THE ERADICATION OF MENTAL SLAVERY THROUGH AFRICAN INTELLECTUALISM OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

Ndazalama Mathebuala

Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Johannesburg
Ndzali57@gmail.com

Abstract: the primary goal of this study was to analyse the eradication of mental enslavement and explore solutions to mental slavery according to the conceptualization of Black Consciousness through African intellectualism. This was achieved by exploring mental slavery and its contemporary forms, highlighting the different forms mental slavery takes, which tends to make the eradication process complex. The study provided the conceptual framework that was prominent in informing the recommendations and how Black Consciousness should be harnessed and operationalized to psychologically emancipate black people by four African Intellectuals Biko, Fanon, Nkrumah, and Sankara. The findings of the study were based on a contemporary form of mental enslavement manifested through the notion-image of beauty skin bleaching and hair extensions. Based on the research findings, the study recommends that Black Consciousness should be part of the education curriculum where the ideology will be taught as a way of life. Furthermore, there should be collective efforts to celebrate and affirm true African identity as conceptualized by African Intellectuals.

Keywords: mental slavery; black consciousness; African intellectualism; colonialism
JEL Codes : F54, A13, D83

Submission	:	August, 13rd 2022
Revision	:	December 24th 2022
Publication	:	February 28th 2023

INTRODUCTION

The year 2021 marks the 57th year since the state of decolonization. This accords African states' abolishment of colonialism and attaining political sovereignty, territorial integrity, and radical economic independence. Though African states achieved their independence, colonialism did have detrimental effects on the political systems, educational systems, religious affiliations, and images of beauty in the African continent. However, the most severe aftereffect of colonialism in Africa is the perpetuation of mental slavery. Colonialism can be defined as a European process to scramble for Africa, which took place during the new imperialism between 1881 and 1914 (SAHO, 2020). According to Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012), colonialism is when a country's geographical integrity and political sovereignty are directly and entirely dominated by another country, such as when Britain directly and entirely colonized Nigeria.

Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) maintain that colonization in the African continent resulted from changes in the mode of production in European societies, such as the rise of the industrial revolution, which introduced the new processes and ways of production dominated by machinery that needs raw materials and labor for their functionality. So did the slave trade in Africa begin. Kapoya (2012) further asserts that to enslave people and make them more susceptible to slavery, Europeans established a process of primitive accumulation which led to the expropriation of land from Africans. Consequently, this process escalated to the forced alteration of African norms, religious affiliations, belief systems, education systems, and the African culture by the colonial rule, which they justified as civilizing primitive Africans. This resulted in the mental enslavement of Africans, which is still perpetuating in contemporary Africa (Chinweizu, 1978).

Isaak (2020) believes that mental slavery in Africa was introduced to enforce the superiority of Europeans over African natives. He defines this as a form of genocide that eradicated the autonomy of many African minds. The literature presented by Europeans carried negative connotations of black people contrasted to the image of being white, which always had a positive intent. Therefore, according to the European definition and literature, the darker the skin is, the dirtier one is, inferior, and shameful one should be about themselves. In this way, the idea that Europeans have absolute superiority and intelligence was achieved. At the same time, African people regarded themselves as subhuman thus, do not have the cognitive capacity to think independently.

On the other hand, Shahadah (2017) defines mental slavery as the programming that protects itself from reprogramming. It is a mentality trapped in Eurocentric views and having absolute confidence in the cosmology and epistemology of western beliefs. Shahadah (2017) further asserts that mental enslavement tempers how individuals perceive their reality.

Irrespective of this preserved mental enslavement, solutions to these immaterial bondages have been numerously reviewed and revised by African intellectuals in the quest to eradicate the generational psychological bondage of Africans. These movements include Black theology, Pan-Africanism, the African Renaissance, and Black Consciousness. All aimed at a positive connotation and representation of Africa, so too, the discrediting of the European idea of Africa. With mental slavery still prominent in contemporary Africa, these ideologies hold great significance in achieving psychological emancipation. This research will explore solutions to mental slavery according to the conceptualization of Black Consciousness through African intellectualism. This will be achieved by exploring mental slavery and its contemporary forms, highlighting the different forms mental slavery takes, which tends to make the eradication process complex.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Examination of mental enslavement through Black Consciousness

The effects of colonialism linked to the contemporary manifestation of mental slavery and the operationalization of Black Consciousness is not a new topic but rather a topic that has consumed vast attention in the academic arena. Where African scholars have revised ways in which Black Consciousness has been previously implemented to eradicate mental slavery, this literature survey aims to review existing literature on the examination of mental enslavement through Black Consciousness so that it can be eradicated according to the ideology.

Bulhan (2015) asserts that classic colonialism in Africa dates to the 19th century, where systemic violence was inflicted on Africans, which he defines as organized, perpetual cultural domination, integrated with capitalism along with racism and European self-aggrandizement. He describes the final and enduring form of colonialism as meta colonialism, a socio-political, economic, cultural, and psychological system that comes with colonialism (Bulhan, 2015). Meta colonialism delves deeper into the mind and social connections than classical colonialism and neo-colonialism would. Focusing on the realm of meaning and controlling the meta colonized psychologically and socially, it occupies and governs the meta colonizer's self or being. With no need for simple colonization techniques, those who have been subjected to subjective occupation and control immediately collaborate. Accordingly, the perpetual circle of mental enslavement remains and occurs differently from time to time (Bulhan, 2015).

Kiros (2004) argues that black individuals tend to deny being recognized as black individuals due to the humiliation and judgments that come with the colonizer's racial gaze (Kiros, 2004). The racial gaze views a black individual as inferior, violent, barbaric, and sub-human. On this latter, a black person is unjustifiably granted a disadvantageous identity from birth. This further explains the perpetuation of the negative connotation of being black; hence Africa is still stuck in the circle of Eurocentric mental enslavement. In this contemporary African society, there are deeply entrenched mindsets of mental enslavement in black individuals who always identify and define themselves in accordance with colonialism instead of the great African history before colonialism. This is perpetuated by the racial gaze (Prabhu, 2006).

Today's behavior of black individuals resulting from the racial gaze is fully equipped with language, books, teachers, and experts. The Bible is the ultimate instrument to carry out the subjugation mission of black Africans (Premnath,2000). It is asserted that the whole African continent is one drowning society following a Eurocentric manual booklet while persistently trying to conform to a given identity that does not embrace true African nature. Consequently, the perpetual nature of mental enslavement remains, explaining why black individuals find themselves holding up a so-called superior social culture that was never designed to elevate them in any aspect of life (Macey, 2002).

Colonialism is crude and overt with regards to dehumanizing the cultural personality of an African. The dehumanization was accompanied by a massive attack of European Christian missionaries, anthropologists, and tourists (Asamoah, 2005). Furthermore, the educational system established by colonialism for black people cultivated the so-called inferior traits. An education system trained students to be inferior copies and caricatures

of the superior English man ((Diop, 1974). This created ample dislocation for black students who were neither fish nor fowl as information about their actual African past was denied.

Furthermore, since culture carries thinking rules, colonialism ensured that the education system transported total European culture and nationalism (Nkrumah, 1963). The mission of "civilizing black people" was further underpinned by an immaterial, unmeasurable, and easily manipulated instrument called religion, which preached the gospel of heaven and hell in a situation where sin, evil, and suffering equated with African culture and personality, with the key to heaven, of course, being western Christianity (Ogun and Irene, 1978). With this establishment, European cultural imperialism and Christian ideology were intertwined. Missionaries preached that when an African served as a loyal and docile Christian servant, this would remove all their allergies to Africa, and everything European would be instilled in them. They would be "superior" (Rodney, 1982). Asamoah (2005) maintains that our history lessons were about Europe and the white man's activities in Africa.

In Douglas's (2007) view, colonization of the mind implies external force on six levels: a) the colonizer's intervention in subjects' psyches, b) the intervention affects the mental sphere of the subjects, c) the effects are long-lasting and hard to remove, d) the result is asymmetrical power relationships between the parties, e) parties can be unaware of the newly acquired relationships, and f) parties can be aware of the newly acquired relationships but choose to ignore them. The transfer of mental habits and other social structures over a long period may be responsible for the process. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) has highlighted, social activities such as education and religion can serve as essential methods of depositing colonial characteristics into victims' brains. Hotep (2008) compares the process of colonialism to deculturalisation, seasoning, and miseducation. A form of pacification and control that strips victim of their culture, history, and traditional education while replacing them with foreign (Eurocentric) ideals is deculturalisation. So that they can lose their cultural legacy and embrace foreign standards as fundamental and universal. Africans are taught to be embarrassed by their cultural background (Hotep 2008).

Contemporary manifestation of Mental Slavery

In further elaborating how the above events have kept Africa in a circle of psychological dependence, these are some of the contemporary manifestations of mental enslavement being witnessed in Africa today. Enaifoghe (2019) has been mindful of the contemporary issue of globalization and cultural integration, which may distort the true purpose and essence of African history where the history can be filtered for it to fit or conform to a certain status quo. In this instance, it is essential to acknowledge the dominant culture cosmology and epistemology and the integration. Furthermore, Nyoni (2019) attributes the persistence of mental slavery in Africa to the educational curriculum in African higher institutions being highly Eurocentric, which he calls Caged Colonial Mentality (CCM). Consequently, it becomes a challenge for Africans to learn about their true history.

On the other hand, Memela (2017) believes that mental slavery has also made the South African youth feel that they are victims in the situation of the current crisis where they believe that the world owes them. Memela (2017) discredits this belief as he believes that everyone should take ownership of their future. However, history presented so many injustices in the African continent; this gives no one reason for them not to succeed. He believes this is mental slavery since the current youth feel that they should be forever compensated for what happened. Though there are compensation measures in place, they should have the agency to change their lives instead of forever blaming the colonial and apartheid government. Therefore, instead of forever pointing fingers at past injustices, he believes that we should unite and bring solutions for a better tomorrow and better South Africa.

Lastly, Charles (2014) Maintains that mental slavery has also been seen in the form of skin bleaching, where many black women bleach their skins to confirm the contemporary definition of beauty. However, as one may know that beauty can take many forms regardless of race. Thus, this dismisses this notion of affirming beauty; he believes that this is mental slavery and self-hate amongst women of the black race. Now, this signals the idea of fitting into the status quo and changing one's image to have self-confidence. However, all these methods may not work since the mind remains enslaved to preserving self-hate and inferiority.

Black Consciousness eradication of mental enslavement

According to More (2014), Black Consciousness is a manner of being in the world rooted in Consciousness. Phenomenology, with its Husserlian roots, seeks to get as close as possible to the raw material of experience, analysing and characterizing it as it comes to the observer's attention. Consciousness may be defined as being aware of something while also being connected and intentional. When one is black in a racist culture, they are aware that their bodies are racially different. Black Consciousness is based on several ontological and teleological issues that need to be addressed. Identity and Liberation are at the core of Black Consciousness. Biko describes black Consciousness philosophy as one of "coming to consciousness echoes Cesaire, but it also alludes to the phenomenological interpretation of Black Consciousness as the desire of black people to build their own identity and accept full responsibility for themselves. The following can be used to describe Black Consciousness: (1) black people being aware of an anti-black social reality; (2) black people acknowledging and being proud of their racial heritage (More, 2014).

Black Consciousness was the black people's yearning for freedom to destroy this social reality and progress towards developing a new one, one that is fair and just as a prerequisite to humanism. Africans existential philosophy embodies both Black Consciousness themes. These existential thinkers deal with the formation of black selfhood, suffering and embodiment, and freedom and enslavement. They are concerned with being black in the world (More, 2014). Manganyi, a leading Black Consciousness theorist at the time, was the first to systematically articulate Black Consciousness'

philosophical foundation as a concern for the ontological concept of being, existentialist categories of freedom, bad faith, and Consciousness.

A reaction to racism in an openly racist society, 'Black Consciousness' explores the contradictions of racial diversity (Turner,2008). Black Consciousness unifies the ANC's pluralism and the PAC's black nationalism, which is overthrown by it. Biko describes a phenomenology of black alienation, but the logic of white domination can also be seen in their arrogant, self-confident sense of security that grew after they defeated the black liberation movement led by the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress (ANC/PAC) in the early 1960s. When the Black Consciousness movement arose, it threw the entire political system into a loop.

A new debate of Liberation arose because of the previous decade's logic of racial and political subordination. Thus, Biko's view of black humanity and its phenomenological mode of being has been transformed. Self-reflection makes this a dialectical time, a time of freedom dialectics. Consequently, the process is internalized to a greater extent. Black Consciousness might be defined as the opposite of white Consciousness (Gordon, 2008).

That which is connected to oneself in forming a personal concept and belief about oneself is logically moving in the same direction. Consciousness-object perception of approaching dissolution, its intuition of entering a close relationship with its objective, drives awareness to escape the dread of dissolution by making certainty itself an object. The advantage consciousness has over objectivity is that it can make the thing match its idea because of its conviction. Whenever awareness has established notions about its object(s) based on subjective knowledge, certainty comes to know that its origin and way of connecting is its ego (Gordon, 2008).

Nengwekhulu (2000) had a similar view on the oppressor's attempts to distort black minds to weaken their emotional and psychological defenses. 'Black Consciousness' was an attempt by Biko to dissuade black people from viewing themselves and their place in society through white people's 'eyes and ideals' (Mabasa 2007). He thought that the only way to change racism in South Africa was for people who had lost their self-awareness to regain it (Biko 2004). Remembering that they were involved in the crime, they could regain their lost identities and become who they were (black and oppressed) (Biko 2004).

New humanity becomes more necessary as Black Consciousness evolves, according to Gibson (2008). This movement aims to develop Black people who do not see themselves as second-class citizens in a white society. Black solidarity is the dialectical opposite of white racism. To achieve complete transcendence, race must be transcended. It is not a "synthesis" between white racism and black unity. When Biko stated that he did not want to choose between the two, Gibson (2008) claims that He was open to capitalism and communism, but he preferred African communism as a long-term plan. To him, society should be built on the concept of man, not merely his financial circumstances, but the concept of man in its whole. Africa will make a significant contribution to put a human face on the globe. As Biko could see, there was a great deal of ambiguity in this situation.

Since no one has provided a conclusive description, this interpretation is up to performance (Gibson, 2008).

How has African Intellectualism conceptualized Black Consciousness?

The Postcolonial state- Franz Fanon

Fanon believes that the future country, which will take the place of colonial states, must be a functional state. At the same time, speaking about "class" for the first time, Fanon aimed for the colonial intellectual elite who took advantage of formal independence to reassert their dominance in local politics (Wiredu, 2005). Pushing beyond existence towards forming the "new self" and living for the other is the means to achieve freedom. When the colonized are liberated, they should know that the colonizer may use force against them. He says that once blacks are free, they will have the power to demand freedom. However, gaining independence will be impossible without the unity and latitude of the black people. Liberation is intrinsically related to African existential phenomenology since its philosophical underpinnings are centered on conveying identity and Liberation. As the oppressor waged war on injustice, so did Africana existential phenomenology (AEP). If the oppressors are united in oppressing, isolating, and demeaning black people, Liberation must be viewed as a community fight rather than an individual one. Existential situations or lived experiences of black people were not chosen by them but rather manufactured and imposed on them. If they want to improve their situation, they must join the liberation struggle (Wiredu, 2005). It is a constant back-and-forth between the masses and the militants to develop meaning in Fanon's liberatory philosophy. Independent thinkers become activists, helping spread the word about the people's ability to govern themselves (Kiros, 2004).

According to Nkrumah, Africanism is vital for developing the African personality, which was briefly submerged under colonialism. Humanity is reawakening to the bonds that connect us—our shared history, culture, and tradition as well as our aspirations (Nkrumah, 1973). With his ideology of "African Personality" and conceptualization of the African revolutionary route and Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah pushed for an All-African Union Government/United State of Africa, as well as (scientific) socialism. Although Nkrumah's fundamental Pan Africanist beliefs diverged from those of the Africanists in the following organizations, there are some parallels between them (Mthimkhulu, 2019). A paradigm change began to spread over Africa in the late 1950s, according to Ajala (1996), when political and economic independence began to sweep the continent. Nowadays, the African personality is discussed so frequently that it is difficult to draw any connections between it and its many meanings. There are various ways to describe African nature: a combination of distinct characteristics that characterize an African's character and separate it from that of a European, as the state of being African. Africa's distinct culture should be reflected through African art forms, including painting, carving, writing, dance, and music.

According to Nkrumah's believe, a man's education should be evaluated on more than just his capacity to acquire financial stability and social position; it should also include his ability to understand and appreciate the needs of his fellow men so that he may serve

them (Biney, 2011). Well-educated people should be deeply concerned about the state of the world around them and devote their whole lives to improving it. Nkrumah believed that educating children had a moral purpose and was also a civic obligation for the benefit of society. The success of the group benefited individuals (Biney, 2011).

Black Consciousness-Steve Biko

There are many similarities between the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the Negritude movement, including the circumstances under which it arose and the motives for adopting a seemingly negative, pejorative, and insulting name as an identifying tag for the group. As a response against racism, black Parisian students in the early 1930s created a cultural, intellectual, political, and philosophical organization around the notion of Negritude, led by Aimé Césaire (of Martinique), Léopold Sédar Senghor (of Senegal), and Léon-Gontras Damas (of Guyana). Negritude was coined by Césaire, who viewed it to fight racism and assimilationist policies in France. A few decades after SASO and Black Consciousness emerged in South Africa, it is almost as if Césaire is explaining their beginnings here.

Evidence of this goes back to the nineteenth-century African nationalists like Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe (1924–78), Julius Nyerere (1922–99), Kenneth Kaunda (1924), and Frantz Fanon (1925–61), who advocated for African socialism and self-reliance as well as anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and actionality. Black nationalism as espoused by Malcolm X (1925–65). As a result of this heritage, the focus was on black resistance to white racism and white supremacy, black racial unity, group self-reliance, and pride in the history of black people (African people in particular).

He describes Black Consciousness as a philosophy and movement that promotes black excellence and complete independence in all areas of life. Hadfield (2017) Black nations should have a strong sense of self-identity and participate in the economic progress of the rest of the world. As a practical guide, Black Consciousness shows Africans how to free themselves from the bonds of mental enslavement. Accordingly, Steve Biko emphasizes psychological emancipation because he feels it may help black people reclaim their identity as people of color (Pithouse and Hadfield, 2017). According to him, Black Consciousness is the understanding by black people that togetherness and pride in the black race should be prioritized and the reaffirmation of self-worth and confidence. This is a response to colonialism left behind by the apartheid regime in South Africa (Hadfield, 2017). Steve Biko also pushed for the economic independence of Black Consciousness as a practical aspect. According to him, the African continent needs to figure out how to make the most of its limited economic strength. Buy Black campaigns can achieve unity and financial support, and development plans that are both strong (Pithouse and Hadfield, 2017).

The upright man- Thomas Sankara

Thomas Sankara said that morality and ethics must govern the revolution in all its aspects. What was a failing state before Sankara, and his political ideals emerged is now a nation with a strong sense of national identity. While pushing for an education system that firmly emphasizes the empowerment of Burkinabe residents, Sankara insisted that citizens of Burkina Faso by the principal actors in the country's development. He also stresses the importance of a moral revolution, which he envisioned. New national emblems and old pre-colonial rallying symbols were designed to provide perfect circumstances for Burkinabe self-acceptance and freedom from colonial control. The local dialect was altered to Burkina Faso, meaning Country of Upright People, from the Upper Volta (Haute Volte).

A new national song and flag were designed to erase Burkina Faso's colonial past. The participation of many people in Revolution Defense Committees made it possible to implement these measures with broad support. To unite the masses behind his cause at a difficult period for socialist governments worldwide in the 1970s is a tribute to how well his thought coincided with the needs and aspirations of his people. The people's need for freedom had been fed by colonial humiliation and postcolonial economic and cultural exploitation, and he fulfilled that desire for them. In his view, there would be no stop to mental enslavement unless an emancipatory educational system re-emphasized indigenous political values like self-respect and pride while also instilling honesty in its students (Yimovie, 2018: 192).

Overall, Fanon emphasizes that Africans are their masters. He names the postcolonial state; in essence, each of the identified thinkers above has offered their cure for the retained consequences of colonialism. When it comes to African identity, Nkrumah is certain. Thomas Sankara also highlighted the significance of a moral revolution, which required the people of Burkina Faso to have honesty, integrity, self-respect, and a feeling of pride, calling the country the land of upright people. It is important to note that all the principles mentioned earlier, and values laid the foundation for Black Consciousness's fundamental beliefs and ideals.

METHOD

The study made use of a desktop approach. This is an exploratory approach that aims to clearly define and understand the research problem and question while highlighting the need for a new perspective and approach to the matter (Rose and Irny, 2005). However, such research is limited to not providing final and conclusive recommendations. A qualitative research design will be adopted as this research seeks to understand the nature of mental slavery and Black Consciousness in Africa.

The appropriateness of adopting an exploratory approach to the study lies in exploring and diagnosing the causality of preserved mental slavery in the African continent as the research problem and question seeks to understand the perpetuation of mental slavery despite all efforts made to raise awareness of its perpetuation. Measures include several theorizations and conceptualization of the African origin, movements with Black Consciousness being the prominent movement to be explored. Furthermore, other efforts

have the quest to decolonize the education system, methodologies, academic literature, cosmologies, and epistemologies to portray the proper representation of all these paradigms; therefore, as these efforts are dated, it is challenging to understand this perpetuation.

The poor operationalization of Black Consciousness has been identified as the gap and labelled as the priority to be further explored as this might be the key to absolute psychological emancipation. Thus, using this exploratory approach will enable further understanding of the African intellectualism of Black Consciousness, and with sufficient awareness, so too will it cultivate the ability and capacity to implement the philosophy practically adequately.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Instead of eradicating the invisible bondage, the perpetuation tends to entrench in different forms of everyday life. This can be witnessed in language, education system, social culture, images of beauty, and religion, to name a few; on the latter, it is fair to assert that mental enslavement in the African continent is anomalous and ubiquitous as water is since it can infiltrate everywhere while taking numerous forms and is certainly challenging to contain.

Throughout the early postcolonial era, mental slavery was apparent in a variety of ways. As a result, the unseen bonds have become more difficult to free yourself from due to the perpetuation's shifting nature. Images of beauty have been used to show the slavery of people of color throughout history. It is possible to describe "beauty" as a grouping of good characteristics to look at and the brain (Thompson, 1995). It is also possible to define beauty as having features that appeal to the senses or the intellect. The importance of beauty in determining what it is to be a woman has long been recognized. All women have voiced worries about being beautiful and accepted in their social circles, regardless of nationality, color, culture, ethnicity, or religious beliefs.

Black people's efforts to comprehend and place themselves in a society founded on Western ideals are often greeted with sentiments of inferiority and subordination because they fail to achieve or conform to the "dominant" Western identity, as stated by Fanon (1986). Bhabha (1994) argues that rather than being imposed and favored by dominant Western ideals, identities should be formed through the constant interaction of different races, ethnicities, and cultures. The same Western criteria often judge black women's attractiveness as white women. Black women's self-identity is either acceptable or unacceptable depending on how well they match the Western ideal of beauty.

Beauty and physical attractiveness serve as social positioning tools and being visually appealing (Tate, 2007). To distinguish between historical conceptions of beauty and current manifestations, one must look at the history of beauty to see how specific ideas have developed and persisted through time. Arnold says that fair skin has been associated with intelligence, order, and reason (2004). It has also been linked to having impeccable

manners. This has led to the assumption that people with dark skin are ugly and lacking in intelligence. They are also more prone to acts of foolishness and violence. Slaves with fair hair and light skin had an advantage over their darker counterparts since they looked more like their white masters.

The colonial mindset weakened African pride by teaching Africans that it is decent and moral to hide and change everything African about Africans that makes them unique (Ribane, 2006). In South Africa, for example, missionaries helped promote headscarves. This technique, which started as an act of worship, has developed into a way to control, and hide what is uniquely African about African women, especially their wild hair (Ribane, 2006). The African custom of covering one's hair with a headscarf has been accepted to show respect. However, there have been claims that Black women's use of weaves and extensions, and headscarves comes from complex racial currents and is motivated by their conditioned desire to appear white (Ribane, 2006). Transforming your skin and physique in sometimes damaging and unorthodox methods may have the same effect (Ribane, 2006). Beauty, social standing, and distinction are now measured by Western physical features and actions mentioned above (Hill, 2002).

As a result, many Black women are marginalized regarding beauty standards and must find a way to fit in with societally enforced beauty identities. Black women tend to desire to appear like white European women because of a sense of racial inferiority (Tembo, 2010). Being black, according to Du Bois (1903), is a challenging experience for blacks. According to him, there is a double consciousness among Africans, which forces them to see themselves through the eyes of both their black community and white culture. According to Du Bois and Bhabha (1994), despite black people's desire for a distinctively Black identity, they have no distinct identity from white people.

Even while beauty and body image go hand in hand, beauty is a broader notion that encompasses more than just one's outward appearance. Problems with one's body image may arise because of a lifelong quest for beauty. Most body image research focuses on the evaluative aspect of body components and is often referred to as dissatisfaction with the body's appearance. It is only within the context of interconnected "ism" systems that the body and beauty among African women be understood appropriately (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, heterosexist)

The way Black women see their hair in connection to issues of bodily satisfaction and attractiveness is understandable. One must deal with European beauty standards that encourage western ideals (Craig, 2002). As a result, African women devote a significant amount of time and resources to maintaining their beauty.

Mindful enslavement may be defined as the state of mind in which the lines between freedom and servitude are blurred. A scenario in which a person gets entrapped psychologically due to false information about their identity and worldview. While it is true that African women are misinformed about what constitutes beauty, the definition does not take their natural appearance into account because being dark is not considered attractive. As a result, African women resort to extreme measures to be accepted, even if doing so harms their health. As a result, skin bleaching, and ideals of beauty are not only

in line with societal norms; they're also in line with how people perceive themselves concerning the rest of the world. During colonial times, African women were subjected to a slew of discrimination and devaluations in society imposed by European norms, which have persisted to this day. As a result, African women are now enslaved to the idea that they must have a fair or light skin tone to be accepted by society, regardless of their natural skin tone. African women should know that this myth has been revised so many times that it is now accepted as fact. Instead of adopting a Eurocentric view of beauty, African women should develop an African that represents an African image of beauty free from any foreign perspective or configuration. As a result, if African women appreciated their natural beauty instead of conforming to a particular ideal of beauty, they would not need to do so.
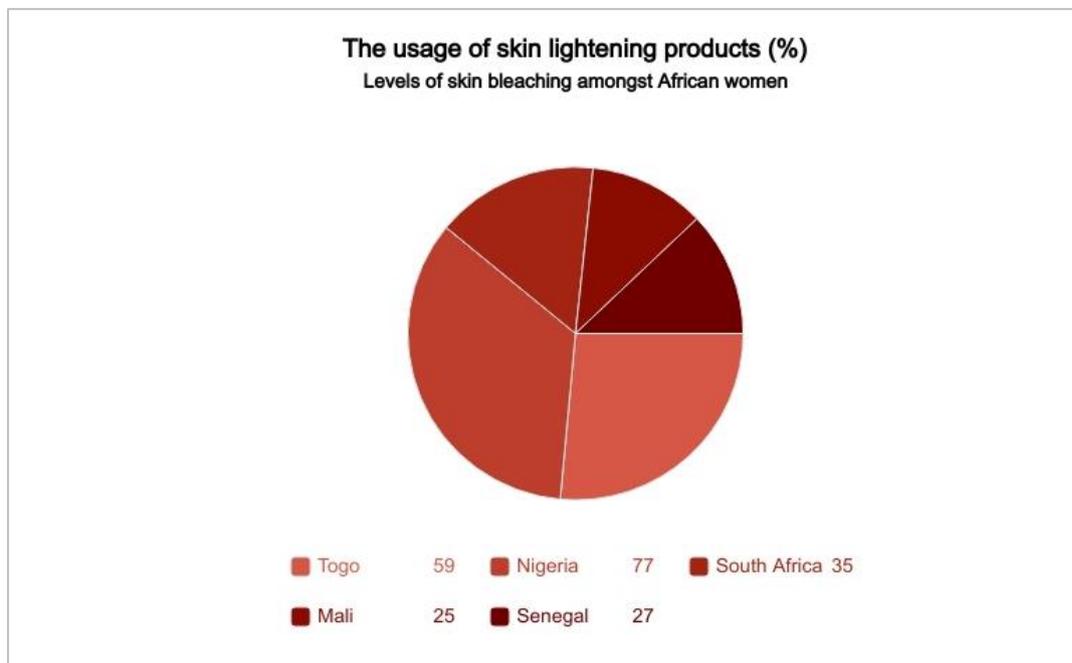

Figure 1: Bleaching of the Skin

Adapted from: Paying a high price for skin bleaching | Africa Renewal (un.org)

In modern Africa, beauty is defined and imagined in terms of fair and lighter complexion; a genetic trait passed down the generations. As a result, since race is purely biological, it cannot be altered. Despite this, 77% of Nigerian women use skin bleaching chemicals to lighten their skin tones, as illustrated in the pie chart (Brown, 2019). Because of the dangers these bleaching chemicals have demonstrated to their users, nations like Rwanda and Ghana have prohibited their usage. However, banning these items does not address the root issue of white supremacy slavery or the widespread exploitation of being white. Skin bleaching is just a symptom of a far more significant problem: mental slavery.

White women's beauty culture throughout America's colonial and Victorian periods, their fair complexion was considered the height of beauty. But that is only the beginning (Cain

2008; Zarrelli, 2015). White women's skin tones and physical features were highly prized for ethical, economic, and political reasons as well as for their physical attractiveness (Flagg, 1834). It was believed that the paler a woman became, the further away she was from the undesired and submissive dark complexion, as well as the callous hands that came from working in low-class jobs all day.

Having the fairest skin was valued more since it signified a person's financial status, level of luxury, and, most significantly, moral character. Appearing white represented purity, delicacy, humility, asexuality, and physical frailty, qualities valued among European nobility. When it came to beauty in the Middle Ages, the face being the mirror of the soul, a beautiful white face mirrored a clean and unstained heart and an absence of sin according to the Toilette of Health, Beauty, and Fashion (Toilette of Health Beauty and Fashion, 1834).

Whiteness was seen to be the pinnacle of femininity, while blackness was seen as immodest and animalistic and sensual and physically strong as men (Tate, 2007). White women have tried a variety of methods to maintain and improve their whiteness because of these ideas. While others avoided sunlight and activities that would darken or redden their skin, others took precautions such as staying out of the bath and drinking warm drinks instead of cold ones; still, others avoided baths and cold drinks altogether; still, others abstained from both; and still, others read in the evenings instead of drinking alcohol (Carin, 2008).

They were ignoring health concerns in favor of trying to be the most equitably balanced (Toilette of Health, Beauty and Fashion, 1834). This was because having completely white skin had significant ramifications. It was a way to provide women a feeling of security by using their physical characteristics, such as their fair skin. Having the whitest skin used to be seen as a social and economic advantage, and many people still hold this view today. According to Julien (2014), skin bleaching involves using lotions, soaps, and other everyday household products to the skin to lighten its tone. The tabloids are now pushing skin bleaching by showcasing local celebrities who flaunt their "new, better, lighter" skin complexions obtained through risky skin bleaching treatments. They are currently promoting skin bleaching. For example, Mshoza, a local artist, used lethal injections to lighten her skin (Drum magazine 2011, p.11). 'I'm going to bleach till Jesus arrives,' she said, according to another well-known South African lady, Kelly Khumalo (eNCA, 2015).

Individuals with little financial resources mix their skin-lightening treatments to create cost-effective but potentially dangerous cures without seeing a plastic surgeon or dermatologist (Julien 2014). Hair bleaching products are added to the mixture of skin lightening agents (Julien, 2014). According to Julien (2014), the harmful consequences of skin lightening concoctions are ignored by Black women in South Africa because of the stigma of blackness. Black women in South Africa may feel pressured to undertake cultural and physical changes to be seen as 'beautiful' if skin lightening procedures are widely used.

As described by Hall (1995), the bleaching syndrome is brought on by a desire to be completely white. There was an overemphasis on skin-lightening cosmetics and the

advantages of having flawlessly pale skin in a British magazine, according to Mcloughlin (2013). At one time or another, Asian women also wished to look as white as possible, particularly while in public or at family gatherings. It was believed that fair skin was a sign of great value, youth, and fertility, which drove Asian women to stress about having more fair skin than their Western counterparts.

Apartheid left a legacy of self-perceptions based on skin colour despite considerable social, political, and economic advances in South Africa. When it comes to describing individuals of African descent in South Africa today, just a few terms are still in use. These include "high-yellow," "yellow-bone," "chocolate," and "blackberry." Words like this communicate positive and negative connotations about the individuals being referred to (Wilder 2010). The phrase 'yellow-bone,' which refers to light-skinned women, and the term 'blackberry,' which refers to dark-skinned women, show that Black women are treated differently depending on their skin colour, according to Ribane (2006).

Africans still define themselves in stereotypical ways that were imposed upon them by previous oppressive regimes. The findings showed that this mental enslavement manifests itself primarily through ideas of beauty, specifically about hair and skin complexion. What does all this mean?

The obvious implication is that distorted notions of beauty are still dominant within African society, especially amongst women. This shows a lack of widespread efforts at conscientization. It is only through educational and informative activities that such distorted notions can be corrected. One example of the success of such educational programs is Miss Tunzi. She wore her hair short and natural. Gyson (2019) describes Tunzi's crowning as an affirmation of the BC slogan black is beautiful'. James Brown's funk song "Say it Loud – I'm Black and Proud" or Nina Simone's "To be young, gifted, and black."

It is not impossible to imagine that Tunzi, or her family, was influenced by the Black is Beautiful movement that dated back to the 1950s in the United States. The activists and artists who launched the campaign calling for the celebration of African American characteristics and culture did so out of need.

They decided to help women feel proud of their hair and blackness, says Kwame Brathwaite, an activist artist (Chutel, 2018). By the middle of the 1960s, the Black is Beautiful movement had spread across the country. The symbolism and aesthetics connected with it contributed to the rise in the popularity of natural hair. The afro and the afro pick became well-known movement icons, paving the way for succeeding natural hair movements.

However, there are too few women like Tunzi out there. This attributed the absence of BC in the educational curriculum and its alignment to defining beauty (More, 2014). This means that the education system does not enable enforcement of Black Consciousness. On the latter, one can deduce that BC is not practiced as Biko envisioned. Instead, it is used as an index of reference inspired by events, for instance, when black individuals are side-lined, racism is central to the happening such as the clicks hair saga that transpired in 2020 where black hair was described as frizzy and dull" and "dry and damaged. This

erupted national outcry, especially amongst black women. At that moment, black society saw the need to affirm their identity and self-pride in alignment with Black Consciousness. Furthermore, it can be argued that black beauty has been capitalized on, a big hair industry that capitalizes on an image of beauty.

Black Consciousness and black beauty are being used with an underlying agenda of either capitalizing on self-pride or for "inclusive" purposes of silencing backlash of racist remarks projecting from the history of South Africa. On the latter, the alignment of Black Consciousness and black beauty is not for empowering black individuals, but rather the alignment is used as a blanket strategy accompanied by a plan resulting in the actual operationalization of Black Consciousness not transpiring. One agenda accords to the capitalization of black natural hair products being very expensive.

Currently, the black hair care industry is oversaturated with high competition. According to a Neilsen study, the 2019 black hair care sector expanded by 6.4%, with the Godrej SA group of products performing the best (Gill, 2020). Gill (2020) further reiterates that natural hair care is an area in which practicality and sentimentality coexist—suggesting that they are selling self-love instead of hair stylers, which makes the profit. To stand out amidst the category noise and social media message, businesses must establish a personal connection with their target audience and provide compelling reasons for them to trust in their products. The link being affirmation to Black Consciousness through expensive hair products. From the above, one can deduce that the hair care industry is capitalizing on one's self-love and pride, resulting in the actual aim of Black Consciousness not operationalizing, one that accords to affirming black beauty, self-pride.

Muhlungu (2017) maintains that black individuals account for most of all customers. According to a recent article in the Huffington Post South Africa, black people spend up to six times as much money on their hair compared to other races. The black hair care business in South Africa is projected to be worth R9.7 billion per year. A 2010 study on the Professional Hair Care Market in South Africa found it was the largest in the continent (Tefu, 2020). According to a 2018 survey from Mintel, a London-based market research business, 40% of black women have switched to chemical-free and no-heat style (Tefu, 2020).

Natural hair products are slightly more expensive than relaxed hair products. Because it takes longer and requires more products, treating and washing natural hair is more costly. Most stylists do not want to work with natural hair; they say they will, but they will price you accordingly (Tefu, 2020). One suggests that as much as black women affirmed to BC and were their natural hair with pride, hair industries do not share the same sentiment; they are not selling those products to affirm Black Consciousness. Instead, they aim to make money.

Overall, the above analysis has outlined how Black Consciousness has been operationalized in defining and embracing black beauty and what impedes adequate operationalization.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the study established, reviewed, conceptualized, and analysed the eradication of mental enslavement through the African intellectualism of Black Consciousness. Furthermore, the study provided the conceptual framework that was prominent in informing the recommendations and how Black Consciousness should be harnessed and operationalized to psychologically emancipate black people by four African Intellectuals Biko, Fanon, Nkrumah, and Sankara. This further involved projects that were informed by the ideology and how they embraced Black Consciousness. The findings of the study were based on a contemporary form of mental enslavement manifested through the notion-image of beauty skin bleaching and hair extensions. Based on the research findings, the study recommends that Black Consciousness should be part of the education curriculum where the ideology will be taught as a way of life. Furthermore, there should be collective efforts to celebrate and affirm true African identity as conceptualized by African Intellectuals.

REFERENCES

Arnold, D. (2004), Race, Place and Bodily Difference in Early Nineteenth Century India, *Historical Research*, 77, (196): 77-162.

Bhabha, H.K. (1994), *The location of culture* (1st edition) New York. Routledge.

Biko, S, (1996). *I write what I Like*. Randburg, Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Biney, A. (2011). *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*.

Brown, O. (2019). Banning skin products won't work if fair skin is linked to beauty and success. *CNN*. Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/15/health/banning-bleaching-products-in-africa/index.html

Bulhan H, A. (2015). Stages of Colonialism in Africa: From occupation of land to occupation of being. *Journal of Social and Political psychology*, 3(1): 239-256

Cain, MC. (2008), The Art, and Politics of looking White: Beauty practices among White women in Antebellum America, *Winterthur Portfolio*. 42, (1): 27-50.

Césaire, A. (1972). *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by J. Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Charles, C. (2014)., Skin Bleaching, Oppression, and Black Resistance. *Social Science Research Network*. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2519822 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2519822

Chinweizu, C. A. (1978). *The Eest and the Rest of US. Lagos*: Nok Publishers (Nigeria) Ltd.

Craig, M.L. (2002), *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? : Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race,* Oxford University Press,

Douglas, M. (2007). The colonization of each other's mind is the price we pay for thought. *In The New Times*, May 22nd, 2007.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (1982). *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Signet Classic.

Du Bois, WEB (1903), *The Souls of Black folk*, AC McClury & co., Chicago.

eNCA. (2015). *Kelly Khumalo on bleaching: Ima bleach till Jesus comes*. Available online: https://www.enca.com>entertainment/kellykhumalobleaching

Fanon, F (1986), *Black skin white masks*, Markman, CL (trans.), Pluto press, London.

Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the Earth*. New York: Ballantine.

Flagg, W. (1834), *Analysis of Female Beauty*, Boston, Marsh Capen and Lyon publishers.

Gibson, N. (1988). *'Black Consciousness 1977–1987: The Dialectics of Liberation in South Africa'. Africa Today* 1st Quarter: 5–26.

Gibson, N.C. (2008). *Black Consciousness after Biko: The dialectics of Liberation in South Africa*. New York Palgrave Macmillan.

Gordon KH, Castro Y, Sitnikov L, Holm-Denoma JM. (2010). Cultural body shape ideals and eating disorder symptoms among White, Latina, and Black college women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*.; 16(2):135–143.

Gordon, L.R. (2008). *A phenomenology of Biko's Black Consciousness*. New York Palgrave Macmillan.

Hadfield, L. A. (2017). Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History.* February 27th, 2017; Accessed April 12th, 2021. https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-83.

Hadfield, L.A. (2016). *Liberation and Development*: *Black Consciousness Community Programs in South Africa*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Hill M. (2002)"Skin color and the perception of attractiveness among African Americans: Does gender make a difference?". *Social Psychology Quarterly*; 65(1):77–91.

Hill, M. (2002), Skin Color and the Perception of Attractiveness among African Americans: Does gender make a difference? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 65 (1): 77-91.

Hotep, U. (2008). *Decolonising the African Mind: Further Analysis and Strategy*. Pittsburg, PA: KTYLI.

Julien, N (2014), Skin bleaching in South Africa: a result of colonialism and apartheid? Discovery: *Georgia State Honors College Undergraduate Research Journal,* 2,(4): 1-11.

Mabasa, T.L. (2007). *Black Consciousness Movement*. In Soweto on September 13th, 2007.

Macey, D. (2002). *"Fanon, Phenomenology, Race." Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity.* London: Continuum. 29–39

Memela, S. (2017). Shaking off Mental Slavery. *IOL news.* Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/shaking-off-mental-slavery-8981791.

More, M. P. (2008). *Biko: African Existentialist philosopher*. New York Palgrave Macmillan.

More, M. P. (2014). The Intellectual Foundations of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Ndletyana, M. (2008). *African Intellectuals in 19th and early 20th century South Africa*. Cape Town, Human Science Research Council Press.

Nengwekhulu, R. (2000). *The meaning of Black Consciousness in South African History* Online. In http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/meaning-black-consciousness-ranwedzinengwekhulu

Nkrumah K (1961). *I speak of Freedom: A statement of African Ideology*. London: William Heinemann Ltd.

Nkrumah K (1963). *Africa Must Unite*. London: Longman, 1963.

Nkrumah K (1968). *Dark Days in Ghana*. London: Panaf Books.

Nyoni, J., (2019), 'Decolonising the higher education curriculum: An analysis of African intellectual readiness to break the chains of a colonial caged mentality,' *Transformation in Higher Education* 4(0):1-10.

Ocheni, S. and Nwankwo, B. (2012). Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa. Cross-Cultural Communication, 8 (3), 46-54.

Pithouse, R. and Hadfield, L. A. (2017). *Liberation and Development: Black Consciousness Community Programs in South Africa.*, *The American Historical Review*, 122:(3), Pages 969–970, https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/122.3.969.

Prabhu, A. (2006). Narration in Frantz Fanon's Peau noire masques blancs: Some reconsideration research in. *Africa literature*, 37(4): 108-210.

Premnath, G. (2000). *"Remembering Fanon: Decolonizing Diaspora."* Postcolonial Theory and Criticism. Ed. Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 57–73

Ramphele, M. (1996). *Across Boundaries: The Journey of a South African Woman Leader*. New York: Feminist Press,

Ramphele, M., (1991), *'Empowerment and symbols of hope'*, in N.B. Pityana & M. Ramphele (eds.), Bounds of possibility: The legacy of Steve Biko, 154–178, David Philip, Cape Town.

Ribane, N (2006), Beauty: A Black Perspective, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, Durban.

Sankara T, (2014). *Discours sur la dette, Con introduzione di Jean Zie*gler, Elytis, 125

Sankara T. (1990). *Women's Liberation and the African struggle*, New York Pathfinder.

Shahadah. A. (2017). Mental Slavery: The unbreakable chains*. African Holocaust.* Available at: https://africanholocaust.net/mental-slavery/, Accessed April 12th, 2021.

South African History Online. (2020). *The Impact of Colonialism*. Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/impact-colonialism.

Tan, P. (2010). *The person in Buddhism*, SD29. 66. Available at: http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/RB9-Mental-slavery-100106.pdf

Tate, S. (2007), Black beauty: Shade, hair, and anti-racist aesthetics, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30 (2): 300-319.

Tate, S. (2013), The performativity of black beauty shame in Jamaica and its diaspora: problematizing and transforming beauty iconicities, *Feminist Theory*, 14 (2): 219-235.

Tembo, M.S. (2010), *Eurocentric Destruction of Indigenous Conceptions: The Secret Rediscovery of the Beautiful Women in African Societies,* Sociology Department, Bridgewater College, Virginia.

The Toilette of Health, Beauty and Fashion, 1834, Boston.

Thomas Sankara (2007) Speaks: *The Burkina Faso Revolution* 1983–87, Pathfinder Press, 2nd edition,

Thompson, C. (2009), Black women, beauty, and hair as a matter of being*, Women's Studies*, 31 (1) 831-856.

Turner, L. (2008). *Self-Consciousness as force and reason of revolution in the thought Steve Biko*. Biko lives. New York Palgrave Macmillan.

Weinbaum, AE, Thomas, LM, Ramamurthy, P, Poiger, UG, Dong, YM & Barlow, TE (2000), *The Modern girl as heuristic device: Collaboration, connective comparison, multidirectional,* in: Weinbaum et al. (eds) Consumption, Modernity and Globalization, Duke University Press, Durham.

Wiredu, K. (1980). *Philosophy and an African Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge

Wiredu, K. (1998). *On decolonizing African religions.* In Coetzee and Roux (eds.), 186