



Understanding the Rationale behind Skin lightening in Nigeria - challenges and repercussion

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The purpose of this thesis is to enable us understanding the rationale behind skin lightening amongst Nigerians in the light of its challenges and repercussion. Skin lightening literally put, is the practice of chemically distorting the colour of the skin through inhibition of the natural process of pigmentation. The practice calls for urgency taking into cognizance the extend young ladies have invested to purportedly achieve their ideal body image for reasons such as aesthetic preferences, finding a partner, career prospect, social statues, self-confidence and many more underlying characteristics as we shall examine in this thesis.

Most ladies are ignorant of the repercussion this practice may have on their overall wellbeing and that of their family while some knowingly undermine the health risk associated with skin lightening; in as much as they achieve their mark. In the course of our report, we hope to examine the various frontages that have directly and indirectly influence this practice amongst women of Nigerian origin while proffering solutions emanating from drafted State legislations, change of attitude and mentality, campaigns, education along with others.

The empirical data was gathered through qualitative methods while the interview which was conducted amongst Nigerian women both in Nigeria and Finland and was semi-structured in context.

This thesis was conducted based on the recommendation of the staffs and services users of The Association of Women Living With HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, ASWHAN. ASWHAN is the umbrella organization that devotes its energy to support women living with HIV/AIDS. The staffs comprising nurses, social workers and a psychology were keen in understanding the motive behind skin lightening amongst Nigerian women.

Only a handful of research has been conducted on the motivating factors that prompted such an enormous surge in the practice of skin lightening over the years. Recommendations for future research should include an in-depth analysis on the impact this practice may have had on the skin and general wellbeing of those consuming bleaching cream. Finally, the consequence of exposure of both children and unborn ones to these dangerous chemicals such as mercury, used in these products has been downplayed thereon worthy of further studies.

Keywords: Skin-lightening, Skin bleaching, Skin Toning, Skin whitening, Colourism

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to enable us understanding the rationale behind skin lightening, its challenges and repercussion amongst Nigerian women both in Nigeria and in the diaspora. It is worth taking into cognizance that, skin lightening, Skin bleaching, and skin whitening denotes the same process and term as we consider in the course of this thesis. The practice of skin lighten has become a socially acceptable phenomena amongst women in Asia, Africa, Middle Eastern countries and the Americas. The global production and marketing of skin bleaching products has become a multi-billion-dollar industry, servicing all parts of the world, making it one of the most common forms of potentially harmful modification practices worldwide states (Siyaka et al. 2016). Skin lightening has been practiced for centuries across the globe and it transcends socio-demographic strata, race, social statues, religion and sexual orientation. Skin bleaching which is the cosmetic application of topical ointments, gels, soaps and household chemicals to de-pigment or lighten (bleach) the skin. This trend has gradually emerged into an increasingly troubling practice as during the past three decades, the number of young ladies patronizing the business has augmented (Siyaka, Joda, Yesufu & Akinleye 2016). Limited research has been conducted to ascertain the motivation behind the practice amongst women in Africa. Previous studies indicate that a growing number of educated women joined the bandwagon making it a multi-billion-dollar industry targeting third world countries (Lewis, Robkin, Karie, Gaska & Njoki 2011).

Skin lightening is a global dilemma that has gained little attention despite the threat it poses to general wellbeing of the public. Despite the limited research conducted within the social science field, there is however hope as many researchers have indicated interest on skin lightening and the complications associate with it.

In the course of this research, I hope to examine the reason behind the skin lightening. To arrive at that, we shall endeavor to probe into already existing empirical data studied by academics. In addition, I will examine and analyze the interviews conducted in Nigeria and Finland in collaboration with my life partner to write this thesis. The thesis will in effect, be used by my life partner to produce a handbook which will be in the form of leaflets, posters and brochures for distribution and an outreach program to benefit those exposed to skin bleaching in Nigeria. I hope the information collected will not only empower consumers of these products but also serve to enlighten them on their choices and available safer options in the cosmetic market. I also hope that, materials gathered in the course of my research will go a long way to serve as a reference point both stalk holders and companies who which to invest in this sector. I also hope to support and exchange information with concerned stalk holders for use in campaigns, adult education.

The quest for a thorough research at present is particularly invaluable as Robinson (2011) forewarns the authorities. Reason being that unfavorable response and commitment has been invested prompting a health concern amongst health officials.

As a future social services professional, I understood the importance and functions of the skin and the need for care. However, I had limited information on why most people choose to bleach their skin, and what action to take to create awareness knowing the fade effect it stands to pose. Startled with these same questions over the course of time, resulted in my willingness to address the status quo accordingly.

The goal of my research is to examine the motive behind skin lightening amongst Nigerian women, by systematically employing empirical data gathered through qualitative methods through interview conducted amongst Nigerian women in in a semi-structured context.

We shall examine the various initiatives that have been implemented to front the rise in skin lightening practice. The key word initiated in the research were skin-lightening, skin bleaching, skin toning and skin whitening. Reader will be introduced to the various stages of our project by familiarising themselves with the chapters accordingly. Firstly, we are going to familiarize ourselves with brief facts about Nigeria; looking at the different socio-political elements and its people. Nigeria is a country located on the western coast of Africa with a diverse geography, with climates ranging from arid to humid equatorial. Nigeria is a country of 250 diverse ethnic groups with hundreds of languages spoken such Yoruba, Igbo, Fula, Hausa, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, English and many more. It is a country with abundant natural resources, notably large deposits of petroleum and natural gas. Nigerians are mostly Christians and Muslims while few still practice traditional religion. The national capital is Abuja in the Federal Capital Territory while Lagos remains the economic capital. The constitution grants all citizens of at least 18 years of age the right to vote. Women were involved in the political process since the colonial era mostly in the south. Their political strength is rooted in the precolonial traditions among particular ethnic groups, such as the Igbo, Edo, amongst others (Falola, Hamilton, Kirk-Greene, Udo & Ajayi et al. 2019). I am going to discuss on the objective of the thesis and skin lightening as a project and introduce the two key research questions to guide us as you read through my report.

2 Objective of the thesis and Skin lightening as a project

The main objective of skin lightening as a project emanates from my motivation to understand why women are tempted to bleach their skin knowing, if not fully then partially the consequences of the application of this topical cosmetic on their skin.

My placement was conducted in collaboration with ASWHAN, Uyo branch in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria, West Africa. (ASWHAN) is the umbrella organization of support groups of women living with HIV in Nigeria. ASWHAN is an organization has some 350 staffs working tirelessly across the Nigerian federation. ASWHAN was established in 2004 to respond to the peculiar needs of Nigerian women living with HIV and their children.

My Thesis was written based on the recommendations of the staffs and services users of ASWHAN after a recurrent discussion and debate on this same issue. This nonetheless motivated me to take the challenge to conduct a research on the project in question.

ASWHAN was registered in Nigeria with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) on September 5, 2005. ASWHAN objectives and goals is to improve the health, socio-economic status and welfare of Nigerian women living with HIV and AIDS (WLHA) and their children and to promote a healthy and risk-free life for all.

The Uyo (ASWHAN) branch where I did my placement was inaugurated in 2010 with about 15 staffs, 3 volunteers excluding 2 drivers and 2 gatemen working in the branch office.

The staffs consist of nurses, social workers and psychologies while service users are mainly women of diverse background, social statues, values and religion. We also have students from the locality and public healthcare workers who frequently visit the center to exchange innovative ideas, participate in workshops and seminars on health care related themes and well-being.

The two research questions which I am going to deliberate on to better understanding the mind-set behind skin lightening are the following;

1. What are the perceived influence and outcome attributed to skin bleaching amongst Nigerian women?
2. What role has popular culture and the media played in the skin bleaching business and how much impact has intervention had on the fight against this phenomenon?

To better understand the questions, chapter three will introduce us to the theoretical framework, detailing the social learning aspect of the report, the critical social theory and the Maslow's hierarchical theory of Human Needs to support my stand.

3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework an important tool in any given research since it accords reliability and texture to the topic. Creswell (2014, 66) as noted by Schwandt in 1993 that no qualitative study begins from pure method. Theoretical framework serves as a starting point for all observation and prior conceptual structure.

“By virtue of its applicative nature, a good theory will fulfill one’s primary purpose by explaining the meaning, nature, and challenges associated with a phenomenon, often experienced but unexplained in the world” (University of Southern California Research Guides 2019).

It further went further to state that the essence of theoretical framework is to use the know-how acquired to better understand and exert a more informed and concrete approach to any text. The theoretical framework must demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of a research paper and that relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered.

In conclusion, theoretical framework is readily found within literature, it is pertinent that a review and research studies for theories and analytic models relevant to the research problem is examined (University of Southern California Research Guides 2019).

Theoretical framework will further strengthen a research work by creating explicit statement of theoretical assumptions that permits the reader to evaluate them critically. This will serve as a connecting bridge of the researcher to existing knowledge thus given a relevant basis for a hypotheses and choice of method.

Cresswell (2014, 65) refers to a study by Fay in 1987 defines critical theory perspectives as concerned with empowering individuals to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender. I hope to accomplish these measures by identifying those vices that directly or in directly prompted them to adopt their position. Ensuing into accessible opportunities conceivably attainable in a discernable manner.

3.1 Social learning theory

The Social Learning Theory was propounded by Albert Bandura. The theory suggests that much learning takes place through observing the behavior of others. This theory therefore suggests that, a lot of learning takes place through observation first, prior to doing it personally (Apuka 2018).

The social learning proposes that for any reaction to manifest itself, there must have been a form of assimilation adopted by developing a general stance and values of the other person through development like one would do with a role model

Additionally, as the theory suggest, the more a person is exposed to certain behavior the more he/she tends to copy them. The advent of social media has made it easier for women to get exposed to various adverts that projects light skin female advertisers, therefore, their perception is influenced into believing that lightening of the skin has some positive significance.

All characteristics of an individual to some degree reflects a given social structure. It emphasises that, it is not merely an acquisition, or receptive process, since social self affects the way a person perceives and interpret their experiences in social living (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin 2003).

Jarvis et al. thus refers to a social theory of learning whereby the idea of a social self encompasses the interaction between us and others in relation to prevailing beliefs and attitudes commonly referred to as the culture of society.

These writers further stress that despite the wholesomeness that it seems, it is not a one-way transaction; that human learning is self-conscious and reflexive even as socialization remains a primary function of learning. The conclusion being that, we are both products and creators of culture and that Learning is seen not as social adaptation but as social action.

Since social learning theory describes human behaviour as a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental determinants. Understand the stance of those who choose to lighten their skin is a socially complex subject that calls for extensive research. Most of my clients assumed that it was their fundamental human right to dictate and influence their self-direction. They felt that whatever they did to themselves was their personally affair therefore no human nor authority had the right to dictate what was good for them. Most government have banned topical products that contains mercury on the shelves of their individual countries. The ban however has not generated much effect on the attitude of those who use this merchandise. This subject had ethical implications as it was difficult for me to draw a line between what is justifiable and conflicting. This conception therefore exalts humans not as powerless objects controlled by environmental forces nor free agents meaning they can choose to be what they want. Both people and their environments are reciprocal determinants of each other (Bandura 1977 cited in Jarvis et al. 2003).

3.2 Critical social theory

Max Horkheimer is a sociologist who developed an unconventional critical theory that seeks to liberate human beings from conditions that supports dominance, enslavement and social inequality.

Critical social theory according to Leonardo describes a multidisciplinary knowledge base theory that principal aim is to advance the emancipatory function of knowledge. The approaches adopted by the writer is aimed at promoting the role of criticism in the search for quality education through critical social theory. This critical form of classroom discourse is only made possible by grooming student's ability to critique institutional as well as conceptual dilemmas, especially those that breeds domination or oppression. Critical social theory-based movement in education promotes the relationship between social systems and people, examine how they manage each other, contribute to the emancipation of both. (Leonardo 2004)

The term critical theory which originated in Germany in the 1930s seeks to politicize and address social anomalies by referring those to historical and cultural contexts, through the process of data collecting and analyzing to relativize their findings. (Barbara 2000).

Barbara further identified three key characteristics of critical theory namely

Social engineering: through functionalist perspectives to assist in the social construction of order, control and regulation;

Political mobilization: through Marxist, critical and feminist theories to establish a base for critique and emancipation;

Sense making: through interpretative approaches to facilitate understanding of how sociocultural intelligibility is achieved (2000, 11).

Critically thinking from the perspective of a common man and a feminist, has the authorities trespass their limit by indirectly intruding into its citizen's private affairs. There are important questions that keep propping into my thoughts. For example, must skin bleaching products be banned? Are Nigerians not entitled to comport and adorn themselves ways that they so desires?

In this circumstance, It is difficult to ascertain how much influence the authority must exert in banning products that contain products that they deem harmful to its citizens. However, the complication these products may have in the long-term on consumers, there is a necessity to ethically and critically appraise and individuals own desires and rights.

3.2.1 Maslow's Hierarchical Theory of Human Needs

Maslow (1954) Maslow's Hierarchical Theory of Human Needs refers to a hierarchical structure shaped in the form of a pyramid. The pyramid dictates that the most basic levels of human needs for life, such as sufficiency needs, occupies the bottom while the most attractive need

are located at the top. It comprises physiological needs, safety/security, aesthetic needs and self-actualization (Maslow 1954, cited in Lee & Hanna 2015, s.6).

Consequently, for one to emigrate to the top, the needs at the bottom must be mostly met. I wish to argue that, in this case everyone has the freedom to set their prior according to their scale of preferences; as they so desire. Most women have gone as far as forsaking food, shelter, clothing which are salient needs to enable them save money to purchase these products. A client hinted me that looking good is more important to her at that stage of her life. She believes that lightening her skin will bring her much favor and possibilities in her daily pursuit. Therefore, if skin bleaching is what will guarantee self-satisfaction, who are we to question their tenacity and judgement. Most ladies are conditioned by the power of needs to actualize their dream, hope and aspiration by resorting to aesthetics measures.

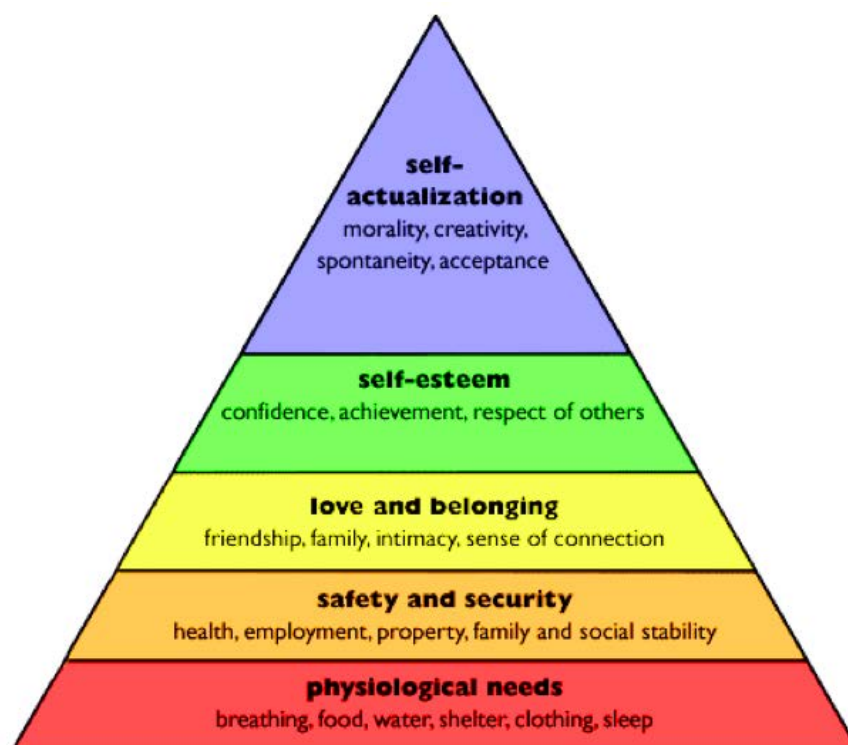


Figure 1. Nick Nelson 2016, an illustration of Maslow's familiar hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs amplifies the need for self-esteem by placing it at the second stage of the pyramid. Self-esteem, which involves confidence, feeling of accomplishment and respect suggest the importance these needs.

This idea seems to support the practice of skin-lightening amongst Nigerian women living both in Nigeria and in the diaspora. Since the most basic levels of human needs namely sufficiency needs drop to the bottom while the most attractive ones elevate cannot be least emphasized.

Most of the Nigerian women I interviewed as earlier mentioned, who bleach believe that to arrive at a self-actualization, it was important to boost their self-confidence and command respect though bleaching to meet their perceived societal craving.

Since everyone has the right to personal freedom and integrity, I would suggest that those who so wish to practice skin-lightening should be allowed to do so. Exception can Of course, can be directed at particularly circumstances that is suspected hazardous or fatal to lives and property. Despite everything, cautious needs to be applied by both the authorities and individuals to evert trampling on the rights and freedom of individuals. This may the case as most individuals are tempted to criticize those who desire to bleach their skin while others seem nonchalant. Most of those who whiten their skin believe that it will boost their self-esteem, enable them to secure a marriage partner, boost their career and search for a job amongst others.

4 Methodology

As the two research questions suggest; (a) what are the perceived influence and outcome attributed to skin bleaching amongst Nigerian women? (b) What role has popular culture and the media played in the skin bleaching business and how much impact has intervention had on the fight against this phenomenon? These basic tools are essential to better understand the perceived influence, outcome and the role of popular culture and solutions. It is on this note that I am going to elaborate on namely the data collection method, the process and analysis.

4.1 Data collection method

This research was conducted using qualitative research approach because of its person-centered approach. A person-centered approach attempts to collect a not too in-depth analysis of an individual's immediate surrounding; gathering an overall understanding of why the respondent responded as such to a product obtainable.

According to Keegan (2009), Qualitative research explores questions such as what, why and how, rather than how many or how much; it is primarily concerned with meaning rather than emphasis on the depth of the understanding and relationships that an individual perceives towards a brand.

Keegan further refer to it as cultural research since it seeks to understand how individuals and groups think and behave in relation to products or services within a given cultural context. These measures involved assuming an informal interaction-based approach unlike a formal one. I was also conscious of the need for an open-minded but dynamic tactic that supports a versatile but effective impression.

I adopted numerous techniques during my research process such as interviews, diary keeping, audio recording and often filming to understand my client's relationship with the underlying subject in question. I was as well vigilant not to warrant an overly rigid method such as adhering to my pre-prepared questionnaire at some point.

As emphasized by Keegan (2009), that although qualitative outcome may be referred to as data, they are not necessarily data in the sense that it evokes thoughts, opinions and behaviors.

4.1.1 Data collection process

I assumed in order to comprehend the various phases undertaken to reach the data processing and analytic stage, it was necessary to familiarized myself with the circumstances that surrounds my target group.

My foremost objective was to understand, create awareness and subsequently empower those who indulge in the various motives behind skin lightening and Identifying causative factors. Most women are attracted to the practice mainly due to diverse factors and the only way to gather materials for my research, I reckon was to immerse myself into my target group environment by participating and acting like one of them.

Secondly, my interest aroused thanks to the recommendations of the staffs and services-users of ASWHAN after a recurrent discussion and debate on the issue.

My service-users were individuals from diverse works of life; encompassing social status, sexual orientation, education, religion and political affiliation. To collect reliable and prompt result however, I decided to focus primarily on the female group who constitute a focal point of my study.

My placement carried out abroad was in collaboration with (ASWHAN). ASWHAN - is an Association of Women living with HIV/AIDs and based in Nigeria. There were altogether 35 interviewees who mostly females were constituting 25 in Nigeria in tandem with 10 women of Nigerian origin residing in Finland. The essence was to add value to my research and draw a contrast considering the distance and cultural differences that surrounds them. Both groups of women nevertheless are currently and were previously exposed to bleaching products.

The interviewees were not selected based on educational nor socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientation, age nor occupation for fear of risking an atmosphere flanked with segregation. Nonetheless, I personally collected personal data essential to achieving a comprehensive data from each interviewee incognito while names were replaced with invented names for ethical reasons.

Confidentiality and trust were paramount considering the level of intrusion into their private lives and secret life. I started by mindfully introducing myself and the purpose of the interview while stating my desire to record their conversation but also promising to personally delete every data afterward. The overall participation of the interviewee was receptive, outspoken, warmth and a rewarding experience (Robinson 2011).

The data collection method used here is qualitative research, segmented into two fragments namely interview and focus group discussion as we shall consider in this report.

Seale, Gobo, Jaber, Gubrium, & Silverman (2004) describes Qualitative Research Practice as an indispensable and ultimate guide in most qualitative methods. In addition, it serves as a requisite for anyone interested in social research and improving research practice.

Qualitative Research Practice further demonstrates the advantages from the perspective of real-life experience. Social research is mandated to serve not only as investigation into the

social, but also biographical engagement in an authoritative yet reachable manner (Jaber et al. 2004). As earlier mentioned, we shall attempt to examine two qualitative research fragments namely interview and focus group discussion. Interview is described as a social encounter where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective (and prospective) accounts or versions of their past (or future) actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts (Jaber et al. 2004, 16).

“As Fontana notes, ‘given the irremediably collaborative and constructed nature of the interview, [it is essential] to try to understand the biographical, contextual, historical, and institutional elements that are brought to the interview and used by both parties’ (Jaber et al. 2004, 16).

Focus group in contrast supports a qualitative approach by laying emphasis on a one-on-one interview which enables a prolonged narrative that triggers an open talk on matters pertaining to issues of status, conflict and self-presentation (Michell 1999, cited in Jaber et al. 2004, 65). The advantage here is that it helps to moderate the pressure and guilt that emanates from an interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Group interview generates an atmosphere that offers warmth, a willingness to contribute, counsel or respond thus facilitating the task of the researcher.

Focus groups is gaining momentum in social science domain often used in an exploratory manner, thus satiate the researcher’s inability to determine what categories, links and perspectives are relevant (Jaber et al. 2004, 65). The main source of data collection for this research emanates from an open-ended interview. The interview was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere at the service user’s convenience and privacy. The open-ended approach of the interview permitted the interviewee to freely express their opinion on the skin-lightening subject without constraint nor coercion from any external sources. The collected data were then recorded with an audio gadget, transcribed and coded according to emergent and recurrent characteristics grounded on the interview guideline.

Qualitative analysis is an approach that incorporates diversity, complex and nuanced traits (Holloway et al. 2003, cited in Braun et al. 2006, 4).

Qualitative analysis is interpretation centered, meaning that there are no given limitations nor roles on the mode of application. There is however a consensus on the processes defined by various researchers. As in this case, I attempted to adopt an exploratory approach, content driven and mainly based on purposive sampling and use of primary data as I have chosen to do in this research (Guest & Macqueen 2012).

4.1.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis method used in this thesis is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method that attempts to analyse qualitative data by focusing on identifying themes of meaning or identifying patterned meaning across a dataset. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke 2006, 6).

Thematic analysis seeks to find patterns and themes appearing in the data by coding different words or phrases (Harvard University 2008). Thematic analysis is theoretically flexible, and it suits well in questions related to people's experiences, views and perceptions, as is the case in this research. The approach to the thematic analysis in this research was inductive, which is a way where the content of the data directs the coding and the development of themes (The University of Auckland, 2019).

According to Holloway et al. (2009), it is worth reckoning that, each interview differs from the next in sequence and wording, despite the already distinct patterns common to all interviews as specified study shows in the analysis. It is also ingenious to start unstructured interviews with general question in the broad area of study which are thus, accompanied by an aide memoir, agenda or a list of topics that will be considered. The authors further emphasized on the necessity to concentrate on Warm-up and simple questions first to avoid reserving the essentials till later thus eliminating boredom, tiredness and reluctance to discuss the essentials. (Holloway et al. 2009, 89).

The advantage of this method of unstructured interviewing make room for flexibility and allows possibility for students to focus on the motives and wishes of the interviewee rather than own assumptions. Bearing the above notion in mind, my Interviews were conducted freely with less pressure on the order or sequence in consideration on the responses to earlier questions while keeping in mind the core focus of my research.

However, Holloway et al. (2009, 89), emphasize that the direction and control of the interview by the researcher must remain minimal while informants are free to answer at length in order to acquire in-depth data. Braun and Clarke (2006) have outlined 6 phases to guide us through the process of analysis. The phases are written in italics and numbered in the text in order to guide us accordingly. The various phases that are going to be considered below are the firstly, data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes and finally, Producing the report.

Phase1: data familiarising

After interview and transcripts have been collected, the first step is the familiarization with the data by thoroughly reading through the interview transcript. This I reckoned will enable

the retaining of meanings, patterns concept of my project. While thoroughly reading through the interview transcript.

Table 1. Codes used for the data analysis.

CODES		
habit	side effect	advantage
beauty	bleach	colourism
shame	medical	high statues
confidence	favor	attraction
attraction	empathy	influence
color	regret	fashion
pride	motive	celebrity
love	ignorance	partner
empowerment	experience	attitude
health	peer pressure	social implication

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Despite availability of computer-based qualitative data analysis software such as (CAQDAS) and NVivo isolate phrases, I thought it practical to use the manual method and the application of Microsoft Word. The codes work by identify features of the data (semantic content or latent) and refer to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed (Boyatzis 1998, 63 cited in Braun and Clarke 2006, 18). In the process of manual coding the data that were gathered are identified and match with materials that validates the codes. I firstly highlighted key points by color-painting to identify plausible patterns to ensure that key data are coded then merged accordingly. The application of Microsoft Word is

mainly to using the comment tool to highlight significant and potential codes through numbering process.

Table 2. The process

CODES
Pressure and attraction

SUBTHEME
Motives, experience and Social implication

THEME
Impetuses for Skin lightening

Phase 3 Searching for themes

Once I had gathered all plausible data and had them coded and organised, the next phase was to analyse the codes gathered and systematized into workable themes. These themes once branded are further collated to enable the shelving of applicable codes in the appropriate thematic columns.

To support and sustain my already sorted codes into themes, I made a visual representation by creating a tables and mind maps to enable me shuffle around to sustain permanent themes.

Table 3. Thematic chart

THEMES	Skin lightening as a practice
SUBTHEMES	The rationale behind skin bleaching
DATA EXTRACTION	M 2 "I just feel comfortable now about my look...really! What else can I say about it?"

Phase 4: reviewing themes

After acquiring and sorting out the Themes, I proceeded with the reviewing phase of my research. A phase defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 20) as the fine-tuning stage of those themes.

At this stage of my project, I endeavoured to guarantee that the core themes and meaning of the data are retained without omitting dynamic specificity. As soon as the given themes are confirmed to collate with the validity of the data, only then did I move forward to the fifth stage of my Thematic Analysis.

Phase 5: defining and naming themes

After ascertaining the validity of the data Vis-a-vis the themes, comes the systematic upgrading stage of the themes. The essence of refining on the theme is to determine the connotation of the theme in order to understand what scope each data dictates.

As explains by Braun et al. that it meant going back to collate data extracts for each theme and organising them into a coherent and internally consistent account with accompanying

narrative. The authors stress that paraphrase should be avoided, in contrary, content of the data extracts must identify what is interesting about them and why (Braun et. al. 2006, 22).

Phase 6: Producing the report

The final stage involves the producing of the report to incorporate the above-mentioned elements. To succeed, there are key factors that should be considered. These factors are according to Braun, emphasis on the coherency, logic, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell within and across the theme (Braun et al. (2006, 23). In this way I was able to focus on an analytic narrative that does not only describes but defend my research question

5 Ethical considerations and reliability

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2019), ethics is defined as a discipline, moral principles as well a set of theory or system of moral values that deals with moral duty and obligation. The core concepts encompass the fundamental principles of decent human conduct. This includes the study of universal values such as the essential equality of humankind or natural rights, obedience to the law of land and concern for health and safety (business dictionary 2019). In the course of writing this research, I was conscious of my principal responsibility as a prospective social works professional is to promote the well-being of my clients. However, there are limitations to my legal obligation that might overshadow my loyalty to them. For instance, in situation whereby my client has the intent to harm oneself or others, I am obligated to alert the concerned authority such as the police.

In the process of my interview, I considered promoting the rights of my clients to self-determination as my social responsibility in so far as their action does not pose a grave threat to lives and property. All the interview and recordings that were conducted was based on my client's informed consent and request. The language that I used to inform my client of the purpose of my interview was clear and understandable to my clients and I was also conscious of the fact that my clients had the right to withdraw granted consent.

I did not forget hesitating to repeat and consent my client the opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions and disagree if they so wish to reach to an understanding. I was alert in cases where my clients were illiterate, needed an interpretation or perhaps did not understand my enquiry by introducing a qualified third party where needed. As for the few who opted to be interviewed by phone, I took time to inform them of the risk and disadvantages associated with such medium. I tried not to stretch my competence beyond my educational boundaries and know-how.

I constantly took cognizance of how human behavior can change overtime in any given society, I considered it relevant to understand beforehand the culture, norms and values of my

clients. I believe it will better equip me to appreciate the underlying aspect behind certain culturally related responses to relevant but sensitive topics and terms.

Most of my clients were females who had experience various degree of gender oppression, physical violence and in most cases sexual harassment. Having a knowledge on the impact of this inclination amongst Nigerians has widened my self-awareness on subjects pertaining to sexuality, belief, politics, sex and socio-political emancipation. I was also committed to exercising fair play, equity and not being judgmental during my interview to guarantee them of my stance which is to protect their interest and confidentiality. I did not take unfair advantage of my clients in the course of the interview to exploit them in any way to feed my own personal interest nor create a situation that may cause them personal harm.

Some of my clients were not comfortable with discussing personal matters at public spaces nor with others, so we made time to meet at a private location for convenience. Subsequently, I made sure that all the materials and sensitive data that were gathered in the course of my research were stored in a safe location to be subsequently destroyed. I did not disclose classified information with any third party, nor did I use the real names of my clients while discussing on skin lightening. I was judicious not to use demeaning statements related to gender inequality nor sexually inappropriate phrases during discussion with my interviewee. I did not use any form of incentive, use of gift nor other forms of personal services deemed questionable towards interviewee. Reliability, on the other hand, denotes constancy or repeatability in determining hypothesis and data both in the social and physical sciences

Peradventure, striking hindrance to the authenticity and reliability of a text lies in the fact that qualitative research demands a quantitative approach where human thoughts and motives are non-permanent. Secondly, the reliability is problematic to assess; especially in a context whereby the researcher's quality of work, amount of time invested, and determination is dictated by the researcher. The research process must incorporate some key elements such as theoretical, investigative, defense of project, descriptive and conclusion.

McLeod (2013) stresses that if the research is replicated, they are reliable meaning that there must be a correlation coefficient used in the assessment of the degree of reliability. There are three forms of reliability namely Inter-rater reliability, Test-retest reliability and internal consistency. Having said that, I was discreet in recording and detailing every aspect of my conclusions in a consistently to reach my target.

Initially, it did not come without impediment and challenges as enormous time and energy was invested on this project. Conducting my research alone demanded extra vigilance and advance preparation to arrive at a more consistent assumption. Most of the appointment and calling time were recurrently cancelled which prompted a rescheduling to reach a higher positive correlation of my research.

Skin lightening as a practise has gained little interest within the academic community thereupon disregarding the physical and psychological scars left behind in the process. This void has translated into limited readily available materials for use in concluding my study.

The interview I conducted nevertheless, did contribute enormously in my sourcing of data and supposition to sustain a consistent but reliable project. Furthermore, to assess the reliability of my work, there was significant reason to be mindful of time factor and unforeseen circumstance. Speed was not to be overlooked in the sense that, human thoughts, wish and awareness is unpredictable and can change thus affecting the materials and data that were already gathered in the process (Business Dictionary 2019).

6 Results

The result chapter will consider the tentative history behind skin lightening. I am going to discuss how it all started in Europe through to the colonial era while elaborating in detail the socio-cultural features that must have warrant the trend.

6.1 Tentative history of skin lightening

The historical skin bleaching started way back in the Victorian era in Europe, with the introduction of powder and paint for making of foundation for the face. Queen Elizabeth was known to take arsenic complexion wafers, which were essentially little bits of poison to give her that ghostly look. According to Allen (2018), **white women invested in whiteness as a way of communicating purity and that race was being solidified as a concept and whiteness was being defined as pure.** White women were practicing whiteness with products such as paint and the arsenic wafers, which resulted in illness.

Way back before the Victorian era, the first archaeological evidence of skin bleaching was found in Ancient Egypt around 4000 BC. Similarly, a growing body of research reported that the art of skin bleaching with Kohl and Henna have long ago been recorded in North Africa (Apuke 2018).

Subsequently, the practice was reintroduced to Africa through the influence of colonialism as is the case with Nigeria. It is no surprise that as the British arrived, they carried along commodity racism, simply put, a way smart to sell product. Allen (2018). Nonetheless, it was not always the case in Africa as the color white represented a ghost from the underworld hence supernatural and far from the norm. According to Kew (2010), white symbolized the sacred and

was used to evoke the spirits as well as the power of the ancestors in contrast to the trend today, Africans believed that the original skin color of humanity was black. Allen (2018) further narrated how numerous accounts of Africans using palm leaves to scrub "White" explorers to the region to reveal the original dark hue which lay hidden beneath.

With the advent of colonialism, which meant domination and assimilation; was borne the impression that having white skin represented dominance, power and elite-like status. Way back before colonialism, most African maidens will accentuate their darkened skin beauty and attractiveness before a traditional rite by wearing shea butter and clay. The practice and motive however were the contrast as the purpose was to smoothen the skin, get rid of impurities and to cool the body since the weather was humid and hot.

Well before the domination, the early European missionaries who preceded the Colonial powers introduced religion to the natives. Subsequently, after much reluctance, the natives were persuaded to believe that the religion of their masters was superior, synonymous with purity, light and knowledge, while black was synonymous with impurity, devilish and barbaric. In order to grasp the significance of skin bleaching practice amongst Africans, I thought it was pertinent to examine the historical significance of skin bleaching amongst the black population in the Americas. I am certain this will enable us to understand how the concept of whiteness was ingrained in their psyche from the very inception. According to Draelos, Zoe and Pugliese (2000), the history of skin lightening industry can be traced back the slavery era in the States when white women desire for creams and preparations which included lighteners to provide smooth, white complexion was very much in high demand (Kew 2010).

It further emphasized that these preparations which were adopted from African slave who introduced hair and beauty mixtures from West Africa. Subsequently, slaves living on the plantations noticed that lighter-skinned blacks with straighter hair were mostly favored as they worked inside the plantation houses where labor was less backbreaking while the rest were relegated to the fields. Imagine being accorded access to discarded items such as clothes, high quality food, education and probably freedom upon the passing away of their master thus the willingness to get fairer became the norm (Byrd and Tharps, 2014, cited in Phipps 2018). The situation in the nineteenth century was such that, the status quo of persons of African descent remained at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. This resulted in the inclination to mimic a resemblance to whiteness thus securing privileges (blacks 2004, cited in Phipps 2018).

Well after slavery, the trends did not change much as individuals continued allying appearance with opportunity. Phipps et al. (2018) refers to a study by Byrd et al. in 2014 that in the twentieth century, the politics of appearance played a crucial role in the reconfiguration of black ideas, norms and ideologies as black became determined to gain access to the American

dream. Level of education or exposure was underrated in as much as the individual looked too African with kinky hair, darker skin and broader nose which connoted barbaric, savage and stained. The significance was the yearning to adopt the Eurocentric standard of beauty, composure and attitude (Draelos & Pugliese 2000). In summary however, it is worth taking cognizance of the fact that the practice of skin lightening constituted a mosaic of numerous factors such as historical, cultural, religious, psychological, political and social as we shall examine below.

6.2 The rationale behind skin lightening

The rationale behind skin lightening is as complex and diverse as humanity itself. It will be an underestimation to assume that a handful of factors are responsible for the phenomena, however, as we proceed in the findings; some relevant elements will be examined accordingly.

Kew (2010) further narrated that while the practice of skin lightening in the western world began over 150 years ago, ironically, with the advent of independence of African nations in the 1960s; the racial stratagem implemented by the colonial masters over the Africans did little to wane as the practice had just commenced. Is it interesting to note that, the practice began gaining prominence not before, but after the colonialism? As odd as it may seem, the answer as to why Nigerian bleach remains as mosaic as an intense its people. Nonetheless, as I had earlier mentioned above, we are self-assured that at the conclusion of this work, significant aspect must have been examined (Kew 2010).

6.3 Colonialism, slavery & Religion

Colonialism has played a principal role in defining and influencing African countries exposure to Skin bleaching, citing Nigeria as a good example. Africa has been subject to Western misrepresentations since the earliest ventures of Europeans into the continent. The colonial clichés of Africa as the “Dark continent” and its people as languid, immoral, savage and incapable of progress have been reasons Western powers have used to justify the exploitation of Africa (Fletcher 2013). With that mentality was borne a Eurocentric standard to everything African, resulting in a self-hate, low self-esteem. Post-colonial sentiment well after independence still lingers on in the form of preference for a lighter skin tone. Colonialism was marked by the establishment and advancement of a white supremacy agenda namely that the white man was superior to the black man in all ramification.

Coupled with Ignorance as well has a relevant role to play in the lives of most people who believed in the beauty and superiority of the light skin thus a gateway to social class and privileges. Blacks adhered and measured their social standings in the society by adopting any characteristics that mimics a Eurocentric character (Robinson 2011). Emerging from the legacy of colonialism was the origins of colourism which can be traced back to a hierarchical class where lighter skin was associated with privileges on the African continent (Naidoo et al. 2016).

This gave birth to the establishment of a racial system where blacks were not supposed to aspire beyond a certain socio-political disposition. The aftermath was the misconception that, in order to be successful and free from the life of servitude, one must be white (Dorman, 2011). Blacks body image associated blackness, disease, unattractive, pollution whereas the white body was portrayed as virtuous, beautiful, and lovable to further reinforce domination (Blay, 2011, cited in Julien 2014). In *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela (1995) refers 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 2011).

The origins of symbolic dichotomy assigned to the colors black and white are interwoven with religious symbolism. Subliminal reinforcement of the superiority of whiteness through association with God or supreme beings is depicted through the portrayal of a white-skinned "Jesus, Angels and deities". In contrast to these good, pure and virtuous associations with white skin, dark skin has been painted as a metaphor for being wrong and possessing devil-like attributes. If we think further across other religions, similar portrayals of color become apparent (Naidoo et al. 2016).

6.4 Media and corporate influence

According to Naidoo et al. (2016), the 19th century skin-lightening products were targeted mainly at white females in Europe and the United States. Well after the First World War, pale skin was associated with those confined to factory work. Having a healthy tan was a sign of travel and affluence thus dwindling the sale of lightening products. This prompted the manufacturers point their focus towards African American market and later to black communities within Africa.

It is projected that by 2024 profits from the sale of skin-bleaching creams will reach US\$31.2 billion worldwide. In addition to Africa, Asia is one of the fastest-growing markets, with the potential to add US\$5.7 billion in profit over the next four years. Europe is also a major market accounting to some 5 million French citizens of African descent (Hall 2018).

My scholars have highlighted the reason why darker-skinned individuals tend to resort to patronising these skin products. As we shall examine in detail subsequently. We are only beginning to understand how lucrative and the healthy capital return made by these large corporations; that have invested heavily (Naidoo et al 2016). The result is a double-digit growth in the bleaching industry focusing on emerging economies borders compare to advanced countries which indicates otherwise.

The Nigerian movies and music industry aggravated the situation by promoting a Eurocentric picture to Nigerian - correlating light skin with beauty and success. As most musicals and movies feature protagonist who are light-skinned people which in effect has a ripple effect on die-hard fans and admirers. Technology, namely social media has impacted culture and has demonstrated how interwoven and connected the world may seem. What happens in the West has gained popularity and serves a great influence on how Nigerian youths conduct their everyday affairs. A couple of such individuals in the diaspora that have attracted enormous influence and helped change mentalities amongst Nigerian women is Lupita Nyong'o and Beyoncé. A good example is an excerpt taken from a 2014 Essence interview with Lupita Nyong'o clarifies this:

"I want to take this opportunity to talk about beauty, Black beauty, and dark beauty. I received a letter from a girl, and I'd like to share just a small part of it with you: "Dear Lupita," it reads, "I think you're really lucky to be this Black but this successful in Hollywood overnight. I was just about to buy "Dencia's Whitenicious" cream to lighten my skin when you appeared on the world map and saved me." (Black girl magic flashback 2014, cited in White 2016, 9) Recently, a Thai advertisement for skin whitening cream called Snobs featured actress Sirin Horwang saying, "you just need to be white to win." appearing besides a model whose skin has been darkened. The advertisement was not well received by thousands of social media users who slammed the video as racist (Siyaka et al 2016)."

Allen (2018) went further to detail that, the most recent scandal with the Dove and Nivea over commodity racism in their advertisement; accused of using black bodies as a way to demonstrate the potency of a product by using a black model to demonstrate the "before" and blissful "white" aftermath. Africans to acculturate, feel privileged and accepted in the society started practicing skin lightening. African women have over the decades continually been subjected to misrepresentation by the Western media. Recent findings indicate that, this recurrent colonial stereotype is prevalent even to this very day. (Allen 2018)

African women are constantly bombarded with images that promote European ideals of beauty from roadside billboard, television to social media. The idea is to foster the age-old

believe that black skin is savage, lacking sophistication, style unlike fair skin which is characterized by economic success, marital success, job prospect and elevated statuses. This is coupled with a clever advertisement that celebrates an instantly pale and radiant skin only to be trapped with debt and guilt as the expense and health related complications dawn on them. The yearning to looking paler has prompted many women who lighten their skin to staying indoors but if they must venture outdoors protected themselves from the sun rays by wearing gloves, carrying umbrellas and wearing overalls to maintain their complexion.

6.5 Psychological effect other factors

The product of media and corporate influence has been over the decade's targeted people of African descent which subsequently sprang into an intricate psychological disorder. The Psychological disorder can be categorized into two key phases. According to White (2016), these two phases are aesthetic misorientation (AM) and cultural misorientation (CM). He further outlines them accordingly, starting with aesthetic misorientation (AM) which denotes a culturally specific psychological disorder whereby one with African lineage physically alters their appearance hair, skin, eye colour etcetera ignoring the health consequences while cultural misorientation (CM) denotes a psychological condition that ensues in people of African descent who have adopted a Eurocentric [disposition] and cultural value resulting in a disconnection with [African] cultural values. Individual Africans and their indigenous African cultural values (Kambon 1980 cited in White 2016, 2).

There are other factors that contribute to Nigerian women bleaching as it depends on the individual in question. During my interview in Nigeria, I was able to painstakingly gather some of the following reasons, nonetheless. Most of the women told me that they bleach to allure socio-economic privileges, higher status and attract more successful partners. While others especially those in the sex industry practice skin lightening to attract more male customers being cognizant that these men are allured to lighter skin women. Some resorted to skin lightening to boost their self-confidence, while some were after securing or prompting their promiscuous partner to resort to them only. Some ladies confide in me that bleaching enables them to be noticed and stand out amongst their contemporaries.

The introduction of skin lightening products from the US to Africa in the 1960's has permeated deep into the perception of young women who aspire to succeed in their daily endeavor.

Skin lightening is not limited to women as most men are lured into bleaching their skin to charm and attract the opposite sex. Skin bleach as a form of aesthetic was exacerbated in Nigeria by most celebrities who created an avenue for young teens to join the bandwagon. They believe that if their idols can engage in the practice, it therefore means that it is fashionable and in vogue. Despite the somewhat optimistic outlook these aspects may have presented, I still want to remain convinced that the long-term negative effect outweighs the present.

6.6 Colorism and tanning

I was also tempted to examine how contradictory and absurd the practice is in relation to tanning which is widely practiced in the West all in the quest to be recognized and appreciated. It is imperative to take cognizance that individuals are naturally endowed with the aptitude to yearn and be identified within a given social class, group, or race. They are fascinated by and willing to conform to any sub-culture that elevates and celebrates their social standing and admiration. This comportment unfortunately backfires into a negative vice as it celebrates segregation, xenophobic sentiments and colorism. I shall however deliberate on colorism and tanning in the preceding paragraph.

Colorism is the process of distinguishing among same-race individuals based on skin colour stratification. Colourism, which is distinct from and yet inextricably linked to race, is practiced by both whites and people of colour alike. (Naidoo et al. 2016). Response from my interviewees has given me reason to discuss Colorism and how that has influenced women into skin bleaching.

Most Nigerians especially men will consciously want to favor or show preference to women with lighter complexion than other women. A good example is in the labor force where lighter-skinned secretaries, bank personnel, salesgirls and front desk staffs are given a front row. The reason being that, they will enable the firm or corporation to attract more clientele thereby boosting sales and turnover. The consequence is the discrimination and intentional marginalization of darker skin females. This societal malaise has enticed most women into intentionally breaching their restrictions and comfort to attain a socio-economic ladder as dictated by the society.

The longing for a perfect skin transcends cultures of values as the bleaching plague was not limited to Africa. I thought to better understand the orgy behind the trend, it was pertinent to briefly reflect on a contradictory form of aesthetic transformation as is the case in Western societies. That aesthetic transformation in question is the concept of tanning which is considered as a form of skin beauty.

Well into the 1920's, tanned bodies became fashionable as the famous French designer called Coco Chanel photographed herself having sun tanned (Sherrow 2001 cite in Foo 2010). The result was lethal as a skin cancer known as melanoma was on the rampage with a fifth most common cancer in men and the sixth most common in women. It was so grave that, in 1935, the risk of invasive melanoma was 1 in 1,500 in 2007, which was 1 in 63. (Claire, 2003) As the westernized standard ascertaining beauty and glamour was shattered as the bourgeoisie and influential fellows in the fashion world stated redefining beauty. Tanning was affiliated with fitness, optimal health and an affluent lifestyle. Draelos (2002) says it remains a popular

practice in the modern age where bronzed skin is highly prized spite the health risk associated with it (Foo 2010). Things took a drastic dimension with the discovery of tanning booth and salon during the 1800s in Western countries.

Claire (2011), elaborated how having a tan makes most feel a bit more attractive and it is not surprising that tanning salons are popular with teens. Claire went further to state how around a quarter of [white] teens and a third of 17-year-old girls have used a tanning bed at least once. As wonderful as it may sound, tanning remains a dangerous option with skin cancer on the rise as we shall consider how it functions.

The tanning process demonstrates how the body protects itself from sun exposure by producing melanin which in turn darkens the skin and helps block the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) Claire warns that all that stimulation to skin cell can cause damage to the DNA of skin cells thus exposure to skin cancer. (Claire, 2003)

Tanning is how the body protects itself from sun exposure. The skin produces more melanin, which darkens the skin and helps block ultraviolet radiation (UVR). But all that stimulation to skin cells isn't good. In general, a lot of sun exposure isn't good, because it can cause damage to the DNA of skin cells. This, in turn, can lead to skin cancer. Although way back in the Victorian era, possessing a tanned skin was assigned a negative connotation. Phelan (2002) narrated how in order to preserve one's pale complexion, women would avoid getting exposed to the sun by avoiding outdoor chores. They will prefer wearing parasols, bonnets and gloves.

Status symbol has always been assigned in western societies to paler skin thus prompting many to reaching that apex by apply various concocted home-made product to boost their pale skins. Sherrow (2001) and Pointer (2005) narrated how women during the Roman Empire and the Elizabethan era resorted to using face whiteners made of ceruse which is a type of lead compound, thinly applied to the face and neck to achieve the pale matt complexion. It further stated that this product was highly priced by European noble women due to its whitening properties without heavy application (Foo 2010). Ceruse was without side-effect as it severely damages the skin accompanied by other complications such as hair loss, health problems and poisoning despite warnings from the health specialist.) Nonetheless, the usage abated as rice powder was introduced in the 1700s as a safer and harmless option (Sherrow 2001 cite in Foo 2010).

Thus, supporting Glenn (2008) who believes that skin tone is often perceived as a "form of fixed or unchangeable capital." Sherrow (2001) agrees and states that individuals from various cultures and eras have used various substances and formulations to make their skin paler or darker. (Foo 2010). The side effects of tanning were not far-fetched as the yearning to go melanin went hare wire.

Feldman (2009) state tanning addiction or tanorexia is on the increase amongst those who frequent tanning salons or lie under the sun however, Phillips et al. (2006) argue that tanorexia or BDD8 -related tanning is a severe disorder which is defined as a preoccupation with one's complexion where the sufferer thinks he or she is too pale or not tanned enough when the individual is normal (Foo 2010).

This practice did not go unnoticed by most countries while measures were taken to cull the impasse. Claire narrates how in 2000, the national Institutes of Health identify tanning beds as a human carcinogen while France in 1997 banned tanning for anyone below 18 years. (Claire, 2003). Although numerous researches having proven that premature aging and skin cancer are associated with tanning, Sherrow (2001) states that a variety of creams, sprays and lotions are manufactured to be used on the face and body to give a temporary tan without facing the risk of a sunburn. Rawe and Scully (2006) support Phillips et al. (2006) by citing a survey that states more women are reported to be using tanning beds on a regular basis to not only maintain their tanned complexions all year-around but also to emulate famous tanned celebrities like Paris Hilton and Jessica Simpson.

Although, tanorexia is considered as a BDD-related disorder, Feldman (2006, cited by Burton, 2006) cites a study conducted on frequent tanners which explains the reason why individuals become addicted to tanning that are due to cutaneous endorphins being produced when one is exposed under the UV rays. When the endorphins are released into a tanner's system, Feldman (2006, cited by Burton, 2006) describes how it leaves him or her feeling relaxed or experience a positive mood change after a tanning session. Like drug, UV-induced endorphins are reported to reinforce tanning addiction among frequent tanners (Foo 2010).

7 Innovative techniques to skin lighteners and Botanic alternative approaches

Are there alternatives to chemically fused skin products that damages the skin you may ask? Well, there are recent breakthrough in sciences and natural product that may assist in that domain. There are multitude techniques used today to lighten the skin such as the use of serums, cream, lasers, chemicals, oral medications, skin peeling, and so forth to inhibit the production of melanin which darkens the skin. How these methods are used to reduce or block the production of melanin shall be examined below. Before going into those in detail, I thought it will be interesting to appreciate the wonders and capability of the skin.

The skin is the largest sensory organ in the body with the ability to detect many sensations such as pain, pressure or touch, itch, heat, cold and tickle. The skin is made of two layers namely epidermis which constitute the outer skin and dermis which is the inner part (Draelos, Peter & Pugliese 2000).

The epidermis serves as a barrier to the external factors; as it manages and regulates water, sunlight, insects, germs, heat, cold, dirt, and gases. It goes further to retain fluids such as water and blood while safeguarding minerals, vitamins, hormones, protein (Draelos et al. 2000).

The epidermis also possesses self-renewal capabilities by replacing outer cells lost to the environment. Draelos et al. (2000) describes how the epidermis despite waterproof layer, still permits internal water to carry nutrients to the outermost living cells though tough to outer layer friction, has the capacity to response to the slightest tough of softest breeze. It also serves as a waste disposal management system by disposing the body of toxic matters.

Melanin is a biopolymer - a large complex molecule formed of many smaller units known as tyrosine which is an amino acid. Tyrosine is acted upon by an enzyme called tyrosinase that converts the tyrosine to L-dopa (Dihydroxy Phenylalanine). Most colours in biological materials are due to complex molecules, the most complex of which is melanin which happens to be the predominant pigment in mammals, also referred to as pigment.

Melanin is mostly found in brain tissue, in the eye, ear and in mucous membranes. There are two types of melanin namely eumelanin (found in black skin and black hair) and pheomelanin (found in red hair (Draelos, Pugliese Peter (2000). There are two pigmentation components in the skin that contribute to skin colour and constitutive and facultative skin colour.

Most people, in the quest to obtain an instant whitened skin often opt for injectable. Injectable consist of glutathione or kojic acid which are administered into the blood stream boost an immediate outcome.

The oral medications on the other hand, consist of glutathione fused medicaments which is an antioxidant produced in the liver that inhibits the production of melanin deposition. Tranexamic acid is a plasmin inhibitor also promoted as a systemic skin whitening agent especially as oral injections. When infused, it dissolves into the blood stream but then the result is ineffective since most of the substances are digested in the stomach (Melathi & Thappa 2013).

Till date, limited trials and few animal studies demonstrating the efficacy in the treatment of post inflammatory pigmentation and whitening has been carried out. Nevertheless, there is considerable promise in natural extracts such as irradiated green tea polyphenol, proanthocyanin-rich extract from grape seeds, ellagic acid-rich pomegranate extract, and coumarin extracts from the plant *Angelica dahurica* as oral preparations for skin whitening.

According to Naidoo et al. (2016), topical botanical extracts are increasingly gaining popularity as alternative therapies in skin lightening regime. These are tyrosine inhibition, anti-inflammatory action, melanin dispersion Azelaic acid, found in wheat, rye and barley, and kojic acid, derived from fungi. The most frequently used however are soy, licorice extract, coffee berry, mulberry extracts and green tea. Some have suggested calamine lotion, glycerine, yoghurt, aloe Vera, honey combined with cinnamon, the ingesting of vitamin C, B and E and the application of almond powder as a paste for face mask.

In addition, Procyanidins and Polyphenols have demonstrated some success in the treatment of melasma and to prevent UV induced pigmentary changes. Promotion for skin whitening has been extended in the form of food or dietary supplements to consumers however with no scientific backing. Some of these are natural collagen extracts, bearberry extract, *Glycyrrhiza glabra* extract, Lycopene, Kelp, olive leaf extract, hawthorn, jujube, sea buckthorn, starch and pearl extracts (Melathi et al. 2013)

7.1 Determinant of hydroquinone content in skin-lighteners in Nigeria - a case study

Limited scholastic research work has been devoted to addressing the skin bleaching phenomena globally. I thought it imperative that further light is shed on the state of bleaching in Africa particularly Nigeria where, according to WHO (2011), is designated to have 77 percent and counting of skin lightening products users globally. With such a staggering figure, it is easy to understand the urgency of the matter on the part of the Nigerian authority, researchers and international agencies. nonetheless, a study on the issue was investigated and the result presented by Siyaka et al. (2016) on Determination of hydroquinone content in skin-lightening creams in Lagos, Nigeria.

The experiment was conducted at Idumota, Lagos in Nigeria where skin bleaching products were acquired, evaluated and critical data gathered. These data were mainly firstly, product

name, Manufacturer, location, batch number, production and expiry dates. In the Determination of hydroquinone content in skin-lightening creams in Lagos, Nigeria Siyaka presented the procedural chain of assessment thus:

Analytical procedure Preparation of calibration plot and assay Hydroquinone reference standard (10mg) was accurately weighed and transferred into a 100ml volumetric flask, about 20ml of methanol was added and mixed for about 5 minutes before making up to 100ml with methanol, to give a standard stock solution (100µg/ml). Further serial dilutions were made to obtain 5-15µg/ml calibrated concentrations. The absorbance of the gradient concentrations was obtained from the UV/visible spectrophotometric analysis 294nm wavelength and the calibration graph was plotted. The concentration of hydroquinone in each of the creams was determined by slotting the absorbance obtained from each of the cream tested into the regression equation obtained from the calibration plot. The percentage purities of all the creams tested were calculated (Siyaka et al 2016, 102).

Code	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Source	Ivory coast	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria
Code	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Source	Nigeria	China	Ivory coast	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria

Table 4. Features varied location where the products where purchased while examining the products expiry dates, place of registration and manufacture

Code	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
HQ on Label	Yes	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
% of HQ	2.0	NS	0	0	NS	0	1.8	2.0	0	0
Code	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
HQ on label	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
% of HQ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5. Demonstrates the labelling claims on creams with regards to presence of hydroquinone on the label where most lack presence of hydroquinone or percentage composition of the hydroquinone on the label.

Code	Percentage (%) labelled	Percentage (%) Found	Percentage (%) Purity	Comment
01	2.0	3.99 ±	199.5	Failed
07	1.8	3.03 ±	168.3	Failed
08	2.0	3.69 ±	184.5	Failed
20	2.0	2.06 ±	103.0	Passed

Table 3 demonstrates the percentage purity of hydroquinone on those creams that stated the amount present. Only one (1) of the cream passed the USP specification.

The fight against skin bleaching is not going to be an easy task, as it demands willpower and a complete overhaul of the Nigerian political system. As corruption, indiscipline thrives amongst the elites and those in power; so, does it dissipate into the very fabric of the society

as the table demonstrates. The above tables examine in detail skin lightening creams, their composition, concentration and characteristics. The study revealed that of all the test carried out, the highest percentage is a foreign cream from Cote D'Ivoire which contains about 4%. Totaling 35% of the screened creams, about 2% contain hydroquinone higher than the limit allowed in the UK. The high dosage stands to expose it users to a hydroquinone related health risk (Siyaka et al. 2016).

The journal went further to state that of the 35% (7) locally made creams tasted, only 4 of these stating the percentage content. Out of the 20 creams screened in Nigeria, 9 (45%) has the National Agency for food drug administration and control NAFDAC Registration number. Despite NAFDAC act of 1995 which prohibits the inclusion of hydroquinone in cosmetic creams, it appears the enforcement has been utterly ignored thus contravening the regulation. It is plausible that the batch of products presented for registration differs from the batch produced for public consumption. The overall result of the research presented a concentration hydroquinone that ranges from 0.07% to about 4% and non-conformed to the United State Pharmacopoeia (USP) specification standard (of not lower than 94% nor higher than 106%) thereby exposing it consumers to potential danger (Siyaka et al. 2016).

8 Complications & Challenges

Dermatologists have identified a host of skin lightening agents available in the market while newer agents have continued to be introduced. This topical skin whitening products have only a handful of certified research conducted to ascertain the chemical composition and levels of toxic concentration. In this chapter, we shall examine some active ingredients used while exploring the difficulties and challenges emanating from systemic usage.

According to the World Health Organization (2011), the key adverse consequence of inorganic mercury contained in skin lightening soaps and creams is kidney damage and result in skin rashes, skin discoloration, scarring, as well as a reduction in the skin's resistance to bacterial and fungal infections. (WHO) further states that Mercury in soaps, creams and other cosmetic products once discharged in wastewater poisons becomes methylated and enters the food-chain as the highly toxic methylmercury in fish. Pregnant women are not been spared as once contaminated fish is consumed, transfers the mercury to their foetuses, result in neurodevelopmental deficits in the children (World Health Organization 2011).

A multitude of both synthetically compounded products and naturally occurring or biological agents are used in skin lightening. There are instances where, multiple products are used simultaneously resulting in complications that ranges to 60 months as we shall examine in detail subsequently in the Mechanism of action and ingredients of skin lightener below (Naidoo et al. 2016).

The damage from bleaching products is further exacerbated when users adulterate bleaching products with household products such as toothpaste, laundry bleach, detergents, automotive battery acid etcetera (Siyaka et al. 2016).

Anxiety, depression or psychosis and peripheral neuropathy have been associated with skin lightening after usage. Another finding indicated a large proportion of nephrotic syndrome among African women using ammoniated mercuric chloride-containing skin lightening creams for a month to three years. Over three quarters of the women who stopped using the creams went into remission (World Health Organization 2011).

Some undesirable aftermath of skin bleaching amongst frequent users ranges from disagreeable odor during perspiration, to wounds, patches of lighter skin, burns and burning sensations, loss of skin elasticity which prevents wounds from healing, and loss of melanin which exposes the skin to the ultraviolet rays of the sun (Saleh 2016).

In Nigeria, Corruption has really hampered the exigence of drugs enforcement agencies from exercising their duty. Most of the familiar cosmetic companies are inclined to bribe the officials with the intent to market their products. Most of these products are illegally allowed to bypass inspection and screening process only to be marketed to the public. The lack of sincere inspections agents means the rise in counterfeited products such as injectable which are in turn administered by untrained professionals. The result again is sepsis, air embolism, transmission of human immunodeficiency virus, hepatitis B, and use of non-sterile preparation leading to serious infections.

Most promoters of skin whitening product have the propensity to disassociate their merchandises from health-related repercussion such as heart disease and hypersensitivity reactions. Besides, limited clinical trials have been affected to ascertain the effectiveness of these whitening topical products on the skin. This is coupled with limited data on the amount of dosage used and the long-term side effects these numerous products may trigger. (Malathi 2013).

Other side effects of skin lighteners such as hydroquinone induces permanent depigmentation, loss of skin elasticity, impaired wound healing, cataracts, pigmented colloid milia and scleral and nail pigmentation. The mechanism of cancer formation is synonymous with melanin destruction, sun exposure and steroid-induced immunosuppression or because of a direct carcinogenic effect of the hydroquinone itself (Naidoo et al. 2016).

Hydroquinone and mercury are common ingredients frequently found in most skin lightening products which result in poisoning and plaguing users with irreversible skin conditions. The experts further detailed how mercury in skin-lightening creams and soaps not only cause neurological and kidney damage but also is responsible for leukoderma, discoloration of skin and nails which result from prolonged usage. Furthermore, in worst case scenario, frequent use of mercury infused kin products may expose women to infertility and birth defects (Dadie & Petit 2009, & Olumide et al. 2008, cited in Saleh 2016).

Leukoderma is an irreversible skin condition where the skin loses the ability to produce pigment resulting in patches of pink or brown patches while Ochronosis is an appearance of dark patches on the skin which are difficult to be removed (Foo 2010). Furthermore, systemic effects have been known to occur as these products can irritate the skin, cause redness and rash, possibility of skin infections such as thrush and patchy skin pigmentation after transdermal absorption (Siyaka et al.).

Although most skin lightening product marketers will emphasize to their customers assurance of a total effectiveness in achieving that radiant "whiteness", unfortunately, the result is far-fetched. Additionally, despite the health authority's ban on the product, highly organized criminal gangs do manage to smuggle them into the country in question. The reason for such

risky effort stems from the indispensable characteristic mercury plays in the making of these cosmetics. Mercury is one of the key agents to help in inhibit the pigment melanin thus lightening the skin as previously elaborated (Engler, 2005).

The supposition is that mercury will serve as a replacement to copper; required for tyrosinase activity and thereby inactivate the enzyme which triggers the whitening (Denton et al., 1952). Furthermore, inorganic mercury has the capability to easily blend and be absorbed by the skin making it the most active ingredient unlike organic forms feasible for cosmetic preservatives (Marzulli and Brown 1972 cited in Saleh 2016).

The high-end skin whitening products often labelled under the new quasi-pharmaceutical category called cosmeceuticals - a hybrid entity with pharmaceutical and cosmetic properties. This ambiguous labelling strategy allows promoters of high-end skin whitening and anti-aging products to make both pharmaceutical and cosmetic claims. The marketing trends are designed in such a way to blur the lines between cosmetics and food categories and food and pharmaceutical categories, thereby helping in evading the regulatory constraints for these products, eventually enticing the masses to consume these relatively expensive and poorly regulated products. Thus, their claims can neither be independently verified, nor can potential risks to consumers be assessed (Malathi et al. 2003, 6).

The question is, how is that possible considering the failures so far sustained? Well, most nations both in the Africa and the Western world are winning the war as the US has recently announced that skin-lightening creams should contain no more than a trace of mercury, amounting to 1 ppm as unavoidable impurities under the conditions of good practice (US FDA, 2011).

Washam (2011) pointed out that the cream is still illegally dissipated across the US borders despite the prohibition Health Canada's draft guidance on heavy-metal impurities in cosmetics specifies a limit of 3ppm as impurity on cosmetics products (Government of Canada 2012).

Furthermore, mercury has been pinpointed as a potential causative factor behind infertility and birth defects despite an extensive research carried out on the reproduction of gestational and lactational mercury exposure from fish consumption. Inadequate studies have examined the plausibility's of the long-term use of mercury containing skin lighteners on childbearing age women and their children's health (Al-Saleh 2016).

To ascertain the health effect of Mercury, a black mother from Brussels frequently used soaps containing 1% mercury as mercuric iodide for some for 15 years which included during pregnancy and lactation. A high level of mercury in the blood (91 µg/l) and urine (784 µg/g creatinine) was documented on the mother four months after delivery, which confirmed its cutaneous absorption. Her three months infant was no exception as she presented a blood: 19 µg/l in her blood and 274 µg/g creatinine in the urine (Lauwerys et al. 1987, cited in Al-saleh

2016). Nevertheless, it is pertinent that further studies be carried out by experts and scientist to finally demonstrate the adverse health effects of these products. is lacking. Al-Saleh (2016) suggested caution when it comes to applying skin lightening creams during pregnancy and lactation until further facts on its safety is assured. Notwithstanding the repercussion and challenges have awoken most African nations and tough measures are no far-fetched as we shall examine below.

8.1 Intervention & regulations

The global market for skin lightening is projected to reach US\$31.2 billion by 2024, driven by frequent dark skin stigma and rigid cultural perception that associates lighter skin tone with beauty, cultural refinement and personal success (Global industry analysts, Inc. 2018).

The fight pertaining to skin lightening and its effect has been documented and published; while safety regulations have been enacted as way back as the 1990s. The impact, however, demonstrates otherwise as skin lightening industry has become Big business in Nigerians and the African diaspora. The authorities are struggling to invest in public campaigns targeting drug addiction, drunk-driving, reproductive health and many more while overlooking skin complications ensuing from bleaching.

Regardless of the ban in most African countries including Nigeria, several petty traders are investing heavily in the bleaching market while billboards and beauty shops and the media are openly advertising their merchandise without fear of concerned authorities. The World Health Organization (2011) estimates that Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Togo, 25%, 77%, 27%, 35% and 59% of women, respectively, are reported to use skin lightening products on a regular basis.

The severity of the crisis emanates partly due to lack of financial means on the part of most women who; out of desperation have resorted to unregulated products which may well contain a higher percentage of these potential carcinogens. This is plausible since most of unregulated products are home-made and concocted with no supervision nor expertise.

Countries like Kenya, Mexico and Brazil have step up measures to initiate a labelling system to inform the public about the limits of mercury in skin lightener's products, while some like Rwanda have utterly banned skin lightening creams. The European Union directives banned the use of mercury as an ingredient; as demonstrated on the article on the potential-health-consequences of applying mercury containing skin-lightening cream. The fight however seems unattainable as concerned authority's battle to dissuade its proliferation partly due to availability on the online market to potential customers (Uram 2010, cited in Al-Saleh 2016, 2).

Many skin lightening creams available to most consumers either online or in stores contained mercury above the US FDA limit (Hamannet al. 2014, cited in Al-saleh 2016, 2).

Are there potential health consequences of applying mercury containing skin lighteners during pregnancy and lactation periods? Well, recently, there has been an emphasis on the mercury contain in cream consumed by women during pre-natal and post-natal pregnancy. According to Al-Saleh (2016), women who breastfeed while using these products have a higher risk of mercury poisoning despite the lack of clinical symptoms especially during early exposure. He continued to stress the permanent neurological damage this might have on children.

The level of education of most women in Nigeria and the lack of health education outreach programs has hindered the dissemination of information from reliable sources to a targeted group. A society devoid of public health outreach only exposes its citizenry to self-service and treatment which in most cases, further worsens already audacious situations.

The spike in the contraband is further fueled by corruption of most officials of the drug enforcement agency who collect bribe from the traders to forestall their product from being confiscated. The result is a reliance on friend and acquaintances who in most cases, pass on wrong information on the effect and severity of the mostly highly dosed hydroquinone and mercury cosmetics. The skin lightening industry nevertheless bends on sustaining its profit by being innovative and by investing on research to meet the needs of its clientele.

New products have been launched to attract curious but growing middle class females in Nigeria who are willing to experiment with novel products. Meanwhile, it becomes even more pathetic as the global society has lend a blind eye to the phenomena resulting in further secrecy amongst its consumers. Although largely unaddressed and unacknowledged, skin bleaching is an issue that demands urgent action as it has seeped into all economic and socioeconomic fabric of the global "Black" population (Kew 2010).

These leaves us with a pertinent question namely; what measures are the concerned authorities taking to address these public health hazard?

About a decade ago, hydroquinone was the most commonly used skin lightening products regulated under the European Cosmetics Regulation and usage was mainly for age spots. Nevertheless, it became apparent that most individuals in the quest to reach a speedy lighter complexion usage was on large areas of the skin leading to de-pigmentation and hyper-pigmentation. The consequence was a ban on hydroquinone as a cosmetic skin lightening product in the EU in 2000 (The Cosmetic, Toiletry & Perfumery Association 2019).

Most experts are of the opinion that, to effectively disengage females patronizing these products will mean educating them from an early age about the effects of skin lightening. Secondly, organizing public sensitization programs such as, radio talk shows, talent hunt, music events that promotes Afrocentric ideologies and self-worth.

Thirdly, Nigeria is a nation constituting a multitude of professed Christian and Muslim sects with hundreds of worship blocks scattered across the nation. Experts agree that, a major crusade against skin lightening from the houses of worship will facilitate the already budget constraint local authorities.

To add to the drama, most EU nations such as France and Switzerland have been at the forefront on the fight against skin-lightening however, exportation of this product to most so-called third world did not apply as noted by Robinson (2011) that, inconsistencies in the legislation has detracted efforts aimed at prohibiting the trade and sale of harmful skin products with potential carcinogen such as hydroquinone, kojic and azelaic acid within the EU while another law states that it is perfectly legal to produce in-so-far as they are destined for exportation.

In the Nigerian case, **Maduewesi (2017) emphasized that all Nigerian government agencies such as the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), and Nigerian customs officials must make their presence felt at the forefront, as they partner with each other to fight against skin bleaching. This she believes is achievable by ensuring that dangerous products are not smuggled in the country while the market flooded with theses merchandise are thoroughly guarded and search conducted.** It is also pertinent that the perpetrators are indicted and penalised accordingly while cooperating and exchanging intelligence with neighbouring countries on the nature of possible trafficking.

Emphasis should be placed on researching and investing on all-natural and organic products derive nature that are skin friendly. It could be from fruits, plants and grains such as aloe Vera, lemon and rice water. European Union Directive bans mercury and mercury compounds as ingredients in cosmetics such as soaps, lotions, shampoos and skin bleaching products. Nevertheless, phenyl mercuric salts for use as preservative in eye makeup and eye makeup removal products are allowed at concentrations equal to or less than 0.007% by weight while tolerates 65 mg/kg as mercury and 100 mg/kg as phenyl mercuric (WHO 2011).

9 Discussion & Conclusion

The drive behind my research was to study and understanding the Rationale behind Skin lightening amongst women of Nigerian origin. Taking into consideration their motives while accentuating the repercussion that emanates consequently.

My empirical data which was gathered using qualitative methods while the interview was semi-structured in context. The Interview was conducted with women residing in Nigeria and Finland. The thesis was based on the recommendation and collaboration of staffs and services users of (ASWHAN), which is The Association of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The nurses, social workers and a psychologist were no exception as they too were keen to understanding the motive behind skin lightening amongst its women.

My wish to work within this domain after consultation with the staffs and client did not go unheeded and supported. This enthusiasm culminated into the reason I choose this topic for my thesis name, Understanding the Rationale behind Skin lightening amongst Nigerians - challenges and repercussion.

To assist me in the process, was the development of three key research questions that was worth considering in the course of the research. I thought it discreet to apply relevant social concept tools such as interview and social group discussions to reach my target.

Skin lightening being a global menace is a topic that is rarely assigned much attention and discussion despite the public health hazard it poses to the general wellbeing of the populace. Nonetheless, several scholastic literatures have progressively surfaced on the issue, discussing the motive, complication and solution.

According to Siyaka (2016), the main essence is to look attractive, removal of blemishes such as acne or melasma, to cleanse or tone the face and body while some indulge on the practice to satisfy their partners. Based on my research, I happen to discern that the catalyst behind skin lightening stems from the colonial legacy of Africans. This was triggered by the notion that white is superior and based on a hierarchy where lighter skin was associated with privileges and class (Naidoo et al. 2016).

The World Health Organization (2011) estimates that In Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Togo, 25%, 77%, 27%, 35% and 59% of women, respectively, are reported to use skin lightening products on a regular basis.

The establishment was design based on a system where blacks were institutional halted from aspiring beyond a specified socio-political class. The consequence was a misapprehension that in order to be successful from subservience, it was pertinent to go white (Dorman, 2011).

Black complexion was portrayed as primitive and unattractive, conversely, white skin signified virtuousness, beauty, and valor (Blay, 2011 cited in Julien 2014, s.5). Gradually, was borne a Eurocentric mindset to everything African which culminated into a self-denial and self-hate.

That post-colonial sentiment well after the independence of African nations did not relinquish as they longed for lighter complexion. It will be an understatement to assume that Ignorance and intellectual exposure had a diminutive role to play as most women were least educated and informed on the effects of skin bleaching. The supposed catalyst that motivates women to forego their natural skin for an aesthetic alternative has several frontages as we shall attempt to consider accordingly. Psycho-social investigation reveals that the rationale behind skin lightening is as complex and intriguing as humanity itself. Thus, it is inconclusive to assume a definitive factor as being responsible for the phenomena.

Blay (2011) States that, due to lack of education, economic and socio-political attainment, religion and lack of empowerment; women were cajoled to remain subservient to a patrilineal society. The situation was no different from most of the women I interviewed in (ASWHAN) Nigeria and in Finland.

The newly adopted westernized religion, according to most of my clients in ASWHAN camp were conditioned to believe that whiteness is next to godliness. Since God is portrayed as white it denotes that white is holy, perfect, superior and beautiful. Well after the arrival of Caucasians to Africa, these reasons are not farfetched in justifying the desire to possess a lighter godlike complexion.

Due to the deplorable socio-economic situation and colorism in most African country; some of my interviewee disclosed that they were swayed to change their skin color to climb the economic ladder. For instance, lighter skin women are most often easily noticed and shown apathy while some gain an advantageous response at an interview or better still, promotion at their place of work.

While at the ASWHAN center, we discussed and dialogued on the influence the media and corporate influence on skin bleaching. Highlighting the enormous impact this medium is having on the lives of these women. The billboards at the street junctions and marketplaces in most towns in Nigeria are adorned with pictures of models and well-known celebrities. The trick in effect was to garner as much clients and fans as possible who believe that her success and splendor hails famously from their skin complexion.

It is worth noting that, the skin lightening practice cuts across all segment of the Nigerian society irrespective of economic success, education, social class and sexual orientation. The

target however, in my opinion are mainly ambitious and anxious women of all ages who wish to change their everyday situation and accomplish their lot in life.

The perceived motivations are further hastened by technology, advertisement and social media such as Facebook and Instagram where people get informed about latest trend and fashion. I am not surprised by my observation as more women are increasingly resorting to the skin bleaching practice in Nigeria.

Despite the above-mentioned drawbacks, there are government NGO's such as ASWHAN and government agencies that have taken this matter into their custody. The mission is to discourage, combat but at the same time empower those that withdrew from the practice.

Despite efforts and commitment by NGO's and government parastatals to combat skin lightening as way back as the 1990's, I still reckon the absence of a coordinated effort to address what could be refer to as a social crisis must be intensified.

To come to the point, the Nigerian authorities like other Western nations have mustered effort to devote a considerable amount of time and energy to organize public campaigns targeting drug addiction, drug abuse and campaign aim at sensitizing the public on the effects and skin complications ensuing from bleaching.

While reflecting on the interview and the data gathered in the field and previous findings, my conclusion seems farfetched from my optimism.

Skin lightening practice was introduced few decades ago and it seems to me, it will be here to stay as majority of these ladies are under pressure from a competitive socio-economic standpoint to excel and better their existing status quo. It is apparent that most of the multinational companies all have a dominant stance at the economic and political level in most of these countries. The matter at the end of the day is inconclusive as many years of fight to convince the authorities to enact by-laws that will stop for instance, the importation of fake cosmetics seems abortive.

In my opinion, more effort must be exerted to combat the practice which could emanate in the form of lobbying, campaign, workshops and education at the elementary level. In the course of my interview, my greatest achievement was the ability to dissuade most of my client from the practice however gentle I was, through education, self-empowerment philosophies and dialogue.

9.1 Recommendation for further studies

The world health organization, governments, scientific and research bodies have not invested adequately to investigate skin bleaching. I could argue that it stems from the nonchalant attitude of those who are supposed to protect and defend their citizenry. Progressively, most drug enforcement departments under the supervision of the government and well-established institutions of learning have allocated funding strictly on research and education to foster to meet the need of the populace.

Most of my clients have whined over the lack of public safety and the indifference on the part of the Nigerian government toward their choice of lifestyle. They supposed that, it is the place of the authority to research on skin bleaching for them to ascertain fact from fiction. Africans are generally mostly dictated and obliged to conform to various spiritual principles, norms and values which in effect serves as a yardstick on how one should behave. Societal impact particularly on those who lighten their skin for aesthetic and other psychosocial motives has not been extensively investigated. Questions such as, what is the motivation behind skin bleach amongst Nigerian women has not been extensively review and investigated.

In addition, most ladies who bleach expose their babies and those around them to chemicals that are found in these cosmetics. A good example is the effect mercury has on the fetus after it is born and during suckling well after as they are cuddled around.

9.2 Professional development

According to business dictionary (2019), Professional development is the Process of refining and increasing proficiencies through education and training opportunities in a professional establishment or through observation. It further describes how Professional development does boost morale and maximize productivity.

Professional development was inevitable throughout the course of my research. This process guided me during the interview process and documentation of facts. It dictated what process and approach was appropriate during my interaction with my clients. Self-reflect on my decisions was as well inevitable as it enabled me to critically examine and consider the everyday lives of my clients, their wishes, fears, ambition, commitments and challenges.

I also endeavored to update and document all the findings so far gathered and assessing how the experience can be applied in my professional pursuit. My participation in seminars and workshops in school and extracurricular activities impacted on my Professional development and competency.

I also partook in tutoring and sharing my findings with my schoolmates which helped in the retention of what I had learned. Material gathered in the form of feedback and counselling both from fellow students and lecturers was resourceful in my search for knowledge and professional development of my study in social services. Thanks to my mentors and supervisors who did not relent their effort and support to nurturing and sustaining my dream despite all setbacks to graduate and secure a job thus contributing my quota in the society. I took cognizance of the fact that, to aspire in life and avoid making unnecessary blunders, it was imperative to constantly admit my failures, revisit my past actions and decision. Additionally, my research was conducted in collaboration with The Association of Women living with HIV/AIDs ASWHAN, a non-governmental organization in Nigeria. During my stay abroad, I was opportune to experience the plight of those stigmatized with HIV/AIDs, their challenges, aspiration outlook. This experience enabled to me to understand their plight thus granting me the invaluable tools and enabling environment required in the future to solicit and empower my client notwithstanding their circumstances nor plight. Conducting research well in advance has enabled me gathered as much needed information for my thesis since not much pedagogic effort has been in circulation on the skin bleaching subjects.

Like the saying goes, that nothing good comes easy was very true in my case as I encountered family matters, lack of fund, time constraint and unforeseen eventualities. This was coupled with the fact that, the research for my thesis without a partner was as easy like I had envisaged, and the topic of my thesis was not that mostly common. The willing to conclude on my search for materials and data online for my research was further thwarted thanks to poor internet connection in the country where my internship was held. This factors as well contributed to my inability to make consultation and seek for assistance from my fellow student. At the end of the day, as I had earlier stated, all these challenges only made me stronger and equip for live in the labor market.

9.3 Feedback from service-users

Well after the interview session, I would hastily ask the clients for feedback which is simultaneously recorded and later coded for the writing of this research paper. This process was carried out as earlier mentioned, after consent form was printed in advance to ensure trust and privacy of my service users. The feedback however was spontaneous and versatile thus designed to conform to the individual client in question. There was no given number of questions used in the gathering of feedback however intended to meet the prerequisite of my research topic. I adopted this technique to avoid overburdening my client who already sacrificed ample time and courage to respond to my rather personal question. The result was really encouraging and positive considering the amount of time and resources committed to arriving at a conclusive momentum.

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Appendix 1: First appendix: Feedback from working life partner

Feedback

Archibong Eyo carried out his work placement with us in our esteemed organization, ASWHAN in Uyo, Nigeria for three months. We have assessed him based on the following criteria as was provided by your school.

Innovativeness and creativity

Archibong has been rather instrumental in the carrying out his task in an innovative manner worthy of emulation. He is tactful, versatile and in the way, he addresses situation in the camp. So far, he has proven beyond doubt his creativity by participating and mentoring most of projects in our center. It is due his competence in above mentioned qualities that has given us the confidence to collaborate with West as he is otherwise known by my staffs.

Research-oriented approach and implementation

Our center is frequented by clients from different background and most of them were lighter in complexion, meaning that there was a tendency they were using bleaching products. Archibong made a proposition which in my opinion and my staffs did sounded stimulating and never discussed. That was how we came about with collaboration in the context of skin bleaching to sensitize our clients on the bleaching crises and its effects on the skin.

Partnership and authenticity

We have been in contact ever since and he is been calling for consultation and counseling on what to write and what not to include. As I speak, we have gone through the draft of the thesis and I must say that we are impress with the content of the draft. The content was up-to-date and handy considering the limitations we face in our country in matters related to information dissemination and pedagogic materials for re-search purposes. We are impatiently waiting to grab the finished copy of the thesis for documentation purposes.

Sincerely yours,

Gloria Felix

Senior supervisor

Appendix 2: Assessment

Assessment

Archibong Eyo Was granted the opportunity to work with us as a member of staff for the following period, 12 March to May 13, 2018. We agreed that His working hour begins at 8 am and closes at 4 pm, from Monday to Friday accordingly excluding independent study hours.

During the internship he demonstrated and achieved the general objectives as required on the PLACEMENT FOR WORK DEVELOPMENT printout namely application of the theoretical approach and methods.

He participated and rendered services along with our staffs in a customer perspective and efficiently. He was able to surprisingly manage the Ethical characteristics of our workplace which was women-centered, and his approach was much appreciated by the staffs and clients.

Advice from staffs when needed was well demonstrated while following the center rules and modus operandi. He was always punctual at work and left at the allotted hour which was very much appreciated. He demonstrated a positive disposition with a relaxed but welcoming demeanor while being approach by assistance.

Positive comments were made by our clients and staffs which was much appreciated coupled with a display of tact and professionalism.

On behalf of the staff and management, we wish to thank your school and management for the opportunity for exchange of knowledge and competence although I did not have the opportunity to interact with the school supervisor as earlier inform by your student.

Sincerely yours,

Gloria Felix

Supervisor

Appendix 3: Consent form

Consent form

My name is Archibong Eyo and I am a student of Laurea university of Applied Sciences in Fin-land. As a requirement of my Degree Programme I am carrying out a research with the theme, Understanding the Rationale behind Skin lightening in Nigeria – challenges and repercussion. The research is carried out in collaboration with ASWHAN,

The Association of Women Living With HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. To complete the study, I would beg to conduct an interview with you, and I shall be grateful if granted.

For the purpose of this study I will be using a tape recorded to record the interviews. I hereby affirm that I will not reveal or in any manner disclose information obtained during this re-search.

I agree to discuss material directly related to this study only with the supervisor of this study. The tape-recorded information will be destroyed after the study is completed and published. Participants can freely participate in this study and are free to withdraw anytime. Feel free to contact me for more information: archibong.eyo@gmail.com

Warm regards

Archibong

Sign_____

Name_____

Date _____ Time_____

Appendix 4: Focus group interviews on skin lightening

Focus group interviews on skin lightening

1. Welcome
2. Overview of the topic
3. KNOWLEDGE ON SKIN BLEACHING
4. Do all of you know what skin bleaching is?
4. Could you tell me what kin bleaching is?
5. What are reasons behind women bleach?
6. What is the side-effect of skin bleaching?
7. Has any member of your family encouraged or discouraged you from bleach-ing?
8. Do you always check the content of your bleaching cosmetics?

Do you have an idea of what the chemicals in your cream/s are made of?
9. Do you know your bleaching cream is manufacture?
10. Are you all aware that the government has banned the usage of skin bleaching cosmetics in the market?

Appendix 5: Hearing opinions of volunteers

HEARING OUT OPINIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

How did you feel as you noticed your body getting lighter?

Have you had any side effect from using bleaching cosmetics?

Have you personally ever tried to stop bleaching?

Do you think it is fair for the government to ban the usage of skin bleaching cosmetics if no/yes, WHY?

If someone ever seek your advice as regards buying and using skin bleaching cosmetics, what will be your advice?

Since you stopped using skin bleaching cosmetics. Have you ever been tempted to go back to the practice?

Is there something else you would like to say as regard skin bleaching?

Appendix 6: questionnaire for the management staff

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE MANAGEMENT

1. What was your approach towards skin bleaching before we started discussing skin bleaching?
2. How has that changed?
3. How useful do you think my thesis on skin bleaching will stand to serve your service users?
4. Do you think my thesis will stand to sensitize and empower your customers?
5. Are you satisfied with the participation of your customers in my interview?
- 6 What else can I do to improve both my participation in relation to the management and service users?