

**INFLUENCE OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS ON SKIN BLEACHING AMONG
WOMEN IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL
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SEPTEMBER, 2024

Declaration by the Student

I, Nasteha Mohamed Abdille, admission number MCP-3-0253-1/2018, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university.

Signed.....

Date.....

Declaration by the Supervisors

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my loving husband and children for their unconditional love as a wife and mother. They were exceptionally supportive throughout my study period. All the way they made me feel lovely in my natural look. They have been my best cheerleaders.

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I owe gratitude to Allah for His grace that has seen me through my academic journey. Also, I'm grateful to my supervisors, lecturers, and colleagues at Kenya Methodist University (KEMU) for being supportive throughout my academic journey. The institution provided the necessary facilities while my lecturers and supervisors gave me immeasurable support during my study period. Finally, I thank my family and friends for their candid support, without which, my academic life would have been a tough task.

Abstract

Skin-bleaching refers to using beauty products like creams and soaps to whiten the skin. Past studies have indicated that skin-bleaching products have negative implications for the user. However, many women in Nairobi County continue applying skin-bleaching products despite evidence that they are harmful. Empirical evidence shows that little attention has been paid to demographic characteristics, body image, and peer pressure as significant factors influencing the continued behavior of skin bleaching among women living in Nairobi County. The current study examined the influence of psycho-social factors on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County. The study's objectives were: To examine the influence of demographic characteristics on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County, to establish the influence of body image on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County, and to find out the influence of peer pressure on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County. Objectification and Social Learning theories were adopted to guide the study. The study used descriptive design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 123 women purchasing skin-bleaching products from shops retailing cosmetic products within Nairobi County. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from the 123 participants while interviews involving 10 participants were conducted to collect qualitative data. The data collection tools were piloted using data collected within Nairobi CBD to ensure their validity and reliability. Quantitative data were analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean, percentage, and standard deviation, and the use of correlation to test the significance of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The findings were presented in bar charts and tables. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and presented in verbatim. The findings based on the responses indicated that the average score of the aggregate items measuring different independent variables were; demographic characteristics (3.06; indifferent), body image (2.94; indifferent), and peer pressure (2.91; indifferent). The scores indicate that demographic characteristics, body image, and peer pressure did not have a strong influence on skin-bleaching. Further correlation analysis denoted a 0.194 correlation between body image and skin bleaching with a p-value of 0.031. This was an indication of a statistically significant and positive relationship between body image and skin-bleaching. The correlations for demographic characteristics and peer pressure were 0.065 and 0.058 with p-values of 0.478 and 0.526 respectively. The figures indicated that demographic characteristics and peer pressure did not have a significant relationship with skin-bleaching. Regression analysis revealed that body image was a significant predictor of skin bleaching with an adjusted R-square value of 0.030 and p-value of 0.031. It was concluded that peer pressure and demographic characteristics did not have a significant relationship with skin-bleaching while body image had a significant influence on skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County. The findings have added knowledge in the area of skin bleaching within Nairobi and may help psychotherapists and other helpers in designing tailor-made interventions to empower women address body image challenges and desist from bleaching themselves. Further studies focusing on other possible predictor variables of skin bleaching to be conducted within Nairobi and other counties in Kenya.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BC	:	Before Christ
EC	:	European Council
IERC	:	Institutional Ethics Review Committee
KEMU	:	Kenya Methodist University
KBS	:	Kenya Bureau of Standards
KNBS	:	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NACOSTI	:	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation.
SPSS	:	Statistical Package Software for Social Sciences
UK	:	United Kingdom
USA	:	United States of America
WHO	:	World Health Organization
ZMWG	:	Zero Mercury Working Group.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background Information

The global use of skin lighteners (bleaching agents) is an old phenomenon. The practice is global for centuries, as evidenced by the archeological findings that indicated that the practice was common in Ancient Egypt around 4000 BC (Adetoogun et al , 2023). Also, the global use of skin bleaching agents is an old phenomenon with cosmetology and skincare having been in existence in Africa for centuries, as documented in archives (Durosaro et al., 2012; Street et al., 2014). In the past, the use of essential locally obtainable skin bleaching products or complicated imported bleaching agents was dependent on their availability and affordability (Kim et al., 2021). Today, nevertheless, the production of these materials has become commercialized and global making the cosmetic industry a fabulous one (Jablonski, 2012).

The cosmetic industry in the United Kingdom has advanced substantially. The use of skin bleaching products such as chemical peels, which involve the application of bleaching chemical solution on the skin to remove the top layer has become common in the contemporary age. The skin that grows back after removing the top layer is smoother and of lighter complexion. The procedure is often repeated until the desired skin complexion is achieved (Hermans, 2021). LaingBuisson (2020) projected growth in the skin-bleaching cosmetic industry in the UK, estimated at £3.6 billion in 2021. The market has not been without hiccups in that health complications have been reported after cosmetic practices. In addition, the Medical Defense Union in the UK reported that the success in negligence claims associated with skin-bleaching practices and other cosmetic practices was high at 45% as compared to claims from general operations at 30% (Griffiths & Mullock, 2017).

The sale of cosmetic products is also enormous in Europe. The study by Michalek et al. (2019) indicated an existence of hazardous skin lightening products within the European market with 26.3% of violations related to cosmetics. Further, the study showed that most hazardous products contain hydroquinone, clobetasol propionate, and mercury. Cosmetic products' regulation is considered possible solutions to ensure safety among the users of cosmetic products (Kim et al., 2021). The EC Cosmetic Regulation 1123/2009, however, does not control personalized cosmetic products because it involves the addition of active ingredients to commonly used cosmetic products at the point of purchase (Eixarch et al., 2019). Violations regarding cosmetic were also reported in Germany (17.29%), France (17.29%), Portugal (15.41%), as well as in the United Kingdom at 11.65% (Michalek et al. 2019).

Likewise, in Korea, the republic's Cosmetic Act does not regulate customized cosmetics (Kim et al., 2021). The challenge of regulating the components incorporated in cosmetics is also experienced in America because the USA's Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act does not control the business of customized cosmetics (Kim et al., 2021). Lack of adequate control has contributed to the occurrence of side effects associated with the unmonitored use of cosmetics. Quinonez et al. (2022) in their article reported that the manifestations of scar formation, dyschromia (patches of uneven color on the skin), hypertrichosis (excess hair growth), as well as extrinsic and intrinsic aging often occur in people seeking cosmetic treatments.

Despite the practice being universal, the use of cosmetics in the form of skin-bleaching agents remains more popular throughout the African continent, in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Togo, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sudan, Senegal and Ghana (Durosaro et al., 2012; Oyedele et al. 2010; Street et al. 2014; Ladizinski et al. 2011). Also, according to Kamagaju, et al. and Caroline, (2015), although the use of skin-lightening agents is every day throughout the world, the practice appears

to be ordinary among dark-skinned women of Sub-Saharan African origin. WHO estimates 77% of Nigerian women are involved in skin-bleaching behavior (Street et al., 2014). In Nigeria, 73.3% of 450 participants who reported using skin-bleaching products were women, while 27.3% were men. Similar research found that 75% of Nigerian women, 60% of Senegalese women, 50% of Malians, and 30% of Ghanaians consistently use bleaching products (Pollock et al., 2021).

Although a precise estimate of Kenyans using bleaching agents is not readily available, the number of bleachers is also high. This is evidence by the presence of a flourishing trade of backstreet skin-lightening creams, pills, and injections especially along River Road Street in Nairobi's central business area (Nyoni-Kachambwa et al., 2021). Similarly, the more orthodox Kenyan aesthetic market is flush with beauty products, which promise users a fairer skin tone in a convincing manner displaying before-and-after use images implying that lighter, blemish-less skin is preferable (Jannink, 2009). Most of these products are readily available along River Road Street in Nairobi City, in Eastleigh shopping malls, and in other beauty shops within the County. Some of the readily available bleaching products are Olay white radiance brightening intensive cream, glutathione pills, Kojic acid soap, and Caro light beauty products among others (Tesfamariam et al., 2024).

Surveys have found cosmetic products containing mercury, steroids, and hydroquinone; components found in bleaching agents (Benn et al., 2016; Durosaro et al., 2012; Oyedeki, 2010; Street et al., 2014). These harmful ingredients have been demonstrated to be in amounts that exceed the legal limits even in countries with strict regulatory systems such as the European Union and the USA (Benn et al., 2016). The other worrying research findings are that access to various illegal bleaching agents has been made easier through immigration, global travel, as well as online purchases (Benn et al., 2016). Studies conducted elsewhere concerning skin bleaching have indicated different reasons as to why the demeanor is common. According to the study by

Ladizinski et al. (2011) and Nimako (2016) some of the factors motivating the use of skin lighten products among Africans are memories of historical insinuations of European colonization, discrimination, slavery, and mistreatment, as well as in color ranking in executive positions and social class during the colonial era (Durosaro et al., 2012).

Studies indicate that skin-bleaching behavior is extensive, and the most common motivating factors are to remove skin blemishes, to soften the skin, to look more appealing "European-like," to attract the opposite sex (ladies looking more attractive to men), historical racism, and to thrill peers (Durosaro et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2011; Street et al., 2014). Other past studies have indicated that the use of skin-bleaching agents does not necessarily lead to the sought-after aspects of beauty. This is because bleaching agents have been proven to be detrimental to the users' physical, economic, and psychological well-being (Bhattar et al., 2015; Durosaro et al., 2012; Nimako, 2016; Street et al., 2014). Additionally, the findings from those studies demonstrated that the users of bleaching agents have some understanding of the side effects associated with the use but still maintain the behavior.

The findings from the cited studies reveal that skin-bleaching behavior is motivated by factors that fall under sociological, psychological, or biological categories. Other factors such as the availability of skin-bleaching products and the purchasing power may also play a role in discouraging or supporting the skin-bleaching practice. While many studies have demonstrated that skin-bleaching behavior is associated with different biological, sociological, and psychological motives, empirical data on psychosocial factors maintaining the behavior of skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County in Kenya is barely available. There was, therefore, a need to conduct the current study which focused on examining how psychological factors (body

image), social factors (peer pressure), and demographic characteristics contributed to the rampant skin-bleaching behavior among women in Nairobi County.

Societies comprise human populations with differences in statistical characteristics. People present with differences in their demographic characteristics including gender, age group, income level, education level, marital status, and race, among others. The fact that skin-bleaching products are readily available, their demand has no boundaries and extends across nations, ages, gender, social class, and marital status (Durosaro et al., 2012). People desiring appearance enhancement or lightening their skin, seek to use skin-bleaching products irrespective of their demographic characteristics (Durosaro et al., 2012).

Though skin-bleaching agents are readily available, not everyone seeks to use them. Body image which refers to the perceptual self (how one perceives their body), affective self (how one feels about the way one looks), and the cognitive self (one's beliefs and thoughts about their body), plays a role in the development of skin-bleaching behavior (Tiwari & Kumar, 2015). We live in a society where humanity has always valued body attractiveness and societies produce propaganda pictures of women's and men's ideal physique looks. As a result, people internalize such ideals during socialization (Tiwari & Kumar, 2015). In recent years, the most visible case of skin bleaching as a result of how one views her body image is the socialite Vera Sidika who claims that the demand for her services increased after she lightened her skin. The celeb is not unique in her quest for light skin because Kenyan communities glorify light skin complexion, which is, in most cases, considered superior to darker tones (Nyoni-Kachambwa et al., 2021). According to Dr. Pranav Mahendra Pancholi, Nairobi's leading cosmetic dermato-surgeon, women who use bleaching cosmetics argue that being lighter-skinned boosts their self-esteem and improves their romantic prospects. This is because Kenyan men prefer light-skinned women (Jannink, 2009).

Peer pressure is another factor that has been linked to skin-bleaching behavior. Peer pressure refers to the implicit or explicit influence, amounting to coercion, to embrace similar beliefs, values, and goals among a population with other similar characteristics. Studies have indicated that people of color who engage in skin-bleaching behavior report higher levels of low self-esteem and elevated lack of self-confidence about their natural skin tone due to their socialization (Balekyani, 2017). People who adopt the behavior of skin bleaching get persuaded by external factors such as societal pressures, family influences, social media, peer pressure, desire to fit in, and deeply rooted feelings of inferiority, and psychological effects of self-devaluing (Balekyanil, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Skin bleaching agents are ideally an option for fairer skin; "visualized beauty." However, this is never always the case, because findings from different studies have associated the products with negative bio-psychosocial and economic implications on the people using these products. This is because some of the components contained in the bleaching agents have been proven injurious to an individual's skin and health in general (Faruquee et al. 2012). It is in the open domain that skin-bleaching behavior has detrimental effects, yet the prevalence of the use of bleaching agents among women is still high. This behavior is also condemned openly within society as well as by the international community. Governments have not been left behind in trying to protect their citizens by passing laws that regulate the use of cosmetic products. Despite the measures put in place to regulate the use of cosmetic products, the black market in Nairobi is flooded with products containing harmful components. Studies have indicated that psychological, social, and biological factors are behind the high demand for cosmetic products (Nyoni-Kachambwa et al., 2021). Not every woman wants to whiten her skin. For instant, it's evident that some women including European women (naturally white) mainly use skin-bleaching products to achieve even skin-

complexion. Previous studies have been conducted in other regions, focusing on specific populations, and using various study designs to examine factors associated with the use of skin-bleaching products. Some studies have focused on social, psychological and biological factors associated with skin-bleaching in countries like South Africa (Rahman et al., 2021), Tanzania (Lewis et al., 2011), Ghana (Asumah et al., 2022), Zimbabwe (Kachambwa et al., 2021), Philippine (Mendoza, 2014), and Saudi Arabia (Alrayyes, et al., 2019). Data on skin-bleaching behavior in Kenya is generally scanty. Specifically, data indicating how psychosocial factors impact on the behavior of skin-bleaching in Kenya irrespective of the serious side effects and complications associated, is scarce. The current study, therefore, examined how psychosocial factors specifically body image, peer pressure, and demographic characteristics, contributed to the continued use of bleaching agents despite the common knowledge that these products hurt the user.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The current study examined the influence of demographic characteristics, peer pressure, and body image impact on the use of skin-bleaching agents among women in Nairobi County. The researcher anticipated that the study findings would contribute to the knowledge regarding the factors that motivate the use of skin-bleaching products irrespective of the side effects associated with the behavior.

1.4 Study Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To examine the influence of demographic characteristics on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County.
2. To find out the influence of body image on skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County.

3. To establish the influence of peer pressure on skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study.

H01: There is no significant statistical relationship between demographic characteristics and the continued behavior of skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County.

H02: There is no significant statistical relationship between body image and the continued behavior of skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County.

H03: There is no significant statistical relationship between peer pressure and the continued skin-bleaching behavior among Women in Nairobi County.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Bleaching has both beneficial and harmful physiological and psychological impacts. Many people suffering from skin anomalies including acne, vitiligo, and sunburns use skin-bleaching products as treatment. Therefore, skin bleaching products have been used under prescription to counter physical and psychological distress associated with skin infections and other anomalies, which is a desirable effect.

Additionally, women using skin-bleaching products are likely to acquire even lighter skin which makes them enjoy social benefits such as attracting a spouse, securing a job, and standing out as more beautiful/appealing among their peers, attributes that past studies have shown to inspire the use of such products. Nevertheless, the use of skin bleaching products without a dermatologist's prescription can cause skin lesions, eczema, acne, warts, and sunburns, among others. While in the beginning, a woman may acquire her desired looks and thus psychosocial well-being, there exist negative psychosocial implications of extensive use of skin bleaching products including low self-

esteem, depression, suicidal ideation, shame, guilt, inferiority complex, as well as poor identity because of the subsequent skin anomalies (Olumide et al., 2018; Oyedemi et al. 2010).

The use of skin-bleaching beauty products is prevalent among women living in Nairobi County despite their proven dermatological and other body systemic complications, negative psychological and social implications, as well as negative economic implications (Tesfamariam et al., 2024). Past studies have demonstrated different factors that correlate with the use of skin-bleaching products. However, studies indicating psychosocial factors that contribute to the continued use of skin-bleaching products among women living in Nairobi County, despite the measures put in place to stop the unendorsed use of such products, have hardly been conducted. The gap necessitated conducting of this study. The current study was, therefore, intended to pay attention to the influence of body image, peer pressure and demographic characteristics on the continued practice of skin bleaching in Nairobi County, irrespective of their negative implications.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study findings contributed to the existing knowledge of how psychosocial factors contributed to the behavior of skin bleaching among women. The current study is valuable to policymakers who engage in matters of controlling the use of skin bleaching in Kenya. The findings offer insights into the role of psychosocial factors in women who still chose to use skin-bleaching products irrespective of the side effects associated with the action. The findings may inform the policymakers in reviewing the existing national policies on the use of skin-bleaching products. The findings may also benefit psychotherapists with information relating to motivating factors sustaining the use of skin-bleaching products. Such information may inform them in tailor-making interventions for women involved in skin-bleaching behavior and in proactive measures taken to

prevent the use of skin-bleaching products. The study also provides relevant literature for reference by future academicians about skin-bleaching among women.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The current study explored the psychosocial factors popularizing the practice of skin bleaching among women aged between 20 and 60 years in Nairobi County. The psychosocial factors addressed in the study were body image and peer pressure as well as demographic characteristics. The study population included women purchasing skin-bleaching products for personal use from the retailing shops famed for beauty products within Nairobi's central business area in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study participants were women between 20 and 60 years and, therefore, the findings may not be generalized to the entire women population using bleaching agents. The study only focused on Nairobi County hence the outcomes may only be generalized to other geographical areas with care.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

- i. An assumption was made that the researcher would have managed to recruit the intended number of participants within the stipulated period.
- ii. The researcher assumed that the identified participants would readily consent to participate in the study.
- iii. The researcher also assumed that the study tools, procedures, and data analysis procedures would yield accurate information.
- iv. Lastly, it was assumed that the environmental and political conditions would be conducive to allow the process of data collection.

1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

Bleaching/lightening agents: Beauty products that are used to bleach skin with the intention of increasing beauty by making the skin even and lighter and have unintended negative implications on the users.

Skin bleaching: The behavior of using beauty products that have skin-lightening effects on the skin.

Demographic: Statistical characteristics of study participants (women using skin-bleaching products and living in Nairobi County) including marital status, age, education level, and employment levels which may encourage the use of skin-bleaching products.

Body Image: How a woman perceives, feels, and thinks about her dark skin or one with blemishes as unattractive.

Peer Pressure: The implicit or explicit allurements from friends or significant others aggregating to coercion to adapt the behavior of skin-bleaching.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: Introduction

In chapter two, the study's independent variables (body image, peer pressure, and demographic characteristics) in relation to the dependent variable (skin bleaching) are discussed in depth. Also, two theoretical frameworks: Objectification Theory and Social Learning Theory have been used to elaborate on how the independent variables are likely to explain the factors that motivate skin-bleaching habits among women. Also, a conceptual framework has been used to outline how the study's independent, intervening, and dependent variables relate.

2.2: Empirical Review

2.2.1 Demographic Characteristics and Skin Bleaching

Existing literature shows that consumer decision-making styles have a significant effect on product involvement (Puska et al., 2018). Additionally, past studies have demonstrated that product involvement and consumer decision-making styles differ between age, gender, income, and education categories (Puska et al., 2018; Wahab et al., 2023). Skin-bleaching behavior is now a global practice (Souza, 2016). The cosmetic practice of applying creams, tropical ointments, gels, and using soaps to de-pigment the skin complexion, is not only a women's affair but also a common practice among men (Rahman et al., 2021). People desiring light skin or to enhance the appearance of their skin patronize beauty products with bleaching components, often marketed as skin toner, lighteners, or whiteners (Durosaro et al., 2012). Seeking for a lighter skin tone (bleaching skin) has constantly attracted attentiveness in Western societies, particularly. This is because light skin tone is perceived as symbolizing prominence, superiority, beauty, sex appeal, and higher social ranking (Alghamdi, 2010). In Europe, women are chiefly white, and thus their main challenge is

the development of hyper-pigmentation as a result of getting exposed to heat and due to the natural process of aging. As such, European women's chief reason for using bleaching products is to achieve and maintain radiant skin (Alghamdi, 2010).

The study by Rusmadi et al. (2015), which recruited undergraduate and postgraduate university students in Malaysia indicated that skin-bleaching was more common among female students compared to male students. Additionally, the study indicated a significant relationship between the level of education and skin bleaching practice with a negative correlation ($r=-0.20$, $p=0.041$). The study also indicated a negative correlation between level of income (student monthly allowances) and skin bleaching practice where most undergraduate students (87.5%) used skin-bleaching products compared to post-graduate students (50%). A similar study revealed that in the Philippines, women across a wide range of ages, engaged in skin-bleaching behavior (Mendoza, 2014). A similar cross-sectional analytic study by Alrayyes et al. (2019) involving Saudi female students indicated that skin color did not correlate to skin-bleaching behavior. The study also revealed that 67% of the study participants used skin-bleaching agents for cosmetic purposes and that low levels of education and low social-demographic status correlated with skin-bleaching behavior.

In Africa, studies indicate that skin-bleaching behavior is more common among women. For instance, the study by Asumah et al. (2022) supported the findings that skin-bleaching behavior is more prominent among women. The study analyzed data from 331 shoppers in Kumasi, Ghana who consented and successfully filled out the questionnaire. 40.4 percent of the respondents acknowledged current or past use of skin-bleaching beauty products, of whom 26.6% were men and 56.5% were women. Females were significantly associated with the behavior of skin bleaching (odds ratio 3.59; 95% and confidence interval of 2.26-5.70). The study participants engaging in

skin-lightening behavior agreed more with the prompts that related lighter skin with beauty, attractiveness, self-esteem, and wealth (Asumah et al., 2022). The study also indicated that being single correlated with skin-bleaching behavior as compared to being in marriage. The latter findings were also reported in the study by Kachambwa et al. (2021). The study involving women living in Zimbabwe demonstrated that the statuses of widow, single, or divorced positively correlated with skin bleaching with the odds of skin bleaching of 2.87 and a P-value of 0.03 in relation to women in marriage. The cross-sectional study by Yusuf et al. (2019) which involved women in Somaliland gave similar findings that, being unmarried positively correlated with skin-bleaching behavior.

A cross-sectional study by Rahman et al. (2021) that involved South African health science students had similar findings. The study indicated a low prevalence of skin-bleaching products, possibly because of the respondents' academic statuses and area of specialization (health science), making them aware of the side effects associated with skin-bleaching practice. Also, the study indicated that age and area of specialization in bachelor education were not significant predictors of skin bleaching, and that gender did not correspond to the behavior of skin bleaching. The study by Kachambwa et al. (2021) which involved Zimbabwean women indicated that the likelihoods of skin bleaching among dark-skinned females were higher by 95% and a p-value of 0.01 compared to that of light-skinned females. The findings thus indicated that skin-bleaching behavior was more preferential among dark-skinned women. The study also indicated that being widowed, divorced, or single was associated with the behavior of skin bleaching with a p-value of 0.03 in relation to married women. Another finding of the study was that age, locality, and level of education did not correlate with the behavior of skin bleaching. The study, however, reported higher odds of skin-bleaching behavior among employed women with a p-value of 0.02 relative to unemployed

females (Kachambwa et al., 2021). Age and education level were not significant predictors of skin-bleaching behavior among women in Kumasi, Ghana, and Zimbabwe (Kachambwa et al., 2021).

2.2.2 Peer-Pressure and Skin Bleaching

The skin-bleaching phenomenon is a complex, subtle, and delicate one in that people have inferred whiteness as a universal standard of progress. What people are not consciously aware of is that when people take whiteness as primacy, the actual yearning is not necessarily to be physically white, but consciously or unconsciously want to access things such as elevated social and economic statuses as well as many privileges white people seem to easily access. Nevertheless, people seek to look white physically using skin-bleaching products, hoping to achieve access to scarce resources in society. Peer pressure refers to the implicit or explicit persuasion that amounts to a compulsion to adopt common goals, values, and beliefs. Past studies have indicated that Blacks who engage in skin bleach behavior are more prone to experiencing low self-esteem and elevated insecurities because of how they have been socialized to perceive their natural skin tone (Balekyani, 2017). Since people have been socialized to think of dark skin as inferior to white skin, dark people may end up considering whitening part of their dark skin or their whole body. Studies have also indicated that people who bleach their skin are more culturally exposed to skin-bleaching behavior or are raised in families where everybody exhibits the behavior, thus, developing the interest to imitate others. External factors such as societal pressures, peer pressure, pressure from family members, social media, desire to fit in, as well as deeply rooted feelings of inferiority and psychological effects of self-devaluing caused by colonialism that took place in many of the African countries, plays a critical role in determining the behavior of skin-bleaching. Verbatim from the study by Balekyani (2017), which involved an African community living in the Midwestern United States of America, revealed how a girl learned the behavior of skin-bleaching

from her sister: “I started bleaching because of my older sister, I grew up watching her change her use of different creams” (Balekyani, 2017). The verbatim indicates that some people use bleaching agents to conform to peer or societal pressures.

In Africa, skin bleaching is also common, the study by Lewis et al. (2011), found that Tanzanian women in Dar es Salam used bleaching agents to be whiter, more European-looking, "beautiful," more attractive to men, and be like their peers (Lewis et al., 2011). The study also reported that some participants' colleagues and friends insisted they lighten up. A 51-year-old food preparer said she used bleaching creams to attract customers while a 22-year-old student continued using lightning creams after realizing her friend wanted to be like her, and other study participants wanted to be stylish (Lewis, 2011). A similar cross-sectional study by Rahman et al. (2021) that involved South African health science students had similar findings. 48% of the respondents believed that friends and family members were more likely to influence a person to use skin-bleaching products. Some companies hire light-skinned salespeople to advertise their products, and social media portraits are mostly light-skinned, indicating light skin is beautiful (Oyedepi et al. 2010). Such pressures can make women consider skin bleaching to secure social favors.

2.2.3 Body Image and Skin Bleaching

Australian neurologist Paul Schilder coined the concept of body image (Tiwari and Kumar, 2015). Researchers believe body image has cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components. The way one sees himself/herself (perceptual self), how one feels about the way they look (affective self), their beliefs and thoughts about their body (cognitive), and what they do regarding the way they look (behavioral). Humanity has always valued body attractiveness. Societies produce propaganda pictures of women's and men's ideal physique looks, which people internalize during socialization (Tiwari & Kumar, 2015). The study by Rusmadi et al. (2015), which recruited undergraduate and

postgraduate university students in Malaysia indicated that respondents (53.8%) believed that having lighter skin provided a higher level of self-esteem, that women with white skin were more attractive as compared to dark-skinned women, and that men considered women with white skin as more gorgeous. Other perceptions were that lighter skin increases a woman's chance of securing a good job, getting higher chances of getting a spouse for marriage, looking healthier, and belonging to a higher social class (Rusmadi et al., 2015). The findings support the presupposition that people have been socialized to believe in ideal beauty. I've been educated to conceive of an ideal body image as fair-skinned, a high-quality image that pleases and increases perception, prolongs eager evaluation, and causes enduring and favorable admiration.

Other societies have persuaded their members to believe that having light skin carries many privileges (Hunter, 2011), hence dark-skinned persons may contemplate whitening their skin. A cross-sectional study by Rahman et al. (2021) that involved South African health science students supports the belief. The study's findings revealed that 76% of the respondents believed that individuals who participate in skin-bleaching behavior do so because it provides a more fashionable look.

Colonial racism in Africa contributes to a preference for lighter skin. During colonial times in Africa, Europeans constructed a racial hierarchy ranking dark-skinned native Africans at the bottom and regarding them as primitive and inferior compared with the light-skinned as a custom of managing Africans (Lewis, 2011). Pre-colonial aesthetic ideals preferred lighter skin tones, say some researchers. Colonial racial systems that favored light skin exacerbated racial preferences. Skin beauty should be emphasized while discussing ideal body image. Skin color and feel are the easiest ways to modify body image. In the internet age, there is a strong interest in beauty or the ideal body image, as seen on Instagram and Facebook. Social media being an interactive

communication platform has made sharing of information quick and wide. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have millions of active users. Such platforms enable the use of augmented-reality tools such as filters that make it possible to alter natural looks. Artificial beautification using filters lowers a person's self-confidence in his/her natural look. The perceived ideal looks and low self-esteem push an individual to use skin-bleaching products to match the ideal looks they often see on social media platforms (Sharma et al., 2022).

Beauty's pursuit is only surpassed by its acquisition. Past studies on skin-bleaching products suggested their usage is increasing in places with increased modernity, capitalism, and Western influence (Olumide et al., 2018). More than a third of the research group in Durban, South Africa said that lighter skin boosted self-esteem. A lighter-skinned woman was also deemed lovelier. Even Kenyan media prefers light-skinned models and superstars like Vera Sidika and Size Eight for TV and magazine ads (Tesfamariam et al., 2024). Whiteness has been portrayed as the ultimate beauty, and its "purity" has been preserved (Jannink, 2009). Blackness symbolizes ugliness (Charles, 2013; Jannink, 2009). Cultural aspects have supported the assumption that white skin parallels certain Western standards such as financial independence and high social class. Some bleachers believe the technique will make them gorgeous and popular (Jannink, 2009). Society's beliefs influence people who care how others view them without contemplating the cost.

2.3: Theoretical Framework

Different models have been formulated to explain how behavior is learned and maintained. For the present study, Objectification Theory and Social Learning Theory will be used to explain the influence of psychological factors on skin bleaching among women.

2.3.1 Objectification Theory

Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts in 1997 (Calogero et al., 2015) developed the objectification theory. The theory posits that females in society are socialized to coopt an observer's perspective as the most significant view of their physical selves (Calogero et al., 2015). In other words, an individual's appearance is judged as good or bad, depending on the observer. Such a mentality is prevalent in societies that sexually objectify a woman's body: perceiving a woman as a mere object of sexual desire and disregarding their personality or dignity (McKinley, 2011). In modern society, objectification takes place through actual interpersonal encounters such as with friends, family, colleagues, acquaintances, and employers. Also, media encounters such as Facebook, Instagram, television, and print media implement a significant role in self-objectification in the contemporary world (Calogero., 2015).

The familiar concept in self-objectification is that women are viewed as a body valued predominantly for their usefulness by others in society. Such a perception has detrimental impacts on girls and women in general because it turns a woman's body into a thing to be looked at, evaluated, and potentially objectified, by observers thus disregarding her totality as a distinct person (Moradi & Huang, 2018). Self-objectified women are more troubled about their body image which may result in shame, anxiety, as well as diminished psychological well-being. Additionally, they are vulnerable and thus more likely to become victims of peer pressure and desire to attain status in society. The theory places female bodies in a social-cultural context to explain the lived experiences and the psychological risks encountered by women and girls who face self-objectification. Such women are vulnerable and more likely to modify their bodies through the use of bleaching and anti-aging products. Self-objectification theory can consequently explain why women tend to use bleaching products to lighten their skin and remove blemishes from the skin as

they want to be perceived as beautiful. However, objectification theory does not explain how learning which occurs through operant, and observation may contribute to skin bleaching. Consequently, the study considered using the social learning theory to help in understanding how skin bleaching is influenced by external factors such as peer pressure.

2.3.2 Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura instituted social learning theory in 1971. The theory emphasizes imitating others' modeled behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions (Bandura, 2015). Bandura's social learning theory explains human behavior through cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences.

According to Bandura, four component processes underlie observational learning. The processes include attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 2015). The ability to pay attention is dependent on the modeled event's distinctiveness, prevalence, affective valence, functional value, and complexity. Observers' characteristics that enable paying attention include their sensory capacity, perceptual set, arousal level, and past reinforcement. Retention of the observed behavior is dependent on the individual's cognitive organization ability, symbolic coding ability, the ability of symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal ability. Motor reproduction involves the observer's physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, and accuracy of feedback (Bandura, 2015; McLeod, 2016).

Lastly, motivation to reproduce an observed behavior relies on external reinforcement, vicarious reinforcement, and self-reinforcement (Lange et al., 2012). Additionally, Bandura proposed the concept of reciprocal determinism also regarded as a triadic reciprocity model. The model shows how three factors; cognitive process, behavior, and context influence and are influenced by each other simultaneously. Bandura argues that not only does the environment impact a people's

thinking pattern, but a people's subsequent behavior also influences their environment (Bandura, 2015).

Reciprocal determinism may explain how skin-bleaching behavior is maintained. For instance, women living in Nairobi County may be attracted to the use of skin-bleaching products that are readily available. Cognitive factors that might influence the behavior of skin-bleaching include a woman's values and past experiences (personal or observed) with the behavior. Finally, the context has to do with the reward structure for skin-bleaching behavior, and according to reciprocal determinism, the three factors are in play.

Bandura's social learning theory, therefore, emphasizes the importance of observation, modeling, and imitating behavior as antecedents for learning new behaviors. Bandura's theory is significant in explaining skin-bleaching behavior because, past studies indicate that skin-lightening agent use is a habit passed down through generations by observational learning (Lewis, 2011; Lewis et al., 2011). Bandura says modeling is a complex process, behavior, attitude, or emotions must be watched. Once a person observes a behavior, he or she must be able to retain, cognitively rehearse, and desire to enact it. This coded information guides action upon repeated observation (Lange et al., 2012). In some cases, coded information can be reprehensible and an individual is only likely to adopt modeled behavior if it produces desired results (Lange et al., 2012). For someone to notice a modeled act, it must be unique, dominate similar acts, have functional value, and be intrinsically attractive (Lange et al., 2012). Past studies have indicated the functional value of a woman's beauty as a high chance of getting popular among peers, securing a job, and getting married, among others. As such, an advertisement on how to achieve fair skin without blemishes (the ideal skin complexion) will attract women's attention and lure many into the use of bleaching agents to achieve the functional values associated with a woman's beauty.

A modeled behavior observer must also have motor reproduction ability, including physical capabilities, self-observation, and accurate feedback (Lange et al., 2012). This implies that a learner of skin-bleaching behavior must also have the capacity of reproducing the observed behavior. As such, a woman's demographic characteristics such as age and level of education may have some influence in determining skin-bleaching behavior. For a woman to start and maintain the skin bleaching, she must have the financial capacity to acquire the bleaching products available in the market. Bandura's theory also posits that external, vicarious, and self-reinforcement play a significant role in maintaining behavior (Lewis, 2011). As such, a bleaching product must yield desirable effects that will eventually lead to external (feedback from significant others), vicarious (imagined or real interpersonal appraisal), and self-reinforcement for a woman to continue using the bleaching products. Past studies have indicated that role models who are admired for their successes, such as getting a spouse, a job, and being popular among peers, drive skin-bleaching behavior (Dlova et al., 2012; Kamagaju et al., 2015). In addition, skin bleaching is used for its initial fair and blemish-free effect. Also, conforming to a peer group and society's ideal of beauty motivates self-reinforcement, as well as exposure to print, TV, and social media advertisements portraying fair-skinned women as splendid, influences women's perception and attitude towards bleaching agents (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2015).

2.4 Knowledge Gap

Several studies have been conducted across the globe to measure different variables related to the use of skin-bleaching products. Studies have demonstrated that people use skin-bleaching agents for cosmetic and pharmacological reasons. Nevertheless, the use of skin-bleaching beauty products has both beneficial and harmful physiological and behavioral implications (Olumide et al., 2018). The psychosocial implications associated with extensive use of skin-bleaching products include

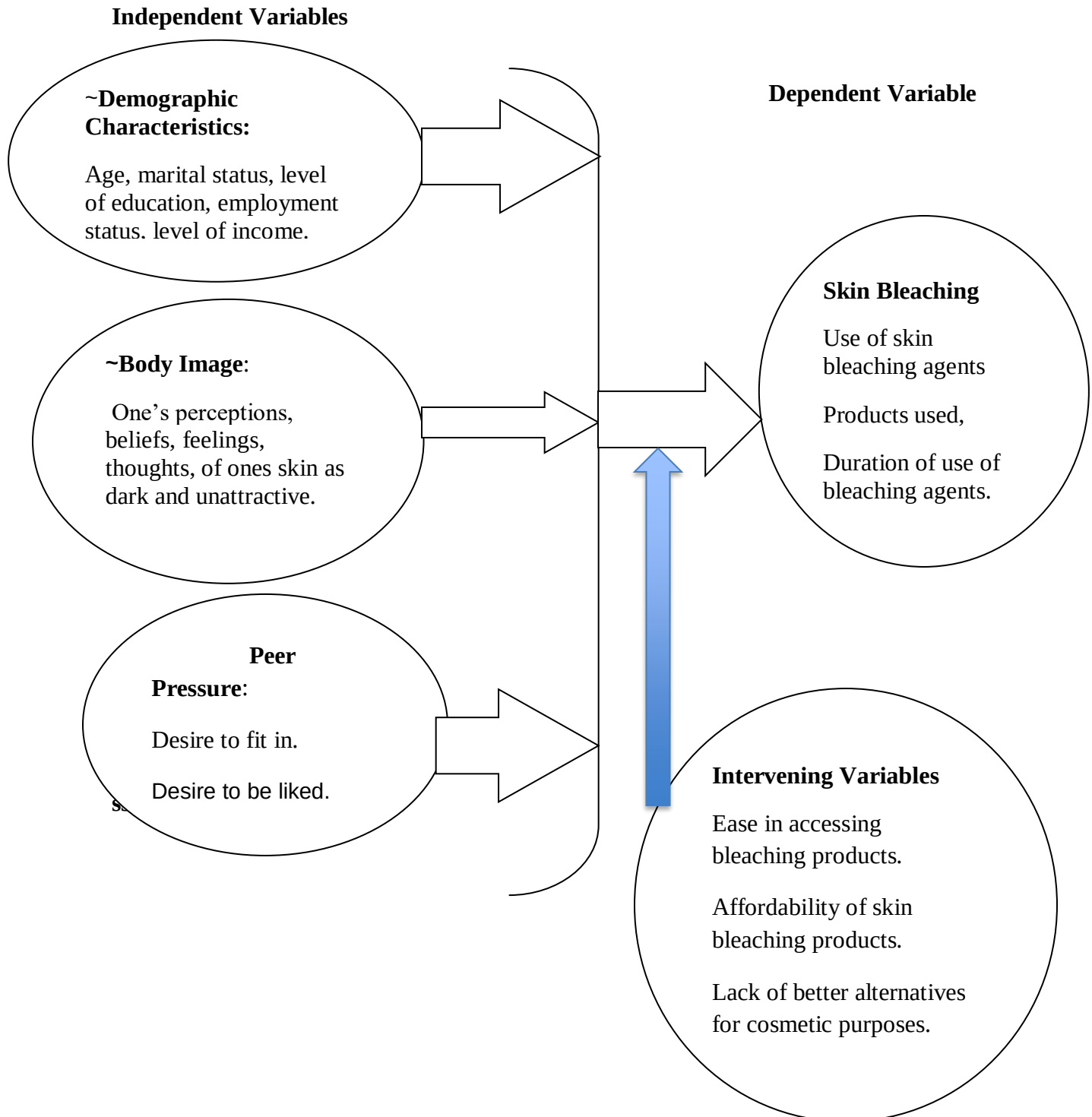
low self-esteem, depression, suicidal ideation, shame, guilt, inferiority complex, as well as poor identity (Olumide et al., 2018; Oyedele et al. 2010). It is in the public domain that skin bleaching agents result in undesirable consequences, yet the behavior is still rampant as indicated by different past studies and in Nairobi, a flourishing business in beauty products within the county.

The reviewed studies employed various study designs, were conducted in diverged localities globally, and used different demographic characteristics of the respondents. In most reviewed studies, the findings were similar and it, therefore, became necessary to conduct a study using a different design (descriptive research design) and in a different locality, Nairobi to ascertain if the findings would be similar or different from regard to how peer pressure, demographic characteristics, and body image contributed to the skin- bleaching behavior among women irrespective of the undesirable effects associated with the behavior.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework



2.5.1 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 shows how independent variables relate to the dependent variable. The dependent variable is skin-bleaching behavior, indicated by the use of beauty products for bleaching the skin. Demographic characteristics are one of the independent variables likely to influence skin-bleaching behavior. It is measured by identifying respondents' age, level of income, marital status, and level of education. Peer pressure is another independent variable likely to influence skin-bleaching behavior. It is measured using factors such as the desire to fit in, the ability to express an opinion, the desire to be unique, the desire to be liked, and being easily influenced by others. Body image is the other independent variable likely to influence skin-bleaching behavior. The variable is measured using factors such as one's perceptions, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and actions that relate to an individual's physical appearance.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the study's research design, the target population, the sampling technique, methods of data collection, as well as the study instruments and data analysis procedures adopted in the study.

3.2 Research Design.

The researcher conducted a descriptive study using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Descriptive design was considered appropriate for the study because it involves describing, explaining, and interpreting conditions of the present and allows the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Devi, 2017). The research explored the influence of demographic characteristics, peer pressure, and body image on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County. As such, the descriptive design enabled the researcher to collect the data of interest as subjectively reported by the study participants. Descriptive research was suitable for the current study because it concerns itself with existing practices, conditions, differences, and held opinions (Bernard & Bernard, 2012).

3.3 Site of the Study

The current study was conducted in Nairobi County, the number 047 county in Kenya, located in the former Nairobi Province. Nairobi County is ethnically diverse hosting people from all the 47 tribes who relocate from rural areas in search of jobs. Also, Nairobi County is a metropolitan city, and the diversity ensured a representative sample. Within Nairobi County, the business of skin-bleaching is gaining popularity, particularly along Nairobi's River Road Street, a busy market street notorious for its black-market commerce. Some of the estates within Nairobi County include

Buruburu, Nyayo, Githurai, Muthaiga, Kitisuru, Rosslyn, and Lavington Nairobi County is very competitive with a high population of people taking up white-collar jobs that require one to remain presentable.

3.4 Target Population

The target population in research refers to a real or hypothetical set of people, events, or objects to which researchers engage to generalize study results (Cohen et al., 2017). The current study targeted women who went to purchase skin-bleaching products from retail shops within the Nairobi central business area. According to the 2019 census, the population of females of all ages living in Nairobi County was 2,204,376. However, data indicating the number of adult women using skin-bleaching products within Nairobi County at large was missing (Kenya Bureau of Standards [KNBS], 2019). As such, the study targeted women who frequented the retail shops famed for retailing cosmetics products to purchase the products for personal use.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

It was not practical to obtain the actual number of women using skin-bleaching agents within Nairobi County. Therefore, there was no predetermined population size to start with. The researcher used opportunistic purposeful sampling technique to recruit 123 women within the age bracket of 20 to 60 years. The women recruited into the study were buying the products for personal use from the retailing shops transacting cosmetics within Nairobi's central business area. 10 out of the identified 123 participants were requested to also participate in interviews after responding to the questionnaires. Sample determination was guided by Andrew Fisher's formula. All the participants were recruited from within Nairobi County.

3.6: Sample Size

The determination of the study's sample size was guided by Andrew Fisher's formula. The sample size according to Andrew Fisher's formula used the same parameters as different confidence

intervals and standard deviations have been advocated for determining the study participants. The study used parameters that have been used in several psychological studies. The parameters included a confidence level of 80% (has a Z-Score of 1.28), a standard deviation of 0.3, and a confidence interval of 0.05.

Andrew Fisher's formula:

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{(Z\text{-score})^2 \times \text{Std Dev} \times 1 - \text{StdDev}}{(\text{Confidence interval})^2}$$

(Confidence interval) 2

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{(1.28)^2 \times 0.3 \times (1 - 0.3)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{1.6384 \times 0.21}{0.0025}$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = 137.6256,$$

Though the sample size was expected to be 138, the actual study was conducted with 123 respondents who managed to respond to the study questions.

approximately 138 participants.

3.7 Instrumentation

The current study adopted questionnaires and interviews as tools for collecting data. The questionnaire yielded quantitative data and was applicable because of its ease of use, its affordability, and ease of analyzing the obtained data. To cover the study objectives exhaustively, the questionnaire was structured in such a way that it had section A for testing the dependent variable (skin bleaching), section B for testing the demographic characteristics, section C for testing the influence of body image on skin bleaching, and section D for testing influence of peer pressure on skin bleaching. The questionnaire items were rated on a Likert scale whereby participants had the option of indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the possibilities given ranging from; Strongly Agree (5), Agree, (4), do not know (3), Disagree (2),

and Strongly Disagree (1). The Likert scale is advantageous in that it yields an ordinal-level measure of the participant's feelings and thoughts in relation to the study variables (Devi, 2017). Open-ended questions, on the other hand, yielded exceptional, non-predetermined, and unscripted responses that revealed how the respondents thought and felt about the topic (Devi, 2017).

The researcher also used open-ended questions to guide the interview. The interviews helped in generating in-depth information regarding the influence of psychosocial factors on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County. Obtaining data from questionnaires and interviews enabled triangulation and richness of the data obtained.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

3.8.1 Validity

Validity refers to how well a test measures what it's supposed to. Content validity is how well an instrument represents the studied factors (Bernard & Bernard, 2012). To ensure content validity, the researcher formulated questions based on the study's objectives to cover all variables. For the interview guide, the researcher used testimonial validity to ensure that data collected from the respondents were reflective of their interview responses.

3.8.2 Reliability

A study tool's reliability signifies the degree of consistency with which the tool measures the attribute it was designed to measure (Bernard & Bernard, 2012). To ensure the reliability of the tool that was used in the study, the researcher administered the same questionnaire to ten study participants for a pilot study. The findings were used to calculate the value of Cronbach's alpha which was α 0.82 (greater than α 0.7). The tool was considered reliable and was used to collect data from other participants.

3.9 Piloting/ Pre-testing the Questionnaire

Piloting of the research instrument was done by administering the research tools to a few study participants to identify any flaws. Piloting was done to examine if the questionnaire used in data collection comprised of questions that were clear to subjects and whether the participants fully understood the instructions and content. Two weeks before collecting actual data, the researcher administered questionnaires to ten respondents and interviewed one of the respondents. The obtained data was analyzed to scrutinize if the respondents understood the questions. The researcher adopted the tool because after analyzing the data obtained, it was found that the responses captured what the study had intended to collect. The analysis of the data obtained in piloting had a Cronbach coefficient with α value above 0.7 ($\alpha \geq 0.82$). The tool was, therefore, considered ideal for data collection and the researcher administered the remaining questionnaires for the actual data collection procedure.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

The researcher used Statistical Package Software for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26 to analyze quantitative data. SPSS was used to leverage descriptive statistics, which included frequencies, mean, standard deviation, percentages, and cross-tabulation. The quantitative findings were presented by use of tables, and bar charts. The study also conducted inferential analysis using regression models. With the exclusion of the factors, demographic and peer pressure, and the retention of body image factors in the model, the coefficient model that was adopted in the study was as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + e_i$$

Where Y= dependent variable

X = independent variable

β = standardized beta coefficient

α = regression equation constant

e_i = error term

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and presented verbatim. First, the researcher translated and transcribed thematically the audio recordings obtained during the interviews. The transcribed information obtained through audio recording and the data obtained through notetaking was typed using Microsoft office word and transferred for coding and analysis to the NVivo software (version 12). The analysis involved familiarization with the data to get a sense of what the responses were. Codes describing specific ideas and perceptions were generated and after examining them to identify patterns that guided in generating themes. Themes were then reviewed to ensure that they represented data appropriately. Lastly, themes were defined and named to ensure that data was meaningful. The qualitative data findings were presented verbatim, and it helped in data triangulation in the study.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

As is the requirement for every person conducting a survey (Ketefian, 2015), the research was guided by various ethical guidelines. To start with, the researcher sought approval from IERC (Kenya Methodist institutional ethics review committee) and NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation) before conducting the study. To ensure the principle of autonomy in participation, the participants were required to give informed consent before participating. The researcher took the initiative to clarify the intentions of the research as well as what it meant for them to participate. After the information had been given to the targeted

participants, they were informed that they had the freedom to choose to participate or not. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher ensured that the study participants used pseudonyms so as to conceal their identities. Additionally, the researcher ensured that the entire participant's information was held with the utmost discretion.

To ensure non-maleficence, the researcher ensured that the process of data collection did not cause any form of harm. The researcher strived to promote social good and ensured that the study language was friendly, and interviews were conducted in favorable places. The researcher was also honest in that data fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of results or study procedures was avoided. The study also observed objectivity through the avoidance of bias in data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation as well as other aspects of research. The principle of beneficence was also adhered to by explaining to the participants that the study's benefits were likely to accrue over years in the future and not necessarily immediately.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1: Introduction

This chapter discusses the study findings on the influence of psycho-social factors on skin bleaching among women in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was guided by three objectives namely:

- i. To examine the influence of demographic characteristics on skin-bleaching behavior among women in Nairobi County.
- ii. To establish the influence of body image on skin-bleaching behavior among women in Nairobi County.
- iii. To find out the influence of peer pressure on skin-bleaching behavior among women in Nairobi County.

4.2: Response Rate

The researcher administered 138 questionnaires to women working or visiting retail shops specializing in skin-beauty products. Out of the 138 questionnaires issued, 123 were duly completed by women using skin bleaching products, and 15 were not returned.

The response rate was as presented in table 4.1:

Table 4.1*Response Rate*

Responses	Frequency	Percent
User responses received	123	89.1
Non-responses	15	10.9
Total	138	100.0

Table 4.1 above indicates that out of the 138 questionnaires distributed, 123 were filled in successfully by women using skin-bleaching products, representing 89.1%. While conducting a study, it is important to acquire a high response rate. This is because a high response rate is an essential attribute of a quality research study as it yields valid, reliable, and generalizable results for a study. Although there is no proven threshold for defining a high response rate, Fink (2015) argues that a rate of 80% or higher is good enough.

4.3: Skin Bleaching

The study investigated how women engage in skin-bleaching behavior: Participants were asked to respond to different prompts and the findings were presented in tables and figures.

4.3.1: Skin-bleaching Products Used

The study sought to identify the products that were used by the respondents. The findings were as presented in table 4.2:

Table 4.2*Types of Skin-Bleaching Products Used.*

Skin Bleaching Products	Frequency	Percent
Amira Sure White	2	1.5%
BeautiON Lightening Cream	7	6%
Caro Light	22	18.5%
Caro White	9	7%
Dermovate Cream	10	8%
Dona White	1	1%
Dr. White	3	2.5%
Faire and White	6	5%
Faiza	3	2.5%
Injection	2	1.5%
Intensive Care Lightening Cream	2	1.5%
Jergens Crema	1	1%
Kojic Body Lotion	1	1%
Kojic Soap	5	3.5%
Lemon Soap	5	3.5%
Mixed Products	7	6%
Mediven	1	1%
Palmer Skin Success	1	1%
Pills	2	1.5%

Qasqas	12	10%
The Ordinary Alpha Arbutin	1	1%
Turmeric Powder	5	3.5%
Turmeric Lemon Oil	15	12%
Total	123	100.0

Table 4.2 shows that the respondents used a wide range of skin-bleaching products with Caro Light being the most (18.5%) commonly used brand. The findings implied that there were numerous skin-lightening products readily available in the market and that users had the freedom to purchase the product they deemed good for them.

4.3.2: Age at which Women Start Using Skin Bleaching Products

The study sought opinions regarding the age at which most women engage in skin-bleaching behavior. All the participants, users of skin-bleaching products were asked to identify the age at which they started using skin-bleaching products. The findings are indicated in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Age at Which Most Women Start Using Skin-Bleaching Products

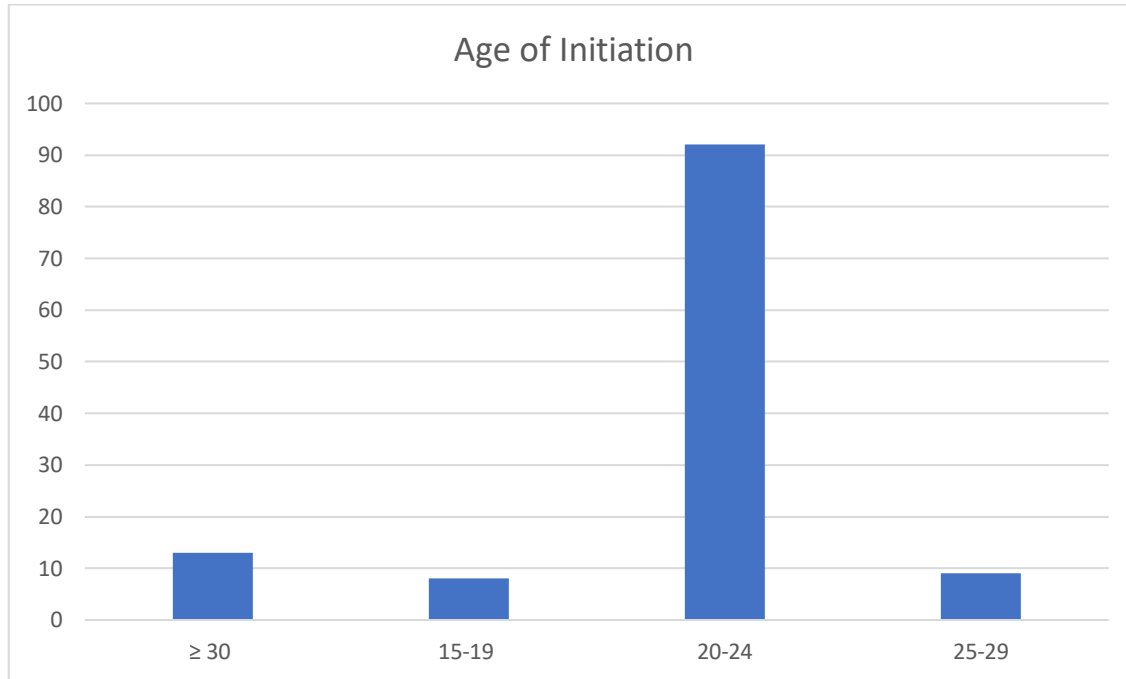


Figure 4.1 shows that women started using skin-bleaching products at different ages. The highest number of participants (75.6%) started using skin-bleaching products while in the age bracket of 20-24 years (93). Other participants started using skin bleaching products in the age bracket of ≥ 30 years (13), followed by 25-29 years (9), and the least age of initiation was 15 to 19 years age bracket (8). The finding implies that 20-24 years is the most likely age bracket when women start engaging in skin-bleaching behavior. This could be because most women in this age group have the freedom to make independent choices on what they prefer for personal use, have independent sources of income, and are likely to be searching for a spouse to settle with in the future. The study findings were similar to the study outcomes conducted by Benn et al. (2019) which indicated that the age at which participants first engaged in skin-bleaching behavior was 16-25 years.

4.3.3: Period of Using Skin-Bleaching Products

The researcher engaged women who used skin-bleaching products to establish the period of use.

The findings were as indicated in figure 4.2:

Figure 4.2

Period Over Which Skin-Bleaching Have Been Used

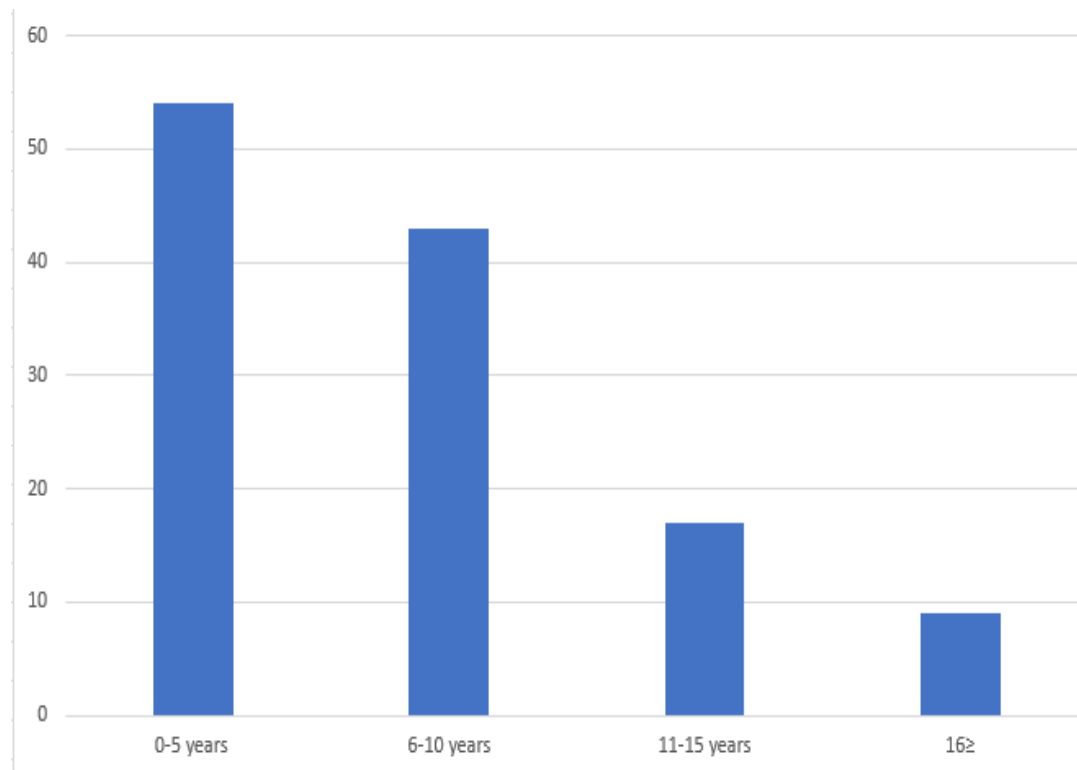


Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of the respondents had used skin bleaching products for a period of 1 to 5 years (54), 6 to 10 years (43), 11 to 15 years (17), and more than 16 years (9), respectively. The finding shows that most participants who had used skin-bleaching beauty products had done so for a maximum of five years and that few of them had been in the behavior for a period exceeding 16 years. The finding is inconsistent with those of the study by Benn et al. (2019) which indicated that the highest duration of skin bleaching was thirteen and a half years. The discrepancy

can be explained by the fact that the participants of the study conducted by Benn et al. (2019) were recruited from a different locality, in New York City and involved African and Afro-Caribbean women living among the whites in the United States.

4.3.4: Body Parts Targeted for Skin-Bleaching

The researcher sought to find out the body parts that women mostly targeted to bleach. The findings were as shown in figure 4.3:

Figure 4.3

Body Parts Targeted for Bleaching

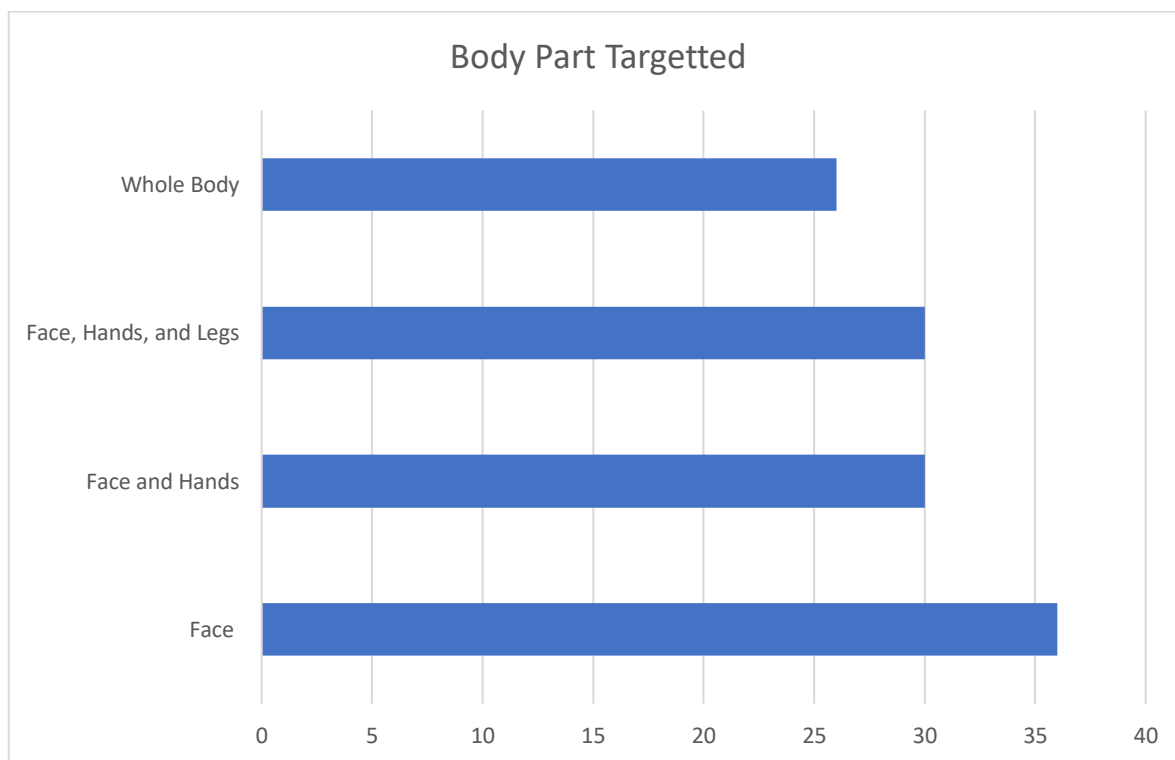


Figure 4.3 indicates that women involved in skin-bleaching behavior mostly apply the products on their face (37) followed by face and hands (30), then face, hands, and legs (30), and the least number of participants applied the bleaching products on the whole-body (26). The obtained

findings indicated that participants believed that among the users, a few women, 26 (21.1%) bleached their whole body compared to 97 (78.9%) who bleached specific body parts including face, legs, and hands. The finding that most women bleached visible body parts; mainly face, hands, and lastly legs can be explained by the fact that when people first meet a new person, they unconsciously judge that person to a large extent by their looks. The tendency may occur due to the primary effect; the tendency to recall and be influenced by information presented first rather than what follows onsequently, women tend to focus on bleaching the face because people's looks are mostly based on their facial appearances. This agrees with objectification theory whereby women's worth is judged based on their conformity to societal standards of beauty. The results were similar to the findings recorded in the study by Benn et al. (2019) which indicated that 44.7% of the respondents bleached their whole body while 55.3% bleached other parts of the body.

4.3.5: Participants' Attitude towards Skin-Bleaching

The researcher found out the respondents' attitudes toward skin bleaching. The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on certain statements on skin bleaching and the responses were as shown in table 4.3:

Table 4.3

Skin-Bleaching Behavior

Qn.	Statements	Mean	S.	Dev
1	I know the existence of a variety of skin-lightening products, and I have experimented with different products.	2.28	1.5	
2	Price is an important aspect to consider in selecting skin-lightening products.	2.17	1.2	
3	The active ingredient is an important criterion for selecting skin-lightening products.	3.16	1.3	
4	Skin-lightening product gives the expected results.	3.27	1.3	
5	Skin-lightening products may cause some undesired effects on user's skin.	3.52	0.97	
Aggregate Mean		2.88		

Table 4.3 indicates that the highest mean was 3.52 (agree) which was about the likelihood of side effects. The second highest reported mean was 3.27 (agree) on the desired result outcomes. The lowest mean was 2.17 (indifferent), which indicated price consideration in deciding the product to use for skin bleaching was not very relevant to users of such products. The findings implied price consideration was the issue of least concern among the respondents regarding skin bleaching. The mean average score for skin-bleaching product experimentation was 2.28 (indifferent), an indication that respondents felt that women do not necessarily experiment on different skin-bleaching products although different brands are readily available in the market. The other

assessed attribute of skin-bleaching behavior was the tendency to consider the active ingredient in the products of use. The mean average on the indicator was 3.16 (agree), an indication that women bothered checking the active components in a skin-bleaching product before considering using specific products. The aggregate mean was 2.88 (indifferent) which shows that the respondents did not support or refute the possibility of skin-bleaching behavior being a common occurrence among women working in Nairobi. This means the motivation to use skin-bleaching agents was high. The highest standard deviation on responses was 1.5, on experimentation with different products of skin bleaching products. The findings indicated that the responses from respondents varied greatly or were not similar, implying that respondents had different views on experimenting with different skin-bleaching products. Similar standard deviations were observed for the other questions apart from the issue of the likelihood of side effects which had the lowest deviation of 0.97 indicating a higher level of harmony in the respondents' views on this issue. The study findings were similar to the reports obtained from the interviews as reported in verbatim:

Participant SK004: *I used different products before settling on the product that has given me the results I like.*

Participant SK008: *I have used only one product since my teenage and I love the outcomes.*

Participant SK003: *Level of income may not necessarily determine skin bleaching because the products are readily available and vary in price. Anyone in need of them can easily obtain them.*

Participant SK005: *In most cases, women look beautiful when they use skin-bleaching products. The skin looks like that of a child or a "ripe tomato."*

Participant SK001, 004, 007, 010: *Most women who use skin products regret using them because their skins look terrible.*

Participant SK002: *I regret having used skin bleaching products because my skin looks like I had survived a burn which I have to incur more expenses trying to control.*

Participant SK006: *Skin bleaching products are readily available, and they come at different prices.*

Participants SK002: *Skin bleaching products are readily available and vary in price. Anyone in need of them can easily obtain cheap or expensive products depending on what one needs.*

The findings implied that women use skin-bleaching products and have varied reasons that support the behavior. The results imply that price consideration was the issue of least concern among the respondents on skin bleaching. The study findings echo the findings from previous studies which indicated that the use of bleaching agents does not necessarily lead to the desired aspects of beauty (Bhattar et al. 2015; Durosaro et al., 2012; Nimako, 2016; Street et al. 2014). However, the study did not demonstrate that factors such as availability of the skin-bleaching products and purchasing power influence skin-bleaching practice as were the findings by Bhattar et al. (2015) and Durosaro et al. (2012). The study findings that skin bleaching has negative implications support the findings that using skin bleaching products is associated with the development of wrinkles at a young age, dark or red areas on the skin, as well as irritation (Benn et al., 2019; Chan et al., 2019; Faruquee et al., 2012; Pollock et al., 2021). Similar results were obtained by Yusuf et al. (2019), where 91.6% of the participants agreed that skin-lightening products may result in undesirable effects on the skin and 88.8% agreed that skin-lightening products are associated with systemic undesirable side effects. The findings that skin-bleaching beauty products are readily available and affordable support the study findings by Abdille et al. (2024) which indicated that the cosmetics market is flourishing within Nairobi County.

4.4: Demographic Characteristics and Skin Bleaching

The study investigated various respondents' demographic characteristics including age, marital status, level of education, nature of work, and level of monthly income. The findings were presented in figures and tables as follows:

4.4.1: Age

The study analyzed the age of the participants, the findings were as indicated in figure 4.4:

Figure 4.4

Age Category

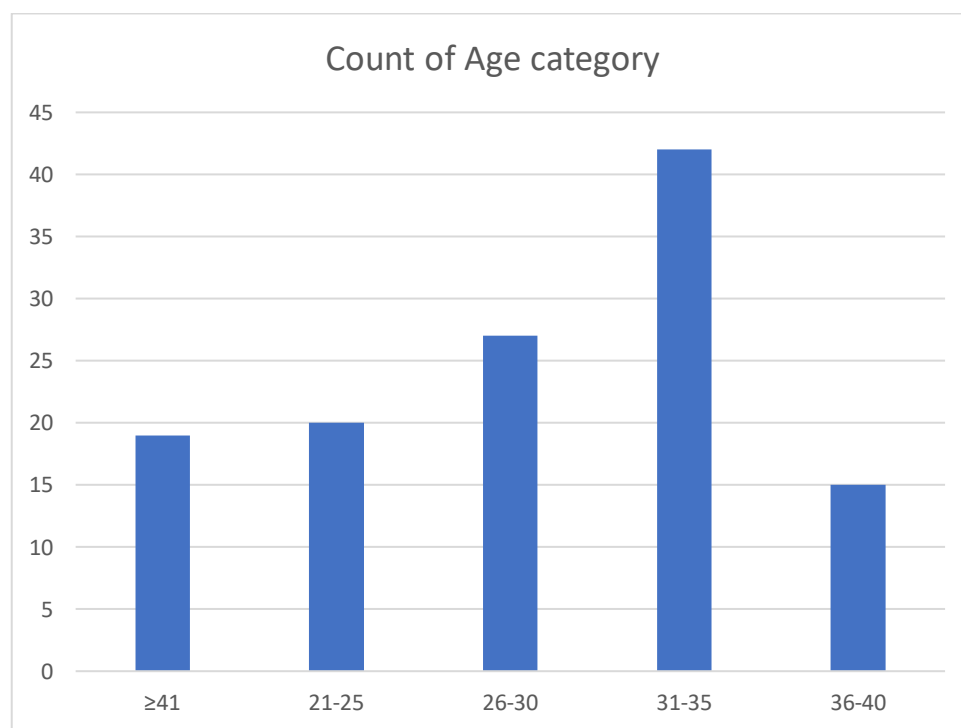


Figure 4.4 shows that participants were of varied age brackets with the majority being in the 31-35 (42) age category. The representation in other age categories were: 21-25 (20); 26-30 (27); 36-40 (15); and ≥ 41 (19). This implied that women frequenting cosmetics shops located in Nairobi's central business area to buy products for personal use belonged to a wide age bracket.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that the majority were women in the age group 31-35 who according to Erik Erikson are exiting the young adulthood period characterized by intimacy versus isolation and joining the adulthood stage characterized by generativity versus stagnation (Cote, 2018). Objectification theory's familiar concept holds that women are viewed as a body valued predominantly for their usefulness by others in society (Moradi & Huang, 2018). At this stage in life, a woman is keen to attract a life partner and as such a self-objectified person is more troubled about looks which may make them more vulnerable to peer pressure or the desire to improve their looks through skin bleaching. Also, at this age, there is an intensified desire to attain and retain status in society and fit into society by meeting societal expectations for women in that age bracket (Cote, 2018). Self-objectification theory and Erik Erikson's theory of human development can consequently explain why women in the age group 31-35 years were the majority of users of skin-bleaching products.

4.4.2: Marital Status

The study sought to find out the participants' marital statuses and the findings were as presented in figure 4.5:

Figure 4.5

Marital Status

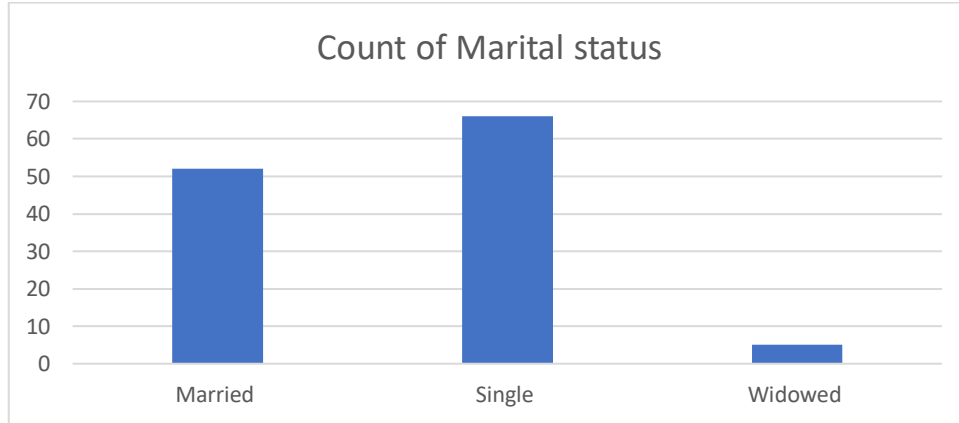


Figure 4.5 above indicates that women who participated in the study belonged to any of the three marital statuses: Married (52), Single (66), and widowed (5). The findings show that the majority of the participants who engaged in skin bleaching were single. Past studies have associated the desire to attract a life partner as one of the social factors that motivate the use of skin bleaching among women Asumah et al. (2022) and this may explain the findings that most of the women in the skin-bleaching behavior were single as compared to married women. Similar findings indicated that being single correlated with skin-bleaching behavior as compared to being in marriage (Kachambwa et al., 2021; Yusuf et al., 2019). The study involving women living in Zimbabwe also demonstrated that the statuses of widow, single, or divorced positively correlated with skin bleaching with the odds of skin bleaching of 2.87 and a P-value of 0.03 in relation to women in marriage.

4.4.3: Level of Education

The study sought to find out the participants' level of education, and the results were as indicated in figure 4.6:

Figure 4.6

Level of Education

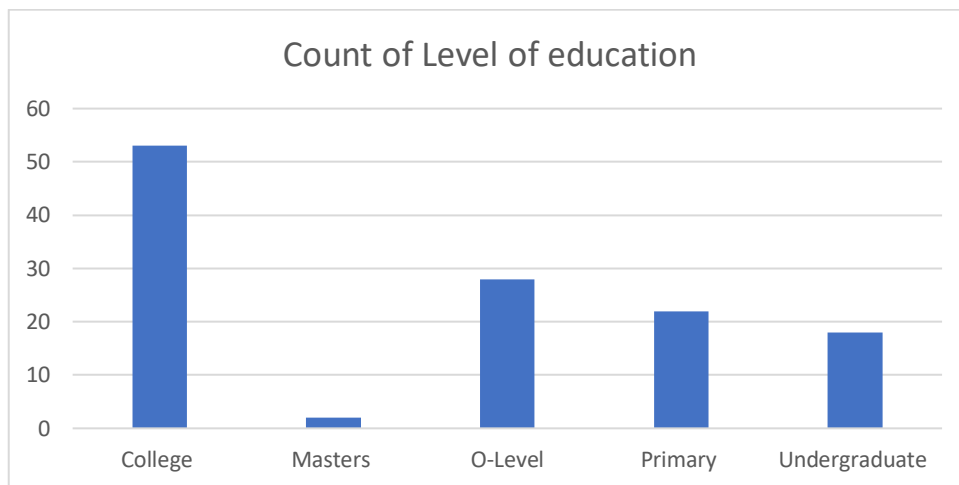


Figure 4.6 shows that participants had obtained different levels of education: Primary level (32); O-level (28); College (53); Undergraduate (18); and Master (2). The findings indicate that the majority of participants were of college level as compared to degree and master holders, and this implies that women of higher education levels are less likely to engage in skin-bleaching behavior. Similar findings were obtained by Rusmadi et al. (2015) indicating a significant relationship between the level of education and skin bleaching practice with a negative correlation ($r=-0.20$, $p=0.041$).

4.4.4: Nature of Work

The study investigated the participants' nature of occupation and how it may influence skin bleaching. The findings were as presented in figure 4.7:

Figure 4.7

Nature of Work

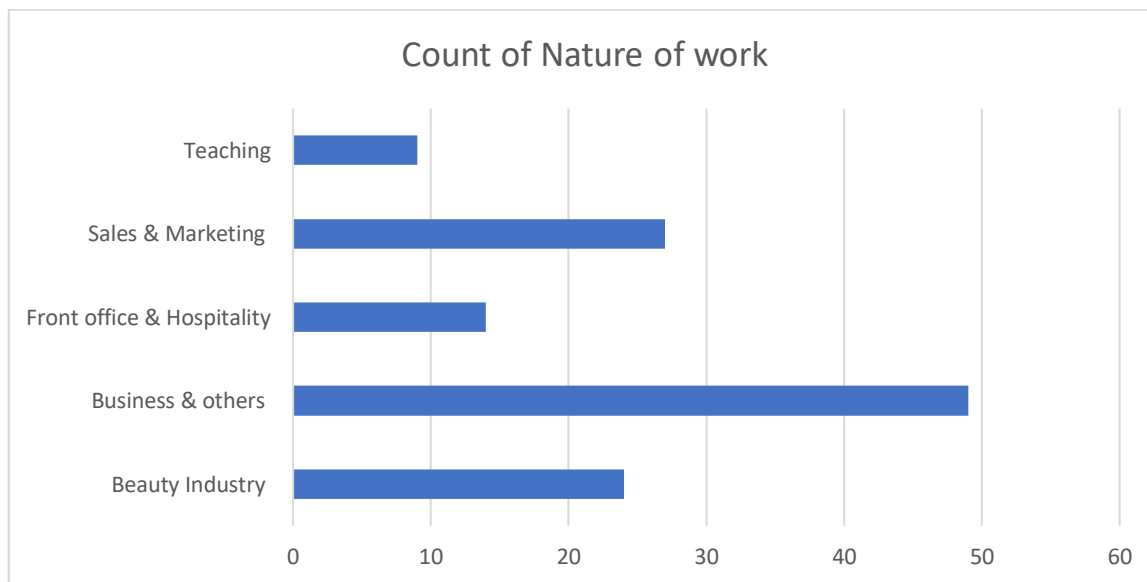


Figure 4.7 indicates that participants worked in different industries with the highest number being in Business and others (49), followed by Sales and marketing (27), then beauty industry (24), front office and hospitality (14), and the least number comprised of teachers (9). The findings show that most users of skin bleaching products were in businesses, sales and marketing, and beauty industry. This may imply that people have been socialized to believe in ideal beauty characterized by fair-skin that pleases and increases perception, prolongs eager evaluation (desire to know a person more), and causes enduring and favorable admiration (Rusmadi et al., 2015). Such attributes are ideal for such types of work where customers have the freedom to acquire goods or services from a wide range of suppliers and retaining customers by all means is crucial to such businesses.

Similar findings were obtained by Rusmadi et al. (2015) indicating that lighter skin increases a woman's chance of securing a good job).

4.4.5: Monthly Income

The study investigated the participants' level of income and how it could influence the behavior of skin bleaching. The findings were as indicated in figure 4.8:

Figure 4.8

Monthly Income

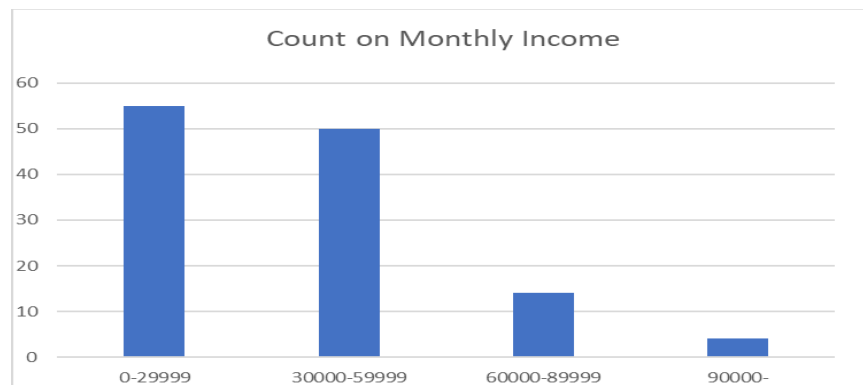


Figure 4.8 shows that participants belonged to different economic statuses with the majority earning Kenya shillings less than 30,000.00 (55) followed by Kenya shillings 30,000.00-59,999.00 (50), and Kenya shillings 60,000.00-89,999.00 (14). A few participants earned Kenya shilling $\geq 90,000.00$ (4). The findings indicate that most women using skin-bleaching products earned less than Kenya shillings 30,000.00, an indication that skin-bleaching agents were readily available at affordable prices. The finding echoes the finding that there is a flourishing trade of cheap backstreet skin-lightening creams, pills, and injections, especially along River Road Street in Nairobi's central business area.

4.4.6: Unidimensional Demographic Characteristics and Skin-Bleaching Behavior

The respondents were also asked to respond to statements on the influence of demographic factors on skin-bleaching behavior. The responses were on the Likert scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= neutral or indifferent; 4= agree and,5= strongly agree. The findings were as shown in table 4.4:

Table 4.4

Unidimensional Demographic characteristics and skin bleaching

Qn.	Focused Issue	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Young age makes one more likely to use skin-bleaching products.	3.60	1.00
2	Women use skin-bleaching products to attain a look that attracts and maintains a spouse.	3.36	1.05
3	A woman's level of education plays a role in determining skin-bleaching behavior.	2.51	1.03
4	Women use skin-bleaching products to keep the standard that suits the nature of their work.	3.08	0.95
5	Women's level of finances supports the behavior of skin-bleaching.	2.74	0.92
Aggregate Mean		3.06	

Table 4.4 shows that the lowest mean score was 2.51(indifference), an implication that the respondents were not in agreement that education level had a significant implication on skin bleaching . The highest mean score was 3.60 (Agree), an indication that young age was a strong factor in determining preference for skin bleaching products. The aggregate score on demographics was 3.06 (indifferent), an indication that demographic characteristics did not have a strong influence on skin-bleaching behavior. The highest standard deviation was 1.05 on the response to attractiveness to a spouse as a factor influencing skin bleaching among women. The findings imply that the respondents had varied opinions regarding the prompt. The lowest standard deviation was 0.92 on the response for financial status as a factor influencing skin bleaching. The findings showed that respondents had similar views on financial status as playing a minimal role in skin bleaching. The findings from the interviews support the above results:

Participant SK001: *Though most women who use skin bleaching products engage in the behavior in their teenage and early 20s, it is common to have women even in their 40s start using such products.*

Participant SK005: *Skin bleaching practice can start in teenage and even in the 50s.*

Participants SK007: *Most women start using skin bleaching products in their teenage and early 20s.*

Participant SK003: *Those who use skin bleaching products can be in any form of marital status.*

Participant SK002: *It is common to find married, unmarried, divorced and widows bleach their skin. There is no difference between married and unmarried in skin bleaching .*

Participant SK003: *I must retain the beauty of my skin so that my husband will not get attracted to other women.*

Participant SK008: *I believe the level of education has no impact on skin bleaching because it is common to see educated and non-educated alike use the bleaching products while those who don't bleach are either educated or non-educated.*

Participant SK009: *It is common to see educated and non-educated alike use skin bleaching products.*

Participant SK004, 005, 008: *In some jobs like working in media and advertisement industries, image is very important, and I feel this may force one to bleach the skin.*

Participant SK009: *With some jobs, one must bleach her skin because it's about how people see you and not how one feels about her looks.*

Participant SK001: *Level of income may not necessarily determine skin bleaching because the products are readily available and vary in price. Anyone in need of them can easily obtain them.*

Participant SK006, 009: *Level of income may not necessarily determine skin bleaching because the products are readily available and vary in price. Anyone in need of them can easily obtain them.*

The study findings imply that most of the demographic factors such as age, marital status, financial levels, education level, and nature of work did not significantly influence skin bleaching among women working in Nairobi. The study findings support the results by Rusmadi et al. (2015) which indicated that level of income and level of education did not have a positive correlation with skin bleaching among undergraduate students in Malaysia. Similar findings were reported in a study by Yusuf et al. (2019) indicating that finances did not correlate with skin-bleaching behavior. The study finding that age is not a strong predictor of skin bleaching also supports the findings obtained in the cross-sectional analytical study by Mendoza, (2014) and by Rahman et al. (2021) which indicated skin bleaching was common across a wide range of age among women in Philistine and

students in South Africa respectively. The findings, however, contradict the findings obtained from the study by Yusuf et al. (2019) and the study by Kachambwa et al. (2021) which indicated that being unmarried correlated with the use of skin bleaching products. The study findings were similar to the results from the study by Rusmadi et al. (2015) which indicated a negative correlation between the level of income (student monthly allowances) and skin-bleaching practice where most undergraduate students (87.5%) used skin-bleaching products compared to post-graduate students (50%). The findings were also similar to the findings from the study by Mendoza (2014) which indicated that the use of skin-bleaching beauty products was common among women across a wide range of ages in the Philippines.

4.5: Body Image and Skin Bleaching

The study respondents were requested to respond to statements on the influence of body image factors on skin-bleaching behavior. The responses were on a Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= neutral or indifferent; 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree. The responses were as shown in table 4.5:

Table 4.5*Body Image and Skin Bleaching*

Qn. No.	Focused issue	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I believe having lighter skin implies I belong to a higher social class.	3.08	1.09
2	According to me I look more beautiful when my skin is light and with no blemishes unlike when my skin is dark and uneven.	3.23	1.08
3	I believe skin looks play a big role in securing a job.	3.01	1.11
4	I'm walking down the street and notice that people are taking a quick look in my direction; I feel that they are somewhat likely judging my skin appearance.	2.66	1.02
5	If someone makes a negative comment about my skin complexion, I feel hurt and wish I could be invisible.	2.72	0.99
Aggregate		2.94	

Table 4.5 reveals that the lowest mean score was 2.66 (indifference). The findings implied that the respondents were not in agreement that how onlookers perceive them had significant implications on skin bleaching. The highest mean score was 3.23 (agree), an indication that participants agreed

that white and spotless skin was an indicator of beauty. The response on the belief that having lighter skin equates to belonging to a higher social class had a mean grade of 3.08 (agree) and a standard deviation of 1.09, an indication that the respondents supported the proposition that light skin implied belonging to a high social class although the views were varied among the respondents. Respondents also agreed that skin appearance plays a big role in securing a job (mean score 3.01), though the opinions were varied as indicated by a standard deviation of 1.11. Additionally, the respondents felt that negative comments about one's skin complexion may or may not hurt their feelings (mean score 2.72), with a standard deviation of 0.99, indicating similar opinions from the respondents.

The aggregate average score on body image was 2.94 (indifferent), an indication that body image did not have a significant influence on skin-bleaching behavior. The highest standard deviation was beauty offering job security at 1.11. This was an indication that there were varied views regarding beauty as a factor that increases job security and influences skin-bleaching behavior among women. The lowest standard deviation was 0.99 in reaction to negative comments on skin appearance as a factor influencing skin bleaching. The findings showed that respondents had similar views regarding how they reacted to negative comments from other people regarding their skin looks. The findings from the interviews support the above results as reported in verbatim:

Participant SK005: *With some jobs, one must bleach her skin because it's about how people see you and not how one feels about her looks.*

Participant SK 001, 0004,006,007, 008, 010: *It is common to see good-looking women still bleach their skin thus skin bleaching is influenced by how one considers her looks.*

Participant SK 003: *I don't bleach my skin yet am dark, it is about how one perceives herself.*

The study findings indicate that body image had some influence on skin-bleaching behavior among a few women working in Nairobi. The findings support the study results demonstrating that some people are persuaded by their societal beliefs that having light skin carried many privileges (Hunter, 2011) and skin-bleaching behavior provides a more fashionable look (Rahman et al., 2021). Similar findings were reported in the study by Yusuf et al. (2019) which indicated that women who use skin-lightening products believed that light skin increased their chances of securing a job and attracting a spouse and that light-skinned women were more confident and beautiful. The findings also support the findings in the studies by Charles (2013), and Jannink (2009) which indicated that whiteness has been portrayed as the ultimate beauty and its "purity" has been preserved while Blackness symbolizes ugliness.

4.6: Peer Pressure and Skin Bleaching

The study respondents answered prompts capturing the influence of peer pressure on skin-bleaching behavior. The responses were on a Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= neutral or indifferent; 4= agree and, 5= strongly agree. The responses were as shown in table 4.6:

Table 4.6*Peer Pressure and Skin Bleaching*

Qn. No.	Focused issue	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Women use skin-bleaches because friends encourage them to use.	2.94	1.01
2	Women use skin-bleaching products because they help them fit in and become fashionable.	2.60	1.11
3	I hide my true opinion (my thinking) about skin-bleaching products when I feel my friends will not agree with me.	3.09	1.01
4	Women use skin bleaching products to attract more followers on social media pages (Instagram, Facebook, tiktok, twitter).	3.14	1.13
5	Women use skin-bleaching products to attract marketing businesses on social media pages.	2.78	1.02
Aggregate Mean		2.91	

Table 4.6 shows that the response to the prompt on whether women use skin-bleaching products to become fashionable had the lowest mean score of 2.60 (indifferent). The highest mean score was 3.14 (indifferent), an indication that respondents held that the desire to attract social media

followership had little influence on skin-bleaching behavior among women. The aggregate score on peer pressure was 2.91 (indifferent), an indication that peer pressure was not a strong factor in influencing skin-bleaching behavior. The highest standard deviation was 1.13 indicating that respondents had varied opinions regarding the prompt on the need to bleach skin to attract followers on social media. The lowest standard deviation was 1.01, an indication that responses to the three prompts did not differ much. The findings from the interviews support the above results as reported in verbatim:

Participant SK 002: *One can be pushed by the peer to use skin-bleaching products, birds of the same feather fly together.*

Participant SK006, 007,009: *Well, friends and family members can influence one to use skin-bleaching products because people tend to share what they have.*

Participant SK002, 005,008: *Social media makes people consider bleaching their skin to look attractive.*

Participant SK 003, 0006, 009: *In social media, women share photos taken with filters that improve their looks and they don't necessarily bleach their skin.*

The study findings indicate that peer pressure had some influence on skin-bleaching behavior among women working in Nairobi. The findings were similar to the findings that friends, colleagues (Lewis et al., 2011), and family members (Rahman et al, 2021) had some influence on skin-bleaching behavior among some participants. The findings that online businesses require one to enhance their beauty supported the findings that some companies hire light-skinned salespeople to advertise their products, and social media portraits are mostly light-skinned, indicating light skin is beauty as indicated in the study by Abdille et al. (2024) and Oyedeki et al. (2010).

4.7: Inferential Statistics

The study conducted correlational and regression analysis to draw conclusions and to make generalizations, predictions, and estimations based on the study findings.

4.7.1: Correlation Analysis

In summary, the descriptive analysis results reflected that the variables' mean was relatively low around neutral, or just fairly strong. This would require a correlation analysis to help in determining not only the strength of the relationship but also indicating how significant the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was. The correlation results were presented in table 4.7:

Table 4.7*Correlation Analysis***Correlations**

		Dv	Demo	Body	Peer
	Pearson Correlation	1	.065	.194*	.058
Dv	Sig. (2-tailed)		.478	.031	.526
	N	123	123	123	123
	Pearson Correlation	.065	1	-.140	-.127
Demo	Sig. (2-tailed)	.478		.122	.161
	N	123	123	123	123
	Pearson Correlation	.194*	-.140	1	.127
Bod	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.122		.163
	N	123	123	123	123
	Pearson Correlation	.058	-.127	.127	1
Peer	Sig. (2-tailed)	.526	.161	.163	
	N	123	123	123	123

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The highest correlation in the above results is 0.194 between body image and skin bleaching. Though a low value, it is significant at a p-value of 0.031. The correlations for demographic characteristics and peer pressure are 0.065 and 0.058 with p-values of 0.478 and 0.526 respectively that are way above the required p-value of 0.05. The findings indicate low correlations between demographic characteristics, peer pressure, and skin-bleaching behavior and were therefore of no

statistical significance. The finding indicated a lack of a significant relationship between the two independent variables (demographic and peer pressure) and skin-bleaching behavior. These findings contradict the study outcomes which indicated a significant relationship between the level of education (a demographic factor) and skin bleaching practice with a negative correlation ($r=-0.20$, $p=0.041$) (Rusmadi et al., 2015). Other similar findings were reported in the study by Kachambwa et al. (2021) which indicated that the odds of skin bleaching for dark-skinned females were higher, 95% and a p-value of 0.01, compared to that of light-skinned females, an indication of skin-bleaching behavior preference among dark-skinned women (body image).

4.7.2: Stepwise Regression Analysis

To test the hypotheses of the study, regression analysis was carried out. The researcher performed correlation analysis to aid in measuring the strength of the linear relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable, as well as computing their association. The analysis helped in demonstrating the level of change in the dependent variable resulting from the impact of the independent variable. With one of the independent variables significant, a stepwise regression analysis is conducted to help extract a regression model as the regression equation for predicting the linear relationship between skin bleaching and any relevant independent variables. The result of this analysis is presented in table 4.8:

Table 4.8*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change in R Square	Change in F	df1	df2	Sig.	Durbin-Watson
Summary.										
Model										
1	.194 ^a	.038	.030	.59889	.038	4.741	1	121	.031	1.790

a. Predictors: (Constant), body image.

b. Dependent Variable: dv;

The stepwise regression model above shows an adjusted R square of 0.030. This means the model explains 3 % of skin bleaching and is significant at a p-value of 0.031. The model captured the body image as the only significant independent variable in this study that has a linear relationship with skin bleaching while demographic and peer pressure are dropped out of the model as not having any statistical significance. However, the proportion explained by the above model though significant is quite small indicating other possible factors that were not dealt with in this study but could be of importance in future studies. Further beta coefficients as well as the excluded factors are shown below. These results help in determining the regression equation relating the independent variable and the significant dependent variable.

Table 4.9*Coefficients***Coefficients^a**

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	T	Sig.	Correlations		Collinearity		
	Coefficients		Coefficients					Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.231	.303		7.372	.000					
1										
Bod	.221	.101	.194	2.177	.031	.194	.194	.194	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: dv

Table 4.10*Excluded Variables (Peer pressure & **demography**)***Excluded Variables^a**

Model		Beta In	T	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics		
						Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance
1	Peer	.034 ^b	.373	.710	.034	.984	1.016	.984
	Demo	.094 ^b	1.041	.300	.095	.980	1.020	.980

a. Dependent Variable: dependent variable

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), body image

With the exclusion of the demographic factor and peer pressure, and the retention of body image variables in the model, the coefficient results in the regression equation for this study are as:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + e_i$$

Where Y= dependent variable

X= independent variable

 β = standardized beta coefficient α = regression equation constant e_i = error term

Therefore:

$$\text{Skin bleaching} = 2.31 + 0.194 (\text{body image})$$

The equation can be used to predict the magnitude of skin bleaching on a change in the magnitude of body image. The equation indicates that for every unit change in body image, there would be a change of 0.194 units on the skin bleaching. This implies that as the challenges of body image increase in a woman, the chances of engaging in skin-bleaching behavior increase.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction.

The current study aimed to ascertain the influence of psychosocial factors on skin-bleaching behavior among women in Nairobi County. This chapter presents the summary of the study findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study findings.

5.2: Summary of the Findings.

5.2.1: Skin bleaching

The study sought to examine the behavior of skin bleaching or whitening among women in Nairobi County. The study findings on the specific indicators of demographic characteristics showed that women working in Nairobi scored average with an aggregate mean score of 3.06 (agree). Individual items' mean scores were bleaching product awareness (2.28; indifferent), price consideration (2.17; indifferent), active ingredient criterion (3.16; agree), desired use results (3.27; agree), and likelihood of side effects (3.52; agree). The findings imply that the strength or magnitude concerning skin bleaching by the respondents is only of some significance. The highest mean score was 3.52 (agree) on the response to the likelihood of side effects as the factor that explained the dependent variable more strongly. This is followed by the mean of 3.27 on the desired result of the use while the least mean is 2.17 which indicates a level (of indifference).

5.2.2: Demographic Characteristics and Skin-Bleaching

The study examined if demographic characteristics played a role in determining the use of skin-bleaching beauty products among women working in Nairobi County. The study findings as presented in table 4.4 were that the highest mean on questions constituting demographic characteristics was 3.6 (agree) concerned with age category. It shows that age category (young

age) as being a predictor of skin bleaching. The second highest score had a mean of 3.36 (agree) on the issue of attractiveness to partners as a predictor of skin-bleaching behavior. Nature of work and financial status as predictors of skin-bleaching behavior had mean scores of 3.08 (indifferent) and 2.74 (indifferent), respectively. The lowest mean was on education level 2.51 (indifferent) as a predictor of skin-bleaching behavior. The indifferent level implied that education level was not a strong factor in skin bleaching. Standard deviations on the questions were similar around a value of 1.0 showing similar views from respondents on the issues constituting demographic characteristics. The study indicated no relationship between demographic characteristics and skin-bleaching behavior with a p-value of 0.478 which is way above the required p-value of 0.005.

5.2.3: Body Image and Skin Bleaching

The current study sought to examine the relationship between body image and skin-bleaching behavior. The study results were that the highest mean for the issues on body image was 3.23 (indifferent) concerned with enhancing beauty while the slowest mean was 2.66 (indifferent) on how people view the skin bleaching user. Other mean scores were 3.01 (indifferent) on securing a job, 3.08 (indifferent) on social status, and 2.72 (indifferent) on enhancing conspicuousness. The standard deviations were close in all the questions implying similarity in the views on issues constituting each variable. Regression analysis indicated a positive correlation between skin bleaching and body image with an R square value of 0.038. This means the model explains 3.8 % of skin bleaching and although the value was low, it was significant at a p-value of 0.031.

5.2.4: Peer Pressure and Skin Bleaching

The study examined if peer pressure was a factor contributing to the behavior of skin-bleaching among women in Nairobi County. The findings for peer pressure indicated the highest mean score of 3.14 (agree) on followership on social media and the lowest mean score of 2.6

(indifferent) in relation to fashion. Other scores were 3.09 (indifferent) on dislike criticism, 2.94 (indifferent) on friends' influence, and 2.78 (indifferent) on marketing tools. There was no correlation between peer pressure and skin-bleaching behavior as indicated by a p-value of .526 which is way higher than the recommended p-value of 0.05.

5.3: Conclusions

From the study findings, the following conclusions were arrived at:

- i. Women's demographic characteristics including age, marital status, level of education, level of income, and nature of work do not influence the continued use of skin-bleaching products among women.
- ii. Body image depicting how a woman perceives her appearance regarding societal set standards of beauty, significantly influences the behavior of skin-bleaching among women.
- iii. Peer pressure relating to social media, friends, and doing business via social media platforms does not influence the behavior of skin-bleaching among women.

5.4: Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Government policymakers should put into consideration that banning skin-bleaching products containing harmful components combined with measures that address psychological factors such as initiatives that seek to change attitudes around skin tone and beauty standards (body image) will have greater effects in controlling the use of skin-bleaching products.
2. Psychotherapists could make tailor-made interventions to address body image challenges to empower women entrapped in skin-bleaching behavior.

3. Therapists intervening in skin-bleaching behavior should empower women and men to embrace positive attitudes towards women's natural beauty at both individual and community levels.

5.5: Suggested Areas for Further Studies

1. Since the current study was conducted in Nairobi County's central business area, it is recommended that similar studies need to be conducted in other parts of Kenya
2. The study also recommends other studies focusing on testing different variables that are possible predictors of skin bleaching to be conducted within Nairobi and other counties in Kenya.

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Appendix I: Study Tools for Quantitative Data

Part A: Questionnaire on Skin bleaching among Women Working in Nairobi

1. Do you use skin-bleaching products? [Yes] [No]

2. What products do you use or are mainly used to bleaching skin?

3. At what age did you start using the identified skin-bleaching products? Or at what age do you think most women start using skin-bleaching products?

[Below 15 yrs] [15-19 yrs] [20-24 yrs] [25-29 yrs] [30 yrs and Above]

4. For how long have you used the beauty product?

[0] [1-5 yrs] [6-10yrs] [11-15yrs] [16yrs & above]

5. Which body parts do you apply the beauty product or are mainly targeted by those who use skin-bleaching products?

[Face] [Hands] [Legs] [Whole body]

6. I know the existence of a variety of skin-lightening products, and I have experimented with different products.

Strongly disagree, [] Disagree, [] Do not Know, [] Agree [] Strongly agree []

7. Price is an important aspect to consider in selecting skin-lightening products

Strongly disagree, [] Disagree, [] Do not Know, [] Agree [] Strongly agree []

8. The active ingredient is an important criterion for selecting skin-lightening products.

Strongly disagree, [] Disagree, [] Do not Know, [] Agree [] Strongly agree []

9. Skin-lightening product gives the expected results.

Strongly disagree, [] Disagree, [] Do not Know, [] Agree [] Strongly agree []

10. Skin-lightening products may cause some undesired effects on user's skin.

Strongly disagree, [] Disagree, [] Do not Know, [] Agree [] Strongly agree []

PART B: Demographic and Skin bleaching

1. a) Currently I belong to the age category of: **[20-25 years] [26-30 years]**

[31-35 years] [36-40 years] □ [41-45 years] [46 years & above]

b) Young age makes one more likely to use skin bleaching products.

Strongly disagree, [] Disagree, [] Do not Know, [] Agree [] Strongly agree []

2. a) My marital status is best described as:

b) Women use skin-bleaching products to attain a look that attracts and maintain a spouse.

3. a) My highest level of education is:

b) A woman's level of education plays a role in determining skin-bleaching behavior.

4. a) My nature of work is best described as:

b) Women use skin-bleaching products to keep the standard that suit the nature of their work.

5. a) My monthly income from all sources can best be described as:

[Ksh. 60,000.00 to 89,999.00] *[Ksh. 90,000.00 and above]*

b) women's level of finances support the behavior of skin bleaching..

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Part C: Body Image and Skin bleaching

In this section, kindly indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning body image and skin bleaching.

(1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Do not Know; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree).

Prompts	1	2	3	4	5
1. I believe having lighter skin implies I belong to a higher social class.					
2. According to me I look more beautiful when my skin is light and with no blemishes unlike when my skin is dark and uneven.					
3.I believe skin looks play a big role in securing a job.					
4. I'm walking down the street and notice that people are taking a quick look in my direction; I feel that they are somewhat likely judging my skin appearance.					
5. If someone makes a negative comment about my skin complexion, I feel hurt and wish I could be invisible.					

Part D: Peer Pressure and Skin bleaching

In this section, kindly indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning peer pressure and skin bleaching. (NB: Prompts 3,4 & 5 are negatively worded and reverse-coded)
(1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Do not Know; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly agree).

Prompts	1	2	3	4	5
1. Women use skin-bleaches because friends encourage them to use.					
1. Women use skin-bleaching products because they make one fashionable.					
3. I hide my true opinion (my thinking) about skin-bleaching products when I feel my friends will not agree with me.					
4 Women use skin bleaching products to attract more followers on social media pages (Instagram, Facebook, tiktok, and twitter).					

5. Women use skin-bleaching products to attract customers for their different products on social media pages.					
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Appendix II: Interview Guide for Qualitative Data

1. Explain how factors like:
 - a). Age influences the use skin-bleaching agents among females.
 - b). Marital status influences the use skin-bleaching agents among females.
 - c). Education level influences the use skin-bleaching agents among females.
 - d). Level of income influences the use skin-bleaching agents among females.
 - c). Nature of work influences the use skin-bleaching agents among females.
2. How may a woman's perception of her body as beautiful or ugly influence the behavior of using skin-beaching agents?
3. Briefly describe how peer pressure influences a person to use skin bleaching agents.

Appendix III: Introduction Letter and Consent Form.

Project: Masters' Thesis

Name: Nasteha Mohamed Abdile

Institution: Kenya Methodist University

I am a student at Kenya Methodist University pursuing a Masters course in Counseling Psychology. I am carrying out research on “*Psycho-social factors motivating continued use of skin bleaching agents among women in Nairobi County*”. I kindly ask you to participate in the study by responding to the questions that will be provided.

What is expected of you?

Kindly take about 30 minutes to answer the questions presented to you. You will tick where appropriate depending on what applies to you.

Safety of the information given

Kindly don't write your name on the questionnaire presented to you. Also note that I will be very careful handling the information you will provide. Before and after the study I will keep all information, I collect about you locked up. No one will be able to identify any information given by any participant.

How relevant is the study to you?

The study findings will help us learn more about the psychological and social factors motivating the continued use of skin bleaching agents. However, you will be thanked for participating even though there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. The study results will also help us in formulating a counseling-based intervention to help prevent the unnecessary use of skin bleaching agents.

Rights to consent?

You have the right to choose whether to participate or not to. You can also say no participation now or you can even change your mind later. No one will be upset with you if you decide not to be in this study, but I'll respect your decision.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Name: Nasteha Abdile

Tel: 0724 506815

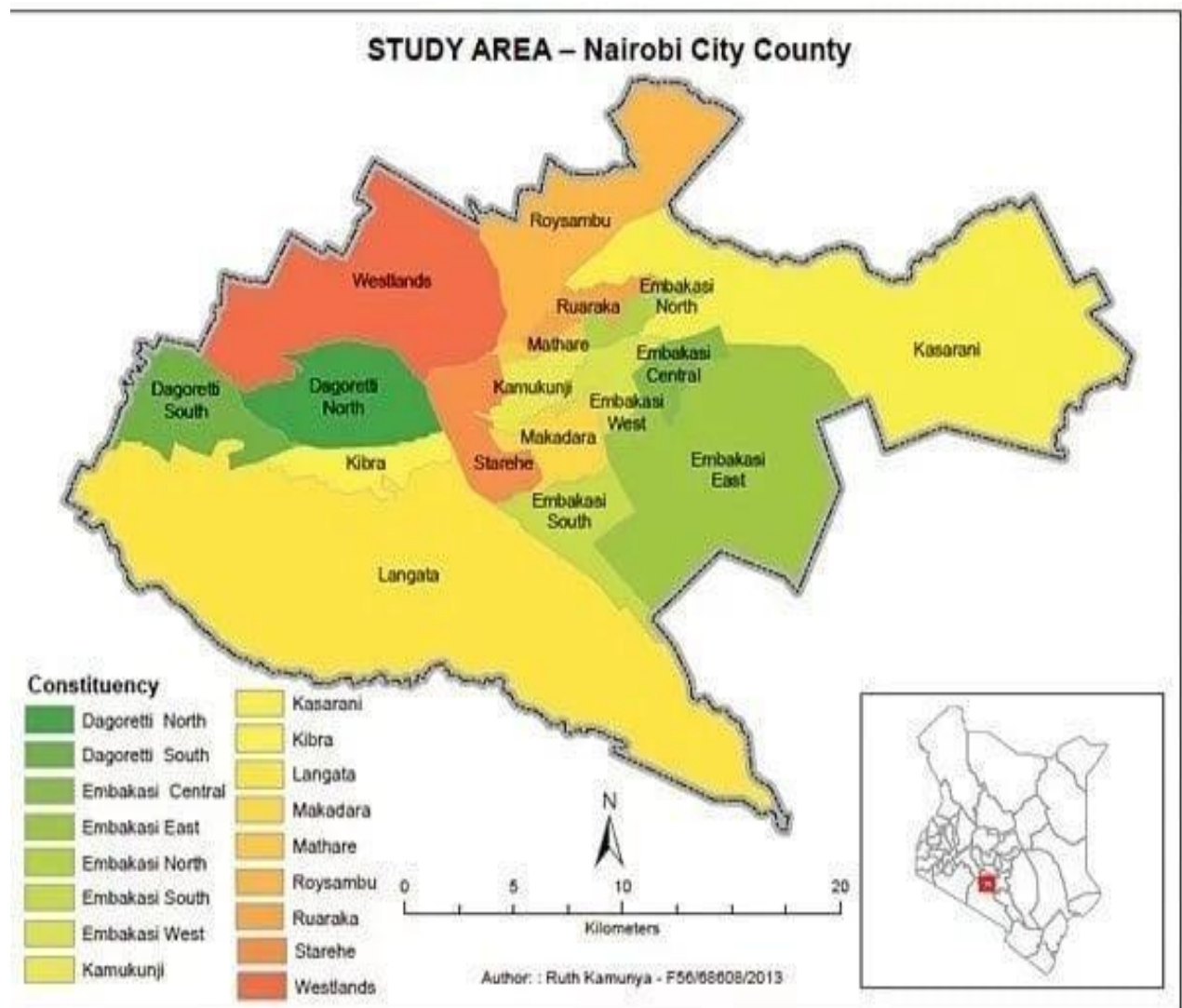
Email: dakaloow1@gmail.com

By signing this form, I agree to participate in the study and declare that the above statement regarding my participation in the study is clear to me.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix IV: Study Area



Appendix V: Ethical Clearance KEMU



KENYA METHODIST UNIVERSITY

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DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

June 13, 2023

Commission Secretary,
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations,
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: NASTEHA MOHAMED ABDILLE – (REG. NO. MCP-3-0253-1/2018)

This is to confirm that the above named person is a bona fide student of Kenya Methodist University, in the School of Education and Social Sciences, Department of Theology, Religious Studies and Counselling undertaking Master of Arts Degree in Counselling Psychology. She is conducting research on: "Influence of Psycho-social Factors on Skin Bleaching among Women in Nairobi County, Kenya".

We confirm that her research proposal has been presented and approved by the University.

In this regard, we are requesting your office to issue a research license to enable her collect data.

Any assistance accorded to her will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. John M. Muchiri (PhD)
Director, Postgraduate Studies

Cc: Dean SESS
CoD, TRSC
Program Coordinator - TRSC
Student Supervisors

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