

# Obsession for Fair Skin Color in Pakistan

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**Abstract** – The aim of this research is to study the variables contribute in creating obsession for fair skin color in Pakistan. Three factors are examined as independent variable i.e. inferiority complex, social pressure and advertising keeping obsession as dependent variable. The research is based on a survey questionnaire, filled by 250 respondents from different areas of Karachi, Pakistan. The collected primary data is analyzed on SPSS by using multiple linear regression technique. The result confirms the affirmative relationship between dependent variable and independent variable. The research implies that by belonging to Asian race, it has to be accepted that majority people in this region born with brown or dark skin color. The skin color should not be considered as measurement tool for beauty.

**Keywords** – Obsession, Fair Skin, Inferiority Complex, Asian Race.

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are number of Asian countries where white or fair skin color counts as a key factor in beauty. In an article Goon & Craven (2003) stated that in our culture dark skin color is linked with low income people who work as field labor while white skin is associated with superior class which hold power. Lal (2004) stated that yearning of white skin has also been driven from South Asian movies in which the positive characters such as hero and heroines are always fair and good looking while the negative characters are mostly dark colored.

For skin lightening, there are many creams and bleaching agents are available in the market. Besides these products different procedures are also available such as cosmetic therapies by dermatologists and non medicated treatments in beauty salons. Del Guidice (2002) mentioned that skin lighteners are not only common in Asian countries but also commonly available in non-white regions of world i.e. Africa.

### A. Problem Statement

In South Asian culture, having dark skin is the most undesirable trait. Being beautiful and having white skin meant the same thing (Philips, 2004). To make the skin whiter or lighter, a big population in Pakistan both males and females use many products and procedures. Earlier the desire of fair skin color was common in females only but now men have also become very conscious about skin color. This consciousness converts into obsession in later stage in presence of different factors and many times it leads to several undesirable results. In this research, different factors or variables are studied which contribute in creating fairness obsession.

### B. Research Objective

The objective of this research study is to identify the contribution of different factors in creating obsession for fair skin color such as advertising, social factor and

inferiority complex. This study also aims to find that which is the most influential factor among them?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Shankar, Giri, and Palaian (2006) in Asian countries, many people lack availability of basic medications for life. However expensive preparations for skin lightening and beauty are promoted successfully which can be thought as one of the reason of disease mongering. Disease mongering refers to building a severe medical condition from a mild symptom or handling the personal problems in medical frame. (Moynihan, Heath, Henry, 2002). Consciousness is the condition or awareness state of some exterior thing or something within own self (www.wikipedia.org). Obsession is defined in psychology dictionary as a persistent thought or push which is knowledgeable as insidious and improper, and results in major fear, stress, or anxiety (www.Psychologydictionary.org). The obsession for beauty or white skin is triggered by different factors, in this literature three factors are discussed i.e. Advertising, Social pressure and inferiority complex

### A. Advertising

Advertising is the most effective communication tool. It not only targets the consumers' psychology but also reflects the cultural values (Chand & Shivani, 2012). Through advertisements the manufacturer of skin lightening products delivers the message of superiority of being fair and beautiful (Shankar, Giri, Subish, 2006). Some fairness creams advertisements create an image of fairness as essential element to get success in different point of life such as at work place, in college/universities and in friends and family. Some beauty salons also use direct marketing strategies such as mobile coupons, when customers get such promotional offers on their own mobile phone, the probability of visiting the salon increases (Kondo, Uwadaira & Nakahara, 2007).

### B. Inferiority Complex

Inferiority complex is characterized by lack of self esteem or self confidence. It's mostly found in women with regard to their bodies (Woo, 2004). Sara Halprin stated that in this male consumerist system, women's external look has become the measuring standard for their personalities (Halprin 1996). In a research, Greene (1992) stated that psychologist argue that woman's body is the symbol of her personality and she strongly needs to take care her beauty. In order to keep themselves away from complex and anxiety, women try to adapt the superficial methods or even cosmetics surgery to consume a beautiful body (Woo, 2004).

### C. Social Pressure

Adam Smith said "the most fundamental human needs are not biological, but social." A fair skin or white skin is

the sign of beauty in many non-whites societies. In Chinese traditional culture there is an idiom "one white covers up three ugliness"(Bray, 2002). In Korean culture, a white person is considered as more respectable (Yoo, 2001).In India black or non-white skin color considered as unfortunate, dirty and unfair, while white skin is considered as sign of beauty and happiness (Arif, 2004).As per Hong (1999), for the occupation purpose women are not only evaluated in terms of their skills, education and ability but their physical appearance matters more in their employment.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Data Collection and Sampling

This research aims to know the factor (s) contributing in creating fairness obsession among both males and females. The research is done on primary data, which was collected from 250 respondents by using a survey questionnaire. The data was collected by using convenience (probability) sampling method in different malls and beauty salons/spas. Convenience sampling is the sampling technique which involves the selecting the most accessible respondents (Marshall,1996). The target respondents were between age group 15 years to 45 years both male and female. A questionnaire was used as data collecting instrument consists of 20 questions. Among which 2 were multiple choice regarding the reason and recommendation for use of fairness creams and treatments and 18 questions were based on likert scale. The least degree was marked as 1 and the highest degree as 5. In likert scale, a statement is provided along with 5 answers varying in terms of degrees from agreement to disagreement(Joseph and Rosemary, 2003).The reliability of data was tested through cronbach's alpha, showed 78% reliability.According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham. & Black (1998) the limit of acceptance for instrument reliability is 0.70 alpha value.

#### B. Statistical Technique

Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Obsession was taken as dependent variable which was computed by adding the responses of four questions. Whereas independent variables were Advertising, inferiority complex and social pressure, also computed having responses of related questions in the questionnaire.

#### C. Research Model

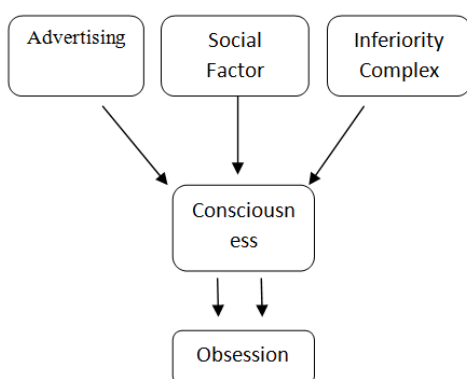


Fig.1. Research Model

### IV. RESULTS

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.781	25

Cronbach's Alpha test was used to test the reliability of data. As shown in reliability statistics table, data is 78.1 % reliable

#### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.733 <sup>a</sup>	0.538	0.532	0.53487

a. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, Social, Inferior

In the model summary table, coefficient of determination (R Square) also known as coefficient of multiple correlation, shows the percentage of variability on dependent variable explained by independent variables (Rao, 1973). R square value 53.8% means the variation in dependent variable is 53.8 rely on independent variable and remaining (46.2%) depends on other variables which are not discussed in this study.

#### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	81.907	3	27.302	95.433	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	70.378	246	0.286		
Total	152.285	249			

In analysis of variance table, the significant F value shows that how much the proposed relationship between dependent and independent variables is fit. The F value 95.43 (with Sig.000) presents a good fit between variables.

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.269	0.165		1.632	0.104
	Inferior	0.562	0.053	0.564	10.543	0
	Social	0.142	0.043	0.16	3.328	0.001
	Advertising	0.055	0.016	0.165	3.378	0.001

a. Dependent Variable: Obsession

From the above table4, the following regression equation is formed:

$$\text{Obsession} = 0.269 + 0.562X_1 + 0.142X_2 + 0.055X_3$$

The table represents the positive relationship between the dependent and independent variable the coefficients of Inferiority complex, social pressure and advertising are 0.562, 0.142 and 0.055 respectively. These are interpreted as for example unit change in inferiority complex will increase the obsession by 0.56 units. All positive relationship indicates the increase in any independent variable will increase the effect on dependent variable.

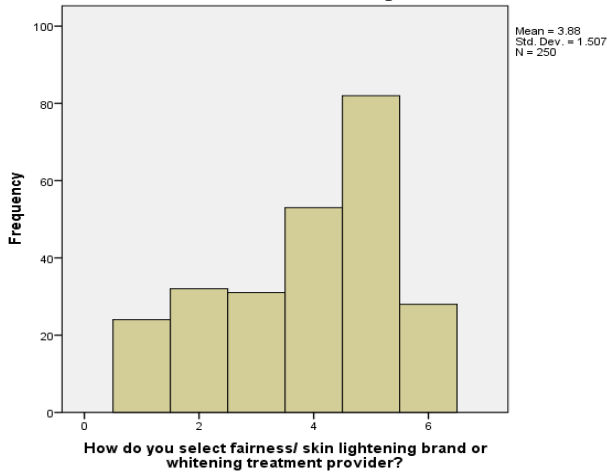


Fig.2. Selection of Fairness/Skin Lightening Product Brand

Figure 2 shows the frequencies of response asked for a question "how do you select fairness/skin lightening product or whitening treatment provider?" the answers were (1) Recommended by friend&/or family, (2) Recommended by beautician, (3) Recommended by dermatologist/cosmetologist, (4) Any famous brand, (5) By judging product through advertisements and the last option (6) was given for respondents who do not use any product or treatment. As we can see the highest frequency of responses were given to answer 5 which means majority of respondents select such products and services through advertisements' attraction.

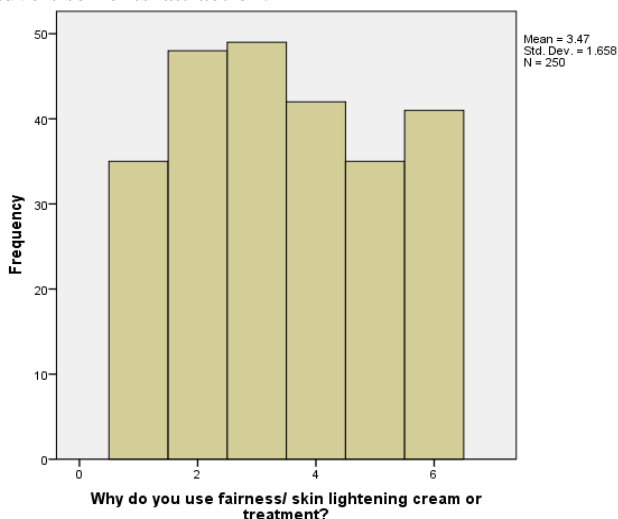


Fig.3. Why do you use skin fairness/ lightening cream or treatment

Above figure 3 represents the frequencies of responses against question "why do you use fairness/skin lightening product or treatment?" the respondents had to choose among the answers i.e. (1) to be more beautiful, (2) Mostly people like fair skins colored people, (3) Fair skins colored people have more friends, (4) People look for fair skin color mate for marriage, and again the last answer for those who do not use such products or treatments (5) I don't use fairness/skin lightening cream or treatments. Here responses have less variation although maximum respondents selected the answer 2 and 3.

## V. DISCUSSION

From the above findings it can be said that obsession for the fair skin color has significant positive relationship with the inferiority complex, social pressure and advertising. As per discussed in the literature section all the studied variable have impact in creating consciousness, which with passage of time becomes obsession, among individuals regarding their skin color. With the advancement of technology distances have become shorter; people have become more social than earlier. This increased interaction has led them being conscious about having more friends, being liked in social circle and having good looking life partner for making a good couple. It is shown in figure 3, that there are small variations among different reasons of using skin fairness / whitening products or treatments. In South Asian culture good looking means having fair skin color, so people use such products or treatments which make their skin whiter. Though they may have moderate to severe side effects. Advertising has created buzz on mass media, outdoor media or social media of such products by showing people that they can have a fair skin color in few weeks to few days which ultimately lead people to try those products at least once. It can be observe in figure 2, where respondents voted in favor of options that they use fairness or whitening products by judging themselves through advertisements.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Through this research it can be concluded that inferiority complex, social pressure and advertising has significant role in creating obsession for fair skin color. Jordan(2008) stated that all over the history lighter skin color has been preferred by the Asians though most of them have wheat color or dark skin color from birth. This trend can be considered as due to close association with wealthy and whiter skin people in the past (Craven and Goon, 2008). In South Asian culture, white skin color has become the sign of beauty. Mostly people with dark skin color strive to get lighter skin color throughout the life for being liked by others in which majority are females. Some people remain confident about their look or dark skin color but some people become victims of inferiority complex. This continual thought of feeling deprived and not being liked by others lead people to adapt some external methods. As discussed in literature that people with fair

skin are considered as white collar worker as they don't have to work in sun like blue collar labor. It has become a stereotype towards rich and fair skin color people (Fuller, 2008). For this society is very much responsible as some people find themselves victims of injustice on the basis of their appearance. According to Crave and Goon (2008), some newspaper worldwide chatter about this prejudice found in advertisements and promotions in skin fairness or whitening products on the cost of worth of South Asian females. As the females are the major targets of such products marketers by showing that females with white skin are preferred for love, friendship and even at work places.

### VII. IMPLICATIONS

Beauty means white face; unfortunately there are people in our society who believe in it, besides knowing that it's the natural color of our race and something which is not in under control. Discriminating people especially females on the basis of skin color is absolutely unfair. The fear of rejection by others leads people to adapt such products or treatments which may harm their skin and health. Marketers shouldn't give such impressions in advertisement which strengthens this prejudice in society and raise questions on self worth of people who are less beautiful or not having fair skin color. The educated and professional people should work on creating awareness among people who are suffering from inferiority complex and to rectify this misconception of society about the beauty and one's own worth.

### VIII. LIMITATIONS

As it is mentioned in result section that variables studied in this study which create obsession for fair skin color explains the 53.8% of its variability. There may be more factors which contribute in creating obsession for fair skin and promoting discrimination in South Asian society. The research can further more be conducted on the basis of educational level and income level to analyze the beliefs among different social classes.

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Because of his meritorious position he was directly admitted as a PhD research student in the University of Cambridge, UK. From here he obtained PhD degree in a record period of 3 years in the field of

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He was awarded *Hirayama Silk Roads Fellowship* for the year 1994 by UNESCO to undertake a research program in the field of Archaeology/Anthropology, “*The language and scripts program and History of Art pertaining to the Silk Road*”, in China, Pakistan and Germany, which was successfully completed in 1997 and the report was submitted to UNESCO. The findings were presented in the International Silk Roads Conference in Xi’an, China.

So far he has supervised 8 PhD research students; all of them were awarded PhD degree by the University of Karachi. He has authored over 15 research papers in Journals of National and International repute. He has organized and participated in a number of National and International Seminars, Conferences, Exhibitions, Workshops, Excavation and Exploration projects.

He has widely traveled around the globe and has represented Pakistan in China, Germany, India, Italy, France, UK, and USA.