



Representing Female Independence in Barbie (2023): A Feminist Semiotic Analysis

Tegar Gunawan Saputra*, Asih Ernawati

Faculty of Culture and Communication Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Purwokerto, 53182, Indonesia
tegargunawan913@gmail.com*, asihernawati@ump.ac.id

*Correspondent email author: tegargunawan913@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 2025-10-20

Revised 2025-12-19

Accepted 2025-12-28

Keywords

Barbie movie;
Female independence;
Feminism;
Gender representation;
Semiotic.

ABSTRACT

The persistent dominance of patriarchal stereotypes in mainstream cinema continues to position women as passive, dependent, and limited to domestic roles, thereby marginalizing representations of female independence and leadership. In response to this phenomenon, this study aims to examine how *Barbie (2023)* constructs and communicates female independence through feminist ideology, using a semiotic framework. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research applies Saussurean and Barthesian semiotic analysis to selected scenes, focusing on visual cues, symbols, costumes, settings, and narrative structures that signify empowerment and resistance to traditional gender norms. The analysis highlights women's representation in professional and male-dominated roles, such as astronauts, pilots, political leaders, and construction workers, which symbolically challenge conventional gender boundaries. The findings reveal that *Barbie* successfully reconciles hyper-femininity with professional competence and authority, using aesthetic elements particularly color, costume, and spatial design as ideological tools to normalize female leadership and autonomy. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on semiotic representations of liberal feminist values within a globally popular mainstream film, rather than on narrative or audience-based analysis alone. In conclusion, this research demonstrates that *Barbie (2023)* functions not only as entertainment but also as a cultural text that redefines femininity as independent, empowered, and capable, contributing significantly to feminist film studies and contemporary media discourse.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



1. Introduction

The considerable impact that movies have on the manner in which people think, feel, and believe is one of the reasons why films are considered to be cultural artifacts. The introduction of cinema in the latter part of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a new communication medium (Imhanobe, 2022; Kovarik, 2025). A lasting impression is made on individuals by using moving pictures, music, and narration. This keeps people captivated and leaves them with a lasting memory. Lighting, color, sound design, and story structure are all examples of cinematic elements that have the potential to effectively convey complex social issues and impact the way people think about such issues (Kashaka, 2025). Films are exploited not only for the purpose of providing entertainment, but also as a venue for the production and examination of cultural perspectives and



gender stereotypes respectively. Specifically, this is due to the fact that movies have such a wide range of effects (McDonald, 2022).

A large amount of attention is paid to the investigation of the ideology of feminism within the realm of cinema. The eradication of gender inequality and the oppression of women is a goal that is being sought via the promotion of feminist ideals (Gökçen, 2021; Septiya Ningrum et al., 2021; Y. Wang, 2021). This aim is being approached from a feminist perspective. This project's objective is to reconstruct patriarchal systems, which are the mechanisms by which male domination is perpetuated. Patriarchal systems are the target of this project. This opinion in ways with Kumar Mohajan (2022) stated, the portrayal of women in patriarchal societies, in which they are portrayed as submissive, dependent, or shackled to family responsibilities. It often inhibits women from expressing their autonomy and restricts the opportunities that are available to women itself. Therefore, Motapanyane (2020) added that feminism places a focus on the autonomy, self-determination, and equality of women in all aspects of society. It including the political, social, and cultural realms. To be concluded, feminism is an ideology that implied for women's rights to be treated equally. The opinions that Joseph and Omodafe stated are supported by this, which is in accord with their claims.

As an example of a film that openly confronts difficulties that are often associated with women, the film Barbie (2023) has been recognized as a breakthrough example of such a film. A thorough examination of the movie led to the discovery of this result. 2024 is the year (Yang). It has been argued that the gender stereotypes that are already in place, which have historically associated rationality and power with males, are problematic. One way in which this criticism is presented is via the depiction of powerful female characters who maintain their independence. Rather than being depicted as passive characters, women's goals, resilience, and solidarity are emphasized, reflecting modern feminist ideas (Zheng, 2024).

Despite the popularity of Barbie (2023), the formation of feminist meanings via cinematic signals has been subjected to a limited amount of academic research. While the ideological or narrative substance is often focused upon, the semiotic transmission of feminist ideals through visual symbols, colors, and character representations and it has not been adequately analyzed. Consequently, Barbie (2023) movie is explored in this study through a feminist and semiotic framework so that sign may be interpreted (Wa Ode, 2023). The contribution to feminist movie studies is made by providing this comprehensive analysis of how mainstream the cinema interacts with modern discourse. It also proves that feminism is considered both an ideology and a social movement through which gender equality is advocated. The empowerment of women is sought so that control over their own lives may be taken. Gender inequality is often found hidden behind various cultural products, particularly in the media. Public conceptions of gender roles are heavily infected by movie. It means the movies are produced and transmitted through visual storytelling and symbols. Thus, films are employed as ideological tools through which gender relations are depicted, reinforced, or challenged (Chahbane & Houssaini, 2025; Jannah et al., 2025).

For a long time, the portrayal of women in motion pictures has been focused upon by feminist media studies. It has been found that patriarchal norms can be both maintained and reproduced by films. In the analysis of Little Women (2019) by Dewi & Medina (2021), it was concluded that various expressions of feminism are epitomized by the female heroine. Attention was brought to the ways in which women's autonomy is presented within societal confines. Similarly, Peirce's semiotic theory was used by Sarah (2021) to analyze Astari & Alamsyah (2024), where it was discovered that the transmission of feminist values was facilitated by the combination of symbolic settings and characters.

The concept of feminism in cinema has been investigated by numerous academics using various methodologies. The first is research by (Septiya Ningrum et al., 2021). It stated that audience reactions to feminist themes ranged from positive to negative. Then, Rahmaton et al. (2023) that semiotic analysis is an efficient method for imply the connotative meanings in movie posters. Furthermore, Yakali (2024) write a criticism of toxic masculinity in the character Ken of Barbie. However, the sign of liberal feminism through manifestations of authority is unexplored. It such as political leadership and professional excellence. Therefore, the general discourses are often discussed. In other way, the specific signs and symbols associated in Barbie (2023) require further investigation. In this study, semiotic theory is applied to analyze these signs.

2. Method

It is a qualitative research strategy that focuses on descriptive analysis, and it is used in this inquiry. Rather than focusing on numerical statistical data, qualitative research focuses a greater emphasis on the interpretation of meanings, symbols, and representations, as stated by (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This makes qualitative research an appropriate method for evaluating films. The researcher is able to study the ways in which the narrative and visual components of the film produce ideological meanings by using this technique throughout the course of the investigation. An examination of the way in which feminist concepts are portrayed in the film Barbie (2023) is carried out with the help of the qualitative method, which is the subject of this inquiry. This research primarily made use of the semiotic analysis approach as its method of investigation. The study of signs and the manner in which meaning is formed via sign systems is referred to as semiotics. Semiotics is also known as sign theory. Saussure (1983) identifies the signifier and the signified as the two components that comprise a sign. The signifier refers to the physical form of the sign, which may include images, colors, costumes, gestures, or speech. The signified, on the other hand, refers to the concept or meaning that is associated with the sign. These two components are inextricably linked and cannot be separated from one another (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The semiotic framework by Roland Barthes is also used in this study to explain a more in-depth examination. This framework extends meaning beyond denotation, which is the literal meaning, to connotation, which is the cultural and ideological meaning. According to Barthes (1977), this paradigm is particularly well-suited for the study of films since films transmit meaning by the use of layered visual and symbolic aspects. This makes this paradigm particularly well-suited for the study of films. Feminist theory, which serves as the fundamental theoretical lens, is the key factor that guides the interpretation of signals via its primary function. Specifically, the feminist media theory that was presented by Gill & Orgad (2018) is used in this study on female media. A significant focus of this theory is on the construction of femininity in contemporary media, as well as representation, visibility, and empowerment.

According to Gill, feminism is often communicated via the media through the concepts of control, self-expression, happiness, and confidence. It is common for postfeminist media culture to be associated with this kind of approach. With the use of this theoretical framework, the researcher is able to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the manner in which the female characters in Barbie (2023) are depicted in terms of independence, authority, leadership, and professional competence. This inquiry makes use of feminist theory as an interpretative lens that builds a relationship between semiotic markers and more general gender ideas. This connection is established thanks to the investigation.

The film Barbie, which is scheduled to be released in 2023, will serve as the primary focus of this investigation. Because they include powerful narrative and visual clues that are related with

feminist ideals, the unit of study is formed of a selection of scenes that have been selected for their inclusion in the unit. When selecting the scenes, the following criteria are taken into consideration: (1) the presence of female characters who are in positions of authority or professional roles; (2) the use of prominent visual signs such as color, costume, setting, and body movement; and (3) the significance of the scene in relation to feminist concepts such as independence, empowerment, equality, and leadership. On the basis of these criteria, for the purpose of this inquiry, five distinct scenes have been selected to serve as the primary data. The gathering of data is accomplished by the use of video recording and repeated observation.

The researcher views the movie numerous times in order to recognize and record the indicators that are pertinent to the sequences that have been chosen. These indications consist of components such as visual aspects, acts taken by characters, and conversation that contribute to the depiction of women. The secondary data that are collected come from scholarly publications such as books and journal articles, as well as internet sites that are associated with semiotics, cinema studies, and feminist media theory ([Grgić & Bego, 2024](#); [Prathap & Kabaleeswaran, 2025](#)). There are a number of methodical processes that are taken in order to carry out the data analysis. The researcher begins by determining the signifiers that are present in each of the scenes that have been chosen. These signifiers include visual features such as color, attire, location, gestures, and language. Second, Saussure's idea of signifier and signified is used in order to ascertain the signified meanings of these signals. The third step is to identify ideological meanings by conducting an analysis of the signals at the connotative level using the semiotic technique developed by Barthes. In conclusion, the feminist theory that was given by [Gill & Orgad \(2018\)](#) is used in order to analyze the manner in which these meanings embody feminist principles, namely feminist independence, empowerment, and postfeminist identity. After the analysis has been completed, the findings are then summarized and interpreted in a way that is both methodical and cohesive ([Qiao & Wang, 2022](#)).

3. Result and Discussion

The findings and discussion of the study are presented in this chapter. The research was based on the examination of certain scenes from the film *Barbie* (2023). Within this chapter, they are discussed in detail. Within the framework of the movie, the research investigates the ways in which feminist interpretations are generated via the use of visual elements, the portrayal of characters, and symbolic messages. In this chapter, semiotic analysis is used to analyze the connection between signifier and signified. The goal of this investigation is to unearth the ideological messages that are concealed under the surface in relation to feminism and gender depiction. This chapter gives the findings of an analysis that was performed on five set of circumstances that were chosen in advance to serve as representative data. In order to offer a clear demonstration of the portrayal of feminist independence, female authority, professional competence, and collective empowerment, these events have been picked.

Condensed tables of semiotic signals are used to evaluate each scene. These tables are then followed by in-depth interpretations that build linkages between visual elements and feminist theory, particularly with relation to feminist representation and postfeminist media discourse. As a result, each scene is studied. The discussion in this chapter will explain that *Barbie* (2023) serves not just as a form of amusement but also as a cultural text that promotes feminist values via the use of visual aesthetics and narrative structure. This will be accomplished by demonstrating that *Barbie* (2023) performs both of these functions. The chapter implies the idealized atmosphere of *Barbie Land* redefines and displays ideas such as femininity, power, and independence.



Fig. 1. Single still frame extracted

As seen in [Fig. 1](#), the visual Data 1 analyzed is a single still frame extracted from the film *Barbie* (2023), depicting a high-saturation, pastel-toned environment characteristic of the fictional setting known as Barbie Land. The scene is dominated by the Barbie core aesthetic, such as a restricted palette of bright pinks, yellows, and whites. The background features two commercial establishments: a "Pet Store" and a "Grooming Salon".

They both styled with light pink and pastel yellow facades and awnings detailed with feminine motifs, such as paw prints. The foreground and midground display of street construction, serving as a key descriptive focus. These elements, including traffic cones and temporary barriers, are stylized in white and bright pink. Crucially, the scene includes visible signage that directly comments on the action. A central sign replaces the typical "Men at Work" warning with the deliberate phrase "Women at Work," emphasizing the female characters' agency in traditionally male-dominated labour. Another sign warns passers-by to be "Careful Queens." Several characters, presumably Barbies, are depicted wearing pink-infield construction gear (vests, helmets) and engaging in the labour activities near the barriers. The presence of a partial pink classic car on the right further anchors the setting within the recognizable iconography of the Barbie brand. Based on the scene in Data 1 from the *Barbie* film, semiotic analysis dissects the visual elements as Signifiers that yield Signified, or the concepts they represent.

Table 1. Signifier and Signified Data 2

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Pink and pastel colour dominance	Hyper-femininity, playfulness, fantasy (Barbie core aesthetic).
2	Pink construction signs	Redefinition of technical labour through femininity.
3	"Women at Work" sign	Gender role subversion and female empowerment.
4	Female character in construction outfit	Women's competence and career equality.
5	Pet shop and grooming salon background	Service economy and light consumer lifestyle.
6	Classic pink car	Luxury, mobility, and Barbie brand identity.

The semiotic signs presented in the visual collectively construct Barbie Land as an imagined space where exaggerated femininity intersects with traditionally masculine social roles. The dominance of pink and pastel colours explained on [Table 1](#), (Number 1) functions as a key cultural signifier associated with fantasy, playfulness, and idealized femininity. A material shape (signifier) and a mental concept (signified) are said to be engaged in a connection with one another in order for meaning to be generated, as stated by [Saussure \(1983\)](#) semiotic theory. Taking this perspective

into consideration, color is not only an ornamental element; rather, it is ideological, and it plays a part in establishing the manner in which femininity is expressed via the visual tale. There are implications that are often linked with technical work, infrastructure, and public activity that are brought about by the presence of construction symbols in [Table 1](#) (Number 2), such as cones and barriers. Historically, it has been considered that these signals are associated with professions that are mostly held by males.

They have been recoloured pink and put within Barbie Land, both of which are indications that they have gone through a process of resignification. On the other hand, they have been recoloured pink. According to [Gill & Orgad \(2018\)](#), feminist media theory asserts that representation has the capacity to disrupt previously established social norms by bringing women into situations from which they have historically been excluded. This is accomplished by pushing women into settings from which they cannot participate. Within the framework of this discussion, femininity does not disappear in order to acquire power; rather, it changes into the display of authority via the medium of visual language ([Nyamkoh & Ngwa, 2021](#)).

In particular, the sign that states "Women at Work," which can be seen on [Table 1](#) (Number 3), does a good job of conveying this message. The phrase "Men at Work" is often used, and this sign presents a direct rebuttal to that phrase. The modification that was made to this omnipresent warning sign indicates a shift in the power relations that exist between men and women in public settings. This change affects both men and women. From a feminist perspective, this sign serves as a kind of symbolic resistance, offering an affirmation of women's visibility and validity within the context of labour-related and infrastructure-related issues. This is because it operates as a symbol of resistance. It expresses the concept that gender roles are socially created and, as a result, possess the potential to undergo alteration. Because of this, the inclusion of a female figure wearing construction clothes farther in [Table 1](#) (Number 4) helps to support this concept by depicting women as being competent and adept in technical vocations.

This is consistent with liberal feminist viewpoints, which place an emphasis on equal opportunities and the access that women have to all professional sectors. On the other hand, the character's continuous alignment with feminine aesthetics is indicative of a postfeminist logic, according to which strength is represented via personal choice, confidence, and style rather than through collective political action ([D'ignazio & Klein, 2023](#)). While this is going on, the backdrop components, which include things like pet stores and grooming salons, which are mentioned on [Table 1](#) (Number 5), present concepts related to care, consumption, and economies that are focused on service. For the purpose of constructing Barbie Land as a place where empowerment is directly linked to commercial culture, these signs contribute to the building of the area.

From the perspective of postfeminist theory, media representations often combine feminist concepts with market values, portraying empowerment as something that can be accomplished by one's way of life and the things that one purchases ([D'ignazio & Klein, 2023](#); [Gill & Orgad, 2018](#)). In the last position on [Table 1](#) (Number 6), the ever-popular pink automobile serves as a representation of luxury, mobility, and the identity of the company. One interpretation of mobility in this context is that it is a metaphor for social freedom and independence, while the beauty of the automobile serves to enhance the prominent presence of branding. Taking everything into consideration, it seems that the picture not only advocates for gender equality, but does so inside a society that is highly idealized and commodified.



Fig. 2. Data 2

On Fig. 2, The image is taken from the film *Barbie* (2023). It shows several female characters standing inside a bright pink room that resembles a dollhouse or a fashion showroom. The setting is highly stylized, dominated by pink and pastel colors, which are strongly associated with *Barbie*'s visual identity. In the center of the image, a female character appears to be speaking or presenting something, while the other women stand around her and pay attention. All characters wear colorful and fashionable outfits, each with a different style, suggesting diversity in appearance and personality among women.

Table 2. Signifier and Signified Data 2

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Ornate pink executive desk and laptop	Authority and modern power expressed through hyper-feminine aesthetics.
2	Central female figure in a gown / formal attire	Highest leadership and executive governance.
3	Pastel structured suits worn by supporting figures	Professionalism, competence, and political staff or cabinet roles.
4	Stylized pink, blue, and white flags	Sovereignty, national identity, and formal political institutions.
5	Tropical landscape visible through windows	Idealized fantasy setting and perfection of <i>Barbie</i> Land.
6	Dominance of pink aesthetics in the office	Absolute female power and feminine control as the ruling norm.

The semiotic signs presented in the visual construct *Barbie* Land as a political and institutional space where authority is reimagined through hyper-feminine aesthetics. The ornate pink executive desk and laptop explained in Table 2 (Number 1) function as key signifiers of authority and modern power. Traditionally, executive leadership is associated with dark colours, rigid forms, and masculine visual codes. However, the use of pink and decorative elements suggests a deliberate subversion of these conventions. In accordance with Saussure's semiotic theory, meaning is derived from the connection that exists between the signifier and the signified. A new ideological sense of power that is molded via femininity is represented by the executive desk in this context. It is not just a utilitarian job; rather, it is a symbol of this new idea. Following that, the center female figure that is positioned behind the executive desk, as illustrated in Table 2 (Number 2), represents the highest level of leadership and government that exists inside *Barbie* Land. Her formal clothing reaffirms her authoritative authority while yet preserving her identity as a woman who is manifestly feminine (Bordo, 2023). From the standpoint of feminist representational theory, the act of putting a woman at the center of executive authority is a challenge to the historical exclusion of

women from positions of political leadership (Gill & Orgad, 2018). In this context, femininity is not shown as being in opposition to power; rather, it emerges as the dominant visual language through which authority is legitimized.

Table 2 (Number 3) provides an explanation of how the supporting people, who are dressed in pastel suits with structured patterns, further reinforce the institutional framework that is being discussed. In the same way as political cabinets or executive staff in real-world governance systems represent professionalism, competence, and bureaucratic order, these graphic features represent same qualities aesthetically. The use of pastel colors, on the other hand, helps to mitigate the gravity of the political imagery and brings it into harmony with the aesthetic logic prevalent in Barbie Land. According to the postfeminist media logic, empowerment is communicated via style, harmony, and visual coherence rather than through overt political struggle (D'ignazio & Klein, 2023).

This is an example of a postfeminist media logic. As a consequence of this, the presence of color flags in the colors pink, blue, and white, as described in **Table 2** (Number 4), establishes Barbie Land as a political entity that is not only autonomous but also self-governing. Throughout the course of history, flags have been used to symbolize national identity, legitimacy, and the power of the state. Despite the fact that they had a pastel and stylized appearance, they were nonetheless able to have an effect on formal governmental systems. This is due to the fact that they continue to maintain the fictional quality of Barbie Land. This combination of political signs that are clearly recognizable and aesthetics that are entertaining provides credence to the idea that there is a kind of governance that is best.

In accordance with the information shown in **Table 2** (Number 5), one of the elements that contributes to the development of Barbie Land as a world that is refined and tranquil is the tropical landscape that can be seen via the windows. A tranquil, magical, and utopian mood is exemplified by the presence of palm palms and the beauty of the surrounding environment. From a feminist perspective, this setting presents power as immutable and unquestioned, which eliminates any apparent struggle or conflict from political leadership. This is because the setting shows authority as unchanging and unchanged. By depicting empowerment as something that is straightforward and natural, postfeminist representations often obscure systemic disparities, according to the thesis that was presented by (Gill & Orgad, 2018).

The prevalence of pink aesthetics across the office area, as illustrated in **Table 2** (Number 6), is a depiction of unrestrained female power and hyper-feminine control. This is the last point, but it is an important one. The color pink is no longer used as a symbol of insignificance or weakness; rather, it has gradually become the preeminent visual code of government. This is an example of a postfeminist worldview, which is characterized by the rebranding of femininity as powerful, attractive, and authoritative, while at the same time maintaining a strong dependence on aesthetics and visual pleasure. D'ignazio & Klein (2023) proposes, these kinds of depictions honor the achievements of women while at the same time minimizing the impact of more profound feminist criticism by incorporating the concept of empowerment into the realms of fantasy and fashion (Sutherland & Feltey, 2017).

The image that can be seen in **Fig. 3**, was taken from the film Barbie, which was officially released in the year 2023. A female figure is seen sitting inside a pink convertible vehicle while wearing a bright pink dress and a pink hat that are identical to the outfit that the character would be wearing. One of the depictions shows the woman smiling and raising her hand in a pleasant motion, which gives the impression that she is happy and confident in herself. The background is simple and stylish, with pink and pastel blue colours predominating in the background. This contributes to highlighting the idealized and fabricated image that is associated with the world of Barbie. Both the

vehicle itself and the character's dress are a reflection of the traditional Barbie iconography, which lays an emphasis on glamor, fashion, and a feeling of fun. The automobile itself is a representation of the old Barbie imagery.



Fig. 3. Data 3

Table 3. Signifier and Signified Data 3

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Pink pilot uniform with rank insignias	Competence and high achievement in technical and aviation fields.
2	Entirely pink aircraft and cockpit	Hyper-feminine ownership of technology and skilled professions.
3	Waving and smiling demeanour	Approachability, joy, and confident professionalism.
4	Bright blue-sky background	Freedom, opportunity, and limitless potential.

Through the use of a uniquely feminine style, the semiotic indicators in this picture establish a depiction of professional ability in an area that is quite technical. One of the most powerful symbols of knowledge, discipline, and authority in the aviation industry is the pink pilot uniform, which has rank insignias that are clearly visible and are detailed in [Table 3](#) (Number 1). Pilot uniforms have always been a sign of technical competence, responsibility, and high professional prestige. These are all sectors that have traditionally been dominated by professionals of the male gender. The presumption that technical proficiency must be connected with masculine look is challenged by the visual, which presents these signals in a pink colour ([Steele, 2021](#)). In accordance with Saussure's semiotic theory, meaning is derived from the connection between form and idea. As a result, the colour pink in this context actively reshapes the cultural meaning of the notion of professional authority. A further illustration of this reinterpretation is provided by the completely pink airplane and cockpit that may be seen in [Table 3](#) (Number 2). It is general knowledge that accuracy, scientific research, and cutting-edge engineering are connected with aircraft technology. Rather than just participating in technological activities, the hyperfeminine coloring of both the façade and inside of the building symbolizes complete ownership of the technology. When seen from the standpoint of feminist representation, this picture challenges gender stereotypes by depicting femininity as being perfectly compatible with technical skill ([Gill & Orgad, 2018](#)). Pink is not shown as a constraint or a decorative feature; rather, it is portrayed as a dominating aesthetic that coexists with responsibility and technical expertise.

The pilot's attitude, which is detailed in [Table 3](#) (Number 3), gives an additional layer of significance to the concept of professionalism. The smile and waving also gives that concept. The

gesture implies that one is approachable, joyful, and self-assured, so establishing a connection between emotional openness and high professional prestige. Self-assurance, positivism, and confidence are often used as symbols of empowerment in postfeminist media culture (Bordo, 2023). This is in contrast to the traditional representation of empowerment, which implies conflict or opposition. The image conveys the message that women are capable of performing difficult technical positions while yet retaining their warmth and the ability to communicate their emotions. One last point to consider is that the sky in the backdrop, which is a brilliant blue colour and is described in Table 3 (Number 4), serves as a metaphorical depiction of freedom, opportunity, and infinite potential. Having the sky above you lend credence to the concept of unfettered motion and the possibilities that lie ahead. When seen from a feminist perspective, this might be construed as a metaphor for the increasing access that women are gaining to professional places that weren't previously available to them. However, the idealized setting also reflects a postfeminist tendency to present empowerment as smooth and effortless, detached from structural barriers (Gill & Orgad, 2018).



Fig. 4. Data 4

As seen in Fig.4, the film Barbie, which was released in the year 2023, served as the material for this picture. There are two female figures that are seen floating in space while wearing identical purple astronaut suits and transparent helmets all at the same time. Additionally, they are shown wearing helmets that are see-through. In accordance with the subtitle, "Hi, Barbie," both of the characters seem to be in a relaxed state of mind, and they both extend their hands in a gesture of greeting and greeting each other with gratitude. The presence of a little spacecraft or equipment box floating next to them adds an additional layer of realism to the ambiance of deep space. The background is gloomy because of the contrast between the bright and colourful astronaut costumes that the characters are wearing and the black backdrop with scattered stars. The figures are wearing the astronaut suits (Delmar, 2018).

Table 4. Signifier and Signified Data 4

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Two female characters floating in space	Scientific exploration, high achievement, and limitless reach in advanced fields.
2	Purple and metallic space suits with frills or peplums	Blending high science with high fashion; femininity retained within technical rigor.
3	Dark, starry background	Vast opportunity and success in the cosmos.
4	Cube-shaped space module or vehicle	Advanced technology and scientific capability.

The study of two female forms that are shown in a condition of suspension in space is presented in Table 4 (Number 1) of the document. There are major emblems of scientific success, adventure,

and intellectual growth represented by these characters. Throughout the course of human history, the majority of positions in the scientific field have been held by males. The field of research is huge acknowledged to be among the most difficult and important scope of exploration within the scientific world. This vision, which places women at the centre of the ecosystem, challenges the gendered pre-conceptions that are associated with the capabilities and authority of the scientific community. According to Saussure's semiotic theory on the topic, meaning is considered to come from the relationship that exists between the signifier and the signified.

This is the theory that Saussure developed. The image reinterprets those individuals who can inhabit the symbolic realm of scientific excellence. The design of the space suits outlined in [Table 4](#) (Number 2) provides stronger support for this redefinition. The suits exemplify a deliberate integration of advanced technology and sophisticated design, characterized by their purple and metallic hues, along with frills or peplum embellishments ([Pitkin, 2023](#); [Tretiakova et al., 2020](#)). Historically, technical uniforms have served to diminish individual expression and aesthetic attributes ([Moraga, 2018](#)). The incorporation of feminine design elements suggests that women can maintain their femininity while achieving precision in scientific research. [Gill & Orgad \(2018\)](#) makes the observation that the image gives the impression that professional expertise and feminine identity are not two options that are incompatible with one another.

According to the information that is shown in [Table 4](#) (Number 3), the background is described as being black and having stars. It is possible to see this site as a metaphor for the vastness of the cosmos and the boundless possibilities that are contained within it. Throughout the whole of the movie, the grandeur of the cosmic backdrop acts as a metaphor for an infinite number of possibilities and possible victories that are yet to come. It is possible that feminists would read this image as proof that women are finding their way into areas of creativity and knowledge that were previously off-limits to them during the historical period that is being discussed. The picture, according to [Kholid et al. \(2025\)](#), is representative of a postfeminist tendency to portray empowerment as an inherent and ongoing evolution.



Fig. 5. Data 5

This trend is reflected in the image's ability to achieve both idealization and freedom from barriers. The final item is the space module or vehicle, represented as a cube, as shown in [Table 4](#) (Number 4). This vehicle or module exemplifies advanced technical proficiency and robust scientific infrastructure. The form, characterized by geometric and futuristic elements, symbolizes the exercise of authority over complex technology and innovation ([Jia, 2021](#); [J. Wang, 2021](#)). The inclusion of women in these technical structures and their placement alongside them conveys a message regarding women's integral role in the progress of science. The framework in which this empowerment takes place is extremely aestheticized and creative. It is a context in which technology and affluence seem to be intertwined and visually attractive. This reminds me of other

portrayals of Barbie Land from the past.

The film Barbie, which was released in the year 2023, served as the material for this picture. It depicts a group of female characters standing and dancing about in a spirited way inside of a large pink hall that seems to be associated with a ceremonial or institutional setting. All the women wear matching pink outfits, creating a strong visual uniformity. The central female figure stands confidently in the foreground, while the others are positioned behind her, raising their hands or dancing in coordinated gestures. The background is dominated by pink walls, columns, and decorative elements, reinforcing the highly stylized Barbie world. As seen in Table Semiotic Analysis.

Table 5. Signifier and Signified Data 5

No	Signifier	Signified
1	Group of women wearing matching pink outfits	Collective female identity, solidarity, and shared empowerment.
2	Central female figure positioned in front	Leadership, confidence, and symbolic authority among women.
3	Joyful dancing and expressive body movements	Freedom, happiness, and emotional self-expression.
4	Pink interior setting with decorative details	Feminine-controlled space and hyper-feminine aesthetic dominance.
5	Presence of diverse women (different appearances)	Inclusivity and representation of varied femininities.

The semiotic signs in this visual on [Fig. 5](#), construct a representation of collective female empowerment within a space dominated by hyper-feminine aesthetics. As can be seen in [Table 5](#) (Number 1), the group of women who are all dressed in pink apparel that is similar to one another represents unity and commonality. Rather of focusing on the achievements of specific individuals, this infographic highlights the collective strength of women as a group. This collective presence highlights the need of female solidarity and cooperation from a feminist perspective. It does so by undermining traditional narratives that portray women as competitors. It is possible to see in [Table 5](#) (Number 2) that the female figure in the middle, which is positioned just ahead of the other figures, is a representation of confidence and leadership. Because of her placement, she is able to command attention and become the focal point of attention. This location also assures that the group that is behind her is not negatively affected. Postfeminist leadership is distinguished by the fact that it is possible to express one's authority by charisma, self-assurance, and public visibility rather than through the use of hierarchical dominance. A reflection of the postfeminist view on leadership is shown in the following, which follows. The intrinsic relationship that exists between femininity and leadership is something that cannot be disputed.

A further emphasis is placed on the ideas of emancipation and emotional candour via the vibrant dancing and expressive body language that is stated in [Table 5](#) (Number 3). Dancing is a symbolic means for people to express themselves, which goes hand in hand with the ideas of empowerment that include having fun, having confidence in one's own appearance, and having fun. In postfeminist media culture, empowerment is often portrayed as the result of people's emotional optimism, self-confidence, and enjoyment, rather than as a consequence of people's struggle or resistance ([Gill & Orgad, 2018](#)). The photo gives the impression that powerful, self-reliant ladies are able to enter whatever room they desire without any restrictions. The pink interior setting, which includes ornamental objects specified in [Table 5](#) (Number 4), places the emphasis on the feminine aesthetics that are at the forefront of the scene. The colour pink is not only widely used in the

fashion industry, but it also permeates the whole environment, giving the impression that femininity is the standard rather than the exception. From a semiotic point of view, this setting demonstrates that the colour pink is not a colour that represents weakness or insignificance, but rather a colour that represents power, visibility, and control. It is not the formal architecture that give this site its force; rather, it is the style and mood found here.

Last but not least, as shown in **Table 5** (Number 5), the inclusion of women who have a variety of haircuts and cosmetics is a reflection of inclusiveness as well as a spectrum of feminine identities. There is a striking contrast in the females' facial expressions, hairstyles, and physiques, despite the fact that they are all related by the same geographical location and the hue of their skin. This is consistent with modern feminist rhetoric, which places an emphasis on the necessity of variety and representation, and it shows that there is the opportunity for a more inclusive definition of femininity. On the other hand, this integration takes place inside an environment that is highly aestheticized and idealized, which reflects a postfeminist logic that supports variety as long as it is visually harmonious.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the research indicate that Barbie (2023) is seen as a symbol of robust female autonomy that acknowledges and endorses feminist concepts while also adhering to conventional gender norms. A new toy, the 2023 version of Barbie, was released in the year 2023. Through the use of narrative structures, character roles, and visual signals, the film portrays women who are employed in technical and scientific professions as being powerful, self-sufficient, and capable. Both in the public sphere and in the commercial sector, these images provide a challenge to the long-held beliefs that women are incapable of doing certain things or are restricted in their abilities. The film takes place in a setting that is both highly fashionable and commercial at the same time. In light of this, it seems that visuals that are polished and simple to ingest are often utilized to demonstrate power. This conclusion makes it very evident that individuals have varying perspectives about the manner in which women are represented in contemporary films.

The research contributes to the existing body of literature by demonstrating how feminist semiotic analysis may uncover hidden meanings in popular films, particularly with regard to feminist symbols of female liberation. This is an important contribution to the academic writing community. This research not only raises awareness about the ways in which people's perceptions of gender and freedom in general are influenced by the texts that they read in the media, but it extends that awareness to the actual world as well. The report, on the other hand, did not investigate how people in general felt about it or how the individuals who created it saw it. Instead, it only looks at certain scenes and visual elements. This study could be built upon in the future by looking at how people responded to it, comparing it to other feminist films, or using other feminist ideas. This would make it possible to look more closely at how gender is changing in popular culture.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank the Faculty of Culture and Communication Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, for providing academic support and facilities that contributed to the completion of this research. Appreciation is also extended to colleagues and reviewers who provided valuable feedback and insights during the preparation of this article. The authors declare no conflict of interest. All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, analysis, and writing of this manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the paper.

References

Astari, A. W., & Alamsyah, A. (2024). Semiotic Analysis in Barbie Film by Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory. *Jurnal Riset Soshum*. <http://jrs.b-creta.com/index.php/jrs/article/view/8>

Bordo, S. (2023). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. books.google.com.

Chahbane, H., & Houssaini, K. (2025). Screening gender in Moroccan Cinema: Endorsing or combating gender stereotypes. In *Social Sciences &Humanities Open*. Elsevier. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291125005911>

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications. <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/735110-studies-in-language-testing-volume-43.pdf#page=53>

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. books.google.com.

D'ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2023). *Data feminism*. books.google.com.

Delmar, R. (2018). What is feminism? *Theorizing Feminism*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494277-2>

Dewi, N., & Medina, T. I. (2021). Feminism Portrayed In Greta Gerwig's Movie Little Women; Analysis In Modern Era. *JEE (Journal of English Education)*, 6(2), 104-116. <https://doi.org/10.30606/jee.v6i2.622>

Gill, R., & Orgad, S. (2018). The shifting terrain of sex and power: From the 'sexualization of culture' to # MeToo. *Sexualities*, 21(8), 1313-1324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718794647>

Gökçen, K. (2021). An Overview Of Gender Oppression And Black Feminism In Alice Walker's The Color Purple. *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research*. <https://jshsr.org/index.php/pub/article/view/449>

Grgić, A., & Bego, F. (2024). Useful Bodies, Socialist Commodification and Everyday Culture: Promoting Albanian and Yugoslav Industrial Production Through Non-Fiction Films. *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2024.2321038>

Imhanobe, H. J. (2022). Reflections on National Integration in Nigerian Film: an Example of Up North. In *South Asian Res J Art Lang Lit*. sarpublication.com. https://www.sarpublication.com/media/articles/SARJALL_42_86-91.pdf

Jannah, S. M., Suryaman, M., & Sayuti, S. A. (2025). Revealing Women's Images in Charles Perrault's Cinderella: A Study Employing Ideological Feminist Literary Criticism. *Sexuality, Gender & Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sgp2.70016>

Jia, C. (2021). Scaling Up Visual and Vision-Language Representation Learning With Noisy Text Supervision. In *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research* (Vol. 139, pp. 4904-4916). <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2102.05918>

Kashaka, N. D. (2025). Cinematic Techniques: Shaping Viewer Perception and Emotion. *Research Invention Journal of Current Issues in Arts and Management*, 4(2), 28-33. <https://doi.org/10.59298/RIJCIAM/2025/422833>

Kholiq, M., Ningsih, S., & Amelia, R. D. (2025). Signs, Symbols, and Identity: A Semiotic Reinterpretation of Javanese Womanhood in "Losmen Bu Broto." *Reila:Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*. <https://journal.unilak.ac.id/index.php/REILA/article/view/25959>

Kovarik, B. (2025). *Revolutions in communication: Media history from Gutenberg to the digital age*. books.google.com.

Kumar Mohajan, H. (2022). An Overview on the Feminism and Its Categories. *Research and Advances in Education*, 1(3), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.56397/RAE.2022.09.02>

McDonald, K. (2022). *Film theory: the basics*. taylorfrancis.com. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003171379>

Moraga, C. (2018). From a long line of vendidas: Chicanas and feminism. *Theorizing Feminism*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494277-4/long-line-vendidas-cherr%C3%AD-moraga>

Motapanyane, J. M. (2020). Feminism, an Overview. In *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*. Springer. https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-3-031-17299-1_1035

Nyamkoh, W. E., & Ngwa, A. T. (2021). Ideology, Power and Gender Representation in two Selected Nollywood Movies. *African Social Science and Humanities Journal*. <https://www.jozacpublishers.com/index.php/asshj/article/view/28>

Pitkin, H. F. (2023). The Concept of Representation. In *Concept of Representation*. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520340503>

Prathap, S. A. J., & Kabaleeswaran, D. (2025). The Construction of Identities and Resistance Through Film Narratives: A Study on Mari Selvaraj's Maamannan (2023). *Sociology Lens*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.70013>

Qiao, F., & Wang, Y. (2022). The myths of beauty, age, and marriage: femvertising by masstige cosmetic brands in the Chinese market. *Social Semiotics*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2019.1682279>

Rahmaton, R., Fitrisia, D., & Nasir, C. (2023). A Semiotic Analysis of the Hafalan Shalat Delisa Movie Using Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Theory. In *Research in English and Education Journal*. <https://jim.usk.ac.id/READ/article/viewFile/25736/12045>

Sarah, R. (2021). Representation of feminism in the film of Jane Eyre (2011): Semiotics analysis study of Charles Sanders Peirce. *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora*. <https://online-journal.unja.ac.id/titian/article/view/15283>

Saussure, F. (1983). Course in general linguistics, trans. In *R. Harris, London: Duckworth*.

Septiyya Ningrum, E., Vedy Prishanti, I., Syafitri Ditasyah, A., & Faidah Amura, I. (2021). Analisis Resepsi terhadap Feminisme dalam Film Birds of Prey. *Jurnal Syntax Transformation*, 2(02), 184–189. <https://doi.org/10.46799/jst.v2i2.218>

Steele, C. K. (2021). Digital black feminism. *Digital Black Feminism*. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479808373.001.0001>

Sutherland, J. A., & Feltey, K. M. (2017). Here's looking at her: an intersectional analysis of women, power and feminism in film. *Journal of Gender Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1152956>

Tretiakova, L. D., Pasnkevich, K. L., & Kotova, T. V. (2020). *Fashion design in a multicultural space*. ela.kpi.ua. <https://ela.kpi.ua/bitstreams/9e62e8b8-3c3c-4423-a361-c061ecf7be46/download>

Wa Ode, R. P. (2023). Analysis of visual elements in Barbie movie posters. *COMMICAST*, 4(2), 51–60. <https://doi.org/10.12928/commicast.v4i2.8717>

Wang, J. (2021). Deep High-Resolution Representation Learning for Visual Recognition. *IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence*, 43(10), 3349–3364. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TPAMI.2020.2983686>

Wang, Y. (2021). An Overview Of Feminism Economics In Asia. In *Social Science Asia*. e-

journal.nrct.go.th. https://e-journal.nrct.go.th/file_upload/digital_file/305_7cbe3.pdf

Yakalı, D. (2024). "He is just Ken:" deconstructing hegemonic masculinity in Barbie (2023 Movie). *Frontiers in Sociology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1320774>

Zheng, S. (2024). Women's Identity Construction and Identity from the Perspective of Gender Theory: Examination of Gender Discourse based on the Film Barbie. In *Transactions on Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*. <https://doi.org/10.62051/wytfaa38>