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ACKNOWLEDGING POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT VITILIGO IN ASEER REGION, SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract:

Background: *Vitiligo is an acquired pigmentary skin disorder that affects 0.5% to 2.0% of the population. Accordingly, this study aims at measuring the knowledge and conception among society in Aseer region of Saudi Arabia, exploring factors that might influence such beliefs (such as local culture) and exploring whether vitiligo patients require more health education.*

Method: *A cross-sectional study. It targeted Saudi Adults in Abha and Mahayel Aseer. A simple Arabic self-administered validated questionnaire was utilized for data collection in shopping centers. The data was collected and then entered using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20. The SPSS was also used to process and analyze the collected data.*

Results: *The sample size reached 300 individuals, of which 51% of the sample are males and 49% are females. Moreover, 287 (95.7%) reported they have heard about vitiligo, while only 13 (4.3%) reported the opposite. The responses showed that the majority (61%) have known from their friends. Furthermore, 53% have moderate level of awareness, while 33.4% have slight awareness about vitiligo. Only educational level has a significant relationship with the level of awareness (p-value= 0.000). Additionally, around 49% of the sampled individuals have positive attitudes towards vitiligo, while 41.5% have neutral attitudes. None of the demographic variables a have a significant relationship with the attitudes.*

Conclusion: *The community in Aseer needs to strengthen their knowledge about vitiligo and change their mind about it.*

Keywords: *Vitiligo, Saudi Arabia, Knowledge, Awareness, Attitude.*

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INTRODUCTION:

Vitiligo is one of the common acquired depigmentary disease in which white patches appear on the skin. The prevalence of this disease is approximately 0.5-2% of the global population [1,2]. Moreover, vitiligo can develop at any age. It is a multifactorial polygenic disease. It relates to multiple genetic and environmental factors. It is an autoimmune disease were autoimmune cell attack and destruct the melanocyte cells but the exact pathogeneses are not yet fully understood. The course of the disease is unpredictable [3].

As a fact, Skin diseases are often visible to other people, correspondingly, many skin disorders may lead to psychosocial consequences. Significant psychological and social effects and discrimination exist among vitiligo patients. The prevalence of the negative impacts is correlated with the community's attitudes and knowledge [4].

The societ's acceptance of vitiligo patients is highly dependent largely on how a given population understands the truth about the disease; the more negative is the general perceptionn about those who suffer from vitiligo, the more likely that these patients will face “social stigma” [5].

A Turkish study conducted on the anxiety and depression correlated with vitiligo disease. The study concluded that the rate of psychiatric morbidity was higher among vitiligo patients than among healthy control individuals [6].

Therefore, this study aims to investigate knowledge and attitudes among general population towards vitiligo. Patients and society knowledge about the disease have a direct impact on quality of life of the patients and their adaptabilities with their disease [7,8].

There are few studies measuring the knowledge and conception of society in our region [9,10,11]. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to address this topic in Aseer region of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it aims at exploring factors that might influence such beliefs (such as local culture) and exploring whether vitiligo patients require more health education. The research was conducted in both Abha and Mahayel Aseer in September 2018.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is a cross-sectional study. it targeted Saudi Adults in Abha and Mahayel Aseer. The study was conducted in November 2019. The sampled individuals were randomly selected in shopping centers every weekend during November 2019 in both Abha and Mahayel Aseer.

A simple Arabic self-administered validated questionnaire was utilized for data collection in shopping centers. The questionnaire covered demographic variables, which are; age, gender, marital status, place of residence, occupation, educational level and income level.

It also had further three parts, one covering knowledge. The second covered the awareness concerning vitiligo and finally the third covered the attitude towards vitiligo. The questions in each part are as follows;

Demographic Characteristics Section
Gender
Age
Educational Level
Place of Residence
Occupation
Income Level

Knowledge About Vitiligo
Did you hear about vitiligo?
How do you hear about vitiligo ?
Vitiligo is a dangerous disease ?
Vitiligo is an infectious disease?
Vitiligo is associating with taking certain foods (e.g. milk, fish) ?
Vitiligo is an autoimmune disease ?
Vitiligo is a hereditary disease?
Vitiligo is associating with exposure to psychological stress?
Vitiligo is affecting the social state of the patient?
Are there treatment for the vitiligo?

Attitude towards Vitiligo
Is the vitiligo a prevalent disease?
I would avoid shaking hands with a vitiligo patient to prevent infection?
I would eat food prepared by a vitiligo patient?
I would share food with a vitiligo patient?
20.I would accept being served by a vitiligo patient?
I would marry a vitiligo patient?
Would a vitiligo partner affect the marital life?
As a work owner, would you accept employment of a vitiligo patient?
There is lack of public awareness regarding vitiligo and its treatment?

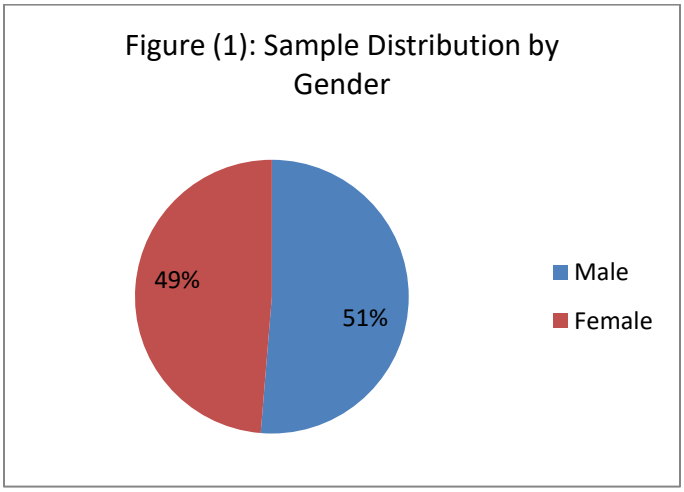
The data was collected and then entered using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20. The SPSS was also used to process and analyze the collected data.

The sample size reached 300 individuals. The sample covered both males and females.

RESULTS:

1. Demographic Data

The age of the sampled individuals ranges between 12 to 60 years old with mean age of 30.9. Moreover, the results show that 51% of the sample are males while 49% are females.



As shown in figure (2), 60.7% of the sampled individuals are married, while 36.3% are single and only 3% are divorced.

Table (1): Sample Distribution by Marital Status		
Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	109	36.3%
Married	182	60.7%
Divorced	9	3%

Concerning the place of residence, the results show that 29% live in rural areas while 71% live in urban areas.

Table (2): Sample Distribution by place of residence		
place of residence	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Urban	213	71%
Rural	87	29%

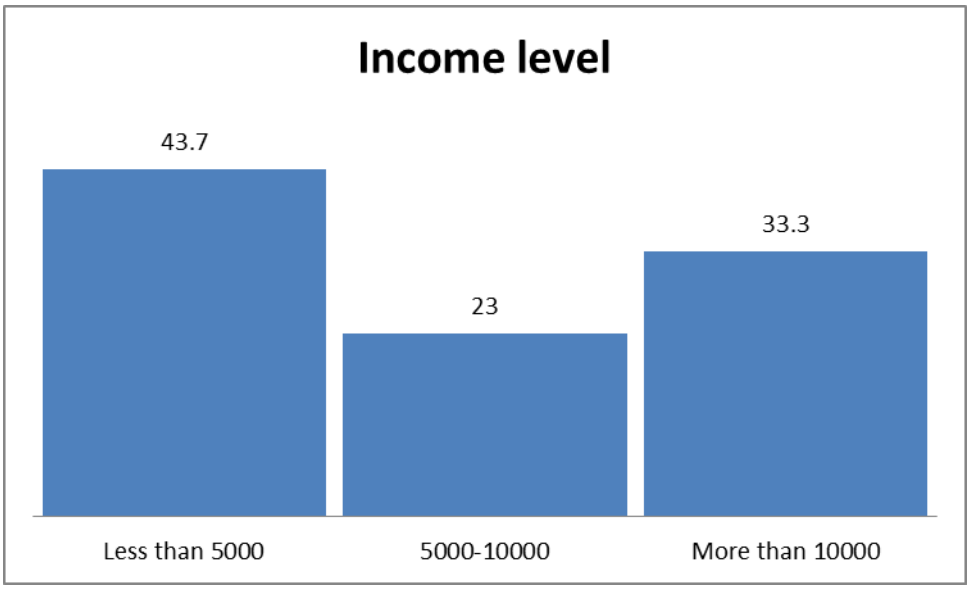
Around 48% of the sample are employees, while 28% are unemployed and 24% are still students.

Table (3): Sample Distribution by Occupation		
Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Student	71	23.7%
Employee	145	48.3%
Unemployed	84	28%

The results of the analysis show that the majority, representing 74% of the sample, have university education. On the other hand, 19% have public education and 7% have higher education.

Table (4): Sample Distribution by Educational Level		
Educational Level	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Public Education	57	19%
University Level	222	74%
Higher Education	21	7%

It appears that 43.7% of the sampled individuals have less than 5000 income, while 33.3% have more than 10000 as income. Moreover, 23% are paid between 5000-10000.



2. Knowledge:

Concerning the knowledge about vitiligo, the results show that 287 (95.7%) reported they have heard about it, while only 13 (4.3%) reported the opposite.

Table (5): Did you hear about vitiligo		
Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	388	96%
No	12	4%

The sampled individuals were asked about the mean by which they have known vitiligo. The responses showed that the majority (61%) have known from their friends. While 18.5% have known from the internet and social media. 7% have known from TV and 13.6% form newspapers and magazines.

Table (6): How did you hear about vitiligo		
Mean	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Internet/social media	53	18.5
TV	20	7
Magazine/Newspaper	39	13.6
Friends	175	61
Total	287	100

3. Awareness:

Concerning the awareness dimension, the responses show that around 53% of the sampled individuals have moderate level of awareness, while 33.4% have slight awareness about vitiligo. Furthermore, 5.2% are not at all aware.

Table (7): Awareness about vitiligo		
Level of Awareness	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Not at all aware	15	5.2
Slight Awareness	96	33.4
Moderate Awareness	151	52.6
Extreme Awareness	25	8.7
Total	287	100

Table (8) shows that only educational level has a significant relationship with the level of awareness (p-value= 0.000), while other demographic variables are insignificantly related with the level of awareness.

It appears that moderate awareness is almost the same level in both genders, however, extreme awareness in higher among females with 9.5% compared to 7.9% among males. Additionally, urban areas residents have higher level of moderate awareness than rural residents. Moderate level of awareness is also the highest among divorced, unemployed, university graduates and those who are paid between 5000-10000.

Table (8): Relationships between level of awareness and demographic variables						
		Awareness				**P-value**
		Not at all aware	**Slightly Awareness**	**Moderately Awareness**	**Extremely Awareness**	
Gender	Male	6.80%	31.10%	52.70%	9.50%	0.556
	Female	3.60%	36.00%	52.50%	7.90%	
Place of residence	Rural	3.50%	40.00%	47.10%	9.40%	0.470
	Urban	5.90%	30.70%	55.00%	8.40%	
Marital state	Single	5.90%	35.30%	51.00%	7.80%	0.956
	Married	4.50%	33.00%	53.40%	9.10%	
	Divorced	11.10%	22.20%	55.60%	11.10%	
	Widowed	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Occupation	Student	1.50%	31.30%	59.70%	7.50%	0.490
	Employee	8.10%	35.30%	47.10%	9.60%	
	Unemployed	3.60%	32.10%	56.00%	8.30%	
Educational level*	Public education	1.90%	48.10%	46.20%	3.80%	0.000
	University level	6.00%	30.70%	55.80%	7.40%	
	Higher education	5.00%	25.00%	35.00%	35.00%	
Income level	Less than 5000	2.40%	36.80%	52.80%	8.00%	0.798
	5000-10000	10.60%	30.30%	53.00%	6.10%	
	More than 10000	5.20%	31.20%	52.10%	11.50%	
*significant at P-value < 0.05						

Table (9) shows that 85% of the sample think that there is lack of public awareness regarding vitiligo and its treatment, while 15% think the opposite.

Table (9): There is lack of public awareness regarding vitiligo and its treatment		
Response	**Frequency**	**Percent**
No	43	15
Yes	244	85
Total	287	100

4. Attitude:

Concerning the attitude dimension, the responses show that around 49% of the sampled individuals have positive attitudes towards vitiligo, while 41.5% have neutral attitudes towards vitiligo.

Table (10): Attitudes towards vitiligo		
Response	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Negative	30	10%
Neutral	123	41%
Positive	147	49%

Table (11) shows that none of the demographic variables a have a significant relationship with the attitudes as all of the p-values are greater than 0.05.

The results show that positive attitudes are more prevalent among females, urban residents, divorced, employed, university graduates and those who are paid more than 10000 compared to other categories.

Table (11): Relationships between the attitude and demographic variables

		Attitude			P-value
		Negative	Neutral	Positive	
Gender	Male	13.50%	40.50%	45.90%	0.083
	Female	5.80%	42.40%	51.80%	
Place of residence	Rural	12.90%	41.20%	45.90%	0.480
	Urban	8.40%	41.60%	50.00%	
Marital state	Single	8.80%	44.10%	47.10%	0.437
	Married	10.80%	40.90%	48.30%	
	Divorced	0.00%	22.20%	77.80%	
	Widowed	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Occupation	Student	10.40%	40.30%	49.30%	0.431
	Employee	11.80%	44.10%	44.10%	
	Unemployed	6.00%	38.10%	56.00%	
Educational level*	Public education	9.60%	32.70%	57.70%	0.126
	University level	9.30%	45.60%	45.10%	
	Higher education	15.00%	20.00%	65.00%	
Income level	Less than 5000	7.20%	39.20%	53.60%	0.323
	5000-10000	10.60%	37.90%	51.50%	
	More than 10000	12.50%	46.90%	40.60%	

*significant at P-value < 0.05

DISCUSSION:

Skin diseases have a negative effect on patient's appearance, social life, and emotional situation. Many researches have reflected that psychiatric problems occur frequently in patients with skin disorders.

A Saudi study results showed that only 6.9% of the participants had sound knowledge about vitiligo, with social media the most common reported source of information (32.2%). This was followed by TV (20.8%), newspapers/magazines (15.7%), and other sources (31.3%)[10]. These results are very different from our results, which states that 52.6% have moderate awareness friends are the main source of knowledge with 61% followed by internet and social media with 18.5%. The same study further suggested that that most participants agreed that there is a lack of public awareness regarding vitiligo and its treatment (86.5%), which is very close to the responses of our sample that reached 85% for the same response.

Another Saudi study conducted in Qassim locality concluded that 31.9% of the sample had no information about vitiligo. The main source of information for males was physicians and for females were the newspapers [11].

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Thailand on participants from healthcare and non-healthcare workers attending Thammasat Hospital and Thammasat University. The results of the study showed a total of 101 individuals completed the questionnaires. Less than 25% of the participants were able to recognize vitiligo and realized that it was a hereditary disease, which relatively very low if compared to the knowledge results of our study which reached 96%[4]. Furthermore, the study prevailed that There was no statistically significant relation between the attitude score and gender, age, marital status, occupation, education, family members working in healthcare and monthly income ($p > 0.05$), which is consistent with our study conclusions.

Another cross-sectional, descriptive study was conducted in Turkey. In total, 100 (58 female, 42 male) patients were covered by the study. Of whom,

74% knew the name of vitiligo, 48% reported that they obtained information on the disease from a doctor, and 69% believed they had adequate information on vitiligo [6].

CONCLUSION:

The community in Aseer needs to strengthen their knowledge about vitiligo and change their mind about it.

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