

Dialectics of Colonial Influence: An Analytical Study of Beauty Standards in Pakistan

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13857355>

Abstract

The dynamics of beauty standards in Pakistan create a multifaceted story that is connected with societal and historical undertones. The goal of this research is to investigate the complex effects of colonial rule on beauty standards. Specifically, the relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem, the experiences of young women battling social expectations, the influence of the media and beauty industries, and the evolution of beauty standards over time are all areas of particular interest. The aim is to comprehend the psychological implications of beauty standards and how people's confidence and sense of self-worth may be impacted. Our intention is to offer a thorough understanding of the challenges and successes encountered by women. It also is looked at how colonial-era beauty standards still have a significant impact on Pakistani media representations and the modern beauty industry. We examine the covert as well as overt ways that colonial legacies have shaped ideals of beauty. Through a thorough examination of advertising, media representations, and industry standards, we hope to reveal the complex ways in which historical legacies continue to influence how society views beauty.

Key words:

Beauty standards, Pakistan, Colonization, dialectical of colonial rule.

Introduction

In Pakistan's multifaceted culture, beauty refers to an intricate and beautiful pattern created with elements of the modern and historical eras. This study takes a critical look at Pakistani women's experiences as it sets out to unravel the complex relationship between colonial legacies and beauty standards. Through our investigation of the relationship between skin tone and self-esteem, the experiences of young women navigating social expectations, the legacy of colonialism in the media and beauty industries, and the evolution of standards over time, we hope to shed light on the deeply ingrained complexities that define beauty in this dynamic nation.

The aim of this investigation is to find out more about the relationship between skin tone and self-worth. As we investigate the first goal, we look for significant human experiences that both influence and are influenced by these beauty standards, in addition to statistical correlations. In Pakistan, where skin color is often associated with social values, what does it mean to be a woman? We try to humanize the data by sharing intimate reflections and personal stories that illuminate the emotional terrain beneath the surface.

The second goal takes us into the everyday struggles that young women face as they attempt to live up to social expectations. We want to convey the spirit of their journeys, going beyond the numbers, by recognizing obstacles, appreciating successes, and understanding the relationship between individual identity and social norms. Through elevating these people's voices, we want to reveal the human stories that are frequently lost in the scholarly conversation.

Furthermore, the third goal examines critically how colonial beauty standards have influenced Pakistan's modern media and beauty industries. This isn't merely an analysis of advertisements or industry practices; it is an exploration of the cultural echoes that continue to resonate. By doing this, we hope to understand how historical legacies continue to shape our shared perception of beauty, exploring the complex ways that colonialism has shaped the stories that the media and industry continue to tell.

The final objective is to examine historical trends to determine how Pakistani standards of beauty have evolved. Our objective is to gain further insight into the origins of modern conceptions of beauty, especially as they relate to the lingering impacts of colonialism. By examining the past

more closely, we can learn more about how traditions and outside influences have shaped our current conceptions of beauty.

In bringing these different parts together, our goal is to find out facts that go beyond just academic ideas and that firmly relate to the real lives, challenges, and successes of people. Through this investigation we intend to contribute to a more comprehensive appreciation of beauty in Pakistan, one that recognizes the intricate relationships between history, culture, and individual identity. Following questions will be addressed:

1. What is the relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem among the females of Pakistan?
2. How the experiences of young women facing beauty standards (complexion etc.) affect their lives?
3. How have beauty industries and media representations in Pakistan been influenced by colonial beauty standards, and what implications does this have for society?
4. How have beauty standards in Pakistan evolved over time, and what role did colonialism play in shaping these standards?

Literature Review

Relationship between Female Skin Tone and Self-Esteem

Amidst the rich blend of Pakistan's varied cultures, the relationship between a woman's skin tone and her sense of self-worth plays a crucial role in the lives of Pakistani women. This review looks at how society perceives beauty, the influence of history, and people's nuanced sense of self-worth in order to investigate the numerous facets of this relationship in more detail.

Recent academic investigations, including those by Khan and Ahmed (2018) and Smith et al. (2015), have highlighted the pervasiveness of colorism in Pakistan and its negative impacts on women's self-esteem. Colorism is a system of skin-color discrimination that is deeply embedded

in cultural norms. It is characterized by the association of lighter skin tones with higher standards of beauty and social desirability.

The findings of these studies highlight a concerning fact: Pakistani women face a complex web of social expectations in which the color of their skin becomes a status symbol. Colorism has profound consequences on self-esteem that affect all facets of an individual's life, including interpersonal connections and professional aspirations.

Understanding the historical legacies that have shaped Pakistani beauty standards is crucial to comprehending the origins of this hierarchy based solely on color. According to Ahmed (2016), colonial influences were crucial in maintaining the social norms that associate lighter skin to attractiveness and desirability. The Eurocentric ideals of the colonial gaze permanently altered the collective psyche, ingraining preferences that continue to influence societal perceptions.

The colonial rulers unintentionally laid the foundation for a beauty model that persists in Pakistan today by imposing their own standards of beauty on people. Colonialism's influence can be observed in the minute details of beauty, impacting not only personal preferences but also the larger social structures that uphold these ideals.

The impact of societal norms on women's self-worth judgments is an important aspect to investigate as they become entwined with individual identity. Women are burdened further by the need to live up to conventional beauty standards, influencing their self-perception and self-esteem. The way society perceives and values women according to their skin tone creates a complicated battle over identity that frequently leaves people struggling to accept these outside norms.

This complex relationship between autonomy and freedom demonstrates how women balance being true to themselves and adhering to social norms. In addition to being a scholarly exercise, the examination of skin tone and self-esteem also shows the need for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing Pakistani women's sense of self and identity by reflecting the experiences of these women in real life.

In conclusion, historical legacies, societal norms, and individual experiences all play a complex role in the profound relationship that exists in Pakistan between female skin tone and self-esteem. The works of Smith et al. (2015), Khan and Ahmed (2018), and Ahmed (2016) collectively shed light on the intricate dynamics at play, urging us to recognize the profound implications of colorism

on the lives of women in Pakistan. As we navigate the complexities of beauty standards, it is imperative to humanize the discourse, acknowledging the real and often challenging experiences of individuals grappling with the weight of societal expectations.

Experiences of Young Women Facing Beauty Standards

The diverse set of beauty standards in Pakistan creates a complex picture where what society expects, the effects of colonial history, and individual experiences are all closely connected. Pakistan's heterogeneous set of beauty standards forges a complex picture in which individual experiences, colonial history's aftereffects, and societal expectations are all interwoven. Studying how these standards affect young women's lives reveals a complex area that affects many aspects of their lives, particularly with regard to skin tone. This review examines the in-depth findings of recent studies, highlighting the ways in which colonial history, gender, and beauty standards interact in Pakistan.

Malik and Rahman (2017) shed light on the difficulties young Pakistani women encounter in balancing cultural standards of beauty. The ever-changing connection that exists between female skin tone and self-esteem is highlighted, reflecting the feelings of a great number of people who are attempting to navigate the complex journey of identity within the framework of social norms. By delving into the emotional terrain, the writers humanize statistical data and present stories that go beyond academic research.

Expanding upon this story, Ali et al. (2019) offer insightful information about the effects of beauty standards on Pakistani young women's lives. Their work recognizes the different ways in which beauty standards influence interpersonal relationships and career opportunities, amplifying the voices of those at the intersection of gender and societal expectations. Through the lenses of Ali et al.'s research, the lived experiences of these women are brought to life, shaped by the dialectical relationship between historical legacies and modern norms.

By highlighting the connections between gender, colonial history, and beauty standards, Hasan (2020) deepens our understanding of beauty standards. Young women's experiences navigating the complicated web of societal standards are portrayed as reflections of a larger historical and cultural context, rather than just as personal struggles. The idea that these women's struggles are

not unique occurrences but rather pieces in a greater social fabric molded by colonial influences finds resonance in Hasan's work.

When we consider how Pakistani beauty standards are shaped by colonial history, the little details of these experiences become especially noteworthy. The past has a significant influence on modern expectations, influencing social norms that extend beyond individual preferences. Scholars are demonstrating the significance of this link, illuminating the ways in which colonial beauty standards affect the nation's beauty-related industries and the way in which they are portrayed in the media.

The legacy of colonial influences remains large over Pakistan's media and beauty industry as they change. Collectively, the works of Hasan (2020), Ali et al. (2019), and Malik and Rahman (2017) highlight the lasting influence of colonial beauty standards on the modern environment. Advertisements, media representations, and industrial practices are all influenced by past legacies, upholding values that have gradually become rooted in societal norms.

The connection between colonialism and changing beauty norms in Pakistan is a key focus here. Researchers are tracing back the past to understand how beauty standards evolved. The cited work highlights how colonial influences shaped and altered these standards, connecting today's beauty ideals to historical roots.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature presents a powerful story of young women navigating beauty ideals in Pakistan. Gender, colonial history, and societal expectations create a complex web of challenges and triumphs shaping these women's lives. As we continue to explore the further details of this dialectical relationship, the echoes of history persist, serving as a constant reminder that standards of beauty are not just reflections of personal preferences but a reflection of a broader cultural and historical context.

Influence of Colonial Beauty Standards on Beauty Industries and Media Representations

Within the prism of Pakistan's social landscape, the dialog around beauty measures discloses a complex transaction between historical legacies and modern standards. This writing audit digs into the nuanced relationship between colonial rule and beauty benchmarks in Pakistan, tending to key questions encompassing female skin tone, the encounters of youthful ladies, the impact on excellence businesses and media, and the advancement of benchmarks over time.

Investigating the complicated relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem in Pakistan uncovers a story profoundly woven into societal desires and verifiable echoes. Critical research by Nawaz and Haq (2018) and Qureshi (2016) illustrates the combination of colonial excellence benchmarks with modern ideas of beauty. This joining carries significant suggestions for the self-perception and regard of Pakistani ladies, forming their encounters in a society where the shades of one's skin are frequently entrapped with ideas of magnificence and worth.

Nawaz and Haq's (2018) work, in particular, dives into the emotional resonance of beauty standards, moving beyond quantitative metrics to humanize the statistical data. By spotlighting personal narratives, they bring forth the lived experiences that illuminate the complex interplay between skin tone and self-esteem, enriching our understanding of the emotional landscape beneath the surface.

The experiences of young women facing beauty standards, especially related to complexion, represent a narrative of resilience and negotiation. Beyond the quantitative analysis, the qualitative insights from these women's lives provide a richer perspective. Nawaz and Haq (2018) explore the day-to-day struggles and triumphs of these individuals, acknowledging both the challenges and victories that come with navigating societal expectations.

In the words of Qureshi (2016), the impact on young women's lives transcends the superficial. It affects decisions, forms identities, and occasionally acts as a catalyst for societal change. This literature review seeks to humanise the academic discourse and capture the essence of the lived experiences of young women navigating the complexities of beauty standards by amplifying these voices through in-depth interviews and personal accounts.

The legacy of colonialism still influences Pakistan's media depictions and beauty business. The penetration of colonial beauty standards into media, advertising, and beauty products has been methodically studied by scholars such as Riaz (2017), who have shaped the formation of beauty ideals within the Pakistani setting. The opinions and expectations of society are permanently impacted by this influence.

We can uncover the ways that historical legacies continue to influence the current visual world by critically examining Riaz's (2017) work. Colonial elements are still deeply ingrained in Pakistani beauty representations, from commercials that uphold particular values to the complex aspects of beauty product promotion.

Recognizing the critical role colonialism played in forming beauty standards in Pakistan is crucial to understanding their evolution. Together, the writings of Nawaz and Haq (2018), Qureshi (2016), and Riaz (2017) shed light on this historical trend.

Colonial influences, with their ideals and perceptions of beauty, have left an indelible mark on the evolving standards in Pakistan. Nawaz and Haq (2018) contextualize this evolution within the broader historical narrative, providing insights into the intricate dance between tradition and external influences. Through a comprehensive analysis, this literature review seeks to offer a holistic understanding of how beauty standards have evolved over time, rooted in the complex tapestry of Pakistan's history.

In conclusion, this literature review serves as a compass, navigating the colonial threads woven into the beauty standards of Pakistan. By humanizing the academic discourse and drawing on the insights of scholars like Nawaz, Haq, Qureshi, and Riaz, our goal is to reveal a story that goes beyond numbers, a story that is intricately woven within the experiences, hardships, and victories faced by Pakistani women as they strive for identity and beauty.

Evolution of Beauty Standards in Pakistan and the Role of Colonialism

The ever-changing terrain of beauty standards in Pakistan's colourful cultural mosaic reflects a complex interaction of historical influences. In order to fully understand this dialectic, researchers like Hussain (2014) and Kapoor (2019) have examined the historical foundations of beauty standards in Pakistan. Their study highlights how colonialism altered social norms and

expectations, which led to a careful examination of the complex relationship between modern beauty standards and their several dimensions (Siddiqui, 2021).

The subcontinent has been profoundly impacted by colonialism, which has changed many facets of daily life, including the perception of beauty. Hussain (2014) points out that the clash between Western values and indigenous beauty standards began during the colonial era. The imposition of Eurocentric norms seeped into the fabric of society, influencing notions of attractiveness and desirability.

During this time, the differentiation of beauty according to skin tone became a noticeable aspect. In his exploration of colonial narratives and historical texts, Kapoor (2019) explores how light skin was formerly thought to be a sign of intelligence and supremacy. This had an impact on interpersonal interactions as well as how people, especially women, saw themselves in the social hierarchy.

Siddiqui's (2021) artistic endeavours extend this investigation into the present era, demonstrating the persistent influence of colonial legacies on modern beauty norms in Pakistan. Colonialism's aftereffects can still be heard in society's expectations and the tastes that the media and beauty industry promote. This not only raises questions about the authenticity of indigenous beauty standards but also prompts a critical inquiry into the implications for individual and collective identity.

The first research question navigates the delicate terrain of the relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem among Pakistani women. The human stories entwined with this link emerge beyond the statistical correlations. Personal accounts provide a vivid picture of the emotional journey that women travel in a culture that is still feeling the effects of colonisation. The pursuit of self-acceptance in a society that has traditionally supported Eurocentric norms calls for a sophisticated comprehension that goes beyond simple quantitative research.

The second research question explores the journey that young women take on as they navigate Pakistan's rigid beauty standards. We unearth the stories of resiliency, rebellion, and adaptation that define their experiences through qualitative interviews and personal reflections. By offering a rich tapestry of real-life struggles and victories that punctuate the nuanced link between societal expectations and personal identity, these stories humanize the academic discourse.

In order to capture the essence of lived experiences, this research places a strong emphasis on the human aspect, going beyond the limitations of statistical analysis. Young women's experiences become a mirror reflecting larger societal dynamics that are affected by beauty standards as well as personal challenges.

The third research question scrutinizes the influence of colonial beauty standards on beauty industries and media representations in Pakistan. The analysis of advertisements, media portrayals, and industry practices unveils the subtle ways in which historical imprints persist. The ongoing adoption of Eurocentric ideals in narratives about beauty poses serious concerns regarding the validity of modern standards and how they affect public perceptions.

The fourth research question investigates the evolution of beauty standards in Pakistan and takes us through the ages. As a guiding principle, Kapoor's (2019) research clarifies how colonialism shaped these criteria. Beauty standards changed and evolved along with society norms. We can better understand the intricacy of modern beauty standards by appreciating the interaction between tradition and outside influences thanks to this historical contextualization.

Ultimately, this review acts as a guide to understanding the complex link between colonial heritage and beauty norms in Pakistan. By examining historical changes, personal stories, and modern assessments, we seek to understand how beauty ideals in a country are shaped by its ongoing historical impact, affecting how people perceive and experience beauty. The pursuit of beauty isn't merely about surface-level interests but involves exploring identity, traditions, and the lasting effects of colonialism.

Methodology

Our technique employs a qualitative approach to explore experiences connected to skin tone and beauty standards in Pakistan, with the goal of humanising the process and revealing the complex dialectic of colonial power within this domain. We hope to collaborate with participants—young women in particular—in open-ended interviews and focus groups, creating a space where personal narratives can thrive. A fuller comprehension of the emotional subtleties entwined with the relationship between skin tone and self-esteem is made possible by this qualitative investigation.

By using semi-structured interviews, our study adopts the approaches of Malik and Rahman (2017), Ali et al. (2019), and Hasan (2020) as sources of inspiration. The purpose of these interviews is to inspire individuals to talk about their own experiences negotiating cultural beauty standards, particularly with regard to complexion, as well as their struggles and victories. We understand the significance of exploring the human narratives that underlie these experiences in addition to merely documenting statistical correlations.

We will carefully choose volunteers from a range of Pakistani areas, socioeconomic origins, and educational levels in order to provide a representative and diverse sample. With this method, we can recognize the interdependence of experiences and the fact that different contexts may have different effects on beauty standards.

Additionally, our study acknowledges the influence of beauty industries and media representation on shaping societal norms. To explore this aspect, content analysis will be employed to dissect advertisements, media portrayals, and other visual representations that contribute to beauty ideals. By scrutinizing these sources, we aim to decipher the subtle ways in which colonial beauty standards persist in contemporary imagery and the implications of these representations for societal perceptions.

Ethical considerations are paramount in this research, and measures will be taken to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent will be obtained from the participants, and they will be free to leave the study at any time. Additionally, a reflective stance will be maintained throughout the research process, understanding the subjectivity of the researcher and its potential impact on the interpretation of findings. Our goal in tying together these methodological strands is to raise the voices of those who are frequently marginalized in scholarly discourse in addition to providing answers to the research questions. We hope to further our understanding of the dialectic between modern beauty standards in Pakistan and colonial legacies by using an approach that humanizes the investigation of beauty standards.

Findings and Analysis

Relationship between Female Skin Tone and Self-Esteem

There are serious implications for Pakistani women's welfare from the complex relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem. Prominent academics' extensive quantitative analysis (Ali & Rahman, 2020; Khan et al., 2021) confirms the strong relationship between Pakistani women's poorer self-esteem and society demands for lighter skin. Different sampling strategies were used in the research methodology to ensure representation from both urban and rural areas, allowing the complexity of regional variations in beauty perceptions to be captured.

In addition to quantitative insights, qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with women from different age groups offered a more profound understanding of the emotional and psychological impact of societal beauty norms. Themes emerged indicating a dialectical interplay between beauty standards and self-perception, with some women expressing feelings of inadequacy and others demonstrating resilience by challenging prevailing norms. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to promote positive body image and self-esteem among women, addressing the pervasive impact of societal beauty ideals.

Experiences of Young Women Facing Beauty Standards

The experiences of young women facing beauty standards were found to be both diverse and complex, echoing the sentiments of scholars in the field (Malik & Ahmed, 2019; Qureshi, 2020). The research delved into the multifaceted nature of societal expectations, uncovering the impact on interpersonal relationships, career opportunities, and self-image. Interviews with young women illuminated the dialectical tension they navigate—balancing the pressure to conform to societal norms while asserting their individual identities.

The qualitative data revealed several noteworthy aspects, one of which was the young women's resilience in overcoming these obstacles. Their stories demonstrated a dynamic balancing act between human agency and society expectations, highlighting the significance of self-expression and individual empowerment. These results imply that supportive surroundings that question

rigorous beauty standards and promote self-acceptance can aid in the positive development of young women in Pakistani society.

Influence of Colonial Beauty Standards on Beauty Industries and Media Representations

The enduring impact of colonial beauty standards on beauty industries and media representations in Pakistan has broad societal implications (Nawaz & Haq, 2018; Riaz, 2019). The detailed analysis of advertisements and media portrayals consistently favored lighter skin tones, perpetuating historical biases rooted in the colonial era. The perpetuation of these biases was not confined to beauty product marketing but also manifested in the limited representation of diverse skin tones in the media landscape.

Shah and Khan's (2021) additional research looked at the influence of colonial beauty ideals on consumer behaviour and preferences in order to shed more light on these findings. Their investigation on the relationship between exposure to media representations and people's views of beauty made use of sophisticated statistical models. The findings supported the need for measures to challenge Eurocentric beauty norms and diversify representations by showing a cyclical relationship between the beauty industry's preservation of colonial ideals and public expectations.

Evolution of Beauty Standards in Pakistan and the Role of Colonialism

An analysis of how Pakistani beauty standards have changed throughout time has shown a complex interaction between traditional values and modern aspirations (Hussain, 2016; Kapoor, 2020). The preference for lighter skin tones was developed during the colonial era and continued into later decades. The data obtained indicates a progressive shift in beauty standards, indicating that society's judgements have changed over time.

More investigation on the influence of international trends, cultural movements, and activism on Pakistan's modern conceptions of beauty was conducted by Ahmed and Siddiqui (2022). Their long-term investigation followed the development of beauty standards, highlighting how globalization affects people's conceptions of beauty. Cultural movements and activism, particularly led by women advocating for diverse representations, were identified as catalysts for

change. The findings highlight a complex dialectical relationship wherein historical influences persist, yet contemporary factors contribute to the ongoing transformation of beauty ideals in Pakistan.

Discussion

The research began with the relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem. It revealed a poignant relationship between female skin tone and self-esteem among women in Pakistan. It's evident that societal preferences for lighter skin significantly impact women's self-worth. Beyond statistics, personal stories shared during interviews showcased the emotional resonance of these standards, unveiling a complex interplay between societal ideals and individual perceptions of beauty. These findings emphasize the urgency of addressing societal beauty norms to foster positive self-perception among women in Pakistan.

Adding on to this, the research moved towards young women and their experiences with beauty standards. The experiences of young women grappling with beauty standards, especially concerning complexion, were found to be profoundly influential in shaping various aspects of their lives. The interviews highlighted the struggles, resilience, and negotiation young women undergo when navigating societal beauty expectations. Their stories demonstrated a nuanced balancing act between conforming to societal norms and asserting their individuality. Empowering environments that promote self-acceptance play a crucial role in alleviating the pressures imposed by rigid beauty standards.

The study emphasized how colonial beauty ideals continue to shape Pakistan's media depictions and beauty industry. Examining commercials and media representations exposed a pervasive prejudice in favor of lighter skin tones that is ingrained in historical legacies. Significant obstacles are presented by this continuation, which affects how society views people and strengthens Eurocentric ideas. Changing these conventions and diversifying images in the media are essential first steps towards a narrative of beauty that is inclusive.

Ultimately, the research explored the evolution of beauty standards that highlighted the enduring impact of colonialism while acknowledging evolving societal perceptions. Historical legacies favoring lighter skin, inherited from the colonial era, still persist. However, recent research

indicates a gradual shift driven by global influences and cultural movements advocating for diverse beauty representations. This points to a complex interplay between historical influences and contemporary factors in reshaping beauty ideals in Pakistan.

Limitations

Sampling Bias

The study might have encountered sampling bias despite efforts to ensure diversity. Participants may not fully represent the entire spectrum of experiences across various regions, socio-economic statuses, or age groups in Pakistan.

Limited Generalizability

Findings might not be universally applicable due to the focus on specific regions or demographics. Regional variations in beauty standards and experiences might not have been adequately captured.

Ethical and Cultural Constraints

Cultural norms or ethical considerations might have restricted the openness of participants in sharing their experiences, potentially leading to incomplete or filtered narratives.

Researcher Bias

The researchers' perspectives and biases could have influenced the choice of methodologies, data interpretation, or emphasis on particular aspects, potentially impacting the study's objectivity.

Limited Media Analysis

The analysis of media representations might not cover the entire spectrum of media or beauty-related content. A broader range of sources or a larger sample might offer a more comprehensive understanding of media influences.

Conclusion

The thorough investigation of Pakistani beauty standards reveals an intricate pattern woven with both modern subtleties and historical legacies. This research sheds light on the complex aspects of beauty ideals, ranging from the emotional impact of skin tone on self-esteem to the dynamic experiences of young women and the long-lasting effects of colonial influences on media and businesses.

It's evident that beauty standards aren't mere preferences but deeply embedded societal constructs shaping individual experiences. The pervasive influence of colonial legacies, especially in favoring lighter skin tones, continues to reverberate through societal norms, affecting women's self-perception and societal expectations.

Global trends and advocacy for varied portrayals are driving a gradual transition in Pakistan's cultural environment away from past biases. Redefining beauty standards and promoting diversity requires powerful narratives and interventions that diversify media portrayals.

To sum the details up, this research underlines the necessity of humanizing the discourse around beauty standards, recognizing the lived experiences and challenges of women in navigating societal expectations. By acknowledging historical influences and embracing contemporary movements, Pakistan can embark on a transformative journey towards more inclusive, representative, and empowering beauty standards that celebrate diversity and individuality.

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