Name

Course

Course instructor

Date

**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 is a representation of an independent modern woman beautiful and with values that align to 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. 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 color and therefore gaining a global audience. They come in different sizes and shapes and are therefore affordable for all social classes. 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 have no ability to make choices and therefore it is the parents who 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 and therefore making the dolls flexible. They are also composed of Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (**ABS)** plastics with the head made out of PVC. There is no need for a computer when playing with Barbie dolls. A small space is all that is required with table tops, a bed, or the floor being convenient play areas. In most cases here 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. There are no social cultural rules governing the use of these dolls, they are play items which are endorsed by people of all races and nationalities. However there are exceptions with conservative religions such as Muslim and Hinduism, the dolls are regarded as 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. 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 dolls sales in 2020 which augments that their popularity continues to grow. First established in the US, the dolls represented the ideal Caucasian young women and can therefore be associated with the western countries. They focused on petite, model like bodies and later adopted different hair styles 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 the perception of the modern woman and fashion. They also have a significant impact on the notions adopted by children on the ideal body types including a small waist and full lips. 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 the eradication of the notion that petite women have the ideal shape. Additionally the dolls have introduced tall, short, and medium heights and therefore diversifying 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 independence, career aspirations, and fashion tastes. 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 the performative, outward and inward identities of its users. There has been a minimal change regarding the age group that predominantly plays with this item. Today is commonly used by girls between 3 and 6 while in the earlier times it was used by girls between 3 and 7. However it is crucial to note that there is an emerging group of adults that are influenced by Barbie dolls regardless of their age. They have conformed to Barbie’s dressing and fashion tastes, body shape, and attitudes. 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. The society on the other hand believes that the dolls are a bad influence to a large extent causing self esteem and body issues. 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 and especially with the animated shows, movies, and clothing merchandise. They therefore have unlimited capabilities when it comes to influencing 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**