

## A Postcolonial Study of Barbie Phenomena and its Implication in Pakistani Urban Context

RABIA SOHAIL  
RAHEELA NAZ  
NAZIR AHMED MALIK  
Pakistan

### Abstract:

*Background: The doll imposes a foreign concept of beauty as Barbie doll is blonde and represents a foreign culture. This doll being the only symbol of beauty for young girls causes complex on the basis of color of skin hair and eyes. Moreover it's ideally thin, impossible to attain figure causes low self esteem, anorexia and Barbie syndrome throughout the world.*

*Aims: The study explores Barbie phenomena in Pakistani Urban context with postcolonial perspective. It aims to find out the means through which Barbie impacts the female Pakistani children. How it serves as a tool for lifelong complexes, the roots of which are deep into our social fabric.*

*Sample: 30 young girls 8 to 11 years old were selected for one closed ended questionnaire using stratified random sampling technique from Lahore Grammar School Township and Johar Town Branches. 30 parents were selected using the same technique for a questionnaire based on liker scale. However 4 parents were selected using convenient sampling for structured interview.*

*Method: Along with the survey, interviews and questionnaires serve the purpose of collecting valuable data from parents and children.*

*Results: The study shows that the doll is idealized and is liked by much of the population and there is strong need to aware the parents about its harmful effects.*

*Conclusion: there is a strong impact of a doll having blond features and representing Western culture along with serious threats of*

*health issues on the young minds of female children. They idealize their doll and get low self esteem. Pakistani parents should be made aware of its harms which are known worldwide.*

**Key words:** Barbie phenomena, postcolonial perspective, complexes, foreign culture, self esteem, Barbie syndrome, Anorexia.

## **1. Introduction:**

### **1.1 Background:**

Globalization is a term that has been widely misused. It is perhaps a new name for what previously had been termed as colonialism the aftermath of which are nationwide mental and spiritual devastation. The worst tools of which are cultural attack through media and linguistic suppression. Under this there have been implicit attempts to unify the concept and parameters of physical beauty. As the colonization was a worldwide campaign the unification of cultures and languages by implementing one as substituting all is among its aims.

Worldwide many women primarily those who belong to the nations previously colonized are dissatisfied with how they look. Chinese girls want to have cosmetic eyelid surgery and nose surgery to make their eyes bigger and nose as long as they call it a Greek nose. Black women are happier if cosmetics turn them two shades light. The international modeling agencies set standards of symmetrical face on the basis of what they call ideal measurements of facial features. They then make their models up through cosmetics to fit into those measurements. Japanese and Chinese cartoon characters have extra ordinary large eyes and small nose and lips ratios. These complexes and ultimate dissatisfaction are derived from idealization. The problem is why everyone wants to be like an ideal. Who is the ideal and how these ideas and ideals are still having such a strong impact that the postcolonial societies are unable to get out of its grasp.

### **1.1.1 Why Barbie:**

This research is an effort to explore one smallest cause of such huge complexes. It attempts to discover the impact of exposure of a toy doll at an age when it matters most. Barbie is a famous fashion doll and she plays persistent part in girls' lives, however little research has been done to know whether Barbie has harmful effects on the development of the girls who love Barbie. Elise Abranson (2009).

Busy parents substitute gifts for lack of time spent with their children. Most of them being busy or ignorant are unaware of the harmful effects of the toys. It has been reported that female children fall prey to anorexia or Barbie syndrome when they had been exposed to Barbie doll or to the pictures of the toy.

Children don't think twice before buying. They have to get what they want to get which is rather determined through which they are exposed to like cartoons, colorful display of things and specifically designed commercials of kids

In India they have film stars as brand ambassador for Barbie doll, which is an attempt to personify the doll. However both the doll and the person are representative of foreign culture. Moreover the doll itself has been the cause of many diseases having physical and mental implications and the worse in our culture is the effect it can generate morally.

### **1.1.2 Exposure of Barbie:**

Barbie doll is a toy that has blond hair and fair complexion and she wears Western clothes. The doll has an ideal, almost impossible figure. In west it had been the cause of diseases like Barbie syndrome and anorexia. Wikipedia cites 11 controversies caused due to Barbie phenomena. In Pakistani context however not all the products have been available so most of them are irrelevant still some of those controversial issues being general are to be included in the study to aware people of its harms.

Every little girl knows and wants to own a Barbie doll. Following are the causes of its fame and also the sources of its exposure.

- Barbie's pictures are found on stationary items like pens, pencils, eraser, pencil cases and even school bags.
- The pictures are found on other toys like balls, Scotty and bicycles as well.
- On some type of jewelry items Barbie pictures are used as stickers like in hair pins, hair bands and the famous light shade of pink color is used to associate the thing itself to Barbie phenomena.
- Things of common use like umbrella, shoes and clothes also have Barbie picture on them.
- Another reason is the celebrity endorsements. India has Bollywood actresses as brand ambassadors so they become a source of personification for the in animate doll.

### **1.1.3 Alternate to Barbie:**

In September 2003, the Middle Eastern country of Saudi Arabia outlawed the sale of Barbie dolls, saying that she did not conform to the ideals of Islam. The Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice stated that the Jewish Barbie dolls, with their revealing clothes and shameful postures, accessories and tools are a symbol of decadence to the perverted West. He urged to beware of her dangers and be careful about that. In Middle Eastern countries there is an alternative doll called Fulla which is similar to Barbie but is designed to be more acceptable to an Islamic market. Fulla is not made by the Mattel Corporation, and Barbie is still available in other Middle Eastern countries including Egypt. In Iran, Sara and Dara dolls are available as an alternative to Barbie. However in Pakistan Barbie is still sold and Fulla has not yet arrived.

## **1.2 Problem Statement:**

Perfect and blond features of Barbie doll in the possession of tan Pakistani girl can cause inferiority complex in her. Children associate their doll with ideal fairy tale characters like Cinderella, Snow white, Rapunzel etc which are symbols of perfect beauty and extreme good luck. This teaches idealism to young children and they don't accept ugliness or other facts of life.

## **1.3 Objectives:**

- To study the phenomena and fame of Barbie doll among young Pakistani girls.
- To understand the cultural impact of a western product in Pakistani context having whitish and dark complexioned persons.
- To highlight the effects of Barbie on the concept of beauty in the minds of female children.
- To investigate the cause of inferiority complexes and discrimination on the basis of color

## **1.4 Hypotheses:**

- Barbie affects the cultural conception of beauty and body image of the girls.
- Being ideal Barbie negatively affects the self esteem of young girls.
- Parents are concerned about the toy safety but not well aware of the harms depicted in the recent researches around the world.
- Barbie is a symbol for ideal beauty and ideal figure among the girls.

## **1.5 Research Questions:**

1. Is Barbie doll famous among the young Pakistani girls?
2. Is Barbie a role model for young girls?

3. Do Pakistani girls want to have physical features like Barbie?
4. Do Pakistani girls want to dress like Barbie doll?
5. Do the girls identify themselves with Barbie?
6. Are their parents aware of different recent researches about Barbie?
7. Are their parents aware of the harms Barbie doll can cause?
8. Are parents concerned about the toy safety?
9. Is Barbie a symbol of beauty for young Pakistani girls?
10. Are those girls who have features like Barbie (having fair complexion and colored eyes) more beautiful than those who are not?

### **1.6 Limitation to the Study:**

The study is limited as it only deals with a feminine toy product that affects only the female population at a younger age. It does not involve the impact of violence based toys, video games, and cartoons which can be used for further research in Pakistani context. However its significance is there as females constitute half of the population and their betterment ultimately affects the whole nation. The study opens the gates for future researchers on toy safety and it throws light on cultural aspects and role of media which shape the social fabric of the Nation, based on values.

## **2. Literature Review:**

### **2.1. Post colonialism:**

Post colonialism allows viewing things in a way as to give right to all people on this earth to have same material and cultural well being. The division between the rest and the west was there in 19<sup>th</sup> century when expansion of European empires controlled nine tenth of the entire land surface of the globe. Anthropological theories legitimized the Colonial and Imperial

rule. White Vs nonwhite races were and still are in conflict in a world civilization. Throughout the colonized rule there had been resistance from the colonized. When nations achieved independence in twentieth century in different parts of the world moved from colonial to post colonial status. “it is striking that the despite decolonization, that major world power did not change”. Post colonialism refers to a politics and philosophy that the disparity in the world continues in a new way the anti colonial struggle of the past Young (2003).

### **2.2 The psychology of doll playing:**

Choice of selecting toys for male and female children was thought to be socially determined phenomena. Satoshi Kanazawa in (2008) reports that some researchers experimented on vervet monkeys and they found that a considerable number of female monkeys chose dolls to play with while male monkeys selected balls and cars. It was deciphered that the toys which resemble babies i.e. dolls, teddy bears and puppets attracted the attention of female monkeys as they are naturally and evolutionary designed to care for them. Gerianne M. Alexander Melisa Hynes. If it is a natural process of selection of toys than it must have impact on the minds, social orientation and development of children that can either be positive or negative according to the culture in which the children are expected to live.

### **2.3 Barbie syndrome:**

Barbie is the name of a fashion doll under consideration. One of the harmful effects are caused by Barbie’s impossible to attain figure. Denise Winterman attempts to explore the relevance of impossibly ideal figure of Barbie that has abnormal proportion of body (2009). The discussion about inappropriateness of body proportion in scientific literature and general media has been based on subjective interpretations of how one perceives the

body dimensions of doll relative to an adult size and this issue is justified in the study of Norton, et al (1996).

Barbie doll is said to emphasize our derived evolutionary traits and that is why it's exaggerated and unreal figure make it perceived as attractive. Macro (1997). For normal woman of 5 feet 2 inches height and 125lb weight to have Barbie like figure would have to gain 24 inches height, decrease 6 inches in waist, gain 5 inches in chest. Now as this is impossible it causes dissatisfaction in nine to eight years old girls Abramson (2009). This ultimately leads to Barbie syndrome.

In a recent study 162 girls of 5 to 8 age were exposed to Barbie, Emma or no doll. Girls exposed to Barbie reported lower body esteem and greater desire for a thinner body than girls who were exposed to other exposure conditions. It proved that early exposure to dolls having unrealistically thin body ideal may damage girls' body image and can cause high risk of eating disorders. Helga et al (2006).

Anorexia is an eating disorder people having it develop fear of gaining weight whereas Barbie syndrome is a term used to describe the desire to have a physical appearance and lifestyle representation of the Barbie doll. It says that the doll has an unattainable body proportion which negatively affects the mind of a young girl especially in Pakistani context where most of the people are either whitish or tan.

#### **2.4 Barbie and unification of cultures:**

Barbie is made to represent more than 30 Nationalities and it is sold in 10 countries, in Mexico Barbie doll has raised concerns. Despite the efforts to 'blanket diverse markets' by adopting Barbie skin color and clothing in Mexico they have reformulated it to represent local identity it was due to stop promoting the 'meanings and value' Barbie doll was attributed by Mattel. MacDougall (2003)

An Iranian toy seller Masoumeh Rahimi thinks that Barbie is foreign to Iran's culture because it is blonde and it



wears revealing clothes. She believes that every Barbie doll is more harmful than an American missile, whereas Sara and Dara dolls preserve their national identity. Anonymous (2002)

### **2.5 Barbie and materialism:**

The sale of Barbie doll was to be banned in New Virginia. Democratic Delegate Jeff Elridge believes that Barbie influences girls in a way that they pay too much importance on 'physical beauty on the expense of their intellectual and emotional development'. It is generally concluded that Barbie promotes materialism and unnatural body image reports Kallie Cart (2009)

Dr. Agnes Nairn at Bath University has found that girls from 7 to 11 years of age subjected their Barbie to 'maiming and decapitation'. Barbie being a feminine icon and reminder of girls' childhood or probably for having an unattainable figure is subjected to creative and varied ways of torture. These girls decapitated, burned, broke or even micro-waved their Barbie doll Anonymous (2005). The doll has been asked to be banned in New Virginia through law Eldridge (2009).

### **2.6 Barbie affects self image:**

Barbie's exposure to young girls affects their self-image for the rest of their lives. Playing with Barbie at a young age is the start of striving for imperfection for the rest of the life of young girls which results in low self-esteem. Rose (2010). A recent research study proves this through experiments and observations. A group of 100 children were given some books. They were to look at their books while someone told them a story. Those female children who had Barbie's pictures on their books had lower self-esteem and they least cared about their weight and how they looked only until and after they looked at Barbie. They reported negative attitude about their appearance Helga, et al (2006). All these issues cannot be easily ignored as would Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline-Walsh argue about

misplaced Barbie angst, childhood conditioning, torture and repression got nothing to do to 'Brave Barbie Survivors'. (1995).

### **2.7 Fulla an alternative to Barbie:**

An alternative doll named Fulla is recommended for many reasons in Arab World and even in Brazil and eventually however in Pakistan. Fulla is the name of a fashion doll, alternative to Barbie, specially designed and created for the Muslim girls. Her concept evolved in 1999. She came in the stores in late 2003. The name of the manufacturing company of Dubai is New Boy FZ Co. Fulla is said to be a role model for Muslim girls. It displays how Muslim families prefer their daughters to dress and behave like Fulla. The doll had black Abaya and head scarf for the Saudi market. Her dress represents Muslim values.

Barbie was banned in Saudi Arabia because she presented and promoted values which are against Muslim culture and society. Fulla doll on the other hand is represented as a symbol of love, care, sincerity and she doesn't lie. The doll is said to be as doctor Fulla or teacher Fulla. Those two professions are socially accepted and respected ones. So Fulla is there to teach Islamic values to young girls.

In advertisement Fulla doll has been shown reciting morning prayers, baking a cake for her friends, reading a book at bed times. The behavior Fulla promotes is much required in our context Fulla's commercials promote modest outfits in them. Girls are asked to put Fulla's spring Abaya before taking the doll out of the house. Arab mothers believe that a doll wearing Hijab will actually inspire their daughter to wear it.

However Fulla is not the first doll to wear the Hijab as Katherine Zoepe (2005) said that Mattel markets a group of collectors doll that include a Moroccan Barbie doll and a doll called Laila in order to represent a Muslim 'slave girl'. A Michigan based company markets a veiled doll called Razamme selling mainly to Muslim in the US and Britain. It is true she

says that none of those dolls ever enjoyed Fulla's wide popularity Zoepe (2005).

### **3. Methodology:**

#### **3.1 Research Design:**

The research is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the extent of likeliness for Barbie among young girls and awareness of its harmful effects among parents.

#### **3.2 Sampling Technique:**

The researcher used stratified random sampling technique for generating Qualitative and Quantities data. 30 female children from two schools (Lahore Grammar School Township Branch and Johar Town Branch) were selected randomly with the help of slip. However for structured interview 2 parents were selected for convenience at a specific time.

#### **3.3 Data Collection:**

The population of this research comprises of persons who are directly and indirectly influenced by Barbie doll i.e. girls of 8 to 11 years of age as they are directly affected by it. Their parents are also considered in collection of valuable data as they are the actual buyers of the product. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from 30+30+4 parents/children. Quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS. Qualitative data was gained from 4 parents through structured interview.

#### **3.4 Instrument:**

One closed ended questionnaire was specifically designed for focus group of young girls to measure their likeliness and extent to which they identify themselves to Barbie. One questionnaire based on liker scale was designed for parents. A structured interview was taken from parents to get in-depth data.

### **3.5 Statistical Tools used for research:**

- **SPSS software**
- **MS Word**
- **MS Excel.**

### **3.6 Variables**

#### **Independent Variable:**

1. Barbie phenomena
  - a. Barbie's fame
  - b. Barbie's exposure

#### **Dependant Variables:**

2. Harmful effects
  - a. Likeliness for Barbie
  - b. Barbie complex

### **4. Data Analysis:**

Quantitative data analysis was done using two close ended questionnaires with the help of SPSS software. Questions were asked from children/parents who already know and own Barbie doll.

Qualitative data was used to determine and measure attitudes feelings and thinking of the parents based on their observations of their children while playing with the doll.

#### **4.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data:**

##### **Questionnaire for Parents**

```
FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q5 Q6 Q7 Q8 Q9 Q10 Q11  
/PIECHART FREQ  
/ORDER=ANALYSIS.
```

**Frequencies:**

Statistics

	Toys do not play role in psychological development of children	Is it not important to provide safe toys to children according to their age?	Do you like Barbiedoll's blond hair and complexion	Do you like the dress of Barbie doll	Do you think the doll is affordable	Do you agree that children having dark complexion should be given a Barbie doll	Would you like your daughter to diet at a young age in order to have smart figure like Barbie doll	Would you like to buy a demanding male Barbie doll for your child	Would you like to see the same Western clothes to wear	Do you approve of your child's wearing Western clothes	Can darker children not feel themselves inferior after having an ideally fair doll
Valid N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Q#1 Toys do not play role in psychological development of children?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
Valid Disagree	20	66.7	66.7	80.0
Valid strongly disagree	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.1 Interpretation:**

- 20.0% of the people strongly disagrees which means that they are very well aware of the fact that toys plays an important role in the psychological development of the child.
- 66.7% people disagree which means that they know about the fact that the nature of toys have an impact on the minds of their children.
- 13.3% people are having a neutral point of view they are usually those who think toys are just for playing.

**Q#2 is it not important to provide safe toys to children according to their age?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Neutral	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
Disagree	10	33.3	33.3	73.3
strongly disagree	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.2 Interpretation:**

- 40.0% of the people have neutral point of view which means that either they don't know the importance of this fact or they don't pay much attention regarding the safety of toys for their children.
- 33.3% of the people disagrees which means that it is important to provide safe toys for the children according to their age.
- 26.7% of people strongly disagree that means that they are much concerned towards the health and safety issues of their children and they are much particular in providing the toys to their children right according to their age.

**Q#3 Do you like Barbie doll's blond hair and complexion?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
Agree	9	30.0	30.0	36.7
Neutral	10	33.3	33.3	70.0
Disagree	7	23.3	23.3	93.3
strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.3 Interpretation:**

- 33.3% of the people have neutral point of view about the complexion and blond hairs of Barbie doll.
- 30.0% of parents agree which means that they like the color and complexion of the toy doll which they are giving to their children.

- 23.3% parents disagree because they don't like it.
- 6.7% of parents strongly agree which means they like is complexion and color a lot which shows that they are fond of the Western complexion and blond hairs.

**Q#4 Do you like the dress of Barbie doll?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
Neutral	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
Valid Disagree	8	26.7	26.7	93.3
strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.4 Interpretation:**

- 46.7% parents have neutral point of view about the dress of the doll they either don't bother about the fact that the dress of the doll is beyond the cultural values of our Islamic country Pakistan or they consider the doll as merely a toy for their children.
- 26.7% of parents disagree which shows that they don't like the dress of the doll.
- 20.0% respondents agree and like the dress of the doll.
- 6.7% of the respondents strongly disagrees which show a clear sign that they have huge concern about the dolls which they give their daughters because they don't want the Western clothes to sneak into their values and traditions.

**Q#5 Do you think the doll is affordable?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Neutral	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
Valid Disagree	8	26.7	26.7	46.7
strongly disagree	16	53.3	53.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.5 Interpretation:

- 53.3% of the respondents strongly disagrees which shows that this brand is not affordable regarding Pakistani context. They have to consider about other issues before making a purchase of this particular doll.
- 26.7% people disagree which means that it is not a product which can be bought easily.
- 20.0% respondents have neutral point of view they either they might have a good buying power or they don't have much concern while spending of their children.

**Q#6 Do you agree that children having dark complexion should be given a Barbie doll?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Neutral	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
Disagree	11	36.7	36.7	50.0
strongly disagree	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.6 Interpretation:

- 50% people strongly disagree which clearly shows that giving a fair complexion doll to their children will ultimately create a complex in the minds of the children they might get irritated or frustrated.
- 36.7% respondents disagree which shows that they are aware of the fact that it might not be a good idea because they don't want to see their daughters to apply fairness cream in future because they will idealize their doll.
- 13% parents have neutral point of view regarding this question.



**Q#7 Would you like your daughter to diet at a young age in order to have smart figure like Barbie doll?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
Valid strongly disagree	26	86.7	86.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.7 Interpretation:**

- 86.7% parents strongly disagrees which shows that they don't want to see their daughter dieting at a young age in order to have a smart figure like Barbie doll but in contrary they have least awareness about the fact about anorexia and Barbie syndrome.
- 13.3% respondents disagrees that shows that they don't want their daughters to diet at young age yet they are unaware of the fact that the Barbie doll is the root cause of this complex.

**Q#8 Would you like to buy a male Barbie doll for your child?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Neutral	11	36.7	36.7	36.7
Valid Disagree	13	43.3	43.3	80.0
strongly disagree	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.1.8 Interpretation:**

- 43.3% respondents disagree with this question which means that they are not comfortable in providing a male Barbie doll to their children.
- 36.7% respondents show a neutral response which means that they don't have any problem in providing their child with a Male Barbie doll.
- 20.0% parents strongly disagree which shows a do or die condition they will not buy a male Barbie doll for their children.

**Q#9 Would you like to see your child demanding the same Western clothes to wear?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
Neutral	5	16.7	16.7	20.0
Valid Disagree	15	50.0	50.0	70.0
strongly disagree	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.9 Interpretation:

- 50.0% parents disagree which means that they don't want their child to wear Western clothes to wear as same as their doll wears.
- 30% respondents shows a do or die situation and strongly disagrees with the statement and will not allow their daughter to demand same Western clothes to wear at any cost.
- 16.0% respondents show neutral response they either don't bother if their daughter is demanding same clothes or they don't have any issue in providing them with such clothes.
- 3.3% of the respondents show a modern point of view they would like to see their daughter to demand and wear such clothes which makes them look like a Barbie doll.

**Q#10 Do you approve of your child's wearing Western clothes?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Neutral	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
Valid Disagree	12	40.0	40.0	66.7
strongly disagree	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.10 Interpretation:

- 40.0% of the parents disagree which depicts that they will not allow their daughters to wear same western clothes to wear even if they demand.
- 33.3% parents strongly disagree showing that they will not allow their daughters to wear such revealing clothes at any cost.
- 26.7% respondents shows a neutral point of view they either might have a modern broad minded thinking or they have no issue in allowing their daughters to wear such clothes.

**Q#11 Can darker children not feel themselves inferior after having an ideally fair doll?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Neutral	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
Disagree	11	36.7	36.7	70.0
strongly disagree	9	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.1.11 Interpretation:

- 36.7% parents disagree with the statement which depicts that they have an idea about the inferiority complex which the dark complexion child might feel after having an ideally fair doll.
- 33.3% respondents are neutral about this issue.
- 30.0% parents strongly disagree which means that they have a strong feeling about the fact that dark complexion children will be having a Barbie syndrome after having an ideally fair doll whose results might be catastrophic.

### 4.2 Focus group Questionnaire

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q5 Q6  
/PIECHART FREQ

/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

## Frequencies:

### Statistics

	You would like to have stationary of	What colors do you like in your dress?	How long do you play with your doll?	What do you like most about your doll?	What do you think the age of your doll?	You would like to have a dress like
Valid N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0

## Frequency Table:

### Q#1 You would like to have stationary having a picture of;

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Pokémon	6	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Barbie doll	16	53.3	53.3	73.3
	Ben Ten	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

### 4.2.1 Interpretation:

- 53% respondents say they would like to have a Barbie doll picture having on their stationary which depicts the likeliness of Barbie doll among the female children.
- 26.7% of the respondents say Ben Ten which shows that likeliness of a hero boy among the female children.
- 20.0% says Pokémon which shows that female children of different age groups are having different liking among the cartoons.

### Q#2 What colors do you like in your dress?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Shades of pink	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	Blue	7	23.3	23.3	66.7
	Green	10	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.2.2 Interpretation:

- 43.3% of the female children selected the option of pink color shades which depicts that the pink color and the shades of pink are much liked by the females. This is because from birth onwards a female child is usually dressed in pinks, moreover it's a color represented and associated with Barbie.
- 33.3% respondents like green color in their dresses.
- 23.3% of the female children like to have blue color in there dresses.

#### Q#3 How long do you play with your doll?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid less than one hour	8	26.7	26.7	26.7
one hour	10	33.3	33.3	60.0
more than one hour	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

#### 4.2.3 Interpretation:

- 40.0% of the focus group says that they play for more than one hour with their dolls which means that in more than our they plays with their dolls they brush their hair, dress them make some of the fairy tale stories with their doll etc. It was noticed that these were the youngest girls among the whole population of participants. It must be because of more freedom from studies and less home work assignments.
- 33.3% of the girls say that they play with their doll for one hour apart from their studies.
- 27.7% female children are those who play less than one hour with their doll.

**Q#4 What do you like most about your doll?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid her golden hair	12	40.0	40.0	40.0
her complexion	12	40.0	40.0	80.0
her eyes	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.2.4 Interpretation:**

- 40.0% respondents like the blond hair of their doll which shows that they are fond of the golden hair which is a sign that shows that they might get their hair dye one day.
- 40.0% female children say that they like the complexion of their doll which creates a sense of complexity in children and they will ultimately use fairness creams to get same complexion as their dolls have.
- 20.0% respondents liked the colored eyes of their Barbie doll which depicts that it is a sign of uniqueness to have colored eyes which is ultimately achieved by wearing contact lenses.

**Q#5 What do you think the age of your doll?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 12	10	33.3	33.3	33.3
16	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
20	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.2.5 Interpretation:**

- 40.0% of respondents say the age of her doll is 16.
- 33.3% respondents say that the age of their doll will be 12.
- 20.0% of the respondents think that the age of their doll will be 20.

- The variation of the results shows that the female children think the age of her doll according to the fantasies and fairy tales they have in the back of their mind. It was shocking however that most of questionnaires when were being arranged manually, showed that there was closeness of the participants' age and the age she perceived of the doll.

**Q#6 You would like to have a dress like;**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Barbie doll	23	76.7	76.7	76.7
your teacher	4	13.3	13.3	90.0
your mother	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**4.2.6 Interpretation:**

- 76.7% respondents want to dress themselves like their Barbie doll which clearly depicts that they are fond of the dressing of their dolls and regardless of the fact that they are brought up in a Muslim family and a Muslim country they idealize the Western clothes and they want to be dressed like their dolls.
- 13.3% respondents say that they wanted to be dresses like their teacher. This shows that for the female children 13.3% idealized there teacher and they consider her as a role model.
- 10.0% respondents replied that they wanted to be dressed up like their mother. It shows that there are a few percentages of female children who like to copy their mother and wanted to be dressed up like their mother. This has an important role in our study because it shows the impact of this Western toy in Pakistani community. The strong impact of Barbie doll is a root cause of the reduced percentages of children to idealize their mother and teachers in dressing.

### **4.3 Analysis of the Structured Interview:**

Qno1 was casually dealt by parents one of them told that she was satisfied that showed that initially she was not aware of the harms of the product.

Qno2 was again asked to get the general impression of the parents and their awareness. For this some parents mentioned the time factor they have in mind when they buy things in a store. It revealed that parents trade off with toys for the lack of time for their children.

Qno3 was aimed at getting the parents ready for the harms of the toy doll. For this parents responded in negative one of them guessed that this must be a disease.

Qno4 generated neutral remarks from two parents while one asserted that she would not allow her child to wear western clothes outside in shopping malls etc.

Qno5 was dealt with emotional intonations. As it was put to instigate parents to discover the impacts of the doll the apparently irrelevant question was useful in invoking parents concern about their children. They all strongly disapproved of any child being discriminated on the basis of skin color.

Qno6 was put forward after explaining briefly the Barbie phenomena and the alternate option of Fulla doll. So parents were hopeful about a new product with less drastic difference of culture. They showed concern about the safety of toys for their children.

### **4.4 Summary of the Findings:**

The findings were very much close to the research questions though they didn't answer to all of them. When the questionnaires were being manually arranged it was noticed that the age of the participants were near the age of which they perceived their doll to be. This showed that the participants identified themselves with the doll. It further suggests that they idealized their dolls. This is also deciphered from the



result of the question that addresses the dress the girls want to wear which was of Barbie doll.

Parents are generally busy and they want to compensate the lack of time for their children with gifts. However during the interview parents seemed to be very concerned about the study being conducted as they agreed that they did not know much about toy safety. It seems that Fulla doll will have a good market here as at the last question of the interview parents showed keen interest.

#### **4.5 Conclusions:**

The researcher tried to explore the likeliness of Barbie doll among the Pakistani girls and the level of awareness of parents regarding the safety of the doll. The results showed close affinity with the research questions posed. Barbie doll is liked by a majority of the young girls and it being an ideal at a tender age can bring dissatisfaction with self and low self esteem in the girls. Moreover the conception of a blonde doll being “beautiful” in our context causes inferiority complex.

#### **4.6 Recommendations:**

We can't ban Barbie in Pakistan as the Arabs did. Because the data shows that the responses of parents were neutral about the issue of dress. However they were very much concerned about the health issues.

1. We need to aware the people about the harms this doll causes. We need to ask the authorities to make a note on the product cover about the safest age at which Barbie can't influence hugely, the body image and hence the perception of little girls. So it should be clearly stated that girls from 3 to 8 should not be given exposure of this doll. At that age baby dolls should be given to them.
2. There is another alternate Fulla doll that can resolve many cultural and ethnic problems in Islamic Republic of Pakistan. But since our country is a home for many

different people having religious and cultural differences so Fulla can only replace Barbie in terms of cultural representation. It does not address the health issue completely.

3. At least what we can do is to aware people about the safe age for exposure of such dolls as Barbie. It is up to people what culture they want to relate to. Being a human being the researcher has discussed a common universal issue of the psychological harms of the doll.
4. It is much recommended that local industries should be encouraged to make handcrafted dolls so as to preserve an ancient art and save cultural values as well. As there is no such thing as Pakistani manufactured doll so alternative to Barbie i.e. Fulla can be introduced in Pakistan.

#### **4.7 Recommendations for further research:**

As the study is inspired from a close to life phenomena it involves knowledge from various fields. The study can be helpful from business, psychological, cultural, social, post colonial and even literary perspective. However due to lack of time there were many aspects not deeply explored, that can be studied further.

This phenomenon can be studies by psychologists and scientists to affirm the suitability of the recent researches in Pakistani context. The cultural aspects are not entirely catered in this study as it was not much of the focused aims. So a longitudinal study can be conducted to explore such issues.

The toy safety can be studied in further researches by changing the population of the research from female to male children. Studies can be conducted regarding violence based videogames that would help to explore bullying in Pakistani schools.

#### **4.8 Learning Experience:**

Seeing a 10 year old holding eagerly a fairness cream in her little tan hands forced the researcher to see the causes of such complexes. The study draws its inspiration from such complexes and biases based on the color of skin. During the research the researcher learnt the causes of the gaps between reality and fantasy for young girls, who are later supposed to nurture Nation builders.

Apart from values, the doll if continues to be a symbol of beauty can ruin the conception of beauty to merely contact lenses, dyed hair, over coating of fairness products and worse of all it will devalue the thinking of our nation and destroy the self-esteem.

The researcher learnt why there is color discrimination and how it affects and destroys the self esteem and psychology of young children. The researcher tried her best to reveal this fact while considering it her moral responsibility to contribute with all her efforts for a better, healthier and safer society and Nation.

#### **Bibliography**

- Abramson, E. 2009, May 21. "Barbie Brains: The Effect of Barbie Dolls on." *Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Psychology* 1-6.
- BBC NEWS*. 2005, December 19. Retrieved September 21, 2012, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/somerset/4539862.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/somerset/4539862.stm)
- Claudia, M., & Jaqueline, R.-W. 1995. "And I Want to Thank you Barbie: Barbie as a Site for Cultural Interrogation." *The Review of Educational/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies* 17 (2): 143-155.
- Eldridge, J. 2009, March 3. Lawmaker Wants Barbie Banned in W.Va.; Local Residents Quickly React.

- Helga, D., Halliwell, E., & Ive, S. 2006. APA Psyc NET. *Developmental Psychology* 42 (283-292), 2.
- Inside the University of Bath*. 2005, December 19. Retrieved October 4, 2012, from <http://www.bath.ac.uk/news/articles/archive/barbie161205.html>
- Kanazawa, S. 2008, April 17. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved September 4, 2012, from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-scientific-fundamentalist/200804/why-do-boys-and-girls-prefer-different-toys>
- MacDougall, J. P. 2003. "Transnational Commodities as Local Cultural Icons: Barbie Dolls in Mexico." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 37 (2): 257-275.
- Macro, A. M. 1997. "Why Barbie is Perceived as Beautiful." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 85 (1): 363-374.
- Martin, S. T., & Times, S. 2005, May 18. *Seattle pi*. Retrieved October 2, 2012, from <http://www.seattlepi.com/lifestyle/article/Arab-world-s-demure-Fulla-is-no-Barbie-wannabe-1173510.php>
- Muslim dolls tackle 'wanton' Barbie. 2002. Iran: BBC News Middle East.
- Norton, K. I., Olds, T. S., Olive, S., & Dank, S. 1996, February 1. *Springer Link*. Retrieved October 3, 2012, from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBBF01544300?LI=true>
- Rose, K. 2010, December 3. *Yahoo Voices*. Retrieved October 15, 2012, from <http://voices.yahoo.com/how-does-barbie-affect-our-childrens-body-image-7256394.html>
- Winterman, D. 2009, March 6. *BBC NEWS*. Retrieved October 3, 2012, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/magazine/7920962.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/7920962.stm)

## Appendix

### Questionnaire # 1

#### (For parents)

(This information will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of study and your identity will not be revealed)

**Name (optional):** .....

**Gender:** .....

**Occupation:** .....

**Number of Female children:**.....

#### Key:

SD= strongly disagree, D= disagree,

N= neutral, A= agree, SA= strongly agree

Sr #	Questions	SD 5	D 4	N 3	A 2	SA 1
1.	Toys do not play role in psychological development of children?					
2.	Is it not important to provide safe toys to children according to their age?					
3.	Do you like Barbie doll's blond hair and complexion?					
4.	Do you like the dress of Barbie doll?					
5.	Do you think the doll is affordable?					
6.	Do you agree that children having dark complexion should be given a Barbie doll?					
7.	Would you like your daughter to diet at a young age in order to have smart figure like Barbie doll?					
8.	Would you like to buy a male Barbie doll for your child?					
9.	Would you like to see your child demanding the same Western clothes to wear?					
10.	Do you approve of your child's wearing Western clothes?					
11.	Can darker children not feel themselves inferior after having an ideally fair doll?					

**Structured Interview**

**(For parents)**

**Name:** .....

**Gender:** .....

**Occupation:** .....

Q 1. Are you satisfied with the doll currently available in the market? Why or why not?  
.....

Q 2. Do you read instructions before providing your child with any toy? Why or why not?  
.....

Q 3. Do you know anything about anorexia?  
.....

Q 4. What do you think of western clothes, do you approve of wearing them at your home or outside?  
.....

Q 5. How would react if your child is discriminated on the basis of darker color of skin?  
.....

Q 6. If you are given a choice what type of doll would you buy for your daughter Barbie doll or Fulla doll and why?  
.....

**Questionnaire # 2**

**(For Girls)**

(This questionnaire is allowed to be filled on the consent of the head/principal of the Institute/School to be surveyed)

**Name:** .....

**Age :** .....

**Class:** .....

Q#1 You would like to have stationary having a picture of

- a) Pokémon      b) Barbie doll      c) Ben ten

Q#2 What color do you like in your dress?

- a) Shades of pink      b) blue      c) green

Q#3 How long do you play with your doll

- a) Less than one hour      b) one hour      c) more than one hour

Q#4 What do you like most about your doll

- a) Her golden hair      b) her complexion      c) her eyes

Q#5 What do you think that the age of your doll is

- a) 12      b) 16      c) 20

Q#6 You would like to have a dress like;

- a) Barbie doll      b) your teacher      c) your mother

**Consent for Participation**

**Investigator:** .....

**Telephone:** .....

**E Mail:** .....

**Introduction:**

You are invited to consider the participation of your child. I will be investigating the likeliness of Barbie Doll in your child with the help of a questionnaire. This form states, your child's rights as a participant. If you decide to allow your child to participate in the study then sign and date this form.

**Confidentiality:**

All of the information collected will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of research. Your child's identity will not be disclosed. Whenever the data from the research will be published, your child's name will not be used.

**Participation:**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time, you do not want to make your child participate, you can tell your child's teacher. If you have any questions about the research you can contact **Miss Rabia Sohail** by phone at 0323-4245695 or in person at University of Management and Technology.

**Investigator's Statement:**

I have explained this study to the students and their parents. I have discussed the activities and have answered all the questions they asked.

Signature of investigator: ..... Date: .....

**Consent of Learner's Parents:**

I have read the information provided in this consent form. All my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I allow selecting my child to participate in this study.

Signature of parent/guardian: ..... Date: .....