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### **Socio-economic and psychological impact of skin complexion on female segment of Pakistan**

**Muhammad Arif Maan, MBBS, D. Derm (London), FCPS<sup>1\*</sup>;  
Shagufta Arif<sup>2</sup>, Shahid Javaid Akhtar, MBBS, FCPS<sup>3\*</sup>; Hina Haque,  
MBBS<sup>4\*</sup>; Javed Iqbal, MBBS, D. Dermat (Thailand), FCPS<sup>5\*</sup> and  
Mazhar Iqbal Raja<sup>6\*</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor of dermatology.

<sup>2</sup> Assistant professor of chemistry, Govt College for Women, Karkhana Bazar, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> Associate professor and head of dermatology department.

<sup>4</sup> Trainee medical officer.

<sup>5</sup> Registrar.

<sup>6</sup> Senior medical officer.

\* DHQ / Allied Hospitals, PMC, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

**e-mail:** [afmaan@hotmail.com](mailto:afmaan@hotmail.com)

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#### **Abstract:**

##### **Introduction:**

Colour discrimination privileges light-skinned people over dark in areas such as income, level of confidence, education, housing and the marriage market.

##### **Methods:**

It was a qualitative comparative study. Educated females of a posh area of Faisalabad were interviewed through a self administered pre-designed questionnaire. The study period was from 1st September to 30th September 2007. The sampling was purposive.

##### **Results and conclusion:**

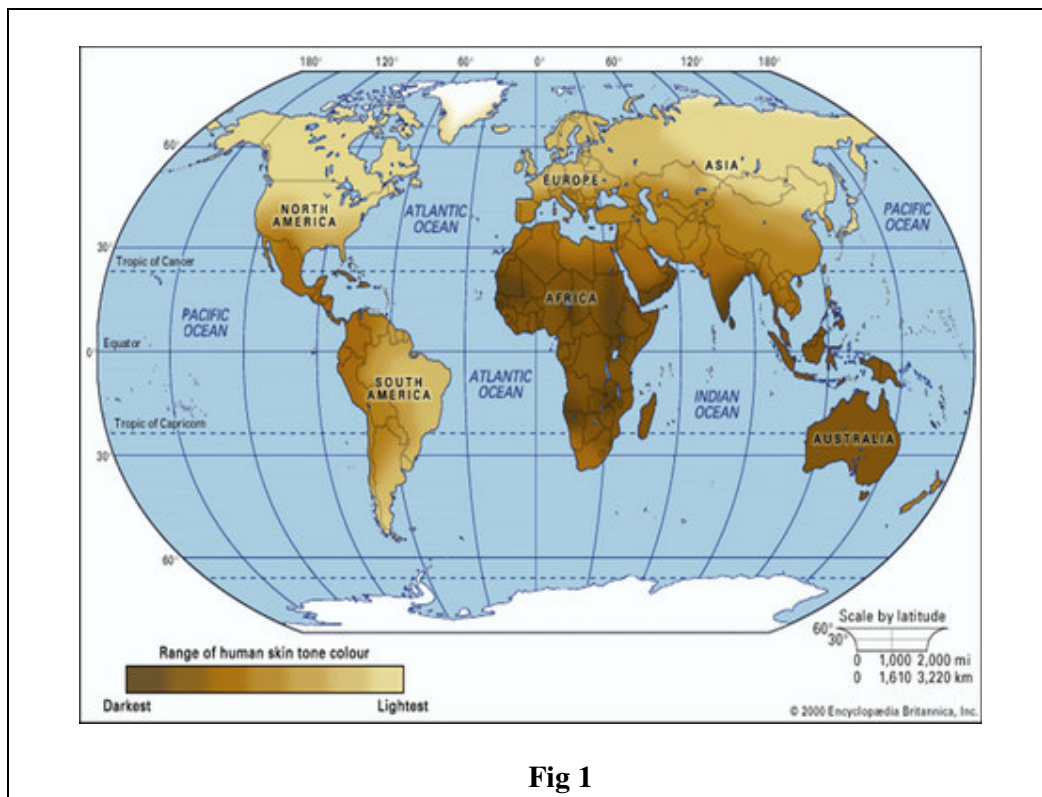
The total number of females evaluated in this study was 80; 50 were whitish, 19 wheatish and 11 were dark-coloured. It was found that females with whitish complexion had several benefits including better marriage proposals, social

acceptability, employment status, fewer psychological problems like depression and low frequency of hypertension.

### Introduction:

Colours have fascinated human beings since ancient times. Colourism is a persistent problem for people of colour. Colourism or skin colour stratification is a process that privileges light skinned people over dark in areas such as income, level of confidence, education, housing and the marriage market.[1,2,3,4,5]

The colour complex is also exported around the globe through media images and helps sustain the multibillion dollar skin bleaching and cosmetic surgery industry (**fig 1**). Colourism is directly related to the larger system of racism around the world. However, dark skinned people are typically regarded as more ethnically authentic or legitimate than light skinned people.[7,8,9,10]



### Methods:

It was a qualitative comparative study. Educated females of a posh area of Faisalabad were interviewed in-depth through a self administered pre designed questionnaire. The study period was from 1st Sep to 30th Sep 2007. The sampling was purposive.

### Questionnaire

**Hypothesis: Socio-economic and psychological impact of skin complexion on female segment of Pakistan.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Religion:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifications:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Skin Complexion**

1)Dark

2)Fair

3)Wheatish

**Social Impact:**

Q: How many friends do you have?

Q: What is your education level?

Q: Have you got any proposal for marriage?

Q: Are you engaged or not?

Q: Do you participate in social gatherings (birthdays, trips and marriage ceremonies)?

**Economical impact:**

Q: Are you having a job?

Q: Have you ever applied for a job?

Q: Have you ever got a job offer?

Q: How many times have you been interviewed?

**Psychological Impact:**

Q: What type of mood you usually practice?

Aggression

Depression

Anxiety

Q: What type of behavior/attitude of other people is towards you?

Class fellows:

Colleagues:

Society :

Q: If married, the attitude of your in-laws towards you?

**Drug History:**

Blood Pressure

Mostly

Usually

Very rare

Not at all

Insomnia

Mostly

Usually

Very rare

Not at all

Usage of anti-depressants

Mostly

Usually

Very rare

Not at all

#### Inclusion Criteria:

1. Consented ladies only
2. Age group: 18-25 years
3. Elite socioeconomic class
4. Psychologically sound females

#### Exclusion Criteria:

1. Females on antihypertensive or antidepressants
2. Uneducated females

A two page pre-designed and pre-structured questionnaire (pre-tested for validity and reliability), containing both open-ended and close-ended questions were used.

Informed consent was taken keeping the ethical issues in mind. Astonishingly, people gave more importance to colour instead of qualification and other skills.

**Skin tones:**

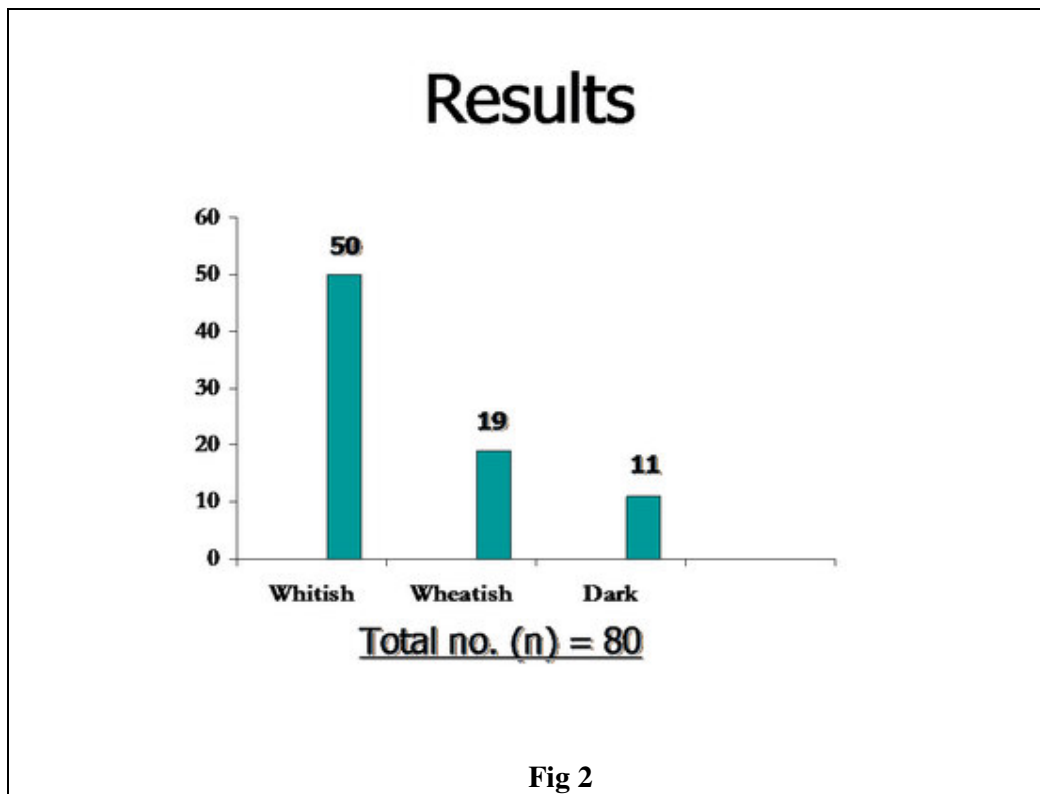
These are the definitions of different skin complexions used in our study;

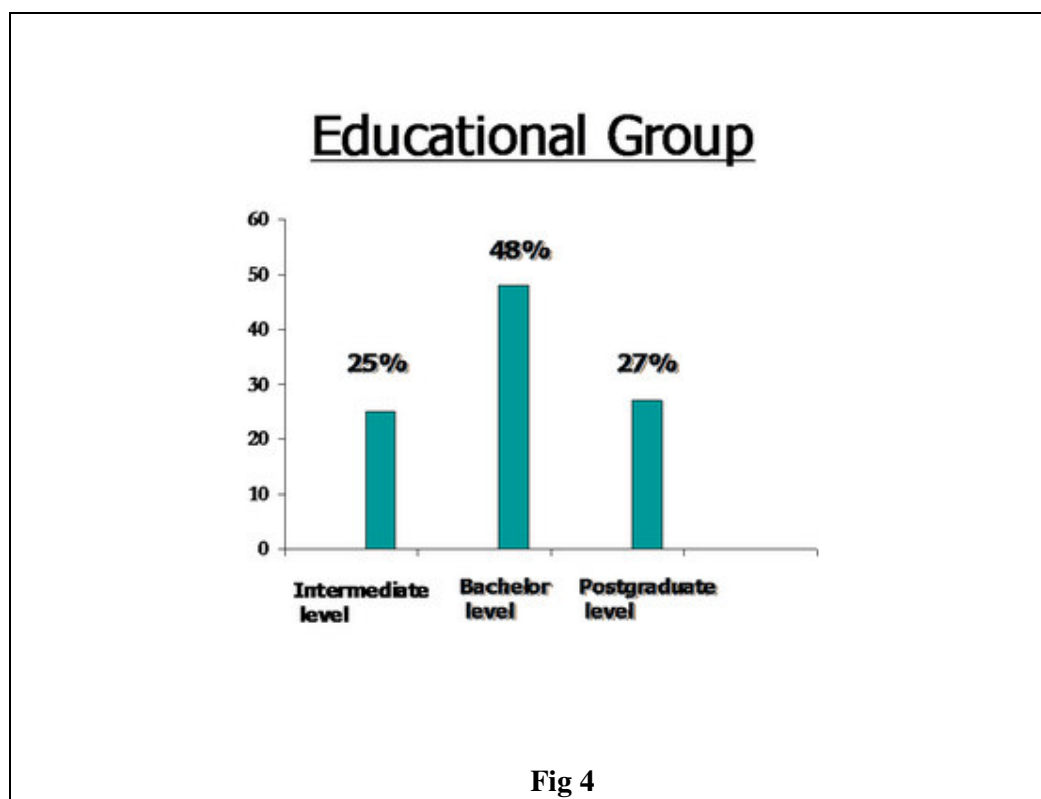
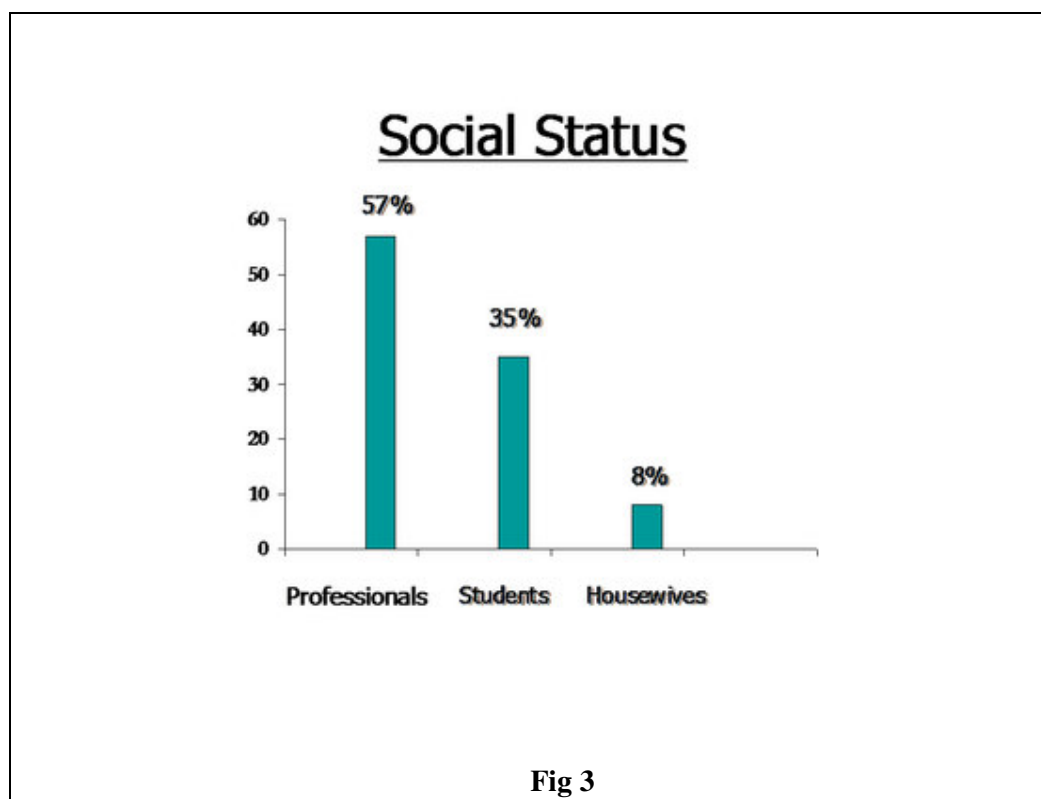
- Whitish complexion: fairly white in colour.
- Wheatish complexion: light brown or light creamy brown.
- Dark complexion: brown or black in colour.

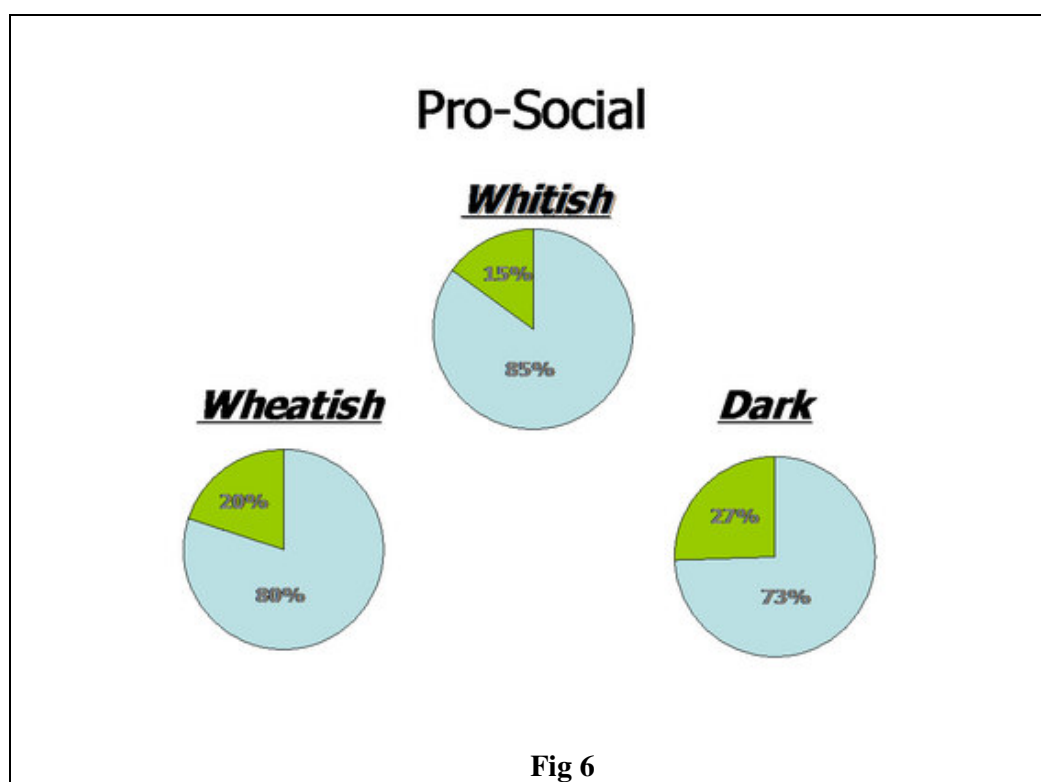
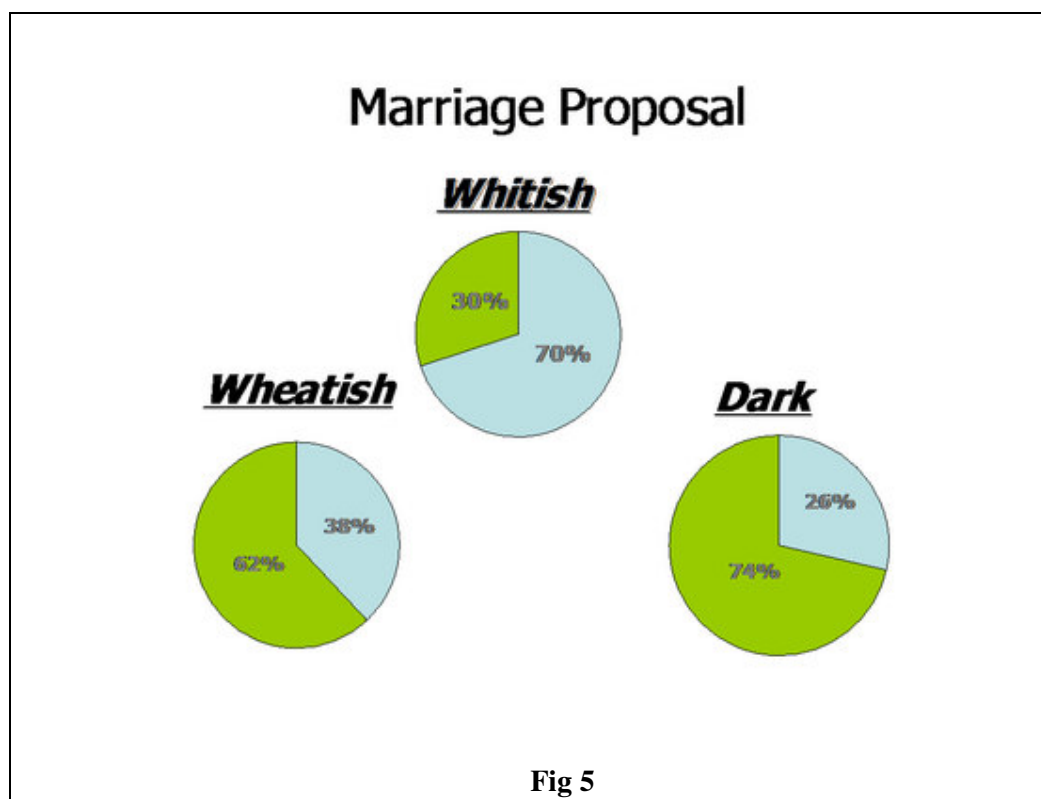
Results:

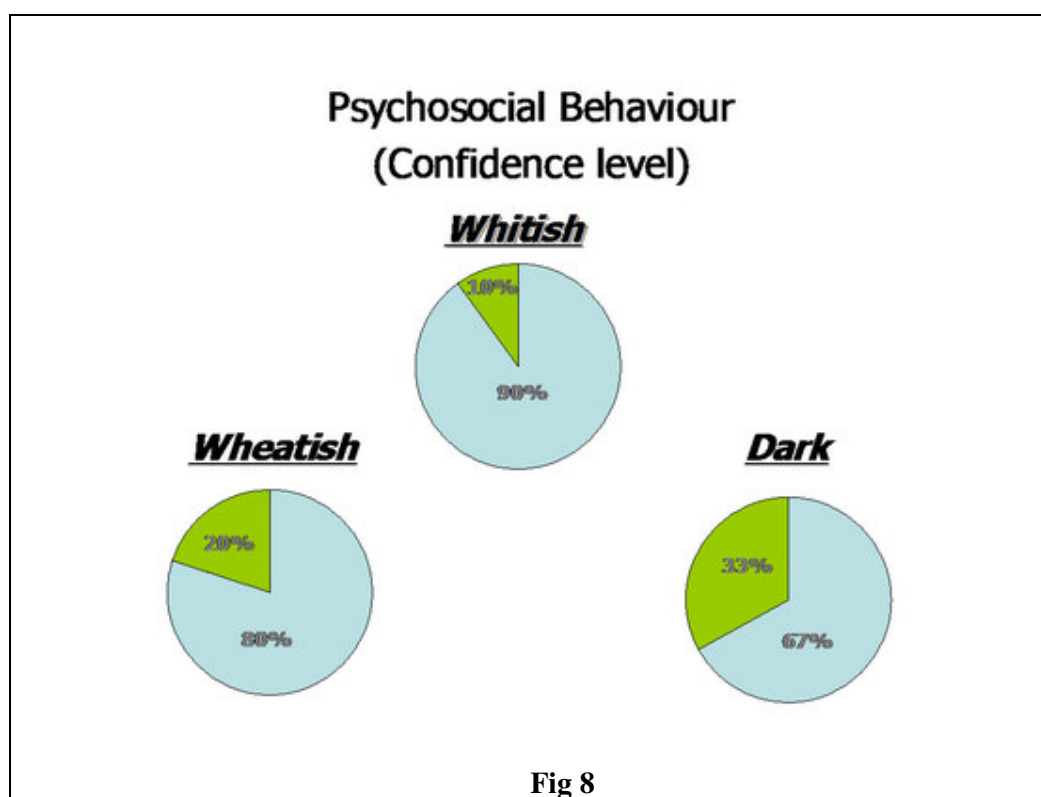
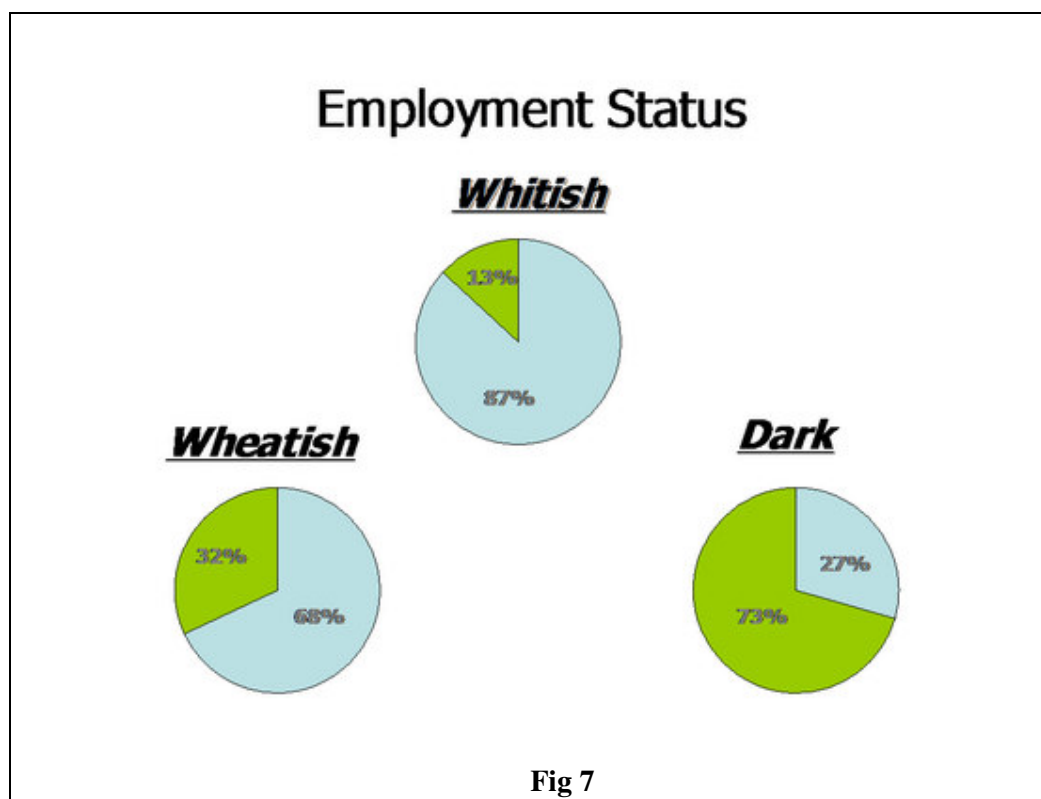
Age range for our study was from 18-25 years with a mean of 21.5 years. Age is a very sensitive issue for female segment. Keeping this in mind, a conducive environment was created for them.

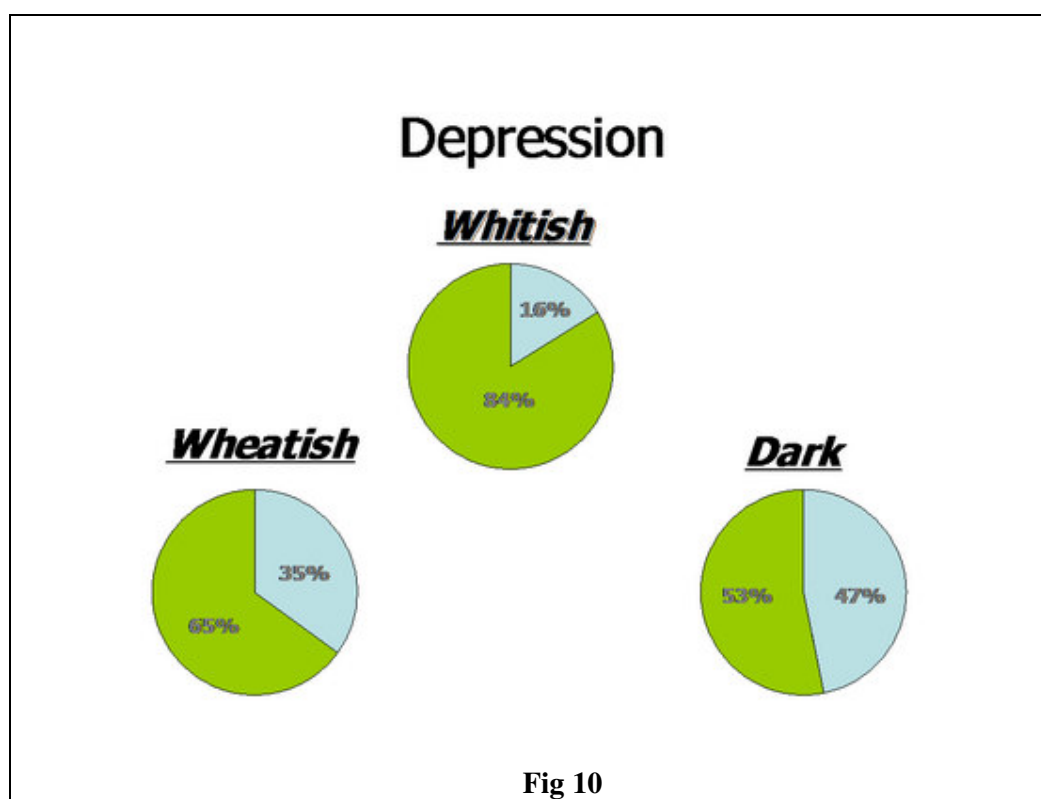
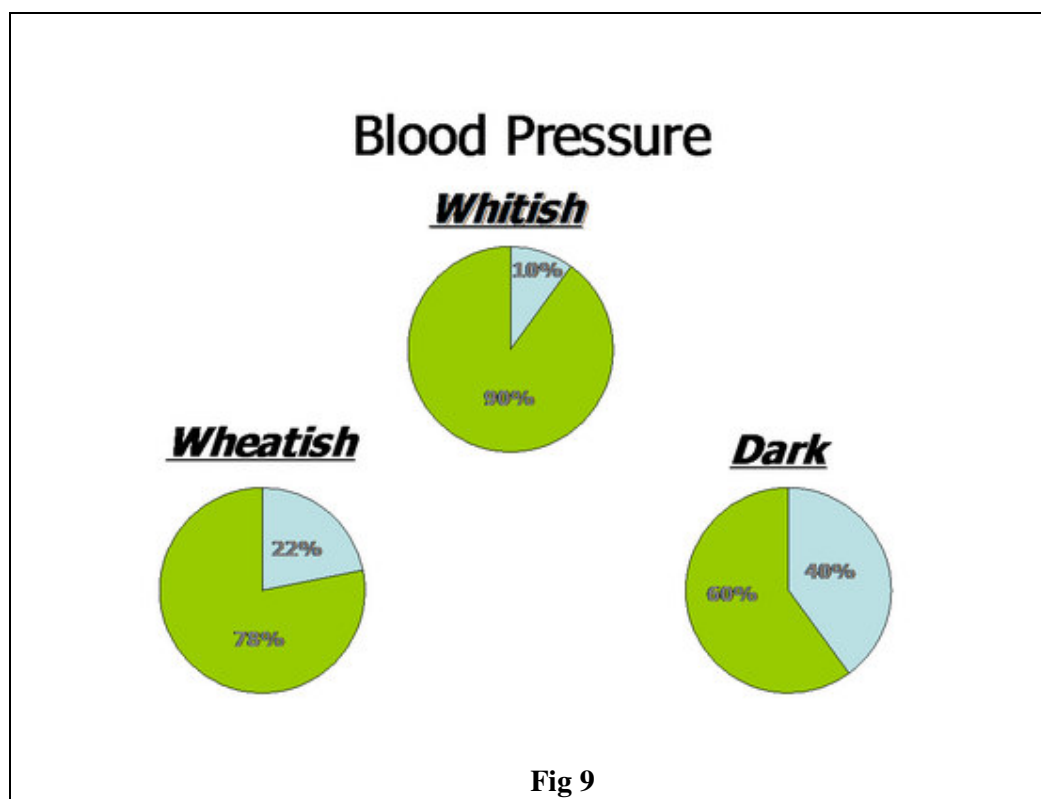
Seventy percent of the subjects in the whitish group got serious marriage proposals as compared to 38% and 26% amongst wheatish and dark groups respectively. Similarly, 85% whitish, 80% wheatish and 73% dark were well-accepted in their social relationships. Eighty- seven percent white, 68% wheatish and 27% dark were employed. Ninety percent of the whitish, 80% of the wheatish, and 67% of the dark were confident in their relationships. Ten percent of the whitish, 22% wheatish and 40% of the dark had occasional rise of blood pressure. Sixteen percent of the whitish, 35% of the wheatish and 47% of the dark reported symptoms of depression (Fig 2-10).













## Discussion:

The earth holds a variegated collection of people with a ranging skin colour. The skin colour is one of the most obvious ways in which human beings differ. Skin colour difference is a loaded and toxic issue and will continue to have an impact on the individual and the national psyche in a manner far more profound than we sometimes realize. Individual self-definition, self-esteem and social relations are still influenced by skin colour.

Several studies have been carried out around the world to examine the effects of skin tone variations on education attainment, income, marital status etc. The findings are that not only does complexion has significant net effects on stratification outcomes but it is also a more consequential predictor of occupation and income than such background characteristics as parents' socioeconomic status.

On reviewing the literature we found that some authors reported that on average, being one shade lighter has the same effect as having an additional year of education[1] and that light skinned immigrants in the U.S make more money on average than those with darker complexion.[1,11]. They also reported that lighter skin colour was associated with higher socioeconomic status and low diastolic blood pressure.[1,12]

Others stated that: skin tone has negative effects on both self-esteem and self-efficacy.[2,10]

Females with whitish complexion have better marital prospects. It is our social tradition that people talk about the colour of bride and the whole family feels proud. Females with whitish complexion are seen to be more social as compared to those with darker complexion. Regarding gainful employment, once again there is clear preference to colour. Whitish females are more confident in their psychosocial interactions and whitish respondents seem to report occasional rise in blood pressure in a very small segment.[13,14]

Physical appearance, including skin colour, is a component of what Goffman, 1959 describes as the personal front for the presentation of self, meaning it is an attribute that follows the person where ever he or she goes. Skin colour becomes one criterion for identifying and categorizing peers as attractive or unattractive.[3] Another research was carried out to understand the link between dissatisfaction with skin colour and psychological well-being among adolescents. Psychological importance of skin and skin colour cannot be denied.[15]

The preferences for young and healthy looking skin could offer an explanation as to why women place such an importance on the condition of their skin and its refinement through e.g. cosmetic products. Recent research showed that facial skin colour distribution significantly influences the perception of age and attractiveness of female faces, independent of skin surface topography cues.[14] Another study was carried out to test the skin colour-blood pressure relationship. Findings suggested that sociocultural processes mediate the relationship between skin colour and blood pressure.[15,17]

## Conclusion:

We conclude that females with whitish complexion have several benefits. They have better marriage prospects, are more acceptable socially, have more employment advantages, have fewer psychological problems e.g. depression and are normotensive.

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