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**EFFECTS OF COLOURISM IN NIGERIA.**

**Colourism**  has long been a common issue in Nigeria, one that is hardly addressed or looked into, probably because people are distracted by a lot of other things but it is something that should be looked into as it affects everyone.

**What is colourism?** Colourism according to Wikipedia is discrimination based on skin color,also known shadeism,is a form of prejudice or discrimination usually from members of the same race in which people are treated differently based on the social implication from cultural meanings attached to skin colour.

When people think of racism it is usually against people outside of their ethnicity. Colorism is discrimination against people because they have a darker complexion. The idea of racism and colorism are similar. Someone with a lighter complexion is considered to be more beautiful or valuable than someone with dark skin .Hence,colourism should not be confused with Racism.

In many parts of Nigeria, women with lighter skin are thought to be more beautiful and likely to find more success than women with darker skin tones.Often this barrier leads to women turning to skin lightening treatments, many of which are harmful to the body.

Historically, the cause of skin lightening goes back to **colonialism**, where individuals with lighter skin received greater privilege than those of darker tones. This built a racial hierarchy and color ranking within colonized African nations, leaving psychological effects on many of the darker skinned individuals.

In Nigeria, people are sometimes treated better just because of their skin color. Light skinned people or ‘fair people’ as we may call them are treated better than those with darker skin and have conditioned some of them to believe that they are indeed higher than others because of their skin color. They even get more opportunities just because they are ‘fair’. To show how colorism is such an issue in Nigeria, most times we see Nigerians making fun of Kenyans and Ghanaians based on how dark they are and it just shows how deeply rooted we are in colorism in Nigeria where we even make fun of dark-skinned people forgetting the beauty in being dark.

Due to colorism, the bleaching industry has become successful in Nigeria, many people have figured that if you can’t beat them then why not join them. They realized that there is a preference for lighter-skinned people so they might as well make themselves lighter to share in this privilege. Many Nigerian celebrities are not as dark as they were before because they also figured that they will be taken more seriously if they bleach.

If we were to carry out proper research we would find out that there are many black girls and guys that had one point in their life felt insecure because they see the preference given to lighter-skinned people or are being mocked because of their color. The only way to tackle Colourism is if Nigerians, change their mentality and instead of being shallow in their thinking, learn to appreciate people for who they are and not just their skin color. Also, we need more dark people to embrace their skin color and flaunt it to encourage other dark skin people like them to love their skin color and not bleach their skin. We should love people for who they are and not their skin color

Colorism affects both women and men in Nigeria , but it has taken hold of the beauty standards associated with a woman's ability to find success and marriage. The number of women across Nigeria using bleaching products have gone up with 77% of Nigerian women using bleaching products.

**MORE AREAS COLOURISM AFFECT ARE;**

* **NOLLYWOOD INDUSTRY:** For a fact, fair girls seem to get more casting roles than dark-skinned girls. The flip-side to this is where both shades of skin tone are casted but dark skinned girls seem to get the less desirable or passive roles in movies. It is a known fact success in showbiz is not totally dependent on talent, the look must be complementary. As a result, a lot of actresses overtime see the need to tone their skin, improve their looks through cosmetic surgery to get more lead roles and also conform to the required image as they climb the ladder of success.

The impacts of colourism are rife. First, it is an act of discrimination fueling the assumption that light-skinned people are better and as such deserve better opportunities particularly in the movie industry.Second, it underestimates the place of talent and merit where people are considered merely because of their skin colour and not their ability or adaptability to the role in question.Most importantly, it places undue pressure on aspiring dark-skinned actresses or sometimes crush their careers and prospects in the industry before time.

Mercy Johnson, a popular award winning Nollywood actress mentioned to *Punch* how difficult it was to get roles in her early days as an actress. In the same light, Keira Hewatch staring as Peace in the popular Nigerian series, ‘Lekki Housewives’ in an exclusive interview with Pulse Nigeria mentioned how she had lost movie roles on account of her dark complexion. As a result, there is a remarkable tendency for young girls to validate their sense of beauty using metrics such as skin colour and general physical appearance.

* **INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA:** Commercials and advertisements for skin lightening products offer the promise of lighter, whiter skin. To tout the skin lightening products, advertisements are usually expensively produced, featuring ultra-light celebrities or super models, and presenting (and mixing) both traditional and westernized visual signifiers to evoke atmospheres of purity, cleanliness and sophistication (Leong, 2006: pg. 169).These forms of tele-marketing suggest black women are unhappy, ignored by men and they suffer from low self-esteem.

Ultimately, advertisements suggest, the lighter your skin, the more likely you are to find your dream occupation or even a suitable partner. When women are exposed to, or confronted with visual stimuli from the media, it creates a sense of anxiety and insecurity which results in them engaging in harmful forms of body beautification such as skin-lightening practices. Well-known Nigerian celebrities like Foluke Daramola-Salako an actress lightened her skin from being chocolate to fair.Other celebrities such as Bobrisky,Toke Makinwa have also been associated with lightening their skin.

Moving up towards upper Africa the artist Dencia has developed her own skin lightening product called Whitenious where rumors also arise that she herself is using the product. In contrast to these celebrities encouraging skin lightening use, Funke Akindele encourages women to adopt healthy skin care habits and to love the skin they are in, saying “every woman is special.” Celebrities carry credibility and prestige, and their use of skin lighteners are perceived as being acceptable, even encouraged. Individuals will go to extreme measures to change the colour of their skin. Consequently, consumers become obsessed with this practice because of the results obtained by its use and positive feelings associated with it. This can be attributed to the extent to which these products are marketed that is to improve appearance.

The media’s role in contributing to the positive outcome in the war against unregulated use of skin lighteners cannot be overstated. The media plays an influential role in the purchase and use of skin lightening products.Fairness can be portrayed as a sign of what is idealised and as a standard for beauty and competency. Products are advertised to promote health and beauty. Billboard advertising in Africa for over 50 years portrayed white-skinned individuals as icons of beauty, as did the print and electronic media industries. Today, in an even greater way, the media plays an influential role in how people live and how they perceive themselves. Television, magazines, newspapers schoolbooks and the likes of social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter,) further emphasize the importance of image and beauty and how integral they are to achieving success.

These platforms encourage the use of products as it presents visual stimuli where individuals with a light skin tone are portrayed as being more attractive and more likely to be successful in life. This ideology bolsters the perception that a fairer complexion is equated to material and social success. Advertisements promote the idea of fairness with slogans such as Successful people, Making your dreams come true, add sparkle to your life and lighter and lovelier. Women claim that the way the television advertises skin lightening products, compels them to prefer lighter skin tones**.**

Concisely, It is not enough to start a viral campaign for dark and natural beauty using the popular #melaninpopping without creating awareness for a fair and equitable system where casting considerations and any job at all are made solely on the basis of expertise.For this to happen, we might need to start reviewing why ladies on popular adverts are predominantly tall, slim and light-skinned and not the everyday nigerian girl because in truth, colourism thrives on the assumption that people prefer ladies with lighter skin.