

# Is Education Enough? Exploring the Ontological Perceptions of Albinism in Tanzania



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## **Abstract**

While perceptions of albinism have always been characterized by difference, it was not until the mid-2000s when brutal killings of people with albinism (PWA) occurred that the government attempted to tackle this problem through education. Almost twenty years later, discrimination and violence against PWA is still present in Tanzania, leading to questions about the effectiveness of an educational approach in combating such developments. Findings from my field research have revealed that people in the northern region of Tanzania perceive albinos to be a different ontological entity, which sustains violence and discrimination against PWA in the country. Most importantly, the governmental and non-governmental educational approach in tackling such problematic perceptions of albinism are proven insufficient in light of such ontological difference. My main recommendation is that education in Tanzania needs an ontological turn, which means that understanding and teaching should be done from the standpoint of albinos and society should be looked at from that perspective.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

“Humans have an instinctive fear of something unconventional” (Agada 2019, 159).

## 1.1 Background Information

During the summer of July 2019, I volunteered in a temporary holding shelter, Kabanga center, which is located in the region of Kigoma, Tanzania. This center is dedicated to hosting and providing protection to people with albinism (PWA), which is a governmental solution that was triggered by the horrendous killings of members of this group of people in 2010. Almost ten years later, this center was no longer “temporary” and I decided to write about this topic for my master’s thesis. As Elvis Imafidon states, when around the “Other,” or anything different from the ordinary, “humans have an instinctive fear of something unconventional” (Agada 2019, 159). During the brief period in which I was conducting research on the perceptions of albinism in Tanzania, I discovered that the fear of albinism is neither instinctive nor “natural”; instead, deep-rooted societal perceptions and complexities inspire this fear when humans are around anything different.

In order to comprehend the topic being studied, it is important to explain what it means to be born with albinism in Tanzania. Firstly, albinism, or more specifically Oculocutaneous albinism (OCA), "encompasses a heterogeneous group of congenital conditions that are the result of a genetic mutation characterized by hypopigmentation of the skin, eyes and hair" (Brocco 2016, 229). Although this genetic condition affects people all around the world, some of the highest rates are found in Tanzania, where 13,000 individuals of the country’s total population of 40 million suffer from OCA (Ibid.). In Tanzania, albinos face different challenges in society, mainly due to their skin condition. Indeed, apart from social stigmatization, albinos are also excluded from agrarian practices because of their vulnerability toward the sun. This limits their access to an important source of economic stability as the agricultural sector is significantly important in Tanzania (Ibid., 230). However, it was not until the mid-2000s that the influence of witchcraft<sup>1</sup> became an important feature that began impacting people’s perception of albinos. Indeed, Tanzania’s traditional doctors began to spread the belief that collecting bones, blood and body parts from individuals with albinism could potentially bring good luck and fortune (Donatian 2018, 9).

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<sup>1</sup> Witchcraft typically includes “sorcery, enchantment, bewitching, the use of instrument of witchcraft, the purported exercise of any occult power and purported possession of any occult knowledge” (Oestigaard 2015, 187).

These beliefs triggered the brutal killings of albinos, particularly in the northwest regions of the country, resulting in mutilations, slaughter, rape and further atrocities, including of infants (Ibid.). Although the Tanzanian government began taking measures to prevent further killings, such as the 2002 Tanzania Witchcraft Act,<sup>2</sup> and introduced certain educational policies, the situation is still ongoing (Brocco 2016, 230) (Oestigaard 2015, 187).

In order to indicate the importance of this issue, first-hand observations from my time as a volunteer in the Kabanga Center are introduced. This organization is located in the region of Kigoma, in the Kabanga village, where approximately 22,000 people live (City Population 2017). As briefly described above, this center was established by the government in 2007 as a “safe heaven” for children with albinism who were threatened by the increase in violence and discrimination that occurred in the beginning of the 2000s. As such, the Kabanga Center is one of 32 “temporary holding shelters,” acting as rehabilitated boarding schools, which aim to offer security, protection and education to albinos in Tanzania (Ntetema and Ash 2013, 17).

The center is not in the best condition as there are big dorms that are full of beds without sheets or pillows, broken and unsanitary toilets and an endless list of things to fix. The organization is surrounded by a fence and the area is heavily guarded to control the people who come in and out, which proves the constant danger that PWA are exposed to, even in a small community. The realization of the physical consequences that these people suffer from within society became real to me when I was visiting the center and encountered an albino woman without an arm, sitting in a group with other women next to the kitchen. Since this was a shocking experience for me, I decided to write about this moment in my observation notes: “One of them was a woman with albinism who did not have an arm. My supervisor explained to me that she was attacked and that the arm was chopped off. Even though I had read about this before, actually seeing this made my body shiver. This happened on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2019.”

This horrendous fact should be viewed in light of the many attacks PWA experience and the percentage that are killed in the process (Under the Same Sun 2015, 1). This woman is considered “lucky” as my supervisor at the time and various local people in charge of the center confirmed that she had been able to escape before the killers continued to mutilate her body. Another challenge that PWA face in Tanzania is the sun. In fact, skin cancer is one of the highest causes of mortality that PWA in Tanzania suffer from (Taylor, Bradbury-Jones,

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<sup>2</sup> Under this law, “all acts of witchcraft are punishable if murders are committed” (Oestigaard 2015, 187).

and Lund 2019, 17). There are approximately thirty children with albinism living in the center and they are all burnt and have early signs of skin cancer. Despite having access to a special type of sunscreen provided by Standing Voice, a non-governmental organization (NGO), no one is in charge of their daily care in the center. Furthermore, most of them do not have hats, and their clothes are torn and do not properly cover their body, thus exposing their sensitive skin to the sun's rays.

Moreover, visual impairment is also a consequence of this biological condition, as I learned while teaching computer classes to a student with albinism, Adil,<sup>3</sup> who was also volunteering in the center. His inability to properly see the computer screen and keyboard represented a huge challenge when compared to other students who did not suffer from this disease. In fact, this is evidence of the difficulties that PWA face in education. In order to ensure that education becomes more inclusive in Tanzania, they would need special attention and aids to, for instance, be able to read a textbook.

Discussions about education continued when, after two weeks of volunteering in the center, I was invited to a meeting with the founding members of the Tanzania Albinism Society (TAS) Kasulu. This is an organization that is dedicated to improving the rights of PWA within Kasulu. The meeting took place in a study room in the Kabanga center and the purpose was to inform me about the challenges that PWA experience in society. More specifically, the conversation focused on how the members of TAS Kasulu attempt to reduce discrimination against this community by raising awareness, explaining how essential it is for people to understand that albinism is a genetic disease. In fact, their attempts are in line with all other governmental organizations and NGOs which have identified education and awareness as key to ending discrimination, violence and stigma against PWA in society.

Hence, the reality of such individuals in Tanzania is challenging and difficult, not only in terms of education or health but also in view of the danger that such people face if they do not live in these temporary holding shelters, like the Kabanga center. As such, even though the living conditions of these organizations are far from ideal, they provide PWA with a safe space that is isolated from the outside world. However, is isolation a long-term solution? Are education and awareness enough to safely include PWA in society? Through this thesis, I attempt to explore some of the entrenched societal ideas and myths that create and sustain violence and discrimination and the implications of this for future interventions regarding this matter.

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<sup>3</sup> This is a pseudonym, used in order to protect his identity.

## **1. 2: Literature Review: Exploring Albinism in Tanzania**

### **1.2.1 Local Perceptions**

In Tanzania, the perceptions of PWA are complex and have not always led to violence. Indeed, according to scholars such as Reimer-Kirkham et al., conceptions of PWA have been present for more than 2,000 years and have differed over time (Reimer-Kirkham et al. 2019, 755). There are several local perceptions of the causes of albinism, including a variety of local explanations that are natural, spiritual and gendered (Ibid., 756). Belief in natural explanations are less common among the Tanzanian people and range from the idea that albinism occurs when the top layer of one's skin is removed to being caused by an infection of the womb (Ibid.).

However, most explanations use spiritual beliefs to explain albinism, with some indicating that it can be seen as a kind of punishment meted out by ancestors or that it can even represent arbitrary punishments, for instance, when caused by a person making fun of PWA (Ibid.). Furthermore, gendered explanations are also widespread and include the belief that a mother's wrongful actions cause albinism during conception, pregnancy or birth (Ibid.). This can include interracial coupling, the breaking of taboos during pregnancy or conceiving during a hot afternoon (Ibid.). Indeed, it is also believed that albinism is contagious and can be spread through social contact (Ibid., 757). Hence, explanations are varied and numerous, encompassing science, religion, witchcraft and wrongful actions.

### **1.2.2 Education and Different Ontologies**

Although local perceptions of the causes of albinism are various and have changed over time, killings and discrimination against albinos have been growing since the 2000s in Tanzania. In analyzing this issue, most of the academic literature on albinism in Tanzania indicates that the problem essentially lies in the lack of education of the Tanzanian population, which leads to misunderstanding, violence and discrimination against PWA. Indeed, this emphasis on education profoundly influences the types of governmental and non-governmental initiatives that have addressed perceptions of albinism in the country (Reimer-Kirkham et al. 2019, 760-61). In fact, the governmental and non-governmental approach can be characterized as being educational. In other words, actors within these sectors have the conviction that tackling the problem through inclusive education and educating the community through raising awareness and creating advocacy programs will help to solve the problem (Brocco 2015, 1).



While this educational approach seems appropriate in light of the multiple explanations and misperceptions that lead to the stigmatization of albinos, other academics suggest that underlying factors influence these ideas. In their article “Albinism, Spiritual and Cultural Practices, and Implications for Health, Healthcare, and Human rights: A Scoping Review,” Reimer-Kirkham et. al. (2019) analyze the current state of knowledge on cultural and spiritual practices surrounding albinism in Africa. Within their study, they conclude that African ontologies widely influence the mistreatment of, and the violence committed against PWA (Reimer-Kirkham et al. 2019, 1). More specifically, they “reveal that African ontologies, including witchcraft beliefs and practices, are implicated by their construction of the person with albinism as an ontologically different entity” (Ibid., 753). Furthermore, while the authors do not explicate the implications of such claims, they argue that it is essential to explore these ontologies in order to better comprehend and tackle the harmful perceptions of PWA in the African continent.

As explained earlier, local interpretations of the causes of albinism entail categorizing this disease as a “difference.” In other words, higher powers are used to explain how and why a White child can be born of two Black parents, which frequently involves the use of ‘othering’ terms in order to describe this occurrence. This phenomenon can be better understood through Anthonie Holslag’s definition and use of “Othering,” which involves “creating dichotomies where Others are considered filthy, impure even animalistic, and are henceforth symbolically essentially different and separate from the in-group” (Holslag 2015, 96). This process is better exemplified in light of the brutal attacks and killings of PWA, which include mutilations, slaughtering, the extraction of blood, grave robberies and references to PWA as ghosts or animals, in addition to other forms of violence. In fact, “Othering” has also been used to explain extreme cases of violence, such as the Rwandan genocide in David Livingstone’s article (2016) “Paradoxes of Dehumanization.” Within his article, Livingstone Smith uses the term “dehumanization” in order to illustrate how the Hutu people referred to the Tutsi population as rats, cock-roaches or snakes (Livingstone Smith 2016, 417). According to the author, “words like these have been uttered countless times by perpetrators of atrocity. Time after time, genocide after genocide, they characterize those whom they wish to harm as less-than-human creatures, and in so doing diminish their moral status to such an extent as to make the commission of the most hideous acts of violence against them permissible or even obligatory” (Ibid., 416).

While the scale of the killings and attacks against PWA in Tanzania are not considered a genocide, the non-human verbal characterizations and brutality of such attacks are comparable to what Livingstone Smith describes above. Furthermore, as has been shown, “Othering” and “dehumanization” are interrelated terms that will be continuously used to analyze perceptions of albinism in the north of Tanzania (as the organization I was working with is located in that area). However, these two processes are viewed from an ontological perspective, whereby ontology refers to “the philosophical study of being in general, or of what applies neutrally to everything that is real” (Simons 2015). One of the most important academics in this field is Holbraad (2017), who published a book called *The Ontological Turn in Anthropology*. Anthropology is the discipline of the study of people and one of the main concerns that the ontological turn deals with in this discipline is “ethnocentrism,” which refers to the cultural, social and political perspectives which influence how anthropologists view the world (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017, 5). Following the logic of the ontological turn, the epistemological problem of “*how one sees things*” is turned into the ontological question of “*what there is*” to be seen in the first place” (Ibid., 5). Hence, the author claims that assumptions within society, politics, culture and power are revisited and questioned, enabling the anthropologist to create new meanings that were otherwise nonexistent.

Indeed, what the author proposes here is a new methodological intervention, which is based on the analysis of ethnographic material through ontological relativization, which describes “moments in which one’s assumptions about what any given object or term of inquiry might *be* are called into question” (Ibid., 3). Hence, in Holbraad’s view, everything that people study is open to reconceptualization (Ibid., 7). It is further important to explore how ontologies influence our understanding of the world in yet unimagined and unexplored ways. For example, the ontological turn can allow us to analyze the “Other,” such as albinos in this case, from their perspective, taking their view on the world as a starting point. Building on this, Imafidon’s unique theoretical approach to African ontologies and PWA demonstrates how and why PWA are perceived as inherently different in African communities (Imafidon 2017).

In his article, “Dealing with the Other between the Ethical and the Moral: Albinism on the African Continent,” Imafidon uses different ontologies in order to explain the perception of PWA in Africa. Based on Polycarp Ikuenobe’s description of the all-inclusive

nature of African Ontology,<sup>4</sup> Imafidon emphasizes the highly generalized view of the interconnection between different entities which are part of the African structure of being. Thus, through the lens of prominent African scholars, he argues that Africa consists of close-knit communities (Ibid., 165-166). Nonetheless, Imafidon claims that no matter how inclusive African communities may be, human beings are still excluded from this web. This applies equally to African and non-African communities, for instance, where persons suffering from deadly or contagious diseases have been temporarily or indefinitely isolated from these structures in order to ensure harmony and prevent death in human societies (Ibid., 166). However, what is particular to the African continent, with variations from community to community, is that other kinds of people have been isolated and treated as the “Other.”<sup>5</sup> These include triplets, twins, PWA, morally-bankrupt persons and persons with deformities, among others (Ibid.).

Within this context, Imafidon specifically focuses on how PWA are treated as the “Other” in African communities,<sup>6</sup> further arguing that it explains the mistreatment and violence that they suffer from within these societies (Ibid., 167). He argues that there are two main reasons for this. The first one is that “in the African consciousness, albinism is an alterity or otherness” (Ibid., 163). He explains that PWA are not simply a physical “Other” but also an ontological “Other” in the African community, which justifies discrimination and violence against them. Moreover, within African communities, there are ontological and normative ideologies that promote the mistreatment of the “Other.” In his view, these normative ideologies are based on maintaining the status quo and harmony within society, which consequently leads to actions that contribute to this unity, hence justifying the harm of PWA (Ibid., 164).

Imafidon further illustrates how they rely on the ethical basis of the “Otherness” of PWAs in African traditions, while referring to Taddeus Metz’s work, which Imafidon believes provides the most representative theoretical formulation on African ethics. In his book *Toward an African Moral Theory*, Metz illustrates the ethical point of view in African

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<sup>4</sup> “In the traditional African view, reality or nature is a continuum and a harmonious composite of various elements and forces. Human beings are a harmonious part of this composite reality, which is fundamentally, a set of mobile life forces. Natural objects and reality are interlocking forces. Reality always seeks to maintain an equilibrium among the network of elements and life forces.... Because reality or nature is a continuum, there is no conceptual or interactive gap between the human self, community, the dead, spiritual or metaphysical entities and the phenomenal world; they are interrelated, they interact, and in some sense, one is an extension of the other” (Imafidon 2017, 165-66).

<sup>5</sup> “Otherness or alterity refers to the quality of being different, unusual, or alien from the conscious self or a particular cultural orientation. The other is therefore what is different from the status quo” (Imafidon 2017, 165).

traditions, whereby “an action is right just insofar as it produces harmony and reduces discord; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to develop community” (Metz 2007, 334). Hence, in other words, communal harmony and equilibrium are necessary for the survival of African communities. In Imafidon’s view, following this logic, discrimination and violence against PWA is seen as justified because due to their “unusual” physical nature, they are seen as non-human and thereby perceived as a threat to the status quo and equilibrium of African communities.

In order to clarify the author’s emphasis on the importance of the ethical point of view explained above, he uses Jürgen Habermas's distinction between the ethical and the moral point of view:

While the former consists of the ethos, customs, or ideas of the good shared by a group of persons with a shared tradition or way of life, the latter consists of what is good for all and transcends particular traditions or ways of life. Consequently, the African ethical point of view, the ethics of solidarity, justifies within the African worldview the established alterity and, by implication, stigmatization of PWAs (Imafidon 2017, 163).

Since the ethical point of view in African traditions justifies the mistreatment of PWA, Imafidon proposes a leap from the ethical to the moral point of view to change the perceptions of PWA (Ibid., 171-172). However, while the author proposes various solutions, his most crucial argument is the need to acknowledge and understand how PWA are viewed as a different ontological entity in African communities.

Imafidon’s approach and understanding of albinism in Africa relies on generalizations when referring to different concepts, such as “African consciousness,” “African traditions and communities” and “African ethics.” These terms are difficult to explain without a proper case-study of each African country, taking into account context-specific knowledge and practices. Nonetheless, Imafidon’s work is considered an important and distinct contribution in academia that furthers one’s understanding of perceptions of albinism in Africa through ontology (Reimer-Kirkham et al. 2019, 770). While there are prominent different authors in the field of albinism studies, such as Caroline Bradbury-Jones et al. (2018) with their article “Beliefs about people with albinism in Uganda: A qualitative study using the Common-Sense Model”, Francis Benyah (2017) “Equally able, differently looking: discrimination and physical violence against persons with albinism in Ghana”, or Bryceson et al. (2010) “Miner’s magic: Artisanal mining, the albino fetish and murder in Tanzania”, none of them proposes Elvis’ Imafidon’s ontological understanding of Albinism. In fact, his conceptual

approach, well-founded on studies of African ethics and African ontology, provides researchers, such as myself, with a theory that might shed light on a better understanding of albinism in praxis. Furthermore, and most importantly, this understanding has new implications for governmental or non-governmental interventions or initiatives. If this “Otherness” is present in perceptions of albinism, tackling stigma through awareness and education will remain insufficient because the problem does not only lie in people’s ignorance regarding albinism as a genetic disorder but rather, as Imafidon argues, is embedded in the human perception of a potentially threatening “Other” ontological entity.

The focus on education and raising awareness is essential in the eyes of state and non-state actors because the expectation is that the mistreatment of PWA will decrease through this (Masanja, Mvena, and Kayunze 2014, 392). This idea is also prominent among scholars as is represented in Masanja’s et al. (2014) article “Albinism: Awareness, Attitudes and Level of Albinos’ Predicament in Sukumaland, Tanzania.” The authors conclude that “illiteracy is the main force behind the beliefs and attitudes towards albinism and PWA” and that awareness campaigns are essential to countering the negative perceptions of PWA (Masanja, Mvena, and Kayunze 2014, 392). Thus, the continuous focus on education as the key factor in reducing negative perceptions and practices concerning PWA proves that there is an underlying assumption that the more educated society becomes, the more likely that stigma and violence against PWA will eventually disappear.

The research gap of this thesis lies in the fact that Imafidon’s theory on ontological difference in perceiving PWA in Africa has never been entirely proven in the Tanzanian context. Most importantly, originality lies in that this paper will analyze how the existence of this ontological difference influences the educational approach in tackling violence and discrimination against PWA in Tanzania.

### **1.3 Research Question and the Structure of the Thesis**

This research sheds light on a new approach to understanding the mistreatment of and violence inflicted upon PWA using Holbraad’s description of ontology and the phenomenon of the “ontological turn.” Imafidon’s work also sheds light on a new understanding of albinism, specifically concerning the possible existence of an ontological perception of albinism. His study is of relevance in this thesis due to the implications that the existence of an ontological difference might have. This specifically pertains to the educational approach established by governmental and non-governmental organizations in their attempt to reduce

discrimination and violence against PWA in Tanzania. Hence, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question: **How does education address people's perspectives on albinism in Tanzania and to what extent can education influence the perception of an ontological difference of individuals with albinism?**

In order to answer this research question, the thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, in Chapter 2, an overview of the current governmental and non-governmental policies and interventions are introduced, specifically answering the following sub-question: What are the governmental and non-governmental educational policies and interventions regarding albinism that have been implemented in Tanzania? Secondly, Chapter 3 explores the limitations of the (governmental/non-governmental) educational approach by looking at an NGO focused on education called Born to Learn as a case study. This additionally involves analyzing interviews regarding whether the educational approach has been changing locals' perception of albinism. Hence, this chapter addresses the sub-question: What are the limitations of the current educational approach in tackling violence and discrimination against PWA in Tanzania?

Thirdly, Chapter 4 delves deeper into exploring ontological perceptions of albinism in Tanzania through analysis of the brutality of the attacks against PWA as depicted in the media. This is supplemented by the analysis of various interviews conducted during field research. This chapter intends to answer the sub-question: Is there a persisting ontological difference in how PWA are perceived in Tanzania? Finally, the discussion and conclusion answer the main research question by addressing and interpreting the findings.

## **1.4 Methodology**

The context of this research takes place in the region of Kilimanjaro, located in the north of Tanzania. More specifically, the field research was conducted during my three-month-long internship in a school founded by Born to Learn (which is different from the Kabanga Center), which aims to provide education to the school's surrounding communities<sup>7</sup>. My position in the organization was project manager and my main tasks mainly included coordinating the various activities in the school such as supervising volunteers, assisting teacher's, participating in the organization of the school curricula, among others. This research aims to shed light on the perceptions of an ontological difference between PWA and the Tanzanian population living in that geographical area and analyze the implications of this

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<sup>7</sup> While the Kabanga center works with people with albinism, this school does not.

existence for the educational approach which will be addressed in Chapter 2. Since the topic under study encompasses an anthropological focus, I have utilized qualitative research methods, mainly entailing interviews and field observations, to gather data.

During my internship and field research from January to March in 2020, seven formal interviews were conducted. As a result, the research concentrates more on presenting an in-depth case study resulting from my interactions with a limited group of participants. However, informal conversations, site-visits and field observations also represent an essential component of my research. These took place during large-scale events, such as the Kilimanjaro Marathon, and mostly during the work I did as part of my internship, such as by visiting schools and engaging with students.

Moreover, it is important to elucidate how the COVID-19 pandemic affected my research. Since I was supposed to gather most of my data in March when the coronavirus crisis was worsening in Europe and the SARS-CoV-2 virus had already started to spread in Africa, I experienced various research restraints. Firstly, it became impossible to travel to Kabanga in the region of Kigoma, where my organization had started another project in a center for PWA, as already introduced in the background information of this thesis. If I would have been able to go there, I would have been able to gather most of my data by interviewing and observing the behaviors and relationships between PWA. Instead, observations that I made during my first and last visit to the center in the summer of 2019 have been used as background information, while also inspiring me to work on my topic. Despite the fact that these observations could not be used in the core of my thesis, they provided me with insight that allowed me to reflect on the data that I collected between January and March 2020. Secondly, due to anxieties toward foreigners that were triggered by the spread of the virus, I could not speak with traditional doctors, which would have otherwise represented a vital perspective within my research.

Thirdly, I was unable to visit various centers that work with PWA in another region around Moshi, the region of Kilimanjaro, as travel-restrictions were also imposed by such fears. These centers have different purposes, including dealing with trauma, promoting social inclusion and providing healthcare, mainly through skin cancer prevention and treatment. Thus, it would have been interesting for my research to observe and interview participants attending these centers and the people in charge of them. Fourthly, on March 17, 2020, all schools in Tanzania closed down, which affected the number of teachers I could interview and also compelled me to leave Tanzania earlier than planned due to the repatriation of Spanish citizens, including myself, to Spain. Even though the coronavirus pandemic has

placed severe limitations on my research, I was still able to use the data I was allowed and able to gather and my experiences from my internship in Born to Learn as part of this study.

With regards to formal interviews, questions ranged from exploring the participants' knowledge of albinism to more challenging questions, such as: "What if your son/daughter would marry an albino?" Another question asked was: "What would you do if you were to have an albino child?" Since albinism represents a sensitive topic in Tanzania, I also aimed to gain insight by asking more indirect questions and having informal conversations. For example, I asked: "What do people in your community think about PWA?" Ethical considerations have also been of vital importance in this research. Due to this aforementioned sensitivity, participants may feel anxious or unwilling to discuss their views on it. To avoid this, certain protocols were established before the start of each interview, mainly by attaining verbal informed consent<sup>8</sup> and guaranteeing the anonymity of the participants. The subjects of this study are all aged above eighteen, six out of seven are from Tanzania and all of them received or were pursuing higher education. In addition, all the interviews were conducted in English.

In terms of anonymity, pseudonyms have been used in order to protect their identity. My first interlocutor, Adil, is the only participant with albinism. He is a student pursuing his studies in Arusha and volunteers during the summers in the Kabanga Center<sup>9</sup>, which is the place where I first met him. Most importantly, he is one of the founding members of TAS Kasulu, which deals with the challenges that albinos face in society. Aside from Adil, all the other participants are directly related to the organization Born to Learn. Abdul is a social worker who had been studying and working with children and adults with disabilities, including PWA, for many years. Currently, he is working with Born to Learn to assess the mental health of the children at the school. Moses is a young student who was born and raised in Tanzania, having been adopted by the CEO of Born to Learn. Even though he is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering in Madrid, Spain, he has always worked as a coordinator at the school over the past few summers, thereby making him familiar with the organization. Moreover, his perspective is important because he received his previous education in Tanzania.

Maria, approximately forty years old, is originally from Spain but traveled and worked for many years in Angola, Malawi and the Congo (DRC). She is a doctor and has worked with various health-related organizations, including the Red Cross. Maria was my

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<sup>8</sup> This consent also included the permission to be directly quoted through my thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Born to Learn only collaborates with the Kabanga Center, while the school was founded by Born to Learn.



coordinator during the time I spent volunteering in the Kabanga Center in 2019, which was part of the new collaborative project that was started by Born to Learn. Furthermore, Catherine, Farida, Chilemba and Gabriel are Tanzanian teachers in this organization. While Catherine and Farida are kindergarten teachers, Chilemba is in charge of teaching science to the older students and Gabriel is a chess teacher. Although it might seem strange to have only one interviewee with albinism, the study itself focuses on exploring *perceptions* of albinism. Hence, it is vital to interact with those who have such perceptions rather than with PWA.

## **Chapter 2: Education, Awareness and Albinism in Tanzania**

This chapter focuses on the governmental and non-governmental educational approach to reduce violence, stigmatization of and discrimination against PWA. The following sub-question is answered here: What are the governmental and non-governmental educational policies and interventions regarding albinism that have been implemented in Tanzania? The purpose of analyzing these interventions and policies is to provide the reader with an overview of the educational approach that has been taken to change people's perceptions of albinism in Tanzania.

### **2.1 Governmental Policies**

Since the reports of the first killings of PWA received the attention of the international community (Brocco 2015, 1), the Tanzanian government has attempted to tackle this problem using different educational policies and strategies. The first one is the National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2009-2017), which is based on the goal that “all children, youth and adults in Tanzania [should] have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings” (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2015, 3). In order to achieve this goal, various practical objectives have been designed based on their understanding of inclusive education as “a system of education in which all children, youths and adults are enrolled, actively participate and achieve in regular schools and other educational programmes regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination, through minimisation of barriers and maximisation of resources” (Ibid., 2).

While this document encompasses a broad range of activities that are intended to improve the access and quality of education received by all students, this study specifically focuses on the actions that relate to people with disabilities, including PWA. Such activities fall under the category of “special needs education,” which revolves around expanding infrastructure, providing resources and human capital. First, it is important to note that the government acknowledges and supports collaboration with other key actors, including parents, NGOs, and religious institutions in order to improve the lives of people with disabilities (Ibid., 18).

For instance, churches have incorporated various units of special education (for people with disabilities) within their boarding schools (Ibid.). Governmental schools have also been adapted to provide special needs education by enhancing their facilities to create new classrooms exclusively dedicated to children with disabilities (Ibid.). Resources and

teacher training are essential in order to offer inclusive education in these schools. Hence, the task of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is to prepare specialized personnel and later appoint them to various public schools. These teachers are also trained to preparing school material that is adapted to blind children, for example (Ibid.). This is necessary so as to involve children with albinism in education as their condition widely affects their vision, making it difficult to read schoolbooks or even the blackboard.

Nonetheless, even though this policy is considered to be an improvement in providing inclusive education throughout the country, it was not enough. Hence, the government enacted the new Strategy for Inclusive Education (2018-2021) based on the accomplishments of the previous one. According to this report, the biggest achievement to build on from the 2009 strategy regarding PWA is the education and resource assessment centers (ESRAC) (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2017, 4). Within these centers, the government focuses on identifying and improving visual and hearing impairments for children with albinism (Ibid.).

Furthermore, the policy report includes a strategy that relates to the inclusion and improvement of education for people with disabilities by also including “overage and vulnerable children in mainstream education” (Ibid., 19). PWA are included in this category of “vulnerable children.” In order to do so, the government has established a number of actions, such as noting that counseling services in schools and child protection need to be strengthened. Secondly, it aims to improve the learning environments in the schools and, alongside community support, provide meals to the most vulnerable groups. Finally, it placed greater emphasis on revising and modifying guidelines for children with albinism in education (Ibid., 20).

All of these actions have been conceived of in collaboration with different partners, such as the Tanzanian Albinism Society (TAS), Tanzania League of the Blind and the United Nations Joint Committee on Albinism (Ibid., 40-41). Finally, the most recent policy developed regarding the provision of education for people with disabilities is the Education Sector Development Plan (2016/17-2020/21). The main goal concerning this vulnerable group is to enroll as many children as possible in the mainstream education system (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2018, 38). However, those who suffer from acute disabilities are to be enrolled within special schools (Ibid.). One way in which the government classifies these children is through, for instance, the initiation of a screening program in order to check the severity of one’s hearing and vision problems. Measures are also being taken in public schools to support such children by seating them in front of the

blackboard or providing them with hearing aids (Ibid.). Moreover, the government is also emphasizing the need to train more qualified teachers to work with children with special needs, as only 2,179 currently do so in primary schools (Ibid., 39). Within secondary education, the situation is not much better. In general,

Qualified teacher shortage, together with very weak community awareness about the possibilities that exist and may be created for children living with disability, [travelling] long distance[s] to [reach] specialised schools, opportunity cost[s] and resistance from regular schools to register children with disabilities are the most common barriers to the education of children living with disabilities (Ibid.).

Within this section, I have described different governmental policies designed to reduce the violence, stigma and discrimination faced by PWA. This has mainly been done through inclusive education programs, such as the National Strategy on Inclusive Education of 2009 and 2021 and the Education Sector Development Plan 2021. These plans build upon one another and the achievements and targets are further expanded in each. The common ground between these strategies and the actions behind all the programs are the focus with regard to identifying disabilities, improving infrastructures, providing resources, and most importantly, training teachers.

However, a crucial governmental initiative regarding PWA has not been addressed, which is the installation of “temporary holding shelters.” These have been excluded from this thesis approach because they were meant to be a temporary solution in response to the most violent killings of PWA in 2010. Even though these centers still exist and provide albinos with a safe environment that is isolated from society, the Tanzanian government is no longer involved anymore. Hence, while it is important to acknowledge their existence, this section has primarily shown the long-term governmental policies of ending violence and discrimination against PWA.

## **2.2 Non-Governmental Interventions**

Since the brutal murders of PWA in Tanzania in the 2000s were covered internationally, many NGOs have attempted to tackle discrimination and violence toward such individuals in different ways. This section focuses on three such organizations, Standing Voice, Under the

Same Sun (UTSS) and TAS, which were selected due to their years of influence and interventions in the country regarding albinism.<sup>10</sup>

UTSS is an NGO that predominantly focuses on integrating PWA into Tanzanian society (UTSS, n.d.). In order to do so, they aim to change people's views of PWA through their two programs: "Education and Support" and "Advocacy, and Public Awareness." According to the Founder and CEO, Peter Arsh, "education is our greatest 'weapon' against discrimination and our most powerful source of advocating a culture towards change" (Ibid.). Hence, this NGO is convinced that the education program is essential in the fight against violence and the stigmatization of Tanzanian society. This program is focused on providing high-quality inclusive education where health needs are administered. Their actions are translated into placing the most disadvantaged children with albinism in appropriate boarding schools, which are different from "temporary holding shelters," and making sure that they are protected, integrated and cared for (Ibid.). Since 2010, among other achievements, 400 students with albinism were included in such schools, whereby 85 eventually graduated (Ibid.).

Another crucial element is the opening of the program, "Summer Camp." Every two years, UTSS opens a summer camp that hosts over 170 children with albinism who are orphans or have been abandoned by their families (UTSS, n.d.). Other support systems include alumni support, career placement, security and support for traumatic victims, among others. Moreover, the "Advocacy and Public Awareness" program is focused on educating people on the realities that PWA live with in order to fight for inclusive human rights. By educating the members of small communities or organizing speeches at the United Nations (UN), the message is clear and simple: PWA should be treated like everyone else (Ibid.). This is done through different channels, including holding seminars in various schools, hospitals, and universities. This additionally involves distributing leaflets in rural communities and informing its members about albinism, in addition to emphasizing this issue in the media and filming documentaries across Tanzania, such as "Crimes of Colour" (Ibid.).

Standing Voice is an international NGO operating in Tanzania, Malawi and the United Kingdom. With programs focused on education, advocacy, health and community development, their aim is to provide PWA with the necessary tools to fight discrimination and empower themselves (Standing Voice, n.d.). They claim that mobilizing local

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to take into account that Born to Learn does not fall under the umbrella of NGOs that focus exclusively on albinism. Nonetheless, it is used as a case study to explore the effectiveness of such an educational approach in practice.

stakeholders is key to providing this agency (Ibid.). Their educational approach to reduce discrimination is based on the Standing Voice Education Scholarship Programme (ESP), whereby the NGO sponsors children with albinism to study in inclusive schools and universities by providing them with the necessary tools they need to learn equally. High-achieving students are offered scholarships throughout primary, secondary and higher education.

Furthermore, the organization emphasizes that its advocacy program entails much more than the “simple dissemination of information” (Ibid.). Instead, it is based on a much more holistic and dynamic approach as they operate on three different levels: international, national and local. Internationally, they have an influence on policies and development whereas they work on including PWA in communities on the national level. Lastly, they aim to eliminate negative local perceptions of albinism in local communities, such as through the Umoja Training Centre (UTC) (Ibid.). In Swahili, "Umoja" means “unity” and this center represents a space where PWA and others without albinism can interact and exchange knowledge and experiences in order to bridge their differences (Ibid.). This center is considered to be a blueprint for how to include PWA in communities successfully and will be replicated across East Africa. Aside from the abovementioned strategies and actions, Standing Voice also offers programs on skin cancer prevention, eye-sight as well as the creation of documentaries to raise awareness about albinism (Ibid.).

TAS is a national NGO with more than 12,000 members committed to supporting, empowering and protecting PWA and their families (TAS, n.d.). In order to do so, they have different programs that operate by using pre-existing infrastructures, such as churches or event venues, and they use the local media and organize national and local campaigns (Ibid.). Firstly, their program on inclusive education encompasses various strategies, including budget allocation, awareness and stigma fighting, cooperating with district councils, recommending timely policy responses to educate albino children and empowering families to support their children in school (Ibid.).

Secondly, the program on inclusive care, which is particularly focused on eye-sight and skin cancer control, is developed through different strategies. These include providing free healthcare to people with disabilities, encouraging peer support and education and working together with local stakeholders in providing PWA with the necessary protection against the sun (Ibid.). Finally, the TAS projects focus on cross-cutting issues, including ending gender-based violence, eradicating poverty and improving the conditions of children living in temporary holding shelters in Tanzania (Ibid.). Furthermore, this organization also

participates in the drafting of reports that provide the government and the wider public with information on the situation that PWA face in society. One example of this is the *2009 Baseline Survey on Socio-Economic Status of Persons with Albinism and their Households in the Lake Zone* (Ibid.).

Thus, this section has provided an overview of non-governmental interventions regarding the stigma and violence that PWA face in Tanzania. The three NGOs discussed above are similar in that they ultimately intend to include PWA in society. This is done through different strategic programs that are mainly focused on awareness, education, advocacy, health and community-work. Emphasis on family and peer support is also addressed by all three, as well as a certain degree of collaboration with local stakeholders, such as community leaders. Most important is the emphasis on inclusive education and educating the community on albinism, where all organizations agree, regardless of whether they are national or international, that education is essential to fighting discrimination and violence.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to answer the following sub-question: What are the governmental and non-governmental educational policies and interventions regarding albinism that have been implemented in Tanzania? In order to do so, central governmental policies have been introduced and summarized, focusing specifically on inclusive education and non-governmental interventions to incorporate PWA into the educational system and educate communities about albinism.

On the one hand, governmental policies include the National Strategy on Inclusive Education of 2009 and 2021 and the Education Sector Development Plan of 2021. Aside from the goal of improving inclusive education in Tanzania, these programs were also enacted in order to end discrimination and violent practices directed toward PWA in Tanzania. These policies are meant to be analyzed as part of a continuous process that not only includes as many people as possible in the provision of education but also as an effort to provide quality education to people with disabilities, such as albinos.

As a result, such governmental actions and strategies involve identifying the severity and needs of PWA through, for instance, the establishment of ESRACs. The plans also include training teachers to work with children with special needs, preparing material that has been adapted by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and establishing special

needs schools. Moreover, the infrastructure of public schools should be improved in order to provide PWA with a more productive learning environment.<sup>11</sup> However, it is also important to address the absence of classes in schools' curricula that are dedicated to explaining the biological origin and nature of the condition of albinism. Hence, despite efforts to include PWA in the educational system, governmental policies fail to directly inform students about the condition of albinism through the material that is being taught.

On the other hand, non-governmental interventions regarding albinism in Tanzania have been undertaken by UTSS, Standing Voice and TAS. Their main goal is to include PWA in Tanzanian society through various programs focused on inclusive education, advocacy and awareness and health. In addition, their main educational strategies regarding albinism are focused on educating people about albinism and including PWA in the educational system. The former has been done through various programs, such as the UTSS Advocacy and Awareness Program, in which they focus on small communities and give speeches at the UN or Umoja Center. In this way, people with and without albinism interact through different activities in order to bridge their differences.

Furthermore, the inclusion of PWA in the educational system has also been attempted in various ways. While Standing Voice does this through its Education and Scholarship Program, which aims to sponsor students with albinism, TAS adopts a more holistic approach through budget allocation, family empowerment or policy recommendations. Even though these organizations offer different solutions to PWA, their main focus is on educating the community by addressing the general perceptions on albinism and by including PWA in the educational system. Through the case study of Born to Learn, the next chapter addresses some of the limitations of this educational approach.

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<sup>11</sup> All these policies have been enacted in collaboration with key stakeholders, such as churches, TAS, the Tanzania League of the Blind and the UN Joint Committee on Albinism.



## **Chapter 3: Exploring the Limitations of an Educational Approach**

This chapter aims at answering the following sub-question: What are the limitations of the current educational approach in tackling violence and discrimination against PWA in Tanzania? Firstly, the effectiveness of the governmental and non-governmental policies and interventions introduced in the previous chapter are analyzed through the case study, Born to Learn, in the first section. The next section explores the extent to which these interventions and policies have changed perceptions of PWA by reflecting on interviews that were conducted during field research.

The case study of Born to Learn, even though it does not include with PWA, is vital for this thesis for the following reasons. Firstly, I will demonstrate, how socioeconomic conditions are affecting the effectiveness of mostly governmental efforts of inclusive education in the country and the difficulties that organizations such as Born to Learn, face to include PWA in this system. Secondly, as there is an expectation that the educational approach (as introduced in Chapter 2) will help change perceptions of albinism, I will analyze how not only socioeconomic circumstances limit this educational approach, but there are deep-rooted underlying perceptions about albinism that influence this limitation. Hence, through interviewing educated participants, in this case, Born to Learn teachers, I will explore to what extent perceptions of albinism that lead to discriminatory and violent behaviors have been changing on the ground.

### **3.1 Limitations of Education: The Case Study of Born to Learn**

Before examining how education has been changing perceptions of albinism in the country, it is important to analyze through first-hand observations whether this educational approach has been effective in the first place. Hence, this section examines the extent to which these policies or interventions are being implemented and what they aim to establish. In fact, through my experience as an intern for three months in Born to Learn, a school established in Newlands in the region of Kilimanjaro, I have come to learn that the aims of inclusive education in Tanzania have not yet been fully realized.

In fact, Born to Learn itself was firstly established because children living in the surrounding communities did not have access to education, due to their inability to pay the required school fees and buy the school materials for governmental schools. Thus, one could argue that the mere existence of Born to Learn serves as proof of how inclusive education is

not completely working in the country. Born to learn “was founded on the belief that education is a right that everybody should receive, no matter where and how they are born” (Born to Lead, n.d.). In fact, their motive is in line with the governmental definition of inclusive education in the first National Strategy on Education, which advocates for an educational system that leaves no one behind.<sup>12</sup> However, if Born to Learn would not exist, many children living in the surrounding communities of Newlands and Kikavu would not have access to education. Even though there are many public primary and secondary schools in the region, many parents living in these communities cannot afford the school uniform, the transport, the materials or the food. Furthermore, Born to Learn also hosts adolescents with disabilities that have not been welcomed by these schools, due to the lack of resources and discrimination against them. In other words, these students are not able to attend such “special schools” due to economic difficulties.

Born to Learn not only provides them with the opportunity to learn but also employs these adolescents by allowing them to work in the school in exchange for a salary in a space that is free from discrimination and social stigma. Although the government has been working toward inclusive education for more than fifteen years, entire communities, including the most vulnerable children, have been left out of this process. This contradicts the Tanzanian government’s definition of inclusive education that they should have the opportunity to be educated “regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination” (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2015, 2). However, it seemed strange that taking into account Born to Learn’s inclusive education goal and strong acceptance towards people with disabilities, that not one child with albinism studies or works in the school. However, the founder of the organization confirmed that most of the children with albinism living in the surrounding communities of the school, are placed in ‘temporary holding shelters’. This is because parents fear for the safety of their children or also most albino children have been abandoned in these centers. Hence, they live isolated from society, making it difficult for non-governmental organizations to include them within the educational system.

In addition, I also had the opportunity to speak with many of the sponsored students that had attended different public schools in the region. Through various informal conversations, I learned that their classes were very crowded, with more than fifty students

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<sup>12</sup> “Inclusive education is a system of education in which all children, youths and adults are enrolled, actively participate and achieve in regular schools and other educational programmes regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, without discrimination, through minimisation of barriers and maximisation of resources” (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2015, 2).

per class. Furthermore, teachers often skip class or simply tell their pupils to study from the books, making it extremely difficult to understand the subject at hand. Moreover, when presented with national exams, students complained that they had not covered most of the material introduced, which made them repeat an academic year in more than one instance. However, I was also informed, by the founder of Born to Learn, that this demotivation is mostly triggered by the fact that teachers are paid very late by the government, if they are paid at all.

While one could argue that the teacher's attitudes are justified, I was privy to a horrific act. One afternoon, one of the sponsored students came to me with a lump on his arm. After repeatedly asking him what happened, he finally admitted that he had been hit in class by a teacher. Confirmed by other sources, such as the founder of the organization, I learned that this was not the first time that this happened and that it may not be the last. Hence, not only are schools' infrastructures poorly maintained but students are also demotivated and sometimes subjected to violence within the educational system. While such acts can be seen as isolated incidents due to the limited data that has been gathered on these issues, they still question the safety and efficiency of the current educational system.

Moreover, I had a conversation with a student with albinism named Adil<sup>13</sup> who is also member of the TAS Kasulu. When asked about the challenges he faces in education, he wrote to me: "Living with albinism has not made me drop out my studies, I enjoy my studies and actually I'm doing very well (academically)." His response can be analyzed in two different ways. The first part "living with albinism has not made me drop out of my studies" implies that most PWA indeed dropout from school, which has been confirmed (Ndomondo 2015, 394-395). His statement suggests that he is an exception to the rule in society. The second part of the sentence "I enjoy my studies and actually I'm doing very well (academically)" can also be interpreted in various ways. The fact that he emphasizes that he is "actually" doing well means that PWA do not usually appear to perform very well at the academic level (Ibid.).

However, adding "academically" might mean that he is simply specifying the domain he is referring to, which would be unlikely due to the fact that my question was already quite specific. The alternative is that, on a deeper level, this might imply that living with albinism is causing him to experience different challenges outside of school. Aside from this, he explained that this is not a big challenge "nowadays" because he is willing to discuss his

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<sup>13</sup> Adil does not work in the school of Born to Learn, but rather we met during my volunteering (through Born to Learn) in the Kabanga Center during the Summer of 2019.

health problems with his fellows students. Most importantly, he also participates in school sports and class discussions. Nonetheless, without being prompted, he also informed me of a number of general challenges he faces in education: “vision problems which makes me unable to see clear what is on the board, bad personal beliefs about albinism, lack of reading devices, etc.” As a closing statement during the written interview, he mentioned: “What I learnt in schools I can say, being different (in race different) it takes time for students to know your kind and your weakness and strength when they realize someone look different from others.”

Through this claim, he is referring to the difficult process of adaptation to “difference.” However, what surprised me in the conversation was that he brought up the issue of race. Does he consider himself to be a member of a different *race*? Is this something that he believes or that society has made him believe by emphasizing his differences? In light of Adil’s claim and considering the wide range of non-governmental strategies and actions directed toward including PWA and eradicating discrimination against them in society, it is surprising that not a single program addresses PWA’s identity formation. The major focus of NGOs that have been reviewed in Chapter 2 involves changing perceptions of PWA and not on changing how PWA perceive themselves. Identity formation could potentially be another factor influencing discrimination against PWA. Hence, counselling or therapy would be adequate in this setting.

Finally, based on field observations and conversations through Born to Learn, it has been identified that governmental and non-governmental organizational interventions regarding inclusive education remain ineffective within the communities that surround the school mostly triggered by socioeconomic conditions. As such, PWA face different challenges that stand in the way of being treated equally in their pursuit of education such as living within ‘temporary holding shelters’ or, as exemplified with Adil, still deal with negative perceptions in class and other challenges that stand in the way of being treated equally in their pursuit of education. Nonetheless, is it important to mention limitations as Born to Learn encompasses a small geographical focus, which makes it difficult to generalize these findings to Tanzania as a whole. Moreover, while Adil continues to face challenges in education, NGOs still do much to help in the country by offering alternative support systems for PWA (Brocco 2015, 6-9). However, more needs to be done to place more resources or follow a different path in order for governmental and non-governmental entities to provide inclusive education to the general population, and even more to PWA, as we have seen how difficult it is for people with disabilities to be included in the educational system.

### **3.2 Education and Albinism**

Even though inclusive education remains ineffective in the northern region of Tanzania mainly due to socioeconomic consequences, governmental and non-governmental organizations have emphasized this educational approach as a means of reducing stigma, discrimination and violence against PWA and continue to do so. Within this section, I will analyze another way in which this educational approach is limited, mainly by exploring deep-rooted underlying perceptions of albinism. This will be done by interviewing teacher's working in Born to Learn, and, on the one hand, this will shed light on the communities' perceptions of albinism, and on the other hand, I will test if such educated participants hold negative beliefs or anxieties against PWA. Hence, in this section, I will examine to what extent this approach has changed the perceptions of PWA by asking my participants the following question: "Is education enough to eradicate violence, discrimination, and stigma of albinos in Tanzania?"

When asked if the actions undertaken by governmental and non-governmental actors regarding education were enough to change perceptions of albinism, Abdul, a social worker in Born to Learn, answered that "education and awareness are not the answer, you can bring awareness, but people will find another way to do this." He claimed that as someone born and raised in Dar es Salaam, mistreatment of PWA was a widespread practice that is ingrained in society. In his opinion, this is related to the fact that some people see albinism as a way to get rich by spiritual means because having a child with albinism can be seen as a "good luck" charm. He emphasized that education is not the answer, based on some painful experiences he lived through when growing up, stating that: "I was a street kid. In Dar es Salaam I knew a girl with a little baby, and I was helping her. The baby had albinism. Two men came and asked for the baby, and the girl refused to give her to them. I tried to help the girl, but they took the baby. Later we found out that the baby was dead. You experience many things in the street all the time."

After this incident, Abdul continued to search and ask about what happened and why this baby was kidnapped and killed. Looking for answers, he claims that he came across many more similar cases in which babies with albinism were killed and their body parts were used for their "special powers." Importantly, he indicated that many of the perpetrators had an education. Thus, he emphasized how these acts are superstitious, which belongs to the world of traditional healers and supernatural powers. In his opinion, education is not the key to combat this. Furthermore, during his years of studies and in the jobs he had in various

centers with people with disabilities, which also have PWA, he learned that many children with albinism are abandoned. Upon examining reports and speaking with his co-workers, he learned that even wealthy and educated families abandon their children. Hence, according to him, awareness and education are not changing perceptions of albinism in Tanzania.

The second participant who responded to my question was Gabriel, a chess teacher in Born to Learn. Although he emphasized the crucial role of education in changing perceptions of albinism, he also addressed the necessity of including traditional doctors in this process. He similarly believes that education alone will not deal with the source of the problem, which is violence and discrimination against PWA. Nonetheless, he claims that change takes time, claiming that “kids are going to keep crying when they see their first albino” and that it is about being different, with regard to the contrast of being a White child within a Black society. He argues that even though education will not eradicate this problem, developing critical thinking tools is essential to reducing discrimination and violence against albinos, as it provides people with the means to scrutinize information, even if traditional doctors continue to spread certain ideas about PWA.

He is convinced that critically approaching traditional doctors through governmental or non-governmental organizations will reduce discrimination and violence against PWA but will not necessarily eradicate the problem. This is because he views that spiritual beliefs of traditional doctors are as powerful as religions, such as Catholicism or Judaism. He claims that this entails believing in a greater power pertaining to a different reality, thereby representing a different ontology. As a consequence, he claims that it is difficult to challenge religious beliefs solely through education. However, he also expects that in the long term, traditional doctors will disappear. In fact, his argumentation is in line with the modernization hypothesis, which suggests that societies are placed on a trajectory that will enable them to “modernize,” mainly by rejecting their past (Weber 1946). Hence, he believes that traditions evolve and that new generations, through education and globalization, will do away with such practices, so that eventually discrimination and violence against albinos will disappear as traditional doctors will disappear too.

Another interviewee who reflected on the question of whether education is enough to eradicate discrimination, stigma and violence against PWA is Chilemba, a science teacher in Born to Learn. Although he claimed that the government is doing a good job in tackling this issue, discrimination continues because “people believe so much in this superstition.” He claims that both educated and uneducated people “fall” for such ideas. On the one hand, he believes that uneducated people believe in this due to their lack of education. On the other

hand, he indicates that educated people discriminate or use violence against PWA due to their culture or traditions. He also emphasizes the influential role of traditional doctors, claiming for instance: “In some areas, people are dying from malaria (just simple malaria). You know why? When a person feels a headache, they don’t go to the hospital, they go to the witch doctor. The witch doctor doesn’t know malaria. And he thinks: Oh! maybe your friend has done something bad to you, and this is why you have malaria, so please be careful with your friend.”

Here, Chilemba explains the role of traditional doctors, indicating that they are spreading wrong information (i.e. having malaria because a friend has cursed you), while further describing how the rest of the community deeply trusts their judgment. He also compares the role of traditional doctors with religion, and along such lines, indicates that countering these beliefs is nearly impossible, even for those who are educated: “I have a degree, I am a teacher, and I trust in Jesus, and if you tell me Jesus is just the Bible, I will never understand you; that is what is happening here.” Thus, following his argument, changing perceptions of PWA by promoting education is not enough. He believes that alternative factors influence these beliefs, such as culture, tradition and religion, which education alone cannot tackle to end discrimination, stigma and violence against PWA.

The fourth participant is Maria, the Spanish doctor mentioned earlier. Although Maria is not a local, I wanted to add an external perspective on this issue. When asked if education is enough to eradicate violence, discrimination, and stigma against albinos in Tanzania, she answered the following:

“They try to justify the fact that a black child is born white, by focusing on the great powers that this could bring and that maybe because of this they bring good luck, and that is why they kill them because their body parts bring luck. They cut off arms also, they don’t only kill them. And why an albino? There can be many explanations, but it is about explaining the difference, how can two black people have a white child.”  
(Fieldnotes)

Maria touches upon the question of difference and how this is explained in the Tanzanian context by referring to supernatural beliefs about alternative powers that bring good luck and incentivize the killings or attacks on such individuals. Maria claims, based on her many travels and work throughout African countries, that education alone is not enough to change people’s perceptions of albinism because certain beliefs about albinos are deeply ingrained in society. This brings her to conclude that education alone is not the answer and that the current governmental and non-governmental approach should address the problem more holistically, not by solely focusing on raising awareness or providing inclusive education.

Upon asking each of these participants if they believe that education is enough to tackle this problem in Tanzania, I noticed that most of them used generalizations regarding the superstitious nature of the traditional doctors' practices, likely deriving from the interviewees' Christian background. Despite this possible bias, all of them have in common the shared view that education alone and the way it is established in a country, will not enable it to address the crux of the issue.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to answer the following sub-question: What are the limitations of the current educational approach in tackling violence and discrimination against PWA in Tanzania? To do so, this chapter has analyzed the effectiveness of governmental and non-governmental policies and interventions through the case study Born to Learn and explored the extent to which they have changed perceptions of albinism based on various interviews that were conducted to the teachers in Born to Learn.

Firstly, the findings indicate that the educational approach is limited since inclusive education is not reaching certain communities mainly triggered by socioeconomic circumstances. This conclusion has been reached by analyzing the purpose and role of Born to Learn, in addition to observations and informal conversations with students from the school. This was further supplemented with an exchange I had with Adil. If Born to Learn did not exist, entire families would remain unable to afford an education for their children. Furthermore, through conversations with various students attending governmental schools, the ineffectiveness of the teaching system can be observed, and students may occasionally suffer from violence within the classroom. Furthermore, I have explained how Born to Learn does not include people with albinism in the school mainly due to the fact that children with albinism live within 'temporary holding shelters', mostly isolated from society, which challenges their access to education. Finally, Adil explained, both directly and indirectly, how students with albinism are still excluded and discriminated against within this system.

Secondly, the educational approach is also limited due to the fact that it is not entirely changing perceptions of albinism in practice. In answer to the question of whether education would be sufficient in eradicating violence and discrimination against PWA, all participants responded that education alone was not enough and that underlying powers and occult perceptions influence such practices. Different participants exemplify these as Abdul explains how educated and wealthy businessmen commit violent acts against PWA and Chilemba also



points out the influential role of traditional doctors in certain communities. As previously mentioned, participants may rely on generalizations. Their experiences and claims about the limitations of the educational system in tackling stigma and violence against PWA in Tanzania are taken as the first step to exploring why education is not enough to eradicate this problem.

Overall, this chapter has introduced and analyzed the limitations of governmental and non-governmental organizations' approach to albinism in Tanzania. While this approach might be ineffective in specific communities and limited by the inability to change perceptions of albinism entirely, this has been reduced to a small geographical area (Northern region of Tanzania, more specifically around the communities of Newlands and Kikavu). However, even if ineffective, the continuous focus on this method implies that such actors strongly believe that it will indeed change people's perceptions of PWA. As such, the next chapter investigates the reasons why the educational approach is unable to entirely change people's perspectives on albinism based on this perception of an ontological difference of individuals with albinism in the North of Tanzania.

## **Chapter 4: Ontological Perceptions of Albinism in Tanzania**

Using Imafidon's theory on ontologies in Africa and albinism, this chapter aims at answering the following sub-question: Is there a persisting ontological difference in how PWA are perceived in Tanzania. The first section surveys the brutality of the attacks on PWA before addressing the ontological perceptions that influence PWA in the second section.

### **4.1 Attacks Against PWA and the Media**

As introduced in the literature review, Imafidon (2017) defines "Otherness" as "the quality of being different, unusual, or alien from the conscious self or a particular cultural orientation" (Imafidon 2017, 165). Although African scholars agree on the all-inclusive nature of African ontology, Imafidon indicates that there are a number of persons excluded from this idea based on certain perceptions of their unusual nature. While these vary from community to community, this section investigates whether this perspective can be applied to how PWA are viewed in Tanzanian society. Furthermore, the attacks against these individuals are analyzed in light of Imafidon's claim that the ethical basis of the "Otherness" of albinos may lead to such violence.

Discrimination and stigmatization of PWA have been present in Tanzania for a long time, triggered by perceptions and fears of the unknown (Reimer-Kirkham et al. 2019, 755). The UN Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of Human Rights by Persons with Albinism, Ikponwosa Ero, who grew up with albinism in Africa, exemplifies this: "Being hypervisible in a context where the majority did not understand albinism but believed in negative superstitions about it caused great anxiety in my mind. ...never in my deepest fears did I imagine that things would become worse. That a near pan-African scale of violence would be meted out to persons with albinism" (Taylor, Bradbury-Jones, and Lund 2019, 15).

Recorded attacks on PWA commonly entail mutilation, blood extraction, hair and organ removal and murder by removing all body parts for witchcraft (Ibid.). These body parts are often believed to bring good luck, good fortune, wealth and a higher social status, which continues to influence the mistreatment of PWA in the country (Ibid.). However, murder does not only end by taking the life of a person, as even when the body is buried, grave robberies are common as the dead body parts of albinos are used for their "great powers." Furthermore, most of the recorded murders are those of newborns or children with albinism, as it is believed that the innocence and purity of the victims and the screams they emit during their mutilation enhances the power of the outcome of the ritual performed (Ibid., 16). Two well-

known cases include the dismemberment of Yohana, a newborn, and Pendo, a fifteen-year-old girl who was attacked while with her family, whereby she lost her right arm (Ibid.).<sup>14</sup>

While explanations and the causes of these attacks are difficult to explain by experts, what characterizes them is the brutality within which they are carried out, which dehumanizes PWA. This is shown in the terminology and descriptions that are used in news articles' headlines, such as "Tanzania's Albino Community: Killed Like Animals," which feeds into this idea as the extreme violence that occurs during the murders of PWA is unprecedented (BBC News 2014). In this article, examples of PWA that have been hacked to death, targeted for their hair or had their bodies stolen from their graves, are provided. Triggered by these horrendous acts, the article also shows a woman with albinism during an event that was dedicated to fighting for the rights of PWA, who was singing: "We're being killed like animals. Please pray for us" (Ibid.). The article "Living in Fear: Tanzania's Albinos" covers additional cases, including the mutilation and subsequent death of a seven-month-old baby and that of an adult, Nyerere Rutahiro, who was murdered while at home with his wife (BBC news 2008). His spouse explains how, suddenly, a group of men burst into their house and started to hack Nyerere's arms and legs while shouting "we want your legs" repeatedly (Ibid.).

In a short documentary published by the UN in 2009, "Deadly Hunt: Albinos in Tanzania," 28-year-old Miriam, an albino, explains the horrific and traumatic attack she experienced. While in her home, two men entered and started mutilating her arms with machetes. Although she miraculously survived, she lost both her arms and suffered from a miscarriage, as she had been pregnant at the time. As she explains her story, she claims, "I was being slaughtered like a goat" (UN 2009). Hence, many victims experience similar vicious attacks and most that do not survive are found with a hole in their necks that was used to drain their blood (Ntetema 2008). Furthermore, these violent episodes also affect their families or loved ones, as they are not only in shock at the state of the bodies but must also bury them in a place where they cannot be stolen (Ntetema 2008).

Finally, the attacks and murders discussed above originally appeared to be inexplicable and represent a brutal pattern of violence among the victims. In fact, the animal-like treatment that the victims or their family members report represents the dehumanization of PWA. The brutality of these killings can be interpreted in light of Imafidon's argument,

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<sup>14</sup> "Baby Yohana who was taken as attackers slashed his mother's face; his dismembered body was found two days later. Pendo, 15, who was attacked by three men with machetes whilst eating with her family and lost her right arm" (Taylor, Bradbury-Jones, and Lund 2019, 16).

especially if PWA are perceived as being ontologically different in the Tanzanian consciousness, in that they are not seen as human beings. Based on Habermas's work, the author believes that "the ethical point of view concerns what is good for a group of persons in a particular tradition or way of life" (Imafidon 2017, 170).

As has been illustrated, the ethical point of view to be found in African societies is based on maintaining harmony and unity among socially-accepted beings in order to survive (Imafidon 2017, 169). In Tanzania, it seems that PWA are often seen as a different ontological entity and therefore may run the risk of being categorized as an "Other." In other words, they are not socially accepted beings and are seen as threatening to the communal harmony explained above. Within this context, this process of "Othering" leads to their dehumanization, which provides a basis upon which to interpret the viciousness of the attacks and killings analyzed above.

## **4.2 Education and an Ontological Difference**

While media reports may present certain cases concerning the mistreatment of PWA, the question is if this framing of dehumanization also describes everyday situations. This section therefore focuses on this particular existence of the ontological difference of PWA in the Tanzanian society in practice. In order to do so, different interviews have been conducted and first-hand observations will arguably demonstrate how this ontological question is dealt with in practice. Moreover, the extent to which education may be able to address perceptions of an ontological difference is examined.

In order to do so, three levels of analysis are performed. Firstly, this section examines how PWA are treated in the social context through field observations during a sports event, specifically the Kilimanjaro Marathon. Secondly, the terms used by people indicate how PWA are perceived as a different ontological entity by those living in the northern region of Tanzania. Thirdly, by looking into the mixed perceptions of albinism of my educated participants and the perceived involvement of rich and educated businessmen in the mistreatment of PWA, this chapter observes how different ontologies limit the governmental and non-governmental approach to tackle discrimination and violence against PWA through education.

Every year, the government organizes the Kilimanjaro Marathon in Moshi, Tanzania. It is a massive event, which took place March 1, 2020, where people come from different places around the world to run or to watch the marathon. I attended this marathon and I went

to see the people who crossed the finish line. Once the run ended, different singers and dancers performed on a stage. In between these performances, various artists organized competitions in which people from the audience were invited on stage.

One of them was a rapping competition, whereby some participants had the opportunity to rap in front of the audience. If the audience liked it, they would shout “stay” and if they did not, they would yell “leave” in Swahili. Thus, it would be clear if and when the audience liked someone. One of the participants was a person with albinism and his performance was not that good, which can be seen in that there was an awkward silence in the audience when he finished his rap. They finally decided to let him stay, although there was much less enthusiasm in doing so than there was with the other participants. I realized that he was not being treated as equal and that people felt uncomfortable admitting that his performance was “not good.” Hence, it appears that this “Otherness” in perceiving PWA is alive in society and that people are afraid of being judged for “discriminating” against such individuals. However, I believe that the choice to let him stay without merit means that he is not being treated as an equal member of society.

As previously discussed, there is a pattern of referring to PWA as inhuman, for instance, by constantly describing them as ghosts or animals. Various interviews and observations during my field research confirmed this fact, but one interview, in particular, stands out. One of the teachers I interviewed in Born to Learn, Catherine, explained to me what her mother told her about PWA in her village: “The problem is about the difference. My mom told me people with albinism don’t die; they disappear. In the village, we have people with albinism, and after some years, they disappear, ‘they just get lost’, like ghosts.” In fact, the first time she saw a boy with albinism, she explained that she “cried so much” and went to her mother. Then, she began to think of him like a “mzungu [White person] speaking Swahili.” While other participants confirmed this ontological difference in different ways, her personal story brought me closer to understanding the origin of the inhuman terminologies surrounding PWA that were recurring. Moreover, Farida, another kindergarten teacher at Born to Learn, explained that she used to think that PWA never died:

“While we were growing up, we believed that people with albinism never died because we went to school together from primary to secondary school then after high-school, people, they scatter. They go to different towns, some marry, you don’t get in touch easy...So, for example in our village, we had children with albinism, but we never saw them later after high school.” (Fieldnotes)

What Farida explains is that all the children with albinism in her community were not seen after high school. This triggered the widespread belief that PWA do not die but that they disappear because she and other members of her community never attended or saw any funerals of PWA. It was only later when the killings began being reported in the media that they realized what happened to them: “Later in the media, when they speak about the killings. The body parts are missing...So at that part, we started thinking maybe they were taken away or being killed. Before we never thought of something like that.” (interlocutor, dd./fiedlnotes)

Even though the belief that PWA do not die became less prevalent when the community understood what had happened to them, references to PWA as “ghosts” or the use of any other terms with supernatural connotations is still common amongst locals. As demonstrated by the participants during my field research, these terminologies refer to what Imafidon identifies as the “Other,” categorizing PWAs as a different ontological entity. In addition, what is particular and very interesting in the abovementioned responses of the two kindergarten teachers is that without being prompted, they voluntarily discussed PWA. In both cases, they felt that it was necessary to speak about how PWA are framed using references to supernatural phenomena, thereby indicating that these are common perceptions in their communities. This further strengthens my analysis, providing a strong basis that confirms what Elvis Imafidon has suggested: namely, that perceptions of albinism reflect the existence of different ontologies in local communities in Tanzania.

Various participants spoke about the mixed explanations and perceptions that people have when speaking of PWA. For instance, although a mother may know that her child’s albinism is a biological disease, she may simultaneously be convinced that the cause of having this albino child is due to bad luck (e.g., a curse). The social worker Abdul also explained how supernatural explanations play a huge role in people’s perceptions of PWA, even if they know that this is a biological condition.

To better illustrate this idea, I discuss the mixed-knowledge (biological and supernatural explanations) and perceptions that my participants have about PWA, mainly focusing on the educated teachers working in the school. All the teachers that I interviewed knew that albinism is as a disease and were aware of its medical consequences. Nonetheless, despite having this knowledge, there were moments during the interviews of perceived anxieties and uncomfortable pauses that occurred when they were confronted with provoking questions about albinism.

There are two cases in which these anxieties are revealed, particularly when asked: “What would you do if you were to have a child with albinism?” Chilemba, the science

teacher in the school, answered: “I wouldn’t be happy, but I would take care of the baby.” Even though he was aware of what albinism is and mentioned on various occasions that they are “normal people like us”, only with a genetic disease, I perceived that he had problems with the idea of having a child with albinism of his own. He added that “I would accept it, but I would feel bad, because, for example, people will talk about the baby and look at it on the streets.” As can be observed, although he did not mention perceiving PWA as ghosts or invoke any supernatural references, his answers connote the feelings described by Imafidon, when human beings encounter different ontologies. Indeed, he explains that “these instances point to a subtle but strongly entrenched feeling and uneasiness in human consciousness when it experiences something different from the ordinary” (Imafidon 2017, 164). Another example in which a participant expressed uneasiness when asked about having a child with albinism was Farida, the kindergarten teacher: “For a moment before everything came to light, I would be scared because they talk ill about them. But after everything is out, I will appreciate him.”

Before answering, Farida took a long pause, as she seemed unsettled by the question. Further analyzing her answers in light of the existence of different ontologies, I realized that being scared of having a child based on other people’s judgments can be seen as an expression of anxiety and nervousness toward something different which is, in this case, a baby with albinism. It is also important to emphasize that she uses the word “appreciate” and not “accept,” as the former takes time and refers to one being grateful with regard to specific actions or the qualities of a person. On the other hand, acceptance refers to a stronger willingness to love or care for someone, no matter his or her circumstances or condition. Hence, it seemed odd to say “I will appreciate him,” as she uses a future tense, thereby implying that this will not happen automatically.

These uncertainties and anxieties about accepting your child, when he or she has albinism, suggest certain negative perceptions ingrained in Farida's consciousness in how she views PWA. Otherwise, this hesitation in accepting her own child would not exist. Of course, there may be many factors influencing this perception, such as the horrendous reports on the killings and mutilations of PWA. Nonetheless, I aim to demonstrate how these differences in how one perceives PWA, especially in ontological terms, are present in the educated sector of the population. In fact, even educated businessmen are perceived to do these practices, which was confirmed by Moses. He explained that it is about status, about getting more money, even if you are already rich. Interestingly, he claimed that:

“It also goes back to the fact that maybe they don’t even believe they are rich in the first place because of their hard work or because of their education; they believe they are rich because of their family history, other powers that have nothing to do with their own efforts; all this contributes to rich educated people getting involved even more with these alternative ways of getting money, believing that parts of albinos bring wealth and good luck.” (Fieldnotes)

This perception of the involvement of rich educated businessman in these practices and in treating PWA as a means of acquiring more money emphasizes the perception of an ontological difference, since PWA are not seen as fellow human beings in this context. Furthermore, the fact that educated teachers have mixed perceptions and feelings about albinos can be seen in that they are aware that albinism is as a genetic disease but still feel anxious and uneasy when confronted with the idea of having such a child themselves. This brings into question the real impact of education in overcoming stigma, discrimination or violence against PWA.

To summarize, within this section, the existence of an ontological difference in Tanzanian society’s perception of PWA has been determined and it has become apparent that different ontologies persist irrespective of the educational approach being used to tackle discrimination against such individuals. Through first-hand observations during a massive event, the Kilimanjaro Marathon, it has been seen that individuals with albinism are not treated similarly to other members of society. Moreover, by exploring and further understanding how meanings are made from the terminology used to categorize PWA as ghosts or entities that do not die, it has been illustrated that these non-human classifications are in line with what Imafidon terms an “ontological difference.” Finally, the interviewed teachers’ mixed perceptions of albinism as both genetic and supernatural and the participation of educated businessman in committing violence against PWA brings into question the extent to which education plays a role in reducing stigma and discrimination against PWA.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to answer the following sub-question: Is there a persisting ontological difference in how PWA are perceived in Tanzania? The existence of an ontological difference has been suggested by Imafidon’s theory on ontology in two different domains. Firstly, this chapter has analyzed the media’s portrayal of the attacks committed against PWA. Secondly, through various field observations and interviews, the extent to which education may be able to address perceptions of an ontological difference has been addressed.



On the one hand, the bloody attacks analyzed in the media, which commonly entail mutilation, organ removal, blood extraction, and even grave robberies, has been discussed in light of Imafidon's theory. Within this theory, brutal killings have been triggered by the view of PWA as a different ontological entity, which enables their dehumanization and subsequent identification as a threat to the survival of societies in northern Tanzanian communities.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the ethical point of view discussed by Imafidon sustains and justifies the killings and stigmatization of PWA. On the other hand, this chapter has further analyzed if this ontological difference is actually practiced within the north of the Kilimanjaro region. To do so, three levels of analysis were performed through observations that were made during the Kilimanjaro Marathon, an assessment of the local terminologies used and the mixed perception of albinism held by the educated participants.

Altogether, findings reveal several points that may prove the existence of an ontological difference in perceiving individuals with albinism. Firstly, during the Kilimanjaro Marathon, I noted that PWA are not treated as equals within society, as observed through the unfair scoring of a singing contest. Secondly, upon analyzing interviews, it has been determined that claims such as those which indicate that PWA do not die or disappear or that they are ghosts is indicative of how local terminologies dehumanize and strengthen the existence of an ontological difference through non-human beliefs among certain communities. Thirdly, genetic and supernatural perceptions about individuals with albinism held by my educated participants and the perceived participation of businessmen in the perpetration of violence against PWA sheds light on the existence of ontological perceptions of albinism in Tanzania. Most importantly, it illustrates how education is unable to tackle this ontological difference. The next chapter will be dedicated to the discussion and conclusion of this thesis, in which findings will be analyzed and concluding arguments will be presented.

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<sup>15</sup> While the author speaks about African traditions and communities in general and his point has been proven within the geographical scope of this study, this should not mean that it applies to all African contexts.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Discussion**

This research has presented how education addresses perceptions of albinism in Northern Tanzania and whether this educational approach can influence the existence of perceiving PWA as a different ontological entity. The main findings have shed light on governmental and non-governmental policies and interventions in tackling stigma and discrimination against PWA. Most importantly, they have proven that PWA are perceived as a different ontological entity, which limits this educational approach. Indeed, one could argue that the limitations of the educational approach in combating stigma and discrimination against PWA are due to the ineffectiveness of such policies and interventions in the first place. This has been analyzed in Chapter 3, in which the case study of Born to Learn shows how inclusive education, mostly due to the socioeconomic conditions of the surrounding communities, remain ineffective in practice. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 3, it is important to state here that the governmental educational approach is also limited by the lack of biology classes that address albinism in the school's curricula.

In light of the ineffectiveness of the educational approach, one could argue that the existence of perceptions of an ontological difference is not the decisive factor in limiting this approach and that governments and NGOs need more time to implement and reinforce such actions. Nonetheless, even if inclusive education would be implemented more effectively and could potentially improve perceptions of albinism in the country, the analysis of interviews has proven that educated people also harm PWA. As is argued in Chapter 4, this is caused by the perception of albinos as another ontological entity, which seems to justify such violent practices. Thus, even if education were to be more effective in the northern region of Tanzania, possibly even changing people's perceptions of albinism, it will not eradicate the problem. Moreover, even the most educated sector of the Tanzanian population, such as teachers, have become anxious and engage in unconscious discriminatory behavior when speaking about PWA.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework of this thesis has been mostly based on the work of one author, which is Elvis Imafidon. As a result, the findings may seem based on having taken for granted the author's theoretical assumptions. These mainly include arguments based on "the all-inclusive nature of African communities" and "the ethical point of view in African traditions." While Imafidon bases these claims on the works of prominent

authors of African ontology and African ethics, little research has been done on this approach in practice. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to critically investigate whether Imafidon's claims apply to the northern region of Tanzania. More specifically, I assessed whether the all-inclusive nature of African communities and the ethical point of view he discussed are used to explain the exclusion and mistreatment of PWA, mainly based on the idea of an ontological difference. These have been useful and contributed to the analysis of the killings, as shown in the media.

In fact, the brutality and dehumanization that this has entailed have been understood through the abovementioned ethical point of view, which seems to justify and sustain their mistreatment due to their allegedly unusual nature and are perceived as a threat to communal harmony. Nonetheless, while Imafidon's approach has been used as a guide to understanding perceptions of albinism, this does not mean that this applies to all communities and traditions throughout the African continent. While Imafidon provides an entirely new understanding of albinism, I believe it is most important to critically approach and apply his findings to the case study being researched as the author relies on many generalizations, which can lead to the essentialization of the African continent.

Moreover, it is important to revisit findings in light of the COVID-19 methodical limitations of this research. Firstly, traditional doctors' perspectives are missing, which could have shed light on different data, such as the number of people who visit them, the credibility and influence they have on society or how many traditional doctors spread inaccurate beliefs about individuals with albinism. This information could have been useful to address in order to investigate, for instance, the source of the outbreak of violence against PWA and the extent to which ontological perceptions are derived from witchcraft. Also, my inability to re-visit the Kabanga Center during my three-month-long internship and field research affected the number of observations and interviews with PWA that I could do. However, during the short time in which I was volunteering during the summer of 2019, I was already able to observe how discrimination and violence against PWA, in addition to the perception of an ontological difference, is a social construct. This is because the center serves as a space where PWA and others without it live and interact together, where discrimination and violence are nowhere to be found.

Overall, despite the limitations presented above, I believe that the findings and concluding arguments presented during this thesis are still of value. I have provided an in-depth analysis of the data gathered during my field research within a limited geographical scope, which provides more specific and precise conclusions. While this is the case, this

thesis aims to enable a new understanding of albinism, which could have implications for further governmental and non-governmental interventions. In the conclusion, I further summarize and interpret my findings in light of the broader academic debate in which this research occurs.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This research has aimed to answer the following research question: **How does education address people's perspectives on albinism in Tanzania and to what extent can education influence the perception of an ontological difference of individuals with albinism?** Through this thesis, I have provided the reader with an overview of the various policies and interventions enacted by governmental and non-governmental organizations in changing perceptions of albinos in Tanzania. Through the case study of Born to Learn, I have analyzed how these interventions remain ineffective in the northern region of Kilimanjaro. Nonetheless, the continuous focus on education as a means of reducing discrimination against PWA over the past twenty years proves how governments and non-profit organizations believe that education is an essential part of this process. Hence, through various interviews, the real impact of education on changing the perceptions of individuals with albinism has been analyzed. The outcome of these interviews proves that, while education is important, underlying forces and complexities are limiting the effectiveness of this educational approach. These underlying forces, as investigated in Chapter 4, translate into the perception of PWA as a different ontological entity. As proven through Imafidon's understanding and theory of different ontologies in Africa, the perception of different ontologies has shed light on the brutality of attacks and killings against PWA in Tanzania and may explain why education alone has and will not eradicate the problem.

The educational approach, as reviewed in Chapter 2, can be categorized into two perspectives. The first one encompasses the idea of inclusive education, whereby efforts were made to include PWA within the educational system in order to provide them with the same opportunities in society. These policies or interventions have been enacted by both governmental and non-governmental organizations through various actions. On the one hand, the government released the National Strategy on Inclusive Education for 2008 until 2017 and 2018 until 2021 and the Education Sector Development Plan for the time period of 2016/17 until 2020/21. On the other hand, NGOs enacted the following programs: Education and Support (UTSS), the Education Scholarship Program (Standing Voice) and the Program

on Inclusive Education (TAS). The second perspective pertains to NGOs' aim to educate the community through various awareness and advocacy programs to inform people about albinism as a genetic disease and eradicate false beliefs about PWA.

In light of the existence of an ontological difference, both educational perspectives' attempts to reduce discrimination and violence against PWA in Tanzania are limited. As analyzed in Chapter 4, PWA are seen to embody the "Other" in the consciousness of Tanzanian society. Hence, such an ontological ideology is maintained by the ethical point of view in African traditions. This view does not only sustain but leads to mistreatment and violence against people with albinism in the country, as Imafidon explains, "threatening or isolating another from the community of beings is permissible, insofar [as] it protects the status quo" (Imafidon 2017, 164). Hence, through Imafidon's theory of albinism, it has been possible to explain the violent killings and attacks against PWA in Tanzania. This shows how PWA are perceived as a different ontological entity, which is deeply rooted in society and therefore difficult to change through the abovementioned educational policies and interventions.

This has been exemplified in various occasions as teachers have experienced anxiety when speaking about PWA and educated businessmen have participated in the killing of PWA, among others. Furthermore, policies and interventions regarding education that is inclusive of PWA have not eradicated discrimination and violence as some of the educated members of the population can be seen to hold on to particular (spiritual) perceptions, thereby forcing many PWA to live in isolation from society. The ontological distinction and ethical point of view explain why, despite becoming more educated, discrimination and violence against PWA continue because they are not seen as human beings but rather as a threat to the community.

By analyzing the limitations of the governmental and non-governmental educational approach in tackling discrimination and violence against PWA, it has been observed that perceptions of albinism are not entirely changing due to the persistence of this ontological difference. Following Imafidon's theory on ontology and albinism in Africa, this thesis has been able to identify, through field research, how these ontologies are present and persistent in the consciousness of the educated and uneducated in Tanzania. In addition, how the ethical point of view sustains discrimination and violence against PWA in the country has been analyzed. Hence, overcoming this ontological difference is a crucial step toward improving perceptions of albinos since education does not address the crux of the problem.

While concluding arguments have been stated, findings are meant to be taken as a first step in grasping the problematic perceptions of albinism and governmental and non-governmental actors' ability to overcome these ontological perceptions. Hence, I believe that this study has shed light on a new approach in terms of how perceptions of albinism can be studied and tackled in the future. However, these conclusions lead to additional questions. For instance, how deep-rooted are these perceptions of albinism in Tanzanian society? What policies and interventions should be enacted in order to change them? If I were to propose a solution to this issue, it would be that education in Tanzania needs an ontological turn, which means that understanding and teaching should be done from the standpoint of albinos and society should be looked at from that perspective. However, before doing so, governmental and non-governmental organizations must acknowledge the existence of these ontological perceptions in the first place.

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