

**SKIN BLEACHING: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF CUSTOMERS IN TWO
SKIN-WHITENING CLINICS IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

BY
TSATSAWANI NYELETI MKHOMBO
(215079547)

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
(RESEARCH PSYCHOLOGY)**

Supervisor:

PROFESSOR AUGUSTINE NWOYE

2021

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the underlying reasons why people engage in skin bleaching activities in spite of the multiple negative side effects associated with it. The study also aimed at determining the extent to which those who engaged in skin bleaching activity are aware of the negative consequences of the practice and how they try to curb them. Additionally, the study aimed to determine which of the currently existing theories on why people engage in skin lightening provides a more plausible explanation for understanding the rationale for the practice of skin -bleaching in the South African context. Qualitative interviews were administered to eight participants that have previously engaged or are currently using skin lightening products. The participants' bleaching experience varied between three to nineteen years. The study revealed that participants in KwaZulu-Natal bleach their skin *to enhance their beauty, to remove marks and to counterbalance the effects of extended use*. The desire to become attractive to the opposite sex was the least rated reason for those engaging in the practice. The study revealed that participants in KwaZulu-Natal who engage in skin bleaching are often unaware of the negative side effects associated with skin lightening, some of which range from the products being expensive and addictive, to having a toxic interaction with skin cells. The findings of this study also show that people are propelled towards light skin and other Eurocentric features by how they were socialized; firstly, as children and later on, as adults. It was discovered that the media including social media, and other mediums of advertisement play a big role in promoting black people's yearning for whiteness; skin bleaching being one of the ways to acquire it.

The research made one important recommendation that entails the need for comprehensive medical services including dermatological services to be made available in all hospital categories. This will allow people to access appropriate medical treatment without having to opt for quicker alternatives that often turn out to be skin lightening agents when faced with skin problems. Some suggestions for further research were also made.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACTii

DEDICATION.....vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTSviii

CHAPTER ONE 1

INTRODUCTION..... 1

1.1 Background 1

1.2 Purpose of the study.....2

1.3 Conceptual Framework.....2

1.3.1 Social Learning Theory2

1.3.2 Post-colonialism.....3

1.4 Objectives of the Study4

1.5 Research Questions4

1.6 Significance of the study4

1.7 Assumptions/Prospective Hypotheses of the Study5

1.8 Scope and Delimitations of the Study.....6

1.9 Limitations of the Study6

1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms6

1.11 Summary and Overview of the Study7

LITERATURE REVIEW9

2.1 Introduction.....9

2.2 Motivations for bleaching the skin 10

2.3 Africa as a Colony..... 10

2.4 Apartheid in South Africa..... 12

2.6 Access to Skin Lightening Products 16

CHAPTER THREE 18

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 18

3.1 Introduction..... 18

3.2 Research Design 18

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size..... 18

3.3.1 Sample/Study Population 18

3.3.2 Sample site/Location of the study..... 19

3.3.3 Sampling Criteria/ Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria 19

3.4 Research Instrument/Data Collection.....21

3.5 Research Data Analysis	22
3.6 Validity & Reliability of study	24
3.6.1 Triangulation	24
3.6.2 Confirmability of the study	25
3.6.3 Transferability of the study	25
3.6.4 Trustworthiness of the study	26
3.6.5 Promotion of Rigor	26
3.7 Ethical considerations.....	27
3.7.1 Scientific validity	27
3.7.2 Independent ethical review	27
3.7.3 Informed consent	28
3.7.4 Fair selection of participants	28
3.7.5 Favorable risk/benefit ratio	28
3.7.6 Social value	28
3.7.7 Ongoing respect for participants and study communities	29
3.8 Summary.....	30
CHAPTER FOUR.....	31
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	31
4.1 Introduction.....	31
4.2 Participant Profile	31
4.2.1 Spotty	32
4.2.2 Ous Carrot	33
4.2.3. White Gold.....	33
4.2.4. Pinky	34
4.2.5 Wiseman	34
4.2.6 Skhokho	34
4.2.7 Biggy	35
4.2.8 Champion	35
4.3 Presentation of Results by Research Question.....	36
<i>Research Question 1:</i> What rationale do participants in the two Kwazulu-Natal clinics for skin whitening have for engaging in skin bleaching?	36
4.3.2 <i>Research question two:</i> To what extent are the sample participants aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it?	37

4.3.3 Research Question 3: In what way does early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin?	40
4.3.4 Research Question 4: Which theoretical explanation extant in the literature could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching?.....	43
4.6 Summary	43
CHAPTER FIVE	45
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	45
5.1 Introduction	45
5.2. Discussion of the Findings according to Research Themes	46
5.2.1 Rationale for people's engagement in skin bleaching practice	46
5.3 Extent to which the sample participants are aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it.	50
5.4 To counterbalance the effects of extended use	53
5.5 Theoretical explanations extant in the literature that could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching.	54
5.5.1 The way early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin	55
5.6 Summary of the Study	57
5.7 Implications for Policy, Practice and Theory	58
5.8 Recommendations for Future Studies	58
5.9 Limitations and Conclusion	59
LIST OF APPENDICES	65
Appendix 1: Ethical Approval	65
Appendix 2: Gatekeepers Letter	67
Appendix 3: Sample Interview Guide.....	68
Appendix 4: Sample instrument to obtain informed consent.....	73
Appendix 6: Visual Images.....	76
.....	76

DECLARATION

I declare that this study titled **SKIN BLEACHING: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF CUSTOMERS IN TWO SKIN-WHITENING CLINICS IN KWAZULU-NATAL** is my original work.

1. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university,
2. All the sources used in this study have been acknowledged as complete references.
3. The thesis does not contain personal data that can make the person identifiable, where photographs are used, these are photographs that were contained in public sources (magazines).

Student Name: Tsatsawani Nyeleti Mkhombo

Date: 18/2/2021

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

I, Prof Augustine Nwoye, confirm that the work reported in this dissertation was carried out by Tsatsawani Nyeleti Mkhombo under my supervision.

SIGNATURE: _____  _____ DATE: _____ 19/02/2021 _____

DEDICATION

This Project is dedicated to all the FIGHTERS. Those that continuously have to fight for the lives their ancestors dreamt of.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This felt like a “never ending journey”, one that I often felt I couldn’t do. “A never-ending project I felt I couldn’t do”. I want to thank God for the strength and wisdom to see this project to completion.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Prof A. Nwoye, not only for his guidance but for his tremendous amount of patience throughout the years.

Prof Dlova, your insight and passion in this subject has been invaluable. Thank You for connecting me to the relevant people.

I am also deeply thankful to the man and women who participated in this study. I cannot disclose their identities, but I do want to appreciate their help and their opening up to me. Their “life stories” have helped me to complete this project.

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) HAST CPT writing team, “iron indeed sharpens iron, so one man sharpens his friend”, Ngiyabonga!

My sisters, Nxalati & SasaVona, thank you for “faithing” the completion of this Masters.

Mama na papa, Ndzi nga va mani mina laha misaveni ehandle ka rirhandzu na nseketelo wa nwina? Kxanimambo! Xikwembu a xi mi endli hi tintswalo, mi hanya mi ta vona mihandzu ya leswi mi swi byalaku.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Skin-bleaching has become a public health concern in many African countries since the 1980's (Kpanake, Sastre, & Mullet, 2009). However, the rise and popularity of skin-bleaching is not new or unique to Africa. Skin-lighteners have been used for centuries, only in the last century have the production of these products become commercialised (Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016). It has now become a global epidemic, as reviews of scientific literature have shown that people from diverse communities around the world, including the Americas, Middle-East and Europe, practice skin-bleaching (Dadzie & Petit, 2009); with the global sale and production of skin-bleaching agents predicted to being a multi-billion dollar industry (Glenn, 2008).

At the same time, skin-bleaching, a multifaceted phenomenon is believed to have become one of the most potentially harmful body modification practices in the world (Hall, 1995a). Skin lightening behaviour cannot be credited to a single cause, however, as many scholars tend to attribute historical, cultural, psychological, socio-political factors and perceived social benefits of lighter skin as some of the main motivating forces of the practice (Blay, 2011a; Davids et al., 2016). Although studies give evidence of some men who bleach their skin, research has shown that women constitute the largest group of users (Street, Gaska, Lewis, & Wilson, 2015).

Skin-bleaching, in itself, refers to the use of various cosmetic products-lotions/creams/gels/oils or laser treatments that contain potentially dangerous chemical agents with the intention of killing or slowing down melanin production of the skin, so as to enable the user to achieve a light complexion (Dadzie & Petit, 2009). Contained in these skin lightening products is usually mercury, lead, steroids, hydroquinone, glucocorticoids and other toxic products (Lewis et al., 2012).

The perplexing thing, however, is that despite the fact that skin bleaching agents contain chemicals that are harmful to the skin and have many dire consequences that can result in irreversible skin damage, such as skin lesions; epidermal atrophy (wasting of the epidermal layer of the skin); exogenous ochronosis (a blue black discoloration); skin irritations, such as

eczema and bacterial and fungal infections (e.g., scabies or acne); various skin cancers, and in worst cases, organ failure and fatalities (de Souza, 2008; Lewis et al., 2012) some people still engage in skin-bleaching behavior. This is an anomaly that begs the question about the factors responsible for enticing people to continue with that practice.

1.2 Purpose of the study

One of the principal motivations for this study was to explore those underlying reasons which push people consciously or unconsciously to engage in-skin bleaching. Another important rationale for the present study is to determine the extent to which people who indulge in skin-bleaching are aware of the risks and dangers associated with it. Concurrently, this study should be able to determine which of the currently existing theories on why people engage in skin lightening provides a more plausible explanation for understanding the rationale for the practice of skin -bleaching in the South African context.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The social learning theory, which is very similar to the Chameleon effect and the post-colonialism perspectives are the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, or theories that support and inform this current research. These ideologies will be used as platforms in which the perceptions of skin bleaching in South Africa will be interpreted and understood.

1.3.1 Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory as formulated by Albert Bandura is built on the belief that people learn from one another, through observation, imitation, and modeling. In this theory, he formulated four principles of learning, which are: attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. The Chameleon effect perspective has assumptions related to Bandura's social learning theory that acknowledges the impact that one's social environment has on how they think and behave. This school of thought attributes behavior to be a result of learning through observation and interacting with the environment. In the same way, the Chameleon effect refers to the often unconscious & passive occurrence of learning, where perceiving

someone's behavior increases the likelihood of the perceiver behaving in a similar way as the perceived (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999); that is, to say that being exposed to a behavior increases the chances of engaging in that behavior.

In relation to this study, what is argued is that people can only duplicate behaviour that they have previously been exposed to; meaning that skin bleachers bleach their skin after they have seen people around them engaging in the same practice. For this reason, some social contexts/environments make skin bleaching behaviour feasible/certain environments promote this behaviour. In relation to this study, what is argued is that people can only duplicate behaviour that they have previously been exposed to; meaning that skin bleachers bleach their skin after they have seen people around them engaging in the same practice. For this reason, some social contexts/environments make skin bleaching behaviour feasible/certain environments promote this behaviour.

1.3.2 Post-colonialism

By 1900, much of Africa had been colonized by the seven European powers - Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Portugal. These European countries had settled and established control over the indigenous African people. Colonization was built on cultural hierarchies and supremacies where dark-skinned natives were considered primitive and inferior to the light skinned Europeans (Hall, 1995b; Hunter, 2007).

Although Africa is free from colonization, this study proposes that to fully comprehend the motivation driving people to bleach their skin we cannot ignore the influence that colonization has had in creating and shaping our cultural values and practices as a people (Julien, 2014; Petra Alaine Robinson, 2011). Using this framework, the research proposes that it is the residual effects of colonization and apartheid (in the case of South Africa) that leads people to engage in skin bleaching behavior. Even though 21st century young people may not be acutely aware of their countries' colonial experiences with race, colonial legacies persist today such that there is an indirect, generational transfer of preferences for fair skin (Dadzie & Petit, 2009).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Investigate the reasons which the participants in the two Kwazulu-Natal clinics for skin whitening give for engaging in skin bleaching.
2. Determine the extent to which practitioners are aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching and try to avoid it.
3. Determine how early learning and socialisations within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin.
4. Identify theoretical perspectives extant in the literature that could be used to corroborate participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching

1.5 Research Questions

1. What rationale do participants in the two Kwazulu-Natal clinics for skin whitening have for engaging in skin bleaching?
2. To what extent are the sample participants aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it?
3. In what way does early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin?
4. Which theoretical explanation extant in the literature could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching?

1.6 Significance of the study

The universal use of skin bleaching agents is not a new phenomenon (Davids et al., 2016; Hunter, 2011), with the main motivation of the practice being a desire to attain a lighter skin tone for varied reasons. Skin lightening agents have been used for centuries and have become a common part of life in many African communities presently. The normalization of the practice is evident in the local vernacular of some communities, where they have adapted unique terms to describe the practice. In South Africa, for example, in various ethnic languages related to indigenous tribes, the practice is described as '*ukutsheyisa*' (isiXhosa for 'to chase beauty') (N. Dlova, Hamed, Tsoka- Gwegweni, & Grobler, 2015) and '*ukucreamer*' (isiZulu for 'applying creams on the skin') (N. Dlova et al.,

2015). Concurrently, around Johannesburg, the word ‘*mashubaba*’ is used in urban township slang to describe ochronosis that develops as a side effect of this practice (Davids et al., 2016). In Mali and Senegal, the term *caco* and *xeesal* are, respectively, used to describe this practice (Dadzie & Petit, 2009) while in Ghana, the term *nensoeben* is used to describe the ochronosis (Dadzie & Petit, 2009).

Despite skin bleaching having become pervasive all over the world (Hunter, 2002) and its global production and marketing having become a multi-billion-dollar industry (Glenn, 2008) there have not been a lot of South African researchers exploring the topic, except those by Keakile (2016); and Boitumelo (2018). A majority of the already limited literature available on the practice focuses on the effects the practice has on the health of users. South African researchers are yet to direct sustained attention on issues around knowledge, attitude and perceptions of bleachers.

The present study is significant because it creates a platform to hear the voices of people who take part in the practice of skin bleaching by exploring their perceptions of and motivations for engaging in the practice. Although the study targets bleachers in Durban, South Africa, the experiences of this group of people are applicable and can be related to the experiences of other people of color in other regions of the world affected by the same phenomenon. Concurrently, this study should be able to raise questions that other researchers can explore in the future related to the practice of skin bleaching.

1.7 Assumptions/Prospective Hypotheses of the Study

In this study, the researcher hypothesizes that:

- Skin bleaching practices amongst people in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa is a result of the legacy of colonization.
- Perceiving someone’s behavior increases the likelihood of the perceiver to behave in a similar way - having been exposed to someone who bleaches their skin is more likely going to influence you to copy the behavior yourself.

1.8 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

Despite evidence suggesting that there is an increase in skin-whitening (Hunter, 2011) and that Africa currently has the highest number of studies reporting on the global prevalence of skin lightener use (Davids et al., 2016), the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population. The results of this study can only be considered factual in the areas where the data was collected. This study seeks to get participants' perceptions and review them against the Chameleon effect/social learning theory and the Post-colonialism framework.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are limited by the honesty of the participants, or their non-biased participation, while the analysis of the data is inductive, making it researcher based. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is identified by the researcher's active role in the data analysis process (Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997). The researcher's aim was to get close to the participants' personal world so as to achieve an "Insider's perspective" (Smith et al., 1997) for understanding why some South Africans engage in the skin bleaching practice. The researcher acknowledges the interlinking nature of an insider perspective with the researcher's perspectives, and additionally acknowledges that it would be impossible to successfully do this without involving the researcher's own point of view (Smith et al., 1997). Secondly, the researcher employed a snowball sampling technique to recruit participants in the study. For this reason, it limited the probability that people in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa would have an equal chance of being selected as part of the sample.

1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms

For this study, the following definitions are applicable for the above-mentioned terms:

Skin Bleaching- Sometimes referred to as skin whitening, skin lightening or bleaching. This refers to the use of various cosmetic products- lotions/creams/gels/oils or laser treatments with the intention of killing or slowing down melanin production of the skin and results in a lighter/brighter skin tone.

Explore- Refers to discussing a subject in more detail. The aim of this study is to discuss the subject of skin bleaching in more detail.

Perceptions - The way that something is regarded or understood. This study will be looking at how people who bleach their skin regard or view or understand their skin-bleaching behavior.

Customers- Defined as a party that receives or consumes products (goods or services) and can choose between different products and suppliers. For this study, customers will be used to refer specifically to those people who have used/are using various skin bleaching agents.

Clinic- Defined as an establishment or hospital department where outpatients are given medical treatment or advice, especially of a specialist manner. For this study, a skin bleaching clinic is the point of entry into the skin bleaching community. What the participants have in common is their connection to the researcher through the gate keeper who is a skin specialist. The participants of this study had gone to the gate-keeper for medical advice/treatment for their various skin types.

Post-colonialism- *The* political or cultural condition of a former colony. This specifically refers to ways in which issues of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity are represented in the modern era after the country has gained its independence from its colony.

1.11 Summary and Overview of the Study

In this introductory chapter, skin bleaching is explained not as an epidemic affecting South Africans, but as a global phenomenon. The purpose of the study, study objective, significance and limitations of the study were also presented. Concurrently this chapter outlines the theories that support and inform this current research, the limitations of the study and operational definitions of terms are also presented.

Chapter 2 is a review of relevant literature that informs the current study. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for the study; it provides a description of the research design by detailing

the location of the study, methods used in selecting participants, and specific methods used in the data collection and analysis. This section also describes how validity and reliability was maintained throughout the study process. Concurrently, the study limitations and ethical considerations that guided the researcher throughout the study are elaborated upon.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study firstly by outlining the profile (personal and demographic information) of the participants who were interviewed for their practice of skin bleaching. Secondly, the themes that emerged from the study are presented. Finally chapter 5 will present a summary of the findings and articulate how the findings relate to the study's research questions. The researcher will subsequently present the study's implications for policy, practice and theory followed by recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

With increasing popularity over the past 30 years (Lewis et al., 2012), skin-bleaching also known as skin-lightening/whitening has become one of the most common forms of potentially harmful body modification practices in the world (Hall, 1995a). Skin-bleaching refers to the use of creams, gels, homemade products or soaps to lighten the skin or bleach the melanin from the skin (Dadzie & Petit, 2009; de Souza, 2008). These products are said to contain high levels of hydroquinone, lead and mercury, all of which are very dangerous to the skin (Dadzie & Petit, 2009).

Among some of the consequences resulting in the extended use of these products are loss of skin elasticity, hyper pigmentation, skin cancers, increased rate of infertility and, at times, even death (Dadzie & Petit, 2009). Evidence has shown that skin lightening has historically been practiced in some cultures; with some women concocting their own treatments or purchasing products from self-proclaimed beauty experts in the form of creams, soaps or lotions, all containing highly toxic material including lead and mercury (Glenn, 2008; Hunter, 2011). Recent data suggests that skin-bleaching is on the rise, particularly among educated, urban women (Hunter, 2011). The question then is what makes people go through such great extremes to achieve light skin?

While it is true that skin-bleaching represents a multifaceted phenomenon, with a complexity of historical, cultural, sociopolitical, and psychological forces motivating the practice, a majority of scholars who have attempted to theorize the motivation for skin bleaching acknowledge the historical social justice issues stemming from colonialism and enslavement, as dominant factors encouraging skin-bleaching.

2.2 Motivations for bleaching the skin

Previous studies on skin-bleaching have suggested a great diversity of motives. According to Kpanake, et al. (2009), one study conducted in Togolese, explaining the practice of skin-bleaching showed that people bleached their skin for such reasons as the following: (1) to be recognized; (2) to acquire desired beauty; (3) to look fashionable; and (4) to enjoy the light skin. Two years after that study, Lewis, et al (2001) implemented a similar study in Tanzania. The study resulted in six (6) motivators as to why people bleach: (1) to remove skin impurities (rashes, pimples); (2) to have soft skin (3) to look “European”, lighter (4) to get rid of the effects of extended use of skin bleaching; (5) to attract /satisfy a male partner, and (6) to satisfy/impress peers (Kpanake et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2011).

Lewis et al. (2011) further illustrated that African women are amongst the most widely represented practitioners of skin-bleaching. This is facilitated by the presence of cosmetics. The global production and marketing of skin bleaching products has become a multi-billion-dollar industry, in developed and developing countries (Hunter, 2005). These companies are able to incorporate old ideologies of white supremacy with new technologies to reach a huge number of people.

The present research suspects that there are more reasons than these which encourage women to indulge in skin bleaching. This study aimed to explore those other possible reasons harbored by the skin-bleachers not accounted for in the extant literature. The study was also designed to explore the experiences of participants regarding their use of skin bleaching, to determine possible problems they encounter in their practice of skin bleaching. It is expected that the results will help to add to the available literature on skin bleaching.

2.3 Africa as a Colony

The idolizing of the European image was validated as early as 1814 when Oliver Goldsmith explained that being White was natural and that any deviation from this was a sign of corruption and that the European figure and color were the models against which everyone should be measured (Robinson, 2011).

Colonization did not exist in a vacuum, instead it bred other color stratification systems- Colourism and Racism which all aided in compartmentalizing people. Colourism has been defined as the process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned people of colour over their dark-skinned counterparts. Colourism is concerned with the actual skin tone as opposed to ethnic or racial identity (Hunter, 2007). (Hunter, 1998) has proposed that in order to understand the skin colour stratification phenomenon, one must investigate the history of sexual violence against African women by White men during slavery. Sexual violence including rape resulted in the creation of mixed-race children [Born to black mothers by White Slave masters] (Hunter, 1998). The children born were legally considered *Black*, however, they were often light in complexion and their physical composition was more similar to Whites (their fathers) than Blacks (their mothers) (Hunter, 1998).

To further reinforce the already existing hierarchies, during the same era, with slavery on the rise, it became the norm amongst slaves to have work-load distributed according to skin-color - work inside the Masters house was reserved for light skinned slaves while the darker skinned slaves were given duties outside in the sun (M. Hunter, 2007; Petra Alaine Robinson, 2011).

Although children born of black mothers and white Slave masters were legally considered slaves, their mixed race (often lighter complexion and physical composition) meant they were higher up the “slave hierarchy” resulting in being treated differently than other slaves because they were biologically connected to the White Slave Masters-They were the White slave’s owner’s children.

The assumption was that the slaves working in the house were treated better than those working outside in the sun, making the slaves in the master’s house somewhat better than those working outside; it became every slave’s aspiration to work inside the Master’s house. This could have been the beginning of the colour stratification process. Light skinned native people started enjoying privileges that other dark-skinned natives could not access. Furthermore, the understanding is that colonization with the aid of colorism had established a psychological and racial hierarchy. The colonizers created a racial hierarchy where dark-

skinned natives were considered “primitive” and inferior to light-skinned Europeans, and a dark skin tone was associated with pollution or dirt (Glenn, 2008; M. Hunter, 2007; Julien, 2014).

This White supremacy benefitted those who matched whiteness aesthetically, culturally, ideologically, and even economically (M. Hunter, 2007). Light-skinned people were at an advantage when it came to allocation of resources, they received privileges that were otherwise unattainable to their melanin counterparts (Hunter, 2007).

These researchers (Hunter, 2007; Robinson, 2011; Glenn, 2008; Julien, 2014) argue that it was through colonization that racial hierarchies, or race and skin color typology gained some significance and left a legacy of submission and imitation. The same researchers argued that although Africa is no longer colonized, colonial legacy continues through the availability and promotion of commodities that promise miraculous transformation (Blay, 2011b). In addition, media images persist in reinforcing racial hierarchies by presenting lighter skin as beautiful and preferable over dark skin (Lewis, Robkin, Gabska, & Njoki, 2011).

Given the above, white people tended to be considered superior in every way and were entitled to many opportunities that were not afforded to people of color, including the ability to buy land, get into better jobs and acquire better standards of education (Hunter, 2011). In turn, this gave a silent message that one needed to be white in order to be happy, successful or have a better life. Some people seemed bent to do everything within their power to try and become white through the process of skin bleaching.

2.4 Apartheid in South Africa

Apartheid is a system of racial division that existed in South Africa from 1948 until early 1990s. It was adopted as formal policy by the South African government after the NPA won South Africa’s general election in 1948 (Julien, 2014). This system [formally] allowed for the separation of public facilities and social events, and dictated housing and employment opportunities, access to services such as healthcare, education, and resources by race (Julien, 2014).

Apartheid was birthed from colorism ideologies that first existed during colonial times. To take it a step further, the Apartheid government in South Africa divided South Africans into four racial groups-*white, colored, black & Indian/Asian*. The people were treated differently depending on the population group to which they belonged (Julien, 2014). Laws established during this era prevented blacks from voting or exercising their civil rights. Additionally, rights were allocated per racial group and many rights were denied to *non-white people*. *Whites* were entitled to first class citizenship while *Indians and Coloreds* were the second-class citizens and *Blacks* were regarded as third-class citizens (Julien, 2014). The system favored *Whites*. *Colored's* and *Indians/Asians* were also somewhat inferior but comparatively much better off than *Blacks*.

Universally, it has been reported that Africa has shown a high popularity in use of skin lightening products. (Davids, 2016; Lewis, 2012). 35% of South Africans are reported to be using skin bleaching products to lighten their skin complexion, specifically, one in three women in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal South Africa have been reported to using skin lighting products (Dlova et al., 2015), with 90% of them claiming to not be aware of the risks associated with using such products (Dlova et al., 2015). It is significant to point out that KwaZulu-Natal has got the second largest population in South Africa after Johannesburg (Dlova et al., 2015).

Skin lightening behaviour in South Africa cannot only be credited to Apartheid and colonisation. However, due to the ideologies that were born from both eras, we cannot ignore the impact that they have had to instigate South Africans to bleach their skin. The residual racism left after colonization is an important factor in understanding some South Africans' preference for Eurocentric beauty standards and lighter skin tones (Charles, 2003; 2009).

The discrimination and injustice that the black South Africans experienced throughout their lives during the colonial and apartheid period appeared to make them to believe that the lighter their complexion was, the more entitled to success they became, because only people who were light in complexion in the days gone by were licensed to a prosperous and happy

life (Julien, 2014). For this reason, they put a link between one's skin complexion and their social status. In that way using skin bleaching products not only gives them a light skin tone, but it also puts them higher in the social hierarchy, resulting in their imagined elevated chances to getting better jobs, respect, spouse and whatever opportunities they sought after.

Dark skinned People also carried the belief that their strive in life was linked with their skin colour (Julien, 2014). In *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela (1995) who had a dark complexion makes reference to this conditioning, explaining that when he was a little boy, he thought that if he behaved very well in his current life, he would become a white man in his next life (Julien, 2014).

2.5 Social Media and Advertising as the main attributor to the skin bleaching phenomena

As the late 1990s approached, consumerism – the ability of advertisements and media to affect the purchasing of goods – became a major influential factor in the sale of skin lightening agents. In addition to consumerism, the influence of social media, cellphone applications (apps)-(Facebook, Instagram) and influential celebrity icons emanating from the West (Hollywood in the USA), the Far East (China and Japan) and Asia (Bollywood in India), increased skin lightener use beyond what it could be globally (Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016).

Advertising may contribute to the perception that fair skin is more desirable by showing fair skinned models as a symbol of what is attractive and desirable. Both Advertising and Social Media processes appear to be important tools used to attract consumers to the practice of skin bleaching. In this context, the operative psychology is one that is built on the assumption that seeing a person behave in a certain way creates an appeal in the observer to engage in that same behavior (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999) P26).

This suggests that possibly one of the factors inducing people to engage in skin bleaching is the presence and impact of social media, which through globalization is now available in the remote parts of the continent. Hunter (2005) has noted that to make their products even more appealing, European/American companies are starting to use women of color as their brand

ambassadors and spokespersons, such as the case with Revlon, which uses Bonang Matheba and Connie Ferguson as the face of Garnier and Terry Pheto who represents L’Oreal. Successful advertisements do not sell a product, but a lifestyle. Therefore, by using these personalities to sell their products, advertisers are sending a message that the “light skinned life” is attainable, and that it ought to be sought after.

These trends show that as far as the existing literature is concerned, people tend to bleach their skin as a result of internalized colonialism, or due to the Chameleon effect (Chartrand & Barg, 1999) or social learning theory in which women’s self-image is based on the perception of others as a reference point.

Mshoza presents one such example. She is one of South Africa’s female rappers who made the limelight as a teenager, and her “rags to riches” story has made her a role-model to many. She “grew” up in front of our TV screens and has not been shy to air her laundry in public, letting [us] the country into her life. It was not surprising when she divulged details of her skin bleaching experience for the first time in an interview with DRUM magazine as early as 2011 (The magazine cover is attached as Appendix 6 figure 4, in this report). Wearing her new lighter skin tone like a badge of honor has liberated other celebrities to also openly confessing their skin bleaching behavior including *Khanyi Mbau* and KwaZulu-Natal’s very own *Sorisha Naidoo* (Winner of Miss India South Africa and Actress).

It was in the same interview where *Mshoza* highlighted that the reason for her seeking out skin bleaching was because she was tired of being ugly. Additional reasons were that she wanted to emulate other superstars, that is, her idols- the likes of *Michael Jackson* and *Niki Minaj*. She reported that her new skin tone has reenergized her career. Furthermore, she admitted to being aware of the influence that she has on her followers/fans and how her behavior can influence them to behaving the same way. She is however not bothered by this since it is a decision she is proud of. In support of *Mshoza*’s decision to lighten her skin is her PR Manager, *Xolile* who believes and has expressed that celebrities with light skin are “easier to work with, make up products look better on them and they just look better on our screens”.

Xolile's attitude is not isolated, with many dark-skinned celebrities having recently come out in recent years complaining about how their producers could not find the right make up match for their skin tone. This sends a message to the masses that a darker skin tone is less desirable and problematic to manage.

2.6 Access to Skin Lightening Products

Skin whitening creams have been used all over the world for centuries; however, it is only in the last century where the production of these materials became commercialized (Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016). The years between 1960 and 1970 saw a massive increase in the popularity of using skin bleaching agents in South Africa, with the market peaking in the 1970s. By 1980, the South African cosmetic market industry had reached an annual turnover of about R25 million, and the market was described as 'phenomenal' and 'ripe for the picking' (Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016). Globally, the production, marketing and distributing of skin bleaching agents is considered a multi billion dollar industry (Glenn, 2008).

Skin lightening agents are available in both informal and formal markets making it easily accessible to everyone (Petra A Robinson, 2011; Glenn 2008). The accessibility and desirability of skin lightening creams is propelled by advertising and marketing companies that invest large sums of money on research and development to enable them to reach both mass and specialized markets (Glenn 2008 ; Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016).

A variety of compounds are used in the manufacturing/producing of skin bleaching products; however, the 'big four' – mercury-containing compounds (known as mercurials), hydroquinone and its derivatives (monobenzyl ether and monomethyl ether), potent corticosteroids and retinoids – are considered the primary sources of damage (Dadzie & Petit, 2009), so often more than one agent is used at a time (Dlova et al 2012) and this has dire consequences on the user.

Several government authorities in the different countries have tried to curb the use of skin whitening products so as to prevent the dangerous consequences that these products have on

the user(s). Some of the ways that this is achieved is to implement policies that regulate the sales and distribution of skin bleaching products (Lewis et al., 2012). For example, South Africa became the first country in the world to prohibit advertisements containing words such as “bleach”, “lighten”, or “whiten” (Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016 ; Dlova et al 2012)”, although many adverts today contain words such as “toning”, “evening” and “brightening” which Hunter (2008) argues means the same thing and has the same or similar effects as typical bleaching agents.

Similarly, the governments of Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Zimbabwe have banned the import and sale of skin-bleaching products that contain mercury and hydroquinone (Lewis et al., 2012). A study in Durban South Africa sampled the 10 top-selling skin-lightening creams and found that nine (90%) were found to contain banned or illegal compounds. Six (60%) of them were manufactured in South Africa and the rest were illegally imported from Taiwan (1–10%), Italy (1–10%), and the UK (1–10%). Four products (40%) contained mercury as an active ingredient, two (20%) contained corticosteroids, two (20%) resorcinol, and one (10%) a derivative of HQ. The majority of products contained banned substances (Dlova et al, 2012).

Many of these countries are experiencing resistance in complying with these regulations resulting in the availability of all these products and skin bleaching remaining a public health concern to date.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for the study. Specifically, it provides a description of the research design by detailing the location of the study, methods used in selecting participants, as well as specific methods used in the data collection and analysis. This chapter also describes how validity and reliability was maintained throughout the study process. Also, the study limitations and ethical considerations that guided the research throughout the study are elaborated herewith.

3.2 Research Design

Some scholars have defined research designs as strategies of enquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); that is, as the steps or processes that the researcher takes to answer the research questions. This study adopted a qualitative research design because it was the most appropriate way of uncovering the perceptions that underlie and influence skin lightening behavior; and in turn answering the research questions posed by this study.

Explaining the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind a social action meant that the researcher had to approach the study participants in a non-manipulative and non-controlling manner with no predetermined outcomes (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This is also called a *naturalistic* manner of inquiry (Durrheim, 1999), which is one of the themes of qualitative research (Durrheim, 1999).

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.3.1 Sample/Study Population

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion (Durrheim, 1999) of the population to represent the entire population (De Vos, Delport, Fouché, & Strydom, 2011). The sample of this study consisted of eight people - four men and four women over the age of eighteen years using skin bleaching products taken from a population of bleachers in Durban KwaZulu-Natal. According to Smith and Osborn (2007), a sample size of 8 (eight) participants for a student

project using IPA is recommended as it allows for “sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case.

3.3.2 Sample site/Location of the study

The initial idea was to have the study sample drawn from two clinics in KwaZulu-Natal, one in Pietermaritzburg and the other in Durban. However, this proved grossly challenging as there were many obstacles that presented themselves, particularly when seeking gate-keeper permission in the clinic in Pietermaritzburg. This resulted in drawing the sample from two clinics in Durban. The first clinic was situated at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine. This is a state-owned facility that services patients in KwaZulu-Natal and some parts of Eastern Cape. The services offered are subsidized by the South African government. The other clinic was situated in Musgrave Durban and is mostly for private patients, either paying cash for their consultations or using medical aid to cover their medical bills. Professor Dlova runs both facilities and offers exceptional services to anyone walking into either of the two clinics.

Durban was chosen solely because it was a convenient location from which the study sample could be drawn, considering that it is a mere 74km from Pietermaritzburg where the university is based. Durban however is a very significant location to base a study on skin bleaching because it is home to the biggest & busiest shipping terminal in Southern Africa (Nxumalo, 2015) and research has shown that a large amount of skin bleaching products are exported into South Africa and sold by informal vendors in the streets or over the counter (Dlova, Hendricks, & Martincgh, 2012; Maneli et al., 2016). As expected, Durban offers limitless options of skin lightening creams. For that reason, it is not shocking that 1 in 3 women have reported to using skin lighteners containing harmful and banned substances (Dlova et al., 2012; Dlova et al., 2015).

3.3.3 Sampling Criteria/ Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The participants for this study were selected through a process of criterion & snowball sampling. Criterion sampling is a non-probability sampling method (De Vos et al., 2011) that

involves the researcher consciously selecting the participants who meet the criteria for the current study and have experienced the phenomenon observed (Creswell, 2013; De Vos et al., 2011). This sampling technique allowed the Researcher to find a defined group for whom the research problem has relevance and personal significance.

The sample for this study was expected to meet the following criteria before they could be considered to participate in this research study: (a) Be over the age of 18. This age was important only because at this age and above participants did not need their parents/guardians' consent. (b) engaging/having engaged in the practice of skin bleaching within the last six months (c) qualifying participants had to be willing & comfortable to be interviewed about their experiences with the bleaching process.

Snowball sampling on the other hand involves identifying ideal participants by asking for referrals from people who are knowledgeable in the concerned subject (Creswell, 2013; De Vos et al., 2011); in this case, the gatekeeper was used to access potential participants.

The researcher entering a territory that she is unfamiliar with benefits from the gate-keepers help in accessing the participants; and it can be assumed that the targeted population has formed a good relationship with the gatekeeper and that they can trust her (Kelly, 2006). While gatekeepers do provide access to potential participants (Kelly, 2006), the researcher is aware that their time commitment to a study may vary based on workload or perceived benefit of the study to the target population.

Prof Dlova was the gatekeeper for this research study. She is the chief specialist and head of the Dermatology department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban South Africa. Her research interests include ethnic hair & skin and pigmentation disorders. She has written and published widely in this area which has helped understand the phenomenon from a health/medical perspective. Some of Prof Dlova's accolades include spearheading the National Anti- Skin Bleaching Campaign held in Durban for the first time in 2016 which aimed to raise awareness on the dangers of skin Bleaching-the pictures of the match can be found on Appendix 6. The match happened through Durban CBD, where matchers held placards filled with humorous quotes to drive the serious message of skin lightening. This not

only sparked an interest amongst onlookers but also caused a social media stir. This was a march that gained much public interest and was widely attended by the public.

Due to her work, Prof Dlova sees a lot of patients that have been exposed to various skin bleaching agents, and some of these patients consult with her after experiencing skin complications from continuous use. She became an ideal person to connect and refer relevant study participants for the research.

Five of the participants had previously been Prof Dlova's patients whereas the three participants were referred to the researcher by some of the participants. Fortunately, they met the criteria for participation and were recruited into the study.

3.4 Research Instrument/Data Collection

The method of inquiry that the researcher used in the present study is an important part of any research project as it is crucial in determining the validity, reliability and success of the project (Alshenqeeti, 2014). For this research study, the main source of data collection that was opted for was the semi-structured, face-to-face individual interviews which were audio recorded and conducted in the study's location-Durban.

The interview technique was chosen because of its ability to uncover rich descriptive data on the personal experiences of interviewees; and, concurrently, interviews can become a platform that enables interviewees to speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Kelly, 2006), thus allowing the researcher to investigate people's views on the topic under study in depth. While the aim of the interview was to investigate certain issues concerning skin bleaching behavior, the researcher also addressed issues of demographics (See Table 1).

The research interviews took place during the period between July and December 2016. The interview venues were comfortable, private & convenient for the interviewees, allowing their confidentiality. Three female participants and one male participant agreed to have the interviews at the Musgrave Clinic, while the one female and three male participants had their

interviews at the skin clinic located at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine. The difference in interview venues was based on what was most convenient for the participants. The interviewees had consented to have the interview audio recorded. This was to allow for more consistent transcription (Creswell, 2013) and to ensure that the researcher was not distracted with excessive note-taking (Kelly, 2006).

According to Dornyei (2007) a ‘good’ qualitative interview has two key features: “(1) it flows naturally, and (2) it is rich in detail”. Given this understanding, the researcher was not fixated on structuring the interview questions in a certain way, instead an interview guide (See Appendix A) was used merely to keep the interview within the boundaries of the study (Kelly, 2006) ; that is, the researcher hoped to determine from these discussions whether early learning and socialisation in a post-colonial country are perceived to contribute to people’s decisions to want to “bleach” their skin.

The semi-structured questions were constructed in such a way that that the interview was rich in detail because it provided the researcher opportunities for in-depth probing thus ultimately expanding the interviewee’s responses (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Kelly, 2006) .While it was important to keep the interview within certain boundaries, the following topic areas were covered generally on the interview guide: *Demographical questions, Perception of beauty, Knowledge of Skin Bleaching and Participation in Skin Bleaching.*

3.5 Research Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1999:150) have described data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. For the interview data, in the present study, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse and understand the way that the participants made sense of their skin bleaching behaviour.

The advantages IPA approach of analysis include that of allowing the researcher to develop a relationship with the study participants while also understanding their lived experiences. Due to the “participant orientation” of this approach of analysis, the participants have an

opportunity to give an authentic account of their experiences. This is based on the belief that people are self-interpreting beings, meaning that people are able to actively engage in interpreting events, objects and people in their lives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The IPA allowed for a detailed case-by-case analysis of individual transcripts resulting in the ability to say something in detail about the perceptions and understanding of the skin bleaching community under review rather than making general claims.

The IPA uses a “bottom-up” approach to analyse data, this involves the researcher developing codes and themes from the data rather than using pre-existing themes that might be applied to the data (Smith et al., 1997). In this way, IPA can capture and explore the meaning that the participants assign to their experiences. The advantages IPA approach of analysis include that of allowing the researcher to develop a relationship with the study participants while also understanding their lived experiences. Due to the “participant orientation” of this approach of analysis, the participants have an opportunity to give an authentic account of their experiences. This is based on the belief that people are self-interpreting beings, meaning that people are able to actively engage in interpreting events, objects and people in their lives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The IPA allowed for a detailed case-by-case analysis of individual transcripts resulting in the ability to say something in detail about the perceptions and understanding of the skin bleaching community under review rather than making general claims.

The IPA uses a “bottom-up” approach to analyse data. This involves the researcher generating codes from the data, rather than using pre-existing approach to identify codes that might be applied to the data. In this way, IPA can capture and explore the meaning that the participants assign to their experiences.

After the data collection process, data was transcribed and translated to IsiZulu. The audio recordings were transcribed. As is the case with the use of the IPA, the transcriptions were more semantic rather than focusing on the prosody/manner of speaking/speech. The transcripts were read, and significant phrases were extracted with the aim of identifying themes that emerged and to establish patterns in meaning. In an IPA study the aim of reading

and re-reading of transcripts was to understand the essence of the experience of participants regarding skin bleaching (Creswell et al., 2007). Cross checking was done by checking the original recordings against the transcribed data and the extrapolated themes from the data. This was a simplified, yet rigorous process to ensure the quality of data analysis employed in this research.

3.6 Validity & Reliability of study

Qualitative validity means employing certain procedures to assess the accuracy of the findings to make sure that the research conclusions are sound (Creswell, 2013; Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999), while reliability refers to the degree to which the results are repeatable, (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999), showing that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and the results can be duplicated. The following steps were taken to ensure the validity & reliability of the current study:

To improve on the reliability of the data collected the technique of triangulation was applied through the following triangulation processes. Two theories were used to explain skin bleaching behavior, measures were taken to ensure that the study findings can be transferred to other settings and can be confirmed by other people that are not directly involved in data collection.

3.6.1 Triangulation

The present study used two different theories to account for the motivations of skin bleaching in Durban South Africa, namely, the Chameleon effect theory and the social cognition theory. This aspect of the study design is called theory triangulation (Kelly, 1999) because multiple perspectives are used to interpret a single data set and proves that the research findings can be incorporated into a macro-level of inference (Kelly, 1999).

There was also the aspect of location triangulation. This is because in this study a sample of people who bleach their skin was drawn from two locations (Clinics).

The use of multiple data sources is called data triangulation (Kelly, 1999) and aids in providing corroborating evidence by increasing the chances of developing an understanding of the way in which participants experience the phenomenon of skin bleaching and report on those experiences (Kelly, 1999). This is believed to lead to a more valid, reliable, and diverse construction of reality (Creswell, 2013; Curry, Nembhard, & Bradley, 2009; Golafshani, 2003).

3.6.2 Confirmability of the study

To enhance the fidelity of the interpretation of findings to the original data, after the data has been collected and transcribed, the researcher engaged the services of a research assistant to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions. This enhanced the lived experience of the participants being studied and made for better representation (Golafshani, 2003).

3.6.3 Transferability of the study

Transferability in a qualitative study is established when there has been evidence provided that the research findings can be applicable to other contexts, populations, situations or times (Curry et al., 2009) . . When a study can be transferable, it proves that the study data is not unique to the sample population (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999)..

To prove that the study findings from the current study can be applicable to other contexts, the following measures were considered: : A thick description of the data collection and analysis process was outlined. This includes descriptions of the demographics of the research participants, where the interviews took place, together with information about the personalities of the participants. Efforts were made to ensure that the accounts of the skin bleachers who attended the targeted clinic in KwaZulu-Natal are documented in a systematic and comprehensive way. This information is useful because it helps the reader construct a vivid picture of the research process and participants in specific, that way, the reader will also be able to understand the social and cultural aspects that might lead to participant responses, concurrently, the reader can make transferability judgement.

Additionally, as an attempt to make the data and conclusion from this study transferable to other areas other than Durban, the present proposal underwent an internal review at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This was to ensure that the study was accurately designed to study what it proposed to study; in this case, the motivations and consequences of skin bleaching in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Employing interviewers with substantial training and experience in data collection enhances the integrity and dependability of the data (Curry et al., 2009). The researcher is grounded in qualitative research methodologies since she has taken courses at Masters level that deal with respective research designs; concurrently, she also has undergone training in Good Clinical Practice (GCP). This further indicates that the study will be carried out ethically and that the study participants will be afforded the respect they deserve.

Using semi-structured interview questions could also aid in creating rich data, in that the research participants are free to express their opinions, leading to more information that can even be developed into future studies

3.6.4 Trustworthiness of the study

To enhance the trustworthiness or validity of the study, the interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. This allowed for a repeated revisiting of the data to check emerging themes (Noble & Smith, 2015). All the audio tapes were transcribed verbatim and transcriptions were made available for further reference. Attempts were made to cite the actual words or “voice” of the participants during the data analysis and the discussion process. This was also engaged in to ensure that the findings of this study accurately reflected the participants’ account of the reality under study, namely, their experience of skin bleaching.

3.6.5 Promotion of Rigor

The present study made use of two different theories to account for the motivations and possible negative consequences of skin bleaching in KwaZulu-Natal, namely, the postcolonialism and the Chameleon effect/social cognition theory. A sample of people who

bleach their skin will be drawn from two clinics in KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, qualitative methods were used to make sense of the phenomenon under study. This determined the degree of convergence across components, and aided in providing corroborating evidence, in turn, leading to a more valid, reliable, and diverse construction of the reality under study (Creswell, 2013; Curry et al., 2009; Golafshani, 2003).

3.7 Ethical considerations

This study used seven of the eight elements of ethical research, as suggested by (Wassenaar, 2006) to guide the research design. Although not all eight principles were applicable for this current study design, it is important to note that no one principle is more important than the other. All principles are important to enhance the ethical standing and scientific value of the study.

3.7.1 Scientific validity

This is an important principle to consider since when a study is scientifically invalid, all other ethical considerations become irrelevant (Freedman, 1987). A study can only be scientifically valid provided it is designed to yield reliable information according to accepted principles of research practices (Freedman, 1987; Wassenaar, 2006).

The present proposal underwent an internal review by a knowledgeable team in the field of research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This was to ensure that the design, methodology and data analysis methods used were feasible and designed to study what it proposed to study; in this case, the motivations and consequences of skin bleaching in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa.

3.7.2 Independent ethical review

The protocol for this research was subject to the UKZN Research Ethics Committee, as data collection could not begin without such approval. This was to further ensure the protection of participants and increase the quality of this study.

3.7.3 Informed consent

The researcher requested and received permission from a gatekeeper to conduct the study within the community of bleachers within their reach. However, this did not exempt the researcher from seeking individual informed consent from the proposed study participants. Prior to participation, participants had to voluntarily consent to taking part in the study by signing an informed consent form. They did this after the researcher had provided them with clear information about the nature and purpose of the study, specifically highlighting the risks and benefits of the study and their right to withdraw from study at any time. Furthermore, participants were advised to address any concerns about the study with either the UKZN Human Social Science Research Ethics Committee, the study Supervisor- Prof Nwoye – or through the researcher directly.

3.7.4 Fair selection of participants

To ensure that the sample selected for this study was relevant to answer the research questions, snowball & criterion sampling techniques were used. This way of accessing participants was important in allowing a fair selection of participants.

3.7.5 Favorable risk/benefit ratio

At the end of each interview, each participant was reimbursed with R150 for their time and travel expenses. This was deemed a fair amount considering the time commitment that was necessary to complete the interview. Furthermore, it was not a huge enough amount to be a sole motivator to attract participants to the study. Settling on reasonable reimbursement amount was essential in ensuring that the participants also personally benefit from the study, while allowing a favorable risk/benefit ratio.

3.7.6 Social value

Numerous studies on different populations of African men and women have demonstrated the occurrence of harmful long-term side effects from the use of skin lightening cosmetics

(Dlova et al., 2012). This current study addresses questions that are of value to communities; firstly, it seeks to get the perception of those using skin bleaching products, particularly the rationale on why they engage in such practices. Secondly, it uses current theories to make sense of the phenomenon. Only after we understand the root of an issue from the perspective of those that the issue is relevant can we come up with relevant solutions for it. This study aimed to provide insight on the subject under study and hopefully in the future, the results of this study might form a basis for government or organizational interventions.

3.7.7 Ongoing respect for participants and study communities

This principle involves treating participants with respect during the study and insuring that their individual information remains confidential (Easter, Davis, & Henderson, 2004). Implementing this principle increased the prospect that the study was ethical, and that knowledge was gained without imparting any harm to the study participants (Wassenaar, 2006).

To honor the principle of confidentiality, the researcher entered into a formal agreement with the participants by signing a consent form and assuring that any information they shared will not be discussed with anyone, and that furthermore, any published information will make use of pseudonyms. This was done in order to make sure that disclosed information could not be traced back to them in any way. At the same time, all digital data concerning this research will be backed up and safely stored in password locked devices. After the required time of 5 years, all interview transcriptions will be shredded and thrown away. Recordings and other parts of the interview stored digitally will also be permanently deleted from all locations in which they are stored, including memory cards.

An extension of this principle has to do with giving participants feedback. The researcher will not be giving participants individual feedback of the results, however, the information resulting from this study will be made available to the host community (Wassenaar, 2006). The completed research thesis can be found in the library located at the University of

KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg, main campus. Part of the results of the study will also be made available to the general public through journal publication.

3.8 Summary

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology and aimed at exploring the perceptions of customers in two skin-whitening clinics in KwaZulu-Natal. Participants were recruited through snowball and criterion sampling; the gate-keeper was instrumental in ensuring that we access the relevant participants that fit the criteria for the present study. To understand the way the participants made sense of their bleaching experiences/behavior, the primary source of data collection was through face-to-face semi-structured audio recorded individual interviews that happened in locations that were convenient for the study participants. In analyzing the data, the researcher made use of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Audio recordings were transcribed, and themes were deduced from the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings that emerged from this study. The findings came from the interviews around the following research questions:

1. What rationale do participants in two Kwazulu-Natal clinics for skin whitening have for engaging in skin bleaching?
2. To what extent are the sample participants aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it?
3. In what way does early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin?
4. Which theoretical explanation extant in the literature could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching?

The presentation of the study findings will be done in two sections. The first section will present a profile of the participants who were interviewed for their personal insights into the bleaching practice. The second section will present the study findings research question by research.

4.2 Participant Profile

This section gives an overview of the participants that took part in this research study. Below is a table which gives brief information about the participants. The researcher has focused particularly on their demographic information, so as to get a vivid and well-rounded description of the participants.

In Table 1 below, pseudonyms have been used as agreed with the participants as a way of ensuring that their identities are protected, and that the information revealed herein cannot be traced back to their owners. Of the eight participants profiled, there are four females and four males. Altogether, the participants have used/are using skin lightening agents to alter their skin tone, in order to make it to become light/lighter.

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Occupation	Age Range	Education	Length of time bleaching
Spotty	Female	Casual employment	44-50	Primary School Grade	19 years ago, since her first pregnancy
Ous Carrot	Female	Self-employment	31-37	High School Grade	5 years ago
White Gold	Female	Casual Employment	44-50	High School Grade	4 years
Pinky	Female	Student	18-24	Tertiary Degree	3 years
Wiseman	Male	Self-employed	25-30	No schooling	Since he was a teenager
Skhokho	Male	Formal Employment	25-30	Tertiary degree	Since Secondary school (teenage years)
Biggy	Male	Formal employment	31-37	Post graduate	Many years, From Childhood. Mother used to bleach him as a child.
Champion	Male	Self employed	25-30	No schooling	5 years

Table 1. Biographical Profile of Study Participants

4.2.1 Spotty

Spotty is a single mother in her late forties. She is short and chubby and appears very quiet and reserved. She has a light brown complexion with black marks/spots in her face. She is originally from Eastern Cape and moved to KwaZulu-Natal in the early 90s. Spotty went to school up to primary school level and is currently unemployed. She comes from a home with both her parents who also have up to primary school education. Spotty started bleaching 19 years ago after she developed “black spots” on her face during her first pregnancy. Her friend recommended she uses a product called *Lemonvate* to remove the spots. This product initially worked but the spots would return, and her skin darkened whenever she stopped using the product, however, until getting medical attention, she could not expose her skin to the sun since the bleaching product had made her skin very sensitive to the sun. She feels bleaching her skin has not benefitted her in any way since she has more skin problems right now than she did before she started bleaching; as a result, she would not

recommend bleaching agents to anyone, instead, she is advising her friends who are bleaching to get medical attention to reverse their damaged skin.

She believes she would be beautiful if her skin was smooth and without any spots, her celebrity icon is Namhla from *Generetions* (Appendix 6 Figure 3) and Matshidiso from Muvhango, both of whose skin complexions she admires. Although she has been bleaching for nearly 20 years, she has never heard of any information regarding the dangers of skin bleaching until she attended the anti-skin bleaching march in 2016.

4.2.2 Ous Carrot

Ous Carrot runs her own “spaza shop” in her Lamontville home in KwaZulu-Natal. This enables her to support her family. She is a confident lady of medium build. Her original skin complexion is dark, but it currently appears “orange-ish” from extended skin bleaching use. Ous Carrot defines a beautiful woman as a *Yellow Bone* (Light Skinned) and a beautiful man as one whose skin tone is dark. She believes she is beautiful because she uses skin lightening agents. Her celebrity icon is Connie Ferguson, (Appendix 6 figure 1). If she could be like any celebrity, she would be like Thandaza (Appendix 6 figure 2) from Muvhango who both have “fine” skin.

4.2.3. White Gold

White Gold has been bleaching for four years. No one in her family bleaches, but her colleagues all use various skin bleaching creams. *White Gold* initially started bleaching four years ago, after she was diagnosed with TB. She developed marks all over her body. She is very knowledgeable about skin bleaching and the effects it has on her skin, despite all that she knows, she is not prepared to stop whitening her skin. Three days after this interview she was attending a funeral at her home village. She was pressured to look light to impress her family and friends. She believes that going home with a lighter skin tone will communicate to her friends and family that life is good for her in Durban (that she is doing well). She does admit that not everyone in her circle is impressed with her light skin. She got married a year before this interview. Her husband does not know her “dark self.” She did however report that she does not think he will change his mind about loving her if he discovers she is dark.

4.2.4. *Pinky*

Pinky is a University student from Pinetown. She is studying and lives in Durban for the duration of her studies. She is a trendy young lady who started bleaching while in University where she adopted the motto “if you don’t like it change it”. She has been very uncomfortable about her skin complexion since childhood and when she moved to the big city she became exposed to different ways of doing things including the access and resources to lighten her skin. She has a part time job that is able to generate some money to afford her the kind of lifestyle that she has dreamt of, including buying skin whitening creams. *Pinky* is also very active on social media and follows some of her favourite celebrities on Instagram and Twitter. She looks up to Khanyi Mbau and Bonang.

4.2.5 *Wiseman*

Wiseman is self-employed. He has been bleaching his skin since he was a teenager. Both his uncle and older sister bleach and introduced him to the practice. He makes sure to buy his lightening creams from big pharmacy’s/supermarkets (reputable retailers) to avoid getting counterfeits. He is knowledgeable about all the adverse events relating to his skin lightening behavior, but after much probing, he asked that we do not dwell in the negative consequences of bleaching because he is “careful” and will ensure his behavior does not lead to any of the negative consequences he often reads about. *Wiseman* appeared to have a very strong and confident personality. He emphasized the importance of how his light skin and smelling good aids to set him apart from his peers. He also reported how he initially experienced ridicule from some people especially the older generation; he said however, they later changed their view point and now embrace his new skin tone because ‘it is beautiful after all’. *Wiseman* is somebody who is always browsing the internet for trends and to follow what his favorite celebrities are up to.

4.2.6 *Skhokho*

This was a married man and father, who is tertiary educated, and works for one of the government departments. He appeared arrogant but friendly and seemed to have made up his mind about bleaching his skin and was not prepared to be criticized or told otherwise about his practice. He did not want to divulge much about the practice. He did say that he buys

expensive creams or imports if need be. He was first attracted to the bleaching practice because it gave the user glowing skin which he admired and wanted for himself. He has a very strong social media presence on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, admitting to spending up to 10 hours a day on the internet.

4.2.7 Biggy

Biggy says he does not believe he is bleaching his skin; rather he is using lightening creams to maintain his natural light skin. His whole family uses lightening creams. Growing up, his mother often commented about his skin getting darker, so he has always lived his life with the consciousness of his skin getting darker.

4.2.8 Champion

Champion considers himself already light skinned. This is even prior to him whitening his skin. He appeared very reserved and held back a lot during the interview. This self-taught bleacher kept his answers to a minimal. He appears to have very independent thoughts yet some of his answers proved that he cares what people think of him. His main motivation to lighten his skin was so that he becomes attractive to the opposite sex.

4.3 Presentation of Results by Research Question

The following section will now present the findings of interviewing the above participants, research question by research question, starting with research question 1:

Research Question 1: What rationale do participants in the two Kwazulu-Natal clinics for skin whitening have for engaging in skin bleaching?

Below is Table 2 which provides answers to research question 1.

	Spotty	Ous Carrot	White Gold	Pinky	Wiseman	Skhokho	Biggy	Champion	Frequency
To remove marks/Impurities in the skin	X	X	X						3
Be attractive to the opposite sex					X			X	2
To enhance beauty	X	X		X	X	X			5
To maintain light skin colour		X			X		X		3
To counterbalance the effects of extended use	X	X	X						3

Table 2: Reasons Why People Engage in Skin Bleaching

Table 2 below presents the findings of this research in relation to the above research question. Highlighted in the said table are the reasons which study participants gave for engaging in skin bleaching practices. The participants interviewed proposed that the main motivation for lightening their skin was to be beautiful or to enhance their beauty; followed by the need to remove marks/impurities in the skin. Some of the research respondents accounted how skin bleaching agents can remove marks and impurities in their skin for as long as they continue using the lightening creams; while stopping the use resulted in the marks/impurities reappearing.

For that reason, the third most popular reason the participants gave for using skin lightening creams was “to counterbalance the effects of extended use.” Being attractive to the opposite sex was the lowest ranked motivation to bleach one’s skin; furthermore, it was only the man who gave being attractive to the opposite sex as a motivation to engage in the skin bleaching practice in the first place. Other participants reported that they do not consider themselves dark, but they engage in skin bleaching practices to maintain their already light complexion, and the goal was not to get “lighter” they reported.

4.3.2 Research question two: To what extent are the sample participants aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it?

This section outlines the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. More men than women participants reported to having been aware of the negative consequences associated with skin bleaching prior to engaging in the practice but that was not enough motivation to prevent them from initiating the practice because the desired outcome outweighs the negative results. The women on the other hand reported to having been shocked at all the negative results they started experiencing after they started lightening their skin. Amongst the negative consequences that the female participants reported are: (a) Dependency (b) Expensive to maintain (c) Side Effects on the Skin and Body. The participants who mentioned these and their detailed comments on them are given below:

4.3.2.1 Expensive to maintain

Participants reported on how expensive maintaining their acquired light skin is:

Fighter

It cost between R60.00-R150.00 FOR THE COMMON ONES (bleaching agents) but I use the expensive ones, I spend a lot of money for my creams, about R20.00 every month.

White Gold

“My cream is R60”.

Maybe a month I buy four creams-its small, very small”

Biggy: *For now, I don't know, my wife buys them.*

On probing he gave in and said he spends *between – R150-R220 per month on bleaching creams.*

It seems like a minimum of R200 per month is what those that use skin bleaching agents can look to budget; however, an interesting point was raised during the interview, the more body parts one bleaches has an effect on how much cream you use, changing the minimum money you can spend on maintaining the habit, concurrently, if one is seeking rapid results, you will change the frequency of your cream application thus increasing the possible amount you can spend.

Ous Carrot

“It's R40. Sometimes it lasts me for a month, sometimes it's less because I am using it daily, morning and night. If I only use it during the day, it lasts me a month. If I use day and night, I get very light”.

4.3.2.2 Dependency and Side Effects

Dependency is closely related with side effects resulting in the use of skin bleaching agents. In their plight to curb the negative side effects resulting from the practice, the participants become dependent on these products. Commenting in this regard, some of the participants had this to say:

White Gold

“I stop maybe for 1 month, then the dark marks, then I start again”.

Spotty

“If it is finished, those marks come back, even when I want to stop it, I can't stop it because my face becomes itchy and become black”

4.3.2.3 Side Effects

As regards the problem of the side effect of skin bleaching, the participants have the following to say.

Ous Carrot

When I do not have money to buy that cream, the dark spots come back again.

“They not tell me the bad thing with that cream, they say, if you are using this one, your black spots is coming out”. When I am walking in the sun, it makes me become very dark, and sometimes itchy- like now my face it has rash.

Researcher: So you don't walk in the sun?

No, my skin is itchy, yesterday it was very bad.

The male participants on the other hand seemed to be experiencing no reportable challenges with the skin bleaching practice, except the money they have to part ways with on a monthly basis, which they reported is a small price to pay to make them more appealing to the eye.

When experiencing some of the side effects that they experienced, most of the female participants reported that they wouldn't have engaged in the practice in the first place, had they known what would become of their actions. Commenting in this regard, some of the participants spoke as follows.

Spotty

“If they said if you using this caroline, now a few days or a month the spots is coming again, im not using”.

Researcher: You wouldn't have started?

“Yes”

Researcher: So the problem is you started because you didn't have all information?

“Yes”

4.3.3 Research Question 3: In what way does early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin?

In relation to the above question the first of the key themes found is that of socialisation . The sub-themes under socialisation are as follows: (a) Socialisation in the family unit and (b) Modeling behavior. The second theme emerging from the research under this research question is: (2) External Influential Factors. The different sub-themes under external influential factors are as follows: (a) Media/Celebrities influence; and (b) Positive reinforcement.

Given below are some of the participants views on these themes, starting with Theme One:

4.3.3.1 Theme One: *Socialisation*

(a) Socialisation in the family unit

Interviewed participants reported on the important role that the family and society played on how they perceive themselves and others around them. It is in the family, according to some of them, where children are taught how to view the world, and unless they unlearn some of those values, they will forever view the world through those lenses. Commenting in this regard some of the participants noted saying:

Biggy

It was my mum who modified my cream when she noticed and said I was getting dark and since then I have been working with that mentality.

Man and woman are socialized differently, even the societal expectations are different, although both man and women bleach their skin, and it seems as if society pressurizes the women to have light skin more than it does the man.

Spotty

When they see a light skin person they say “Yhoo, you are beautiful, you are Yellow-bone”, those Yellow-bone, they like Yellow-bone. Even when you are dark they say you are beautiful, but they appreciate the white people, they talk about Yellow-bone, light color.

Ous Carrot

They say a beautiful woman is light, [pointing at a dark skinned woman in a magazine], she’s ugly, and me too I think light people are beautiful

White Gold

A beautiful woman looks like medium, the color of the skin is dark brown, a beautiful man is black.

Skhokho

A pretty woman [is]catchy and light

(b) Modeling Behavior

Not only, from the above indications, are the study respondents socialized to believe that being light skin is aspirational, they also see people modeling the behavior before them. This according to the participants influence people to engage in the behavior. None of the people interviewed pioneered the skin bleaching behavior; they saw significant people in their lives model the behavior. When asked who else in their family/circle bleaches, these were some of the responses:

Wiseman

“My uncle and my younger sister”

Biggy

“All of us in my family”

White Gold

All my colleagues here at work bleach

4.3.3.2 Theme two: External Influences

(a) Media

The above findings show that socialisation in a postcolonial country is one of the motivating factors pushing people to engage in the skin bleaching practice. The media plays a very significant role in influencing behavior. According to the research respondents, they (people) tend to want to emulate the lifestyle that their favorite celebrities present with, even if it is not an indication of reality, and additionally, the media dictates what is fashionable, and what is not. When asked who their favorite celebrities were, below are some of the responses:

Spotty

“I want to be like Matshidiso wa ka Muvhango (Appendix 6 figure 3), she’s light skinned, light complexion”

Ous Carrot

“I like Karabo Moroka (Appendix 6 figure 1), and, I forgot this lady for Muvhango, she is beautiful, and her face is fine”

When probed, we got to the conclusion that her celebrity icon is Thandaza (*from Muvhango*) (*Appendix 6 Figure 2*). Other trends from the study show that ‘advertisements’, ‘music’, ‘fashion and music’ are also some of the things that are also able to influence people’s behaviors and attitudes.

Commenting in this regard one of the participants *Skhokho* noted,

“When I see advert on bill boards and TV, I see good looking people and be like them”

To support the view that the media plays a crucial role in determining behavior and attitudes, Biggy, one of the participants, reported that it is on social media that he sees beautiful accessories, meaning, he does not allow himself to make that decision for himself, but takes whatever he sees on his chosen social media platforms as beautiful, he admitted to relying on social media to determine which trends to follow.

(b) Positive Reinforcement

After behavior has been learnt and is duplicated, the responses that the actor receives will determine if they continue with the behavior or not. From the trend of the research, the responses that the research participants received- *Ous Carrot*, *Spotty* and *White Gold*, it was evident that they were happy to continue whitening their skin because their black marks seemed to have disappeared; this was a positive reinforcement of their behavior. The male participants on the other hand received praises from other people, which was encouraging them to continue with the behavior.

4.3.4 Research Question 4: Which theoretical explanation extant in the literature could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching?

The research question three is quite linked to research question 4. The researcher had theorized that the social learning theory and post colonialism can account for the reasons why people engage in skin bleaching behaviour. For that reason, the next chapter will discuss and interpret the findings in the light these theories.

4.6 Summary

This chapter outlined the findings of the present study, research question by research question. The findings indicated that participants proposed that people indulge in the practice of skin bleaching mostly *to remove marks/impurities in the skin, to enhance beauty, to counterbalance the effects of extended use, to maintain skin color and lastly to be attractive to the opposite sex*. The findings also suggested that some of participants are not aware of negative skin bleaching consequences prior to engaging in the practice. Those that are aware

take part in the practice any way because the desired results outweigh the negative consequences. However, some of the negative consequences of the practice include the skin bleaching process being expensive, addictive and having many dire side-effects. The findings of this study also show that people are propelled towards light skin and other euro-centric features by how they were socialized firstly as children and later on as adults. The media including social media, and advertisements were said to play a big role in promoting a yearning for whiteness among the people; skin bleaching being one of the ways to acquire it.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher plans to discuss the findings of the present study. This discussion will be organized around the major themes emerging from the study. After transcribing and translating the interviews, they were interpreted in terms of the common themes arising from the participants. The themes were identified by noting recurring patterns in participants' encounters as they responded to questions related to the four research questions that guided the current study, stipulated as follows:

1. What rationale do participants in two KwaZulu-Natal Clinics for skin whitening have for engaging in skin bleaching?
2. To what extent are the sample participants aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it?
3. In what way does early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin?
4. Which theoretical explanation extant in the literature could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching?

There are nine themes that have been identified as follows:

Theme 1: To improve the appearance of their skin

Sub-themes: : a) To remove marks and impurities in the skin (37,5%); b) To be attractive to the opposite sex (25%); c) to enhance beauty 62.5% ;d) To maintain light color (37.5%); and d) To counterbalance the effects of extended use (37.5%).

Theme 3: Some Participants appear Ignorant of the consequences of skin bleaching.

Theme 4: Some participants appear on the other hand to have made an informed decision before they started bleaching.

Theme 5: There is a lack of media awareness on skin bleaching.

Theme 6: Participants experienced medically related problems while using skin bleaching products.

Theme 7: To date, there is still an overwhelming preference for eurocentric characteristics as a marker or indicator of beauty.

Theme 8: Participants modeled the behavior of a significant person in their life

Theme 9: Participants were encouraged to continue bleaching by the positive affirmations they received

The major themes arising from the participants' responses to each of these questions will be discussed below. This will be followed by a summary of the implications of the study for public policy, professional practice and theory building, as well as some recommendations for future research.

5.2. Discussion of the Findings according to Research Themes

5.2.1 Rationale for people's engagement in skin bleaching practice

The theme about understanding why people engage in bleaching their skin is one of the major issues that this research centered around. Interviews were conducted amongst eight people-four South African women and four men, all of whose responses on the theme of motivations to skin bleaching yielded the following results : a) To remove marks and impurities in the skin (37,5%); b) To be attractive to the opposite sex (25%); c) to enhance beauty 62.5% ;d) To maintain light color (37.5.%); and d) To counterbalance the effects of extended use (37.5%). All of which shows that the participant had identified a "flaw" on how their skin looked, they engaged in skin bleaching behavior to improve how it appeared.

Theme 1: To improve the appearance of their skin

Sub-themes: : a) To remove marks and impurities in the skin (37,5%); b) To be attractive to the opposite sex (25%); c) to enhance beauty 62.5% ;d) To maintain light color (37.5.%); and d) To counterbalance the effects of extended use (37.5%).The above findings indicate that the reasons research participants propose for taking part in skin bleaching activities vary from bleaching due to a deep-rooted desire to attain a perceived standard of beauty which is equated with a light(er) skin complexion to bleaching because the bleacher wants to solve

genuine dermatological problems and concurrently attaining a smooth skin which is often also glamorized and associated with beauty.

5.2.1.1 To remove marks and impurities

Spotty was not aware she was even using a skin lightening agent when a product (*Lemonvate*) was recommended to her by her friend to remove “marks” on her face after she gave birth to her first child.

I was pregnant; I start to get those marks when I was pregnant, so, then my Friend, [REDACTED] my friend said I must take this other medicine, that medicine was Lemonvata. She said she used that medicine to take the spots out. I buy it and apply it on my face. When I start it, it was right, it take out these marks. So if it is finished, those marks come back. Even when I want to stop it, I can't stop it, because my face is become itchy and it becomes black.

When she began using the product, she achieved her desired results- her skin evened out, meaning the dark marks on her face which were causing a problem for her started to disappear, this communicated a message to her that the “medicine” that her friend had recommended was effective. However, she realized when her first tube finished and was forced to discontinue using the product that the marks on her face reappeared, not only that, but now her skin became itchy when she didn't have the lotion applied, furthermore, her complexion was even darker than it initially was.

These findings are congruent with existing literature and in a study conducted in Durban South Africa among 600 women of African and Indian ancestries, 67% of these women revealed that they used skin lighteners to treat various skin problems including post inflammatory hyperpigmentation, melasma and acne (N. Dlova et al., 2015).

An earlier study also conducted by Dlova and her colleagues, (Dlova 2015) revealed that acne, eczemas, dyschromias, infections, and hair disorders were the most common skin conditions affecting people in South Africa. These findings agree with data from other parts of the world”. Finding out the spectrum of any disease in a population allows for effective planning and in the case of skin disease allows for provision of dermatology services (Dlova

2015). With the high numbers of people using skin lightening creams to treat skin conditions, it makes sense why somebody like *Spotty* referred to a skin lightening cream as “medicine”, medicine which is known for its healing and restoration effects and components.

What is the root of this misconception one may ask? In responding to it, it is reasonable to speculate that: Firstly, manufacturers of skin bleaching products deliberately market their products as agents to clear marks and scars caused by pimples and various skin conditions (Lewis et al., 2011). However, the repercussions of using these products are never mentioned, despite these products containing hydroquinone and its derivatives, steroids, mercurials, kojic acid, alpha hydroxylacids, plant-derived products and even hydrogen peroxide, all of which are known to cause many adverse effects (Dadzie & Petit, 2009) on the users.

5.2.1.2 To be attractive to the opposite sex

Under this theme some of the participants interviewed attested to the fact they went into skin bleaching to be attractive to the opposite sex and most of them argued that they were more attractive now that they bleach their skin and the opposite sex finds them more appealing”. This is obviously based on a deep-rooted belief that a lighter skin complexion equals beauty, which will be explored further on.

When asked how beautiful/attractive other women find him to be, participant 1, *Wiseman* replied:

“Even you self, you can testify that am beautiful. Women see me as waoh guy – that is look at me with surprise and amazement because of how I look”

When asked specifically why the participant bleached, he (*Wiseman*) responded:

Seriously, you become lighter and finer especially if you combine it with perfumes. It makes people notice your appearance.

As absurd as this might sound, it has been found in other countries that not only does skin lightness affect perceptions of a person's beauty, the word "beauty" is synonymous with "light skin" (Hunter, 2007). This trend is emphasized in some key literatures in skin bleaching in which beauty is presented as a critical resource for people because it also affects marital prospects, job prospects, social status, and earning potential, increasing the economic and social advantages of light skin (Hunter, 2007). To further emphasize this point, the same studies show that in societies where resources are divided by race and color, light-skinned people get a dis-appropriate amount of the benefits (Hunter, 2007;) Julien, 2014; Lewis et al., 2012).

Some skin-bleaching products are advertised as tools to clear up marks and scars caused by pimples, rashes, and skin disease" (Draelos, 2007). Unfortunately, some of the participants' accounts suggest that the extended use of products containing high levels of caustic agents can actually worsen skin conditions. Thus although some creams are advertised as effective tools for curing skin problems, the high and sometimes unlawful levels of hydroquinone and other caustic agents within the creams may result not only in their failure to clear acne but rather in their giving rise to new, and exacerbation of existing, acne" (Del Giudice & Yves, 2002; Mahe` et al., 2003; Ntambwe, 2004).

5.2.1.3 To enhance beauty and maintain light color

To support this theme, *Wiseman*, one of the male respondents considers himself already light skinned; even prior to engaging in the skin bleaching practice. He like some of the respondents say they bleach their skin not to get lighter, but so as to not get darker. The underlying belief is that as they maintain their light skin color, they are enhancing their beauty. At face value, getting light is what people assume to be the primary reason for engaging in skin bleaching in the first place.

Another participant *Wiseman*, went on to elaborate on *Wiseman's* motivation to engage in skin bleaching:

“I do not see myself as bleaching but believe I am naturally light and I am just maintaining my skin. Bleaching for me has no benefit but that using the creams makes you look beautiful”

Evidence in the literature appears to show that being light skinned is often glamourized and put at a higher pedestal in the mind of the many people in the society. This is because having light skin is often associated with success, and this can be traced back to the times during slavery where light skinned slaves were given minimal tasks in the slave masters house (Hunter, 1998). A skin tone hierarchy is also part of the South African history, opportunities were once distributed depending on skin tone, and meaning that success could be predicted based on one’s skin tone (Julien, 2014).

5.3 Extent to which the sample participants are aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching, and try to avoid it.

The themes arising from this question appear contradictory. **Theme 3:** One group of participants appear Ignorant of the consequences of skin bleaching.

Theme 4: The other group of participants appear on the other hand to have made an informed decision before they started bleaching, and lastly, **Theme 5** the theme arising from this section is that of lack of media awareness on skin bleaching.

The male participants seemed to have known more about skin bleaching and the effects which use of skin lightening creams could have on the skin. Unfortunately, despite their knowledge and being aware of the harmful ingredients contained in skin bleaching agents, they reported that this would not discourage them from taking part in any skin bleaching activities. Their sources of getting skin bleaching information were varied, from radio announcements, medical rooms, people in the neighborhood/community to the internet. Corroborating this conclusion, one of the participants, *Skhokho* has this to say:

“I have heard a lot. They say bleaching causes skin infection, cancer, stretch marks, body malodor and it does not make wounds to heal up on time.”

Specifically, a majority of the female participants claimed to have never heard anything about skin bleaching or the effects which its continued use might have. One participant reported that she first heard of the concept of *skin bleaching* just prior to this interview after she had taken her child to the doctor. The doctor happened to be a dermatologist who noticed the patches on her skin and was interested in the product(s) she uses. Thereafter, the doctor invited her to a skin bleaching awareness march that was happening in her city. It was at that event that she heard about the concept of *skin bleaching* and what it can do to the skin.

Another participant, *Spotty*, declared:

“I saw that skin bleaching can be damaging cause I saw it on my face. I have a lot of skin problem now”

When asked during the interview what her problems were, she stated saying:

When I am walking in the sun, it makes me to become very dark and sometimes itchy, like now I have rash, it was itchy and I was scratching.

While both of these responses might appear contradictory yet they are supported by the literature. Firstly, it is not very surprising that most women in the study reported to not being aware of their “skin bleaching” behavior. They do not see their behavior as a foreign concept, but rather consider skin bleaching as a natural/normal part of the female grooming; firstly because they have seen women around them include skin lightening products as a normal part of their beauty routines either to consciously lighten their skin tones or to rectify problematic skin. This is congruent to what is reported in literature where it was indicated that- Skin bleaching has become a common part of life in African communities. In the late 1960s, 60% of urban African women reported using skin lightening formulations, making these formulations the fourth most commonly used household product (after soap, tea and tinned milk) (Davids, Van Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016).

In countries like Japan, applying white powder to the face has been considered a woman’s moral duty since the *Edo* period. Further evidence of normalizing skin bleaching practices is derived from local vernaculars adapting phrases/terms to refer to the practice (Davids, Van

Wyk, Khumalo, & Jablonski, 2016), even the female participants in the study reported to being aware of phrases used in their communities to refer to people who lighten their skin, however, they could not equate this to their behavior

Studies in South Africa have shown that the use of skin-lightening products is not associated with appropriate knowledge of risks or of safe practice, meaning, there is a poor understanding of the risks associated with the use of these products (Dlova, 2015). Even those that agreed that the skin lightening practice could have adverse consequences could not name the active ingredient in their product of choice; Not only that, but known adverse events were not enough to stop the practice.

The research participants also reported that prior to their engagement in bleaching practice; they were not aware how much money maintaining the habit/practice would be. Some reporting to the habit costing them R200 a month, obviously depending on the products one uses and which parts of the body he/she bleaches.

Furthermore, the present study reveals that some research participants were not aware of the addictive consequences the behavior has; as using these skin bleaching agents creates dependency. This is because if the user stops, they will often experience re-pigmentation and steroid withdrawal (Ly F., et al. 2007; Mahé, A., 2003), resulting in a darker skin tone and many other skin problems that they might not necessarily have had before engaging in skin bleaching practices. In commenting in this regard, one of the participants, *Spotty*, notes that:
“When you stop or when you have got no money, those few days, they coming back and you become dark”

“They take it out the dark spots, but when I do not have money to buy because I am not working, when I am not buying that cream, they come back the dark spot”’.

The trend from the study appears to suggest that the only other way one can successfully stop bleaching is by seeking medical help from a qualified dermatologist, like the case of one of

present study's participants. That way the dermatologist can offer the necessary treatment to start with the rehabilitation of the skin.

It is this very point that *Spotty* was attesting to when she observed saying:

“I stop it now because I saw Dr [REDACTED], to use that cream I stop it . My skin become dark dark, she gave me this other ointment. I stop it to use it but I still got problems because my face is still bad, its not nice”

Most of the respondents who took part in this study seemed to not have been aware of the negative consequences that come with bleaching and did nothing to avoid them. As a result, they feel powerless in their pursuit of a lighter skin tone. One of the study participants reported that had she been aware of all the negative consequences she is currently experiencing; she would not have started bleaching in the first place.

5.4 To counterbalance the effects of extended use

While answering this question. We were brought to the fifth theme of this study, that is: **Theme 6:** Participants experienced medically related problems while using skin bleaching products .The present study revealed under this theme that due to the side effects that resulted from continuous use, it is not easy for someone engaging in the skin bleaching practice to just all of a sudden stop engaging in the practice and this is because using these skin bleaching agents creates dependency, if the user stops, they will often experience re-pigmentation and steroid withdrawal (Ly, et al. 2007; Mahé, , 2003), resulting in a darker skin tone and many other skin problems that they might not necessarily have had before engaging in skin bleaching practices.

We have noted previously how *Spotty*, *White Gold* and *Ous Carrot* recounted the horror of their skin getting worse than it had initially been. What they thought was improvement of their skin from using whitening creams was actually leading to building dependency, such that when they do not use the products, their skin worsened.

5.5 Theoretical explanations extant in the literature that could be used to corroborate the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching.

There is still a bias in Africa for light skin over dark skin (Robinson, 2011) , although our continent contains a deep heritage and history that we can be proud of (Julien, 2014), plus more and more movements are rising up to promote everything that makes us uniquely African, that is our wide hipped bodies, “4 C” hair and ebony skin tones, to name but a few. We cannot ignore the fundamental role that colonisation and apartheid in the case of South Africa has played in Africa as a whole. Slavery and colonization dominated life in Africa and imparted values related to white superiority onto the generality of the population.

Seventh theme To date, there is still an overwhelming preference for eurocentric characteristics as a marker or indicator of beauty.

Africa's history of, and experience with, slavery and colonization remains at the core of this belief and way of life (Robinson, 2011).

Postcolonial theory can be useful in understanding how colonial power continues to shape culture even many years after we have been colonized. This theory suggests that the bleaching epidemic is a result of the internalization of the white aesthetic ideal which come from people (Africans in this case) having internalized colonial and slavery values and learned to esteem light skin tones and Anglo facial features. Idealization of eurocentric characteristics continues to be propagated by the media and various social media platforms.

Learning and teaching are some of the ways that culture, traditions and values are transferred throughout the generations. This can be done in both formal and informal mediums. We can therefore acknowledge that in Africa, people continue to be socialized and learn in various platforms with the remnants of colonization which continue to dominate spaces such as sports, religion, music, education, social life and language.

Findings from this study show that there are still deep-rooted beliefs in society that still suggest that European values are held at a higher esteem than African values. The social learning theory is well suited to explain how socialisation in a postcolonial country leads to the skin bleaching practice.

Together, using post colonialism and the social learning theory, this study has found that people who engage in skin bleaching practices to make up for a perceived physical limitation of being black skinned rather than white.

5.5.1 The way early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contribute to the decision for people to bleach their skin

The social learning theory as articulated by Albert Bandura is built on the belief that people learn from one another, through observation, imitation, and modeling. In his theory, he formulated four principles of learning, which are: attention, retention, reproduction and motivation.

Theme 8: Participants modeled the behavior of a significant person in their life

Theme 9: Participants were encouraged to continue bleaching by the positive affirmations they received

From the reported experiences of study participants engaging in skin bleaching behavior, the practice is modeled through observation and interaction, a key component of the social learning theory. According to the social learning theory, the observer will imitate the model's behavior if the model possesses characteristics that the observer finds desirable. The participants in this study reported to have grown up in societies where their parents, aunts and neighbors bleached their skin; consequently, they too wanted the same kind of esteem that they perceived these people to have, as a result they too engaged in the behavior hoping to get the same kind of results.

For example, when asked who else in their family or close circle bleached, those that were willing to respond to this question reported that their entire family engaged in the practice. Some few others said they had an uncle and sister, friends or a mother who was already

bleaching. Indeed, the current study did not find any participant, who pioneered the behavior. Rather what is reported is those who engage in the practice ended up doing so by mimicking a behavior that they had seen modeled to them either by those in their immediate environment or virtual reality.

In the literature of social learning, the understanding is that after the behavior has been observed, retained and reproduced, the results will motivate the observer to continue or refrain from behaving that way. If the perceived rewards outweigh the perceived cost, then the behavior will more likely to be imitated by the observer. In the case of skin bleaching, according to the findings of the present study, the participants continue with the practice because of the positive affirmations that they receive from those around them, and the results they themselves see when they look at the mirror. For instance, when asked how other people perceived their now lighter skin complexion, the responses were as follows:

Wiseman

“Men are even more jealous of me at times, sometimes they even make fun of me because am more beautiful”

Skhokho

“They see me as fine and good looking”

Biggy

“To be frank, men envy my beauty”

All of these indications reflect the occurrence of positive reinforcement on users of skin bleaching; a phenomenon which encourages the behavior. The participants receive positive feedback for their behavior, which according to the social learning theory is enough to promote/encourage the behavior; the admiration and “envy” is the prize they are getting for their behavior.

When asked which celebrities they found beautiful, the responses were Namhla (Thulisile Phongolo) (Appendix 6 figure 3) an actress from *Generations*, Thandeka (Sindi Dlathu) (figure 2) from *Muvhango*, AKA, Karabo (Connie Furguson) (Appendix figure 1) also an actress from *Generations* (etc. looking at the female respondents, they all look up to very light in complexion celebrities, except for Karabo from *Generations* who has a much darker skin shade, although she is not light in complexion, she is rumored to have done Rhinoplasty (plastic surgery performed on the nose), apart from skin bleaching, plastic surgery is another way of purchasing racial capital (M. L. Hunter, 2011). The procedure is believed to make a flat, short, wide African nose to look more European-that is, wider and shorter.

5.6 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of customers in two skin-bleaching clinics in South Africa. This was done through exploring the rationale participants in the two clinics for skin whitening gave for engaging in skin bleaching and trying to understand the extent the sample participants were aware of the negative consequences of skin bleaching and how they avoided it. Additionally, the study also explored the ways in which early learning and socialisation within a post-colonial society contributes to the decision for people to bleach their skin and finally, the study looked at a theoretical explanation extant in the literature that could be used to explain the participants' rationale for engaging in skin bleaching.

The study used qualitative in-depth interviews to collect the required data. The interviews were administered to the sample of eight-four men and four women who were conveniently sampled through the gate keeper in the Skin Bleaching outpatient clinics located in Durban South Africa. The data was analysed using the IPA methodology.

Using two theories-post colonisation and the social learning theory to account for the motivation of skin bleaching allowed multiple perspectives to interpret a single data set

which is called theory triangulation, this proves that that the research findings can be able to be incorporated into a macro-level of inference (Kelly, 1999) .

5.7 Implications for Policy, Practice and Theory

The need to remove marks and impurities in the skin and to counterbalance the effects of extended use were some of the reasons that people gave for engaging in the skin bleaching practice. This being the case, comprehensive healthcare (including dermatology) services should be made available in the various categories of public hospitals. At the moment in South Africa, one will have to be transferred to a facility that offers dermatology services to be seen by a dermatologist, which is often a time consuming and laborious process, often resulting in opting for a quicker and cheaper alternative when faced with skin problems, which is buying an over the counter ointment, which so often turns out to be a skin lightening cream that offers a quick fix yet with long term dire effects.

The findings of this study have provided some valuable insights regarding the need for educational campaigns and overall national efforts to effectively deal with the skin-bleaching epidemic confronting many members of the South African public.

Furthermore, it has been deduced from this study that many black South Africans have a tendency towards Eurocentric ideals of beauty, which is often instilled through socialisation in a postcolonial society. Popular culture from the family to the social media and the social influence of celebrities are some of the channels of learning and transferring skin bleaching knowledge. These socialisation groups need to be educated to ensure that the message that they continue to transfer to others is one that celebrates the diverse people of Africa without leaning only towards imitating the culture of a singular group.

5.8 Recommendations for Future Studies

The findings of this research have revealed other areas in need of further exploration. Having explored the literature and listening to the research participants, it has become evident that although Africa is now liberated, free from apartheid and colonization, the residual effects of

both continue to dominate and shape our societies, resulting in the continued idealization of Eurocentric standards of life and beauty in particular. Popular culture has been reported as the main transmitter of knowledge and learning.

Given this understanding, further studies need to explore how we can instill African pride back to all Africans. We also need to determine if the current Afrocentric movements are being effective in successfully rebranding Africa and ensuring she is reclaiming her identity. Concurrently, it is important to determine if these movements are attractive and effectively reaching out to young people who are the future influencers and transmitters of knowledge to the next generation. This study has also shown that the media and media personalities constitute popular culture and are mediums through which learning happens.

Research is needed on the matter of responsibility and censorship of the broad media space, perhaps even finding a way of vetting media personalities to ensure that the content that they produce reflects and celebrates the diverse people of Africa.

The results of the current study show that some participants had never heard anything in formal platforms teaching/educating about skin bleaching and its dangers. South Africa will need to develop creative collaborative public health policies with the various government departments within the country to promote public health education on the subject of skin bleaching and its negative effects, similar to how alcohol, smoking; and most recently, obesity is being combatted nationally.

5.9 Limitations and Conclusion

Despite the health challenges that are associated with skin bleaching practices, people still freely choose to engage in this practice, and it continues to be a flourishing business because of increasing demand in supply.

The reasons for going through such extreme and often dangerous body modification practices can be traced back to the early 20th century among African Americans who experienced slavery, who engaged in this practice mostly as a psychological means to escape their

“blackness”, indicating that initially, skin bleaching behavior was more than being aesthetics but a means to a better standard of life. In modern day society, Eurocentric standards of beauty are preferred because of our Colonial history, children are raised in communities where they are socialised to believe that it is more advantageous to look like the Coloniser as much as they can. The current study has also revealed that there is a portion of bleachers who do so solely to fix dermatological impurities.

The current study has been able to provide insight into factors that motivate people in Durban South Africa to engage in skin bleaching behavior. It has also shown the lack of adequate public policy necessary to safeguard the sale of dangerous skin bleaching creams. For example,

To curb the use skin bleaching products, the South African government came up with what seems like a contradictory policy-the sale of skin bleaching products is regulated and vendors and distributors are banned from selling/distributing such products, however, consumers are not prohibited from consuming/using skin bleaching products.

The current project also highlighted the need to educate consumers of the skin bleaching products.

The skin bleaching journey is a personal decision; the right systems can be put in place, but people can still decide they want to lighten their skin. It is impossible for the government to totally prevent skin lightening behavior; other research projects can look at options for people to lighten their skin with minimal harm. This might include having products that are regulated, marketed and produced that contain properties that can lighten one’s skin without the accompanying negative side effects.

One of the greatest limitations for this study was social desirability and information bias. Looking at the sensitivity of the topic and some of the questions, participants could have had the desire to look good and answer in an “acceptable” manner which might not have been a true reflection of their reality.

6. REFERENCES

- Alshenqeeti, H. (2014). Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. *English Linguistics Research*, 3(1), 39.
- Blay, Y. A. (2011a). Skin bleaching and global white supremacy: By way of introduction. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4), 4-46.
- Blay, Y. A. (2011b). Skin bleaching and global white supremacy: By way of introduction. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4), 4-46.
- Chartrand, T. L., & Bargh, J. A. (1999). The chameleon effect: The perception–behavior link and social interaction. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 76(6), 893.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. SAGE Publications, Inc., London.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications
- Curry, L. A., Nembhard, I. M., & Bradley, E. H. (2009). Qualitative and mixed methods provide unique contributions to outcomes research. *Circulation*, 119(10), 1442-1452.
- Dadzie, O., & Petit, A. (2009). Skin bleaching: highlighting the misuse of cutaneous depigmenting agents. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 23(7), 741-750.
- Davids, L. M., Van Wyk, J., Khumalo, N. P., & Jablonski, N. G. (2016). The phenomenon of skin lightening: Is it right to be light? *South African Journal of Science*, 112(11-12), 1-5.
- de Souza, M. M. (2008). The concept of skin bleaching in Africa and its devastating health implications. *Clinics in Dermatology*, 26(1), 27-29.
- De Vos, A., Delport, C., Fouché, C. B., & Strydom, H. (2011). *Research at grass roots: A primer for the social science and human professions*: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Dlova, N., Hamed, S., Tsoka- Gwegweni, J., & Grobler, A. (2015). Skin lightening practices: an epidemiological study of South African women of African and Indian ancestries. *British Journal of Dermatology*, 173(S2), 2-9.

- Dlova, N. C., Hendricks, N. E., & Martincgh, B. S. (2012). Skin- lightening creams used in Durban, South Africa. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 51(s1), 51-53.
- Dlova, N. C., Mankahla, A., Madala, N., Grobler, A., Tsoka- Gwegweni, J., & Hift, R. J. (2015). The spectrum of skin diseases in a black population in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 54(3), 279-285.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). Research methods in applied linguistics.
- Durrheim, K. (1999). Research design. In M. Terre Blanche, & K. Durrheim (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences* (pp. 29-53). Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Durrheim, K., & Wassenaar, D. (1999). Putting design into practice: Writing and evaluating research proposals. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*, 54-71.
- Easter, M. M., Davis, A. M., & Henderson, G. E. (2004). Confidentiality: More than a linkage file and a locked drawer. *IRB: Ethics & Human Research*, 26(2), 13-17.
- Eric P.H. Li, Hyun Jeong Min, Russell W. Belk, and Junko Kimura, Shalini Bahl (2008). "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Cultures", in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 35*, eds. Angela Y. Lee and Dilip Soman, Duluth, MN :Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 444-449.
- Freedman, B. (1987). Scientific value and validity as ethical requirements for research: a proposed explication. *IRB: Ethics & Human Research*, 9(6), 7-10.
- Glenn, E. N. (2008). Yearning for lightness: Transnational circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin Lighteners. *Gender & Soceiety*, 22,281-301.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, 8(4), 597-606.
- Hall, R. (1995a). The bleaching syndrome: African Americans' response to cultural domination vis-à-vis skin color. *Journal of Black Studies*, 172-184.
- Hall, R. (1995b). The bleaching syndrome: African Americans' response to cultural domination vis-à-vis skin color. *Journal of Black Studies*, 26(2), 172-184.
- Hunter, M. L. (2007). The persistent problem of colorism: Skin tone, status, and inequality. *Sociology Compass*, 1(1), 237-254.

- Hunter, M. L. (2002). "If You're Light You're Alright" Light Skin Color as Social Capital for Women of Color. *Gender & Society*, 16(2), 175-193.
- Hunter, M. L. (2011). Buying racial capital: Skin-bleaching and cosmetic surgery in a globalized world. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4), 142-164.
- Julien, N. (2014). Skin Bleaching in South Africa: A Result of Colonialism and Apartheid? *DISCOVERY: Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal*, 2(1), 4.
- Kelly, K. (1999). Calling it a day: Reaching conclusions in qualitative research. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*, 421-437.
- Kelly, K. (2006). From encounter to text: Collecting data in qualitative research. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*, 2, 285-319.
- Kpanake, L., Sastre, M. T. M., & Mullet, E. (2009). Skin bleaching among Togolese: A preliminary inventory of motives. *Journal of Black Psychology*. Kpanake L, Sastre MTM, Mullet E. (2009). Skin Bleaching Among Togolese: A Preliminary Inventory of Motives. *Journal of Black Psychology* , 36 (3), 350–368.
- Lewis, K. M., Gaska, K., Robkin, N., Martin, A., Andrews, E., & Williams, J. (2012). The Need for Interventions to Prevent Skin Bleaching A Look at Tanzania. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(7), 787-805.
- Lewis, K. M., Robkin, N., Gaska, K., & Njoki, L. C. (2011). Investigating motivations for women's skin bleaching in Tanzania. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(1), 29-37.
- Maneli, M., Wiesner, L., Tinguely, C., Davids, L., Spengane, Z., Smith, P., . . . Khumalo, N. (2016). Combinations of potent topical steroids, mercury and hydroquinone are common in internationally manufactured skin- lightening products: a spectroscopic study. *Clinical and experimental dermatology*, 41(2), 196-201.
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 18(2), 34-35.
- Nxumalo, J. (2015). Why Durban was voted tops in SA. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/why-durban-was-voted-tops-in-sa-1833242>
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. J. C. P. (2012). Praktyczny przewodnik interpretacyjnej analizy fenomenologicznej w badaniach jakościowych w psychologii. *18(2)*, 361-369.

- Robinson, P. A. (2011). Perceptions of beauty and identity: the skin bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica.
- Robinson, P. A. (2011). *Skin bleaching in Jamaica: A colonial legacy*. Texas A&M University,
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Osborn, M. (1997). Interpretative phenomenological analysis and the psychology of health and illness. *Material discourses of health and illness*, 68-91.
- Street, J., Gaska, K., Lewis, K., & Wilson, M. (2015). Skin bleaching: A neglected form of injury and threat to global skin. *African Safety Promotion: A Journal of Injury and Violence Prevention*, 12(1), 52-71.
- Terre Blanche, M., & Durrheim, K. (1999). Histories of the present: Social science research in context. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*, 2, 1-17.
- Wassenaar, D. (2006). Ethical issues in social science research. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*, 2, 60-79.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval



23 June 2016

Ms Tsatsawani Nyeleti Mkhombo 215079547
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Mkhombo

Protocol reference number: HSS/0275/016M

Project Title: Skin Bleaching: Exploring Perceptions of Customers in Two Skin- Whitening Clinics in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Full Approval —

Expedited Application In response to your application received 16 March 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis,

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted signature]

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor Augustine Nwoye
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D Wassenaar
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nondumiso KhanyiJe

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za
soymanm@ukzn.ac.za | mohunp@ukzn.ac.za Website:
www.ukzn.ac.za

100 OF EXCELLENCE

Four. Carnusuz• Edgewood Howard College Medml School Piebrmaritzbura Westville

Prof Ncoza Dlova

MB ChB (Natal). FC Derm (SA). PhD (Natal) PR. NO. 1201840

Cosmetic, Hair and General Dermatologist - Udokotela Wesikhumba

4B Durdoc Medical Centre
460 Smith Street
Durban 4001
Tel: +27 31 305 8335
Fax: +27 31 5666770
+27 31 305 8332

Heritage House
170 Steve Biko Road/Mansfield Road
Musgrave
Tel: +27 31 202 2982
Fax: +27 31 202 2982
E-mail: dlovan@ukzn.ac.za

31.5.2016

To whom it may concern

Re: Masters on Skin Bleaching: Exploring Perceptions of Customers in Two Skin Whitening Clinics in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I agree to be Miss Tsatsawani Mkhombo's gate-keeper for her Masters in Research Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and assist with her project.

Kind Regards

Prof Ncoza .C. Dlova (MBChB. FCDerm. PhD)

Chief Specialist and Head of Department

Dermatology Department



Appendix 3: Sample Interview Guide



1. Section A: Demographics

1.1 Gender: Male Female

1.2. Where were you born?

1.3. Where do you live now?

1.4. What is your age range?

18-24 25-30 31-37 38-43 44-50

51-57 Older than 58

1.5. What race best describes you?

Black Indian White

1.6. How would you describe your skin color?

Black Very Dark Brown Dark Brown Light
Brown

1.7. What is your current relationship status?

Single Married Divorced Separated

1.8. What is your highest grade of education achieved

No schooling Primary School Grade High School Grade

Tertiary Degree Tertiary Diploma Post Graduate

1.9. What is your occupation?

Unemployed Self-employed Casual Employment Formal
Employment

1.10. Were your parents married?

Yes No

1.11. What is your mother's highest grade of education achieved?

No schooling Primary School Grade High School Grade

Tertiary Degree Tertiary Diploma Post Graduate

1.12. What is your father's educational background

No schooling Primary School Grade High School Grade

Tertiary Degree Tertiary Diploma Post Graduate

1.13. What is your Spouses educational background?

No schooling Primary School Grade High School Grade
Tertiary Degree Tertiary Diploma Post Graduate

2. Section B: Perceptions of beauty

2.3.What does an attractive/beautiful woman look like?

2.4.What does an attractive/" beautiful" man look like?

2.5.Do you think you are beautiful? /Are you beautiful?

2.6.How would you make yourself more beautiful?

2.7.How beautiful do you think other women conceive you to be?

2.8.How beautiful do you think man perceive you to be?

2.9.How important is looking good to you?

2.10. How has the media influenced what you think is beautiful?

2.11. Who is your celebrity icon?

2.12. What digital social networks are you a part of?

2.13. How much time a week do you spend using these social mediums?

2.14. What does having a light complexion represent in man in your community?

2.15. What does having a dark complexion represent in women in your community?

3. Section C: Knowledge about skin bleaching

3.1. What information have you heard, seen or received about the dangers of skin bleaching?

3.2. What was the source of this information?

3.3.What information have you heard, seen or received about the benefits of skin bleaching?

3.4. What was the source of this information?

3.5.How do you think bleaching agents could damage women's skin?

3.6.Do women use bleaching creams even if the components of the creams are unknown to them?

- 3.7. What harmful side effects do you think result from continuous use?
- 3.8. How do you think women plan to avoid some of the negative consequences that come with bleaching their skin?
- 3.9. How would knowing about the negative consequences that skin bleaching could have on women's skin and general health affect their decision to bleach your skin?

4. Section D: Participation in skin bleaching

- 4.1. What does it mean to "bleach your skin"?
- 4.2. What other terms do people in your community use to refer to bleaching?
- 4.3. What are the most common bleaching agents available to the public?
- 4.4. For how long does a person have to use a skin-bleaching agent before their skin can start lightening?
- 4.5. What parts of the body do people normally choose to lighten?
- 4.6. Why do you bleach your skin?
- 4.7. How long have you been bleaching?
- 4.8. Who else in your family or circle bleaches?
- 4.9. What benefits do you think skin bleaching has?
- 4.10. Are you able to recognize someone who bleaches?
- 4.11. How does it make you feel seeing other people in your community bleach their skin?
- 4.12. How did your family/community react to the change in your complexion and how did their reaction affect/impact you and your decision to bleach?
- 4.13. Have you ever stopped bleaching? What happened to your skin after you stopped bleaching?
- 4.14. How old were you when you started bleaching?
- 4.15. Who taught you to bleach your skin?
- 4.16. What challenges do you face in getting involved in skin bleaching?
- 4.17. How much does it cost to maintain your bleaching habit?
- 4.18. What bleaching agents do you have experience using?

- 4.19. How many of these products do you have to use before seeing any significant change in your skin color?
- 4.20. Where do you normally get/buy these products?
- 4.21. Describe the bleaching process?
- 4.22. What are the best bleaching agents that one can use?
- 4.23. How much do these costs?
- 4.24. How does your skin feel after you make use of these products?
- 4.25. What would make you stop bleaching your skin?

Appendix 4: Sample instrument to obtain informed consent



I am a Masters student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal involved in a study investigating *Skin Bleaching: Exploring Perceptions of Customers in Two Skin Whitening Clinics in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa*. This study is supervised by Prof. A. Nwoye and is designed to help the researcher attain further knowledge and understanding on the topic of skin-bleaching, the emergent data from this research will be compiled as a thesis and as a possible publication to improve research on skin-bleaching in South Africa.

Invitation to participate and implications of participation

I am pleased to invite you to participate in this research, which will involve a discussion with other women who have recently used the services offered in a skin-whitening clinic. The discussion may focus on questions whose answers will shed some light on skin-bleaching practice. There are no direct benefits for your participation in this part of the study, however the researcher will be extremely appreciative for the time you sacrifice to participate in the study.

This research will adhere to strict ethical guidelines at every stage of the research, such as confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for dignity. You will be asked to read this information sheet and if you have understood it, you will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you have understood the information sheet and that you freely volunteer to participate in the research.

If you agree, the interview discussion will be audio recorded and then transcribed. The data that arises from your participation will be entered into a secure database and analyzed. The analysis will subsequently help the researcher answer her research questions. The data will be published in a thesis that will be available through the library at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In the process of data analysis and the dissemination of findings, your identity will remain anonymous.

Confidentiality

Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, your name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed.

How you are protected

The audio recording of the interview will be deleted once it has been transcribed. The transcribed interview will be stored for 5 years in a locked cabinet in the possession of the research supervisor. After a period of 5 years the data will be destroyed. In the unlikely event that participation causes you any personal discomfort, distress, or you may have complaints, questions or concerns about the study, you may contact, the supervisor of the research, Professor A. Nwoye (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus) at 033 260 5100/5853 or email nwoye@ukzn.ac.za. In addition, if you feel that your rights have been violated in any way you may contact the UKZN Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Committee on 031 260 4557 Email HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za.

Your informed consent

Prior to your participation, we ask that you indicate your consent to participate in this research, after you have read and understood the information sheet, by signing the attached consent form. Furthermore, your participation will indicate that you have understood and have agreed to the conditions of participation in this study. Through your participation you are also confirming the fact that you are over 18 years of age and are therefore legally entitled to give your informed consent to participate in this research.

Thank you for your willingness to consider this and for your participation. If you have any questions regarding the research project, please feel free to ask the researcher.

Signature of Researcher.....

..... (Full name of participant) hereby declare that I have read and understood the nature and requirements of the study. I have been given adequate information to make an informed decision to consent to participate in the study. I hereby give my informed consent to participate in this research.

I agree to not discussing the issues arising from an individual interview with others in ways that might identify an individual ii) Not disclosing what an individual has said in the discussions. I hereby consent/do not consent (please circle one) to have this interview audio recorded.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire, without any negative or undesirable consequence.

Signature of Participant.....

Date.....

Appendix 5: Sample instrument to obtain Gate Entry



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

EMAIL CONTENT TO DERMOTOLOGISTS

Good day,

Master's Degree Research on Skin Bleaching

My name is Tsatsawani Mkhombo, I am studying towards a Master's Degree in Research Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus. As part of fulfilment of requirements for my degree, I must do a research project, I am interested in pursuing a research topic which I am aware is related to your field of interest: Skin Bleaching. I would therefore be very grateful if you could give me permission to undertake the study using your clients/customers as part of my sample.

My idea is to start a conversation, in the form of individual interviews in two separate locations to be able to compare my findings in the two, with people who have used various skin bleaching/whitening products in the past. The aim is to find out, amongst other things, their greatest motivation for using skin-tone altering products, the benefits they derive in doing this, some of the challenges they have experienced since they started using the products and how much they spend, etc. The findings will be compared to relevant theoretical frameworks extant in the literature regarding why people engage in skin lightening behavior.

Should you have further questions regarding this project, please do not hesitate to contact me at 081 848 9985 or tsatsawanimkhombo@gmail.com, alternately, you can contact my research supervisor, Professor Nwoye (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus) at 033 260 5100 nwoye@ukzn.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Tsatsawani Mkhombo

Appendix 6: Visual Images



Figure 1 Connie Ferguson (Karabo from Generations)



Figure 2 Thandaza from Muvhango



Figure 1 Namhle from Generations



Figure 4: DRUM Magazine cover showing Mshozas before and after skin bleaching pictures. underneath is a message "I was tired of being ugly" which sums down her skin bleaching experience

Figure 5: Pictures illustrating the first skin bleaching awareness match that took place in Durban CBD in 2016. Attendees can be seen in shirts and placards with warnings about skin bleaching or humorous quotes about skin colour

