

**I WANT TO BE WHITE: A STUDY OF WHITENING PRODUCTS
CONSUMPTION BEHAVIORS AMONG FEMALE UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN MANDALY UNIVERSITY, MYANMAR**



EI KAY THWE

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EI KAY THWE 5837911 SHHS/M

M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: LUECHAI SRINGERNYUANG, Ph.D.,
SEUNG CHUN PAEK, Ph.D., MARK STEPHAN FELIX, Ph.D.,

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to understand whitening products consumption behaviors of female University students in Mandalay University. Focuses of the study were on how body image and skin color perception affect consumption patterns and on factors influencing the whitening products use. In addition, knowledge and the adverse effects of mercury, hydroquinone, corticosteroids and the skin damage like irritation, redness, rashes and hyperpigmentation caused by these toxic chemicals were explored in this study.

This exploratory study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection including semi-structured interview, observation for the behavior related of buying these whitening products, non-participant observations concerned with the nature of markets including the advertisements and survey questionnaires. Altogether, 17 female students were purposively included for in-depth interview and 199 were randomly selected in the survey.

The findings revealed that whitening products were popular among studied female undergraduate students. They mainly practised whitening cream, facial whitening soap, body whitening scrub and whitening body lotion. It was found that four out of seventeen students used to take oral whitening pills such as glutathione or collagen pills. The most popular brands among students gathered from interview are properly imported from Korea and Thailand. In their perceptions, most students linked skin whiteness with beauty, prestige, fame, perfection, confidence, and attractiveness. The inferential of "Whiteness is beauty" influenced on whitening products consumption. The main influencing factor of the use of whitening products was mentioned by shaping new realities through social media advertisements among these students.

Results of the 199 samples surveyed in this study, it showed that 71.4 percent currently used whitening products, 25% of students used unregistered products, 12.3 % of students bought these products from unreliable sources were reported (e.g., grocery shops or selling on the evening street bazars or online shopping) and 36% of studied population experienced of harmful effects in using these products.

This study recommends that the university students are a potential risk group. Although the use of skin whitening products among studied population is high, they do not care about the adverse effects of toxic chemicals contained in unregistered products. They suffer not only physical impacts but also psychosocial impacts, as they have high body dissatisfaction upon their skin color as they followed socially acceptable body idea without considering the long-term adverse effects.

KEY WORDS: WHITENING PRODUCTS USE BEHAVIORS/ SKIN COLOR
PERCEPTION/BODY IMAGE/ HEALTH CONSEQUENCES/ FEMALE
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