

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A.1 Background of the Research

Film has long been recognized as one of the most powerful forms of media in shaping and reflecting culture, values, and social norms. In addition, film also serve as a medium for personal expression and emotional connection. Wamane (2023) stated that film has allowed audiences to express themselves and relate to characters in a more meaningful way. Therefore, film has the power to shape the audience's perspective and create space for diverse interpretations.

Furthermore, Manzoor, Rehman, and Rauf (2016) explain that the film industry has an important societal role because of its high entertainment value. This value becomes effective and is easily accepted to convey the message of the film's content to the public. This is because the content of a film is usually not only able to reflect, but also actively contribute to constructing it (Jowett & Linton, 1981). The concepts formed from social construction are masculinity and femininity.

Walby (1989) indicates that masculine and feminine identities are formed through socialization from childhood, where masculinity is associated with assertiveness, action-oriented, and lively, while femininity is perceived as passive, cooperative, and gentle. These concepts are not universal and fixed, but shaped and passed on through culture, media, and social environments, including movies. In media, especially film, masculinity and femininity are often over-represented or

stereotypical, which can reinforce narrow views of how men and women should act.

The concepts of masculinity and femininity are illustrated in the Barbie (2023) film through the representation of gender roles by various characters. In Barbie Land, each Barbie character is portrayed as having a unique identity and a significant role in their society. They hold various professions and positions such as Stereotypical Barbie, Physicist Barbie, Weird Barbie, President Barbie, Doctor Barbie, Writer Barbie, Diplomat Barbie, Lawyer Barbie, Judge Barbie, Journalist Barbie, and others. These portrayals highlight women as independent, accomplished, and dominant figures. In contrast, all male characters in Barbie Land are called "Ken," lacking distinct roles or strong identities. The only male character with a different name is Allan, who was initially introduced as Ken's friend but was discontinued by Mattel due to low popularity.

The movie presents the dynamics between Barbie and Ken as a reflection of the social construction of what is considered masculine and feminine in society. Barbie (2023) not only presents an imaginative story but also raises gender issues in a satirical and reflective manner, thus attracting widespread public attention. The film was first released on 19 July 2023, and made many profits. As Mendez (2023) reported in the Los Angeles Times, Barbie is the highest-grossing movie, grossed more than \$620 million domestically and \$1.4 billion worldwide.

Unlike the animated version of Barbie, the live-action Barbie addresses complex and mature themes, positioning its primary audience as adults rather

than children. The film prominently features feminist discourse, complemented by vibrant visuals and a comedic tone, while critically examining issues such as gender roles and empowerment. As a result, this movie functions not merely as a form of entertainment but also as a reflection of contemporary social dynamics. Through its compelling characters and narrative, the film contributes to broader discussions on gender equality and is a relevant subject for academic analysis.

This can be seen from many previous researchers using Barbie (2023) as the main data for their researches. For example, an analysis by Alviyanti & Siraj (2023) also used the film Barbie (2023), which focused on understanding how gender equality is represented in Barbie. Dikmen Yakalı (2024) analyzed how the film deconstructs hegemonic and toxic symbols of masculinity and their performative aspects within the framework of postfeminist discourse. Salwa & Purwaningrum (2024) conducted a study to identify elements of gender stereotypes, the traits of femininity and masculinity, and the impact of gender stereotypes. In addition, Pramaisela Lubis (2024) focused on the types of masculinity portrayed in male characters, particularly Ken.

Unlike the previous studies, especially the research by Pramaisela Lubis (2024), this research not only analyzes masculinity in Ken but also examines both masculinity and femininity in Barbie and Ken in Barbie (2023). This study uses Raewyn Connell's theories of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity as its theoretical framework. Therefore, based on the description of the problems

in the background above, the researcher is interested in conducting research titled *“The Masculinity and Femininity of Barbie and Ken in Barbie (2023) Movie”*.

A.2 Problems of the Research

Problems of the research entitled *“The Masculinity and Femininity of Barbie and Ken in Barbie (2023) Movie”* are:

1. How are the types of masculinity portrayed in Barbie and Ken?
2. How are the types of femininity portrayed in Barbie and Ken?

A.3 Objectives of the Research

Objectives of the research entitled *“The Masculinity and Femininity of Barbie and Ken in Barbie (2023) Movie”* are:

1. To find out how the masculinity types are portrayed in Barbie and Ken.
2. To find out how the femininity types are portrayed in Barbie and Ken.

A.4 Significances of the Research

This research provides several important things for readers. These significances can be formulated as follows:

A.4.1 Theoretically

This research has theoretical significance in enriching the study of the social construction of gender by analyzing the types of masculinity and femininity on Barbie and Ken in the Barbie movie (2023). It also fills a gap in the academic literature by analyzing the types of masculinity and femininity using Raewyn Connell’s hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity theory, contributing

theories on gender representation in popular media. In addition, this research provides a deeper understanding of how movies can be both a reflection and a social critique of traditional gender norms. It offers new perspectives in gender studies, feminism, and media studies.

A.4.2 Practically

This research has practical significance in raising public awareness about the construction of the types of masculinity and femininity through popular media, particularly in the context of the film *Barbie* (2023). This study can help audiences, filmmakers, and educators understand how gender representations influence perceptions and social norms. The findings can also be used to encourage more inclusive and gender-balanced media productions and provide insights to educational institutions and social organizations in designing programs or campaigns aimed at promoting a better understanding of the types of masculinity and femininity in society.

A.5 Limitations of the Research

In this study, some limitations need to be acknowledged. This research only focuses on analyzing the types of masculinity and femininity in *Barbie* and *Ken*. The data taken is also limited to the scenes, dialogues, and characters shown in the film, without considering the context of production and the perspective of filmmakers who can influence the representation of gender stereotypes. In addition, this study is limited to the cultural and social context only depicted in the

movie, which may not represent the broader reality of gender issues in the real world.

A.6 Definition of Key Terms

In the research entitled “The Masculinity and Femininity of Barbie and Ken in Barbie (2023) Movie,” some of the key terms that often appear and are relevant are:

A.6.1 Masculinity

According to Connell (2005), masculinity is a fluid social construct, not a biological or psychological trait. However, masculinity has common societal traits, including strength and toughness, independence, dominance or assertiveness, rationality, a service role, courage, and risk-taking.

A.6.2 Femininity

Femininity refers to qualities, behaviors, and roles traditionally associated with women and girls. Barker (2004) stated that femininity is a category of identity that refers to the social and cultural characteristics associated with being a woman. Common traits associated with femininity include nurturing, empathy, passivity or gentleness, emotional expressiveness, beauty and grace, and submissiveness.

A.6.3 Barbie

Stereotypical Barbie is portrayed with blonde hair, a slim figure, and stylish outfits. She reflects the image of beauty and perfection commonly seen in

popular media. Unlike other Barbies who have careers or diverse appearances, Stereotypical Barbie represents the general or default version of the Barbie character. However, in this study, the researcher used the name Barbie only in the analysis.

A.7 Organization of the Research Report

In this research, the researcher organizes the research into several chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which consists of the background of the research, the problem of the research, the objectives of the research, the significance of the research, the limitations of the research, the definition of key terms, and the organization of the research report. The second chapter is a literature review consisting of a theoretical framework and a review of related research. The third chapter is a research method consisting of the design of the research, data and source of the data, method of collecting data, technique of collecting data, and method of analyzing data. The fourth chapter is the research results and discussion of the problems. Then the fifth chapter is the last chapter, which consists of conclusions and suggestions from the research.