the importance of creating an environment that values gender equality and its positive impact on men's attitudes and behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the portrayal of women's empowerment in Greta Gerwig's film *Barbie* (2023), focusing on the female characters and their thematic exploration within the narrative framework. Barbie Margot is portrayed as a symbol of resistance to societal norms, inspiring women of all ages. The film depicts Barbie's journey of facing challenges, showcasing her strength, resilience, and ability to find her true self. The film emphasizes the importance of women's roles in shaping a just and inclusive society, with characters like Barbie Sharon exemplifying courage and determination in fighting for change and gender equality. Financial independence is a key aspect of women's empowerment, as Barbie's character embodies financial stability and autonomy, allowing her to make decisions based on her preferences and goals. The film highlights the power of female solidarity and support in overcoming challenges and achieving success. Self-confidence is another crucial aspect of women's empowerment, as shown through

Barbie Margot's journey towards self-confidence. The film also explores the impact of women's empowerment on male characters, particularly through the character Ken. Ken's journey towards understanding and supporting gender equality reflects a growing awareness of men in response to women's empowerment initiatives, leading to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors towards gender equality.

In conclusion, *Barbie (2023)* provides a powerful message about the importance of women's empowerment in shaping a more just and inclusive society. Through the characters' journeys of self-discovery, empowerment, and solidarity, the film encourages viewers to reflect on the value of diversity, equality, and mutual support in creating a better world for all.

Suggestion

Future research could explore how the female empowerment themes presented in *Barbie (2023)* may be received by various demographic groups, examining its impact across different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses to understand its broader influence and effectiveness in encourage empowerment. Comparative studies with other contemporary films that deal with similar themes can provide deeper insight into how different narratives and cinematic techniques influence audience perception. Longitudinal research could study how the representation of female empowerment in the film *Barbie (2023)* influenced public perceptions over time, trace changes in attitudes toward gender roles and empowerment before and after the film's release, and examine whether these changes can be sustained over the long term. Investigating how the film's themes of empowerment are received and interpreted in different cultural and regional contexts will provide a deeper understanding of its global impact. Additionally, future research could examine the role of marketing and media coverage in shaping the film's message and its reception, analyzing promotional materials, interviews, and reviews to understand how these elements contribute to the film's narrative of empowerment.

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