

# Feminism Barbie Through a Sociological Lens Analyzing Liberal and Radical Feminism in Contemporary Media

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## Abstrak

Studi dengan judul "Feminisme dalam film 'Barbie (2023)' berdasarkan perspektif sosiologi" mengkaji representasi feminisme pada film 'Barbie (2023)' dan mengkaji representasi feminisme dalam film 'Barbie (2023)' menggunakan perspektif sosiologi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis feminisme yang digambarkan pada film 'Barbie (2023)' dan menganalisisnya melalui empat (4) perspektif teori sosiologi. Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menganalisis skrip film 'Barbie (2023)'. Hasil analisis pada studi menunjukkan; 1. Dari empat (4) aliran feminisme yaitu feminisme liberal, feminisme radikal, feminisme Marxis, dan feminisme sosialis, ditemukan dua (2) jenis feminisme yang dominan dalam film 'Barbie (2023)' yaitu feminisme liberal dan feminisme radikal pada studi ini. Sebanyak Sembilan belas (19) representasi feminisme ditemukan, dengan rincian sembilan (9) representasi feminisme liberal dan sepuluh (10) representasi feminisme radikal. 2. Empat (4) perspektif teori sosiologi yaitu interaksionisme simbolik, teori konflik sosial, fungsionalisme struktural, dan teori feminis menyajikan sudut pandang yang berbeda terhadap representasi feminisme pada film 'Barbie (2023)'. Temuan tersebut diharapkan dapat memperluas pemahaman tentang penggambaran feminisme pada media, serta melihat penggambaran feminisme melalui empat perspektif teori utama.

Kata Kunci: Feminisme, Perspektif Sosiologi, Film Barbie.

## Abstract

*The study entitled "Feminism in movie "Barbie (2023)" based on sociological perspective" examines feminism within the movie "Barbie (2023)" and examines feminism within the movie "Barbie (2023)" based on sociological perspective, this study aimed to identify type of feminism portrayed within movie "Barbie (2023)" and to examine feminism within the movie "Barbie (2023)" through four (4) theoretical perspective of sociological perspective, this thesis analyzing the script of movie "Barbie (2023)" employs qualitative method. From the analysis then revealed; 1) Out of four (4) types of feminism namely liberal feminism, radical feminism, marxist feminism and social feminism, the study revealed two (2) type of feminism liberal feminism and radical feminism portrayed within movie "Barbie (2023)", nineteen (19) portrayal of feminism occurred, specifically nine (9) portrayal of liberal feminism and ten (10) portrayal of radical feminism. 2) Four (4) theoretical perspective of sociological perspective namely symbolic interactionism, social conflict theory, structural-functionalism, and feminist theory served different perspective of feminism portrayed within movie "Barbie (2023)". The finding above expected to broaden the understanding portrayal of feminism within the media also view the portrayal of feminism through four (4) main theoretical perspective.*

*Key words: Feminism, Sociological Perspective, Movie Barbie.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century understanding of feminism is characterized by a rich tapestry of theoretical perspectives, making a singular definition elusive. The concept of feminism encompasses a diverse range of perspectives informed by individual beliefs, historical contexts, and cultural backgrounds. While definitions may vary, a core tenet uniting these perspectives is the pursuit of gender equality across social, political, and economic spheres. Feminism itself can be understood as a socio-political movement and ideology rooted in the experiences of women, as Delaney said, women should have equal access to opportunities and limited resources in society (Kumar Mohajan, 2022). Moreover, according to the Oxford Dictionary, feminism is defined as the conviction and objective that women should possess equal rights and opportunities as men, and the endeavor to accomplish this objective.

Feminism is a social movement that aims to eradicate gender bias and promote fair treatment for all genders. According to Bell Hooks, feminism is a movement that seeks to put an end to sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression (Littig, 2020).



Feminism encompasses a diverse array of social movements and ideas that advocate for the assertion of women's rights. Feminism encompasses collaborative engagement with the goal of attaining parity in terms of legal, economic, and social rights between genders. Feminism is based on the conviction that women should have equal rights and opportunities as men. (Mangan, 2019) Feminism encompasses a diverse range of social movements and ideologies that support the progress of women's rights, encourage collaborative activism to achieve legal, economic, and social parity between genders, and uphold the principle that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.

Hannam describes feminism as both a cultural and political movement. It alters women's cognitive and emotional processes, influencing their behaviors and shaping the perspectives of both women and men in their daily lives and their understanding of the world. Due to this reason, it has incited vigorous discussions and intense conflicts that have persisted up till the present time. (Dewi & Medina., 2020) Feminism is a multifaceted movement that encompasses both cultural and political dimensions. It has profoundly reshaped women's perspectives and experiences, influencing how individuals of all genders perceive and navigate the world. This transformative power has inevitably sparked heated debates and fierce opposition, which continue to reverberate to this day.

According to Mandell, Feminism is a political movement that seeks to establish gender equality in several aspects of society, including social life, politics, economic situations, language, culture, and other domains. (Indriyani et al., 2022) Feminism is inherently political due to its pursuit of gender equality across all spheres, encompassing social, political, economic, linguistic, cultural, and various other domains.

While feminism is fundamentally rooted in the broader framework of human rights, subsuming it under the generic term 'human rights' risks obscuring the unique and distinct challenges faced by women, as Adhichi mentioned, feminism is a component of human rights in a broader sense. However, using the broad term "human rights" overlooks the distinct and unique issue of gender inequality. (Adhichi, 2014)

Feminism is a movement that opposes patriarchy and is specifically for women. Its effectiveness is heavily influenced by the depth of the political analysis that supports it. (Kiraly & Tyler, 2015) Feminism can be characterized as a resistance movement by and for women, challenging the patriarchal system. The strength of this movement is highly dependent on the strength of the underlying political analysis.

Feminism encompasses more than just the concepts of gender and sex. The presence of violence, greed, wars, nuclear weapons, and poverty can all be attributed to the influence of patriarchy and a patriarchal worldview. Feminism transcends that. (Mackay, 2015) The scope of feminism extends beyond the confines of gender and sexuality, encompassing a broader critique of societal structures and systems that perpetuate oppression and injustice. Patriarchal ideologies, characterized by male dominance and power imbalances, are deeply intertwined with a multitude of global challenges, including violence, greed, war, nuclear proliferation, and poverty. Feminism seeks to dismantle these patriarchal structures and foster a more equitable and just world for all. Feminism is a socio-political movement aimed at achieving gender equality by advocating for equal rights and opportunities for women. As Lindsey mentioned, feminism strives to eradicate the subjugation of women. (Lindsey, 2021)

At its core, sociology represents the systematic study of human society. This field conceptualizes society as a network of interconnected individuals engaged in collective action. Nevertheless, this field goes beyond simply gathering social data and beliefs. Instead, it transforms into a state of awareness, a mode of cognition, a discerning perspective. Sociologist Peter Berger asserts that the fundamental principle of sociology is that things are not as they appear. (Barkan, 2010) that our everyday experiences and assumptions about the world around us might not be the whole story.

As Macionis and Plummer stated, sociological perspectives, paradigms and theories are complex methodological and theoretical frameworks that are used to study, understand and explain particular entities in the sociological world. There is, however, a continuous evolution and changes in sociological theory and thus, this makes it to be incomplete. Sociological analysis can be conducted at either a macro-level, which examines the broader social structures that shape society, or at a micro-level, which involves a detailed examination of social interactions occurring in specific settings (Wahab et al., 2023), means the sociological perspective refers to a set of frameworks used to analyze and understand social phenomena. These frameworks encompass methodologies, theories, and paradigms, offering a complex lens to study the sociological world. Notably, sociological perspectives are constantly evolving and adapting, reflecting the ever-changing nature of society itself, this perspective allows for examination on two key levels: macro-level, which focuses on broad social structures, and micro-level, which delves into specific social interactions.

The sociological perspective is based on the recognition that we exist within societies and historical contexts. It prompts inquiries into the social structure of our lives and offers temporary comprehension. (Pamella Abbott & Claire Wallace, 1997) The sociological perspective is firmly rooted in the fundamental reality of our existence within societies and specific historical periods. It prompts critical inquiries into the social organization of our lives, offering a dynamic framework for understanding these complexities.

The sociological perspective delves into the complexities of human life, examining social interactions between individuals and groups. It meticulously analyzes how these interactions are shaped by the overarching social structures and the broader society as a whole. Furthermore, it explores how these social interactions, in turn, influence and potentially transform the very social conditions from which they emerge, according to Ilkka Kauppinen (2017) The sociological perspective examines human existence and social contact, focusing on how these are influenced by social structures and society as a whole. It also explores how social interaction can either uphold or change these social conditions.

Sociological perspectives serve as distinct lenses or focal points through which sociologists meticulously examine and analyze social phenomena. These perspectives offer diverse conceptual frameworks and assumptions about society, guiding researchers in their rigorous analysis and interpretation of data, as Sherytamara (2024) stated sociological perspectives refer to specific lenses or viewpoints through which sociologists examine and analyze social phenomena. These perspectives provide different conceptual frameworks and assumptions about society, guiding researchers in their analysis and interpretation of data.

For the feminism and sociologist, too, movie "Barbie (2023)" is an interesting topic to discuss, the movie delves into the concept of femininity in flux, exploring the anxieties and challenges faced by women as they navigate a social landscape where traditional gender roles are undergoing a significant transformation. From a sociological perspective, this portrayal is particularly intriguing. It serves as a springboard for a critical discussion about the evolving definition of femininity and the potential pathways for women to adapt and contribute meaningfully within a more equitable social order.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study focuses on a qualitative analysis of the portrayal of feminism in the movie "Barbie (2023)" from a sociological perspective. The methodology section should describe the materials and methods used in this study, transcript and screenplay of the movie "Barbie (2023)", the screenplay was accessed from 8Flix.com (<https://www.8flix.com>) the focus was on spoken dialogues that exemplify feminist themes.

Relevant scenes and dialogues were selected from the movie based on their thematic relevance to feminist issues. This involved watching the movie multiple times to ensure comprehensive data collection. Dialogues were meticulously transcribed and categorized based on feminist themes identified in the initial review.

The study employed qualitative research methods as described by Bryman, prioritizing the use of words over numerical data to understand the depth of feminist representation in the movie. (Martyn Hammersley, 2013)

The transcribed dialogues were coded thematically. Each theme was aligned with existing feminist theories to identify patterns and deviations in the movie's portrayal of feminism. Analysis was conducted using sociological theories focusing on both macro-level (broader social structures) and micro-level (specific social interactions) perspectives.

### **Methods for Measuring Parameters**

1. Thematic Analysis: The main method for measuring parameters was thematic analysis, which involved:
2. Identifying recurrent themes related to feminism in the dialogues.
3. Categorizing these themes based on their alignment with feminist theories.
4. Comparing these themes to existing literature on feminism to identify congruence and deviations.

### **Statistical Analysis Techniques**

1. Qualitative Analysis: The study relied on qualitative data analysis techniques, specifically thematic analysis. This involved
2. Coding the data into themes.
3. Analyzing the frequency and context of themes.
4. Cross-referencing with sociological theories and prior research to ensure robustness and reliability.
5. Data Validation: Triangulation was used to validate findings by comparing the thematic analysis results with secondary data from scholarly articles and feminist critiques of the movie.

This detailed methodological approach ensures that the study is thorough and replicable, providing a robust framework for understanding the portrayal of feminism in "Barbie (2023)" from a sociological perspective.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research successfully demonstrates that the movie "Barbie (2023)" portrays feminism predominantly through liberal and radical feminist lenses. This study identifies 19 distinct instances of feminist ideology, with a significant representation of liberal (9 instances) and radical feminism (10 instances). This research adds new insights by highlighting how the film challenges traditional gender roles and presents a nuanced depiction of feminist ideals within a popular cultural context.

Data, Trends, and Findings

1. Liberal Feminism:

Empowerment and Choice: The film portrays Barbie as an independent woman with her own money, house, car, and career, suggesting that women can achieve anything they set their minds to. This aligns with liberal feminism, which emphasizes individual empowerment and the right to choose one's path.

Equality: Barbie's objection to being objectified and her demand for equal treatment reflect liberal feminist values, which advocate for equal rights and opportunities for women.

2. Radical Feminism:

Critique of Patriarchy: The film critiques patriarchal structures by showing women as strong and independent leaders who take control of their destinies without male dominance. This is a core aspect of radical feminism, which seeks to dismantle patriarchal systems and advocate for women's liberation from traditional gender roles.

Compared to previous studies on feminist representations in media, this research stands out by offering a detailed analysis through the lenses of different feminist theories. Prior research has often focused on a singular feminist perspective or general gender studies without delving deeply into the specific ideologies presented within a film. This study's comprehensive approach, incorporating both liberal and radical feminism, provides a more nuanced understanding of the movie's feminist themes.

By employing multiple feminist theories this research offers a richer and more detailed analysis than previous studies that may have used a singular theoretical framework, the study situates the film within the broader sociological discourse, enhancing its relevance and applicability to contemporary gender studies.

The findings highlight the film's role in promoting feminist ideals to a broad audience, potentially influencing societal perceptions of gender roles and equality, the detailed analysis of feminist representations in "Barbie (2023)" can be utilized in academic settings to teach about feminist theories and their application in media analysis, the research underscores the importance of media representation in shaping public discourse on gender equality, which can inform advocacy and policy-making efforts aimed at promoting gender equality.

The insights from this study can guide filmmakers and critics in creating and evaluating media content that portrays feminist ideals accurately and effectively, the findings can be incorporated into gender studies curricula to provide students with concrete examples of feminist theory in practice, the study's conclusions can be used to support campaigns that promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender norms in society.

The research successfully achieved its goals of understanding how "Barbie (2023)" represents feminism through a sociological perspective and identifying the specific feminist ideologies depicted in the film.

While the research provides a comprehensive analysis, it notes that some feminist themes, such as Marxist feminism and socialist feminism, were less prominent or absent in the film. This may be due to the film's focus on individual empowerment and critique of patriarchy rather than broader economic or class issues. Further research could explore these aspects in other media representations of feminism.

In conclusion, the study presents a thorough and multi-dimensional analysis of feminist representations in "Barbie (2023)," highlighting its cultural significance and potential impact on societal gender norms. The research contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on feminism in media, offering a solid foundation for future studies in this area.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The study of the movie "Barbie (2023)" through a sociological lens has yielded several important findings regarding its portrayal of feminism. A content analysis of the script identified nineteen distinct representations of feminist ideology, with prominent strands being liberal feminism and radical feminism. Specifically, nine instances align with liberal feminism, which advocates for equal rights and opportunities within the current societal framework, while ten instances resonate with radical feminism, which calls for a fundamental restructuring of societal norms to eliminate patriarchy.

By employing theoretical frameworks such as symbolic interactionism, social conflict theory, structural-functionalism, and feminist theory, this thesis provides a nuanced understanding of how the movie addresses

gender issues. The sociological approach highlights the deeply embedded nature of these issues within societal structures and power dynamics, revealing how "Barbie (2023)" both reinforces and challenges existing gender norms.

The major findings indicate that "Barbie (2023)" serves as a cultural artifact that reflects ongoing societal debates about gender roles and the empowerment of women. The movie reinterprets the iconic doll, traditionally associated with specific femininity, to deliver a strong feminist message. It underscores the importance of friendship and solidarity among women, the rejection of traditional gender expectations, and the critique of patriarchal structures by portraying women as strong and independent leaders.

This research contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how popular media can be a potent vehicle for feminist discourse. It shows that movies like "Barbie (2023)" can facilitate a broader societal understanding of feminist principles and encourage the dismantling of entrenched gender stereotypes.

For future research, it would be valuable to explore how diverse experiences of gender across different races, classes, and sexualities shape and are shaped by feminist thought within various media representations. Additionally, examining the audience reception of such feminist portrayals could provide deeper insights into their impact on societal attitudes towards gender equality. This study encourages continued investigation into the intersections of feminism and popular culture, promoting a more equitable social order.

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