

## Semiotic Analysis of Patriarchal Relations in the Film "Barbie"

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### ABSTRACT

Many men in Indonesia still consider men superior to women. Even after watching the anti-patriarchal film Barbie which has a strong message about gender equality, many men do not agree with the message the film conveys. The use of mass media in conveying communication messages is the right thing. The use of mass media such as Netflix, Disney Plus, and HBO makes it easier for readers to receive the messages contained in a film. Many films now raise social issues such as feminism, bullying, cyber crime, economic crisis, patriarchy and many more. This research aims to analyze the existence of patriarchal ideology displayed in scenes in the film Barbie, and there are many problems caused by patriarchal ideology such as domestic violence which is caused by the ideology embedded in men's minds that women are below men, this thought or ideology must be eradicated. It can be hoped that this research can eradicate the ideologies that exist in the minds of the wider community. The theory used by researchers is John Fiske's Semiotics theory, This film will be studied using 3 codings from John Fiske's Semiotic theory, namely Reality, Representation, and ideology. The method used for research is a qualitative research method. Semiotic analysis is used to determine the signs of the patriarchal system displayed in the Barbie film by analyzing the scenes in the film. The techniques used for data collection in this research are observation and documentation techniques. The method used in this research is descriptive analysis with a qualitative approach. The results of this research reveal that the scenes in the Barbie film contain deep messages such as patriarchy and the feminist movement. This film touches on the reality that occurs in the real world by showing reality upside down. there is a scene where Ken gets unfair treatment in Barbieland where this scene touches on the reality that occurs where women get less good treatment compared to men in the real world. This film tries to convey the role of women who can be anything freely without being haunted by other variables. The patriarchal aspect shown in the film shows that even in the modern era, patriarchal culture is still being fostered by society, so the Barbie film presents this reality by showing the reverse reality in Barbieland.

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### INTRODUCTION

The use of mass media in conveying communication messages is the right thing. The use of mass media such as Netflix, Disney Plus, and HBO makes it easier for readers to receive the messages contained in a film. Many films now raise social issues such as feminism, bullying, cybercrime, economic crisis, patriarchy and many more. Talking about patriarchy, there are still many men in Indonesia who consider men to be superior to women. Even after watching the anti-patriarchal film Barbie which has a strong message about gender equality, many men do not agree with the message the film conveys. a tik-tok account called @sastiaroria with a current following of 45.4 thousand and likes of 6.9 million uploaded a video of her relative's response to the Barbie film. As quoted from the @sastiaroria account on the Tiktok application. The account owner told

what happened to his friend after watching the Barbie film. The story began when the owner of the account @sastiaroria suggested that his friend go to watch the Barbie film with his girlfriend. Strange things began to appear when his friend invited his girlfriend to watch a Barbie movie. Boys are embarrassed to watch Barbie movies. And when the film was finished, his girlfriend protested and said that films like this are dangerous and make women too independent and forget that leadership qualities exist in men. With this research, it is hoped that the patriarchal ideology that has long been embedded in people's minds will soon fade.

The role of women depicted in society's thinking cannot be separated from the role of the media. The media often creates roles for women who can only dress up and be a good wife. The reality in the media never shows women as leaders or having a strong role. For example, many women are shown in films as wives who are obedient to their husbands. Women are often highlighted in the media as sexy objects and tools to satisfy lust. In this film, Barbie depicts reality upside down to satirize the reality of what actually happened. Like Barbie who became president, Barbie who won the Nobel Prize, Barbie who had a lot of wealth and other influential roles. Meanwhile, the man is described as Ken who just wants to get Barbie's attention at any cost. (Maulid, 2022)

Gender inequality means that men's roles are needed more than women's, so men's roles become specialized. Like only men get jobs away from home, while women only work at home. This division of roles means that men control many areas and women are only given the role of taking care of the household, because in this role men obtain more material things than women. This fact is conveyed well in the film Barbie. This film retells the reality of gender bias in reverse. In Barbie Land, only Barbie gets the dominating job, while Ken as the male representative only gets a role that is no more dominating than the job Barbie gets. (Pinontoan, 2020)

As a result of the gender gap or what is usually called Patriarchy, men will feel that they are better or more special than women. In the modern era, the gender gap should be resolved. Because this issue began to be discussed in ancient times, for example during the era of RA Kartini who fought for women's rights during the colonial era, many were confiscated. However, in reality, currently there are still many cases of gender inequality that cause violence against women. Cases of violence against women include, among others, in the field of employment, the job opportunities obtained by women are not as wide as the job opportunities obtained by men. Gender disparities in the world of work also have an impact on sexual violence in the world of work. It is not only in the world of work that women experience violence, even in the world of marriage, women also experience violence. According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) throughout 2023 (last quoted 14 September 2023), there were 16,351 female victims out of a total of 18,466 cases of violence that occurred in Indonesia. (Rini et al., 2019)

Film is a mass media tool that can be used to disseminate information or reality to the wider community. Films can easily influence people's perspective, with the messages contained in a film, people can easily perceive the messages contained in a film. Therefore, films are the right means to highlight the bad realities that occur in society so that they receive more attention and are not considered ordinary. Film is a means of transferring reality to the screen. This reality is adapted through sayings, symbols, signs and so on. The reality adapted from the film Barbie is a reality which states that women are objects whose position is only below men. (Rinawati Rini, 2006)

Films or films are a means of mass communication media. A film can contain effective communication messages because it is packaged in an attractive way and is easy to digest and

interpret by all levels of society. Films or movies can have an influence on society depending on the culture, behavior or phenomena that exist in society. Film as a means of mass communication has proven to be very effective in conveying messages in an interesting way to the audience. In this research, researchers will use John Fiske's semiotic theory to analyze the patriarchal movement in the Barbie film.

John Fiske explained that the theory of semiotic analysis is television codes which are often also called signs used on television. According to him, the signs used in television programs are interconnected so they have meaning. Also according to this theory, reality is not only seen through the signs produced but must be processed using the five senses and reference sources that already exist within the television audience. So each individual sees the sign in a different way. This theory is not only used for television shows, but is also used to observe other media such as films, advertisements, and others. John Fiske's semiotic analysis groups signs into 3 groups, namely:

1. Reality Level: appearance, clothes, make-up environment (environment), behavior (behavior), speech (speech), movement (gesture), expressions, etc.
2. Level of Representation: narrative, conflict, character, action, setting and dialogue.
3. Ideological Level: Individualism, liberalism, socialism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, and so on.

## METHOD

Researchers use qualitative methods and use a semiotic analysis approach. Qualitative is intended to further understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects experimentally (as a whole) and descriptively using word forms and language in a special natural context. Qualitative methods were used because researchers wanted to understand patriarchal ideology as a whole and not just part of the incident. This research also uses semiotic methods to understand the signs in the Barbie film in detail. (Rako, 2010).

Qualitative research is research that uses the natural environment and aims to interpret phenomena that occur and is carried out using various existing methods. Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that qualitative research is scientific research which aims to understand a phenomenon in a social context that determines the natural order of importance of the in-depth interaction process between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied.

In general, data collection can be done in 3 ways, namely observation, interviews and documentation. The techniques used for data collection in this research are observation and documentation techniques. Observations were carried out so that researchers could see and study patriarchal behavior contained in the Barbie film. Meanwhile, documentation techniques are used to view documents or files in the form of writing, videos and photos to show phenomena or events that occur. This film was taken because the patriarchal values contained in the Barbie film represent the reality that occurs in the real world. This reality can be seen in the video quoted on the tiktok account @sastiroria which reveals the patriarchal behavior that occurred to his friend. (Sugiyono, 2018)

The descriptive method is a method for studying the condition of a group of people, objects, a group of conditions, a system of thought or other categories of current events. The aim of this descriptive research is to produce systematic, factual and accurate descriptions, images or paintings regarding characteristics, facts and phenomena. The descriptive method is a search for facts with correct interpretation. This research explores these issues, procedures in society and certain

situations, including human relationships, actions, attitudes, insights and ongoing processes as well as the impact of these phenomena. (Rubiana et al., 2023)

The descriptive method also aims to examine norms or standards. Therefore, this research is also called normative research. By using descriptive methods, standard questions can be studied together with status questions and when comparing phenomena. This kind of research is often called descriptive research or surveys. This point of view. In the case of descriptive research, the time that can be accessed is the present, or at least the time that is still in the respondent's memory. (Wijaya & Riau, 2022). This method was chosen as a research method because in this research the researcher attempted to study or analyze the behavior of the Patriarchal movement contained in the Barbie film.

To test the truth of the research, researchers compare the results of their research with related previous research. The researcher compared it with a journal by Harry Setiawan et al entitled Patriarchal Ideology in Film (John Fiske's Semiotics on the Interaction of Fathers and Children in the Film Chef). The ideological behavior that is visible is from the interaction between children and fathers when managing their food truck. The interaction that is seen is the interaction between the chef and his employees where the chef is a boss and dominates his employees. The same thing can be seen in this research that the reality that occurs in the Barbie film shows that all agencies or good aspects of work are dominated by men and women are only shown as employees of men.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Barbie film is a film adaptation of the popular toy produced by Mattel, namely the Barbie doll, this doll is the work of Ruth Handler which was released in the 1950s. Initially, the Barbie doll appeared as a beautiful girl with a slim body and blonde hair. However, as time goes by, these dolls come with increasingly varied appearances such as different skin and hair colors, not only that, Barbie dolls also start to come with different body shapes. Quoted from the Matel website, there are now 35 different skin colors, 94 hairstyles and 9 body types.

The Barbie film, which was released on July 19 2023, has succeeded in stealing the attention of people from all over the world. The Barbie film was directed by Grewig. The director deliberately inserted feminist messages from social life into this film. This film provides a breath of fresh air for people who support the feminist movement. This film contains a strong feminist movement and patriarchal ideology which is depicted in the scenes in the film. The feminism seen in this film is liberal feminism in which women fight for political, social and economic rights in their lives.

Since January 1 2023 until now there have been 26,553 cases of domestic violence in Indonesia, of which 23,296 of the 26,553 total cases were women victims and 5,562 were male victims. It can be seen from this percentage that women are still a minority even in the world of marriage.

The scenes that researchers will discuss in this film are none other than scenes that display action, narrative and symbols related to patriarchy. The Barbie film openly offends patriarchy by showing the opposite reality experienced by the film's characters. In reality, this film shows the differences in behavior between Barbie and Ken. While in Barbie Land, Ken's unfair behavior is similar to Barbie's unfair behavior in the real world. At the level of conflict representation contained in the film when Ken begins to take over Barbie Land with the understanding of patriarchy he has just acquired from the real world he visited, Ken brainwashes Barbie so that Barbie can be taken

over completely. Then from a narrative perspective there is a man who verbally abuses Barbie. Then, at the level of patriarchal ideology, it is shown a lot, even when the film starts, the topic of patriarchy is already touched upon a lot in this film. The concept of this film is to show reality that is reversed from what happens in the real world, many immediately insinuated that Ken, the male character in Barbie Land, received poor treatment from Barbie.

The following is an explanation of the form of patriarchy that is clearly depicted in the Barbie film:



Figure 1. Barbie movie scene performance dialogue that women can be anything

In this scene there is a narrative that shows a small child playing with a baby doll. Since Barbie was launched they no longer have to act as a mother with their baby, but they can be anything with the Barbie doll. The professions carried out by Barbie dolls are endless, Barbie can be any profession in the real world, such as being a doctor, teacher, president, architecture and various other professions. By launching free female dolls, Ruth, the creator of the Barbie doll, hopes that all generations of young women who play with Barbie dolls can freely determine their dreams and not be shackled by the existing patriarchy.



Figure 2. Scene when Ken is shocked Patriarchy exists in the real world

This scene explains that Ken is shocked when he is in the real world where all social aspects are controlled by men, even though in the world he lives in, namely Barbie Land, where Barbie represents women who control all aspects of Barbie Land. This scene shows the opposite of the reality of the real world and what is happening in Barbie Land. The scene showing Barbie as a representation of women who rule over all aspects of Barbie's land touches the real world order which shows the reality that men are in power, and women are discriminated against just for being women.



Figure 3. Barbie tells the reality of feminism in Barbie Land

This scene shows Barbie returning from the real world to Barbie land. During the trip, he told about the situation in Barbie Land, which was led by a Barbie like a male leader in the real world. Barbie Land is where Barbie and Ken live where all systems are led by Barbie, such as parliament, Nobel prize winners, police, doctors and all professions that have only been filled by Barbie. Meanwhile, Ken in Barbie Land doesn't get any important profession, such as just relaxing on the beach, attracting Barbie's attention, and other unimportant jobs.



Figure 4. Ken expanding the feminist movement in Barbie Land

In this scene, it is depicted that Ken wants to spread patriarchal ideology in Barbie Land so that Ken can get a high position and can take over Barbie Land and become Kendom. The house previously owned by Barbie, called The Dream House, was taken over by Ken, who then turned it into the Mojo Dojo Casa House. The patriarchal ideology that Ken spreads is the same as the feminism ideology that exists in the real world. Ken is a character in the Barbie film who receives unfair treatment, so he tries to gain power equal to what Barbie achieved in Barbie Land. However, the method used by Ken is very different from the ideology of feminism in the real world. Ken fights for justice not in the right way, such as brainwashing Barbie and simply taking Barbie's property.

Feminism also occurs because women feel unfair treatment in the eyes of society. In 1776 during the American Revolution and in 1792 during the French Revolution, the idea began to develop which stated that women were less fortunate than men in social life. At that time, all women, whether from the nobility, middle or lower classes, did not have the same rights as men. Women do not yet have rights such as education, property, work and political rights. Therefore, the position of women, both in social and legal eyes, is not equal to the position of men. From this phenomenon, a movement began to emerge asking for women's rights to be equal to men's rights, this movement was named the feminism movement.



Figure 5. Ken hopes Barbie Land will also do the same with the real world dominated by patriarchy

In this scene, Ken regrets that in the real world his life is valued just by being a man. He gets special treatment from people just because he is a man. Ken only realized that he was underappreciated when he was in Barbie Land. When he visits the real world, even people he doesn't know appreciate Ken's existence. Only by being a man can he get good rewards. In this scene, Ken also expressed his feelings about being treated unfairly in Barbie Land. Ken said, "But it always says Barbi & Ken, never just Ken." This dialogue touches on the reverse reality that occurs in the real world where women are never appreciated simply as women. Even when married, women usually change their last name to their husband's last name. From this example alone it can be seen that men are superior to women.

This film was made to touch on the reality that occurs with the persistence of patriarchal ideology in people's lives. Even today, in the era of scientific progress, patriarchal ideology is still used by society. Women still experience injustice just because they are women. Even now, the percentage of cases of harassment against women in Indonesia is still very high. To find out whether there are signs of patriarchal actions in this film, researchers used John Fiske's semantic analysis.

John Fiske explains in the book *The Codes Of Television* that in semiotic analysis there are 3 divisions into groups of signs contained in a film, namely the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. Therefore, researchers will group the scenes in the Barbie film into 3 groups.

#### 1. Level of Reality

The level of reality contained in the Barbie film about the reality of patriarchy can be seen from the perspective of behavior and expression. The behavior and expressions displayed by Ken and Barbie are very different when they visit the real world. When Barbie first visited the real world, she immediately experienced inappropriate behavior from men she didn't know. The man molested Barbie by touching her buttocks. Meanwhile, Ken is the opposite of Barbie, he has fun experiences when visiting the real world.

#### 2. Level of Representation

The level of representation that emerges is mostly in the form of conflict. When Barbie and Ken first visit the real world, they are immediately faced with conflicts such as how they are treated differently. And when Ken takes over Barbie Land with the patriarchal understanding of work he got from the real world. She took over Barbie Land by brainwashing all the Barbies in Barbie Land and making them all forget their true identities. Like Barbie, the Nobel Prize winner serves as a waitress at Casa Ken's Mojo Dojo House.

#### 3. Ideology Level

The ideological level that emerges is the patriarchal aspect. This film displays the concept of a film with reverse reality, meaning that the reality shown in this film is inversely proportional to the reality in the real world. Since the film begins, aspects of patriarchy begin to be touched upon, from the beginning to the end of the film there are scenes that display the problem of patriarchy quite loudly. This film is intended to oppose the existence of patriarchy in society's social life.

It can be seen from various scenes where Ken is amazed at the patriarchy of work which is shown in the real world reality shown in the film. Ken then adopted the concept of patriarchal work ideology to apply to Barbieland, which at that time was led by women, namely Barbie.

### CONCLUSION

Barbie is a film that tells the story of a woman who lives happily in Barbie Land. Barbie Land is a place where a woman can be anything and suddenly she is forced to go out into the real world. It turns out that the reality in Barbie Land is very different from the reality in the real world he came to. The real world he came to was very steeped in patriarchal culture. The differences that occurred made Barbie very surprised because of the reverse reality that occurred in Barbieland. Barbieland adheres to the principles of liberal feminism, namely feminism that upholds women's rights. There are three levels of coding in the Barbie film, namely the Level of Reality, Representation, and Ideology. The aspects that dominate the Barbie film are aspects of behavior, expression, conflict and patriarchy. The patriarchal aspect shown in the film shows that even in the modern era, patriarchal culture is still being fostered by society. This culture places women in a state of chaos because of the demands of patriarchal culture. It's like you have to be thin but not too thin, you have to be a career woman but you have to be able to take care of the house too and the demands are only placed on women.

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