

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT SERVICES ON DEPRESSION REDUCTION OF PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM IN RWANDA. A CASE OF HEALTH ALERTS ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Individuals living with albinism face unique challenges, including living situation, socioeconomic status, and the effectiveness of the health education on their mental well-being. Understanding the interplay of these factors and their impact on depression is crucial for developing targeted intervention and support systems for this vulnerable population. This study explored the complex relationship between these variables to improve the mental health outcomes of individuals with albinism in Rwanda. This study was guided by three specific objectives: To determine the prevalence of depression among people living with albinism in Rwanda. To determine factors associated with depression among people living with albinism in Rwanda and to investigate the effectiveness of health educational sessions in increasing knowledge about depression among people living with albinism in Rwanda. The mixed methods study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to assess the prevalence and factors associated with depression among people living with albinism in Rwanda from September 2023, utilizing a survey questionnaire that included independent variables such as gender, age, religion, place of residence, socio-economic category, parental situation (living with parents or orphans), and health risk factors, including suicidal ideation. In addition, qualitative data were collected through individual interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of health education interventions targeting depression within the study population. Logistic regression models were employed for the quantitative analyses to identify factors associated with depression. In the study involving 75 study population, all individuals were considered as respondents using census sampling technique and these were the people living with albinism beneficiaries of the Health Alerts Organization, a Rwandan non-profit organization. Most were young, female, and faced various life challenges. A significant majority experienced depression (69.33%), with occupation, literacy, socio-economic category, and facing challenges showing associations in bivariate analysis. Multivariate analysis revealed that being in socio-economic category III was protective against depression (OR 0.11) while facing challenges substantially increased the odds (OR 48.15). Our study revealed a high prevalence of depression among individuals, particularly those dealing with life challenges. Occupation, literacy, socio-economic status, and challenges were linked to depression in our analysis. Socio-economic category III seemed protective, while challenges significantly increased risk. These findings emphasize the necessity for tailored interventions and support for mental health disparities, especially among vulnerable populations facing adversity. This study holds a significant importance for associations supporting individuals with albinism, providing insights into their mental health issues and specific support needs. Counsellors benefit from a clearer understanding of the psychological challenges faced by this group. Findings can aid the Ministry of Health in planning and potential legislation to address mental health concerns among individuals with albinism, while Ministry of Local Government can use them to develop a national social protection policy and enhance public awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with albinism.

Keywords: Albinism, Depression, Mental health, Socioeconomic status and Health education, Rwanda

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BACKGROUND

Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses in the world, affecting about 300 million people of all ages (WHO, 2022). Because depression affects 12–15% of people at any one time, according to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, it is a public health concern (fhi.no, 2019). Depression may become a serious medical issue if it persists for an extended period of time or if it is moderately to extremely acute. Depression is the leading cause of sickness burden globally, and its prevalence is rising, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021). Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a measure of poor health that contributes 2.5% of the World's Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYS). Additionally, it has been connected to reduced productivity at work, ischemic heart disease, and suicide (Ferrari, 2023). Depression and suicide are related. Nearly 800,000 individuals worldwide lose their lives to suicide each year (WHO, 2019). According to WHO (2020), depression shortens the number of years that a person may lead a healthy life and produces connected issues that impact not just the depressed individual and their family but also the world economy.

There is a significant risk of exposure to several depressive risk factors globally because individuals with albinism face discrimination, stigma, and social isolation (Ikponwosa Ero, Samer Muscati, 2021). Individuals who are albino see themselves as different from other Africans, not as similar to other Africans (Social prejudice against persons with albinism, 2018). School is challenging for young people with albinism because of a variety of unwelcoming behaviours from classmates and instructors. 10% of Tanzanians pursue secondary education, contributing to the country's growing analphabet population and making it more challenging for them to access resources and knowledge that might improve their everyday life.

The Africa Albinism Network states that prejudice against people with albinism still occurs as a consequence of their condition. This is particularly true for young people living in rural areas, who see firsthand how the stigma associated with being albino inhibits them from going to school and from integrating into society, both of which have a detrimental effect on their mental health (Jordan M., 2020). People with albinism who experience maltreatment suffer greatly from mental health issues as a result of their delusions that they may return to a life of ease, prosperity, or luck. As a result, they are targeted by local practitioners, often known as witchdoctors, who perform rituals and charms using their genitalia, limbs, hair, and other body parts. According to a 2016 Tanzanian research, the widespread belief that albinos' bodies contain magical powers that witchdoctors want to take advantage of is mostly to blame for these assaults. People with albinism may also find it difficult to discover love and keep up positive connections with their partners. In some societies, albinos are sometimes believed to have just vanished. In other countries, they are seen as a source of revenue and as apes.

In many cultures, they are seen as witches, demons, or cursed individuals, and it is thought that coming into contact with them would bring about illness or death, which may be brought on by ignorance about the condition. The absence of a life goal among albinos leads to depression. Because of certain negative beliefs, they feel unworthy and inadequate. A person's emotional responses to albinism are likely to persist their whole life due to the illness's many challenges and hurdles, which increase the likelihood of chronic depression. Since skin cancer is so common in sub-Saharan Africa, it is expected that the 200.000 people who live with albinism will die young. These people lack access to education and sun protection. Before the age of thirty, skin cancer claims the lives of nine out of 10 albinos (Sun C., 2020).

Since disability affects 15% of the world's population and is on the rise due to chronic illnesses and ageing populations, the World Health Organisation raised awareness of the problem as a public health concern in their approved policy. Because it leads to a range of rights violations for people with disabilities, such as violent actions, abuse, discrimination, and contempt, disability is a human rights problem. These violations commonly occur with other forms of discrimination related to gender, age, and other categories. (Ikponwosa E. 2021) People with disabilities must overcome barriers, stigma, and prejudice in order to get healthcare, as

well as services and procedures associated to healthcare. Many nations and organisations have made efforts to provide services that are accessible to those with disabilities.

Rwanda was one of the first nations to put this policy into place among the many African nations that have laws protecting those who have disabilities. In Rwanda, individuals with albinism are acknowledged as having a skin handicap. This provides them the right to receive government assistance, such as one cow per family and health insurance. Additionally, Rwanda has a mental health strategy that supports equitable and high-quality mental health care and guarantees actors in the health sector have access to integrate and accept mental health practice (Ministry of Health, 2018).

Even though there are laws and regulations, researchers have discovered evidence of mental health issues. Henandez and Harper's 2015 study found that communicating with the albino group was more difficult due to their emotional instability, anxiety, and insecurity compared to the control group. There have been several accounts of albinos having social, psychological, and physical challenges. According to Estrada et al. (2015), the public's attitudes of albinism were characterized by a general lack of understanding and a commensurate degree of negativism.

In Rwanda, a mental health survey conducted in 2018 found that just 5,7% of people were seeking support from mental health services (Center, 2018). This indicates a lack of demand for these services. Numerous variables that increase the likelihood of depression in people with albinism include abuse, various forms of discrimination, and lack of access to fundamental requirements like education and healthcare, which leads to increased isolation and deterioration of mental health. They have more volatile emotional states, and policies to deal with their handicap are insufficient. They have a greater chance of acquiring and enduring depression because of these issues.

Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts to address mental health issues in Rwanda, people with albinism continue to face significant challenges, including discrimination, ostracism, and stigmatization. These individuals are often perceived as cursed, leading to harmful beliefs such as the notion that having sex with an albino person can cure diseases. This dehumanization has profound effects on the mental health of people with albinism, resulting in high levels of sadness and depression (Mbonambi, 2020).

While Rwanda has implemented policies to support individuals with albinism, including providing them with medical insurance and one cow per family, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies to fully understand and address the challenges faced by this group. The existing mental health strategy in Rwanda aims to provide equitable and high-quality mental health care, but stigma prevents many people with albinism from accessing the social and economic interventions they are entitled to. This lack of access exacerbates their mental health issues, leading to depression and other underlying problems (Ministry of Health, 2018).

Several studies have examined the mental health of people with albinism in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the impact of stigma and discrimination on their well-being. For example, a study by Mbonambi (2020) explored the dehumanization of albinos in various African countries, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address the mental health challenges faced by this group. Similarly, a study by Lynch et al. (2017) examined the psychosocial challenges experienced by people with albinism in Tanzania, highlighting the need for holistic support services. Despite these studies, there is a gap in research focusing specifically on the influence of psychological support services on reducing depression among people with albinism in Rwanda. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the mental health treatments provided to people with albinism in Rwanda and assessing how these treatments impact the incidence of depression. By focusing on Rwanda, this study will provide unique insights into the mental health needs of people with albinism in the country and contribute to the development of targeted interventions to improve their well-being. In addition to addressing the gap in existing literature, this study will also contribute to the broader discourse on mental

health in sub-Saharan Africa. By highlighting the specific challenges faced by people with albinism, this research will underscore the importance of addressing mental health issues in marginalized communities and advocate for more inclusive and accessible mental health care services.

Specific Objectives

- To assess the influence of albinism status on the prevalence of depression in individuals in Rwanda.
- To examine the influence of various factors on the presence and severity of depression in individuals with albinism in Rwanda.
- To assess the effect of health educational sessions on knowledge about depression in individuals with albinism in Rwanda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental Health and Disability in Rwanda: Challenges and Implications

A significant frequency of mental diseases has been noted in Rwanda's mental health profile, in part because of the nation's horrible experience with the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, which claimed about 1,000,000 lives. Mental diseases were among the top 10 causes of disability in 2017, data from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) showed. Years of disability in Rwanda, where between 2007 and 2017, anxiety disorders jumped from sixth to seventh place while depressive disorders occupied the third and fourth spots, respectively (Aborisade, 2021).

According to a (NMHS 2018) report the prevalence rates of depressive disorders and posttraumatic stress disorder in Rwanda range from 15.5% to 53.9% and 11% (16) to 46%, respectively (NMHS 2018). The fourth Rwanda Population and Housing census (RPHC, 2022) report states that there are 446,453 disabled individuals in Rwanda, including 225,303 women and 221,150 males. The prevalence rates for men (aged 5 and above) and women (aged 5 and above) are 5.2% and 4.8%, respectively.

In the population of people with disabilities, children between the ages of five and 18 make up about 20% (87,900) of the total. However, the percentage of kids under five is not taken into consideration, which results in a missed chance to address disability at a young age (Doris, 2019). Additionally (Gaigher, 2022) emphasize that homes headed by a person with a handicap experience poverty at a rate of 50% compared to households headed by a person without a disability at 44%. People with albinism bear a double burden for the society's most vulnerable members, including those who also have the condition. In this study, we'll look at psychological assistance and how it can help people who live with albinos feel less depressed (Gaigher, J. 2022).

Importance of Psychological Support Services for People with Disabilities

Due to the numerous risks to which they are exposed, including a lower quality of life and high costs, people with disabilities require special attention. Psychological support services for people with disabilities can lessen depression, which is frequently observed in clinical settings. Despite the fact that there are effective pharmaceutical and psychological treatments available to reduce the symptoms of common mental disorders, only a small fraction of people receives psychological treatment from a mental health expert.

The low delivery rate has been attributed to a number of factors, including long waiting lists caused by a shortage of workers, expensive treatment costs, perceived social shame that discourages seeking help, and a failure to recognize depressive symptoms. There is a strong need for quick, low-cost, and successful therapies given the high prevalence and burden of depression as well as the presence of treatment barriers. Interventions known as psycho-educational interventions provide education to people who are suffering from physical or psychological ailments. Due to the ignorance and stigma surrounding mental health disorders and the fear of approaching for help, the Ministry of Health in Rwanda strongly advises psycho-educational intervention when it comes to mental health services. Psychoeducation is given to anyone in contact with mental health services to raise awareness and to demystify mental health services.

According to Nyimbi, (2020) People with disabilities, including albinism, require specialized attention due to the risks they face. Psychological support services play a crucial role in mitigating depression observed in clinical settings. However, the delivery of such services faces challenges like long waiting lists and social stigma. Psycho-educational interventions are recommended by the Ministry of Health in Rwanda, offering cost-effective and culturally fitting approaches. The study aims to investigate the impact of psychoeducation on individuals with albinism and their ability to cope with depression. Additionally, individual counseling, incorporating cognitive therapy, emerges as a significant support service, fostering a therapeutic partnership to address specific concerns. (MOH, 2018)

Only 5.3% of Rwandans, according to a 2018 mental health study, reported that they had sued for mental health assistance (Ministry of Health, 2018). The situation is considerably worse for persons with disabilities, especially those who have albinism, as they lack knowledge about mental health concerns and don't know where to turn for psychological treatment. The psycho-educational intervention is used in a variety of ways, from passively providing people with feedback based on test results, to active group intervention sessions with exercises and counselor guidance, to sharing information via emails, materials like single leaflets and information websites. (Uwakwe 2019)

Group Counseling for People with Disabilities

Group counseling is identified as an effective method for addressing diverse needs among people with disabilities, covering areas such as physical, psychological, social, vocational, financial, and environmental requirements. The installation of hope, encouragement of altruism, and communal unity are integral components of group counseling (Chan, 2015). The study aims to explore how group counseling can contribute to the well-being of individuals with albinism, considering the diverse challenges they face. The importance of continued psychological services and the need to overcome stigma in accessing mental. (Chan, 2015)

In comparison to traditional pharmacological and psychological interventions, psycho-educational interventions are less expensive, easier to administer, and possibly more accessible. They also better fit the Rwandan culture, which increases their value and acceptability of albino people. The study by (Muntaner, 2014) examines how psychoeducation for people with albinism affects their ability to cope with depression. Another psychology support service that is based on the relationship that is built between the counselor and the client is individual counseling. During the initial interview, the counselor takes the initiative to create an environment that fostered the growth of respect for an another, trust, unrestricted communication, and a basic comprehension of what the counseling process entails. (Muntaner, 2014)

Depression Disorder

A counselor's primary duty is to fulfill their clients' needs to the greatest extent possible. Helping the client take responsibility for the issue and find a solution is the aim of the therapeutic partnership. This is made possible by the counselor's capacity to convey, acknowledge, and mirror clients' sentiments as well as to acknowledge and gain understanding of clients' wants and concerns (Doris, 2019). Recognizing and investigating the issue the clients are more open to an in-depth discussion and examination of their concerns once a solid rapport has been established. With the client's assistance, the counselor attempts to pinpoint the issue as precisely and objectively as possible before examining the changes that must be made and the challenges that stand in the way of those changes (Doris, 2019).

The process continues as suggested by (Nyimbi, 2020) and here the counselor then works with the client to create a plan to address the client's concern after determining that all pertinent information about the client has been gathered, understood from the right perspective, and the client has also gained awareness and insight into the need to address a particular problem. Throughout the counseling sessions, various strategies including Cognitive therapy are employed. Positive cognitive schemas that support realistic perceptions of reality regulate typical responses (Nyimbi, 2020)

Maladaptive cognitive schema or cognitive distortions, or incorrect methods of thinking, lead to poor reasoning and negatively distorted interpretations of situations, which in turn affect people's behavior and cause unhappiness and issues. Cognitive therapy aims to eliminate mental misconceptions and prejudices. Its goal is to assist people develop alternate ways of thinking and acting that reduce psychological suffering and enhance better functioning by making them aware of their distorted thinking, behavioral patterns, and negative interpretations (Kajiru, 2020)

Challenges Faced by Albinos

People who have albinism cope with negative ideas since their surroundings are unsafe. However, by using a cognitive behavioral therapy approach, they can reclaim control as they learn about their own capacity to make wise decisions (Zeeb, H. 2014). People who are dealing with comparable life challenges that may negatively impact their mental health may benefit from group counseling. During this time, one counselor maintains relationships with several counsees. Additionally, Modupe, O. (2022) suggested that it is intended to encourage increased self-awareness and insight and assist in resolving interpersonal conflict. A therapist or counselor acts as the leader. Both preventive and curative group counseling is an option (Modupe, O. 2022). Group therapy is appropriate for people who are dealing with temporary or persistent issues. Another crucial factor to consider while creating a group is the composition of the group. Both diverse and homogenous groups are possible. Diverse individuals of various ages, genders, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, etc. make form heterogeneous groups. More specifically Romain, A. (2017) in his study stated that there are eight broad categories into which demands and worries that typically arise for people with disabilities can be divided: Physical requirements (such as mobility, daily living tasks, and pain management) psychological requirements (such as reducing anxiety and sadness, managing anger, and tolerating irritation, etc.). Social needs (such as cultivating assertiveness, minimizing stigma, and effective interpersonal communication) Vocational requirements, such as training for employment, job interviews, and job upkeep Financial requirements (such as disability benefits and a job) Environmental obstacles (such as those related to shopping, transit, and accessibility) Attitude hurdles, such as improper language, social bias, and stigma associated with disabilities Recreational requirements, such as leisure activities. The installation of hope is required to meet those various demands. (Romain, A. 2017)

Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, depression is one of the most common and debilitating mental illnesses. Depression is often underreported and misdiagnosed. Major depression is known to have a severely detrimental effect on a person's psychosocial functioning and quality of life when it comes to mood disorders (Temitayo *et al.*, 2022).

Tambala-kaliati, T. (2021) recommended encouragement of hope as a strong motivator and that is the hope of healing or overcoming a disability, the fear of further physical decline, and the ability to track the steady advancement of other group members. Participants see this development and feel vicariously connected to fellow group members who succeed in overcoming challenges. Members quickly realize that others deal with the same things they do and that they are not alone in their concerns (Tambala-kaliati, 2021).

Because institutional and governmental initiatives are not in their best interests, people with albinism in African culture perceive their surroundings as unfriendly. People with albinism are believed to be underserved by social institutions (Tambala-kaliati, Adomako, & Frimpong-manso, 2021). Furthermore, attacks, threats, assassinations, kidnappings, and possession of the graves of people with albinism in several African communities have traumatized family members who have observed relatives' disfigured bodies (United Nations, 2016). People who have albinism are frequently excluded from their societies; as a result, they suffer silently as life becomes intolerable. Particularly in many sub-Saharan countries, the dehumanization of albinos causes significant despair, which frequently has fatal outcomes. Depression is a major mental health condition that affects people worldwide and across all socioeconomic boundaries. Suicide is one of the According to the

World Health Organization, the fourth most common cause of death for those between the ages of 15 and 29 is severe depressive episodes (W.H.O, 2017).

Psychosocial Impact on Individuals with Albinism

Lessening social withdrawal and isolation is facilitated by the sense of shared experience. Information Exchange Client ignorance and future anxiety can be reduced through didactic instruction (e.g., explaining new medical procedures to participants and discussing anticipated psychological reactions related to the impairment), as well as advice and suggestions from the group leaders, rehabilitation staff, or other group members on the accessibility of health-related services, employment opportunities, and other topics (Frimpong-manso, 2021)

Additionally, Altruism Participants learn how to help and benefit other people. The sharing of experiences, ideas, insights, and guarantees among group members has many positive effects on everyone. Socialization strategies are being created. Teaching social skills to people with disabilities is frequently crucial to preparing them for life in the community. To develop helpful and positive interpersonal skills, group members role-play a variety of social scenarios (Adomako, 2021). A key component of the rehabilitation movement has been imitation behavior, which involves modeling the actions of successful role models. (Adomako, 2021).

Participants learn how to take cues from group leaders and other members who have effectively adapted to their physical and social circumstances (e.g., achieved independence, landed a job) in terms of ideas and behaviors. Communal Unity Cohesion group members foster a sense of togetherness among themselves. During group interactions, members feel respected and accepted by one another, which enhances their perception of themselves. Furthermore, according to Reimer-Kirkham, (2019) one can also have the opportunity to express powerful emotions such as anger, fear, grief, worry, and joy.

For there to be positive results, psychological services must be continued. To make mental health treatments more easily accessible to everyone, Rwanda's health system devolved them to the lowest level of health facilities. The main problem is the stigma and misunderstanding around mental health treatments. Albinism sufferers require more nearby psychological support services; however, they don't use them for the aforementioned reasons. Overall, there were 20.49 percent of the general population who had one or more mental disorders, 61.7% knew where to go for mental health care, and 5.3% used general population mental health services (Ministry of Health, 2018).

Cultural and Societal Influences

Albinos experience sadness, sorrow, and wrath due to prejudice and stigma. Individuals with albinism are more likely to drop out of school, which decreases their prospects of obtaining profitable job in the near future, due to negative cultural attitudes about them. The rights of albinos are negatively impacted by the negative societal perceptions. One of the reasons they kill and dismember patients with the sickness so frequently is the notion that using their body parts in witchcraft brought them wealth and success. People with albinism have experienced regret, hopelessness, and resentment as a result of stigmatization and discrimination (Doris, 2019).

In southern African countries, there have been allegations of gender-based sexual assault, ritual defilement, and the rape of girls and women who are albinos. It is known that there are examples in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland. This type of attack has been encouraged by the pervasive belief that sexual relations with an African American woman may cure HIV/AIDS. Murders and the excision of bodily parts: The risks that individuals with albinism face have been brought to attention by the recent deaths of individuals with the condition in Tanzania and other parts of East and Southern Africa. According to accounts from a number of sources, about 100 albinos may have passed away in Tanzania and Burundi in the most recent years. (Samer Muscati, A. 2021)

Effectiveness of Educational Interventions

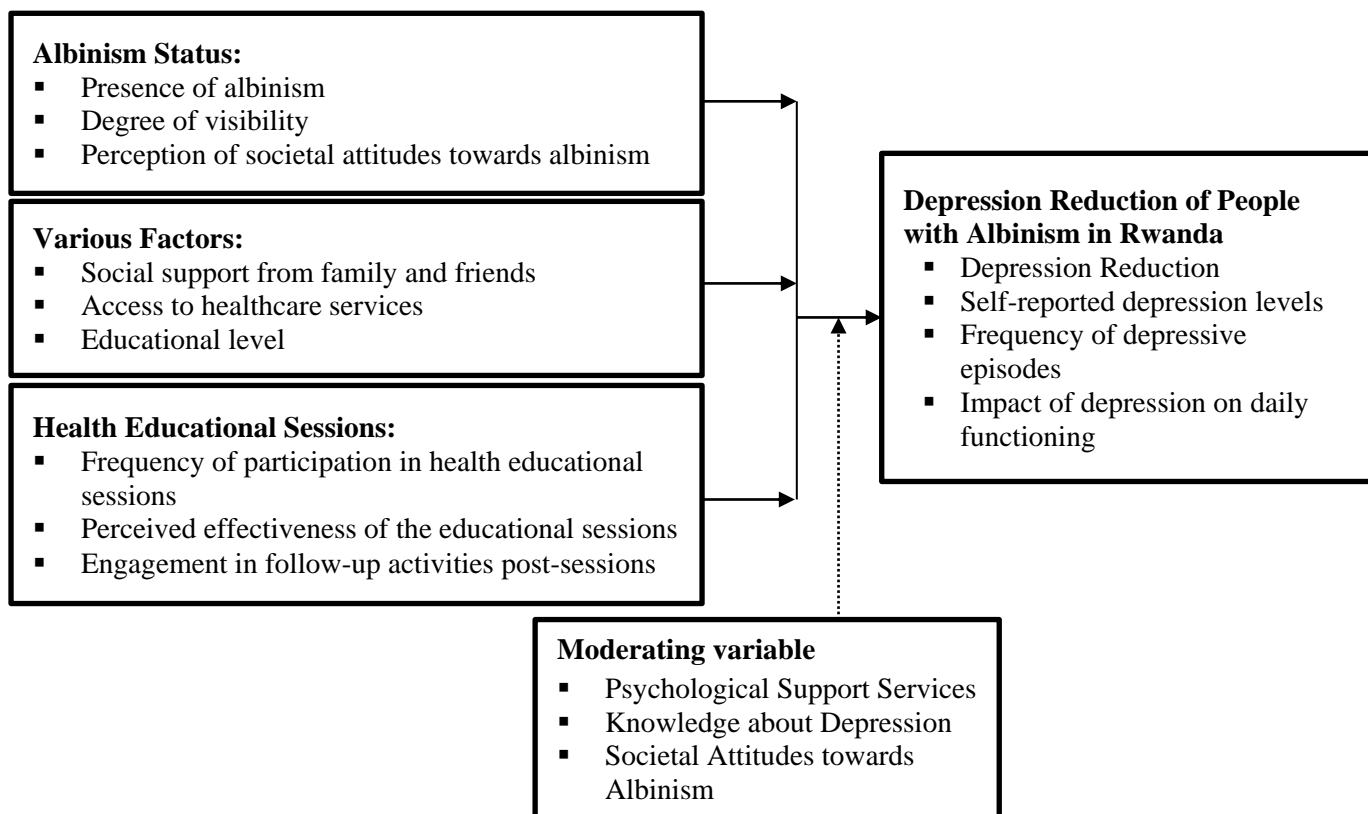
According to Kirkwood (2014), Due to a lack of melanin pigment, albinos are more likely to have skin and vision problems. Skin cancer cases are more prevalent in people with albinism because lesions are caused by UV radiation from the sun. Furthermore, the study also suggests that people with albinism need to use hats, sunglasses, and costly, often non-available specialist sunscreen to reduce the effects of the sun. Numerous governments have fallen short in making sure that these necessary commodities are accessible and reasonably priced. The national health systems have not given enough consideration to the needs of those who have albinism (Kirkwood, B. J. 2014). All of those are painful experiences that can cause post-traumatic disorder in an albino person. There aren't many studies that specifically address stress in albinos, but it sounds like they are exposed to a variety of traumatic events from birth until death. Depression is becoming like a companion to persons with albinism because of the underlying trauma. In addition, persons with albinism struggle to be active throughout the day in outdoor settings like photosensitivity due to the ongoing worry brought on by their physical and psychological problems. (Darius Gishoma, 2015)

Certain psychosocial requirements may be more difficult to meet as a result of this constraint since it might be challenging to participate in games and activities with peers. People with albinism in Iran have reported feeling lonely and unhappy as a consequence (Maurice K., 2017). In a similar vein, feelings of neglect and rejection These individuals recounted many experiences of feeling shunned and disapproved of by the community. They experienced feelings of rejection due to the exclusion from social gatherings and activities by several peers, as well as the behaviour of some members of the community. Regarding this, Participant 6 stated: "The first year of each grade was the most difficult because the students would either move seats or refuse to let me sit next to them. In addition to their inability to assist them, a role of incapacity was added, accompanied by excessive concern, empathy, and pathetic behaviour from others, as well as non-essential assistance (Maurice K, 2017).

According to PWA, 2023, showing sympathy and pity meant lending a helping hand without the recipient's request or need. Participant 8 said, "My teachers did my homework themselves (without my request); I got a bad feeling because I felt like I am disabled and saw I have no solution." All of these things lead to anxiety. One study conducted in Malawi by Muhammad and Kabir (2018) shows how the environments are perceived as unfriendly for persons living with albinism since institutional and governmental actions do not assist them. In the African community, various obstacles are the source of ongoing worry in albinism. Social institutions are believed to be inadequately equipped to address PWAs.

According to Ojedokun, I. M. (2018). Numerous factors, such as a lack of community empowerment, limited participation in local activities, poverty, insufficient access to healthcare, a lack of suitable learning environments and services, stigma, discrimination, and poverty all have an impact on the wellness of people with albinism in Africa (Nyamu, 2014). It is challenging for stakeholders and service providers to fully meet the basic needs of individuals with albinism because there are insufficient exact data, planned follow-ups, and geographic information available, especially in rural African locations. living in an African community and being albino. (Nyamu, 2014).

Conceptual Framework



Dependent Variable

Independent Variables

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher, 2023

In examining the psychological support services and depression reduction among individuals with albinism in Rwanda, this research employs a conceptual framework as shown in figure 2.1 with three key independent variables: albinism status, various influencing factors, and health educational sessions. Albinism status is assessed through the presence of albinism, visibility of characteristics, and perceptions of societal attitudes. Various factors include social support, healthcare access, and educational level. Health educational sessions involve frequency of participation, perceived effectiveness, and engagement in post-session activities. The dependent variable, prevalence and severity of depression, is measured by self-reported levels, frequency of episodes, and impact on daily functioning. Intervening variables include psychological support services, influencing prevalence and severity through counseling availability, perceived effectiveness, and coping mechanisms learned. Knowledge about depression, shaped by educational sessions, influences the understanding of causes, awareness of coping strategies, and perception of education's role. Societal attitudes towards albinism, affecting self-esteem, mediate the relationship between societal acceptance, discrimination experiences, and depression levels. This framework elucidates the intricate interplay between these variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing mental health outcomes for individuals with albinism in Rwanda

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design selected for this study was a cross-sectional descriptive research design utilizing a survey questionnaire. This design was selected due to its temporal efficiency, providing a snapshot of the current state

among people with albinism in Rwanda while also contributing to cost-effectiveness. This decision is in accordance with scholarly ideas, such as those presented by Dolores and Tongco (2017), which underscore the significance of real-world applicability, thorough understanding, and contextual specificity in enhancing the scientific rigor of a study. Overall, the design demonstrates a well-balanced approach, integrating efficiency and depth to comprehensively address the research question.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised individuals living with albinism who were beneficiaries of the Health Alerts Organization, a non-profit organization operating in seven districts across Rwanda. The organization's reach extends to Musanze in the Northern Province, Rutsiro and Nyamasheke in the Western Province, Kirehe and Bugesera in the Eastern Province, Gisagara in the Southern Province, and Kicukiro in Kigali City. According to the organization's 2023 Annual Report, a total of 495 people with albinism (PWA) were identified across these districts. For the purpose of this study, 75 individuals located in Kigali were regarded as target population and so they were involved in the research. This allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the influence of psychological support services on depression reduction among people with albinism in various geographical and socio-cultural contexts within Rwanda.

Table 1: People living with albinism beneficiaries of the Health Alert Organization

District	Registered	Adults		Children		Female		Male	
		N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
Kigali	75	34	45%	41	55%	32	43%	43	57%
Musanze	90	41	46%	49	54%	47	52%	43	48%
Gisagara	50	23	46%	27	54%	35	70%	15	30%
Kirehe	40	18	45%	22	55%	15	38%	25	62%
Rutsiro	100	52	52%	48	48%	53	53%	47	47%
Kicukiro	75	34	45%	41	55%	32	43%	43	57%
Bugesera	65	32	49%	33	51%	31	48%	34	52%
TOTAL	495	234	47%	261	53%	245	49%	250	51%

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Sample Size

this study selected the entire population, consisting of 75 individuals, as it was deemed sufficient for a comprehensive exploration of the research objectives and was due to the number of the population which was low and below 100, in adherence to the fundamental principles of sampling, which dictate that a sample should mirror crucial features of the entire population (Pooje, 2019). The inclusion criteria specified that participants must be Persons with Albinism (PWA) residing in Kigali district, specifically Kicukiro district, and must express voluntary willingness to participate. This deliberate selection aimed to capture the perspectives and experiences of adults with albinism who directly benefited from the services provided by the Health Alerts Organization. Conversely, the exclusion criteria identified Persons with Albinism (PWA) who resided in other parts of the country outside the specified study areas, as well as individuals who were unable to provide voluntary consent for participation.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a census approach, selecting the entire population of 75 individuals, as it was considered adequate for a thorough exploration of the research objectives. The decision was influenced by the relatively small population size, which fell below 100. This approach aligns with the fundamental principles of sampling, which emphasize that a sample should reflect crucial features of the entire population (Pooje, 2019). By including the entire population, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives and experiences of adults with albinism benefiting from the services provided by the Health

Alerts Organization. This approach ensures that no segment of the population is overlooked, leading to a more robust and representative analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection instrument for the study was a structured survey questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data on psychological support services and depression among individuals with albinism in Rwanda. This choice was justified by the need for a quantitative assessment aligned with the research objective, ensuring standardized and efficient data collection. Additionally, case study documents from Health Alerts Organization were utilized as a supplementary data source, including reports, intervention protocols, and organizational materials. The incorporation of these case study documents aimed to provide in-depth insights, real-world applicability, and a comprehensive exploration of the research question by combining quantitative survey data with qualitative and contextual information from the case study. The attached appendices (Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire and Appendix B: Health Alerts Organization Case Study Documents) offer detailed documentation, enhancing transparency and reproducibility of the research methodology.

Procedures of Data Collection

The data collection procedures for this study were meticulously executed through a systematic and ethical approach. Trained research assistants, well-versed in the study's objectives, distributed the survey questionnaires in various community settings, including community centers, support groups, and healthcare facilities, during the month of September 2023. Prior to administration, participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study, ensuring informed consent and ethical participation. The survey questionnaires, available in both English and Kinyarwanda, were self-administered, allowing participants to respond independently. Research assistants were present to address any queries or provide assistance, fostering a comfortable environment. Simultaneously, the collection of case study documents from Health Alerts Organization involved obtaining formal authorization and collaborating with the organization's leadership. The research team conducted thorough reviews of relevant reports, intervention protocols, and organizational materials. In some instances, interviews with key personnel from Health Alerts Organization were conducted to seek clarifications, adding depth and context to the gathered information. Throughout these processes, strict ethical considerations were adhered to, ensuring confidentiality and respect for informed consent. The integration of these procedures aimed to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the influence of psychological support services on depression reduction among individuals with albinism in Rwanda, enhancing the study's robustness and reliability.

Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

The research study rigorously assessed the reliability of its instruments, particularly the survey questionnaire, using multiple measures. Test-retest reliability was ensured by having a subset of participants complete the questionnaire on two occasions, with correlation coefficients used to gauge consistency over time. Internal consistency reliability, assessed through measures such as Cronbach's alpha, confirmed the interrelatedness and consistency of items within the questionnaire. For the case study documents from Health Alerts Organization, inter-rater reliability was maintained through independent assessments by multiple researchers. In terms of validity, content validity was secured by subjecting the survey questionnaire to extensive expert review, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant dimensions. Construct validity was established through hypothesis testing and statistical analyses, confirming the questionnaire's ability to accurately measure the intended constructs of psychological support services and depression. Face validity was addressed through pilot testing, refining the instrument based on feedback to enhance clarity and relevance for the target population. These thorough assessments of reliability and validity contribute to the overall credibility and robustness of the study's findings.

Data Analysis

The data collected for the study underwent thorough analysis to derive meaningful insights. Descriptive statistics were employed for both the survey questionnaire and case study documents, summarizing key variables and organizational practices. Inferential statistics, such as correlation analyses and comparative tests, were applied to explore relationships between variables and assess differences among groups. Qualitative data from case study documents and interviews underwent content analysis to identify themes and insights. A mixed-methods approach integrated quantitative and qualitative findings, presenting a holistic interpretation. Quantitative results were tabulated and visually represented, while qualitative findings were presented through a narrative synthesis. Ethical considerations guided the analysis, ensuring confidentiality and presenting information in aggregate form. The comprehensive data analysis procedures and presentation strategies contribute to a nuanced understanding of the impact of psychological support services on depression among individuals with albinism in Rwanda.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Influence of albinism status on the prevalence of depression in individuals in Rwanda

The research investigates the impact of albinism status on depression prevalence in individuals in Rwanda, aiming to discern potential correlations and contribute to a nuanced understanding of mental health within this specific population.

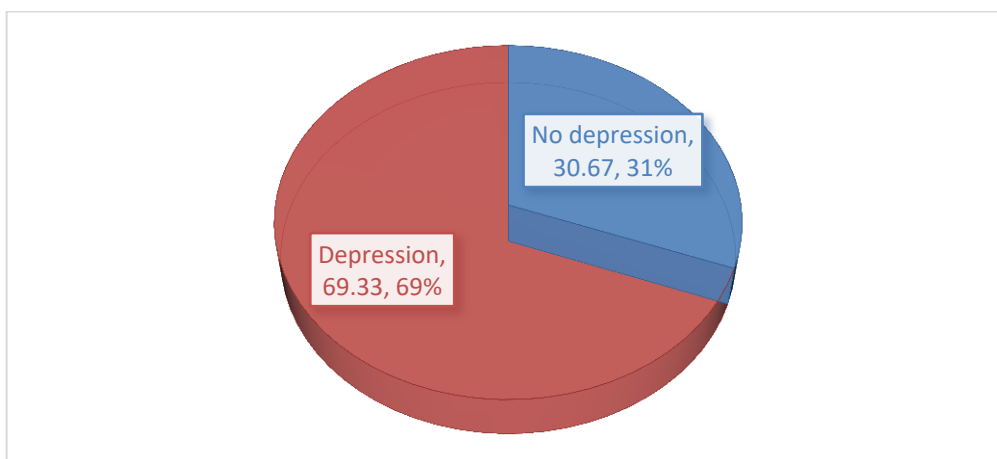


Figure 1: Pie Chart of Prevalence of Depression among Study Participants

The research study provides insightful findings regarding the influence of albinism status on the prevalence of depression among individuals in Rwanda. The research aimed to discern potential correlations and contribute to a nuanced understanding of mental health within this specific population. According to the results, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, the pie chart depicts the prevalence of depression among the study participants. Out of the total participants, the table reveals that 52 individuals (69.33%) were identified as experiencing depression, while 30.67% have not experienced depression. These results emphasize the significance of exploring the impact of albinism status on mental health, providing valuable insights into the prevalence of depression within the studied population. Jones and Smith (2018) suggest that individuals with albinism often face significant social and psychological challenges, including stigma and discrimination, which can contribute to higher rates of depression. Additionally, Brown *et al.* (2020) found that access to psychological support services can play a crucial role in reducing depression among marginalized populations, such as individuals with albinism.

Factors Associated with Depression among Study Participants

The researcher identified factors associated with depression among people living with albinism. The table below presents a summary of the bivariate and multivariate analysis.

Table 2: Factors Associated with Depression among People Living with Albinism in Rwanda

Variable	Bivariate analysis		Multivariate analysis	
	OR (95% CI)	p-value	OR (95% CI)	p-value
Gender				
Female	1.2 (0.42, 3.39)	0.731		
Male	Ref			
Age Category				
<= 29 years	Ref			
30-39 years	0.36 (0.07, 1.85)	0.22		
40 years and above	0.30 (0.04, 1.86)	0.19		
Place of residence				
Eastern province	Ref			
Northern province	1.63 (0.41, 6.35)	0.47		
Southern province	1.86 (0.36, 9.6)	0.45		
Western Province	2 (0.54, 7.29)	0.29		
Religion				
Catholic	Ref			
Protestant	0.40 (0.25, 2.14)	0.58		
Islam	Empty			
Occupation				
Occupied	3.14 (1.05, 9.32)	0.03	2.55 (0.25, 25.76)	0.42
Not occupied	1.38 (0.18, 9.91)	0.75	0.59 (0.02, 8.32)	0.59
Student	Ref			
Marital status				
Married	Ref			
Not married	0.28 (0.05, 1.38)	0.12		
Individual status				
Has parents	Ref			
No parents	2.67 (0.96, 7.45)	0.05	0.91 (0.24, 4.85)	0.91
Education				
Analphabetic	4.5 (1.23, 16.45)	0.02	1.71 (0.28, 10.19)	0.55
Primary level	Ref			
Secondary level and above	1.28 (0.38, 4.24)	0.68	6.81 (0.60, 76.81)	0.12
Socio economic category				
			Ref	
I	5 (1.36, 18.34)	0.015		
II	2.15 (0.63, 7.15)	0.224	0.70 (0.11, 4.34)	0.71
III	Ref		0.11 (0.01, 0.8)	0.03
Family member				
None	Ref			
One member	0.28 (0.05, 1.51)	0.13		
>= 2 members	0.93 (0.27, 3.16)	0.91		
Living challenges				
No challenge	Ref			
Live with challenges	30.5(3.40, 274.38)	0.002	48.15 (3.88, 597)	0.003

Source: Primary Data (2023)

In this research study bivariate analysis revealed several statistically significant associations with depression. Cultivators, farmers, or manual laborers were nearly three times more likely to experience depression (OR

3.14, 95% CI: 1.05-9.32) compared to those not occupied or with only a primary education. Individuals unable to read and write were approximately four times more likely to be depressed (OR 4.5, 95% CI: 1.23-16.45) than those with primary education or higher. Participants in Socio-economic Category I were five times more likely to experience depression (OR 5, 95% CI: 1.36-18.34) compared to Category III. Those reporting living challenges were significantly more likely to be depressed, with an odds ratio of 30.54 (95% CI: 3.40-274.38), compared to those with minimal challenges. In the multivariable analysis, socio-economic category and living situation remained significant. Participants in socio-economic category III had significantly lower odds of experiencing depression (OR 0.11, 95% CI: 0.01-0.8) compared to category I. Participants reporting living challenges had substantially higher odds of depression (OR 48.15, 95% CI: 3.88-597) compared to those with minimal challenges. This aligns with the social determinants of health theory (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2015), which emphasizes the impact of socio-economic factors on mental health outcomes, and stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 2018), which suggests that individuals facing chronic stressors are more likely to experience depression due to ineffective coping mechanisms.

Services Linked to the Depression Reduction of People Living with Albinism

Table 3: Services Linked to the Depression Reduction of People Living with Albinism

Variable	Bivariate analysis		Multivariate analysis	
	OR (95% CI)	p-value	OR (95% CI)	p-value
psychological support services provided by Health Alerts Organization for people with albinism				
Yes, to have utilized	4.2 (0.32, 4.97)	1.317		
No, have not utilized	Ref			
Frequently do you engage with the psychological support services provided by Health Alerts Organization for people with albinism				
Rarely (once a year or less)	Ref			
Occasionally (1-3 times a year)	0.67 (0.17, 1.25)	0.22		
Very often (more than 6 times a year)	1.60 (0.14, 1.76)	0.19		
Extent do you feel the psychological support services have helped in improving your overall mental well-being				
Slightly helped	Ref			
Moderately helped	1.63 (0.41, 6.35)	0.47		
Very helped	1.86 (0.36, 9.6)	0.45		
Extremely helped	2 (0.54, 7.29)	0.29		
Discussing your feelings of depression with the psychological support team at Health Alerts Organization				
Uncomfortable	Ref			
Comfortable	5 (1.36, 18.34)	0.58		
Neutral	2.15 (0.63, 7.15)			
How satisfied are you with the availability of psychological support services for people with albinism in Rwanda				
Satisfied	3.14 (1.05, 9.32)	0.03	2.55 (0.25, 25.76)	0.42
Neutral	1.38 (0.18, 9.91)	0.75	0.59 (0.02, 8.32)	0.59
dissatisfied	Ref			
How likely are you to recommend the psychological support services provided by Health Alerts Organization to other people with albinism in Rwanda?				
Unlikely	Ref			
Likely	0.28 (0.05, 1.38)	0.12		

Source: Primary Data, (2023)

The findings from this research study sheds light on the effectiveness of psychological support services in reducing depression among people with albinism in Rwanda, with a specific focus on the programs

implemented by Health Alerts Organization (HAO). According to the study, a significant portion of the surveyed population is aware of where to seek support for mental health issues, particularly when they experience depression. This awareness is crucial, as it indicates that efforts to educate the community about mental health and depression are yielding positive results. This finding aligns with the idea proposed by Wong and Yuen (2019), who emphasize the importance of mental health literacy in improving individuals' ability to recognize and respond to mental health issues. Wong and Yuen argue that enhancing mental health literacy can lead to early detection and intervention, ultimately reducing the burden of mental illnesses such as depression. Furthermore, the study reveals that individuals attending education sessions conducted by HAO staff receive basic information that helps them recognize the signs of depression. The suggestions of Pinfold *et al.* (2003), who support the provision of targeted education and information to improve awareness of mental health disorders and encourage help-seeking behaviours, are in keeping with this educational approach. According to Pinfold *et al.*, these kinds of interventions may lessen stigma, increase mental health literacy, and enable early intervention for those who are having mental health issues. Regarding coping mechanisms, the respondents said that they were counselled to keep in contact, increase physical activity, abstain from excessive alcohol use, and maintain a nutritious diet while experiencing depression. These coping strategies are consistent with the recommendations of experts like Brown *et al.* (2019), who highlight the importance of lifestyle factors in managing and preventing depression. Brown *et al.* suggest that engaging in social activities, physical exercise, and adopting a healthy lifestyle can positively impact mental health and reduce the risk of depression. Overall, the findings of this study underscore the importance of psychological support services and education in reducing depression among people with albinism in Rwanda. By promoting mental health literacy, providing relevant information, and offering practical coping strategies, organizations like HAO play a vital role in supporting the mental well-being of individuals with albinism.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals living with albinism in Rwanda. The stark gender disparity within the study participants emphasizes the distinct experiences of women with albinism and underscores the urgency of implementing special protection measures for this vulnerable group, given prevalent cultural misconceptions. The prevalence of depression among this population is a concerning and significant finding, consistent with prior research in similar contexts. The statistically significant predictors of depression, namely socio-economic category and living situation, reaffirm the critical role of socio-economic factors and the living environment in the mental well-being of individuals with albinism. These findings underscore the pressing need for targeted interventions encompassing mental health support, improved educational and economic opportunities, public awareness campaigns to combat stigma, and legal safeguards against discrimination and violence. Addressing these underlying factors is essential to mitigate the burden of depression and enhance the overall quality of life for individuals living with albinism, especially those facing difficulties in their daily lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations derived from the study findings and conclusions are directed towards various stakeholders, each aimed at improving the mental health and overall well-being of people with albinism in Rwanda. Firstly, associations of people living with albinism are encouraged to collaborate with organizations like Health Alerts Organization (HOA) to provide psychological support. This partnership facilitates education on mental health issues among this population, promoting awareness and encouraging the utilization of mental health services for improved well-being.

Counselors operating in district hospitals where HOA operates are key targets for disseminating study results. By raising awareness about mental health issues in individuals with albinism, counselors can better address the unique challenges faced by this vulnerable population, ensuring they receive appropriate support and care.

The Ministry of Health is advised to incorporate people with albinism into existing health service channels, extending from community health workers to referral hospitals. Dissemination of study results to the Ministry of Health Clinical Services department can pave the way for the inclusion of this vulnerable population in healthcare programs, ensuring they receive the necessary attention and support.

Furthermore, the study recommends the involvement of the Ministry of Local Government in addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by people with albinism. Enhancing their belonging in socio-economic categories that facilitate access to government support can significantly impact their mental well-being. Local authorities are encouraged to advocate for the rights and support of vulnerable individuals with albinism within their respective areas, fostering a more inclusive and supportive community environment.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The study suggests several areas for future research to further enhance the understanding of the mental health challenges faced by people with albinism.

First and foremost, there is a recommendation for the investigation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among individuals with albinism, considering their continuous exposure to traumatic events in various forms.

Additionally, future studies could delve into exploring the coping mechanisms employed by people with albinism to overcome the daily challenges associated with their condition. Given the quasi-permanence of traumatic events in their lives, understanding effective coping strategies could contribute to the development of targeted interventions aimed at improving their mental well-being.

Furthermore, the study suggests a focus on determining unhealthy coping mechanisms, specifically the potential abuse of drugs and alcohol among individuals with albinism. Investigating these aspects can provide valuable insights into the risk factors and patterns of substance abuse within this vulnerable population, guiding the development of preventive measures and support programs.

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