

The Skin Color Preference of Lighter and Darker Skin Colored Males and Females

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, colorism has been a deep-rooted notion that influences day-to-day decisions in our society. Moreover, people's worth is unconsciously determined by their skin color, where all positive virtues are associated with fairness, while anything dark is considered evil. However, with rising awareness, it has become crucial to scrutinize young adults' present-day thought patterns. This gender-based study aims to assess the skin color preference of light and dark skin-colored males and females. A self-constructed questionnaire of 13-items is used for data collection. A sample of 100 participants from the Delhi-NCR region, between 18-30 years of age, is selected through quota sampling. Results indicate no difference in the skin color preference of light males and females, yet the majority of both preferred light skin color. Furthermore, we can observe no difference in dark males' and dark females' skin color preferences, yet the majority of both prefer dark skin color. Finally, we found that among the females, most dark females prefer dark skin color while most light females prefer light skin color. Similarly, among the males, most dark males prefer dark skin color while most light males prefer light skin color.

Keywords: *Colorism, Skin-color, Preference, Gender-based*

In the current times, while race can play a passive role in one's identity, skin color is a predominantly visible feature of an individual. It thus can be tagged as an active facet of one's identity. Colorism or skin-color stratification is a process that privileges light-skinned people over dark in domains such as income, education, housing, and matrimony (Hunter, 2007). Not only is lighter skin preferred over the dark, but also many research pieces show that many positive attributes and personality traits are believed to be associated with lighter skin tones. From marketing to marriages, skin tone is considered to be crucial in countries like India. Thus, other things being the same, lighter skin color is related to higher societal acceptance. (Mishra, 2015). Racism is discrimination against a person because of their actual or perceived racial status. Colorism is discrimination against a person because of his/her skin tone, sometimes even within the same race. However, both terms are interwoven together, and we cannot address one without relating it to the other (Webb, 2013).

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Colorism in India

India, in the past, has been an amalgam of different races. There was a considerable difference in the skin color of the Aryans (noble invader immigrants) and the Dasyus or Dasas (tribal population.) However, there are also mentions of dark-skinned heroes, powerful gods and goddesses, and princesses, which reaffirms that being black was not a thing to be looked down on. One of the finest examples would be that of Lord Krishna, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. All of the above affirm how India in the Vedic times didn't discriminate based on color. The most prominent emergence of colorism can be seen when the Britishers invaded India. They asserted how Indians were black-colored and inferior second-class citizens while the whites were superior and ruling class. (Mishra, 2015).

These beliefs can be observed in the day-to-day lives of the Indian people even today. They have an obsession with white skin color and believe that skin color decides someone's worth and status in the societal realm. It is not surprising to see many examples where colorism is emphasized in cartoons, such as the 'superhero' to be depicted with light skin color while the 'devil' is always dark skin-colored. The whopping percentage usage of fairness creams during adolescence, particularly among females, also portrays an essential facet of colorism. The market industry in India has polluted the frame of mind with advertisements endorsing skin fairness cosmetics. The fairness cosmetics industry is a massive business in India, worth almost US\$180 million and growing at 10% to 15% annually (Shevde, 2008). A study also found that women with lighter skin color were rated more attractive, healthy, and fertile. (Swami et al., 2008)

Irrespective of one's caste, region, or gender, the desire for a lighter skin tone persists even in marriages. A recent study analyzed profiles and preferences of brides and grooms and coded success story wedding photos posted on four Indian matrimonial websites. Results showed an overwhelming preference among males for brides that had a lighter-skin color than them. Men were also more likely than women to state a preference for skin color in their prospective brides and use qualitative words like beautiful and lovely to describe their preferred match. Most significantly, the success story wedding photos consistently had lighter-skinned brides than grooms. Dark-skinned women were almost non-existent in these success stories. This research points out that the powerful profile menu options and the visual imagery of predominantly light-skinned, successful brides illustrated on current websites visually reinforce the invalidation of dark-skinned women. (Jha & Adelman, 2009) The most explicit expression of colorism is in the domain of employment (Norwood, 2015). Dark skin-colored people are often given justifications for being rejected on other grounds, but it profoundly impacts their self-esteem and affects their promotion opportunities. Colorism is also being exhibited on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter in very subtle ways like- negative comments, derogatory memes, and trolling a person for his or her color.

According to the similarity-attraction theory, people are attracted to others who are similar to them in important aspects like interests, hobbies, etc. In recent research, this theory plays a vital role in making inferences about physical attractiveness based on skin color. A study conducted by MC Hills (2002) clearly shows that skin color consciously or unconsciously influences the assessment of physical attractiveness in people. The results indicate that skin tone influences black women's attractiveness ratings and a compelling, monotonic manner (Hill, 2002). Another study called the Doll study by K. B. Clark and K. M. Clark was duplicated, and it was found that the majority of the black-skinned people preferred the

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black dolls. Like the blacks, the majority of the white-skinned people picked the doll of their race. (Hraba & Grant, 1970).

Recent research examined African American women's self-reported skin tone discrimination from out-groups (e.g., whites) and in-groups (blacks). Findings indicate that light-skinned women reported less out-group colorism, and light-, medium-, and dark-skinned women with higher self-mastery perceived lower out-group colorism. Medium-skinned women perceived less in-group colorism, while dark-skinned women perceived more in-group and out-group colorism than counterparts. (Uzogara & Jackson, 2016)

Colorism is an unexplicit evil that can unconsciously live in peoples' brains and influence even their meager day-to-day decisions. Even if people are not fair, their worth is determined by how close they are to be fair. However, with the rising awareness and the will to change, people nowadays have started to reflect upon and question the old discriminating ideas fed to them. So it is crucial to understand the notions of the young population regarding the issue and if they are incorporating such changes in their life. There can also be seen a lack of research evidence on colorism in the Indian context. Thus, the present study was conceptualized to assess the skin color preference of light and dark skin colored young males and females.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The following objectives were thus proposed for the study-

- To study the skin color preference of light skin colored participants across gender.
- To study the skin color preference of dark skin colored participants across gender.
- To study the skin color preferences of light and dark skin colored participants within the same gender.

Design

The present study aims to analyze the skin color preference of light and dark skin colored young adults. A gender-based cross-sectional design will be used, where people of Delhi-NCR will be approached through quota sampling. A self-constructed questionnaire will be circulated through google forms. Data of all participants collected will then be pooled for qualitative analysis.

Sample

For the intent of the present study, a sample of 100 participants from the Delhi NCR area (India), belonging to the age group of 18-30 years, was selected through non-probability quota sampling. The quota was assigned on the basis of gender and skin color (light and dark). The sample consisted of 50 females and 50 males, of which 25 identified with light while 25 with dark skin color within each gender.

Instrument

In the present study, a self-constructed questionnaire consisting of 5 demographic questions and 13 items was used to collect data using Google Forms. The items sought to assess the skin color preference of the participants based on their perception (7 items) and opinion (6 items). The questions were either multiple choice, picture-based, and open-ended in nature.

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Procedure

The idea of the present study was to assess the skin color preference of light and dark skin colored young adults. Student researchers finalized this idea after rigorous brainstorming sessions. A survey questionnaire containing 22 items was self-constructed based on a thorough review of the literature. A pilot study was conducted on over 10 participants, and it was observed that in 9 items, the participants responded with severe social desirability bias. Therefore, these 9 items were removed from the questionnaire before the process of data collection. Data were collected across Delhi through google forms. Once the data collection was complete, the responses of 100 selected participants were compiled. The sample was divided into 4 equal categories of light females, light males, dark females, and dark males based on their responses to demographic question no. 5. They were asked to select the color that matches the most with their skin color. The data was then used for further qualitative analysis.

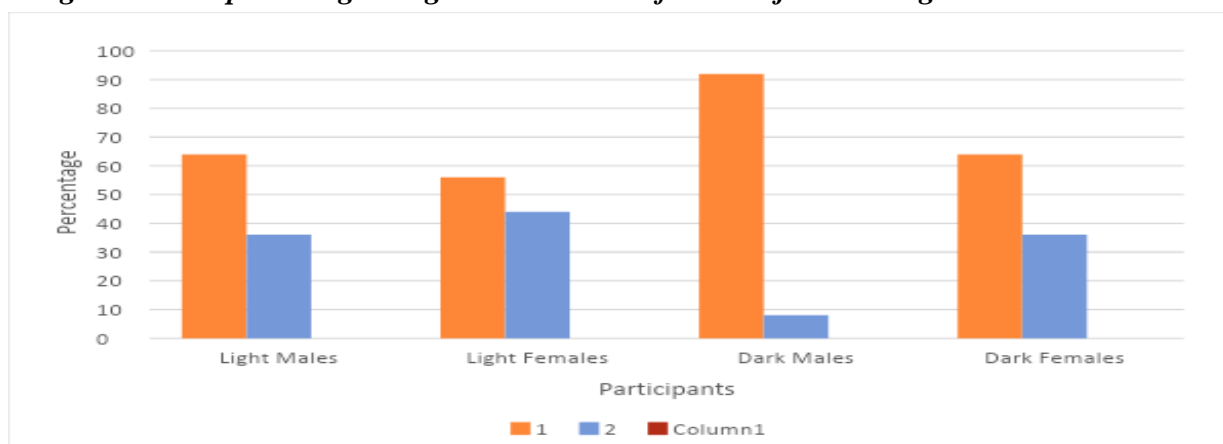
RESULT

A qualitative, multiple-choice questionnaire was administered via google forms. The results for the present study have been tabulated question-wise and represented in the form of graphs. Table 1 and figure 1 represent the perception regarding the skin tone of the subject in the image. Table 2 and figure 2 show the perception regarding satisfaction with their skin color. Table 3 and figure 3 illustrate the perception regarding the conventional skin color of a menial worker (waiter). Table 4 and figure 4 represent the perception regarding the selection of pink-collar employees (receptionists) based on skin color. Table 5 and figure 5 illustrate the opinion on the advantage of fair skin color in job interviews. Table 6 and figure 6 show the perception regarding the acceptance of a job in a fairness cream company. Table 7 and figure 7 represent the perception regarding preference for a baby based on skin tone. Table 8 and figure 8 show the opinion on the appropriateness of fairness cream advertisements. Table 9 and figure 9 illustrate the perception regarding the ‘ideal’ skin color. Table 10 represents the Content Analysis of qualitative opinion-based questions.

Table 1 Perception Regarding the Skin Tone of the Subject in Image

Participants		Responses (Percentage)	
		1	2
Light	Male	16(64%)	9 (36%)
	Female	14 (56%)	11 (44%)
Dark	Male	23 (92%)	2 (8%)
	Female	16 (64%)	9 (36%)

Figure 1 Perception Regarding the Skin Tone of the Subject in Image



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Table 2 Perception Regarding the Satisfaction with Own Skin Color

Participants		Responses (Percentage)		
		1	2	3
Light	Male	17 (68%)	8 (32%)	0 (0%)
	Female	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)
Dark	Male	16 (64%)	9 (36%)	0 (0%)
	Female	21 (84%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)

Figure 2 Perception Regarding the Satisfaction with Own Skin Color

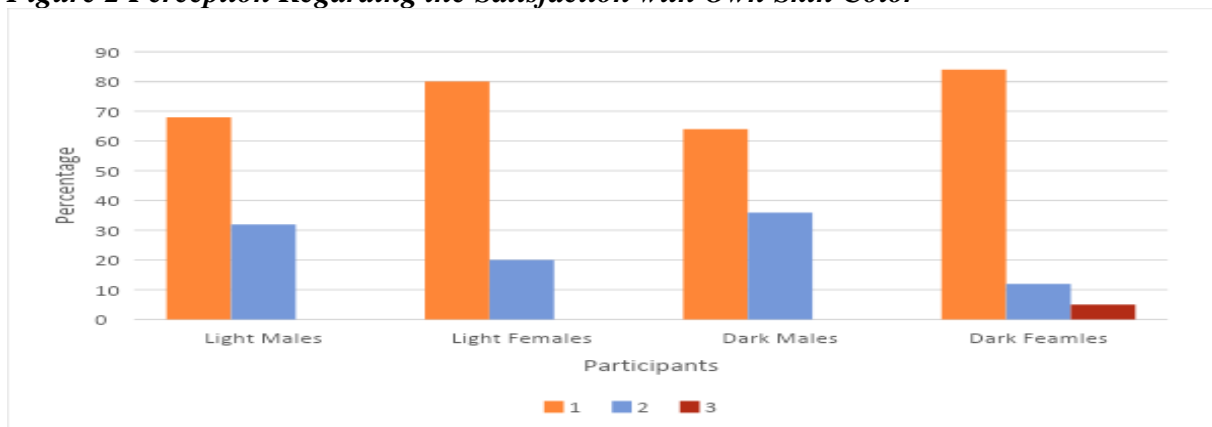
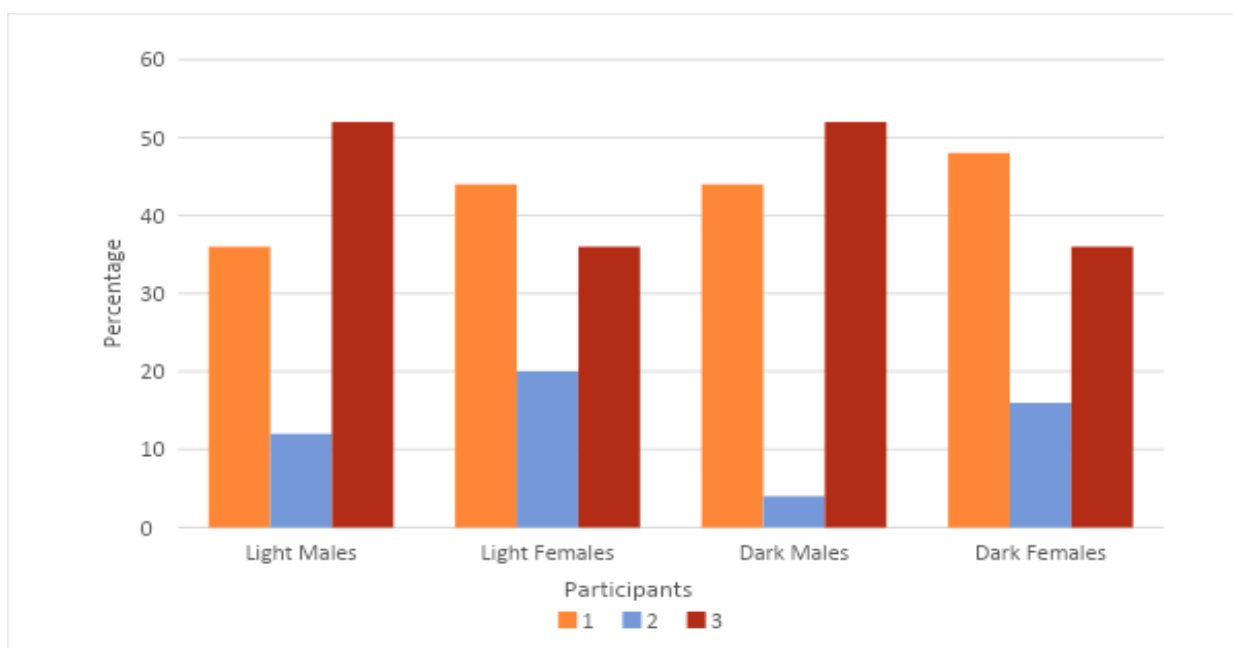


Table 3 Perception Regarding the Conventional Skin Color of a Menial Worker (Waiter)

Participants		Responses (Percentage)		
		1	2	3
Light	Male	9 (36%)	3 (12%)	13 (52%)
	Female	11 (44%)	5 (20%)	9 (36%)
Dark	Male	11 (44%)	1 (4%)	13 (52%)
	Female	12 (48%)	4 (16%)	9 (36%)

Figure 3 Perception Regarding the Conventional Skin Color of a Menial Worker (Waiter)



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Table 4 Perception Regarding the Selection of Pink-Collar Employees (Receptionists) based on Skin Tone

Participants		Responses (Percentage)		
		1	2	3
Light	Males	5 (20%)	17 (68%)	3 (12%)
	Females	13 (52%)	11 (44%)	1 (4%)
Dark	Males	7 (28%)	18 (72%)	0 (0%)
	Females	8 (32%)	14 (56%)	3 (12%)

Figure 4 Perception Regarding the Selection of Pink-Collar Employees (Receptionists) based on Skin Tone

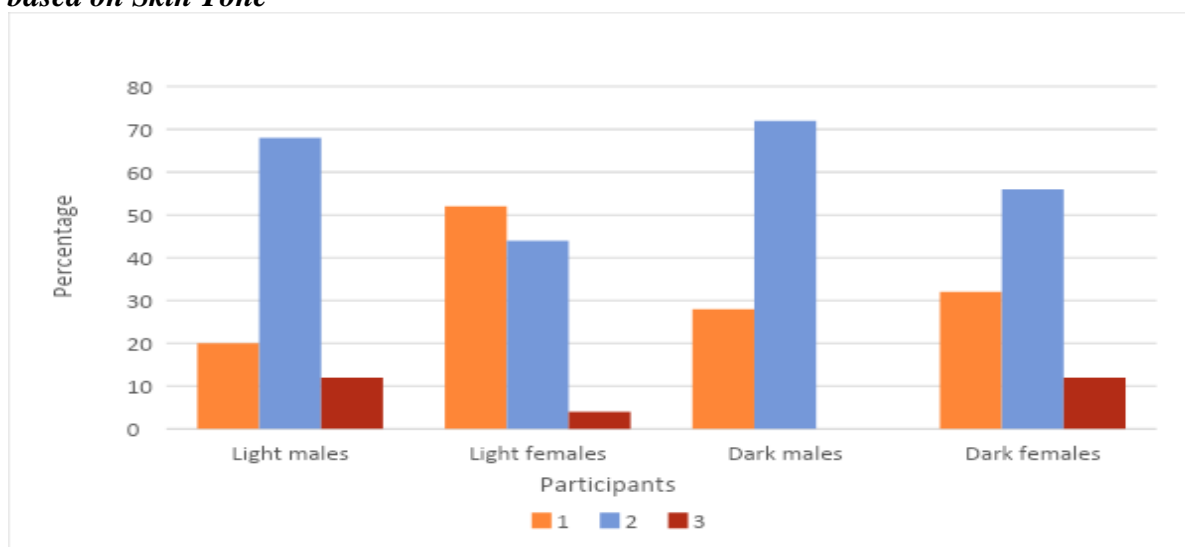


Table 5 Opinion on the Advantage of Fair Skin Color in Job Interviews

Participants		Responses (Percentage)	
		Yes	No
Light	Males	10 (40%)	15 (60%)
	Females	10 (40%)	15 (60%)
Dark	Males	9 (36%)	16 (64%)
	Females	12 (48%)	13 (52%)

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Figure 5 Opinion on the Advantage of Fair Skin Color in Job Interviews

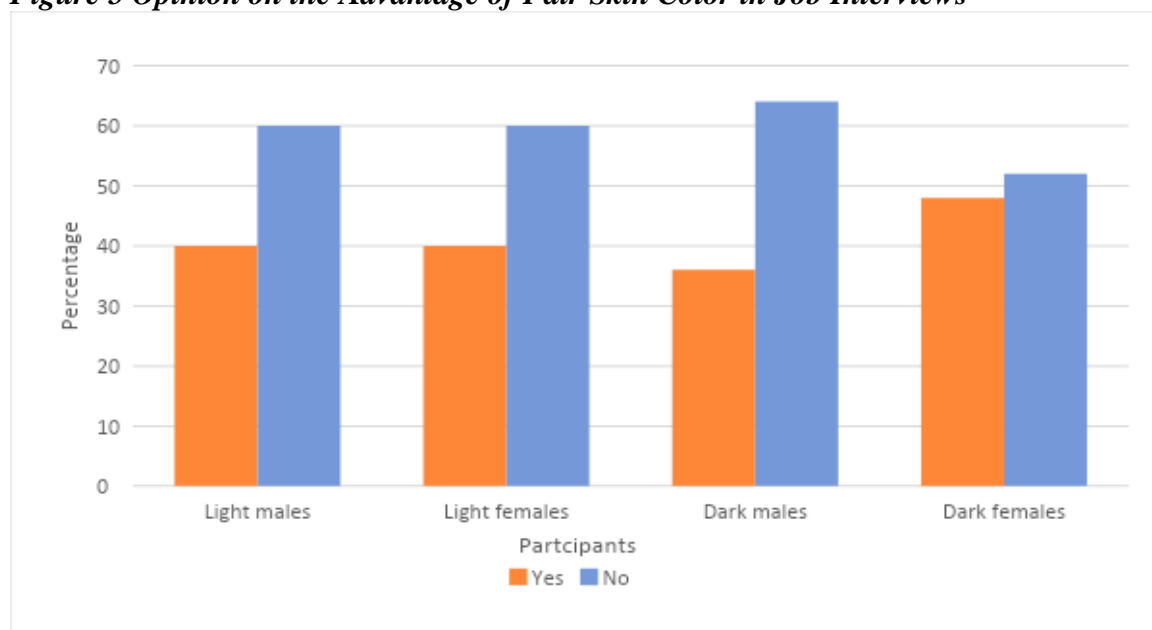
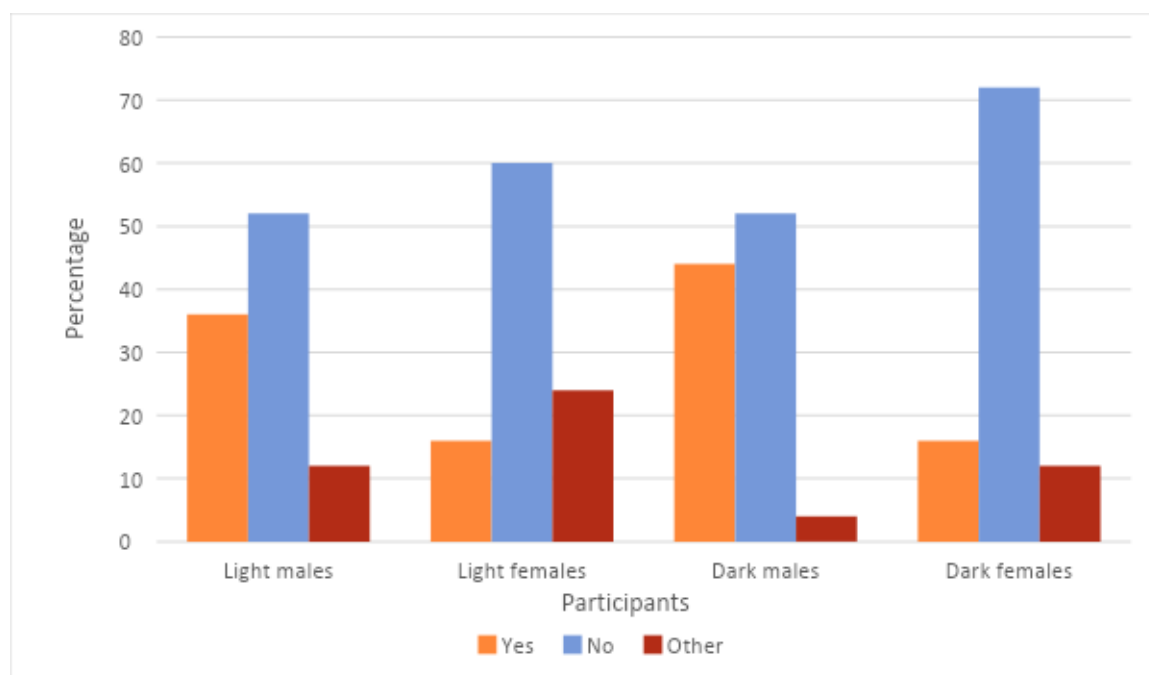


Table 6 Perception Regarding Acceptance of a Job in a Fairness Cream Company

Participants		Responses (Percentage)		
		Yes	No	Other
Light	Males	9 (36%)	13 (52%)	3 (12%)
	Females	4 (16%)	15 (60%)	6 (24%)
Dark	Males	11 (44%)	13 (52%)	1 (4%)
	Females	4 (16%)	18 (72%)	3 (12%)

Figure 6 Perception Regarding Acceptance of a Job in a Fairness Cream Company



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Table 7 Perception Regarding Preference for a Baby Based on Skin Tone

Participants		Responses (Percentage)		
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Light	Males	7(28%)	10(40%)	8(32%)
	Females	10(40%)	8(32%)	7(28%)
Dark	Males	8 (32%)	5(20%)	12(48%)
	Females	6 (24%)	5(20%)	14(56%)

Figure 7 Perception Regarding Preference for a Baby Based on Skin Tone

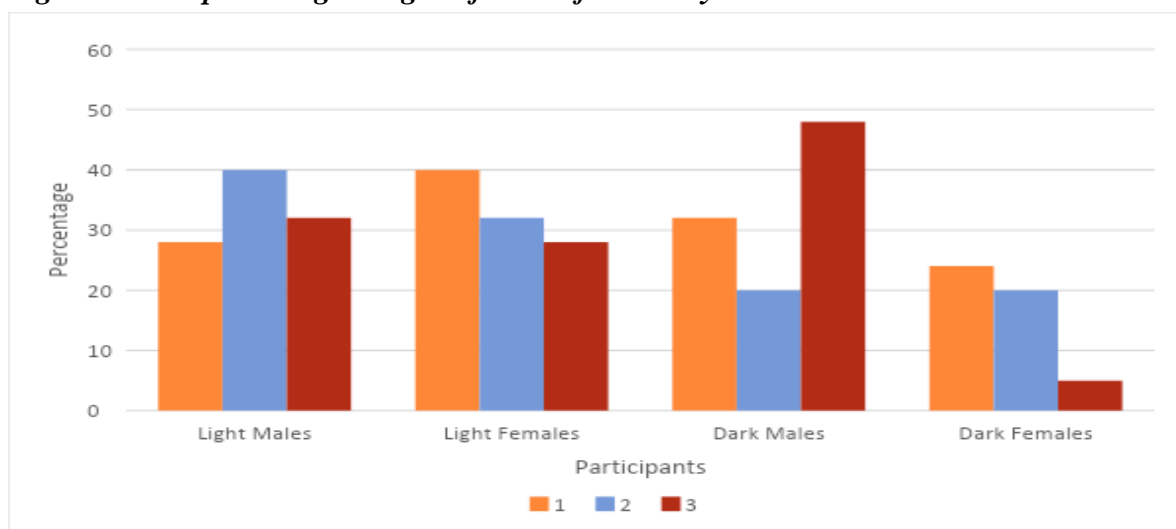
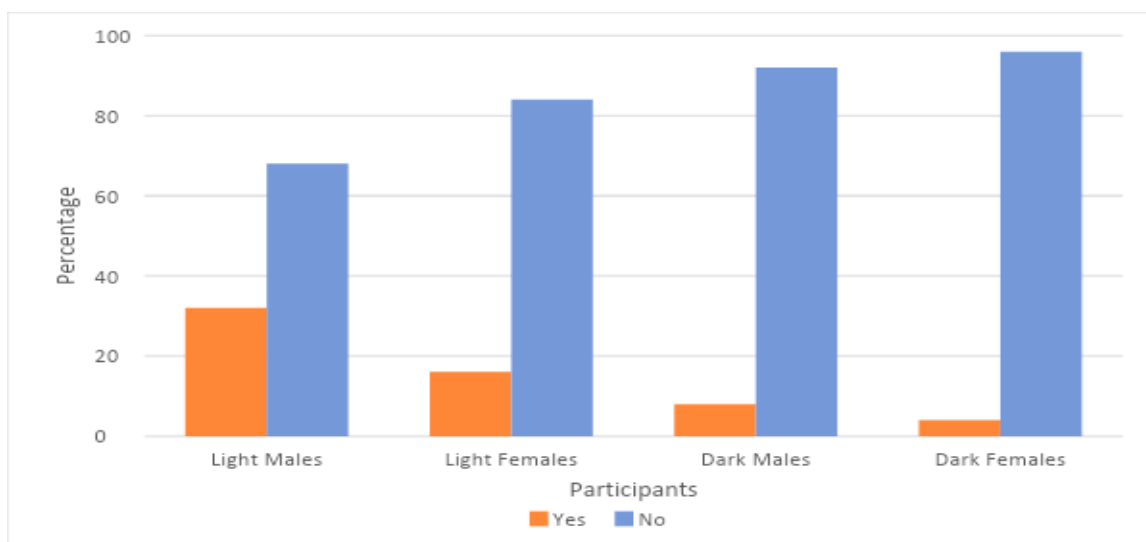


Table 8 Opinion on the Appropriateness of Fairness Cream Advertisements

Participants		Responses (Percentage)		
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Light	Males	7(28%)	10(40%)	8(32%)
	Females	10(40%)	8(32%)	7(28%)
Dark	Males	8 (32%)	5(20%)	12(48%)
	Females	6 (24%)	5(20%)	14(56%)

Figure 8 Opinion on the Appropriateness of Fairness Cream Advertisements



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Table 9 Perception Regarding an ‘Ideal’ Skin Color

Participants		Responses (Percentage)						
		Very Fair	Fair	Olive	Light Brown	Brown	Dark Brown	Black Brown
Light	Males	3(12%)	5(20%)	13(52%)	3(12%)	1(4%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
	Females	1(4%)	6(24%)	11(44%)	6(24%)	1(4%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Dark	Males	0 (0%)	2(8%)	8(32%)	11(44%)	4(16%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
	Females	0 (0%)	1(4%)	9(36%)	9(36%)	5(20%)	1(4%)	0 (0%)

Figure 9 Perception Regarding an ‘Ideal’ Skin Color

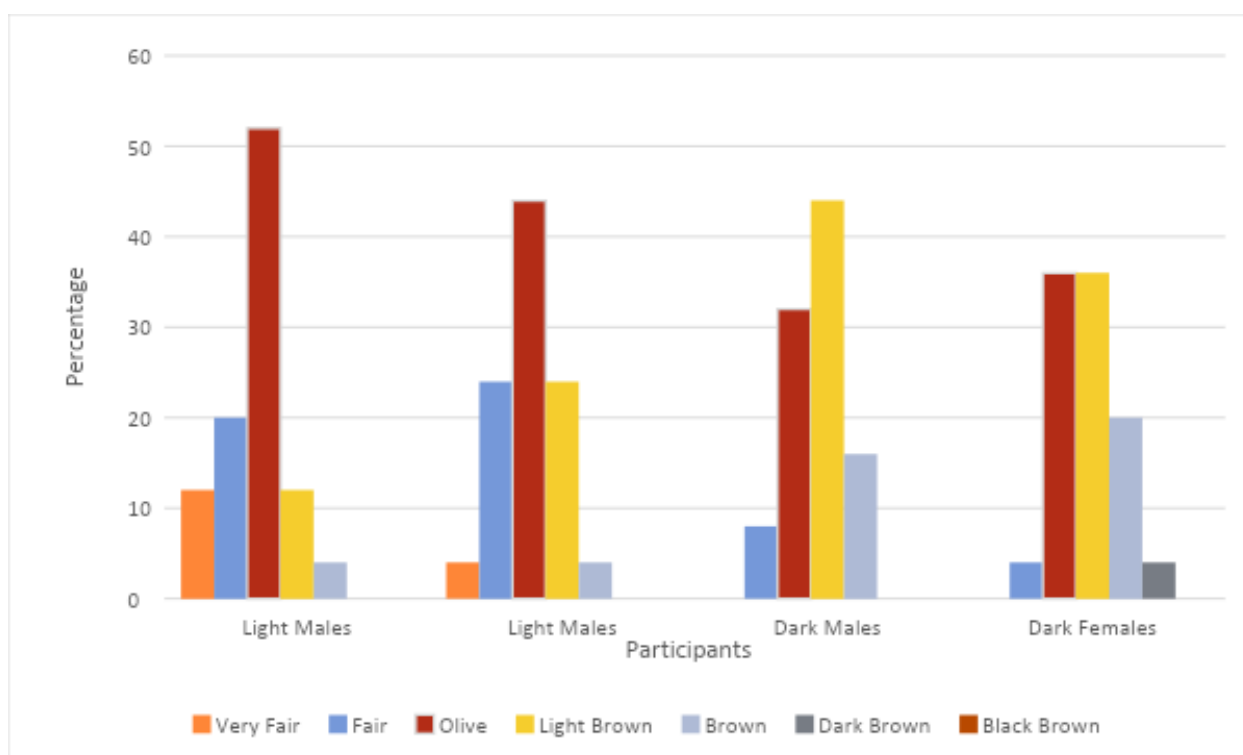


Table 10 Content analysis of subjective opinion-based questions

Categories/Themes	Codes	Condensed meaning units	Meaningful unit
Biased interpretation of skin color	Presence of biased judgment on skin color	The majority of the people gave a response in favor of the black comic character. While some reflected a preference for whiter skin tone, others were neutral.	<p>“I think I really like my own skin color.”</p> <p>“Why?”</p> <p>“I wish I could say the same”</p> <p>“I wish I was a little fair.”</p> <p>“I don’t like white.”</p> <p>“I like being black.”</p>

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<p>Neutrality in the interpretation of skin color.</p>	<p>Presence of neutral judgment on skin color</p>	<p>Most of the people gave neutral and impartial responses to comic characters of both skin colors. Though, some people favored the white comic character.</p>	<p>“Both of them would be regarded as racist as skin color should not be something to like. We all are humans and therefore equal.” “It doesn’t make sense to call him a racist, but being white and liking it somehow sounds racist. It isn’t racist, but it sounds so.” “I think this isn’t exactly racism. He is just expressing his likes for a skin color.” “That’s Pseudo Racism/Hypocrisy.” “Actually, the black kid is racist because the other kid just replied the same way as the first kid did.” “That’s unfair towards the white guy.”</p>
<p>Influence of colorism on dating perspective</p>	<p>Presence of non-colorist suggestions on dating</p>	<p>Most people stressed other factors such as compatibility and personality instead of skin color while advising about dating. A few people even urged about changing the mindset of their friends when required.</p>	<p>“Skin Color does not matter, the character of the person matters.” “Get a brain.” “The person could be a great company despite his color.” “It’s his/her choice. I can’t say anything to him/her.” “I will try to change the mindset of my friend.” “Don’t date because you’re clearly not fond enough of that person.”</p>

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Family and friends outlook on colorism	Presence discriminatory thoughts and behavior,	Some people said that their family is discriminatory in practice even though the families claim that they aren't. While other people also believed that their families are indifferent and not prejudiced.	<p>“Oh, she is fair and beautiful.”</p> <p>“They are indifferent to discrimination. They don't do it, and they aren't bothered.”</p> <p>“They don't discriminate. Because they have also faced the situation.”</p> <p>“In spirit, they agree. In practice, not always. This may be because of a subliminal condition causing favoritism for a type of skin color.”</p>
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DISCUSSION

“She is too pretty for a dark-skinned girl,” and many more stereotypical notions have been associated with the skin color of a person. Not just the framework of beauty but one's personality traits, economic status, and even possible profession have been affiliated to one's skin color. The present study was aimed to analyze the skin color preference of light and dark skin colored young adults. Efforts were made to acknowledge the difference between the males and females of light and dark skin color participants, majorly based on their perception and opinion. For the same, the questionnaire items were classified into perception-based items (7 items) and opinion-based items (6 items). The questions that helped bring out the perception of the participants for a particular skin color were perception-based items. These assessed the responses of the participants if they were themselves placed in a specific situation. While opinion-based items, as the name suggests, were rather direct items that concerned the general viewpoint of the participants on skin color.

The participant's perception of the subject's skin color in the image is assessed through question 1. An image of a female was presented to the participants, and they were asked to describe her as being either 'mildly fair' or 'mildly dark.' As per table 1 and figure 1, it can be observed that 64% of the light male participants described the female as 'mildly fair' while 36% of them described her as 'mildly dark.' Moreover, 56% of the light females described her as 'mildly fair' while 44% described her as 'mildly dark.' As observable, both males and females of the light skin color perceived the female as mildly fair. This shows that both males and females judged the female based on the 'fairness' parameter showing the preference for their skin color. However, the percentage of males was higher than females. It can also be noticed that 92% of the dark males and 64% of the dark females described her as 'mildly fair' while 8% of dark males and 36% of dark females described her as 'mildly dark.' Again, it can be observed that the majority of the dark skin colored males and females perceived her as mildly fair even though the percentage for males was higher, indicating they viewed the skin color through the 'fairness' parameter. Finally, when compared with the same gender, it can be noted that both light and dark females described her as mildly fair; however, the percentage of dark females was higher. Among the males as well, both dark and light males perceived the image to be 'mildly fair,' and again, the percentage of dark males was higher. This reflects a consistent pattern of perceiving the image through the lens of fairness, irrespective of gender and skin color.

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The self-reported satisfaction of the participants with their skin color was determined in question 2. The participants had to rate their satisfaction with their skin color on the option of satisfied, somewhat, and unsatisfied. The responses are represented in table and figure 2. It can be observed that 68% of the light males reported being satisfied with their skin color. In comparison, the rest of 32% reported being somewhat satisfied with their skin color, and none reported being unsatisfied. On the other hand, 80% of the light females reported to be satisfied with their skin color and the rest 20% reported to be somewhat satisfied. Like the light males, none of the light females expressed dissatisfaction with their skin color. While most light males and females reported being satisfied, the percentage of light females was higher than the light males. This can be because of the stereotypes associated with fair skin color wherein fairness determines attractiveness, and hence the level of satisfaction is high in fair-skinned people. Within the dark participants, 64% of dark males reported to be satisfied, 36% to be somewhat satisfied, and none of them said to be unsatisfied with their skin color. Moreover, 84% of the dark females reported being satisfied with their skin color, 12% reported being somewhat satisfied, while 4% reported being unsatisfied with their skin color. People are considering the Indian wheatish/dark skin color to be equally attractive and normalizing it as beautiful with changing perspectives. Thus, we can discern that most of the males and females of dark skin color reported being satisfied with their skin color; however, the percentage of dark females was higher than the darker males. While drawing comparisons within the same gender, it can be observed that within males, both the light and dark skin participants were almost equal in reporting satisfaction with their skin color, and none of them reported to be unsatisfied. Within the female participants, it can be noted that even though a similar percentage of light and dark females reported to be satisfied. However, a tiny minority of 4% of dark females reported being unsatisfied. With the increase in awareness and acceptance of oneself, people are becoming more and more content with their skin color.

To assess the perception of the conventional skin color of menial work, images of three males were shown in question 3, and the participants had to choose any one image which is most likely to be a waiter. Two images depicted fair skin males, while the third was a darker male. Out of the two fair skin colored images, to add an additional variable, the image of a male belonging to Mongolian ethnicity was selected. The participants' responses are represented in the table and figure 3. Within the light skin color male participants, we can observe that 52% of the light males perceived the fair Mongolian male to be the waiter. In comparison, 36% of them reported the other fair male, and only 12% of them reported the dark male to be the waiter. On the other hand, within light females, 44% of them reported the fair male to be the waiter, 36% of them reported the fair Mongolian male, and only 20% of them reported the dark male to be the waiter. This shows that both males and females with light skin color perceived the fair males to be a waiter than the dark ones. Similarly, in the dark skin color male participants, it can be observed 52% of them reported the fair Mongolian male to be the waiter, 44% perceived the fair male, and only 4% of them said the dark male to be the waiter. Among the dark females, 48% reported the fair male to be the waiter, while the other 36% reported the fair Mongolian, and the remaining 16% said the dark male was the waiter. Again, both males and females with dark skin color perceived fair males to be a waiter than the dark ones. If we compare within the same genders, a similar pattern of perceiving the fair Mongolian male as the waiter was observed in the males. This may also indicate the stereotypes associated with people of Mongolian ethnicity who usually migrate to big cities for work and end up doing menial jobs. The roots of discrimination against such people can be traced to various aspects of everyday life. Furthermore, a similar pattern of reporting the fair male as the waiter was observed in both light and dark females.

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With the changing hospitality industry, physical appearance and presentation have become essential, leading to an increase in fair males working as waiters. Hughes & Hertel (1990) found that skin tone has significant relationships with education, occupational prestige, personal income, and family income, even when gender, age, and parental socio-economic status are controlled. For each resource indicator, light African Americans were higher. Keith & Herring (1991) elaborated upon Hughes & Hertel's work by examining the exact nature of the differences between skin tone groups. Their findings indicated that very light individuals were the most likely to be employed as professionals and technical workers, while very dark people were most likely to be laborers. The family incomes of very light African Americans were more than 50% greater than those of very dark Blacks. Very light respondents' incomes were almost 65% higher than those for very dark respondents. Finally, Keith & Herring found gender differences indicating that skin tone plays a pivotal role in determining education, career, and family income for women only."

Question 5 was formed to assess the perception regarding the selection of pink-collar employees (receptionists) based on skin color. Participants were given three options wherein option 1 was an image of a fair-skinned female subject, option 2 was an image of a dark-skinned female subject, and option 3 was the image of a fair-skinned female subject but of Mongolian ethnicity. The purpose of including this third category was to assess if it's only the color or the ethnicity as well, which affects the people's responses. According to table 4, 20% of light males and 52% of light females responded with a fair-skinned female's image, 68% of light males and 44% of light females responded with a dark-skinned female's image, and 12% of lighter males and 4% of lighter females responded with fair-skinned female's image but of Mongolian ethnicity. A pink-collar worker works in the care-oriented career field or in fields historically considered to be women's work. (*Occupational employment statistics*, 2006). It mainly involves positions that deal with public relations. The notion was to see the participants' perspective on the idea that most companies might prefer a more attractive or 'fair' person for this job. Though both lighter males and females preferred a dark-skinned person for this job, the percentage of lighter males was higher. There may be many factors behind this, like people exhibiting social desirability bias, especially males, since it was a female's image. 28% of dark males and 32% of dark females responded with a fair-skinned female's image, 72% of dark males and 56% of dark females selected the image of a dark-skinned female. In comparison, 0% of dark males and 12% of dark females selected fair-skinned female's image but of Mongolian ethnicity. We can see that most dark males and dark females show a preference for dark-skinned females; however, the percentage of dark males is significantly higher. A prominent reason could have been that since the image had three different people, the dark-skinned female subject might have looked more bold, confident, and appealing for the job because of her features. We can also see that within the same gender, both sets of females have mostly selected the dark-skinned female, but the percentage of dark females is higher. For males, both sets have mostly opted for the dark-skinned colored female; however, the percentage of dark males is higher. Data from the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) (1979-80) was used to determine the effects of skin-color variations of blacks on various dimensions like occupation, income, etc. The findings are that complexion has a significant net impact on stratification outcomes, as well as is also a more valuable predictor of occupation and income than background characteristics such as parents' socio-economic status. This highlights the persisting discrimination against blacks (Keith & Herring, 1991).

The purpose of question 7 was to see participants' opinions on the advantage of fair skin color in job interviews. Two categories of 'yes' and 'no' were given as options to the

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participants. According to table 5, we can see that 40% of light males and 40% of light females think that fair skin color has an advantage, while 60% of light males and 60% of light females feel that it doesn't. Thus, a higher and equal number of light males and females think that having a light skin color doesn't enhance their chances of being selected. 36% of dark males and 46% of dark females believe that fair skin color does have an advantage, while 64% of dark males and 52% of dark females think it doesn't. More than half of both dark males and females believe that dark skin color doesn't lower their chances of clearing the interview. However, the percentage of dark males with this opinion is higher. We can also see that both dark and light females think that color doesn't matter, but the rate of light females is higher. This could be because light females might not have experienced it upfront and have a more favorable opinion. The same pattern could be seen in dark and light males but with a higher percentage of dark males. We have all heard that interviews are all about first impressions and being presentable. The TV advertisements of many fairness creams link fairness to success, showcasing how the confidence level suddenly rises with becoming fairer. All these notions are somewhere still ingrained in the minds of some participants. However, a non-colorist panelist will look for skills and abilities over the physical attributes of an interviewee. DeFina et al. (2013) used data from The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, and logistic regression analyses indicated that darker skin color significantly increased the odds of suspension for African American adolescents. Closer inspection of the data revealed that the experiences of African American females disproportionately drove this overall result. The odds of suspension were about three times greater for young African American women with the darkest skin color than those with the lightest skin.

In question 8, participants were asked if they would accept a marketing job in a fairness cream company. Three categories of 'yes,' 'no,' and 'other' were presented as options to participants. According to table and figure 6, 36% of light males and 16% of light females agreed, 52% of light males and 60% of light females said no, while 12% of light males and 24% of light females responded with the option 'other.' Some key responses given by participants in this category were: "Sure if the company offers a good package." or "It depends on what kind of incentives they are providing." So even though the majority of males and females said they would reject the job based on their non-colorists ideals, some participants justify that it all depends on the amount of salary offered and their financial conditions. Most males said yes, probably because males are socially conditioned to think about the monetary aspect of things. 44% of dark males and 16% of dark females said yes, 52% of dark males and 72% of dark females said no. In comparison, only 4% of dark males and 12% of dark females responded with the option 'other.' participants in this category gave some key responses like: 'I would if money is great #materialism.' or 'Sure and make sensible fairness ads. It might be a choice but not a supreme achievement in one's life.' Even though most males and females said no, there was a significant difference in the percentages. They might be have the same reasons as light males. We also see that within the same gender, both sets of females majorly gave a 'no' response, but the percentage of darker females was higher. This could be because they are vulnerable to facing discrimination related to color and are more sensitive to anything that promotes colorism. An equal number of lighter and darker males have responded with no. One reason could be that both sets are against supporting the promotion of such creams that idolize the notion of 'fair is beautiful.' However, both groups consider money as another essential parameter to judge things from. A study examines three competing discourses: 1) the beauty discourse, based on the mass-marketing of cosmetic whitening products, 2) the public health discourse, designed to dissuade potential skin-bleachers by exposing health risks and 3) the cosmetic surgery discourse, created to market cosmetic procedures to the new and growing "ethnic" market.

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This article demonstrates that the focus on individual attitudes in all three discourses obfuscates color-based discrimination and encourages the purchase of racial capital through the analysis of advertisements and public health campaigns. (Hunter, 2011)

Question 9 was aimed to see participants' perceptions regarding preference for the adoption of a baby based on their skin color. Participants were given three images of babies, in which option one was based on a fair skin colored baby, option two was a baby of Mongolian ethnicity, and option three was based on a dark skin colored baby. In table and figure 9, it is clearly evident that 40% of light males prefer babies of Mongolian ethnicity, followed by 32% of the light males who prefer babies of dark skin color, and the remaining 28% of the light males prefer babies of light skin color. Likewise, 40% of light females prefer fair skin-colored babies, followed by 32% of light females who like babies of Mongolian ethnicity, and a significantly lesser proportion of light females prefer babies of dark skin color. Conversely, we can conclude that 48% of dark males prefer babies of dark skin color from the figure and tables. In comparison, 32% of dark males prefer babies of light skin color, and the remaining 20% of dark males prefer babies of Mongolian ethnicity. Whereas 56% of dark females prefer babies of dark skin color, 24% of the dark females prefer babies of light skin color, and the remaining 20% of dark females prefer babies of Mongolian ethnicity. This indicates that most fair and dark males and females prefer a baby of their skin color. This is because parents who cannot have their baby traditionally wish that their adopted child resembles the phenotype they possess. Given the above perspective, females as mothers also firmly believe that their children should be their genes. While making comparisons within the same gender, it was seen that a higher percentage of light males preferred Mongolian babies, while most dark males preferred dark skin colored babies. Parallely, within the female participants, most light females preferred light skin color babies, and most dark females preferred dark skin colored babies. In a research by Landor et al. (2013), it was found that no connection existed between skin tone and racial discrimination, suggesting that lightness or darkness of skin does not shield African Americans from or aggravate the experience of facing discrimination. Families also showed preferential treatment toward offspring based on skin tone, and these differences varied by gender of the child. Specifically, darker skin sons received higher-quality parenting and more racial socialization, promoting mistrust compared to their lighter skin counterparts. Lighter skin daughters received higher-quality parenting compared to those with darker skin. In addition, the gender of the child moderated the association between primary caregiver skin tone and racial socialization, promoting mistrust. These results suggest that colorism remains a salient issue.

The purpose of question 11 was to see the participants' opinions on the appropriateness of fairness cream advertisements. In the table and figure 11, it is very much evident that 68% of light males think fairness cream advertisements are inappropriate. Correspondingly, 84% of light females think fairness cream advertisements are inappropriate. This means that the majority of light males and females believe that fairness cream advertisements are inappropriate. 92% of dark males and 96% of dark females felt that fairness cream advertisements are inappropriate. Perhaps it may be because people think fairness creams are among the causes of the deep-rooted obsession regarding fair skin color. However, rising awareness through social media is decreasing stereotyping based on skin color among people. While making comparisons within the same gender, lighter and darker-skinned participants of both genders did not favor fairness cream advertisements. Glenn (2008) examines the "yearning for lightness" and skin-lightening practices in various societies and communities and the role of transnational pharmaceutical and cosmetic corporations in

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fueling the desire for lighter skin through print, Internet, and television ads that link light skin with modernity, social mobility, and youth.

Question 12 intended to see the participants' perceptions regarding the ideal skin color. Participants were given seven options based on skin color types: very fair, fair, olive, light brown, brown, dark brown, and black-brown, out of which they were asked to choose the ideal skin color. According to the table and figure 12, 52% of light males and 44% of light females think that "olive" is the ideal skin color. It could be because olive is the most prevalent skin color in the Indian context. Furthermore, 44% of dark males think "light brown" is the ideal skin color because participants prefer their skin color. Contrastingly 36% of dark females think that "olive" as well as "light brown" are the ideal skin colors. Hence from the mentioned data, it can be concluded that dark females prefer their skin color because it also quickly gets tanned and is prone to hyperpigmentation. In making comparisons within the same gender, it was found that "olive" is the ideal skin color for most light males. In contrast, according to most dark males, "light brown" is the ideal skin color. It was also observed that the majority of the light females consider "olive" as the ideal skin color, though dark females view that both "olive" and "light brown" are the ideal skin colors. According to research, one reason could be that men are subconsciously attracted to fairer skin because of its association with innocence, purity, modesty, virginity, vulnerability, and goodness. In contrast, women are attracted to men with darker complexions because these are associated with sex, virility, mystery, villainy, and danger. (Dobson, 2008)

To analyze the participants' qualitative responses to four open-ended questions, a detailed content analysis was conducted. The first category was regarding the biased interpretation of skin color. A white cartoon character was shown saying, 'I like being white' to a black cartoon character. The participants had to type the black character's response. The majority of the people responded in favor of the black comic character: "I think I really like my own skin color." Some reflected a preference for whiter skin tone, while others were neutral. The second category was Neutrality in the interpretation of skin color, which was a contingency question to the first category. It was the extension of the 1st cartoon image where the black cartoon was shown saying 'I like being black' to which the white character responds 'I like being white,' finally to which the black character responds 'racist.' The participants had to type their thoughts on this extended version of the cartoon image. The responses were found to be in contrast to the reactions of the 1st question. The majority of participants reflected a neutral viewpoint by mentioning none of the two characters is racist: "I think this isn't exactly racism. He is just expressing his likes for a skin color." Simultaneously, many responded against the black comic character: "Actually, the black kid is racist because the other kid just replied the same way as the first kid did." The third category was about the influence of colorism on the dating perspective. We asked people what they would suggest to a friend who was confused about dating because of the other person's skin color. The majority of people responded with, "Skin Colour does not matter. The character of the person matters." Most people stressed other factors such as compatibility and personality instead of skin color while advising about dating. A few people even urged about changing the mindset of their friends when required. Lastly, the fourth category was about the family's and friend's outlook on colorism. Participants were asked about their family's and friends' views on discrimination based on skin color/race. Presence of discriminatory thoughts and behavior was observed. The majority of people said that their family is discriminatory in practice even though the families claim that they aren't: "Oh, she is fair

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and beautiful.” While some people also believed that their families are indifferent and not prejudiced.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to explore the skin color preference of light and dark skin-colored young adults. In view of objective 1, the findings indicate no difference in the skin color preference of light skin-colored males and females, yet the majority of both preferred light skin color. For objective 2, we can observe no difference in the skin color preference of dark skin-colored males and females, yet the majority of both preferred dark skin color. Finally, it was found for objective three that among the females, the majority of dark females preferred dark skin color while the majority of light females preferred light skin color. Similarly, among the males, most dark males preferred dark skin color while the majority of light males preferred light skin color.

Limitations

The study may have some shortcomings that shall need further improvement. Firstly, several images were used to get into the participants’ perceptions regarding skin color. Such images may have evoked different thoughts in different participants and may have worked as extraneous variables for them while reporting their responses. Secondly, the perception of light and dark can be subjective. What may be fair for someone may not be equally fair for someone else. So, the issue of generalizability is a significant limitation. Thirdly, the participants selected their skin color in the demographics based on their discretion, and there is no way to determine its accuracy. Finally, this study’s qualitative nature may have invited bias during the interpretation of participants’ responses, especially in the open-ended questions.

Suggestions

The study can be conducted at the national level to get the broader picture. Many extraneous variables play a role in one’s views and perceptions about a controversial topic like colorism that could be controlled. Various other trends like age differences, regional differences can be worked upon. Colorism is a threat to the community as a whole, and more research needs to be done on strategies and interventions that can be used to make people aware of it. Research should also find the causal and maintenance factors and trends because change can only happen when we know that a problem exists.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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