

**The Role of Faith Leaders in Influencing Wellbeing:
A Qualitative Exploration of the Views of Tongan People
Living in Aotearoa to Inform Policy, Church Law, and
Practice**

Rubinstine Manukia Schaumkel

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Abstract

This doctoral study investigates the role of faith leaders in influencing the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. There is no specific evidence describing the role of faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people. A Pacific worldview paradigm and the key research ethics and values expressed and practised by Tongan people were used to engage with Tongan people (Vaioleti, 2006) to explore the role of faith leaders. The research design used was a qualitative research methodology informed by a talanoa research approach that is inclusive of Pacific knowledge, values, and belief systems (Vaioleti, 1999–2003). This qualitative study employed a Pacific worldview paradigm using a talanoa research approach to underpin protocol and discussion. Twenty-six participants (11 females and 15 males) aged between 25–89 years, actively engaged in their church community, took part in four focus group talanoa sessions. Participants reported mixed wellbeing levels, realities, and experiences. Within the talanoa approach, components of the kakala research framework were integrated. This framework leverages from the talanoa research approach in that it allows the researcher to access and capture the authenticity of Tongan traditional knowledge systems in its intended form, structure, and processes (Helu-Thaman, 1997). That is, to capture the insights of Tongan congregants and parishioners, specifically exploring the experiences of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. The information collection method used was focus group talanoa sessions and the participants were recruited from the Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Synod of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa and faith leaders from other Tongan denominations. An iterative process with the use of the NVivo qualitative analysis software was used to analyse the information by thematic analysis.

The analysis identified four themes of enablers and barriers to religious and faith-based community participation. These were: (1) connections and relationships, (2) influence and interests, (3) personal knowledge and awareness of wellbeing, and (4) resources and connection to the land (fonua) and environment. The findings established that wellbeing is a holistic balance of the physical (sino/body), mental (atamai/mind), and spiritual wellbeing (laumalie/loto) – *mo 'ui lelei, mo 'ui lo tolu ma 'uma 'uluta, potupotutatau and napangapangamālie*. Methodist faith leaders and participants (50-89 years) believed the role of a faith leader is an ordained minister or presbyter called to ministry to have a relationship with God. Participants (25–49 years) believed that we are all faith leaders and/or subleaders responsible for our actions, like a mentor or teacher. Non-Methodists believed a faith leader is a supporter and encourager of faith held to higher standard of expectations. Faith leaders influenced wellbeing through a variety of ways. Methodists explored wellbeing through ministry, pastoral care, home visits, leaders' meetings, information sharing and reporting. Non-Methodists relied on church doctrine through the bible, internal systems, structures, and functions to explore wellbeing. Intrinsic factors such as developing stronger connections for resilience, getting to know the congregants and parishioners better, maintaining stronger relationships (tāuhi vā) and developing essential programmes and resource support were identified as enabling community wellbeing. Barriers identified within this study included unwanted traditions and hierarchy, unappealing cultural influences, and practices, such as having limited opportunity to develop meaningful connections or explicitly targeting the youth and intergenerational gap, disconnection, and a lack of support resources and accessibility limitations.

This research contributes to a better understanding of how Tongan people live amidst the leadership of the faith leaders in Aotearoa. Additionally, faith leaders can use these finding to inform and strengthen their role for their congregation or parish by being informed of

the realities and experiences of the congregants and parishioners. Furthermore, the church, faith denominations and key stakeholders can be informed by the findings of this research to better enhance its policies, laws and regulations, systems, functions, and structures. Collectively, the relationships in this study were aimed to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongans and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa. Thus, recommendations were suggested to inform the development of programmes and support resources to increase the community wellbeing among this group.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Dated: 17/06/2022

Tribute

I acknowledge God first and foremost for guiding me through this journey.

This work is a tribute to my late Father Sione Tāvō Manukia (STM) who was born in a special Island. Its name is Niuafo'ou but is commonly known as Tin Can Mail (TCM) Island. Tāvō as we knew him is a descendant of Arthur Tindall that played an important part in the TCM history from (1881–1938). Arthur Frances Leopold Tindall (1881-1938) played an important part in the TCM history. He traded by his sailing ship Ysabel and established coconut plantation on Niuafo'ou (The Island of my Father's birth). He arranged for the ships of the Union Steamship Co., Ltd of Auckland, to stop off Niuafo'ou to pick up and deliver mail. He had established a home and coconuts plantation on Niuafo'ou that was very successful. In 1914 Tindall left the Islands for war service. Most of activity was centred around familiar waters in the South Pacific so he was able to continue trading. Of course, the Tin Can Mail of Niuafo'ou continued, too. Later Tindall invited C.S. Ramsay. Mail was enclosed in “tin cans” that were carried by swimmers or canoes in the solitary Island, Niuafo'ou, Tonga for over 100 years. This extraordinary method of mail delivery was known as Tin Can Mail. Tāvō was a beloved son of the Niuafo'ou and Eua Islands. He was bestowed the matapule title of ‘Kiva’ from the late Noble Tuita. Kiva as we knew him was a faith leader, businessman and tradesman that migrated to Aotearoa in search of higher education opportunities for his children. He pioneered and co-founded the Pulela'a Tongan Methodist Church on Margan Avenue, New Lynn. I refer you to my book, *Like a Dove: A Memoir and Biography in Honour of Sione Tāvō Manukia*, published on January 21, 2016 (ISBN 978-1-927260-47-0). The story was about what life was like for a Tongan migrant in New Zealand in the 1970s and onwards. In this tribute to Sione Tāvō Manukia (1936–2008). I tell of his early life in

Tonga and his experiences in New Zealand, as he sought a prosperous life and further education for his children. Tāvō settled in West Auckland and gained a job at Crown Lynn Pottery's New Lynn brickworks. Tāvō then helped other migrants gain employment at the brickworks, which enabled them to assist their families back home by sending remittances. As more migrants arrived, Tāvō realised that a church group base was required to host and assist them daily. This was the beginning of Pulela's New Lynn Tongan Methodist Church, founded in 1975, where Tāvō served as the head church steward for the next 30 years. There are valuable lessons in this book for other migrants seeking work and opportunities in Aotearoa. Tāvō's story demonstrates how through hard work, and moral and ethical determination, you can be successful in whatever you set out to achieve. Tāvō was a Steward and Faith Leader of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa for more than 30 years. Tāvō dedicated his life to God, church, country, and family. I dedicate this thesis to my parents: Father: Sione Tāvō Manukia, Mother: Meleseini Kaihau Manukia, and siblings Rev. Goll Fan Manukia, Fatani Manukia, Martin Tindall, Amelia Manukia-Vake, Helen Manukia-Aho, nieces, nephews and mokopuna of the Manukia-Tindall clan.

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Like a Dove



A memoir and biography in honour of
Sione Tavo Manukia

by
Rubinstine Manukia

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What was life like for a Tongan migrant in New Zealand in the 1970s and onwards? In this tribute to Sione Tavo Manukia, his daughter Ruby tells of his early life in Tonga and his experiences in New Zealand, as he sought a prosperous life and further education for his children. He settled in West Auckland and gained a job at Crown Lynn Pottery's New Lynn brickworks. He then helped other migrants gain employment at the brickworks, which enabled them to assist their families back home by sending remittances. As more migrants arrived, Sione Tavo realised that a church group base was required to host and assist them on a daily basis. This was the beginning of Pulela'a New Lynn Tongan Methodist Church, founded in 1975, where Sione Tavo served as the head church steward for 30 years. There are valuable lessons in this book for other migrants seeking work and opportunities in New Zealand. Sione Tavo's story demonstrates how through hard work, and moral and ethical determination, you can be successful in whatever you set out to achieve.



Tongan born author Rubinstine Manukia migrated to Auckland with her family in 1974. Ruby has a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Education from Auckland University, a Law degree from Victoria University and a Masters of Law (Honors) degree from the USA. At one time she ran a restaurant, the *Foghorn Bar & Grill* in San Francisco. She currently serves her community on the Whau Local Board of the Auckland Council, and is the President's Legal Advisor for the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Ruby enjoys sports, recreation and travelling.



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Librarian

I would like to acknowledge Steph Clout who has been instrumental in guiding my literature review and providing resources and reading materials upon request. She was always on task and phenomenal in securing the plethora of publications available. I spent hours with her in the early stages of my research learning and understanding all the sources available to me so that I could be better equipped with academic and literature navigation. Thank you, Steph, we did it!

Research Ethics Advisor

I would like to thank Charles Grinter for his invaluable advice with ethics considerations and approval. He enlightened me with different ways of thinking about ethics in research. Thank you for stimulating me philosophically and challenging my thought process.

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MAI-ki-Aronui

Ka pai Dr. Jani Wilson for providing me with regular updates and information on the MAI-ki-Aronui—the Māori and Indigenous PhD network at AUT, which aims to foster Māori and Indigenous leadership and research excellence. I enjoyed the mahi and privilege of presenting My 3 Minute pitch on the 3MT-style video creation for feedback. Kia kaha MAI-ki-Aronui.

Advisors

I would like to acknowledge my advisory group for their cultural leadership in championing protocol, customs, culture, and traditions. Your wisdom, knowledge and cultural expertise has been invaluable in better understanding Tongan customs, protocols, and traditions. Malo ‘aupito.

Participants

To my participants, thank you for your time and effort, especially for allowing me into your lives and enabling me to tell your stories, realities, and experiences. Malo ‘aupito moe loto hōunga ia.

Family

Finally, I would like to thank my family: my husband and children for all their love and support. Their sacrifices made my journey possible and allowed me time and space to complete my thesis. Thank you for your understanding. ‘Ofa lahi ‘atu.

Reflection

Finally, this body of work (thesis) contributes to the writings of other Pacific and Indigenous Scholars focused on empowering the wellbeing of our people and is likely to be shared among other cultures and Pacific peoples.

Glossary and Key Terms

Tongan	English
‘Ako Tapu	Prayer Group
‘Ako Tohitapu	Bible Study Group
Anga fakapalangi	Palangi, English way
Anga fakatonga	Tongan way
‘Atamai	Mind
Atakai	Environment
CPA	Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (50–89 years)
CPB	Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (25–49 years)
Evangelio	Evangelical
Fahu	Sister
Faifekau	Minister
Faitotonu	Ethics
Faka’apa’apa	Respect
Faka’ehi’ehi	Avoid
Faka’eke’eke	To inquire into, investigate, to make repeated inquiries about
Fakakata	Humour
Fakama	Embarrass, embarrassing
Fakamamahi	Difficult, uncomfortable
Fakame	White Sunday
Fakatokilalo	Humility
Falala	Trust

Falalaanga	Trustworthy
Fale	Home, house
Fale Tapafa	Square house
Fai Kava	Drink Kava
Fanau	Family
Fefalala'aki	Trustworthy, trustworthiness
Fefehake	How are you
Fe'ofa'aki	Love, compassion
Fe'ofa'ofani	Caring
Feveitoka'i	Caring, generosity
Fonua	Land
Hako	Genealogy
Hekesi	Tie
Heliaki	Metaphor, sarcasm
Hou'eiki	Royalty
Hua	Joke
Hufia	To pray for
Ita	Anger
Kai	Eat
Kalasi 'aho	Cell group
Kaveinga	Burden, load, obligation, responsibility
Kita	Yourself
Lakanga	Responsibilities, position, authority
La Taha	One sail

Laumalie	Spirit
Lautohi Faka Sapate	Sunday School
Lea Fakatonga	Tongan language
Lelei	Good, healthy
Lotolahi	Strength
Loto tō	Humble
Lotu fehu'i	To accept Christ/God
Lotu seini	Prayer Chain
Lukuluku	Pitch in, pitching in
Matapule	Chief, nobleman
Ma'uma'uluta	When all the parts fit together/completeness, steadfast
Mehekitanga	Auntie
Misinale	Tithing
ML	Methodist Leader
Mo'ui	Life, to live, to be living, alive
Napangapangamālie	Everything is in place
NML	Non-Methodist Leader
Ofa	Love, compassion
Pau'u	Naughty
Pone	Favourite
Poto	Smart, competency
Potungaue Talavou	Youth Group
Potupotutatau	Of the same thing or space, to have its sides equal or the same

Po Talanoa	Have a conversation; Po means night
Puaka	Pig
Saipe	Fine
Sapate ‘Ako	Education Sunday
Setuata	Steward
Sia Melie	Goodhill
Sino	Body
Tafa’aki	Side
Taimi	Time
Talaloto	To relate one’s religious experience, giving a testimony
Talanga	To have a friendly discussion
Talangofua	Obey
Talanoa’i	To tell, talk about, relate, divulge
Tala tu’utu’uni	Give instructions
Tapu	Taboo (sacred)
Tau’ataina	Freedom
Tauhi ‘aho	Day keeper
Tauhi Vā	To tend, take care of, keep, relationship
Tau ngutu	Talking back
To’ua	Woman who serves the kava
Vā	Distance between, distance apart, attitude, feeling, relationship towards each other
Vahenga Ngaue	Working group, working department

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This thesis argues that unless the spiritual world of Tongan people is in place, their wellbeing (meaning their happiness, freedom, security, growth, and progression) in Aotearoa cannot be possibly articulated and progressed. The proposed argument here is evident in the findings chapter. The use of the words '*mo'ui lelei, ma'uma'uluta, potupotu tatau, mo'ui lō tolu,*' relationship with God, mentorship, soul of the people, resilience of the heart are examples of the spirituality of wellbeing for Tongans in Aotearoa. The reason for this thesis, body of work, is to understand the impact of faith leaders' influence in Tongan society and the role of faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people. Specifically, to explore how the role of faith leaders influences the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. The participants were drawn from active church membership of Tongan Methodists and Tongan non-Methodists. This research requires an understanding of the Tongan population. The proportion of Tongans living in Aotearoa has increased significantly over the last decade and continues to rise (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2020). Such substantial growth highlights the importance of facilitating Tongan people's wellbeing. The nature of the core research question is transformational and designed to construct knowledge to improve Tongan people's wellbeing in Aotearoa. Hence, the aims are to understand wellbeing as perceived and experienced by Tongan church leaders and congregants and parishioners, and the ways in which church leaders shape the wellbeing of Tongan people in Aotearoa. The concept of "faith leader" in the Methodist context involves ordained ministers, presbyters, stewards, and deacons. Other non-Methodist faith denominations have a different definition for faith leaders but, for the purpose of this study, the role of faith leaders is viewed within the realms of religious and faith-based denominations. Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviours and practices,

morals, beliefs, and worldviews (Colon-Baco, 2010). The study of the role of faith leaders will provide a more complete understanding of the impact of religion on wellbeing.

1.2 Church Structure, Function and Hierarchies

A description of church law, ethos, polity, and regulations provides relevant background information to preface the study. The church structure, functions and hierarchies of Methodists provide the history relevant to the story telling, legislation, policies, and traditions of the church (including values and beliefs). The Methodist Church doctrines and nature of New Zealand Methodism on which the preachers and teachers, both ordained and lay, pledge to base their teaching cannot be revoked, altered, or changed (Methodist Church Laws and Regulations, 2017). It binds Methodist faith leaders to John Wesley's sermon notes. The relevance of this to the research inquiry is that it provides background information on the role of Methodist faith leaders and the boundaries.

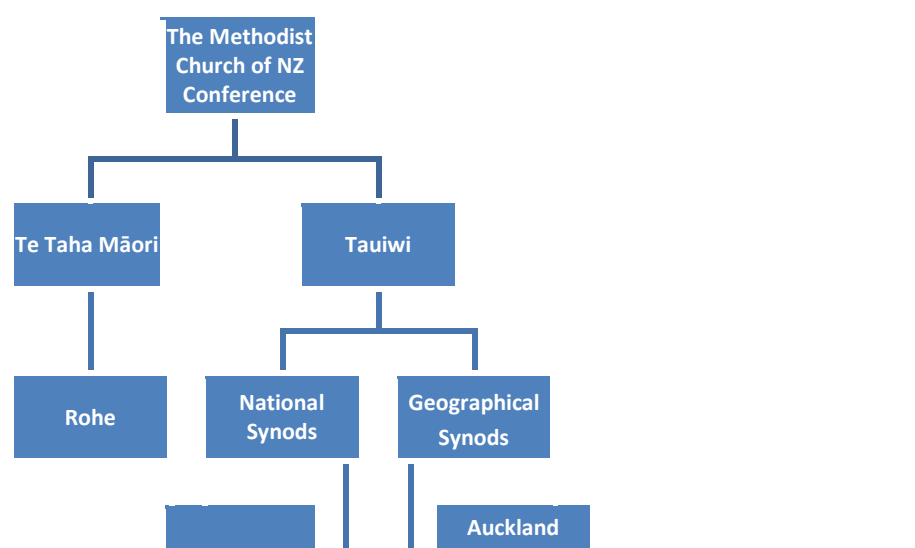
Furthermore, Methodist Church Law is a set of rules and regulations that govern and guide the members of the church. It has its own in-house rules and regulations that govern the existence of its membership, ministry, parishes, synods, connexional divisions, committees, and conference of the church. Its laws and regulations have not stayed the same but have developed over the years. For example, the Tongan and ethnic synods have been given nationwide responsibility over time for their ethnic-speaking congregations and parishes. Within the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa is the largest ethnic synod, and each synod has nationwide responsibility for their ethnic-speaking congregations and parishes. Section 4:2.2.2 of the Methodist Church of Zealand Laws and Regulations states that: "Sinoti Samoa, Vahefonua Tonga and Wasewase ko Viti kei Rotuma shall have nationwide responsibility for all Samoan, Tongan and Fijian language parishes and congregations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa under their

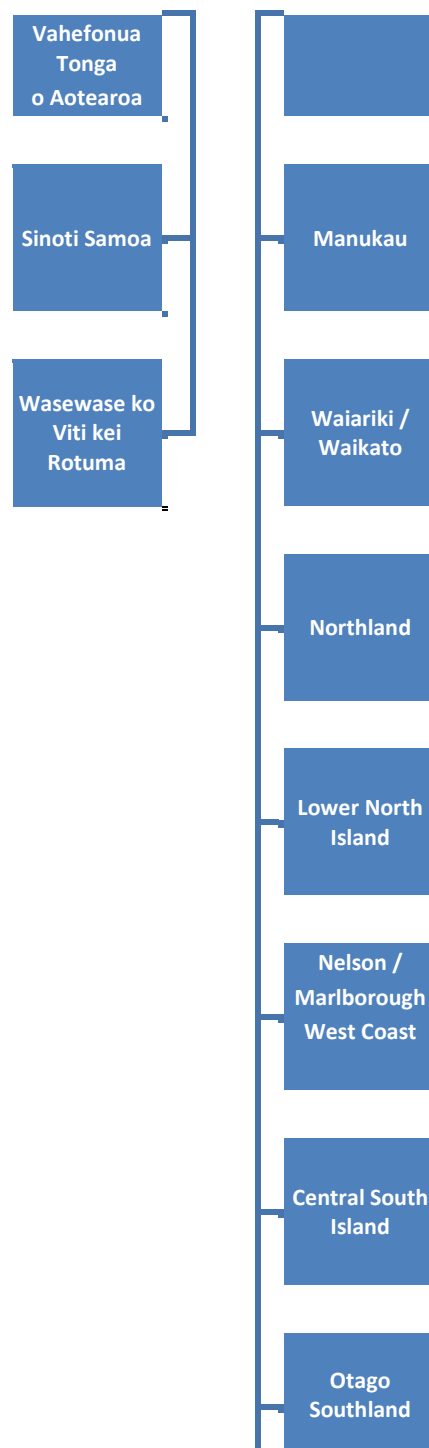
jurisdiction” (p. 52). It is within this context that the role of a Methodist faith leaders is explored. The roles of non-Methodist faith leaders included in this study were explored from the point of view of Wesleyan, Catholic, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Bahá’í Pentecostal, and Breakthrough Church faiths. These faith leaders potentially influence better wellbeing for Tongan people living in Aotearoa. This research produces relevant knowledge about the role of faith leaders and possibilities for addressing Pacific wellbeing issues within the context of the church. It allows for gathering information about the story telling, realities and experiences of faith leaders, congregants, and parishioners through focus group talanoa sessions to better understand how to reach, communicate and foster community collaborations to improve the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. Thus, it is timely to investigate the realms of Tongan Methodists in Aotearoa through Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa within the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

Figure 1 demonstrates the structure of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

Figure 1

‘Āsenita ‘o e Fakataha Vahefonua Kakato ‘o Siulai, 2020





1.3. Contribution of Research and Questions

1.3.1. Rationale and Significance of the Study

A theoretical foundation of this thesis is that spirituality affects the wellbeing of Pacific people. A pacific wellbeing framework that includes family resilience, connectedness and

belonging, religious centrality and embeddedness, and cultural recognition. The key interest in this thesis stems from the growth of the Pacific population which reached 381,642 in 2018 (Census NZ, 2018). The primary interest in this research is those of Tongan ethnicity living in Aotearoa. Of the 381,642 Pacific population, 82,389 are Tongan (target population). The projected growth of the Pacific population suggests escalated wellbeing concerns especially considering Covid-19 Delta and Omicron variants resulting in calls for an urgent investigation of Pacific wellbeing spiritually, mentally, and physically. The census showed Pacific peoples increased from 7.4% in 2013 to 8.1% in 2018 and is projected to be 10% of the population by 2026 (Census NZ, 2018). Furthermore, in 2007 Statistics NZ projected that the Pacific population would increase to 12% of the total New Zealand population in 2051 (a treble increase in comparison to the general population), which underlines the importance of considering the wellbeing of Tongan people. Continual growth of the Tongan population justifies the investigation into the wellbeing of Tongans living in Aotearoa. Another justification of the study is that the cultural make-up in Aotearoa is becoming more diverse, and Pacific peoples are a diverse and dynamic group with the fastest growing young population in Aotearoa (Stats NZ, 2018). Aotearoa hosts the largest number of people from the Pacific, living among others in Aotearoa, and Auckland is the largest Polynesian city in the world. This study focuses on the Pacific population in Auckland. Thus, investigating the wellbeing of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa has a collateral impact of understanding Pacific emigration's contributions to Aotearoa.

1.4. Prevalence of Information About Pacific Peoples

1.4.1. Pacific Peoples' Wellbeing

The determinants of Pacific peoples' wellbeing are numerous and complex. Pacific peoples are exposed to higher levels of health risks and unhealthy behaviours (Reid, 2012).

Overall, Pacific peoples in Aotearoa have a shorter life expectancy compared with the total population. Obesity rates are high among Pacific peoples and Pacific youth are twice as likely to have depression, anxiety issues, or to make suicide attempts than the rest of the population (Stats NZ, 2018). The evidence for the overall health of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa shows high mortality rates and illnesses among Pacific peoples in Aotearoa (Census NZ, 2018). Goodyear-Smith and Ashton (2019) also inferred that Pacific people receive less effective preventive and treatment services from the health system. This is identified through the differences in health outcomes for Pacific peoples and other ethnic groups (Blakely et al., 2007). These are often due to a complicated combination of factors, which include socioeconomic inequality, access to healthcare and lack of quality health care (Su'a et al., 2018).

Pacific wellbeing is needed to acquire and acknowledge both the positive and yet-to-learn contributions of Pacific people in Aotearoa. Rohorua et al. (2021) explored the type of unpaid productive work and volunteering that Pacific people contribute to wellbeing and wealth development in Aotearoa New Zealand. The project aimed to better understand the Pacific informal economy contributed by Pacific people in Aotearoa that little is known about. Rohorua et al. (2021) found that unpaid work enhances Pacific wellbeing through spirituality. It was common among participants to relate to “service” as a blessing, if not for themselves then for people that they cared about (i.e., family). The unpaid work and volunteering further enhanced Pacific wellbeing by increasing social capital, which improves wellbeing. Participants described how unpaid work and volunteering involvement influenced their own professional lives, as well as how they used their professions, skills, and resources to improve wellbeing of others through unpaid work and volunteering. Furthermore, the unpaid work enhanced Pacific wellbeing through holistic support because, from Pacific perspectives, unpaid work and volunteering activities were

performed to better the collective wellbeing, rather than simply to better oneself.

Participants described their responsibilities in providing unpaid work and volunteering for their families and communities as contributing to their holistic wellbeing. Evidently, Pacific wellbeing is inherently connected to unpaid work and volunteering and cannot be separated (Rohorua et al., 2021). For many Pacific peoples, lifelong engagement is deeply rooted in family (fanau), through the collective, reciprocal, communal, village and Pacific ways (Su'a et al., 2018).

Stereotypically, people not familiar with Pacific ways of knowing see the church as an important space in Pacific peoples' lives and the importance of spirituality for Pacific wellbeing (Pope, 2017). There is a dearth of peer-reviewed literature confirming how spirituality contributes to the wellbeing of Tongan people (Mafi, 2018). This lends a strong indication that we need to provide information on how spirituality affects the wellbeing of Pacific peoples. Therefore, in this research, spirituality is valued for exploration through how faith leaders might influence the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. Such research also entertains the need to explore how Tongan cultural identity and spirituality relates to their wellbeing and can inform innovative approaches for the wellbeing of Tongan people, along with their Pacific cousins and neighbours.

The right to wellbeing includes complete physical, mental, spiritual, social, and economic wellbeing for Pacific peoples. Recent research shows that Pacific peoples were the most affected during the Covid-19 pandemic (Colmar Brunton & Tupu Toa, 2020). Other recent research indicates that working households with at least one adult of Pacific ethnicity experience the highest poverty rates at 9.5%, compared with New Zealand European households at 5.9%. (Plum et al., 2019, Table 5). The research also found that the mean number of individuals in these working households was significantly higher for Pacific peoples compared to other ethnicities, suggesting that the household income may be

stretched to support a larger number of household members. (Plum et al., 2019). In February 2018, Treasury established its Living Standards Framework which identified 12 dimensions that will be used to measure the standard of life for Aotearoa's population (King et al., 2018). The Wellbeing Framework included indicators identified by Pacific stakeholders, which were family resilience, connectedness and belonging, religious centrality and embeddedness, and cultural recognition (Thomsen et al., 2018). This study will impact the "religious centrality and embeddedness" aspect through the exploration of faith leader influence in the lives of Tongan people, with collateral effect on resilience, connectedness and belonging, and cultural recognition (Manuela & Sibley, 2014). Social embeddedness can be summarised as the social friendships in a congregation or parish, human connections and behaviour conforming to the organisation (religious centrality) in which relationships are nested. Social embeddedness can be a strong predictor of religious activities including sharing faith and spirituality. Thus, religious and faith leader research would be enhanced by devoting greater attention to the importance of congregation and parish social embeddedness (Stroope, 2012).

Furthermore, the human dignity and rights of Pacific peoples were breached during the dawn raid period of 1974–1976 (Anae, 2020). Initiated by the 1972 Labour government and intensified under the following National government, the dawn raids notoriously targeted Pacific peoples. An unofficial taskforce oversaw raids on Pacific families' homes to find overstayers and deport them (NZ On Screen, 2005). Pacific peoples have suffered enough, and a government apology has started the healing process.

In Aotearoa, Pacific peoples spend much time at church to adhere to both spiritual and cultural practices (Forrest et al., 2020). Both the spiritual and cultural practices are maintained using their language. The use of their language further encourages and reinforces "fanau" (family) cohesion. This is a reciprocal process through talanoa

(conversations) in settings of their choice such as the church. It is where social connections and networks are fostered and maintained. Hence, the fanau (family) and church play a major role in the lives of Pacific people. The church replaced the predominance of village, leadership, and community life in the Islands for the first wave of immigrants that arrived in Aotearoa (Macpherson, 2021). For these immigrants, the church has become the centre of the community in Aotearoa for many New Zealand-born Pacific people. This is reinforced by the church's ability to transcend and bring together people from diverse Island communities and villages. When Tongans arrived in Aotearoa they moved towards new or existing church communities and extended family to fulfil the village life in the Islands (Macpherson, 2021). The demand for faith communities in Aotearoa, and the form that they took, reflected the role of churches in Pacific societies. Island community life and personal social identity were built around three closely integrated institutions: fanau (family), church and village. This structure was recreated in Aotearoa with new or existing church communities acting as surrogate villages (Anae et al., 2001; Macpherson, 2012, 2021; Macpherson et al., 2000). Thus, it is important to explore and investigate the influence of the church through the role of faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa.

It is planned that the research will provide a better understanding of how Tongan people live amidst the leadership of the faith leaders in Aotearoa. The findings will be beneficial for promoting wellbeing behaviours for Tongan people. The research will provide a better understanding of Tongan perspectives on wellbeing and how the influence of faith leaders can improve responsiveness to overall Pacific wellbeing. It will also serve as a step forward for the health and medical professional understanding of wellbeing from the place of religion, faith, and spirituality (Florence, 2015; Lee, 2016). Furthermore, the findings

can help to inform policy, church law and practice within religion and faith community denominations.

1.5. Overall Aims of the Study

It is important to understand the overall aims of the study which are designed to:

- 1) Explore the views and perceptions of Tongan people living in Aotearoa on “wellbeing.”
- 2) Explore the role of Tongan faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa.
- 3) Explore the realities and experiences in the role of faith leaders in influencing the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa.
- 4) Contribute to the development of policies that will improve Pacific wellbeing in Aotearoa, including church law and practice.

1.6. Research Question(s)

1. What does wellbeing mean to Tongan faith leaders/congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa? (Exploring the Tongan view of wellbeing with the participants).
2. What do Tongan faith leaders/congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa understand about the role of faith leaders? (Exploring the role of Tongan faith leaders with the participants).
3. How do faith leaders explore their congregants and parishioners’ wellbeing in Aotearoa? (Exploring the realities and experiences of the participant faith leaders/congregants and parishioners).

1.7. Summary of Introduction

This chapter sets out the scene and background information to preface the study. It explains the preliminary information and the foundation for the journey. The journey will

be to explore what wellbeing means, and the role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing in a Tongan context. The Tongan context offers the worldviews and paradigm of Tongan people. These worldviews are to be expressed through a Tongan lens and approach, using talanoa focus groups to capture the realities and experiences of Tongans living in Aotearoa.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Introduction and Structure of Literature

This literature review focuses on Tongan wellbeing within the faith sector. A range of local, regional, national, and international studies about wellbeing and the role of faith leaders will be explored. The sources include AUT thesis repository:

<https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/research-repository>; tuwhera.opentheses@aut.ac.nz;

NZresearch.org.nz, <https://nzresearch.org.nz/>; the national thesis repository; AUT New Library Beta Search; AUT Library Search; CINAHL Complete Choose Databases; Scopus Search; Web of Science; Google Scholar Search; Google Search and archival documentation from the Methodist Church and other Tongan faith denominations. The researcher will locate information relevant to the story telling, legislation and policies typically applied through Tongan traditions (includes values and beliefs) and Methodist Church and Tongan faith doctrines. Further developing an understanding of their stories enables the researcher to elicit insights and methods applied to explore the research questions, and to align with critiquing the information gathered in this research. The next section will provide more details about these concepts.

2.2. Historical Overview

Religion, faith, and spirituality are integral to Pacific wellbeing. Religion has been with Tongan people since the ancient polytheistic religion of the supreme God Tangaloa

(practised for over 2000 years), until the missionaries arrived and persuaded King George Tupou I to convert to Christianity. King George, I ordered and strictly enforced that all Tongans become Christian (Gifford, 1929). Christianity is ingrained in the Pacific way of life and for Tongan people religion is a part of Tongan culture (anga faka Tonga). When Tongan people migrate, they take their religion with them to their adopted country.

2.3. Village Histories and Stories

2.3.1. Membership for Pacific Peoples and Church as a Village

The demand for faith communities in Aotearoa, and the form they take, reflects the role of churches in Pacific societies. Island community life and personal social identity are built around three closely integrated institutions for Pacific peoples: family, church, and village. This structure was recreated in Aotearoa with new or existing church communities acting as surrogate villages. Those who identified as members of a particular family, denomination and village back home could continue to do so (Macpherson, 2021). Within this structure the minister (faifekau) was akin to a village chief—the most powerful and respected figure in the church community. In most Pacific churches, the aim is to maintain the religious and cultural traditions of Island life rather than adapt to the Aotearoa context. Whether or not this is perceived positive is arguable and debatable on both sides. For Pacific peoples, it is the freedom of association and freedom of expression to worship in a culturally appropriate way in a foreign land that is suitable to the concept of church as a village and an acceptable approach for most Pacific churches.

2.3.2. New Structures of Church in Aotearoa

Some Pacific churches want to follow a form of Christianity centred on Pacific Island traditions, culture, and language. Therefore, they clone many of the Pacific churches in the Island village, where people worshipped before arriving in Aotearoa. Of interest is whether

Pacific churches in Aotearoa, such as Tongan Methodists and Tongan faith leaders of other faith denominations recruited for the purposes of this study, still follow a form of Christianity or church centred on Pacific Island traditions, culture, and language, or whether they have conformed to or integrated with Aotearoa culture and society (or a balance of both) (Macpherson, 1994, 2021).

2.4. Pacific and Diasporic Worldviews

2.4.1. Tongan Culture Through Spirituality

It is important to acknowledge Pacific, Indigenous, and diasporic people's worldviews that they belong to. For Tongan people, Christianity is an embedded value system within Pacific cultures (Havea et al., 2021; Huffer & Qalo, 2004). In contemporary times, Tongans identify with some form of Christianity. Tongan people clone the Island church and form the same church in Aotearoa. For example, Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa is formed on Tongan language and culture and has national responsibility over Tongans speaking congregations and parishes. There is diversity among the branches of Christianity followed by Tongans in Aotearoa, including but not limited to Methodist, Wesleyan, Catholic, Bahá'í, Mormon, Seventh-Day Adventist, Pentecostal, and the Breakthrough Church. Hence, churches are a significant part of social and cultural life for most Tongans.

2.4.2. Religion, Faith, and Spirituality

Religion, faith, and spirituality are essential to the wellbeing of Indigenous and Pacific peoples. There is a growing body of research exploring spirituality, ageing, and religious coping in Aotearoa. For example, spirituality permeates the land and waters, and wellbeing (hauora), for Māori, is incomplete without spirituality (Egan & Blank, 2020). According to Pacific cultural beliefs, spiritual harmony is necessary for wellness to emerge and is particularly salient for Pacific Elders who are intergenerational connectors between the

past, present, and future (Ihara & Vakalahi, 2011). It is interesting to explore the literature on wellbeing and faith leader influence on the wellbeing of Pacific peoples. The next section will consider concepts of wellbeing, leadership, and ways of knowing that aligns best with a Tongan perspective.

2.5. Pacific Wellbeing

Understanding the wellbeing of Pacific peoples and perspectives of Tongan people is important for eliciting insights. Including, methods applied to explore and accurately interpret the responses to the research questions and overall aims. Mafi (2018) identified that for older Tongan men and women (e.g., 60 years plus) born in Aotearoa, their wellbeing was centred upon the quality of their mo'ui kakato (life in its entirety). The participants described and aligned their understanding of mo'ui kakato with the Tongan life matrix of mo'ui lōtolu: Life in threefold or the three pillars of sino (physical/body), atamai (mental/mind) and laumālie (spiritual life/soul). According to the participants, their lives were totally complete and content when the three pillars were in order and equally cared for. Mafi (2018) found that God was the overarching component, and the belief in God influenced the views of wellbeing. This germane belief in God influences wellbeing through assisting family members, churches, communities, health professionals and others to improve their practices for Pacific peoples' wellbeing. Therefore, when inviting Tongan people to participate in wellbeing research it is recommended to include practices suited to Pacific peoples' values and belief systems (Mafi, 2018; Vaioleti, 2006). Mafi (2018) successfully recruited Tongan participant(s) to be actively involved in the research using a qualitative research design guided by Pacific models of talanoa and the kakala research framework to aid the method and analysis in this study. Vaioleti (2006) advocated for the strengths of inclusion by contributing to the theorising of Pacific research approaches from a personal and Tongan perspective. Vaioleti suggested that most of the thinking and

concepts have similarities and common implications for most other Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Vaioleti further discussed the underpinnings of what constitutes “normality” in relation to research approaches, and the influence Pacific Indigenous values have on the way Pacific peoples see their worlds. Talanoa for example, allows more mo’oni (pure, real, authentic) information to be available for Pacific research than data derived from other research methods (Vaioleti, 2006). Another important qualitative study was undertaken by Pope (2017) that indicated intergenerational differences in the psychological thinking and behaviour of older Island-born Tongans (grandmothers) and younger New Zealand-born Tongans (16–24 years), attributed to the variances in upbringing, parenting styles, mainstream culture and diversities in the hardships and struggles. As a result, wellbeing could be constructed in diverse ways and across generations. A key finding of the study associated Tongan women and their wellbeing with mo’ui lōtolu (life pertaining to the body, mind, and spirit), which is like Mafi’s (2018) study (pertaining to life in its entirety). Tongan women in Pope’s (2017) study expressed differences in viewpoints of wellbeing. Each age range believed that their wellbeing was a result of their diverse upbringing and environmental influences. Pope’s study is important for the evidence, strategies, and meaningful ways to engage with Tongan female participants and is cognate for the research methodology framework that can be used to aid and guide the method and analysis in this study. In Pope, a qualitative approach was selected and considered appropriate for the research design because it allowed the researcher to be situated in the world of the participants and attain a deeper understanding of the meaning’s participants attached to the concept of wellbeing. The study employed the talanoa and noa methodologies to undertake interviews with the guidance of the kakala research framework. A semi structured interview schedule helped guide the focus groups and the information was analysed using thematic analysis. Using a research approach that is

culturally appropriate for the participants enables clarity for the research and an opportunity to better understand participants' thinking processes by understanding phenomena such as their belief, values, attitudes, decisions and even actions (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). This was achieved by Pope (2017) because the researcher and participants were from the same descent (Tongan heritage). Using a qualitative approach is the most appropriate research design for this research project because it aligns with the traditional practices of how Pacific people share knowledge (Fua, 2009). Filiai (1998) stated that Pacific people are more akin to oral traditions and communication, and have traditionally passed on lifestyles, tradition, cultural values, beliefs, and protocols through verbal communication. Thus, using a qualitative approach to obtain information that enables talanoa provides a culturally appropriate and safe space for participants to exchange knowledge. Moreover, providing a safe space for participants to express themselves is vital for the authenticity, reliability, and anticipation of information (Foliaki, 1998). In Pope (2017), the participants belonged to the same Methodist congregation, but this doctoral study recruits beyond Methodist faith leaders and includes other denominations to identify similarities and differences among the faith leaders for richer information. Furthermore, Hone's (2015) work provided a body of knowledge that furthers the understanding and measurement of wellbeing. It highlighted that the lived experiences of Tongan faith leaders, congregants and parishioners need to be captured within a context unique to the participants. The growing interest and application worldwide in the science of wellbeing or empirical evidence is foreign in a Tongan or Pacific context, but the use of a talanoa research approach is respectful and better reaches the participants in the study.

2.6. Leadership

Recognising Indigenous and Western leadership is relevant to the research context for understanding key competencies exhibited or required of leaders from diverse

communities that reflect a changing Aotearoa and change over time. For example, Aotearoa's changing demographics need to reflect a more inclusive country from a bicultural nation to an increasing multicultural context that has historically recognised Māori as the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa, Pākehā of European descent, and Pacific Islanders (e.g., Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Niuean, Cook Islands) (Santamaria et al., 2017). Pfeifer and Love-Prism (2004) found that leadership is deeply rooted in the broader cultural contexts and that leadership concepts are culturally endorsed in Aotearoa. The Māori and Pākehā cultures, Aotearoa's two largest cultural groups, have been described as having distinct characteristics (Walker, 1989; Willmot, 1989). They are distinguished by the behaviour patterns, values and beliefs that characterise each cultural group. Yet in other studies, these cultures have been collectivised as New Zealanders, despite their many differences. It is important to recognise the historical and contemporary differences of these cultures and how these distinctions may influence the leadership process between Māori and Pākehā living in Aotearoa (Pfeifer & Love-Prism, 2004) including other cultures. It is pertinent to include talanoa (korero and conversations) in future studies relevant to decolonisation and Te Tiriti o Waitangi and be congruent to diversity, equity, and wellbeing acknowledgement of the differing cultures.

2.6.1. Pacific Leadership

The Pacific peoples' story in Aotearoa is ever evolving, from the early migration journey to families seeking opportunities, to now, a population that is firmly established and identified as having an important role to play in the fabric of Aotearoa leadership and its future. Maiava-Zajkowski (2021) stated that there are similarities within Pacific cultures (like Pacific peoples clustered together as Pacifica), but each group has their own unique processes, languages, and customs regarding leadership and that a pan-Pacific lens or collective term such as Pacific, Pacifica, Pasifika or Pacific Islands should not be used in

exploring concepts of Pacific leadership such as the “collectivised New Zealander” expressed in Pfeifer and Love-Prism (2004). Instead, the unique perspectives of specific Island groups and their people (i.e., Tongan people) should be explored as having relevance to the broader Pacific population living in Aotearoa (Maiava-Zajkowski, 2021). The voices of young Pacific peoples are also important and how they view leadership in Aotearoa. The findings in Faletutulu (2017) suggested that young Pacific peoples understand leadership as a negotiation between Pacific and Western ideas. This negotiation is performed contextually, but young Pacific peoples are redefining leadership for themselves and a way they are doing this is by combining their Pacific and Western understandings of leadership (Faletutulu, 2017). Furthermore, Faletutulu’s (2017) research found three implications for young Pacific peoples on leadership. Firstly, too much focus on culture can be a problem, Secondly, the different contexts that young Pacific peoples are being raised in influences their leadership beliefs, especially compared to the older generation. Thirdly, young Pacific peoples need to receive recognition for their ability to negotiate ideas between the Pacific and Western worlds. This calls for future research on rethinking leadership between a Pacific context and Western context (Faletutulu, 2017). This literature is relevant for the views of younger Pacific leaders that reflect change over time. Thus, leadership can be what a person makes of it and a balance between Pacific (country and culture of origin—i.e., Tonga) and Western values (the adopted country and culture—Aotearoa).

2.6.2. Tongan Leadership

Tongan people are proud of the fact that Tonga was never colonised during the imperial rule even though missionary influence was present in Tonga (Fua, 2009). In the Tongan culture, leadership has been associated with a monarchy and patriarchal system. But women held some leadership through the fahu system in which the father’s sister is

deemed a higher rank than her brother. However, brothers are seen as the “ulumotu’a” (head) of the family (Paea, 2016). In contemporary Tonga and with change over time, other factors are being added to the qualification of Tongans to be in leadership apart from the traditional criteria. These additional criteria are achievements and educational qualifications (Fua, 2009). Tongan leadership is also based on relationships. The acknowledgement of vā (relationship) means that Pacific people engage in relationships from a place of mutual respect and reciprocity. Such as the vā of Māori leadership in Te Tiriti o Waitangi that acknowledges the Māori Health Authority will work alongside Health New Zealand with a joint role in developing system plans, commissioning primary and community services, and co-commissioning Kaupapa Māori services. The Māori Health Authority will also work alongside the Ministry of Health in developing strategies and policies that work for Māori (Health and Disability Review Transition Unit, 2021). This is often in contrast to the more Westernised leadership positioning, which takes a hierarchal view.

Relationships are additionally guided by regulations of social and cultural etiquette. This is due to the importance of tapu (sacredness) for Pacific people. Tapu implies the presence of divinity. It is guarded and demands that people are intentional and respectful in their interactions with others (Pasefika Proud, 2012). Paea (2015) presented a Tongan leadership model from a Tongan perspective and the location of the study was in the New Zealand Public Service. Paea (2015) acknowledged cultural practices that help us think differently about how leadership is understood and practised in a particular context. She did this by utilising primarily a vā and/or tauhi vā (nurturing relationships) approach that draws on sources which explore and discuss the key conceptual foundations of Tongan culture. These included the central value of māfana (warm love/inner warm passion) for vā and/or tauhi vā māfana (nurturing warm relationships), as the driver for leadership (Paea,

2015). Tauhi vā māfana signifies that wellbeing for Tongans in Aotearoa is relationally and spiritually shaped by their māfana of Christian belief, love, and courageous spirit. It is about looking after or taking care of their holistic self, or what napangapangamālie referred to in the findings or mo'ui lō tolu (to be prepared and completed). Tongan leadership values are a dynamic interplay between fāmili (familial relationships), māfana, fua, fatongia (fulfilling obligations), and faka'apa'apa (sacred wisdom) within a given sociocultural context. This speaks truth to the attributes and characteristics of Tongan leadership and what that looks like in a specific or given context, like faith, spirituality, and religion. (Crane, 1978; Tupou, 2018). In the face of the dominance of Western leadership models, Paea (2015) encouraged leadership scholars and practitioners to think about how they could use knowledge of cultural practices, such as the emerging literature on Pacific and Indigenous perspectives to understand and utilise leadership differently. Thus, it will provide a developing alternative to organisational research based on Western perspectives.

2.6.3. Faith Leadership

Recognising the role of faith leaders within the realms of the Methodist Church, Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa and other faith denominations is important to gain an understanding of the purview of faith leaders under the jurisdictions of the church/es. In this context, the term “faith leaders” within the Methodist Church refers to all who are recognised by the Methodist Church through being formally ordained as a minister or presbyter in their church or informally recognised for holding an authoritative or influential leadership role (such as a church steward or deacon). Faith leaders are expected to be agile thought and process leaders who know who to refer people to and provide guidance and direction in accordance with the word of God according to Methodist practice. The role of a faith leader is to guide, inspire and lead others (Goldie-Anderson,

2018). A minister in the Methodist context refers to presbyters, deacons and any lay person named on the stationing sheet of the Methodist Church. A presbyter is set apart by ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments, and deacons to special ministries shaped by the communities they serve within the Methodist Church of New Zealand (Methodist Church Laws and Regulations, 2017). The Methodist Church holds that the ministries of presbyter and deacon depend upon the call of God, and are vocations accepted from God, who bestows the gifts, graces, and fruits of the Spirit. Those whom the church recognises as “called of God” are received into the presbyterate or diaconate by ordination and by the laying on of hands, thus expressing the church’s seal on that call. Ministry in the church by ordination and the laying on of hands held by persons (presbyters and deacons) are set apart by ecclesiastic authority to be ministers in the church. Their call to special vocational service in a church is afforded some measure of general recognition. This is the mandate provided to clergy to provide pastoral care and support for congregants and parishioners within the realms of the church (Methodist Church Laws and Regulations, 2017). Respect for the ways of the clergy is relevant to this study because the researcher is exploring the influence of faith leaders and their practice in the lives of Tongan people, the realities, and experiences of clergy influence, and how the clergy influence wellbeing among their congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa. Furthermore, it is important to recognise the hierarchy of the Methodist Church of New Zealand that ordained faith leaders are bound by. The governing body is the Conference. Its decisions are final and binding upon both the ordained and lay members of the church. Its Conference and subsidiary courts, that include presbyters, deacons, and laypersons, together possess certain powers and privileges, as set out in the laws and regulations, including the exercise of discipline within the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The powers and privileges of Conference mandate the governing body of the church to pass

resolutions and change or amend Church Laws that are exercised at every stage under the judgement of God. Presbyters and deacons are responsible to God as they seek to interpret the mind and will of God in every situation under the Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. More generally, the Methodist Church maintains its belief that every believer is a minister. The concept is a vital part of the Church's Mission Statement, which exhibits the significance of everyone's contribution to its life. Both lay and clergy contribute equally to the existence of the church (Pole & Vaka'uta, 2007). Thus, the role of unordained faith leaders is informally recognised, for those holding an authoritative or influential leadership role (such as a church steward or deacon) are perceived as a minister under the Methodist Church belief. Leadership contributions are relevant in this context because the role of a faith leader is not limited to ordained ministers but anyone who believes and makes a significant contribution to the life of the church. One of the aims of this doctoral study is to demonstrate and show the functions of the faith denominations. The functions, hierarchy and belief systems of other Tongan faith denominations were gathered and collected from the focus group talanoa sessions of the faith leader participants.

2.6.4. Ethnic Church Structure and Functions

The church structure, function and hierarchies were discussed in Section 1.2 as they relate to the Connexion which is the church linked and associated in its entirety. The context which is explored in this study relates to the functions of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, which is the national Tongan Synod of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The authority of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa has nationwide responsibility for all Tongan members of the Methodist Church. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa shall operate alongside the regional synods in the life of the Conference. The Methodist Church's Mission

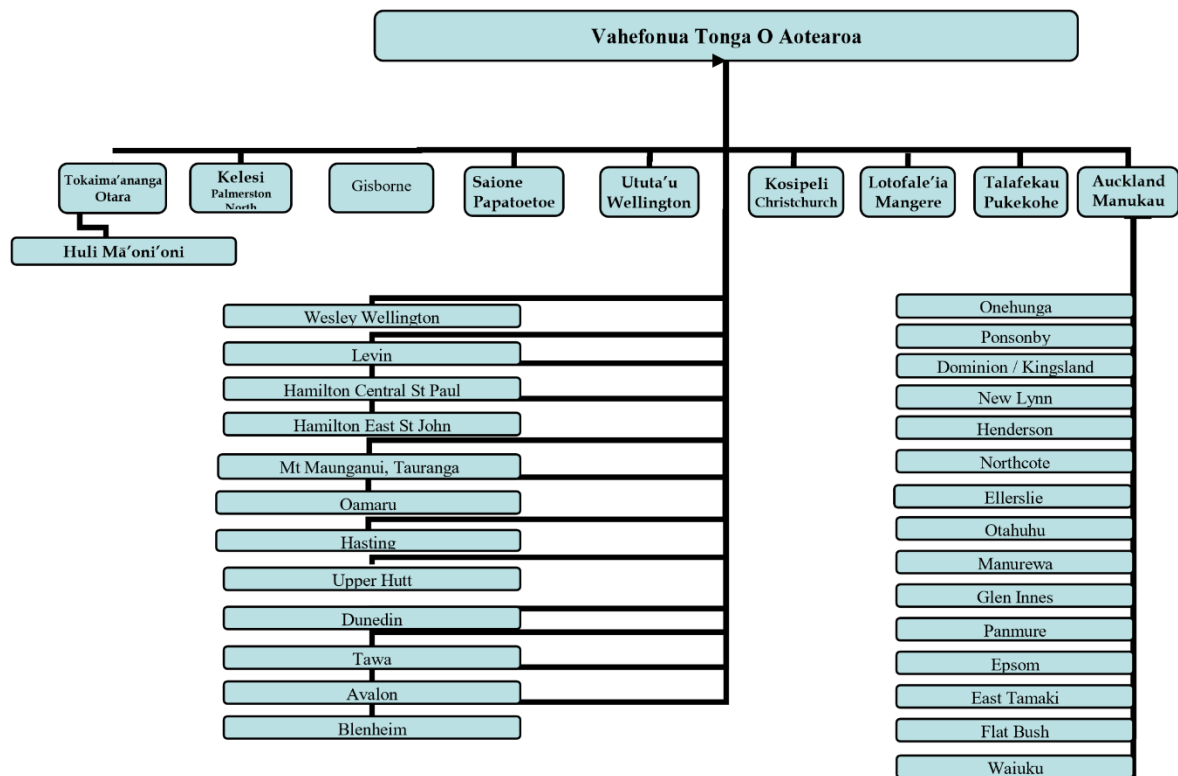
Statement is the basis of the work of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa (Methodist Church Laws and Regulations, 2017):

To reflect and proclaim the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and declared in the scriptures. The Church is empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve God in the world. The Treaty of Waitangi is the covenant establishing Aotearoa based on a power-sharing relationship and will guide how the Church undertakes the mission. In seeking to carry out the mission the Church will work according to these principles (n.p.)

The functions of Vahefonua Tongan o Aotearoa are first to provide a forum where information and concerns relating to Tongans in Aotearoa can be shared, provide Tongan people with a structure through which they can relate directly to the Conference, and provide a body to which Conference can direct issues relating to the care and oversight of Tongan Methodists in Aotearoa (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Tohi 'Āsenita 'o e Fakataha Vahefonua Kakato 'o Siulai, 2020



What has not been explored is the role of faith leaders within Vahefonua Tongan o Aotearoa and perceptions of Tongan faith denominations explored in this study: Wesleyan, Catholic, Mormon, Bahá'í, Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostal, and the Breakthrough Church, to explore the research questions: (1) what does wellbeing mean? (2) what is the role of a faith leader? and (3) how do faith leaders explore the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners?

2.7. Gaps and Limitations

The literature reveals the work of faith leaders in Aotearoa and abroad, but there appears to be no information specifically on the influence of faith leaders on the wellbeing of Pacific or Tongan people living in Aotearoa. However, there is research on Tongan wellbeing in other areas of life, but nothing specifically on the influence of faith leaders on the wellbeing of Tongan congregants and parishioners living in Aotearoa. This study will close the gap in literature to describe the views and perceptions of Tongan people living in

Aotearoa. Collectively, the relationships in the research aim to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa.

2.8. Analysis of Review

This study will aid the exploration of the wellbeing of Tongan faith leaders living in Aotearoa. It calls for future research and/or subsequent study that will focus on the wellbeing of faith and/or spiritual leaders. Fry's (2003, 2005, 2008) models of spiritual leadership successfully show that spiritual leaders create greater organisational commitment, productivity, and improved employee wellbeing. Such future research could contribute to Fry's notion that spiritual leadership is a predicator of ethical and spiritual wellbeing and corporate social responsibility. Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as "comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p. 2). In another study, Fry (2005) extended his spiritual leadership theory by exploring the concept of positive human health and wellbeing through recent developments in workplace spirituality, character ethics, positive psychology, and spiritual leadership. Although the church is a charitable organisation and not a corporation, the same analogy is drawn for the spiritual leader and faith leader to enhance and improve the church organisational commitment, productivity, and improved member wellbeing. Thus, the findings in this study can be utilised as collateral information to strengthen and improve faith leader wellbeing, as well as look beyond the organisation to spirituality at work. (McGhee & Rozuel, 2011), using critical realism to reach cross culturally. Critical realism allows the stratification of spirituality into different levels of reality (McGhee & Grant, 2017a). The findings from the study can be further used to challenge the existing systems and fundamentals of contemporary practice, proposing organisational change (Smollan & Pio, 2016) and/or transforming organisational work culture (McGhee & Grant,

2017b). It is also proposed that future studies will further contribute towards identifying different and innovative ways of church, or doing church differently, whereby new ways of identity construction and religious communication can exist (Nairn et al., 2015).

2.9. Summary of Review

A review of the literature reveals a gap in the personal insights of faith leaders influencing wellbeing (See Chapters 5 & 6). There appears to be no specific evidence describing the role of faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people and, vice versa, of the perceptions of congregants and parishioners on faith leader influence. It also demonstrates a gap in the views of Tongan women and young people in the faith sector. A critical and pragmatic approach to reform Tongan social hierarchy in the faith sector is necessary for everyone to feel valued, respected, honoured, included, and appreciated the same as men (if not more) in a male-dominated sector. The concepts of leadership in the Tongan structures are important to empower the participants and neutralise any power imbalances between Tongan men and women in the faith sector. The treatment of all the participants with dignity and respect was a key factor in the relational space between the researcher and participants. The researcher demonstrated this respect with all the participants by offering inclusivity and equality of opportunity to pray, speak, lead and talanoa without fear, hindrance, and intimidation. The researcher accustomed to Tongan hierarchy and protocol understands the dignity and respect deserved of the clergy within the Tongan structures and showed this respect through the relational space and talanoa research methodology.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1. The Nature of the Inquiry

The focus of this study is to explore Tongan Methodist and non-Methodist faith leader influences. This chapter explains the methodology and recruitment process used to explore faith leader influences.

3.2. Study Design

The study design provides the strategy for answering the research questions using a research approach or method that marries with the cultural context. In the Pacific region, or for those working with Pacific people, a popular choice is talanoa. (Johnston, 2014).

3.3. Worldview Paradigm

A Pacific worldview paradigm of respecting the knowledge, values, and beliefs of mana whenua and tangata whenua (Indigenous people) in their homelands or Islands drives this PhD research journey (Smith, 1997; Smith, 2012; Vaioleti, 2006, 2013; Walker & Amoamo, 1987). In Aotearoa, Māori are the Indigenous people. However, the people of primary interest in this research are those of Tongan ethnicity living in Aotearoa. It is therefore important to adopt key research ethics and values founded, expressed, and practised by Tongan people and early scholars to reach, engage, and communicate with Tongan people (Vaioleti, 2006). These values include faka'apa'apa (respect), loto fakatokilalo (humility), fe 'ofa'aki (love, compassion) and feveitoka'i (caring, generosity) (Fua, 2014). Of note, these research ethics and values closely align with AUT working values of tika, pono and aroha (integrity, respect, and compassion) (AUT, 2019), and endorsed by others (Hudson et al., 2008, 2010). The next section will further unpack Pacific research methodologies – theories behind the methods chosen to communicate with Tongan people.

3.4. Analysis, Frameworks and Methods (Methodology)

3.4.1. Pacific Research Methodologies—Qualitative Research Design

Pacific research methodologies refer to Indigenous research that is conducted from the ontological and epistemological standpoint of Pacific peoples. It is a move away from colonisation by recognising the legitimacy of Pacific ontologies and epistemologies, enabling research that is reflective of Pacific people's experiences and/or way of life (Naepi, 2019). This study is interested in ascertaining the lived experiences of Tongan faith leaders, congregants, and parishioners of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and faith leaders of other Tongan denominations. Therefore, a talanoa research approach was used to focus on exploring the lived experiences of the potential Tongan participants in each group. Through this process, the researcher constructed the universal meaning of the event, situation, and experience to arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. In this section, the researcher facilitated focus group talanoa sessions (discussed in Section 3.7. to Section 3.10.) to obtain knowledge about how, what, and why Tongan faith leaders, congregants and parishioners think and feel about what is, and are the influences of well-being from faith leaders. The talanoa groups provided the *vā* (tauhi *vā*) to explore the lived experiences of the participants. It also gave insight on what goes on within the participants for the researcher to describe the lived experience in a language as free from the constructs of the intellect and society as possible. Through the talanoa research inquiry, the researcher is charged with encouraging the participants to share their lived experiences of the phenomenon to understand the experiences and any variances of that phenomenon through both the use of Tongan and English language and with respect to their cultural practises and values. The talanoa research inquiry is as much interested in the individual experiences, as it is of the group membership dynamics among the participants. It usually involves long, in-depth interviews with subjects, and sometimes researchers will

interview the same subject several times to get a full picture of their experience with the phenomenon.

Traditionally most phenomenological interviews are conducted with only one interviewer and one respondent, and, in Bradbury-Jones et al. (2009), the thinking for the use of focus group discussion in phenomenology is an oxymoron. Whether this tradition needs to continue or whether individual lived experience can be preserved within a group context depends on the strengths of a phenomenological design. In this study, the researcher chose to not use a phenomenology design but opted for a Tongan research methodology (talanoa). It is relevant to compare phenomenology to talanoa to draw on its benefits, strengths, and opportunities. Group interviews in phenomenology can be beneficial because the group sample can stimulate discussion and open new perspectives. The rationale to use focus groups (in addition to observational information) is that it can be complementary to in-depth interviews. Additionally, focus group interviews may potentially produce a different form of information, in terms of it being obtained collectively from multiple participants, with focus group questions drawn from initial interviews with participants (Goldberg, 2013). Another key feature of the focus group is the exploitation of group interaction among participants to stimulate the generation of information that might not otherwise emerge from a series of single respondent interviews (Webb & Kevern, 2001). Thus, focus groups were used for this study accompanied by in-depth individual lived-experience interviews.

3.5. Decolonising the Research Design: A Diasporic Worldview

Decolonising the way research has often been designed is an important consideration in this study. To reform wellbeing inequities and disparities, researchers have recognised the need to build true partnerships, meaning and understanding with communities (Syme, 2004). Indigenous communities and researchers have voiced a variety of concerns with

“research as usual” and emphasised the value of true partnerships, including decolonising research to instil a balance between Indigenous and Western frameworks and methods (Walters et al., 2009). Decolonising research is a process for conducting research with Indigenous communities that places Indigenous voices and epistemologies in the centre of the research process (Smith, 1999). This study held high regard for the voices of Tongan people, and therefore implemented Tongan values and belief constructs.

3.6. Epistemology of Design

Utilising traditional cultural perspectives is an important lens for developing a platform to create effective reform in practice, policy and research and offer respective methods of intervention. Around the world, favourable social and political circumstances have encouraged the development of academically non-traditional ways of research (Smith, 1999). Talanoa (story dialogue) is increasingly finding its place as a Pacific research method (Faleolo, 2021; Tecun et al., 2018; Tunufa’i, 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). Approaching talanoa from mostly a Tongan lens, contributes and did contribute to broader discussions of Indigenous research methods and epistemology relatable to the Tongan participants. Researcher reflexivity and dialogue were described and became important for the development and sustainability of research inspired by Pacific ways of knowing and being. Such focus lends thought to research activities among and with Pacific communities for them to recognise their values, practices, and aspirations for the future.

3.7. Objectives and Limitations

3.7.1. Research in a Pacific Context

Researchers in Pacific contexts should be encouraged to use research methods that reflect the in-depth lived experiences and realities of their participants, rather than reproducing what are seen as Western methods of research. Talanoa has become a popular research

method defined as an open, informal conversation between people in which they share their stories, thoughts, and feelings (Fa'avae et al., 2016; Vaoleti, 2006). Vaoleti's (2006) theorising of talanoa as a research methodology is valuable because talanoa recognises Tongan culture and is an appropriate research method for Tongan people (Otunuku, 2011; Vaoleti, 2016). There is a danger in assuming that all Western and Pacific knowledges have the same origins. Tongan worldviews are different from Western knowledge. Both have different knowledge systems and knowledge traditions and whakapapa. For instance, Tongan knowledge systems are deeply connected to fonua (land), moana (ocean), and langi (sky). See Tu'itahi (2010). The researcher must use the key research ethics and values practised and expressed by Tongan people for the talanoa to be successful. Therefore, the researcher was cognisant for the study to be underpinned by faith-based principles applicable to a church setting to demonstrate why talanoa is an appropriate research method for this study.

3.7.2. Talanoa: An Appropriate Research Method in Tongan Context

Talanoa is an appropriate research method in a Tongan context because of the following principles:

Principle 1: Fakaapapa/Respect (Fe'ofa'aki/Love and Compassion, Feveitoka'i/Caring and Generosity). Talanoa is considered a respectful principle in Tongan culture because it allows a reciprocal relationship between the participant and researcher. It also provides space for relational prayer in a church context. Talanoa is a familiar process among Tongan people, used for talking about their interests. In a church context these conversations are typically respectful and usually based on God, faith, religion, and/or spiritual matters. At the same time, feveitoka'i (caring and generosity) and feveitokai'aki are acknowledged (respecting participants' culture and showing mutual respect) as centering the discussions. If the researcher demonstrates respect to the

participant(s), it is likely they will show the same respect out of ‘ofa (love and compassion). Further, in some Pacific cultures, acts of love occur in the relational space, in the vā, and it is a constant reminder that we are all connected to each other and to our ecosystems (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). The vā is interpreted as distance between, distance apart, attitude, feeling, and relationship towards each other (Churchward, 2015). How does vā apply to the range of relationships between peoples in different Pacific and non-Pacific settings? Pacific cultural knowledge and experience is crucial to exploring these ideas (Amituanai-Toloa, 2009).

Principle 2: Fakatokilalo/Humility (Poto he Anga/Cultural Competency). It is important in the Tongan culture for the researcher to show humility. The concept of poto he anga (cultural competency) requires that the researcher observe Tongan cultural protocol. For example, the researcher should dress appropriately, know how to greet, and address the participant(s) and use appropriate language in the context of the church. It is not good to be seen as showing off or talking too highly of oneself and family. An opening and closing prayer in the Tongan language or a song in the mother tongue are appropriate access protocols for Tongan congregants and parishioners. For example, the researcher could ask two participants of the focus group to start and close the talanoa with a prayer. This is a church protocol that most Tongans observe (Otunuku, 2011).

Principle 3: Falala/Trust (Fefalala’aki/Establishing Appropriate Confidentiality and Integrity). Building trust and good rapport in the Tongan culture is important for positioning the strength of relationships and connections. The establishment of appropriate confidentiality and trust, through the application of talanoa, is known to trigger greater honesty and openness (Keung, 2018). When Tongan people meet for the first time, they search to find any connections using talanoa. Making connections is an

important part of building relationships and locating your participants in their own “context.” Bishop (1998) refers to this in the context of Māori as *whakawhanaungatanga*,

“The process of establishing *fanau* [*fanau*] relationships, literally by means of identifying, through culturally appropriate means, your bodily linkage, your engagement, your *cod* therefore an unspoken but implicit commitment to other people” (p. 219).

When the researcher appreciates the context and location of the participants, the understanding of the researcher’s competency is enhanced. Trying to make connections on a personal level builds up trust and confidence among participants. This is an important aspect in Tongan culture that can be fostered in a *talanoa* research methodology.

3.7.3. Challenges of Talanoa

Talanoa research methodology is a challenge. Tunufa’i (2016) claimed that *talanoa* lacks the philosophical rationale as well as the processual clarity that is unambiguously outlined in other “Pacific” approaches such as *kakala* and *vanua*. Further, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012) contended that only three models, “*Kaupapa Māori*, the *Kakala Framework*, and *Unaisi’s Vanua Research Framework*” (p. 2) have been specifically focused and developed as comprehensive Indigenous research methods specific to a cultural context within the Pacific region. However, *talanoa* is responsive to the way Pacific peoples see and communicate their worlds. The most obvious challenges that may apply to the *talanoa* approach are discussed below.

Issue of Reliability—Authentic Information, Trustworthiness, and Quality of Research. *Talanoa* should be present in the paradigm, worldview, and cultural protocol(s) of the participant(s), in their context and location for it to work well. The knowledge of the researcher is secondary to the worldview of the participant(s). The *talanoa* research needs

to deal with the deeper epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the lived realities of our individual participants within their specific cultural contexts. Some examples of differences between Pasifika cultures and within Pasifika nations can be found in the notions of relatedness, expectations, assumptions, values, and protocols associated with the ways in which we communicate with one another. All these are embodied and imagined in different ways by different individuals. Each talanoa session is different from the next talanoa. Often, talanoa research is presented as synonymous with open-ended, informal interviews or focus groups conducted within a broad set of Pasifika cultural protocols. This only goes some way to decolonising research in the Pacific because it can perpetuate the representation of all Pasifika cultures as homogeneous. There are complex cultural differences within each Pacific ethnography that need to be lived, experienced, and mastered by the researcher. To emphasise this point, talanoa is not all about “what you say,” or even just about “how one says it.” Nabobo-Baba (2006) and others reminded us that in Fiji, even silence is far from empty: it is a way of knowing:

“There is eloquence in silence ... a pedagogy of deep engagement between participants” (p. 94).

There is a need to emphasise that valid talanoa research is undertaken with the understanding that it is a culturally and emotionally embedded reciprocal exchange between researcher and participants. It requires a deep, interpersonal relationship and emotional sharing between all parties involved (Morrison, Vaoleti, & Vermeulen, 2002, as cited in Otsuka, 2006, p. 3) to minimise and eliminate issues of reliability.

The current PhD study provided a unique opportunity between researcher and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and other Tongan denominations, because it provides a prolonged period of participant observation that

justifies Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba's (2014) contention that "valid talanoa" could only be achieved "with prolonged periods of participant-observation" (p. 324). As Johnston (2014) stated, "while Pacific people are known for being friendly and welcoming, this is not the same as being accepting and trusting" (p. 4). Building trust takes time and is easier to do if you are engaged actively at the local level. The reliability of research is enhanced by the mutual respect and understanding of researcher and participant. The researcher is empathetic to the context and access protocol of the participant. For example, the researcher allows for digressions to occur in the talanoa research methodology because it is respectful to allow them to happen, and it helps with the rhythm and the flow of talanoa. Trust, respect, and integrity are important underpinning values if talanoa is to be successful (see Principles 1, 2 & 3 above).

Hidden Meaning and Interpretation—Tongan Heliaki/Sarcasm. The researcher's experience provides a foundation for understanding Tongan sarcasm, metaphors, nuances and interpreting the heliaki used by people in social gatherings. In formal gatherings, there is a shift from the everyday Tongan language to a metaphorical level of communication called heliaki or sarcasm. This creates an additional challenge, as considerable insider knowledge is required to correctly interpret the heliaki used by people. Heliaki means to say one thing but mean another, and it requires skill based on cultural knowledge to carry out. Heliaki is manifested in metaphor and layers of meaning and is developed by skirting a subject and approaching it repeatedly from different points of view. Encoding hidden meanings and unravelling them layer by layer until they can be understood requires considerable creative skill and imagination. See Smith (2012) for her account of being both an insider and outsider in the research process. Similarly, other Tongan scholars for instance, 'Okusitino Māhina and Melenaita Taumoeofolau' have referred to Heliaki as poetry. See Māhina (1999), Taumoeofolau (2004).

3.8. Research Method of Talanoa

3.8.1. Exploring Talanoa

In exploring the literature, a common theme identified by Indigenous scholars was authentic and distinctive methodologies unique to the researcher (González, 2020; Wilson 2013; Pouwhare, 2020, 2016; Smith, 2006; Toluta'u, 2015, 2009). These sources support the research design and methodology applied in this study because talanoa and the kakala research framework are pertinent to Tongan people. Each of these works have distinctive methodologies developed to acknowledge what is available in academia and beyond, but for these Indigenous scholars they also celebrate what is taken-for-granted knowledge in diverse communities (these are sometimes the arts, tikanga, cultural philosophies, values, cultures, and traditions) to “innovate” academia and beyond. This is what can underline the wider contribution of this study, as doctoral research is primarily based around *how* it is done, so that others may learn what the researcher did and use this knowledge in their own research. Pacific Indigenous methodologies have primarily emerged out of the education literature, but there were some studies on the wellbeing of Tongan people outside of the faith sector that are relevant for some of the purposes of this study, such as research in the health, education, and business sector, including evidence of wellbeing in other Pacific groups and populations nationally and internationally. These researchers discussed nuances between Tongan people and other populations and provided background to the current study. As such, the use of Pacific research models to collect information is only just “beginning to find a footing in the world of academic research” (Squali-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014, p. 332), with an emerging body of work coming out of health and education. In health, Meo-Sewabu (2015) explored the lay understanding of health and wellbeing amongst indigenous Fijian Pacific women. It developed an indigenous research methodology and social policy framework that incorporated “cultural embedded agency”

relevant for Fijian women. To date, research and development practices have focused on Western paradigms and biomedical models of understanding health and wellbeing which often ignore cultural understandings. Meo-Sewabu's (2015) findings contributed to the beginning of a new approach to health and wellbeing not only for Indigenous Fijians but also for Pacific and Indigenous women globally. Furthermore, in health, the fonofale model was created by Pulotu-Endemann (2001) as a Pacific Island model of health for the use in the New Zealand context. The model arose over the need for Pacific determinism post overstayer and dawn raids of the 1970s period. This first published appearance of the fonofale model filled a need for a definition of how and what Pacific people believed to be major determinations of their health. In the education sector, Fua (2009, 2014) acknowledged the kakala research framework as a Pasifika research framework that celebrated a decade of rethinking Pacific education initiatives for and by Pacific People. The kakala research framework was first developed as an educational framework by Professor Konai Thaman (2003) and had its roots in a Tongan cultural context, which was later expanded into a research framework by Fua (2009, 2014). The kakala research framework is used in this study to complement the Talanoa approach in the research design methodology. Moreover, McFall-McCaffery (2008) challenged the development of more effective services for Pasifika students and staff within a university institution setting from Pasifika perspectives and Māori enhancement initiatives, perspectives and programmes. In Otsuka (2006), researchers were encouraged to use culturally appropriate procedures in conducting talanoa research effectively. For this purpose, researchers should be aware of the ethnic, cultural values and beliefs of the culture. Further, the protocols should not be ignored, or the research results will likely be unreliable. For example, the ethnic participants may end the talanoa, and deliberately elicit a wrong response to teach researchers a lesson (Otsuka, 2006). This demonstrates a surge of Indigenous scholars

developing a range of methodologies, methods, frameworks and approaches pertinent to the worldviews and paradigms of Indigenous peoples and cultures.

3.8.2. *Benefit of Talanoa*

A growing number of Pacific and non-Pacific researchers favour talanoa as a culturally appropriate Oceanic research methodology (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Johnston, 2014; 'Otunuku, 2011; Prescott, 2008; Robinson & Robinson, 2005; Sanga, 2004). Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) supported talanoa as a culturally appropriate research method in Pacific contexts. Johnston (2014) supported the importance of theory in research and adopted a sense-making perspective, which focuses on the ontological and epistemological dimension of research. 'Otunuku (2011) supported the reality of doing talanoa research and how it can be used effectively as an Indigenous research methodology with Tongan people. Prescott (2008) explored talanoa in the context of Pacific business research in Aotearoa. The study acknowledged the dilemma associated with a statistical approach but identified that progress can be achieved by employing a qualitative research approach. Talanoa was used as a method for collecting the information about Pacific businesses. Robinson and Robinson (2005) explored the "Pacific way" of talking about issues of common concern. A key purpose of the research was to identify customary talanoa and hui (a social or ceremonial gathering) and the factors that need to be present for the process to be of use in contemporary society and the degree to which they must all be present for an event to be authentic. Sanga (2004) raised concern about the ignorance in academia of Pacific thought and called for Pacific thought to be recognised and to influence policy making and Pacific development. These scholars and researchers claimed that the standard procedures for doing research on Indigenous peoples are inappropriate and need to identify more grounded approaches acceptable to Pacific peoples.

Kakala Framework.

The kakala research framework consists of six key components: Teu, toli, tui, luva, malie and māfana (Fua, 2014). (i) Teu means to prepare. It is the preparatory stage, referred to as the conceptualising stage (Fua, 2014). In the preparatory stage, the researcher will conceptualise, design, and plan the research proposal, study design, methodology and key research questions. The researcher prepares the background work and planning at this stage. (ii) Toli means to pick or choose an object. The researcher typically applies purposeful sampling of persons for focus group talanoa sessions. It is the information-collection stage. In the toli stage, the researcher will use the Tongan research tool of talanoa to carry out the information collection. This stage is critical for the researcher to obtain authentic and accurate information from the participants. (Fua, 2014). (iii) Tui is used to refer to the analysis stage of the research process. The researcher will code and analyse the information for common themes, patterns, and variations. This stage also includes emerging proposals and recommendations for change and solutions to better inform the work of the subject matter (Fua, 2014). (iv) Luva refers to the reporting and dissemination stage. This process is important for the researcher to return the gift of knowledge to the participants who provided the knowledge. The main purpose is to honour and benefit Tongan people and contribute to Pacific knowledge systems in Aotearoa (Fua, 2014). The researcher of this study will share this knowledge with Tongan communities and international conferences. (v) Malie is the evaluation stage. The researcher evaluates the whole research and constantly monitors the research process from the conceptualising stage (teu) to the information collection stage (toli) to the analysis stage (tui) to ensure accountability, applicability, and relevancy (Fua, 2014). (vi) Māfana is the final evaluation process where the researcher seeks transformation and sustainability of the research and to ensure that the researcher and participants are transformed and empowered in the process to make real change and be a part of the solution. Māfana in Tongan refers to warmth,

something that is heartfelt, has touched the lives of others and makes a difference (Fua, 2014). The framework of kakala interwoven with talanoa is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Talanoa Focus Group Sessions. The in-depth individual lived-experience interviews were conducted through a talanoa research approach that is inclusive of Pacific knowledge, values, and belief systems (Halapua, 2002; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003; Vaioleti, 1999). Talanoa is selected for its personal encounter, where people story their issues, realities, and aspirations, and in this instance those of the Tongan people (Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003; Vaioleti, 1999). Within the talanoa approach, components of the kakala research framework will be integrated (See Sections 2.2.4. and 2.2.5); these include: teu (prepare), toli (pick), tui (analyse), luva (report and disseminate), malie (evaluate), māfana (final evaluation: transformation, application, and sustainability of transformation) to progress the research (Helu-Thaman, 1997). The kakala framework leverages from the talanoa research approach in that it allows the researcher to access and capture the authenticity of Tongan traditional knowledge systems in its intended form, structure, and processes (Helu-Thaman, 1997). That is, to capture the insights of Tongan congregants and parishioners. It allows for mo'oni (pure, real, authentic) information to be available for Pacific realities than information derived from other traditional mainstream research methods (Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003; Vaioleti, 1999). A key opportunity relates to humanising research, such that Pacific research approaches promote inquiry that is more authentic, respectful, and meaningful to Pacific communities. Further, the approach will promote mutual accountability which adds to the trustworthiness and quality of the research processes and findings.

The talanoa methodology is appropriate and respectful of Tongan people. It is used to elicit the voices of the participants, and it has been used before (Halapua, 2002; Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003; Vaioleti, 1999). Talanoa has been accepted as a research method for

Tongan populations (Mafi, 2018; Pope, 2017), and endorsed by others (Otunuku, 2011). According to Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2012, as cited in Vaioleti, 2013), talanoa research methodology is the most accepted Pacific methodology across the Pacific. Talanoa is consistent with Pasifika research guidelines that suggest the best research methodologies for Pasifika people are sensitive to contemporary Pasifika contexts, capable of embracing existing Pasifika notions of collective ownership, collective shame, collective authoritarian structures, and capable of withstanding the test of time (Anae et al., 2001). This is also consistent with the ethical research principles listed by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (2005), in particular the principles of respect, cultural competency, meaningful engagement, and reciprocity.

3.9. Research Method of Other Forms of Talanoa

There are different types of talanoa (talanoa faka'eke'eke, po talanoa, talanoa'i, and talanga) that belong to the talanoa collective. They cover different dimensions that can be utilised in different contexts, including the rigour of in-depth interview to ascertain the lived experiences of the participants in focus group phenomenology. The researcher used talanoa faka'eke'eke for verbal searching, relentless questioning, and more probing questions to identify or uncover certain knowledge, understanding or a point of clarification. In such an approach, the researcher is the one who determines the direction of the talanoa. In this case, talanoa faka'eke'eke resembles a qualitative research approach or it can be an instrument to further quantitative research. The researcher gave the participants time to review the research questions before the interview process. This gave the participants time to prepare and reduce any element of surprise.

To assist the mechanics of talanoa faka'eke'eke, the researcher used po talanoa to gain more information on the social issues that were missed by talanoa faka'eke'eke. Po talanoa refers to "po," which implies night or evening which points to the origin of this type of

talanoa. In village life in Tonga, from the ancient times and before the time of television, after the evening meal, friends, relatives, and neighbours would visit each other's house to chat, evaluate the day's activities, tell stories, discuss family matters as well as more secular matters such as sharing plans and hopes for the days ahead (Manu'atu, 2002). Po talanoa is talking in an everyday occurrence. It may be about any topic or a lack of things to do. At one level it may be what we might readily identify as "conversation" and can be held anytime, both day and night. Po talanoa is vital for establishing connections and putting the participant/s at ease so that deeper and searching talanoa such as talanoa'i and talanga can be implemented effectively (see the discussion of talanoa'i and talanga in the information analysis section). Po talanoa was appropriate to foster conversations and dialogue before the questions were asked. It was used in this study at the initial setting to break the ice, comfort and relax the participants before the formal questions were asked.

Talanoa is a collective term for many dimensions which, when used skilfully, will initiate a sense of bonding to stimulate discussion and interaction among the participants in focus group phenomenology, not otherwise likely to emerge from a series of single respondent interviews (Webb & Kevern, 2001). It is possible to use one or all the dimensions of talanoa concurrently depending on how the research develops. The talanoa research approach in this study used a focus group method to collect the information, guided by the talanoa dimensions of talanoa faka'eke'eke and po talanoa simultaneously as appropriate to encourage and assist the participant/s to recapture the phenomenon being researched in its truest form.

3.10. Research Method of Focus Group Talanoa Sessions

3.10.1 Focus Group Setting

The talanoa focus group sessions (four sessions) occurred at the premises of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, located in Auckland. The talanoa focus group session (one session) of the other Tongan denominations was held at a place of consensus decided among the participants.

The talanoa setting was conducted at the Synod of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, which is the Tongan branch of the Methodist Church of New Zealand Church family for the Methodist participants. It was so that the researcher avoided any conflict of interest, bias, or foreseeable impropriety by conducting the research at the local church. However, the individuals in the focus groups ultimately chose the settings for their group interviews such as the participants' churches/branches or church hall of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa to make it accessible and convenient for them. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa embraces all Tongans in Aotearoa who are Methodists. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa has been given, by the Methodist Church of New Zealand Conference, the responsibility for oversight of all Tongan members of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa is one of the standing committees of the conference. It also functions as a national court or forum for Tongan fellowships within the Methodist Church of New Zealand. It may sometimes liaise directly or indirectly as appropriate with any overseas conference or church, and any regional or global Methodist organisation, and any ecumenical or secular agency. The same applied for the faith leader participants of other Tongan denominations, in that the talanoa setting was conducted at the church, hall or parsonage of those denominations, participants' home or another place chosen by the participants. In some instances, doing research with people with whom you already have a relationship is argued by ethics committees to be a conflict of interest (Banks &

Scheyvens, 2014). However, in doing research cross culturally, relationships are paramount, and in terms of using talanoa, drawing on connections and relationships is important in Tongan and Pacific worldview. Talanoa requires connection. Connectivity is integral to knowledge production; knowledge is embodied and cannot exist outside social relations to country (Meo-Sewabu, 2014). Both the church venue/s and cultural protocols were observed, practised, and mutually respected because they are important aspects of life for both the participant/s and researcher in this study.

3.10.2 Focus Groups

The main information-collecting method of this study was group interviews of Tongan participants to explore the research questions.

There were four focus groups of mixed age and gender comprising the following:

- (1) a mixed group of congregants and parishioners selected from an age group of 25- to 49-year-olds representing the youth and younger population,
- (2) a mixed group selected from an age group of 50- to 89-year-olds representing the mid to older population,
- (3) a group selected from practising faith leader participants (recruited from ordained Methodist Church Ministers/Presbyters and Stewards), and
- (4) a group of faith leaders selected from different denominations than the Methodist Church of New Zealand. These focus groups provided an opportunity to explore the approaches of faith leaders from other churches than the Methodist Church of New Zealand with Tongan congregants and parishioners. This adds important information about the role of faith leaders in supporting wellbeing among Tongan people. The participants from other faith denominations included the:
 - (i) Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga New Zealand—Siasi Uesiliana Tau’ataina ō Tonga,

- (ii) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Mormon Church of New Zealand—Siasi Māmōngā NZ,
- (iii) Catholic Church Aotearoa New Zealand—Siasi Kātōlika NZ,
- (iv) Seventh-Day Adventist Church—Siasi ‘Aho Fitu NZ,
- (v) Bahá’í Church,
- (vi) Pentecostal Church, and
- (vii) Breakthrough Church.

There were back up participants from the

- (viii) Free Church of Tonga NZ—Siasi ō Tonga Tau’atina Nu’usila, and
- (ix) United Church of Tonga—Siasi Fakatāhatāha NZ,

should the researcher not have been able to find participants from the Tongan churches (i) to (vii).

3.11. Participants and Inclusion

3.11.1 Invitation to Participate

The participants were recruited from the Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Synod of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The focus groups included two groups: Group A Tongan Methodists, and Group B Tongan Faith Leaders. Group A participants were Tongan, Methodist, aged between 25 and 89 years, and actively or regularly attending a Methodist church in Aotearoa. Group B participants were Tongan faith leaders belonging to a church in Aotearoa. The criteria to measure and identify the ethnic background of the participants were based on the Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Synod being a Tongan-speaking forum.

3.11.2 Ethical Considerations

The researcher applied for ethics approval for the research (see Appendix A). Ethical considerations were given to exclusion criteria that would disqualify any potential participant from recruitment. The exclusion criteria applied only to potential participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria above. Exclusion criteria such as any heightened risks due to power differences in the relationships, conflicts of interest and other characteristics that might place potential participants at unreasonable risks of harm were also considered. The criteria used to exclude people from Groups A and B of this study were people from the researcher's own family, immediate Methodist congregation, people who report directly to the researcher, and people who have a daily working relationship with the researcher. These exclusions were necessary to allow the smooth progress of the talanoa focus group sessions.

3.11.3 Participant Sampling

The recruitment process involved an open dialogue and reciprocal interaction with the potential participants about the research study, that included access protocols to invite the potential participants to participate in the focus group talanoa sessions. The most common practice to engage Tongan people was a variation of talanoa through word of mouth, notices, and/or relational space for prayer. The recruitment process in this study used purposive sampling through word of mouth, notices through information sheets for the participants, and telephone calls to recruit the participants for the focus group talanoa sessions (see Appendix B). Purposive sampling involves the researcher using their judgement to select a sample that is most useful to the purposes of the research. An effective purposive sample must have clear criteria and rationale for inclusion. A purposive sample is a nonprobability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a

population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is different from convenience sampling and is also known as judgemental, selective, or subjective sampling.

Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. It is often used in qualitative research, where the researcher wants to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than make statistical inferences. The researcher selected purposive sampling for the recruitment of participants so participants could actively consent to share their stories, realities, personal and lived experiences through the research design (see Appendix C). A purposive sample is where a researcher selects a sample based on their knowledge about the study and population. The participants were selected based on the purpose of the sample, hence the name. Purposive sampling suited the researcher for a talanoa research. The researcher explored Snowball sampling which happens because of the research, but the researcher wanted diverse participants. Thus, purposive sampling is appropriate for this study.

The methodological framework of talanoa employed in this study involved 26 participants in focus group talanoa sessions. Each focus group contained a minimum of six participants. A good rule of thumb is to assume that at least two participants will not show up for the focus group, so two backup participants were recruited for this purpose (Stewart et al., 2007). The question of how many is related to the number of focus groups as well as the number of persons in each group. There are no general rules concerning the optimal number of groups. When the research is very complex or when numerous different types of individuals are of interest, more focus groups will be required. When the population of interest is relatively homogeneous and the research question is relatively simple, a single group or two may be sufficient. Most focus group applications involve more than one group, but seldom more than three or four groups. The question of the number of groups to

use is ultimately one that must be determined based on the objectives of the research. Focus group participants need to have something in common and are in fact chosen because of a commonality that is required for the research focus (Krueger & Casey, 2000). There is no hard-and-fast rule about the size of focus groups, but there are limits to the number of people who can meaningfully participate in a group discussion. The size of a focus group, as with most things in research, varies with the setting, topics, and research objectives of the project. The suggested focus group size throughout the methodological literature ranges from six to 12 individuals (with a few outliers on either end). Focus groups with fewer than six individuals may not be able to capitalise on the group dynamic so important to focus groups. And groups larger than 12 tend to lose momentum or become difficult to manage (Guest et al., 2013). Most focus groups are composed of six to 12 people. Fewer than six participants make for a rather dull discussion, and more than 12 participants are difficult for the moderator to manage. The presence of more than a dozen participants also does not afford enough opportunity for all individuals to actively participate. It is generally a good idea to recruit more individuals than required, if it is assumed participants will not show up for the focus group. This number may vary somewhat depending on the nature of the participants and the type of recruitment used (Stewart et al., 2007). In this study, the invite was to Tongan male and female, youth and adult participants who are active and practising congregants and parishioners of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and other Tongan denominations. The Tongan participants were bilingual from Tongan and English-speaking congregations and parishes.

While, traditionally, the researcher holds most of the power within the research process, particularly during the interview process, talanoa is seen to be a means for ensuring “there is absence or diminishing researcher imposition on the respondents (participants) and that

there is power sharing in research” (Nabobo-Baba, 2008, p. 145). Talanoa allows the focus group sessions to develop over the given research period. The location, place of setting and time of the talanoa were determined by the participants themselves, and their immediate surroundings and worldviews. Throughout the study, attention was given to Tongan protocols, cultural nuances, traditions, and sensitivities to ensure the contexts which these Tongan participants engaged in were captured.

3.11.4 Key Participants and Informants

The key participants and informants were recruited from Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The participants were from Tongan faith leaders and laity (congregants and parishioners) from different congregations and parishes within Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa. Faith leaders were also recruited from Tongan faith denominations in Aotearoa representing the Wesleyan, Catholic, Mormon, Bahá’í, Seventh-Day Adventist, Pentecostal, and Breakthrough faiths. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa is the Tongan Synod in the Methodist Church of New Zealand family. It embraces all Tongans in Aotearoa who are Methodists. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa has been given, by the Methodist Church of New Zealand Conference, the responsibility for oversight of all Tongan members of the church, and to empower them in their worship of God. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa is one of the standing committees of the conference. It also functions as a national court or forum for Tongan fellowship within the church. Further this standing committee may sometimes liaise directly or indirectly as appropriate with any overseas conference or church, and any regional or global Methodist organisation, and any ecumenical or secular agency.

The focus group discussions were used with the kakala components teu and toli (prepare and pick) applied to arrange the focus group discussions (otherwise referred to as talanoa group sessions). In this space the researcher prepared and scheduled four focus talanoa

group sessions through existing relationships within Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and other Tongan denominations discussed above. These relationships and context included the faith leaders, congregants, and parishioners. The researcher prepared the talanoa group session schedules with open-ended questions in English to allow the participants to express their views and perceptions to guide their story telling (discussions). The talanoa group sessions were anticipated to be an hour long, but all the sessions went beyond an hour. The storytelling was audiotaped and transcribed. The researcher allowed up to three hours in total for the talanoa group sessions, for introductions, opening and closing prayer and enjoyment of food (better known as “kai” or snack) to thank the participants for their time and knowledge.

The researcher selected the talanoa method because it better aligned to Pacific worldviews. Using the talanoa method better enabled the researcher to authentically experience and capture the phenomenon being explored. Talanoa is appropriate in the Tongan context because it aligns with Tongan culture. In talanoa, culture is typically understood and taken into consideration before the research engagement and the dominant paradigm throughout the process of talanoa. The use of talanoa with Tongan participants acknowledged hierarchies such as age, gender, social rank, and genealogy because Tongan ways of being are still influenced by old religions (Vaioleti, 2013). This is particularly relevant for the church setting because Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa (including other Tongan denominations) practises old religion based on old Tongan customs and traditions. Aspects such as safety, dignity, voice, representation, and to give back in some way are equally important (Stewart-Withers, 2016).

Talanoa is appropriate in this context because it considers Tongan protocols in considering the participant selection criteria. It also considers Tongan gender values and identifies Tongan access protocols. Furthermore, talanoa is aligned to Pacific worldviews and is a

research approach that can enable the researcher to authentically experience and capture the phenomenon of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. Talanoa can elicit the views and perceptions of Tongan people in a culturally appropriate way that is acceptable to Tongan culture and customs. Talanoa is respectful to Tongan people. The method is courteous and not obnoxious. Getting it right and respecting Tongan culture first and foremost is the key to retrieving and receiving the information in return. In Tongan culture, this is referred to as “fofola ae fala kae talanoa e kainga,” a Tongan metaphor that literally means, “Roll out the mats so the family/village can dialogue.”

3.12. Research Method of Focus Group Talanoa Session Questions

The researcher used an indicative questions sheet to engage the participants in talanoa with a focus on (a) Tongan Methodists, and (b) Tongan faith leaders. The researcher accessed protocol to begin the talanoa with an opening prayer and introductions to invite the participants to engage and participate in the talanoa. The researcher asked the research questions in the open dialogue stage and used prompting questions in the talanoa faka’eke’eke and po talanoa reciprocal interaction stage to prompt and engage the participant in talanoa (see Appendix D).

3.13. Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to explore and elicit information from the research questions, to explore the views, realities, experiences, and stories of the participants from the participants’ viewpoint, and to ensure the participants are comfortable in their chosen environment and recruitment for the focus group talanoa sessions. The researcher remains impartial through the kakala sequence of the talanoa process: the teu (prepare), toli (pick), tui (analyse), luva (report and disseminate), malie (evaluate), māfana (final evaluation: transformation, application, and sustainability of transformation) stages, to progress the research (Helu-Thaman, 1997).

3.14. Context of Study

The context of this study was a safe space and environment for the participants to express their views, realities, and experiences. Participants were familiar with the Pacific fono of talanoa. The research was conducted in the participants' local churches, and/or familiar territory, venues, and settings because they were expected to share their views, realities, and experiences in a comfortable state. The research output provides the stories, realities, and experiences of the participants with consent. Thus, the voices of the participants can be heard, and researchers can learn from what the participants have shared in the same field of interest.

3.15. Summary of Research Design

The research approach is designed to marry with the cultural context of the participants (Johnston, 2014). Thus, we captured the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa using both a talanoa and kakala frameworks to capture and interpret their views and perspectives of Tongan respectfully to Tongan culture. It enabled the researcher to relate to the lived realities and experiences of the participants from their worldviews. It was also to acknowledge that the participants actively participated by sharing their stories, and personal experiences.

Chapter 4 Information Analysis

4.1. Introduction to Information Analysis

4.1.1 Information-Collection Method and Analysis

The information was analysed using the NVivo qualitative research analysis software to understand the lived experiences of the participants and capture the “pure” description of those lived experiences. The focus groups’ audiotaped information was transcribed verbatim, and after close familiarisation with the information, codes and themes were assigned to relevant categories and patterns that were identified using thematic analysis. A close review and analysis of the verbatim information substantiated the accuracy of the information in its interpretation, adding worthiness, truthfulness, meaningfulness, and transparency in the analysis. Through a rigorous coding and review process that patterns of meaning were identified that provided an answer for the research questions being addressed.

4.2. Spatial Awareness and Proximity

4.2.1 Collectivism and Reciprocity

Tongan society is collectivistic, meaning that Tongans tend to be group oriented and interdependent with one another. Collectivist cultures are group centric. A group is a faction of people one shares an interest or identifying trait or characteristic with (e.g., religion, ethnicity, gender, age, education). Groups usually bond through a shared history or goal, such as one’s family, business, community, or country. In collectivist cultures, groups reflect or come to define who their members are and often entail overriding loyalty. For instance, individuals may tend to privilege the group’s interests over their own, even if they conflict. Furthermore, those who are in the same group often expect to receive preferential treatment from other group members. In return for this loyalty, an individual gains a sense of

belonging, protection, and unity. People in collectivist cultures are generally interdependent and feel a sense of responsibility to those around them. Co-operation and collective achievement are emphasised over self-fulfilment and personal gain. Therefore, individuals may be less enticed to act independently. Harmony is considered highly important, and competition can sometimes be counterproductive as individuals are expected to conform and share the same goal as those in their group. Individualism, whereby an individual prioritises their personal interests over the group, is mostly looked down upon. There is a general expectation that a person will share their success with the members of their immediate and extended family. In Tonga, people typically perceive having enough to share with others as a blessing. A primary example is food; it is polite to share food with others, while eating alone (*kai po*) is considered rude. The term *kai po* is also often used to describe a person as selfish or sneaky. Tongans do better in a collective environment (like the *talanoa* focus group) than individually. Individualist cultures are self-centred. Each person is viewed as uniquely endowed with potential and possessing distinctive talent. People are often taught to subconsciously think of themselves as “special” or “unique” as they grow up. Everybody’s individual ability to be creative, assertive, self-reliant, and self-directed is emphasised. Acting, having agency over one’s life and choices and being a “self-made man” are seen as positive qualities. In individualist societies, interpersonal competition and personal achievement is emphasised. People tend to look after themselves and their immediate families primarily. Among the collectivist cultures of the South Pacific, Pacific-focused evidence suggests Pacific wellbeing is a combination of mental, behavioural, physical, and spiritual wellbeing (Manuela & Sibley, 2013; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Tu’itahi, 2009). This aspect of wellbeing reflects upon Pacific values, traditions, and beliefs. To date, Pacific research has incorporated these concepts of mental wellbeing, behavioural wellbeing, physical wellbeing, and spiritual wellbeing while working with the general

wellbeing of Pacific people (Anae et al., 2002; Manuela & Sibley, 2015). However, there is very little research that examines the understandings of Pacific concepts of wellbeing from an ethnic-specific intergenerational perspective. In addition, a pan-Pacific view may not address the specific needs of ethnic-specific Pacific groups (Spoonley, 2017). For example, the views of wellbeing for young Tongan peoples may have distinct and important differences to those of another Pacific ethnic-specific culture.

4.3. Social and Hierarchal Negotiated Spaces

Tonga is partly a matriarchal society, as discussed in Section 2.4.1, but also hierarchal within the faith context, in that an ordained presbyter or minister are considered important in Tongan culture. In this study, the researcher had focus group talanoa sessions with faith leaders separate from congregants and parishioners to allow freedom of thought and speech without fear and intimidation. The intention was to allow the free flow of talanoa outside the boundaries of hierarchy, rank, status, position, and authority.

4.4. Negotiated Relational Spaces and Structure

This section will indicate where the research was conducted and provide a brief justification and indicate how communication and resource issues were addressed. The primary researcher followed best practices to ensure potential participants were comfortable. This was done through the Tongan concept of *vā* (and/or *tauhi vā*) (Ilaiu, 2009; Ka'ili, 2005; see also Glossary and Key Terms for definition). The researcher negotiated the research space with the participants. The participants decided the research space without coercion and intimidation. The researcher studied the participants' backgrounds to get a better understanding of the audience. The audience are key informants of the study, so understanding the relational space is necessary for a talanoa research approach or methodology to be successful, to identify entry protocols for the

research and establish the values practised by Tongan people. See Principle, 1, 2 and 3 in Section 3.5 Objectives and Limitations.

4.5. Scope of Research

The scope of the research was analysed on the responses of the participants in the focus group talanoa sessions. The researcher aimed to have a balance in scope of sample participants (faith leader, congregants, and parishioners), gender and size (an even amount of male and female participants), and availability and time (flexibility for participants).

The researcher had limitations in the geographic area, such that Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) was the common place of all the participants. The research setting for focus group talanoa sessions was Auckland for both researcher and participants.

4.6. Thematic Analysis

4.6.1 Information Analysis

To capture the voices and lived experiences of the potential participants, a qualitative exploratory research approach was used (likened to phenomenology), but phenomenology is not used in this research. Talanoa was the focus of this research. It was underpinned by the talanoa lens and the kakala research framework. These collective approaches are designed to ensure that the interpretation of the findings is accurate and responsive to Tongan worldviews and paradigms. Further, the research aims, and questions were addressed using an iterative approach that integrated tui (analyse), luva (report and disseminate), malie (evaluate), and/or māfana (final evaluation: transformation, application, and sustainability of transformation) into the talanoa group sessions. The information collected was transcribed, then coded and calibrated in themes to explore the meaning of wellbeing with the participants. The participants were given the opportunity to review the summaries of the talanoa group sessions before any publication or

dissemination of findings outside of the church regime. This ensures Tongan cultural protocols and processes are followed and includes reciprocity, which marries with the aim of doing research that benefits and gives back to the communities of the participants.

The information was analysed using the NVivo qualitative research analysis software to understand the lived experiences of the participants and capture the pure description of those lived experiences. The focus groups were audiotaped, and the information was transcribed verbatim, and after close familiarisation with the information, codes and themes were assigned to relevant categories and patterns that were identified in the information using thematic analysis. A close review and analysis of the verbatim information substantiates the accuracy of the information in its interpretations, adding worthiness, truthfulness, meaningfulness, and transparency in the analysis. The thematic analysis identifies patterns of meaning from the information collected to answer the research questions being addressed. Patterns were identified from a rigorous process of information familiarisation, information coding, theme development and revision. The researcher had approaches to deal with information that required clarification: (1) record the information with “limitations” and note the point(s) of clarification, and (2) use the focus group process to re-examine the point(s) of clarification.

4.6.2 Analysis Clarification

Talanoa'i is another type of talanoa that belongs to the talanoa collective, that function in addition to talanoa faka'eke'eke and po talanoa (discussed above). Talanoa'i is like the semi structured in-depth interviews which depend on three types of questions: main questions, follow-ups, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In this study, the main questions were asked by a (i) talanoa approach, (ii) follow-ups by talanoa faka'eke'eke and/or po talanoa (discussed in Chapter 3), and (iii) probes by talanoa'i used to discuss and talk in depth about a matter for clarification.

Talanoa'i means to tell, talk about, relate, divulge (Churchward, 2015). It is a more rigorous process of talanoa, and in-depth interview used at this stage of the analysis, because it implies high-level analysis and synthesis. Talanoa'i can be used to problematise issues to examine them more closely and from different angles. It may take the form of a robust debate but with the normal respect for age, gender, and other's cultural conventions. Talanoa'i may develop along a pathway that reflects the objectives of Bloom's taxonomy involving recall, application, deep analysis, and co-construction to produce some judgement on a particular issue (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). These are all possible in informal or highly competent focus group discussions in their endeavour to talanoa'i solution/s for a complex issue or truth (point of clarification).

In talanoa'i, the researcher is not a distant observer but is active in the talanoa process and in defining and redefining meanings to achieve the aim of what is being talanoa'i (point/s of clarification). The researcher must be careful to not reinvent the wheel and recreate information. Instead talanoa'i is expected to encourage contributions from participants just as participants may demand of the researcher or even the other way around. This is normal for talanoa where participants (or the researcher) can take leadership at different stages of the encounter in the active pursuit of the best possible knowledge, solution, or a final consensus for the point/s of clarification. Both researcher and participant/s are integral to co-construction of the solutions or point/s of clarification. Talanoa'i is constructive and appropriate for in-depth interviews of focus group phenomenology and clarification/s because it considers open discussion and robust debate and reasoning to derive a solution, conclusion or finding for the point/s of clarification.

4.6.3 Analysis Challenge

Talanga is a talanoa process that is dialogical and involves both the acts of speaking and listening. Talanga can be used to challenge a process or finding/s during and after the

Talanoa process. It is reserved for the limited right to challenge any process of the study. Talanga will contribute to the validity and reliability of the talanoa research methodology (Ofanoa et al., 2015).

4.7. Iterative Process with the Use of the NVivo Qualitative Analysis Software

The information collection method used focus group talanoa sessions and the participants were recruited from the Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and faith leaders from other Tongan denominations. An iterative process with the use of the NVivo qualitative analysis software analysed the information by thematic analysis. It is anticipated that the research will provide a better understanding of how Tongan people live amidst the leadership of the faith leaders in Aotearoa. Additionally, it is anticipated that faith leaders may use this process to inform and strengthen their role for their congregation or parish by being informed of the realities and experiences of the congregants and parishioners. Collectively, the relationships in this study are aimed to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa.

4.7.1 Talanoa

Talanoa is a way of exploring wellbeing in a group, focus group or one on one, like in a kava bowl circle from a cultural perspective.

Talaloto.

Talaloto is a research methodology introduced by Naufahu (2018) that is closely related to talanoa. While talanoa is the co-construction of knowledge and ideas by two or more people, talaloto is a person's testimony of constructed knowledge or lived experiences. There is a scarcity of information on this traditional practice, yet, like talanoa, it is rooted in Tongan oral tradition. Naufahu (2018) explained that talaloto is a traditional cultural practice and is used as a research methodology. Naufahu hopes that more researchers will

consider using the method in the future, recognising its place within Pasifika methodologies and its ability to generate rich and authentic information.

4.8. Summary of Information Analysis

The analysis went through a systematic process of discovering and interpreting the information using an iterative process with the use of the NVivo qualitative analysis software to analyse the information by thematic analysis. The information collected through focus group talanoa sessions was transcribed, coded, and calibrated in common themes to explore the research questions with the participants. The participants were respected in the process with reciprocity and communication before dissemination and any publication. What this means is the accuracy checks of the summaries were authenticated by the participants before releasing information beyond the thesis, along with the advisory group of Tongan Leaders (Clergy and Doctors) guiding me in this “body of work” to ensure I met the Tonga cultural concepts from the outset.

Chapter 5 Research Findings: Faith Leaders

5.1. Background

This chapter and Chapter 6: Congregants and Parishioners, outlines the key findings from the participants' views on wellbeing, the role of faith leader, and how faith leaders explore the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners.

The summary of findings and results were explored from common themes and categories from the responses of the participants (faith leaders, congregants, and parishioners) to help answer and explain the research questions and research aim. Four focus groups with a total of 26 participants divided into: Focus Group 1: which contained Methodist faith leaders (seven participants, four females and three males). The participants were all born in Tonga. They were ordained ministers and presbyters. Four of the presbyters were stationed at parishes within the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Of the four participants, three were stationed at Tongan-speaking parishes and the other stationed at an English-speaking parish. The three remaining participants were involved more broadly in the Connexion, representing various branches within the life of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Focus Group 2: contained non-Methodist faith leaders (seven male participants). These participants were all born in Tonga. They were active leaders of their respective denominations from the Wesleyan, Catholic, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Bahá'í, Pentecostal and Breakthrough faiths. These participants were ordained, lay leaders, and supporters of the denomination in an encouraging and supportive role of authority. Focus Group 3: contained Methodist congregants and parishioners aged between 50–89 years (six participants, three females and three males). The participants were all born in Tonga. They were active, regular church members of Tongan-speaking congregations. These participants were not ordained but held responsible leadership roles within Vahefonua

Tonga o Aotearoa. Focus Group 4: contained Methodist congregants and parishioners aged between 25–49 years (six participants, three females and three males). The participants were all born in Aotearoa. They were active, regular young adults of Tongan-speaking congregations and parishes of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa. They were youth leaders and members of the Tongan Synod, mission, and social services branch.

The study employed a Talanoa research approach to undertake the talanoa (conversations and discussions) with the guidance of the kakala methodological research framework. A semi structured interview schedule helped to guide the focus groups and the information collected was analysed using thematic analysis. The participants were asked about their wellbeing, what they thought about the role of a faith leader and how they thought a faith leader explored the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners. The participants described the facets of wellbeing from their experiences in the role of ordained ministers, presbyters, pastors, bishops, faith leaders, stewards, congregants and parishioners, cell group leaders, youth and young couple leaders, choir conductors, bible study leaders and elderly groups. The responses were from the lived experiences and realities of the participants that were connected to their awareness, reactions, excitements, disappointments, feelings, and emotions.

5.2. Research Question 1: What Does Wellbeing Mean?

The faith leaders expressed wellbeing from a (i) cultural and (ii) faith perspective distinct from the non-Methodist faith leaders' perspectives.

5.2.1 Cultural Perspective of Methodist Faith Leaders

The faith participants used Tongan terms to define the meaning of wellbeing from a Tongan cultural perspective: *mo'ui lelei*, *ma'uma'uluta*, *potupotutatau* and *mo'ui lo tolu*.

This implied that the Methodist faith leaders were connected to their culture using Tongan terms to explain wellbeing.

Most of the participants (six of the seven participants) found the term *wellbeing* complex to define because there were no direct translations for the word wellbeing in the Tongan dictionary. However, the faith leaders associated wellbeing with Tongan terms to explain wellbeing from a Tongan perspective. *Mo'ui lelei* means to live, to be living or be alive in a good or suitable state or condition. Other terms used to describe wellbeing included: *Ma'uma'uluta*, to live a healthy life or to live, to be living or be alive in a good or suitable state or condition; *Potupotutatau*, to be the same on both or all sides, to be of the same size and shape, to be treated alike, without favouritism; and *Mo'ui lo tolu* which means sino, 'atamai, laumalie—pertaining to the body, mind and spirit. The findings are presented under six key themes.

Theme 1: Wellbeing Is a Healthy Life, Happy State and Condition in Life— Mo'ui Lelei.

To be well a person needs to be in a (i) healthy (ii) happy state of wellbeing (mo'ui lelei). The participants associated wellbeing with a healthy life, happy state, and condition in life using the term mo'ui lelei.

“‘Mo'ui lelei’ is a healthy life.” [ML1: female 56 years]

“Mo'ui lelei is a happy state and condition in life.” [ML2: female 62 years].

An extension to the literal meaning of being healthy and happy is often dependent on one's experiences as described below:

“(Mo'ui) means the state of being alive, and (lelei) qualifies that state of being well. The state comes with quality and positivity. It is not just surviving but having a quality-of-life existence. In addition, wellbeing must be addressed from a holistic point of view because it is about the totality of our being, spiritual, social,

intellectual, emotional, and so forth. So, there must be balance amongst those aspects of our lives for us to maintain some form of wellbeing.” [ML3: male 55 years]

Theme 2: Wellbeing Is a Whole and Complete Person, When All the Parts Fit Together—Ma’uma’uluta.

The participants further described wellbeing as a whole and complete person, when all the parts fit together. The participants used the term *Ma’uma’uluta* to describe the whole and complete person, when all the parts fit together.

“A whole or completeness when all the parts fit together” [ML4: male 64 years].

Ma’uma’uluta was qualified as:

“How Tongans construct the traditional fale (house). When they finish constructing the whole structure, they must pronounce a judgement on the work they did, and if every part fits together, they call the fale “Ma’uma’uluta” (when the parts fit together and are complete). If there is one part that does not fit, they call the fale “Ulu Toki” (someone with an X shaped head). It means that the fale is not rightly built and fit for purpose. Thus, wellbeing is the “ma’uma’uluta” of the body physically and spiritually (when all the parts of the body, mind and spirit fit together, and the person is complete). The parts represent the components of the whole person spiritually and physically. It represents a complete person in body, mind and spirit and make up the wholeness (mo’ui lelei and ma’uma’uluta) of a person”) [ML3: male 55 years].

Theme 3: Wellbeing is when there is equal treatment and treatment alike without favouritism -Potupotutatau.

Equal treatment and treatment alike without favouritism were important to the wellbeing of the participants.

“Equal treatment or treatment alike without favouritism is the whole being or every aspect of existence.” [ML4: male 64 years].

The participants used the term *potupotutatau* to explain equal treatment and treatment alike because equality is important for wellbeing.

“Potupotutatau means the same on both or all sides, to be of the same size and shape. To be treated alike, without favouritism.” [ML6: female 60 years].

Further it is *“a word symmetrical to the Tongan dance, that the singing and the choreography is well balanced and fits together. These are all terms that can define wellbeing.”* [ML7: female 69 years].

Theme 4: Wellbeing Is Personal Self-care, Time for Yourself, and Having a Relationship with God.

The participants associated wellbeing with personal self-care, time for yourself and a personal relationship with God.

“As a faith leader I need to exercise self-care and have a personal relationship with God first.” [ML1: female 56 years].

It indicates the importance of faith leaders knowing that wellbeing starts with the individual before being able to lead and influence others. Personal self-care and time for yourself was expressed by the faith leaders as regular time off to reset and refresh, go on vacation undisturbed and uninterrupted.

“I need to take regular time off and go on a vacation without any disturbance or interruption.” [ML2: female 62 years].

Taking regular time off to refresh was important for self-care.

“I need regular time off to refresh, to have an undisturbed and uninterrupted vacation.” [ML3: male 55 years].

However, the presbyters expressed difficulty in taking regular time off if they are not reminded or encouraged to take time off.

“I need to remind myself to take regular time off to rest and take care of my health and wellbeing.” [ML4: male 64 years].

“I don’t always take regular time off for myself and my wellbeing.” [ML5: male 67 years].

Theme 5: Wellbeing is to receive faith leader supervision for mentoring, professional development, and resource support.

The participants expressed the need to receive faith leader supervision for mentoring, professional development, and resource support.

“As a faith leader I need supervision for my personal wellbeing, mentoring and any training that I need.” [ML6: female 60 years].

However, the female faith leaders expressed a lack of ordained presbyter supervision in the respective parishes. A lack of supervision has an impact on presbyters, particularly female ministers who do not receive supervision.

“I do not receive supervision in my parish,” [ML7: female 69 years].

“I really need supervision, but the parish will not pay.” [ML6: female 60 years].

There was the concern for parishes who are unable to pay for the supervision of their presbyters.

“I’ve raised supervision at Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, but nothing gets done about it.” [ML1: female 56 years].

Every presbyter and minister should have supervision for their personal self-care as it impacts their wellbeing. Moreover, the participants were aware of the importance of having a personal relationship with God for wellbeing to exist.

“I need a personal relationship with God and take care of myself.” [ML4: male 64 years].

This highlights the importance of self-care and having a personal relationship with God that cannot be separated.

“I need time for myself with God, and I can’t separate that with my self-care. Once I am not healthy, it will affect my emotions and I can’t do my role as a presbyter, so I must take care of myself and my self-care in a holistic approach.” [ML2: female 62 years].

“There is no excuse for the church to not pay for supervision. We put it forward to the Synod quarterly meeting, but they said no. In the church it is a must for the parish to pay supervision for the presbyter. I think we need to pay someone independent to do the work and not an inside job where it will be felt that they need to protect the institution. We don’t need to protect the institution, but the presbyter’s wellbeing. The institution will always be there but for us that do the work it is a must. This remains an issue in the Tongan church but not in the English-speaking congregations. We need to talk to the Director of Pacific ministries and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa to remind them that it is necessary to

have supervision for the presbyters in Tongan-speaking parishes. It should be part of the parish budget to pay for supervision.” [ML3: male 55 years].

**Theme 6: Wellbeing Is a Holistic Balance of the Body, Mind, and Spirit—
Mo’ui Lo Tolu (Body/Sino, Mind/Atamai, and Spirit/Laumalie).**

All the participants agreed that wellbeing is a complete and holistic balance of the body, mind, and spirit for total wellbeing.

“Wellbeing is to exist in every aspect of life: body, mind and spirit, mo’ui lo tolu, and treated alike without favouritism” [ML1: female 56 years].

This suggests that all three components of a healthy body, mind and spirit should exist in harmony for holistic wellbeing to exist.

“There should be a holistic balance of a healthy body, mind, and spirit, mo’ui lo tolu working together in harmony for the person to be in a happy place in life.

Without these conditions, a person is not in a full state of health and happiness.”

[ML2: female 62 years].

Participants described the individual components of the whole person’s wellbeing in body, mind, and spirit.

Mo’ui lo tolu of the body (sino) is qualified as:

“Mo’ui lo tolu of the body is the temple of God. The body should be treated with the utmost dignity and respect because it is the temple of God.” [ML3: male 55 years].

Mo’ui lo tolu of the mind (atamai) is qualified as:

“A holistic balance of knowledge and wisdom from the word of God. My mind, atamai and intellectual wellbeing is when I study the Bible to feed my brain. We read scripture and the word of God to feed the mind with biblical messages and

instructions. A holistic balance of the mind is knowledge and wisdom from the word of God.” [ML4: male 64 years].

Further, mo’ui lo tolu of the spirit (laumalie) is qualified as:

A holistic balance of the spirit is a divine connection and relationship with God.

Holistic wellbeing is my spiritual connection and relationship with God. It is my divine, and spiritual connection with God. When I feel close to God and led by the Holy Spirit. [ML5: male 67 years].

5.2.2 Faith Perspective of Methodist Faith Leaders

The participants used faith perspectives that were biblical, spiritual, and pastoral to explain wellbeing. The participants described the body as the “*temple of God*” and the body should be treated with dignity and respect. It implies that faith leaders should not indulge in unhealthy habits or behaviours that do not enhance or improve wellbeing. The participants expressed a lack of physical wellbeing, as they focused on the spiritual wellbeing.

“I value the spiritual side of wellbeing but disregard my physical health from a faith leader perspective and overall wellbeing of a person.” [ML7: female 69 years].

“I know the physical is important to be healthier to do my spiritual work. Physical for me is to do a bit of walking every morning to get the blood flowing, but I don’t often do it.” [ML6: female 60 years].

The Methodist faith leaders expressed a lack of physical wellbeing. Thus, Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa should invest in provisions that enhance the physical wellbeing of Tongan faith leaders to improve their holistic and overall wellbeing.

The focus of the mind in the intellectual and mental wellbeing of faith leaders is equally important. For example, faith leaders' read scripture to feed the brain with biblical messages and instructions.

"God and the Bible are major influences in my life." [ML1: female 56 years].

A faith leader is viewed as a conveyor of religious messages based on scripture. Their role in interpreting the *"word of God"* as ordained ministers and presbyters is important in making them a credible and influential force in positively influencing wellbeing. A faith leader can influence through the word of God as an agent of God's message. The messages relayed were considered from a divine source (the Bible) (See the responses of the congregants and parishioners, aged 50–89 years). The messages and instructions received from faith leaders were often received without question or critical analysis from the older participant group (50–89 years). The younger participants (25–49 years), on the other hand, expressed an intergenerational gap between them and faith leaders. It showed a disconnect between young people and faith leaders (to be discussed in the responses of the congregant and parishioners, aged 25–49 years).

There was a greater emphasis on the spiritual wellbeing of the participants than on the physical (body) and intellectual (mind) state of wellbeing.

"I focus on the spiritual aspects rather than on my physical and mental wellbeing."

[ML2: female 62 years].

The participants acknowledged a limitation in the focus of their work on the physical and mental aspects of wellbeing and spent more time and focus on spirituality.

"A big part of ministry is on the spirituality of wellbeing, but more could be done for the physical and mental wellbeing." [ML3: male 55 years].

It implies a lack of focus on other aspects of wellbeing (body and mind) to balance spirituality for total wellness and wellbeing to occur. These themes explained the meaning of wellbeing from Methodist faith leaders in their personal and religious capacities from a cultural and faith perspective.

5.2.3 Faith Perspective of Non-Methodist Faith Leaders

The non-Methodist faith leader participants were asked the same research questions, but the participants were interviewed individually at the participant's choice of place or denominational premise, where the talanoa was conducted. The findings are summarised under one key theme.

Theme 1: Wellbeing Is a Holistic Balance of the Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Wellbeing—Mo'ui Lo Tolu (Sino/Body, Atamai/Mind, Laumalie/Spirit), Tongan Cultural Values and Connection to the Environment (Fonua/Land).

A common theme among the participants was a holistic balance of the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. Tongan values were also important to the faith leaders and connection to the environment, land and fonua from a cultural perspective. The participants explained that values and connection to the land (fonua) and environment were important factors for a holistic balance of the physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. Tongan values such as respect, humility and reciprocity are fundamental to a person's wellbeing.

“It is a combination of my values, such as the respect, humility, reciprocity and balance of my physical, mental and spirituality wellbeing that is important for holistic wellbeing to exist.” [NML1: male 50 years].

“I believe that holistic wellbeing are my cultural values and combination of my physical, mental and spiritual health.” [NML2: male 48 years].

Furthermore, Tongan people are connected to the environment and land (fonua) that they live and belong to.

“Mo’ui lo tolu is the sino (body), atamai (mind), and laumalie (spirit). It is a complete balance of the body, mind, spirit, and connection to the environment.”

[NML3: male 70 years].

“A holistic approach of the body, mind, soul, land and fonua that we live.”

[NML4: male 68 years].

“Holistic wellbeing is a balance of the body, mind, spirit, environment, land and fonua for holistic wellbeing to exist.” [NML5: male 52 years].

The participants boiled it down to a combination of the body, mind, and spirit, connected to cultural values and a caring and supportive environment that are essential for wellbeing.

“Wellbeing is a combination of the body, mind and spirit, and the values connected to the environment” [NML6: male 72 years].

“I believe that wellbeing is the total physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing connected to a caring and supportive environment.” [NML7: male 46 years].

The non-Methodist faith leader participants differed in their responses on wellbeing from the Methodist faith leaders because of their connection to the environment and land (fonua) for holistic wellbeing. The faith leaders recruited from non-Methodist faith denominations including the Wesleyan, Catholic, Mormon, Seventh Day Adventist, Bahá’í, Pentecostal and Breakthrough Church. The internal church systems and structures

of the participant denominations are outlined to provide background understanding of the faith groups.

Wesleyan. The Wesleyan faith is based on a traditional biblical view to care for the people (flock) and be a shepherd of the church. From a Wesleyan perspective, wellbeing is to follow the Bible and live according to the biblical messages and instructions.

“Wellbeing means that people in the church are members that understand what the Bible says. They should do what the Bible tells them to do, including the faifekau [minister]. Faith leaders need to take care of its members, pray for them, and lead them to greener pastures. The faifekau should do everything according to the Bible and be spirit led.” [NML4: male 68 years].

Catholic. The Catholic faith is based on a holistic and wholeness view of the complete human being focused on the physical, mental, and spiritual life. From a Catholic perspective, wellbeing means the holistic wholeness of a human being, in body, mind and spirit.

“Wellbeing means the holistic wholeness of a human being in body, mind, and soul. It must relate to God and the holy spirit. The holistic approach is the physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The example is when Jesus became a human being. He humbled himself from being God to share with us incarnation. Jesus came to share in our human nature. He came into the world to share with us and show us the way, the truth, and the life. That is what wellbeing means to me. Thinking about how I can bring the community together in unity, faith, and love. One of the sayings of Saint John Bosco was the pastoral and teacher of the young who grew up in Italy during the

of Italy. He grew up in 1815 to 1888 and his motto (Da mihi Animas caetera tolle) 'give me soul and take away the rest.' So, the essence and the importance of the core for us mankind is the soul of the people and take away the rest. So, the soul is very important. I believe that we must treat the soul carefully with openness and the spirit to guide us." [NML6: male 72 years].

Mormon. The Mormon faith is based on looking after people in all areas of their life according to the church's system, internal structures, and functions. From a Mormon perspective, wellbeing means the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional self-care of a person.

"Wellbeing is looking after people in all areas of their life. For instance, in their physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing. That is what wellbeing means to me." [NML3: male 70 years].

Seventh Day Adventist. The Seventh-Day Adventist faith is based on a holistic view of healthy living (mo'ui - lelei), physically (faka sino), mentally (faka 'atamai), and spiritually (faka laumalie). It means having policies that allow people to flourish and protect culture, including connection to the land, environment, and society (fonua). From a Seventh-Day Adventist perspective, wellbeing is the holistic approach of healthy living, physically, mentally, spiritually and connection to culture, the land and environment. The cultural aspects that build resilience for wellbeing include the following:

Faikava (kava) targeting young men (audience).

"I believe wellbeing are the things that protect yourself from Tongan hua [talk and jokes]. I am an active person in the faikava, and one of the things that the faikava teaches you is resilience. When you go to the faikava, there are all sorts of

conversations, and you get to talk with your peers in a way that builds resilience. They make fun of you and make fun of each other. But it's done in a way that is light and informal. It is the young men that are particularly impacted by this way of talking. I think young people need to experience situations where they can culturally learn the art of talanoa and camaraderie. The younger generation now are particularly unable to fathom the art of Tongan talanoa. 'Oku nau vale he faka kata (they don't understand Tongan humour). Hence, why there is a lot of suicide. Lea 'atu pe ha taha ia 'oku lave'a ae loto [you are easily hurt when someone says something bad to you or about you], especially young men with young girls when relationships break up, it is not the end of the world, and they haven't lived life to the fullest. Then they go and do the most extreme thing possible, which is to kill themselves. That is probably the most harmful thing for young people, which is the lack of the ability to be resilient. To understand that some people find that so hideous, because they do not know any better because of the lack of understanding and lack of maturity that they will go to the extreme because of the pain and personal hurt they might have. Sadly, that is something I have seen over the years as a sign of a society not well." [NML1: male 50 years].

Cultural awareness in a Tongan context.

"From a Tongan context, that is part of our cultural awareness in the way that we fakakata (make fun) of each other. For example, I walk down the road with a couple of mates, and I trip over and fall, and the first thing my mates do is laugh before they pick me up. They will laugh first, and Tongans do that as a Tongan reaction and Pacific Islanders do that. Rather than make sure that someone is fine, they will laugh first, and that is a trait that I think young people think is harmful. That is human nature for Tongans. These are some of the nuances familiar to a

Tongan if you grew up in the Islands. You laugh at your mates about the simple things because it is common in the Islands. It comes with time and experience. But in Aotearoa, young people grow up differently than how their parents grew up in Tonga. So, when migrant Tongans overlay their cultural experiences from the Islands with the cultural experiences of their children in Aotearoa they do not match up. I'm speaking from experience.

So, wellbeing is also taught. You need to teach wellbeing at home because New Zealand Tongan born kids do not understand it and it is not taught at schools. Parents do not talk enough with their children, and I am guilty of that too. Parents are busy with all sorts of things, and they are involved in so many things, but they should try and find the time for their children. Unless you communicate and talk with your children they are not going to understand, including making them understand Tongan fakakata (making fun and jokes). When I was growing up my father was a strict disciplinarian. He will tell you something once and your expected to know exactly what to do. There is not a lot of training that goes on, and you often hear people say: "osi tonu ke 'ilo ae me'a koe" [you should already know this or that]. The child is thinking: well, you never told or taught me? But there is an implied expectation that you absorb, that you should understand and know what to do culturally. Communication for families is vital. I am slowly getting there myself, but I could do a lot more to communicate with my children. I am closer with my daughters because it is easier for me to communicate with them than it is to communicate with my son, and I am harder on boys." [NML1: male 50 years].

Parenting and cultural transmission of information through generations.

“Wellbeing is around parenting as well to ensure that leaders are practising what they preach. Children should be communicating too, so that it’s a reciprocal relationship. So, that I am doing at home what I said I would do in public because people will observe you. So, that if the public see you are not doing what you told the community you would do, then people are not going to believe you. Your credibility is at risk, and part of the role of a faith leader is to lead by example. Thus, if you cannot lead by example, then it is an end road. I think for young men, the kalapu kava [kava group] needs to evolve. In Tonga, the same principles and traditions are practised in Aotearoa, and I think we should keep the core of it, which is based around transmitting information. But it is sexist because the kava group is male dominated and exclusive of women except for the tou’a. The tou’a [woman who serves the kava] is the one and often only female at the kava ceremony because she is the eye candy for the men drinking the kava. There is a lot of inappropriate conversations that occur, but the faikava was never intended that way. It emerged and evolved into that. But I believe faikava should remain in generations for the tradition of courting a young lady. A group of young men will go to the house of the young lady and talk to the father and mother and say they would like to faikava (drink kava) with their daughter. They will go and sit at the house and the young lady will come and prepare the kava. That was the original concept of the tou’a, but modern era has changed that. Men used to learn how to interact with women respectively in that forum in the Islands. Ka kuo liliu ia heni [but that’s changed here], and now it has become more of a business for the young lady making money, and the men are using the forum for conversations and other reasons.” [NML1: male 50 years].

Tongan culture evolution and reclaiming of things that have been taken for granted.

“We can evolve our culture around the positive aspects of kava. One of them is getting people away from drinking alcohol, which is far more harmful than kava. Kava has never killed anyone from my knowledge. But alcohol has killed millions of people around the world. Kava is a drink used traditionally for relaxing. For me it is highly therapeutic in terms of allowing me to be peaceful. To talk, it does not make you hyper like alcohol does. I know first-hand, the difference between kava and alcohol. I note for a fact, that it is better for men to talk with kava than it would be with alcohol. There is far more harm with alcohol than there is kava. I think women should consider groups and forums like kava for talanoa (talking and having conversations). I think women are better conversationists than men. But this is one way that men can have a conversation with kava, and that is part of wellbeing. Kava is male dominated, but the irony is if you look traditionally at the origin of kava, it was a gift from the death of a woman. So, kava is something that women should take back as a gift to the people of Tonga. Thus, wellbeing is about reclaiming things that have been taken for granted like kava.” [NML1: male 50 years].

Wellbeing has not been the focus of a Tongan patriarchal and hierarchical society, but there is a need to reclaim what has been lost and taken for granted through knowledge, history, genealogy, and culture to build resilience.

“Tongan society is very patriarchal. Although, we have the fahu system that sometimes helps to regulate it, which is unique to Tongans. It is still highly patriarchal and hierarchical. So, wellbeing tends to not be the focus of societies that are patriarchal or hierarchical. It tends to be an open society about the benefit for those at the top, and for those at the bottom it is about serving those at the top. So, you have got to unwrap that triangle somehow. One of the ways is to reclaim

things in terms of resilience, using the knowledge we have of our culture and history. Part of that is knowing who we are through our genealogy [hako] and connecting through our generations to key people in our past. It is about building resilience and resilience builds wellbeing.” [NML1: male 50 years].

Bahá’í. The Bahá’í faith is based on a holistic view of life totality in body, mind, and spirit, including a combination of Kiwi, Tongan, and Bahá’í values, and maintaining family relationships.

“My perspective of wellbeing is a combination of my Kiwi, Tongan and Bahá’í values. Essentially, maintaining my individual wellbeing is key by keeping a healthy balance of my mind, body, soul, and family. When I’m well and healthy, I have greater capacity to support my family and the wider community. Breaking down those four aspects of wellbeing: (i) Mind—I have a few activities that help me clear my mind and declutter my day from the challenges of life. This gives me clarity and grounding so that I can continue to fulfil my duties. I study and read to increase my knowledge as I believe in working smarter not harder. (ii) Body—I watch what I eat and exercise regularly which helps to keep me mobile and physically capable to meet the demands of being a proactive parent, professional and coach. A healthy body means a healthy mind. (iii) Soul/Spirit—Is to actively strengthen my connection with God and continually evaluate how I worship God through my day-to-day life. Work is worship. In the Bahá’í cause, arts, sciences, and all crafts are counted as worship. Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and will to serve for humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1972, pp. 176-177). (iv) Family—Maintaining relationships by fulfilling family obligations such

as funerals, weddings, birthdays and so forth. Maintaining my immediate family goals of weekly devotional meetings, family physical training, daily chores around the house and monthly meetings with extended families.” [NML7: male 46 years].

Pentecostal. The Pentecostal faith is also based on a holistic view of a healthy body, mind, and spirit for total wellbeing to exist.

“For me wellbeing incorporates a balance of the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing. So, wellbeing is holistic rather than just physical wellbeing. When I was growing up, wellbeing meant the physical wellbeing. but as I grew older, I understood that they are all linked and that there is a balance of all those aspects for wellbeing to exist.” [NML2: male 48 years].

Breakthrough. The Breakthrough view of wellbeing is to be the best version of yourself and live your best life. To believe in God, walk in faith and do God’s will. Enjoying worship and training together works in parallel.

“I think wellbeing is to be the best you can be. Like how we believe in God. To do the right things and make the believers happy and enjoy walking in faith. That’s what I think wellbeing is for people to be happy and know God’s plan for them. If you don’t look after yourself physically you cannot look after yourself spirituality. It helps to train and refresh your mind to make you stronger. It’s hard but you must push yourself to exercise. When you finish exercising it makes you feel good. I can eat the things I want by exercising, and I know what I can eat. I train my children too because I know the benefits of training. I enjoy worship while I’m training. I realise that when I’m tired, I can’t do much. But when I train and worship at the same time, I can control my mind and how I think by concentrating on God. The main thing is control, Galatians Chapter 5 talks about Self Control. If I don’t have

control, it will affect my eating habits [kai], and my life [mo'ui]. I am rarely sick because I train every day and control my eating habits.” [NML5: male 52 years].

The non-Methodist participants have distinct systems and processes in place to explore the wellbeing of members. Their systems and functions are more structured than the standards and practices of Methodist faith leaders. The main differences are because Methodism is an older group started by John Wesley and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa has been given nationwide responsibility for all Tongan language parishes and congregations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand under their jurisdiction. Nationwide responsibility can be interpreted widely but this study establishes parameters and boundaries for Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa to work within to strengthen its processes for Tongan-speaking congregations and parishes in influencing wellbeing. What is certain in Methodism is that no part of the church can revoke, alter, or change any doctrines of the Methodist Church as contained in the Standard Sermons of John Wesley and his notes on the New Testament, nor to establish any new doctrine contrary thereto. Non-Methodist denominations, on the other hand, have their own ways of doing things to influence and explore wellbeing. The Pentecostal church believes in speaking in tongues and divine healing, and the Breakthrough Church is more relaxed but contemporary with a vision of total redemption and restoration of all things. Although the practices between different national churches follow their doctrines, and most Methodist churches annually follow the call of John Wesley for a renewal of their covenant based on the doctrines of John Wesley. They all agree on wellbeing being a holistic balance of the body, mind and spirit, and non-Methodist faith leader participants including cultural values and connection to the environment and land (fonua) for holistic wellbeing. Furthermore, the participants were asked what they thought the role of a faith leader was to discern whether the expressions of wellbeing were connected to the role of a faith leader influencing wellbeing?

5.3. Research Question 2: What Is the Role of a Faith Leader?

5.3.1 Methodist Faith Leaders

The participants expressed the role of a faith leader to be spiritual leaders, faith providers, and role models. They viewed faith leaders as ordained ministers and presbyters, with a divine calling from God. Being faithful, honest, and trusted agents of God and the church, held to a higher standard. These findings are presented under four key themes.

Theme 1: A Faith Leader is a Spiritual Leader, Faith Provider and Role Model.

The participants viewed the role of a faith leader as spiritual leaders, providers of faith, and role models.

“My responsibility is to provide spiritual leadership, faith and hope for congregants and parishioners.” [ML1: female 56 years].

“I am a leader and role model for others.” [ML2: female 62 years].

“My role is to be a faith provider for the church” [ML3: male 55 years].

“I provide spiritual guidance and leadership for the parish.” [ML4: male 64 years].

The participants agreed that their role of responsibility should mirror and align with their actions.

“Faith leaders are role models. The word in action, means not only words but actions need to go alongside words, to be a leader and role model. People look up to me, and my words need to align with my actions.” [ML3: male 55 years].

“For me there are diverse levels of leadership: (1) envisioning (2) enabling and (3) facilitating. You can only be a leader if there are people following you and if there is no one following you, then forget about being a leader. Traditionally, in the Tongan setting, we tend to think of our role as faith leaders like whips in

parliament, encouraging the group you lead to conform to a particular way of life.

That's the traditional perception of faith leaders and I think that's a mistaken understanding of our role." [ML5: male 67 years].

"In a Tongan context it has to be thought of in a communal and collective sense rather than a singular, individual understanding." [ML3: male 55 years].

Theme 2: A Faith Leader Is an Ordained Minister or Presbyterian with a Divine Calling from God.

The participants described the role of a faith leader as an ordained minister or presbyter in a special and privileged position because they are ordained, with a divine calling from God. Under the Methodist Church of New Zealand, an ordained minister or presbyter shall fulfil the requirements of ministry under the laws and regulations of the church.

"I believe the role of a faith leader is to be an ordained Minister or Presbyterian."

[ML5: male 67 years].

"A person that has been ordained under the requirements of the Methodist Church" [ML6: female 60 years].

"I believe the role of a faith leader is someone that receives a divine calling from God. A person chosen by a divine intervention to do the will of God. It is someone special that has been called by God to do his work." [ML7: female 69 years].

The participants believed that being in a close relationship with God first and foremost was important for the divine calling. Participant 3 (male):

"You must be a person who is first and foremost in a good relationship with God.

That is my priority as a faith leader to be spirit led. Otherwise, you will not be able to deliver your calling as a faith leader. So, a faith leader who has a good relationship with God will automatically work towards having a good relationship with colleagues, parishioners, church members and others." [ML3: male 55 years].

“There are many interpretations of a shepherd of the flock, and a shepherd that coexists with other shepherds. I didn’t choose to be a faith leader. I had a divine calling from God to be a faith leader and I need to be in a good relationship with the Lord first. We need to know that we have directions according to Psalm 139, “God created all and he handpicked us for these faith leader jobs to be accountable.” [ML6: female 60 years].

Theme 3: A Faith Leader is Faithful and Honest with God, the Congregants & Parishioners, and Co-Faith Leaders.

The participants expressed the importance of being faithful and honest with God, congregants, parishioners, and co-faith leaders. Faithfulness and honesty are traits of character and behaviour more important than being ordained.

“A faith leader is accountable to God and accountable to the congregants and parishioners. That is what we need to be as faith leaders, and with the Tongan faith leader of course we know how they are structured in our hierarchy. But to be faithful and honest with God first and then carry on being a good faith leader to parishioners and co-faith leaders is important.” [ML1: female 56 years].

“For me being faithful and honest to God, myself, my parishioners and co-faith leaders is more important than my status as a minister in our Tongan hierarchy.” [ML2: female 62 years].

It is important to understand some of the risks and nuances of interpretation in Tongan culture. For example, Tongan social rank and hierarchy, culture, and tradition, and Tongan heliaki sarcasm.

Tongan social rank and hierarchy: The participants identified that Tongan rank and hierarchy have an impact on faith leadership, behaviour, and interaction. It raised the

concern of whether faith leader dictatorship and CEO like behaviours arise from a hierarchal Tongan structure of power, position, privilege, rank, and authority.

“Within Vahefonua, the struggle in the congregations is when the “faifekau” [minister] becomes a manager or CEO that dictates rather than convince people to make their own choices and decide for themselves. So, to be a leader you need to be able to make people see what you see, enable them to do what you believe, and facilitate and assist them to go along with you on the journey. It is a very broad term but to be a faith leader, one of your roles is to guide the people to explore their faiths for themselves rather than force people to believe in what you believe, and in doing so dictate what kind of faith people they should be, rather than allow people to explore faith for themselves. So, it is vital for people to explore wellbeing for themselves, to allow them the space to explore for themselves rather than forcing them. For the most part in Vahefonua, we are forcing our kids to do things at all levels. So, it does not do any justice for our younger generations.” [ML5: male 67 years].

There are nuances in the behaviour and interaction between how faith leaders are structured in Tongan hierarchy and society and their personal relationship with God. On the one hand exists religious doctrine and scripture from the word of God that can lead and guide faith leader behaviour and interaction, and on the other hand exists Tongan social hierarchy and status that ranks a faith leader at the top of the pecking order (like it or not). This research is about the balance of these worldviews and compromises to achieve the best outcome and result for faith leader influence on wellbeing. For example, a faith leader should depend on their divine calling and personal relationship and commitment with God rather than rely on their rank in Tongan society and cultural hierarchical structures.

“From my experience we struggle in what we do and how we live because some aspects don’t fit in well yet. So, unless we strive to maintain balance in all aspects of our lives, wellbeing remains a goal we strive towards but, we are yet able to arrive at. In saying that I know, and I understand which part of my life is not yet there, and it is still “ulu toki” [incomplete]. It is deformed in some ways, and I can easily see it in others.” [ML5: male 67 years].

Tradition vs non-tradition—Cultural aspects: There are nuances in the behaviours and interactions of faith leaders claiming they acted within Tongan culture, customs, protocols, and traditions. For example, when a faith leader shares private information in a public domain knowingly or unknowingly breaches confidentiality (i.e., at meetings and faikava/kava drinking ceremonies). They invoke Tongan culture, customs, and traditions as a shield to omissions of confidentiality. It is inexcusable for faith leaders to share private information entrusted to them by congregants and parishioners, when members view the church as a safe space and place to share sensitive and private information with faith leaders (See exploration of participants aged 25–89 years), and Tongan sarcasm (heliaki).

Tongan sarcasm (heliaki)—Hidden meaning and interpretation: Exploring Tongan sarcasm (heliaki) is important for understanding the nuances in interpretations of meanings within Tongan culture. The researcher’s background and experience provide a foundation for understanding Tongan sarcasm, metaphors, nuances, and the interpretation of sarcasm used by people in social gatherings. In formal gatherings, there is a shift from the everyday Tongan language to a metaphorical level of communication called sarcasm. This creates an additional challenge, as considerable

knowledge is required to correctly interpret the sarcasm used by people. Heliaki means to say one thing but mean another, and it requires skill based on cultural knowledge and understanding to carry out. Heliaki is manifested in metaphor and layers of meaning and is developed by skirting a subject and approaching it repeatedly from different points of views. Encoding hidden meanings and unravelling them layer by layer until they can be understood requires considerable creative skill and imagination. See Smith (2012) for her account of being both an insider and outsider in the research process.

Theme 4: A Faith Leader Is a Trusted Agent of God and the Church, held to a Higher Standard of Pastoral Care, and Maintains Professionalism & Confidentiality.

The participants were concerned that Tongan sarcasm could breach trust and confidentiality. That ordained ministers and presbyters are held to a higher standard of pastoral care and maintain professionalism and confidentiality.

“There is a concern when Tongan ministers and presbyters breach confidentiality through the use of Tongan sarcasm and heliaki, knowingly or subconsciously.”

[ML1: female 56 years].

The onus will be on the individual, congregation, or parish, and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa. Thus, the Methodist Church of New Zealand should review this as the national body of all Methodists in Aotearoa. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa need to think about monitoring Tongan heliaki to protect confidentiality in accordance with the Methodist Church of New Zealand laws and regulations.

“A faith leader is a trusted agent of God and the church, held to a higher standard of pastoral care to maintain professionalism and confidentiality.” [ML2: female 62 years].

5.3.2 Non-Methodist Faith Leaders

The participants expressed the role of a faith leader as a supporter of faith, more than a sole leader. A faith leader is an encourager of faith, supporter of the Bible and church doctrine that participants belong to, expressed in one key theme.

Theme 1: A Faith Leader Is an Encourager and Supporter of Faith More Than a Leader. The participants viewed the role of a faith leader as an encourager and supporter of faith. To support people who want to commit to their faith and live according to the Bible and church doctrine.

“My role is to encourage people to commit to their faith” [NML1: male 50 years].

“Pray and help others to live according to the teachings of the Bible.” [NML2: male 48 years].

“Teaching the meaning of scripture and religious writings is their role” [NML3: male 70 years].

“To help people understand the Bible and teachings of church doctrine.” [NML4: male 68 years].

“It is to encourage people to commit to faith and live according to the bible and church doctrines.” [NML5: male 52 years].

“I see myself as a faith supporter more than a faith leader. I’m someone that supports and encourages people of faith.” [NML6: male 72 years].

“I support being on the same level as my fellow congregants and parishioners, so that we are on the same level.” [NML7: male 46 years].

The non-Methodist faith leaders differed in their responses to Methodist faith leaders because they were non-hierarchical in their connections with members of their denominations. Their responses were co-dependent on the respective faith denominational structures, culture, internal systems, and functions that faith leaders belonged to. The duties of the faith leaders varied from faith to faith and included encouraging people to commit to their faith and live according to the Bible and church doctrines. The Methodist faith leaders on the other hand were hierarchal and widened the gap between young people and faith leaders.

Wesleyan. Wesleyans believed the role of a faith leader was a prophet called by God.

“As a faifekau [minister] we have been leading and there are questions in our ordainment. Whether we think we are being called by God to do his job? We know that people like a faifekau in the Bible have been called the prophets from the beginning. Those people were called from God to tell the people the good news, and we understand as faith leaders that we have been called by God. We need to do what God says because we are the reliable people in the church. As leaders we need to front the complexities and challenges in life. We need to fight against all the difficulties and take lead for all the followers to combat sin. The congregants should follow the word of God and do all things that lead them to have eternal life not of personal life. We have faith in God and to worship only one God. He is the Father of the beginning that created everything on earth. That is our Wesleyan faith. We believe in the son Jesus Christ who died on the cross to take away the sins of the world, that whoever believed in Him shall have everlasting eternal life and shall not perish. Jesus came to die on the cross because of our sin. That’s the faith that I believe in. That Jesus has risen and went back to the Father and sat on

the right side of the throne to accept all the believers. That's what I believe is the role of a faith leader, a prophet called by God to lead the followers to the kingdom of heaven." [NML4: male 68 years].

Catholic. Catholics believed that the role of a faith leader was a servant of God responsible to guide people spiritually.

"Understanding the role of a faithful leader is to guide people spiritually and be a servant of God called to serve. The model of leadership that I use is to dedicate my work to the people. By that, I mean to work as a team. For example, I have a liturgy committee that talk about how to run a mass. They talk about different ministries. The ministry of the word of God are those who read the scriptures during mass, and the Eucharistic minister help give out holy communion, and there are choirs. All these groups put together form the liturgy group that look after everything spiritual in the church. There is also a financial group that take care of the maintenance of the buildings. For example, we have four houses owned by the parish. Those four houses provide income. One of the four houses is the priest house, and the other three houses have renters that help the maintenance of the building and weekly monthly operations. The other one is the Parish Pastoral Council that is the pastoral group of the parish, and they help me run the parish's pastoral tasks. These groups work as a team to run the parish. People bring their gifts and talents to help build the parish weekly and monthly. A leader is a good shepherd that guide people spiritually." [NML6: male 72 years].

Mormon. Mormons believed that the role of a faith leader (bishop) is to be responsible for the people of the church as a servant. From a faith perspective, a bishop is responsible for the people they preside over.

“A faith leader is responsible for the people they preside over to visit the families and make sure their needs are met. Each person is assigned a family to take care of and meet their needs. That is how the church fulfils the needs and expectations of families and individuals.” [NML3: male 70 years].

Seventh Day Adventist. Seventh Day Adventists believed the role of a faith leader is a supporter of faith more than a faith leader in a Christian context. Somebody that builds resilience as a community leader (matapule/chief) of the land. They support people and people follow. From a faith perspective, a leader can be multifaceted and be connected to the land (fonua) and environment. For example, Seventh Day Adventists can have multiple roles: a leader of the land, community leader, matapule (Tongan chief) and community activist.

“I would say that in a Christian sense, I would be classed more as a faith supporter than a faith leader. My strength is from the fonua [land] as a matapule [chief]. You do not have to be a Christian or religious leader to have faith. That is where I come from: my knowledge of the culture and history of Tonga, connections that I have established, give me the right to say, that when King Tupou the 1st gave Tonga to God in 1839, ae tuku fonua [when the land belonged to God], he gave Tonga to me as well. Because what that did was reclaim that nobody owned Tonga, except God owned Tonga. Which means, that if I believe or have faith in God then Tonga is mine as well. That’s why the motto: “Ko e ‘Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi’a” [it’s my birth right]. Unless he did that we would still be bound by the chiefdoms and the divine right of the King to basically have over our lives. So, King Tupou the 1st emancipated Tonga in that one move. Whether Tongans understand that or not, is the one thing that I believe drives me not so much as a faith leader but as a leader from the fonua (land). That’s my role as a matapule

from the fonua that go hand in hand with faith. [Furthermore] I have a dual role as a community leader (matapule), and a leader of the Seventh-Day Adventist community. I think it is very important for community leaders to have people to lead. You are not a leader unless you have people that follow you. It is important that followers define that because you could be calling yourself a leader when no one is following you, so technically you are not a leader. Even though, I may not share values, policies, or principles with people. I find that people often like the fact that I am outspoken and stand passionately for the things that I believe in. In the context of wellbeing, to have a well-integrated society, you cannot all agree because then something is wrong. I do not believe in joining groups that people all agree. There's something fundamentally wrong in my view with groups that have no points of contention and there is no friction. Because, unless you have that, then you have a group thing. So, being well is also being able to challenge. You need the right environment to allow people to feel safe to have different views and opinions. Because I believe that Tongans are very much into the group thinking mentality, and that's dangerous. I believe that if we are going to be a well society in this country, we must be willing to see other people's perspectives." [NML1: male 50 years].

Bahá'í. Bahá'í's believed and relied on the good character of an individual. They do not have the ranks of priests, deacons, vicars, bishops, clerics, mullahs, monks, nuns, rabbis, and gurus. There is no rank of professional or hierarchal leaders. The individual takes on a leadership role in selfless service to God and the community. From a faith perspective, the role of a faith leader is to be an individual with good character and have selflessness without rank. It is someone that is a faith supporter rather than a faith leader.

“In the Bahá’í faith we have no priests, deacons, vicars, bishops, clerics, mullahs, monks, nuns, rabbis, gurus, preachers, reverends, or ministers. For Bahá’í, there are no ranks of professional leads in religion however, there are spiritual assemblies of the Bahá’í faith at local, regional, national, and international levels. I had the blessing of serving on a Spiritual Assembly on a local level so mine alone. A faith leader to my understanding is an individual of good character who is selfless in their service to God and their community. They take on the leadership role by actively organising and leading initiatives that support those within the faith alongside the great community.” [NML7: male 46 years].

Pentecostal. Pentecostals believed the role of a faith leader is to encourage people to have a deeper and closer relationship with God. From a faith perspective, a faith leader is someone that leads people to a personal and more meaningful relationship with God, acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

“We are a Pentecostal movement and are what people term as the happy charismatic church. For us when it comes to our job as a faith leader it is about leading people into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour. Everything is focused on personal relationships and growing people in their spiritual giftings to fulfil the purpose that we believe they were called to preach, which for us as Pentecostals obviously is in Matthews to teach and preach the word, to make disciples of all nations to love God and love people. Faith leaders should encourage and enhance that and create an environment of service and ministry to develop gifts and talent in the community to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, to encourage people to have a personal relationship with God.” [NML2: male 48 years].

Breakthrough. The Breakthrough faith believed the role of a faith leader is to focus on the activations of the word of God through scripture. From a faith perspective—the role of a faith leader is to be a faithful servant that is honest and truthful in their actions.

“Faith leaders need to be faithful, honest, and truthful in their actions. In this generation, we talk a lot, but I believe that actions speak louder than words. We need to be faithful in doing God’s work and hold on to doing the right thing all the time. We are not perfect but need to do the best we can for God. If we do good for God and help people, it will have an everlasting effect on their lives. But when we do things for ourselves, it won’t have a long-lasting impact. I consider myself a faith leader because I wholeheartedly trust and believe in God’s word.” [NML5: male 52 years].

5.4 Research Question 3: How Do Faith Leaders Explore the Wellbeing of Congregants and Parishioners?

5.4.1 Methodist Faith Leaders

The participants expressed the exploration of wellbeing through pastoral care, home visits and the executive team practice of steward meetings, leaders’ meetings, and parish council as the governing body of the congregation or parish. Like the expectation of a key performance indicator that enables targets for something to be achieved. The findings are presented under four key themes.

Theme 1: The Exploration of Wellbeing Is Through Pastoral Care, Home Visits and the Executive Team Practice of Leaders’ Meetings, and Parish Council for Information Sharing.

The participants explored the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners through pastoral care, home visits and the executive team practice of leaders' meetings, and parish council information, and the reporting of these groups.

“Through pastoral care, home visits and the executive team practice of steward meetings, leaders' meetings, parish council and the reporting of these groups that informed the faith leaders.” [ML1: female 56 years].

Meeting the congregants, parishioners and their families are an important part of a faith leader's role in exploring wellbeing.

“Meeting the families helped me understand people's situations.” [ML2: female 62 years].

Pastoral care is a crucial part of a faith leader's role to care for members and understand their situations.

“Pastoral care is how I care for my congregants.” [ML3: male 55 years].

Information sharing is a vital way of faith leaders knowing about the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners. Information is shared among the leaders and parish council which are helpful in the process.

“Getting information from the stewards, leaders' meetings and parish council are how I am informed of peoples situations.” [ML4: male 64 years].

Methodist faith leaders relied on the church practices and ministry responsibilities to explore wellbeing. (Section 3: 6.4 of the Methodist Church of New Zealand Laws and Regulations states: “Leaders Meetings are to grow leadership to and in the congregation” and Section 3:7.3: “Parish Council are to co-ordinate congregational life within its area and give

oversight to the life and work of the congregations.”) The Methodist faith leaders experienced that they worked more during Covid-19. Congregants and parishioners experienced more hardship during Covid-19, and some parishioners did not have permanent residence status in Aotearoa. Some presbyters were not able to check on everyone in the parish during Covid-19 lockdowns because of lockdown restrictions and technology limitations.

“I worked more during Covid-19 to make sure people were okay under the circumstances because we never experienced lockdown before.” [ML1: female 56 years].

Faith leaders and parishioners experienced online services and the use social media and zoom meetings for the first time.

“It was the first time to have online services on zoom and use social media to reach the congregants and parishioners.” [ML2: female 62 years].

Some faith leaders experienced being referral agents for the congregants and parishioners during Covid-19.

“I found myself being a referral agent during Covid-19 with many requests from parishioners.” [ML6: female 60 years].

It was identified that there should be a proper system in place for professional referrals so that faith leaders are not burdened and overwhelmed by the referrals. Faith leaders need training to know and understand the existence of proper services and experts available to deal with referrals.

“We need to refer matters to the experts to deal with issues, because sometimes presbyters pretend to know everything. We need to acknowledge our limitations and

encourage congregants and parishioners to seek further advice from qualified experts.” [ML7: female 69 years].

Theme 2: Faith Leaders from English and Tongan-Speaking Congregations and Parishes Used Different Tools to Explore the Wellbeing of Congregants and Parishioners.

Faith leaders from Tongan churches relied on their ordained authority, rank, title, position, culture, and hierarchy to explore the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners.

“I explore wellbeing in my faifekau [minister] role, as an ordained minister of the church.” [ML3: male 55 years].

“The Tongan church look up to me because I am ordained and a leader of my village. I get lots of respect in my Tongan culture and heritage because I am a faifekau and the church and village respect the hierarchy.” [ML4: male 64 years].

Faith leaders from English-speaking parishes have a more structured approach to the exploration of wellbeing. They use such tools as: (i) observation during pastoral visits to learn about the parishioners and understand the background and demographics of the parish; (ii) active listening to elicit and discern what matters to parishioners; (iii) adaptation to integrate, mix and blend with the English-speaking parish; and (iv) reflection on learnings and achievements to inform faith leader influence, improvement, development, progression, and practice. Others included language, suspension of judgement (not to judge or label people), theological differences, hope, hospitality, and leadership style. This implied that the English-speaking parishes have a more structured framework in place than Tongan parishes.

“When I started in a new English-speaking congregation, I used tools because people had different upbringings, and their approaches and theological concepts

are different. So, I had to be aware as a Tongan faith leader to bring all of me and my traditional ways of doing things to a mixed congregation. I had to watch the language I used to preach to a Palangi congregation. Many people I preached to were from diverse backgrounds and professions, so I had to be aware of the language I used from the pulpit. The first tool I used was observation to analyse my true data. Another tool was to suspend my judgement and not judge or label people because we are all different and our views are different. Another tool was the exploration of theological differences in the parish, that ministers and faith leaders need to be aware of. Then there were the messages of hope and hospitality that I used in my ministry, and finally the leadership style which is not fixed to a one-way model but is flexible.” [ML3: male 55 years].

Theme 3: Faith Leader Connections, Engagement and Networking Explored the Wellbeing of Congregants and Parishioners.

Connections, engagement, and networking of faith leaders were essential for exploring wellbeing, particularly among the elderly and younger participant group (25–89 years).

“There is a lot of compromise involved in exploring the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners, especially of young people and elderly. Compromise takes time to really get to know people. It is about connecting, engaging, and networking. Sometimes as a presbyter we need to connect with the congregation and parish on a spiritual and social level.” [ML2: female 62 years].

It was discovered that female faith leaders were better connected and engaged with youth and young people because they encouraged youth to connect and engage. They reached out more to the youth than their male colleagues because they found young people approachable, skillful, and talented. Young people were either shy or scared to connect and engage. But, once the youth connected and engaged, they talked became good speakers.

“We should give the youth space to share and engage because they are skillful, talented, and resourceful. Every Friday, I provide Zoom on live to allow the youth to share their experiences at church and how they cope with challenges. Like the “Fanongo kihe ui” [A young adult couples’ programme], which means listen to your call. Those young parents are very smart, skillful, and approachable, and they can lead the church.” [ML2: female 62 years].

Faith leaders experienced challenges and uncomfortable times in ministry (taimi faingata’a) such that ministry is not always pleasant and there are plenty of challenges and uncomfortable moments.

“Sometimes I can share information with others, and other times I cannot because of issues of privacy and confidentiality and there are always challenges and uncomfortable times in ministry, taimi faingata’a.” Participant 2 (female): *“Ministry is not always pleasant and there are plenty of uncomfortable moments, momeniti faingata’a.”* [ML1: female 56 years].

Theme 4: Faith Leaders Explored the Wellbeing of Congregants and Parishioners Through Their Presence and Active Listening.

Faith leaders do not always need to speak, but their presence and active listening is required.

“The ministry of presence is a vital part of pastoral care. Listening is another integral part of pastoral care. You cannot separate the two, listening and presence. You can be quietly present but not need to say anything, which is powerful. Being present and available is an integral part of a presbyter’s role. To be present, whether you speak or not is still effective. You do not need to dictate but be present, and a person will unload on you how he or she feels about his or her situation. You can consume the emotion and explore the situation.” [ML4: male 64 years].

Some faith leaders experienced alienation and loneliness during ministry, especially during pastoral home visits and funeral attendances. Parish stewards are not always available to accompany faith leaders, so it is a lonely experience. It could be a requirement for faith leaders to travel in pairs for safety and wellbeing like other faith denominations (Mormon missionaries and Jehovah's Witness, etc.). There could be a system in place for faith leaders to have a companion accompany them in ministry for home visits and late-night pastoral visits for the health, safety, and protection of all faith leaders. It was important to note that female presbyter faith leaders experienced loneliness and alienation more than male presbyter faith leaders.

“Some presbyters have their spouse to accompany them on home visits and pastoral care, but God is my partner, especially when I perform ministry in the evening and late nights. For example, when someone passes away after midnight, I must go and visit the family, but I need someone to accompany me during my late-night visits. Even when I contact the steward, most of the time he is not available, so it is only me that is available to go. Thankfully, I put my faith and trust fully in God. I always pray and ask God to accompany me every time I am in ministry. In terms of security, safety, and protection it can be a lonely process. Faith leaders need the support of family and friends because we are still human.” [ML7: female 69 years].

5.4.2 Non-Methodist Faith Leaders

The participants expressed that they explored the wellbeing of members through the word of God (biblical messages and instructions), faith denominational doctrines, internal systems, structures, and functions of the respective churches. This finding is presented under one key theme.

Theme 1: The Exploration of Wellbeing is Through the Word of God, Faith Denominational Doctrine, Internal Systems and Functions of the Church.

“I explore wellbeing through my duties and responsibilities through my church denominational doctrines.” [NML1: male 50 years]. “Through my faith denomination, culture, internal structures, and functions.” [NML2: male 48 years].

Knowing and understanding the faith denominational systems and structures are helpful for the exploration of wellbeing.

“My belief in the church system and understanding of the church structures help me to explore members wellbeing” [NML3: male 70 years].

The participants used the word of God, biblical teachings, and scriptural instructions to explore the spiritual wellbeing of members.

“I explore spiritual wellbeing through the word of God, scripture, biblical teachings and instructions.” [NML4: male 68 years].

Wesleyan. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through Bible studies, youth programmes, praying, fasting, and direct communications of asking people directly.

“In the congregation, we can ask members directly “how they are?” If they are feeling well and healthy? There is nothing in Tonga as a poor person because they have their own lands (free land) and own farms.” [NML4: male 68 years].

Wesleyans expressed that faith leaders should not have favourites (pones) and play politics at church but treat everyone the same.

“We should not have favourites [pones] and play politics at church. There should be training for the youth as they are the future of the church. Tongan migrants need to appreciate the small things that differentiate our way of life among

Tongans living in Aotearoa. Everyone should be treated equally and the same.”

[NML4: male 68 years].

Catholic. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through ministry, Parish Pastoral Council, pastoral care, and visits to members of the church, making people feel welcome and getting them involved in ministry.

“I explored wellbeing by trying to get members to participate in the role of ministry. I selected new candidates for the Parish Pastoral Council. The new role lasts for three years then I change the groups with different people. I encourage people to participate in leadership, like the ecclesial ministers that help me give away the eucharist during mass. Others, I go with them and visit the sick, anointing the sick, especially in rest homes. That is one way I try to support, share, and explore wellbeing. At every mass, we welcome newcomers and visitors, and invite them to join us for morning teal. That way, people feel welcome in a family oriented, friendly environment and form new friendships.” [NML6: male 72 years].

Mormon. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through a unified church system that is globally uniform. The faith leaders relied on welfare services and reports to know and understand the personal situations of families. Bishops can keep track of family situations through the internal processes.

“If a family is identified as needing help, usually what happens is a welfare report is made. Each person is identified to an area, and families in need are reported to the bishop and the bishop keeps track of the welfare of these families, so that the bishop can support these families. Then there is a meeting, and a clerk records everything that happens at the meeting. When a bishop receives all these reports he prays and decides what needs to be done to help these people in need. For instance, if a person needs to have their lawns done, then the bishop can assign

someone to mow the lawns. All the help comes from within the church. Everyone has identifiable skills and talents used internally to help members of the church. That is how wellbeing is explored within the Mormon church. When people are helped that strengthens families and the bishop's role. We can explore informally as well when we get to know other families and know their situations. We can report this to the bishop in the same way and the bishop can find help for these families in need. We have a set process to deal with issues internally and the church can deal with financially. There are church counselling and referrals available if people need professional help, they can be referred to see a specialist. We have welfare services to help our families. Our Stake President is the head of the Latter-Day Saints Church for the welfare services. This service is voluntary, optional, and free for the people of the church. The counsellors are paid for by the church because they are professionals. This is universal and the system is the same all over the world. We have a ward and different members have different issues and problems that are reported to the bishop and the bishop can help with different needs like financial and psychological issues. The church is very structured, and the bishop has support. The bishop is assigned different people that he can refer people to. The bishop cannot deal with everyone personally, but he can deal with certain things like finances, and the psychological stuff that can be dealt with by church services. Each family is visited by Elders of the church and if a family is struggling it will be reported to the "Elders Forum President" and they have meetings once a month or fortnight with the bishop. They each have a "Women's Relief Society" and a "Primary," and when they have meetings, they can report on the families that need help and let the bishop know. The bishop can refer and delegate responsibility. There is a self-reliance person or welfare person that the

bishop can delegate to take over and go and visit the families. So that person goes to help, but the bishop does not have to visit personally. The bishop does delegate responsibility and allocate jobs for people to do. The church teaches financial prudence, frugality, thriftiness, and receive budgeting advice. The church offers self-reliance courses all from America, like family budgeting, eating healthy, keeping gardens, self-reliance, and all sorts of stuff for free. All the manuals are received from the United States, which is standard, and all the resources are provided to the church members all over the world.” [NML3: male 70 years].

Seventh Day Adventist. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through the art of active listening, being able to challenge, exercise empathy and humility, have personal insight, be a role model and lead by example, using tools and models, valuing, and respecting different perspectives.

“For me it is about listening. One of the things that my peers have over time forgotten in my view is the art of listening actively. That is something that I am guilty of as well. I would like to think that I am a very good communicator and love to speak. I am a person who can articulate force and feelings very clearly. However, I will often go after a meeting, and think to myself, hang on I just missed something. Or there are possible things that I could have said better. So, I believe that for me it is about active listening. Number two is to have empathy. Empathy is important to understand where people are coming from. Tongan people are funny, they will be smiling and nodding their head, and giving you all the verbal and physical signals that they are happy with you but deep down they are not. So, you have got to have intuition and personal insight as well. A good leader should be a role model, that leads by example. People will observe and they will make their own assessment of you. There is a quote that resonates with me, especially in the

mental health, addictions, and disabilities sector: “our people don’t care about what you know, until they know that you care.” That is important for a faith leader to understand, because if you go there expecting to change a person and their wellbeing from a space of arrogance, you will not succeed unless you humble yourself to their level. Leaders need to put their ego aside and show empathy and be vulnerable as the person they are trying to help. It is a reciprocal and two-way street, that unless that happens it is going to be an uphill battle. Trust is very hard to gain, but the good thing with Tongans is they are trusting when you have earned their trust. However, all it takes is one thing to go bad and people will not trust you again. It is a challenge for leaders to gain people’s trust and be trustworthy [falala anga].” [NML1: male 50 years].

Bahá’í. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through the internal processes, programmes, and activities of the Bahá’í 19-Day Feast (19 days in a Bahá’í month) and purposeful and spiritual assemblies like the Local Spiritual Assembly of Auckland and the Ruhi Book Study (Bible study). There are also children’s classes, devotional Meetings and Holy Day celebrations.

“How you explored the wellbeing of your followers or people you cared for, looked after, coached, or mentored depended on the Purpose of Spiritual Assemblies. These bodies have the sacred obligation to help, advise, protect, and guide the believers (members) in every way within their power when appealed to—indeed they were established just for the purpose of keeping order and unity and obedience to the law of God amongst the believers. You can go to them as a child would go to their parents. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Auckland supported the Bahá’ís within the Auckland supercity region. With the support of other administrative bodies, they are obligated to support and guide friends with

whatever issues they may have. Alongside the Bahá'í 19-day feast and holy day celebrations there are three main Bahá'í activities. (i) devotional meetings, (ii) children's classes and (iii) Ruhi book study (Bible study). During these events, the friends share and meditate on the word of God where they share, fellowship, and unpack the issues on the individual, local and international level. Through these activities the friends explored and learned about the virtues of God that lead to increased empathy, love and care for each other and the world around them."

[NML7: male 46 years].

Pentecostal. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through the Connect Group Leaders (like the Cell Groups, Kalasi Aho), Global Outreach and Mission, Youth Central, Personal Relationships and Fellowship.

"As pastors we regularly catch up with our members, but we depend largely on our Connect Group Leaders, like Cell Groups [Kalasi Aho] to connect with members. We have about 12 Connect Groups in our church that run during the week. They might share a meal together or pray together. They basically do life together. So, if anything arises within that group, the leader might deal with it directly if he or she can. It might be that someone is sick or has a new baby, so they work within themselves to try and support that one family. If there is anything they cannot do, they will contact us, and we will fill that gap. That is how the Connect Groups work. It is about casting the wider net, so it is not just coming through to senior leaders and senior pastors, but we are enabling and empowering our other leaders to be able to pastor as well." [NML2: male 48 years].

Breakthrough. Faith leaders explored wellbeing through Bible Studies, Connect Groups (get togethers, sharing, fellowship) and Home Visits.

“We have three programmes: Bible Studies, Connect Groups (get-togethers, sharing, fellowship) and Home Visits, to check on our family members. We talk and share in fellowship. I do my best to guide them by sharing the word of God. We catch up informally and are on the same level. We wanted to conduct our services in the Tongan language [lea fakatonga]. It helps us to have a Tongan-speaking church because it is easier for me and easier for other members that do not understand much English. We go with the flow and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to us. Without the Holy Spirit I am nothing. I believe that for faith leaders it is important to have the Holy Spirit of God with us and in us. Jeremiah 14:14 The message had to be from God and not from our own agenda [kita]. So, we need to share the right message. The measure is praying and having a close relationship with God. Spiritual people can hear the voice of God. The people that do not receive the Holy Spirit will not hear the voice of God. Sometimes, people receive the message but get the time wrong and vice versa. So, it is God’s time that really matters. It depends on our relationship with God if we pray all the time. It is like having a relationship with our children when we talk and interact all the time. If we do not have a relationship with the father, we will not receive the good news. We can be a faifekau [minister] at church but when we go home, we need to be a father at home in our fatherly duty [tu’unga faka tamai].” [NML5: male 52 years].

Chapter 6 Findings: Congregants and Parishioners

This chapter follows on from the findings in Chapter 5 for Faith Leaders, exploring the views and perceptions of the congregants and parishioners.

6.1. Research Question 1: What Does Wellbeing Mean?

6.1.1 Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (50–89 Years)

The participants expressed what wellbeing means from a social, cultural, economic, and environmental standard of living to measure wellbeing, connected to a holistic balance of the body, mind, and spirit. These findings are presented under two key themes.

Theme 1: Wellbeing is the Social, Cultural, Economic, Environmental and Global Standards of Living.

The participants expressed indicators of wellbeing related to the social, cultural, economic, environmental, and global standards of living.

“It is the social, economic, and environmental standards of living that are indicators of wellbeing.” [CPA1: female 59 years].

Social stability, cultural values, finances, and the environment are important indicators of wellbeing.

“My social stability, values, finances and living environment are important for my health and wellbeing. It is also my finances and cultural aspects of wellbeing.”

[CPA2: male 67 years].

Understanding these indicators of wellbeing will inform the role of a faith leader and the church of the wellness of congregants and parishioners.

“An understanding of our social, cultural, economic and environmental wellness would inform the parish and faith leader of our wellbeing.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

Furthermore, the participants expressed a global standard of living to measure wellbeing.

“I understand that globally [me’a fakamamani lahi], a human being is measured by their wellness and their standard of living, whether social or economic. There are a lot of indicators and I think that the human view of wellbeing is measured from the economic development of a country. The wellbeing of the economy and country provides money for families through jobs [ngaue] and education (ako). That is the measurement of the wellness from a global view.” [CPA5: female 56 years].

Theme 2: Wellbeing is a Healthy and Holistic Balance of the Body, Mind, and Spirit.

The participants expressed wellbeing as a healthy and holistic balance of the body, mind, and spirit. These components need to exist together and not separated for wellbeing to be holistic.

“Wellbeing is a holistic balance of the body, mind, and spirit. It is a healthy state of my whole being in body, mind, and soul.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

“It is a holistic balance of my overall physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.” [CPA1: female 59 years].

“Wellbeing is a holistic balance of the body, mind, and spirit.” [CPA5: female 56 years].

“Wellbeing is the complete wellbeing of myself in body, mind, and soul to be a well-balanced person. So that all the parts are in sync with each other. If you don’t have a healthy body, it will hinder the progress of holistic wellbeing. If you are fit and healthy but your mind and soul are not healthy, it will be a barrier to complete wellbeing. Thus, having all three are necessary and one cannot work without the other.” [CPA6: female 81 years].

The participants expressed a healthy balance of the body, mind, and spirit for holistic wellbeing to exist.

Wellbeing is the healthy state of a person's mind, body, and soul. If I can interpret wellbeing in the Tongan context. We often hear in our prayers [lotu] the words: sino [body], atamai [mind], and laumalie [spirit], our environment at home, work, and Christian faith. [CPA2: male 67 years].

“For me wellbeing incorporates all the parts of the person. It is a healthy balance of the body, mind, and spirit. Wellbeing is holistic rather than just a part of the whole. Growing up. I thought wellbeing was linked to the physical body only, but I soon discovered they are all linked. There must be a healthy balance of all those components for wellbeing to exist.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

6.1.2 Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (25–49 Years)

The participants expressed the same for wellbeing as the older participant group for a well-balanced and holistic life, with an emphasis on mental health for complete wellness to exist. The younger generation identified a safe space and place for young people to feel they belong, are valued, feel accepted and appreciated, and included a state of economic and financial wellness and wellbeing as important among this young age group for spiritual fulfilment and revival. There are seven themes that emerged from the talanoa of these young participants. These findings are presented under seven key themes.

Theme 1: Wellbeing is a Holistic Balance of the Body, Mind, and Spirit (Emphasising Mental Health).

Like the older participants, this age group expressed a healthy balance of the body, mind, and spirit for wellbeing to exist.

“A healthy balance of the body, mind and spirit is wellbeing.” [CPB1: female 30 years]. *“Wellbeing is a holistic balance of the body, mind and spirit.”* [CPB2: female 34 years].

The participants emphasised mental health and the importance of a healthy state of mind.

“For young people, mental health and having a healthy state of mind is important for our wellbeing. Wellbeing is my mental health and a holistic balance of my physical and spiritual wellbeing.” [CPB5: female, 48 years]

“Wellbeing is a healthy mind and well-balanced life.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

Theme 2: Wellbeing is a Well-Balanced Life When Everything Is in Place (Napangapangamālie).

Some participants referred to wellbeing in a biblical sense to mean a well-balanced life, when everything is in place (napangapangamālie).

“Personally, I don’t think that there is such an interpretation for wellbeing. The word itself is not a word that we often personally hear people talk about. However, I often hear Tongan people talk about wellbeing from a biblical context, sino [body], atamai [mind], and laumalie [spirit]. The body, mind and spirit are the three pillars of wellbeing that Tongans need to have in place [Napangapangamālie].” [CPB3: male 42 years].

“Wellbeing is holistic, tapped into three areas of life: mental, emotional & spiritual, and physical.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

“Wellbeing means to be whole heartedly complete, physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotional. Young people need to feel safe and supported and have a place to feel self-motivated to live their full potential. The whole spiritual being is connected to something higher, a higher being. For me, it is my faith in God and

being connected to God that uplifts me to keep trying to be better. I think the physical wellbeing is keeping yourself healthy and your spiritual wellbeing plays a massive role as well.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

The participants used other terms in addition to *napangapangamālie* to further explain wellbeing.

“Wellbeing means that the body, mind, and spirit is balanced, and everything is in place “napangapangamālie,” and that the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional capacity are well. I know there is wellbeing in Hauora in the Māori context of using the word Hauora. But for me it is the healthy life “mo’ui lelei” we are yearning for. Yes, we are aware of the fale tapafa “square house” of the body, mind, emotion, and spirit. However, I think for me personally it is the body, mind and spirit filled with the word and the fruits of the spirit. That to me in a nutshell is wellbeing. The healthy lifestyle mo’ui lelei of your relationships, and tauhi vā, maintaining those relationships.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

Theme 3: Wellbeing Is the Tongan Way, Cultural Identity and Heritage in a Cultural Context (Anga Faka Tonga).

Equally important is how young people do things the Tongan way within a cultural context (anga faka Tonga).

“Personally, wellbeing is more than just the three pillars. It also includes the cultural context of how we do things in the Tongan way, and how we live and learn.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

“It’s about our whole being around our culture, who we are, and our identity, and how we’re able to hold ourselves when we are under pressure, and the complete package. Often when we leave home to start our own family, we like to raise our children in the Tongan culture, like how we were raised.” [CPB56: male 47 years].

Theme 4: Wellbeing Is a Safe Space and Place for Young People to Feel They Belong and Are Heard (Inclusion).

Inclusion, to be heard and have a safe space to belong were important for young people.

“Wellbeing is a sense of belonging and inclusion.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

They expressed the desire to feel welcomed, connected and engaged to avoid external influences.

“To feel welcome, connected, engaged, and that I belong.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

Furthermore, young people expressed the need to be heard, valued, and appreciated.

“To be heard, valued and appreciated is my sense of worth.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

The participants wanted the church to be a place they can call home and be heard.

“Younger people want a safe space and place to call it their home.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

Young people also expressed the need to feel comfortable in their environment and have a safe space to express themselves and have freedom—(tau’ataina).

“I think the meaning of wellbeing in the Tongan congregation is to have a comfortable, happy, and safe space. It is the state of being comfortable and having the freedom ‘tau’ataina.’” [CPB5: female 48 years].

Equally important for the participants was for the youth to have a safe and supportive environment with respected relationships for their growth and wellbeing.

“A safe place means that if you come across challenges you are in a safe space and there are people that can support you. You can have a talanoa and the vā [relationship] won’t be broken, or the vā will be respected, because once the vā is

disrespected or broken that's when it starts feeling unsafe. To be supported holistically, physically, spiritually, and mentally.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

Theme 5: Wellbeing Is When Young People Feel Valued, Accepted and Appreciated Without Judgement.

The participants expressed the desire to feel valued, accepted and appreciated as an equal.

“Young people like to feel valued, accepted and appreciated without pressure or judgement.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

“For young people, it's the pressure of having to do so much for the church and feel like they are not getting anything out of it. It doesn't help when people judge you as well and it's something that leaders do as well from the moment you step into the church to the moment you step out. That's why young people are moving away, to have the freedom to do anything they want without being judged. Another thing is that faith leaders give people a different value depending on how much money they give to the church. Someone could have the talent to do a job at church, but because he or she or that family are not giving as much money, they are judged as being nobody. It's based on how much you can do, how much you can give, and how much you can get up and talk at church.” [CPB3: male 42 years]. “Another issue is pointing fingers at people if they do something wrong instead of guiding and strengthening them. There is also the issue of healing, a lack of pastoral care in church and the community.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

Theme 6: Wellbeing Is a State of Economic and Financial Wellness.

The participants were vocal about the state of economic and financial wellbeing that families could not afford.

“It is our state of economic and financial wellness that’s important to wellbeing.”

[CPB5: female 48 years].

The participants were concerned that the church was a financial burden for the families that could not afford to give.

“The church is a financial burden and there is always something to give money to.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa have annual tithing (misinale) that the participants said was a financial burden for families to afford.

“We are not in a state of financial wellness and wellbeing because of the amount of money our parents need to give the church for misinale. We feel pressured to give to the Church and it is overwhelming.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

Young people emphasised the need for economic and financial stability (tu’unga fakapa’anga ke lelei). That living a healthy life, having a good job and career, and supportive relationships are essential for wellbeing (mo’ui ke lelei/healthy life, vā lelei/and good relationships).

“I think we need to talk about wellbeing and what that means to Tongans. Wellbeing means mo’ui lelei [have a healthy life], vā lelei [good relationships] and financial stability [tu’unga fakapa’anga]. The biggest issue with families is finances. Maybe 80% of the issue is finance. It’s all to do with money. It’s something that our leaders have never really addressed. That maybe they need to look after the families then the family will then look after the church. Leaders don’t have enough information about the families that are struggling financially. For example, if a minister asked a family to give three thousand dollars for their misinale [tithing], how would they know if the family can afford it? Of course, the family will give everything up to give that amount to please the leaders. Sometimes,

a faith leader will put a figure amount on the tithing rather than what they can afford. Sometimes, they work towards a number because they are building a church or have a target to meet at the end of the year. Sometimes, families on a low income will give the same amount as a person on a high income, and you wonder how these families manage. It's something that church leaders don't always consider but they need to address for holistic wellbeing." [CPB3: male 42 years].

Young People Experienced the Tongan Church as a Burden: The participants expressed that the church should be a safe space, sanctuary, and place of spirituality for young people to thrive, yearn for hope, fulfilment, and wellbeing: body, mind, and spirit. However, the participants expressed that the Tongan church was a burden in comparison to the Palangi English-speaking church.

"I know a lot of people understand and love how Palangis do church. On Sunday they go to church and then they go home. There is no [responsibility and obligations], they just share the Bible and that is all they do. But in our Tongan congregations there are burdens from our own culture, customs, and traditions. There are some good things but around the way we can do church better. For example, preparing food is what we love, getting together and sharing food. But as Tongan people, we find it hard now and food preparation has become a burden, the fakaafe [invite]. We fail to understand that the main purpose of church is to share the Bible. My children often say: "Dad I would rather stay home than go to church." When asked why, they replied: "because I do not understand what they are talking about at church." [CPB3: male 42 years].

A Misconception of Palangi/English-Speaking Congregations and Parishes.: The participants and younger generation valued the Tongan church despite the fact they did not always understand the language. For example, some young people leave the Tongan

church but return when they have their own families to teach and raise their children in the language and culture.

“I spoke to one of the young boys in our church that grew up in New Zealand and he believes in the traditional way of life. Even though it is hard for him and his family to understand the language they choose the traditional way of life. It is the only way they know, and they miss speaking in Tongan. They wanted to do the same for their children and bring their kids to Sunday school. Even if they are married to Palangis or a non-Tongan, they still want to bring their kids to Sunday school to learn the Tongan language.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

“Another example is a congregant who takes his kids to White Sunday [Fakame] even though he is married to a Palangi. He brings his kids to church every Sunday and shares his understanding of the culture and what his parents taught him. They go and experience other religions and find out the best way to raise their children is through the church they grew up in. That is the good news from the downside of kids listening to services without understanding. Luckily, we now have the Taulua Bible converted into Tongan and English. Some ministers preach and worship in Tongan and English and the kids can understand. So, it should be a requirement in the delivery of preaching, sermon training and education (ako malanga) that English and Tongan are both taught.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

It is a misperception and misunderstanding that English-speaking congregations and parishes do not have responsibilities and obligations. But the contrast is that the burden and load may be disparate for English-speaking congregations and parishes, but they do have responsibilities and obligations like every other church, including Tongan congregations and parishes.

Learning the Tongan Language and Maintaining Tongan Culture and Heritage, Customs and Traditions is a Drawcard (Buy-In) for New Zealand-Born Tongans Attending Tongan-Speaking Congregations and Parishes.

New Zealand-born Tongan participants expressed the reason they stayed in the Tongan church was for the language and culture.

“The language is bringing young people and families back to the Tongan traditional church. Within our Tongan language we can learn values like respect and humility. There is something behind language, like engaging with older people and the words they use. I think when people leave the church and miss the language, culture, singing and choir, they want their children to return to the Tongan church and experience the same upbringing they had. This has impacts on the government, society, and education system to allow culture and languages in schools. That was the influence from the Mate Ma’a Tonga [MMT, die for Tonga] rugby league national team campaign that inspired young kids. Those kids aspired to be Tongan and were proud to be Tongan. Even at Sunday school kids wanted to imitate Mate Ma’a Tonga. That was the big influence from the last couple of years, to bring people back to their roots from the players from overseas who wanted to be Tongan and were proud to be Tongan.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

Theme 7: Wellbeing Is When Young People Yearn for Spiritual Growth, Fulfilment, Revival, and Something Better Than the Current Practice.

The participants expressed that holistic wellbeing revived their spirit. They went to church looking for something better, searching for answers and yearning for fulfilment (fiema’u ke mo’ui honau laumalie/revive their spiritual growth).

“For me wellbeing at church means fiema’u ke mo’ui hoku laumalie [I want to revive my spirit]. I believe in the laumalie mo’ui [revived spirit]. Once you sort

your life out, your laumalie will mo'ui [your spirit will be revived] and you feel alive. But sometimes when we are at church, we only concentrate on one thing, the lotu [prayer] part. When you're stressing out about your finances you can't all be there, and wellbeing is lacking. Your laumalie won't mo'ui [your spirit won't survive]. I often hear lotu ma'u pe [always pray] but there should be lotu and ngaue [work that go hand in hand]. You need to work hard and play hard for total holistic wellbeing." [CPB1: female 30 years].

6.2 Research Question 2: What is the Role of a Faith Leader?

6.2.1 Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (50–89 Years)

The participants viewed faith leaders in a special and privileged position. That faith leaders were called by God as messengers to deliver the good news from the Bible. They were ordained ministers or presbyters that were born-again servants of Christ. These findings are presented in five key themes.

Theme 1: A Faith Leader is an Ordained Minister/Presbyter in a Special Relationship with God.

The participants viewed the role of a faith leader as someone who is ordained, and in a special and privileged relationship with God.

"I believe a faith leader is in a special and privileged relationship with God."

[CPA1: female 59 years].

"An ordained minister and presbyter that has a divine calling from God." [CPA2:

male 67 years].

"It is someone chosen by God to do his work and will on this earth." [CPA3: male

74 years].

Theme 2: A Faith Leader Is a Messenger and Deliverer of the Good News from the Bible.

The participants expressed the role of a faith leader as a messenger and deliverer of the good news from the Bible. That the Bible was the core of their messages and biblical teachings and instructions.

“A faith leader is a messenger of God that receives from the Bible to deliver to the people” [CPA5: female 56 years]:

“A messenger that delivers the good news from the Bible” [CPA6: female 81 years]:

“A messenger has been called by God to do his will and provide biblical teaching and instructions.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

Theme 3: A Faith Leader Is a Spiritual Leader, Pastoral Carer, Healer, and Nurturer.

The participants expressed seeking spiritual nurture, healing, and pastoral care with church leaders. There is an expectation that they will be spiritually led and fulfilled by the faith leaders. That’s the focus and purpose why congregants and parishioners attend church for spiritual growth, nurture, and fulfilment.

“We often look at church leaders to nurture the members of the church. We go and we yearn for this to be comfortable but then it’s not often the case. It’s important that we are open and honest and be critical about our faith today. It’s very different to 30 years ago. I can only say to what I have observed over the years that it is a struggle. It’s a huge struggle to when we first started because we weren’t pressured so much. Our life is different to our parents because we all know that

our parents were so loyal to whatever they commit themselves to pastoral care and ministry. They gave everything with the small amount of money they had. My parents gave everything, and they did everything for the church, right up to their retirement days. They were dedicated to the Methodist Church of New Zealand and the Wesleyan Church of Tonga. There is also the issue of healing, a lack of pastoral care in the church and community.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

Theme 4: A Faith Leader Is a Teacher and Mentor of Ethics, the Bible, and the Word of God—to Live by Example.

Ethics was a strong point among the participants for the role of faith leader in the talanoa.

“There are many reasons but the basic is to teach the followers. The group of people that you lead and are responsible for teaching the word of God. Their main role is to teach the congregants and parishioners, ethics and Godly wisdom and knowledge. I believe that God distributes different talents to worshippers. We are all different parts of God’s creation to live well, to live peacefully, and to be Christlike.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

The participants also expressed the importance of faith leaders living the word of God by example.

“The main role for a faith leader is to teach the Bible and ethics and live by example. A faith leader lives by the word of God not only at church but everywhere in the workplace, community, society and at church.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

Theme 5: A Faith Leader Is a Born-Again Servant of God, Humble and Christlike—John 3:3.

The participants expressed the importance of a faith leader being born again and a servant of God.

“A faith leader should be born-again and be a servant of God that has made a commitment to serve Christ.” [CPA1: female 59 years].

The participants further expressed that faith leaders needed to be Christlike and humble like a servant of God.

“A humble born-again servant of God called to serve his people, John 3:3.” The New International Version John 3:3 NIV—a Bible verse used by the participant:
“Jesus replied, very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” [CPA2: male 67 years].

“To be a faifekau [minister], we need to be a servant. This is what Jesus said to his disciples. The first thing to do is to be a servant. To be a servant, you need to be loyal to your calling and role in ministry. I understand that the first thing a faith leader must do is be born again. Before anyone can be a leader, they need to be a servant and be last.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

The participants identified issues in exploring the role of faith leaders:

The Struggle When the Livelihood of a Faith Leader Depended Solely on the Congregation and Parish Without any Financial Alternative: The participants identified a struggle for faith leaders when they relied solely on the congregation and parish for stipends without any other financial alternative.

“It is hard for a congregation now to give enough for the faifekau [minister] to fulfil their role. When faith leaders want to give a lot of tithing [misinale] to the church and save up for tithing. It is a concern for congregants and parishioners when faith leaders rely solely on their stipends for annual tithing without any other means of financial survival.” [CPA5: female 56 years].

Veterans and Pioneers Who Started the Church Were Often Barriers to Change (But Not Always).

Participants identified veterans and pioneers of the church who were barriers to change (but not always).

“I know some of the veterans and pioneers are barriers to any real change in the church because they claimed they started the church and have a sense of entitlement.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

These responses implied that mature participants (aged 50–89 years) believed the role of a faith leader is to be ordained by the church, which is the laying of hands for the anointment of God at the Methodist Church of New Zealand Conference for the induction of ordained presbyters. In contrast, the younger generation (25–49 years) believed that the role of a faith leader should not be limited to an ordained presbyter but that we are all faith leaders. (See the Theme: We are all faith leaders, below.)

6.2.2 Methodist Congregations and Parishioners (25–49 years)

The participants in this age group expressed that a faith leader is a spiritual and pastoral leader, faith provider, teacher, role model, but also an effective leader that is relevant and relatable to the youth on the same level. The faith leader should be humble, approachable, and be able to connect with young people. Young people aspire to be leaders in the notion that we are all faith leaders without limitation to ordained presbyters only. These findings are presented under seven key themes.

Theme 1: A Faith Leader Is a Spiritual Pastoral Leader, Faith Provider, Teacher, and Role Model.

The participants identified the role of a faith leader as a spiritual leader, faith provider, teacher and role model for the youth and young people.

“A faith leader is a spiritual leader and teacher that is Christlike and model’s the word of God.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

“A faith provider, leader and role model for the youth and young people.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

The participants clearly viewed a faith leader having expertise and knowledge of faith and spirituality.

“A faith leader is a teacher with expertise and knowledge of faith and spirituality, and lives by example for young people to follow.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

“They have knowledge and expertise of faith, worship and biblical instruction.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

The participants expressed the role of a faith leader was to contribute to spirituality and add value to the whole congregation and parish.

“I think the role of a faith leader is to contribute to the faith pillar. One of the pillars is spirituality. We look towards a faith leader for the obvious: spiritual support, growth, guidance, and leadership. That’s their role. Tongans do most things by faith. Sometimes, we know implications of life can be harmful and challenging but we persevere through faith. I think Tongan people believe in God because we are strong in our faith, and it dominates most of what we do. That’s when our emotions come in because our faith makes us emotional.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

“For me personally the role of a faith leader is looking after the spiritual wellbeing and pastoral care of congregant’s and parishioners. Making connections with members of the church, being there to spiritually support and enhance the lives of the parishioners. But, also to add value to the whole congregation, in body, mind and spirit so they can not only share from the pulpit but also walk alongside members who are going through tough times and adding value to families and the

whole church. The key role of faith leaders is spiritual and pastoral care, that go hand in hand.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

**Theme 2: A Faith Leader Is an Effective Leader Who is Relevant,
Contemporary and Relatable to the Youth on Their Level.**

Having an effective leader is important for young people if they are relevant, contemporary, and relatable to youth on all levels.

“A faith leader must be relatable, current and contemporary, and relevant to be effective.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

“A faith leader should be relevant and relatable on our level.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

It was important for the participants that faith leaders connected with young people on their level to be effective.

“A leader that connects and engages with young people are effective.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

“A faith leader that has strong leadership and effective people skills are able to connect and engage with the younger generation and make a difference.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

Connecting the old to the now was important for the participants as they described the need to be contemporary and relatable.

“You know the Bible was written many years ago. But it’s important that faith leaders relate the biblical messages to what’s happening today, like the social and economic issues people face. The message must be relatable and relevant to the contemporary time of today. The message related should connect with young people, someone you can approach and talk to. That’s my understanding of their role.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

**Theme 3: A Faith Leader Is a Highly Accessible and Approachable Person
Who Connects with Young People.**

The participants viewed the ideal faith leader as highly accessible and approachable, that were engaged and connected with young people.

“A faith leader is a highly accessible and approachable person that connected with young people.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

A faith leader that young people connected and engaged with captured their attention, imagination, and loyalty.

“A faith leader connects and engages with me captures my attention and imagination.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

“A person that understands young people and delegates responsibilities to include them will get their full attention and loyalty.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

The participants further identified approachability, humility, and connection as important.

“The leaders need to be approachable and accessible to the people. The leaders need to mix and mingle with the people. Sometimes they just stay in their role as faifekau [minister], and it is hard for the people to approach them. They need to be humble and approachable. Too many people in the church honour them. Many of the presbyters sit at the front table all the time and perceived to want to be royal [laughs]. They love what they get at the birthdays. They come with the sila [envelope of money] and me’a fakatonga [Tongan fine mats]. You can see how, leaders [presbyters] of Vahefonua attend birthdays and funerals to support their families to survive [ke mo’ui ai ae family].” [CPB6: male 47 years].

**Theme 4: A Faith Leader Is a Person Who is Genuine and Engaged with
People of All Ages and Walks of Life.**

The participants were aware that faith leaders need to be genuine, connected and engaged with people of all ages and walks of life regardless of who they are to be effective. The challenge for faith leaders is to be real with youth, because young people know when a leader is not genuine. Faith leaders need to reciprocate and respect all ages and form relationships with all walks of life (vā and/or tauhi the vā/form relationships) and do it every day.

“My understanding of a faith leader is someone that engages with people of all ages. Someone that is a spiritual father and mother to the congregation. Someone that’s professional and doesn’t let personal agenda cloud their judgement and get in the way. Also being real and able to walk the talk. Someone that does not sugar coat things and slide it under the carpet when stuff happens and the going gets tough. Language is important for faith leaders in the congregation to connect and engage with people. Someone that is real and able to connect, engage and create a safe space for people to feel they are safe. Someone, that engages in the talanoa space, so that it encourages the listener and follower. It encourages them to be well. There’s always going to be shortfalls and all that stuff but it’s part of the process, but if I go back to that part of the whole wellbeing thing. If you are supported like a leader, if you are supported as a faith leader, you will be able to get through some of those challenging times because everyone needs to be supported to play their role and know their role within the congregation. Being able to facilitate change when people feel safe and have confidence in that change.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

Theme 5: A Faith Leader Is Humble and an Inclusive Leader Who Delegates Responsibility to Include Everyone.

The participants expressed that being humble and inclusive to delegate responsibility to include everyone is a competent faith leader.

“Being able to delegate responsibility and being humble (loto tō) enough to delegate responsibility to be inclusive is the role of a faith leader. It won’t be the end of the world if you delegate the role. Like that Tongan saying “oku ‘ikai ke honge kakai” [there’s plenty of people] to delegate responsibility to fulfil the call of duty. For faith leaders it’s important to be humble [loto tō] to delegate responsibility and still lead from the side or behind [back] because you are a part of creating something for the next generation. Being real and preaching the message, walking the talk, and living what you preach. That is the hard thing, you cannot be saying one thing and doing another thing. I guess for young people, they see that, and they learn from it. Some adults probably think and assume that young people do not take any notice, but young people do take notice of what they see and hear. If you’re like wearing your hekesi [tie] up in the front of the congregation, and telling everyone to do this and that, and you’re wearing your hekesi at a public arena and you’re doing something different, then young people will take notice of that and have their own perspectives on how things should be because they are searching for answers.” [CPB3: male 42 years]

Theme 6: We Are All Faith Leaders and/or Subleaders Making a Difference.

The participants viewed themselves as faith leaders or subleaders making a difference.

Distinguished on the ground that the older participant group (50–89 years) viewed faith leaders as ordained ministers or presbyters. Participant 6 (male):

“You don’t need to be ordained to be a faith leader.” [CPB1: female 30 years]:

“I believe we are all faith leaders or sub leaders making a difference.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

The participants believed that having a role in the church made them a faith leader.

“I’m a faith leader because I’m a youth leader.” [CPB3: male 42 years]

“I have a position at church so that makes me a faith leader.” [CPB5: female 48 years]

We are all faith leaders, and the role is not limited to only ordained ministers and presbyters. A faith leader can be anyone in a faith role like a steward, Cell group leader, Sunday school teacher and the list is not exhaustive. We are given different roles and work to do. As a mother, we are faith leaders in our own little corner at home. We have a role to guide, protect and care for our families. As parents we have a role to teach and educate our children so that when they leave home, they are responsible citizens. I don’t believe that the role of a faith leader is limited to only those things that are recognised, called, and commissioned to ministry. We are all faith leaders once we accept God in our lives and have a calling in the church. A faith leader affirms who we are and the task we’ve been nominated to do.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

The participants said they were faith leaders or subleaders, and a by-product of their calling and responsibility in the church.

“I see myself a faith leader because we have young couples’ group [fanongo kihe ui/listening to the calling group] and I’m a leader of that group.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

“I consider anyone with a leadership role as a faith leader, and myself a sub leader of lay ministry as a supporter of the ordained representative of the church, and I have some responsibility and involvement in that leadership.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

“I consider myself a faith leader with youth. I am working with a whole range of young people and there is nothing wrong with showing our faith because our youth and young people are searching for it. The youth are looking for somewhere to feel safe and learn about their faith and identity. Young people need a voice at church, and faith leaders are an instrument for the youth to express themselves.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

“I consider myself a faith leader because I like to connect and follow up with young people and the elderly. Checking in with people using social media, replying to messages, and adding comments on Facebook is an effective way to communicate with youth.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

“I think it’s a bit of everything and we are all faith leaders because one size does not fit all. What works for one person does not necessarily work for another person. We don’t spend enough time understanding the personal circumstances and situations of youth and young people.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

Theme 7: Faith Leaders Continue to Learn, Hone Skills to Improve, and Build on the Legacy of Veterans and Pioneers—Learning Is Lifelong.

The participants expressed the importance of continued education, training, and upskilling to ensure faith leaders are continually learning and upskilling for the best results.

“For me it’s about always trying to be better, trying to be a better person than I was yesterday, and that’s the challenge to be a better person, to be able to act in a manner that keeps the vā [relationship] with whoever you come across and being honest with who you are as a person. Learning should be lifelong for continued education, training, and upskilling to ensure we are continually learning and upskilling for the best results. Learning all the stuff like being able to delegate, listen, create a safe environment for young people to take on leadership, and

learning from adults and older leaders gives me will power and strength [lotolahi] to lead. I know that having supervision gives me time out, where I can talk to someone to support me because it contributes to becoming a good faith leader. Also learning from the legacy and leadership of leaders that have passed away, and the characteristics and contributions of that time. You are always learning, and the learning doesn't stop, especially when you are working with youth, children, and young adults. The learning does not stop because you are continuously coming across new issues, different trends and having to deal with stuff differently because not every situation is the same." [CPB2: female 34 years].

These responses mark the importance of the expectations of the younger generation for the church and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa to acknowledge for effective influence, inclusion, acceptance, and sustainability as the future church and what futureproofing and succession planning might look like.

6.3 Research Question 3: How Do Faith Leaders Explore the Wellbeing of Congregants and Parishioners?

The relevance of this question is to detect and ascertain the influence of faith leaders on the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners. To explain the process used by the faith leaders and ask the congregants and parishioner about what they know and understand about the process/es used by the faith leaders for the exploration of wellbeing.

6.3.1 Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (50–89 Years)

The participants expressed that personal contact with small church groups and smaller gatherings were more effective for exploring wellbeing than through larger groups. What also worked was the sharing of information through the various church departments. The findings are presented in three key themes.

Theme 1: The Exploration of Wellbeing Is Through Personal Contact and Small Church Services and Group Gatherings.

The participants preferred personal contact, smaller church services and group gatherings for the exploration of their wellbeing. It gave them more of a personal connection with the faith leader.

“Through smaller worship groups, cell groups [kalasi aho] and Bible studies, I feel an intimate connection with God and the faith leader.” [CPA1: female 59 years].

“Smaller church activities such as cell groups, worship groups [kulupu lotu] and Bible studies [ako tapu] provide better connections with the faith leader.” [CPA5: female 56 years].

“I find the smaller church groups more effective in enhancing my spiritual wellbeing.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

“The kalasi aho is where I feel more connected to God and the minister, because the group is smaller, and the minister can pray for me and my family individually.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

Participants experienced wellbeing during close contact with faith leaders when intimately engaged and involved in smaller church activities, such as Cell groups (kalasi aho), worship groups and Bible studies.

“I experience wellbeing when I am in close contact with the faith leader, when I am intimately engaged in the cell group and smaller Bible study group and small worship gatherings.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

Theme 2: The Exploration of Wellbeing Is Through Accessibility and Collaboration of the Different Church Departments (Internal) for Information Sharing.

The participants explained that collaborations between the different internal church departments shared information about how people were doing and that is how a faith leader knew about a person's wellbeing.

"The collaboration of different church departments and information sharing was how a faith leader found out about a person's wellbeing." [CPA5: female 56 years].

Information sharing and knowledge about how people were doing was vital information for a faith leaders' exploration of wellbeing.

"The sharing of information between different internal departments to know how congregants and parishioners were doing was vital information for faith leaders." [CPA6: female 81 years].

Equally important was information received from the leaders reports that helped inform the parish.

"The reports of the stewards and ministers informed the parish and the leaders learned about what was happening in the church." [CPA1: female 59 years].

The working groups and Executive Committee need to be approachable and accessible as the first point of contact for congregants and parishioners when faith leaders are not available.

"The leaders of the groups, need to be alert and approachable, otherwise the members will be too shy to tell them when they need help. Thus, the leaders need to ask the right questions to ascertain the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners." [CPA2: male 67 years].

Theme 3: The Exploration of Wellbeing Is Through Knowledge and Understanding of Key Assets, Resources, Strengths, Support Services, Research and Opportunities Available for the Congregations and Parishes, Including Communities.

The participants expressed how access to research and collection of support services, key assets, resources, strengths, and opportunities were important for the exploration of wellbeing.

“A good leader should do more research and homework to get to know the congregants and parishioners better. People feel blessed when faith leaders understand their situations. The information is shared between faith leaders in ideation. So, a faith leader going to a new congregation will not need to start from scratch and carry on the work from the previous faith leader.” [CPA3: male 74 years].

Furthermore, knowing and understanding about the wealth of resources and support services available help congregants and parishioners, as well as communities.

“Identifying the wealth of support services available to our communities is key. There are also Tongan providers who can help our communities and sometimes are free. It is a matter of identifying who and where we can get help from. I think it is the work of the administration from Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa to identify the different services and make them known and available for faith leaders. So, that faith leaders can direct congregations and parishes to these support services for help as well as the communities. This information needs to be readily available and distributed to the different departments of the churches. We have a variety of groups: youth, young adults, married couples, evangelical group, Sunday school, choir group, Bible study group, elderly groups, etc.” [CPA4: male 63 years].

There were also internal specialist groups within the church for the exploration of wellbeing.

“There are programmes for the women [kaluseti] that targets communion with all women fellowship members to gather and work together in prayer and fellowship in groups, that aim to gather all the women in a certain place to achieve a certain goal. If we leave people individually and not in union to receive the warmth of fellowship, people will not feel linked and connected. When they feel a part of the group they will want to stay and contribute to the needs of women. These needs could be spiritual, fellowship and family oriented. We explore the needs of women and organise programmes that cater for those needs. There are programmes that we use as a resource, called the tree of life [koe akau oe mo’ui]. It is a resource that we use for a daily scripture to be read and we apply our situation to that scripture and verse of the day. We work together with Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa and the Connexional Methodist Church in Christchurch to share the same lessons and programmes. We work in harmony and interlink the same scriptures to help people. We have another programme called Prayer Chain [Lotu Seini], that occurs every morning, and we include the lead minister in our women’s Zoom services as a resource. There are programmes for women in Aotearoa that fit the different situations and needs of women all over Aotearoa. There is a Ako Tapu [Prayer Warrior Group], for women of all ages to gather and pray for one another. This is a strength that faith leaders can use as a resource for prayer warriors to pray [hufia] over the work of women and the church. There is also Bible Studies [Ako Tohitapu] and Crusade Meetings that the Women’s Group conduct. Women conduct ministry in many ways and the mission is nationwide. For the nationwide fellowship of women Methodists in Aotearoa, newsletters are used

to reach and engage women to ascertain the needs of women.” [CPA5: female 56 years].

Other relevant information was perceived from this participant group in the exploration of wellbeing. The 50–89 years participant group was compliant with the status quo and accepted the current faith leader influence of wellbeing more so than the younger participant group (25–49 years). For example:

Older Participants Complied with Faith Leader Worship and Ministry Without Question and Accepted the Status Quo.

“When congregants and parishioners [aged 50–89 years] listened to faith leaders and did what they said, it was through their faith that they obeyed. Tongan people treat the minister [faifekau] with the utmost respect and gave the best of everything they owned to the minister. The minister was treated like Tongan royalty [hou’eiki], and the older generation honoured the minister as royalty. The congregants and parishioners gave the minister the best of everything, including the best crops. Older participants accepted instructions from faith leaders because they believed they were messengers from God, and whatever the minister instructed they did, without question because they thought that it was the right thing to do. We complied with the faith leader’s instructions, worship and ministry and accepted everything.” [CPA2: male 67 years].

The effectiveness of the exploration of wellbeing was dependent on the participants’ views for what they thought wellbeing was and the role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing. The younger generation showed more gaps and limitations in the exploration of their wellbeing than the more mature congregants and parishioners (50–89 years). See the discussion below.

6.3.2 Methodist Congregants and Parishioners (25–49 Years)

The participants' wellbeing was explored through church youth groups, young adults, and young couples' programmes and activities. Trusted relationships were important amount these groups, and the effectiveness and impact of these groups are further discussed in Chapter 7. These findings are presented under two key themes.

Theme 1: The Exploration of Wellbeing Is Through Youth, Young Adults and Young Couples' Programmes and Activities.

The participants expressed that their wellbeing was explored through youth programmes and activities.

“We have youth programmes and activities that the minister can attend to find out how we are doing.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

“We have young adults, couples' programmes [fanongo kihe ui] for the younger generation.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

The youth also have youth camps and sports exchanges. Participant 6 (male):

“We have youth camps, sports, cultural exchanges and social activities to keep the youth occupied.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

There are youth programmes for young adults and couples to engage the youth and involvement of young families.

“The fanongo kihe ui [listen to your call] group was established for young adults and couples, who have young families and children. This group was established to fill the gap and void of young families fitting in to the church. For couples who were not fully involved in the life of the church and starting out—the fanongo kihe

ui group gathered young people together to share and fellowship. For example, topics discussed in this group included how to raise a child, marriage relationships and parenting.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

The effectiveness of these programmes and activities on the wellbeing of young people is discussed in Chapter 7.

Theme 2: The Exploration of Wellbeing Is Through Trusted Relationships Between the Faith Leader and Congregants & Parishioners.

The participants expressed those relationships were based on trust and that faith leaders were essential for the exploration of their wellbeing, and for the youth to open and share their struggles. It was particularly helpful for issues of mental health.

“Maybe the faith leaders do not want to get too personal, with everyone’s wellbeing. If they do, it would be a good step. I think if they try to explore, they need to spend more time bonding with congregants to gain trust. If they have trust and connection, they can open and start questions. Otherwise, they are not going to find out about any daily struggles if the bond and trust are not present. So, the key is in trusted relationships and connection.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

“Being in a trusted relationship with congregants and parishioners, and faith leaders are helpful for mental health and the struggles of youth and young people.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

The exploration of the younger participant group (25–49 years) through trusted relationships and the effectiveness of youth programmes and activities revealed the following:

Faith Leaders Need to Explore Beyond the Surface—To tackle and address underlying issues and not take things for granted [or at face value.]

“There are the reports from the various leaders’ meetings and Sunday School, but the reports are always positive but underneath it there are things that need to be addressed. For example, it depends on how you deliver the messages that are easily understood by children born in Aotearoa and I don’t think we have tackled that professionally. We do things because we have done it for so many years, but we have not paused to reflect and assess how things are and if it is the most efficient way. Whether it sinks in, or the congregants and parishioners fully understand. It is something I think we could be better at in terms of exploring wellbeing.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

Faith leaders need to dig deeper and explore beyond the surface and ask the right questions to discern wellbeing.

“During the lockdown with this pandemic, we have seen a big chunk of how faith leaders explored the wellbeing of the youth and young people. You’ll see leaders that went out of their way to find out what the congregation was doing and move into a space of zoom and Facebook. I think there should be a component in the faith leader training schedule about how to connect and explore wellbeing. Because we don’t know when people ask fefehake? [how are you?] and the youth say fine [saipe], that we assume that everything is fine with that response. I think that faith leaders need to dig in a bit more about exploring just what is meant by being fine. The leaders need to connect, engage, and say what does fine mean? The leaders need to ask the right questions about whether everything is really, okay? The leaders need to find ways to connect because it becomes normal for the youth

and young people to say I'm fine and we accept that to mean just that.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

Young People Leave the Church for Outside, External Influences That Capture Their Attention.

“Vahefonua faith leaders preach but they are not getting to the nitty gritty to find out what's happening with youth and young people. I know some leaders were concerned from our latest youth meeting, when they were told that local gangs were using our young people to sell drugs and be a part of the gangs. When the youth and young people heard it, we were saying that's not new, but the leaders found it a shock. For us youth we knew it was not new because we have family members that are part of these gangs. What these gangs do is provide gyms like city fitness gyms and it is free to use the gym. Young people can just walk in and use the gyms that are 24 hours open. It meets the needs, and there are components of wellbeing for families to attend the gym, and it is the only gym that is free for young people to attend. The gangs own and operate the gyms, and they are attractive to young people. There is equipment for youth to use in these gyms. They are flash with up-to-date equipment that young people want to use. It is a legitimate gym that is registered. These gyms are all over the country and the gangs are doing something right by bringing people together. You can just walk into the gym and work out. The trade-off is a free gym but then they start asking questions. The whole perspective of them saying “you should come and join us or come to our next event” and we will show you this and that, and one thing leads to another. They are meeting the needs for any person that is missing something or in search of something.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

“That’s what I see in our younger generations, that they are leaving to other denominations because they are receiving better support from them. Children receive better support at other denominations for schools, jobs, and the latest technology. It is good for their families too. These churches are more equipped for the wealth of the denomination. Tongans must work harder to raise funds for congregational and parish support, where the support from other churches and denominations are more established, like the Impact Church.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Spend More Time Getting to Know Their Congregants and Parishioners.

“For my part as a young person in the church I have a role to play. People ring to ask if they can come and see me? I sit down with them for a whole hour and find out everything about them. When I say everything, I mean it because they tell me everything. Even if they have been married three times, they will tell me that. Sometimes, I feel I know more about a person than a faifekau (minister) about an entire family. When I connect with a family they open, and want to tell me everything about their life, including their finances. It is about doing a bit of research to find out more about a person, and their personal situation. I have never seen a church leader spend that much time with a family to work out if they are healthy or wealthy? If have enough income to manage their day-to-day expenses? Whether they can afford to go to the doctor? Whether they have a car to get to work? You know little things that make a difference to a family, a Methodist family. But because we are so busy in our own lifestyle that nobody has time to do this. It says a lot about our leaders and sometimes I question how they can give instructions [tala tu’utu’uni] when they do not know anything about the

congregants and parishioners and their individual situations? It might be that a person or family has an issue at home that I/they need to sort out first before I/they can do anything for the church. There are a lot of information that some of our church leaders don't know about, and if only they could spend a bit of time with each person, daily, weekly, or monthly, they could learn a lot and help a lot of people at church. Sometimes, the faifekau does not have time to sit down with you at all. Sometimes, you go to church, and nobody even talks to you, and you think, why do I need to go to church if it doesn't help me at all. These are things that faith leaders do not even think about because they are so busy, and we forget about the wellbeing of our families. I think it might be not important to faith leaders. Maybe they feel that it is not a part of their role or job description. Whether it takes a whole year for faith leaders to find out, but at least congregants can feel heard and supported. You wonder how anyone can support you if a faith leader has never asked you or bothered to find out about your wellbeing. It is like being at work, when your faith leader is your manager at church, so if you have not had time to sit down with your staff, and have a conversation about their work and wellbeing, then how can they expect to lead? That is why a lot of youth and young people move away because faith leaders of other churches and denominations have the time to sit down with them and have a coffee. A lot of young people need that kind of support from faith leaders, to have regular catchups and follow-ups which are important." [CPB5: female 48 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Lead by Example and Get Along with Others and Work as a Team.

"Another thing I would add is that leaders need to lead by example as well. We are talking about the faifekau [minister] and setuata [stewards], they all do not get

along. So how do they expect the church to get along with others and grow by example if they do not get along? How can our spirits [laumalie] grow if the leaders are not leading by good example? You wonder why I should care about myself if the leaders do not care to work together? This is something that is very important, but the faith leaders are not even aware of or thinking about.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Observe and Reflect on the Unspoken Truths, Realities, and Misconceptions of Over spiritualising, Putting Unrealistic Expectations on the Youth and Young People, and making them feel judged.

“I do not think this is something that is easily done in terms of how faith leaders explore. I think at most times the faifekau [minister] should pause and reflect on his or her actions and how it impacts others. I think we are often busy on setting programmes at church from Sunday to Sunday. Not having time to pause and reflect and having the time to reassess what was said among the families. Or reassess issues that happened at church and reassess church activities like Fakame (White Sunday) and the effectiveness of church programs for health and wellbeing. I think exploring would be looking and understanding what is currently in place and what people are going through. Talking to the youth and young people and discovering what works and does not work. Exploring the experiences of young people and having conversations about it. The first stage is to observe. I think it is important to implement programs that support wellbeing. For example, Siaola [Vahefonua faith-based Social Service] is effective when people are at camp and attend retreats. But perhaps Siaola could do more in promoting and educating Tongan congregations and parishes about what they are offering? There is a misconception that Siaola is only for problematic families that speaks some

misunderstanding. If clarity needs to be applied there or somebody needs to explain it a little bit more, then that might be useful. But when families attend camps, it benefits them to talk about life, as a sense of self-care for their families because the current situation is that everybody is giving, the idea of the more you give the better a Christian you are. But the unspoken truth is that the numbers are declining in our memberships in wider Auckland, Aotearoa and that speaks volume. They can point at overprogramming or exhaustion of attending different commitments. There is a decline in wider Methodism and the Tongan church. If we investigate it to confirm that because now with Pākehā numbers, there are no youth. The Tongan churches are shifting towards that way. There is a decline in our teens to middle aged groups between 15 to 40 years. Investing in their self-care and their families are important and it will give them a sense of worth. Perhaps the decline has to do with a variety of factors such as: not connecting with the Tongan language particularly for the New Zealand born, the cultural aspects of the young and their voices not being taken seriously, being antichurch and the young not wanting to go to church, leaders are Bible bashing and over spiritualising that they are paralysing the young, and the list is not exhaustive. I believe that it starts by getting some training and professional development to understand what wellbeing means and the impacts it has on individuals. There are failures without saying and pointing the finger at the church but there is room for improvement in improving the wellbeing of youth and young people. It can be misinterpreted as over spiritualising and puts unrealistic expectations on our youth and young people. They feel judged, and they feel that being different is not accepted in a church. Whether in the ability to speak properly or address an audience or know how to do

things. You can go as far as gender or sexual orientation, but young people feel like a minority, and they feel indifferent and isolated.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

***Faith Leaders Need Measures and Mechanisms in Place to Respond to Crises—
To be Proactive Rather Than Reactive.***

“I am aware of youth suicide and want to know what is the response of our Methodist Church to that? What do we have in place? I asked one of the leaders for ministers in training if there was anything in place to support them, or have knowledge of how to support someone in suicidal situations, or post suicide? To see if they were equipped not only to be counsellors but whether they were connected to resources or networks that can better support families? Of course, prayer is important, but there needs to be more because the aftermath is huge and traumatising for young people and their families, and that is the key, because I do not think we have anything in place to respond to that sort of crisis?” [CPB2: female 34 years].

***Faith Leaders Need to Check on the Social, Cultural, and Economic
Environments of the Families to Grasp and Understand Diverse Living Standards.***

“I think that it is important to look at the social, cultural, and economic environments of the families and their children and look at their spiritual wellbeing. We need to explore those pillars and reassess ourselves against them. That’s what I believe we need to improve on doing. If we improve on doing that from a progressive environment, I think we will see a change in relationships between the youth and young people and the faith leaders and how they do things. The relationships and vā (interactions) will be improved significantly in how faith leaders do things, and they will be much more united in a cohesive way of doing things. They will be more fe ‘ofo’ofani [caring] in doing the work. That is

something that I personally see the faith leaders are not doing, and it needs to be done to make a difference.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

***Faith Leaders Need to Find Out the Working Employment Status of
Congregants and Parishioners to Discern Financial Wellness and Wellbeing.***

“As a young person faith-based leader, I think we still need, and I am speaking from my experience, that we are very behind the exploration of the wellbeing of our congregations and parishes. We need to find out the percentage of unemployed congregants and parishioners and those on the welfare benefit as a key statistic for discerning wellbeing. That will provide direction on how much a faith leader should be asking a congregation and parish to contribute towards annual tithing [misinale]. It will inform the faith leaders that they need to do some budgeting on how to manage finances, and how to help congregants and parishioners reach that goal. To find out these facts on families, check in on them and follow up on them, which faith leaders fail to do.” [CPB4: male 36 years].

***Faith Leaders Need Proper Training to Acquire the Tactical Skills, Knowledge,
and Expertise to Be Effective Agents of Wellbeing.***

“Our faith leaders are not properly trained because they talk about pastoral care but are not skilled at implementing pastoral care. There should be some component in their training to find out about individual and communal wellbeing. It showed when we went into lockdown just how important it was for people needing essentials like food, sugar, and bread. The faith leaders did not go into any depth of things but just scratch issues on the surface. If it wasn’t for the pandemic, we wouldn’t know just how much families were struggling to make ends meet. From the work that we did through the schools and church, we had to engage with our church members to find out if families were fine [saipe] and dig deeper to find out

if they were fine. We received private messages from families to say that they needed food and financial support. That's where our churches need to work on, to better respond to the wellbeing of all families." [CPB5: female 48 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Provide Young People with a Safe Space and Place to Express Themselves.

"With our younger generation our faith leader gives them the opportunity to express themselves. He gives them the opportunity to have a voice. The services are not run like the normal old Tongan way [temipale tapu]. We're given one Sunday a month for the youth to run and conduct the service, and the youth take over it completely. I reckon that is a good way because for the last twenty plus years that was all right because people were coming from Tonga, and we were all still so young back then. But we've grown up and are used to the old way [founnga koia] of the old Tongan traditional way of running the Methodist Church. But the new generation have grown up in Aotearoa, and the system is different [pea kuo kehe ae founnga ia], and the young people get bored. They're moving out to other churches because our old traditional Tongan ways are rigid and old fashion for them. The way we run our services now, is that the youth run the service once a month, and at every church meeting there is a representative for the youth, so our voices are heard. So, it's about connecting with the younger generation, and allowing them to have a voice. On the other hand, we've got the old troops, having their old style of doing things and the youth wanting to explore a new way of worship. It's connecting with the younger generation and allowing them to have a say. Not judging but allowing everyone to feel comfortable. The dress code is comfortable, but not too comfortable because we are still trying to bring in the

good old tie to be respectful which is good now and then.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Consider the Evolvment of Children, Youth and Young People in Aotearoa That May Clash with Tongan Culture, Customs, and Traditions.

“The wellbeing of the child starts at home. Children are being hushed at home in Tongan culture to respect Elders and not answer back. But at school, teachers are encouraging students to speak up, reason and ask questions in class. This clashes with Tongan culture when a child is raised to not answer back. If you spoke back to your parents you are deemed to be tau ngutu [talking back], but now we equip our children to be vocal, ask questions and seek help if they do not understand at school. We are deemed to tell the children that they do not know what they are doing and are being hushed or we say they cannot speak because they do not have a lakanga [position or authority] at church. In other churches children and youth are encouraged to share and speak in a congregation and parish. So, NZ-born children of Tongan households may find an identity crisis with who they are or which culture, customs, and traditions to practice.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

This participant group acknowledged failures on the part of the faith leaders. listed below.

Failure to Revive the Spirits of Young People (Tokoni’i Kita, Ke Mo’ui ho Laumalie).

“A lot of times at church you don’t get that fulfilment, and your spirit is not revived [’ikai ke mo’ui ho laumalie]. Faith leaders don’t consider the different situations of congregants and parishioners. My life is different from the life of another [kehe ’eku mo’ui ’aku ia meihe mo’ui ha taha kehe].” [CPB1: female 30 years].

Failure to Acknowledge, Embrace, and Accept Changes Proposed by Young People.

“There’s no one size fits all. Our faith leaders do not embrace that, especially when young people bring in change. Some faith leaders are not comfortable with change.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

Failure to Listen to Young People When Only Ordained Ministers (Faifekau), Veterans and Pioneers Were Heard by Most of the Congregation and Parish and excluded Young People.

“I think that we’re all faith leaders in this room. But what gets me is when you’re not ordained and not the minister, you have no voice. Just for example, in a church meeting, whatever the faifekau [minister] says, everyone must agree, and you can’t dispute anything that the faith leader and faifekau says. You will be criticised as a bad person. We are all in some way faith leaders, our friends, our families, we do our best in our church community, and we lead our kalasi ‘aho [cell group] or whatever when we are asked to, so I see myself as a faith leader. Because we try our best to play our part as a Tongan Methodist. If the faifekau doesn’t have time because of so many families, maybe allocate it to other leaders and then come back and report on them. I guess you can rely on a tauhi aho [day keeper] to do it, but it is not done properly.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

Failure to engage With Young People Through a Lack of Connectivity and Appeal in Church Worship Services and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Practices.

“It’s like in a family, the mother and father must connect so that the kids can look up to them. The pastor of a congregation may not have a relationship with the members, so there’s a gap. We still live in the past. The way we conduct our church

services is still back in the archaic days. The services need to be relatable and more relevant for young people and youth born in Aotearoa to connect and engage with the church worship services and Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa practices.”

[CPB4: male 36 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Delegate Responsibilities and Use the Expertise of Congregants and Parishioners to Ease the Pressure for Unreasonable Expectations.

“There are too many expectations of our faith leaders in the Tongan churches. The faith leaders need to think smart to use the expertise of the Tongan congregants to ease the pressure off them. For example, some of the churches, the smaller ones will have the faifekau [minister] being the Chair of the different boards, such as investment and properties, which is not healthy. For the wellbeing of the faith leader the body will be stressed, the mind as well, not only that but the congregation will find that they are all linked to one direction of what the faith leader is leading them to. Whereas if they delegate to the different expertise within the congregation, they will offer their expertise and bring different perspectives and more varieties into the mix. Now we have the Theological College providing different topics to equip the faith leaders because faith leaders need to stay current and be relevant. Faith leaders need to be updated on different policies and things that are being changed all the time. Faith leaders need to help congregants. They don’t need to be at hundred percent, they just need to have the correct information to guide and direct the congregants. We have some faith leaders that try and do it all, they think they know it all but it’s not good for their wellbeing, because they are overworked. At Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, the faifekaus are being overworked and faifekau can’t visit all the families within the church because of the huge numbers in membership. There will be more than a hundred families and the only way for the faith leaders to

share the responsibilities are with the Executive Committee and the two setuatas [stewards]. The faith leader can delegate responsibilities so that the steward can visit the elderly while the faifekau visit the extremely sick and spare him from visiting every home.” [CPB5: female 48 years].

Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Has Not Evolved Fast Enough to Involve Young People for Succession Planning.

“We are not evolving as fast as we should, especially for Tongans in Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa because people think it is only for the elderly. Whereas we see in other churches, that they target the younger generation earlier into the mix. That way they know the processes, they know the activities happening within the church. Not only that, but they will understand what is discussed in the church settings. For the last twenty years, I remember that it was always the faifekau [minister] and setuata [steward] that will go to conferences. When they return from conference, they don’t report back to the church. They go to the meeting and when they come back, no one has a report to report back to the church. Later, we nominated other people like the secretary and other people who can go. We identified names of people who could come back and report back to the church. Now we are getting the youth and younger members to attend conferences, to come back and report to the congregation about conference. It has always been the stewards who attended conference but now they will pick one or two youth and young adults to go, and the church will pay for them. At least the youth can come back and report back. It is different now from the last 20 years when youth couldn’t attend conference. It is more for succession planning.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa and Faith Leaders Need to Set Up and Establish Wellbeing Programmes That Are Fit for Purpose.

“I think the church can set programmes for wellbeing such as educating the children about the right foods to eat and proper food portion intakes. Offering Sunday school and examinations in the English and Tongan languages. The Sia Melie programme encourages sermons in both languages. I always do my sermons in both languages English and Tongan to reach all audiences.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

“Vahefonua and the Vahenga Ngaue [working group] have been trying to work on the healthy eating and stop using fizzy drinks campaign. Stick to water and trying to reduce using pigs at the feasts [kai poloa] and festivals as well. However, that’s part of the customs, it can’t be removed from the table. You know what people say if there’s no pig at the table, that there is no festival. It is leading to not fully performing your role as a spiritual faith leader. I think we need to start with our families first as models of wellbeing. A wellbeing model based on family habits and behaviour. I can see and tell from those families in our church that have been a part of the Siaola programmes. Siaola is the Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Methodist Mission Trust. Some people think it’s for young families but it’s for everyone. A lot of people think they don’t need it until they go there and find out exactly what they’ve been doing is wrong. You try to be fitter and healthier, but you concentrate on one side, and you miss out on the spiritual side, so it must be balanced.” [CPB2: female 34 years].

Faith Leaders Need to Know When to Switch Off and Balance Life so That Children, Youth, and Young People Do Not Resent God.

“The faith leaders need to know when to switch off or how to switch off. It is not a 9 to 5 job, Monday to Friday job. So, you really must be purposeful about protecting your family, your marriage. All those sorts of things. There is no defined

switch off time for our own wellbeing. For us, we have been in the role for 19 months. We have really come in and made some huge decisions. It has been great, but we know there must be a time to know how to balance work and turn off and know when to do something different. Because you know how pastors are expected to be available 24 hours, 7 days a week, but that is not generally possible. Jesus could not please everyone, and he did not. Spiritually there is often experienced burn out because pastors are not taking proper time out or looking after their children. The priority should be in finding that balance for us and our children, so that they still love Jesus when they get older. So, they do not resent church. We want this to be a positive experience and not a negative experience for our children. God is a God of love and abundance, and a light burden. But we tend to make it a heavy burden because we take too much on when we should not. So, finding that balance and trusting God more is necessary.” [CPB3: male 42 years].

A Change of Mindsets is Needed for Practices That No Longer Work and Are Not Fit for Purpose.

“I think mindsets need to change to improve practice, like the lukuluku of food [to gather up or draw together food] that Tongan people relied on for “pitching in and contributions,” whether it applied to food or money. We are always talking about the wellbeing of the church and the financial strife, but we are still accepting traditional ways of doing things that we need to change and find smarter ways and processes of doing things. It will help ease the burden for poorer congregants that are struggling. The challenges of Covid-19 opened the doors for the church and faith leaders to ask about what they can do for the congregants because it has always been about what the congregants can do for the church and annual tithing [misinale]. The church reviewed its strategic direction and asked what the church

can do for its members especially during Covid-19? Thus, some churches provided financial assistance for families during Covid-19. All Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa parishes cancelled their annual tithing because of the impacts of Covid-19 on families and their wellbeing. Some churches distributed food parcels for families in hardship and referred people to emergency service providers. People were relieved to have no annual tithing for the year.” [CPB6: male 47 years].

Implement New Programmes and Initiatives That Are Fit for Purpose.

“Through the Sia Melie [Goodhill] training programme, I can learn new things, especially through ethics. Sia Melie is the La Taha [Onesail] programme that was approved by New Zealand ministry to do the programme. The Sia Melie La Taha programme is for 2 years. The first-year session teaches (Malanga) how to preach. The second year teaches ethics [faitotonu]. I believe that is where we can bring in new change through ethics, where we can review and evaluate the way the church has operated and its effectiveness.” [CPB1: female 30 years].

These findings demonstrated the differences and nuances in the way faith leaders and congregants and parishioners viewed themselves and their responsibilities. The faith leaders associated wellbeing with their personal calling in ministry and experience at a spiritual and pastoral level. The Methodist faith leaders viewed themselves as leaders and non-Methodist faith leaders viewed themselves as supporters. The responses on wellbeing for the faith leaders were more extensive for the Methodist faith leaders because they used Tongan terms to define wellbeing. The non-Methodist faith leaders used the factors of values and connection to the land/fonua and environment as important indicators of wellbeing. The way faith leaders explored wellbeing differed between the faith leaders. The Methodist faith leaders explored through pastoral care, home visits and the collaboration of church departments. The non-Methodist faith leaders explored wellbeing

through the faith denominational doctrines, and respective faith structures, systems, and internal functions. The intergenerational differences in the congregants and parishioners showed that the older participant group (50–89 years) viewed faith leaders as ordained leaders and the younger participant group (25–49 years) viewed faith leaders as equal because they considered themselves faith leaders too. These findings showed how the different generations in this study (the old and young, aged 25–89 years) expressed differences in their viewpoints of wellbeing. Participants from the group aged 25–49 years were born or raised in Aotearoa and their perceptions were from their upbringing, family environment and experiences in Aotearoa. The older participants (50–89 years) were born or raised in Tonga, so they conformed to the Vahefonua Tongan o Aotearoa liturgy and how they did things in Tonga. Liturgy is the customary public worship performed by a religious group. As a religious phenomenon, liturgy represents a communal response to and participation in the sacred through activities reflecting praise, thanksgiving, remembrance, supplication, or repentance. The older participant group (50–89 years) accepted the status quo and tolerated faith leaders more willingly than the younger participant group (25–49 years). The younger participants expressed a lack of faith leader connection, engagement, and relationship with the younger generation. There was a disconnect between Aotearoa-born and -raised youth and faith leaders. The values imbedded by parents in the upbringing of young people born or raised in Aotearoa were present, but there was a lack of connectivity with faith leaders at Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa and between generations (young and old). A key finding among the younger participants was an emphasis on mental health and economic and financial wellbeing. Younger participants felt they were not in a state of mental health and financial wellness because of external influences and the amount of money their families felt pressured to give the church under overwhelming circumstances. This study highlights the complex

intergenerational views of wellbeing among the different age groups and within Tongan and English-speaking congregations and parishes. Findings from this study can be used to help inform better wellbeing outcomes for Tongans in general. This study also contributes to evidence base focused on the wellbeing of Tongans within a religious or faith denomination but is not limited to only religious and faith-based regimes.

The next chapter will provide a discussion of the themes from the findings, identify gaps and limitations, and suggest recommendations for future research. The distinctions on subtleties and nuances will be further explored. For example, the distinctions on the views of wellbeing and the role of faith leaders between Methodists and non-Methodism leaders, including English and Tongan-speaking congregations and parishes, and the exploration of wellbeing are discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 Discussion of the Findings

7.1. Background

The summary of discussions was explored from common themes of the research findings in Chapters 5 and 6 to help explain the research aims and questions. The researcher weighed up the differences and nuances of key themes as evidence of enablers and barriers of wellbeing within a Tongan context. Common themes emerged from the talanoa that encapsulated the views of the participants succinctly as key findings of the research. This chapter presents the sample and information collection methods, strengths and limitations, recommendations and future research that emphasise the usefulness of the study and importance of the church for Tongan people living in Aotearoa.

The main aims of the study were to: (i) explore the views and perceptions of Tongan people living in Aotearoa on wellbeing; (ii) explore the role of Tongan faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa; (iii) explore the realities and experiences in the role of faith leaders in influencing the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa. This study examined how Methodists and non-Methodist faith leaders explored wellbeing among the congregants and parishioners and vice versa, including the effectiveness and identified gaps; and (iv) contribute to the development of policies that will improve Pacific wellbeing in Aotearoa, including church law and practice.

7.2. Research Question 1: The Meaning of Wellbeing?

7.2.1 Methodists and Non-Methodists Believed Wellbeing Is Holistic and a Balance between a healthy Body, Mind, and Spirit

The findings suggest that wellbeing is holistic, and the components cannot exist without the other. How you end up with that in practice will depend on the individual and church

they belong to. There are nuances in how you would end up with that in practice and there are differences between the views of Methodists and non-Methodists presented below.

Methodists—Focussed on the Wellbeing of Spirituality more than they focussed on Physical and Mental Wellbeing.

From the findings the Methodists (faith leaders and congregants/parishioners alike) people went to church for their spiritual growth more than anything else. The young people raised “mental health” as a factor of wellbeing and female faith leaders asserted the need for ‘supervision’ and ‘companionship’ to support wellbeing in ministry. Mental health, supervision and companionship are identified as being necessary for the improvement of spiritual growth and wellbeing within the church in ministry.

There was a strong emphasis on the way that congregants and parishioners viewed wellbeing. The older participant group (50–89 years) expressed the social, cultural, economic, and environmental standards of living as indicators of wellbeing. The younger participant group (25–49 years) emphasised mental health, inclusion, better connections, a safe space and place, and financial wellness as strong indicators of wellbeing. The youth and young people expressed that the Tongan church was a financial burden and did not meet the needs of young people. There was a lack of connection between young people and faith leaders specified in Chapter 5 and 6 for Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa and the Methodist Church of New Zealand to take notice of and address.

Non-Methodists Identified Connections to the home environment, land (Fonua) Impacting Wellbeing. Non-Methodist faith leaders emphasised a connection to the environment and land (fonua) as important influences of wellbeing, that a person’s wellbeing was shaped, influenced, and impacted by their upbringing, home environment and connection to the land and country they came from.

7.3. Research Question 2: The Role of Faith Leaders?

7.3.1 Methodist Faith Leaders/Participants (50–89 years) Believed a Faith Leader Is an Ordained Minister or Presbyterian Called to Ministry

A key finding about how faith leaders perceived their role revealed differences in the way Methodists and non-Methodists viewed themselves. Methodist faith leaders viewed themselves as ‘ordained spiritual leaders’ in a special position and relationship with God. They relied on the spiritual and pastoral aspects of the role to be faithful and honest. Equally important was the need to be trusted agents of God and the church, held to a higher standard of care to maintain confidentiality and avoid Tongan sarcasm (*heliaki*). Furthermore, female faith leaders experienced alienation and loneliness in the role of faith leader. This was expressed more by the female faith leaders than the male faith leaders. The older participant group (50–89 years) also believed that the role of a faith leader is an ordained minister or presbyter under the induction of the Methodist Church of New Zealand Conference.

7.3.2 Methodist Participants (25–49 years) Believed That We Are all Faith Leaders and/or Subleaders Responsible for Our Actions

The younger participants (25–49 years) believed that “*we are all faith leaders or subleaders*” and the role of faith leader should not be limited to ordained ministers or presbyters but that we all have a responsibility to be faithful leaders of good moral character, standing, and be good citizens. The younger generation then emphasised that faith leaders need to be more effective, relevant, relatable, contemporary, accessible, approachable, and better connected with young people. Thus, faith leaders need to be trained to work more effectively across all ages and generations and connect and engage with the younger generation. These findings highlight important aspects in the life of the

church for women and young people for Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa and the Methodist Church of New Zealand to address.

7.3.3 Non-Methodists Believed a Faith Leader is a Supporter and Encourager of Faith

The non-Methodist participants focused on the support and encouragement of faith. They believed that it was important to function and work on the same level as congregants and parishioners to influence wellbeing, whereas Methodist faith leaders were led by their culture, traditions, rank, and hierarchy which distanced the *vā* (relationship) between people, causing a disconnect between faith leader, congregants, and parishioners, including young people.

7.4. Research Question 3: Exploration of Wellbeing?

7.4.1 Methodists Explored Wellbeing Through Ministry: Pastoral Care, Home Visits, Leaders' Meetings, Information Sharing and Reporting

The Methodists explored the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners through the *practice* of ministry through pastoral care, home visits, and the executive team leadership reporting and information sharing (parish council and leaders' meetings).

The intergenerational differences among Methodist congregants and parishioners were that the 50–89 years participant group said they felt a better connection with God and faith leaders when they were in smaller close-contact services and group gatherings. The 25–49 years participant group identified that more work was required to influence and explore the wellbeing of young people. That there needs to be *trust and better connections* among young people and faith leaders, and for the church and faith leaders to begin the process of spiritual growth and revival of young people. The participants suggested decisions and proposals for the church and faith leaders to consider for better care and wellbeing of young people in Aotearoa.

7.4.2 Non-Methodists Relied on Church Doctrine: through the Bible, Internal Systems, Structures and Functions to Explore Wellbeing

Non-Methodists explored wellbeing through the word of God, internal systems, structures, and functions. Non-Methodists relied on their faith *doctrines* to get the message across and explore wellbeing.

These findings can be used to inform Methodists and non-Methodists of what works for unveiling the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners. There are enablers and barriers of wellbeing within a Tongan cultural and social context that places Tongan faith leaders in a state of hierarchy and isolation from congregants and parishioners. In contrast, non-Methodist faith leaders find themselves on the same level as members of the denomination by being approachable supporters and encouragers of faith rather than acting as dictators or CEOs.

The Methodist faith leaders revealed issues experienced in the role of faith leader such as burn-out by not taking regular time off, and how past experiences shaped and influenced the role of a faith leader. Some faith leaders functioned as dictators and CEOs rather than a leader of faith for congregants and parishioners. These faith leaders were treated in the hierarchy of their role as hou'eiki (royalty) instead of as a leader of faith by the older participant group (50–89 years). Thus, the main gaps in the role of a faith leader were expressed by the participant groups as a person who is dictatorial rather than encouraging people, but by forcing people to see what they believed in and acting as a CEO manager instead of a faith leader by not practising what they preached (walking the talk at 100%). In addition, female presbyters experienced doing more referrals during the Covid-19 lockdown period than before lockdown. The female presbyters functioned as referral agents, and experienced loneliness and alienation during the process of ministry.

The concern was whether these limitations were from the boundaries and restrictions of Tongan hierarchy or inhibitions of human behaviour and ability or both? In contemporary Tonga, there are three social status categories: royalty, nobility, and commoner. The Tongan faith leader: minister or presbyter (faifekau) are likened to royalty among some Tongan churches but not all. The most noticeable time for social status and rank to inform interactions is at formal services and occasions, such as church services, funerals, weddings, or birthdays. The Tongan presbyter sits at the front of the church and the head of the banquet table. For some, it gives them rank and entitlements. A Tongan presbyter is given although it varies Tongan artefacts and monetary gifts for their attendance at church social gatherings. They are treated like royalty, guests of honour and very important people (VIPs). It is important to note that Tongan social hierarchy depends on the gender and status of a person. Thus, there should be a balance between the role of a faith leader in Tongan society between customs and traditions and the need to better influence self-care and the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners.

The analysis found strength in the non-Methodist faith leaders' exploration of wellbeing. The diverse non-Methodist faith denominations were structured and balanced. The faith leaders ministered to the youth and young people through connected ministry. The non-Methodist faith leaders were connected and engaged with members because their ministry was supported and resourced internally, and there was interface with communities locally and internationally.

The proposals recommended to impact the influence of wellbeing include having a robust internal system for Methodist faith leaders to monitor work overload and encourage leave for faith leader time off to refresh; and have workshops, pastoral care, and EAP (New Zealand's Employee Assistance Programme) provider to deliver employee support solutions readily available for wellbeing, and training for professional services referrals.

The intent to resolve Tongan sarcasm (heliaki) to avoid toxic masculinity and manhood through proper training will protect privacy and confidentiality. Also, a companion system for presbyters doing home visits and community engagement will support faith leaders fulfilling pastoral care responsibilities.

There was a strong desire for supervision by presbyters, particularly female faith leaders. Supervision is the provision for an independent person to provide pastoral care for the wellbeing of the faith leaders. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa need to make this a priority to provide provisions and alternatives for congregations and parishes that do not or cannot provide supervision for their faith leader(s). This could include a budget for the supervision of faith leaders for overall wellbeing. This responsibility rests with the congregation or parish, but Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa is charged with the national governance of all Tongan-speaking congregations and parishes as the national body and Synod of the Church, according to the law of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Currently, there are no measures within the Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa Synod for mandatory supervision apart from the guidance of the Methodist Church of New Zealand laws and regulations for English-speaking ministries.

The Law of Supervision under the Methodist Church of New Zealand states:

- (a) Ministers have a responsibility to recognise that they are also vulnerable, requiring them to maintain their professionalism in difficult circumstances.
- (b) Ministers shall keep appropriate pastoral records (e.g., details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents).
- (c) Professional supervision means the relationship ministers have with another professional whereby the Minister is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry (as per the definition at the

commencement of the code) including competencies, time management, priorities and any difficulties arising in ministry.

(d) Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision.

(e) Ministers shall discuss with their supervisor any ongoing situations of conflict in which they are involved in the course of their work.

(f) Where applicable, Ministers shall maintain membership requirements of any relevant professional association (e.g., counsellors.)

There was a clear desire for faith leaders to be more connected and engaged with young people, to be inclusive and provide a safe space and place for youth to express themselves. The participants viewed faith leaders as spiritual leaders, faith providers, teachers, and role models. A strong leader models the characteristics of a role model for young people to follow. The younger generation need a sense of place, to avoid the urge of looking externally for acceptance and belonging. There were other conditions identified by the participants to strengthen the role of faith leaders discussed in Chapter 5 and 6. The younger participants (25–49 years) raised some important indicators of wellbeing for young people to feel safe. Young people find the church a financial burden which is alarming. Thus, it is worth reviewing the impact of financial tithings (misinale) on individuals and families within Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand in Aotearoa to address financial wellness and wellbeing.

Currently, there are internal church youth and young adult couples' programmes and activities that have been identified as not being fit for purpose. They do not prevent young people from leaving the church for other churches and external factors and influences to

feel they belong. The participants agreed that faith leaders need to be better at connecting and engaging with young people to fully understand the underlying factors impacting their wellbeing. There were relevant proposals and recommendations suggested by this age group to better improve and inform the exploration of youth and young people by faith leaders. There is a generational gap between the Tongan church and young people. The current church structure and system is outdated and not working well for young people. There were also gaps within the interface of church and community. Young people feel a disconnect with faith leaders because of the lack of communication on social media platforms that young people are engaged and familiar with such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snap Chat, Pinterest, Viber, Messenger, Discord (and the list is not exhaustive). Faith leaders need to embrace these methods of communication on social media to better connect and engage with young people. Faith leaders explored the wellbeing of young people through various church programmes such as: Sunday school (Lautohi Faka Sapate), White Sunday (Fakame), Youth (Potungaue Talavou), Education (Ako lotu), Listen to your call (Fanongo kihe ui). The participants found these programmes to be over spiritualised, Bible bashing and ineffective of real change. They found the programmes outdated and did not capture the imagination, attention, creativity and innovation of the youth and young people, especially among the youth born and raised in Aotearoa.

The analysis found limitations in exploring the wellbeing of the younger participant group (25–49 years) by the faith leaders through bible bashing and over spiritualising without connections, burn-out and overprogramming, overload of work, exhaustion of attending different commitments, decline in numbers and attendance, and decline in self-care. The participants expressed that faith leaders giving instructions was not leading (Tala tu'utu'uni). Growing up in an era where young people could not answer back or speak up to

challenge a situation had language and cultural barriers, and nowadays faith leaders need training to pick up on the signals of social issues. This age group also identified issues and gaps in the role of faith leaders: faith leaders did not spend enough time with the congregants and parishioners to really get to know and understand their individual and personal circumstances, background, and situations—especially members that suffered sufficient economic financial strife and hardship, including mental health issues. Faith leaders need to be authentic, creative, and innovative in practice and service, in Christian education and worship, for younger people to flourish and thrive. Faith leaders need to be more adaptive to change and accept the proposed and suggestive changes from youth and young people, to balance faith, culture, and education (such as education on the right foods to eat, a healthy diet and nutrition). Young people also expressed cultural and financial strains such as the false expectation of royalty (hou'eiki), and the financial burden on families, exacerbated by language barriers and leaders not being properly trained. Thus, the expertise of congregants and parishioners is required to ease the stress and demands on faith leaders, and faith leaders need to better use the skills, talent and expertise of young people and skilled people in the church.

A balance of old traditions and new ways of doing things could improve situations, if there is a disconnect so that faith leaders are adaptable to change. The rigidity and distance of the Tongan hierarchy need to change because they create barriers for any real connectivity and relationships with young people. The findings revealed that the Tongan values were present and embedded in the younger generation; however, some faith leaders did not recognise the intergenerational gap with young people and the current church system through worship and education. Thus, there needs to be a balance between a traditional way of worship and a new way of worship influenced, shaped, and informed by young

people (through consultation) to better connect and engage with the youth and young people that were born and raised in Aotearoa.

7.4.3 A Comparative Review of Congregants and Parishioners Aged 25–49 Years and 50–89 Years

The contrast between the two age groups showed that the younger participants (aged 25-49 years) born and raised in Aotearoa did not connect or have a relationship with the faith leaders who had little understanding of their personal circumstances and situations. The older participants (50-89 years) born in Tonga followed a traditional approach and accepted the status quo. They conformed to the teachings and instructions of the faith leaders and accepted their leadership style more than the younger participant group.

7.4.4 A Comparative Review of Methodists and Non-Methodists.

Methodist faith leaders have responsibilities within the parish they are stationed to by the decision of conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. Their responsibilities are within the scope of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa—that has nationwide responsibility for all Tongan-speaking parishes and congregations. Non-Methodist faith leaders have responsibilities within the processes and structures of their denominations. These denominations have systems and processes to guide the responsibilities of the faith leaders. Furthermore, these denominations have internal resource support, services, and networks available to them. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa on the other hand, need more internal resources to support ministry and impact the overall wellness and enhancement of wellbeing. Faith leaders of Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa find themselves being social change agents and referral agents for congregants and parishioners without any proper resource support or training. This was evident during the Covid-19 lockdown periods when congregants and parishioners were facing hardships and struggling financially, including ill health, unemployment, poverty, family, and relationship issues, including immigration.

The sample and data-collection method of the focus group talanoa sessions used by the researcher to explore the research aims and questions with the participant groups was pertinent, relevant, and relatable to the participants recruited (Vaiotele, 2006). The strength of the research method used to gather the information was effective because talanoa and kakala are authentic and acceptable to Tongan people. In this study, the kakala research framework provided a space that allowed the participants to be who they are, with their insights, knowledge, experiences, and inherited gifts to contribute to their understanding of wellbeing (Fua, 2009, 2014). Hence, the researcher found a shift of understanding of wellness among the participants. The participants were given the opportunity to review the transcribed responses of their interviews before writing the findings and discussion section. The finding adds to the importance of a value system embedded within Pacific cultures that can be employed to inform efforts to address social issues (Havea et al., 2021).

Talanoa is an embodied expression of the Fijian vanua (fonua in Tongan, meaning land, people, tradition, place, and more), a concept that includes love, empathy, and respect (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012). As a Pasifika process, talanoa has become a popular research method, often likened to narrative interviews. It has been defined as an open, informal conversation between people in which they share their stories, thoughts, and feelings (Vaiotele, 2006). The kakala framework allowed conceptualisation from a distinctive Tongan worldview, recognising, and giving value to Tongan culture, customs, and traditions (Fua, 2014). There were no major limitations of the research strategy used to collect the information; however, translation of the talanoa and information gathered into the Tongan language would strengthen the value of the study and optimise its worth to Tongans and Pacific people living in Aotearoa for holistic wellbeing.

The Talanoa approach is a way of how to work with people of Tongan nationality from a research methodology viewpoint. The research method is underpinned by Tongan values important to Tongan people (Fua, 2014). This confirms that the Talanoa approach works best with Vaioleti (2006) because it recognises that talanoa can be used to illicit information from Tongan participants in focus group settings. The Talanoa approach has operationally worked well with the Kakala governance framework in this study. Unlike the view of Tunufa'i (2016) that claim talanoa lacks the philosophical rationale as well as the processual clarity that is unambiguously outlined in other "Pacific" approaches such as Kakala and Vanua. Talanoa specifically works best under the view of Vaioleti (2006) that is responsive to the way Pacific peoples see and communicate their worlds. Thus, this study adds to the literature of placing indigenous voices and epistemologies in the centre of the research process (Smith, 1999).

7.5. Conclusion

A key finding of this study is a call for Tongan faith leaders in Aotearoa to rethink their religious practices to improve or to have positive impacts in the wellbeing of their congregants and parishioners. The argument is to consider that wellbeing is spiritually driven based on the dynamic interplay between sino (body), 'atamai (mind), and laumalie (spirit, heart, and soul). This is conceptualised under the notion of napangapangamālie. These suggest ways, actions, methods, and processes for Vahefonua Tongan o Aotearoa and the Methodist Church of New Zealand to consider ways to support and strengthen the role of, and faith leaders themselves towards influencing wellbeing. The importance of the church in positioning faith leaders to influence the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners under their pastoral care and watch was also highlighted. Highlighted in the sense of usefulness to inform Tongan faith leaders and churches in Aotearoa of the realities experienced by members. This

knowledge is designed to help encourage faith leaders to continue to lead, and to enhance the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners. Ultimately the findings are charged with benefitting and improving the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa. In addition, these findings can also inform the practice of those working with Tongan people in other settings such as health service providers, medical professionals, policy makers and church lawyers.

7.6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Methodist faith leaders are informed by the findings of the non-Methodist faith leaders to strengthen their work internally and externally. In addition, faith leaders shall be informed by the proposals and recommendations for better connections with congregants and parishioners, emphasising stronger relationships with the youth and young people to positively influence their mental health, inclusion, safety, connections and financial wellness and wellbeing. Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa should act for the parishes to organise supervision for faith leaders in ministry. Furthermore, proper referral training is required for the church and faith leaders to address issues and support physical activities for total wellness, including a companion system for faith leaders during pastoral care and home visits for ministry wellbeing.

7.6.1 Learnings and Observations – Cultural Capacities

Something to explore further is language. For Maori ‘holistic’ means language (Matika et al., 2021), but for Tongans ‘holistic’ means identity and spiritual wellbeing. Learning the Tongan language and maintaining Tongan culture and heritage, customs and traditions is a drawcard for the future generations of Tongans living in Aotearoa. Being a member of a Tongan speaking church maintains cultural identity and provides access for the language to be taught to the younger generation born and raised in New Zealand. Thus, New

Zealand-born Tongans stay and remain in the Tongan church of their family (parents and grandparents) for the language and culture.

7.7. Advisory Group

The researcher had an advisory team of Tongan clergy and doctors to provide expert advice on the research methodology (talanoa). The advisory team focused on the kaupapa, ways of doing and knowing of Tongan people to ensure the research was culturally responsive to the researcher as a Tongan researcher and target population (Tongan people) living in Aotearoa.

7.8. Dissemination of Results (TIKA)

The dissemination of results is crucial for getting the message across to wider Tongan audiences; to reflexively position the findings and results in the Tongan language for broader reach and more authentic output and richer responses; to consider Tongan translation and interpretation; and to consider more deeply the potential limitations of the research for further improvement and development, acknowledging that all research has limitations. The findings will be disseminated through workshop, articles, and publication on websites to key stakeholders like AUT, the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa, Tongan community, church leaders and the Tongan Pacific advisory group, the Health Research Council of New Zealand, the Ministry of Health, district health boards in the Auckland region, New Zealand Lay Preachers Association, Presbyters and Ministers of Religion in Aotearoa, and the Tongan community worldwide. There will also be presentation at relevant conferences (Pacific, church conferences) at both national and international levels. Study results will be shared on the Tongan radio, newspaper, Methodist Church of New Zealand *Touchstone*, as well as by publication in reviewed journals and dissemination to community and church groups through talanoa.

7.9. Open Questions for Future Research

- How can programmes be improved and developed for faith denominations to better explore the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners *and* track faith leader wellbeing?
- How can the government, Ministry of Health and key stakeholders work in collaboration with the churches *and* faith leaders in Aotearoa for better health and wellbeing outcomes?
- How can faith communities, denominations, organisations, and faith leaders better connect and serve young people in Aotearoa?
- Can leadership be rethought, between a Pacific context and Western context?
- How can we use knowledge of cultural practices such as the emerging literature on Pacific and Indigenous perspectives to understand and utilise leadership differently?
- Time to review the impact of financial tithing (misinale) on individuals and families within Vahefonua Tonga o Aotearoa of the Methodist Church of New Zealand in Aotearoa?
- How can the role of faith leaders inform district health boards, the Ministry of Health, NGOs, and key stakeholders to provide better access to healthcare and wellbeing?
- Could future studies in the Tongan language be conducted on the role of faith leaders influencing wellbeing for broader participation and authentic responses for the Tongan non-English speakers?

- What might a comparison between what faith leaders in Aotearoa—a colonised country—and faith leaders in Tonga—a Kingdom— look like? Are there any differences between how they are perceived in Aotearoa and Tonga? Will there be any distinction between New Zealand- and Tongan-born respondents?
- What is the global impact of this study on the wellbeing of other faith denominations nationally and internationally?
- How can we accommodate the variability in conceptualising the interface between cultural contexts and the psychology of religion and spirituality?
- Unpacking decolonisation, Te Tiriti o Waitangi congruent to diversity, equity, and wellbeing, acknowledging diverse cultures?
- Could a future proposed study contribute towards identifying different and innovative ways of church, or doing church differently, and investigate new ways of identity construction and religious communication?
- Statistics of Tongan people in the Methodist and non-Methodist churches in Aotearoa

This doctoral journal proposes an inert directive to continue evolving with employing talanoa research practices to improve the connection between our Tongan clergy and parishioners. Like a Dove I am viewing in-between and bequeath to search for more if this requires a post-doctoral journey, I am ready and willing to do so.

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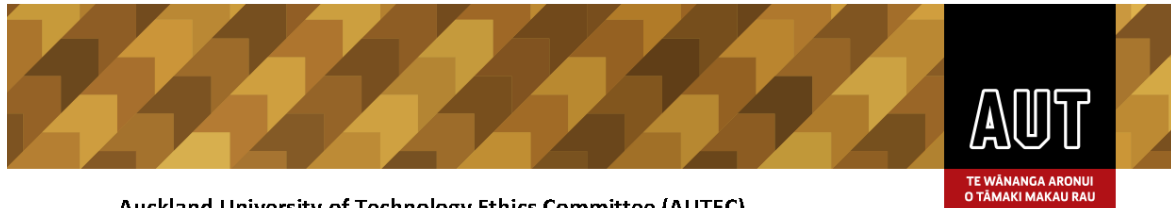
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Appendices

Appendix A Ethics Approval Letter for Research



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

23 October 2020

Margaret Williams
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Margaret

Re Ethics Application: 20/296 The role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration of the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 23 October 2023.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please remove the last sentence in the section on alleviating risks/discomforts. The counselling suggested in the Information Sheet must be free for participants to access and they also need to have the information they need to access it without needing to go through you, the researcher. Both these requirements are met, I think, with AUT Counselling and assistance via participants' churches so additional support is likely not necessary. If any amendments are made to the Information Sheets as a consequence of your consideration of this point.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study but please send updated versions to the Secretariat for our records.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: rubyschaumkel@gmail.com; Janis Paterson

Appendix B Information Sheets for Participants



Participant Information Sheet: Group A: Tongan Methodists

Date Information Sheet Produced:

7 September 2020

Project Title

The role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration of the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa

An Invitation

Hello my name is Rubinstine Manukia. I am a PhD student at AUT. My research topic is: the role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration on the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. I would like to invite you to participate in my research as part of focus group Talanoa sessions. My research will contribute to my PhD degree. To avoid, minimise and manage the conflict of interests, I will exclude my family members and whom I have a direct and specific daily working relationship with. The Talanoa focus groups for the Faith Leaders and Congregants & Parishioners will be separate to protect against conflicts. I will ensure that there is no direct conflict of interest, coercive influences or power imbalances between any of the relationships between researcher and participants and between participants. Ensuring there is a mixture of participants from different denominations in the focus groups will prevent direct relationships of Faith Leaders and their Congregants and Parishioners from the same Church. Thus, whether you choose to participate or not will neither advantage nor disadvantage you.

What is the purpose of this research?

What are you trying to find out?

OVERALL AIMS

- 1) To explore the views and perceptions of Tongan people living in Aotearoa on 'wellbeing'
- 2) To explore the role of Tongan faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa
- 3) To explore the realities and experiences in the role of faith leaders in influencing the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa
- 4) To contribute to the development of policies that will improve Pacific wellbeing in Aotearoa

Who are you wanting to involve?

- A. Tongan Methodists

What would you like them to do for you?

Take part in a Focus Group Talanoa

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

You may choose or decide to be identified in the findings. You will need to give your consent to be identified in the findings in the Consent Form. You will need to consent without force or coercion. You will need to be fully aware that there may be consequences for identification in the findings. You may wish to seek independent advice.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have received this information sheet through the initial contact with potential participants.

A. Tongan Methodists

The initial contact for Tongan Methodists will be through me sending a notice to the Church, with an introduction informing you about the research, with a notice saying if you are interested to contact me.

The recruitment and selection process involved in this research requires 2 participant groups:

A. Tongan Methodists

There will be 4 focus groups with a minimum of 6 participants per group and a maximum of 8 participants in one focus group. Total participants will be between 24 and 32 participants.

The inclusion selection criteria involve:

A. Tongan Methodists

Criteria – That you

are: Tongan, Methodist, aged over 25 years old, actively or regularly attending a Methodist Church in Aotearoa

The exclusion selection criteria to exclude people from the study for A. Tongan Methodists are:

I will exclude people from:

- My own family members
- My own immediate Methodist congregation
- People who report directly to me
- People who I have a daily working relationship with

This exclusion criteria is to allow the smooth progress of the talanoa focus group sessions.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your consent will be obtained and evidenced in the Consent Form (attached to this application).

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

You will be involved in a focus group talanoa session with a minimum of six (6) participants to a maximum of eight (8) participants in total from Tongan Methodists in Aotearoa. There is a protocol of how the talanoa session will be conducted listed below for your information. You are involved in the group of Tongan Methodists because you fit the criteria: Tongan, Methodist, aged over 25 years old, actively or regularly attending a Methodist Church in Aotearoa. You consented to participate in the research by signing the Consent Form.

Talanoa Protocol: How to run the Talanoa Sessions

We will begin with a prayer and introductions at the beginning of the focus group talanoa session.

There will be four (4) focus groups:

- (1) a mixed group of Tongan Methodist Congregants and Parishioners selected from an age group of 25 to 49-year olds
- (2) a mixed group of Tongan Methodist Congregants and Parishioners selected from an age group of 50 to 89-year olds
- (3) a group selected from practicing Tongan Methodist faith leaders (recruited from ordained Methodist Church Ministers/Presbyters and Stewards), and
- (4) a group of Tongan faith leaders selected from other faith denominations in Aotearoa

The focus groups will be asked the research questions from the Indicative Questions Sheet (attached).

The focus groups will be audiotaped and the information collected will be transcribed.

There is no control group involved in this research and the data collected will only be used for the purposes for which it has been collected.

What are the discomforts and risks?

You may feel a bit of discomfort or embarrassment around talking in a group about how faith affects your wellbeing, especially if for some reason there is tension.

You may be at risk when unintentional non-identifiable information exposes you or your identify in the research.

However, I believe that there is more benefit than harm foreseeable in this research project. At any point during the project you can withdraw your participation if you experience risk or discomfort as a result of any cultural, employment, financial or similar pressure.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

It is very unlikely that you will need counselling as a result of this research. However, you are advised that you can always access your own pastoral care and support from within your Church.

However, there is AUT counselling available and the use of independent counselling contacts such as Helpline where appropriate.

AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- drop into our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 921 9992 City Campus or 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment. Appointments for South Campus can be made by calling 921 9992
- let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on <http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling>.

What are the benefits?

The primary benefit of this research is to enable me to better build and serve the Tongan Methodist Church. I will better understand how Tongan Methodists and Tonga Faith Leaders function. The secondary benefit of doing this research is for me to achieve a PhD degree.

The potential benefit of this research is that the research finding, outcome and output will answer or attempt to answer the research questions, aims and objective of the study. It will provide evidence of how faith leaders influence the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa to better improve Methodist practice. It will help to inform and improve the wellbeing of Tongan Methodists and Tongan faith leaders.

The potential benefits of this research for you as a potential participant are that it provides an opportunity for you to express your views, realities and experiences in a safe space and environment. You will be familiar with the Pacific fono of 'talanoa'. The research will be at your Church or your choice. You will be familiar with the territory you choose to share your views, realities and experiences. The research output will provide the stories, realities and experiences shared by you with your consent. Thus, your voice will be heard, honoured and respected by other researchers in the same field and interest.

It is planned that the research will provide a better understanding for you and I of how Tongan people live amidst the leadership of the faith leaders in Aotearoa. It will benefit me to understand my curiosity as a life-long member of the Church. Additionally, it is anticipated that you (congregant, parishioner, faith leader and faith organisation) may use this process to inform and strengthen your role in your congregation or parish by being informed of the realities and experiences of the participants. Collectively, the relationships in this study are aimed to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa.

It is hoped that findings from this exploratory study will contribute to the body of knowledge that better improve the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. The findings will inform faith leaders, Churches in Aotearoa of the realities and experiences of members, and the wider community to help [5]strengthen their role and influence. Collectively, the finding is aimed to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa. The study will also inform the practice of those working with Tongan people, such as health service providers and medical professionals, as well as policy maker.

How will my privacy be protected?

How will the privacy of participants and researchers be protected?

There will be an express clause on privacy in the Consent Form for you to read and express consent in the Consent Form that you have read and understand the terms and principles of privacy.

How are the researcher and the participants protecting each other?

I will protect you by informing you of your privacy and confidentiality and management of risks, especially around your spiritual safety in the Consent Form. You will consent to your understanding of privacy, confidentiality and management of risks by expressing your consent in the Consent Form to show that you have read and understand the principles of protection.

How are the researcher and the participants protecting others?

You shall not identify others in focus group discussions, including other congregants, their Minister or their Church.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is a koha for participation and koha for food (kai) during the focus group talanoa sessions.

\$100 koha per participant is allocated for participation time in the focus group sessions, and \$250 koha is reserved per focus group for food (kai) during the focus group talanoa sessions.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

A. Tongan Methodists

You will have a month to decide if you are interested in participating in the Focus Group Talanoa sessions. I will also give you a copy of the Indicative Questions.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A one-to-two page summary of the findings of the research will be given to you unless in the Consent Form you indicate that you do not want the summary. In the summary of findings, I could note the location of the thesis in the AUT repository.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Margaret Williams, margaret.williams@aut.ac.nz, work (+649) 921-9999, ext. 6837

Any Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ex.t 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Rubinstine Manukia, rubinstinemanukia@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Margaret Williams, margaret.williams@aut.ac.nz
Professor Janis Paterson, janis.paterson@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTC Reference number *type the reference number*.



Participant Information Sheet Group B: Tongan Faith Leaders

Date Information Sheet Produced:

7 September 2020

Project Title

The role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration of the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa

An Invitation

Hello my name is Rubinstine Manukia. I am a PhD student at AUT. My research topic is: the role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration on the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. I would like to invite you to participate in my research as part of focus group Talanoa sessions. My research will contribute to my PhD degree. To avoid, minimise and manage the conflict of interests, I will exclude my family members and whom I have a direct and specific daily working relationship with. The Talanoa focus groups for the Faith Leaders and Congregants & Parishioners will be separate to protect against conflicts. I will ensure that there is no direct conflict of interest, coercive influences or power imbalances between any of the relationships between researcher and participants and between participants. Ensuring there is a mixture of participants from different denominations in the focus groups will prevent direct relationships of Faith Leaders and their Congregants and Parishioners from the same Church. Thus, whether you choose to participate or not will neither advantage nor disadvantage you.

What is the purpose of this research?

What are you trying to find out?

OVERALL AIMS

- 1) To explore the views and perceptions of Tongan people living in Aotearoa on 'wellbeing'
- 2) To explore the role of Tongan faith leaders in the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa
- 3) To explore the realities and experiences in the role of faith leaders in influencing the wellbeing of congregants and parishioners in Aotearoa
- 4) To contribute to the development of policies that will improve Pacific wellbeing in Aotearoa

Who are you wanting to involve?

- B. Tongan Faith Leaders

What would you like them to do for you?

Take part in a Focus Group Talanoa

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

You may choose or decide to be identified in the findings. You will need to give your consent to be identified in the findings in the Consent Form. You will need to consent without force or coercion. You will need to be fully aware that there may be consequences for identification in the findings. You may wish to seek independent advice.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have received this information sheet through the initial contact with potential participants.

B. Tongan Faith Leaders

The initial contact for Tongan Faith Leaders will be made through my personal networks, and I will individually email the Tongan faith leaders that I think will be interested in taking part in the research.

The recruitment and selection process involved in this research requires 2 participant groups:

B. Tongan Faith Leaders

There will be 4 focus groups with a minimum of 6 participants per group and a maximum of 8 participants in one focus group. Total participants will be between 24 and 32 participants.

The inclusion selection criteria involve:

B. Tongan Faith Leaders

Criteria – That you are: Tongan, Faith Leaders in a Church in Aotearoa

The selection will be on a first in first served basis. Once I have 3 or 4 people from one gender for the focus groups then no more participants will be accepted. I will then invoke gender balance for the remaining recruitments to get the mixed balance of gender and age.

The exclusion selection criteria to exclude people from the study for B. Tongan Faith Leaders are:

I will exclude people from:

- My own family members
- My own immediate Methodist congregation
- People who report directly to me
- People who I have a daily working relationship with

This exclusion criteria is to allow the smooth progress of the talanoa focus group sessions.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your consent will be obtained and evidenced in the Consent Form (attached to this application).

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

You will be involved in a focus group talanoa session with a minimum of six (6) participants to a maximum of eight (8) participants in total from Tongan Faith Leaders in Aotearoa. There is a protocol of how the talanoa session will be conducted listed below for your information. You are involved in the group of Tongan Faith Leaders because you fit the criteria – that the participants are: Tongan, Faith Leaders in a Church in Aotearoa. You consented to participate in the research by signing the Consent Form.

Talanoa Protocol: How to run the Talanoa Sessions

We will begin with a prayer and introductions at the beginning of the focus group talanoa session.

There will be four (4) focus groups:

- (1) a mixed group of Tongan Methodist Congregants and Parishioners selected from an age group of 25 to 49-year olds
- (2) a mixed group of Tongan Methodist Congregants and Parishioners selected from an age group of 50 to 89-year olds
- (3) a group selected from practicing Tongan Methodist faith leaders (recruited from ordained Methodist Church Ministers/Presbyters and Stewards), and
- (4) a group of Tongan faith leaders selected from other faith denominations in Aotearoa

The focus groups will be asked the research questions from the Indicative Questions Sheet (attached).

The focus groups will be audiotaped and the information collected will be transcribed.

There is no control group involved in this research and the data collected will only be used for the purposes for which it has been collected.

What are the discomforts and risks?

You may feel a bit of discomfort or embarrassment around talking in a group about how faith affects your wellbeing, especially if for some reason there is tension.

You may be at risk when unintentional non-identifiable information exposes you or your identify in the research.

However, I believe that there is more benefit than harm foreseeable in this research project. At any point during the project you can withdraw your participation if you experience risk or discomfort as a result of any cultural, employment, financial or similar pressure.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

It is very unlikely that you will need counselling as a result of this research. However, you are advised that you can always access your own pastoral care and support from within your Church.

However, there is AUT counselling available and the use of independent counselling contacts such as Helpline where appropriate.

AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

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The potential benefit of this research is that the research finding, outcome and output will answer or attempt to answer the research questions, aims and objective of the study. It will provide evidence of how faith leaders influence the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa to better improve Methodist practice. It will help to inform and improve the wellbeing of Tongan Methodists and Tongan faith leaders.

The potential benefits of this research for you as a potential participant are that it provides an opportunity for you to express your views, realities and experiences in a safe space and environment. You will be familiar with the Pacific concept of 'talanoa'. The research will be at your Church or your choice. You will be familiar with the territory you choose to share your views, realities and experiences. The research output will provide the stories, realities and experiences shared by you with your consent. Thus, your voice will be heard, honoured and respected by other researchers in the same field and interest.

It is planned that the research will provide a better understanding for you and I of how Tongan people live amidst the leadership of the faith leaders in Aotearoa. It will benefit me to understand my curiosity as a life-long member of the Church. Additionally, it is anticipated that you (congregant, parishioner, faith leader and faith organisation) may use this process to inform and strengthen your role in your congregation or parish by being informed of the realities and experiences of the participants. Collectively, the relationships in this study are aimed to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa.

It is hoped that findings from this exploratory study will contribute to the body of knowledge that better improve the wellbeing of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. The findings will inform faith leaders, Churches in Aotearoa of the realities and experiences of members, and the wider community to help strengthen their role and influence. Collectively, the finding is aimed to benefit and improve the wellbeing of Tongan and other Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa. The study will also inform the practice of those working with Tongan people, such as health service providers and medical professionals, as well as policy maker.

How will my privacy be protected?

How will the privacy of participants and researchers be protected?

There will be an express clause on privacy in the Consent Form for you to read and express consent in the Consent Form that you have read and understand the terms and principles of privacy.

How are the researcher and the participants protecting each other?

I will protect you by informing you of your privacy and confidentiality and management of risks, especially around your spiritual safety in the Consent Form. You will consent to your understanding of privacy, confidentiality and management of risks by expressing your consent in the Consent Form to show that you have read and understand the principles of protection.

How are the researcher and the participants protecting others?

You shall not identify others in focus group discussions, including other congregants, their Minister or their Church.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

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What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

B. Tongan Faith Leaders

You will have a month, the same time to decide if you are interested in participating in the Focus Group Talanoa sessions.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A one-to-two page summary of the findings of the research will be given to you (participants) unless in the Consent Form you indicate that you do not want the summary. In the summary of findings, I could note the location of the thesis in the AUT repository.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Margaret Williams, margaret.williams@aut.ac.nz, work (+649) 921-9999, ext. 6837

Any Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ex.t 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Rubinstine Manukia, rubinstinemanukia@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Margaret Williams, margaret.williams@aut.ac.nz
Professor Janis Paterson, janis.paterson@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTC Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix C Consent Forms for Participants



Consent Form

Project title: *The role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration of the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Margaret Williams
Professor Janis Paterson*

Researcher: *Rubinstine Manukia*

Participant: *Tongan Methodists*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that I should not identify people who are not present in my discussions/talanoa.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that I may be identified in the findings and that I give my consent to be identified in the finding. (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I understand that there are consequences and that I will seek independent advice.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form



Consent Form

Project title: *The role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing: a qualitative exploration of the views of Tongan people living in Aotearoa*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Margaret Williams
Professor Janis Paterson*

Researcher: *Rubinstine Manukia*

Participant: *Tongan Faith Leaders*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- ☐ I understand that I should not identify people who are not present in my discussions/talanoa.
- ☐ I understand my right to privacy and confidentiality, and the management of risks, especially around my spiritual safety. I have read and understand the principles of privacy and protection.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that I may be identified in the findings and that I give my consent to be identified in the findings. (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I understand that there are consequences and that I will seek independent advice.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix D Prompting Questions

Tongan Methodists – Prompting Questions

Po Talanoa Stage – Informal talanoa before questions are asked

Research Question (1) – Prompting questions: - Talanoa Faka'eke'eke Stage

- Can you give an example of what wellbeing is?
- Can you give an example of what that means to you?
- How do you experience it/wellbeing?
- Where do you experience it/wellbeing?
- Do you feel it and experience it often?
- Do you experience it from or at Church?
- Do you experience it from your faith leader?

Further prompting questions – elaborations and clarifications – Talanoa'i/Talanga Stage

Research Question 2 - Prompting questions: - Talanoa Faka'eke'eke Stage

- What does faith leader mean to you?
- Who is your faith leader?
- What do you think a faith leader's job/role or responsibility is?
- How do you react towards your faith leader?
- Do you react differently to your faith leader than your congregant or parishioner?

Further prompting questions – elaborations and clarifications – Talanoa'i/Talanga Stage

Research Question 3 - Prompting questions: - Talanoa Faka'eke'eke Stage

- How do you think faith leaders explore their congregants and/or parishioners wellbeing?

- What are some of the experiences you have had with your faith leader in influencing your wellbeing?
- Were they positive or negative experiences?
- Is there anything that could improve the role of faith leaders in influencing wellbeing?
- Is there anything you can think of about your faith leader that could improve his or her role in influencing wellbeing?

Further prompting questions – elaborations and clarifications – Talanoa’i/Talanga Stage

Tongan Faith Leaders – Prompting Questions

Po Talanoa Stage – Informal talanoa before questions are asked

Research Question (1) - Prompting questions: - Talanoa Faka'eke'eke Stage

- Can you give an example of what wellbeing is?
- Can you give an example of what that means to you?
- How do you experience it/wellbeing?
- Where do you experience it/wellbeing?
- Do you feel it and experience it often?
- Do you experience it from or at Church?
- Do you experience it from your role as faith leader?

Further prompting questions – elaborations and clarifications – Talanoa'i/Talanga Stage

Research Question (2) - Prompting questions: - Talanoa Faka'eke'eke Stage

- What does faith leader mean to you?
- Who is your faith leader?
- Do you consider yourself a faith leader influencing wellbeing?
- What do you think a faith leader's job/role or responsibility is?
- How do you react towards other faith leaders?
- Do you react differently to other faith leaders than your congregants and/or parishioners?
- How do you react towards your congregants and/or parishioners?

Further prompting questions – elaborations and clarifications – Talanoa'i/Talanga Stage

Research Question (3) - Prompting questions: - Talanoa Faka'eke'eke Stage

- How do you explore your congregants and/or parishioners wellbeing?
- What are your experiences in influencing the wellbeing of your congregants and/or parishioners?
- Were they positive or negative experiences?
- Is there anything that could improve your role as a faith leader influencer of wellbeing?
- Is there anything you would change about your role to improve the influence of wellbeing?

Further prompting questions – elaborations and clarifications – Talanoa'i/Talanga Stage

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