

Effect of colourism on negative thoughts and self-worth in minorities in Ireland

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“Nothing can be done without faith or confidence”.

### **Abstract**

Colourism is a form of intra-group discrimination and biasness based on one's skin tone. Predominant research shows that the experiences of colourism are prevalent within the Afro communities, however not exclusive to them. This phenomenon of colourism is also shown to impact one's education, job prospects, socioeconomic status, general life chances and have diverse effects for genders. Building on existing research, by examining the psychological and cognitive effects colourism has among the various ethnicities within the Irish population this study hopes to add on and broaden the scope of previous literature. This study participants completed online questionnaires based on their skin tone, self-worth and negative repetitive thoughts. Analysis of the results revealed a negative correlation between skin colour satisfaction and negative repetitive thoughts, but not significant, overall, dark-skinned males showed the lowest self-worth levels and an increase of self-worth levels for both genders who self-identify as dark skinned. Findings suggest a shift in perception that not all dark-skinned individuals have low self-esteem, future research on the buffering effect skin colour satisfaction has on self-worth and the need for public awareness in addressing the issue of colourism.

*Keywords:* Colourism, Gender Differences, Skin Tone, Skin Colour Satisfaction, Self-Worth, Negative Repetitive Thoughts

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### **What is Colourism?**

There has been significant research conducted on intergroup racial discrimination, this issue of racism has been researched by many psychologists for centuries (Banks and Grambs, 1972; Anderson & Cromwell, 1977; Parham, White and Ajamu, 2000) but mostly regarding colour discrimination - "White versus Black". Research has shown that such discrimination affects the well-being and lives of minorities. Researchers have stated that the latent effects of racism originated from colonisation, slavery of minorities and segregation, this led to a type of discrimination in which lighter skinned people of colour were more favoured compared to the darker skinned people of colour (P.O.C) (Keith and Herring, 1991). Russell, Wilson and Hall (1992) assert how colourism has historical roots in the sexual relationships that occurred between slave and slave masters and although this type of discrimination was first practised by the colonisers it was gradually internalized by the black slaves.

The offspring formed by slave and slave master created a greater distance in privileges and favours between light and dark-skinned black people in America. Glenn (2008) states due to their lighter complexion they were assigned house slave work and were treated much better whereas "pure" Africans were deemed more suitable for harsh outdoor field work. This growing distance within the black community was attributed to the ideology of white supremacy which perceived blackness as being uncivilised, unrestrained, and primitive (Glenn, 2008). Because lighter skin Africans more closely resembled white men and men compared to their counterparts, they were therefore seen to be more intelligent and more attractive, hence were granted more opportunities. Ultimately, this intragroup discrimination based on the stratification of skin colour, in which being light skinned is deemed more favourable became known as "colourism" (Hall, 2017; Hunter, 2007).



Dobbins and Skillings (1999) discussed the concept of “colour symbolism”, in which colours are used to convey a certain meaning of what is positive or negative (e.g. white lie or black market). Although using colours as a form of racial identification is socially acceptable, it becomes problematic when these derogatory terms associated with blackness negatively impacts individuals with darker skin tones. For instance, in many occasions’ studies have shown that African Americans with darker skin complexions were predominantly linked to stereotypical traits such as criminality, poverty and meanness (Russell, Wilson and Hall; Maddox and Gray, 2002). A well-known historical research by Clark and Clark (1947) revealed between a white doll and black doll, majority of African American children stated they would much rather play with the white doll. Additionally, they also associated the attributes – niceness and attractiveness to the white dolls.

Many believed that due to the abolishment of slavery and the rise of the black-conscious movement – “Black is Beautiful” during the 1960s, the process of internalizing such discriminatory beliefs had been minimalized (Williams, 2002). Unfortunately, skin colour bias continues to remain significant in the lives of minorities and that this occurrence of colourism within these communities appear to be more common than once believed (Hunter, 2007). This significance was demonstrated in a recent experimental study by CNN (2010) in which black and white children were asked a series of questions on photographs in relation to skin colour. Results revealed, that although there were some slight differences between the two groups, overall these children associated lighter skin tone pictures with more positives attributes whereas darker skin tone pictures were associated with more negative attributes.

### **Colourism and Other Communities**

Although most of the research concerning intragroup discrimination is predominately focused on Black people and most specifically those living in the United States, the negative impact of colourism has been shown to be pervasive across all racial and ethnic minorities especially various Latino and Asian communities (Ryabov, 2016; Glenn, 2008; Hunter, 2016). Like African Americans, colourism for Latinos is rooted in the colonisation and slavery of the Europeans, lighter skinned Latinos who had embraced white culture, ideologies and aesthetics were rewarded with privileges that were unattainable to darker skinned Latinos. Colonisers had created a colour-caste hierarchy in which lighter skinned Latinos were given dominion over the darker skinned counterparts thus allowing the maintenance of white supremacy (Fanon, 1967).

Recent evidence shows colourism still impacts Latinos in relation to employment and education. In 2003, it was revealed that Latino's who identified as being "white" earn \$5000 more each year compared to Latinos who identified as "black", study also shows that those who identified as white had lower unemployment and poverty rates than those who identified as black (Fears, 2003). Espino and Franz (2002) had also compared employment experiences of three Hispanic communities – Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans. Findings showed that within all three, being darker in skin complexion was significantly associated with lower occupational prestige scores compared to having a lighter skin complexion. Skin colour bias has also been shown to exist within the education system, Muguia and Telles (1996) had demonstrated that even with similar family upbringing, light skinned Mexicans completed more years of schooling than dark skinned Mexicans. This study was particularly important especially due to the gradual increase of immigration from Mexico into the States, Alba et al. (2000) stated how new immigrants not only faced racial discrimination but also discrimination based on their skin colour.

Within Asian countries and communities in America the focus on colourism has also been viewed in relation to racial theories, emphasising the impact of slavery, racism and the colonisation of Europeans (Glenn, 2008; Charles, 2011; Hunter, 2011). However, some researchers argue that the value placed on whiteness has been there long before colonisation especially within east Asian countries who seldom had contact with Europeans and that increased contact with the Europeans simply reinforced the existing preference for whiteness (Leong, 2006; Takezawa, 2015). In many Asian cultures, whiteness was associated with luxury and royalty and that only the poor and working people would be dark due to the lengthy hours spent outdoors as manual labourers (Jones, 2004; Rondilla and Spickard, 2007).

Despite the fact society has become much tolerant and open to diversity and there has also been an evidential change in attitudes towards Afrocentric features in which fuller lips and having a bigger buttock became ideal (Kim, 2014), darker skin is still seen as an undesirable trait. Because these images and attributes associated with whiteness or lighter complexion are highly valued and promoted consistently all over the global marketplace, it gave rise to an increasing desire to alter one's skin colour. This is quite evident as bleaching/whitening creams are now approximated to be multi-dollar industries especially within the minority communities (Cuny, 2017; Ryabolv, 2016; Charles, 2011).

### **Colourism, Women and Self-Esteem**

Research has found that the effect of colourism on males and females differs for each gender and that due to the impact of Eurocentric beauty standards, colourism has been shown to affect dark skinned women of colour more strongly than their lighter-skinned counterpart, especially on their self-esteem (Thompson and Keith, 2001; Hall, 2017; Wilder and Cain, 2011). Russell, Wilson and Hall (1992) discussed how historically, the social discord created

by associating having a lighter complexion to high standards of beauty was inevitable, and that this perception of light skinned black women being more attractive to men caused dark skinned black women to internalize this “inferiority”. To determine if this ideology still pervades in black culture, Hill (2002) investigated the perception of attractiveness in both genders of African Americans. The study revealed a significant relationship between lighter skin and higher perceived attractiveness in both African American women and men; this study also revealed that skin colour was the second strongest predictor of attractiveness among the participants, second to weight.

Also, in a study investigating overall body satisfaction of African American college students, Falconer and Neville (2000) found a high correlation between skin tone and body dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction with skin colour led to dissatisfaction of overall appearance regardless of other features hence indicating an impact on self-esteem. Hanon and Defina (2014) gave more support in their research based on a longitudinal data of 12-16-year olds which showed that darker skinned African American girls were three times more likely to wish to be lighter compared to African American girls wishing to be darker. Moreover, because of this negative stigma associated with dark skin, skin colour is seen as an important characteristic in defining beauty for women of colour. Within Thai culture, many women were more likely to believe that having lighter skin will grant them successful careers, a happy long life by keeping their men loyal and a higher self-esteem (Cuny, 2017), therefore, to live up to this beauty ideal and to be “marriageable” these Asian women seek out whitening cosmetics (Leong, 2006; Ryabolv, 2016).

Consequently, having a lighter complexion is said to provide them with a chance of achieving upward social status and advancement in marriages. (Hunter, 2007; Thompson and Keith, 2001). Studies have shown that although light skinned people of colour are not more

likely to marry than dark skinned people of colour, they do however have a higher chance of marrying a spouse with a high status (Glenn, 2008; Hunter, 2007; Keith and Herring, 1991).

### **Colourism, Men and Self-Efficacy**

Early research suggested that among the black community, dark skinned men were idealized as “alpha” Males who possessed strong masculine characteristics such as dominance, strength and confidence (Hall, 1995). However, due to poor treatment by society, not all aspects of having dark skin can be idealized. For instance, they are typically stereotyped as “bad” and “dangerous” beings (Khan and Davies, 2011; Maddox and Gray, 2002). Eberhardt and colleagues revealed in their experimental study that dark skinned black men are the most common targets of police harassment and racial profiling (Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughn & Johnson, 2006). Compared to their lighter skinned counterparts, dark skinned African American men who are arrested are said to serve harsher and longer sentences even for similar crimes (Glymah-Bremong and Price, 2006). Although people of colour are less likely to trust the police (Huggins, 2012; Wu, 2014), a research study by Nadal, Davidoff, Allicock, Serpe and Erazo (2017) demonstrated that among their participants black men were more likely to have negative perceptions of police than Asian and White men.

Having a dark skin tone also impacts the occupation and socioeconomic class of men of colour (Anderson and Cromwell, 1977; Fears, 2003). Because darker skinned men of colour receive fewer opportunities to advance in their careers and earn significantly lower wages than lighter skinned men of colour they consider their skin colour as a barrier to success. This was demonstrated through the “Barack Obama” study in which individuals who did not vote for Obama perceived him to be significantly darker than his true complexion whereas those who did vote for him perceived him to be significantly lighter (Caruso, Mead

and Balecitis, 2009). Consequently, seeing other men having successful careers and experiences simply because they are light in complexion leads darker skinned men of colour to view “light skin” as the key to professional status and popularity. The idea of their hard work not paying off simply because of their skin and having fewer opportunities to demonstrate competence in the traditional “breadwinning” role, their masculinity may feel threatened thus also impacting their self-efficacy. This was demonstrated by Thompson and Keith (2001) analysis, in which although having a lighter complexion was associated with higher self-esteem in women, lighter skin tone was associated with higher self-efficacy for men.

### **Rationale, Research Aims, Hypotheses**

Although the existing literature gives great insight to colourism and its profound psychosocial effects on minorities, to the knowledge of the current researcher, there is little to no research conducted on the cognitive implications’ colourism has on minorities. Inferences about the effect colourism has on the cognitive wellbeing of minorities could be drawn. It may be that exposure to frequent negative evaluations from both outside and within the same race dynamics will increase the likeliness of them engaging in negative thinking. As well as this, studies have mostly examined the impact of colourism on self-esteem and/or self-efficacy within one racial group at a time (predominately African Americans). This study will be the first to assess the impact of colourism on self-worth with a total of three or four diverse ethnic groups simultaneously within the same study and to determine any unique differences between genders.

The two aims of this study are to:

- 1) Explore the relationship between skin complexion and repetitive negative thoughts.

- 2) Determine if there is any difference between males and females in levels of perceived self-worth based on skin tone.

From the evidence it is firstly hypothesised that lower levels of satisfaction on skin complexion would negatively correlate with repetitive negative thoughts. The second hypothesis based on skin tone is that females would display significantly lower levels of perceived self-worth than males.

## Method

### **Participants**

This current study consisted mainly of undergraduate students of different ethnicities who are based in Dublin, Ireland. Initial G\*Power analysis estimated approximately 200 participants needed of the study however only 150 individuals volunteered to partake. Participants were gathered using convenience-snowball sampling method and out of the 150 participants, there were 107 females (71.3%) and 43 males (28.7%). Majority of the participants were aged from 18 - 25 (N = 143) and a few mature students, age 26 onwards (N = 7). The current study also accounted for five different ethnicities, Black (N = 112, 74.7%), Asian (N = 21, 14.0 %), Multiracial/Biracial (N = 6, 4.0%), Hispanic/Latino (N = 4, 2.7%) and Pacific Islander (N = 1, 0.7%). Participants whom did not identify with any of these ethnicities were grouped as “Other” (N = 6, 4.0%).

### **Measures**

Skin colour satisfaction was measured using the “*Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale*” (SCSS) by Falconer and Neville (2000) who developed this scale to examine different dimensions of skin colour. The questionnaire contains 7 items on a 9 Likert scale with 1 being extremely dissatisfied and 9 being extremely satisfied with items, 5 and 6 being reversed coded. For the purpose of this study, only items, 1, 4, 6, and 7 pertaining to skin colour satisfaction exclusively is used in the analyses, the mean of the scores are summed and averaged. Hence, higher scores indicate higher satisfaction with skin colour. The overall Cronbach’s alpha was shown to be .71, whereas for this study the Cronbach level is .74 indicating a high level of internal consistency with this specific sample. The language of the original SCSS was changed slightly to suit all people of colour in Dublin and not just black participants. (See Appendix C).



For example

original SCSS question: Compared to most African American people, I believe my skin colour is...

changed version: Compared to most people of my ethnicity, I believe my skin colour is...

Perceived skin tone was measured using item 2 from the *Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale*, individuals indicated from a scale of 1 – 9 what they perceived their skin colour to be. With 1 being extremely light and 9 being extremely dark. (See Appendix C.)

The “*Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale*” by Rosenberg (1965) is a questionnaire used to measure an individual’s self-esteem and self-worth. It is a 10 item, 4-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly agree and 4 being strongly disagree. The scale measures both negative and positive feelings about the self. The totalled number of the questionnaire was used to indicate how much self-worth the participant has for themselves. Scores ranging 15 – 25 are considered to be normal range and those scoring below 15 suggest low self-esteem scores hence, the higher the score the higher the perceived worth. Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 are all reversed coded and this scale has an internal consistency rating of 0.77. (See Appendix D.). This scale has also been shown to be valid in studies such as Thompson and Keith (2001).

Negative thinking was measured using the “*Perseverative Thinking Questionnaire*” by Ehring, Zetsche, Weidacker, Wahl, Schonfeld & Ehlers (2011). This is questionnaire is based on intrusive and repetitive negative thinking with 15 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (almost always). The initial validation research on this questionnaire showed it has satisfactory internal consistency of 0.95, for this study Cronbach alpha score was .91. (See Appendix E.)

## **Design**

This study consists of three dependant variables (self-worth, negative repetitive thoughts and skin colour satisfaction) and two independent variables (skin tone and gender). To examine colourism's effect on self-worth and negative repetitive thoughts in people of colour, a quantitative research design was implemented. This was a cross sectional within subject design study, which used self-reported questionnaires to determine if perceived self-worth based on skin tone differs significantly between males and females as well as to determine if there is a correlation between skin colour satisfaction and negative repetitive thinking.

## **Procedure**

Due to the slight change of wordings in the skin colour satisfaction scale a small pilot study was conducted with four individuals of different ethnicities. This was to test if the questionnaire going to be administered would still be easily understood by individuals who did not identify as being "Black". Once the questionnaire was deemed administrable, recruitment of study began hence because the study aims to focus on intragroup discrimination of minorities in Ireland the exclusion criteria included individuals who identified as Caucasian as it is well known that intra-discrimination is most pervasive in people of colour. During initial recruitment stage flyers were placed in various universities and shopping departments especially where different minority groups are prone to hanging around.

Participants who then got in contact and wished to partake in the study were encouraged to invite friends or family to also partake in the study. Communication between researcher and participates was solely through email so any information concerning study was addressed there. Participants were therefore gathered in an opportunistic manner hence

no incentives were used. Using the platform “Google forms”, a link was sent out to all participants which consisted of the informative consent form. During initial recruitment stage and again prior to the study it was highlighted that participants must be over the legal age of 18, although they were free to withdraw at any given time a clear warning was given to the participants to ensure they are aware they are about to exit and would be required to start all over if they would like to come back. There was also no penalty for individuals who do not complete all aspects of the study and that the study was completely anonymous. (See Appendix A).

Once they read and consented to the study, they were then sent the study which involved answering some demographics (age, ethnicity and gender) and then the three questionnaires (Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Preservative Thinking Questionnaire). Duration of overall study was approx. 10-15 mins. Ethical approval was provided by the ethical review board of the National College of Ireland. Although the study did not impose any serious ethical issues, the sensitive issue of discrimination on minorities who have experienced some level of biasness throughout their life and the level of personal disclosure needed for this study may have created psychological discomfort in the participants. Information details of helplines and avenues for participants who had feelings of distress or discomfort arise are listed at the bottom of the consent form (See Appendix A.).

**Results****Descriptive Statistics**Table 1. *Frequencies for the current sample on each demographic variable (N = 150)*

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	43	28.7
Female	107	71.3
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic/Latino	4	2.7
Black	112	74.7
Asian	21	14.0
Pacific Islander	1	.7
Multiracial/Biracial	6	4.0
Other	6	4.0
<b>Skin Tone</b>		
Light	1	.7
Moderately Light	9	6.0
Mildly Light	13	8.7
Brown	58	38.7
Mildly Dark	29	19.3
Moderately Dark	29	19.3
Dark	8	5.3
Extremely Dark	3	2.0

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables*

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
PTQ	31.84 (29.86-33.82)	1.00	32	12.25	0-60
RSE	16.86 (16.51-17.21)	.175	17	2.14	11-21
SCSS	7.58 (7.35-7.82)	.117	8	1.44	3-9

*Note.* PTQ = Preservative Thinking Questionnaire; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; SCSS = Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale

The following tables above (i.e. *Table 1 and Table 2.*) present a visual summary of the descriptive statistics gathered from the existing sample. By analysing each form of central tendency in relation to the range in *Table 2.* we get in depth information about the distribution of the data. for instance, compared to PTQ which shows a symmetric distribution, RSE demonstrates a slightly skewed distribution whereas SCSS shows an extreme skewed data.

### **Inferential Statistics**

Table 3. *Correlations between continuous variables SCSS and PTQ.*

Variables	1	2
1. Skin Colour Satisfaction	1	
2. Negative Repetitive Thoughts	-.127	1

Due to the violation of normality on SCSS, the relationship between skin colour satisfaction and negative repetitive thoughts was investigated using the Spearman's product-moment correlation coefficient. As shown in *Table 3.* results indicate there was a weak, negative correlation between the two variables ( $r = -.127$  [95% CI = .297 - .48],  $n = 150$ ,  $p > .05$ ), indicating that the two variables share approximately 18% of variance in common.

Results also indicate that although lower levels of skin colour satisfaction are associated with higher levels of negative repetitive thoughts these findings were non-significant.

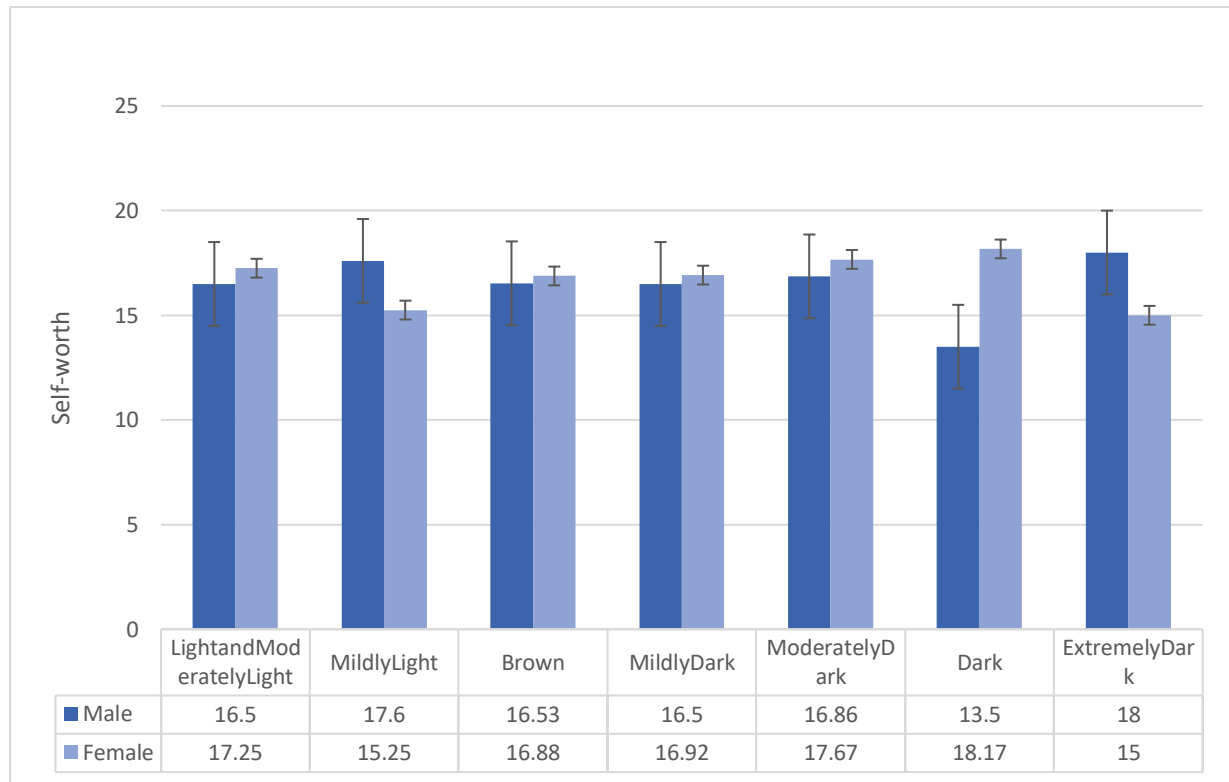
Table 4. ANOVA (*Analysis of Variance*)

Self-Worth	<i>df</i>	MS	F	<i>p</i>	Effect size
Gender	1	.746	.167	.70	.001
SkinTone	6	.532	.532	.80	.023
Gender*SkinTone	6	9.94	2.23	.04*	.09

*Note.* MS = Mean Square,  $p < .05$ \* significant

Firstly, a two-way between groups analysis was conducted to explore for: (1) differences in gender, and skin colour, on levels of perceived self-worth and (2) to examine the effect of gender on levels of perceived self-worth depending on skin tone. Initial findings indicated no violation for the assumption of homogeneity of variance ( $p = .389$ ). The results indicate that interaction effect between gender and skin tone was statistically significant,  $F(6, 136) = 2.23$ ,  $p = .04$ . However, the main effect for gender on self-worth was not significant and of a small magnitude ( $F(1, 136) = .17$ ,  $p = .68$ ,  $\eta^2 = .001$ ). The main effect for skin tone was also not significant and the effect was of a small size ( $F(6, 136) = .53$ ,  $p = .78$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ).

Graph 1. Mean differences of self-worth in relation to gender and skin tone with error bars.



As shown in “Graph 1”, differences between and within genders are clearly visible.

The graph illustrates a decrease in self-worth for women who perceive themselves to be “Extremely Dark” (15). Similar results shown for male participants, higher levels of self-worth reported among those who perceived themselves “Mildly Light” (17.6) compared to those having “Mildly Dark” skin complexion (16.86). However, this graph also reports shifts in self-worth levels within the male participants who perceived to be “Extremely Dark” (18) and female participants who perceive to be “Dark” (18.17). Self-worth levels for females who perceive to be on the lighter spectrum average at 16.46 compared to males who also perceive to be on the lighter spectrum at 16.87. Whereas a reversal is seen for females who perceive to have a darker skin complexion, average at 16.94 compared to the dark male participants who average at 16.21. Overall, female participants seem to have more higher levels of perceived self-worth than males.

Furthermore, from the reported statistically significant interaction between gender and skin tone effect on self-worth and the observations made from *Graph 1*, a few simple effect tests were conducted to determine if there was a significant effect of genders in levels of self-worth for individuals who perceive themselves as having “Mildly Light,” “Dark” and “Extremely Dark” complexions. Simple effect analysis showed that, the effect of gender on self-worth for people identifying as “Dark” skinned was significant ( $F(1, 6) = 2.22, p = .009$ ) and the effect size was quite large ( $\eta^2 = .71$ ). However, simple effect analysis for both “Mildly Light” skinned and “Extremely Dark” were non-significant ( $P > .05$ ).



## Discussion

The aim of this study was to firstly explore the relationship between skin complexion and repetitive negative thoughts amongst a sample of individuals who identify as various ethnicities and secondly to determine any differences between males and females in levels of perceived self-worth based on their skin tones. Using the intersectionality theory by Crenshaw (1989), this study tackled how skin colour and gender intersect to extract different reports of self-worth and negative thoughts. These aims were driven by previous research and literature that suggest biasness towards darker-skinned people of colour. Due to the historical discrimination and continuous devaluation towards darker skinned individuals, it was hypothesised that individuals dissatisfied with their skin complexion would have higher engagement in repetitive negative thinking, hence a negative correlation would be observed between skin colour satisfaction and repetitive negative thoughts. It was also hypothesised that females who perceive themselves to be dark-skinned would display significantly lower self-worth than males. Nevertheless, this study revealed both significant and contradicting findings.

Results did show although weak, a negative correlation between skin colour satisfaction and repetitive negative thoughts (see *Table 3.*), however due to the non-significance of this result to conclude some sort of relationship exists between the two variables, the hypothesis was rejected. Although findings show no significant correlation, the null hypothesis is just as important as it sheds light on whether colourism could or could not affect one's cognition by increasing engagement in repetitive negative thinking.

Interpretation of these findings must be done with caution, firstly due to the uneven distribution of skin colour among the participants with only 9% of the sample identifying as "Mildly Light" and 19% identifying as "Mildly Dark" and "Moderately Dark" (see *Table 1.*), results may have been skewed. Additionally, due to the self-report nature of this study

participants may be less inclined to reveal their true thoughts about their skin complexion. Previous research has shown that minorities are aware of the history, sensitivity and effect surrounding the issue of colour biasness (Fears, 1998; Caruso, Maed and Balecitis, 2009; Cuny, 2017).

Data from this study also reveal that although no statistically significant effect found for gender on self-worth, and skin tone on self-worth there was however a significant interaction between gender and skin tone on perceived self-worth (see *Table 4.*). Thus, indicating some differences in self-worth between males and females based on their skin tone, in depth analysis reveal that these differences found had an opposite effect from the hypothesis as well as contradictory results to early literature which found females to be more psychologically affected by the issue of discrimination. For instance, in an empirical study by Perry, Harp, & Oser (2013), it was revealed that specifically African American women who experiences high levels of racial discrimination reported lower levels of well-being, severe anxiety and other negative health concerns. Furthermore, this study reveals it is males who report lower self-worth levels compared to females, hence we reject the hypothesis. Once again, interpreting these findings must be done with caution in that these results could be a result of a small and unequal representation of minorities. Compared to the wide-range of participants in other studies focusing on this same topic of intra-group discrimination, this study holds 150 participants. Despite the small sample size, it does however provide useful information that may be of benefit to therapists and clinicians working with male minorities here in Dublin.

Notwithstanding, these results also give support to previous empirical research that have consistently found darker skinned individuals to have lower self-esteem than their lighter skinned counterparts (Hill, 2002; Thompson & Keith, 2001). Previous research has suggested that due to the stigma associated with having darker skin, this has caused body

dissatisfaction and negative perceptions about one's attractiveness (Hunter, 2007) which in turn effects one's view of the self. Another interesting finding to emerge from this study is the sudden increase in self-worth for males and females who identify as "Dark" and "Extremely Dark" (see *Graph 1.*) A simple explanation for this is the fact that participants, irrespective of their perceived skin tone had high levels of skin colour satisfaction. Therefore, such findings suggest how satisfied one is with their skin complexion may mitigate the effect skin tone has on self-worth levels. A study conducted by Maxwell, Brevard, Abrams and Belgrave (2014) had revealed that participants who scored higher on skin colour satisfaction also scored high on private regard beliefs, especially participants who self-identified as dark skinned toned. These findings are in support of the early works of Falconer and Neville (2000) who researched skin colour satisfaction as an important indicator of self-perceptions.

While these results are promising, there are a few factors that should be addressed that limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the current study. As previously mentioned much of the limitations dwell in the uneven distribution of participants within a colour continuum which may have manifested due to the unwillingness to identify as a certain skin complexion. Unequal representation of gender shown as well, in that the current study had twice as more females than males. Most importantly, because participants in this study are living in Ireland they may not represent the same level of colourism that is found to be more profound in America. Despite being historically a colony of the British Empire, Ireland is quite an unusual country colonialism-wise as it is highly probable that many of these non-white Irish respondents are first, or second-generation immigrants. Whereas, compared to an American cohort many of the participants will be 6+ generations in the USA and the historical context of the transatlantic slave trade would have been much more salient.

## **Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research**

In conclusion, although results are not aligned with the original hypotheses, implications can still be drawn. The fact that overall, males reported lower levels of self-worth than females may demonstrate a change in perception, it also challenges the notion that darker-skinned people of colour hold themselves in less regard due to the negative stigma attached to being dark-skinned and consequently could have less self-esteem. Moreover, the view that being satisfied with one's skin colour builds a convincing debate for the beneficial importance of advocating being satisfied in your own skin complexion. This study also prompts the need for change in the media and public awareness especially among social workers and therapists. In order to counter act the impact these negative social constructs have on minorities such individuals must be educated in the historical background of how such biasness came about.

For future research, to tackle issues concerning unequal representation of skin tone, rather than a subjective measure of skin colour, using a more objective measure such as the spectrophotometer which has been shown to be a reliable identification for skin tone (Wang, Luo, Wang, Xiao, & Pointer, 2017) may provide more significant statistical results. As well, because this study does not deal with the concept of skin colour satisfaction in relation to self-worth and gender, this study lays a foundation for future research to explore the relationship between these variables within a sample of multiple ethnicities and not just the Black community.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Informed Consent form**

Effect of Colourism on negative thoughts and self-worth in minorities in Ireland

I yield my consent freely and voluntarily to participate in this research study led by Cynthia Nwagwu a student of National College of Ireland, Undergraduate degree of Psychology. I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate the effects that colourism has on cognition and perceived self-worth of the diverse ethnic communities in Ireland. Participation in this research study serves as a means of exploration, ultimately aiding in providing valuable information to educators, social service providers, mental health workers, as well as the greater society.

Results from this research study will also aid in bringing to light the prevalence of the issues and problems experienced by minorities affected by colourism in countries other than America. Additionally, the conclusions of the study will assist in the process of educating social service and mental health providers to employ more effective, culturally sensitive techniques when working with ethnic populations affected by colourism. I understand that this research study will be accomplished through a series of questionnaires and that the entire completion of the questionnaire may take up to 30 minutes. By taking part in this study, you are expected to answer the questions truthfully, and to the best of your ability. I understand that there may be risks associated with participating in this study; however, they are minimal. I also understand that the researcher has provided me with a list of mental health providers at the bottom of this Informed Consent Form. I may contact these mental health care providers to address any discomfort or distress associated with my participation in the study. I understand that I may withdraw at any time from this study without any risk or repercussion.

Similarly, if I do not wish to participate or if I desire not to answer some questions, I do not have to do so and there will not be any repercussions for me.

I understand the information collected from the survey will be utilized for research purposes only and will be appropriately disposed of after the completion of the research project. I am aware the study will be completely confidential. I am not required to offer the researcher my real name but may do so if I so wish to. I understand that this document with my signature will be the only potential link between me and the investigation, and my name will not be indicated in the study. Finally, I understand that if I have further questions or concerns because of this study, I am encouraged to contact Cynthia Nwagwu at x16347093@student.ncirl.ie or her thesis advisor.

I understand that I will not receive any monetary or compensatory incentive for participating in this research study. I understand that I have the right and, therefore, I have exercised the right to ask questions regarding the study and these they have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that if I wish to receive addition information about the conclusions surmised in this research study, I can contact Cynthia Nwagwu via e-mail at x16347093@student.ncirl.ie

Ticking this box indicates I have read, I understand, and agree to the terms.

### **List of Mental Health Providers**

1. Pieta House 1800 247 247
2. Suicide or Survive 1890 577 577

**APPENDIX B**

**Demographic questions**

Q: What is your age?

Q: What is your gender?

Male

Female

Q: Please specify your ethnicity

- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)

**APPENDIX C**

**Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale**

Written by Jameca Woody Falconer and Helen A. Neville

University of Missouri, Columbia

Directions: Please read each statement/question carefully before circling the most appropriate answer.

1. How satisfied are you with the shade (lightness or darkness) of your own skin?

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Extremely Dissatisfied                      Somewhat Satisfied                      Extremely Satisfied

2. Compared to most people of my ethnicity, I believe my skin colour is...

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Extremely Light                              About the Same Colour                      Extremely Dark

3. If I could change my skin colour, I would make it....

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Much Lighter                              About the Same Colour                      Much Darker

4. Compared with the complexion (skin colour) of members of my family, I am satisfied with my skin colour.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Strongly Disagree                              Neutral                              Strongly Agree

5. I wish the shade of my skin was darker.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Strongly Disagree

Neutral

Strongly Agree

6. I wish my skin was lighter.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Strongly Disagree

Neutral

Strongly Agree

7. Compared to the complexion (skin colour) of other people of my ethnicity, I am  
satisfied with my skin colour.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8            9

Strongly Disagree

Neutral

Strongly Agree

**APPENDIX D**

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

Written by Rosenberg, M (1965).

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself.

Please

indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree



**APPENDIX E**

**Perseverative Thinking Questionnaire**

Written by Ehring et al. (2011)

Instructions: in this questionnaire you will need to describe how you typically feel about negative experiences and problems. Please read the following statements and rate the extent to which they apply to you when you think about such negative experiences.

(1) The same thoughts keep going through my mind again and again

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(2) Thoughts intrude into my mind

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(3) I can't stop dwelling on them

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(4) I think about many problems without solving any of them

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(5) I can't do anything else while thinking about my problems

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(6) My thoughts repeat themselves

0 1 2 3 4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(7) Thoughts come into my mind without me wanting them to

0 1 2 3 4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(8) I get stuck on certain issues and can't move on

0 1 2 3 4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(9) I keep asking myself questions without finding an answer

0 1 2 3 4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(10) My thoughts prevent me from focusing other things

0 1 2 3 4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(11) I keep thinking about the same issue all the time

0 1 2 3 4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(12) Thought just pop into my mind

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(13) I feel driven to continue dwelling on the same issue

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(14) My thoughts are not much help to me

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

(15) My thoughts take up all my attention

0      1      2      3      4

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always