

## Language on Skin Whitening Products in Pakistan Promotes Unfair Beauty Standards: A Critical Discourse Analysis

**Authors :** Azeem Alphonce

**Abstract :** In Pakistan, there is a variety of skin tones and colors across all provinces. However, a fair complexion is one of the standards of beauty among females in Pakistan, which creates insecurities in dark-complexioned females. This research is a critical discourse analysis of the language used on beauty products for females in Pakistan. The purpose was to analyze the language used on female beauty products using Van Dijk's three-stage socio-cognitive model to understand what message is received from the few words written and repeated across the packaging of various facial products, why such language is used and what are its wider socio-cognitive effects? The criterion for the selection of beauty products was skin whitening terminologies and the language used on these products. The results showed that over 57 per cent of products utilized skin-whitening terms. The adjectives written on the package indicate that fairer skin is the ultimate beauty goal of females. The analysis explored how the language reinforces unfair beauty standards and perpetuates colorism. It was concluded that female beauty products utilize discriminatory discourse by marginalizing individuals of darker skin tones. Fairer skin is promoted, whereas darker skin is referred to as a problem, flaw or imperfection. Socially shared mental models seem to have caused beauty companies to exploit and promote perceptions of colorism in society. Therefore, such discourse should be prevented, and beauty companies should utilize their discourse to promote acceptance of various skin tones.

**Keywords :** language, skin whitening products, beauty standards, social mental models

**Conference Title :** ICLP 2024 : International Conference on Linguistics and Phonology

**Conference Location :** Montreal, Canada

**Conference Dates :** May 23-24, 2024