

2020

## Skin Bleaching Among Female University Students

Adegboyega Abayomi Adewoyin  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Adegboyega Abayomi Adewoyin

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Gary Kelsey, Committee Chairperson,  
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Mark Gordon, Committee Member,  
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Amanda Deerfield, University Reviewer,  
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Skin Bleaching Among Female University Students

by

Adegboyega Abayomi Adewoyin

MS, California State University, 2000

MEd, University of Lagos, 1991

BA Ed, University of Lagos, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Administration and Leadership

Walden University

June 2020

## Abstract

In Nigeria, skin bleaching, a practice that can create significant health problems, represents a persistent social issue. The behavior has become widespread due to unfettered access to various brands of bleaching creams. The purpose of this study was to gather data to (a) seek an understanding of the deeper motivations underlying the decision to engage in skin bleaching or skin whitening among female tertiary students and (b) examine the awareness among such students of public policy on skin bleaching creams. The case study qualitative research design was employed to enable skin bleaching cream users to share their motivations and experiences. A purposeful sampling method was used to select 18 participants from the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This study applied the narrative policy framework and rational choice theory to gain an understanding of the experiences of this population. Data were collected using 7 semistructured open-ended interviews. Analysis of data was done using both manual and software coding to identify themes and patterns. Thematic analysis of the data confirmed prior findings on motivations in that some respondents viewed the behavior as a lifestyle and individual decision. Majority of the respondents expressed vague awareness of the public policies guiding the use of skin bleaching creams. The study findings provide pertinent information to policymakers and the community at large about motivations for using bleaching creams. Ultimately, policy changes or additions may address ease of access to bleaching cream and may reduce the cost of treatment associated with long-term effects of using such cream.

Skin Bleaching Among Female University Students

by

Adegboyega Abayomi Adewoyin

MS, California State University, 2000

MEd, University of Lagos, 1991

BA Ed, University of Lagos, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Administration and Leadership

Walden University

June 2020

## Dedication

I want to dedicate my dissertation to God, the supreme being who has kept me alive to see this day. His mercy over me has endured and ensured the completion of my thesis. It has not been a very smooth journey in the real sense, but I am glad it came to fruition. I would also like to dedicate this to my family. To my wife, Adetoun, who was my Rock of Gibraltar, who supported me and guaranteed the enabling environment needed for me to survive several intense moments throughout the dissertation process. To my children, Alex Adeoluwa and Felicia Adedolapo, both of whom were always conscious of the process and stood by me. They provided me with the motivation to continue with the dissertation process despite many times of despair. Finally, to the memory of Madam Sherifat Amope Akinfenwa, the other woman in my life, who made my existence possible. Rest in peace, Amope.

## Acknowledgments

I am extremely indebted to some notable people in my life who have been very supportive of my quest for knowledge. My number one fans and cheerleaders throughout my journey are too numerous to mention here. I am very fortunate to have Dr. Gary Kelsey as the chairperson of my dissertation committee. I am profoundly grateful for his teaching and guidance throughout this process. His patience, support, encouragement, positive feedback, and uncommon leadership qualities helped a great deal toward the successful completion of my dissertation. My academic journey would not have been so rewarding and fulfilling without his willingness to take me through this academic horizon in the first place. Thank you, Dr. Kelsey! Secondly, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my committee member, Dr. Mark Gordon. Your opinions and suggestions helped to strengthen this dissertation. You gave me the needed nudge and the support to be a better scholar.

I would like to thank Professor Olanike Adeyemo, Professor Ayodele Jegede, Professor Lanre Olutayo, and Dr. Dauda Busari, all from the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, for their support and for ensuring the approval of the study through the institution's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee. I also want to thank Mrs. Tejumola Ajao, Onaara Ashaolu, and Dr. Simon Umukoro for their guidance and support at various stages of the data collection process. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Donna Daniels, who patiently reviewed my papers over several quarters and stayed with me until the very end.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Operational Definitions.....	12
Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations.....	13
Significance of the Study.....	15
Summary.....	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	18
Introduction.....	18
Literature Search Strategy.....	18
The Concept of Skin Bleaching .....	20
Skin Bleaching Chemicals .....	21
Findings on Skin Bleaching.....	22
Consequences of Skin Bleaching.....	25



Theoretical Explanations/Framework of Skin Bleaching.....	26
Narrative Policy Framework (NPF).....	27
Rational Choice Theory (RCT).....	29
Public Policy on Skin Bleaching.....	31
Empirical Studies on Skin Bleaching .....	35
Motivating Factors for Skin Bleaching.....	44
Summary of Literature Review.....	48
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Research Design and Rationale .....	51
Role of the Researcher .....	52
Research Questions.....	54
Methodology.....	55
Setting and Sample .....	55
Participant Selection and Logic .....	56
Instrumentation .....	57
Procedure for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection .....	57
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	61
Credibility .....	61
Transferability.....	61
Dependability .....	62

Confirmability.....	62
Intra- and Intercoder Reliability.....	62
Protection of Participants’ Rights/Ethical Issues.....	63
Formal Steps of Protection.....	63
Institutional Permission .....	64
Recruitment Material/Ethical Concerns.....	64
Summary.....	67
Chapter 4: Results of the Study .....	69
Introduction.....	69
Research Questions.....	69
Research Setting.....	71
Demographics .....	71
Data Collection .....	74
Data Analysis .....	77
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	78
Credibility .....	78
Transferability.....	79
Dependability .....	80
Confirmability.....	81
Study Results .....	82
Theme 1: Motivations for Using Skin Bleaching Creams .....	85

Theme 2: Public Policy Awareness .....	95
Theme 3: Experienced Consequences of Skin Bleaching.....	98
Theme 4: Mitigating Skin Bleaching Practices .....	107
Summary .....	112
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	115
Introduction.....	115
Interpretation of Research Findings.....	116
Theoretical Implications .....	128
Limitations of the Study.....	130
Recommendations.....	131
Implications for Positive Social Change.....	132
Conclusions.....	135
References.....	138
Appendix A: Interview Questions .....	152
Appendix B: Interview Protocol .....	153
Appendix C: Sample Cover Letter.....	155
Appendix D: First-Level Themes .....	157
Appendix E: Victor Olaiya—Omo Pupa—Full Lyrics.....	159

## List of Tables

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Information.....	73
Table 2. Interview Process Details.....	74

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Word frequency output.....	85
--------------------------------------	----

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Skin bleaching transcends geographic borders and occurs in many cultures throughout the world. Individuals across the globe practice various forms of skin treatment, and these treatments are performed for different purposes (Dadzie & Petit, 2009; Kpanake, Sastre, & Mullet, 2010). Skin bleaching has become a common trend, especially in trans-Saharan West Africa (Fatimata et al., 2012). This study explored the motivation behind the use of skin bleaching creams among female undergraduate students in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria in order for policy makers to create research-based public policy.

This study also explored awareness among female university students to assist policymakers in formulating public policies related to the use of dangerous cosmetics labeled as skin bleaching creams. While the motivations behind the practice of skin bleaching are not completely known, there are many negative implications associated with the use of bleaching formulas (Alegbeleye, 2017; De-Souza, 2008).

Skin bleaching has been established to have severe side effects (Durosaro, Ajiboye, & Oniye, 2012). It has also been identified as the source of serious health-related outcomes among users, especially those who subjected their bodies to creams formulated without proper safety precautions regarding chemical contents used in their production. The use of skin bleaching has also been reported to be responsible for skin

cancers, skin discoloration, and depression among users leading to negative outcomes and suicide (Lewis et al., 2011; Mahe, 2014).

The growing concern about the use of skin bleaching calls for a detailed examination of the motivations and uses of skin bleaching formulas, especially among university students. It is imperative to know what drives the decision by female university students to engage in this behavior.

There is no documented history of when and how the phenomenon of skin enhancement became so popular among humans, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Various authors have discussed issues relating to skin bleaching from various points of view. In the literature review for this study, I explore the trajectory of skin bleaching from the perspectives of different scholars and establish the context of this study by identifying existing studies' relevance. The literature review also identifies the research gap that this study addressed. At the secondary school level, there is an alarming trend of skin bleaching among female secondary school students in the Ibadan metropolis (Durosaro et al., 2012).

There is a paucity of literature on the effect of this trend among female university students, who are commonly referred to as the leaders of tomorrow. There is no understanding of whether the members of this population have any awareness of existing public policies guiding skin bleaching creams and their choice of skin bleaching creams.

### **Background of the Problem**

In Nigeria and most parts of Africa, the indigenes are predominantly dark skinned. Bleaching of the skin occurs in Nigeria either as an attempt to look lighter or to maintain skin toning. Skin bleaching trends in Nigerian communities have grave health and cultural implications (Azibo, 2011). Health-related issues as a result of skin bleaching going wrong can result in large expenses for medical treatment. Skin bleaching also has a tremendous impact on participants' personality development, self-esteem, and identity formation (Azibo, 2011; De Souza, 2008). Ease of access to the chemicals used in the preparation of skin bleaching creams has been reported to result from lapses in policy implementation, lack of enforcement of rules, and poor regulation (Mah'e, 2014).

Both men and women engage in the practice of skin lightening; however, women are generally more likely to engage in the practice than men (Rusmadi et al., 2015). For example, in a study carried out by Olumide et al. (2008), out of "450 Nigerians who confessed to the use of lightening creams, 73.3% were women, and 27.6% were men" (p. 345). The high percentage can be compared with other parts of the world where skin bleaching is a notable practice (Alghamdi, 2010; Rusmadi et al., 2015). Studies by Adebajo (2002) and Ravichandran (2013) also pointed out that women aged between 20 to 30 years are more active in the use of skin lightening creams. While not disregarding the practice of skin bleaching among men, I sought to understand through the current study why this phenomenon is predominantly seen among females, particularly young



women. The focus on female undergraduates in this research provided an avenue for an inquiry into skin bleaching among this demographic.

The World Health Organization (WHO), an arm of the United Nations, has reported that 77% of Nigerian women engage in skin bleaching (Fihlani, 2013). This statistic raises serious questions about the role of policy makers and administrators in stemming the skin bleaching phenomenon. Policy makers in Nigeria appear to have no reliable records of the devastation caused by skin bleaching. There is a need to understand whether awareness of existing policies at different levels of governance and school administration impacts distribution and easy access to skin bleaching chemicals among female university students.

Researchers have focused attention on issues relevant to skin bleaching. The historical evolution of skin bleaching practice has been traced to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century among African Americans who experienced slavery, who engaged in this practice mostly as a psychological means to escape the “Negro past,” indicating that its function was more than merely cosmetic (Azibo, 2011; Dorman, 2011). Some authors have identified skin bleaching as a prevalent cultural practice and a normal part of life in some African countries; such studies suggest that skin bleaching is associated with social privilege, marital prospects, attraction to the other sex, and a bandwagon effect (Dadzie & Petit, 2009; Gwaravanda, 2011).

Conversely, it has been argued that individuals who frequently use skin bleaching creams do not bleach their skin in opposition to African culture, but for other obvious

reasons that include appearance, attraction, style, and satisfaction (Kpanake, Sastre, & Mullet, 2009). Other studies have dealt with the medical and health implications of skin bleaching in sub-Saharan Africa (Atakpedo, et al.; 2015 Mah'e, 2014).

Although some of these studies are generally applicable to the Nigerian experience, to date, there have been no studies devoted to the application, motivation, and implications of skin bleaching among young females at the university level in a specific region of the country. Thus, this qualitative study examined the prevailing motivations for skin bleaching cream use among female undergraduates at universities in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study was intended to generate a deep understanding of the prevalence of the practice of skin bleaching in this population and investigate the awareness of public policy among female university students with a view toward assisting policymakers in formulating public policies related to the use of dangerous cosmetics labeled as skin bleaching creams.

The use of skin bleaching cream or therapy is a matter of individual choice. Likewise, the direct implications of the use of skin bleaching products are also personal. However, the side effects associated with skin bleaching have attracted the interest of various parties concerned about the overall health and welfare of society (Askari et al., 2013; Ravichandran, 2013). There is a need to consider the skin bleaching phenomenon in relation to the intersection between individual choices and societal values, especially in the African setting. Living standard in the African setting is construed from a collective approach with broader community perspective, rather than the individual notion.

It is essential to consider the distinction between *skin bleaching* and *skin toning* because these terms have been used interchangeably among users of creams and chemicals that “whiten” the skin. In the subsequent sections of this dissertation, the distinction between various terms used by users of skin bleaching creams are closely examined. Many reasons have been adduced and offered as to why people bleach their skin, including self-identity, self-esteem, and the desire to feel more beautiful (Adebajo, 2002). In this study, I examined the role of policymakers and administrators at the university level in ensuring that female students have access to ample information regarding the dangers associated with skin bleaching creams.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Skin bleaching is an ongoing trend and practice among Nigerians irrespective of gender. It does not appear that the skin bleaching phenomenon has been viewed from public policy perspectives, especially among the users of skin bleaching creams. Durosaro, Ajiboye, and Oniye (2012) studied the perception of skin bleaching among female secondary school students in the Ibadan metropolitan area. The researchers found a significant number of adolescents who were students in high school engaged in skin bleaching. This issue highlights the need to understand what is fueling this trend among young women with a view toward facilitating the possible development of accurate information and appropriate public policy intervention by relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, and university administrators. The WHO reported that about

77% of Nigerian women using skin bleaching products regularly (Fihlani, 2013). Nigeria has the highest rate of skin bleaching among women in the world. Within the sub-saharan Africa, Nigeria compared with the following countries Togo (59%), South Africa (35%), and Mali (25%).

Many factors may cause female Nigerian students, especially those enrolled in tertiary education, to use bleaching creams and other bleaching agents. It is of interest to investigate whether education and awareness of existing public policies play any role in the decision to use these creams. The cultural heritage of the Yoruba-speaking people of West Africa requires exploration when considering the increasing “whitening” of skin among female university students.

There is a paucity of information in Nigeria regarding the effect of skin bleaching in communities and on college campuses, and little or no appropriate public policy is in place. Atadokpédé et al. (2015) concluded that skin bleaching should be considered a public health problem—a position that has implications for administrators and the public about interventions needed to combat the trend. Mah’e (2014) found that the practice of skin bleaching had led to serious health-related issues among users and that the incidence of these problems might have been underreported. Bleaching of dark skin appears to have impacted the core values of West African societies, creating cultural uncertainty. Adebajo (2002) found that about 77.3% of 450 local market traders surveyed in Lagos admitted to using skin lightening creams without regard for the chemicals used in the cream formulations. This study was conducted without differentiating between genders. The

risks associated with the use of dangerous cream agents include skin damage, cancers, liver disease, and kidney failure (Lewis et al., 2012).

Through this research, I sought to provide a detailed understanding of the phenomenon of skin bleaching among young female students in Nigeria and analyze the implications of this trend among female undergraduate students. The research explored awareness among female students to assist policymakers in formulating public policies related to the use of dangerous cosmetics labeled as skin bleaching creams. To this end, a case study of female students in the tertiary institutions in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria was conducted. To provide a broader understanding of the study, the study's research questions served as a guiding framework.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to gather data to provide an understanding of the deeper motivations underlying the decision to engage in skin bleaching or skin whitening among female tertiary students in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria. The study provided qualitative data on skin bleaching among female students. The results of the study may serve as essential data for policymakers at various public management levels for future policy formulation.

Durosaro, Ajiboye, and Oniye (2012), who focused on the perception of skin bleaching among female secondary school students in the Ibadan metropolitan area, attributed skin bleaching to personal intentions to attract public acceptance and perhaps to attain a balanced body color, which could be associated with societal acceptance.

Bleaching the skin has also been found to attract attention from both sexes, seemingly making bleachers popular among their peers and within society (Lewis et al., 2012).

### **Research Questions**

1. What motivates female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria to bleach their skin?
2. To what degree are female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria aware of policies related to skin bleaching product safety?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework serves as the foundation of any serious research project. It also forms the core of a research project by assisting the researcher in putting the problem to be addressed in perspective (Wacker, 1998). The choice of a framework for a dissertation relies on assessment of theories that assist in the organization and definition of findings concerning the phenomenon under study. The theoretical framework chosen for this study was rational choice theory (RCT). Theory in qualitative studies can effectively explain the phenomenon under study and provide insight into the problem from various angles (Creswell, 2009).

Researchers tend to employ conceptual frameworks to assist in providing a detailed exploration of a topic of study. A conceptual framework ensures that the findings are organized and presented concisely. For this study, I considered the use of the narrative policy framework (NPF). This framework served as a model for understanding the phenomenon under study with the use of three levels of analysis: micro, meso, and

macro levels. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that the role of the conceptual framework in qualitative research is to provide a basis of understanding for the overall structure of the study concerning the examination of the research goals.

The psychological basis of the RCT made it appropriate for explaining the rationale behind human behavior in the current study. This theory targets why people choose to do what they want to do (Grüne-Yanoff, 2012). The theory involves the assumption that all humans base their decisions on rational calculations, act with rationality when choosing, and aim to increase either pleasure or profit. RCT also stipulates that all complex social phenomena are driven by individual human actions (Green & Shapiro, 1996; Scott, 2000).

The consideration of RCT helped to give meaning to human activities around skin bleaching and provide understanding as to why people decide to engage in this behavior. The NPF accounted for individual perspectives about individual belief systems. The framework also provided additional insight into participants' understanding of existing policies regarding the use of skin bleaching creams and other behavioral outcomes. The incorporation of the conceptual frameworks assisted in viewing and understanding the findings from various angles.

Ritzer and Smart (2001) identified RCT as having a good foundation in social psychology due to its ability to provide theoretic integration across the social science disciplines. Steele (2016) examined the results of a study that set out to ascertain the applicability of RCT to offending concerning offenders' actual experiences. The study

viewed offenders as intelligent individuals who weighed up the potential costs and benefits of committing a crime. The findings suggested that rationality can be seen to vary both within and between individuals, as well as within and between offense types. This study provided insight into how offenders' motivations can affect their ability to decide, and how these motivations can be understood in the milieu of the offense. This study is relevant to the topic of the current dissertation because of the interest in knowing what motivates female university students who engage in skin bleaching. RCT helped to provide an understanding of the motives and outcomes of the behavior under study.

The NPF is a policy theory that I applied to this study. The NPF provided an understanding of the participants' lived experiences in the realm of the existing policy context and how such policies affect skin bleaching behavior. The NPF also assisted in identifying the contents and form of the behavior under study with a view toward understanding participants' belief systems and how they have influenced policies and regulations on dangerous skin creams. Sabatier and Weible (2014) argued that the NPF helps in identifying narratives in the policy-making process. One argument suggests that policy debates can lead to rich development of policy contexts, which can be useful for future policy formulation.

Among the core assumptions of the NPF is the belief that policy processes can be affected by individual behavior. This can also be evident at the group level, depending on how individuals reason and assign meaning to their perceptions (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2015). This study provided insight into existing policies and how



actors' experiences must have influenced their implementation or lack thereof of such policies or regulations. The conceptual framework provided a better understanding of the participants' motivations and decisions concerning the phenomena under study.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Bleaching cream:* A liquid substance containing hydroquinone and other similar chemical formulas, or a combination of chemical-based liquid contents, mixed for rubbing on the skin—either used for skin lightening/whitening or for the reduction of physiological skin pigmentation.

*Cream:* A soft substance in the form of a thick liquid that has a soothing and moisturizing effect and can be rubbed on the skin.

*Female:* The broad category of the female gender as opposed to the male gender. The current study dealt with a female young adult population ranging in age from 17/18 years to the early 30s.

*Ibadan:* A large and metropolitan Yoruba city, which is the capital of Oyo State in southwestern Nigeria. Ibadan is the site of the premier university in Nigeria.

*Public policy:* An official regulation or framework that emanates from the government rather than the private sector; it addresses any serious issues/problems of social, economic, or political concern in society.

*Skin:* The outer surface layer and natural protective body covering of human beings (or other animals) and the site of the sense of touch.

*Skin bleaching:* The art/practice of changing the original color of the skin or making the skin look whiter/lighter using artificial method(s); performed by rubbing chemical cream into the skin, or by the use of any other applicable therapy.

*Skin therapy:* The act of caring for or treating the skin with cream formula(s) to make it whiter or lighter.

*University students:* Students engaged in study at the undergraduate level of a university. They can also be referred to as *college students*.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations**

The issue of social lifestyle choice and whether individuals practice skin bleaching or not in Nigeria (and many other parts of the world) is more of a moral issue than an ethical issue. As such, there is no yardstick for defining the right choice, in that what is good for one person might not be good for another. However, there are concerns about the accessibility of skin bleaching creams. Individuals within the society can boldly defend their positions and can describe their “negative experiences” concerning skin bleaching. However, achieving this narrative may be difficult. I expected that many students would be willing to tell their stories, whereas others might be concerned that the information gathered be used strictly for research purposes, and not for witch-hunting or persecution.

As a male researcher, I anticipated that it might be difficult to have free access to the private quarters and hostels of female undergraduates in order to examine and assess individual lifestyle choices with regard to skin bleaching, particularly with respect to the

kinds of creams or therapies being used by the students—whether they were of the bleaching variety or not. Thus, the data were limited to the opinions reported in questionnaires that were distributed to students, as well as the oral interviews granted by willing female undergraduate participants.

Initially, it was difficult to obtain willing female undergraduate participants, especially those who were actively engaged in skin bleaching. Some female university students in Ibadan were not willing to participate in the study. Finally, a pool of 10 to 18 participants were identified for the study. Although participants responded openly and honestly to the questions presented, the veracity of the information that they provided cannot be ascertained. Information received from participants was accepted at face value.

Bleaching creams for sale in Nigeria are usually on display at all types of markets and outlets without requisite regulations; they are merely identified by popular names and specific fragrances, with little or no information about their chemical formulations, whether harmful or not. Therefore, it takes the professional expertise of a pharmacist or a dermatologist to identify the chemical content and proper health status of the creams. Such pharmacists and dermatologists are highly insufficient in Nigeria; where such experts are available, they are not consulted by individuals in the process of selling and buying of the creams.

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is the agency responsible for the formulation of public policy regarding the control of dangerous skin creams in Nigeria. The organization was set up in 1993 to specifically

control the importation, advertisement, manufacture, distribution, sale, and use of cosmetics, among numerous other responsibilities. The agency appears to focus attention on the legalization of business enterprises willing to sell cosmetics rather than ensuring the safety of consumers. Although the agency has records of its efforts to curtail the importation and distribution of dangerous cosmetics products, its policy effectiveness needs to be explored. Concerted efforts were made to highlight NAFDAC's regulations and control of cosmetics use and its implication from a public policy standpoint.

The results of this study were limited to female students of the University of Ibadan. Investigation of other populations, such as younger preuniversity females, nonstudents, and adult women in Ibadan, was not within the scope of this study. The fact that this study did not encompass participants of male gender was also a limitation. In Nigeria, men have been identified as users of skin bleaching creams, but women are more likely to use these creams than men are.

The case study approach has limited capacity and cannot provide the quantitative descriptions that previous studies of bleaching creams have used. However, quantitative studies may specifically identify psychological and physiological problems associated with skin bleaching. The findings from this dissertation were limited to the interpretation of qualitative data rather than quantitative analysis.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study resides in its exploration of what motivates the decisions of female students in Ibadan, Oyo State to bleach their skin. In selecting this

topic, I sought to address a serious gap in the literature regarding this population. An understanding of what fuels this trend may help policymakers to develop appropriate regulations to address easy access to dangerous chemicals used in formulating bleaching skin creams. This study may contribute to social change and help leaders within community health institutions create awareness and aggressive education modules regarding the short and long-term risks associated with this behavior. This study may also contribute to knowledge among relevant stakeholders in the community. For this purpose, a descriptive qualitative research method was employed to enable participants to relate their lived experiences regarding the phenomenon of interest.

### **Summary**

Skin bleaching as a phenomenon has received significant attention from the general public and scholars alike. The use of skin bleaching creams and other associated therapies is increasing in sub-Saharan Africa, with far-reaching consequences and complications. There is a need for innovative research and policy efforts directed toward an understanding of the reasons behind the practice of skin bleaching and effective solutions to discourage it. Researchers have documented broad issues concerning the nature, causes, and development of skin bleaching in various societies.

Researchers have also focused on the general implications of skin bleaching. However, the case in Nigeria demands specific attention, given that the country is reported to have the highest prevalence of African females practicing different forms of skin bleaching. Concerning Nigeria, researchers have described the potential course and

impact that skin bleaching has and will have on the country, but formal studies have not been conducted among individuals in specific geographical regions to determine the motives for engaging in this practice. Such information would increase understanding of the peculiarity of the phenomenon and the need for far-reaching official responses to it. Thus, the Ibadan case study presented here is a deserving one in this regard.

The only existing study about this topic in Ibadan examined issues related to skin bleaching perception among secondary school students in the city. It was necessary to carry out a study of female students in tertiary institutions in the city of Ibadan because females in this age bracket are the predominant participants involved in skin bleaching. The literature review on skin bleaching activities in Nigeria points to skin bleaching's popularity among women across various age groups. Olumide et al. (2008) reported on a study of 450 Nigerians who admitted to using skin lightening creams. Among the respondents, 73.3% were women and 27.6% were men (Olumide et al., 2008). Rusmadi et al. (2015) noted that even though skin whitening activities are not gender specific, more women than men are actively engaged in skin bleaching.

Hence, this study explored the motivations behind the use of skin bleaching creams among female undergraduate students and documented existing policies or lack thereof to address the phenomenon. Chapter 2 contains a comprehensive literature review. It addresses the strategy that I used to find relevant sources and to identify a gap in the literature. This discussion is followed by a review of articles addressing several issues related to skin bleaching.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The human body's largest organ is the skin. Maintaining the skin is an age-old desire, and cultures have developed various practices for skin treatment and maintenance. Members of generations past and present have engaged themselves in the art of beautification, in which one area of focus may be skin bleaching, which seems to have become a major trend among Nigerians. Despite the documented evidence of serious health-related issues inherent in the use of skin bleaching creams that contain harmful chemicals, Nigerians have been reported to have the highest rates of use for skin bleaching products in the world.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To locate relevant literature, I conducted multiple searches using Walden University library databases, and I used a variety of online resources to gain access to additional robust information on the topic. Databases accessed for this purpose included PsycINFO, ProQuest, EBSCO, SAGE, and ProQuest Central, which I used to search for peer-reviewed articles that might shed more light on the phenomenon under study. I maintained a log of all searches that I conducted, which included the results I received. The following search terms were employed: *skin bleaching, skin whitening, skin lightening, university students, skin treatments, Nigeria, motivations, cosmetics, NAFDAC, and public policy*. A review of the literature was conducted to synthesize previous research studies relating to skin bleaching from the many results generated from

the searches. There was no literature found that directly addressed public policy in Nigeria about skin bleaching. Efforts were made to request information from the agency responsible for cosmetics public policy in Nigeria, but there was no response.

There was a dearth of documented history on how the phenomenon of skin enhancement became so popular among humans, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Various authors have discussed issues relating to skin bleaching from various points of view. The study literature review explored the trajectory of skin bleaching from the perspectives of different scholars and situated the context of this study by identifying existing studies' relevance. It also identified the research gap that this study addressed.

At the secondary school level, there is an alarming trend of skin bleaching among students in the Ibadan metropolitan area (Durosaro et al., 2012). There is a paucity of literature on the effect of this trend among female university students, who are commonly referred to as tomorrow's leaders. There is no understanding of whether the members of this population have any awareness of existing public policies guiding skin bleaching creams and their choice of skin bleaching creams.

There is a need to understand what motivates female university students in Ibadan to bleach their skin. It is critical to discern the impact of skin bleaching on the students, as reported by a different point of view of researchers. Most existing studies on skin bleaching have focused on the broad experiences of females concerning skin bleaching, without specific attention to the involvement of the undergraduate population in Nigeria. Moreover, there has been only cursory attention in the existing literature to policy



measures and official reactions to skin bleaching phenomena. In this study, I examined these issues as primary areas of focus.

### **The Concept of Skin Bleaching**

The concern for the body of research in public policy is gaining momentum among scholars in recent times. This indeed has led many researchers to focus on the issue of skin bleaching and related health hazards and effects on public policy. Dadzie and Petit (2009) observed that skin bleaching is a global issue and practice that cuts across countries and continents.

This review will help readers understand the concept of skin bleaching by addressing various views and definitions of skin bleaching presented by researchers. One commonality in definitions of skin bleaching is that skin bleaching is the act of purposively changing one's skin color through the application of substances or solutions on the skin, with the sole intent to make the skin color brighter. Street et al. (2014) defined skin bleaching as the cosmetic application of creams, gels or soaps and household chemicals to depigment or lighten the skin complexion, which may have resultant effects of temporary or life-threatening danger. Lewis et al. (2009) described skin bleaching as a permanent or temporary alteration of the outer part of the skin (i.e., the epidermis. Forna (1992), in line with Street et al. (2014), described skin bleaching as the purposeful lightening of the skin using various substances or methods. Durosaro et al. (2012) viewed skin bleaching as a process of artificial removal of the topmost layer of the skin. Olumide (2010) added that users of skin bleaching products tend to target the following parts of

the human body: the face, upper limbs (arms), lower limbs (legs), and genital areas.

Durosaro et al. noted that some people resort to complete bleaching of the whole body to ensure uniformity in body coloration. Mbayu (2012) described skin bleaching as using creams, soaps, and exfoliants to lighten skin tone by reducing melanin counts.

Gwaravanda (2011) examined the phenomenon of skin bleaching from a cultural perspective among the Shona tribe of Zimbabwe. The research argued that there were dilemmas, contradictions, and uncertainties involved in skin bleaching. Skin bleaching seems to be a trend among female university students in Nigeria. Although it is not synonymous with the students' population, the trend cuts across females regardless of age, status, and educational level.

### **Skin Bleaching Chemicals**

Several chemicals are used in skin bleaching creams. The ease of access to the chemicals used in skin bleaching creams has been described as hazardous and as resulting from lapses in policy implementation. Despite serious health side effects, both men and women continue to use skin whitening creams that contain harmful chemicals. Davids et al. (2016) opined that there is evidence that hydroquinone in skin creams contains ingredients that have carcinogenic properties that can be harmful to the skin. Davids et al. noted that dermatologists recommend short-term use of hydroquinone for the treatment of common skin diseases, with a maximum dose of 2% being approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States. However, it should be obtained by prescription from a treating doctor.

Olumide et al. (2008) reported that chemicals used in skin bleaching include mercury, hydroquinone, niacinamide, kojic acid, arbutin, lactic acid gel, shea butter, topical retinoids steroids, and corticosteroids. The majority of illegal skin lightening creams contain between 8% and 15% hydroquinone, despite its ban by the authorities since 2001 (Davids et al., 2016). Literature indicates that mercury is the most dangerous among the listed chemicals in skin bleaching products (Denton et al., 1952; Saffer et al., 1976; Summa, 1975). Official reports show that mercury-containing products exist throughout the world, with such products available for sale over the internet in a mostly unregulated manner (Japan's Ministry of Environment, 2011; United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2013).

### **Findings on Skin Bleaching**

A WHO report ranked African countries by rates of skin bleaching product usage, with Nigeria at 77%, Mali at 25%, Senegal at 27%, South Africa at 35%, and Togo at 59% (Fihlani, 2013). The above statistic marks Nigeria as the largest consumer of skin bleaching creams in the world. Davids et al. (2016) suggested that growth in skin bleaching product use in Africa, Asia and in the Middle East may have occurred because indigenes in these areas tend to be dark skinned and many desire to look like Europeans and resort to lightening their skin color.

In a study of 104 respondents who were university students in Malaysia (Rusmadi et al., 2015), 63.6% of respondents were users of skin lightening products. Rusmadi et al. argued that this level was in the same range as rates reported in countries such as Nigeria

(72.4%), Jordan (60.7%), and Senegal (67.2%). Alegbeleye (2017) supported the claim that Nigeria has the highest percentage of women who use skin bleaching soaps and creams in the world. Adebajo (2002) also corroborated the finding that Nigeria has the world's highest percentage of women using skin lightening agents in their quest for beauty. The author studied 450 market traders and found that about 77% of the traders surveyed admitted to using bleaching creams.

After Nigeria, Togo comes next in the ranking of countries with the highest rates of bleaching cream use in Africa. Despite a series of public-awareness efforts by government agencies and bans on skin bleaching products, Togolese continue to use skin bleaching products in large numbers, clearly indicating flaws in the country's public policy and enforcement strategies (Kpanake et al., 2010).

Adebajo (2002) found that 77.3% of 450 market traders surveyed in the Lagos metropolitan area acknowledged using skin lightening creams without regard for the chemical components used in formulating the creams. The use of these dangerous creams has been associated with increased risk of serious health-related problems such as skin damage, cancers, serious depigmentation, and liver and kidney failure (Lewis et al., 2012). In a cross-sectional study of 450 female secondary school students in Ghana, the results determined that more than 60% of female high school students engaged in skin whitening activities (Osei et al., 2018).

In a qualitative study of the use of skin bleaching creams, 38% of 300 participants alluded to a desire for immediate enjoyment as the main reason that they decided to use

skin bleaching creams on their bodies (Kpanake et al., 2010, p. 358). Decisions to bleach the skin represent both individual and collective actions that can cut across different strata of society irrespective of economic status and class (Azibo, 2011). However, the level of education has not been thoroughly examined to determine if it affects individuals' choices to use skin bleaching creams or not.

A cross-sectional survey evaluating the prevalence of skin bleaching among secondary school students in the Republic of Benin (Atadokpédé et al., 2015) indicated that 36.6% of participants were engaging in voluntary depigmentation. Bleaching creams used by the study population also revealed that the creams contained about 42.2% of hydroquinone and 22.7% of corticosteroid.

The study indicated that discoloration (32.2%), stretch marks (20%), acne (18.5%), and fungal infections (13.1%) were side effects identified by the participants (Atadokpédé et al., 2015). South African leaders implemented a public policy to control dangerous chemicals used in formulating skin creams. In the 1980s, products with over 2% hydroquinone were considered illegal within the country. However, the skin bleaching industry continued to thrive on the streets, with minimal enforcement of this policy (Davids, 2016). South Africa is the sixth largest consumer of skin bleaching products in the world (Davids, 2016).

The literature reviewed for this study indicates that the motivation to use skin bleaching products is complex and multifaceted. I anticipated that the target population's motivations for this study, which consisted of female university students, might correlate

with the motivations identified in past literature. Through this study, I sought to fill a gap in the literature relating to issues surrounding skin bleaching. In a study of Tanzanian women who used skin bleaching cream, Lewis et al. (2011), found six motivation themes among participants:

- the desire to have soft skin, the desire to attract men,
- the desire to be beautiful,
- the need for acceptance by peers,
- the need for help to remove skin diseases, and
- a pattern of continuous use due to damaged skin due to prior bleaching cream usage and its effects.

### **Consequences of Skin Bleaching**

The side effects of skin bleaching with harmful chemicals can be serious. Ajose (2005) questioned why people continue to use skin bleaching products despite adverse effects. Within communities, skin bleaching trends have grave health and cultural implications (Azibo, 2011). The researcher emphasized that such side effects are due to exposure to chemicals such as mercury and hydroquinone. As noted by the WHO (2011), the effects of inorganic mercury in skin bleaching products include kidney damage, skin rashes or discoloration, and scarring and reduction in the skin's resistance to bacterial and fungal infections.

Ajose (2005) added that the use of chemicals to bleach the skin could lead to serious skin and health conditions that include skin cancer and tender skin that may be

difficult to stitch when required, such as following surgical procedures or accidents resulting in deep cuts (Alegbeleye, 2017). Other effects of the use of skin bleaching creams include slow healing from wounds, thinning of the skin, acne, osteoporosis, and muscle weakness. Street et al. (2014) documented the dangers inherent in using dangerous skin bleaching chemicals. Other side effects mentioned include hypertension, diabetes, and infertility (Ajose, 2005). Alegbeleye (2017) maintained that skin whitening chemicals cause irreversible skin damage, as well as renal and liver damage.

Atadokpédé et al. (2015) concluded that bleaching the skin is a public health concern. This conclusion has a public policy component. Research findings have indicated that skin bleaching practice leads to serious health-related issues among users. There are increasing risks of serious health-related problems associated with the use of skin cream agents, including skin damage, cancers, and liver and kidney failure (Lewis et al., 2012). The literature reviewed for this study indicated that the health consequences of skin bleaching creams might be categorized as premature aging, skin cancer, vulnerability to skin injuries, damage to internal organs, and mercury poisoning.

### **Theoretical Explanations/Framework of Skin Bleaching**

In a qualitative study, theory can explain the phenomenon under study and provide insight from various angles to assist in viewing the problem (Creswell, 2009). Several authors have expressed views on theories that apply to skin bleaching and other related conceptual frameworks. Three theoretical positions provide explanations for the subject matter of this study: the NPF and RCT.

### **Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)**

The NPF is relevant in the understanding of matters concerning the participants' experiences in the realm of existing policy contexts and how such policies affect skin bleaching behavior. In their work, Jones and McBeth (2010) introduced the NPF as a quantitative, structuralist, and positivist approach to the study of policy narratives. According to them, the NPF provides a methodological approach for using content analysis to identify the elements of policy narratives. Sabatier and Weible (2014) argued that NPF helps in identifying narratives in the policy-making process. They thus suggested that policy debates can lead to the development of policy contexts that can be useful in future policy formulation.

The NPF involves an assumption that the policy process can be affected by individual behavior. This can also be evident at the group level, depending on how individuals reason and assign meaning to their perceptions (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). Shanahan et al. (2017) focused on how to conduct an NPF study and addressed some underlying issues regarding the theory. Among these issues were the following: NPF assumptions must align with the research approach, NPF research questions may be policy centered or theory centered, and the NPF operates at three levels of analysis—micro, meso, and macro. The consistency of the NPF concept is critical to building knowledge about narratives, and NPF research design uses historical data from primary and secondary sources in experimental and nonexperimental designs for analysis.



The NPF applies to various cases using the qualitative study. In this regard, Shanahan et al. (2013) focused on NPF's academic implications for those who study public policy. Gray and Jones (2016) analyzed the narratives of a campaign finance regulatory reform in the US within a qualitative study. The analysis employed the NPF methodology. The authors' work shows that the framework is compatible with qualitative methods for overall development in research issues as it provides opportunities for a more detailed description and inductive forms of inquiry. Ravitch and Carl (2016) identified the conceptual framework role in qualitative research as the basis of understanding the overall structure of the study vis-à-vis the examination of the research goals.

Blair and McCormack (2016) utilized the NPF to identify news media narratives and characters (heroes, victims, and villains) on hydraulic fracturing in two local Colorado newspapers. The study demonstrated the potentials of NPF to evaluate media reporting of contentious issues. Hence, the framework might serve as the utilization tool to understand framing and narrative biases and evaluates other issues where narratives are important. Pierce et al. (2014) stated that the NPF fills an important niche in the body of policy process theories by explicitly and empirically examining the policy narratives used by actors in the policy process. In this sense, policy actors are actively involved with the politics or governance of a given topic or issue (Heikkila et al., 2014).

The literature could be applied here to provide insights into the existing policies on skin bleaching or other societal issues and how the actors' experiences must have

influenced their levels of implementation. The NPF will also assist in identifying the contents and form of the behavior under study to understand participants' belief systems and how they have influenced policies and regulations on dangerous skin creams. The framework will also provide insight into participants' understanding of existing policies regarding the use of skin bleaching creams and other behavioral outcomes. It could also provide a pathway to understanding the influence of public policies on various shades of society.

### **Rational Choice Theory (RCT)**

The psychological basis of the rational choice theory (RCT) makes it sufficient to explain the rationale for human behavior in the study. The theory focuses on why people choose to do what they want (Grüne-Yanoff, 2012). Ritzer and Smart (2001) identified rational choice theory as a good foundation in social psychology due to its ability to provide theoretic integration across the social science disciplines.

The theory is based on the assumption that all humans base their decisions on rational calculations, act with rationality when choosing, and aim to increase either pleasure or profit (Homans, 1961; Becker, 1976; Coleman, 1973 & 1990). The rational choice theory also stipulates that all complex social phenomena are driven by individual human actions (Green and Shapiro, 1996; Scott, 2000). Scott (2000) tried to separate the ideas of rational choice theory from other related frameworks such as the influential typology of action in Max Weber (1920) and Talcott Parsons (1937), and structures of reciprocity and social obligation in Malinowski (1922) and Mauss (1925). He argued that

what distinguishes rational choice theory from these other forms of theories is that it does not support the existence of any kind of action but concur that it may be purely rational and calculative.

Elster (1989) noted the essence of Rational Choice Theory and stated that human beings, most times, will take actions that they feel convinced will lead to the best outcome. Coleman (1990) combined principles of individual rational choice with a sociological conception of collective action and argued that rational choice is a key to the development of a revived sociology that might someday provide decision-makers with socially optimal institutional designs.

According to Adams and Sydie (2002), RCT adopts a different approach to the study of society by emphasizing individual action, choice, resources available to the actor, preferences, optimality, and rational decision-making. The authors further identified Rational Choice Theory (RCT) as evolving: one's current assets and capabilities, consequences of one's choices, and evaluation of uncertainty or probability of outcomes. Admitting that there is a multiplicity of RCT's variants, its devoted attention is devoted only to two of them, which are the 'individual and minimalist variants' of rational choice theory.

Sato (2013) argued that rational choice theory should explain actors' actions as well. He explained that the theory assumes two mechanisms: choice by actors and the macro–micro-macro transition. He also showed how rational choice theory successfully explains the problem of social order embodied in various fields. Ogu (2013) focused on

the application of rational choice theory outside the western milieu context and emphasized that social scientists could use it to understand human behavior.

Steele (2016) examined the results of a study that set out to ascertain the applicability of rational choice theory from offending to offenders' actual experiences. The study viewed the offender as an intelligent individual who weighs the potential costs and benefits of committing a crime. The findings suggested that rationality can be seen to vary both: within and between individuals offense types. This study provided an insight into how offenders' motivations can affect their ability to decide and understanding these motivations in the milieu of the offense.

The literature on the rational choice theory and its methods will help to explain human activities around skin bleaching and why people decide to engage in the behavior. This is relevant to the dissertation's scope because of the interest in knowing what motivates female university students who engage in skin bleaching. The RCT will help in understanding the motives and outcomes of the behavior under study.

### **Public Policy on Skin Bleaching**

The ease of access to dangerous chemicals for the preparation of skin bleaching creams was reported as a lapse in policy implementation and the lack of enforcement of rules and regulations (Mah'e, 2014). There seems to be no coordinated public policy, rules, and regulations regarding direct control of skin bleaching products in Nigeria. There is evidence of skin bleaching product sales by vendors through online and social media, including roadsides, sidewalks, over the counter at pharmaceutical stores with

loose oversight, and underground black markets. Hydroquinone is a form of chemicals found in skin bleaching creams, and the higher the percentage of the chemical in the creams, the higher the exposure of users to dangerous adverse effects (Adebajo, 2002).

Despite the serious health consequences of consistent usage of bleaching creams, it appears that the phenomenon did not attract the attention of regulators and policymakers in Nigeria. Although there were rules and regulations geared towards banning dangerous chemicals used in formulating skin creams, strict enforcement of these rules seems to be lacking in Nigeria. Although the agency responsible for the regulations of food and drugs in Nigeria (NAFDAC) was reported to have made and released a list of banned bleaching creams, the agency was reported to engage in intermittent raids of underground markets to impound fake and dangerous skin bleaching products that were not officially registered with the agency (Obinna, 2015).

Kalu (2013) supported the idea that specific rules and regulations on bleaching products in Nigeria are not well coordinated, considering the extent to which skin bleaching products are readily available and used by the people. This is evidenced by the sales of skin bleaching products by vendors in various locations such as roadside, saloon, supermarkets, and unregistered outlets without any expected labels and warnings or directions.

United Nations Environment Programme (2013) debunked the notion about lack of awareness by reiterating that the World Health Organization (WHO) many years back warned against the use of hydroquinone and mercury. The researchers at the UNEP

further emphasized that the products containing these dangerous chemicals have gradually found their way back on the shelves, mostly in African countries.

Documented evidence revealed that public policies and regulations exist worldwide to control the use of dangerous chemicals used in formulating skin creams. There has been a problem with the lack of enforcement and underground markets for these products, especially in Nigeria. South Africa banned the use of more than 2% of hydroquinone, but the products are available over the counter with more than the required regulated warning. The influx of people from countries such as Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo was reported to have created a growing market for these products, especially in South Africa (Davids et al. 2016).

Ghana took a giant step in recent times when it officially declared war against the multi-billion-dollar skin bleaching industry with strict legislation and enforcement through its food and drugs agency. The country banned the importation of products used in the preparation of skin creams, which contain hydroquinone (Osei et al. 2018).

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is the agency responsible for the formulation of public policy regarding the control of dangerous skin creams in Nigeria. The organization was set up in 1993 to accurately control the importation, advertisement, manufacture, distribution, sales, and use of cosmetics among its other responsibilities. There is no clear-cut understanding of the agency's roles in ensuring the protection of consumers of skin products. Public information from the agency indicates that the agency seems to assign more resources

towards the legalization of the business activities among enterprises willing to sell cosmetics more than it does with consumers' safety. Under the act setting up NAFDAC, the following were listed under its subsidiary legislation:

1. National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control Tariff Charges Regulations.
2. Drug Products Advertisement Regulations.
3. Prepackaged Food (Labelling) Regulations.
4. Bottled Water (Advertisement) Regulations.
5. Cosmetic Product (Prohibition of Bleaching Agents, etcetera) Regulations.
6. Food Products Registration Regulations.
7. Bottled Water (Labelling) Regulations.
8. Pesticide Registration Regulations.
9. Nonnutritive Sweeteners in Food Products Regulations.
10. Nonnutritive Sweeteners in Drug Products (Prohibition) Regulations.
11. Food Products (Advertisement) Regulations.
12. Food Grade (Table or Cooking) Salt Regulations.
13. Cosmetics and Medical Devices (Advertisement) Regulations.
14. Bottled Water Registration Regulations NAFDAC Act, 1993

(Source NAFDAC Act, 1993).

Tracking the activities of the agency relating to cosmetics regulations reflects that the agency's activities are focused on regulating stakeholders engaged in manufacturing,

importation, and corporate organization selling skin bleaching creams. The focus of the review is not an attempt to evaluate NAFDAC's statutory functions but to identify the agency's roles and the impact or effectiveness of existing public policies regulating access to skin cream. Whatever findings from the study may contribute to ensuring that the consumers are protected from dangerous skin cream products, understanding the level of awareness among female university students, and may assist policymakers in formulating public policies related to the use of dangerous cosmetics labeled as skin bleaching creams.

### **Empirical Studies on Skin Bleaching**

Authors have examined and reported on empirical studies of skin bleaching. Some of the works generally apply to reported health cases; others have focused on practices that are notable in specific geographical areas. Dadzie and Petit (2009) above, mentioned that skin bleaching is a global issue, and the practice cuts across countries and continents. Street et al. (2014), who reviewed different literature on the subject matter of skin bleaching, also took a global approach in their analysis. Their work concluded that skin bleaching products currently contain toxic concentrations of chemicals such as mercury and hydroquinone, which are known to cause damage to the body at the cellular level and injury to other internal organs, including fetal development.

While also taking a global perspective in her analysis, Blay (2011) stated that in its current manifestations, skin bleaching is practiced disproportionately within communities of color, in general. Moreover, the study also emphasized that the skin



bleaching phenomenon has long affected African communities, in particular, more than what is obtainable in other continents of the world.

Hunter (2011) showed that the use of skin-bleaching creams is on the rise throughout Africa and the African Diaspora and that cosmetic surgery has increased dramatically among people of color in wealthy countries. The author thus examined three competing discourses about skin bleaching, which are:

- the beauty discourse – based on the mass-marketing of cosmetic whitening products,
- the public health discourse – a blueprint for dissuading potential skin-bleachers by exposing health risks, and
- the cosmetic surgery discourse – created to market cosmetic procedures to the new and growing 'ethnic' market.

De-Souza (2008) observed that the concept of skin bleaching is common in many parts of Africa and that it was kindled in the continent four to five decades ago. This author analyzed the causes of skin bleaching in Africa to include memories of historical overtones of colonization, slavery, discrimination, mistreatment, color rating in social class against dark skin, and for better job opportunities, executive positions, and better chances in beauty pageants favoring those with less skin pigmentation. Westerhof (1997) maintained the same position by affirming the motivating factors for skin bleaching. Dadzie and Petit (2009) and Gwaravanda (2011) identified skin bleaching as a prevalent cultural practice and a normal part of life in some African countries. They indicated that

skin bleaching is associated with social privileges, marital prospects, attraction to the other sex, and a bandwagon effect among many to practice the use of skin toning products.

Among the various specific cases mentioned in Africa, many authors have admitted that Nigeria tops the chart at both the continental and global levels in terms of the use of skin bleaching products (Pitche, 2005; Fihlani, 2013; Julien, 2014). Fihlani (2013) captured the reports of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, which stated that Nigerians retain the highest users of skin bleaching products in the world. According to the report, about 77% of Nigerian women regularly use skin bleaching products, followed by Togo: 59%, South Africa: 35%, and Mali: 25% (Fihlani, 2013).

There are works whose attentions are also directed to the nature of skin bleaching attitude among some individuals in particular Nigerian communities. Adebajo (2002) found that about 77.3% of the 450 traders surveyed in Lagos admitted to using skin lightening creams without regard for the chemicals used in formulating the creams. In this regard, Durosaro, Ajiboye, and Oniye (2012) studied the perception of skin bleaching among secondary school female students in Ibadan metropolis. The study observed that significant numbers of adolescents and young persons are engaging in skin bleaching in that Nigerian city.

Literature also showed that even when the trend of practicing skin bleaching of various sorts is common among both men and women to engage in the skin lightening

practice, nevertheless, women generally have higher rates of practice than men (Rusmadi et al., 2015). Studies by Olumide et al. (2008), revealed that out of '450 Nigerians who confessed to the use of lightening creams, 73.3% were women and 27.6% were men.' This situation is similar to other parts of the world where skin bleaching is a notable practice (Alghamdi, 2010; Rusmadi et al., 2015). Regarding dominant age-range users of skin bleaching products, studies by Adebajo (2002) and Ravichandran (2013) confirmed that women in the age group of 20 to 30 years are more active in the use of skin lightening creams.

However, skin bleaching rates in Africa vary from city to city. This ranged from about 25% of adult women in Bamako, Mali being users to over 70% in Lagos, Nigeria as users of skin leaching products (Julien, 2014; de Souza, 2008; Pitche, 2005). Thus, aside from prime Nigeria's empirical example, many pieces of literature dwell on issues concerning the practice of skin bleaching in other notable places.

Alghamdi (2010), used the case of Mali to assess the use of topical bleaching agents among women in West Africa. This study observed that women, specifically about 45% of students, frequently experienced complications related to skin lightening agents. Mahe et al. (1993) also showed a high prevalence of the use of cosmetics and skin bleaching agents by women in Bamako, Mali, which has resulted in series of dramatic consequences among the users of such products.

Atadokpédé et al. (2015) conducted a cross-sectional survey to evaluate the prevalence of the phenomenon of skin bleaching by voluntary depigmentation in

secondary schools in the central Benin Republic. According to the voluntary study, depigmentation is motivated by a desire to lighten the skin or correct a defect of the skin. On the contrary, this practice in schools in Benin has led to real public health problems such as dermatological complications of discoloration, stretch marks, acne, and fungal infections. Although there are problems of voluntary depigmentation among high school students are real, the authors argued that about 98.7% of the users were unaware of the complications associated with these products until they started to engage them.

Concerning Togo, Kpanake (2010) examined the motives of why participants practiced skin bleaching regularly, mainly in the country. According to the study, these motives include: to appear important, to look attractive, because they enjoyed their light-colored skin, and because skin bleaching was fashionable to those practicing it. Similarly, Lewis et al. (2011) investigated the motivations for women's skin bleaching in Tanzania and contended that there are six motivators to why people, particularly women, bleach their skin. The authors reported that people might decide to:

- bleach their skin to remove skin imperfections such as rashes, dark spots, and pimples;
- make or maintain softer skin; to whiten their complexion so they can meet the westernized standard of beauty;
- correct uneven skin tone or excessive damages caused by skin bleaching;
- make themselves look more attractive to current or potential partners, and
- impress and meet their friends' approval. (p. 29)

Del Giudice and Yves (2002) showed the empirical examples of the widespread use of skin lightening creams in Senegal and its persistent negative health implications in the West Africa country. The authors agreed that African women are some of the biggest consumers of skin bleaching products. These products being used in Africa, they stated, include potentially harmful local concoctions made from household chemicals such as automotive battery acid, bleach, laundry detergent, toothpaste, and over-the-counter creams. The works noted that the usage of these products has the potential to put African women at higher risk for a variety of serious health outcomes.

Harada et al. (2001) explored the extensive use of skin-lightening soap produced from mercury chemicals in Kenya. The study found out that women in Kenya who used European-made skin bleaching soaps had high mercury levels. According to them, these mercury-oriented products are "accompanied by various symptoms, such as tremor, lassitude, vertigo, neurasthenia, and black and white blots, suggesting inorganic-mercury poisoning."

South Africa is also another notable country where the practice of skin bleaching is very high. Julien (2014) explained that colonialism and apartheid have been among factors influencing some black South Africans to engage in skin bleaching. The study maintained that the historical manifestation of white racial supremacy over the blacks under colonialism and the subsequent apartheid policy in the hierarchical warranted exploitation, domination, and unequal allotment of resources, have produced outcomes which are motivating many black persons to be continually changing their skin color to

the white pattern (Mire, 2001). Hence, the literature stated that the injustice experienced by black South Africans conditioned them to believe that only fair-skinned people were entitled to success and happiness.

In the same vein, there is an alarming rate of women in South Africa who engage in skin bleaching as – one in every three women in the country practices skin bleaching (Blay 2011; Julien, 2014). Shefer (2010) argued that, compared to the menfolk during the colonial and apartheid period, South African women were treated as inferior, not only because they were dark-skinned but also because of the notion that they are the weaker sex and probably with lower societal status. These factors have equally made women ignore all the health risks associated with skin bleaching and thereby continue to use potentially dangerous chemicals to lighten their skin (Julien, 2014).

Closely related to the above, Davids et al. (2016) focused on South Africa's example. The authors mentioned some names/slugs in which skin bleaching is being described in the various indigenous languages of South Africa and some other sub-Saharan Africa. These are '*ukutsheyisa*' (Xhosa word for 'to chase beauty'), '*ukucreamer*' (Zulu word for 'applying creams on the skin), and *mashubaba* (the popular derogatory local slang in Johannesburg to describe the concept of skin bleaching). Others local reference observed here include in Mali and Senegal, where the terms '*caco*' and '*xeesal*' is used to describe the practice of skin bleaching; and in Ghana, where the term '*nensoebenis*' describes ochronosis – the hyperpigmentation and damage to the skin as a result of chronic skin lightener use (Dadzie O, & Petit, 2009). Skin lightening agents in

common use in Africa, such as Mercurials, Hydroquinone, Corticosteroids, and Retinoids, were described with their empirical attendant consequences for their users.

Studies have also focused on the medical and health implications of skin bleaching in sub-Saharan Africa (Mah'e, 2014; Atakpedo et al. 2015). In this regard, Faye et al. (2005), looked into the impact of skin bleaching on its participants and noted that bleaching of skin could lead to several damages. These include skin atrophy, thinning, and breaking, giving rise to keloidal scarring, payroll dermatitis, contact allergic and irritant dermatitis, acneiform eruptions, striae, hypertrichosis, telangiectasias, and various forms of infections among others (de Souza, 2008).

Outside Africa, several studies have also focused on the empirical case of skin bleaching in some specific geographical areas in other continents. Among these are the works of Rusmadi et al. (2015), which carried out a preliminary study on the skin lightening practice and health symptoms among female students in Malaysia. The literature showed that there is a widespread practice of skin lightening in Malaysia, as the sale of skin lightening products increased 100% every year in the country since the year 2010. The study also noted that 61% of women in Malaysia believed they looked younger with a fair complexion, making the majority of them patronize skin lightening products.

On the American angle, Lindsey (2011) examined the use of skin bleaching products and processes among some African American women in the urban upper south in the United States during the early twentieth century. The author showed empirical evidence which revealed that the politics of appearance of black women in wanting to

look like the Whites in lifestyle and taste, as well the oppressing White cultural hegemony system as motivating factors for the thriving of skin bleaching among these Black women.

While Charles (2011), which centered on the Harlem District of New York, showed an example of the influence of advertisement images on skin bleaching products and marketing in the United States of America. According to the literature, the contents of the images are in a derogatory way, such that they devalued Black skin. For example, it observed that the contents of these images in advertisements recommended that lightening the skin would not only make the user White but would also make their skin healthy, soft and glowingly beautiful and that lightening the Black physicality is socially acceptable because White skin is superior and sought after ideal, unlike Black skin which is inferior. These images have motivated Black-skinned persons to tone their skin and have further driven the sale of skin bleaching products in Harlem.

Lastly, Hope (2011) explored the cultural debates on skin lighting or 'bleaching' in Jamaica through the lens of popular music, and in particular, dancehall music culture. The author draws his analysis on the lyrics and slang of dancehall artistes and delineates a path from Buju Banton's *Browning* (1990) to Vybz Kartel's *Cake Soap* (2010) in his attempts to flesh out the overlapping cultural debates that surround skin bleaching. He noted that the lyrics of such songs and other social influences are capable of promoting the culture of skin bleaching among many Jamaicans, in imitating the white-superiority craze. However, he argued that these hegemonic debates of white/brown supremacy



mainly serve to distract Jamaica's users of skin lightening cream from understanding what real oppression means. The authors also pointed out that there was a general lack of real strategies to facilitate social and cultural mobility among users.

Together with the viewpoints of other scholars, the literature examined showed the diverse issues addressed by studies through the empirical application of skin bleaching products and therapies in Nigeria, other African states, and outside the African continent.

### **Motivating Factors for Skin Bleaching**

Skin bleaching practice among female university students is an attitudinal nonbehavioral phenomenon occurring among complex-bothered students who seek to appeal for a change of status or looks. The issue of bleaching is not synonymous with students only but the larger society in which they exist. The trend cuts across defined borders and cultures. The phenomenon attracted the attention of many writers and researchers who postulated divergent views on why people of different ages, races, creeds and economic status indulge in skin bleaching.

Alghamdi (2010) submitted that people bleach their skin to establish a relationship, eradicate racial discrimination, deal with an inferiority complex, affect body modification, achieve emancipation from slavery, and promote prostitution and fashion. However, justifying the reason for bleaching from a relationship perspective, the author noted that men tend to show interest in light complexion ladies rather than the darker ones leading to the decision of many ladies to opt for skin bleaching. The above is in line

with other findings that men also engage in skin bleaching intending to become attractive to their female counterparts.

Skin bleaching can also be an aspect of art or body beautification. In this regard, skin bleaching is compared to fashion as an element of body beautification. Thus, Blay (2011) opined that bleaching is arguably within which the waves of consumerism are fervently endorsed as constituting a way of life. Hence, skin bleaching can be explained as part of the process of bodily commodification through adorning self with beauty-enhancing apparel or fashion.

About social discrimination and inferiority complex, Mahe et al. (2005) explained the desire for skin bleaching among women as a concept of aesthetic assimilation, which was likened to a situation where those engaged in bleaching do so to be more acceptable by others. The conclusion was supported by drawing copious instances from reasons African women bleached to be attractive or to change their identities.

Kpanake et al. (2010) stated that the reasons why people bleach their skin ranges from low self esteem, self-hate, peer group influence, and the quest for beauty. The author further reiterated that light skinned women are considered more attractive and are believed to be more successful career-wise and tend to marry early than their darker skin counterparts. Meduewesi (2017) maintained that people's attraction to the lighter skin seems to be a psychological injury from Africa's colonial past, pointing out that the notion of colonial impact should be in the past and that people should not hang on to the past.

Davids et al. (2016) contend that skin bleaching is perceived to correlate with increased privileges, higher social standing, better employment opportunities, and increased marital prospects. It also blamed the mass media, especially the use of influential marketing strategies from transnational cosmetics corporation using celebrities to motivate women to engage in skin bleaching.

Lewis et al. (2011) concluded that motivating factors for skin bleaching could be understood from six thematic motivations, namely:

- to remove pimples, rashes, acne, skin disease, the quest for soft skin,
- to be white, beautiful and more European looking,
- to remove the adverse effects of extended skin bleaching use on the body,
- to satisfy one's partner
- to attract partners, and
- to satisfy and impress peers. (p. 33)

Davids et al. (2016) argued that despite serious health consequences of sustained use of the bleaching creams, users do not seem to pay attention to the long-term side effects. Peltzer, Pengpid, and James (2016) investigated the prevalence of skin bleaching among university students from 26 countries. The research was unique in that it targeted students of both genders at the higher education level. More importantly, the study spans three continents, namely: Africa, Asia, and America. The quantitative study employs a total sample of 19,624 undergraduate students from 26 countries. The study concluded

that it is more likely that students between the ages of 20-21 years are more prone to using skin lightening products due to their sense of freedom.

Psychologists postulate that human's perceptions may be affected by the bottom up – top down theory. The theory suggests that an individual's overall satisfaction is a product of the individual's satisfaction with the benefits of the behavior (Chen et al., 2018). The notion that people are generally predisposed to certain behaviors by perception was the highlight of the study conducted about athletes' life satisfaction. The study took a cursory look at the Top-Down and Bottom-Up processes of life satisfaction of athletes. The study concluded that there is a notable "directionality between team satisfaction and life satisfaction." Although the study focused on the life satisfaction of athletes, the bottom-up and top-down theory could provide insight and understanding of the motivations for using skin bleaching creams among female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Nakazato, Schimmack, and Oishi (2011) found that top-down, bottom-down theory gave credence to understanding the effects that life circumstances may have a direct influence on wellbeing. The researchers concurred that there is a distinction between top-down and bottom-up models, the bottom-up does not have a causal effect, while the top-down may show a sublime causal effect. Biddle and Wang (2003) supported the idea that motivation and self -perception among young girls is average, especially if they include activities that enhance their physical self-worth, global self-esteem, and physical activity.

This study is not focused on assessing the perception but rather the motivation of female university students' decision to use bleaching cream. In the process of collecting data for the study, attention will be on those motivation variables that may have led the participants to engage in bleaching their skin. The bottom-up theory seems to provide a link between perception and behavior rather than the top-down theory.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review has considered several authors' positions on various topics and sub-topics related to skin bleaching. While some of the authors' perspectives are interrelated, some are contrasting in nature, some other findings and conclusions agreed. The subject matters discussed in this chapter are copiously identified as skin bleaching related issues. It includes the concept of skin bleaching, skin bleaching chemicals, consequences of skin bleaching, motivating factors for skin bleaching, public policy on skin bleaching, the theoretical explanations/frameworks of skin bleaching – Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), Rational Choice Theory (RCT), and the empirical studies on skin bleaching. An exploration of the psychology of perception and motivation was mentioned to provide a deeper understanding of perception as it may affect the motivation of young female university students.

The literature/texts reviewed were very relevant to this study as they provide versatile outlook and debates by which this research study will benefit from to a great extent. The literature reviewed to provide a synopsis of various analyses that discussed issues relating to skin bleaching in Nigeria, parts of Africa, and other parts of the world.

The majority of the authors pointed out that compared to the other parts of the world, the African continent is the most notable one, especially concerning the usage and impact of skin bleaching on a global scale. In the same vein, many scholars agreed that Nigeria had been the leading country concerning the population percentage that practiced skin bleaching. Although it is a common phenomenon, evidence in the literature supported that the rate of young women/ladies practicing skin bleaching – in its multiple facets – is more than men.

However, while taking advantage of the background environments created by the available literature, this study made an effort to fill in some of the identified gaps as far as skin bleaching is a concern in Nigeria. With particular reference to the Nigerian example, most of the available literature here discussed the overall issues concerning skin bleaching mainly from the women's participation in this act, at the country level, and with particular regards to Lagos and some other urbanized areas. Since the skin bleaching trend is more common among young girls/ladies/women, it is desirable to embark on detailed academic research in studying the culture of female university students in a specific geographical and organized setting. The goal of this study, among others, is to provide an insight into a specific population classification case study in the Ibadan metropolis of Nigeria.

There is the dearth of research in understanding the motivational behavior of the category of students who occupy the dominant age-range (20s-30s) of active skin bleaching product users. The current study in this direction is Durosaro et al. (2012),

which focused on skin bleaching perception at the secondary school level of students in the Ibadan metropolis of Nigeria. In this regard, there is a lack of literature or studies that seek to know how the trend of skin bleaching may have affected female university students in Nigeria – whose age range falls under the acclaimed active population of the skin bleaching phenomenon. Thus, the main gap which this research intends to complement in the existing literature.

In addition to the broad issues established by scholars, this research will be interested in studying the public policy initiatives towards skin bleaching in Nigeria to understand the impact and effectiveness on the identified demographic, as well as to make suggestions on the public policy areas that can further help to stem the tide of skin bleaching in Nigeria. This social construct is necessary since Nigeria is still known as the country with the highest rate of skin bleachers. The selected areas of focus and other emerging issues will guide the attention of this study in its desire to add to the existing literature on the topic of skin bleaching in Nigeria.

Chapter 3 will include detailed information and shed more light on how this study will be conducted, the data collection process and storage of information, the process of choosing participants for the study including the choice of site locations as well as how the information collected will be collated, categorized and analyzed.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 3, I describe the research methodology and design, including the methods used in collecting and analyzing the research data. The data collection process is detailed, and the instruments for data collection are clearly explained. Detailed procedures for data collection, data analysis, and verification of findings are documented in this chapter.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The qualitative method was adopted as the research methodology for this study. The case study approach was chosen as the most appropriate for the study. Qualitative research focuses on events and activities that have occurred, with resultant outcomes that can be related by those who have direct experience (Teherani et al., 2015). Although Ravitch and Carl (2016) described the qualitative research method as very complicated and subjective, it is strongly recommended as the method of choice when researchers seek to allow participants to provide meanings to their own experiences.

The qualitative method is most appropriate for gathering data from different sources to present a holistic view of a phenomenon in a social setting (Patton, 2015, p. 67). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study in the sense that skin bleaching has been identified as a social issue among various categories of Nigerians. It was also appropriate that public policy awareness of skin bleaching cream among female university students was investigated from a case study perspective. A case study is “an



exploration of a bounded system or cases over time to gather information” (Creswell, 2009, p. 61).

Case study research design is traditionally recommended as one of the best approaches to conduct research meant to explore and understand a phenomenon within a group or an organization (Schoch, 2016). Case study research derives its strength from a constructivist approach that allows people to derive meaning and learn from processes and outcomes (Schosh, 2016, p. 223). I used a collective case study approach to explore the awareness of female university students about existing public policies as they relate to skin bleaching creams.

This method was chosen as the most appropriate means to seek information in a learning environment about the motivation for skin bleaching cream use among female university students in the Ibadan metropolitan area. Ibadan is an ancient city with five institutions of higher learning. Students attending universities in the city come from cities and villages all over the country; there are also a few international students.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Researchers conducting qualitative studies must be cognizant of their role in the data collection process (Patton, 2015, p. 700). Patton argued that the credibility of a qualitative study depends largely on the ability to be aware of any predispositions or biases. I was expected to be part of the data collection process and therefore function as one of the data collection tools in the qualitative study. Depending on the level of involvement, I may have a significant impact on the outcome of a qualitative study.

I had some concern that my role as a male researcher interviewing respondents who were female could compromise the interview process and have a lasting impact on the outcome of the process. I used the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) as a mode of data collection to ameliorate any effect that my gender might have on the participants during the process. Participants for this study were drawn from universities in the Ibadan metropolitan area. In qualitative studies, there must be an awareness that fluid relationships may develop with respondents that could taint the quality and validity of the data collection process. An issue that is commonly encountered by qualitative researchers is the relational nature of the method. Personal interactions with participants that occur as researchers reel out probing questions may be unavoidable. My goal was to maintain professionalism and stick to the ethical standard expected of a doctoral-level student at every step of the study.

In a qualitative study, the chief investigator must demonstrate great awareness of the implications of proximity to participants. Therefore, I maintained a high degree of consciousness and paid close attention to the possibility of bias on my part. The intention was to exercise a high level of objectivity throughout the research process by implementing academic rigor and thoroughness when interacting with participants in this study. In qualitative research, interviewing is a sensitive process aimed at improving human conditions. Therefore, it should be devoid of stress, especially for the participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 90).

To meet ethical standards, a high level of discipline must be exhibited in the conduct of the research process (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). The primary interest when conducting research on human subjects should be to eliminate or reduce risks for participants (p. 267). In my role as a researcher, I was guided by the ethical standards as enforced by the Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions generated for this study were based on the literature review conducted for the study. The intention was to determine which questions might best reflect the interest of the study. I sought to ensure that the research questions guided my use of the data collection tools in such a way that the most active responses could be elicited from all participants. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stressed that researchers striving for cohesion in research study must select very good research questions.

When researchers set goals for a research study, these goals can be mapped in such a way that they bring forth connections between the ideas of interest. One of the pertinent questions that came to my mind was the following: What motivates about 70% of women in a country to engage in skin bleaching? This question was triggered by a WHO report, as stated by Fihlani (2013). Additional questions that came to mind were the following: Is skin bleaching a trend or a social behavior among female university students? How far is the behavior accepted as the norm within the community? Based on all of the above, the following research questions were developed for the study.

1. What motivates female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria to bleach their skin?
2. To what degree are female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria aware of policies related to skin bleaching product safety?

### **Methodology**

The case study method was applied in helping the participants to narrate their personal experiences. This design was useful in understanding participants' perspectives on their own experiences in relation to their motivation for using skin creams. The method focused on participants' awareness of public policy related to skin bleaching creams and how this might have shaped or impacted their behavior.

In this chapter, I provide a detailed profile of the participants, including the manner of recruitment, selection, and criteria for inclusion in the sample. In addition, the chapter presents ethical concerns relating to the study and various strategies for the protection of the data collected, including those related to participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

### **Setting and Sample**

The settings for the study were university campuses located in the ancient city of Ibadan, Oyo State. The sample population for the study consisted of 18 female students, which was achieved at the attainment of saturation. Participants selected for the study used or engaged in skin bleaching activities and indicated this either verbally or through a demographic survey. The individuals in the sample were enrolled as full-time, active

students at the University of Ibadan. Participants were selected randomly among those who met the criteria stipulated for the study.

### **Participant Selection and Logic**

Participants for this study were female university students located in the Ibadan metropolitan area. The decision to use the female gender as the unit of analysis to be studied aligned with literature review, which suggested that women are more likely to engage in skin bleaching than men. The location was specifically selected for the study due to the concentration of many higher learning institutions in the metropolitan area. Five higher education institutions are located in Ibadan, and efforts were made to select participants for the study in a purposeful random manner from any of these schools. There was the expectation that there might be some difficulties in recruiting volunteers for the study due to the cultural disposition of the dominant ethnic tribe (Yoruba) in southwestern Nigeria, the location of these institutions.

Participants were actively enrolled and registered to take academic courses in their institution. Each participant met participation criteria for the study. Relevant criteria used in selecting participants for the study indicated that participants needed to be adult female university students between the ages of 19 and 30 years. All participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation in the study and asked to sign an informed consent prior to being interviewed. Ratvitch and Carl (2016) recommended that researchers establish a clear understanding of the goals underlying their research

questions when using the purposeful sampling method for selection of participants in a qualitative study.

### **Instrumentation**

The primary instrument of data collection for the study was the personal interview. Patton (2015) recommended that a good interview should establish good communication flow between me and the participant (p. 467). A short demographic survey was administered to potential subjects for the purpose of selecting those who met the criteria for the study. The goal of this research inquiry was to understand the motivations responsible for participants' decision to engage in skin bleaching use and skin treatment. The instrumentation included seven researcher-developed open ended questions geared towards female students who were specifically selected based on their active enrollment in universities within the Ibadan metropolitan area.

The interview guide was developed to document responses from young Nigerian female students about their experience with the use of bleaching creams. I took notes about my observations and nonverbal cues exhibited by the participants during the interviews. All responses to behavioral questions on skin treatment, skin toning and awareness of public policy on skin bleaching creams were subjected to documentation and thematic analysis.

### **Procedure for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The researcher must plan and organize the process of recruiting participants for a study. Patton (2015) stated that participant recruitment must be done in a way that

ensures privacy and lack of bias. Recruitment was done methodically to ensure that only those subjects who met the criteria for the study were included in the participant pool. The decision to focus on female students for the study aligned with a United Nations report indicating that 70 % of Nigerian women are actively engaged in skin bleaching (Fihlani, 2013).

**Recruitment.** Participants selected for the study were enrolled as active full-time students at a university within the Ibadan metropolitan area and volunteered to participate in the study. A purposeful sampling method was used to identify participants who met all criteria for participation. All participants indicated verbally and by using a demographic survey that they had used skin bleaching cream within the 6 months preceding the study. The demographic survey was administered after recruitment and prior to the beginning of the interviews. The participant recruitment process included posting research flyers in strategic locations on campus, snowballing recruitment on campus, group activities and contacts, and use of social media apps such as WhatsApp, Messenger, and Instagram. I observed that all participants had lightened their skin using creams specifically made for that purpose before their inclusion in the participant pool.

**Data collection.** The data collection instrument for the study was a personal interview. I obtained data from female university students using semistructured personal interviews. Through the interviews, I sought background information on bleaching cream users and their awareness of public policies concerning dangerous cosmetic creams. I planned to use a CAPI approach to elicit data from participants who might not be willing

to complete a personal oral interview due to the sensitive nature of the topic. However, a CAPI approach was not necessary during the interviews. Two of the participants chose to bring a friend to the interview sessions due to the cultural implications of the topic.

The use of CAPI technology might have helped respondents in disclosing pertinent information that might otherwise have been difficult to share directly in the presence of a researcher, but the use of the technology was shelved for the study. The interviews focused on the participants' background with the intent to put the participants' experience in context. The interviews were conducted in a formal setting that was convenient for the respondents.

Qualitative interviews should be constructed in such a way that the research objectives can be realized and be meaningful, with identical context for all respondents (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The interview process served as an opportunity to build good rapport, outline the research process for participants, have participants sign the consent form, and gather relevant information about each individual's experience of the phenomenon under study.

The semistructured interviews consisted of seven questions (Appendix A) meant to elicit participants' understanding of public policies regarding skin bleaching. Using the interview questions, I sought detailed information on participants' perceptions of enforcement issues and policy development strategies, as well as any education that might have impacted their skin cream usage. Participants' responses may assist



institutions and other agencies in future public policy development and enforcement in Nigeria.

The interviews were conducted in locations carefully selected on the university campus. I maintained due diligence to ensure that the locations were suitable and approved by the participants. Efforts were made to make sure that the location was devoid of any distractions and ensured participants' privacy. Each interview session lasted between 15 minutes and 1 hour. Participants listened to the informed consent document as I read it out to them and signified that they agreed to participate in the process. All interviews for this study were audio recorded and kept in digital format. All of the information collected was transcribed, arranged, and marked with participants' assigned markers for coding analysis. Interviews with participants were tape recorded and transcribed in accordance with academic standards.

The data collected were analyzed using codes and nodes from the data collection format in accordance with NVivo 12 (Windows) format. This helped to facilitate the organization of the data in different categories of themes, trends and patterns as identified by participants in the study. NVivo 12 is the most current version of NVivo qualitative data analysis software and incorporates the capability to transcribe interviews uploaded directly into the software as audio. Additionally, notes were taken to document nonverbal communication and to provide details of the environment and the process in general.

## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

The credibility of a research study is usually viewed from the positivist point of view that recommends validity and reliability. However, qualitative research is viewed from different perspectives when it comes to validity and reliability measure. Modern researchers have found means of creating different standards for trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility applies to different standards a researcher applies to the process from the initial stage to the completion of the study (Patton, 2015). Qualitative studies are considered credible if it can be assessed through triangulation. This study was conducted using reliable source for data collection, verified purposeful sampling of participants, feedbacks on interview methods, conducting peer review of the process and reaffirming the level of saturation.

### **Transferability**

This study was aimed at meeting the level of relativity to existing studies in such a way that it may have bearings to other studies that were completed. It was my responsibilities to ensure that rich information was gathered about public policy awareness of skin bleaching creams among participants to the extent that the outcomes meet the criteria for transferability. Although, the study was meant to explore the awareness of female university students about public policies that affect skin cream, the goal was also to provide enough and reliable information about this phenomenon for comparison with other studies in the field of study. Creswell (2009) suggested the needs

for data in the qualitative study to be collected directly from the site where participants experienced the issues under study. Such a step could enhance transferability.

### **Dependability**

This refers to efforts to make sure that the research process is logical, traceable and documented (Patton, 2009). In this regard, I was committed to ensuring that the research process makes sense and can be linked to other research in its field. I kept all records and ensured that the information collected during this process are arranged in a sequential and logical manner. Dependability largely depicts that this study may be replicated by others using the same logical manner used by the researcher.

### **Confirmability**

It is of utmost importance that a qualitative research study can support information and the data presented in the study. Other people should be able to confirm the data and the sequence in which it is presented. The goal was making sure that I do not impose my agenda especially on the participants and the data collected. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the findings of a research study should be confirmable. The authors further recommended that research biases and prejudices should not find its way into the outcomes of the processes.

### **Intra- and Intercoder Reliability**

This refers to the reliability of the data collected during the coding process. Intra and intercoder reliability demand that the researcher tried to have two or more coding procedure. This is meant to ascertain that all coders involved in the coding of data have

access to the same text materials. The ability to ensure a standardized coding process will lead to avoidance of biased interpretation and associated risks of random error. In order to attain a high level of coding reliability, researchers must ensure that meaning and conclusion given to data are similar across coders and that this must be closely supervised (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015).

### **Protection of Participants' Rights/Ethical Issues**

Ethics is considered the cornerstone for all research as it pinpoints what is right or wrong during the research process. Stuart (2005) defined ethical codes as the basic statement of civic expectations that may be considered as ethical obligations expected from public servants and professionals. This research was conducted within the ethical norms taking into cognizance respect, dignity, value, knowledge and the quality of the research. Protection of the participants in this study was paramount and nonnegotiable. Walden University ensures that researchers meet the universal standard when it comes to the quality of work and protection of participants. The process was completed through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for research projects. The broad ethical aspect is discussed in the following steps:

#### **Formal Steps of Protection**

Participation by participants was voluntary and noncohesive. There was no anticipation of any serious risk to the participants in this study. Risks of any type were minimized and there was plan for adequate transparency if such ever occurs. At every point of the process, a concerted effort was made to protect the personal information of

all participants. Participants were informed of the right to withdraw participation at any point of the process if they feel like leaving. Prior information about this procedure were made available to all participants before signing the informed consent.

### **Institutional Permission**

A letter was written to all institutions selected for the research in Ibadan metropolis through the Dean, Student Affairs Unit. The content of the letter was seeking permission and approval to conduct the research on their campus(es). Approval in writing was received from only the University of Ibadan before steps were taken in recruiting participants for the study. Also, a request for students' participation in the research project was made through appropriate institutions' chain of command. Approval from the National Health Research Ethics Committee of Nigeria (NHREC) was not required for the study. National Health Research Ethics Commission is the responsible agency for ensuring ethical health research in Nigeria. From all indications, approval for academic related research work on university campuses are not so stringent if it complies with guidelines and protection of human subjects. Significant efforts were made with contacts in the institutions located in Ibadan and only the University of Ibadan gave provisional approval for the study.

### **Recruitment Material/Ethical Concerns**

The researcher employed the use of available media to reach out to potential participants while recruiting on the university campuses. This was done after acquiring official approval from relevant authorities. The medium used will include flyers, email,

social media platforms, personal contacts, and more. This process was done with attention paid to maintaining the privacy of potential participant and respecting their media space. Information about the research topic was not posted through any open medium for potential participants. Cooper (2013) indicated that human beings are prone to a personal feeling which could form the basis for their ethical standard and character. Therefore, I ensured that I conducted this research at the highest level of ethical standard I can maintain.

**Data collection/ethical concern.** Appropriate instructions were given to all participants about the availability of the CAPI technology. Instructions include how to attend to the instruments especially the computer-assisted personal interview CAPI device which many of them do not have familiarity. However, none of the participants opt to use the CAPI device. Participants were informed about their obligation to participate honestly and follow the instructions given to the best of their ability, perception, and knowledge of the phenomenon under study.

**Agreements.** Participants were asked to give consent and voluntary participation. Part of the agreement include a clause that stipulates that any of the participants was free to withdraw from the research if he/she ever feels threatened. Confidentiality was the cornerstone of the participants' information. In this regard, participants were assured that everything about the research were strictly confidential. Privacy of all participants was assured throughout the process of recruitment, participation, and completion of the study. All information gathered during the process was kept in a safe and secure location.

**Data treatment.** A qualitative study is unique in the way it treats data collected from participants. Collated data were categorized and subjected to Nvivo 12 software analysis. Emerging themes identification were done and coded appropriately. Data is very important to the project; therefore, all data collected were treated with utmost importance and carefully handled. Each response was coded based on major themes that emerged in response to the interview conducted. All the coded items were then transferred to a summary data sheet and each item recorded against each item assigned in the respective column. After that, appropriate thematic coding was utilized for the data analyses. Data was secured digitally, and the only access was through a password. The researcher is the only individual that has direct access to the data storage.

**Conflict of interest.** There was no anticipation of any specific conflict of interest on my part. I have no interest whatsoever in any organization that may be associated with cosmetics or creams. I explained to all participants my role as a student and as a researcher who was researching as part of the requirements for graduation. I ensured transparency in my interactions with all potential participants and reassured them that I have no bias in conducting the research. As an individual who cannot see in advance other conflicts that may arise, I was not aware of any power differential between the participants and me and I did not envisage any.

The issue of bias and subjectivity could lead to a potential conflict of interest. Therefore, it was imperative that I ensured ethical professionalism in the conduct of the research study. I addressed any form of subjectivity in my interaction with the

participants and avoided any gender counter transference since most of the participants were female students. I adhered strictly to the rules of engagement as stipulated in the Walden University's informed consent form. I did not provide anything of value to entice potential participants to attract participation. There was an incentive for participation which did not amount to anything of value, and this was limited to voluntary participation by the participants. Participants were informed that the potential benefits of the study will be for the overall good of the public.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the research design and methodology including the settings and participant samples. It highlights the reason for the selection of qualitative case study method to explore the personal experiences of the participants. The chapter also touched on the sampling methods, data collection processes, and data analysis employed for the study. The research questions were all restated, and the ethical issues that may arise during the process were highlighted including the site approval process.

The role of the researcher and other biases that may be a threat to the study were highlighted in this chapter. The issues of trustworthiness including credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were also explored to ensure a higher level of validity for the study. The efforts to attain a quality research and how this guided the whole research process . In chapter four, the process of qualitative data collection and the coding methods to be used will be highlighted as well as the data analysis. The



chapter describes the four main themes and sub-themes developed from the data. to provide answers to the research questions.

The results of this study will be useful for policymakers and higher institutions across the country about the effects of skin bleaching among female university students. It will also help to understand the level of public policy awareness among female university students. In Chapter five, I discuss how the data collected may help with the development of new policies by the agency responsible for skin bleaching creams control.

## Chapter 4: Results of the Study

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this case study was to collect qualitative data and provide an understanding of the deeper motivations underlying the decision to engage in skin bleaching, also known as skin whitening, among female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. In addition, I aimed to gather qualitative data on participants' awareness of existing public policy regarding skin cream usage. The skin bleaching phenomenon among female Nigerians has attracted the attention of various stakeholders, including researchers, the WHO, policymakers, journalists, local and international businesses, and the users of these products.

In this chapter, I document the interview setting, data collection process, demographic profiles of the participants, and data analysis procedures. Further, I state the evidence of trustworthiness and present the results of the interviews. The chapter highlights the quality of the study and my role as the researcher throughout the research process. This study was anchored using the case study method to enable respondents to tell their personal stories regarding the phenomenon.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions provided the foundation for the study:

1. What motivates female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria to bleach their skin?

2. To what degree are female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria aware of policies related to skin bleaching product safety?

The research questions led to the development of seven interview questions to elicit responses from the participants. There were several follow-up questions used intermittently to elicit rich data from the respondents. Unlike regular conversation, research interview tend to elicit detailed responses with depth from respondents (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Seven questions were developed to elicit responses from the participants for the purpose of answering the research questions:

1. What are your motivations for using bleaching cream on your skin?
2. How would you describe your experience so far using bleaching cream?
3. How do you pick the type of skin creams you use?
4. How do you seek advice and guidance regarding your choice of skin cream?
5. Can you share with me any negative consequences of using bleaching skin cream?
6. Are you aware of any government warnings or recommendations related to skin bleaching?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the use of skin bleaching creams?

The interviews employed the use of prompt questions in addition to the main questions to generate rich qualitative data from respondents with the aim of providing answers to the research questions.

### **Research Setting**

The purposeful sample for the study was between 10-18 female students who met the set criteria for participation. The participants indicated the use of skin bleaching cream to meet the criteria for participation. The interviews took place on the University of Ibadan campus, where all of the respondents were full-time students. The university approved the study through its internal institutional review board, served as the primary site for the interview process, and assisted in arranging accommodation. Interviews were conducted in one of the administrative offices provided by the university. During the interviews, the participants were informed of my role as the researcher. Once the consent forms were signed, the interviews commenced. At the end of the interview process, 18 respondents had completed interview sessions. However, 15 of the interviews conducted met the standards for the rich data needed for the study. Three of the interviews were excluded from the data set due to lack of clarity; these participants' voices were muffled on the recordings. The issues were discovered during the transcription of the data.

### **Demographics**

The specifics of the research design focused on female university students in the Western region of Nigeria. The University of Ibadan, Oyo State served as the primary site

for data collection. Respondents were classified based on the following categories: year of study at the institution, marital status, age range, and course of study.

Table 1 provides detailed characteristics of the 15 respondents whose data were included in the study. The gender of the participants was not a factor in the study because all of the respondents were female university students. The study purposely targeted female students at the university level because WHO reported that about 77 per-cent of Nigerian women are believed to engage in skin bleaching behavior (Fihlani, 2003).

Table 1

*Respondents' Demographic Information*

Respondent	Age range	Marital status	Course of study	Year of study
P01	25-30	M	Guidance & counseling	300
P02	21-24	S	Economics education	400
P03	21-24	S	Archaeology	400
P04	21-24	S	Guidance & counseling	300
P05	21-24	S	Educational management	300
P06	21-24	S	Educational management	300
P07	21-24	S	Human kinetics & health education	400
P08	21-24	S	Adult education	400
P09	25-30	S	Health education	300
P10	21-24	M	Guidance & counseling	300
P11	21-24	S	Sociology	400
P12	21-24	S	Library archival & information studies	400
P13	19-20	S	Special education	400
P14	19-20	S	Educational management	400
P15	21-24	S	Guidance & counseling	400

*Note. Year of study between year 1 to 4 is the same as 100 level to 400 level.*

Table 2 indicates the interview process for all respondents. Interviews were conducted between September 3 and September 5, 2019. A total of 18 individuals responded during participant recruitment. Three recorded interviews were not clearly

captured due to problems with recording technology and respondents' inability to speak clearly. These issues with the recordings were only discovered at the transcription stage. The quality of data from the interviews did not meet the criteria for this qualitative study and were subsequently discarded. All interviews took place at the University of Ibadan for all respondents.

Table 2

*Interview Process Details*

Participant	Date of interview	Time of interview	Location of interview	Length of interview (min:sec)
P01	09/04/2019	3:25pm	UI	12:49
P02	09/04/2019	10:00am	UI	17:56
P03	09/03/2019	2:10pm	UI	11:5
P04	09/04/2019	2:30pm	UI	14:39
P05	09/04/2019	1:24pm	UI	12:06
P06	09/04/2019	12:55pm	UI	13:53
P07	09/05/2019	2:05pm	UI	17:00
P08	09/05/2019	10:46am	UI	19:06
P09	09/04/2019	12:15pm	UI	22:44
P10	09/05/2019	11:45am	UI	20:43
P11	09/03/2019	10:09am	UI	15:53
P12	09/03/2019	11:22am	UI	24:02
P13	09/05/2019	12:20pm	UI	11:00
P14	09/04/2019	3:50pm	UI	10:00
P15	09/05/2019	1:35pm	UI	15:42

Table 2 reflects details of the interview process per each participant. The interviews were conducted over 3 days at the same location on the university campus. The volunteers were placed on a schedule after the initial contact to streamline contact and to ensure confidentiality of the process. Interviews were conducted for varied lengths

of time due to different responses to the questions by the respondents. The average interview length was 12 minutes.

### **Data Collection**

Eighteen interviews were conducted on the campus of the University of Ibadan. The interview sessions took place in one of the administrative offices assigned for the study by the institution's research review board. The data collection process was strictly adhered to as described in Chapter 3 and per the IRB-approved study proposal. There was no significant deviation from the proposed study that required an additional IRB review.

There was a slight deviation during the data collection process from the proposed data gathering method. I employed the purposeful sampling method at the start of the data collection process. Three respondents who freely contacted me were interviewed. The interviewed respondents decided to contact potential respondents who they knew must have used skin bleaching cream. The snowball method helped a great deal in bringing in additional participants who met the criteria for the study.

The initial goal for the proposed research was to recruit 15 participants. The number of participants rose to 18 as a result of the snowballing effect. In keeping with IRB guidelines, each participant's consent was received before the interview session. Once the participants consented to participate in the study, the demographic survey was completed before the commencement of the interview sessions. Scheduling the volunteers for the interviews was easy due to the appointment sign-up opportunity

afforded to volunteers. Appointments for interviews were agreed upon between me and the volunteers.

I obtained informed consent from the respondents before conducting the semistructured interviews using the interview guide. The interview guide served as the primary data collection tool for the study. As the researcher, I had sole responsibility for developing all of the questions used for the interviews. The interview session with each respondent lasted an average of about 12 minutes. This period included review of the consent form and the interview protocol with the respondent. There were two interviews in which the respondent insisted on having an additional person in the room with her. These requests were granted to provide a comfortable environment for the respondents.

Two separate recording devices were employed during each interview session. Electronic devices were used as the means of recording each interview. The use of electronic devices was to ensure that the information provided by respondents was captured. I also took notes during each interview to record other information about each respondent. In this way, rich qualitative data from the respondents' experience was available for the study. I purchased a digital voice recorder, but I could not use the device for the interviews. The digital recorder malfunctioned before the start of the first interview. I resorted to using a voice recording app on my cell phone to complete all recordings. I also kept another cell phone as a backup device for recording during all interviews.



I ensured that the data collected were protected per the approved study proposal. After conducting the interviews with the participants, I implemented physical and electronic measures for data storage and security. The data were immediately forwarded through email and placed in password-controlled cloud storage. Under institutional policy and guidelines, the stored data for the study will remain secured and maintained for 5 years as required by the Walden IRB.

The recorded interviews were all transcribed by a third party who signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure that the personal information of all respondents would be anonymous and confidential from the public. The audio recordings from the interviews ensured that rich data were preserved. All interview transcripts were read through to ensure accuracy. I sent all study participants the transcribed data from their respective interviews to review for accuracy. However, none of the respondents replied to the request to review these data.

Each respondent received a gift for her participation. All respondents received a major carrier call card credit worth about \$5 at the end of the interview session. The card gift seemed to help a great deal to bring in additional volunteers using the snowballing method. During the data collection process, there were no unusual occurrences, except for the two participants who specifically requested to have their friends who recruited them be part of their interview sessions. One of the participants cited religion as the basis for her decision; the other just stated that she wanted to feel comfortable during the

interview session. None of the study participants expressed significant apprehension, and I conducted all interview sessions in a respectful manner.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with an appropriate coding strategy (Adu, 2019). The data consisted of verbatim transcriptions that were completed by a third-party transcriber. I ensured that the transcriber signed a statement of confidentiality before carrying out the transcription of the data. I carried out the cleanup of the data, and in the process, I discovered the three interviews that were not suitable for the study. I could not use the qualitative data analysis (QDA) software for transcription due to the strong accent of the respondents. Efforts were made to use an online-based transcription tool to transcribe the data at [www.rev.com](http://www.rev.com), but it was not successful.

Once the data were ready for coding, I created four different nodes/categories on the NVivo 12 Pro version of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDA) software (QSR International, 2018). CAQDA software offers an effective way to store, categorize, organize, and analyze data. The characteristics of the respondents were input into the QDA software, which helped in providing a pathway for my choice of appropriate coding strategies. The use of a third-party transcriber helped a great deal, affording me a firsthand look at the raw data before the cleanup exercise. The transcripts were then condensed into nodes and themes. I used the descriptive focused coding strategy, which was adjudged as one of the best for analyzing the case study research

approach (Adu, p. 91). The approach is aligned with the aim of identifying or describing specific behaviors, experiences, or events as described by respondents.

Coding is the process of making sense of the enormous data gathered from respondents. It provides a means of distilling and categorizing the data into analytical relevance that can be applied while explaining the research questions. The process of descriptive coding also involves identifying emerging themes and patterns in responses to understand what motivates female university students to engage in skin bleaching as well as their degree of awareness regarding public policy about skin creams.

The process of coding and identifying emerging themes and patterns began in earnest as soon as the data cleanup was completed. I used the opportunity to familiarize myself with the content of the transcribed materials. The most frequently adopted form of analysis in qualitative studies breaks data down into manageable comprehension with codes so that they can be grouped for the purpose of analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

The main strategy was to ensure the trustworthiness of this study as highlighted in Chapter 3. The goal of achieving trustworthiness for this study was critical during each stage of the data collection process. The following steps were taken to ensure that the study met the criteria set out in the earlier chapter.

### **Credibility**

The credibility of a research study refers to the internal validity applied to ensure that it aligns with the research design, data collection, and instrumentation. A qualitative

study should be conducted to ensure credibility whereby the data collection should be free of encumbrance and gaps. The respondents interviewed must be able to relate their explicit experience of the phenomenon under study in such a manner that it is comparable to other studies in the field (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I ensured that the study's credibility was maintained by making sure that only those volunteers who met the criteria for the study were included in the pool of respondents interviewed. I made sure that those who were interviewed for the study were recruited through the purposeful sampling method. The snowballing recruitment method was also applied because it became clear that potential volunteers for the study were not too eager to make the phone call and schedule an appointment for interview. The snowball recruitment method provides two layers of validation for each volunteer interviewed. This way, they met the study criteria stipulating that respondents must have used or currently be using skin bleaching cream. The recruiter and I ensured that the respondent indicated the use of skin bleaching cream. For about 80 % of the respondents interviewed, it was confirmable that they used bleaching cream. Thus, only those who met the criteria for the study were interviewed, thereby ensuring the study's credibility.

### **Transferability**

Transferability of a study measures the applicability of the research to the larger body of knowledge in the field of study and the ability to maintain the integrity of the study-specific data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Even though this study was confined to female university students in a specific higher institution in one of the states in Nigeria,

but students in the university were admitted from different regions of the country. The university that serves as the study site participates in the Federal Government's federal character policy which stipulates that students in all federal institutions must be admitted from different parts of the country in certain proportion. For this reason, this study meets the transferability requirement as the findings can apply to other research of the same phenomenon in other universities in Nigeria.

One of the factors to achieve transferability is the ability to provide detailed account of the research methodology, how data collection instrumentation was applied, and the ability to ensure the research procedures can easily be replicated for future studies. This was exactly the step taken and thus it helps to achieve the transferability of this study. The study results are expected to assist institutions and other agencies in future public policy development and enforcement in Nigeria.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable and documented (Patton, 2009). In this regard, I strived to make sure that the research process made sense and can be linked to similar research in its field. I kept all records and ensure that the information collected during this process were arranged in a sequential and logical manner. Dependability largely depicts that this study may be replicated by others using the same logical manner used by the researcher. Patton (2015) stated that participants' recruitment must be done to ensure privacy and conducted in an unbiased manner. This was achieved for the study.

### **Confirmability**

To ensure the study's confirmability, it is of utmost importance that the study can support information and the data presented in the study. Other researchers should be able to confirm the data and the logical sequence in which the data and results were presented. The goal I set out to achieve was to ensure that I do not impose my agenda especially on the participants and the data collected. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the findings of a research study should be confirmable. The authors further recommended that research biases and prejudices should not find its way into the outcomes of the processes.

I reflected on my personal biases, worldview of the phenomenon and background, and worked on making sure that I suppressed them for the purpose of the interview. By paying attention to my worldview and biases about skin bleaching, I conducted interviews with a nonbiased perspective to ensure objectivity. This way, I was able to explore the lived experiences of the respondents. In addition to the above, I displayed supportive, understanding perspective and nonjudgmental attitude towards the respondents. As a male researcher interviewing all female respondents, I had to make sure that the environment was not intimidating for the respondents. I also employed my counseling skills to ensure that respondents felt comfortable to discuss their lived experiences.

## Study Results

The purpose of this interview-driven qualitative study was to explore the motivations of female university students in using skin bleaching creams. The study also seeks to understand the degree of awareness of public policy regarding skin bleaching cream. Students at the university level are expected to demonstrate level of understanding of the phenomenon under study when compared with other research studies conducted that focused on motivations among secondary school students and market women.

The interview conducted was extensive and the study participants provided their lived experiences from their personal perspectives. I explored the respondents' shared experiences to identify similarity in their understanding the motivations to engage in the skin bleaching behavior. The interview to understand the degree to which the female university students were awareness of the public policies that guide the skin cream.

This study was guided by two main research questions:

1. What motivates female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State to bleach their skin?
2. To what degree are female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria aware of policies related to skin bleaching product safety?

The identified motivations of what propels female university students will provide additional understanding of the remote reason the behavior has become so trendy in the community. The trendy behavior among Nigerians has reached an alarming stage, and

there is need to know to what degree female university students are aware of the public policies put in place to guide the use of skin bleaching cream.

I conducted eighteen semistructured interviews to collect the data for this study. Three of the interviews were not used for the study due to the poor quality of the recordings. The seven interview questions were also supported by follow-up questions to elicit rich data from all the respondents. The questions were carefully developed to ensure that the responses can provide answers to the research questions. A synopsis of responses from the respondents is provided below. A more detailed analysis of the themes, consisting of participant quotes, is presented later in this chapter.

Data generated from the 15 interviews adopted for the study were extensive. The data generated was secured and transcribed by a third party who signed a confidentiality agreement. The data were uploaded into the NVivo 12 Pro version of CAQDA. Due to the enormous amount of data generated from all the interviews, it was not ideal to use only manual coding to develop nodes/themes for the study. I used the Nvivo 12 Pro to generate word frequency from the data collected. The data generated and its output is presented in Figure 1 below.





### **Theme 1: Motivations for Using Skin Bleaching Creams**

**Perceived attraction for fair skin.** Some people prefer to completely bleach the whole body parts, not exempting any region. One may adduce the reason as being an attempt to attract public and probably to attain a balance body colour. People not only gained friends through bleaching but they equally attract attention and popularity. It is apparent that many individuals think that bleaching helps them to gain adequate attention at social services. By attending and making contacts at large events, where social hierarchies are created and maintained, women (especially) who bleach their skins gain sense of social prestige (Andrew, 2007). In his own view, Akerele (2006) believe that reasons why people bleach their skin could be to establish relationship, eradicate racial discrimination, deal with inferiority complex, effect body modification, achieve emancipation from slavery, and promote prostitution and fashion.

From the relationship perspective, men tend to show interest in light complexion ladies. Because of the imminent need for young women to get attached to a man (for the purpose of marriage) the former employs all possible bait, which includes skin bleaching, in order to attract their target (men). Nevertheless, married women equally engage in skin bleaching behavior.

The perceived attraction from fair skinned ladies seemed to be a recurrent theme among the study participants. Many expressed their opinion that fair skinned persons often received more attention from significant others (especially from the opposite sex). People not only gained friends through skin bleaching, but they equally attract attention

and popularity. Based on the study results, it is apparent that many individuals think that bleaching helps them to gain adequate attention. From the relationship perspective, men tend to show interest in light complexion ladies. Because of the imminent need for young women to get attached to a man (for the purpose of marriage) the former employs all possible bait, which includes skin bleaching, in order to attract their target (men). Some selected verbatim statements were captured below:

Literally most people around us, um, they really don't like dark skin like that.

They would even tell you, they prefer ladies that has light skin. And it has always been a thing that maybe when you are growing, and you feel your complexion is already getting dark.

P12/21-24/Single/LARIS/400L

In Nigeria, these days, when you are light skinned, it will attract people. You know, the first sight will look flashy and you would have called attention before other conversations can follow.

P03/21-24/Single/Archaeology/400L

I started becoming flashy, and finer. People started acknowledging my skin color.

P04/21-24/Single/G&C/300L

I mixed with guys that do not notice dark skinned girls, leaving me with little or no option than to change my complexion in order to fit into the new click.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

**Medical value/removal of spots.** As highlighted in the previous theme, skin bleaching is done to promote one's beauty and attraction. This is an offshoot to the use of bleaching cream to remove spots and treat/preventive other skin ailments, as highlighted in this study. In pursuit of a radiant skin, some students attested to the medical value of skin bleaching as they reported that they often bleach because they want to remove facial blemishes to appear more beautiful. Some skin care products are also purported to have some medicinal value for some skin diseases, as well as some antiviral components. This perceived medicinal value often forms a justification for continued use of skin bleaching creams among adolescents. Corroborating the results obtained in this study, Nigerian students have been found to justify their use of bleaching creams as a skin toning effort in order to reduce pimples, eczema, skin spots, scars and generally have a perfect complexion (Ajose, 2005). The ingredients contained within bleaching agents that are not medically prescribed, however, are not necessarily monitored by regulating bodies:

My motivation is that, I had skin disease and spots all over my legs, so, I made enquiries on what I can use, and then I was told that some bleaching creams could remove the spots.

P05/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

I was misled that if I should use the bleaching cream, it will not only clear the spots on my legs but have antiviral property to clear chickenpox.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

I tend to have black spots. So at some points I was not comfortable with all the black spots I have on my leg and somebody told me that I could use a cream that would bleach off the black spots and it would become normal with the normal skin.

P15/21-24/Single/G&C/400

**Peer influence.** Peer pressure and conformity has been said to be one of the main factors that motivate students to lighten their skin through bleaching, as captured in the thematic expressions obtained in this study. Peer pressure is an indirect or direct encouragement from one's own age group (for example, friends, siblings.) to engage in activities that they may or may not want to engage in. Rational choice theory explains this phenomenon by the concept of reason and motivation. The concept explains that not every motivating reason might be deemed appropriate (Dietrich and List, 2013). However, people tend to want to feel accepted by their peers and the environment; they want to belong. In so doing, they engage in activities that their peers engage in just to gain that acceptance. Moreover, students spend more than half of their time in school by the company of their peers, which concludes that peer pressure can significantly influence the activities of a young adult. As highlighted by verbatim statements in this study, peer influence in motivating skin bleaching may be direct or indirect. Direct pressures arise when peers directly encourage their friends to engage in skin bleaching while indirect pressures arise when light skinned peers are admired from afar by their friends who then engage in skin-lightening activities:

Whenever I see one of my colleagues that they are fairer than me I was like whoa, so, I went to the supermarket to get the cream on my own.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

I am aware of just bleaching creams. But when I see a friend that look fresh and me looking stressful, I decided to ask my friends the types of cream that make them look fresh. After telling me the product, I will just go to the market to purchase them. And since then, those creams have been enhancing my skin color.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

I ask people around about the cream they use. Especially if their skin color is attractive to me. For now, I don't know if you are asking me about the previous experience. Previously, I only look out for hydroquinone and mercury in creams.

P08/21-24/Single/Adult Education/400L

Peer pressure nowadays is high. I could remember then when I wanted to get my, they called it organic products. The time I went for it, I spent N12,000. The reason I went for it then was because, a friend told me about it.

P15/21-24/Single/G&C/400L

**Influence from family member.** The family as the first unit of socialization is also bound to play an important role in the initial development and behavioral predispositions of children and wards within the family. The influence of parental role or sibling modelling can thus come into play in the inculcation of habits such as skin bleaching practices. Some of the study participants claimed that their skin bleaching

practices were borne out of familial relationships by way of admiration or advice. For instance, it is highly likely that a mother whose beauty regimen includes skin bleaching practices will be admired by her daughters who are also likely to pick up such beauty habits in later years.

A relative of my mine came and introduced the cream to me after seeing my skin.

P10/21-24/Married/G&C/300L

My twin brother came back from school. He was looking all fresh. Though a dark-skinned person but suddenly became lighter and I liked it on him.

Although, I was a dark-skinned girl but I was really looking darker due to the stress I went through on that day. Therefore, I took his cream and started using it. Under two weeks, I can vividly see my skin color changing and brightening but I liked it.

P13/19-20/Single/Special Edu/400L

**Influence of advertisements.** Advertisements of skincare products also serve as skin bleaching motivations among some youths. Advertisers communicate the message that a light skin signifies beauty. As such, skin-lightening products present a means to attain that beauty. With the proliferation of ‘the Internet of things’ within the present-day Africa, skin-lightening products are strategically advertised everywhere, including on local radio and television stations as well as on huge billboards throughout urban areas and major roads. The adverts generally depict a slightly clad (light-skinned) female,

positioned close to a series of products with captions that generally indicate that ‘nice’ or ‘adorable’ skin is obtained by these products.

Even when I got to the supermarket, there was a picture on the carton of the cream and those things used to deceive people. Common captions that follow those pictures will make you believe that you will look like the person in the picture if you use the cream just within seven days.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

**Customer/over-the-counter recommendations.** It is not uncommon for a customer to make enquiries in shops and stores from other customers or salespersons about the quality of skin cream products on sale. This was the case of some of the study participants who often depended on the recommendations they got from other customers or over the counter in the selection and purchase of skin bleaching creams. The validity of these recommendations is often based on the assumption that such customers and salespersons would have more experience and knowledge about the product by virtue of previous usage or their contact with multiple users, and market trends. Some of their verbatim statements are captured below:

For the third one, I went to the shop myself and explain to the seller that I want a bleaching cream that could remove spots from my legs.

P05/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L



I am a novice to bleaching creams. But when you get to the market, you walk up to the cosmetic shops. If you tell the seller that you need a cream that will bleach fast, they will give you the one that everyone could depict from their names.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

So, whenever I want to get my cream, I go to shops that I know sells qualities and I talk to someone, may be dermatologist, and they advise me appropriately. So, I don't rely on friends.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

And sometimes, you can meet customers at the stores sharing his or her testimony. Those customers can recommend base on their experiences. Most times, if you don't have any knowledge, they will enlighten you and tell you what to use.

P03/21-24/Single/Archaeology/400L

**Teenage impulse & curiosity.** Teenage impulse, curiosity and exuberance are recurring features during the periods of adolescence and youth. During developmental milestones, adolescents and young adults are open to exploratory and adventurous behaviors, sometimes instinctual, which drives them to trying out new things just for the fun of it. Concerning skin bleaching, some of the participants interviewed in this study could not really pinpoint a specific factor that motivated them to start bleaching the skin other than the impulse just to try it. The rewards (or not) derived from such exploratory episodes often determine how enduring those behaviors are in the long run. For instance,

one of the participant's use of skin bleaching creams was reinforced by the positive comments and compliments that she received upon her curious use of skin lightening creams. In her own words, she said:

The first motivation was, I was tired of using the cream my mum always got for me. I wanted to try something different. And when I started, I noticed that I was getting fairer. It was really nice that I even liked it. People comment about my complexion.

P11/21-24/Single/Sociology/400L

**Racial discrimination and social modeling.** Racial discrimination is a contributing factor for others who decided to engage in skin bleaching behavior. Those who felt convinced that they were discriminated against resorted to skin bleaching behavior with the aim of alleviating the color stigma. Racial discrimination may be sighted as one of the reasons responsible for skin bleaching among African descents of the slave trade. Discrimination among races exists in different forms. Azibo (2011) opined that skin color is an important part of the dialogue on racial discrimination based on skin color. Therefore, certain people opted to bleach their skins in order to be 'acceptable'. In this study, the issue of racial discrimination as a motivation towards skin bleaching was highlighted in a participant's narration of her teacher's experience.

My teacher said he had to change his skin color because of the way they were treating the blacks in America then.

P11/21-24/Single/Sociology/400L

Inferiority complex may compel individuals with darker skin to bleach their inherited dark color. Adeleye (2007) inferred that “black” has always been associated with inefficiency, counterfeit, adulteration, second class, low quality and evil. To compensate for what they perceived to be deformities and to compete favorably with their light skin counterparts, those with darker skin color bleach their skins. They believe this practice would enhance their smooth integration into the generally acceptable global society. This highlights issues of social modelling whereby black skinned persons see light skinned persons as models to emulate. This theme was also emergent in this study as participants asserted that they often admired light skinned models on television and other social media, which often led them to try and lighten their skin through bleaching. One of the participants verbally expressed that:

I was dark and wanted my face to be clearer. I watch beautiful ladies online and think of what to do. I wanted my thigh to be light too and that is why I used the creams. That is one of the reasons I go for it.

P13/19-20/Single/Special Edu/400L

**Prostitution.** Prostitution is another significant factor which could be responsible for skin bleaching behavior. In his own view, Akerele (2006) believes that the reasons why people bleach their skin could be establish relationship, promote prostitution, and fashion. This was reflected in the outcomes of this study, albeit only one participant expressed this. Skin bleaching is a major strategy often employed by sex workers for the purpose of making their bodies attractive to the target individuals. Skin bleaching makes

such sex workers appear “attractive” to the opposite sex who were willing to engage them. Campus prostitution is now a common trend in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are not immune to this sordid trade. Verbatim statements connecting prostitution with skin bleaching are highlighted below:

And most people when they want to go into prostitution work, the first thing that comes to their mind is to bleach. That once they bleach, they are good to go because it's like an attention thing.

P05/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

## **Theme 2: Public Policy Awareness**

**Lack of awareness.** It was evident from responses obtained during the interview sessions that most of the participants had little or no awareness of public policy put in place to regulate the production, distribution, and sales of skin bleaching creams in Nigeria. While there exists a ban in most African countries including Nigeria on the use of specific bleaching products, many people are unaware of such policies. This is due to the continuous investment in the skin cream market by several petty traders. The rate at which billboards, beauty shops and the media are openly advertising their merchandise without fear of regulatory authorities is unparalleled. With the Nigerian government focusing on addressing many social vices in the society such as drug addiction, drunk-driving, reproductive health issues and other social vices, skin bleaching cream regulatory effort has become a relegated social vice. The nature of the skin cream industry is such that its production can take place virtually anywhere. Production of skin

cream in makeshift labs anywhere makes it an enormous challenge for regulatory bodies. Moreover, since most of unregulated products are home-made, concocted with no supervision, and subjectively labelled, it becomes difficult to identify harmful creams from harmless creams by both users and regulators.

Not really. I am not sure about it. Like, even if I am sure, I don't think I can categorically talk about it, because it is not obvious.

P03/21-24/Single/Archaeology/400L

I am not aware of any government policy.

P13/19-20/Single/Special Edu/400L

No, I don't even think there is any government warning. No warning. I don't think so in Nigeria. I don't know.

P15/21-24/Single/G&C/400

**Awareness via nongovernmental sources.** Few participants expressed that they come across content from nongovernment sources which castigated or admonished the use of skin bleaching creams in the society. This may be as a result of efforts from some NGOs, independent researchers, social media bloggers and professional dermatologists who are trying to champion the course of mitigating the negative effects of skin bleaching among members of the society. For instance, dermatologist Cole-Adiefe (2019) has constantly expressed worry that the high rates of bleaching in Nigeria may lead to an epidemic of skin cancer in future, due to the damage that bleaching creams have on skin composition.

Yes, not government parse, but like the one we did in our hall this week, my hall of residence, during the health day, the guest speaker talked about skin reaction, advising us not to go for cream that are can tone our body.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

It's like I saw one on social media because they showed some creams that we shouldn't go for. They are bleaching cream and they know the effects of those bleaching cream. So, the time I saw those creams, I jot them down. That it could be either me or my relatives. And I'll get to advise them not to go for those creams. So, I think they created awareness like that for people not to buy creams that will create problems to their body or skin.

P10/21-24/Married/G&C/300L

**Awareness via government agencies.** Further thematic analysis of the interview transcripts showed that some of the participants were aware of government regulatory policies and bans through related agencies such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). This is the agency under the Federal Ministry of Health that is responsible for regulating and controlling the manufacture, importation, exportation, advertisement, distribution, sale and use of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, chemicals and packaged water in Nigeria. Aside from enforcing the policies guiding cream production in Nigeria, NAFDAC also provides awareness and advice, through media outlets, to consumers of this product on the danger inherent in purchasing creams with dangerous chemicals. As recently as December 4, 2019, officials of

NAFDAC stormed the facility of the viral bleaching product seller (known as House of Phareedah) to cart away goods considered by the agency to be noncompliance.

Oh yes, I do. I read about NAFDAC. NAFDAC is the agency that the federal government is using to regulate these kinds of things. One of the things they are doing is that they want to make sure that certain skin cream that contains certain chemicals.

P12/21-24/Single/LARIS/400L

I think I heard about it once. And that was when the public awareness about the use of mercury was on the high. There was a cream that has mercury and NAFDAC later banned it.

P07/21-24/Single/ Health Edu/400L

### **Theme 3: Experienced Consequences of Skin Bleaching**

During the interviews, participants provided experiences and associated consequences of using skin bleaching creams. The emerging themes were categorized as positive and negative based on the perceptions of the users.

**Positive experiences of skin bleaching.** Most of the positive statements made by interviewees on their use of skin bleaching were registered at the initial phase of their skin bleaching experiences. The data is suggestive that many of the participants gained some forms of satisfaction from the initial outcome of the bleaching cream. The sole purpose of using bleaching creams is to lighten dark areas of the skin or achieve an overall lighter complexion. The chemical composition of these skin bleaching creams

(Arbutin, Monobenzone, Fuller's Earth, Hydroquinone, Kojic Acid, 4-Methoxyphenol, Niacinamide etc.) are very potent skin bleachers and yield skin-whitening results over time. Thus, there is bound to be a change in skin complexion as soon as such creams are being used. Negative experiences often arise due to long-term effects of continuous use. There are, however, some individuals who are ardent users of bleaching creams over time without claims of negative experiences. Verbatim statements corroborating these assertions are highlighted below:

I was so consistent just because I wanted a positive result. I used it both in the morning and at night. When I returned back to school, my mates were actually jealous of my new look. And I was acceptable amongst my friends. Therefore, I will say it was positive for me.

P13/19-20/Single/Special Edu/400L

So, it was nice initially, but later, it became worse on my skin, I have terrible rashes all over my body. So, I stopped using the cream. I started looking for remedy.

P02/21-24/Single/Eco Edu/400L

It has been majorly positive. Though, when a cream is introduced to the skin, they tend to react after sometimes yielding a negative result, just like the one my mum bought for me some years ago. She bought me the cream because black spots



where spotted on my body and initially, the spots were clearing but I have to stop when it started showing deteriorative effects after sometimes.

P07/21-24/Single/ Health Edu/400L

I have never experienced a negative reaction on my skin because I never have black knuckles. I only just stopped using those products when I discover that products that have hydroquinone which is bleaching product. I started using Carolwhite and when I noticed it contained the same chemical, I stopped using it. I switched to Nivea which doesn't have hydroquinone.

P08/21-24/Single/Adult Education/400L

**Negative experiences of skin bleaching.** The majority of participants had negative experiences to recount over the continued used of skin bleaching creams over time. The findings show that participants endorsed that skin bleaching mostly results in an array of negative factors indicating that participants are fully aware of the negative consequences associated with the practice of skin bleaching. In many areas, unregulated products are sold, often without listing their contents or they are labelled incorrectly. They may be safe but completely ineffective, or the chemicals may result in side effects and toxicity. The risks depend on which ingredient is being applied to the skin, in what concentration, over what area, and for how long it is used.

The most common negative experience from skin bleaching is the over-whitening of the skin. The goal of skin whitening is to lighten or fade the skin complexion beyond the natural skin tone. However, as a result of the potency of the hydroquinones (an

effective skin lightening agent) in bleaching creams, its prolonged usage destroys the melanin content of the skin, turning the skin whitish after long-term use. According to the International Society of Dermatology, the recommended concentration over the counter is 2%, but up to 4% is available from a dermatologist in some countries; but it should never be used for more than 6 months. Negative experiences of skin whitening were highlighted by majority of the participants as highlighted below.

So, when I used this particular cream, my skin became virtually white. So, I stopped using the cream.

P01/25-30/Married/G&C/300L

It would have led to medical issues eventually because my skin was getting white that my blood vessels were becoming visible.

P02/21-24/Single/Eco Edu/400L

Even my legs were so white that I could not wear skirts that period. I kept wearing trousers, and you know, when you cover your body too much, the heat from the cream worsens. But there was nothing I could do.

P05/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

My friend using it became really light that she was almost turning white and she was not looking presentable to me.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

Complications from skin bleaching are not only unhealthy for the suffering individuals but may be offensive to those around the person. Some of the participants in

this study attested to the fact that the use of skin bleaching creams over time resulted in foul body odor from the user. In some individuals, excessive use of hydroquinone in combination with certain foods in the diet (fish, eggs, offal, and beans) can result in an unpleasant fish odor in the body secretions such as sweat and urine. The syndrome is due to the excretion of a chemical called trimethylamine in the sweat, saliva, urine and vaginal secretions.

It started well, I liked it, but I started noticing a certain smell coming from my body. I could perceive the odor from my armpit. The experience wasn't too good over time, so I have to quit.

P11/21-24/Single /Sociology/400L

When I was using it, it started well and overtime I got to discover that the cream wasn't like okay, I noticed the kind of smell, I don't really feel pleasant to the smell that comes out of it. Again, the kind of body, my armpit, I never felt okay with it.

P12/21-24/S Single /LARIS/400L

Skin reactions, and complications, were also highlighted as part of the negative consequences caused by skin bleaching among the study participants. Across the responses obtained, there was a wide range of skin complications such as contact dermatitis which is the inflammation of the skin caused by continuous bleaching with symptoms of skin redness, blisters, skin ulcers, itching, burning, tenderness, dermatophyte infections, irritant dermatitis, acute cases of scabies, skin cancer, thinning

of the skin, dyschromia, poor wound healing. There were highlighted cases of exogenous ochronosis which is a skin disorder that causes blue-black pigmentation. Some of the respondents also mentioned issues of eczema and steroid acne resulting from skin bleaching which mostly affects the chest, but can also show up on the back, arms, and other parts of the body with long-term use of corticosteroids. Some of their verbatim statements are highlighted below:

So, it was nice initially, but later, it became worse on my skin, I have terrible rashes all over my body. So, I stopped using the cream. I do not allow any object to touch my skin because of pains that emanated from the rashes. The rashes persisted for 1 year until I met with a friend that recommended a soap for me.

P02/21-24/Single/Eco Edu/400L

That one is actually bleaching my skin and did not even do well. I noticed that my legs were peeling and filled with spots. So, I had to stop. And when I stopped, so, when I stopped, it resulted to stretch marks.

P03/21-24/Single/Archaeology/400L

I started having pimples, I had eczema. It would have led to medical issues eventually because my skin was getting white that my blood vessels were becoming visible.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

I experience my veins become palpable, rashes all over and if the skin should get injured, it doesn't heal fast.

P05/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

There was a time I experience dark spots on my skin. It wasn't really much. But I have a serious skin infection, eczema on my back and chest. It got really bad that I could not wear armless.

P07/21-24/Single/ Health Edu/400L

Perceived stigmatization, body image disturbance and low self-esteem were among some of the severe emotional distress experienced by some of the participants as a result of the skin complications from bleaching. The fact that society often relies on external validation relating to outward appearance and capability, skin complexion becomes key in self-perception and ratings of beauty, cleanliness and femininity. Thus, the distortion of the skin through bleaching results in emotional distress from the perceptions that significant others would have negative evaluations and ratings of the user. Many of the participants expressed seeking skin remedies after bleaching and hiding their skin from public view till the skin treatment is completed.

My skin color did not later blend and people wondered what could have been happening to me. It caused a lot of negative attractions. Even when I tried to withdraw from it, it brought up another issues, like leaving black patches on my

face. I feel stigmatized by people around me and it really took time before I could regain my original skin color.

P11/21-24/Single/Sociology/400L

But there was nothing I could do. I felt ashamed of myself that I used bleaching cream and people would be talking. Since am on campus, a lot of people would be talking about it and I would be feeling guilty and so low because I used one cream or the other.

P04/21-24/Single/G&C/300L

The attendant stress and financial implications associated with skin bleaching was also highlighted as a negative consequence among some of the study participants. The entire process of skin bleaching is often based on a specific regiment, sometimes as stated in the cream labels. These regiments included time specific and usage patterns which creates an extra routine for users. Moreover, many of these creams, which come in small sizes, are relatively expensive and become scarce after some time. Thus, users are under pressure to keep on buying these creams, at exorbitant costs, in order to continue the regiments. The financial and time-consuming consequences of searching for the right bleaching cream or skin remedies were also highlighted. Particularly, one participant attested to the indirect effect on her academic performance due to study hours which were wasted on skin bleaching related activities.

To me, bleaching requires a lot of stressful processes for you to get to that level.

Someone that is not neat enough will have a lot of problem. Because if you use

any powder, foundations, or any other additives, you must wash them away same day. Most times, you will have to apply palm oil before you can remove every other chemical on your lightened skin. You will spend a lot of time trying to try out new products, and you even have to create time for your skin.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

Sometimes I would have slept and forget that I've not used this thing to rub. I'd have to stand up, take my bath and do it. Its stressful and I don't know, it involves lots of money, stress and again, at the end of the day, you are mostly not getting what you want.

P15/21-24/Single/G&C/400L

You will spend a lot of time trying to try out new products, and you even have to create time for your skin. Also, financially, it is very expensive to maintain. Because, there are separate creams for each body parts. That of legs is different from those for hands which is not the same as those for the face. And most times, they come in sets.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

It is not positive, it is negative. I therefore try to advice people around me to stay clear from it due to what I experience in those three weeks of my recovery. It cost me a lot both academically and financially, surfing the net several times for remedy but effects keep worsening.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

**Theme 4: Mitigating Skin Bleaching Practices**

**Personal advice.** To reduce the societal menace and negative effects of skin bleaching, some of the study participants were able to offer advice based on their knowledge and experiences of skin bleaching. Adhering to advice from persons with experience is an informal route to eliciting self-help among users of bleaching cream. Some of the participants urged users of bleaching cream to be more conscious of the exact contents of these creams and make effort to look up the possible effects and side effects of such content in isolation. There was also advice on the need to be satisfied and contented with one's natural skin color. Regarding skin diseases, advice on seeing a specialist or expert (dermatologist) was emphasized.

I will only advice the dark people to go for creams that will maintain their complexion rather than trying to bleach out their skin. Also, before getting the products, people should look out for the manufacturer, NAFDAC and the contents, they use in making those creams, so that it will not later affect the person.

P07/21-24/Single/ Health Edu/400L

I will advise people to be conscious of the fact that these creams are harmful in the long run. Because, from what we see around, the people who are not privilege to basic education are really falling prey to this scenario. Some of them bleached



until their skin turns red and they would not know how to manage the withdrawer processes.

P08/21-24/Single/Adult Education/400L

Maybe when we talk to an expert, or a foreigner, or someone that come to enlighten us the more about the use of cream. I think we don't have that in UI as at present.

P07/21-24/Single/ Health Edu/400L

But if I'm to advice, I would advise people to go and ask what cream they can keep using. And using bleaching cream affects lots of students.

P10/21-24/Married/G&C/300L

Let's like our colors, let's appreciate it. So even whites overtime can even start liking blacks and even then they might even want to change their own skin to be black.

P12/21-24/S Single /LARIS/400L

Just accept yourself the way you are, if you're light, appreciate it. And if you're dark, appreciate it too. So when you have that confidence, you won't go to that extent of bleaching. That's better instead of using the cream that will cause problem for you.

P15/21-24/Single/G&C/400L

**Public awareness campaigns.** Ignorance among users was cited as a reason for the incidences of skin bleaching among many students. Based on this, further

interventions towards mitigating the menace of skin bleaching in the society were proffered through promotion of public awareness. By deploying media content about the negative consequences of prolonged skin bleaching via radio, television, internet, seminars, word-of-mouth etc., many of the participants believed that the level of ignorance will be reduced, such that any act of skin bleaching practices will be done based on informed choices irrespective of whether or not the products are banned. Some of their verbatim responses are presented below:

I think we need more advertisements; radio, google ads, etc. perhaps if such avenues can be designed to pass information about skin bleaching so that this trend can stop. Sometimes these creams cause itchy skin. So that is what I think.

P04/21-24/Single/ G&C /300L

If there is a public awareness, it will be much better. Because if you ask people that are not privileged to have formal education, it will help them. These people don't know that this particular substance is in a particular cream. It is because I know that this chemical is in a particular cream that I avoid it. They only want to look finer, to look white all of a sudden. So, they don't know these things.

P07/21-24/Single/ Health Edu/400L

They can publicize on radio, television and even one on one interaction. We ladies can enlighten one another on the possible dangers associated with it.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

They should create awareness to control the way people are using it. Or if they can check some particular products. Even at that, what works for someone might not work for another person, that is why I will not call for banning of any products.

P13/19-20/Single/Special Edu/400L

They should publicize it. They should go online and tell people to stop using cream and, and I don't know how to explain it but they should warn them to stop using bleaching creams.

P14/19-20/Single/Edu Mgt/400L

**Policy formulation and implementation.** Emergent themes on policy formulation and implementation as an intervention for mitigating skin bleaching practices in the society were highlighted. Many of the respondents suggested that government and its related agencies should be more proactive in the fight against distribution and sale of harmful body creams in the open market.

If government should set up policy to ban bleaching cream, it will help some, because it will enlighten them more after seeing the consequences.

P06/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

Once research has shown that some chemicals used in these creams are toxic to the body, I think they should not approve those products. The regulatory body

can really help in the area of public awareness, revoking of licenses, or controlling their usage of the dermatoin.

P08/21-24/Single/Adult Education/400L

Product manufacturers can reduce the percentage of these harsh contents in those creams. The government can even increase tax by imposing damage levy in order to correct them.

P09/25-30/Single/Health Edu/300L

I think they can have a regulating agency that cater for cosmetics. They should actually call all these people that do fake product to book. They should appoint people to be watchful and monitor this section.

P05/21-24/Single/Edu Mgt/300L

**Discrepant findings.** Analysis of the data also found that skin bleaching behavior is not synonymous with female students alone, male partners were reported to be primary source of inspirations among few of the study participants. While preparing for the interview, participant P02 denied using skin bleaching cream even though the participant verbally admitted to using the cream prior to inclusion in the participants' pool. However, researcher was able to observe that participant P02 must have previously used skin bleaching creams due to the coloration of her skin and was subsequently included in the participants' pool.

### Summary

By exploring the motivations behind skin bleaching creams use among female university students in the southwest region of Nigeria, and the degree of awareness of the relevant public policies guiding the distribution and usage of the creams, this study makes an important contribution to the existing literature about the phenomenon. It also provides a clear understanding of the respondents' mindset about what motivates their usage of skin bleaching creams. The participants shared their lived experiences of the skin bleaching trendy phenomenon and the personal effects it bears on them. The impact of this behavior on their health and academics were discussed by the participants through in-depth one-on-one interviews focused on answering the research questions. The data collection process was anchored on the theoretical framework designed for the study.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a case study approach with 18 original respondents. Finally, the data of the fifteen respondents chosen for the study were considered appropriate due to the rich response and technological recording hitches. Respondents for the study were full-time students of a higher institution located in the southwest region of Nigeria. The respondents provided pertinent information regarding their personal experiences while using the skin bleaching creams. The respondents were transparent and honest about their lived experiences and were at no time pressured to divulge the information provided during the interview sessions.

The respondents for the study have varied views of the skin bleaching phenomenon. While some of them did not see anything wrong in the behavior, some

appeared to show unintended remorse for their behavior. Majority of those who expressed certain regrets with the usage of bleaching creams were core of those who had experience with the negative effects of using the creams. Some of the respondents viewed the behavior as a lifestyle decision and felt the need to engage in the behavior as that of individual's opinion. Majority of the respondents expressed vague awareness of the public policies guiding the use of skin bleaching creams.

Although, few respondents expressed greater awareness of the agency responsible for developing public policy in the country, they also expressed lack of confidence in the ability of the agency to effectively reform the skin bleaching business that has been said to run into billions of dollars . Some of the respondents feel at odds with the advice given to others when compared with their involvement in the same behavior. The study shows that healthcare professionals may be a great source of information to those with negative experiences from the use of skin bleaching creams. There is no indication that the skin bleaching behavior conflicts with the respondents' cultural norms and practices. There is a cultural folklores tale song that gives preference to a lighter-skin individual rather than a dark-skinned one.

Omo Pupa oooo, Omo pupa le mi nfe

Omo pupa ooo, jowo mo feran re oo

Translation

Light skinned one, light skin one is my preference

Light skinned one, please I like you. (Appendix E)

The four major themes and sub-themes provided insight into the participants' world and their lived experiences as it relates to the phenomenon studied. It helps respondents to describe how they felt about sharing so much personal information during the interview sessions. Most of the respondents showed no remorse despite the knowledge that they dared the consequences for engaging in the skin bleaching behavior.

This chapter discussed the research questions, the research setting, the respondents' demographics, and the data collection method, including the challenges encountered. Also, I explained the data analysis process, trustworthiness, and the results of the study which states the themes and sub-themes developed from the data. Chapter 5 below detailed the discussions of the research summary, interpretation of the research findings, theoretical implications, implication for positive social change, the conclusions, limitations, implications for future studies, and recommendations for further studies.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This chapter contains discussion, conclusions, and recommendations based on the entire study. It reflects the integration and evaluation of the interviews and literature findings relating to the study's research questions. Thematic analysis enhances the integrated results and findings from the previous chapter to make useful inferences, deductions, and generalizations for practical applications and societal implications. Additionally, this chapter highlights the limitations of the study, as well as other directions for future research in this area of study. Finally, I address potential implications for positive social change that may be derived from the research.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the deeper motivations underlying the decision to engage in skin bleaching or skin whitening among female tertiary students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study also focused on the level of awareness among female university students about public policy regulating skin bleaching cream usage. The study provided rich qualitative data on skin bleaching among female students. The conceptual framework for the study was the NPF. I used the NPF as a model for understanding the phenomenon. The use of the NPF's three levels of analysis (i.e., micro, meso and macro levels) helped in understanding the main themes and subthemes. The conceptual framework helps to provide a basis for understanding the overall structure of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).



It is anticipated that the results of the study will serve as the source of essential data for policymakers at various public management levels for future policy formulation and implementation. The study results may also provide pertinent information to address negative outcomes resulting from dangerous skin cream usage.

### **Interpretation of Research Findings**

The first objective of the study focused on factors that motivate female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria to bleach their skin. Based on the thematic analysis, nine emergent themes were significantly highlighted across the responses from the study participants, including perceived attraction to fair-skinned ladies, the medical value of skin bleaching, peer influence, the influence of advertisements, user experience and recommendations, skin color discrimination, curiosity and youthful exuberance, and prostitution. Some of these themes are put into perspective within the context of this study in the following paragraphs.

People prefer to bleach the whole body, not exempting any particular region. One may adduce the reasons for such bleaching as attempting to attract people and attain a balanced body color. People not only gain friends through bleaching, but also attract attention and popularity. It is apparent that many individuals think that skin bleaching helps them to gain adequate attention during social events and gatherings. By attending and making contacts at significant events where social hierarchies are created and maintained, women (especially) who bleach their skin gain a sense of social prestige (Andrew, 2007). Akerele (2006) suggested that people may bleach their skin to establish

relationships, as men tend to show interest in women with light complexions. Because of the urgent need to become attached to a man (for marriage), young women may use all possible bait, including skin bleaching, in order to attract their targets. However, married women also engage in skin bleaching activities.

The perception that fair-skinned ladies are considered more attractive was evident in cases in which respondents described the perceived preference for fair-skinned ladies over dark-skinned ladies by significant others. This implied that many female university students believe that there is a general preference for light-complexioned girls by their peers. Therefore, there is a tendency for dark-skinned women to increase their ratings of attractiveness by becoming fairer through bleaching. This perspective suggests that the “fair maiden” of myth may have a basis in scientific reality. According to Rusmadi, Ismail, and Praveena (2015) looking into attractiveness in men and women suggest that men of all races find fairer skinned women most alluring. Owing to this perspective, many university women are motivated to engage in skin bleaching to look attractive to male admirers and “level up” in terms of beauty with their female counterparts.

In line with this assertion, Baumann (2008) at the University of Toronto in Canada studied more than 2,000 advertising photographs (chosen on the basis that the models featured were considered among the most attractive people of the races and gender) and found that the skin of White women was 15.2 % lighter than the skin of White men, and the skin of Black women was 11.1 % lighter than the skin of Black men. According to Baumann, the outcomes of the research showed that people’s aesthetic

preferences operate to reflect moral preferences such that within cultures, people have a set of expectations about how women should look and behave. A light complexion has a subconscious association with delicate tenderness and elegance needing the protective presence of a male (Dolan, 2008). Moreover, when individuals are faced with potential mates of equal value, they will tend to select the one who stands out from the crowd, and skin complexion is often the initial index relied upon to make this determination.

In line with these results, Cruz (2018) assessed the impact of target faces' skin tone and perceivers' skin tone on participants' attractiveness judgments regarding an asymmetrical representative range of target faces as stimuli. Overall, participants preferred light-skinned faces over dark-skinned ones. This finding is not only consistent with previous results on skin tone preferences, but it is even more powerful because it demonstrates that light skin tone preference occurs regardless of the symmetry and baseline attractiveness of the stimuli. Additionally, Mpengesi and Nzuza (2014) found that 63.3% of students in their study reported that people often bleach because they want to remove facial blemishes to appear more beautiful, while Shroff (2017) found that African men were significantly more likely than women to endorse beliefs about fairness being more attractive and were more likely to perceive family and peers as viewing skin fairness as criteria for endorsing the selection of a partner.

The medical value of bleaching creams for spot removal and skin cleansing also emerged as a motivation for the use of bleaching creams among female undergraduate students. In pursuit of radiant skin, some of the students attested to the medical value of skin bleaching as they reported that they often bleached because they wanted to remove

facial blemishes to appear more beautiful. This perceived medicinal value often forms a justification for the continued use of skin bleaching creams among female university students. Bleaching or skin lightening creams or ointments are widely used worldwide in attempts to remove either skin blemishes such as birthmarks or localized dark patches (e.g., melasma or postinflammatory hyperpigmentation). Skin lightening procedures work by reducing the concentration or production of melanin in the skin and peeling off the top layers of the skin. Because skin bleaching is generally assumed to have side effects, dermatologists are of the view that medical advice should be sought if skin bleaching is being considered as a treatment option.

Corroborating the results obtained in this study, Nigerian students have been found to justify their use of bleaching creams to even out their skin tone; to reduce pimples, eczema, skin spots, and scars; and generally have a perfect complexion (Ajose, 2005). Ingredients contained within bleaching agents that are not medically prescribed, however, are not necessarily monitored by regulating bodies. Some existing studies (Benn et al., 2016; Ladizinski et al., 2011) have highlighted the medical value of certain bleaching cream components as effective spot removal agents; however, the potency of these ingredients is often hindered by the presence of other ingredients in the cream. Moreover, because multiple uses of a variety of bleaching creams and unregulated usage are common practices among female university students, the side effects of bleaching cream are often more pronounced than its medical value.

Peer pressure and conformity have been said to be among the factors that motivate students to lighten their skin through bleaching, as captured in the thematic expressions obtained in this study. Peer pressure involves indirect or direct encouragement from members of one's age group (friends, siblings, etc.) to engage in activities that one may or may not want to engage in. RCT explains this phenomenon succinctly through the concept of human rational decision making in which people engaged with complex social phenomena are driven by individual human actions. Human beings want to feel accepted by their peers and the environment; they want to belong. Therefore, they engage in activities that their peers engage in just to gain acceptance.

Moreover, students spend more than half of their time in school in the company of their peers, which suggests that peer pressure can significantly influence the activities of young adults. As highlighted in this study, peer influence motivating skin bleaching may be direct or indirect. Direct pressures arise when people directly encourage their friends to engage in skin bleaching, whereas indirect pressures arise when light-skinned peers are admired from afar by friends who then engage in skin lightening activities.

Students engaging in skin bleaching practices state peer pressure as a motivation to engage in these practices. In a comparative study of nine skin bleachers and nine nonskin bleachers, Charles (2003) found that among the nine skin bleaching participants, one participant stated that she bleached because her friends were also engaging in the practice, suggesting that peer pressure can be a motivating factor. A study by Robinson (2011) corroborated this finding because it was also found that significant others could be quite influential in the decision to engage in skin bleaching. Similarly, Lewis et al. (2011) found

that some of the respondents in their study reported that their friends and colleagues insisted that they should have a lighter complexion to conform to their group. These findings suggest that most people engage in skin bleaching practices because they are conforming to pressure and because they see other people using these products and seek to acquire the same privileges of having a lighter skin tone, which include, but are not limited to, admiration, social class, and beauty (Charles, 2003).

As commercial products with a myriad of brands, skin bleaching creams are often advertised through various media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, outdoor advertising, direct mail, news, internet search results, blogs, social media, websites, and text messages. The major aims of advertisements are to inform consumers about specific brands and convince them that such products (or services) are the best, to enhance the image of a company, to point out and create a need for products (or services), to demonstrate new uses for established products, to announce new products, and to educate consumers about the attributes and benefits of new or established products.

Concerning bleaching creams, advertisements are often targeted at young females, who represent potential users of these products in society. Such advertisements tend to reinforce the notion of light skin as a symbol of respectability and social power that may be available to dark-skinned people using skin lightening products. The persuasive components of these advertisements often motivate female undergraduate students toward purchasing and using bleaching creams.

A typical advertisement for a fairness cream begins with portrayal of the (many) problems of a dark-skinned person. The majority of skin-lightening cosmetics are

targeted at women. Such advertisements portray the dark-skinned woman as an insecure person who is unable to secure success in life until someone suggests the use of a fairness cream (Sylvia, 2014). The advertisement then shows the woman's radical transformation; not only does she become several shades lighter, but her entire personality undergoes a drastic change. She emerges as a successful woman, confident and self-assured because of her "whiteness." The advertisement ends with her clinching a desirable marriage proposal; the camera zooms in on her "fair" and happy face. The implied message is "fair is lovely and dark is ugly." The suggestion of such advertisements is that dark-skinned people can change their circumstances of supposed inferiority and gain access to respect and power through the consumption of skin-lightening products.

Recommendations from other customers or over the counter were another factor that motivated female students to use skin bleaching creams. It is not uncommon for customers to make inquiries in shops and stores from other customers or salespersons about the quality of products on sale. The assumed validity of these recommendations often derives from the idea that other customers and salespersons have more experience and knowledge about the products based on previous usage and market trends. These forms of recommendations fall under the category of word-of-mouth advertisements. Word-of-mouth advertising occurs when customers tell other people about a product or service and their experience using it. This type of advertising happens naturally in many cases when people want to share their experience with those they know.

Based on data from this study, various forms, sizes, and brands of skin bleaching creams are often displayed on shelves of supermarkets, which may create dissonance in the process of consumer choice. Thus, the input from experienced customers and salespersons accounts for significant variance in the purchasing patterns of skincare and bleaching products. A study conducted by Phoosangthong and Sermsiriwath (2006) indicated that female consumers paid more attention to the user experience of significant others than other indices such as ingredients and brand image. Most of the respondents agreed that a recognized brand is a function of user experience, which was an important factor influencing them to buy a product. This line of assertion is also in consonance with Ukpebor and Ipogah (2008), who studied the correlate of customer spending on cosmetics and found that consumers are willing to spend on products that have received validation through user experience, irrespective of price.

Racial discrimination is another contributing factor. In some parts of the world where apartheid policy has been practiced, Blacks who are being discriminated against may resort to skin bleaching with the aim of removing color stigma. The problem of racial discrimination as a result of skin color was mainly responsible for skin bleaching among African victims of the slave trade. The problem of racial discrimination still exists, especially where Black immigrants find themselves looking for better opportunities in “the White man’s countries.” People may bleach their skin in order to be acceptable in such a foreign land.



An inferiority complex compels some Black-skinned individuals to bleach off their inherited dark colour. Adeleye (2007) inferred that “black” has long been associated with inefficiency, counterfeit, adulteration, second class, low quality, and evil. In an attempt to compensate for such perceptions and be able to compete favorably with their White counterparts, Blacks may end up bleaching their skin. Such practice, they believe, enhances the smooth integration of the Black race into global society.

Skin color discrimination was also a factor that motivated some of the female students to engage in skin bleaching. Perceptions of light skin color sitting within a space of privilege and the preferential treatment afforded to persons with lighter skin complexions relate to the popular ideal or globalized concept of beauty. Skin color and skin color stratification based on complexion are important issues for all people of color. Hunter (2002) described such stratification as a major sociological issue for Black communities. Skin color discrimination can be traced to racism and apartheid. In some parts of the world where the practice of apartheid policy was prevalent, Blacks who were discriminated against saw skin bleaching practice as a way of removing color stigma.

Campus prostitution is now a common trend in Nigerian higher institutions. There is virtually no tertiary institution in Nigeria today that is immune to the sordid trade. Campus prostitution is a survival strategy among students who engage in it. It is a fall-out of the dwindling morals in the society coupled with the harsh economic realities that affected many Nigerian families. A light skin complexion is a resource to being successful in the prostitution business, such that skin bleaching is a major strategy most

often employed by sex workers to make their bodies attractive to potential customers. Skin bleaching changes the body color of African women and makes them appear more acceptable to both black men and non-Africans who are willing to pay for sex. Thus, students who are involved in this practice may be prompted to engage in skin bleaching practices to boost their market value.

The second objective of the study focused on the degree to which female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, are aware of policies related to skin bleaching product safety. Based on thematic expressions obtained from this study, it is evident that there are currently no enforceable laws that prohibit the production, distribution, and use of skin bleaching creams in Nigeria. This is ironical owing to the widespread campaigns of the negative health consequences of bleaching creams. The plausibility for this situation may stem from the fact that skin bleaching is a multibillion-dollar global industry with at least four out of every 10 women in Africa bleaching their skin, according to the World Health Organization. Recently, one of the top American models, Blac Chyna, visited Nigeria to promote a new skin lightening cream. There are no regulations in place to moderate and control such promotions among celebrities. Therefore, the financial benefits accruing to the Federal government through investments in this industry limits government capacity to place an outright ban on bleaching creams.

In 2017, medical doctors under the aegis of the Nigerian Association of Dermatologists, (NAD) began the process of meeting with lawmakers at the National Assembly to formulate laws that will regulate the manufacture and use of bleaching

cream. The Chairman of the Abuja Dermatology Society, Dr. Mohammed Danmallam, who spoke on behalf of NAD, made this known through a press conference held in commemoration of the World Skin Health Day. According to him, the Nigerian Association of Dermatologists has contacted health committees in the National Assembly to push for formulating and implementing laws regarding the production, distribution, and use of bleaching creams. Several African countries have banned skin lightening products, but the laws are not enforced (Benn et al, 2016). Therefore, skin-whitening creams and soaps continue to flood the markets in several African countries.

As evidenced in this study, due to the seemingly nonexistent laws against bleaching creams, the majority of the respondents were not aware of any existing policy against the sale and use of skin bleaching creams. Thus, the prevalence of this practice is very high in Nigeria compared with other countries globally and the impacts are also severe. The economic impact of the skin bleaching practice is largely ignored because of the ignorance and denial exhibited by users and the lack of education on this issue by the general populations and even specialized medical staff. This has spurred up efforts by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to mitigate the use and consequences of dangerous skin bleaching creams. These efforts are quite significant as many of the respondents who were aware of the negative effects of skin bleaching credited such knowledge and awareness to campaigns by various NGOs.

Extensive public awareness campaigns have been going on for years, led by the WHO, international NGOs, and media outlets, to educate adults on the dangers of skin

bleaching and smoking. These efforts seemed not to have discouraged users of dangerous skin bleaching, but it has helped to shift focus on providing pertinent information and assistance. Especially providing necessary assistance to ameliorate the negative effect of skin bleaching use at old age.

All people have a right to a healthy life, therefore skin bleaching must be treated just like other public-health concerns. The fact that an increasing number of people are bleaching their skin at will, destroying their melanin and exposing themselves to health risks, indicates a systemic failure of public-health outreach. The lack of an effective public education campaign should not be the new normal. People should not be left to look after their health without reliable guidance and functional public policy.

In Nigeria, individuals often bear the costs of health care due to the lack of a nationwide health care insurance policy. Most people are often ignorant of the implications relating to personal behavior such as those relating to skin bleaching use. People thus turn to self-treatment and self-medication, substandard medications, and whatever chemicals and herbal nutrients that may be readily available. Appropriate public policies should be developed from individual perspectives and individual belief systems in sync with the narrative policy framework (NPF) recommendations. Policymakers should pay attention to the views expressed by users to formulate policy guiding the skin bleaching phenomenon.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study highlight the rational choice theory approach to how individuals make decisions about body image. Rational choice theory is used to model human decision making, especially in the context of microeconomics, where it helps economists better understand the behavior of a society in terms of individual actions as explained through rationality in which choices are consistent because they are made according to personal belief systems. Drawing from the tenets of the rational choice theory, the results of this study portray the use of skin bleaching creams as outcomes of a conscious and relatively informed personal belief in the perceived benefits of skin bleaching. Thus, the general notion of the demerits of using skin bleaching creams does not dampen individual notions of its merits. This is because each individual is believed to be rational when making decisions about actions that would favor the self. Therefore, in the context of skin bleaching creams and its usage, individual belief systems supersede societal belief systems. As supported by the rational choice theory, students who use bleaching creams are generally aware of its potential side effects, but still choose to use these creams because they believe in the personal benefits that they stand to gain from its usage. This decision-making process often stems from a rational analysis of the pros and cons of using skin bleaching creams.

Thus, it may be theoretical implied that female students have preferences as to their use (or not) of skin bleaching creams among the available choice alternatives that allow them to state which option they prefer. These preferences are assumed to be

complete ( such that the students can always say which of two alternatives they consider preferable or that neither is preferred to the other) and transitive (if Cream-A is preferred over Cream-B and Cream-B is preferred over Cream-C, then Cream-A is preferred over Cream-C). This decision making process is assumed to take account of available information, probabilities of events, and potential costs and benefits in determining cream use preferences, and to act consistently in choosing the self-determined best choice of action, irrespective of the societal norms about the usage of skin bleaching creams.

In simpler terms, the rational choice theory suggests that every student, even when carrying out the most mundane of tasks such as body cream usage, performs their cost and benefit analysis to determine whether the action or option is worth perusing for the best possible outcome. And following this, a student will choose the optimum venture in every case. This, therefore, culminates in a student deciding on whether or not to use a skin bleaching cream, which brand to use, and how to use the selected brand.

In furtherance of the theoretical implications emanating from the study outcomes, the strength of individual beliefs over societal norms, as portrayed by the rational choice theory, highlights an absence or weakness of existing bleaching cream policies in Nigeria. Therefore, the theoretical implications of the narrative policy framework, as used in this study, provides an understanding of the participants' lived experiences in the realm of the existing policy context and how such policies affect skin bleaching behavior. Government policy is a rule or principle that hopefully better guides decisions, resulting in positive outcomes that enhance the community or unit.

Government policies contain the reasons things are to be done in a certain way and why. Such policies may also have enforcement and punitive measures to enhance adherence. These features of a government policy give it strength over societal norms. Thus, in the context of skin bleaching, best practices among students would be predicated on the available adherence framework in the form of government policy or societal norm. The formal and authoritative nature of government policy would form a more potent basis for individual choices in the use of skin bleaching creams.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Irrespective of the adoption of conventional scientific and objective methods in arriving at the outcomes of this study, the study is not without its contextual limitations. For instance, due to the cross-sectional design of the current study, causal inferences cannot be drawn from the associations. Since data were collected in face-to-face interviews, information bias might occur due to recall, the sensitivity of questions, and social desirability factors (i.e., the bias in self-report data accounted for by respondents' desire to look good, which is because of the respondents' need for self-protection and social approval). This, in turn, might have affected the predictive power of some independent variables on the criterion variables.

Therefore, it would be interesting to replicate this study, with a longitudinal design, assessing individuals during different stages of their schooling career with their skin bleaching perceptions and practices. Moreover, the research only focused on female students in a selected university in Ibadan; therefore, the likelihood that the sample

represents a good cross-section from the national population of female university students in the country limits its external validity. Future research studies should make use of stratified random sampling to ensure a satisfactory representation of different groups. The use of larger sampling might also provide increased confidence that study findings would be consistent across other (similar) groups. Further studies should be more diverse and have national coverage so that economic, cultural, ethnic and geographical differences can be highlighted.

### **Recommendations**

- Addressing this problem should be made a priority for the World Health Organization (WHO), government agencies and health ministries across Africa and particularly in Nigeria. In addition to the efforts by dermatologists aimed at educating their patients about the dangers of skin bleaching, the entire medical community should follow recommendations to devote its energy to researching and addressing this issue.
- The skin-bleaching products flooding Nigerian markets must be actively and thoroughly subjected to oversight by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON), and Nigerian Customs officials to ensure that the dangerous ones are not smuggled in. The federal agency responsible for enforcement should devote additional resources to ensure that banned skin creams remain banned.



- All African countries should take strict measures to keep out these dangerous skin cream products and offer safer brands of skin-bleaching products at affordable prices. The various government agency responsible can also assist by offering safer creams to low-income earners just like the way free condoms are made available for people to protect themselves during sex. All-natural products containing papaya, lemon juice, or rice water should be further researched and these may serve as alternatives to dangerous skin creams. The chemicals derived such as azelaic acid and niacinamide are claimed to be safer than the compounds often found in bleaching creams and soaps.
- Institutions of higher learning especially in Nigeria should be aware of the underlining consequences of using bleaching creams among the students' population. Students affairs offices on campuses should engage in appropriate public enlightenment programs to educate students about making informed decisions when it comes to the choice of skin creams. The enlightenment and information about dangerous skin creams may have a positive impact on the decisions to use skin bleaching or not among students.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The prevalent use of skin bleaching creams among Nigerians has attracted the attention of different scholars, medical personnel, policymakers, and the World Health Organization (WHO). The negative impact of the behavior has also been documented. The findings of this study have significant social change implications. Nigerian youths

are commonly referred to as the leaders of tomorrow. In retrospect, future nation-building, and healthy family units begin with Nigerian students and particularly female students. There are 43 Federal Universities, 52 State Universities, and 79 Private Universities: making it a total of 174 universities in Nigeria. Understanding the motivations for skin bleaching cream use among the female student's population in these universities will provide rich data for policymakers.

The findings of this research could strengthen this field of study through the identification of the motivations for skin bleaching cream use among female university students. The study also affirms other findings in the field that have studied the phenomenon. Hopefully, the knowledge provided through this study will help a great deal in assisting school administrators to come up with strategies that will best serve the students and improve their educational interaction on campus. The findings of this study have potential policy implications for different educational institutions in Nigeria due to the trendy behavior of skin bleaching among Nigerian women that had been adjudged as the highest all over the world. Sabatier and Weible (2014) recommended that identifying the narratives in the policy-making process helps policy formulations. They suggest that policy debates can lead to the rich development of policy contexts that can be useful in future policy formulation.

There is the assumption that in some situations, students are in a unique position to bring about social change. According to Dunne and Edwards (2010) students often feel responsible and assume the positions of power and influence that could be used for the

'common good'. Students also have the drive and eagerness to push for changes in society. Therefore, the study has social change implications for policy development and implementation. Policymakers could focus their attention on the students as the potential area to initiate active community engagement towards developing long-lasting policy that will help to stem the use of dangerous skin bleaching creams.

This study added to the existing knowledge base in the field of policy and administration by highlighting the degree of awareness of public policy regarding the skin bleaching creams products. The study findings show that most of the students do not have adequate knowledge of the existing public policies guiding the use and distribution of skin bleaching creams. Most of the participants may have been empowered through their participation in the study to seek knowledge about the existing public policy and particularly the agency responsible for enforcing existing regulations. It is imperative to know that the participants' knowledge of agency responsible for oversight on bleaching creams may lead to direct engagement of the agency's policymaking process by university students.

The final policy recommendation emerged from one of the major themes of the study and that is mitigating skin bleaching practices. Institutions of higher learning especially in Nigeria have a communal responsibility to play an active role in providing information to its teeming students. Using bleaching creams among the students has been found to impact the students' capacity to complete their studies. Students' affairs offices on campuses should engage in appropriate public enlightenment programs to educate

students about making informed decisions when it comes to the choice of skin creams. The enlightenment and information about dangerous skin creams may have a positive impact on the decisions to use skin bleaching among students.

### **Conclusions**

Skin bleaching covers a variety of cosmetic methods and procedures used to whiten the skin. Skin bleaching is a common practice in Africa, which affects mostly women and is extremely harmful to their health. Though research on this subject has been sparse, studies have shown more than half of women in Nigeria engage in skin bleaching. The prevalence of this practice is equally high in other countries globally and the impacts are severe. The consequences of these behaviors are largely ignored because of the ignorance on the subject sometimes fueled by users' denial and a lack of education on the issues among the general populations. Professionals and specialized medical staff working with women should be trained to use contacts with them as a teaching moment. The most common form of skin whitening consists of the application of creams and soaps that contain dangerous substances, such as mercury, hydroquinone, cortisones, vitamin A (which when used in excess could be toxic), and dermo corticoids.

Populations in Africa are at a higher health risk from the use of these products since to whiten their darker skin, many women resort to the mixing of different chemicals/products to enhance the bleaching capability and making them more dangerous. Skin bleaching has a strong impact on the communities in which it is practiced. High cost, the practice requires the constant purchase of these sometimes-

addictive products, thereby reducing the disposable income available to families in which it is practiced. The practice also shapes gendered norms of physical appearance that becomes highly destructive for young girls. This effect can be seen in the fact that adolescents and younger women have higher rates of skin bleaching behavior than other age groups.

Despite the obvious health challenges caused by skin bleaching, many individuals and small businesses are joining this lucrative business, and skin-bleaching products flood Nigerian markets like bottled water. In a 2009 report from Global Industry Analysts, it declared skin-lightening a \$10 billion industry; the organization also projects that the number would hit \$23 billion by 2020. Nigeria has the highest proportion of skin bleaching practice; therefore, skin bleaching products can be found in any cosmetic store, street corners, salon/beauty shop, open markets and of course purchased online through various social media. Most sellers claim expertise that cannot be verified and advertised their products openly on billboards, television, and social media. Skin-whitening is big business across Africa; one skin-whitening product called Whitenicious, which claims to use all-natural products, launched by Nigerian-Cameroonian pop musician Reprudencia Sonkey (known by her stage name, Dencia), sold out almost immediately after its release. Within three weeks of its launch, sales surpassed 15,000 units.

Female undergraduate students are potential targets for the sales of skin bleaching cream because of the fascination with body looks and beauty which peaked at adolescence. The sudden freedom from parental guidance that comes with tertiary

education and leaving home enables the opportunity to explore at will. This study has been able to provide insight into factors that motivate female undergraduates to engage in skin bleaching and highlight individual perceptions on the issues of skin bleaching across student populations. It has also shown the lack of adequate public policy necessary to safeguard the sale of dangerous skin cream and the need to educate consumers of the skin bleaching products who are mainly women in the community.

## References

- Adams, B. N., & Sydie, R. A. (2002). *Sociological theory*. New Delhi, India: Vistaar.
- Adebajo, S. (2002). An epidemiological survey of the use of cosmetic skin lightening cosmetics among traders in Lagos, Nigeria. *West African Journal of Medicine*, 21(1), 51-55. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/11294538>
- Ajose, F. O. A. (2005). Consequences of skin bleaching in Nigerian men and women. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 44(S1), 41–43.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-4632.2005.02812.x>
- Alegbeleye, O. (2017, August 4). Unexplored implications of Nigeria’s skin bleaching pandemic. Retrieved from <http://www.businessdayonline.com/unexplored-implications-nigerias-skin-bleaching-pandemic/html>
- Alghamdi, K. M. (2010). The use of topical bleaching agents among women: A cross-sectional study of knowledge, attitude and practices. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology*, 24(10), 1214-1219.
- Arar, K., Masry-Harzallaa, A., & Haj-Yehiab, K. (2013). Higher education for Palestinian Muslim female students in Israel and Jordan: Migration and identity formation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 43(1), 51–67.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2012.749391>
- Askari, S. H., Sajid, A., Faran, Z., & Sarwar, Z. (2013). Skin-lightening practice among women living in Lahore: Prevalence, determinants, and user’s awareness.

*Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Business Management, Lahore, India.*

Atadokpédé, F., Adégbidi, H., Koudoukpo, C., Téleclessou, J., Aholouké, C., Degboé, B.,

Yedomon, H. (2015). Epidemiological and clinical aspects of skin bleaching in secondary school in Bohicon, Benin. *Journal of Cosmetics, Dermatological Sciences and Applications*, 1(5), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jcdsa.2015.51001>

Azibo, D. A. (2011). Commentary: On skin bleaching and lightening as psychological misorientation mental disorder. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4).

Retrieved from <http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no4/AZIBO%20final.pdf>

Banton, B. (1990). *Love me browning* [Vinyl recording]. Kingston, Jamaica: Penthouse.

Baumann, S. (2008). The moral underpinnings of beauty: A meaning-based explanation for light and dark complexions in advertising. *Poetics*, 36, 2–23.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2007.11.002>

Becker, G. S. (1976). *The economic approach to human behaviour*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Benn, E. K., Alexis, A., Mohamed, N., Wang, Y. H., Khan, I. A., & Liu, B. (2016). Skin bleaching and dermatologic health of African and Afro-Caribbean populations in the US: New directions for methodologically rigorous, multidisciplinary, and culturally sensitive research. *Dermatologic Therapy*, 6, 453–459.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13555-016-0154-1>



- Biddle, S. K. H., & Wang, C. J. K. (2003). Motivation and self-perception profiles and links with physical activity in adolescent girls. *Journal of Adolescence*, *26*, 687–701. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2003.07.003>
- Blair, B. D., & McCormack, L. (2016). Applying the narrative policy framework to the issues surrounding hydraulic fracturing within the news media: A research note. *Research and Politics*, *3*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168016628334>
- Blay, A. Y. (2011). Skin bleaching and global white supremacy: By way of introduction. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *4*(4), 4-46.
- Charles, C. A. (2003). Skin bleaching, self-hate, black identity in Jamaica. *Journal of Black Studies*, *33*(6), 711-728. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934703033006001>
- Charles, C. (2010). Skin bleaching in Jamaica: Self-esteem, racial self-esteem, and Black identity transactions. *Caribbean Journal of Psychology*, *3*(1).
- Charles, C. A. D. (2011). The derogatory representations of the skin bleaching products sold in Harlem. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *4*(4), 117-141.
- Chen, L. U., Wu, Y., Lin, S., & Ye, Y. (2018). Top-down or bottom-up? The reciprocal longitudinal relationship between athletes' team satisfaction and life satisfaction. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, *7*(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000086>
- Cherry, K. (2017, June 9). What is extrinsic motivation? Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-extrinsic-motivation-2795164/html>
- Coleman, J. (1973). *The mathematics of collective action*. London, UK: Heinemann.

- Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Cooper, T. L. (2013) The responsible Administrator: An approach to ethics for the administrative role. *Journal of Higher Education* 71(6)  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2649163>
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (3rd ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cruz, G.V. (2018). The impact of face skin tone on perceived facial attractiveness: A study realized with an innovative methodology. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 158*(5), 580-590.
- Dadzie, O. E., & Petit, A. (2009). Skin bleaching: Highlighting the misuse of cutaneous depigmenting agents. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology, 23*(7), 741–750. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3083.2009.03150>
- Davids, L. M. Wyk, J. V., Khumalo, N. P., & Jablonski, N. G. (2016). The phenomenon of skin lightening: Is it right to be light? *South African Journal of Science, 112*(11/12), 1-5.
- De Souza, M. M. (2008). The concept of skin bleaching in Africa and its devastating health implications. *Clinics in Dermatology, 26*, (27-29).
- del Giudice, P. & Yves, P. (2002). The widespread use of skin lightening creams in Senegal: A persistent public health problem in West Africa. *International Journal of Dermatology, 41*(2), 69–72.

- Denton, C. R., Lerner, A. B., & Fitzpatrick, T. B. (1952). Inhibition of melanin formation by chemical agents. *J Invest Dermatol*, 18(2), 119–135.
- Dolan, A. (2008, March 17). Why men prefer fair-skinned maidens and women like dark, handsome strangers? *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article535828/Why-men-prefer-fairskinned-maidens-women-like-dark-handsome-strangers.html>
- Dorman, J. S. (2011). Skin bleach and civilization: The racial formation of blackness in 1920s Harlem. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4). Retrieved from <http://jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no4/Dorman%20Skin%20Bleach%20And%20Civilization.pdf>
- Dunne, S. & Edwards, J. (2010). International schools as sites of social change. *Journal of Research in International Education* 9(1) 24–39  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240909356716>
- Durosaro, A. I., Ajiboye, S. K. & Oniye, A. O. (2012). Perception of skin bleaching among female secondary school students in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(7). Retrieved from <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/viewFile/1847/1802/pdf>
- Elster, J. (1989). *Nuts and bolts for the social sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Faye, O., Keita, S., Diakit , F. S., Konar , H. D., & Ndiaye, H. T. (2005). Side effects of depigmenting products in Bamako, Mali. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 44(1), 35-6.
- Fihlani, P. (2013). Africa: Where black is not really beautiful. *BBC News, Johannesburg: Section of paper*,. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20444798>
- Forna, M. (1992). Beyond the pale black magazines do it, black pop stars, black models - promote images of lightskinned beauty that are encouraging women to reach for the bleach. *The Guardian*, Manchester (UK), November 2.
- Frankfort-Nachmias, C., Nachmias, D. & Dewaard, J. (2015). *Research methods in social sciences (8th ed.)* New York, NY: Worth.
- Gray, G. C. & Jones, M. D. (2016). A qualitative narrative policy framework? Examining the policy narratives of US campaign finance regulatory reform.” *Public Policy and Administration* 31(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076715623356>
- Green, D. P. & Shapiro, I. (1996). *Pathologies of rational choice theory: A critique of applications in political science*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gr ne-Yanoff, T. (2012). Paradoxes of rational choice theory. In S. Roeser, R. Hillerbrand, P. Sandin, & M. Peterson, (eds.) *Handbook of risk theory: Epistemology, decision theory, ethics, and social implications of risk*. New York: Springer.

- Gwaravanda, E. T. (2011). Shona proverbial implications on skin bleaching: Some philosophical insights. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4). Retrieved from <http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol4no4/Dorman%20Skin%20Bleach%20And%20Civilization.pdf>
- Harada, M., Nakachi, S., Tasaka, K., Sakashita, S., Muta, K., Yanagida, K. & Ohno, H. (2001). Wide use of skin-lightening soap may cause mercury poisoning in Kenya. *The Science of the Total Environment*, 269(1–3), 183–187.
- Heikkila, T., Weible, C. M., and Pierce, J. (2014). Exploring the policy narratives and politics of hydraulic fracturing. In: Jones M. D., Shanahan E. A. and McBeth MK (eds) *The science of stories: Applications of the narrative policy framework in public policy analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.185–206.
- Homans, G. (1961). *Social Behaviour: Its elementary forms*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hope, D. P. (2011). From browning to cake soap: Popular debates on skin bleaching in the jamaican dancehall, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4), 165-194.
- Hunter, M. L. (2011). Buying racial capital: Skin-bleaching and cosmetic surgery in a globalized world. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(4), 142-164.
- Japan (2011). *Lessons from minamata Disease and Mercury Management in Japan*. Japan: Ministry of the Environment.
- Jones, M. D., & McBeth, M. K. (2010). A narrative policy framework: clear enough to be wrong? *The Policy Studies Journal*, 38(2), 329-353.

- Julien, N. (2014). Skin bleaching in South Africa: A result of colonialism and apartheid? *Discovery: Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal*, 2, Article 4.
- Kartel, V. (2010). *Cake soap*. Adidjaheim Records, JA.
- Kpanake, L., Sastre, M. T. M., & Mullet, E. (2009). Skin bleaching among Togolese: A preliminary inventory of motives. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 36(3), 350-368.  
Retrieved from  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.878.3206&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Ladizinski, B. & Mistry, N. & Kundu, R. (2011). Widespread use of toxic skin lightening compounds: Medical and psychosocial aspects. *Dermatologic Clinics*. 29.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.det.2010.08.010>
- Lewis, K. M., Gaska, K., Robkin, N. Martin, A., Andrews, E., & Williams, J. (2012). The need for interventions to prevent skin bleaching: A look at Tanzania. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(7), 787–805. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219347124446701>
- Lewis, K. M., Robkin, N., Gaska, K. & Njoki, L. C. (2011). Investigating motivations for women's skin bleaching in Tanzania. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 35(1), 29-37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684310392356>
- Lewis, K., Robkin, N., Gaska, K., Njoki, L. C., Andrews, E., Jetha, K. (2009). The Tanzanian response to dangerous skin bleaching products and practices and the

gendered politics of it all: A critical analysis. *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 14.

Lindsey, T. B. (2011). Black no more: Skin bleaching and the emergence of new negro Womanhood Beauty Culture. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4,(4), 97-116.

Mah'e, A. (2014). The practice of skin-bleaching for a cosmetic purpose in immigrant communities. *Journal of Travel Medicine*, 21(4). 282–287.

<https://www.doi.org/10.1111/jtm.12106>

Mahe, A., Blanc, L., Halna, J.M., Keita, S., Sanogo, T. and Bobin, P. (1993). An Epidemiologic survey on the cosmetic use of bleaching agents by the women of Bamako, Mali. *Annales de Dermatologie et de Vénérologie*, 120, 870-873.

Mahe, A., Ly, F., & Perret. J. L. (2005). Systemic complications of the cosmetic use of skin bleaching products. *International Journal Dermatol*, 44(Suppl 1), 37-8.

Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mauss, M. (1925). *The gift*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

Mbayu, N. S. (2012). Skin bleaching in Western and Central Africa: A critical analysis utilizing the social learning and colonial mentality theories. *Proceedings of The National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)*. Retrieved from <https://www.weber.edu/wsuiimages/ncur2012/ncur-032012.pdf>

- Mcbeth, M., Jones, M. & Shanahan, E. (2014). The narrative policy framework. In P. A. Sabatier & C. M. Weible (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process, 3rd edition*. Boulder, Col: Westview, 225-266.
- Mire, A. (2001). Skin-bleaching: poison, beauty, power, and the politics of the colour line. *Resources for Feminist Research, 28*(3-4), 13-38.
- Mpengesi, A., & Nzuzi, N. (2014). Perceptions of skin bleaching in South Africa: A study of University of KwaZulu-Natal students (Unpublished honors project). University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- Nakazato, N., Schimmack, U. & Oishi, O. (2011). Effect of changes in living conditions on well-being: A prospective top-down bottom-up model. *Social Indicators Research, 100*, pgs.115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-010-9607-6>
- Ogu, M. I. (2013). Rational choice theory: Assumptions, strenghts, and greatest weaknesses in application outside the western milieu context. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review 1*(3), 90-99.
- Olumide ,Y. M., Elesha, S. O. (1986). Hydroquinone induced exogenous ochronosis. *Niger Med Pract., 11*, 103-106.
- Olumide, Y. M. (2010). Use of skin lightening creams. *Brit Med J. 341*, 345–346. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.c6102>
- Olumide, Y. M., Akinkugbe, A. O., & Altraide, D. (2008). Complications of chronic use of skin lightening cosmetics. *International Journal of Dermatology, 47*(4), 344-353.



- Pedersen, D. M. (2002). Intrinsic-extrinsic factors in sport motivation. *Journal of Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 95(2), 459-475. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/toc/pmsb/95/2>.
- Phoosangthong, C. & Sermsiriwiwat, N. (2006). How to whiten the market? A study of single women behaviour of whitening products in Thailand. Master's thesis dissertation. Retrieved from [http://www.eki.mdh.se/uppsatser/visa\\_uppsats.php?unr=1244](http://www.eki.mdh.se/uppsatser/visa_uppsats.php?unr=1244)
- Pierce J. J., Smith-Walter A., Peterson H.L. (2014). Research design and the narrative policy framework. In: Jones M. D., Shanahan E.A., McBeth M.K. (eds) *The Science of Stories*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Pitché, P. (2005). Cosmetic use of skin-bleaching products and associated complications. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 44(39). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-4632.2005.02811>
- Posavac, H. D., Posavac, S. S., and Posavac, E. J. (1998). Exposure to media images of female attractiveness and concern with body weight among young women. *Sex Roles*, 38, 187-201.
- Ravichandran, N. (2013). Skin whitening creams can cause long-term damage, doctors warn. *Mail Online India*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/html>, 10-02-2018.
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual theoretical, and methodological*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Ritzer, G. & Smart, B. (2001). *Handbook of social theory*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Robinson, P.A. (2011). Skin bleaching in Jamaica: A colonial legacy (DPhil thesis). Retrieved from <http://repository.tamu.edu>
- Rusmadi, S. Z., Ismail, S. N. S., & Praveena, S. M. (2015). Preliminary study on the skin lightening practice and health symptoms among female students in Malaysia. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 1-7. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2015/591790>. 10-02-2018.
- Sabatier, P. A., & Weible, C. M. (2014). *Theories of the policy process* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). London: Westview Press.
- Saffer, D., Tayob, H., Bill, P. L., & Baily, P. (1976). Continued marketing of skin-lightening preparations containing mercury. *South Africa Medical Journal*, 50(39), 1499.
- Sato, Y. (2013). Rational choice theory. *Sociopedia.isa*, DOI: 10.1177/205684601372
- Schultz, D. (2010). Ethics regulation across professions: The problem of gifting. *Public Integrity*, 12(2), 161–172. Retrieved from the Walden Library databases.
- Scott, J. (2000). Rational choice theory in browning. In Halcli, A. & Webster, F. (Eds.) *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Shanahan E A., Jones, M. D., and McBeth, M. K., (2018). How to conduct a Narrative Policy Framework study. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2017.12.002>

- Shanahan, Elizabeth A., Michael D. Jones, Mark K. McBeth, and Ross R. Lane. (2013). "An Angel on the Wind: How Heroic Policy Narratives Shape Policy Realities." *Policy Studies Journal* 41(3).
- Shefer, T. (2010). Narrating gender and sex in and through apartheid divides. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(4), 382-395.
- Shroff H, Diedrichs P.C., Craddock N. (2017) Skin color, cultural capital, and beauty products: An investigation of the use of skin fairness products in Mumbai, India. *Front Public Health* 5:365.
- Silverstein, B., Perdue, L., Peterson, B., & Kelly, E. (1986). The role of the mass media in promoting a thin standard of bodily attractiveness for women. *Sex Roles*. 14. 519-532. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00287452>
- Steele, R. (2016). How offenders make decisions: Evidence of rationality. *British Journal of Community Justice*, 13(3), 7-20. Retrieved from <http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/3257/1/BJCJ-13-3-Steele.pdf>
- Stepanova, E.V., & Strube, M.J. (2018). The role of skin color and facial physiognomy in racial categorization: moderation by implicit racial attitudes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48 (4), 867–878.
- Street, J. C., Gaska, K., Lewis, K. M., & Wilson, M. L. (2014). Skin bleaching: A neglected form of injury and threat to global skin. *African Safety Promotion Journal*, 12(1), 52-71.

- Summa, J. D. (1975). Chronic mercury poisoning from cosmetic creams. *Munch Med Wochenschr*, 117(26), 1121–1124.
- Sylvia, K. (2014). Hegemonic whiteness: A qualitative study of fairness advertisements in India. *Texas State Undergraduate Research Journal*, 2(1), 1-5.
- Ukpebor, P., & Ipogah, B. (2008). A study to indicate the importance of consumer based-brand equity on consumer perception of brand (A case study of fast food restaurants). (Masters' Thesis). Retrieved from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:bth-1229>
- United Nations Environment Programme. (2013). *Time to act*. 978-92-807-3310-5, Pdf.
- Wacker, J. G. (1998). A definition of theory: Research guidelines for different theory-building research methods in operations management. *Journal of Operations Management*, 16, 361-385.
- Weber, M. (1920). Conceptual Exposition. In *Economy and Society*. Edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich (1968).
- Westerhof, W. (1997). A few more grains of melanin. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 36: 573-574.
- Williamson, O. E. (1996). *Mechanisms of governance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What are your motivations for using bleaching cream on your skin?
2. How would you describe your experience so far using bleaching cream?
3. How do you pick the type of skin creams you use?
4. How do you seek advice and guidance regarding your choice of skin cream?
5. Can you share with me any negative consequences of using bleaching skin cream?
6. Are you aware of any government warnings or recommendations related to skin bleaching?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the use of skin bleaching creams?

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Topic:

Skin bleaching among female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria.

Time of the Interview:

Date:

Location:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interviewee year in school:

1. The interview session will commence with a warm welcome of the participant and a brief introduction by me including a brief review of the research topic.
2. Researcher will express to appreciation to the participant for showing up for the interview, volunteering and taking the time to be part of the study.
3. The signed consent form will be reviewed to ensure thoroughness, clarity and understanding by the participants. Participants will be asked if there are any final questions prior to interview.
4. Researcher will notify participant of the use of a digital recorder and offer the option of a one-on-one interview or a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI).
5. Digital Recorder will be turned on while the date, time, and location will be noted.

6. The interview will begin.
7. The interview will take approximately one hour for exhaustive responses to the questions.
8. Questions will be use in sequence while researcher will be on hand to respond to any question for participant using CAPI device.
9. Researcher will pause after asking each question to ensure participant's understanding of the question.
10. Participants will be allowed to skip or refuse to answer any question without giving any reason for doing so.
11. When the interview session is completed, researcher will give thanks to participants for their participation.

## Appendix C: Sample Cover Letter

Date:

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

My name is Adegboyega Adewoyin and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on the motivations for skin bleaching cream use among female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. There are vast number of studies detailing the perception of skin bleaching cream use among secondary school students and market women. The growing concern about the use of skin bleaching calls for a detailed examination of the motivations and uses of skin bleaching formulas especially among university students. It is imperative to know what drives the decision by female university students to engage in this behavior.

Your assistance in conducting this much needed research is important. I am seeking for your approval to conduct this study on your campus. If willing, I might need you to assist in identifying women who are students in your institutions who are between age 19 – 30 years of age, enrolled academically in a course of study and must have used skin creams for the purpose of lightening complexion. Identification of such students within your institutions will be a great opportunity to meet with them to discuss the nature of this study. The participants are free to choose whether or not to participate and



can discontinue participation at any time. Information provided by the participants will be kept strictly confidential.

I would welcome a telephone call from you to discuss any questions you may have concerning this study and your role in identifying any possible research participants.

Sincerely,

## Appendix D: First-Level Themes

**Topic:** Skin Bleaching Among Female University Students

**Research Questions:**

1. What motivates female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria to bleach their skin?
2. To what degree are female university students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, aware of policies related to skin bleaching products safety?

**Introduction.**

The task of data analysis in qualitative study begins with the collation of the raw data collected by identifying specific themes. The themes are then arranged in different categories through labelling or tagging. Thus, the themes are helpful by assigning meanings to the data. In qualitative study, data may be words, phrase or phrases that stand out to provide answers to the research questions. It is my responsibility to develop the skills needed to identify those themes that are expected in a study. This appendix is list of themes I expect to learn more about based on the interview with the participants and their responses to the interview questions. The interview questions were developed based on the conceptual frameworks, research questions and public policy issues related to skin bleaching.

**First Level Themes**

- Bleaching
- Skin Creams

- Bleaching Creams variety
- Motivations for cream use
- Rules and Regulations about creams
- Awareness of public policy
- Skin bleaching cream contents
- Knowledge of danger inherent
- Information sources
- Safety and long-term effect
- Years of experience using cream
- Internal or Extrinsic motivations

## Appendix E: Victor Olaiya—Omo Pupa—Full Lyrics

Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Omo pupa l'emi nfe	Light-skinned lady is the one I want
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Jowo ko feran mi o	Please you need to love me
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Omo pupa l'emi nfe	Light-skinned lady is the one I want
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Jowo ko feran mi o	Please you need to love me
Ti mba de London	When I get to London
Mawa f'owo oko ranse	I will send money for transport
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Jowo ko b'oko de o	Please you must arrive
Ti mba de London	When I get to London
Mawa f'owo oko ranse	I will send money for transport
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Jowo ko b'oko de o	I will send money for transport
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Omo pupa l'emi nfe	Light-skinned lady is the one I want
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Jowo ko feran mi o	Please you need to love me
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Omo pupa l'emi nfe	Light-skinned lady is the one I want
Omo pupa o	Light-skinned Lady
Jowo ko feran mi o	Please you need to love me
(End).	