Name

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**Barbie Dolls History**

Toys have been part of our culture, and children’s growth with their origin traced back to the 14th century. Their role in augmenting social and cognitive development is critical given that toys are the primary items children spend their childhood engaging with. They are, therefore, vital elements when it comes to learning and shaping perception and the Barbie doll is no exception.

The Barbie doll is feminine; it represents an independent modern woman beautiful and with values that align with the contemporary social-cultural environment. They, therefore, appealed more to the female gender, given that they resonate with the shape, design, fashion statement, and what the Barbie dolls represent (Jennifer et al., 111). The dolls are synonymous with female children aged between 3 and 7 years of age; it is an age group where children develop their imagination. Additionally, Barbie dolls target this age group since it is easy to influence their perception. The dolls are common in the western world, with the original prototypes representing Caucasian females. Today, the dolls have evolved to represent people of all races and colors, gaining a global audience. They come in different sizes and shapes and are therefore affordable for all social classes (Udo et al., 1). It is, therefore, accurate to conclude that Barbie dolls are vital feminist representations to children with no boundaries when it comes to social classes, race, or nationality.

In many cases, Barbie dolls are chosen for the children playing with them. Children between 3 and seven cannot make choices, and therefore, the parents decide to buy the dolls for them. Barbie dolls are made out of plastic material. Polyvinyl chloride (vinyl or PVC) mixed with plasticizers is the most common material, making the dolls flexible. They are also composed of Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS**)**plastics with the head made out of PVC (Udo et al., 7). There is no need for a computer when playing with Barbie dolls. A small space is sufficient with tabletops, a bed, or the floor being convenient play areas. In most cases, there is no need for other components; however, most girls prefer to play with the Barbie dolls together with other items such as cooking toys or horses. Barbie dolls can be used as both single and multiplayer with the introduction of Ken complimenting the gender parity associated with this doll (Udo et al., 4). There are no social-cultural rules governing the use of these dolls; they are play items that people of all races and nationalities endorse. However, there are exceptions with conservative religions such as Muslim and Hinduism; the dolls are regarded as a negative influence.

Historically, Barbie dolls first appeared in 1959 following the adoption of the German-made doll Bild Lilli. Ruth Handler developed the Barbie dolls as the flagship of item of Mattel Inc., a toy factory formed in 1945 (Udo et al., 3). They were first popularized in the United States, with the first year seeing over 300,000 dolls sold. Mattel Inc. grossed over 1.3 billion dollars in Barbie doll sales in 2020, which augments that their popularity continues to grow (Udo et al., 9). First established in the US, the dolls represented the ideal Caucasian young women and can therefore be associated with western countries. They focused on a petite, model-like body and later adopted different hairstyles to represent Hispanic, Asian, and African American communities. In the contemporary world, the dolls represent all nations. Barbie dolls play a central role in influencing popular culture, especially when it comes to shaping modern women and fashion. They also significantly impact the notions adopted by children on the ideal body types, including a tiny waist and full lips (Amy et al., 188). Little has changed over time, given that Barbie dolls have little difference in influencing the popular and elite culture. The introduction of curvier dolls has come as an addition to societal acceptance of plus size women and eradicating the notion that petite women have the ideal shape (Amy et al., 188). Additionally, the dolls have introduced tall, short, and medium heights and diversify social conformities associated with their influences on children.

Barbie dolls primarily shape other people’s identities; as mentioned earlier, they influence the children’s perception regarding body image and feminist attitudes. They play a critical role in shaping the societal beliefs on women's independence, career aspirations, and fashion tastes (Garber, Benjamin, and Prescott 189). Additionally, the dolls have been known to influence self-esteem and physical transformation. It is evident that Barbie dolls have a significant impact in shaping its users' performative, outward, and inward identities. There has been a minimal change regarding the age group that predominantly plays with this item. Girls between 3 and 6 commonly use today, while in the earlier times, girls between 3 and 7. However, it is crucial to note that there is an emerging group of adults influenced by Barbie dolls regardless of age. They have conformed to Barbie’s dressing and fashion tastes, body shape, and attitudes (Amy et al., 188). They, therefore, create a world around Barbie dolls allowing them to influence their lifespan development.

The doll company assumes that society needs to get influenced by empowering girls through play. On the other hand, Society believes that the dolls are a bad influence to a large extent, causing self-esteem and body issues (Jennifer et al., 109). They associate it with the rising cases of eating disorders and body deformity. Barbie dolls have a considerable global following; their franchise is also crucial in influencing society, especially with animated shows, movies, and clothing merchandise. They, therefore, have unlimited capabilities when it comes to impacting individuals positively. The dolls can play a pivotal role in helping environmentally conscious mindsets among young children, augment diversity and inclusion, and increase confidence among the female gender. Therefore apart from entertainment, the dolls can play a central role in empowering young children and instilling values that will foster positive lifespan development.

**Works Cited**

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