

Summary of thesis projectⁱ

‘Fatal Beliefs: the Spread and Characteristics of Attacks on Persons with Albinism in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia’

This research was aimed at gaining insights into what characterized attacks on persons with albinism in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia from 2000 through 2024. While previous research has focused on the attacks on persons with albinism in Tanzania, studies about the attacks in Malawi and Zambia have been scarce. Gaining insight into the concentration of attacks could allow for more targeted prevention.

Using data from Under the Same Sun (UTSS) and Africa Albinism Network (AAN) which consists of information on these attacks during the research period, a total of 265 cases were selected and analyzed. The research combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. Hypotheses regarding the temporal and geographical dispersion of the attacks, the relation between victim gender and type of attack, and the influence of victim- and crime characteristics on a fatal outcome of the attack were tested with statistical analyses. Furthermore, the motives for the attacks were explored through textual analyses.

The available information shows that the attacks on persons with albinism were concentrated in the rural regions in Tanzania and Malawi and in the urbanized districts of Malawi. Men were more often victims of murder and assault, and women were more often victims of rape. Nevertheless, gender differences in the type of crime were overall not significant. To see which factors could predict a fatal outcome of an attack, different factors were investigated, including victim characteristics (gender, age and relation to offender), the presence of multiple offenders and the country the attack occurred in. None showed a significant effect in predicting a fatal outcome. Whether or not a victim was mutilated was by far the most significant predictor for a fatal outcome.

Future research can be directed towards the role gender plays in victimization of attacks on persons with albinism, while also recommending using a bigger dataset for the analyses. The insights regarding the geographical concentration of these attacks can be used to direct awareness campaigns to these specific locations and could be centered around spreading knowledge about the genetic cause of albinism and discouraging (future) offenders of attacking people with albinism.

ⁱ *The thesis project was completed by Bieke Vissers as fulfillment of her MSc degree in Criminology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Thesis supervisor: dr. Anneke Koning.*