

# Myths Surrounding Albinism among the Tonga People: A Case of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga District, Zambia

Masiye Noria and Penda Annie

Special Education Dept. Kwame Nkrumah University, (KNU) Kabwe, Zambia

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## ABSTRACT

This study focused on myths surrounding Albinism among the Tonga People: a case of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga District, Zambia. The main objectives of the study were to identify the myths surrounding Albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district, Zambia, to establish how Albinos are treated based on the myths among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom. The study was qualitative in nature, interpretivism as a paradigm was used and descriptive research design was adopted. The study involved twenty-eight (28) participants who were purposively selected. Data was generated using an in-depth interview guide for headmen and relatives of persons with albinism, a focus group guide for persons with albinism and community members and document study was also used for collection of data relating to cases involving persons with albinism within the chiefdom. The collected data was analyzed using latent thematic analysis approach. The key findings were that persons with albinism were cursed people who caused bad lucky in the families, albinism was considered to exist as a result of punishment from the ancestors for the wrong things done. Persons with albinism were said to be immortal, Albinism was considered to be contagious. Treatment of the persons with albinism in relation to myths was also established. For instance, persons with albinism were isolated and rejected, they were killed for one reason or another, they were accused of all the bad things that happened in the families, community members looked down on them and considered them to be lazy and unproductive.

**Keywords:** Albinism, Myths, Sinakomba, Siavonga, Chiefdom, Headmen, Community, Government, Ancestors, Spirits, Ghost, Beliefs, Superstitions and Treatment.

## INTRODUCTION

Albinism is surrounded by many cultural beliefs and superstition. These beliefs and superstitions pose a challenge on the lives of persons with albinism. This is affirmed by [19] who asserted that people with albinism have faced different forms of discrimination from different tribes due to their genetic condition. Persons with albinism are shunned away by the rest of their community members and are at a high risk of being ill-treated or killed because of their unique physical features. Myths have endured through the course of history and have evolved from time to time. They could be found in different societies all over the world, but some may be limited to one continent, region, country, village, tribe, family and sometimes to one social group. African history disclosed the existence of numerous myths that could be distilled from stories.

People with albinism have received various forms of support from international, regional and national stake holders. At international level, according to the World Report on Disability by [25] World Health Organization and the World Bank recommended that governments and their development partners enable access to all mainstream policies, systems and services intended for the general public. The report also recommended investing in specific programs and services for people with disabilities. Some people with disabilities require access to specific measures, such as rehabilitation and support services, which can improve functioning, independence and foster participation in society. Persons with albinism also need integrated and decentralized rehabilitation services, and improved provision of assistive technologies, for example, low vision devices, and related services. The document highlighted the support such as the policy, special education services, and

material support towards persons with disabilities which includes persons with albinism. The report however did not document anything about myths that surrounded albinism of which this study embarked on.

According to a study by [15] in Malawi on the education of children and young people with albinism showed that teachers were positive towards children with albinism despite the challenges of insufficient training and large class sizes. In the same study, interviews with teachers revealed good practice towards pupils with albinism because they were encouraged to sit in front of the classroom and were allowed to move close to the chalk board when necessary. Teachers provided large print sheets for children with albinism and also wrote in bold, clear letters on the chalk board and allowed people with albinism to wear their hats. The schools also encouraged positive attitude towards albinism and this enhances the learners' self-image and self-worth [10]. Some teachers also permit these learners to change their sitting positions, depending on where the work is being conducted. In some instances, these learners are allowed to use their own textbooks, rather than sharing with others [14] and Gallaher [10] quite alright penned down the support services provided to persons with albinism such as special education services suitable for persons with albinism but never brought out myths surrounding albinism.

At the national level, there was evidence of support towards persons with disabilities in Zambia, for example [16] is a policy document that supports persons with albinism as it focused on ensuring equality of education opportunities, provision of good quality education to pupils with special education needs and improving and strengthening the supervision of special education across the country. [16] has highlighted the support services such as encouraging equity and adaptation and modification of the education system and services to accommodate people with disabilities which include persons with albinism. The policy document however according to the researchers' view appears not to have documented issues that had to do with myths surrounding albinism which this research bridged.

Despite the fact that international like in America, in Africa such as Malawi and Zambia where persons with albinism had received various support services, due to the underlying assumptions that prevail in the minds of exploited members of superstitious societies, according to the researchers' view, it appears that persons with albinism still remained vulnerable to the violation of their human rights, more has to be done in order for universal human rights to be true to its word. It was for this reason that the researchers undertook this study to explore the Myths Surrounding Albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district of Zambia.

## **Statement of the Problem**

People have had different myths and beliefs about persons with albinism which varied from one tribe to another and these myths affect the entire lives of persons with albinism. For example, some of the tribes in Zambia believed that persons with albinism were not human beings but ghosts [1]. They were targeted because of such beliefs and were therefore discriminated against a situation which if not urgently addressed might lead to extinction of persons with albinism. According to the researchers' view, it appeared that there was no documentation on myths and superstitions surrounding people with Albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga District. This is what compelled the researchers to conduct a study on Myths surrounding Albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district, Zambia.

## **Significance of the Study**

The study was significant because myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom were established. The findings might be a critical basis for policy formulation in order to improve the quality of life of persons with albinism in the country. The findings of the study might be used for advocacy work around in an endeavor to demystify certain myths surrounding Albinism and also change people's attitudes towards persons with albinism. Furthermore, the study findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the myths associated with albinism. This might be important for future researchers as stepping stone for further in-depth studies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Presentation of Albinism, myths and beliefs and the Tonga people while identifying the myths surrounding albinism.

#### Myths surrounding albinism

##### The concept of Albinism

[9], Carried out a research on the Role of the Media in Promoting Images of Disability - Disability as Metaphor in New Delhi. The researcher defined Albinism as a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited condition occurring in both genders regardless of ethnicity, in all countries of the world. Both the father and mother must carry the gene for it to be passed on even if they do not have albinism themselves. [12] carried out a research on Challenges Pupils with Albinism face in Selected Schools of Luapula Province, Zambia stated that, albinism is a genetic deficiency of melanin pigment production. The authors stated that albinism genes were produced by both parents which this study agreed with, however the authors did not link the birth of an albino to myths which the study looked into.

According to [5], albinism is defined as people with a condition where they have little or no melanin pigment in their eyes, skin, or hair. Central Statistics Office defined what characterizes albinism. The document did not in any way link albinism to myths among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district of Zambia which the current study embarked on.

##### Myths and beliefs

At international levels, [23] conducted a study on the knowledge attitude and practices on children with albinism in Nigeria and USA. The study revealed that learners with albinism were isolated from peers in school as a result of negative attitudes of peers. The study recognized negative attitudes as being a contributing factor to isolating children with albinism. What the study did not do was to consider the impact of myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district of Zambia: As an aspect which this study research on.

[1], carried out a research on the role of culture of superstitions in the proliferation of religion in Nigeria. The study found that in many diverse cultures across the globe, there are various myths and beliefs that ascribe albinism to a curse by the gods or by dead ancestors. The study further said that some people even believe that contact with a person with albinism can result in bad luck, sickness, or even death. Moreover, in some societies giving birth to a baby with albinism is something that carries severe stigma. In line with this study, the author linked albinism to myths but he did not bring out the myths that surrounded the birth of a child with albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district which this study considered.

According to the study conducted by [2] on the myths surrounding people with albinism in South Africa and Zimbabwe; the study used the pathological participatory design to document and give voice to the experiences of people with albinism, and extend this to include their families and communities. The participatory approach to documenting and giving voice to the experiences of people with albinism, as well as those of their families and communities enabled the researchers to convey the complexities of the issues associated with the condition by demonstrating that the attitudes of friends, family, colleagues and healthcare professionals, whether positive or negative, could significantly influence the life experience of people with albinism. The approach however did not capture what was obtaining presently as it relied on documented historical narratives; the reason why the current study took the descriptive research design as it deals with the current state of affairs. It helped to describe phenomena and its characteristics as it existed at present in their natural occurrence.

In Zambia, [18] administered a research on views of teachers, pupils and parents on inclusive education for children with disabilities, a case study of St Lawrence School in Lusaka. The researcher discovered that there was discrimination against children with albinism as the other children were afraid of contracting the condition as they held to the belief that albino skins melts and if someone sat near them, the condition can be passed on.

The aspect of myths as relating to albinism was brought out by the researcher. However, the researcher did not elaborate if the myth also applied to the issues of albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district.

### **The Tonga people**

[22] conducted a research on Decolonizing research in a Sub-Saharan African context. Exploring ubuntu as a foundation for research methodology, ethics and agenda. The study found that Ubuntu does not translate easily into Western languages, but in English it is most often interpreted as I am, because we are, which seeks to capture how in Africa, individuals exist through community and that what happens to the individual, happens to the whole community. Ubuntu is both a philosophy and way of life. Ubuntu refers to Bantu indigenous peoples of central and southern Africa who speak Bantu languages and emphasizes communal life, based on sharing, respect and compassion. It is one in which the perspective of African people is centred, located and grounded, and it honours indigenous culture. The author stressed on the bantu being people who were concerned with communalism and that they respected and showed compassion to one another, the study however did not mention whether every individual regardless of color or skin type as in the case of persons with albinism were part of Ubuntu because they were still segregated by culture, the reason why the researchers intended to unearth the myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district of Zambia .

According to [3] Albinism in Malawi: Knowledge and Beliefs from an African Setting" Disability and Society. The study pointed out that myths and superstitions against people with albinism have led to discrimination, teasing and verbal abuse and, worst of all, killings. The study further pointed out that in many cases, and especially in rural villages, people with albinism are shut away and cut off from society. Braathen and his colleague pointed out that rural villages were especially in the forefront of executing abuse against people with albinism due to the myths that surrounded the condition. What they did not do was to identify the myth surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district an aspect that this study was aimed at.

In Zambia, a study was conducted by [12] on pupils with albinism in Luapula province. The study reviewed that Albino population seem to be growing. As at 2010, the albino population at national level was 25,324. The population in rural areas was higher than that of urban areas. Lusaka Province had the highest population of people with albinism while North-Western Province had the lowest number of people with albinism. The authors described the Albino population distribution in Zambia as a whole. They however did not touch on myth surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district.

### **2. Treatment of persons with albinism based on myths**

In Zambia, a study was conducted by [12] on Challenges Pupils with Albinism face in Selected Schools of Luapula Province, Zambia. The study discovered that, children with albinism face a lot of problems at school due to their condition which affect their academic performance. The study further found that many families frequently neglect the education of children with albinism as they believe that their education is a waste of resources. Those who are lucky to attend school often suffer from teasing and bullying from classmates. The study stipulated how persons with albinism were treated in Luapula district. The study however, never indicated if this treatment was applicable even among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district, an aspect which the current study established.

### **Myths and beliefs**

At international level, the report by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the [24], on violence against children with albinism indicates that persons with albinism are perceived as a curse from the gods and a charm made from their body parts is considered to have magical powers that bring wealth, success and good luck. The report highlighted that persons with Albinism were perceived in relation to myths. The report did not however take into consideration the treatment of persons with albinism in relation to myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district, Zambia an issue which the current study established.



According to [3] Albinism in Malawi: Knowledge and Beliefs from an African Setting" Disability and Society. The study revealed that in a section of Malawi Society, persons with albinism are often treated as misfits or outcasts. They are believed to be white skinned people in a black society, they are shunned and feared as the products of witchcraft, therefore they are treated as if they are out of the ordinary. The study brought out the perception of the people towards albinos in that part of Malawi. The study did not discuss the treatment and beliefs of people towards persons with albinism in the Tonga community of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district of Zambia, which the current study established.

In Zambia, a study was conducted by [18] on the views of teachers, pupils and parents on inclusive education for children with disabilities and gender dimension, Lusaka. In the study, one participant complained that teachers were the first ones to run away from him due to his albinism condition. Fellow pupils also avoided him and sometimes teased and victimized him. This made him to stay away from school as he had nowhere to run to. The study highlighted the issue of negative attitude. The study however did not establish if the negative attitude was as a result of myths surrounding albinism especially among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district.

### **The Tonga people**

[4] Media analysis of albino killings in Tanzania: a social work and human rights perspective. The study found that the profound effects of this violence, on persons with albinism as well as on the wider community, are also documented regularly in the media, illustrating how family members are forced to escort their children to school and to other areas of the community. There are accounts of parents hiding their children at home, seeking asylum in police stations or moving to safer parts of the country. [4] highlighted that persons with albinism were not safe and were treated with violence in Tanzania. What they did not do was highlight whether persons with albinism in other parts of the continent like among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district of Zambia were treated the same way, something which the current study took into account.

According to a research carried out by [11] on Healing Environmental Harms: Social Changes and Sukuma Traditional Medicine of Tanzania. The study found that it is not true that people who share certain things with a person with albinism will catch the condition as it is not a disease and it is not contagious. The study further revealed that this misconception, coupled with a lack of education, is a key reason why the persecution of persons with albinism is prevalent. The lack of sufficient and sound knowledge about people with albinism means that folktales and superstition, and particularly practices that are fuelled by witchcraft, take the place of medical and scientific facts in the minds of many native Africans which in turn has major effects on the social integration of persons with albinism. The author found that persecution of persons with albinism was prevalent because of the assertion that albinism was contagious coupled with lack of education. The author however did not relate the persecution to the myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom something that this current study took into consideration by identifying how albinos are treated with regards to myths among the said Tonga people.

### **Research gap**

The main research gap for this study was lack of information concerning the myth surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district, Zambia discovered by this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **The paradigm**

The interpretivism paradigm was adopted for this study in which truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, based on peoples experiences and their understanding of them [21]. Interpretivists believe that human knowledge of the world is constructed socially. Beliefs, motives and action of individuals had to be understood and interpreted in order to understand social reality. To explore myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district, the researchers had to get a full description of the phenomenon with all its variables as seen, or experienced, interpreted

and described by the people in the area. This made the paradigm Interpretivism ideal for the study because the researcher interpreted data basing on the participants' responses.

## **Research Design**

According to [7] A Research design is a plan for a study, providing the overall framework for collecting data. It involves deciding what the research purpose and questions will be, what information will appropriately answer specific questions and which strategies are most effective for getting the answers. This study employed a descriptive research design. In this design, feelings and insights were considered important. The chosen design helped to answer the research questions: What are the myths surrounding Albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom of Siavonga district Zambia? How are persons with Albinism treated using the myths among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district, Zambia? In what ways can the beliefs surrounding the lives of albinos among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom of Siavonga district be addressed? Descriptive research design was ideal because it was concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes and opinions of people and involved description of words which were non-numerical.

## **Study population**

According to [7] a study population is a group of individuals relevant to the research, from which the researcher wants to draw the sample to which the research findings would be generalizable. The groups targeted in this study included: persons with Albinism, district officials from Zambia police, village headmen, family and community members. Persons with albinism were a target because the study concerned them and their welfare. Officials from Zambia police service were targeted because they were concerned with peace and order and so they could unveil information on reported cases of abuse or anything that had to do with persons with albinism. Village headmen were targeted because they were custodians of traditions and culture while family and community members were targeted because of their daily interactions with persons with albinism in the society. The researchers' choice of the targeted population was based on the conviction that it would provide appropriate data.

## **Study sample**

Sample is the strategically and systematically identified group of people that meet the criteria of representativeness for a particular study [17]. The sample for this study comprised of twenty-eight (28) participants in total. These include eight (8) persons with Albinism, two (2) officials from Zambia police service, two (2) village headmen, eight (8) family members and twelve (8) community members in a Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district of southern province, Zambia.

## **Data collection instruments**

To collect the necessary data in the qualitative approach, this study used the in-depth structured interview guide. This method was appropriated in that the researchers interacted with the participants in order to gather honest and broad information on the problem under investigation. Focus group discussion guide was another instrument that was used as well as document study.

## **In-depth unstructured interviews Guide**

According to [17] in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation. This technique is desired because it provides much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods. Due to the sensitivity of the study at hand, 'Myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom in Siavonga district the researchers settled for the in-depth unstructured interview guide which provided a more relaxed atmosphere in which data was collect, where respondents felt more comfortable according the researchers enough opportunities to get to the root cause of the experiences, perceptions and beliefs. The persons who were interviewed included, the headmen and family members.

## Focus group discussion Guide

[13] defines a focus group discussion as a group of participants who are interviewed together and encouraged to share their opinions, experiences, aspirations, attitudes and feelings on a specific topic which is focused on in an interview. Since focus group comprises of individuals who share certain characteristic which are relevant to the study, it was ideal for probing data from persons with albinism and Community members. Focus group discussion guide was appropriated because of its effectiveness in bringing out issues of common interest as participants freely speak their minds out.

## Document study

According to [6] document study is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating both printed and electronic material. It requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. Document study was used to obtain data from the judiciary on a case that had something to do with a person with Albinism in the area. Document study enabled the researchers to obtain raw data as it had been recorded on the judgement sheet.

## Ethical Considerations

[8] define ethics as a morality or a position of doing what is right both morally and legally are needed. In order to collect data from the purposively sampled participants, the researchers asked for permission from Kwame Nkrumah University to embark on data collection. It was important to protect participants who willingly presented themselves for the purpose of advancing our understanding in research. Therefore, a strict set of guidelines and code of conduct was adopted and adhered to. The researchers ensured that participant's consent to participate in the research was voluntary by making them sign a consent form, free of any coercion or promises of any benefits as a result of their participation in the research. The researchers further ensured that the participants received adequate information on the study including the expected benefits of the study to the participants, to the society and nation at large. Confidentiality and anonymity were observed and of the participants in the chieftdom were ensured by not revealing their names and personal details with the use of (pseudonym). The participants were advised to withdraw their participation at any time if they felt not comfortable.

## Findings

The findings are presented according to the objectives of this study basing on these themes; the concept of Albinism, 'myths and beliefs' and Tonga people.

## Myths surrounding Albinism

In order to identify myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chieftdom in Siavonga district, Zambia, data was collected from the following coded as Headmen H'1', relatives of persons with albinism R'1', persons with albinism PWA'1' and community members C'1' using in depth unstructured interviews guide and focus group discussions guide. The researchers also employed the document study as an instrument to establish the myths surrounding albinism among the named people.

## The concept of Albinism.

During individual interviews with the headmen, the researchers administered the question about their understanding of the concept of albinism, their responses were as follows.

Table 1: Responses on the understanding of the concept of albinism

Respondents	Responses
H'1'	I'm aware that Albinism comes as a result of sinful acts committed by the parents of the offspring but I stand to be corrected, I believe these guys are a product of parents faults being punished by

	<p>the ancestors, It is said that if you don't live right with society norms nature has a way of getting back to you, and albinism is one of the way nature gets back to the wrong doers, things like abandoning and not offering sacrifices to the gods, extra sexual affairs on the part of women and misbehaving during funerals attracted such punishment.</p> <p>Added that, 'If an elderly family member dies it is prohibited to indulge in sexual activities until the person is buried and mourned, if not, production of an albino is one of the punishments for sending the deceased's spirit astray.'</p>
H'2'	'Ba mwabi (albinos) will come to any family which has one of the parents coming from a clan which has had such a child before, Albinism runs in the blood.'
R'1'	'All I know is that I'm very light in complexion, my husband is actually lighter than me, even his hair is brown. So it is not surprising that we delivered an albino child because even himself escaped the condition by an inch, even our son's wife delivered an albino child whom I'm now keeping since they separated after having that child.'
R'2'	'I don't understand this thing as no one in my family or my husband's family ever had such a child, all I know is that I delivered this child. When I gave birth even the nurses at the hospital were surprised, they told me that I was lucky to have such a child because it is a gift from God.'
R'3'	'Albinism is not a curse as people say, I read somewhere on social media that albinism is genetically acquired from both parents. This was what made me get that child because I know that even if I stay with him I cannot have such a child for as long as I don't have albinism in my blood.'
R'4'	'Albinism comes if there is someone in the close family who has the condition, I gave birth to an albino because even my mother has the condition. Anyone who carries albino genes can have an albino child
R'5'	'Albinos are a gift from god. Whoever gives birth to an albino is chosen by god to take care of his special creation. They are people just like anyone else only that they are special in the eyes of God
R'6'	'The condition should never be blamed on one partner, both of us have albino genes that's why we produced those children with albinism, there is no magic here. But as God may have it, we also have other children that are not albinos.'
R'7'	the grandparent to the person with albinism had this to say; 'Truthfully speaking albinos are a result of encounter with spirit world. Once an albino is born, know that things are not ok in the realm of the spirit. It is for that reason that an albino child was considered to be a ghost and was killed immediately it was born. That's why you don't see elderly albinos of my age. It's the whites that brought the concept of compromised fertility as being the cause of albinism no wonder the number of albinos is now growing, woman who birthed an albino was immediately told that what she had done was a taboo, after which the child was killed, the entire family would seek forgiveness and offer sacrifice to the ancestors to wave away the bad omen.'
R'8'	'The condition is inherited from both parents, both parents must be carriers of albino genes in order to have an albino child. We do not have an albino child because I don't have the albino genes even if my partner is an albino. Only those who both possess albino genes produce children with albinism.

Table 2: Responses from young persons with albinism during the focus group discussion

Respondents	Responses
PWA'1'	'Albinism means having white skin, white hair and white eyes.'



PWA'2'	Albinos are white people
PWA'3'	'People say that albinos are ghosts that's why children run away when they see me. Albinos are human beings just like anyone else only that they have a different color just like whites.'
PWA'4'	'Albinos are people who look white like me.'

Responses from the adult persons with Albinism during the focus group discussion. The following responses were revealed. PWA'5' explained that, 'To be an albino is Gods will to make you look different from other people, it may be to test the people or to make you a blessing to them. What is important is to accept who you are.' PWA'6' echoed that, 'Whatever I am called I am a distressed person in my society and I sometimes regret my birth, God has the answer not me or anyone in society. I actually don't like talking about this topic.' On the other hand, PWA'7' noted that, 'I know the meaning of the term, but we are called mwabi, chidangwaleza, utuba and many more bad names for whatever reason, albinism means someone who doesn't have what makes a person black. It is only that which makes us different, otherwise everything else is the same,' PWA'8' added that, 'Albinism is a congenital condition characterized by lack of melanin resulting in pale skin, hair and eyes.'

Responses from the community members during the focus group discussion

Table 3: Responses from community members

Respondents	Responses
C'1'	'Women who get themselves extra sexual partners and get pregnant outside marriage are usually exposed by giving birth to an albino that's why most mothers of albino children are divorcées.'
C'2'	'It was intercourse with the white man that brought about albinism, when a black married woman gets impregnated by a white man their blood could not really mix well to bring about a normal child thus resulting in an albino child.'
C'3'	'People especially pregnant women should be cautious when they meet an albino. They need to either spit on their abdomen or aside, not doing so turns the child in the womb into an albino. When visiting a family or home where there is an albino a pregnant woman should be padded as if attending periods, this is to stop the spirit from entering her. If she doesn't she will give birth to an albino.'
C'4'	'If for example a child complains about bad treatment or says why was I born like this to the mother while she is pregnant, the mother will give birth to another child with albinism.'
C'5'	'A young woman who had a habit of laughing and scolding at an albino, eventually got married and gave birth to an albino. Those people have bad saliva because they are like spirits, if they curse you, the curse will manifest.'
C'6'	'Eciya cintu ceenda mumukowa (albinism runs in the blood), no matter how long ago, there must have been someone in the family with the condition'.
C'7'	What could cause albinism is witchcraft, witches are there and they can do anything even out of jealous they can bewitch a woman and she delivers an albino child, that is why those children are said to be a taboo or curse.
C'8'	'No one who comes from a family where there are no albinos can ever produce an albino.'

Document study was another tool the researchers used to collect data. From the document study, it was revealed to the researchers that one person with albinism got involved in mischievous activities. Later the said person, PWA'G' stood in as surety and signed bail for a suspect of theft. When time for the accused to be tried came the

PWA 'G' failed to discharge the duties of the surety as the accused person was nowhere to be seen. PWA 'G' was given time to find the accused but to no avail, leading to contempt of court charge. Fine in recognizant with the bail undertaken was charged, an amount which PWA 'G' could not pay leading to jail sentence of six months.

Depending on these empirical findings concerning the understanding of albinism, it was revealed that myths have an impact on some peoples understanding of albinism. Some respondents however, knew the meaning of the term albinism while others did not. For instance those who knew what albinism was, the research revealed that albinism runs in the blood or having the condition in the family, it was genetically acquired from both parents, both married partners having albino genes and characterized by lack of melanin. For those who did not understand about albinism, it was revealed that albinism comes as a result of parents faults being punished by the ancestors, having extra sexual affairs, sexual intercourse with the white man, having sex during funerals, if parents are light in complexion and that albinism is as a result of Gods will to make a person different Others who didn't understand the condition said albinism comes as a result of not spiting when meeting a person with albinism, complaints by albinos about bad treatment, laughing and scolding albinos and as a result of witchcraft activities. Others said, albinos are a taboo which needs cleansing of the entire family to wave away the bad omen, called mwabi, chidangwaleza or utuba, considered to be a ghost and killed immediately after being born.

The voice of the researchers was that albinism is a genetic condition with lack of melanin.

### Myths and beliefs

The question about the myths that surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom of Siavonga district was administered through individual interviews to the village headmen by the researchers. The following were their responses.

Figure 1: Responses from village headmen

H'1' stated, 'According to our forefathers, albinos were spirits living amongst us; they were not as human as everyone else. It was for that reason that most of them don't die but just disappear; the other thing was that when the ancestors were not happy with the happening around, they used to bring an albino to show that things were not fine. Once the ancestors pronounce a curse on the family, an albino results and that became the source of bad luck. In an event that an albino died, they were not to be buried but placed in a particular animal's hole because burying them would mean that more albinos would be born from that family.'

According to H'2', 'Myths surrounding albinism are there but were only seriously applicable before civilization. Now they are just in stories, though some people still honor them, some people still regard albinos as being outcasts, cursed and source of family bad luck. Pregnant women needed to spit on themselves or on the ground once they come across an albino, if not they would deliver an albino. The other myth is that albinos have no graves because they do not die.'

The researchers conducted unstructured individual interviews on the relatives of persons with albinism. A question was administered on what myths surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom, the responses were as stipulate below;

Table 4: Responses of relatives of persons with albinism

Respondents	Responses
R'1'	'There is a myth which says that albinos are ghosts and this had been hailed from generation to generation. It feels bad because only a ghost can give birth to a ghost, which means that as parents to an albino- we are also ghost.'
R'2'	'Persons with albinism are said to be ghosts who do not die but vanish instead, when I gave birth to my child, relatives accused me of having been sleeping with the white road contractor and got pregnant for him'
R'3'	'Myths have denied the people with the condition the right to life, people kill albinos in broad day light and use their body parts for evil and no one cares to do anything about it under the pretext that they just vanish. This is disheartening'

R'4'	'People in the community don't appreciate persons with albinism because they say they are cursed people and therefore cause bad luck such as illness and death.'
R'5'	'Pregnant women run away from persons with albinism fearing that they will contract the condition.'
R'6'	'I was said to have been impregnated by an albino in the next village, something I never did, this issue brought problems that even today the child is not liked by the father. Pregnant women run away from my child because they think that they can deliver an albinos.'
R'7'	'nowadays these people are wanted by people who want power, they drink their blood so that they can become powerful business men and win elections, this is not from tradition I believe its Satanist who do this. For us albinos brought bad luck (malweza).'
R'8'	, 'Albinos were said to have no graves that's why they just throw them away, this kind of evil activities must be brought to a stop because this is all wickedness.'

Figure 2: Responses from the young persons with albinism during focused group discussion

PWA'1' indicated that, 'Albinism is a curse and so albinos are not real human beings but spirits/ghosts, they say that, we are ghosts, that is why children get scared when they see me.'

PWA'2' stated that, 'People think we are ghosts that's why we are white, my father said that I'm a child of an albino man from the neighboring village I am not his child.'

PWA'3' echoed that, 'Some people say that may be my mother used to laugh at an albino, and God punished her for what she did, I usually tell people who laugh at me that they too will have a child like me.'

PWA'4' added that, 'Others say that if the family did something bad the ancestors bring an albino in the family.'

The focused group discussion by the adult persons with albinism revealed the following in response to the question about what myths surrounded albinism among the people of Sinakomba Chiefdom. PWA'5' narrated that, 'They keep telling lies that we are immortal yet not, if even Jesus Christ died and just rose again, who am I not to die, if we are immortal then we are gods. PWA'6' extended it by saying, 'Yes, they lie that albinos don't die but just vanish, meanwhile they abduct and kill them while the community is left to believe that they just disappeared.' PWA'5' echoed that, 'We recently buried a fellow albino why didn't she disappear as they claim?' PWA'7' affirmed that, 'I equally attended the burial and to date the tomb is still there.' PWA'5' explained that, 'Pregnant women either spit on their stomachs or look the other way when they see me, fearing that their unborn babies will contract the condition.' PWA'8' added that, 'There was a myths that albinos have supernatural powers to heal incurable diseases, why then do we get sick wouldn't we be healing ourselves even before the sickness manifests. Would we be begging for drugs and special lotions when we have the cure within ourselves?' This was echoed by all the person with albinism as they all nodded in silence. PWA'7' indicated that, 'The other lie is that albino body parts can boost business and cause wealth and fame, being an albino has never been easy.' PWA'8' explained that, 'People don't believe that black people can have a child like me, my mother was accused of having been impregnated by the white man who was supervising the road construction works in the area.'

During the focus group discussion by the community members, the researchers administered the question about the myths that surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom. The following responses were brought out.

Table 5: Responses from the community members during the focus group discussion

Respondents	Responses
C'1'	'I was told that, giving birth to an albino was not a thing to be done, my child was killed immediately after being born and as the mother of the child I was just informed that what they did was a taboo and so the child needed to die. I was told not to review what type of a child was born to the community.'

C'2'	'Women who helped in delivery would sit on the baby until it died; it would then be placed in a galaba hole.' (galaba is an animal on the old one ngwee coin - also called orycteropus after.)
C'3'	'Some communities tied the child together with a stone and threw them in the river so that their bodies would never be seen.'
C'4'	'That albinos are cursed people meant that ancestors were angry with the family or community thereby causing the birth of albinos which is said to come with bad luck such as drought, poor harvest, sicknesses and death, this is what makes them to be considered as (cipini) outcasts.'
C'5'	'Albinos do not have graves, when an albino becomes critically ill, the following morning he would not be found he would have disappeared to unknown places never to be seen again.'
C'6'	'Just last week I attended the funeral of an albino in the next village, I made sure that I attended the funeral and saw where she was buried. It was the first time such a thing happened in this locality.'
C'7'	'Indeed an albino died within the chiefdom and was buried normally just like any other human being.'
C'8'	'What they did was a taboo, the mistake they made was to announce the death, they should have just silently carried the body away as if they were taking her to the hospital, then dispose the body somewhere in the hills'. 'Things have changed everything is taken lightly nowadays.'

From the findings about the myths that surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom in Siavonga district it was established that there were many myths which surrounded albinism. Persons with albinism were said to be spirit beings among the people, they were a result of punishment from the ancestors or gods for wrong deeds committed and they signified a curse on the family and were therefore considered to be a source of bad luck. Albinos were said to be cursed and therefore considered to be outcasts and not real human beings but ghosts that harm people, they were said to be white because of the ghost in them. They were said to be immortal people who disappear back to the spirit world at the time of death. Albinos were said to be a taboo as they were said to be products of infidelity and incest, they were supposed to be killed the moment they were born to ward off the evil spirit they poses, no one was supposed to see the dead body of a person with albinism and they were never to be buried but just thrown away in the bush as they had no burial site or graves within the community. Burying an albino was said to be a taboo which causes more albinos to be born, death and misfortunes in the family and community at large. Albinism was said to be contagious, pregnant women needed to spit on their stomachs once they came across a person with albinism in order not to contract the condition and pass it on to their unborn babies, a black woman impregnated by a white man would give birth to an albino and raising an albino child was said lead to unending sickness and death in the family.

The voice of the researchers was that, the myths surrounding albinism are strong and are still existing in our communities thus there is a great need to address them because they contribute greatly to making persons with albinism to continue living in fear.

### **Beliefs surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom.**

The researchers administered the question about what beliefs emanated from the myths that surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom. The following were the responses.

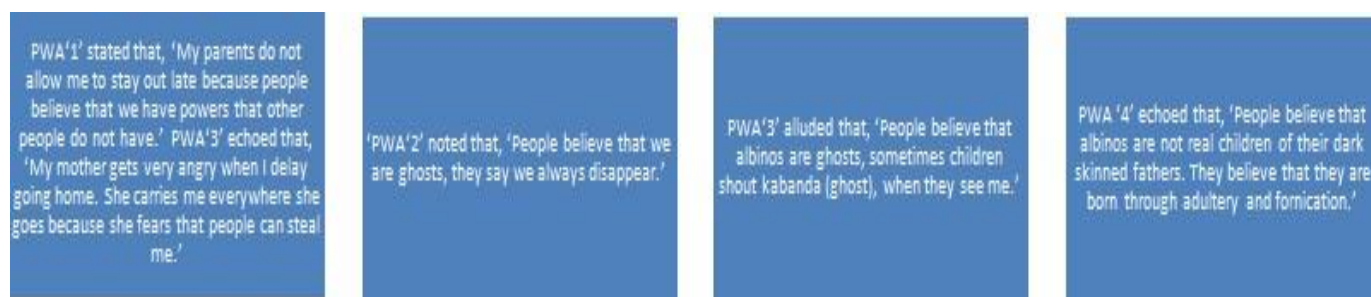
Table 6: Responses on beliefs from headmen and individual relatives of persons with albinism

Respondents	Responses
H'1'	There is a belief that albinos cause bad luck such as illness and death they don't die but just disappear. If an albino dies they are not supposed to be buried but placed in a hole called mpako ya galaba. Burying them was believed to cause more death.



H'2'	'People believed that persons with albinism were ghost and when they disappear at time of death they go back to the spirit world where they belong. They believe that albinos cause bad luck and so they were treated as unwanted people, pregnant women could contract the condition if they come across an albino. These are the beliefs that are there but I have nothing to do with them, Nowadays, people believe that some parts of their body can make powerful good luck charms.'
R'1'	, 'Albinos are believed to be ghosts that's why they don't die, they run away from death.'
R'2'	'There is a belief that if you raise an albino, the family will experience lots of problems including sickness and death.'
R'3'	'Having an albino in the family means endless problems because they have been cursed by ancestors, albinism is believed to be punishment from God for evil deeds and that a married woman who cheats with a white man produces a baby with albinism.'
R'4'	'People believe that albino children cannot be fathered by black men, while some believe that albinos are a source of money, people ask me why I'm suffering when I have an albino child. 'why don't you sell her or at least sell her hair' they say'
R'5'	'There was a belief that albinos melt if they eat salt, another belief is that albinos were god's gift to mankind.'
R'6'	'People believe that albinos melt when they eat boiled fish and that having sex with an albino cures HIV/ AIDS.'
R'7'	, 'body parts such as hair and nails of persons with albinism are believed to be good for boosting business.'
R'8'	'There is a belief that drinking the blood of a persons with albinism gives power, wealth and fame.'

Figure 3: Responses from the young persons with albinism during focused group discussion about the beliefs



During the focus group discussion of the adult albino's group discussion, the researchers enquired for the beliefs that emanated from the myths surrounding albinism to which the following responses were given. PWA '5' elucidated that, 'People believe that we are immortal because we are scared of maggots in the grave. Others believe that we are spirits and that at time of death we disappear back to the spirit world. PWA '6' stated that, 'People believe that albinos melt when they eat fresh fish and any food which is salted, a friend of mine was surprised when she found me eating fish, she said, 'I always avoid preparing fish whenever I know that you're coming over because I heard that you people melt when you eat fish'. PWA '7' explained that, 'People believe that albinos are outcast 'cipini' because no one would want to live with a ghost; it is for this reason that other albinos had been killed right after birth because people believe that they cause misfortune.' PWA '6' added that, 'They believe that our hair, nails and fingers are good for business, some people even believe that albinos have gold in the abdomen if they kill one they remove gold and sell.' PWA '8' narrated that, 'Our women folks fall victim of rape and sexual harassment at the hands of evil men who believe that sex with an albino cures HIV/AIDS.



**Table 7: Response from community members during the focus group discussion, on what belief emanating from the myths**

C'1', echoed that, 'No one was supposed to give birth to an albino because they are believed to be a taboo, believed to be a curse passed down by the ancestors as punishment for evil deeds of the family.'	C'5' echoed that, 'The other belief is that no funeral should be held for an albino in case they die, their bodies were just be hidden away Other families are believed to dispose the bodies by secretly burying them in shallow grave.'
C'2', stated that, 'Persons with albinism are not real human beings but spirits for that reason they were considered to be outcast locally known as 'cipini', this led to the killing of albinos at birth believing that the spirit would be cast away.'	C'6' added that, 'There are people who still believe that albinos don't die, but that they just disappear.'
C'3', reported that, 'People believed that pregnant mothers can contract the condition and pass it onto their unborn babies if they do not take good care of themselves as they come across the persons with albinism.'	C'7' 'Some attacks on albinos are due to the belief that albino body parts are used for fishing sharks as sharks are said to contain gold,' explained one community member'
C'4', elucidated that, 'Like ghosts that move around causing harm at night, albinos are believed to be active at night.'	C'8' indicated that, 'It is believed that it is the responsibly of close elderly family members to dispose the dead persons with albinism.'

Basing on these finding about the beliefs that emanated from the myths that surrounded albinism in Sinakomba Chiefdom, it was established that the Tongas of Sinakomba Chiefdom were immersed in many different beliefs concerning albinism, for instance they believed that the birth of an albino was a result of punishment and curse by the ancestors or gods for the evil things done by the family. Raising a child with albinism was believed to cause bad luck such as illness, poor harvest and death, persons with albinism were therefore regarded as outcasts that were not fit to live but to be killed immediately they were born. Killing of albinos at birth was believed to cast away the bad spirits. It was believed that albinos did not die but just disappeared back to the spirit world where they belonged. It was a taboo to see or burry a dead body of an albino, they were believed to have no burial site talk less of graves, a dead albino would just be placed in a particular animal hole as burying them was believed to cause more death. It was believed that no funeral should be held for a person with albinism. Elderly members of the family had a responsibility to dispose dead bodies of persons with albinism. There was a belief that albino body parts were good for fishing, good for making good luck charms to boost business, have power and become famous, and sex with persons with albinism was believed to cure incurable diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Persons with albinism were believed to have gold in their stomachs which people could remove and sell. It was believed that pregnant women could contract the condition and pass it on to their un born babies and that albino children were not real children of their dark skinned fathers.

The voice of the researchers was that, there is a great need to discard all the negative beliefs which aim at bringing untimely death, discomfort, disregard on the lives of persons with albinism using human rights approach.

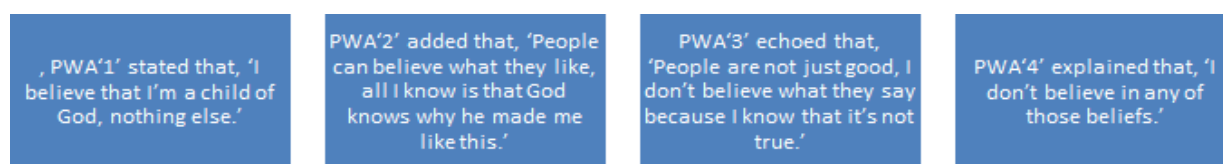
### **Respondents stating their position of believing in the existing beliefs surrounding albinism**

The researchers further asked the respondents to state their position whether they believed in the existing beliefs surrounding albinism or not. Having talked about the myths and the beliefs emanating from the myths concerning albinism, the researchers during the interviews with the Headmen asked them to state their views.

Table 8: Headmen and Relatives of persons with albinism stating their position of believing in the existing beliefs surrounding albinism

Respondents	Responses
H'1'	'For me, they are people just like anyone else. Whatever went wrong only God knows, who are we to judge.'
H'2'	'Just like anyone else albinos are here to stay, they should be accepted as they are. Most of these beliefs are evil'.
R'1'	'Just last week, an albino died in our neighboring village, which was proof that they also die. I don't believe they are the ones that cause sickness and death in families; people get sick and die in all the families why should it be blamed on albinos. They are all lies.'
R'2'	'It's only the color that differs everything else is the same with those people.'
R'3'	'The beliefs are fake as they just expose the ignorance of people in their attempt to get rid of albinos.'
R'4'	'May be the one about bad luck is true because most of the mothers of children with albinism are not with their husbands or the men that impregnated them, sickness and a lot of other problems everywhere, life is not easy. As for the issue of melting, it is not true that salt and fish makes them melt. My mother and my daughter both eat fish and salted things but they have never melted.'
R'5'	'As for me, albinos are a gift from God, it is Gods will to make them that way. All the other beliefs are false.'
R'6'	, 'I believe in God, all the other mystic beliefs are false mostly composed to marginalize those affected by the condition, I don't believe such things.'
R'7'	'Most of the beliefs were true. For us who believe these things, they work and there is great danger in overlooking them.'
R'8'	'I do not believe in any of the mythical beliefs, they are not my thing'.

Figure 4: Young persons with albinism stating their position of believing in the existing beliefs surrounding albinism during focused group discussion



The focus group discussion by the adult persons with albinism on the issue of making known their position concerning the beliefs emanating from the myths that surrounded albinism revealed the following responses

Figure 5: Adult persons with albinism stating their position of believing in the existing beliefs surrounding albinism during focused group discussion

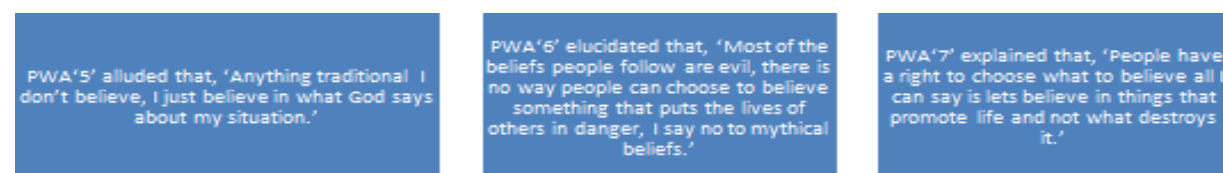


Table 9: Community Members' position concerning the beliefs emanating from the myths that surrounded albinism focus group discussion

C'1' stated that, 'Albinos are really a taboo and cause bad luck. No family with albinos is prosperous, albino lives are characterized by sickness and poverty.'	C'5' elucidated that, 'I don't believe that they are ghosts or spirits, my belief is that there is something about them that needs to be understood.'
C'2' narrated that, 'Indeed I've never seen the grave of an albino. I've seen an albino get critically sick, what we head eventually was that he left, had disappeared some of those beliefs have basis.'	C'6' indicate that, 'Taboos are there and they ought to be respected. Most of those beliefs are true. What I can say is that things have just changed these days with the coming of schools and churches.'
C'3' added that, 'Albinos do not disappear what happens is that close family members separate them from the public so that no one sees their dead bodies, they either live them to die or burry them alive. The belief about disappearing is not true, what is true is that they've no graves. I can't say I believe or I don't believe, I remain neutral because most of these thing are done in secrete.'	'C'7' narrated that, 'There are few albinos around that's why we don't hear about their death, funerals and burials, just recently an albino died, what suddenly happened to be disappearing, the beliefs are false I don't believe.'
C'4' noted that, 'I don't believe some of those things, I've never seen a melted albino, my belief is that salt is actually good for their sores. I believe they are human just like anyone of us.'	C'8' alluded that, 'They really possess extra ordinary powers, you know they are attractive, you can't ignore an albino and you can sport them from afar. God made them in their own special way.'

The findings of this study on individual respondent's stance with regarding the belief that emanated from the myth which surrounding albinism revealed that people had mixed reactions, for instance some people believed in the existing beliefs while others did not with some remaining neutral. Those who believed had this to say most of the beliefs are true these things work and there is great danger in overlooking them, albinos were really a taboo and cause bad luck no family with albinos was prosperous, there was really something to be understood about albinism, persons with albinism possessed extra ordinary powers and some continued to say bad luck was evident in families where there were persons with albinism as this was clearly seen in the community.

Those who did not believe said most of the beliefs were evil persons with albinism were people just like anyone else, whatever went wrong only God knew, who were we to judge therefore it was said that persons with albinism should be accepted in the communities. Most of the beliefs were composed to marginalized those affected by the condition, others said they didn't believe in mystical beliefs as they were not true, others said 'no' to mythical beliefs and wondering why people believed in what puts the life of others in danger, others just believed in what God said about their situation and believe in things that promote life, persons with albinism were a gift from God, the beliefs were said to be fake as they exposed the ignorance of people in their attempt to get rid of persons with albinism. Some said they did not believe they were the ones that caused sicknesses and death in families, people got sick and died in all the families why blame albinos. The beliefs were said to be all lies it's only the skin color that varied.

Those who remained neutral reported that they couldn't state whether they ascribed to the beliefs or not, because most of the beliefs were practiced in secrecy while their beliefs remained personal without any need of making it known.

The researchers voice was that, there is need to maintain a position of having positive beliefs that are helpful and life giving to the lives of persons with albinism.

### The Tonga people

To collect data on myths that surrounded albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom the researchers administered unstructured interviews to the headmen where they were asked to explain what the Tonga culture said about albinism to which they responded as follows;

Table 10: Explanation of what the Tonga culture said about albinism by Headmen and relatives to persons with albinism

Respondents	Responses
H'1'	'The Tonga culture of Sinakomba chiefdom is silent about albinism, how do we talk about something that is not part of us, something that we are not even looking forward to. It is for this reason that albinos were killed at birth because they were not considered as part of the society.'
H'2'	'Albinism was considered to be a taboo, in the days of old, our culture did not recognize albinos, perhaps that's why they were considered a taboo and not fit to be family members. This however is not the case today as albinos are embraced and treated just like anyone else.'
R'1'	'The Tonga culture regard albinos just like anyone else just that people have failed to fully accept them, people still treat them with hatred. When I delivered my babies it was found that one was an albino, everyone was shocked, news moved like bushfire in summer, before I could even take my bath, our compound was filled as if someone had died. People talked, some laughed others expresses sympathy. It was a darkest day of my life. My friend advised me to have my albino son killed. I refused and I've continued enduring the torment until now.'
R'2'	'Albinos were considered as outcast (cipini), they were either killed at birth or abandoned in the bush. Komba Iya galaba was said to be their resting place when they die, but now they are slowly being accepted.'
R'3'	'Those assigned to register people for social cash services do not consider their children with albinism, perhaps because they are not considered to be human beings on the other hand some people especially relatives understand and give fair treatment.'
R'4'	'Nowadays because of human rights issues culture pretends to be silent about albinism while secretly effecting the evil beliefs about albinism.'
R'5'	'It is from culture that it was said that it is a taboo to raise an albino child. This is what made them be viewed as spirits, ghost or curse. Glory be to God that people have given their lives to God and have started seeing them as God sees them, only a few do otherwise.'
R'6'	'From my observation society is composed of people with different belief systems, there's still some challenges accepting persons with albinism because of culture which stigmatized them, there's however better reaction now as compared to days back.'
R'7'	'Every community is governed by culture and traditions, if culture does not recognize you then you have no place in that community. Once culture recognizes albinos even the entire community will have no problem with them. This is the case of these our people. If only they could be accepted by tradition, all that we're seeing would not be the case.'

Figure 6: Responses from young persons with albinism focus group discussion about what the Tonga culture said about albinism





**Figure 7: Responses from adult persons with albinism focus group discussion about what the Tonga culture said about albinism**

PWA'5' explained that, 'Tonga people believe in consulting witchdoctor and traditional healers especially during sickness and death, something that has led to the victimization of persons with albinism. Witch doctors tell people afflicted by different sicknesses and death and other situations that albinos bring bad luck, have the power to heal, give power, fame.'

PWA'6' stated that, 'Elders and community leaders are the ones consulting witch doctors who because of hatred for albinos accuse them of all sort of things, poor harvest, sickness, death and many more. The community in return gets back to albinos with so much anger and attacks.'

PWA'7' elaborated that, 'Some community members are good but when they hear this and that concerning albinos, they begin to develop hatred.'

This was echoed by PWA'8' who elucidated that, 'I don't sleep with visitors, I don't even go for holidays elsewhere because people are wicked, they can kill me and say that I disappeared.'

The researchers administered a focus group discussion with the community members and the question about what the Tonga culture said about albinism was asked. The community members' views were as follows. C'1' stated that, 'Our forefathers left us those myths so that we are guided by them, today it is left to families whether to follow them or not bearing in mind the consequences.' C'2' noted that, 'Among the original Tonga people of this chiefdom there were no albinos why then should they be accepted today.' C'7' added that, 'Albinos were to be killed the moment they are born to wade off the curse. The body was not to be buried but just hidden in particular places known only by close elderly family members.' This was echoed by C'3' who reported that, 'Mpako ya sigalaba (animal hole) is the place albinos where abandoned because they had no burial site in society.' C'4' echoed that, 'Albinos have no graves this is to confirm that they are not part and parcel of the community as every community member is buried in their own communities, holding a funeral for a person with albinism was a taboo which lead to more death and calamities such as madness, chronic diseases and poor harvest.' C'5' elucidated that, 'The hair of bamwaabi (albinos) is used especially by leaders for them to have power to rule. They mix it with other roots and it makes them powerful... no one can speak against one that has been fortified by such a charm made of an albino parts, cizimba chipati. (meaning it's a great charm).'

The findings of the study on what the Tonga culture said about albinism revealed that the chiefdom was composed of both people with negative attitude and those with positive attitudes. The Tonga culture was said to be silence about albinism, the silence was said to be due to the fact that albinos were not considered to be part of the community, the reason why they were considered a taboo, outcast, cursed and killed at birth. Giving birth to an albino attracted torment and ridicule, one person was advised by a friend to kill her son because he was born with albinism, people had failed to accept persons with albinism and that they were still treated with hatred as evidenced by bad comments uttered about them, they were abused and mocked. It was believed that when an albino died, no funeral was to be held to mourn them, no one was to see their dead bodies and they would not be buried within the community, an animal hole was said to be their resting place somewhere in the hills. The Tonga culture was said to condemn the birth of an albino as it was believed that it was a taboo to raise an albino child. It was indicated that Tongas liked consulting witch doctors especially during illness and funerals thereby fueling abuse against persons with albinism, they were accused and blamed for the activity of witchcraft as witches caused harm on the families of albinos knowing that the blame would be placed on albinos.

On the other hand, albinos were said to be embraced and treated just like anyone else, people expressed sympathy at the birth of the albino, people had started seeing them as God saw them, they were slowly being accepted, and there was positive reaction now as compared to days back.

The voice of the researchers was that, among the culture of the Tonga people one of the new cultural norm which should be added to their culture should be the one that aim at preserving the lives of persons with albinism and replace the culture of silence.

## **Treatment of persons with albinism based on myths**

### **The Persons with Albinism**

During interviews with the Headmen, the researchers administered a question to find out the effects of treatment of albinism on the people living with the condition. The headmen responded as follows.

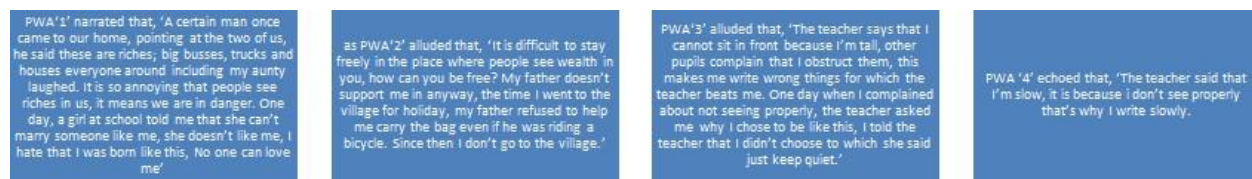


Figure 11: responses from headmen and individual relatives on the treatment and effects of albinism on the people living with the condition

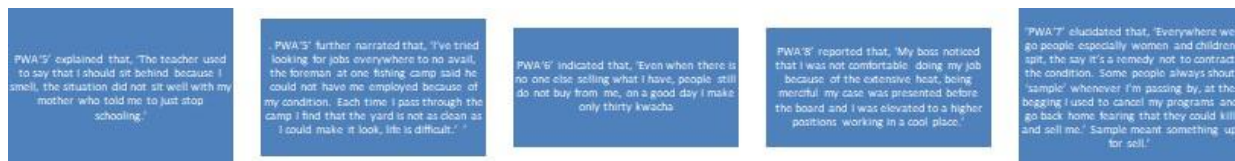
Respondents	Responses
H'1'	'To tell you the truth, those people are feared because of their color. If you come across them especially at night you would think it's a ghost, that's why our forefathers referred to them as spirits, even during the day you will see children running away from them shouting, ghost, it's something very difficult to control, even albinos themselves; know that people are scared of them.'
H'2'	'People have a false belief that albinos melt especially if they eat salt. So once they start developing cancerous ulcers they are isolated due to fear of contracting the condition. The other thing is that albinos just by their being albinos is something that people have kind of failed to accept because of ignorance about the condition as a result those people are discriminated against. Our ancestors were responsible for the tarnished image of persons with albinism but our generation doesn't hold such beliefs. Those people are loved and respected just like anyone else.'
R'1'	'I'm lucky that I found a real Christian who whole heartedly accepted to live with my son so that he could have easy access to school which is a long distance away, the woman is not even my relative but she manages to keep and take care of all his need, there are a few people out there who see them as normal children and even bring them close, while others laugh and mock them, children and some adults are scared of them.'
R'2'	' Some medical personnel are hesitant to attend to persons with albinism, they keep telling me to take the child to the next person, the next will say go to the first just like that, in the end we don't even get good medical attention.'
R'3'	'Albinos are treated with so much cruelty and hatred even by family members, I adopted an albino child after witnessing the cruelty and open hatred that the biological father had on the child to an extent of wishing the child death.'
R'4'	'People will not employ them because they think there is nothing they can do because of their condition, they keep rejecting him even when he opts for simple jobs such as cleaning the yards or being a helper at a construction site, this makes him depressed, they also live in fear because of the many things said about the condition.'
R'5'	'Albinos are fearful because they find it difficult to trust anyone. They become over sensitive such that he would know even when there comes a visitor in the neighborhood, he will ask what that person came to do fearing that they could kill him.'
R'6'	'Albinos experience segregation, stigma, hurt and fear of being killed but at times people show them love and respect.'
R'7'	'They experience difficulties establishing relationships which makes them lonely, they are not considered human, they feel belittled.'
R'8'	'Because of the condition coupled with the heat of Siavonga, the employers pitied my partner leading to elevation to a higher position working in an air-conditioned room conducive to the condition, really some people show love, respect and consideration. There are a few instances when there's mockery even from relatives.'

The researchers administered to a group of who revealed the following as stipulated in the responses

**Figure 8: Responses from young persons with albinism during a focus group discussion concerning the treatment and effects of albinism on those that lived with the condition.**



**Figure 9: Responses from young persons with albinism during a focus group discussion concerning the treatment and effects of albinism on those that lived with the condition.**



**Figure 10: Responses from community members during a focus group discussion concerning the treatment and effects of albinism on those that lived with the condition**



From the document study concerning effects of albinism on those living with the condition it was revealed that one person with albinism went against the law faced trial and judgement for failure to execute the duties of the surety. The person with albinism was sentenced to six months' jail term which led to loss of employment as a civil servant.

Depending on these empirical findings concerning the effects of albinism on the people living with the condition, it was revealed that albinism had both positive and negative effects. The positive effects were that some people whole heartedly accepted the persons with albinism and helped take care of their needs, they were loved and respected just like anyone else. Some people saw them as normal human beings and treated them mercifully.

The negative effects were that persons with albinism lived in isolation due to fear of being killed and some people were scared of them due to their skin color which they likened to ghosts, they were therefore not considered as normal human beings. They were discriminated against as no one wanted to share things with them alleging that they could contract the condition if they did so, people especially pregnant women spat on the ground or on themselves when they saw them. They were rejected as people had failed to accept them due to ignorance about their condition, they were laughed at and mocked leading to stigma and hurt. Persons with albinism were treated with so much cruelty and hatred even by family members. They were blamed for every bad thing that happens in the family because they were considered to be the source of bad luck, parents especially fathers usually neglected their albino children denying them support leading to self-hatred and depression. Persons with albinism experienced difficulties establishing relationships as people refused to marry them leading to loneliness and low self-esteem. Teachers were said to segregate against them with some saying that they smell and others passing ridiculous comments which make them drop out of school. Slow in writing due to challenged vision was another effect. Medical personnel were hesitant to attend to persons with albinism resulting in lack of proper medical care. Persons with albinism were considered to be riches as they were referred to as sample (something that can be traded). Those in business experienced business failure as no one was willing to buy from them. Persons with albinism lacked employment as employers believed that they were underachievers that they could not do anything productive. They were belittled and looked down upon.

The voice of the researchers was that the treatment led to the effects which persons with albinism experienced, thus there is need to deal with the aspect of treatment so as address the effects.

### Myths and beliefs and their Impact on Persons with Albinism

The researchers administered unstructured interviews with the headmen and relatives to persons with albinism the question was asked on the impacts of myths surrounding albinism on the lives of those living with the condition. Headmen's views were as reflected in their responses below.

Table 12: Responses from headmen and relatives to persons with albinism on the impacts of myths surrounding albinism on the lives of those living with the condition

Respondents	Responses
H'1'	'Persons with albinism face isolation. Those people's life is not good, they are Suffering because no one wants to come near them, they have no one to run to, some people kill them because there has come a belief that their body parts are used for fishing sharks while others say that they can be used to make charms for good luck.'
H'2'	'Albinos are hated because of the myths that they are cursed and bring bad luck, no one wants to interact with them because they are considered to be bad people this results in uttering hurtful remarks and discrimination against them, this makes albinos to live in fear and isolation.'
R'1'	'Due to the myths around, albinos live in fear and Isolation, loneliness has become a challenge that sometimes they develop anger.'
R'2'	'Albinos experience hatred from people, only church members and family show them love, they do not get good schooling, they live in fear of people that might harm them.'
R'3'	'Albinos are discriminated against, they are hated and not really considered as human beings, this makes them fearful and isolated.'
R'4'	'The challenge facing albinos as a result of myths are difficulties in getting help, not considered to be normal human beings, looked at as ghost and fear of being killed and feel angered.'
R'5'	'Albinos are regarded as outcasts as such they feel rejected and neglected, they are viewed as ghosts.'
R'6'	'Albinos have faced discrimination, uncertainty, fear and sometimes depression.'
R'7'	'They feel hated because of being considered outcasts.'
R'8'	'Segregation, stigma and discrimination of albinos cause them not to seem normal because they live in fear and rejection.'

Figure 11: Responses during a focus group discussion of the young persons with albinisms on the impacts of myths surrounding albinism

PWA'1' stated that, 'my friends will not want me to touch their items such as books, pens, pencils, and rulers or sit on their seats; if I do they won't get those items or sit on their seats again. In class no one wants to sit with me most of the time I sit alone on the desk, while they sit on the floor and I feel bad.'

PWA'2' narrated that, 'People often ask whether I will die or just disappear, they say that albinos don't die but just disappear, they say that no one has ever seen a grave of an albino, this makes people to think that we are ghosts I really feel bad.'

' PWA'3' stated that, 'People think we are ghosts and that we will not die it makes me to feel out of place.'

PWA'4' pointed out that, 'I don't trust anyone because I don't know who can harm me.'

Figure 12: Responses during a focus group discussion of the adult persons with albinisms on the impacts of myths surrounding albinism

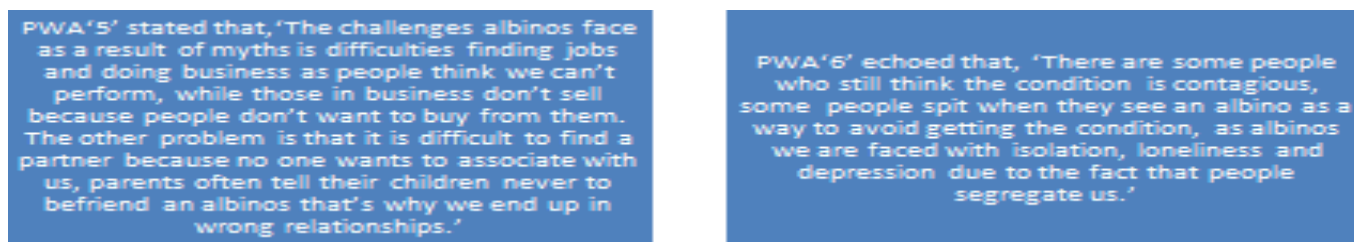


Figure 13: Responses during a focus group discussion of the community members on the impacts of myths surrounding albinism on the people living with the condition.



Basing on the findings of this research on the impacts of myths that surrounded albinism on the lives of those that lived with the condition. It was established that myth that surrounded albinism had to a greater extent a negative impact than the positive one on the people who lived with the condition. The negative impacts were that persons with albinism had no one to run to as almost everyone either hated them or were simply afraid of them, they were killed either at birth to ward off the bad spirit or in adulthood for body parts, stoned, felt bad therefore they experienced fear and isolation. They were considered to be outcast, ghost or spirit as such no one wanted to be associated with them leading to loneliness as a result of failure to establish successful relationships. Persons with albinism were discriminated against due to the myth that they are cursed and therefore caused bad lucky such as death and illness; they experienced difficulties in getting help due to the myth that they were not real human beings, they felt rejected and neglected by relatives such as fathers who denied them as a result of their condition leading to uncertainty and depression. The myth that surrounded albinism made persons with albinism feel inhuman leading to self-stigma as they did not understand their fate, people thought the condition was contagious leading to segregation and infringement of the freedom of association, they had difficulties finding jobs, no success in business leading to poverty and poor health, they were underrated as people regarded them as lazy and unproductive, they were faced with so much accusations, abuse and harassment due to the myths that they were responsible for evil things that happened in the families, they mostly came from broken homes due to the myth that they were products of adultery, incest and fornication.

On the other hand, due to the myths that surrounded albinism, persons with albinism had received good treatment from the people that pitied them as a result of ill treatment they faced where ever they went, the government helped them through the provision of skin lotions and sometimes social cash while some people sympathized with them because of their condition.

The voice the researchers was that, the negative myths that surrounded albinism should be discouraged and only promote the positive ones of preserving their lives.

### Tonga people description of albinism

The researchers administered interviews to the headmen and relatives to persons with albinism the question was asked on how the persons with albinism were described among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom.



Table 13: Responses from headmen and relatives to persons with albinism on how the persons with albinism were described among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chieftdom.

H'1' stated that, 'The albinos were described as outcasts (cipini) they were considered to be alien to the Tonga tradition.'	R'4' narrated that, 'Albinos are described as people not fit to live (cipini), people who were supposed to be killed at birth, not fit to be community members.'
H'2' added that, 'Some people described them as spirit beings, white people and so on, but some of us are civilized and see them as normal human beings just like any other person.'	' R'5' stated that, 'Albinos were described as gods special gift.'
R'1' explained that, 'Albinos are described as (cipini) unwanted people, cursed, cause of bad luck.'	R'6' indicated thus, 'They are described as cursed people, punishment from gods and punishment from ancestors.'
. R'2' added that, 'Albinos are described as outcasts, cause of evil in the family, cursed, ghost, mwabi.'	R'7' added that, 'Albinos are described as something that move in the dark,(ceenda mudima), Cipini or out cast, cause of bad luck.'
R'3' echoed as follows, 'They are described as 'cipini' chidangwaleza, mwaabi, gift from god and cursed,'	R'8' echoed that, 'Albinos are described as unfortunate people.'

Figure 14: Responses from focus group discussion to the adult and young persons with albinism on how albinos were described among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chieftdom

PWA'1' explained that, 'Albinos are described as mwabi or cipini.' (meaning someone who have been given as a gift and outcast or someone who is not considered to be a normal human being respectively.)

PWA'2' echoed that, 'Albinos are described as 'utuba.' (meaning a white person).

PWA'5' elucidated that, 'Some people describe albinos as sample or package, (meaning something that can be traded or advertised for sell.)

PWA'8' explained that, 'Albinos were described as mwabi, zilengwaleza, mwabuwino or muzungu bbelela.' (muzungu bbelela meant not a real white person.)

PWA'6' affirmed that, 'People describe us as punishment from God, people not worth living, cursed and ghosts while others describe us as God's creation.'

The researchers administered a focus group discussion to the community members; the question was posed on how the persons with albinism were described among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chieftdom. Their responses were as follows. C'1' explained that, 'They are described as outcasts, cursed, ghosts, spirits, and cause of calamity such as illness death and poor harvest.' C'2' echoed that, 'They were considered to be people with no origin (taku nkubazulilwa), of late they have become source of wealth, capital, mwabi. Zilengwaleza.'

Basing on the findings of this study of how the persons with albinism were described' it was found that they were describes as outcast, people not worth living, punishment from the ancestors or gods, cause of bad lucky, spirit beings ghost, unfortunate, cause of poor harvest and considered to be alien to the Tonga tradition. Some people described them as people with not original white others referred to them as source of wealthy, power and fame. Some people described them as sample, package, mwaabi and source of healing.

The voice of the researchers was that the kind of description were so demining to persons with albinism and there is great need not to continue with these type of descriptions.

### Personal Judgement of the Treatment Given to Persons with Albinism Among The Tonga People of Sinakomba Chieftdom



Table 14: responses from headmen and relatives to persons with albinism concerning their personal judgement of the treatment given to persons with albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom.

H'1' explained that, 'The general treatment is bad but there is nothing anyone can do, its nature. No albino is doing a good job may be its because they are few, but we have one albino who is a headman and another one who works for council this Sign that society is gradually embracing persons living with albinism in Sinakomba Chiefdom of Siavonga district.'	R'1' expounded that, 'The treatment given to albinos is not very good.' R'2' stated that, 'The treatment given to them is very bad.'  R'3' echoed that, 'The treatment given to albinos is very bad.'  R'4' added that, 'The treatment given to albinos is bad.'  R'5' indicated that, 'The treated was not very bad.'
H'2' narrated that, 'There are some isolated cases of abuse and stigma but it's not the norm, they are treated just like any black pigmented villager when they are wrong; they face the law just like others.'	R'6' echoed the following, 'the treatment was not good.'  R'7' noted that, 'The treatment is not very bad.' R'8' expressed that, 'The treatment was quite good.'

Table 15: Responses from focus group discussion to the adult and young persons with albinism concerning their personal judgement on the treatment given to persons with albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom.

PWA'1' expressed that, 'The treatment is ok.'  PWA'2' indicated that, 'The treatment is bad.'  PWA'3' echoed that, 'The treatment is bad.'  PWA'4' stated that, 'The treatment is not very good.'	PWA'5' echoed that, 'the treatment is not very good.'  PWA'6' added that, 'The treatment is not good.'  PWA'7' indicated that, 'The treatment is not good.'  PWA'8' expressed that, 'The treatment was not fairly good.'
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Table 16: Responses from focus group discussion to the community members with albinism concerning their personal judgement on the treatment given to persons with albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom.

C'1' elucidated that, 'The treatment is good depending on who they are, they are no longer killed at birth- they are given chance to live.' C'2' echoed that, 'The treatment is good because even if they are outcasts people still treat them just like any other person.'  C'4' expressed the following, 'The treatment is good because now you can see an adult albino around, those people never used to grow old in this locality.'	C'5' 'The treatment is bad because they are not given chance to die normally. Once they get sick family fears that they may die and so they are isolated so that no one sees where they die from and talk less of their dead bodies.'  C'7' 'The treatment was good because the Tonga of today have new ideas and dignify Albinos more than before as seen in albinos involvement in civic celebrations  C'8' 'The treatment is bad because even family members reject and marginalize them.'
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The findings on the personal judgement of the description of the treatment given to persons with albinism revealed that the general treatment given to persons with albinism varied because some people stated that it was bad, some expressed that it was good while others explicated that it was fair. For instance it was said that the general treatment is bad there is nothing anyone can do about it, others said the treatment is good because now they are adult albinos meaning they were no longer killed at birth while others indicated that it was fair treatment considering the alleged fact that they were outcast.

The voice of the researchers was that, the treatment was bad because it involved killing of persons with albinism.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Concerning the understanding of albinism, the research revealed that, myths have an impact on some peoples' understanding of the concept of albinism. The study found that some respondents understood the concept of albinism while others did not.

The findings of this study were partially similar to findings of [9] who carried out a research on the Role of the Media in Promoting Images of Disability - Disability as Metaphor in New Delhi. The researcher defined Albinism as a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited condition occurring in both genders regardless of ethnicity, in all countries of the world. Both the father and mother must carry the gene for it to be passed on even if they do not have albinism themselves. [12] also carried out a study on the Challenges Pupils with Albinism face in Selected Schools of Luapula Province, Zambia and stated that Albinism is a genetic deficiency of melanin pigment production. However the study by [8] and [12] did not highlight the understanding of those who did not know the meaning of the term albinism but about those who understood the concept. This research brought out the understanding of both those who understood the concept and those who did not.

The findings of the current study were not in agreement with what was stated in the theoretical framework, the social model of disability by [20] who sees disability as the result of the interaction between people living with impairment and an environment filled with social barriers. This is because the term albinism was not explained the way it was explained in the current study as the theory focused on the social part of albinism while the current study explained on understanding of the concept of albinism.

With these research findings, the researchers were in agreement with what the respondents answered concerning the concept of albinism; this could have been the reason why some understood the concept while others did not understand it.

Basing on the findings, the researchers' voice was that the concept of albinism was not fully understood not only to the persons with albinism but also their relatives and the community members which might have led to misconceptions of the concept of albinism.

### **Myths and beliefs**

The current study findings with regards to the myths surrounding albinism among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom of Siavonga district revealed the following myths. Persons with albinism were said to be spirit beings, were a result of punishment from the ancestors or gods for wrong deeds committed by family members, they signified a curse on the family, considered to be a source of bad luck. They were considered to be outcasts, not real human beings, immortal people who disappeared back to the spirit world at the time of death, products of infidelity and incest, were supposed to be killed the moment they were born to ward off the evil spirit they possessed, no one was supposed to see the dead body of a person with albinism and they were never to be buried but just thrown away in the bush as they had no burial site or graves within the community. Burying an albino was a taboo which causes more albinos to be born, death and misfortunes in the family and community at large. Albinism was said to be contagious, pregnant women needed to spit on their stomachs once they came across a person with albinism in order not to contract the condition and pass it on to their unborn babies, and raising an albino child was said to lead to unending sickness and death in the family.

The findings of this study were not in agreement with the findings made by [18] who administered a research on views of teachers, pupils and parents on inclusive education for children with disabilities, a case study of St Lawrence School in Lusaka, Zambia and found that there was discrimination against children with albinism as the other children were afraid of contracting the condition as they held to the belief that albino skins melts and if someone sat near them, the condition can be passed on. The discrepancy was because the current study established the myths that surrounded albinism while the previous study discovered the effects of myths that surrounded albinism.

The findings of this study were not in line with the theoretical frame work of social theory of disability by [20] which pointed out that the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment must change to enable people living with impairment to participate in society on an equal basis with others. This was because the current study established the myths which may be a barrier hindering persons with albinism from participating on an equal basis with others while the theory suggested the solutions to the barriers hindering equal participation.

The researchers were in agreement with the findings of the study as the myths surrounding albinism were established.

The researchers' voice was that the established myths could have been the source of the current negative beliefs about albinism.

Concerning the findings about the beliefs emanating from the myths surrounding albinism in Sinakomba chiefdom, the following beliefs were established; the birth of a person with albinism was belied to be a result of punishment and curse by the ancestors or gods for the evil things done by the family. Raising a child with albinism was believed to cause bad luck such as illness, poor harvest and death, persons with albinism were believed to be outcasts that were not fit to live but to be killed immediately they were born. Killing of them at birth was believed to cast away the bad spirits. It was believed that albinos did not die but just disappeared back to the spirit world where they belonged, they were believed to have no burial site talk less of graves, a dead albino would just be placed in a particular animal hole as burying them was believed to cause more death. It was believed that no funeral should be held for a person with albinism. There was a belief that albino body parts were good for; fishing, making good luck charms to boost business, give power and fame, and sex with persons with albinism was believed to cure incurable diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Persons with albinism were believed to have gold in their stomachs which people could remove and sell. It was believed that pregnant women could contract the condition and pass it on to their un born babies and that albino children were not real children of their dark skinned fathers.

Some of the findings of the current study were similar to the findings of [1], who carried out a research on the Role of Culture of Superstitions in the Proliferation of Religion, Nigeria. The study found that in many diverse cultures across the globe, there are various myths and beliefs that ascribe albinism to a curse by the gods or by dead ancestors. The study further revealed that some people even believed that contact with a person with albinism can result in bad luck, sickness, or even death. Moreover, in some societies giving birth to a baby with albinism is something that carries severe stigma. Some of the findings of the current study were similar to the findings of [1] because both studies brought out the negative beliefs surrounding albinism but the previous study did not bring out the current beliefs that positively perceive albinism as being a source of money, power, wealth, fame and healing, the reason which could have made the lives of persons with albinism to be so much at stake which this study highlighted.

With these research findings, the researchers were in agreement with what the respondents brought out concerning the beliefs surrounding albinism because it reflected what was obtaining among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chiefdom which might be similar in other societies.

The researchers' view or voice was that, the beliefs that ascribe albinism to power, wealth, fame and healing were what could have led to the current victimization of the persons with albinism.

### **The Tonga people**

The current study findings Pertaining to what the Tonga culture said about albinism, the study revealed that the chiefdom is composed of people with negative attitude and those with positive attitude. The Tonga culture was said to be silent about albinism be due to the alleged fact that albinos were not considered to be part of the community, the reason why they were considered a taboo, outcast, cursed and not worth living. Giving birth to an albino attracted torment and ridicule, people had failed to accept persons with albinism, they were abused and mocked. It was believed that when an albino died, no funeral was to be held to mourn them, no one was to see their dead bodies and they would not be buried within the community, an animal hole was said to be their resting place somewhere in the hills. The Tonga culture was said to condemn the birth of a child with albinism as it was

believed to be a taboo to raise an albino child. It was indicated that Tongas liked consulting witch doctors especially during illness and funerals thereby fueling abuse against persons with albinism, they were accused and blamed for the activity of witchcraft as witches caused harm on the families of albinos knowing that the blame would be placed on albinos. On the other hand, albinos were said to be embraced and treated just like anyone else, some people expressed sympathy at the birth of a child with albinism, people had started seeing them as God saw them, they were slowly being accepted and there was positive reaction then than before.

The findings of this study were in agreement with [20] social model of disability which stated that it does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society and that it was not individual limitations, of whatever kind which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organization. The agreement was in the sense that the Tonga people of Sinakomba chiefdom were of the view that albinism was a result of societal failure to live right with the ancestors and also that it was caused by human errors during their interactions with persons with albinism in the society just like Oliver's social model of disability with located disability within the society.

With these findings, the researchers were partially in agreement with the findings as they brought out what was true according to their understanding though some of the responses according to the view of the researchers were not true indeed for instance the views that persons with albinism did not die but just disappeared as the researchers had witnessed several funerals of persons with albinism, what the researchers agrees with is the view that the concept of albinism needed to be explained in detail to the Tonga community of Sinakomba Chiefdom the situation that could help do away with the misconceptions regarding albinism.

The voice of the researchers concerning what the Tonga culture said about albinism was that, the culture need to promote the life of persons with albinism and not ignoring them which put their life at risk.

### **Treatment of persons with albinism based on myths**

The current study findings with regards to the effects of albinism on the people living with the condition revealed that albinism had both positive and negative effects on persons with albinism. The positive effects were that some people whole heartedly accepted the persons with albinism and helped take care of their needs, they were loved and respected just like anyone else. Some people saw them as normal human beings and treated them mercifully. The negative effects on the other hand were that persons with albinism lived in isolation due to fear of being killed and some people were scared of them due to their skin color which they likened to ghosts, they were not considered as normal human beings. They were discriminated against as no one wanted to share things with them alleging that they could contract the condition if they did so, people especially pregnant women spat when they saw them. They were rejected as people had failed to accept them due to ignorance about the condition, they were sometimes killed at birth, they were laughed at and mocked leading to stigma and hurt.

Persons with albinism were treated with so much cruelty and hatred even by family members. They were blamed for every bad thing that happens in the family because they were considered to be the source of bad luck, parents especially fathers usually neglected their albino children denying them support leading to self-hatred and depression. Persons with albinism experienced difficulties establishing relationships as people refused to marry them leading to loneliness and low self-esteem. Teachers were said to segregate against them with some saying that they smell and others passing ridiculous comments which made some of them to drop out of school. Medical personnel were hesitant to attend to persons with albinism resulting in lack of proper medical care. Persons with albinism were considered to be riches as they were referred to as sample (something that can be traded). Those in business experienced business failure as no one was willing to buy from them. Persons with albinism lacked employment as employers believed that they were underachievers that they could not do anything productive. They were belittled and looked down upon.

The study findings were similar to the findings of the study conducted by [12] on Challenges Pupils with Albinism face in Selected Schools of Luapula Province, Zambia stated that, which discovered that, children with albinism face a lot of problems at school due to their condition which affect their academic performance. The study further found that many families frequently neglect the education of children with albinism as they believe



that their education is a waste of resources. Those who are lucky to attend school often suffer from teasing and bullying from classmates. The similarity was in the sense that both studies established that albinism had an effect on the treatment of those living with the condition. In both studies persons with albinism faced a lot of problems due to their condition, such as poor academic performance, teasing, bullying, neglect and lack of support from relatives.

The study findings were in agreement with the social model of disability by [20] which sees disability as the result of the interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with social barriers. The findings were in agreement because, how the persons with albinism were treated had little if not nothing to do with the challenges caused by the condition itself but due to the challenges created by societal through its' perception of persons with albinism.

The researchers' view was in agreement with the study findings because the treatment of the persons with albinism in relation to myths was established.

The researchers' voice with regards to the effects of albinism on the people living with the condition myths coupled with the recent positive beliefs about albinism could have been the cause for the ill treatment of persons with albinism. There is a great need to address the negative kind of treatment in order to make persons with albinism enjoy their stay on earth like any other person.

### **Myths and beliefs influence**

The findings on the influence of myths and beliefs surrounding albinism on the lives of persons with albinism revealed that myths had both positive and negative impacts, Persons with albinism had no one to run to as almost everyone either hated them or were simply afraid of them, they were killed either at birth to ward off the bad spirit or in adulthood for body parts which were traded for use in charms, they were isolated as they were considered to be outcast, ghost or spirit, they were discriminated against due to the myth that they are cursed and therefore caused bad lucky such as death and illness, people regarded them as lazy and unproductive, they were faced with so much accusations, abuse and harassment due to the myths that they were responsible for evil things that happened in the families.

On the other hand, due to the myths and beliefs that surrounded albinism, persons with albinism had received good treatment from the people that pitied them as a result of ill treatment they faced where ever they went, the government helped them through the provision of skin lotions and sometimes social cash while some people sympathized with them because of their condition.

The findings of this study were partially similar to the findings of the study conducted by [3] on Albinism in Malawi: Knowledge and Beliefs from an African Setting" Disability and Society. The study revealed that in a section of Malawi Society, persons with albinism are often treated as misfits or outcasts. They are believed to be white skinned people in a black society, they are shunned and feared as the products of witchcraft, therefore they are treated as if they are out of the ordinary. The partiality in agreement was that both studies explicated how persons with albinism were badly treated, the current study however went further and elucidated how persons with albinism were also treated with love, care and sympathy.

These study findings were not in agreement with the social theory of disability by [20], which pointed out that the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment must change to enable people living with impairment to participate in society on an equal basis with others. This was because the current study focused on establishing the influence of myths surrounding albinism on the treatment of persons with albinism while the social model of disability focused on changing the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment to enable people living with impairment to participate in society on an equal basis with others.

The researchers were in agreement with the findings because the influence of myths and beliefs surrounding albinism could have been the reason for the negative treatment of persons with albinism which could have misled the people of the chieftdom into mistreating persons with albinism. For instance, this was similar in other societies like Malawi and Luapula province other than Siankomba as indicated by [12] who carried out a study



on the Challenges Pupils with Albinism face in Selected Schools of Luapula Province, Zambia who stated that in most cases, a father abandoned his family when a child with albinism was born. Those fathers who opted to stay in the family often had a tendency of treating the child harshly and ridiculed.

The researchers voice was that, the negative influence of myths and beliefs surrounding albinism on the lives of persons with albinism should be dealt with by addressing the mindset in terms of the myths and beliefs.

### **The Tonga people and personal judgement**

The study findings on the personal judgment of the description of the treatment given to persons with albinism revealed that the general treatment given to persons with albinism varied as most of the people stated that it was bad, a few others said that it was good while others said that it was fair.

The findings were partially in line with the findings of the study conducted by [4] on Media analysis of albino killings in Tanzania: a social work and human rights perspective. The study found that the profound effects of this violence, on persons with albinism as well as on the wider community, are also documented regularly in the media, illustrating how family members are forced to escort their children to school and to other areas of the community. There are accounts of parents hiding their children at home, seeking asylum in police stations or moving to safer parts of the country. This was because both studies established that persons with albinism were badly treated, the current study however went further and found out the respondents' personal judgement of the treatment given to persons with albinism to which it was established that the respondents general comment was that persons with albinism were treated badly among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chieftdom.

The researchers partially agree with the findings that persons with albinism were treated with love pity and sympathy because in the researchers' view albinos were innocent and just victims of circumstance and really deserved to be loved, pitied and sympathized with. What the researchers does not agree with was ill-treating of them due to the influence of myths.

According to personal judgment of the description of the treatment given to persons with albinism the researchers' voice on the concept of 'myth' was upheld by most Tongas of Sinakomba Chieftdom which might have led to influencing beliefs leading to bad treatment of persons with albinism.

## **CONCLUSION**

It was evident from the research findings that myths surrounding albinism as established among the Tonga people of Sinakomba Chieftdom had an effect on people's understanding of the concept of albinism and affected the treatment of persons with albinism in the chieftdom.. Some of the identified myths were that persons with albinism were said to be spirit beings among the people, they signified a curse on the family and a source of bad luck, they were considered ghosts that harm people, immortal people who disappeared back to the spirit world at the time of death and were supposed to be killed the moment they were born to ward off the evil spirit they were believed to possess. With regards the treatment of the persons with albinism it was established that they had no one to associate with as almost everyone either hated them or were simply afraid of them because of their outlook, they were killed either at birth to ward off the bad spirit or in adulthood for body parts which were traded for use in charms, they were neglected and rejected as they were considered to be outcast, ghost or spirit, they were discriminated against because people regarded them as lazy and unproductive, on the other hand due to the myths that surrounded albinism, persons with albinism had received good treatment from the people that pitied them as a result of ill treatment they faced where ever they went. Some people welcomed them in their homes while others sympathized with them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations from this study are;

1. Expecting mothers to be taught about albinism at antenatal clinics and expecting mothers to be encouraged to deliver from the hospitals.

2. Parents of children with albinism to undergo counseling collectively immediately they deliver such a child.
3. There is need to educate persons that lived with albinism on their human rights and how to live with their condition.
4. Community leaders need to speak against the beliefs surrounding albinism and village headmen to be informed of every death of infants before disposing the bodies in order to combat the killing of new born albinos.
5. Teachers and medical personnel need to be taught about albinism and how to handle children with Albinism.
6. Enhance law to protect albinos and declare abuse against albinos as a serious offence and offenders to be punished.
7. People should be educated about the condition so that they discard their false beliefs emanating from the myths surrounding albinism and people should be encouraged to accept persons with albinism as normal human beings just like anyone else.
8. There is need to campaign against the evil myths surrounding albinism to be held, people should be made to understand the condition

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