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## Perceptions on People with Albinism in Urban Tanzania: Implications for Social Inclusion

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#### **Novelty:**

This paper adds up to the knowledge of society's perception of those with albinism in Urban Tanzania for social inclusion.

### Abstract

This article analyses the perceptions of people from urban Tanzania about individuals with albinism. It attempts to evaluate people's understanding of albinism, their attitudes towards individuals with the condition, and perceived reasons for their inhumane treatment. The findings reported in this article were gathered from forty-seven participants from Dar es Salaam region who were purposefully selected for the study. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaire were used for data collection. Findings have indicated that to a larger extent, respondents had a poor understanding of albinism. However, on the average they felt comfortable having individuals with the condition around them. Nonetheless, respondents also had mixed responses regarding marrying people with albinism. Congruent with the existing literature, the murder are linked to superstitious practices and negative beliefs. In advancing the available literature, a discussion of these findings is offered in light of social inclusion of persons with albinism in Tanzania. To intervene, it is recommended that education should be given to the wider community to help change their perceptions about those with albinism.

**Keywords:** Albinism, Attitudes, Murder, Social Inclusion, Tanzania.

### Introduction

Tanzania, like other African countries is home to people with albinism (Fayoyin, Ihebuzor, 2014). Given their disabling conditions, many individuals with albinism are likely to experience

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social and health-related problems (Braathen, Ingstad, 2006; Brilliant, 2015; Brocco, 2015, 2016; Lund, 2001; Machoko, 2013; Mmatli, 2010; Wan, 2003). The individuals are at risk of being excluded from full participation and access to social services. This makes it necessary to have concerted efforts among the government, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, local authorities and the general public to protect persons with albinism in Tanzania.

Furthermore, the Tanzanian government has taken steps to condemn the murdering and to protect individuals with albinism in the country. By arresting individuals believed to perpetuate the murdering of persons with albinism (Imafidon, 2017). Promoting social inclusion and justice in the contemporary world is important as it helps to enhance a sense of acceptance among people. Similarly, the minorities within such diverse communities are likely to experience marginalization based on such factors as stigma (Allman, 2013), and their rights deprived in due course. People with albinism are one of those minority populations in Tanzania hence susceptible to such conditions.

The geographical regions that are notorious in the murdering of people with albinism are Mwanza, Mara and Shinyanga in the Northern part of Tanzania and Mbeya region in Southern part of the country. The increase in greediness and innate superstitious beliefs among people in these areas, places people with albinism at high risk of death. This has led to the exclusion of albinos from socio-economic activities, as well as access to social services in the community (Burke et al., 2014; Dave-Odigie, 2010; Ikuomola, 2015; Mucina, 2015; Tanner, 2010).

### **Conceptualization of albinism**

Albinism, scientifically defined by many authors as an inherited condition leading to deficiency of pigment in the skin, hair, and eyes (Kolk, Bright, 1983; Vergason, 1990; Vaughan, Asbury, & Riordan-Eva, 1992). It is a condition that affects people of all races from all countries (AI, 2016; Under the Same Sun, UTSS, 2014). People with the condition are easily noticeable in many African societies in which the majorities are black-skinned as opposed to the western societies where the majorities are white or pale-skinned (Baker et al., 2010). From African way of thinking, much of which is based on cultural practices, as Imafidon (2017) points out, 'albinism is considered an alterity or otherness' (p. 164). In this article albinism is referred to as a category of pigment disorder characterized by a less than normal production of melanin in the skin. Although the term is often used as though it represents a single syndrome, in reality, over a dozen varieties have been identified. Albino is used to designate the individual with albinism (Reber, 1984).

It is noteworthy that there are different types of albinism described in literature falling into at least two major categories: oculocutaneous albinism [OCA] and ocular albinism [OA] (Kamaraj, Purohit, 2014; Martinez-Garcia, Montoliu, 2013). One is said to have OCA albinism when 'hypopigmentation trait is associated with skin, hair and eyes', as opposed to having OA albinism in which, 'the hypopigmentation affects primarily the retinal pigment epithelium cells' (Martinez-Garcia, Montoliu, 2013: 319). In fact, all forms of albinism are associated with some kind of stigma which is recognized for its power to exclude individuals, especially those from the marginal or peripheral positions in society (Allman, 2013). Almost all people with albinism have visual impairments (AI, 2016), with the majority being classified as "legally blind".

While numbers vary, in North America and Europe it is estimated that one in every 20,000 people have some form of albinism. Throughout East Africa, albinism is much more prevalent, with estimates of one in every 1,400 people being affected. In Tanzania, people with albinism represent one in every 1429 births, a much higher rate than in any other nation. Based on the population and housing census of 2012 for the United Republic of Tanzania, there are 16127 officially registered people with albinism in Tanzania mainland (United Republic of Tanzania, URT, 2014). However, it is believed that there are many undocumented people with albinism in the country.

### **Attitudes towards people with albinism**

What people understand about albinism in terms of its meaning and perceived causes may affect their attitudes toward them (Baker et al., 2010). Attitudes towards people with albinism are learned from the environment of people (Machoko, 2013). Recently, there has been a shift in attitudes to an even more dangerous position of using the remains of bodies of people with albinism for witchcraft purposes. Some people in Tanzania kill individuals with albinism to get parts of their bodies for sale. The remains of parts of the body of an individual with albinism are

believed to be “*good luck charms.*” It has been widely reported in Tanzania that some parts of the body of a person with albinism are used by business people to enable them become wealthy. How that works, nobody knows! Literature indicates negative attitudes towards people with albinism, which leads to terror and unhappiness among the individuals with albinism. However, changing such attitudes is important.

Despite their small number, people with albinism are being killed in Tanzania. For instance, the Mwananchi Newspapers of Tanzania published on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, indicated that 686 people with albinism had been killed in Mwanza since 2002. Such killings are attributable to different reasons such as the belief that albinism results from a curse put on the family (Brocco, 2016; Dave-Odigie, 2010; Tanner, 2010; Uromi, 2014). Some people in Tanzania think that a person with albinism is a kind of ghost-like creature. All the said may be a result of negative attitudes towards people with albinism and ignorance which leads to superstitious behaviours and rudeness towards such individuals. In this context, persons with albinism experience marginalization and exclusion from different social, economic and political engagements. Tanzania Albino Society (2009) shows that the killing of people with albinism is a new phenomenon and is by no means the traditional way of practising medicine.

However, what is happening in Tanzania is also experienced in other countries. In Zimbabwe having sex with a woman with albinism is believed to treat a man of HIV/AIDS (Baker et al., 2010) while in Malawi, body parts of people with albinism are hunted by inhuman people for magical powers and good luck (AI, 2016). On the other hand, history shows that people with albinism in Jamaica were degraded and regarded as cursed. Such practices have made them and their families live under everlasting fear, creating handicapping conditions for them (Dave-Odigie, 2010; Machoko, 2013; Mucina, 2015; Tanner, 2010). When people have negative attitudes towards some groups of exceptional individuals in the community, it may negatively affect the social inclusion of people with albinism and other marginalized individuals. Since humans are social creatures, writing about social inclusion is important in most contemporary societies.

### **Social inclusion and albinism research**

The conceptions of social inclusion have been offered in different contexts. Taking a human rights perspective, Lavery (2015), explains social inclusion as ‘the ability to participate in society, and to be free from discrimination and disadvantage’ (p. 4) as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Writing about social inclusion in the context of individuals with learning disabilities, Bates and Davis (2004) conceive it as a means of ‘ensuring that people with learning disabilities have full and fair access to activities, social roles and relationships directly alongside non-disabled citizens’ (p. 196). Similarly, Simplican, Leader, Kosciulek and Leahy (2015), while proposing an ecological model of social inclusion, define the term as ‘the interaction between two major life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation’ (p. 18).

Reflecting on these conceptions, social inclusion requires having equitable communities where marginalized individuals find their way to live comfortably in those communities. In fact, it is a process of ensuring equal participation for the marginalized groups in all activities within their society as long as they are able to accomplish them (European Commission, 2006), the absence of which, denotes the existence of social exclusion (Rawal, 2008). Indeed, the creation and sustainability of inclusive societies requires ‘social architectures’ (Allman, 2013: 3). Social inclusion is an important element through which society can work to achieve caring community and inclusive practices (Kelders et al., 2016). Given the noticeable killings of individuals with albinism in Tanzania and in other countries, integrating social inclusion addresses for this population in the day to day interactions is important if social justice has to be attained in society (Tanner, 2010).

The available literature concentrates on albinism from the perspective of those with the condition and their families (Braathen, & Ingstad, 2006; Brocco, 2015, 2016). A focus on those without albinism would also contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon, in experiences drawn from Tanzania in light of social inclusion of persons with albinism. The latter line of inquiry was the objective of this research realized through the following questions: (a) How is albinism understood by the members of community in urban Tanzania? (b) How do members of community in urban Tanzania react towards seeing persons with albinism around them? (c) What are the views

of people from urban Tanzania about marrying persons with albinism? (d) What are the reasons for the killings of people with albinism as perceived by people from urban Tanzania?

## Methods

### Design

A qualitative approach was used to document people's feelings, attitudes and perceptions towards individuals with albinism. The approach, which is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting, was used to obtain the relevant data for the study. Qualitative research focuses on discerning the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives. It is concerned with the understanding of a specific organization or event and looks at deeper meaning, analysis and interpretation, rather than surface description of a large sample of a population like quantitative research. Data for this research were collected in Dar es Salaam region in Tanzania.

### Population, sample and sampling techniques

Purposive sampling was used to get the participants of the study. The researchers were interested in collecting data from participants with experiences with people with albinism. Forty-seven respondents participated in the study of which 25 were males and 22 females. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 46 years and above. The majority of the participants were in the age range of 26 to 35. Their educational level ranged from primary education to degree level. The degree holders formed the majority of the participants. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of participants

Age ranges of the participants		Participants' education level	
Age group	Number of participants	Level of Education	Number of participants
46 and above	2 (4.26 %)	Elementary School Education	7 (14.89%)
36 – 45	8 (17.02%)	Secondary/High School Education	14 (29.79%)
26 – 35	21 (44.68%)	Basic Certificate (Post-Secondary School Training)	4 (8.51%)
18 – 25	16 (34.04%)	Diploma	1 (2.13%)
-	-	Degree	21 (44.68%)
Total	47 (100%)	Total	47 (100%)

### Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through the use of open-ended questionnaires administered to all participants. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were also used to obtain data from the research participants. The questionnaires were set in Kiswahili, the familiar language to many people in Tanzania. Like questionnaires, the interviews were conducted in Kiswahili and the data from both instruments were translated into English during the analysis phase through the final presentation of the findings. The use of Kiswahili allowed easier collection of the data as the participants could air out their views without any language barrier. The use of interviews was meant to complement information obtained from questionnaires. Data from questionnaires were analysed manually to determine frequencies, percentages and finally presented in tables.

Descriptions of the various comments of participants were recorded in statements and then analysed thematically in which direct quotations of actual conversations with participants used in the research are presented. It was considered important to ask questions on participants' understanding of 'albinism', people's reactions to persons with albinism as well as the aspect of getting married to persons with the condition since responses to the questions would provide

indications of whether or not the participants had positive or negative perceptions towards people with albinism.

### **Trustworthiness of the study**

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the researchers were the primary instruments of data collection. Backed with sound experience in carrying out studies on this area, relevant data were gathered through face-to-face contacts with the research participants; hence researcher-as-instrument (Morrow, 2005) was achieved in carrying out the study. This enabled the researchers to take note of every signal as reflected in the participants' conversations and their corresponding paralinguistic cues during the data collection phase. The process was done to enhance the richness and quality of the collected data. At different points of the research, peer debriefings were made, and the use of multiple methods of data collection made both the process and the findings of the study more credible.

### **Results**

This section presents the findings of the research that aimed to undo peoples' perceptions about albinism and individuals with the condition. To achieve this, it was of interest to know peoples' conception of the term 'albinism', how comfortable they are having individuals with the condition around them, and perceived causes for their killings in Tanzania. The following are thus worth reporting:

#### **Participants' understanding of the term "albinism"**

To tap this information, the researchers requested participants to elaborate on the term "albinism" so as to establish the extent to which they could correctly define the term. Thirty-eight (100 %) participants responded to this item. Out of the respondents, nine (23.7) of them did not indicate any response, while ten participants (26.3 %) said that people with albinism are human beings who lack pigment due to inborn conditions. Table 2 summarizes the participants' responses and their brief explanations.

**Table 2.** Participants' conception of the term "albinism"

<b>Response</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>Evaluation/analysis of the participants' responses</b>
1. One who lacks chromosomes	5 (13.2)	This is a wrong response. Albinism is a condition, not a person.
2. Normal human being with a skin impairment	10 (26.3)	Albinism is a condition, a genetic disorder not a human being.
3. One who lacks vitamins	1 (2.6)	Albinism is a disorder, not a person. Neither is it caused by lack of vitamins.
4. One with white skin which cannot resist strong sunlight.	3 (7.9)	Noteworthy is that it is the ultraviolet rays which affect the skin of people with albinism.
5. A person who does not have a normal skin colour of a human being.	3 (7.9)	Albinism is not a person (Refer to above explanations).
6. An inborn and inherited skin problem due to nutrients deficiency.	5 (13.2)	This is an incorrect statement similar to the third response.
7. A disability.	9 (23.7)	Albinism is not a disability. It is a disorder and in many cases referred to as impairment.
8. I don't know.	2 (5.3)	
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	<b>38 (100)</b>	

Overall, the findings indicate that the research participants did not understand the meaning of the term, ‘albinism’. It may be that the participants of the study could not provide correct responses on the term *albinism* due to lack of awareness on albinism in the country.

**People’s reactions to persons with albinism**

The second research objective looked into how people reacted towards individuals with albinism. The item was responded to by forty (85 %) participants who stated their reactions upon meeting or seeing persons with albinism. On average, the results portray a positive picture about people’s perceptions on individuals with albinism with only one (2.1 %) participant who indicated to have fear towards individuals with albinism. When participants were asked to say how they felt when they met persons with albinism, their responses were as summarized in [Table 3](#).

**Table 3.** Participants’ reactions towards people with albinism

Participants’ Reactions	Frequency	Percentage
Fearful	1	2.5
Feeling ok, fine, usual	21	52.5
Feeling bad	-	-
Feeling like running away	-	-
Feeling for the individual (Feeling pity)	18	45
<b>Total respondents (N)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

The results on [Table 3](#) show that despite the fact that the participants were unable to correctly define the concept of albinism, their reactions towards people with albinism, on average, were positive.

**Getting married to persons with albinism**

The question on whether or not one could get married to a person with albinism had interesting responses. There were many respondents who preferred getting married to individuals with albinism. Equally important is that there were respondents who said that they would not get married to individuals with albinism. One participant for instance, said that while she preferred getting married to a person with albinism she thought that it would be difficult. The response was not elaborative. This is an indication of indecisiveness. Another response was on fear that her off springs would inherit albinism. This response indicates that the person knew albinism is an inherited condition and that there could be chances of giving birth to a child with albinism if one got married to a person with the condition. The rest of the responses were based on the attitudes of members of the community who stigmatize and hate people with albinism. The respondents thought more on what people say about them instead of making their own firm decisions. The results show that the societal stigma on people with albinism shape people’s perceptions towards their marriage. This also is an indication that family and societal values, beliefs and ethics have an influence on the choice of spouses. [Table 4](#) presents the results as extracted from participants’ open-ended questionnaire.

**Table 4.** Participants’ responses on their willingness to get married to individuals with albinism

<p><b>Positive responses:</b>                  People with albinism are human beings like others, they need love and to be loved.                  Having albinism does not hinder a person from getting married.                  The impairment is not a yard stick for one not being able to sexually satisfy another.                  Love means accepting a person as he/she is, so I can get married to a person with albinism.                  A wife with albinism can survive and maintain her marriage contrary to the said beautiful women.                  People with albinism have all the qualities of becoming husbands or wives.                  It is not necessarily true that when you get married to a person with albinism you naturally get a child with albinism.                  They are human beings with feelings like other people.</p>
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Love has no colour. If you love a person you get married, regardless of his/her condition.  
If I love him, I can get married to him since love is blind.  
It is only the skin problem and when you get to protect the skin, everything is fine.  
The only problem is that it is expensive to take care of them.  
Yes, because he/she wants to get married like any other person  
What matters is love  
Getting a child with albinism is biological. So I can get married to one.  
I can get married to him. What matters is love, not colour. It is humanity.

**Negative responses:**

I fear it will be difficult.  
Albinism is inherited from parents and passed through families.  
I do not like white skin that hurts my eyes. It is not that I have bad intention but it is how I feel.  
I do not like to bring an albino child to the world because albinism is hereditary; it is something that people would not like.  
People are going to stigmatize me.  
When we get a child with albinism we are not going to be happy since we are going to be segregated, or laughed at.  
We may be laughed at and our children may be booed by other kids.  
I do not like to marry a wife with albinism because I do not want to get a child with albinism.

**Perceived reasons for the killings of people with albinism in Tanzania**

To confirm if what was obtained in the literature was true, the participants were asked to say why they thought people with albinism were being killed. Different responses emerged in the following themes; some of which were supporting the literature:

**Superstitious-related reasons**

The participants were of the view that, people with albinism were being killed because of witchcraft reasons. Indeed, the reasons that came up were that people with albinism were bad omens who had to be exterminated, parts of their bodies could be used for witchcraft, they are being killed just because of brutality. The following narratives from one of the participants indicate the case:

‘People with albinism are killed because of superstitious behaviours related to getting rich. There are beliefs that one can get rich through the use of parts of the body of a person with albinism to prepare good luck charms.’ [Interview with participant A]

**Religious-related reasons**

It was found during the research that, the reasons for persistent killings of people with albinism in Tanzania emanated from religious beliefs about albinism among community members. That is, the participants mentioned that those who do not believe in God coupled with ignorance of the condition are likely to perpetuate the killing of innocent albinos in Tanzania. Some of the participants had the following to say on this:

‘...some people do not believe in God, and have evil hearts and minds; there are people who believe that a child with albinism is a punishment from God. This assumption is not true. Why don't the individuals say that such individuals are given the child because God knows that they can take care of him or her? Why do they go for negative answers?’ [Interview with participant C]

**Lack of proper knowledge on albinism**

It was also found that, some participants were unaware of the condition and thus attributing the incidences of albino killings in Tanzania to lack of knowledge of it among community members including parents with children with albinism. The case below indicates this:

‘Many parents are ignorant about the condition. They need education. If parents would be educated about the causes, as well as how to treat individuals with albinism, not many would be ignorant and afraid of individuals with albinism’ [Interview with participant E].

### **Negative attitudes and stigma attached to Albinism**

The results have indicated that there are people with negative attitudes towards individuals with albinism. While others said that they did not know the reasons for killings of people with albinism, the following excerpts from some of the research participants reflect on the foresaid claims:

‘Parents feel ashamed of their children with albinism: Because children with albinism become outstanding because of their skin colour and other characteristics of albinism, and because of negative cultural beliefs, some parents feel ashamed of their children and fail to see how they can fit in the life styles of the normal children.’ [Interview with participant D]

‘... negative perceptions or attitudes towards those with albinism; there are individuals who do not like such human beings. That is why some parents kill such children as soon as they are born’. [Interview with participant B]

### **Discussion**

Primarily, peoples’ level of knowledge about something affects their attitudes, thinking and shapes their behaviour. In view of the findings, the participants could tell that albinism was an inborn impairment. Despite the fact that the definition is incomplete, it shows that at least the respondents understood the condition. Similarly, the findings indicate that about one quarter of the participants knew that albinism was inborn but inherited skin impairment; yet others conceived it as a disability.

Generally, given the fact that majority of the participants were educated to different levels, the current results support the findings by Masanja, Mvena and Kayunze (2015) whose study was centred on assessing the level of awareness, attitudes towards albinism and perceptions on contributing factors for the killing of individuals with albinism in areas notorious for the inhuman practices. It was found that participants with higher education level had awareness of the albinism condition. The participants had a better understanding of various issues pertaining to albinism in the studied areas. Certainly, the findings of the present study shows that most of the respondents had some ideas of the concept, despite the fact that some of them could not scientifically articulate the definition. The findings provide hope for social inclusion of people with albinism in urban Tanzania, hence their full participation and access to social services in the society.

Furthermore, understanding how members of a community react towards people with albinism was central to carrying out the present research with a view to ascertaining level of social inclusion of the albinos in the community. In their entirety, the findings create hope for people with albinism and their families as most participants have positive view of the albinos signalling the presence of welcoming community for all. The situation has made the government of Tanzania to publically condemn the killings of individuals with albinism for their body parts since 2008. Despite the condemnation, the killings are still happening. For instance, a report by Under the Same Sun (2014) indicated the increase in attacks and killings, not only in Tanzania but also in Africa in general with Tanzania leading in the killings. Indeed, the efforts against albino killings should be placed at the top most national and international agenda in order to make Tanzania and other countries better places to live for all. One way to achieve this could be advancing national and inter-state collaborations aimed at setting practical mechanisms, realized through a bottom-up approach, to redress the trends. Additionally, the results of the current study conflict to what is happening in the country, does not support the assumption that the members of society have negative perceptions towards people with albinism. Can the reasons be due to the fact that the survey was carried out in Dar es Salaam, which is a big city with people from all walks of life, who can also be said to be open minded, having more education and exposure to various situations than those in rural areas? More needs to be looked into on this.

Marriage is an important social stage in the life of a grown up person. Getting married can be interfered by many factors for instance, an individual’s perception about members of a particular community. This could be attributable to disability issues as well, making those with different disabilities experience difficulties marrying, hence their exclusion in society. So long as social inclusion is getting significant attention in the current discourses, it was imperative looking into the views of people without albinism about marrying those with the condition. The results have

indicated mixed responses: 15 positive and eight negative responses. The responses show that more individuals had positive attitudes towards marrying individuals with albinism, than those with negative ones. It is obvious that love plays a central part. There were individuals who said that they felt comfortable getting married to individuals with albinism as long as there was love. Unlike these findings, studies by Baker et al. (2010) and Machoko (2013) conducted in Zimbabwe revealed that majority of people with albinism faced difficulties finding someone to marry due to myths and superstitions surrounding those with albinism. The findings of the present study have indicated that there were participants who would get married to those with albinism due to the fact that they are human beings who would also wish to get married and raise a family. This is a positive change on attitudes toward individuals with albinism.

However, there were responses that gave an indication of fear of individuals with albinism. Some participants indicated that they would not get married to people with albinism because of fear. Indeed, the responses were based on fear of the unknown, negative beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of members of the community towards individuals with albinism. They were also based on shame of people with impairment or disability. Experience shows that there are individuals who are ashamed of their children with albinism. They think deeply about disability as it may have been reflected by others. They have guilty conscience. They have questions that remain in their minds: "How will relatives, siblings or the neighbours react? What will they say about my child?" Consequently, people withdraw or isolate themselves from those with disability leading to social exclusion of those with albinism. As emphasized by Machoko (2013), ongoing efforts to discourage any forms of social discrimination for persons with albinism should be strengthened on the African continent. This could then bring about social inclusion for those with albinism in Africa and more particularly in Tanzania.

Moreover, there was also fear and questioning about future life. "How are they going to handle their children in terms of expenses, school, social interactions as well as psychological situations? What does this situation mean? Taking care of the handicapped child throughout the child's life? What about medical treatment? Who is going to foot the bills for such a long time? How will the child grow, go to school, work or even get married and manage his or her life?" These are some of the questions remaining in peoples' minds. The questions have to be answered. It is at such instances that people with albinism have to be supported, guided and given assurance that the feelings they experience are not abnormal. However, such feelings should not occupy their minds to an extent that they fail to live happily. They should try to speak out their problems. It is clear from the data that the responses support what is facing people married to individuals with albinism. The respondents were more afraid of their off springs, thinking that they would be laughed at and stigmatized, rendering their social exclusion in the community.

Other participants provided biological reasons saying that the condition could be passed on to their off springs. They did not like getting married to individuals with albinism due to stigma attached to the condition. It is evident that social aspects play a big role in deciding who should get married to an individual. However, of more importance was the biological factor. The participants were afraid and uncomfortable getting married to individuals with albinism because of the fear of getting children with albinism. Does it mean that individuals with albinism should be segregated and left to get married to themselves? Indeed, such practices compromise the social inclusion of people with albinism in society making it difficult for such people to participate fully in various activities. This should not be allowed and that awareness raising should be the goal so that people understand albinism instead of creating fear against people with the condition. The findings support explanations from Tanzania Albino Society's (2009) on fear of people with albinism which is reinforced by rumours from the society and people around them. Also, some participants expressed that individuals with albinism are human beings first; their impairment and disability come second. The expressions painted a positive picture about people with albinism and their chances of getting married. The results did not support the research assumption that participants would not like to get married to people with albinism, since there are more positive responses than negative ones. However, results show that negative perceptions about people with albinism are still rampant in the community.

Establishing the views of people from urban Tanzania on the reasons for the killing of people with albinism in different parts of the country would provide a wider picture of social inclusion of these individuals. The empirical data on the reasons for the killings would assist in reducing and in

final analysis eliminating the evil acts. It was assumed that individuals with albinism were killed because of superstitious reasons. This assumption was arrived at after documentations by the Tanzanian media in the past ten years. There was also unproven kind of thinking that the killings were geared towards exterminating them because they are considered as bad omens by some cruel and uninformed individuals. To some extent, the thinking is supported by information from the literature review from other countries. For instance, among the Zimbabwean community, people with albinism have been associated with water spirits and ascribed celibates (Machoko, 2013). There are myths among Tanzanians that people with albinism are evil spirits too. Such myths signify lack of knowledge about albinism among community members which should be dispelled through appropriate education.

What is evident from the literature and further replicated by the present study is that there is ignorance, lack of knowledge and awareness about people with albinism. Similar findings were reported by Braathen and Ingstad (2006) in Malawi from the perspectives of those with albinism and their family members. This renders the provision of education on albinism to members of community necessary. Findings from other studies such as those of Under the Same Sun (2009) also support the current findings. The observations are supported by literature that there are superstitious behaviours that leads to being afraid of those with albinism, leading to the killings of the individuals with albinism. Among the myths are stated, a *person with albinism is a curse* from God/gods/ancestral spirits, a result of witchcraft, or a bad omen.

Once in a while, one may hear comments such as, 'Is there something wrong that she has committed to have such a child?' This myth is found in many societies. For example, Harris, a parent of a handicapped child had feelings that it was a curse to have a child with disability as indicated by Turnbull and Turnbull (1985). The parent said that the feeling of being cursed was very strong in his family and operated unconsciously in him for many years. He pointed out that there are superstitions and irrational myths that go beyond the bounds of families with handicapped children. Myths result from the society whereby society members harbour such myths as part and parcel of their culture. Skinner (1965), the famous behavioural psychologist explained that superstitious rituals are found in human society. They involve verbal formulae, and are transmitted as part of the culture. They are sustained by occasional contingencies that follow the same pattern. A person is blamed for an 'unfortunate' event which was not actually a result of her/his behaviour such as saying, 'If you hadn't delayed so, we should have started earlier, and the accident would never have happened' (p. 351). There are people who believe that if a pregnant woman shares utensils with a person with albinism, she may be likely to get a child with albinism. Unless such ignorance about albinism is seriously addressed and fought against, people with albinism will continue being the endangered species in Tanzania.

There were also participants who said that the killings of people with albinism are a result of greed and not superstitions. Others said that there are people who kill individuals with albinism because they believe that they can use the body parts of the latter individuals to become rich, congruent with other studies and literature on the topic (Dave-Odigie, 2010; Ikuomola, 2015; Mucina, 2015; Tanner, 2010). As a means of protecting and promoting the rights of people with albinism in Tanzania, everlasting advocacy campaigns for this population are important (Fayoyin, Ihebuzor, 2014). The findings support the literature that people with albinism are killed because of superstitious behaviours or witchcraft. This requires intervention initiatives from within and outside the country.

## Conclusion

In this paper, attempts were made to analyse the definitions of *albinism* as provided by the research participants. There were also discussions on various issues pertaining to the condition of people with it. The analysis has shown that many research participants lacked a clear understanding of the term. It was also discovered from the discussions that people with albinism were both liked and disliked by various individuals for various reasons, but there are more people with positive attitudes than those having negative ones towards people with albinism. There were individuals who said that they felt comfortable working, living and getting married to individuals with albinism while others said that they would not get married to individuals with albinism because they were afraid of such people. Those who had positive attitudes towards individuals with albinism said that the latter were human beings and that what matters in marriage is true love.

Those who did not wish to get married to people with albinism said that they were afraid of being stigmatized or giving birth to children with albinism. There were also those who said that they did not have any problems with individuals with albinism and were ready for marriage with them. At surface level, one might say that people with albinism are not in danger.

### Recommendations

Future research on this area should be done focusing on two things: First, documenting experiences of social inclusion by individuals with albinism in the community, especially with regards to marriage and access to social services. Second, conducting an ethnographic research with a deep analysis to tap information on the traditions that influence superstitions on people with albinism and their killings so that proper measures can be taken to address the sociological aspects.

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