

## An Appraisal Analysis of Albinism in Human Rights Advocacy Discourse

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the evaluative construction of albinism in United Nations human rights advocacy discourse through the analytical lens of Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). While existing research on albinism has mainly focused on medical, social, psychological, and legal issues, limited attention has been paid to how albinism is linguistically represented within institutional advocacy discourse. The data under examination consist of three UN press releases addressing employment rights, health risks related to skin cancer, and the rights of children with albinism. The analysis employs the three Appraisal systems-Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation to explore how evaluation, voice alignment, and intensity are discursively realized. The results show a dominance of Appreciation (valuation), indicating that the discourse primarily evaluates the social conditions of people with albinism and the institutional practices related to them rather than presenting their personal emotions. Judgement resources position governments as morally and legally responsible actors. The dominance of heteroglossia within Engagement enhances institutional legitimacy in advocating for the rights of people with albinism. Within the system of Graduation, Force is frequently used to intensify urgency and reinforces the seriousness of the issues addressed. Overall, the study demonstrates that UN advocacy discourse reconstructs albinism as a complex human rights issue shaped by social inequality and institutional responsibility.

**Keywords:** Advocacy, albinism, appraisal theory, human rights.

تحليل تقييمي للمهق في خطاب المناصرة لحقوق الانسان

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## المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث البناء التقييمي لموضوع المهق في خطاب المناصرة الحقوقية الصادر عن الأمم المتحدة، وذلك من خلال توظيف الإطار التحليلي لنظرية التقييم لمارتن ووايت (2005). وعلى الرغم من أن الدراسات السابقة حول المهق قد ركزت على نحو أساسي على الأبعاد الطبية والاجتماعية والنفسية والقانونية، فإن تمثيل المهق لغويًا ضمن الخطاب المؤسسي للمناصرة لم يحظَ باهتمام كافٍ. تتكوّن النصوص محل الدراسة من ثلاثة بيانات صحفية صادرة عن الأمم المتحدة، تتناول حقوق العمل، والمخاطر الصحية المرتبطة بسرطان الجلد، وحقوق الأطفال المصابين بالمهق. يعتمد التحليل على الأنظمة الثلاثة لنظرية التقييم: الموقف (Attitude)، والمشاركة (Engagement)، والتدرّج (Graduation)، للكشف عن كيفية تجسيد التقييم، ومواءمة الأصوات، ودرجات الشدة على المستوى الخطابي. تُظهر النتائج هيمنة نظام التقدير (Appreciation)، وبخاصة بُعد القيمة (valuation)، مما يدل على أن الخطاب يركّز أساسًا على تقييم الأوضاع الاجتماعية والممارسات المؤسسية المرتبطة بالأشخاص ذوي المهق، بدلًا من التعبير عن مشاعرهم الفردية. كما تُسهم موارد الحكم (Judgement) في تموضع الحكومات بوصفها جهات مسؤولة أخلاقيًا وقانونيًا. وتُعزز هيمنة التعدد الصوتي (heteroglossia) ضمن نظام المشاركة من مشروعية الخطاب المؤسسي في الدفاع عن حقوق هذه الفئة. وفي إطار نظام التدرّج، يُستخدم بُعد القوة (Force) بشكل متكرر للتركيز بشدة على خطورة القضايا المطروحة. وبوجه عام، تبيّن الدراسة أن خطاب المناصرة الأممي يعيد تشكيل المهق بوصفه قضية حقوق إنسان معقدة تتحدد بفعل عدم المساواة الاجتماعية والمسؤولية المؤسسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المناصرة، المهق، نظرية التقييم، حقوق الانسان

## 1. Albinism: Biological and Socio-Cultural Dimensions

Albinism is a genetic condition resulting from mutations that affect the production, distribution, or degradation of melanin, the biological pigment responsible for the coloration of the skin, hair, and eyes (Morris-Jones, 2019, p. 151). Dermatologists and ophthalmologists define albinism as a group of inherited disorders characterized by a congenital absence or reduction of pigment production despite the normal presence, structure, and distribution of melanocytes, the epidermal cells responsible for the production of melanin (Sybert, 2010, p. 345). Melanin is not limited to pigmentation alone; it has a significant biological function in the development of ocular tissues, and it serves as a protective barrier for the skin and eyes against the harmful UV radiation from sunlight (Seibert & Darling, 2013, p. 93). Consequently, one of the most recognizable physical indicators of albinism is reduced pigmentation in the skin, hair, and eyes, often accompanied by visual impairment and heightened sensitivity to sun exposure (Archer, 2008, p. 138).

Albinism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and gender groups, and in all geographical region. People with albinism are commonly born to parents whose physical appearance reflects the typical pigmentation of their ethnic community because both parents may carry the recessive gene without having the condition themselves (Miller, 2021, pp. 5-6). When both biological parents are carriers of the mutated genes, each pregnancy carries a 25 percent probability of resulting in a child with

albinism (Garza et al., 2016, p. 4). The condition has also been documented among various species, other than humans, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish (Kelly & Taylor, 2009, p. 325).

In spite of that no medical cure has been reached yet for albinism or its associated visual limitations and skin sensitivity, most people with albinism are physically healthy and capable of leading productive and fulfilling lives. However, the condition often yields into social vulnerability because the difference in appearance and the low vision expose people with albinism to specific physical, psychological, and social burdens, which are even more intensified not only by the cultural views towards difference (Kelly, 1996, p. 208). The nagging pressure to appear "normal" and to minimize visible distinction often creates internal anxiety and emotional challenges. In many cases, people with albinism follow some strategies of social camouflage to avoid ridicule, exclusion, or any impression of incapacity. Miller (2021, p. 6) comments on this pressure by arguing that:

"The pressure to minimize the differences albinism causes while continually trying to maximize visual ability presents stress for the albinic person. In some instances, the pressure can prompt a person with albinism to reject their condition, thereby losing touch with a very crucial aspect of his or her identity."

The experience of living with albinism is closely associated with stigma. Goffman (1963, p. 3) defines stigma as an attribute that discredits an individual and reduces him from a socially accepted person to someone who looks like as diminished. From a sociological perspective, stigma is not inherent in the attribute itself, but it emerges through social judgment and cultural expectations that define particular types of difference as undesirable. Scambler (2018, p. 767) emphasizes that stigma is socially produced through processes that determine what counts as normal and what is seen as deviant. In this respect, albinism proves to be an obvious example of health-related stigma and skin color discrimination (Burke et al., 2014, p. 119). Individuals may experience fear, avoidance, ridicule, or pity because of their appearance, all of which contribute to psychological pain and social exclusion (Mason et al., 2001, p. 2).

The degree and form of stigma differ across societies. In the United States, many families provide emotional and social support for their children born with albinism to be confident and engaged in everyday life (Miller, 2021, p. 7). However, African Americans with albinism often face double discrimination. Gold and He (2018, p. 772) explain that these people may be marginalized by White communities because of racialized facial features associated with African ancestry, while simultaneously

being perceived as different within Black communities because of their lighter skin, hair, and eye color. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the consequences of having albinism are more severe. Studies in countries such as Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe show that people with albinism are often deprived from healthcare, education, employment, social inclusion, and even physical safety (Lund, 2001; Seibert & Darling, 2013; Burke et al., 2014).

Social hostility in some cultures may include bullying, humiliation, physical, and even violence. Cultural myths and superstitions are often linked to albinism in these cultures, including beliefs that albinism is contagious, the result of a family curse, or that people with albinism have supernatural powers (Lund, 2001, p. 5; Burke et al., 2014, p. 118). The most extreme form of violence involves abduction and murder for body parts used in witchcraft rituals, or as things that bring wealth and luck (Seibert & Darling, 2013, p. 93). Such violent practices attracted the attention of international organizations including the United Nations, UNICEF, and World Health Organization (WHO) to condemn violence against people with albinism and support advocacy efforts to protect and include those vulnerable individuals (Burke et al., 2014, p. 118). Therefore, the present study is aimed at investigating advocacy discourse as a form of moral discourse used by the United Nations to defending the right of people with albinism worldwide.

More specifically, the study tries to answer the following questions:

- How is albinism evaluated through Attitude resources in advocacy discourse
- How do Engagement and Graduation resources contribute to fostering advocacy toward people with albinism?
- What ideological representation of albinism emerges through these evaluative patterns?

## 2. Data and Methodology

This paper examines three press releases that address different issues related to people with albinism published on the official website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in 2025 and 2026. The themes of the selected texts revolve around employment rights, skin cancer, and children's rights. These texts represent official human rights advocacy discourse produced within an institutional and international context. The selected press releases were chosen on the basis of thematic relevance, evaluative density, and discursive richness. Since the study aims to examine evaluative representation rather than frequency across a large corpus, a small dataset is considered to be methodologically appropriate for in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The study employs Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005) as its main analytical framework. It investigates the data in terms of the three subsystems of

Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Attitude is further branched into affect, judgement, and appreciation to identify how emotions, assessments, and valuations are linguistically constructed. Engagement is analyzed to figure out how the discourse negotiates alternative voices, positions institutional authority, and manages dialogic alignment through monoglossia and heteroglossia resources. Graduation is analyzed to show how evaluative meanings are intensified or mitigated.

### 3. Analysis and Discussion

#### Text 1: Greater alignment of laws and policies needed for enforcement of employment rights for persons with albinism: UN expert

Table 1

Attitude distribution in text 1

Attitude Type	Subtype	Negative	Positive	Total
Affect	Happiness	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
	Security	3 (13.6%)	0 (0%)	3
	Satisfaction	1 (4.5%)	0 (0%)	1
Judgement	Social Esteem	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)	4
	Social Sanction	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)	4
Appreciation	Reaction	2 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	2
	Composition	0 (0%)	1 (4.5%)	1
	Valuation	3 (13.6%)	4 (18.2%)	7
Total		<b>14 (63.6%)</b>	<b>8 (36.4%)</b>	<b>22</b>

The quantitative analysis shows that this text is dominated by negative Attitude choices, particularly within Appreciation and Judgement. This dominance of negativity indicates that the discourse focuses on evaluating social and institutional obstacles facing people with albinism more than on describing their emotions. The most frequently used subtype is Appreciation (Valuation), especially positive valuation (18.2%) used in expressions such as "the right to employment is a critical lifeline", where employment is represented as highly valuable and fundamental. Negative valuation also appears in phrases such as "barriers and challenges" and "employment disparities," which describe employment conditions as inadequate and unfair.

In the domain of Judgement, negative social sanction is prominent (13.6%), such as "considerably more needs to be done," where the institutions concerned with people with albinism are implicitly judged for their insufficient action. Positive

social sanction appears in "imposes an obligation on States," which portray governments as morally and legally responsible parties. As for Affect, it is limited and mainly realized through negative security (13.6%), as in "distressing examples", which reflects insecurity and vulnerability rather than happiness or satisfaction in life. This pattern convey the message that depriving people with albinism from employment as an embedded human-rights issue rather than a personal emotional experience.

Table 2

Engagement distribution in text 1

Engagement category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Monoglossia</b>	—	7	35%
<b>Heteroglossia</b>	Attribute	5	25%
	Acknowledge	3	15%
	Counter	3	15%
	Pronounce	2	10%
	Deny	0	0%
	Concur	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of engagement, the text relies on heteroglossia more than on monoglossia. The repeated attribution made to Miti-Drummond, references to her "latest report," and mentioning "country visits and regular consultations" open the discourse to institutional and experiential sources. These choices strengthen legitimacy as the claims are not presented as personal opinions but as expert-based or report-based statements.

However, monoglossic assertions also occur (35%), especially in statements such as "barriers to accessing employment impact much more than the enjoyment of the right to employment." Assertions like these totally eliminate alternative voices and present the impact of exclusion from employment as an established fact about the suffering of people with albinism.

The most important heteroglossic movement occurs in "*many have shared with me distressing examples...*" In this instance of attribution. The discourse producer incorporates the voices of persons with albinism into the UN expert's discourse. The text therefore gains moral authority from lived experience while maintaining the institutional authority through the expert's voice.

Table 3

Graduation distribution and text 1

Graduation category	Frequency	Percentage
Force	13	76%
Focus	4	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

Graduation in this text is mainly realized through the domain of Force (76%). Lexical items such as "critical," "robust," "considerably more," "numerous," "severely," and "much more" are chosen to intensify the urgency of the issue. The text uses amplification to prevent employment rights from being dealt with as a secondary concern.

The category of Focus appears less than Force, and in expressions such as "precise employment disparities" and "meaningful interventions." These sharpen the boundaries of what is considered as acceptable action. The write wants to deliver the message that the problem of denying people with albinism's right in employment is not simply lack of policy, but lack of effective, concrete implementation as well.

**Text 2: Skin cancer poses global health emergency for people with albinism, UN expert warns**

Table 4

Attitude distribution and text 2

Attitude Type	Subtype	Negative	Positive	Total
Affect	Happiness	1 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	1
	Security	5 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	5
	Satisfaction	2 (5.7%)	0 (0%)	2
Judgement	Social Esteem	2 (5.7%)	0 (0%)	2
	Social Sanction	5 (14.3%)	2 (5.7%)	7
Appreciation	Reaction	4 (11.4%)	0 (0%)	4
	Composition	2 (5.7%)	0 (0%)	2
	Valuation	8 (22.9%)	4 (11.4%)	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>29 (82.9%)</b>	<b>6 (17.1%)</b>	<b>35</b>

In this text, the marked dominance of negative Attitude (82.9%) reflects the severity of the health issue related to skin cancer. The most frequent subtype of Attitude is Appreciation (Valuation), especially negative valuation (22.9%). This subtype is realized in expressions such as "global health emergency, " "bleak and unfortunate reality, " and "grim statistics. " These lexical choices frame skin cancer not as an mild medical issue but as a hugely serious humanitarian emergency that requires urgent action.

Negative social sanction is also highly frequent (14.3%). One of the strongest examples appears in the sentence "Failure to prevent foreseeable and unnecessary deaths... is a violation of the right to life," in which institutional neglect is morally condemned. This is a powerful judgement of governments' responsibility. Negative security dominates Affect by the ration (14.3%) through strongly inscribed expressions such as "particularly vulnerable" and references to death and risk. Such choices emphasize feelings of insecurity rather than temporary unhappiness or dissatisfaction. Positive values are limited, by only (11.4%), and they mainly appear when discussing the right to access healthcare and the possibility of intervention. This imbalance between positive and negative evaluation is deliberately made in order to intensify urgency by foregrounding preventable suffering and institutional failure to find proper solutions.

Table 5.

Engagement distribution in Text 2

Engagement category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Monoglossia</b>	—	9	36%
<b>Heteroglossia</b>	Attribute	5	20%
	Acknowledge	4	16%
	Pronounce	4	16%
	Counter	2	8%
	Deny	1	4%
	Concur	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

The quantitative analysis shows the dominance of both attributive expansion and purely authoritative voice. Attribution (20%) appears in references to Miti-Drummond, her report, research, and statistics. Attribution is relied upon because the claims are severe, so they require evidential support. The statistical references to "up to 1,000 times more likely, ""98 per cent," and "four fifths" make the advocacy discourse appear accurately supported by facts.

Pronouncement appears by the ration (16%) in clauses such as "can and must be reversed" and "I implore States. " These expressions put pressure on governments to act urgently.

Denial and Counter appear together in expression such as "not just a violation of the right to health, but a violation of the right to life." This combination put aside any narrower interpretation and expands the moral and legal voices. Counter appears in the contrast between the existence of general cancer research programs and the "deplorable dearth" of data on persons with albinism. The discourse refer to the contradiction between the existence of general cancer knowledge, and the constant neglected vulnerability of people with albinism.

Table 6.

Graduation distribution in Text 2

Graduation category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Force</b>	24	88.9%
<b>Focus</b>	3	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table shows that Force is extremely dominant in this text. Intensification is expressed by lexical choices such as "global," "highest," "urgent," "grim", "particularly, " "deplorable," "highest attainable", and by numerical quantification, such as in "1,000 times, " "98 per cent" and "four fifths" which are used to make vulnerability measurable and difficult to deny or neglect.

Meanings of Focus occur in such expressions as "appropriately targeted measures", "necessary research", and "relevant programs". These expressions deliver the meaning that the general available health policy is insufficient to deal with the particular health issues faced by people with albinism.

**Text 3: New guiding note for reporting on children with albinism: UN expert**

Table 7

Attitude distribution in Text 3

Attitude Type	Subtype	Negative	Positive	Total
Affect	Happiness	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
	Security	4 (12.1%)	0 (0%)	4
	Satisfaction	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1
Judgement	Social Esteem	1 (3%)	3 (9.1%)	4

	Social Sanction	3 (9.1%)	5 (15.2%)	8
Appreciation	Reaction	0 (0%)	2 (6.1%)	2
	Composition	0 (0%)	3 (9.1%)	3
	Valuation	3 (9.1%)	8 (24.2%)	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>11 (33.3%)</b>	<b>22 (66.7%)</b>	<b>33</b>

This text is dominated by positive Attitude linguistic choices, especially positive Appreciation (Valuation) (24.2%). This dominant field of meaning reflects the discourse producer's intention to focus on institutional solutions rather than on emotional suffering or on expressing judgements. The "Guiding Note" is evaluated positively more than once through expressions such as "critical tool," "important advocacy tool" and "a testament to the power of partnership". These evaluations render the discourse as an effective social practice that boosts protecting children with albinism.

Within judgement, positive social sanction is also highly frequent. This meaning appears particularly in phrases such as "fulfilling their reporting obligations" and "sustained commitment and collaboration." These lexical choices positively evaluate governments and stakeholders as they are considered as the committed actors in charge. However, negative evaluation still exists such as "systemic discrimination, violence, ritual attacks, and exclusion," where negative security and negative valuation directs the attention to the social and psychological challenges faced by children with albinism.

The existence of both negative and positive values has two functions in the representation: children with albinism are shown as vulnerable individuals facing serious barriers, while the institutional cooperation is expressed as a realistic and essential in the process of protection and inclusion. This strategy makes Text 3 less crisis oriented and more solution oriented in its evaluative structure.

Table 8.

Engagement distribution in Text 3

Engagement category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Monoglossia</b>	—	8	32%
<b>Heteroglossia</b>	Attribute	5	20%
	Acknowledge	4	16%
	Pronounce	5	20%
	Concur	1	4%
	Counter	2	8%

	Deny	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>100%</b>

The text is highly heteroglossic by the ratio 68% as it attributes authority to multiple institutional actors, such as the UN expert, the African Committee, African Union Member States, NHRIs, CSOs, children, and stakeholders. This 20% ration of attribution produces a collaborative advocacy discourse defending the rights of those children with albinism.

Pronouncement (20%) is clear in such clauses as "I call on all African Union Member States" and "Let us seize this opportunity". These clauses directly intervene in the dialogic voice and necessitate action. Acknowledge appears where the text recognizes the "Guiding Note" as a result of institutional collaboration.

The 32% Monoglossic claims are used to establish the painful reality, as in "Children with albinism continue to face systemic discrimination". The statement is presented as an unnegotiable bitter fact. The text therefore expresses the writer's complete alignment with collaboration, meanwhile it prevents any attempt to deny the problem.

Table 9.

Graduation distribution in Text 3

Graduation category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Force</b>	17	73.9%
<b>Focus</b>	6	26.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

In this text, Force appears in "urgently", "systemic", "all African Union Member States", "sustained commitment", "full inclusion", and "across Africa". The fundamental function of these lexical items is to intensify urgency, scope of the problem, and the moral seriousness of the issue. Focus appears in "targeted action," "specific focus," "key indicators," "concrete steps," and "specific areas." This is important because the text is not only emotional or declarative; it is procedural. It demands precise reporting frameworks and concrete implementation.

#### 4. Conclusion

After examining three thematically distinct texts focusing on employment rights, health risk of skin cancer, and children's rights, this paper demonstrates that evaluation plays a central role in shaping the ideological representation of albinism. The findings of the quantitative analysis shows the dominance of Appreciation

(valuation), across the three texts. The density of this domain indicates that the discourse is not intended for expressing emotions or personal experiences, but rather on evaluating social conditions, institutional procedures, and structural inequalities regarding people with albinism. They are therefore represented not as inherently deficient individuals, but as subjects with full rights, but marginalized through systemic barriers, ineffective policies, and insufficient implementation of law.

Judgement, especially in terms of social sanction, is used strategically to position state's institutions as the morally and legally responsible actors. The discourse of the three texts recurrently constructs governmental responsibility through obligation, failure, and compliance in order to reinforce urgency. As for the domain of Affect, it remains relatively limited and controlled for the purpose of sustaining the seriousness of the issues posed rather than to evoke sympathy. The predominance of heteroglossia within Engagement reflects the institutional nature of advocacy discourse. The integration of expert voices, reports, statistics, and stakeholder perspectives enhances the legitimacy of the claims made by the discourse. Monoglossic assertions, on the other hand, are used purposively to express central propositions such as the existence of discrimination or the severity of health risks as established and undeniable facts.

within Graduation, Force, is more frequently used to intensify urgency, especially in the health related issues. Quantification and lexical amplification function to transform abstract concerns into measurable and inescapable realities.

In sum, the study concludes that UN advocacy discourse reconstructs albinism as a complex human rights issue, shifting it from a purely biological condition to a socially and institutionally mediated experience. This evaluative framing plays a crucial role in legitimizing advocacy efforts and mobilizing international attention toward the protection and inclusion of persons with albinism.

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