

**MOTIVATIONS, CONSEQUENCES AND KNOWLEDGE OF SKIN BLEACHING:
A STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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Declaration

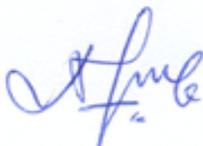
I, Keitumetse Mmami Keakile, declare that:

- (a) The research reported in this dissertation, except where stated otherwise, is my original work;
- (b) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university;
- (c) This dissertation does not entail other people's work unless specifically attributed as such, in which case their words have been rephrased and referenced. However, where their exact words have been used, their writings have been placed in quotation marks and referenced.

Signed: 

Date: 31th December, 2016

I, Professor Augustine Nwoye, confirm that the work reported in this dissertation was carried out by Keitumetse Mmami Keakile under my supervision

Signed: 

Date: 31th December, 2016

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the Lord our God for the strength and wisdom he has afforded me over the past few years.

Secondly, I thank my esteemed supervisor Professor Augustine Nwoye for his mentorship and guidance.

I also thank my family for their immeasurable love and support throughout my journey.

Last, but not least, I send my deepest gratitude to my research participants who took time out of their busy schedules to attend to my questionnaires and partake in my focus group discussion. For that, I am eternally grateful.

ABSTRACT

The study examined University of KwaZulu-Natal students' perceptions, motivations, consequences, and knowledge of skin bleaching. The aim was to explore factors that the students propose are responsible for people's indulgence in skin bleaching, explore consequences of this practice, and determine the extent of the students' knowledge of these consequences.

This study employed a mixed methods approach. One-hundred-and-forty students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, responded to an adapted questionnaire, whilst seven students took part in a focus group discussion.

Quantitative data was then captured in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in frequency tables. Moreover, the focus group interview data was analysed by means of thematic analysis.

The findings show that participants propose that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching mostly to look trendy and fashionable, to remove skin pimples and blemishes so that they can obtain a smooth skin and to be popular amongst peers respectively. In addition, the study revealed that some of the negative consequences associated with the skin bleaching practice include the fact that it is hazardous to the skin, expensive and time consuming. It was also found that among the positive consequences associated with the skin bleaching practice were that it improves one's beauty, ameliorates against certain medical conditions and provides opportunity for anticipated gains. The study furthermore revealed that, *in toto*, the students are fully aware of the harmful effects of the practice.

Implications of these findings for improved clinical practice and further research were then briefly drawn.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Purpose of the Study	3
1.4 Objectives of the Study	3
1.5 Research Questions	3
1.6 Significance of the Study	4
1.7 Assumptions/Prospective Hypotheses of the Study	4
1.8 Scope and Delimitations of the Study	4
1.9 Operational Definition of Terms	5
1.10 Summary and Overview of the Study	5
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 History and Impact of Colonialism in Africa	7
2.3 History and Impact of Colonialism in South Africa	8
2.4 Prevalence of Skin Bleaching Globally	10
2.5 Prevalence of Skin Bleaching in South Africa	11
2.6 Motivations for Skin Bleaching	13
2.6.1 <i>To be White, beautiful and European Looking</i>	13
2.6.2 <i>To Satisfy one's Partner/Attract Male Mates</i>	14

2.6.3 <i>To Satisfy and Impress Peers</i>	14
2.6.4 <i>To Have Soft Skin</i>	15
2.6.5 <i>To Remove the Adverse Effects of Extended Skin Bleaching Use on the Body</i>	15
2.6.6 <i>To Remove Pimples, Rashes and Skin Diseases</i>	15
2.7 Consequences Related to the Practice of Skin Bleaching	16
2.8 Levels of Knowledge with regards to the Negative Consequences Related to the Practice of Skin Bleaching	18
2.9 Summary and Synthesis of the Review	19
2.10 Conceptual Framework	19
2.11 Summary	21
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	22
3.1 Introduction	22
3.2 Research Paradiagn	22
3.3 Design of the Study	22
3.4. Location of the Study	23
3.5 Study Population	23
3.5.1 <i>Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria</i>	23
3.6 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size	24
3.7 Research Instruments	25
3.7.1 <i>Demographic Information</i>	27
3.7.2 <i>Validity and Reliability</i>	27
3.7.3 <i>Pilot Study</i>	29
3.8 Data Analysis	29
3.8.1 <i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	29
3.8.2 <i>Thematic Analysis</i>	30
3.8.2.1 <i>Phase 1: Transcribing</i>	30
3.8.2.2 <i>Phase 2: Coding and categorising</i>	30

3.8.2.3 <i>Phase 3: Checking</i>	30
3.9 Ethical Considerations	31
3.10 Summary	32
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY	33
4.1 Introduction	33
4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Distribution of Respondents	33
4.2.1 <i>Survey Questionnaire Response Rate</i>	33
4.2.2 <i>Demographic Characteristics of Survey Questionnaire Participants</i>	34
4.2.3 <i>Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants</i>	35
4.3 Presentation of Results, Research Question by Research Question	37
4.3.1 <i>Research Question One</i>	37
4.3.2 <i>Research Question Two</i>	39
4.3.2.1 <i>Theme One: Negative consequences of skin bleaching</i>	39
4.3.2.1.1 Cost and expenses	39
4.3.2.1.2 Time consumption	40
4.3.2.1.3 Side effects on the skin and body	40
4.3.2.1.4 Addiction	41
4.3.2.1.5 Labelling and stigmatisation attitudes	42
4.3.2.2 <i>Theme Two: Positive consequences of skin bleaching</i>	43
4.3.2.2.1 Beauty	43
4.3.2.2.2 Fashion and trend	43
4.3.2.2.3 Anticipated gains	44
4.3.2.2.4 Medical conditions	45
4.3.3 <i>Research Question Three</i>	46
4.3.4 <i>Research Question Four</i>	47
4.3.4.1 <i>Theme One: Socialisation</i>	49
4.3.4.1.1 Upbringing & modelling	49

4.3.4.1.2 Social stereotypes	49
4.3.4.2 <i>Theme Two: External influential factors</i>	50
4.3.4.2.1 Celebrities	50
4.3.4.2.2 Media	51
4.4 Summary of Findings	51
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	53
5.1 Introduction	53
5.2 Discussion of Results, Research Question by Research Question	53
5.2.1 <i>Research Question One</i>	53
5.2.2 <i>Research Question Two</i>	55
5.2.3 <i>Research Question Three</i>	57
5.2.4 <i>Research Question Four</i>	58
5.3 Summary of the Study	61
5.4 Implications for Clinical Practice	63
5.5 Limitations of the Study	64
5.6 Recommendations for Further Research	64
REFERENCES	66
APPENDICES	71
Appendix A: Information Sheet for Survey Questionnaire	71
Appendix B: Information Sheet for Focus Group Discussion	73
Appendix C: Consent Form for Survey Questionnaire	75
Appendix D: Consent Form for Focus Group Discussion	76
Appendix E: Survey Questionnaire	78
Appendix F: Interview Schedule	80
Appendix G: Demographic Information Sheet	81
Appendix H: Ethical Clearance Approval Letter	82
Appendix I: Gate Keeper Approval Letter	83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Questionnaire Participants34

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants35

Table 3: Factors Influencing Skin Bleaching Practice as Perceived by University Studied
.....37

Table 4: Information on Students’ Knowledge of Consequences of Skin bleaching46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Scalar Diagram of Elements of Skin Bleaching Theoretical Formulation48

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The phenomenon of skin bleaching has been traced back to the era of slavery and colonialism (Blay, 2011). Black people then were oppressed by White people and through socialisation, they assimilated the identity of British and American value systems into their cognitive schemas (Charles, 2003b). In this way, skin bleaching is perceived as “a contemporary evidence of deep-rooted and lingering psychological scars of slavery in particular and colonisation in general” (Singham, 1968; Abrahams, 2000, as cited in Charles, 2003b, p. 712). However, the perplexing thing is that even after a century following the abolition of slavery and decades after the end of colonialism, skin bleaching practice appears to have become a norm among people of various backgrounds, age and gender (Durosaro, Ajiboye, & Oniye, 2012; Glenn, 2008; Mpengesi & Nzuzza, 2014). And this, despite the fact that such practice appears to be associated with some devastating consequences on its practitioners’ physical and psychological wellbeing (Durosaro et al., 2012).

There seem to have been numerous driving forces that have contributed to people, especially Black people, desiring to engage in the body modification practice of skin bleaching. For instance, it might be speculated that amongst such forces must include the problems of colonialism and apartheid and perceptions of skin colour as advertised by the media (Edmonds, 2014; Julien, 2014). Colonialism came with the exploitation of many countries around the world, amongst them African countries (Ziltener & Künzler, 2013). It was through colonialism that many African nations lost their cultural way of life, which inevitably led to the collapse of the African social structure, because African lifestyle came to be perceived as inappropriate in comparison with the Western standards (Thomas, n.d.). In this way, many Africans had to adopt Christianity introduced by missionaries who accompanied the colonisers. According to Ziltener and Künzler (2013) “the new religion demanded not only exclusivity and renouncement of traditional practices such as ancestral worship and shamanistic health rituals as well as non-sedentary lifestyles, polygamy and open promiscuity” (p. 304). This suggested that African people’s way of life and identity was considered unacceptable.

In addition, the apartheid era which was characterised by the unfair treatment of Black people by White people, as well as the differential treatment of the Coloured people from the Black

people, has led many South Africans to believe that skin colour has a bearing on an individual's position in society (Julien, 2014). As such, the concept of colorism which is a function of colonialism has caused division and rivalry amongst marginalised groups because of society's tendency to give preferential treatment to lighter skinned individuals over the darker skinned ones of the same race (Brown, 2000), suggesting that a person's complexion determines his or her value (Robinson, 2011). Moreover, people have become saturated on a daily basis with billboards and television commercials using light skinned models for advertisements (de Souza, 2008) suggesting that fair skin is attractive. Furthermore, some advertisements imply that a light skin will enhance a person's chances to access privileges, for instance, a job (Malik, 2007). The former and latter are indicative of media projections that lightness signifies beauty and facilitates opportunities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies have shown that there is a high increase of skin bleaching practices because people value light skin (de Souza, 2008). Unfortunately, skin bleaching is known to have serious hazardous consequences (Pitché, Kombaté, & Tchangai-Walla, 2005). Exploring such a theme is necessary given, among other matters of concern, the recent report that a middle aged woman of Nigerian origin who lived in Europe died from complications arising from skin bleaching (Olumide et al., 2008). Furthermore, in South Africa around 1986, approximately 30 million pounds had been spent on the purchase of skin bleaching products (Mahe, Ly, Aymard, & Dangoe, 2003), implying a high degree of people indulging in skin bleaching products in South Africa. Moreover, Ntshingila (2005) reported that Mictert Marketing found that 1 in 13 South African Black women aged between 25 and 35 bleached their skin (as cited in Glenn, 2008), showing that skin bleaching is commonly practised, regardless of governmental efforts to banish the existence of such toxic products in the South African market (Dlova, Hendricks, & Martincgh, 2012). It is against this background that it becomes significant to establish the fundamental reasons behind people's indulgence in skin bleaching practices, as well as some of the negative and positive consequences arising from such indulgence as perceived by the University of KwaZulu-Natal students.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine University of KwaZulu-Natal students' perceptions with regard to motivations, consequences and knowledge of skin bleaching. This entailed exploring factors that the students propose are responsible for people's indulgence in skin bleaching practices, exploring consequences of skin bleaching practices, determining the extent to which students are fully aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching practices and generating a viable theoretical explanation to account for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the factors which students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal propose are responsible for people's indulgence in skin bleaching in contemporary Africa.
2. Explore from the point of the study participants major consequences (positive and negative) of skin bleaching.
3. Determine the extent to which students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal are fully aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching practice.
4. Generate a more comprehensive theoretical explanation to account for the basis for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching despite the negative consequences to its users.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What factors do students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal propose are responsible for people's indulgence in skin bleaching in contemporary Africa?
2. From the point of the study participants, what are the major consequences (positive and negative) of skin bleaching?
3. To what extent are students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal fully aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching practice?

4. What variables should a viable and comprehensive theory of skin bleaching factor into its formulation?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, even though this study explores perceptions of skin bleaching amongst students in a South African University, problems related to skin bleaching are relevant to other people across the globe. Secondly, a review of the negative consequences of skin bleaching demonstrates that emphasis tends to be focused only on physiological effects of the practice (Mahe et al., 2003; Street, Gaska, Lewis, & Wilson, 2014). Therefore, its possible extended impact on other departments of the users' life has yet to be fully ascertained by means of a research process. The present study was an attempt to close this gap. Furthermore, exploring students' perceptions with regards to people's motivations for engaging in skin bleaching practices as well as exploring their knowledge levels pertaining to the negative consequences associated with skin bleaching could prove fruitful in the establishment of effective public health campaigns aimed to combat the practice of skin bleaching.

1.7 Assumptions/Prospective Hypotheses of the Study

It is hypothesised that:

1. University of KwaZulu-Natal students are not very knowledgeable about the negative consequences of skin bleaching practice.
2. Amongst University of KwaZulu-Natal students, the problem of colonialism and the experience of apartheid will be perceived as the major motivating factors for people's indulgence in skin bleaching.

1.8 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted on the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus premises. Therefore, participants were drawn from the University of KwaZulu-Natal student population, thus, generalisation to any other population is not possible. Furthermore, the study intended to explore University of KwaZulu-Natal students' perceptions regarding skin

bleaching practices, therefore, all study participants fell within the university boundary, and non-University of KwaZulu-Natal students were considered outside the scope of the study. Nevertheless, using the theories of Internalised Colonialism and Colorism as a point of reference in this study, it was hoped that the study would shed some light in assisting the reader gain an understanding of why people engage in the practice of skin bleaching, especially given the negative consequences that usually arise.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Apartheid: Racial classification system whereby people, particularly Black people, were denied access to opportunities based on the colour of their skin (Brown, 2000).

Coloured: “Any person of mixed blood; and includes children as well as descendants from Black-White, Black-Asian, White-Asian and Black-Coloured unions” (Brown, 2000, p. 198).

Colonialism: “Acquisition of political dominion over another county or group of people with the primary goal of economic advancement” (Nkrumah, 1962 as cited in Utsey, Abrams, Opare-Henaku, Bolden, & Williams, 2014, p. 3).

Colorism: “Preference for and privileging of lighter skin and discriminating against those with darker skin” (Glenn, 2008, p. 281).

Skin bleaching/whitening: Used interchangeably in this study, and “involves the application of various cosmetic products (e. g. creams, soap and lotions) that contain potentially dangerous chemical agents” (Kpanake, Sastre, & Mullet, 2010, pp. 350–351).

1.10 Summary and Overview of the Study

This dissertation comprises of five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. The introductory chapter provides a synopsis of the study, which is, the background and rationale of this study. Chapter 2 is the literature review which outlines the major findings about the topic at hand, as well as an overview of the theoretical explanations regarding this topic. Chapter 3 illustrates the methods that the researcher employed to conduct the study. This includes an outline of the research design, sampling techniques, methods of data collection, data analysis as well as crucial ethical considerations that took place throughout the research

process. The findings of this research study will be provided in Chapter 4. However, Chapter 5 will entail an in-depth discussion of these study findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this review, the history and impact of colonialism will be outlined. In addition, the review will explore the prevalence of skin bleaching practices. Furthermore, it will discuss motivations for skin bleaching, as well as the negative and positive consequences associated with the practice. The review will also provide a synopsis of people's levels of knowledge with regard to the negative consequences of skin bleaching. The chapter concludes with a theoretical framework from which the researcher drew concepts to explain the phenomena under study.

2.2 History and Impact of Colonialism in Africa

The concept of colorism still remains a prominent social ill that has spanned centuries (Hunter, 2011). Therefore, it is pertinent to explore how it impacts the lives of people as well as people's reactions to this kind of discrimination. In exploring the impact that colorism has had on people's lives, a closer look at the South African history is emblematic that South Africans have also battled with issues of social discrimination on the basis of colour (Brown, 2000). In South Africa until quite recently, racial discrimination was prevalent, and people's skin colour predestined their position in society (Dlova, Hamed, Gwegweni, Grobler, & Hift, 2014). The majority of those who fell victim to discrimination on the grounds of their skin colour were Black people (Brown, 2000). The tendency to grade people on the basis of their skin colour can be traced back to the ancient times of colonialism and apartheid (Blay, 2011; Dlova et al., 2014).

Colonialism brought about a lot of changes in the way of life of many nations through which Europeans established a system of power to rule and dominate their colonies (Mpengesi & Nzuzi, 2014). This mentality of White supremacy was characterised by the unfair treatment and subservience of many nations by White people (Blay, 2011). Because Christianity was introduced by White people (Thomas, n.d.), it implied that their whiteness symbolised goodness and purity whereas blackness symbolised everything bad and immoral (Charles, 2003a). The mere fact that an individual was White meant that he or she would be saved (Thomas, n.d.). Therefore, being White suggested greater social prestige and reverence

compared to being Black (Hunter, 2011). In addition, as colonialists migrated to rule over their colonies, they brought along with them goods. These goods were supposedly intended to upgrade and improve the living standards of the people, hence, they were thought of as “civilizing mission” (Thomas, n.d., p. 28). Some of those commodities that were introduced included the soap, which the missionaries held to an esteem because soap represented their Christian virtues of cleanliness and adequate self-care (Blay, 2011). In addition, in Jamaica the ‘cake soap’, as it was commonly referred to, was valued for its effectiveness in beautifying the skin by removing the “shine and greasy” or “tarry” look in an individual’s face (Hope, 2011, p. 183). Moreover, over time, it was a norm to have soap advertisements that depicted Black people as filthy, hence needing a thorough washing as evidenced by the 1930 French poster demonstrating an African man’s hands turning white after washing with soap (Glenn, 2008). The introduction of goods could have negatively influenced Black people’s perception of themselves in relation to others, because goods instigated colour hierarchies.

European women throughout ancient times have always placed a lot of emphasis on their physical appearance (Blay, 2011). As a result, they engaged in beautifying practices (Hunter, 2011). However, skin bleaching gained momentum when Queen Elizabeth I started practising a whitening beauty regimen that inspired other European women to follow suit (Thomas, n.d.). As such, the history of skin bleaching began with Europeans themselves and the Europeans continued their lifestyle practices in the lands of their colonies. This suggests that the tendency to bleach one’s skin goes beyond the need to be white, since those who are already white are still in pursuit of different levels of whiteness, suggesting that several psychological factors are at play.

2.3 History and Impact of Colonialism in South Africa

In South Africa, two factors may have played a significant role in introducing cosmetics, including skin bleaching recipes, to Black people (Thomas, n.d.). Firstly, it was through domestic service that most Black women became exposed to the way in which European women cared for their bodies, and such bodily regimes included paints and powders to lighten the skin and protect against the scorching African heat (Thomas, n.d.). Secondly, mission schools taught African girls that homemaking and cleanliness led to Christian salvation, and human development (Thomas, n.d.). They emphasised that in order to assume

admirable status, an individual had to be well trained with regards to taking care of the home. African girls and women internalised this ideology especially since salvation was dependent upon grooming, whereas, lack of hygiene was judged as immoral, thus leading one to condemnation (Blay, 2011; Thomas, n.d.). Black people learnt new ideas about beauty (Julien, 2014), cleanliness and domesticity, in such a way that it became the standard through which they came to live their lives. This can explain the reason why women seem to be more likely than males to engage in the practice of skin bleaching, since from our evolutionary past, women most often at times are evaluated on the basis of how they look (Hunter, 2002; 2011).

During the apartheid era, which was another form of White supremacy, instigated laws perpetuated the segregation of racial groups, with preference given to White and Coloured people. For instance, pass laws inhibited interracial interaction by controlling movement of people from one place to the other, and so did the immorality laws that were intolerant of sexual relations between people from different racial backgrounds (Brown, 2000). These laws were intended to monitor racial groups in South Africa (Julien, 2014) and at the same time maintain the integrity of the White group. This racial segregation was also evident in situations whereby Coloured people were elevated to a higher social status and accorded better opportunities as opposed to Black people solely on the basis of their skin tone (Glenn, 2008). This unfair treatment made Black people feel that their misfortune and abuse resulted from their skin colour, hence, for one to have access to those privileges, one had to be White or seemingly White (Mpengesi & Nzuzi, 2014).

Therefore, not only were Black people faced with across-group racial discrimination, there was also within-group discrimination, suggesting that Black people were experiencing double discrimination (Julien, 2014). For this reason, a study by Lewis, Robkin, Gaska and Njoki (2011) revealed that one of the reasons why people bleach their skin is to look White and European, suggesting that people often associate European traits with privileges, prestige and favour. Similarly, a study conducted at a South African University by Mpengesi and Nzuzi (2014) found that a lighter skin was more favoured as opposed to a darker skin. The social ill of colorism may have led to the unfavourable treatment of many Black people which resulted in some Black people engaging in skin bleaching practices to elevate themselves in society (Julien, 2014). These attitudes are some of the unpleasant inheritances of colonialism and apartheid, and have caused feelings of inadequacy among some Black people (Dlova et al.,

2014) as they continuously faced discrimination, injustice and ridicule because of the colour of their skin (Mpengesi & Nzuzi, 2014).

In the United States of America, light skinned models are used most often for advertisements as opposed to dark skinned models, symptomatic of universal preference for lighter skin tones, because lighter skin tones are associated with beauty (Robinson, 2011). In addition, Indian women are also known to practise skin bleaching because in India there is a tendency to prefer lighter skin tones because it represents status and more benefits (Malik, 2007). Similarly, because of cultural exchanges brought about by westernisation and social media, the Filipinos have incorporated Western values for beauty and hold the same constant attitudes and skin bleaching practices held by White people (Glenn, 2008). As a result, the younger generation of Filipinos are known to bleach their skins, targeting specific body parts such as armpits and knees (Glenn, 2008), because they want to even out their skin to maintain a perfect complexion. Therefore, the negative stereotype attached to blackness, whereby dark skin is associated with evil, ugliness, lack of civilisation and uncleanliness (Charles, 2003a; Thomas, n.d.) has predisposed many marginalised races, especially Black people, to attach value to lightness and perceive the positive characteristics of possessing a light skin. This mentality clearly suggests that most racially-stigmatised groups are mis-educated about blackness and beauty in general.

2.4 Prevalence of Skin Bleaching Globally

Many health professionals have embarked on an enquiry to discern the degree to which people indulge in this self-harming practice (Lewis et al., 2011). Studies have indicated that the skin bleaching phenomenon is widely practised amongst different age groups, gender, socio-economic backgrounds and races (Olumide et al., 2008). People from across the world use skin whitening products for various reasons, mostly to improve physical appearance (Charles, 2003a). In Nigeria, Olumide et al. (2008) found that out of 450 participants who confessed to skin bleaching, 73.3% were women, whereas 27.3% were men. Moreover, the World Health Organization states that Nigeria records the highest percentage of women using skin bleaching products with an estimate of 77% worldwide (Rambaran, 2013). In addition, a cross-sectional study of 910 women in Togo conducted by Pitché et al. (2005) found that 58.9% of women used skin bleaching cosmetic products, and that 30.9% used products containing mercury, 24% used products containing hydroquinone and 18.5% used products

containing topical corticosteroids. This study by Pitché et al. (2005) suggested high rates of cosmetic use of skin bleaching products among Togolese women.

Moreover, it has been found that 25% of women in Bamako, Mali and 52% in Dakar, Senegal use skin lighteners (Adebajo, 2002; Del Guidice & Yves, 2002; Mahe, Ly, Aymard, & Dangou, 2003 as cited in Glenn, 2008). A cross-sectional study of knowledge, attitudes and practices towards the use of topical bleaching agents amongst 509 Saudi Arabian women by AlGhamdi (2010) found that the degree of skin bleaching practice has increased in the country, with an estimation of 38.9% reporting to be actively bleaching their skin. It is worth noting that in Saudi Arabia, skin bleaching products are legal (AlGhamdi, 2010).

Furthermore, East Asia has a long history of valorised practice of skin bleaching and Nielson (2007) found that 30% Chinese, 20% Taiwanese, 18% Japanese and 8% Koreans frequently used skin lighteners (as cited in Glenn, 2008). In Europe, White women utilise bleaching creams to maintain radiant skin free from hyperpigmentation brought about by the aftermath of being subjected to heat (Durosaro et al., 2012) or the often dreaded process of maturation (Glenn, 2008). Interestingly, a review of literature from countries where the use of skin lighteners is a commonly held practice points to slavery, colonialism or westernisation as a precursor for the prominence of skin bleaching (Charles, 2003a; Glenn, 2008; Blay, 2011; Rambaran, 2013; Julien, 2014).

2.5 Prevalence of Skin Bleaching in South Africa

In South Africa, a cross-sectional study on predictors of topical steroid misuse by Malangu and Ogunbanjo (2006) amongst 225 patrons of pharmacies found that 35% reported misusing topical steroids for the purpose of skin lightening. In addition, the study found that being a Black female was the best predictor for the misuse of topical steroids. Initially, skin bleaching was commonly associated with Black rural women, but there seems to be an increasing trend of skin bleaching amongst learned women who then go the extra mile of purchasing expensive bleaching chemicals (Pitché et al., 2005). However, it is possible that statistics outlined herein may not be a true representation of the actual number of bleachers since this practice carries with it stigmatising attitudes (Mahe et al., 2003), therefore people are less likely to report truthfully. The above findings suggest that women are the most common users of bleaching products (Malangu & Ogunbanjo, 2006; Olumide et al., 2008; Rambaran, 2013).

The Krok brothers were known infamously for manufacturing skin bleaching products which they sold to their fellow South Africans (Thomas, 2012). However, in the 1970's South African doctors alarmed the public of the devastating consequences associated with hydroquinone and, in 1990, all beautifying creams made of hydroquinone were banned (Thomas, 2012). Even though some people have experienced the hazardous effects of these chemicals (Malangu & Ogubanjo, 2006) and though governmental campaigns attempt to ban skin bleaching products, people continue to use them (Olumide et al., 2008; Hunter, 2011), suggesting that there are underlying psychological factors that influence people to indulge in the practice of skin bleaching regardless of the known negative consequences of these products. For instance; a report by Dlova et al. (2012) in which they investigated the top ten selling skin lightening creams in Durban, South Africa, found that 90% of the skin lightening creams in their study contained banned substances. Surprisingly, the report also found that 60% of those skin lightening creams were manufactured in South Africa and 40% were manufactured from outside the country, implying that although the South African government has enforced laws to inhibit the production of such creams, these products still find themselves on the shelves of many outlets, because the "legislation of such products had been scanty or has not been vigorously enforced" (de Souza, 2008, p. 28).

Furthermore, a recent study by Dlova et al. (2014) of women's perceptions of the benefits and risks of skin lightening creams in two South African communities found that 89% of participants agreed that there are negative consequences associated with skin bleaching; however, the researchers were not able to find any relationship between knowledge of risks and the avoidance of use. Moreover, Malangu and Ogunbanjo (2006) found that some participants reported experiencing side effects but ignorantly continued use of the topical steroid creams. Similarly, a study by AlGhamdi (2010) which explored women's knowledge, attitudes and practices towards topical bleaching agents in Saudi Arabia, found no association between level of education and avoidance of use. Nevertheless, there is a need to generate a more comprehensive theoretical explanation to account for the basis for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching despite the known and experienced negative consequences it brings to its users.

2.6 Motivations for Skin Bleaching

Possessing light skin is believed to carry many privileges (Hunter, 2002). A qualitative study investigating motivations for skin bleaching of 42 urban women who reported engaging in skin bleaching practices in Tanzania by Lewis et al. (2011, pp. 33–34) yielded six thematic motivations behind people's indulgence in skin bleaching. The themes are as follows: (a) to be White, beautiful, and more European looking; (b) to satisfy one's partner and/or attract male mates; (c) to satisfy and impress peers; (d) to have soft skin; (e) to remove the adverse effects of extended skin bleaching use on the body; and (f) to remove pimples, rashes, and skin disease

2.6.1 To Be White, Beautiful and European Looking

In a study by Dlova et al. (2014) of 579 South African women, it was found that more than a third of the women studied reported that a lighter skin tone increased self-esteem. In addition, the study found that a woman with a lighter skin tone is considered to be more beautiful. This is not surprising given the media preference for either White or Black models and celebrities who possess Eurocentric ideals of beauty to run adverts on television and magazines (Hunter, 2011; Lewis et al., 2011), thus suggesting that whiteness is beautiful (Wilder & Cain, 2011) and hence, worthy of preserving its “purity” (Brown, 2000, p. 201). On the contrary, blackness is considered to represent ugliness (Charles, 2003a) as evidenced in a qualitative study on perceptions of skin bleaching of 97 Shona women in Zimbabwe by Gwaravanda (2011) whereby participants reported that skin bleaching improves a person's appearance and makes them look presentable because a dark skin is “embarrassing and humiliating” (p. 201). This demonstrates that a dark skin is perceived as unattractive and not worth embracing. As a result Black people may be obliged to bleach their skin in order to rid themselves of the stigma attached to their skin tone, especially when in pursuit of opportunities (Durosaro et al., 2012) which often appears to be available to people who possess Eurocentric physical features (Blay, 2011). This study intends to explore if the desire to be White or Eurocentric is still considered a relevant motivational factor for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching practices as perceived by University of KwaZulu-Natal students.

2.6.2 To Satisfy One's Partner/Attract Male Mates

People are motivated to bleach their skin because of the power that light skin has on attracting and securing a romantic relationship (Hunter, 2002). For example, Gwaravanda (2011) found that one 19-year-old participant reported that “if I am to keep my boyfriend from being snatched away by other ladies, skin bleaching is the only solution” (p. 201). Similarly, a qualitative study aimed at examining the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the practice of skin bleaching in the post-colonial society of Jamaica of six men and six women, Robinson (2011) found that one male reported, “the girls love it man! See, your face looks brown and looks good. Ha! The girls like it ... the girls pray for it man! Lots of girls (like it)!” These findings clearly indicate that skin bleaching is a means to attract the opposite sex, gain their appraisal and maintain the relationship. In his article titled ‘Skin bleaching and the prestige complexion of sexual attraction’ Charles (2011) stipulates that “the high status and sexual attractiveness of brown skin influences relationships so some Jamaicans bleach their skin ...” (p. 382). Moreover, according to Durosaro et al. (2012) both men and women are driven to engage in body beautifying practices, amongst them is skin bleaching. The hope is to succeed in attracting their partners and to maintain these relationships.

2.6.3 To Satisfy and Impress Peers

A comparative study between nine skin bleachers and nine non-skin bleachers on self-esteem levels by Charles (2003b) found that amongst the nine skin bleaching participants, one participant stated that she bleached because her friends were also engaging in the practice, suggesting that peer pressure can be a motivating factor. A study by Robinson (2011) corroborates this finding because it was also found that significant others can be quite influential. Similarly, Lewis et al. (2011) found that some of the respondents reported that their friends and colleagues insisted that they too should have a lighter complexion. For example, a 51-year-old independent food preparer reported, “I use skin bleaching to attract my friends” whereas a 22-year-old student reported, “... I saw my friend had changed so I wanted to look like her.” (Lewis et al., 2011, p. 34). In South Africa, Malangu and Ogubanjo (2006) found that peer pressure was significantly associated with topical steroid misuse. For example, the study found that of the 35.5% respondents who misused topical steroid products, 47.5% were initially advised mostly by friends. These findings suggest that most

people engage in the practice because they are conforming to pressure and also bleach their skin because they see other people using these products, hence, envy to acquire the same privileges of having a lighter skin tone, which includes, but is not limited to, admiration, social class and beauty (Charles, 2003a). For this reason, the present study aims to ascertain if the need to fit in or the need for popularity amongst peers is a good enough reason for this practice.

2.6.4 To Have Soft Skin

Lewis et al. (2011) found that participants bleached their skin to obtain a smooth and softer skin texture. In fact some believed that the more one used skin bleaching creams, the softer the skin became. For example, one participant reported, “men love women who have soft skin ... people apply creams and lotions to make their skin soft ...” (Lewis et al., 2011, p. 33). Similarly, a study by Mpengesi and Nzuza (2014) utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate perceptions of skin bleaching of 109 students in a South African University, and found that 36.7% of students reported that skin bleaching satisfies an individual’s belief that men prefer soft skinned girls.

2.6.5 To Remove the Adverse Effects of Extended Skin Bleaching Use on the Body

Most skin bleachers tend to overuse skin bleaching products, therefore, they sometimes experience non pleasurable side effects (Lewis et al., 2011), as such, people continue to use bleaching creams to treat certain skin conditions such as post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation and acne (Dlova et al., 2012) because they fear that if they stop using the bleaching creams the condition would worsen (AlGhamdi, 2010). Mpengesi and Nzuza (2014) found that 19.2% of the students believed that people bleached in order to remove the adverse effects of extended skin bleaching.

2.6.6 To Remove Pimples, Rashes and Skin Diseases

Most women are in pursuit of a radiant skin (de Souza, 2008). Mpengesi and Nzuza (2014) found that 63.3% of students reported that people often bleach because they want to remove facial blemishes so as to appear more beautiful. In fact, the result in their study showed that

the most trending motivation for skin bleaching was the need to have a blemish free face. Charles (2003b) found that four out of nine bleachers reported that they bleached their skin solely for the purpose of diminishing facial pimples. Similarly, a study conducted at a skin clinic in Nigeria by Ajose (2005) found that 92% of female patients and 5% of male patients over 16, who used the clinic between February and October 2004, reported using skin bleaching creams to even out their skin tone in order to have a perfect complexion. Having a smooth skin is one of the benefits of bleaching because an “even toned, blemish free skin is everyone’s dream” (de Souza, 2008, p. 27). Thus it would be interesting to investigate to what extent University of KwaZulu-Natal students perceive preference for a radiant skin as a reason for indulging in the skin bleaching practice.

2.7 Consequences Related to the Practice of Skin Bleaching

Skin bleaching has caught worldwide attention, especially the medical field fraternity, because of the implications arising from the usage of such substances (Olumide et al., 2008). In most cases, dermatologists are faced with the task of treating many patients presenting with skin problems resulting from the use of bleaching chemicals (Mahe et al., 2003). Skin bleaching substances are toxic and some of the consequences can cause serious physical harm to the user (Pitché et al., 2005). This is because most skin bleaching creams are now known to contain chemical substances like hydroquinone, mercury, corticosteroids and lead among others (Street et al., 2014). The usage of hydroquinone is known to inhibit the production of melanin which consequently results in the person being prone to sun damage (Ajose, 2005). Furthermore, mercury may lead to the impairment of the nervous system and kidney dysfunction (Glenn, 2008).

Moreover, some of the negative consequences of skin bleaching include, but are not limited to, dermatophyte infections, irritant dermatitis, acute cases of scabies, eczema, skin cancer, body odour, thinning of the skin, dyschromia, poor wound healing and need for corrective surgical dermabrasion (Mahe et al., 2003; Ajose, 2005; Dlova et al., 2014). All of these bleaching creams have been noted to be detrimental, health-wise to the users. However, the extent of the severity of the body’s reaction to them is dependent upon the individual’s skin type, lifestyle, chemical composition of the bleaching substance, duration of use, other medical conditions and a tendency to use multiple bleachers concurrently (Pitché et al., 2005; de Souza, 2008; Julien, 2014). For instance, Pitché et al. (2005) suggest that extensive use of

high potent corticosteroids can cause diabetes and hypertension. Furthermore, prolonged exposure to skin bleaching toxic substances can cause damage to the kidneys as well as suppress the immune system, which may result in an individual suffering from opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis and vulval warts (Ajose, 2005). Research has also shown that about 60% of those who practise skin bleaching may incur at least any one of these complications at some point in their lives (Shankar & Subish, 2007).

Skin bleaching does not only result in unpleasant physical experiences, other aspects of the users' life may be affected. Some individuals experience loss of confidence and do not feel good about themselves as a result of the skin reaction caused by bleaching chemicals (Ajose, 2005). In addition, because most skin bleachers become dependent on the skin bleaching creams, they end up spending a lot of money to maintain the habit (Ajose, 2005; Robinson, 2011), especially since discontinuing use of those products may result in unpleasant withdrawal side effects, such as rash, dry skin and a return to a darker skin than before (AlGhamdi, 2010). When this happens patients would rather not consult the doctors for assistance, and they prefer to continue use of these bleaching creams (de Souza, 2008). Moreover, some families and society at large tend to stigmatise skin bleachers because they believe that skin bleaching is disgraceful as it is indicative that an individual lacks moral principles, hates his or her identity and has low self-esteem (Gwaravanda, 2011). For example, Gwaravanda (2011) found that a 42-year-old married woman reported that skin bleaching is a form of "evil since it is done mostly by prostitutes and divorcees who have the bad habit of snatching other people's husbands" and another 50-year-old married woman stated that skin bleaching is an "... insult to God ..." (pp. 201–202). Furthermore, a 32-year-old woman added, "Those ladies who practice skin bleaching do so because they are very ugly" (Gwaravanda, 2011, p. 202). Hence, this study hopes that by exploring people's continued use of skin bleaching products despite the known negative consequences it may bring to its users could provide more insight into this phenomenon.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that though skin bleaching products may have detrimental consequences, on the contrary, they may be useful in other aspects of the user's life. Skin bleaching products can be used for improving one's self esteem, social standing, romantic desirability and beauty (Ajose, 2005; Dorman, 2011; Robinson, 2011). Furthermore, some skin bleaching products such as topical steroids can be used for medicinal or therapeutic purposes to treat certain dermatological conditions (Malangu & Ogubanjo, 2006; AlGhamdi, 2010; Dlova et al., 2012). For example, monobenzyl ether of hydroquinone (MBEH) and 4-

methoxyphenol (MP) are bleaching chemicals that are used to treat patients diagnosed with depigmentation disorders such as vitiligo universalis (AlGhamdi & Kumar, 2010) which is a genetic and immunological skin disorder. Patients with vitiligo are known to experience great discomfort in certain aspects of their lives, such as, sensitivity to the sun, bodily disfigurement as well as psychological distress (AlGhamdi & Kumar, 2010). As such, medical practitioners utilise depigmentation therapies as previously mentioned, to assist patients to overcome their afflictions, as these bleaching agents even out their skin tone, through a depigmentation process. The latter suggests positive effects of skin bleaching products.

2.8 Levels of Knowledge with regard to the Negative Consequences Related to the Practice of Skin Bleaching

Knowledge of the effects of skin bleaching products to one's health is imperative, particularly for the bleachers themselves. Mpengesi and Nzuzi (2014) found that the majority of their study participants were less knowledgeable about the negative consequences related to the practice of skin bleaching. Similarly, a study by AlGhamdi (2010) found that people were also less informed about the negative effects that skin bleaching products could cause, nor were they knowledgeable about the degree of toxicity of certain chemicals found in bleaching creams. Hence, it was found that 80% disagreed with the fact that bleaching creams were detrimental to a person's overall health. Surprisingly, 47.3% considered corticosteroids as the most hazardous substances contained in bleaching creams, whereas only 38.2% selected mercury (AlGhamdi, 2010), indicative of misinformation. Interestingly, a study by Dlova et al. (2014) found that even though the skin bleachers self-reported to be knowledgeable about the bleaching products that they were using, the study revealed that actually they were not. For instance, the participants seemed unaware of the chemical compositions found in the bleaching products that they were using, suggesting possible ignorance. Nevertheless, Robinson (2011) found that participants were knowledgeable as they reported that skin bleaching is costly, addictive, time consuming, causes stigma and exposes an individual to possible name calling. Therefore, the researcher aims to explore to what extent the above-mentioned findings, for example, cost factors, addiction and stigmatisation to mention a few, will be corroborated by the present study.

2.9 Summary and Synthesis of the Review

From the above studies it could be hypothesised that the major motives for skin bleaching amongst marginalised groups, particularly Black people, include the negative effects of colonialism and the apartheid experience in South Africa. However, while these factors are not to be ignored, the recognition that it is not only Black people who engage in that practice presently (Malik, 2007; Glenn, 2008; AlGhamdi, 2010; Franklin, 2013), does suggest that alternate factors, other than the problem of internalised colonialism, must be called into question. In addition, a review of the negative consequences of skin bleaching demonstrates that emphasis tends to be focused only on physiological effects of the practice (Mahe et al., 2003; de Souza, 2008; Street et al., 2014). Therefore, its possible extended impact on other departments of the users' life needs to be explored in depth.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

The framework that informs this study is the theory of Internalised Colonialism and theory of Colorism. These theories provide a psychological account of what motivates people to engage in body beautification practices (such as skin bleaching) which seem to be detrimental to the users' health (Olumide et al., 2008), especially since people go to extremes of persistently engaging in such bleaching acts and rituals regardless of the known consequences of doing so (de Souza, 2008). The theory of Internalised Colonialism posits that the colonial era has negatively influenced the style of thinking of Africans to the extent that Africans have disregarded their way of life and identity in order to mirror attributes of their coloniser (Utsey et al., 2014), suggesting that colonialism has misinformed Black people and misguided them to think less positively of themselves. For instance, African traditional religion was frowned upon, and African traditional rituals were regarded as immoral, whereas the only civilised practice was believed to be Christianity, a religion introduced by White people and associated with godliness and purity (Thomas, n.d.).

The theory of Internalised Colonialism stipulates that "at the individual level, internalised colonialism encourages a sense of inferiority" (Utsey et al., 2014, p. 5) because having a colonial mentality makes one value principles of the Eurocentric culture and devalue one's own heritage and customs. According to Gwaravanda (2011) many negative thoughts about skin colour that Black people have internalised cannot only be attributed to colonialism or slavery but can also be attributed to some Western philosophers' writings which have

suggested colour hierarchies. Gwaravanda (2011) wrote, “Eurocentric perceptions of the black skin have been systematically developed by Western philosophers ... and all these philosophers made either explicit or implicit reference to skin colour in an attempt to provide the intellectual basis for White supremacy which was used to justify colonialisation and exploitation of Africa and denigrate black skin” (p. 198)

In its own case, the theory of Colorism proposes that within marginalised groups, there is a tendency to discriminate against one another on the basis of skin complexion or skin tone (Hunter, 2007). Therefore, the theory of Colorism assumes that due to negative experiences of racial discrimination, Black people have been conditioned to believe that a lighter skin tone is more beautiful and worthy of privileges (Wilder & Cain, 2011). Because of preference for a lighter skin tone, those whose skin tone is on the opposite side of the spectrum are made to feel less appealing and not valued (Hunter, 2002; Mpengesi & Nzuzwa, 2014). For instance, the continuous suffering of Black people during the apartheid era during which Black people were exploited, bullied, mistreated and discriminated against in comparison to White and Coloured people (Brown, 2000), influenced Black people over time to learn and believe that the reason for their misfortune was due to their skin colour (race) and skin tone (colorism), especially since Coloured people were given preferential treatment over Black people (Julien, 2014).

Moreover, Wilder and Cain (2014) assert that Black families play a significant role in socialising their children to be cognisant of colour, such that the family too, has come to “... instil, perpetuate and contest a colour hierarchy” (p. 597). Hence, Black people often bleach their skin because a lighter skin seems to be more fashionable (Robinson, 2011) and it is also perceived as lucrative because it is a form of social capital (Hunter, 2011) with which a person can secure a job, marriage partner and status in their community (AlGhamdi, 2010; Gwaravanda, 2011; Lewis et al., 2011). It is on this basis that an individual would be motivated to bleach their skin because of the value attached to skin lightness.

In conclusion, the above mentioned theories (Theory of Internalised Colonialism and Theory of Colorism) demonstrate the possible origins of colour hierarchies as well as their detrimental effects in influencing people’s subjective realities, which subsequently negatively affected their way of life. It is on this basis that it becomes imperative to investigate factors that students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal propose are responsible for people’s indulgence in skin bleaching in contemporary Africa, as well as to find out if amongst

University of KwaZulu-Natal students, the problem of colonialism and the experience of apartheid will be perceived as the major motivating factors for people's indulgence in skin bleaching.

2.11 Summary

Skin colour has long been an issue of public interest for many years. An individual's skin tone has been used as a determinant of a person's value and how they may be treated (Thomas, 2012; Hunter, 2011). Basically, skin colour has been used as a classification strategy for stratifying people into categories of preferable versus non-preferable (Franklin, 2013). This tendency to measure people on the basis of their skin colour does not only exist amongst people of different racial groups, but also exists amongst people of the same racial group (Brown, 2000; Glenn, 2008). Evidence shows that skin bleaching is very common in the world, including Southern Africa (Glenn, 2008), which is not surprising given the history of European women who practised beautifying regimes during colonisation (Thomas, n.d.). Nevertheless, many theories have been proposed to explain people's indulgence in skin bleaching practices regardless of the side effects of doing so as discussed above. What remains to be discovered is which of these theories will be relevant for explaining the motivations for skin bleaching as perceived by the present study sample.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods that the researcher employed to answer the research questions. In addition it captures the theoretical paradigm that guided and informed the researcher's choice of research design and data analysis. Moreover, this chapter yields forth a detailed and precise account of the research process itself, from design, data collection, data management and analysis.

3.2 Research Paradigm

In this study, the researcher aimed to explore students' perceptions and not lived experiences. For this reason, the researcher employed an interpretive approach. An interpretive approach permits the researcher to explore subjective realities and assumptions as held and understood by the study sample, and to represent these ideas as close as possible to the context in which they are given (Neuman, 2007). According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), interpretive analysis allows the researcher to synthesise data with empathic understanding. The latter relates to the current study because the researcher explored University of KwaZulu-Natal students' perceptions with regards to motivations, consequences and knowledge of skin bleaching practices, and a study participant's skin bleaching practices or lack of, was not an exclusion criterion for taking part in the study.

3.3 Design of the Study

A cross-sectional survey design was implemented because it is a simple and less costly approach (Neuman, 2007). Furthermore, a mixed method design was used in the study, involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative survey produces data in the form of numbers (Neuman, 2007), whereas qualitative survey includes written or spoken words and is directed towards interpreting "meaning and experiences" (Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015, p. 616). The rationale for using a mixed methods research design was to ensure methodological triangulation (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), and hence, increase the rigour of the study.

3.4 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in South Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has five campuses (Pietermaritzburg, Edgewood, Howard College, Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine and Westville) and comprising of students that live both on campus and off campus. However, the study was limited to the Pietermaritzburg campus due to the financial and technical constraints faced by the researcher.

3.5 Study Population

The University of KwaZulu-Natal comprises mainly of Black, Indian, White and Coloured students (Mulwo, 2009 as cited in Mutinta, Govender, Gow, & George, 2012). Hence, the student body consists of individuals from diverse racial groups. The study population also comprised of both males and females over the age of 18 and participation was based on informed consent and was completely voluntary in order to follow the stipulated ethical codes (Emanuel, Wendler, & Grady, 2008).

3.5.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participation in this study was based on the following factors: (a) registered student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and attending on Pietermaritzburg campus; (b) over the age of 18 years; (c) engaging or not engaging in the practice of skin bleaching. Hence, participants' engagement in skin bleaching is not an absolute criterion for participating in the study. As such, all University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus students in general are legible to participate in the study because students who bleach are not the primary focus of the study, but they may be useful in assisting the researcher to gain more insight into the phenomenon and practice of skin bleaching (Robinson, 2011); (d) either residing on campus or off campus / private housing; (e) born and raised in Africa; and (f) with regards to focus group discussions, their willingness to be audiotaped. The above-mentioned inclusion criteria were intended to ensure that the participants in the study were able to provide pertinent and significant information in this particular study.

3.6 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

A convenient sample of 147 respondents from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus student community participated in the study. One hundred and forty (140) filled in the survey questionnaire and seven (7) participated in one focus group discussion. A convenient sample was chosen because it was readily available (Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Neuman, 2007). The researcher simply walked up to potential participants on campus premises and asked if they wanted to fill in a questionnaire on the skin bleaching phenomenon. Those who accepted this request were included in the study sample. Similarly, the researcher walked up to students on campus and asked if they were interested in participating in a focus group discussion on the theme of skin bleaching which was to be conducted at a later time during the research process. It is worth pointing out that the focus group discussion comprised only of participants who had not filled in the questionnaire. The rationale for recruiting fresh participants who had not filled in the questionnaire to participate in the focus group discussion was to ensure that they were less biased in defending what they reported in the questionnaire. Furthermore, fresh focus group participants were in a better position to offer new insights because they had not carried any past learning from the questionnaire, thus increasing rigor (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Moreover, focus group discussions are less structured and for this reason they "... can be used to understand complex social processes, to capture essential aspects of a phenomenon from the perspective of study participants, and to uncover beliefs, values, and motivations that underlie individual health behaviors" (Curry, Nembhard, & Bradley, 2009, p. 1442).

Although the researcher decided to recruit only fresh participants (i.e. those who were not part of the survey questionnaire) to be in the focus group, this was with the exception of participants who would have indicated in the survey questionnaire that they had indulged in skin bleaching practices. For example, item 9 on the demographic section of the survey questionnaire specifically asked if a participant had ever at one point in their life bleached their skin. This item question was strategically asked to inform the researcher whether or not a participant had attempted to engage in skin bleaching. Therefore, the researcher had intended to utilise a criterion based sampling technique to purposefully recruit bleachers to participate in the focus group discussion because this set of people have experienced the phenomenon under study, thus, their participation is relevant, important and especially informative (Neuman, 2007). Unfortunately, amongst the 140 survey questionnaires distributed, only four (4) reported to bleaching their skin, and were thus recruited to

participate in the focus group discussion. However, at the time of the focus group discussion, the researcher was unable to reach some of them on their cellphone numbers, and some did not arrive altogether. Hence, all four (4) were excluded from the focus group discussion. It is however worth noting that of the seven (7) whom the researcher recruited to participate in the focus group discussion, only one (1) reported to have indulged in the practice of skin bleaching a long time ago. Nonetheless, the objective of the study was not primarily on skin bleachers *per se*, but on perceptions about motivations for skin bleaching, consequences of the practice and knowledge levels associated with the practice by all students in general. So any student who met the inclusion criteria was allowed to participate in this study. Snowball sampling method was implemented so as to recruit additional participants (Neuman, 2007). Overall the study sample consisted of University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus students regardless of whether they had engaged or not in skin bleaching before, because skin bleaching was not a selection criterion for participation in the study.

3.7 Research Instruments

Data was collected by means of a self-developed structured Likert-type questionnaire that taps on perceived motivations for people's indulgence in skin bleaching. Some of the items read as follows – skin bleaching helps an individual to: (1) look trendy and fashionable; (2) attain social rank; and (3) satisfy one's partner etcetera. The participants had a choice between four categories ranging from, strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. In addition, a skin bleaching consequence awareness survey questionnaire was used to explore students' knowledge levels regarding the negative consequences associated with skin bleaching. Some of the items read as follows – skin bleaching results in: (a) skin infections; (b) body odour; and (c) suppression of the immune system, to mention a few. Similarly, the participants either responded by choosing between strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree categories. Likert scales are useful for “providing an ordinal level measure” of an individual's thoughts and feelings (Neuman, 2007, p. 131).

Data collected from the above-mentioned two questionnaires were supplemented by a focus group discussion using a self-developed open ended interview guide. An open ended interview is useful for producing unique, unscripted and non-predetermined responses (Curry et al., 2009). The focus group was limited to seven (7) participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated that “focus group discussion affords the researcher privileged access to in group

conversations which often include everyday languages and local terms thereby uncovering variety, group dynamics and stimulating conversations ...” (as cited in Mutinta et al., 2012, p. 354). The focus group explored the skin bleaching phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. The focus group discussion was held in a conducive environment in the department of psychology seminar room to enable participants to feel comfortable and relaxed (Robinson, 2011). The researcher assigned number tags to the participants ranging from 1 to 7. The researcher read out the questions from the interview guide and then captured the respondents’ answers with an audio recorder so as to obtain the information verbatim (Lewis et al., 2011) and simultaneously hand wrote the main ideas made by respondents in the sequence that they unfolded in the focus group discussion (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The focus group discussion was one hour 30 minutes long. All seven (7) participants had consented to be audiotaped.

In addition, participants were expected to pledge that they will not discuss what was said in the focus group afterwards to others or disclose any identifying information about other participants for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Neuman, 2007). Some of the items in the instruments (questionnaires and focus group interview guide) have been adapted from the studies conducted by Lewis et al. (2011), Durosaro et al. (2012), Dlova et al. (2014) and Mpengesi and Nzuza (2014) because the items seemed comprehensive enough to achieve the objectives of the researcher. Data collection was accomplished within a two-week period and prior to participation in the study, respondents signed an informed consent form. The University of KwaZulu-Natal gatekeeper’s approval letter had been obtained, as well as ethical clearance before embarking on any data collection.

On the cover page of the questionnaire was an information sheet that briefly explained the purpose of the study, including the researcher’s particulars such as her phone number and e-mail address. Participants were also informed on the information sheet that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality. For instance, they were not required to put their names anywhere on the questionnaire besides signing a consent form. The same rule applied with regards to the focus group, but also stated that participants were expected to pledge that they will not discuss what was said in the group afterwards to others or disclose any identifying information about other participants for the purpose of confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, the information sheet for the focus group discussion also stated that the discussions will be audiotaped for use only in this study, and that if they felt uncomfortable they could withdraw without any penalty. As such, participants were informed

that participation was voluntary. The latter is an ethical principle of respect for study participants (Emanuel et al., 2008). The information sheets for the survey questionnaire and focus group discussion informed the participants that referral support services would be provided to them if the need arises, e.g. Student Counselling Centre. Moreover, participants were informed that if they were interested in finding out the results of the study, they could contact the researcher or the supervisor and a verbal or a written feedback report would be provided to them. They were also notified that a copy of the thesis would be made available in the university library for easy access. Participants were aware that they could contact the Research Ethics office for questions or queries regarding their rights as study participants.

3.7.1 Demographic Information

Demographic information was gathered from the respondents based on an author generated data sheet. The author generated data sheet drew on students' gender, age, relationship status, geographical location, skin colour preferences and indulgence in skin bleaching etcetera. However, participants' engagement in skin bleaching was not a criterion at all for participating in the study, as mentioned earlier.

3.7.2 Validity and Reliability

It is recommended that every study conducted should follow certain procedures to ensure that the research is valid and reliable. However, obtaining absolute reliability and validity is virtually impossible (Long & Johnson, 2000). Yet, the researcher attempted to approximate this ideal. The validity of the study was promoted through effort at making sure that the study's survey instruments have content validity; that is, that they are able to measure what they are intended to measure (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), hence, in the context of the present study, perceptions of factors responsible for skin bleaching, consequences and knowledge levels regarding skin bleaching practices. In addition, by the rigour of collecting data in a standard form, with precision, as implemented in the present study, any other researcher can replicate the study and arrive at the same conclusion provided the conditions remain the same (Neuman, 2007). Furthermore, the reliability of the research instruments have been promoted through the use of the pilot study. From the exercise of the pilot study, conceptual clarity was entrenched and any semantic confusions that would affect the reliability of the participants'

responses was detected and corrected before the main study commenced (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006).

Thirdly, the researcher sampled 147 participants as opposed to small units of participants which is common in qualitative studies. By so doing, a large sample size permits the researcher to make inferences (Neuman, 2007) hence, increase the likelihood of research findings being somewhat generalisable. The researcher also used precise levels of measurement to improve reliability. For instance, on the survey questionnaire, the researcher uses four refined categories (ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree) to measure the students' perceptions and knowledge levels, thus, more specific information is measured and the probability of any other construct being obtained is minimised (Neuman, 2007). Again, this study employed a mixed methods approach (triangulation), which enhances the dependability of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). According to Curry et al. (2009, p. 1442) mixed methods "... are increasingly recognized as valuable, because they can capitalize on the respective strengths of each approach. Pairing quantitative and qualitative components of a larger study can achieve various aims, including corroborating findings, generating more complete data, and using results from one method to enhance insights attained with the complementary method."

In addition, by recording the focus group discussion and transcribing the data verbatim, the researcher ensured that the participants' accounts were captured fully in their originality. Again, transcribing participants' audio recordings verbatim enabled the researcher to go over the material numerous times, and become immersed in the data in order to adequately reflect the participants' accounts, thereby ensuring the truthfulness and authenticity of the research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Furthermore, performing member checks by phone calling the focus group participants and obtaining their verification with regards to the themes that the researcher generated, ensured that the researcher's biases were minimised and the findings reflected the participants' truthful reality (Long & Johnson, 2000). Participants were phone called because it was more convenient to do so since the researcher was out of town and unable to see the participants in person. Moreover, the entire research process (design, data collection and analysis) was critically examined and evaluated by a qualified researcher, suggesting the credibility and neutrality of the research study itself (Noble & Smith, 2015). The researcher kept a reflective journal to provide a space for introspection. As such, the researcher's attitudes were evaluated and taken into account (Long & Johnson, 2000). Consequently, rigour is entrenched in the study methodology through the attempt to use valid

instruments, larger sample size, pilot study, precision in data collection, reflective journal, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

3.7.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study of 15 participants was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the participants' comprehension of the questionnaire so that modifications could be made thereto if deemed necessary (Neuman, 2007). The researcher walked up to students on university campus (Pietermaritzburg) and asked if they would like to participate in a pilot study on the theme of skin bleaching. When the respondents agreed, the researcher handed the participants an information sheet and an informed consent form. Thereafter, the researcher issued them with the questionnaire and requested them to complete it, to offer their opinion either in writing or verbally with regards to the survey questionnaire as a whole including conceptual clarity. In this way, any important issues that could potentially arise were dealt with before the actual study commenced (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). As such Blaxter et al. (2006, p. 137) stipulates that a pilot is, "re-assessment without tears, ... whereby you try out the research techniques and methods which you have in mind, to see how well they work in practice, and, if necessary, modify your plans accordingly." Hence, by so doing the researcher somewhat improved the reliability of the study (Neuman, 2007). Nevertheless, data collected from the pilot study was not included in the study.

3.8 Data Analysis

Statistical Package Software for Social Sciences Version 23.0 (SPSS-23.0) was used to analyse the survey questionnaire data.

This involved the application of:

3.8.1 Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics provided means, rank orderings, frequencies and percentages of the students' responses to the questionnaire items (Blaxter et al., 2006). Furthermore, frequency counts and percentages were also used to describe participants' demographic information.

Data collected from the focus group discussion was analysed by:

3.8.2 Thematic Analysis: Data was collected by means of an audio recorder and only participants who consented to audio-recording were audiotaped. The audio-recording was transcribed and themes were generated (Neuman, 2007). Data analysis of focus group discussion took place in three phases:

3.8.2.1 Phase 1: Transcribing

Data was transcribed verbatim because the researcher wanted to ensure that the participants' story was captured fully in their originality. After that, the researcher became immersed in the data to ensure familiarisation by going over the material numerous times, making side notes (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). By so doing the researcher established a pattern in her mind about how information was distributed as well as the location of pertinent information.

3.8.2.2 Phase 2: Coding and categorising

Having looked at the transcripts numerous times, the researcher began representing the texts into unit meanings by underlying key words, phrases, ideas and descriptions (Blaxter et al., 2006). These unit meanings were colour coded distinctively according to their tentative theme. Thereafter, the unit meanings were assembled to form concrete themes, and the researcher ensured that each unit meaning was correctly placed under its appropriate theme colour. This process of inducing themes and categorising was repeated to ensure that corrections were made in case unit meanings were misplaced or simply to make room for new themes to be created should there have been an oversight by researcher (Terre Blanche et al., 2006; Robinson, 2011). Data that did not fit was not discarded but delineated (Blaxter et al., 2006).

3.8.2.3 Phase 3: Checking

The researcher reflected on how the data was collected and how interpretations were made in order to assess any potential prejudices (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). And by performing member checks by calling the participants of the focus group to inform them of the induced themes the researcher ensured that biases were minimised and the results mirrored the participants' true accounts (Long & Johnson, 2000).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

To maintain high ethical standards in the course of this study, every effort was made to avoid exploitation of the participants. This was achieved through preservation of their autonomy by obtaining their *informed consent* to take part in the study (Neuman, 2007). For example, the information sheets for survey questionnaires and focus group discussion were adequately informative in order to enable participants to make an informed decision. In addition to preserving the autonomy of the participants in the course of this research, the following principles of research ethics were also protected: the research ethical principle of *collaborative partnership* was enhanced in the study by assuring the participants that their participation was voluntary and that should they discover that any aspect of the questionnaire is against their personal interests and values, they were entitled to refuse to continue their participation without penalty. The *social value* of the study was promoted by reminding the participants that the study was aimed at generating knowledge to establish if the practice of skin bleaching is for people's own good or not, and to institute relevant intervention depending on the direction of the findings (Emanuel et al., 2008). They were assured that the result of the study was for the good of the society, and therefore worth their time, participation and their honest opinion on the matter.

The *scientific validity* of the study was preserved by recruiting a non-biased sample for the study and by attempting to interpret the results of the study as objectively as possible, uncontaminated by the personal values and opinions of the researcher. Even though the researcher employed a convenient sampling method, the sample selection procedure was planned in such a way as to respect the *principle of fair participation* of respondents (Emanuel, Wendler, & Grady, 2000). For instance, the researcher made notes and tally marks to correspondence with each gender and race to ensure a fair and representative sample. The items in the research instruments were not intended to cause any harm to the participants, thus, and it was hoped that participants would not incur any risks or discomfort in the course of the study. However, in the event of a participant incurring any psychological discomfort, referral mechanisms were put in place to provide the necessary support. For example, arrangements were made with the Student Counselling Centre in such cases and the contact numbers of those service providers were made available to the participants. Hence, in the present study the *principle of fair risk-benefit ratio* remained unthreatened. Finally, *respect for participants* was protected in the study by assuring the participants that participation was voluntary and that each participant had the option to withdraw without penalty (Emanuel et

al., 2008). Moreover, participants were informed that if they had any concerns or questions about their rights as study participants they could contact the relevant authorities (e.g. Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration office) and their contact details were made available to them.

3.10 Summary

This chapter outlined the methods that the researcher employed in the study. The chapter entailed the design of the study, study population, inclusion and exclusion criteria. In addition, the chapter provided detailed information with regards to instruments used, as well as a step by step outline of how the data was analysed. In conclusion the researcher highlighted some of the ethical principles that were considered to ensure validity and reliability of the study, and safety of study participants.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It outlines the descriptive analysis of the study participants. In addition the chapter provides study findings research question by research question; what motivates people to bleach, what are the major consequences of skin bleaching, what are the knowledge levels of University of KwaZulu-Natal students with regards to the negative consequences of skin bleaching and what variables can provide a comprehensive theory to account for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching practices. This chapter concludes with a summary of findings.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Distribution of Respondents

4.2.1 Survey Questionnaire Response Rate

One hundred and forty University of KwaZulu-Natal students were administered a survey questionnaire. All the survey questionnaires were included in the analysis because they all met the inclusion criteria for the study. However, some survey questionnaires had missing data. Even though some surveys had missing data, they were included in the data analysis, therefore, any missing data was coded as such on SPSS. The researcher decided to include questionnaires that had missing data because despite the incidences of missing data, the degree of such incidences were regarded as not very significant to have major bearing on the results. The reason behind the occurrence of missing data is attributed to the fact that the survey questionnaire appeared long and time consuming, hence, some participants became discouraged to respond to all the items as required. Some of the items which were not responded to in relation to factors influencing skin bleaching practice included amongst them, Item 1 (look trendy and fashionable), Item 3 (attain high social class/rank) and Item 6 (remove skin pimples and blemishes so that they obtain a smooth skin). However, as previously mentioned, the occurrence of missing data was considered insignificant to negatively influence the findings of the study, which could simultaneously have affected conclusions drawn.

4.2.2 Demographic Characteristics of Survey Questionnaire Participants

This section provides a description of the survey questionnaire participants. The analysis indicates that of the 140 participants, 1 (0.7%) did not indicate their gender. As such, of the 139 that indicated their gender 58 (41.4%) were males and the majority 80 (57.9%) were females. Again of the 139 that indicated their race, 49 (35%) were Black, 33 (23.6%) were White, 39 (27.9%) were Indian and 18 (12.9%) were Coloured. In addition, most of the participants 79 (56.4%) reported that they were single/not dating, whereas 55 (39.3%) reported that they were dating and 6 (4.3%) reported that they were married. None of the survey participants reported being divorced or widowed. Although, 4 (2.9%) did not indicate their age, of the 136 who indicated their age, their ages ranged between 17 to 45 years, with an average age of 21 years, 6 months. In addition the most predominant age was 19. Table 1 provides a summary of demographic characteristics of survey questionnaire participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Questionnaire Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	58	41.4
Female	80	57.9
Total	138	99.3
Race		
Black	49	35
White	33	23.6
Indian	39	27.9
Coloured	18	12.9
Total	139	99.4
Relationship Status		
Single/not dating	79	56.4
Dating	55	39.3
Divorced	0	0
Married	6	4.3
Widowed	0	0
Total	140	100
Age		

17-21	87	59.6
22-26	37	25.3
27-34	8	5.5
34-45	14	9.6
Total	146	100
Level of Study		
Undergraduate	117	83.6
Honours	12	8.6
Masters	10	7.1
Doctorate	1	0.7
Total	140	100

Note. The above table is a continuation of Table 1 on the previous page.

4.2.3 Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

This section provides background information of the focus group participants. The analysis indicates that of the 7 participants who participated in the focus group, 2 (28.6%) were males and 5 (71.4%) were females. All 7 (100%) of the participants were Black. In addition, 4 (57.1%) reported that they were single/not dating and 3 (42.9%) stated that they were dating. None of the 7 focus group participants were married, divorced or widowed. The ages of the participants ranged between 21 to 29 years, with an average age of 24 years, 4 months. Table 2 provides a summary of demographic characteristics of focus group participants.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	2	28.6
Female	5	71.4
Total	7	100
Race		
Black	7	100
White	0	0

Indian	0	0
Coloured	0	0
Total	7	100
Relationship Status		
Single/not dating	4	57.1
Dating	3	42.9
Divorced	0	0
Married	0	0
Widowed	0	0
Total	7	100
Age		
21-22	2	28.6
22-23	3	42.9
24-25	1	14.3
26-29	1	14.3
Total	7	100
Level of Study		
Undergraduate	1	14.3
Honours	0	0
Masters	5	71.4
Doctorate	1	14.3
Total	7	100

Note. The above table is a continuation of Table 2 on the previous page.

4.3 Presentation of Results, Research Question by Research Question

4.3.1 Research Question One:

What Factors do Students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Propose are Responsible for People's Indulgence in Skin Bleaching in Contemporary Africa?

Data relating to the above-mentioned research question is summarised below in Table 3. The data type that addresses this particular research question is the survey questionnaire.

Key: 3=Strongly Agree (SA)

2= Agree (A)

1= Disagree (D)

0= Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 3: Factors Influencing Skin Bleaching Practice as Perceived by University Studied

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Choice
Look trendy and fashionable	26 (18.6%)	55 (39.3%)	39 (27.9%)	19 (13.6%)	1.63	1	Agree
Remove skin pimples and blemishes so that they obtain a smooth skin	20 (14.3%)	62 (44.3%)	41 (29.3%)	16 (11.4%)	1.62	2	Agree
To be popular among peers	23 (16.4%)	58 (41.4%)	38 (27.1%)	20 (14.3%)	1.60	3	Agree
Attain high social class/rank	21 (15.0%)	57 (37.1%)	43 (30.7%)	23 (16.4%)	1.51	4	Agree
Be White and look more like an European	23 (16.4%)	44 (31.4%)	44 (31.4%)	27 (19.3%)	1.46	5	Disagree
Satisfy one's partner	14	54	45	26	1.40	6	Disagree

	(10.0%)	(38.6%)	(32.1%)	(18.6%)			
Acquire a desired marriage partner	13 (9.3%)	41 (29.3%)	57 (40.7%)	27 (19.3%)	1.29	7	Disagree
Achieve and succeed in their career (employment opportunities)	10 (7.1%)	25 (17.9%)	57 (40.7%)	47 (33.6%)	0.99	8	Disagree

Note. The above table is a continuation of Table 3 on the previous page.

Table 3 indicates that participants propose that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching mostly to look trendy and fashionable, to remove skin pimples and blemishes so that they obtain a smooth skin, to be popular amongst peers and to attain high social class/rank respectively. Furthermore, the findings indicate that participants did not perceive that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching in order to be White and look more like a European, to satisfy one's partner, to acquire a desired marriage partner and to achieve and succeed in their career (employment opportunities). Therefore, the need to look trendy and fashionable is ranked top of the list, whereas need to achieve and succeed in their career is ranked bottom of the list.

The next section outlines major consequences of skin bleaching from the point of study participants.

4.3.2 Research Question Two:

From the Point of the Study Participants, what are Among the Major Consequences (Positive and Negative) of Skin Bleaching?

The data type that addresses this particular research question is the focus group interview schedule.

The first theme demonstrates participants' perceptions with regards to the major negative consequences related to the practice of skin bleaching. The second theme outlines the perceived positive consequences of skin bleaching.

4.3.2.1 Theme One: Negative consequences of skin bleaching

This section outlines the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. Participants emphasised that even though people utilise skin bleaching products, there are consequences that usually arise, and most of them are negative. Amongst them are: (a) Cost and Expenses; (b) Time Consumption; (c) Side Effects on the Skin and Body; (d) addiction; and (e) Labelling and Stigmatisation Attitudes.

4.3.2.1.1 Cost and expenses

The participants' accounts clearly articulated how expensive skin bleaching products are. Hence, remarking on this:

Participant 1 who had disclosed to having bleached his skin shared:

“...it was expensive too...The product that I was actually using was an advanced product to the student and using that was crazy. So the cost aspect!”

Furthermore, participant 7 alluded:

“...there are good creams that whiten you without making you have those side effects that are very expensive...”

Participant 6 gave an account of a situation he was familiar with, relating to his next door neighbour whose wife was reportedly bleaching her skin against her husband's wishes. The husband felt that the money was a lot, hence, could be used for far more important things.

This is how participant 6 gave an account of what the husband said:

“I cannot sit and see you wasting money...This money is supposed to maybe go for the children’s school fees, healthcare and whatsoever. And you are wasting it.”

4.3.2.1.2 Time consumption

Skin bleaching reportedly requires time and effort because it is considered a beauty regimen.

Therefore commenting on this:

Participant 6 alluded:

“...Skin bleaching is not something that you get into your room and you do it for one minute...you need to take time...You have to make sure that the oil touches every part of the body and that is not something you can do within minutes...You are wasting time, valuable time...”

Similarly participant 7 stated:

“...There are various points and those points need attention, they need attention and you need to take time...”

4.3.2.1.3 Side effects on the skin and body

Participants highlighted the negative side effects that skin bleaching creams have on the skin and body. Nevertheless, participants held mixed reviews with regards to their effects on the skin and body.

Participant 1 stated:

“I had to stop on the way because I started having some kind of rashes coming out. So I was uncomfortable then and had to stop.”

Participant 3 shared:

“The more you bleach the more you like damage your skin because you are removing layers to actually protect you from the rays from the sun and... in the long run it could actually lead to cancer...There is this other effect whereby the skin instead of being light it’s like reddish, pinkish as if the person is in pain and sometimes some dark spots.”

Participant 2 reported:

“...it has negative effects on your skin...if you look at people who have done this, you look at them like uhmm...they now have black spots in their faces...And I once met one...she had lumps on her face filled with water and stuff...”

Participant 6 added:

“Every woman that bleach there is odour. There is a particular odour that emanate from their body...You can use perfume or can spray perfume or what so ever but when you pass that particular odour is there and it irritates...”

On the contrary participant 7 disagreed with the idea of generalising the side effect of body odour to every bleacher. As such participant 7 stated:

“...effects that you are pointing out are product specific because not everybody has body odour if you are using the right product.”

However, participant 4 shared that skin bleaching creams in general have negative consequences irrespective of their nature and cost. Hence, participant 4 stated:

“...I once talked to this lady she is a dermatologist in Pinetown. When I asked her about the lightening creams and what not, she said no matter where they come from they always remove that epidermal cell that protects you from the UV rays. So whether you got it for 1000 or whatever they always do the same thing, it's just that the others take a long time to show those effects. The ones that we get from the streets, the effects will show immediately. However, the once that we see from the...the OLAY'S and whatever they take time to show the effects. So she was just saying skin bleaching/lightening removes the epidermal cell whether you do it with approved or non-approved.”

4.3.2.1.4 Addiction

Skin bleachers reportedly over time become addicted to their bleaching practice to the extent of not being able to stop the habit. For this reason, participants shared:

Participant 5 reported:

“...Once you start something...to fix something it never stops. You are gonna go to your breast, and then go to your bums and then do something and then you whole person changes...”

Similarly participant 3 shared:

“I believe just like drugs this thing is addictive cause once you start it's hard to go back.”

Again, the participant stated:

“Yeah it's addictive.”

4.3.2.1.5 Labelling and stigmatisation attitudes

Participants reported that people often hold stigmatising attitudes and negative evaluation towards people who engage in the skin bleaching practice. Commenting on this issue:

Participant 6 reported:

“...In my own perspective I look at women who bleach as fake people because why should you fake who are. If...if you can fake who you are, you can fake whatsoever thing that is attributed to you...”

Similarly participant 4 said:

“...Fake does attract but it does not keep. My opinion will be that person suffers from low self-esteem...”

Furthermore, participant 1 stated:

“...In Cameroon when you are getting married to a fair lady there is always this connotation... there is this attribution that will you cope? So it's like if you marry a fair lady you need to spend a lot to keep them. So men will be like, will I really cope or not? And there is that opportunity window that you miss of course when you bleach.”

Moreover participant 3 reported that a skin bleacher has:

“Low self-esteem, and he or she needs help.”

However, participant 7 disputed the belief that skin bleachers are fake. Hence, participant 7 shared:

“...This is what I am doing to myself, not to change my personality...But it doesn't make me fake. I think that's the thing with the talks.”

The following section highlights the positive consequences of skin bleaching practices.

4.3.2.2 Theme Two: Positive consequences of skin bleaching

This section outlines the positive consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. These positive consequences motivate people to engage in the practice. The identified themes were: (a) Beauty; (b) Fashion and Trend; (c) Anticipated Gains; and (d) Medical Conditions

4.3.2.2.1 Beauty

Skin bleaching is considered to be a beauty regimen. Therefore people bleach their skin because being light/fair skinned is perceived as attractive and admirable.

Proving this point, Participant 1 who earlier on reported to having bleached his skin, disclosed his reason for bleaching:

“...I have bleached sometime like a long time ago. It was so easy maybe to like maybe find a girl... (laughs)... and we feel more comfortable and we are so happy when people tell us that we are good or something.”

Participant 3 added:

“Ummhhh...Let’s say you are in a crowd and you are the darkest person amongst light people...the first thing they say is Joh! That person is dark! But when you are light skinned amongst dark people or fair skinned people they will be like wow! And she is so pretty look at how her fair skin is. So yeah! You will be avoiding that.”

Participant 6 said:

“...Most times people bleach because...they want to look beautiful and attractive... attractive to others maybe opposite sex”

In addition participant 7 reported:

“...it just becomes part of my routine of wanting to be beautiful...because I know guys who would really go for fair skin... being lighter in complexion is associated with beauty...with being attractive.”

4.3.2.2.2 Fashion and trend

Participants reported that lightness or whiteness has become a fashionable and trendy ideal. Some commented as follows:

Participant 3 reported:

“...talking to some of my male friends, uhhmm, most of them prefer dating light skinned girls because they believe that once you are the yellow bone you are the ‘it thing’...”

Participant 2 also stated:

“I think basically women are insecure. They believe that if they look more Whiter then guys would be attracted to them and stuff...now it’s a trend.”

Similarly participant 7 added that:

“...skin bleaching has become the norm...it becomes imbedded as part of being modern...”

Again, participant 4 shared:

“Mmmm... It’s like right now being a yellow bone is a trend and you should be a yellow bone and if you are not then? However, since it is a trend we go with that...”

4.3.2.2.3 Anticipated gains

Participants reported that being light skinned accorded an individual more opportunities than being dark skinned, and that would ultimately improve their quality of life. Demonstrating this point:

Participant 1 reported:

“If you go to township here and you are like a White or maybe fair or light they will attribute it to riches. Even if you go to some offices the respect given to you as a White will of course be different because of course you have that quality. That is the effect of apartheid. So people would be like, I want people to know that I am in this class. And they do those things because they want to portray themselves differently in society and get the same respect like the White of course.”

Furthermore, participant 5 added:

“...I think now we are bleaching just to look better and we think we will get better advantages when we are lighter skinned compared to darker skins.”

Similarly participant 6 shared:

“...You can bleach because maybe it’s attributed to your occupation and you think it will attract people to your business...”

Participant 2 alluded:

“During the Apartheid era they will just tell you that ummhh...this place is for Whites only and if you are Black you are not allowed in... So probably you will want to be White because you want to access all those things.”

In corroborating participant 1 and 2's ideas, participant 4 expressed that most people are still suffering from the psychological scars of apartheid. Hence participant 4 shared:

"...I think it stuck with us...People are still stuck with that being Black you are not superior...We have not healed from apartheid...If a White person is in a restaurant and they are not satisfied with the service they will complain. But a Black person will be like...no they will not hear me because I am Black."

On the contrary, participant 3 shared that people no longer bleach because they want to access the same prestigious opportunities accorded to those who are light skinned. But stressed that skin bleaching is mostly motivated by one's dire need to blend in with others. Hence participant 3 stated:

"...Aren't the benefits now equal? You have got equal benefits now. I can go to White clubs, I can go anywhere where White people are going. It's no longer about apartheid, it's about fitting in."

Likewise participant 6 agreed with participant 3 that there is more to why people engage in the practice of skin bleaching rather than just the simple explanation of attributing skin bleaching practices to the experience of apartheid. As such participant 6 stated:

"...I do not think it has anything to do with apartheid because even in places where apartheid never existed we still have people bleaching."

4.3.2.2.4 Medical conditions

There are certain heritable medical conditions that affect a person's skin colour and thus may motivate a person to want to bleach as a means to avoid embarrassment. Stressing this point: Participant 7 shared:

"...there are also medical conditions that are associated with having White patches so in order to hide that because they add some social stigma...you have to whiten the skin..."

Similarly participant 3 stated,

"It is a genetic disease. My sister had it...So a person may bleach."

The next section outlines students' knowledge levels in relation to the consequences of skin bleaching practices.

4.3.3 Research Question Three:

To what Extent are Students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Fully Aware of the Negative Consequences of Skin Bleaching Practice?

Data relating to the above mentioned research question is summarised below in Table 4. The data type that addresses this particular research question is the survey questionnaire.

Key: 3=Strongly Agree (SA)

2= Agree (A)

1= Disagree (D)

0= Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 4: Information on Students' Knowledge of Consequences of Skin bleaching

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Choice
Sun damage, including sun burn	47 (33.6%)	68 (48.6%)	20 (14.3%)	4 (2.9%)	2.14	1	Agree
Financial constraints because skin bleaching products are very expensive	46 (32.9%)	66 (47.1%)	24 (17.1%)	4 (2.9%)	2.10	2	Agree
Fragile skin	49 (35.0%)	59 (42.1%)	26 (18.6%)	6 (4.3%)	2.08	3	Agree
Absorption of harmful substances (e.g. hydroquinone found in most skin bleaching creams) which can lead to organ failure and death by poisoning	37 (26.4%)	72 (51.4%)	24 (17.1%)	7 (5.0%)	1.99	4	Agree
Negative (judgmental) attitude from society for	36 (25.7%)	65 (46.4%)	28 (20.0%)	10 (7.1%)	1.91	5	Agree

changing one's skin colour							
Skin infections, such as fungi	29 (20.7%)	68 (48.6%)	37 (26.4%)	6 (4.3%)	1.86	6	Agree
Body odour	10 (7.1%)	26 (18.6%)	84 (60.0%)	19 (13.6%)	1.19	7	Disagree
Suppression of the immune system	13 (9.3%)	43 (30.7%)	66 (47.1%)	17 (12.1%)	0.66	8	Disagree

Note. The above table is a continuation of Table 4 on the previous page.

Table 4 shows that participants endorsed that skin bleaching mostly results in sun damage, financial constraints, fragile skin, absorption of harmful substances, negative (judgemental) attitude from society and skin infections respectively. These findings indicate that the participants are fully aware of the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. In addition, the results show that some participants reported that skin bleaching does not result in body odour and suppression of the immune system. Overall, sun damage was ranked top of the list, whereas suppression of the immune system as ranked bottom of the list.

The following section elucidates variables of a comprehensive theory of skin bleaching.

4.3.4 Research Question Four: What Variables Should a Viable and Comprehensive Theory of Skin Bleaching Factor into its Formulation?

The data type that addresses this particular research question is the focus group interview schedule.

The researcher identified themes and subthemes that should be taken into consideration as they serve as viable variables that provide a comprehensive theory for the practice of skin bleaching. The themes will firstly be presented in a Scalar diagram below. Thereafter, the themes will be outlined and supported by extracts derived from the focus group interview.

The first theme to be discussed is: (a) Socialisation. The different subthemes under socialisation are as follows: (i) Upbringing and Modelling; and (ii) Social Stereotypes. The second theme is: (b) External Influential Factors. The different subthemes under external influential factors are as follows: (i) Celebrities; and (ii) Media

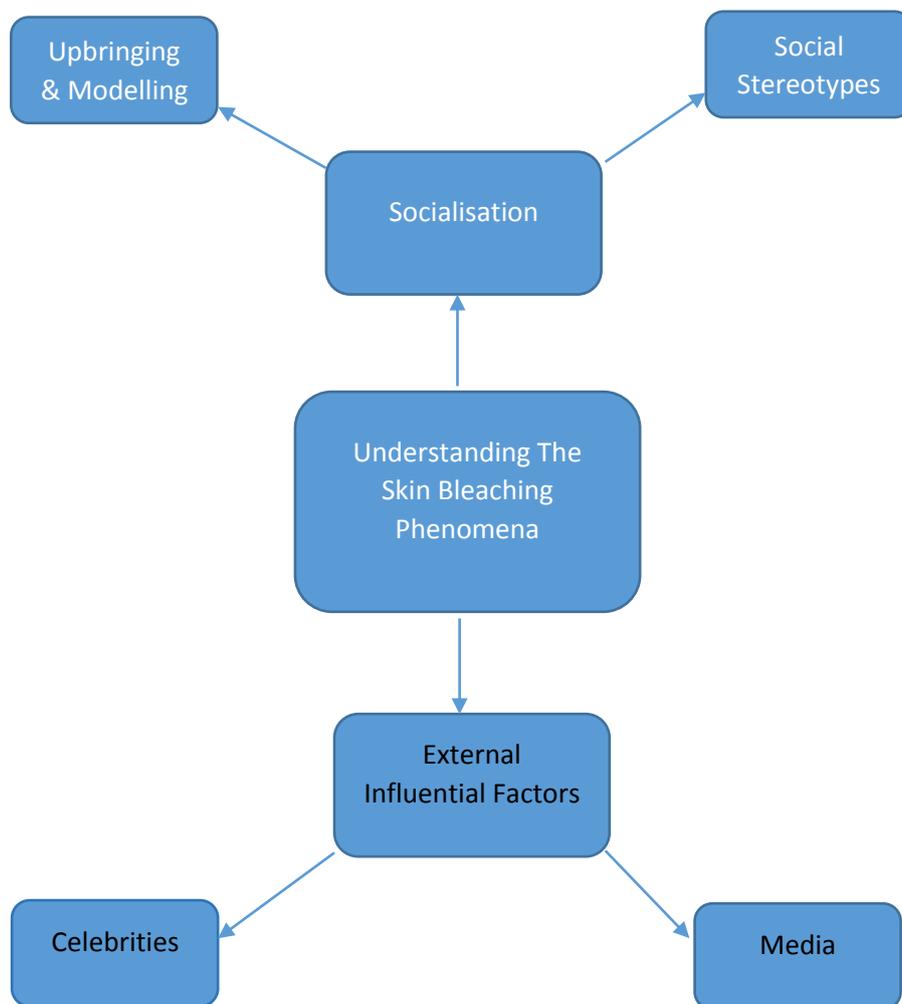


Figure 1. Scalar Diagram of Elements of Skin Bleaching Theoretical Formulation

4.3.4.1 Theme One: Socialisation

Participants reported that the family and society play a very crucial role in how people come to conceive themselves as well as others.

4.3.4.1.1 Upbringing & modelling

In describing how society and parental figures teach and model the value of light skin to their young ones:

Participant 3 reported:

“I actually believe that it is society... in fact the parents are the ones. Sometimes, not always, but in most cases they are the ones who say that this child is beautiful because she is light in complexion...it actually imprints in that child and that child actually believes that since I am dark in complexion, it means I am ugly therefore they actually try to make themselves lighter.”

Similarly participant 6 stated:

“You know when you are growing up, you encounter a lot of challenges with your colour. The community in which you grew up in can use words like you are darker... or look at that black thing. Those things can build up in you...And in order to avoid such insults you have to do something, at least lighten your skin and change your skin from the original skin...”

4.3.4.1.2 Social stereotypes

Participants reported that blackness is associated with everything that is not appealing.

Hence, commenting on this issue:

Participant 4 who acknowledged this added:

“I think that when the western people came here in Africa, they made it like being black is a bad thing...like being black is associated with darkness. Because I remember this time like in Facebook and people were debating asking why is Jesus portrayed as a white person and why is Satan a black person...That is what they instilled in our minds that if you are black you are bad. That is why Satan is Black.”

Likewise participant 1 shared:

“I have had a case living in Macedonia where we were almost like the first Blacks in the area. And when you are going to the lecture in the morning you have all the kids going to school on your back, (laughs a bit) and they are like ooohh, a monkey around. That kind of thing actually like cause them to think I need to change... and even when you are travelling in a plane you see some Whites. When you sit closer to them they are like uuuhhh this one!”

In addition participant 6 reported,

“...Most people are not comfortable with their colour...And the colour too in a particular environment is attributed to stigma and maybe discrimination. And for people to avoid such instances, they tend to bleach their colour so that they camouflage their true colour...”

However, participant 7 disputed that racial discrimination is no longer the cause of people's tendencies to prefer light skin colour over black skin colour. As such participant 7 asserted:

“...Even though skin bleaching is not a relatively new phenomena, it has changed phase. So in the colonisation period that explanation would have held water. But now at the present moment we are in a post-colonial stage. So understanding that it's not about blackness, it's not about racial discrimination per se...but about what whiteness affords you. The advantages of being White.”

4.3.4.2 Theme Two: External influential factors

According to the participants, celebrities and different media outlets are believed to be influencing peoples' lifestyle choices, including bleaching tendencies.

4.3.4.2.1 Celebrities

Participants alluded that celebrities are usually admired, particularly by the youth. For this reason, the youth emulate them. Therefore:

Participant 4 stated:

“...We look up to celebrities quite a lot... most celebrities have light skin and everything. So most youth tend to look up to celebrities and they want to look like Beyoncé or Halle Berry or whatever. So they think it is better to have a lighter skin than a darker skin...”

Similarly participant 7 remarked:

“...We live in this enmeshed and interconnected world... We are so exposed to the celebrities that we think are the epitome of beauty and have those caramel skins like Beyoncé so we try to emulate that...”

In addition, participant 3 shared:

“...Compare the now Chomi and past Chomi (laughs). You will see a huge change. People will be like, I want to be like that. And they bleach their skin...Therefore, I will bleach my skin as well...”

4.3.4.2.2 Media

Media and any forms of advertisement are deemed to be quite an influential force for spreading information. Participants shared their opinions with regards to media and advertisement influences:

Participant 1 reported:

“...I went to a store and saw like a lotion which was kind of like beautiful. It showed in the lotion how the advertisement was...the marketing stuff in it was good... So I bought it.”

Moreover, participant 3 added:

“...Facebook, social media, television and even radios can convince you that this product is good, it's available and cheap. Go and get yours! You see if you did not get such news you would not have that interest to go and look up a lotion of that nature. So the media is really playing a serious role in that aspect.”

Additionally participant 6 stated:

“You do not even have to type them. Maybe you could be searching information on google, and the advertisement is just there going on in front of you. You see it was not your intention...You are there to use their services but they are there to advertise those things for you...So you see you cannot run away from it.”

Interestingly participant 7 expressed how manipulative skin bleaching advertisements can be, in that the advertisement messages are not put bluntly, but rather, intricately. As such participant 7 shared:

“...So there are subtle forms of doing this that is why we find that in skin bleaching they are not going to say out rightly that we are selling skin bleaching creams. They will say we are selling bebe creams to even out your skin tones. So they talk in order to make this legitimate and more acceptable to everyone...”

4.4 Summary of Findings

This chapter outlined the results of the study research question by research question. The findings indicate that participants proposed that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching mostly to look trendy and fashionable, to remove skin pimples and blemishes so that they obtain a smooth skin, to be popular amongst peers and to attain high social class/rank respectively. Moreover, findings also indicate that participants did not perceive that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching in order to be White and look more like a European, to satisfy one's partner, to acquire a desired marriage partner and to achieve and

succeed in their career respectively. As such, the need to look trendy and fashionable was ranked first whereas the need to acquire a desired marriage partner was ranked least.

In addition, the study showed that participants believed that skin bleaching practices have both negative and positive consequences. Some of the reported negative consequences were that it is costly, time consuming and causes negative side effects on the body and skin, to mention a few. Nonetheless, the participants also reported that skin bleaching creams can be beneficial, and for this reason, often used for purposes of beauty, fashion and trend as well as to treat certain medical conditions. Furthermore, the findings indicate that participants are fully aware of the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. As such they ranked sun damage as the most perceived negative consequence whereas suppression of the immune system was ranked as the least perceived negative consequence. Moreover the findings show that quite a few variables can account for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching practices. For instance, the manner in which people are socialised, for example, upbringing and modelling and social stereotypes, as well as other external influential factors, such as media and celebrities. Nonetheless, the next chapter is concerned with the discussion and interpretations of the results of the study as outlined above.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher discusses the results of the study research question by research question as previously outlined in Chapter 4. Thereafter, the researcher will outline the implications for clinical practice and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Discussion of Results, Research Question by Research Question

5.2.1 *Research Question One:*

What factors do students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal propose are responsible for people's indulgence in skin bleaching in contemporary Africa?

The results of the study relating to this research question have been highlighted in Table 3 of Chapter 4. The findings indicate that participants propose that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching mostly to look trendy and fashionable, to remove skin pimples and blemishes so as to obtain a smooth skin, to be popular amongst peers and to attain high social class/rank respectively. Therefore, the finding that people bleach because they are motivated to remove skin pimples and blemishes so as to obtain a smooth skin suggests people's need to obtain a smooth and perfect complexion. The latter is congruent with the existing literature that indeed skin bleaching is perceived as a body beautification practice performed by people who are determined to achieve a flawless skin complexion (Ajose, 2005; Mpengezi & Nzuzza, 2014). For example, Mpengezi and Nzuzza (2014) found that 63.3% of their study participants reported that people often bleach because they want to remove facial blemishes so that they appear beautiful. Similarly, a study by Ajose (2005) found that people bleach to even out and improve their complexion. For this reason, de Souza (2008, p. 27) stated that having a smooth skin is one of the benefits of bleaching because "an even toned, blemish free skin is everyone's dream." Therefore, the current study and the existing literature demonstrates the value attached to possessing a radiant, even toned and perfect skin complexion as it is deemed attractive, and thus, admirable. The latter may motivate an individual to employ all means possible to achieve this esteemed attribute.

However, the current study revealed that participants did not perceive that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching in order to be White and look more like a European, to satisfy one's partner, to acquire a desired marriage partner and to achieve and succeed in their career. For this reason, the current study revealed that the need to acquire a desired marriage partner was ranked 7th indicative that it was not considered a motivational factor for skin bleaching practices. It is worth noting that this finding does not correlate with a study by Durosaro et al. (2012) which found that the need to attract desired marriage partners was ranked second, indicative that it was highly endorsed as a motivational factor for skin bleaching practices (Durosaro et al., 2012). Moreover, since less than half (47.8%) of participants in this current study reported that people bleached for purposes of being White or European looking, it is indicative that the hypothesis of this study has been disproved. Thus, amongst University of KwaZulu-Natal students, the problem of colonialism and the experience of apartheid has not been perceived as the major motivating factor for people's indulgence in skin bleaching. For this reason, the theory of Internalised Colonialism does not seem to hold true in this study because the majority of participants did not believe that people bleach because they are overwhelmed by feelings of inferiority which cause them to strive for Eurocentric attributes (Utsey et al., 2014). The latter contradicts the findings of a study by Lewis et al. (2011) which found that people bleached because they wanted to be White and European looking. Hence, the desire to be White or Eurocentric is no longer considered a relevant motivational factor for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching practices as perceived by University of KwaZulu-Natal students.

The study reveals that University of KwaZulu-Natal students propose that people are most likely motivated to bleach for purposes of being accorded some degree of symbolic capital, such as admiration, reverence and status (Glenn, 2008), as opposed to bleaching for purposes of negating internalised psychological scars of colonialism or apartheid. This point is evidently endorsed by (52.1%) of participants in this study who reported that people bleach in order to attain a high social class/rank. This could mean that the Theory of Colorism holds true in the sense that people are bleaching because lightness is considered beautiful and worthy, thus according some degree of social standing (Hunter, 2002). This phenomenon is evident in the Indian Caste system, where a woman is considered classy and worthy if she is light skinned and a man is considered elite if he marries a light skinned woman (Franklin, 2013). These findings mean that some families and communities hold the ideology that fairness or lightness equates to beauty and status, hence, highly favourable.

5.2.2 Research Question Two:

From the point of the study participants, what are among the major consequences (positive and negative) of skin bleaching?

The focus group participants in this study reported that skin bleaching is hazardous to the skin, costly, time consuming, addictive and results in labelling and social stigma. For example, Participant 4 expressed that skin bleaching products remove the epidermal cells. As a result, existing literature stipulates that by removing the epidermal cells, the skin is more likely to be susceptible to infections, cancer, thinning and poor wound healing to mention a few (Mahe et al., 2003; Ajose, 2005; Dlova et al., 2014) because the protective layers of the skin have been tampered with.

In addition, Participant 1 in the current study reported that skin bleaching is a costly endeavour. Interestingly, a study conducted by Robinson (2011) found similar results in that some of the participants reported that skin bleaching practice not only requires plenty of money, but that, it is addictive in nature and a lengthy process that requires dedication.

Another negative consequence as reported by focus group participants in the present study is that skin bleachers are subjected to labelling and social stigmatisation. For example, in the current study, Participant 3 and Participant 6 similarly explained how people who bleach their skin are perceived to be having low self-esteem as well as not truthful about their identity respectively. The latter is consistent with existing literature that skin bleachers are at times negatively evaluated by societies, families and peers (Ajose, 2005; Gwaravanda, 2011). Corroborating this theme, a 32-year-old participant in a study conducted by Gwaravanda (2011) explained that skin bleachers do so because they are not physically appealing. Therefore, skin bleachers are at times unfavourably stereotyped as people who dislike their physical appearance and as a result, employ various means as an attempt to disguise their unattractiveness. For this reason, users usually stop engaging in the skin bleaching practice because of critique by significant others (Ajose, 2005). On the contrary, a study conducted by Malangu and Ogunbanjo (2006) found that most bleachers in their study were encouraged to engage in the practice by their friends, suggesting that predictor factors may vary from case to case.

Participants in the present study also reported that skin bleaching practices are beneficial for purposes of beauty, medical conditions, anticipated gains and trend and fashion. These findings corroborate with existing literature on similar themes (AlGhamdi, 2010; Dorman,

2011; Robinson, 2011; Durosaro et al., 2012). For example, in the present study, Participant 6 commented that individuals engage in the practice of skin bleaching in order to entice the opposite gender. According to Charles (2011) people are obsessed with facial attractiveness and, as result, resort to bleaching their skin with the aim to secure romantic relationships. For this reason people bleach their skin to look appealing, hence, attractive.

AlGhamdi (2010) found that 26.7% of respondents in their study utilised skin bleaching creams to treat various skin disorders, indicative that they can be used for medicinal purposes as well. According to AlGhamdi and Kumar (2010), vitiligo universalis is one of the skin disorders in which depigmentation therapies are conducted to even out patients' skin. Corroborating this finding, Participant 7 in the present study indicated that there are certain skin diseases that cause white patches on the skin. The latter may motivate people to bleach because of embarrassment and shame.

With regards to the theme relating to trend and fashion, Participant 4 in the current study shared how being light in complexion is perceived as trendy, fashionable and classy. The latter finding is consistent with existing literature, in which it was found that skin bleaching is perceived as a normal way of showcasing an individual's trendy and fashionable qualities (Durosaro et al., 2012). Similarly, in a study conducted by Robinson (2011), one participant gave a personal account of how she came to utilise bleaching creams for purposes of being stylish and fashionable. Likewise, a study by Charles (2003b) found that out of the nine (9) who bleached, one (1) participant stated that she bleached for style.

Nevertheless, though skin bleaching practices may result in negative consequences as previously outlined, there are positive aspects as well. This means that there are mixed views on the matter. For this reason, it is imperative that people are psycho-educated about the possible consequences (positive or negative) resulting from the practice of skin bleaching, with the hope they may feel empowered to make appropriate decisions for themselves either way.

5.2.3 Research Question Three:

To what extent are students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal fully aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching practices?

Data relating to this research question is summarised in Table 4 of Chapter 4. The findings show that participants endorsed that skin bleaching mostly results in sun damage, financial constraints, fragile skin, absorption of harmful substances, negative (judgemental) attitude from society and skin infections respectively. These findings indicate that participants are fully aware of the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. For instance, 82.2% and 77.1% endorsed that skin bleaching may result in sun damage and fragile skin respectively. The former and latter are consistent with the existing literature that skin bleaching creams cause harmful effects on the skin (Ajose, 2005). The literature furthermore outlines that skin bleaching products lead to absorption of harmful chemicals such as hydroquinone which may result in organ failure or death (de Souza, 2008), and this theme was endorsed by 77.8% of participants in this study. For this reason, the hypothesis that University of KwaZulu-Natal students are not very knowledgeable about the negative consequences of skin bleaching practices is rejected. However, these results are incongruent with the findings of a study conducted by Mpengezi and Nzuzi (2014) which found that most of their participants were less aware of the risks and negative impact that skin bleaching products have on the user's life. Similarly, a study by Dlova et al. (2014) found that although participants self-reported to be knowledgeable about the negative effects of skin bleaching products, they were in actual fact not knowledgeable. Therefore, University of KwaZulu-Natal students' full awareness of the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching is a possible indicator that information relating to the skin bleaching phenomena is abundantly dispersed. In addition, because University of KwaZulu-Natal students have achieved higher education, this could have positively influenced their knowledge levels with regard to skin bleaching consequences. This could mean that the more educated a person is, the more likely they are to be knowledgeable about certain issues of social interest. However, a study by AlGhamdi (2010) did not find a correlation between level of education and knowledge of skin bleaching consequences. Nonetheless, the results show that even though most of participants in the present study are very knowledgeable about the risks associated with skin bleaching, some of them reported that skin bleaching does not result in body odour (73.6%) and suppression of the immune system (59.2%) suggesting some degree of ignorance. The latter indicates that, to a minimal degree, there is

misinformation regarding the negative consequences associated with skin bleaching practices that still evidently exist.

5.2.4 Research Question Four:

What variables should a viable and comprehensive theory of skin bleaching factor into its formulation?

The first theme to be discussed is Socialisation. The different subthemes are: (i) Upbringing and Modelling; and (ii) Social Stereotypes. Participants reported that socialisation plays a crucial role in how people decide to live their lives. According to Wilder and Cain (2011), though families serve as support structures, it is often within the family structure that “colour differences are learned, reinforced, and in some cases contested within families, ultimately shaping Black women’s perspectives and experiences with colorism” (p. 577). As such in an attempt to demonstrate the significance of socialisation on children’s upbringing, Participant 3 in the present study outlined the significance of parental influence in relation to conditioning their children to appraise a light skin complexion because it is considered admirable. Similarly, a participant in a study by Wilder and Cain (2011) gave a personal account of how she was encouraged by her mother to utilise skin bleaching products so that she may be less likely to be unfavourably evaluated by members of society. The former and latter mean that processes of upbringing and modelling by the family and society play a very crucial role in how people over time perceive themselves as well as others.

In addition, according to Charles (2003a) White people are often positively appraised whereas Black people are negatively stereotyped. Hence, in the present study, Participant 4 and Participant 1 corroborated the negative stereotypes attached to blackness or dark skin complexion. For example, Participant 4 reported that being Black is associated with negativity, whilst being White is associated with positivity. Similarly, Participant 1 expressed how he was called derogative names, thus, negatively stereotyped, for being the only Black person in his community. These findings indicate the negative stereotypes attached to blackness or dark complexion. Therefore, what people are, how they are and how they choose to present themselves in the world is deeply shaped by their upbringing, as well as their prior learning history. Hence, the learnt social stereotypes influence how a person construes their own social standing in relation to others.

Moreover, Fokuo (2009) stipulated that the Ghanaian society places great importance on skin colour as a form of social capital, particularly for women, in that it increases their self-worth, esteem and standard thus making light-skinned women preferred candidates for marriage. Because marriage is considered the ultimate achievement in the Ghanaian community, women are therefore, inclined to make themselves attractive at all costs. Likewise, in a study on 1,310 African Americans and 596 Mexican Americans conducted by Hunter (2002), in which she utilised data collected from the 1980 national survey of Black Americans and the 1980 national Chicano survey, it was found that light skinned African Americans and Mexican Americans as opposed to dark skinned ones had more advantage when it came to education opportunities and receiving more income. Hence, being light skinned or being seemingly White is the ideal (Gwaravanda, 2011) because one stands to gain something. Therefore, the value for lightness is entrenched in the social structures of families and societies at large, thus perpetuating colour hierarchies.

The second theme to be discussed is External Influential Factors. The different subthemes are: (i) Celebrities; and (ii) Media. Celebrities are highly admired by their fans, and for this reason they are at times used to attract consumer attention on various products (Franklin, 2013). A world renowned fair skinned Indian actress and former Miss World, Aishwariya Rai, who is otherwise known as “The world’s most beautiful woman” (Franklin, 2013, p. 37) was hired to be the face of L’Oréal, a leading cosmetic company (Malik, 2007). This means that L’Oréal capitalised on her celebrity status to sell their beauty products. Therefore, because celebrities are admired by their fans, and seen as role models, the fans will buy any product endorsed by their role models, and follow any trends portrayed by their idols, ranging from beauty routines to fashion. The hope is to emulate their esteemed role models and icons. Hence, in the current study, Participant 4 and Participant 7 corroborated the latter findings as they reported that people, particularly youth, are highly influenced by celebrities (who are often light in complexion). For this reason, celebrities serve as the standard by which beauty is defined.

In addition, various media outlets, such as internet, television, newspapers and magazines have lured people towards the tendency to utilise skin bleaching products (Glenn, 2008). Corroborating findings in existing literature, Participant 3 in the present study elaborated how Facebook, television and radio mediums, strategically convince people to purchase bleaching products. This goes to show the significance of media influences with regard to enticing people to buy skin bleaching creams. Furthermore, Charles (2011) stated that a fair

complexion is often popularised by dance hall music in Jamaica because of the sexual attraction attributed to having a fair skin complexion. Hence, a popular song by one of the esteemed Jamaican singers had lyrics that sang like: “Oh boy because Buju Banton told the girls about browning, all of the girls have run to the shop to purchase bleaching products, because they want brown skin” (Hope, 2011, p. 170). This means that any kind of advertisement, be it through a song, has the potential to influence people’s lifestyle choices. Moreover, skin bleaching advertisements usually use fair skinned models with the objective to sell the public the notion that the essence of beauty is a light complexion (Edmonds, 2014). For this reason, advertising strategies and beautiful models that are depicted on lotion covers can lure people into purchasing bleaching products. As such, Participant 1 in the present study similarly expressed the conditioning effects of marketing strategies found on lotion covers. This shows that any source of information regarding skin bleaching products can increase people’s desire towards engaging in the practice.

Overall, from the point of extant literature, it can be attributed that to a certain degree the problem of colonialism and experience of apartheid has somewhat contributed towards Black people and other marginalised groups experiencing psychological scars (Julien, 2014). Furthermore, Black people’s lived experiences of being subjected to negative stereotypes attached to their skin colour has heightened the ideology that a dark skin complexion is unwanted (Brown, 2000). However, these standpoints alone, do not fully account for people’s continued indulgence in skin bleaching practices. As a result, it is worth considering that the ideology that a dark skin complexion is far less admirable and desired than a fair skin complexion is deeply rooted and evident in how children are socialised by their families and the societies they live in. Children are taught from early on to embrace a light skin complexion as opposed to a brown/dark skin complexion, and this suggests colorism (Wilder & Cain, 2011). Moreover, considering that people are currently living in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era, means that, this time around people are not necessarily bleaching because of colonial oppression and racial discrimination *per se*. And proving this point, Participant 3 and Participant 6 in the present study discounted the ideology that the experience of apartheid is a possible predictor variable for people’s current indulgence in skin bleaching practices. These findings show that in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era people are bleaching mostly because of what whiteness/lightness can afford them, which is, beauty, fashion and trend, radiant and fair complexion and social class to mention a few as reported by participants in the present study. Over and above, the various media outlets and celebrity

influences continuously sell this colorist mentality to the public, by representing lightness as the ideal standard of beauty, and by so doing, exacerbating the problem. Therefore, regardless of the known negative consequences associated with skin bleaching practices, people bleach because of the benefits of being light/fair rather than the intention to negate experiences of Internalised Colonialism or the problem of racism. This orientation is also a deviation from the available literature that associate skin bleaching practices with an individual's self-hate (Charles, 2003b; 2009). For this reason, Participant 7 in the present study explained that an individual's preference to engage in the practice of skin bleaching does not have any significance in relation to disowning one's identity. Therefore, Franklin (2013, p. 70) stated "I conclude that the... colorist preferences in each country share one underlying reality: the correlation between fair skin and individual prosperity."

5.3 Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine University of KwaZulu-Natal students' perceptions with regard to motivations, consequences and knowledge levels of skin bleaching practices. This entailed exploring factors that the students propose are responsible for people's indulgence in skin bleaching practices, exploring consequences of skin bleaching practices, determining the extent to which students are fully aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching practices and generating a viable theoretical explanation to account for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching.

This study employed a mixed methods approach to ensure methodological triangulation (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). A convenient sample of 147 respondents from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus student community participated in the study. Therefore, 140 participants filled in the survey questionnaire and seven (7) participated in one focus group discussion. A convenient sample was chosen because it was readily available (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The researcher simply walked up to potential participants on campus premises and asked if they wanted to fill in a questionnaire or participate in a focus group discussion on the theme of skin bleaching phenomenon. The survey questionnaire was analysed by means of SPSS, whereas the focus group discussion by thematic analysis.

Various theories have been used to account for people's indulgence in skin bleaching practices, amongst them the Theory of Internalised Colonialism and Theory of Colorism. For this reason, studies have shown that Black people and other racially marginalised groups are

motivated to engage in skin bleaching practices hoping to fit into Western societal ideals of beauty and to establish in addition some degree of equality (Malik, 2007; Robinson, 2011; Julien, 2014) in relation to the perceived elite White group. So having borne witness to the implications arising from the classifications of people according to their skin complexion (Brown, 2000), it is not surprising that people would be motivated to engage in practices that they believe would accord them the same respect and value given to those who possess a light/fair complexion (Glenn, 2008; Hunter, 2011).

In implementing this study, the researcher found that participants propose that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching mostly to look trendy and fashionable and least of all to achieve and succeed in their career. In addition, it was found that participants reported that skin bleaching is costly, time consuming, has negative side effects on the skin and body, is addictive and increases one's susceptibility to labelling and stigmatisation attitudes. Nonetheless, it was also found that participants also reported that some of the positive consequences related to skin bleaching practices is that skin bleaching improves one's beauty, fashion and trend, increases potential gains and ameliorates against certain medical conditions. Furthermore, it was found that overall, participants are fully knowledgeable about the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. Moreover, even though the existing literature stipulates that the history of colonialism and problem of apartheid has shaped people's ideas about beauty and class, this study has found that this orientation alone does not fully account for people's continued indulgence in skin bleaching practices, especially since currently people are living in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era. Hence, other push factors that are worth considering entail socialisation such as upbringing, modelling and social stereotypes, as well as other external influential factors such as media and celebrities. The latter have been found to play a significant role in instilling a colorist mentality amongst people. As a result, in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era, people are most likely bleaching because of what lightness affords them rather than attempts to negate the negative effects of colonialism and apartheid in particular.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the implications in this present study correlate with that of other studies that similarly explored people's perceptions with regard to motivations, consequences and knowledge levels of skin bleaching practices.

5.4 Implications for Clinical Practice

Because it has been found that people have a tendency towards colorism, which is often instilled through socialisation, media and celebrity influences, it is imperative that certain measures are put in place in order to reorient people way from this colorist mentality towards a more balanced appraisal of all various skin complexions. This may need to be done from both a familial level to a mass media level.

People's need to be trendy and fashionable was ranked first, whilst the need to remove pimples and blemishes so as to obtain a smooth skin was ranked second as motivational factors for people's indulgence in skin bleaching practices. Therefore, people need to be desensitised from the ideology that perfectionism is the only way to being, especially since this particular state of being is not always attainable or realistic.

Similarly, the focus group participants reported that skin bleaching improves an individual's beauty. This implies that beauty needs to be redefined so that people may come to the understanding that there is no one particular kind of beauty. In this manner people may learn to embrace their skin colour.

Bleaching for purposes of anticipated gains as reported in the current study means that people associate lightness with success. More governmental campaigns need to be put in place to psycho-educate people about the importance of staying true to themselves, and not feel the pressure to change the colour of their skin for purposes of anticipated gains. Hence, more programs that assist people to build their self-esteem and also help them to identify their assets should be put in place, with the aim to assist people to capitalise on what they already have, which is their strengths.

Even though participants in this study are fully knowledgeable about the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching, there is some degree of ignorance on certain themes. For this reason, skin bleaching awareness campaigns should adequately target and address any misinformation and misperception regarding the negative consequences associated with skin bleaching practices that, to a certain degree, still evidently exist.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, the sample of this study was not generalisable to the entire University of KwaZulu-Natal student population because the study was conducted only at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus as opposed to the other four university campuses.

Secondly, the survey questionnaire appeared long. As such, some of the respondents did not attend to all the items which consequently resulted in missing data during the analysis process.

The third limitation is that the researcher found it difficult to recruit bleachers to participate in this study, particularly in the focus group discussion, as that would have provided more in depth understanding about the practice of skin bleaching.

Fourthly, the researcher employed a convenient sampling technique to recruit participants in the study. For this reason, it limited the probability that each student would have an equal chance of being selected into the sample.

5.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the limitations of the study highlighted above, the following recommendations for further research are made:

This study highlights other areas that need exploration. Firstly, it is important that other studies focus primarily on bleachers themselves. It is from the bleachers themselves that it can be explored explicitly why they indulge in this potentially self-harming practice.

Secondly, a correlational study should be conducted that explores the relationship between media influences and people's motivation for bleaching. By so doing, it could be discerned to what degree the media has bearing influences on people's skin bleaching practices, thus, shedding light on what may need to be done.

Thirdly, it is useful to explore if there are other possible predictor variables for people's indulgence in bleaching practices, from the ones already alluded in the present study. The aim will be to extend the current theoretical formulation of skin bleaching as outlined by the researcher.

Fourthly, other researchers could ensure that they utilise probability sampling techniques to ensure that every member has an equal chance of being selected to be in the sample. In addition, the sample should be drawn from all four University of KwaZulu-Natal campuses. The objective is to minimise bias and make the findings more generalisable to the entire University of KwaZulu-Natal student community.

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APPENDICES

A. Information Sheet for Survey Questionnaire

A STUDY ON THE PRACTICE OF SKIN BLEACHING

Thank you for contributing your time to help us with this important study.

What are we doing?

My name is Keitumetse Mmami Keakile. I am a first year Master's student specializing in Educational Psychology. I am exploring University of KwaZulu-Natal students' opinions regarding the practice of skin bleaching. The results of this study could provide important information that could be incorporated in to awareness creation programs as a primary intervention strategy.

Participation is confidential and voluntary

ALL of your responses will be completely confidential and anonymous. You will NOT be asked for your name, and answers to these questions will never be associated with you in any way. PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you are not obliged to complete the questionnaire. There are no monetary benefits attached to participating in this study. You may decide not to answer certain questions or stop answering questions all together at any time. But, you will be more helpful by answering every question that you can. Participation in the study is unlikely to involve any risks or discomfort, however, should you incur any psychological discomfort as a result of participating in this study, referral mechanisms will be put in place to provide the necessary support (e.g. Student Counselling Center Reception: Mike Murray 0332605233 {Psychologists: *Mariam Jassat Email:jassat@ukzn.ac.za OR *Tracey Visser Email:visser@ukzn.ac.za}). Furthermore, if you are interested in finding out the results of the study, you can contact either me or my supervisor on the contacts below, and a verbal or a written feedback report will be provided to you. In addition, a copy of the thesis will be made available in the university library at the end of the research which you can access.

In addition, if you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a study participant, or if you are concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then you may contact the relevant authorities (e.g. Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration: Ms. Ximba -Tel: 031 260 3587 OR HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za). This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee. My ethical Clearance Protocol Reference number is HSS/083/015M. Gate keeper permission to conduct research on university premises has also been granted by the Registrar's office.

You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this study. If you are not at least 18, please do not answer. Instead return the blank questionnaire to the researcher.

More information about the study

You can contact me: phone 0632225395 or via email: keakilek@yahoo.com

OR my research supervisor nwoye@ukzn.ac.za

B. Information Sheet for Focus Group Discussion

A STUDY ON THE PRACTICE OF SKIN BLEACHING

Thank you for contributing your time to help us with this important study. You are being asked to participate in a focus group discussion. This cover letter entails all the information deemed necessary to assist you to decide if you wish to participate in the study.

What are we doing?

My name is Keitumetse Mmami Keakile. I am a first year Master's student specializing in Educational Psychology. I am exploring University of KwaZulu-Natal students' opinions regarding the practice of skin bleaching. The results of this study could provide important information that could be incorporated in to awareness creation programs as a primary intervention strategy.

Participation is confidential and voluntary

A facilitator will lead the discussion. She will pose the questions to the group and you will be invited to share your feelings and ideas. ALL of your responses will be completely confidential and anonymous and answers to these questions will never be associated with you in any way. It is important that you sign a pledge that you will not discuss what was said in the focus group discussion afterwards to others, or disclose any identifying information about other participants for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you are not obliged to participate. There are no monetary benefits attached to participating in this study. You may decide not to answer certain questions or stop answering questions all together at any time. But, you will be more helpful by answering every question that you can. Furthermore, the focus group discussion will be audiotaped for use in this research only, however, if you are not comfortable with this you may withdraw without any penalty, however, your participation in the study will be more helpful.

Participation in the study is unlikely to involve any risks or discomfort, however, should you incur any psychological discomfort as a result of participating in this study, referral mechanisms will be put in place to provide the necessary support (e.g. Student Counselling Center Reception: Mike Murray 0332605233 {Psychologists: *Mariam Jassat

Email:jassat@ukzn.ac.za OR *Tracey Visser Email:visser@ukzn.ac.za}). Furthermore, if you are interested in finding out the results of the study, you can contact either me or my supervisor on the contacts below, and a verbal or a written feedback report will be provided to you. In addition, a copy of the thesis will be made available in the university library at the end of the research which you can access.

In addition, if you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a study participant, or if you are concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then you may contact the relevant authorities (e.g. Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration: Ms. Ximba -Tel: 031 260 3587 OR HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za). This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Research Ethics Committee. My ethical Clearance Protocol Reference number is HSS/083/015M. Gate keeper permission to conduct research on university premises has also been granted by the Registrar's office. You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this study. If you are not at least 18, please do not participate.

More information about the study

You can contact me: phone 0632225395 or via email: keakilek@yahoo.com
OR my research supervisor nwoye@ukzn.ac.za

C. Consent Form for Survey Questionnaire

Please sign and return the following if you choose to take part in this study:

- I confirm that I have read and thoroughly understand the information sheet provided to me regarding the topic on skin bleaching.
- I know that my participation is completely voluntary and I may withdraw from participation at any time without any penalties.
- I know that the study team will treat the information given with the utmost confidentiality.
- I also understand that I may call the study team at any time if I have questions.
- I know that referral support services will be provided to me if need arises.
- I know that I can contact the relevant research ethics office if I have any concerns or questions regarding my rights as a research participant
- I understand that feedback will be provided to me upon my request and a copy of the thesis will also be available at the university library.

CONSENT:

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to being a research participant for a study on skin bleaching practices.

Signature

Date

D. Consent Form for Focus Group Discussion

Please sign and return the following if you choose to take part in this study:

- I confirm that I have read and thoroughly understand the information sheet provided to me regarding the topic on skin bleaching.
- I know that my participation is completely voluntary and I may withdraw from participation at any time without any penalties.
- I know that the study team will treat the information given with the utmost confidentiality.
- I agree to sign a pledge that states that I am expected to not share what was said in the discussion group afterwards with others or disclose any identifying information about other participants for the purposes of confidentiality and anonymity.
- I also understand that I may call the study team at any time if I have questions.
- I know that referral support services will be provided to me if need arises.
- I understand that the focus group discussion will be audio recorded
- I know that I can contact the relevant research ethics office if I have any concerns or questions regarding my rights as a research participant
- I understand that feedback will be provided to me upon my request and a copy of the thesis will also be available at the university library.

CONSENT:

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to being interviewed for a study on skin bleaching practices.

Signature

Date

Consent to audio record interview

The researcher will be making audio recordings of the interview for data collection and transcription purposes. Any identifying data will not be included in the write up of the report and pseudonyms will be used. The recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your permission is sought in order to record the interview. Please indicate by ticking the box below whether you consent to allowing the researcher to make an audio recording of the interview for data collection and transcription purposes.

- Willing to be audio-recorded.
- Not willing to be audio-recorded.

Signature

Date

E. Survey Questionnaire

We all have reasons as to why we do the things that we do. According to your understanding, what makes people decide to bleach their skin? Please indicate your opinions by **circling** the answer category of your choice. Skin bleaching helps an individual to:

1. Look trendy and fashionable	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
2. Achieve and succeed in their career (employment opportunities)	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
3. Attain high social class/rank	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
4. Satisfy one's partner	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
5. Be White and look more like an European	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
6. Remove skin pimples and blemishes so that they obtain a smooth skin	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
7. Acquire a desired marriage partner	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
8. To be popular among peers	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0

Kindly state your current perceptions regarding the following statements. Please indicate your opinions by **circling** the answer category of your choice. Skin bleaching may result in:

1. Sun damage, including sun burn	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
2. Skin infections, such as fungi	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
3. Fragile skin	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
4. Body odor	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
5. Suppression of the immune system	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
6. Negative (judgmental) attitude from society for changing one's skin color	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
7. Absorption of harmful substances (e.g hydroquinone found in most skin bleaching creams) which can lead to organ failure and death by poisoning.	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0
8. Financial constraints because skin bleaching products are very expensive	a) Strongly Agree=3 b) Agree=2 c) Disagree=1 d) Strongly Disagree=0

F. Interview Schedule

- I) According to your understanding, why do people in contemporary Africa indulge in the practice of skin bleaching?

- II) Do you know of any risks or negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching?
 - a) If yes, please elaborate further?
 - b) If no, please elaborate further?

- III) What are your attitudes towards people who engage in the practice of skin bleaching?

- IV) Has the history of Apartheid in South Africa influenced its people in any way to engage in the practice of skin bleaching?
 - a) If yes, please elaborate further
 - b) If no, please elaborate further

- V) Has popular culture and media played a role in influencing people in contemporary Africa to engage in the practice of skin bleaching?
 - a) If yes, please elaborate further
 - b) If no, please elaborate further

G. Demographic Information Sheet

Please **make a tick** on the answer category of your choice

1. Your gender: (1) Male (2) Female
2. What is your race? (1) Black (2) White (3) Indian (4) Colored
3. What is your relationship status? (1) Single/ not dating (2) Dating
(3) Divorced (4) Married (5) Widowed
4. Age _____
5. Which geographical region do you identify with? (1) Rural Area (2) Urban Area
6. Please estimate your monthly income
(1) 0-2,000 (2) 2,001- 4,000 (3) 4,001- 6,000
(4) 6,001- 8,000 (5) 8,001- 10,000 (6) 10,001-12,000 (7) 12,001 and more
7. What is your current level/year of study?
(1) Undergraduate (2) Honours (3) Masters (4) Doctorate
- 8) Are you satisfied with the color of your skin? (1) Yes (2) No
- 9) If you could, would you change the color of your skin? 1) Yes (2) No
- 10) Amongst the following skin tones/complexions, which one do you **prefer** the most?
1) Dark brown complexion (2) Medium brown complexion (3) Fair/Light complexion
- 11) Have you ever at one point in your life bleached your skin? (1) Yes (2) No
- 12) Are you aware of the negative consequences associated with skin bleaching?
(1) Yes (2) No
13. Do you believe the media plays an important role in influencing people to bleach their skin? (1) Yes (2) No

H. Ethical Clearance Approval Letter

I. Gate Keeper Approval Letter

